

DISTRICT LITERACY PLAN

2008 - 2009



*Delta - Where Learning Matters
and Literacy is the Key*

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CONTEXT: WHAT IS OUR COMMUNITY LIKE?

THE DELTA COMMUNITY:

The Corporation of Delta is a suburban municipality in the southwest portion of the Greater Vancouver region. Delta is made up of three urban communities - Ladner, Tsawwassen and North Delta. Delta is comprised of a number of unique neighbourhoods and all of these areas have significant differences in terms of access to literacy programs and services. In terms of population growth, this community remained fairly consistent from 2001 to 2006 with a population change from 96,950 to 96,723 within this five year period.

Age and Family Characteristics:

When analyzing the age characteristics of this community, it becomes evident that this “family-friendly” community contains large proportions of children and youth aged 15 – 24 at 13.79% of the total population in addition to large proportions of middle-aged adults (from 40 – 59 years) at 32.69% of the total population. In terms of actual family structure, there are a fairly high percentage of married-couple families at 79.78% of all census families and a low proportion of lone-parent families at 12.73%. The smallest type of family structure in Delta is male lone-parent families which comprise 2.84% of all census families. Female lone-parent families comprise 9.88% of all census families.

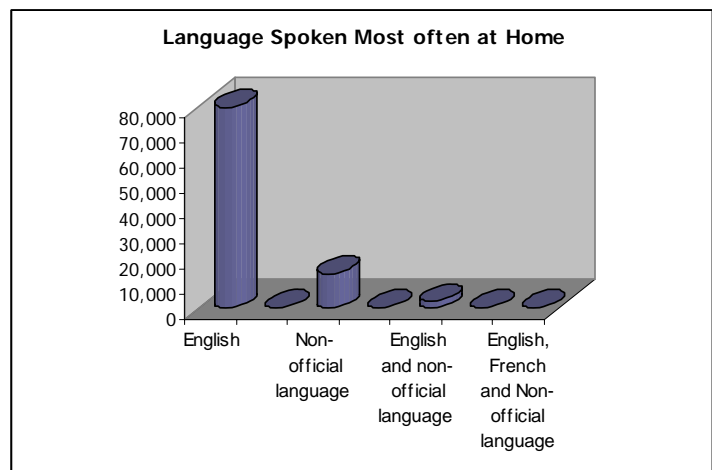
These numbers are striking and are reason for optimism. Strong family structure has been linked to better success in school and better health and future outcomes which could suggest that this community’s make-up is positioning it to be a literacy success.

Immigrant and Ethnic Characteristics:

Delta boasts a population rich in ethnic and cultural diversity, which is enhanced by its 27,020 new residents who have immigrated to Delta and now form 28% of the total population of Delta.

57% of Delta’s immigrant population immigrated prior to 1991 followed by 28% from 1991 – 2000 and 14% from 2001 – 2006.

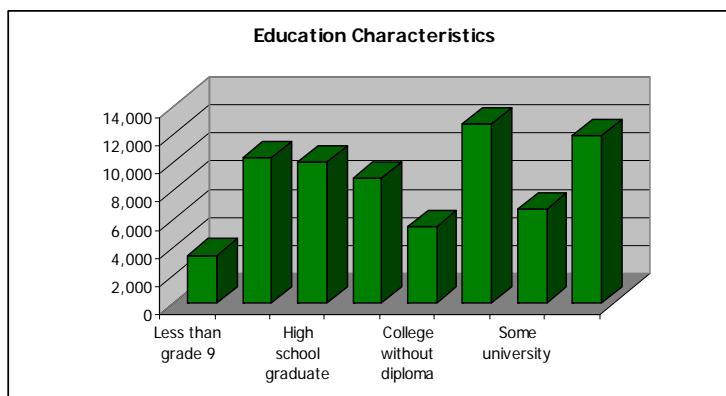
In terms of languages spoken, the majority of Delta residents (83%) speak English while a smaller proportion (14%) speaks another non-official language (neither English nor French). Of these non-official languages, Punjabi and Chinese dialects are the top languages spoken most often at home by 4.4% and 0.7% of the total population, respectively. The South Asian and Chinese Populations are the top visible minorities in Delta making up 12.4% and 5.7% of the population. Anecdotal evidence has shown that the majority of South Asians in Delta are clustered in neighbourhoods within and bordering North Delta. 4% of Delta residents identify themselves as Aboriginal, including the Tsawwassen First Nation, the Musqueam First Nation, the Wilson Family and many others living off reserve.



