

Essential Skills Profile: Parents

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Parents

Important:

The skills listed in this profile are not intended to be taken as required skills that every parent must possess in order to raise a child. Rather, these skills represent the responses of the focus group participants and are intended to reflect the range of skills these parents performed. Hence, this profile represents a diversity of possible skill requirements for parents as expressed by the focus group participants. This profile is **not** a list of skill pre-requisites that every parent must develop.

Introduction

Parents care for children on an ongoing lifelong basis, in their own residence and outside the family dwelling. Parents provide for children's physical, emotional, educational, and social health and development. Parents also complete a wide range of household duties while caring for children. As a result, they are often multi-tasking. As well, since parents are responsible for time management for the whole family, they perform both short and long term planning. What about community involvements because they are parents?

The most important Essential Skills for parents are:

- Thinking Skills
- Oral Communication
- Document Use

A. Reading Text

Reading Text refers to reading material that is in the form of sentences or paragraphs. **Reading Text** generally involves reading notes, letters, memos, manuals, specifications, regulations, books, reports or journals. **Reading Text** includes:

- forms and labels if they contain at least one paragraph;
- print and non-print media such as computer screen and microfiche text; and
- paragraph-length text within charts, tables and graphs.

The Reading Text Complexity Rating Scale ranges from Level 1 (least complex) to Level 5 (most complex). The typical text reading tasks of parents are at Complexity Levels 1-4. Their most complex text reading tasks are at Complexity Level 4.

Examples of Reading Text and Complexity Levels ()

Parents:

- read recipes from a variety of sources, like internet, books, magazines (1)
- read emails and announcements from a variety of sources, like family members or teachers (1)
- read children's stories and rhymes aloud to entertain and to develop children's language skills (2)
- read information brought home from school, like report cards, newsletters, notices for field trips, vaccinations, homework assignments, forms (2)
- research, assess, select, read children's books that teach: science, reading maps, history, time, how to, crafts etc.(3)
- read prescription information for a child's medication (3)
- read reports on products, like safety reports on infant car seats (3)
- read operation manuals or assembly directions for children's toys or household appliances (3)
- read and assess parenting information from a variety of sources, like internet, magazines, brochures, books, newspapers (4)
- read research and information for a child's medical condition (4)
- read contracts and agreements, like housing, leases, relationships, custody, business services (4)
- read specifications and/or regulations (4)

Reading Summary

Type of Text	Purpose for Reading			
	To <u>scan</u> for specific information/To <u>locate</u> information.	To <u>skim</u> for overall meaning, to get the 'gist'.	To <u>read</u> the full text to understand or to learn.	To <u>read</u> the full text to critique or to evaluate.
Forms	>>>	>>>	>>>	>>
Labels	>>>	>>>	>>>	>>
Notes, Letters, Memos	>>>	>>>	>>>	>>
Manuals, Specifications, Regulations	>>>	>>>	>>>	>>
Reports, Books, Journals	>>>	>>>	>>>	>>

Use of Symbols

The following symbols are used to indicate the proportion of focus group participants who reported using a particular skill:

- >>> most of the participants
- >> some of the participants
- > few of the participants
- > none of the participants

B. Document Use

Document Use refers to tasks that involve a variety of information displays in which words, numbers, icons and other visual characteristics (e.g., line, colour, shape) are given meaning by their spatial arrangement. Workplace examples of documents include graphs, lists, tables, blueprints, schematics, drawings, signs and labels.

If a document includes a paragraph of text, as may be the case on a label or a completed form, it is also included in **Reading Text**. Documents requiring the entry of words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs are also included in **Writing**.

The Document Use Complexity Rating Scale ranges from Level 1 (least complex) to Level 5 (most complex). The typical document reading tasks of parents are at Complexity Levels 1-4. Their most complex document reading tasks are at Complexity Level 4.

Examples of Document Use and Complexity Rating ()

Parents:

- read lists –grocery, to do (1)
- interpret computer program icons to navigate programs, internet, games, keyboard (2)
- read a map to determine a route to a destination (2)
- read newsletters and report cards, spelling lists and other homework assignments
- read schedules, guides, catalogues, menus (2)
- read and follow instructions and diagrams for craft activities or to assemble toys (1-3)
- read and follow graphic instructions for children's action songs and rhymes (2)
- read bills and financial statements, write cheques (2)
- complete forms for school, day care, doctor, registration for activities (2)
- interpret symbols on signs and labels – hazardous materials, food products, signs (2)
- read and assess tables and charts like Canada's Food Guide (2)
- complete household forms – lease or mortgage, medical, insurance (3)
- assess information for appropriateness, especially children's books, magazines, and games(3)
- complete forms for relationship agreements – child support, custody (4)
- complete legal forms – birth certificate, passport, criminal record check, income tax, wills (4)
- conduct information searches using a variety of sources (4)

