

2012 – 2013

Community Literacy

Plan

Implementation Report

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Victoria Literacy Task Group

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*“To build vibrant and resilient communities by leveraging literacy
and learning opportunities”*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
District Context	3
• Demographic Data	
Community Literacy Plan	
• History 2006 - 2013	4
• Community Context	5
• Task Group	6
• Community Development and Literacy Collaboration	7
• Goals and Actions for 2012-2013	8
• Indications of Success	12
• Challenges	18
• Plans for 2013 - 2014	18
Appendices	
• Appendix A: Terms of Reference	21

INTRODUCTION

The Greater Victoria School District and its community partners enjoy a respectful and highly interactive relationship. The Community Literacy Plan serves as a wonderful example of how when various groups come together for a common cause and higher purpose, positive outcomes occur. We are pleased with the progress made to date.

DISTRICT CONTEXT

Demographic Data

The Greater Victoria School District serves students from the municipalities of Saanich, Esquimalt, View Royal, Oak Bay, the Highlands, the City of Victoria, and the following Nations and Aboriginal organizations: Esquimalt Nation; Songhees Nation; Métis Community Services; Métis Nation of Greater Victoria; Victoria Native Friendship Centre; Indigenous Interagency Team; Surrounded by Cedar Child & Family Service; and Hulitan Social Services Society. Schools draw from urban, semi-urban, and suburban areas. Five MLAs represent the Greater Victoria area. As of July 2011, BC Stats reports a total of 102,613 private households in the Greater Victoria School District with approximately 223,488 people residing within the School District.

Students come from diverse socio-economic levels with 23 schools qualifying for CommunityLINK (Learning Includes Nutrition and Knowledge) funding. Of the families living in the Greater Victoria School District, 16.39% are considered to be low income.

Enrolment 2012-2013

We enrolled:

- 8144 FTE Kindergarten through Grade 5 students
- 3874 FTE Grade 6 through Grade 8 students
- 6380 FTE Grade 9 through Grade 12 students
- 94 FTE Adult Students

Included in the above enrolment are the following students:

- 1573 Aboriginal ancestry students
- 686 International students
- 11 Home-school students
- 714 Students registered in Distributed Learning Programs
- 1660 Students with English as a Second Language or English as a Second Dialect
- 3272 Early French Immersion students
- 206 Late French Immersion students
- 2160 Students designated for Special Education Services

COMMUNITY LITERACY PLAN

History 2006 - 2013

In **2006**, Camosun College hosted a forum of literacy educators, service agencies, school districts, and temporary regional literacy coordinators to discuss regional literacy needs on south Vancouver Island. A subgroup met to identify gaps and priorities and became the Regional Literacy Advisory group (RLAG).

In **2007**, British Columbia School Districts were mandated by the Ministry of Education to create a community literacy plan that would be revised and submitted on an annual basis in July of each year. The Ministry of Education provided a Vancouver Island School District orientation to the new district literacy planning process where Island School Districts and Regional Literacy Coordinators discussed beginning plans for community collaboration. Twelve draft district literacy plans were submitted to the Ministry of Education and were available as a resource to other school districts. The Greater Victoria School District received \$10,000 in provincial funding to create a Community District Literacy Plan.

In **2008**, an orientation to the literacy planning guidelines was provided to all provincial school districts. Districts were encouraged to proceed at a pace set by the community. The Greater Victoria School District met with RLAG to discuss potential processes for developing the Community Literacy Plan. A successful funding application for \$20,000 was submitted by the RLC (Regional Literacy Committee.) This request was submitted by Literacy Victoria as steward of the funds. The RLC held several roundtable meetings, the primary purpose of which was to inform the community about this regional planning initiative and request participation on the Steering Committee and/or availability for tasks and resources for the initiative. Subsequently a Community Literacy Planning Steering Committee was formed and terms of a literacy coordinator contract complete with deliverables and timelines was completed. The deliverables included a review of the literacy planning process and the development of templates that would lead to the creation of a community profile and an asset/inventory data source list. By July 2008 the community profiles for Victoria, Esquimalt, View Royal and Oak Bay were completed. Between September and December of that same year the community engagement process was implemented. This involved Focus group meetings, individual consultations and community forums. A report on the findings incorporating all data was submitted for consideration to the RLC.

In **2009/2010**, the aforementioned report was edited, and submitted to Legacies Now. \$30,000 funding was secured to hire a Literacy Outreach Coordinator and an additional \$40,000 funding intended to support the goals of the District Community Literacy Plan was confirmed. With active input from the Task Group and the Management Group goals were then prioritized for action. Goals were as follows:

1. Provide support for Persons with Disabilities.
2. Literacy Support for vulnerable populations, which include those living in poverty, those involved with the justice system, those with mental health issues, women in shelters, those who are homeless.
3. Support for youth (15-18 years) who have dropped out of school or youth (19-24) who are out of school with a high school diploma but are not working or involved in continuing education.

