

LINC and Online Learning

This edition of Migration Matters provides a practical overview of LINC online delivery methods including LINC blended learning and LINC Home Study. This info sheet supports LINC service providers with knowledge of teacher training, useful terminology and online learning delivery methods that support newcomers through their settlement journey in the digital age.

Introduction

As digital technology and computer use¹ become widespread and necessary for success in today's workforce, online and blended learning methods are also becoming more common in settlement language training. **Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)** is moving towards increasing LINC blended learning which allows more newcomers to access classroom language training, allows more flexibility for those with job and family commitments and also increases one's comfort with official languages through digital literacy.²

Online learning options

Within the next two years, LINC instructors will be supported with a national **Learning Management System (LMS)** with just one sign-in to access Tutela, blended learning courseware, online learning & a national curriculum.²

LINC Home Study in British Columbia

Newcomers may come to learn English or French online via different pathways. The Centre for Education & Training's **LINC Home Study Canada (LHS)** program provides free distance education for eligible newcomers who cannot attend **Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC)** classes in person.³ There are 88 LINC Home Study seats for BC's North, Interior, Vancouver Island, Fraser Valley and Metro Vancouver regions. All of these seats are full and there is a waitlist as of June 2019.⁴

Learners choose between online (computer with Internet access) or correspondence (books and CDs) learning options and study independently from their local community.³ TESL-certified instructors located in Ontario,⁴ conduct weekly 1:1 lessons with students using telephone or **Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)** such as *BigBlueButton* or *Skype*. Although elements of **Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA)** are incorporated into **LHS**, the program is currently exempt from full implementation.⁴

Supports for **LINC Home Study** learners include:

- a [student code of conduct](#) which defines responsibilities;
- [Write@Home](#) a quarterly publication of student writing;
- [links to regional resources](#) for learners in smaller BC centres curated by Language Education at a Distance.

LINC Home Study eligibility and referral

Prospective clients must be at minimum **Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB)** scores of 3 for listening and speaking and 2 for reading and writing.³ With eligible benchmarks, students may be referred directly by assessment centres to LINC Home Study, but if a student can no longer attend face-to-face LINC programming, and the student has been assessed by the school, those *new* benchmarks will be used as the initial benchmarks to join the LINC Home Study program.⁴

Glossary of Online Learning

Learning Management Systems (LMS) are software applications used by instructors & learners for online learning. They are also the platforms used by instructional designers & teachers to create and edit course content, assessment tools, and other course management features. Commonly-used virtual learning environments include: *Moodle*, *Blackboard*, *Canvas* & *Edmodo*.

The Flipped Classroom includes a dimension of blended learning. Teachers assign Internet-based tasks (watch instructional videos) and move practice "homework" into the in-person classroom time. Face-to-face time may also include technology aids.⁵

Blended Learning is a combination of online & in-person learning activities. It is also known as *hybrid learning*. This format allows portions of instruction to take place through a LMS, making more class time for other activities such as group work.

Distance Learning occurs when instructor and student are in geographically separate locations. The degree of self-direction and time with instructor varies. LHS students study independently 5 hours/week and have 30 minutes with a teacher per week.³

References

¹ Employment and Social Development Canada. (2015). [Guide to Essential Skills Profiles](#).

² New Media Language Training. (2017). [LearnIT2teach Project Update](#).

³ Centre for Education and Training. (2018). [LINC Home Study: Overview](#).

⁴ Viggiani, Adriana. (2019). Personal email, June 11.

⁵ Knewton Infographics. (2018). [The Flipped Classroom](#).

LearnIT2teach blended learning

LearnIT2teach develops digital courseware and provides accompanying language educator accredited training and professional development to support the integration and adaptation of immigrants to Canada. This indirect service provider contributes to settlement language training with Canadian-centric **technology-enhanced language learning (TELL)** resources and tools. At the time of research for this info sheet, there were 18 teacher training courses being offered with 2,616 trainees⁶ and 663 online LINC courses with 52,043 LINC clients accessing them.⁷

LearnIT2teach uses a Moodle-based **Learning Management System** or (LMS). Moodle stands for **M**odular **O**bject-Oriented **D**ynamic **L**earning **E**nvironment. This web-platform's code is open-sourced and customizable to tailor to students' and teachers' needs including PBLA. Points of contact include:

1. **teacher to / from student**
2. **teacher to whole class**
3. **students to / from students via the EduLINC blog**

Both teachers and students can share their blogs to all users on this password protected, national LINC blog site. The courseware is on a national server and therefore no **virtual private network (VPN)** is required. There are three ways to access IRCC-funded, blended learning supports and courses:

LearnIT2teach.ca: web portal (training info, resources & news)

LearnIT2teach.org: free PD and teacher training courseware

EduLINC.org: the learner courseware or "blended classroom"

Incorporating blended learning into LINC

Settlement Officers can provide support for **Service Provider Organizations (SPO)** wanting to incorporate blended LINC classes into Schedule 1 of their Contribution Agreements and programming. SPOs can then arrange Stage 1 training for instructors through the [LearnIT2teach web portal](http://LearnIT2teach.ca). The training is free of charge for both LINC instructors and substitutes. A Moodle 3 edition of [Language Learning Leadership Guide: Supporting Flexible Learning through Technology](#), is available.

References

⁶ LearnIT2teach.org. (June 21, 2018). [Statistics](#).

⁷ EduLINC.org. (June 21, 2018). [Statistics](#).

⁸ LearnIT2teach.org. (2018). [Teacher Training](#).

⁹ Sturm, Matthias. (2018). Personal email, June 6.

Four stages of LearnIT2teach training

- **Stage 1**, done in 3 hours either face-to-face in a lab or online, provides an introduction to e-learning concepts and the LearnIT2teach training stages.
- **Pre-Stage 2** takes approximately 3 hours and provides trainees with the knowledge and skills to set up their student courseware, the software used in e-learning.

Note: Training in Stage1 and Pre-Stage 2 must be successfully completed by all participants before they can receive the free courseware to use with their students.

- **Stage 2** involves teachers using the courseware in a blended learning model with their students for a minimum of 4 weeks. Teachers do basic course editing and integrate resources from [Tutela](#).
- **Stages 3 and 4** instruct teachers on how to enhance their use of courseware and to integrate other software elements such as Hot Potatoes, TexToys and webquests.⁸

At the time of research, there were 159 BC LINC teachers trained in-person and remotely by BC LearnIT2teach mentors.⁹ Mentors are experts in online learning technology and TESL-trained. As reported in their profiles, 97 trainees were from the Metro Vancouver region including Squamish, 46 from the Fraser Valley, 11 from the Vancouver Island region, 2 from the Interior, 1 from Prince George and 2 from undisclosed cities. There has been positive uptake of blended learning in British Columbia with 176 blended LINC courses being offered at the time of publication.⁹