Examples of Creating Documents

Parents:

- create family chore charts and calendars
- create a schedule of weekly activities
- create children's books

- create documents to record a child's growth, development, medical history
- create documents to record a family event, like a wedding, a reunion, a trip
- create a family tree

Document Use Summary

Parents:

- >>> read signs, labels or lists
- >>> complete forms by marking check boxes, recording numerical information or entering words, phrases, sentences or texts of a paragraph or more
- >>> read completed forms containing check boxes, numerical entries, phrases, addresses, sentences or texts of a paragraph or more
- >>> read tables, schedules or other table-like text
- >>> create tables, schedules or other table-like text
- >>> enter information on tables, schedules or other table-like text
- >>> obtain specific information from graphs or charts
- >>> interpret information on graphs and charts
- > construct or draw graphs or charts
- > recognize common angles
- >> draw, sketch, or form common shapes such as circles, triangles, spheres, rectangles, squares etc.
- > interpret scale drawings
- > make measurements from scale drawings
- > draw to scale
- >> read assembly drawings
- >> make sketches
- >>> obtain information from sketches, pictures or icons.

Use of Symbols

The following symbols are used to indicate the proportion of focus group participants who reported using a particular skill:

- >>> most of the participants
- >> some of the participants
- > few of the participants
- none of the participants

C. Writing

Writing includes:

- text writing and writing in documents such as filling in forms; and
- non-paper-based writing such as typing on a computer.

The Writing Complexity Rating Scale ranges from Level 1 (least complex) to Level 5 (most complex). The typical writing tasks of parents are at Complexity Levels 1- 3. Their most complex writing tasks are at Complexity Level 3.

Examples of Writing and Complexity Rating ()

Parents:

- write short emails to communicate simple information (1)
- write lists, party invitations, reminder notes for self and children (1)
- complete forms for children's school and other activities (1)
- teach children to write by modelling writing for them (1)
- write schedules to organize family activities (2)
- write letters, recipes, directions to a destination (2)
- complete medical forms (2)
- write journals to record child's growth and development (2)
- write a resume and cover letter for a job application (2)
- write children's books (3)
- write a family history (3)
- write a portfolio (3)
- write assignments for adult education or training (3)

Writing Summary

Length	Purpose for Writing						
	To organize/to remember	To keep a record/to document	To inform/ to request information	To persuade/ to justify a request	To present an analysis or comparison	To present an evaluation or critique	To entertain
Texts requiring less than one paragraph of new text	>>>	>>>	>>>	>>>	>>>	>>>	>>>
Texts rarely requiring more than one paragraph	>>>	>>>	>>>	>>>	>>	>>>	>
Longer texts	>	>	>	>	>	>	>

Use of Symbols

The following symbols are used to indicate the proportion of focus group participants who reported using a particular skill:

- >>> most of the participants
- >> some of the participants
- > few of the participants
- none of the participants

D. Numeracy

Numeracy refers to the use of numbers by workers and their requirement to think in quantitative terms in order to complete tasks. Two aspects of **Numeracy** have complexity ratings: **Numerical Calculation**; and, **Numerical Estimation**.

Numerical Calculation is rated within four different application settings as specific knowledge of concepts or procedures are exclusive to each setting:

- **Money Math** - financial transactions, such as handling cash, preparing bills or making payments;
- **Scheduling or Budgeting and Accounting Math** - managing time and money as resources, planning and monitoring their use, assessing best value, reducing waste;
- **Measurement and Calculation Math** - measuring and describing the physical world; and,
- **Data Analysis Math** - analysis of numerical data such as extrapolation of information and determination of trends or statistically significant effects.

Numerical Estimation refers to tasks involving any estimation (i.e., an approximation based on judgment) that results in a number.

Numerical Calculation

The Numerical Calculation Rating Scale ranges from Level 1 (least complex) to Level 5 (most complex). The numerical calculation tasks of parents involve:

- Money Math at Complexity Levels 1-5
- Scheduling or Budgeting and Accounting Math at Complexity Levels 1 – 4
- Measuring and Calculating Levels 1 - 3
- Data Analysis at Complexity Levels 1 - 4

Examples of Money Math and Complexity Rating ()

Money Math

Parents:

- pay for groceries (1)
- pay allowance to children (1)
- teach children about money by playing money games, reading stories and books (1)
- teach children about counting, saving, and spending money (1)
- save for a vacation (1)
- fundraise for children's schools or clubs (1)
- pay monthly bills, balance a cheque book, calculate interest (2)
- calculate income/expenses to purchase clothing, school supplies, household items (2)
- calculate income/expenses to pay for lessons, sports, and appropriate equipment for children's activities (2-3)
- calculate income/expenses to pay for gifts for children's birthdays or Christmas (2-3)
- sell household items, hold a garage sale (2)
- calculate discounts, sales, taxes when shopping (2-3)