In **2010**, the following projects were funded for 2010-11:

- Victoria Disability Resource Centre: Scribe Services – Goal 1
- Together Against Poverty Society: Tenancy Advocacy Project – Goal 2
- Literacy Victoria: Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre (VIRCC) Literacy Pilot Project - Goal 2
- Victoria READ Society with Boys and Girls Club: Building Learning Bridges - Goal 3

In **2011**, the following projects were funded for 2011-12:

- Victoria Disability Resource Centre: Scribe Services - Goal 1
- Together Against Poverty Society: Tenancy Advocacy Project - Goal 2
- Literacy Victoria: Digital Literacy Resources Project - Goal 2
- Victoria READ Society: Building Learning Bridges - Goal 3
- Centre for Youth and Society: “Now What”: Literacy and Youth in Custody project - Goal 3

In 2011, the Literacy Task Group received \$40,000 from 2010 Legacies Now for Year 2 of the Community Literacy Plan Implementation, as well as \$35,000 for the Literacy Outreach Coordinator (LOC) position. Also in 2011, Literacy BC and 2010 Legacies Now merged to become 'Decoda Literacy Solutions', whose mission is "to build vibrant and resilient communities by leveraging literacy and learning opportunities".

In **2012**, the Task Group received \$40,000 for Year 3 implementation, as well as \$30,000 for LOC position funding. Five literacy projects were funded and implemented in 2012-2013.

- Together Against Poverty Society: Wrongful Dismissal Advocacy
- Literacy Victoria: Outreach Tutoring
- Victoria READ Society: Outreach
- Capital Mental Health Association: Support for Adult Literacy Upgrading
- Victoria Disability Resource Centre: Scribe Services

The Task Group meets quarterly and was open to new members for 2012-13.

The project website is www.learnnowvictoria.com.

Community Context

What has happened in the community over the past year that impacts people in the community and the ability of organizations to support literacy development?

Input from Task Group Organizations and Literacy Outreach Coordinator:

1. The Greater Victoria Public Library (GVPL) adapted their existing budget to ensure free Internet access remained in place when federal funding for the service was reduced. Free or low-cost internet had been provided by libraries and other facilities by the Canada-wide Community Access Program (CAP) since 1995. Although the CAP funding was discontinued at the end of March 2012, GVPL maintained the same level of Internet access despite the funding loss so that people in the community, including those with limited means and students, would have free Internet service.
2. Task Group members report that the Ministry of Community and Family Development and the

Ministry of Housing and Social Development funding reductions resulted in reduced social supports and family services. Several Task Group members observe that there is an increasing need to support people with mental health and other social issues, and an increasing reliance on staff and services, and they report that there is a greater need for counselors, including support for clients dealing with trauma. Agencies must provide trauma training for staff, as there are no other supports. The focus in funding shifted from intervention to prevention and this includes support for Aboriginal services.

3. Task Group members observe that there is a lack of community support services for vulnerable youth, and thus resulting in the need for greater outreach to youth. These agencies report that they see an increase in the number of children impacted by social issues.

4. The closure of Community Access Program (CAP) sites is a loss to citizens who need access to computers. This change results in greater numbers of people coming to agencies, who would have previously used CAP sites.

5. At this time, many Task Group members see provincial reemployment initiatives to have a greater funding focus than adult literacy initiatives.

6. Non-profit agencies see a high staff turnover in non-profits and wages as a factor.

7. Agencies have had to be more innovative and creative, and collaborations have increased.

8. Learning Disabilities Association: The Learning Disabilities Association reports an increase in referrals for additional support for students, particularly as an outside agency in conjunction with requesting extra behavioral support. Hence, there is an increase in referrals from schools, social services and mental health agencies.

Task Group

A. Who takes part in the Task Group?

The Task Group has the following organizations as active participants:

- Greater Victoria School District #61-(SD61)
- The Victoria READ Society
- Greater Victoria Public Library- (GVPL)
- Literacy Victoria- (LV)
- The Victoria Disability Resource Centre - (DRC)
- Together Against Poverty Society - (TAPS)
- The Learning Disabilities Association - (LDA)
- Camosun College
- Victoria Epilepsy and Parkinson's Society - (VEPS)
- Capital Mental Health Association - (CMHA)

B. How is the work of this group organized?

The Task Group (TG):

- Operates within the Terms of Reference developed by the Literacy Outreach Coordinator (LOC) and TG members
- Is open to community members and includes representatives from the social services and education sector
- Works with the LOC to identify and respond to gaps in literacy services and resources
- Makes decisions by consensus
- Determines the best use of implementation funding
- Membership, meetings, consultations and activities are organized by the LOC
- Meets on a quarterly basis, unless extra meetings are required
- Has the LOC as their the primary contact person

See Appendix A: Victoria Literacy Task Group Terms of Reference

Community Development and Literacy Collaboration

A. What are the important collaborations that have taken place to support literacy and the work of the Task Group? What are the essential ongoing collaborations?