Economic Characteristics

The economic characteristics of Delta display an average family income of \$78,359 which is slightly higher than the provincial average of \$64,100. In addition, the median income stands at \$70,509 for a family and \$37,234 and \$20,686 for males and females, respectively.

While this would seem like encouraging news, poverty is also a significant issue for Delta. Low income households are defined as those families whose low income will force them to devote a larger share of their income on necessities than the average family. In Delta 8.7% of the population are considered "low income" and 1.8% of the total population is receiving Income Assistance Benefits (3.4% of the child and youth population are receiving such benefits).



Education Characteristics:

In addition to boasting a strong family structure, Delta also boasts a large proportion of residents aged 20 and over who are high school graduates and residents with at least some college, university and university degrees.

THE DELTA SCHOOL DISTRICT:

Just under 16,400 students attend the 33 public schools in Delta. This group is composed of about 9,100 children in 26 elementary schools and 7,200 students in seven secondary schools. Included in these demographics are 2,000 Special Needs, 480 Aboriginal, 1,700 French Immersion, 180 Alternate Education and about 250 International students. The District has faced the challenge of declining enrolment for the past several years and our numbers are down approximately 108 students from last year. This decline in enrolment is expected to continue for the next decade.

The success of any literacy plan will depend largely on local schools. Therefore, statistics from School District 37 regarding early child development, provincial assessments, and graduation results are important when considering community literacy.

According to EDI (Early Development Instrument) data, there are considerable differences in vulnerability between neighborhoods in Delta which indicates a need to concentrate services in particular areas. This information is being used to determine where to place Strong Start programs within the district. In the 2007 EDI report, district wide, 10.7% of children were deemed to be vulnerable in Language and Cognitive Development and 14.6% in Communication Skills and General Knowledge.

Provincial data shows that a fairly small proportion of Delta students in grades 4 and 7 are below standard in Writing (about 6.3%) but a larger proportion are below standard in Reading and Math (17.4% and 10.6%, respectively). Provincial exam results show that

11% of grade 10 students were not meeting expectations in English. Delta is one of the top four School Districts in terms of graduation rates and boasts a graduation rate of 89% for all students which is 10% higher than the provincial average (79%). In addition, 60% of aboriginal students and 87% of ESL students graduate which again are both higher than their respective provincial averages of 47% and 82%.

Delta is a close-knit and prosperous community that has the family infrastructure and other successes in place that are well-positioning it to be a literacy success. However, the fact that the community is made up of three geographically and culturally distinct areas presents challenges in terms of providing access to key literacy opportunities. The compilation of these community profiles in partnership with an exhaustive consultation process with key stakeholders in Delta will allow for literacy gaps to be identified and addressed in focused and targeted ways that could yield significant, positive results for the community of Delta.

CONSULTATION: HOW CAN/DO WE WORK TOGETHER?

