

Andrea

Andrea is a twenty five year old single woman who has lived in Ottawa all her life. Since leaving school she has had many jobs in retail, stocking shelves and helping customers, none of which have lasted more than a few months. She recently found out she is pregnant and will be raising her child on her own. She is currently unemployed and is on Ontario Works.

Andrea is looking forward to the birth of her child but she also realizes that she should get her life together and so, on the advice of a counsellor at her community health centre, she decided to talk to an employment counsellor at an Employment Services centre to see if she could get a job that was going to last. During their discussions the employment counsellor discovered that Andrea didn't do well at school but that she had her high school diploma. However, most of these credits were from locally developed courses (sometimes known as K courses)¹ that are not regarded as having the same academic standing as other credit courses.

Because of Andrea's history of short-lived jobs, it seemed to the counsellor that Andrea might be lacking some of the basic skills and work ethic needed to stay employed. The counsellor wondered if a literacy program might be the best first step. Andrea was not certain about the options for Literacy and Basic Skills programs so she contacted the literacy network for some information.

Then they reviewed the information together and Andrea decided on a school board literacy program. She called for an appointment and met with an intake assessor who completed a detailed assessment. The assessor discovered that Andrea was not working at the credit level even though she had her high school diploma. This did not come as a surprise to the assessor who recognized that some schools have less stringent requirements for graduation. As they talked more, the assessor discovered that Andrea was a very caring person and that she was really interested in becoming a nurse. The assessor made a note of this as a long-term goal.

The following day Andrea came into class and met with her instructor who asked her to do a writing sample and a math quiz. The instructor reviewed the initial assessments and together they decided on some activities to get Andrea started. Andrea would be coming into class four days a week. This would leave her one day per week when she could schedule appointments, get some rest or do some homework.

After three weeks Andrea and her instructor developed a training plan. The instructor decided to introduce Andrea to possible alternatives within the nursing field that would not require Andrea to meet the stringent academic requirements needed for nursing. Andrea agreed to consider this.

¹ Locally Developed (credit "1L, 2L" courses): These are Ministry developed courses modeled after the Applied curriculum guidelines designed to allow students, who enter high school with skills which are slightly behind grade level, to achieve success. The Ministry has approved up to six Locally Developed courses to be used as compulsory subjects for graduation. Retrieved from www.sirguycarletonss.ocdsb.ca 16/04/2010

The instructor noticed that when Andrea responded to written questions she was often hasty and didn't read the questions carefully. The instructor had seen that Andrea rushed through her work, her objective being to get the work finished as quickly as possible. The instructor talked about this and they decided that one of Andrea's goals would be to slow down, breathe, and think carefully about what she was being asked to do before she started doing any writing.

Andrea worked on her writing skills by using workplace documents, labels, memos, notes, messages and schedules. As her math skills were also weak Andrea worked on money math, including making change. Later she worked on preparing inventory and schedules. All these activities helped Andrea prepare for the workplace.

Andrea had good oral skills but she needed to pay more attention and improve her listening skills. She was already reasonably comfortable using a computer and part of her program included developing her computer skills so that she could use them in a workplace environment.

Andrea was excited by the plan. Her instructor knew that Andrea was always keen to start new things but that she had trouble following through, and so she kept a close eye on how things were going. She offered encouragement and constructive feedback as needed. Andrea flourished and made steady progress. But then as the birth of the baby got near she started to miss more and more classes. Her instructor discovered that Andrea had argued with her mother who was no longer willing to babysit when the new baby arrived. Andrea wanted to move out of her mother's apartment. Her instructor suggested she talk to her social worker about getting her own apartment. She also asked Andrea to see a staff person in student services about meeting with a counsellor in a community agency to help her deal with the issues that were affecting her well-being.

The instructor didn't hear from Andrea for ten months but then Andrea came in to show off her baby, Natasha. Andrea said she was ready to come back to class. She had found a baby-sitter and was getting help from Ontario Works to pay for childcare. She had also taken some parenting classes and was anxious for Natasha to have some good school-readiness skills when the time came. She wanted to be a good role model for her daughter. She missed classes when the baby was sick but she wanted her baby to have a good start in life and she was finding a new maturity. Andrea kept going to the program and registered Natasha for onsite daycare when she reached eighteen months old.

Andrea attended the literacy program for two years during which time she got her CPR and First Aid certificates as well as completing all the requirements of her training plan. Then she felt ready to take some next steps. She arranged a meeting with the employment counsellor at Employment Services and this fall she is applying for a place on an Early Childhood Educator course at the local college so that she can become a daycare assistant. She still hopes that one day she will become a nurse but she is happy about the progress she has made.