Greater Victoria Public Library
Art Gallery of Greater Victoria
BC Black History Awareness Society Belfry Theatre
Community Arts Council of Greater Victoria
From the Heart Theatre Project Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria
Pacific Opera Victoria
Royal BC Museum Saanich Heritage Society
School Districts 61, 62 and 63
Success by 6
United Way
University of Victoria
Vancouver Island Health Authority
Victoria Symphony Orchestra
Victoria Immigrant & Refugee Society
1000x5

Collaboration Examples:

- Literacy Victoria (LV) is partnered with Aids Vancouver Island, CoolAid Health Clinic, and Pacifica Housing and Our Place.
- Greater Victoria School District #61 is partnered with: Victoria READ Society; Success by 6; 1000x5; Saanich Neighborhood House; Greater Victoria Public Libraries; Raise-A-Reader; Victoria Epilepsy and Parkinson's Society; Belfry Theatre; Victoria Symphony Orchestra, Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Society.
- In 2012-2013, the READ Society explored opportunities and offered programs in partnership with

organizations such as Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria, Greater Victoria Housing Society, GT Hiring Solutions, Surrounded by Cedar, School Districts #61, #62 and #63, Success by 6 and Vancouver Island Refugee Centre Society (VIRCS).

- Task Group members have shared information, resources and referrals.

B. What makes collaborations work well?

- Clear agreed upon Terms of Reference
- Highly organized process for meetings and follow-up activities (i.e. minutes)
- A genuine interest in the project and availability to participate at an effective level
- Members understand what is expected of them and how they can expect to benefit from participation
- Focus on the best decisions for the community and not letting personal work agendas interfere with the process
- Existing and potentially new members are well informed on the background and work of the project
- Creating realistic goals
- Members display mutual respect, understanding and trust
- People at all organizational level are encouraged to participate
- Flexibility and adaptability to factors that influence the progress of a project and TG membership

Goals and Actions for 2012-2013

A. What priorities, goals or objectives have you addressed this year?

The Task Group agreed to continue in 2012-13 with a focus on activities and initiatives that address the link between poverty and literacy issues:

- Increasing community awareness of literacy issues, programs and services
- Support agencies working with vulnerable populations (adults with low literacy, persons with disabilities, low income families)
- Identify and respond to issues and gaps in literacy programs and services
- Direct funding to agencies addressing priority needs

Overall Framework:

1. Increase links with community organizations and groups:
 - √ identified issues and gaps in services
 - √ identified potential partnerships for programs, including potential funding
 - √ facilitated resource sharing
 - √ promoted literacy programs and services
2. Develop and deliver information, including presentations, to organizations, networks and groups.
 - √ delivered 'Literacy 101' presentation to organizations, which included information on:
 - √ literacy and related issues
 - √ how to identify and respond to client literacy issues
 - √ where to refer clients for literacy support
 - √ introduction to Health Literacy

- √ introduction Financial Literacy
- √ plain language
- √ literacy resources

3. Support fundraising efforts of organizations offering literacy programs and support services:
 - √ researched funding sources, including local corporations and new technology tools (including social media)
 - √ disseminated information on funding opportunities and offered grant writing support
 - √ participated in fundraising networking events
4. Shaw TV-The Daily: Follow-up to segment on Family Literacy Day with feature stories on literacy and programs and services:
 - √ received support to promote literacy events i.e. Adult Literacy Week
 - √ produced a SHAW TV segment on literacy; interviewed Literacy Victoria, the Greater Victoria Public Library and Russell Books
5. Broaden the development and marketing of LNV website:
 - √ created and widely distributed website bookmarks
 - √ consulted with organizations regarding adding & updating program and service listings
 - √ sought a volunteer to assist with website technology (in-progress)
6. Times Colonist: Request promotion of literacy issues, programs and services, using and promoting plain language.
 - √ features stories on adult literacy and family literacy
 - √ promoted community programs and services
 - √ promoted website
7. Use Social Media to reach all populations with information on programs and services.
 - √ promoted programs, services, events, news and resources via Facebook and Twitter
8. Assist organizations offering literacy programs and services to increase their volunteer base, if required.
 - √ promoted volunteer opportunities via social media
9. Create a brochure on literacy programs and services.
 - √ TG decided to produce a bookmark instead of a brochure to list services
 - √ included www.learnnowvictoria.com website information

In addition to implementing the above priorities, the LOC manages a broad range of literacy plan activities including budget management, planning and coordination including:

- Day to day administration
- Meeting with many service providers and groups to promote project, services, programs and identify gaps in service
- Meetings with LOC's in Saanich, Sooke and Westshore
- Island meeting of LOC's and Decoda Literacy Solutions
- Advocacy for reinstatement of MOE funding to 55 communities and Literacy Outreach Coordinators
- Professional development via webinars; information to Task Group

- Research on health and financial literacy programs and resources
- Promotion of literacy related events via email & public relations
- Created partnership with SHAW TV
- Produced SHAW TV segment on literacy
- Maintained social media tools: (Facebook & Twitter)
- Research on literacy marketing tools used by national organizations
- Public relations promotion of literacy related events
- Shared coordination of ABC Life Literacy Money matters pilot program
- Grant writing workshops

Funded Projects 2012-13

Five projects were funded through Year 3 Implementation funding:

1. Together Against Poverty Society

Project: Advocacy for people dealing with wrongful dismissal and self-help kit (and related documents).

