



**Coast Mountains Board of Education
(School District No. 82)**

**District Literacy Plan
July 15th, 2009**

2009 - 2010

REGIONAL, COMMUNITY AND DISTRICT CONTEXT - 2009/10

Coast Mountains School District (CMSD) is located in the northwest of British Columbia. The surrounding school districts are Prince Rupert, Nisga'a, and the Bulkley Valley. CMSD, however, is unlike its neighbouring districts in that it covers a large and diverse geographical area. CMSD includes the communities of Terrace, Thornhill, Kitimat, Kitwanga, Stewart, and the Hazeltons. The school board office is located in Terrace with Kitimat a forty-five minute drive from the office, Kitwanga one hour, the Hazeltons one and a half hours, and Stewart three and a half hours.

Coast Mountains School District encompasses the traditional territories of three Aboriginal Nations: the Haisla, the Gitksan, and the Tsimshian. The Haisla Nation is centered in Kitamaat Village. The Tsimshian Nation has three distinct communities in the Terrace and Thornhill areas. The Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en Nation of the Hazelton area is made up of a large number of band communities that range from Gitanyow and Gitwangak through the Hazelton communities, and on up the Kispiox Valley.

The communities of Terrace, Thornhill, Kitimat and Hazelton have a number of independent schools as well. In Terrace, there is also a Friendship Centre that runs Early Learning and Literacy programs. Most of the Aboriginal communities/villages have a variety of Early Learning programs as well. Throughout this region there are also programs available to young adults and the communities at large through the Northwest Community College and the University of Northern British Columbia.

The Northwest region continues to be affected by a continuing serious economic recession. This has resulted in families having to relocate to other parts of the province. It has also left many families who cannot afford to relocate with the major breadwinner having to leave the community to find work; this leaves the remaining parent to raise the children without that ongoing support. This has had a significant effect on some of our families and communities. However, despite difficult economic times, many families have committed to staying here as long as possible.

Coast Mountains School District serves a student population of approximately 5050 students in twenty-two schools: three primary, eight K-7 schools, three intermediate 4-7 schools, two grade 8-10 junior secondary schools, two grade 8-12 secondary schools, one grade 11-12 secondary school, one K-12 school, and two alternate un-graded secondary schools. As we continue to experience continuing declining enrolment, we struggle to balance our facilities usage and financial pressures with loyalty and allegiance to the need for community-based schools. We have reconfigured one set of Primary and Intermediate dual-track French Immersion schools into two single-track K-7 schools for the coming year. We also continue to plan and consult on a number of potential facility configurations and closures to take place over the next three years.

CMUSD currently employs approximately 850 people, making us a significant employer in most of our communities. The operating budget for the upcoming year is approximately \$54 million. Significantly, CMUSD has chosen to operate on a Four-Day School Week for the last five years as a means of effecting financial savings. Equally significantly, over the last couple of years, we have gained efficiencies in other areas and are able to make a return to the Standard School Calendar for the 2009-10 school year.

Approximately 38% of our student population is of Aboriginal ancestry. Although the overall student enrollment has declined in the District, the Aboriginal student population has increased each year. The School District has a Local Education Agreement with the three major nations of the area. The District does not yet have an Enhancement Agreement.

Although the District is small in population, a wide variety of educational opportunities exist for students enrolled in both alternate and regular programs. French Immersion is currently offered in each of our communities of Terrace, Kitimat and Hazelton. The District has a high quality music program with students winning awards both provincially and nationally. There are strong curricular and extra-curricular programs in both Fine Arts and Athletics throughout the District. An area where there is much work to do is developing culture and language goals within our distinct communities throughout the district.

CONNECTIONS – BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND PARTNERSHIPS – 2009/10

Community literacy planning is no longer new to Coast Mountains School District. We now have formal partnerships and structures in every community. We have Community Literacy Committees in each of our three major communities that are headed and coordinated by the Outreach Literacy Coordinators; a school principal and/or district staff member participates in each of these committees. The process of producing a District Literacy Plan is basically completed in all three communities, and the Outreach Literacy Coordinators will be submitting their reports and the plans in September. Being a partner in this process has given our School District the opportunity to engage in community literacy planning and activities that, prior to this time, we were not using. It has had a positive affect on community relationships. Having a voice at the Community Literacy Planning tables has strengthened the partnerships that were informally there and has given way for formal partnerships that will benefit all learners.

GOAL ALIGNMENT – 2009/10

Our District Achievement Contract includes Literacy as a focus. Our Contract for 2009/10 includes Literacy goals, objectives, and actions, including strategies and structures for reaching our most vulnerable learners. One of our four goals in the Achievement Contract is "... that all students will be able to "read to learn" at the end of their Primary Program years (Grade 3)."

A major area of community literacy planning has been to build and strengthen relationships through collaborative work with community partners. Last year this work made significant progress in Hazelton and Kitimat, and this year tremendous growth has occurred in Terrace. There are many areas within the community where viable partnerships already exist. Building on these partnerships is work that will continue and grow in the coming year.

STRENGTHS AND ASSETS OF OUR COMMUNITIES – 2009/10

We continue to work individually with our three major communities; Terrace, Kitimat and Hazelton. Each of these communities now has a strong Literacy group that has met and developed community plans. Community plans will be in place in all three communities by this September. Coast Mountains School District has had a seat at each of these community tables.

CHALLENGES OF COMMUNITY LITERACY PLANNING – 2009/10

As stated in last year's report/plan, our most challenging element of community literacy planning in Coast Mountains School District is the many diverse communities that it serves.

The planning and implementation of one Community Literacy Plan that includes, or engages all of the communities within the boundaries of our school district continues to be an enormous challenge. This year, our District Committee, consisting of the Outreach Literacy Coordinators and District representatives from each community along with District Staff, met to discuss this issue three times. As community partners/planners working in the area of Literacy, we wonder about the practicality of such a venture! In spite of our concerns, though, we have found our sessions together to be informative and of real value in terms of discussing the programs and partnerships that we have in our various communities. While we have only met as a District-wide Committee three times this year, it would be fair to say that our sessions together have become a 'touchstone' where we can share our beliefs, our plans, our successes and failures very openly and freely.

NEXT STEPS 2009/10

A reduction in our District Staff this past year, along with changed priorities, resulted in us reconsidering and delaying our “Next Steps” as identified in the 2008/09 plan. In light of this, our “Next Steps” have been moved forward to the 2009/10 year!

“Our next step is to plan District-wide Community Forums for next year. These Forums need to be once or twice a year in each of our three main communities. The focus must be on learning – learning for all. We could work together with the community members that are engaged in this work and have an evening where we all get to share the work we are engaged in with our various communities.

The planning will look different in each of our communities. Moving from where we are to action will depend on where each community is in the process.”

PRESENTED TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICT 82:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rob Greenwood", written over a horizontal line.

Rob Greenwood
Superintendent

A handwritten date in blue ink, "July 11, 2009", written over a horizontal line.

Date