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND FORMING PARTNERSHIPS:

In 2007, a group of citizens and organizations in Delta came together to begin the development of a Community Literacy Plan to define priorities and guide future programs and services in this area. The Delta Literacy Plan outlined in this document was developed through a collaborative approach that solicited feedback from citizens and organizations in Delta through a variety of means. This plan is a living document and should be evaluated on a regular basis. Members of this committee represent the following literacy stakeholder groups:

- Delta Public Library
- Delta Chamber of Commerce
- Deltassist
- Delta Parent Advisory Council
- Delta School District
- Boys and Girls Club
- Delta Arts Council
- Surrey/Delta Immigrant Society
- Rotary International

History:

In January 2007, a Launch meeting was held for Delta Literacy Now which served to introduce the Literacy Now concept and planning guidelines. A carousel activity was carried out at this meeting and brainstorming around a community literacy vision, strengths and possible future goals were mapped out. Key highlights from this activity included:

1. How would we like our community to be different five years from now?

- To have all children “ready” for school
- More parent support for children with disabilities
- Hub-like community schools with multi-services for families
- Literacy support for immigrant/non-English speaking families

2. What are you proud of as a member of the Delta community?

- Delta District Resource Centre
- Strong focus on literacy in schools
- SkillsLink – work & learn program
- Many different cultures active in community literacy, ie. Family resource centers
- District programs – Ready Set Learn, Books for Babies, Noisy Reading, Drop Everything and Read, Guys' Night Out, Mother Goose, Kindergarten Readiness

3. In your opinion, what are the areas of need, or gaps, in regards to literacy in the Delta community?

- Recognition of & programs that develop a connection between activity/gross motor development & language development
- Reaching out to our multicultural community & First nations community
- Recognition of need for literacy for those students who will enter workforce

4. How can we expand choices for literacy and life-long learning for people of all ages?

- Trained teacher-librarians better utilized in schools
- Collaborative work with groups
- Parents must be included/motivated to become an important part of the solution
- Have a Literacy Coordinator for the community

A number of findings from this meeting served as foundational elements for the development of the Delta Literacy Plan.

Following the initial January 2007 meeting, a meeting was held in February 2007 where Delta Literacy Now committee members undertook a brainstorming activity to capture current literacy assets in Delta. These literacy assets also served as foundational elements for development of the Literacy Inventory and Directory. From this collection of assets, it was clear that there were a number of groups who were already striving to integrate literacy best practices and programs into the community of Delta. Subsequent meetings were also held in September and December 2007 (with a Literacy Planning Facilitator hired in November 2007) to assist with initiating the community consultation and literacy plan development phase.

Methodology:

A Literacy Planning Facilitator was hired in November 2007 to compile community based statistics and information in order to guide the development of a community literacy plan for Delta. The development of this plan was guided by a number of goals:

- Research and presentation of the current demographic face of Delta
- Development of a Literacy Vision for Delta
- Compilation of current programs, services and other literacy assets in Delta
- A comprehensive community consultation around potential literacy issues and strategies in Delta
- A compilation of best practices and assets (within Delta and in other communities)

In order to achieve all of the goals listed above, a multi-pronged methodology was undertaken which included: online research and a brief literature review for compilation of the Delta Community Profile and phone and email based research in order to develop a

current literacy inventory for Delta. To achieve adequate input from the community of Delta for the literacy plan, a community consultation was implemented which included the development of an online survey, key informant interviews and brief consultations with community groups. Input for the Delta Literacy Plan through the community consultation included:

- 80 responses to the online survey
- 16 Key Informant Interviews with Delta residents and employees
- A focus group with parents at the George Mackie Library

What does Literacy mean to Delta?

In order to develop a community literacy plan for Delta, there needs to be an understanding of what literacy actually means to Delta. Within both the online survey and key informant interviews, respondents were asked to provide input on their definition of Literacy and what they believed were the main priorities for Literacy in Delta.

What does literacy mean to you?

Overall, the majority of respondents of the online survey felt strongly that having literacy competence would assist those in Delta with success in all life endeavors through providing them with the ability to communicate and function in society as a literate citizen. In addition, a number of respondents mentioned the conventional definitions of Literacy such as reading, writing and comprehension. Some respondents linked Literacy to the social literacy competencies such as the "ability to read ones prescription, road signs and being able to function in ones community" in addition to "having the essential skills to obtain and keep a job and function independently".