- ½ day per week of service
- promotion of service in community
- see TAPS report for details

2. Literacy Victoria

Project: A ‘tutors onsite’ pilot project including 1-1 tutoring in reading, writing, computers to support low wage workers. Partners include:

- Casual Labour Pool
- Inter-Cultural Association
- James Bay Community Project
- Mustard Seed
- Adults with low literacy and in poverty

3. Victoria READ Society

Projects:

a. Literacy and Numeracy Outreach to low income households, which was provided on-site at low income housing units

b. Outreach Programs:

- Noisy Readers Club: remedial support for vulnerable children in reading
- Preschool 0-3 years
- In school 5-10 years
- Children with English as a Second Language
- Grades 2-4

4. Capital Mental Health Association

Project: Adults 19-45 with mental health issues to support completion of upgrading and education
Contribution to Joan Dumca fund, which currently provides \$200 per person.

5. Victoria Disability Resource Centre (DRC)

Project: Scribe Services. Assists people with disabilities and low literacy skills to complete documents, forms etc.

Greater Victoria School District #61 Collaborations – not funded by Implementation Funds

- **Noisy Kids Reading Club**

The Noisy Kids Reading Club has worked in partnership with School District #61 for three years. In 2012-2013, READ significantly expanded program service locations. During the autumn of 2012, the program operated in four schools, two in School District #61 and two in School District #62. READ offered the same level of service in January - April, 2013. This after-school program serves children in Grades 2 and 3 who are not-yet-meeting or minimally-meeting grade level expectations in Language Arts, and who come from low income households. In a creative, active learning environment this program blends a remediation program using familiar reading, new reading, word study with Reader's Theatre, educational games and parent workshops. The invitation went to families whose children could benefit from extra literacy support and who would enjoy being part of something special. The program was designed to be fun and on more than one occasion groups of friends and siblings wanted to join.

- **Success by 6**

In 2010 - 2011, School District #61 worked with Success by 6 to implement the 1000x5 Children's Book Recycling Project. In October, 2011 the Board of Education passed a motion to continue "to be an active partner with Success by 6 and PLAY (Partnership, Learning and Advocacy for Young Children) and their initiatives in the development of literacy of infants and preschoolers." In May, 2013, Success by 6 awarded the District's Strong Start Centers with an Early Years Award for "Favourite Child/Family Friendly Community Program". The Teachers and Principals of the Greater Victoria School District #61 also received a Success by 6 Early Years Award for "Individuals who made Children Feel most Respected and Welcome".

- **1000x5 Children's Book Recycling Project**

Success by 6 funds the '1000x5 Children's Book Recycling' Project coordinated in cooperation with the Greater Victoria School District and Saanich Neighbourhood Place. The project is based on the belief that if a child hears 1000 books by age five, he or she is much better prepared to enjoy and succeed in learning. In October, 2011, the Greater Victoria Board of Education passed a motion asking each school to participate in the '1000x5 Book Recycling Project', inviting parents to donate gently used books for babies and preschoolers. Greater Victoria School District provided venues in schools for the collection of books donated by district families, and space in a school for community volunteers to sort the books according to age groups. The books were distributed to children 0-5 years who attend the district's six Strong Start Centers and other community agencies. Many of these children had limited or no books in their homes. This program increased early literacy opportunities each month for over 750 children. Each child may receive up to 30 books per year for his or her home library. To date, the program has donated 55,000 books at an estimated value of \$550,000.00 for children to take home and keep for their home libraries. The goal of the project is to donate \$1,000,000 in books in five years.

- **Postmedia Raise-a-Reader**

The Greater Victoria School District promotes Postmedia Raise-a-Reader grants by distributing application information to all schools. In total, forty-nine School District #61 schools received Postmedia Raise-a-Reader grants to promote literacy initiatives.

B. What actions were taken to reach these?

See Goals and Actions for 2011-2012 (pages 8) and Indications of Success (page 13)

Additional actions:

- The Task Group & Literacy Outreach Coordinator worked on priorities at quarterly meetings and additional meetings as required;
- 5 organizations implemented funded literacy projects;
- Initial project evaluations completed.