- complete income tax (2-4)
- calculate income/expenses to pay for home renovation projects (3)
- purchase big ticket items like a house, car, appliances (3-4)
- act as power of attorney for a family member (5)

Scheduling or Budgeting and Accounting

Parents:

- schedule and budget for entertainment (1)
- schedule and budget for a night out with a babysitter (1)
- schedule and budget for day care (1)
- teach children about time and time management (2)
- schedule and budget both time and money for shopping (2)
- budget and keep accounts for monthly expenses – food, telephone, credit card, insurance, internet (2-4)
- schedule family activities that are constantly changing (2-3)
- schedule and budget for seasonal events – Christmas, birthdays, recreation equipment for children (2-3)
- budget long term for big ticket items – house, car, furniture (3)
- budget and keep accounts for long term investments – bonds, RRSP, leases, mortgage, education fund for children (4)

Measuring and Calculating

Parents:

- measure ingredients when cooking (1)
- measure medications for appropriate dosage (1)
- measure child's growth – height and weight (1)
- measure sizes of clothes, shoes, costumes for children ((2)
- calculate quantities when changing recipes – doubling or halving (2)
- teach children about measuring and calculating – read children's books, describe, model, count, calculate time (1-3)
- measure space for new furniture or appliances (3)
- calculate amounts needed for craft projects or home decorating (3)

Analyzing Data

Parents:

- compare prices, brands, sizes on children's clothing, food etc.(1)
- compare monthly statements (1)
- analyze report cards (1)
- compare nutritional information on food labels (1)
- read, compare, and/or record family history – baby book, family tree, treaty rights (1-2)
- teach children to count, tell time, identify number patterns, add, subtract (1)
- teach the basic concepts of comparing like big/small with shape and size – read concept books to children, model, describe (1)
- compare, calculate weather data – wind, temperature, forecast (1-2)
- calculate, interpret, compare, draw conclusions from data on children's growth and development (1-3)
- interpret data on reports: vehicle repair, payment plans, investments (2-3)
- follow scores and performances for a child's sports team (3)

- calculate, interpret, compare medical information about a child – medical records, medical conditions, medical histories, medication, children's temperatures (1-4)
- calculate, interpret, compare data surrounding pregnancy and childbirth (3-4)
- calculate, interpret, compare emotional data (3-4)
- calculate, interpret, compare data on an estimation chart (1-4)

Numerical Estimation

The Numerical Estimation Rating Scale ranges from Level 1 (least complex) to Level 4. The numerical estimation tasks of parents are at Complexity Levels 1-2.

Examples of Estimation and Complexity Rating ()

Parents estimate:

- the time it would take to travel to a destination (1)
- the length of time for an outing, a lesson, or a game (1)
- height and weight of children (1)
- sizes of children's clothes, shoes, sports equipment, etc. (2)
- cost of groceries and other purchased items (2)
- time, distance, gas when travelling or chauffeuring children (2)
- the amount of food needed for a birthday party or social gathering (2)
- time for meal preparation and other household tasks (2)
- shape, size, space for packing and storing (2)

Math Skills Summary

a. Mathematical Foundations Used

Number Concepts

- >>> Whole Numbers – Read and write, count, round off, add or subtract, multiply or divide whole numbers. For example, teach children basic math concepts. Read food labels for nutritional content. Count calories of children's food intake.
- >>> Read, write, add or subtract, multiply or divide integers. For example, check weather conditions – temperature, wind speed, wind chill – to decide how to dress children to go out.
- Rational Numbers –
- >>> Fractions – Read, write, add or subtract, multiply or divide by a fraction, multiply or divide fractions. For example, following a recipe or using household tools like wrenches or drills. Read financial bills and statements.
- >>> Decimals – read and write, round off, add or subtract decimals, multiply or divide by a decimal, multiply or divide decimals. Use decimals mainly to refer to dollars and cents. For example, preparing a household budget or writing cheques.
- >>> Percents – Read and write percents, calculate the percent one number is of another, calculate a percent of a number. For example, calculate discounts and sales tax when shopping. Read and interpret children's grades and report cards, household financial statements, or nutritional food labels.
- >> Equivalent Rational Numbers – Convert between fractions and decimals or percentages,

convert between decimals and percentages. For example, convert children's school grades from fractions to percents, and percents to letter grades.

Patterns and Relations

- >> Use of Rate, Ratio, Proportion – Use a ratio showing comparison between two quantities with the same units. Use proportion showing comparison between two ratios or rates in order to solve problems. For example, use a ratio to mix baby formula or to determine food portions for children. Use ratio to compare nutrition information on food labels. Determine amount of cough medicine to give a child in proportion to the child's weight. See *Document Use* for information on using scale drawings.

