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# Changing Lives with PLAR

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Fanshawe's Pilot with  
Early Childhood Education & Educational Support



# Land Acknowledgement

Across Ontario, we acknowledge that we are on the traditional lands of many Indigenous peoples, each with distinct cultures, languages, and histories. Those rich cultures, languages, and histories have shaped this land for generations and have contributed to our personal learning journey, which in turn is connected to our sense of place.



Early Childhood Educators are committed to creating learning environments that honour Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and teaching. They create spaces where respect, empathy, and truth are foundational to every child's growth. They foster an environment where all children, families, and communities feel valued and understood. They reflect on the importance of teaching young children about the histories, cultures, and contributions of the Indigenous Peoples in age-appropriate and meaningful ways, fostering a sense of belonging, justice, and respect from the earliest years. They walk alongside children and families as they collectively nurture a future rooted in reconciliation and mutual respect.

# The Project

- This project recognized prior learning acquired outside of the classroom by moving beyond the course-by-course assessment and allowing applicants to challenge program learning outcomes using PLAR
- A new assessment model for applicants to challenge up to 75% of their program using PLAR
- The pilot assessed the candidate's vocational skills using vocational learning outcomes

Experience  
Opportunity  
Impact

3 Key Words ...

**FANSHAWE**

**BULK PLAR OUTREACH PROJECT**

**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION  
UPSILLING OPPORTUNITY**

Have you considered returning to college and using your valuable work experience towards an Early Childhood Education (ECE) diploma from Fanshawe College? Did you know that based on prior learning and valuable work experience, you could receive credit for up to 75% of a 2-year ECE diploma program? By completing a Prior Learning and Assessment Recognition (PLAR) assessment, you could earn an accelerated credential, improve your professional recognition and local labour market job impact.

**Participant Requirements**

- Recent or current employment in the ECE field, with significant levels of current industry experience
- Attend classes at Fanshawe's regional site in Clinton, ON
- Must not be currently registered in Fanshawe College's ECE program, or registered in ECE programs at another Ontario College
- Must meet program eligibility requirements

**Benefits of Participation**

- Earn an ECE credential to improve your professional recognition in an accelerated time-frame
- Upskill and earn credentials with a flexible schedule, allowing you to continue to work
- Reduce costs of completing your ECE diploma
- Receive credit towards the Bulk PLAR fee assessment (\$725 value)

**Learn More!**

Learn more about this exciting opportunity through your industry connections.

**For More Information:**

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This project received support from ONCAT (Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer).



**FANSHAWE**

**BULK PLAR OUTREACH PROJECT**

**EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT  
UPSILLING OPPORTUNITY**

Have you considered returning to college and using your valuable work experience towards an Educational Support (EDS) diploma from Fanshawe College? Did you know that based on prior learning and valuable work experience, you could receive credit for up to 75% of a 2-year EDS diploma program? By completing a Prior Learning and Assessment Recognition (PLAR) assessment, you could earn an accelerated credential, improve your professional recognition and local labour market job impact.

**Participant Requirements**

- Recent or current employment in the EDS field, with significant levels of current industry experience
- Attend classes at Fanshawe's regional campus in Woodstock, ON
- Must not be currently registered in Fanshawe College's EDS program, or registered in EDS programs at another Ontario College
- Must meet program eligibility requirements

**Benefits of Participation**

- Earn an EDS credential to improve your professional recognition in an accelerated time-frame
- Upskill and earn credentials with a flexible schedule, allowing you to continue to work
- Reduce costs of completing your EDS diploma
- Receive credit towards the Bulk PLAR fee assessment (\$725 value)

**You're Invited!**

You're invited to an exclusive "meet and greet" event with Fanshawe College faculty and staff, to discuss this exciting opportunity.

**Date and Time:**  
**Location:**  
**RSVP to:**



This project received support from ONCAT (Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer).



# The Problem

- The barriers and stigma of PLAR
- The ongoing underutilization of Bulk PLAR (7+ courses)
- The lengthy and cumbersome PLAR process for multiple courses
- The lack of employment mobility for highly skilled but under credentialed individuals
- The labour market demands



# The Idea

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- **Identify good news stories surrounding local industry who collaborated with the College to fast track experienced, but under credentialed employees to diploma completion**
- **Supported through:**
  - Streamlining the PLAR process to attract mature learners with extensive skills and little to no post-secondary experience
  - Focusing on strategic initiatives - Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM) & labour market demand
  - Receiving ONCAT Capacity Grant funding



# The Research

## Labour Market Demand

Toronto

### Percentage of early childhood educators in Ontario child care declining, despite goal

Numbers in new government report could put Ontario's expansion of \$10-a-day child-care program at risk

Allison Jones - The Canadian Press -  
Posted: Dec 23, 2024 12:12 PM EST | Last Updated: December 23, 2024



A new government report shows that the number of registered early childhood educators in Ontario child-care programs is declining, a big problem for the province's \$10-a-day program. (Laura Meader/CBC)



The percentage of staff in Ontario child-care centres who are registered early childhood educators (RECEs) has been declining over the past few years, moving the province further away from one of its goals in the national \$10-a-day system.