C. What organizations or group participated in these actions?

- Greater Victoria School District #61
- The READ Society
- Literacy Victoria
- The Victoria Disability Resource Centre
- Together Against Poverty Society
- The Learning Disabilities Association
- Camosun College
- Epilepsy and Parkinson’s Society
- Capital Mental Health Association
- Vancouver Island Literacy Outreach Coordinators
- Website consultant
- ABC Literacy Canada
- Other agencies who submitted listings to www.learnnowvictoria.com website

D. What adjustments were made to the plan?

A decision was made to create a website bookmark rather than a brochure.

E. As the year progressed were there new opportunities or were there changes that did not allow for some actions to be taken?

No.

Indications of Success

A. How do you know that actions taken are working to support literacy? What impact have the literacy initiatives had? It is important to include examples to illustrate the impacts.

Literacy Victoria:

The funding was used to pilot several new Literacy Outreach partnerships in the Victoria area. These partnerships included the James Bay Community Centre (Computer Literacy with seniors), the Inter-Cultural Association (1-1 tutoring at ICA), the Mustard Seed (group work and 1-1 tutor support) and the Casual Labor Pool (1-1 drop-in tutor support).

The funding allowed Literacy Victoria to expand services into partner agencies throughout the community. The majority of these partnerships were very successful, and many insights and much learning were gained in the process.

The James Bay Community Centre pilot project involved offering computer classes using Literacy Victoria's Mobile Computer Lab. The delivery of these courses adapted and changed over the course of the project. Initially there was little instruction offered, and the classes mainly involved a tutor working with one or two learners on the computer skills that the learner wanted to develop. Observations and feedback resulted in a shift toward a more structured 'teaching' model. To achieve this curriculum was developed with eight modules that addressed the most common computer skill development requests. They are currently exploring offering creative writing classes at James Bay Community Centre.

The Inter-Cultural Association (ICA) project involved Literacy Victoria's tutors working on-site at ICA offering tutoring to learners who were struggling to keep up with their class work. This project was well received, and it is hoped that it will continue and evolve as a strong partnership between LV and ICA.

The Mustard Seed project involved Literacy Victoria (LV) tutors working with adults attending a Life-Skills program at the Mustard Seed. This program is offered several times a year. The nature of LV's involvement evolved and changed with each program, depending on what was learned in earlier courses and the needs of the participants in the current course. Typical involvement has been LV staff attending the Life Skills program to present information and hosting tours of LV. This partnership has resulted in several program participants being actively involved with a tutor and/or taking a Camosun course at LV.

Casual Labor Pool project involved two tutors being available at the Casual Labor Pool offering computer skills or general literacy support. Unfortunately, very few clients attended these sessions and after several months of minimal participation, the project was dropped.

Through these pilot projects a clearer picture has emerged as to how to ascertain needs within the agencies and the community in general, as well as gaining insights on what works and what doesn't work with certain Outreach Literacy services. The pilot project has demonstrated the benefits of our community partnerships and a clear need for these services, which will enhance the requests for further funding assistance. In addition, several other agencies have since approached Literacy Victoria requesting similar programs and partnerships with their organizations.

Impact Stories from Literacy Victoria

Betty is a woman in her early 80's who attended a community center computer class. Prior to attending this class, Betty had never even touched a computer. Her motivation for developing computer skills was sending emails and pictures to and from her grandchildren. This goal made Betty a very dedicated learner and she came to every session. The tutors started with her on basics skills such as how to start up a computer, how to open program and how to use a mouse. But at the end of the six week session, Betty had gained numerous skills and was comfortable using a computer. But most importantly, she had learned how to download pictures from her camera onto the computer and email these to her grandchildren as well as how to receive and open pictures and emails from them. This new skill added so much to Betty's life and allowed her to feel more connected to her family and friends.

Wanda was staying at a women's shelter when she joined Literacy Victoria's mobile computer class. Her

goal was to create a Facebook account. With the help of the tutor, she did this at her first session. While on her Facebook account, she connected with her son who she had not had any contact with for several years. Due to her transient lifestyle, it had been difficult for him to contact her. Wanda had lost his contact information so she had no previous way of reconnecting, and for many years they did not know how to contact each other. After 'friending' each other on Facebook, they met for the first time in over five years.

READ Society: Noisy Kids Reading Club

In 2012 - 2013, forty-eight children attended Noisy Kids Reading Club in its various locations. Of these forty-eight participants, six came to both sessions. READ hosted some two hundred eighty-two people at family/community dinners and end-of-program celebrations. This program could not have operated without its many volunteers. With the significant increase in locations and the associated need for trained and supported volunteers, READ used implementation funds to create a comprehensive NKRC Volunteer manual and training program and to recruit and schedule the volunteers for this program.

With the significant increase in locations and the associated need for trained and supported volunteers, READ used implementation funds to create a comprehensive NKRC Volunteer manual and training program and to recruit and schedule the volunteers for this program. This foundation is now in place and can be leveraged for future implementation. The manual was used for the recruitment, training and support for twenty-seven program volunteers. Forty-eight students received between 36 - 72 hours of support.