Shape and Spatial Sense

- >> Measurement Conversions – Perform measurement conversions. For example, convert imperial to metric when following a recipe or estimating speed and distance when driving. Convert between Metric and Imperial when travelling in the United States or using materials printed in the US. See *Document Use* for information on recognizing common angles, and on drawing, sketching, and forming common forms and figures.

Statistics and Probability

- >> Calculate and Use Statistics – Calculate averages, calculate rates other than percentage, calculate proportions or ratios. Use statistics and probability. For example, use statistics and probability to track a child's progress in competitive sport or school performance. Use statistics and probability to track a pregnancy or a child's rate of growth and development. See *Document Use* for information on using tables, schedules or other table-like text; and on using graphical presentations.

b. How Calculations Are Performed

Parents perform calculations:

- >>> In their head.
- >> Using a pen and paper.
- >> Using a calculator.
- >> Using a computer.

c. Measurement Instruments Used

Parents measure:

- >>> Time. For example, using a conventional clock or watch or a timer (cooking/baking).
- >> Weight and mass. For example, using a scale to measure a child's weight or a food scale to measure portion sizes.
- >>> Distance or dimension. For example, using a meter stick to measure a child's height. Using a tape measure to measure room sizes for new furniture or appliances or to determine if storage space will hold all of the containers.
- >>> Liquid volume. For example, using measuring cups and spoons to follow a recipe.
- >>> Temperature. For example, using a thermometer to check a child's temperature. Using oven gauges to determine correct temperature and time for cooking.

>> Angles. For example, using a square or a level to measure floors or counters to see if they are straight. Cutting craft and quilting pieces, cutting cakes.

Parents Use:

>>> The SI (metric) system

>>> The imperial system

E. Oral Communication

Oral Communication pertains primarily to the use of speech to give and exchange thoughts and information.

The Oral Communication Complexity Rating Scale ranges from Level 1 (least complex) to Level 4 (most complex). The typical oral communication tasks of parents are at Complexity Levels 1-3. Their most complex oral communication tasks are at Complexity Level 4. Many of the tasks are listed as a range of complexity, since the same task can be easy or very complex depending on the situation.

Examples of Oral Communication and Complexity Rating ()

Parents:

- Send and receive voice mail messages to seek or receive routine information. (1)
- entertain children with stories, songs, and rhymes. (1)
- speak with children to provide or receive routine information, e.g. daily schedule. (1)
- model clear and appropriate speech to teach a toddler to speak or to teach older children appropriate speech for a variety of contexts, e.g. public events. (2)
- resolve routine conflict between family members. (2)
- speak with peers to provide and receive information about parenting. (2)
- meet with professionals – doctors, dentists, teachers, counselors - to exchange information or to resolve a conflict for your child. (2-4)
- communicate with children to co-ordinate or delegate tasks, e.g. completing chores. (2-4)
- instruct, persuade, or negotiate with children in order to attain a family goal, e.g. put on a snowsuit to go out to the grocery store. (2-4)
- instruct, persuade, or negotiate with children in order to guide their behavior, sometimes under dangerous circumstances. (2-4)
- discipline a child. (2-4)
- negotiate or exchange information during non-routine events like labor, childbirth, sick or injured child. (3-4+)
- co-ordinate a family event - party, anniversary, funeral. (3-4)

Modes of Communication Used

Parents communicate:

- >>> In person.
- >>> Using the telephone, cell phone, text message.
- >>> Use specialized communication where noise levels are high or children are using headphones – body language, facial expression, hand gestures.
- > By computer webcam.

Environmental Factors Impacting Communication

Oral communication often occurs simultaneously with other tasks in the home that create noise, for e.g., using the telephone, kitchen appliances, vacuum, television, radio, computer. Noise can also interfere with oral communication in environments outside the home, e.g., playground, other people, concert, midway, traffic, machinery. Communication is also severely impacted when children and/or parents are using headphones for Ipods, computers, or gaming units.

Oral Communication Summary

Type	Purpose for Oral Communication											
	To greet	To take messages	To provide/receive information, explanation, direction	To seek, obtain information	To co-ordinate work with that of others	To reassure, comfort	To discuss (exchange information, opinions)	To persuade	To facilitate, animate	To instruct, instill understanding, knowledge	To negotiate, resolve conflict	To entertain
Listening (little or no interaction)	^^	^^	^^									
Speaking (little or no interaction)	^^	^^										
Interact with co-workers/children	^^	^^	^^	^^	^^	^^	^^	^^	^^	^^	^^	^^
Interact with those you supervise or direct/children	^^	^^	^^	^^	^^	^^	^^	^^	^^	^^	^^	^^
Interact with supervisor/manager/professionals	^^	^^	^^	^^			^^			^^		
Interact with customers/ clients/ public	^^	^^	^^	^^						^^		
Interact with suppliers, servicers	^^	^^	^^	^^	^^					^^		
Participate in group discussion	^^		^^	^^	^^		^^	^^		^^		
Present information to a small group	^		^					^	^			
Present information to a large group	^		^				^					