A collection of quotes from the online survey:

"Literacy means everything! Knowledge about self, society and the world; enjoyment of other realms; being able to "find out"; informed; knowledgeable; an enriched life and environment; the "magic" of books; the wonder of the internet; the information of the world"

"Literacy – letters, numbers, music, play and communication. Literacy means opening the door to opportunities, promoting self-esteem, and providing the literacy tools to cope in an ever challenging and changing society. Literacy also means never having to live in the shadows of others because you do not have the skill sets needed to live a fulfilling life."

"Beyond being able to read and write, as these are rights that are available to Canadians; also, to be informed about matters that involve day-to-day living such as driving, banking, nutrition; government concerns; or just pursuing what one might be interested in"

"Literacy is vital to our children's success and they are our future"

"The ability to read and write in a language, and when in Canada, the English and or French Language"

Literacy Priorities:

Key informant interview participants were asked to give input on what they believed were the main literacy priorities for Delta. Key themes that came out strongly as literacy priorities are listed below:

- Reaching the hard to reach families in the pursuit of a literate Delta
- Having funding to expand and enhance current successful literacy programs
- Education around the importance of a literacy foundation that begins at the infant stage. Early learning readers should develop a love for/ interest in reading
- Meeting the needs of those who fall through the cracks and continually lack in developing literacy skills
- Continuing to expand the possibility of literacy for all (from the early childhood set to those with special needs)
- Supporting adults to help children and in their own literacy needs through increasing the involvement and education of parents in supporting literacy/ home reading programs and initiatives in both the home and school setting.
- Strengthening school, community and library partnerships and continuing to collaborate and work together.
- Working to meet the needs of the various cultural groups (e.g. new immigrants and First Nations) that comprise Delta in culturally relevant and meaningful ways.
- Delta should establish itself as a literate community (make it a goal in municipal and community plans)
- Finding ways to link the seniors and child/ youth communities through literacy

ALIGNMENT: WHERE DOES THIS FIT?

WITH THE DISTRICT ACHIEVEMENT CONTRACT:

Delta School District's top priority, as outlined in the Achievement Contract, is "To raise the achievement of academically *at-risk* students in reading and mathematics."

Specific objectives have been set to address *at-risk* male students, *at-risk* Aboriginal students, *at-risk* students with Special Needs, and *at-risk* ESL students.

Actions taken by the School District to support this goal are outlined in the Achievement Contract and include:

- Providing LST (Learning Support Team) FTE based on student need rather than student numbers
- Placing Strong Start programs in schools with the largest number of *at-risk* students according to EDI data
- Having 25 elementary and 4 secondary schools with an identified literacy goal
- Providing each school with an *At-Risk* Student List at the beginning of the year to encourage targeted interventions through the LST
- Providing a 3 member Literacy Support Team at the District level dedicated to leading literacy initiatives in schools
- Having a District Literacy Committee (formed in March 2006) to develop a Literacy Handbook on best practices and current research
- Implementing a School Based Literacy Coaching program, supported by the Literacy Innovations Grant, to increase school capacity to improve literacy achievement (19 elementary schools; 3 secondary schools currently involved)
- Providing a one on one Reading Intervention Program for 'At Risk' Grade one students in 8 elementary schools

WITH THE COMMUNITY LITERACY PLAN:

The main goals outlined in Delta’s District Literacy Plan are closely aligned with the literacy priorities outlined in the Community Plan. Continuing to expand the possibility of “Literacy for All” is a key aspect of both plans.

| District Literacy Plan | Community Literacy Plan |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Learning Goal: to increase opportunities for & access to early learning/ literacy experiences in schools & in the community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building a literacy foundation that begins at the infant stage • Expanding and enhancing current successful literacy programs |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K-12 Goal: to give all students the strategies they need to become literate citizens | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting the needs of those who fall through the cracks and lack in literacy skills • Developing a love for/interest in reading |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult Goal: to improve communication to adult learners regarding literacy opportunities so that existing programs are fully utilized | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting adults in their literacy needs so they can help their children • Reaching the “hard to reach” in pursuit of a literate Delta |