For the School District #61 component of this program, two hundred eighty-two family and community members attended family learning dinners/information sessions and program celebrations. Consistent comments from parents, school administrators and the participants were that this program helped children to improve their reading and has motivated them to increase their independent reading.

Without this funding, volunteer recruitment and training would not have been possible. Without the volunteers, the program could not be delivered as designed, and the children and families who benefited would not as easily see the link between reading, literacy, self-esteem and confidence.

Impact Story from Noisy Kids Reading Club

Erika was in Grade two when she began with Noisy Kids. She is the second of five children, willowy and shy. She was reading at about an end-of-Grade 1 level. When we began working together, you could hardly hear what she said. She looked at the ground a lot and didn't say much to the other kids. She brought her whole family to the first dinner and spent a lot of time showing her younger sister and her dad what she was doing and how to play some of the games, like alphabet scoop, smart mouth and UNO.

Sometime in the 12 week journey, Erika changed. I don't know if she figured she could trust us or whether she'd found the perfect book or learning situation. She became more outgoing, she asked more questions, she talked with the other kids about how they were figuring things out. She just blossomed! We heard from her mother and from the school principal about the change in this little girl.

At the family dinner and final Readers' Theatre, Erika's mother told us "She walks differently, she tells us what she thinks...she holds her head up ...she is just so excited." Erika is the one who suggested that READ set up a group of kids who've already been part of Noisy Kids so that they can help other kids in the school who are having a hard time. This is still on our 'TO DO' list.

Note: Low income households research delayed. Results and report expected in September 2013.

Together Against Poverty Society

The funding was used to pay for office supplies, printing costs, volunteer and administrative support for the Employment Rights project. As of September 2012, the funding was also used to pay the wages for a part-time Employment Rights Worker. The funding continues to be used to pay the wages of the Employment Rights Worker. Since the project began in June 2012, three people have been trained to assist people with the Employment Standards self-help kit. To date, approximately 25 clients have been served as a result of the funding.

Impact Story from Together Against Poverty Society

“The client’s name is Jane Doe. Jane moved to BC from Quebec two years ago. She grew up with French as her first language and only attended school up to Grade 9 when she dropped out. She is a little shy about her ability to read and speak English and is often intimidated by paperwork. Jane was let go from her job at Small Heart Care Facility (SHCF) in the fall. Her working shifts were cut by more than half of her typical schedule without her boss giving Jane any notice. Jane was forced to move from Prince George immediately as she had the potential to find some work in Hope that would help her to make ends meet as she could no longer afford her rent or food on the hours she was being given.

Her boss wanted her to stay in Prince George and wait until there would once again be full time work. As Jane could not afford to wait until this happened, she was forced to move to Hope to gain full time hours. When discussing the situation with her boss she was told that as her shifts had been substantially reduced that she would be given a “layoff” and would therefore have the opportunity to collect Employment Insurance if she could not find full time work. Unfortunately, another supervisor decided that she had quit because she would not wait for full time shifts and as a result Jane was issued a Record of Employment citing “Quit” as the reason for termination. Jane was unable to collect EI benefits and was also unable to find full time employment once she arrived in Hope. She was in a tough position and was unwilling to go back to work at SHCF after the dishonest treatment that she had received.

Jane then moved to Victoria as she had a lead on some work here. The jobs she found were very short term and there were not enough hours. Jane had to apply for welfare for the first time in her life. She saw a TAPS poster at the welfare office and decided to come in and see an advocate. The TAPS Advocate assisted her with completing the written self-help kit and explained Jane’s rights to her. If your Boss reduces your schedule by more than 50% without giving you notice then you have been fired and are entitled to liability severance based on how long you have been employed.

The advocate mailed the self-help kit to the employer and tried to negotiate an early settlement on Jane’s behalf. SHCF refused to provide severance and so the advocate filed for mediation with Employment Standards Branch. Four months later with no EI benefits and no settlement from SMHC, a mediation was held. During this four month period Jane had lost her housing as she was unable to find enough hours and could not afford her rent. She was living in a shelter when the mediation was held.

SHCF acknowledged in the mediation that Jane’s work schedule did reflect that her shifts had been cut without notice, constituting a layoff. However, they maintained that they offered her future employment and this meant that she quit even though Jane did what she had to do to try and survive. SHCF agreed to pay severance but would not change the ROE so that Jane could access EI benefits that she would be otherwise entitled to. Jane settled for her outstanding severance in the amount of \$1809.60. Jane was very grateful and said that if she had not had an advocate to help her through the self-help kit and in navigating through the mediation there is no way she would have been brave enough to move

forward on her own. Jane has now found steady employment and housing. She was able to pay her first month of rent and damage deposit with her severance check and she now has full time work as a farmer's assistant in Saanich.