F. Thinking Skills

Thinking Skills differentiate among five different types of cognitive functions. However, these functions are interconnected and include:

1. **Problem Solving**
2. **Decision Making**
3. **Critical Thinking**
4. **Job Task Planning and Organizing**
5. **Significant Use of Memory**
6. **Finding Information**

1. Problem Solving

Problem solving involves problems that require solutions. For example, a mechanic solves problems, e.g., the car shakes when driven over 80 km./hr., by eliminating probable causes until the correct one is identified and remedied. Most problems concern mechanical challenges, people or situations.

The Problem Solving Complexity Rating Scale ranges from Level 1 (least complex) to Level 4 (most complex). The typical problem solving tasks of parents are at Complexity Levels 2-3. Their most complex problem solving tasks are at Complexity Level 4.

Examples of Problem Solving and Complexity Rating ()

Parents:

- choose a course of action when children's schedules conflict. (1-2)
- help children solve their problems, teach them problem solving, like resolving conflict with siblings or friends, homework, difficulties learning new skills like dancing or soccer. (1-2)
- troubleshoot when appliances fail. (1-2)
- entertain children. (2-3)
- choose the most effective, diplomatic course of action to resolve issues when children are fighting, misbehaving, or wilful - especially when it occurs in a public place. (2-3)
- choose a course of action when financial problems arise. (2-3)
- negotiate with teachers or staff to solve problems at school or day care, like a child conflicting with a teacher or another child. (2-3)
- create solutions for resolving relationship issues. (3-4)
- find solutions to problems that arise from sleep deprivation or post-partum depression. (4)
- create solutions to problems in crisis events – runaway child, medical emergency, childbirth, loss. (4)

2. Decision Making

Decision making refers to making a choice among options.

Decision making occurs during problem solving, but not all decision making is part of problem solving. It is, therefore, presented as a separate thinking skill. For example, buyers for retail outlets regularly make decisions about which suppliers to buy from, i.e., they select from the options for particular types of merchandise. This is not problem solving.

The Decision Making Complexity Rating Scale ranges from Level 1 (least complex) to Level 4 (most complex). The typical decision making tasks of parents are at Complexity Levels 1-2. Their most complex decision making tasks are at Complexity Level 4.

Examples of Decision Making and Complexity Rating ()

Parents:

- make decisions and set priorities to accomplish daily tasks - what to wear, what to cook for meals and snacks, errands, chores, time with children. (1-2)
- select appropriate children's books, TV shows, games, movies, music. (2)
- schedule family activities daily, weekly, monthly. (1-2)
- decide monthly budget plans and bill payments. (2)
- make decisions when planning a family vacation or a family party. (2 -3)
- set priorities for long term tasks and create timelines for financial investing, large purchases, children's future education. (2)
- decide whether or not a sick child should see a doctor or emergency room. (2-3)
- select appropriate approaches to solve the diverse problems of infants and young children – emotional, social, physical. (1-3)
- decide lifestyle issues – where to live, how many children, parenting style, language and culture for children. (1-4)
- decide how, when, where to work or return to work. (2-3)
- decide lifestyle issues for your child – breast feeding, vaccinations, day care, TV, friends, activities, school of choice, technology. (1-4)
- make decisions during non-routine events like childbirth, a child with medical problems or injury, a death in the family, difficulties conceiving. (1-4)

3. Critical Thinking

Critical Thinking is the process of evaluating ideas or information, using a rational, logical thought process, and referring to objective criteria, to reach a rational judgment about value, or to identify strengths and weaknesses.

Critical Thinking may be an element in other thinking skills. For example, judgment is sometimes required to evaluate the choices offered during the course of **Decision Making** and to evaluate solutions proposed as a result of **Problem Solving**. In other cases, Critical Thinking is an independent job task.

The Critical Complexity Rating Scale ranges from Level 1 (least complex) to Level 4 (most complex). The typical critical thinking tasks of parents are at Complexity Level 1. Their most complex critical thinking tasks are at Complexity Level 4.