News / Local News

### Special needs shortage: Educational assistant vacancy rates hit 30 per cent

*It's a critical shortage that some warn may lead to a student or staff member suffering a major injury in a London-area school.*

Heather Rivers

Published Nov 30, 2023 • Last updated Nov 30, 2023 • 8 minute read

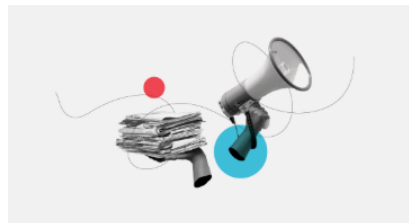
[Join the conversation](#)



Grade 2 student Mattiaso Bravo-Cimolin writes a story on his AlphaSmart Neo keyboard with educational assistant Sharon Klamn in this file photo. (Postmedia Network files)

*It's a critical shortage that some warn may lead to a student or staff member suffering a major injury in a London-area school.*

The Thames Valley District school board is running an educational assistant vacancy rate of 30 per cent and it's hurting both students and education workers, union officials say.



May 9, 2023

### New national PLAR framework will support lifelong learning and help individuals enter the workforce faster

Ottawa, May 9, 2023 – Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan), today, released a national framework that will support lifelong learning, help streamline skills upgrading for... [Read more](#)

## Environmental Scans



### Priority Programs





# The Solution

## BULK PLAR OUTREACH PROJECT



WHY CHOOSE FANSHAWE PROGRAMS AND COURSES ADMISSIONS & FINANCE !



WHY CHOOSE FANSHAWE PROGRAMS AND COURSES ADMISSIONS & FINANCE !



### EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



### EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT



# The Approach

- **The Engagement Approach:**

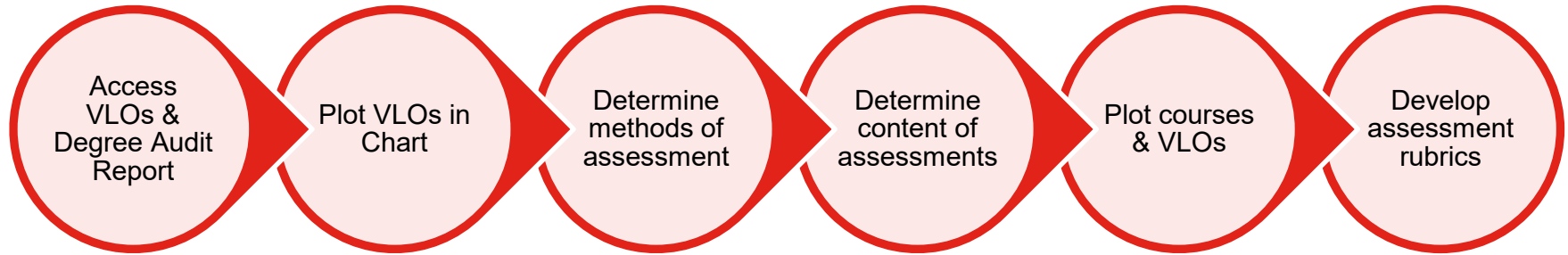
- Engage faculty/subject matter experts to create assessments/evaluations
- Complete a marketing, communication, knowledge mobilization plan
- Connect with internal and external stakeholders
- Recruit participants
- Provide student wrap around supports

- **The Assessment Approach:**

- Focus on vocational learning outcomes rather than course learning outcomes
- Create assessments that are manageable for the applicant and assessor
- Use triangulation of assessment to confirm a robust approach
- Ensure applicant maintains Fanshawe's residency requirement



# The Assessment Process



***Focussed on the 9 Guiding Principles of PLAR:***

Accessible, Consistent, Fair, Respectful, Valid, Flexible, Rigorous, Transparent, Professionally Supported  
(CAPLA: *Canadian Association of Prior Learning Assessment*)

# The Assessment Tools

- **Methods of assessment included:**
  - Challenge Exam
  - Interview
  - Portfolio
- **Triangulation of assessments provided:**
  - Cross validation of performance
  - 3 elements of assessment - a well-rounded approach
  - Clear demonstration of skill using various platforms of assessment
- **Evaluation of assessment provided:**
  - A transparent process to document the applicant's knowledge/skills related to vocational learning outcomes