WITH THE ABORIGINAL EDUCATION ENHANCEMENT AGREEMENT:

The Aboriginal Objectives outlined in the District Literacy Plan are closely aligned with the goals stated in the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement that was signed on May 24, 2005. The objectives reflect our commitment to improve outcomes for our Aboriginal students.

| District Literacy Plan | AEEA |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Literacy Objective: to contact Aboriginal families to determine their needs/desires for their preschoolers & identify barriers to accessing existing programs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve literacy skills in K & Grade 1 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K-12 Literacy Objective: to identify & remove barriers to success for Aboriginal students in the development of literacy skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve literacy skills in intermediate grades • To improve students performance & participation in provincial exams • To improve transition rates from grade to grade |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult Literacy Objective: to determine through direct contact with Aboriginal adults the kinds of adult literacy programs that would best meet their needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve the graduation rates for Aboriginal students |

EARLY LITERACY

GOAL: To increase opportunities and accessibility for early learning and early literacy experiences, in the schools and in the community.

RATIONALE: We know that the early years are crucial to future learning success. By partnering with parents and caregivers to create a multitude of opportunities for early learners, the community can enhance children's success upon entering Kindergarten..

| Objectives | Actions | Partnerships | Indicators of Success |
|---|--|---|---|
| 1. To help preschool children develop the skills necessary to transition successfully into the school system. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the two existing StrongStart centres • Establish three more StrongStart sites for 2008-09, if approved. • Maintain and expand the existing programs for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ready, Set, Learn • Starting with Stories • Kindergarten Readiness Program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boys and Girls Club of Delta • Public libraries • Ministry of Education • Home/school partnerships • Delta ECD committee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDI evaluation • Monitor participation in early learning programs • Reduction in the number of Kindergarten students approaching expectations on the June report card |
| 2. To support parents and families in providing their children with early learning and early literacy experiences. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcoming families into the school community through programs such as Ready, Set, Learn, Starting with Stories and StrongStart. • Working with multicultural and SWIS workers to help promote awareness of early learning opportunities. • Providing parents with information on how to read to children, the importance of early learning experiences, and resources and activities to share with their children. • Encouraging literacy development among parents and caregivers through Adult Education programs. Attracting hard-to-reach families to school and community programs. • Attracting hard-to-reach families to school and community programs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home/school partnerships • Public and school libraries • SWIS and multicultural workers • Boys and Girls Club • Delta ECD committee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor participation in early learning programs • EDI evaluation |
| 3. To contact Aboriginal families to determine their needs/desires for their preschoolers & identify barriers to accessing existing programs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locate a new Strong Start program in Ladner Elementary, a school attended by TFN children • Work through Aboriginal Support Workers to determine the needs/desires of Aboriginal families & to identify barriers to accessing existing programs • Work on removing some of the identified barriers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TFN contact • Aboriginal Support Workers • Special Programs Branch, Delta SD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased participation of Aboriginal families in early learning programs |

KINDERGARTEN – GRADE 12 LITERACY

GOAL: To give all students the strategies they need to become literate citizens.

RATIONALE: Our district report card data indicates that we have 31% of students in grade 1 *at risk* and at grade 7 we have 14% *at risk*. There is a jump to 21% in grade 9. We believe that if we can identify students early and provide extra support in literacy, we will have fewer students who are considered *at risk* at the intermediate and secondary level.