Examples of Critical Thinking and Complexity Rating ()

Parents:

- evaluate parenting situations with children to determine the appropriate course of action, e.g. a playground is unsafe (1)
- evaluate information, both electronic and print, and judge it's relevance or value. (1-2)
- continually assess the social, emotional, physical well-being of children. (2)
- teach children to think critically through modeling and explaining. (2)
- behavior maintenance for self and children. (1-4)
- make judgments about moral guidance for children. (1-4)
- evaluate children's education, schools, teachers, sports, entertainment, friends. (1-4)
- make judgments about long-term planning for travel, education, home renovation, large purchases. (1-4)
- quickly assess an emergency situation and judge the appropriate response while under stress, e.g. child in an accident. (1-4)
- assess medical treatment, therapy, medication for a child's medical condition or injury (1-4)
- continually evaluate our role as parents. (1-4)
- assess the nature and scope of a diverse range of problems children encounter and select the most appropriate course of action. (2-4)

4. Job Task Planning and Organizing

Job Task Planning and Organizing refers to the extent to which the workers plan and organize their own tasks.

Organizational Planning refers to the job incumbent's involvement in the organization's broader planning and organizing tasks (i.e., planning and organizing the work of others, operational planning, strategic planning).

The Job Task Planning and Organizing Rating Scale ranges from Level 1 (least complex) to Level 4 (most complex). Parents plan and organize typical job tasks at Complexity Level 1. Their most complex tasks are at Complexity Level 4. The complexity rating is listed as a range to indicate that parents plan and organize in a wide variety of circumstances and with a number of changing variables. For example, a morning routine on one day may be very simple, while on another day it could be extremely complex.

Examples of Job Task Planning and Complexity Rating ()

Parents:

- plan and organize daily life for self and children – morning routine, housework, meals, schedules, bedtime. (1-4)

- plan and organize children's non-routine activities – sleepovers, school field trips, school holidays. (1-4)
- plan and organize non-routine family events – travel, moving, childbirth, party, wedding, shower, potluck, care for elderly, volunteering. (1-4)
- long-term planning – goal setting, future for children, education for self and children, money, major purchases, travel. (1-4)

Description

Parents are challenged by many diverse demands on their time. They independently set priorities for daily tasks and set timelines for short and long term goals. They must also be ready to revise their plans at any moment as unforeseen issues arise with regularity. Parents must also co-ordinate their schedules with their children's, since much of their work is done in cooperation with the family. Also, their work includes a range of tasks that change over time, so parents must be able to organize a variety of work tasks, integrate a variety of schedules, and be prepared to adapt to changing circumstances. Factors such as family rules, transportation, school, time, money, previous commitments, or illness all must be considered in the task of planning and organizing. This is a significant skill for parenting efficiently.

Organizational Planning – planning and organizing the work of others

Parents constantly plan and organize tasks for the whole family. Certainly, when children are preschool age, parents plan and organize all of their activities, as well as their own chores, errands, and projects. As children grow, parents plan and organize children's schedules so that everyone's work is accomplished in the appropriate time frame. Planning and organizing the tasks of one's children is a significant skill for parents.

Operational Planning – day-to-day planning to accomplish immediate or short-term goals

Parents have many objectives every day. Parents plan everything from meals and snacks to outings, activities, sleep time, learning, and entertainment – especially when children are preschool age. Parents also plan for their own accomplishments in a day – laundry, cooking, reading, errands etc. Operational planning is intrinsic to a successful family life.

Strategic Planning – planning and organizing long-range goals, objectives, indicators of success

Parents plan and organize many long-term goals for their children and the family as a whole. Moving, travel, education, lifestyle, money, careers are a few of the long term objectives that parents plan for themselves and their children. Strategic planning is not as significant a skill for parenting as operational or organizational planning. However, it does contribute substantially to a successful family life.

5. Significant Use of Memory

Significant Use of Memory includes any significant or unusual use of memory for workers in the occupational group. It does not include normal memory use that is a requirement for every occupation.

Examples of Use of Memory and Complexity Rating ()

Written by Carol Goossen for OLES # 2075208

Parents:

- memorize facts like children's schedules, medications, appointments, recipes.
- memorize information like one's family history.
- memorize stories, songs, rhymes to teach to one's children.
- memorize numbers – accounts, cell phones, telephone, passwords, addresses, SIN, health, memberships.
- remember a diverse range of changing job tasks, timelines, and deadlines.

6. Finding Information

Finding Information involves using any of a variety of sources including text, people, computerized databases or information systems.

Finding Information is highlighted in this section as an essential job skill. However, workers' use of various information sources may be referred to in other sections such as *A. Reading Text*, *B. Use of Documents*, *E. Oral Communication* and *H. Computer Use*.

The Finding Information Complexity Rating Scale ranges from Level 1 (least complex) to Level 4 (most complex). Parenting tasks that involve finding information are at Complexity Levels 1 - 4.