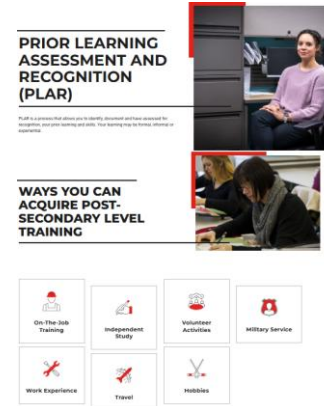


# The Assessment Model

- **An efficient and flexible PLAR process includes:**
  - A transparent and well mapped out process
  - A comprehensive assessment that allows the applicant the opportunity to demonstrate skills for a variety of course learning outcomes
  - A detailed report that provides the applicant with scores for each assessment and provides confirmation of learning outcomes by course
  - A well-developed process with the Advising Centre outlining the results by course and the associated grades
- **How does Fanshawe use program learning outcomes to assess PLAR?**
  - Engage faculty who are subject matter experts in both academic and vocational competencies - Able to map out course learning outcomes to vocational skills and tie them back to vocational learning outcomes
  - Create a standardized matrix/evaluation tool
  - Develop an evaluation process which assigns a letter grade for each course - ensure student transcript requirements are met

# The Self Assessment

- **Purpose:**
  - Allows applicants to assess their own level of knowledge
- **Benefits:**
  - Determines if prior learning/experience aligns with learning outcomes
  - Fosters self awareness of strengths/weaknesses
  - Promotes informed decision making
- **Challenges:**
  - Subjective based on individual bias



# The Portfolio

- **Purpose:**
  - Allows applicants to collect and present evidence of experience
- **Benefits:**
  - Learner centered
  - Detailed document of acquired skills
  - Allows for direct documentation (by the applicant) and indirect documentation (third party)
- **Challenges:**
  - Time consuming

# The Challenge Exam

- **Purpose:**
  - Uses prewritten exam questions to test applicant's knowledge/skills
- **Benefits:**
  - Quick and easy to administer
  - Accurate assessment of knowledge
  - Self marked
- **Challenges:**
  - Can be intimidating to applicants with low technical abilities or those who have been out of the classroom for many years

# The Interview

- **Purpose:**
  - Uses preplanned questions to assess knowledge/skills and the applicant's ability to apply that knowledge to real world situations
- **Benefits:**
  - Student focussed
  - Authentic
  - Focusses on oral skills
- **Challenges:**
  - On demand answers required



# The Rubric/Evaluation

- **Purpose:**
  - Uses a standardized approach to assessment evaluation based on vocational learning outcomes
- **Benefits:**
  - Transparent & robust demonstration of knowledge
  - Maps to course codes
  - Visually appealing - maps to each course code and is easy to identify course grades and courses still requiring enrolment/completion
- **Challenges:**
  - Grades may be lower than applicant expects

# The Participants

## Early Childhood Education

- **9 applicants - 3 selected to participate**  
*(based on self assessment , level of experience, screening process)*
- **Connected through community outreach**
- **Varying levels of prior experience - currently working in the field**
- **Completed all 3 assessments**
- **Received significant course credits**
  - 1 was enrolled part-time, 2 had not started their post-secondary journey
- **Currently registered as part-time students working towards the ECE diploma**

## Educational Support

- **2 applicants - 2 selected to participate**  
*(successful based on self assessment , level of experience, screening process)*
- **Connected through program team**
- **Consistent levels of prior experience - currently working in the field**
- **Completed all 3 assessments**
- **Received significant course credits**
  - Both participants were enrolled part-time
- **Currently registered as part-time students working towards the EDS diploma**

# The Impact

## The impact was substantive:

- Achievements of the participants far outweighed the other important factors contributing to the project's success
- Opportunity for students to begin or continue studies at Fanshawe
- Opened doors and eliminated barriers



*“I never thought that I was good enough to be a post-secondary student.”*

*“The development of this initiative has provided these individuals with opportunities far beyond the expectations of the project.”*

*“I am pleased with the results.”*

*“I enjoyed hearing about the Bulk PLAR. It sounds like you are breaking new ground with this. It is very exciting.”*

# The Lessons Learned

- The development of assessments by faculty is lengthy and requires many revisions - ensure appropriate time is allotted
- The completion of assessments by students is extensive - ensure expectations are communicated and appropriate time is allotted
- The Bulk PLAR fee of \$750 may continue to be a barrier
- The institutional process and student process must be well defined
- The barriers of post-secondary education are declining

# The Future

- Develop a standardized assessment approach/templates for programs across the College
- Engage ECE programs at all Fanshawe campuses to adopt the Bulk PLAR model
- Continue to focus on the recruitment of non direct students
- Continue to offer creative solutions to workers struggling with employment stability/mobility due to lack of post-secondary credentials
- Continue to establish best practices and awareness of Bulk PLAR



# Thank You

*“Problems can  
become opportunities  
when the right people  
come together.” -  
Robert Redford*