| Objectives | Actions | Partnerships | Indicators of Success |
|--|---|--|---|
| 1. Primary: To identify primary students who are <i>at risk</i> for acquiring literacy skills and intervene as soon as possible. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement an early intervention program at the Gr. 1 level in 8 schools with high numbers of <i>at risk</i> students. • Explore literacy assessment tools at the K/1 level • Maximize Early Learning Initiatives to promote readiness for school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindergarten Readiness • Strong Start • Ready Set Learn • Starting with Stories | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boys and Girls Club of Delta • Public libraries • Ministry of Education • Home/school partnerships | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To decrease the number of students not yet meeting expectations in reading, writing and oral language as indicated on year-end report cards |
| 2. Intermediate/secondary: to strengthen the literacy achievement of students so that they are better equipped to meet the increasing demands of reading to learn. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work through Literacy Coaches that are in most elementary and 3 secondary schools to strengthen teaching and learning capacity in the area of assessment and instruction. • Make use of “Soar to Success” blocks, set up in some secondary schools for struggling readers. • Continue with a District professional development focus on differentiated instruction and specific reading comprehension strategies (Adrienne Gear) to help students better understand more complex text. • Encourage more schools to participate in the public library’s “Reading Link Challenge” & Book Clubs in elementary schools • Work through school based LST to monitor identified <i>at risk</i> students in literacy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home/school partnerships • Public libraries • Ministry of Education • District Literacy Team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce the percentage of students receiving C- in Language Arts |
| 3. To identify & remove barriers to Aboriginal students’ literacy success. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with Special Programs, Aboriginal Support Workers, & LSTs regarding Aboriginal Student learning needs. • Continue to provide Aboriginal grants for “At Risk” Aboriginal students. • Continue to track “At Risk” Aboriginal student progress in literacy at the school level • Conduct inservice on “The Aboriginal Kids in my Class” document throughout the District. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TFN contacts • Aboriginal Support Workers • Special Programs Branch, Delta SD • School based Learning Support Teams | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicators of success are outlined in the AEEA |

ADULT LITERACY

GOAL: To improve the communication to Adult Learners regarding Literacy opportunities so that the existing programs we offer are fully utilized.

RATIONALE: Feedback from the community indicated that Adult Learners are not necessarily aware of the programs available for them.

| Objectives | Actions | Partnerships | Indicators of Success |
|---|---|---|--|
| 1. To provide more information to new Canadians regarding literacy skill development opportunities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and disseminate a brochure that is relevant for adults new to Canada. Track inquires, advising appointments, and E-mails, registration. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Settlement workers • Libraries • Delta Parks & Recreation • Senior Centres • ELSA Coordinator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased inquires • Increased requests for appointments • Increased registration |
| 2. To provide caregivers who attend early learning programs (Strong Start, Ready Set Learn, Starting with Stories) with information regarding literacy skills development opportunities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a brochure to give (in person through our Early Learning staff) to parents and other caregivers of children in our early learning programs. Track program inquires (phone calls, E-mail, registrations). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong Start Staff • Early Learning Coordinator • Boys & Girls Club | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased inquires • Increased requests for appointments • Increased registration |
| 3. To increase our understanding, through direct contact with Aboriginal Adults, of the kinds of Adult Literacy Programs that would best meet their learning needs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Aboriginal Adults in person to hear their ideas and identify their needs and wants. • Create a list of possible programming options. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TFN contacts • Aboriginal Support Workers • Special Programs Branch, Delta | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data indicating what Aboriginal Adult Learners need and want • Able to plan programs relevant to Aboriginal Adult Learners |
| 4. To better communicate the tuition free, BC Education Guarantee opportunities made available by the Ministry of Education to all Adult Learners. This would include information regarding academic courses and graduation diploma programs available for both non-graduated and graduated adults. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-develop our fall course catalogue to reflect new opportunities available to adult learners. • Track inquiries, advising appointments, and registrations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary School Counsellors • Delta Job Finding Club • Libraries • Delta Parks & Recreation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased inquiries • Increased requests for academic advising appointments • Increased enrollment in high school completion and academic upgrading • Increased number of students receiving their grade 12 diploma • Increased number of students achieving post secondary requirements |

PROCESS FOR APPROVAL

The Delta Literacy Plan was developed by the Delta School District Literacy Team in consultation with the Literacy Now Community Team. The District Literacy Plan will be formally approved at the June meeting of the Board of Education and submitted to the Ministry of Education by July 15, 2008.