

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DISTRICT LITERACY PLAN **Submitted by SD38 (Richmond)** **July 15, 2009**

Background

The community of Richmond is well-poised to help all residents meet their literacy potential. This is a community that has an extremely diverse make-up, a plethora of accessible literacy programs and services and a number of key organizations and other stakeholders who are keen to move the literacy agenda forward.

A number of key priorities arose from the consultation strategy, from which our Community Literacy Plan was developed, which will hopefully help Richmond to meet their literacy goals in a sustainable and holistic manner.

Our consultative process was many-pronged. The original Task Force began meeting in April of 2007 and consisted of representatives from the Richmond Public Library, the Food Bank, the Health Department, SUCCESS, the Richmond School District, Touchstone Family Services, Kwantlen University, Richmond Children First, Strong Starts, Richmond Sunrise Rotary Club, SWIS workers 2010 Legacies Now and Big Sisters. This committee met approximately every second month with close to 100% attendance.

A "Taste of Literacy" was held in May of 2008 to showcase community literacy initiatives and invite input. This event was attended by members of government (provincial and local), Women's Resource Centre, Family Place and Adult Education as well as all members of the Task Force and the general public. An online survey was used to gather information about current programs and initiatives which promoted literacy in the community from which a data base was created. Other aspects of consultation were Key Informant Interviews, focus groups, topical surveys and a public dialogue.

In May, 2009, our Literacy Plan was presented to a much larger group of service providers which included as well as the Task Force, the Women's Resource Centre, Immigrant Services Society, Family Place, Volunteer Richmond, Richmond City Hall, and CUPE. Each attendee was given the opportunity to view and select what would be the top three priorities from our Plan, for the group(s) of people they serve.

Priorities

The three priorities are (in order):

- Connect with recent immigrants to provide information and resources on literacy initiatives and services within our community.
- Increase access to literacy initiatives and services for the "hard-to-reach" populations.
- Increase the literacy levels of entry level workers in Richmond and increase the capacity of workplaces to provide literacy resources and opportunities.

All participants were attending in their professional capacity or as volunteers and there has not been any funding except for that provided by 2010 Legacies Now which allowed us to hire a consultant for most of the data-gathering process and generating of the report with input from all committee members. We have received a second grant from 2010 Legacies and have hired a Literacy Outreach Coordinator to implement our plan.

Action Plan

During the year's duration of the Literacy Outreach Coordinator's position, she will address the three priorities in order.

- Connect with recent immigrants to provide information and resources on literacy initiatives and services within our community. Actions will include:
 1. Provide books to new immigrant families (similar to how books are provided to new BC babies).
 2. Strengthen partnerships with organizations like SUCCESS to integrate literacy into ESL and other programs.
 3. Explore the opportunity to increase ESL classes (through funding opportunities) for the community.
 4. Work with the school district and SWIS workers to promote "positive reading experiences" to new immigrant families.
 5. Develop and disseminate information on Canadian Cultural Literacy to new immigrants (through organizations such as SUCCESS) in English and translated versions.
 6. Work with programs frequented by new immigrants eg. Community Kitchens, the Food Bank, etc. to facilitate the promotion of literacy programs and services available in Richmond.

- Increase access to literacy initiatives and services for the "hard-to-reach" populations. Actions will include:
 1. Promote literacy programs and services at common areas frequented by all adults such as grocery stores, religious centers, the Food Bank, malls, community centres, banks, etc.
 2. Work with the school sector to provide literacy information, workshops and other educational services to parents and families.
 3. Ensure sharing and information flow between organizations who provide literacy programs and those who serve "vulnerable" populations so that clients can be referred to programs when needed.
 4. The Literacy Centre (which we hope to establish in a Neighbourhood of Learning), will be promoted as a safe and non-judgmental place for individuals to access literacy services.
 5. The Literacy Centre/Outreach Coordinator should partner with the food bank and other service organizations to access and support vulnerable families.

- Increase the literacy levels of entry level workers in Richmond and increase the capacity of workplaces to provide literacy resources and opportunities. Actions will include:
 1. Provide resources to workplaces on how to provide public speaking and leadership training to employees.
 2. Educate employees through a public education campaign, on the importance of gaining literacy skills in terms of what the literacy skills could mean to their employment and/or job advancement.
 3. Explore the possibility of partnering with the Richmond Chamber of Commerce to promote workplace literacy and resources to all members.