Examples of Finding Information and Complexity Rating ()

Parents:

- locate numbers and email addresses to contact professionals or service providers (1)
- locate information to plan an event or travel e.g. hotel, resort, flights, campground. (1)
- find information to assist children with school projects or science fair. (2)
- find information to complete forms. (1)
- research using a variety of sources – books, journals, consumer reports, internet, people, videos, radio, newspapers, maps, email, TV, support groups – to respond to a variety of family needs and wants, e.g., to answer an inquiry, to solve a problem, to stay informed of parenting issues, medical issues, or social issues, to perform repairs, to find directions. (1-4)

G. Working with Others

The Essential Skill of *Working with Others* examines the extent to which employees work with others to carry out their tasks. Do they have to work co-operatively with others? Do they have to have the self-discipline to meet work targets while working alone?

The Working with Others Complexity Rating Scale ranges from Level 1 (least complex) to Level 4 (most complex). Parents work with others at Complexity Levels 2-4.

Examples of Working with Others and Complexity Rating ()

Parents:

Work co-operatively to accomplish:

- daily, weekly, monthly family routines and schedules. (2-4)
- non-routine work with children to achieve a family goal e.g. moving, travel, events. (2-4)
- work with professionals – teachers, doctors, counsellors – to support and care for one's children. (2-4)
- work with community members to build a safe and nurturing environment for one's children. (2-4)

Work alone to accomplish:

- individual tasks, goals, and projects both short and long term, e.g. a hobby, book club, exercise. (1-3)

Description of Work Context

Parents work alone, independently, with a partner, and as a member of the family team. Within the family group, parents' schedules and tasks must be both coordinated and integrated, sometimes with complicating factors or unpredictable circumstances. Parents must also be prepared to adapt to and accommodate changing circumstances.

Participation in Supervisory or Leadership Activities

Parents perform leadership roles as a: supervisor, teacher, role model, counsellor, domestic goddess, beautician, doctor and nurse, psychologist, financial manager, taxi, entertainer, spiritual leader, chief cook, maintenance and repair person.

In the following section, the terms "work" and "worker" have been modified to "household" and "other family members" in order to reflect a parent's environment. The term "other family members" refers to the family members living in the same household.

Parents:

- participate in formal discussions about household processes or product improvement.
- have opportunities to make suggestions on improving household processes.
- monitor the work performance of other family members.
- inform other family members or demonstrate to them how tasks are performed.
- make hiring decisions for service providers.
- select contractors and suppliers for home servicing.
- assign routine tasks to other family members.
- assign new or unusual tasks to other family members.

- identify training that is required by, or would be useful for, other family members.
- deal with other family members' grievances or complaints.

H. Computer Use

Computer Use indicates the variety and complexity of computer use within the occupational group.

The Computer Use Rating Scale ranges from Level 1 (least complex) to Level 5 (most complex). The Computer Use tasks of parents are at Complexity Level 2.

Examples of Computer Use and Complexity Rating ()

Parents:

- use word processing. (2)
- conduct Internet research, download material, print material. (2)
- use graphics software, games for children. (2)
- use communications software. For example, parents use MS Outlook to perform daily communication by E-mail that includes sending attachments. (2)
- use a webcam. (2)

I. Continuous Learning

Continuous Learning examines the requirement for workers in an occupational group to participate in an ongoing process of acquiring skills and knowledge.

Continuous Learning tests the hypothesis that more and more jobs require continuous upgrading, and that all workers must continue learning in order to keep or to grow with their jobs. If this is true then the following will become Essential Skills:

- knowing how to learn;
- understanding one's own learning style; and
- knowing how to gain access to a variety of materials, resources and learning opportunities.

The Continuous Learning Complexity Rating Scale ranges from Level 1 (least complex) to Level 4 (most complex). Parents perform Continuous Learning tasks at Complexity Level 2-3.

Description

Parents have an ongoing need to learn. They deal with diversity and the challenge of responding to needs, ranging from immediate and unexpected to carefully planned and executed. Parents' learning may cover a wide range of subjects all connected to being a parent. Subjects may include technology, parenting, education, finances, entertainment, self-help, how-to, health and safety, food and nutrition, maintenance and repair, relationship issues, current events.

Parents may develop a learning plan independently or in consultation with a counsellor. There is always motivation to pursue personal development since the demands of parenting require ongoing response to change. Continuous learning may occur in one or more of many options. Parents may learn new skills through reading and experience at home. Parents may also learn through course work, which may be completed as independent study or by attending classes. As well, parents may participate in adult upgrading in a learning centre, or attend a high school. They may take university or college courses, or attend short courses or community sponsored workshops. They may also read books, talk to peers/experts/professionals, and research information from a variety of electronic and text sources as part of their regular day. Sometimes learning is subsidized through training programs or scholarships.