The funding received from the Victoria Community Literacy steering committee significantly impacted the sustainability of the program. First of all, the money provided TAPS with the initial seed money required to start the project. It gave us an opportunity to provide service and assess the need in the community. Once we discovered the extent of the need in the community, we were able leverage the funding from the Victoria Community Literacy Steering Committee to write a strong and successful grant application to the Victoria Foundation. The result is that an increased number of low wage, vulnerable workers, many of whom have low-literacy levels will better understand their rights and have access to the support needed to enact those rights.”

Disability Resource Centre

The funding was used the pay for a portion of our staffing costs for the Information & Referral program Two staff members and 2 volunteers were trained. Seven hundred clients were assisted in completing applications for:

- Person's with Disability Designation (PWD)
- Canada Pension Plan – Disability
- Old Age Security
- Disability Tax Credit
- Disability Fuel Tax
- BC Housing Registry
- Guaranteed Income Supplement

This training has enabled staff at the Disability Resource Centre to speed up the application process for applicants. Staff have a more in-depth knowledge and understanding of the information that is needed for the applications and the criterion they are evaluated upon. This has meant that more applications have been approved successfully because they were able to provide the applicants with clear and concise information about what the adjudicators are looking for, what the doctor needs to include and how the applicant needs to share information about their disability.

Disability Resource Centre staff developed a weekly information session that describes the processes for applying for PWD or Canada Pension Plan. This has been very helpful for applicants as they are able to get all of their questions answered in a safe way. During the past four years, many support organizations in the community have closed and the Disability Resource Centre staff observe that this has left a gap in the delivery of services to those in need. As a result, the Information & Referral Program is doing significantly more in filling that gap in the community than it has in the past. Applications and appeals for disability benefits have increased. Clients report that they are unable to find a doctor to complete forms, and clients report that as a result they are not collecting benefits and are hungry. Staff have arranged for donated furniture for some who were able to find affordable unfurnished housing. Funding for this program will help the Disability Resource Centre to continue to fulfil their role and find strategies to address new issues as they arise.

Capital Mental Health Association-report not received.

Literacy Outreach Coordinator:

Outcomes and Reflections- Excerpt from LOC 2012-13 Report to Task Group:

- 1) I received ongoing feedback that LOC representation of the Victoria Community Literacy Project plays a vital role in increasing recognition and awareness of the broad cultural definition of literacy, beyond reading and writing, to include computers, social media, financial, health and plain language. It was made clear to me that most community organizations consider this to be a very important issue.
- 2) Numerous comments were also made about the value of the LOC bringing literacy to the table as a key component and common thread in many social issues including people in poverty, underemployed and unemployed, mental health, addictions, and the workplace. Many people have expressed their appreciation of the opportunity to discuss literacy, expand their understanding of the issues, identify gaps, and gather information on literacy resources and referral information. Again this was identified as a very important issue.
- 3) Ongoing identification of gaps in adult literacy programs and services, referrals to community services, potential resource sharing and partnership opportunities.
- 4) Agency staff, community groups and the community are adding the awareness of literacy issues and resources to their agendas when looking at client needs for resources to assist them to move forward with their lives. For example, by contributing to the Community Action Plan on Poverty Group (CAPP), literacy is a more visible component of their understanding of strategies to address poverty.
- 5) A wide range of agencies have newly formed or solidified connections with each other. For example, the James Bay Community Project collaborated with Literacy Victoria to deliver a seniors' computer training pilot project. Inter-Cultural Association and Literacy Victoria have partnered to deliver 1-1 tutoring. Agencies at the Task Group table are supporting each other's programs and sometimes partnering to deliver programs (i.e. School District #61 and READ Society). There is a cumulative effect to groups hearing about literacy. This strongly suggests that the support and expansion of a literacy focus in community networks is a priority for the year ahead.
- 6) Many agencies have expressed an interest in having me provide a literacy orientation to their staff and clients. It has however been extremely challenging to schedule orientations with numerous organizations, due to the crisis-oriented nature of their core services. They are often dealing with life and death crises and do not have the time or resources to include literacy workshops to their agencies. However, most agencies indicated that they sincerely want this information, recognize its value in the big picture of working with clients, and appreciate my continuing to try and find ways to work with them in this regard.
- 7) We have had an excellent response from the media to supporting the promotion of literacy awareness and services to the community. As a volunteer with SHAW TV, I interview various people in the community. SHAW knows of my literacy work and is a big supporter of literacy, which led them to ask me if I would like to use the SHAW resources to profile literacy services in the community. With the support of two SHAW program staff and volunteers, I have produced a show profiling the services of Greater Victoria Public Library, Literacy Victoria and Russell books. There is an opportunity for further support of literacy with SHAW TV in the year ahead. I recommend further profiles of community literacy services in the year ahead.

B. What are the things that support literacy work?

- Sufficient funding and staff to deliver sustainable services
- Availability of people to meet and develop new avenues to address literacy
- New people with different skills and expertise joining Task Groups
- Higher profile of literacy issues at all levels of the community
- Awareness raising that reduces stigma
- Training for staff and volunteers
- The introduction of workplace literacy programs
- Web-based conference calling capacity (including video) to communicate locally, provincially and nationally

Challenges

A. What are the difficulties?

- Lack of sustainable funding; instability of LOC funding in 2013; Ministry of Education cuts to 55 communities and LOC's; restored as result of significant advocacy efforts from LOC's and communities; need secure long term funding.
- Most work is done on a project and contract basis, when sometimes the nature of the position means it should be an employment contract.
- Community agencies providing literacy services need stable, sustainable funding.
- Need for greater understanding of reality of literacy issues and their impact on economics and quality of life (skills, confidence, employment).
- Stigma remains an issue and needs to be reduced.

B. What would help?

- Sustainable funding for staff (not project/contract based) and community literacy organizations
- Free awareness and promotional materials provided to LOC, Task Groups and literacy agencies (including television, radio and internet)

Plans for 2013 - 2014

A. Are there new opportunities, challenges or issues in your community?

The LOC and Task Group reviewed current gaps and established priority goals for this year.

B. What goals, priorities or objectives will you work on in the coming year? What actions are planned against those goals?

Currently, the Task Group has reviewed the LOC's recommendations for priorities in 2013-14. This is the general framework for the year ahead, although there may be further input from TG members in the next few weeks. As well, actions and outcomes for the priorities are being developed.

C. Recommendations for 2013-14 Priorities:

- 1) Invite people to join the Task Group; start with people who have expressed interest; contact other potential members.
- 2) Collect information from the Literacy Outreach Coordinators on Vancouver Gulf Islands on what they are working on. Share with the Task Group.
- 3) Continue network development for literacy awareness, promotion of programs and services, interagency support and partnerships.
- 4) Continue promotion of broad cultural definition of literacy, beyond reading and writing, to include computers, social media, financial. Increase in awareness, health and plain language.
- 5) Continue to educate community of literacy as a significant issue and a common thread in many social issues including people in poverty, underemployed and unemployed, education system, mental health, addictions, and the workplace. Ensure literacy is on the agenda.
- 6) Support community groups engaged in the provision of literacy programs and services.
- 7) Work with groups and individuals to facilitate the creation of new or enhanced literacy programs and services in keeping with the goals of the community literacy plan.
- 8) Increase media support for literacy. Collaborate with SHAW TV to continue profile of literacy issues and services. Social media. Develop podcasts and videos for literacy awareness and promotion.
- 9) Develop a health literacy workplace in-service presentation. Promote and deliver to interested organizations.
- 10) Promote use of plain language to organizations and networks. Provide workshops where requested.
- 11) Collaborate to develop and support a Vancouver Island Literacy Coalition.
- 12) Research funding support /sponsorship for website development.
- 13) Inform the Task Group of funding opportunities. Assist with proposals where needed, including partnership proposals.
- 14) Act as a liaison at the provincial and community level. Meet with local Literacy Outreach Coordinators and those in other locations where funding supports travel.

Notes:

***There are no new funded projects this year, due to lack of implementation funding.
Priorities from the recommendations above will be determined.***

D. What will be required to meet the goals and effectively employ actions for the coming year?

- Realistic framework / timeline for implementation of goals
- Adequate staff time
- Strategic use of LOC hours
- Task Group availability to participate in meetings, email discussions and decision making processes

Appendix A

Victoria Literacy Task Group Terms of Reference

Note: The Terms of Reference will be reviewed and may be adjusted in June 2013.

1. Interested community members can join the Task Group if they have a vested interest in literacy and learning.
2. Members attend a minimum of 3 out of 4 quarterly meetings and are available for occasional 1-1 consultations with LOC (meeting / phone / email).
3. Members review materials sent by the Coordinator and respond in the requested timeframe.
4. Scope: Consensus decision-making is understood to be the foundation of the collaborative nature of the Task Group and demonstrates trust in the organizations at the table to make wise decisions. The purpose of this approach (community building) is to support ownership of the project by people investing their time and expertise in it.

The Plan resides within Greater Victoria School District #61 geographically and forms a complementary piece to the School District's Achievement Contract. School District #61 is an active player in the Task Group and communicates its decisions to the Greater Victoria School District #61 Board of Education.

The Task Group:

- Brings expertise to discussions and makes decisions on the literacy plan implementation.
- Literacy Victoria, the project steward, has fiscal responsibility. Most financial decisions are made by TG consensus
- Reviews applications for implementation funding and decides on funding allocation; if there is a point of disagreement at the Task Group table, it goes to the Management Group for review and decision making; the Management Group will come back to the Task Group with a decision and rationale for it.
- Provides LOC with referrals to community resources/relevant contacts.
- Supports the LOC in implementation activities, including connecting coordinator to target groups.
- Participates in an evaluation process of the plan implementation.