How the Learning Occurs

Learning may be acquired:

- >>> As part of regular daily activity.
- >>> From peers and family members.
- >>> Through reading and other forms of self-study:
 - >>> at home.
 - >>> on their own time.
 - >>> using materials available at home.
 - > using materials obtained through a professional association or union.
 - >>> using materials obtained on parents own initiative.
- >> Through off-site training:
 - > partially subsidized.
 - >> with costs paid by the parent.

J. Other Information

Other Information summarizes additional information collected during interviews with job incumbents and focus groups with occupational experts.

1. Physical Aspects

Body Position

Parents perform their job in a variety of body positions. They sit, stand, walk, and use many other body positions like bending, stooping, crouching, lying down, rocking, running.

Limb Co-ordination

Parents require upper limb coordination to carry infants, cook, do dishes, dress children, bathe children, talk on the telephone, use a computer, clean house, play with children. Parents require lower limb coordination to keep children safe – especially toddlers who like to run away from their parents. Maintaining the home and physical play with children also requires lower limb coordination. Limb co-ordination is also required to transport children, mostly when they are young.

Strength

Parents are required to carry many items of varying weight. They carry children from birth to age 4 or more. They also often perform other tasks while carrying children or carry two children at the same time. They carry bags of groceries, diapers, car seats, children's books and toys, loads of laundry, food and dishes. They also lift furniture or appliances. Most carrying or lifting occurs in the limited, light, and medium weight loads.

2. Attitudes

Note: Participants in all three focus groups responded with a very long list of required attitudes for parents to do their job well. One can conclude from this extensive response, that attitude is an important and far-ranging skill for the job of parenting.

Attitude is very important to the job of being a parent. Most of all, parents need to be loving and nurturing. Parents are also required to be responsible and use considerable self-control. Parents also need to be optimistic, balanced, flexible, realistic, trustworthy, and diplomatic. In addition, they must be giving, hopeful, positive, patient, self-motivated, focused, respectful, trustworthy, kind, sensible, aware, involved, sympathetic, empathetic, strong.

3. Future Trends Affecting Essential Skills

Future Trends or Skills for the Future

Note: Participants in all three focus groups became very concerned and vocal when discussing the future trends for parents. These parents believe that the job of parenting is going to become increasingly demanding and difficult as we move into the future. There was such a wide range of responses to this question, that I have grouped them into clusters. Generally, the responses point to the importance of continuous learning in all Essential Skills. The broad implication for

skills development and training is that parents need more support to develop whatever skills they need to do their job well, as it changes over time.

Technology Issues

Parents need to develop skills to keep up with their children in computer technology, gaming systems, and cell phones. As we move into the future, these issues implicate a need for well developed thinking skills, document use, computer training, and continuous learning.

Communication Issues

This group of future trends represent the how, why, and what parents talk about with their children. The issues children confront are changing and how parents help their children with these issues is a real challenge. The changing technology of communication between family members also indicates the need for parents to continually add skills. These issues implicate the need for ongoing training in thinking skills, oral communication skills, computer training, and continuous learning.

Legal Issues

Issues like privacy, security, access to guns, accountability, liability, and child maintenance all represent issues that today's children will have to confront. Logically, these are also issues that parents want to be prepared to confront. These concerns of parents implicate the need for ongoing training in document use, thinking skills, oral communication skills, computer use, and continuous learning.

Parenting Issues

All parents expressed concern for the future of parenting as a whole. However, maintaining the balance of power between parents and their children is the most important issue for the future. Parents need to find ways to stay in control of their children. Secondly, it is important to find ways of raising responsible children. Parents want children to be trustworthy, respectful toward others, and compassionate. These qualities are getting more and more challenging for parents to instill in their children. Thirdly, maintaining structure in a child's life and keeping a consistent discipline style will be important in the future. Lastly, medical care and education/schools will be issues for parents in the future. Implications for training point to a need for ongoing support for parents to develop their skills in thinking, oral communication, reading, document use, computer use, working with others, and continuous learning.

K. Notes

Use of Symbols

The following symbols are used to indicate the proportion of focus group participants who reported using a particular skill:

- >>> most of the participants
- >> some of the participants
- > few of the participants
- none of the participants

Data for this profile was collected from three separate focus groups, all occupational experts. Two of the groups were made up of parents from family literacy programs in Manitoba. Each of these groups met for two hours, once a week, for 12 weeks. There were fifteen women in one group and eight women in the second group, all experienced parents. The third group was made up of family literacy practitioners and consultants in Manitoba, also all parents. This group of ten people met for a two-day intensive conference. Final results were also reviewed by project consultants.

Important:

The skills listed in this profile are not intended to be taken as required skills for every parent to raise a child. Rather, these skills represent the responses of the focus group participants and are intended to reflect the range of skills these parents performed. Hence, this profile represents a diversity of possible skill requirements for parents, based on the experiences of the focus group participants. This profile is not a list of skill pre-requisites that every parent must develop.