

**School District #41, Burnaby Literacy Plan 2012**  
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**School District 41 Literacy Plan**

Burnaby has a richly diverse community and within this community a number of distinct challenges. It is the third largest city in BC, with a population of 223,218 in 2011. (Census data)

Current district data indicate that, in terms of Mother Tongue, (the language first learned in childhood and still understood) 49% of students have a primary language other than English in the home.

Burnaby is an economically diverse community with 22% of children and families living below Canada's before-tax Low Income Cut-offs (LICOs). In 2005, 27% of children under 6 years of age lived in households with incomes below Statistics Canada's before-tax LICO's.

Recent Early Development Instrument\* (EDI) findings for Burnaby demonstrate the vulnerability rate over the last three Waves indicates a trend showing approximately one-third of children in the SD41 population are vulnerable in one or

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more of the EDI scales.

(\*EDI-population-level measure of children's development on scales or domains of development, including: Physical Health and Well-being, Social Competence, Emotional Maturity, Language and Cognitive Development and Communication Skills.)

## **BACKGROUND**

Burnaby is a community that reads in many ways and in many different languages.

Burnaby's **Community Literacy Plan**, developed in 2007, had broad based community involvement and identified key priorities for supporting learners across all age groups, cultures and socio-economic groups. They were:

- Program Sustainability;
- Support for and enhancement of programs that provided effective services and intergenerational literacy to the homeless, immigrant families and Aboriginal children and youth; and
- Support for community-based multi-service hubs.

The Plan encouraged us all to celebrate Burnaby as a reading community. It also acknowledged that there was a need to remain open to emerging needs.

The Literacy Now Burnaby Steering Committee began to actively implement the **Community Literacy Plan** in January 2009. A Community Literacy Outreach Coordinator was hired and began working with the Steering Committee, initiating community outreach and a literacy awareness process, contacting agencies and service providers. Funding from *Legacies 2010 - Literacy Now* (now *Decoda Literacy Solutions*) was used to support literacy initiatives in Burnaby and to fund the activities of the Community Literacy Outreach Coordinator.

In 2010, the Steering Committee focused on building the capacity of community organizations, staff and volunteers through the hosting of workshops on topics of interest such as proposal writing, program evaluation, and clear language. Literacy Now Burnaby also provided funding support for School District 41's "Later to Literacy" program for at-risk youth and continued its efforts to increase literacy awareness in the community.

During 2011- 2012, we continued to provide workshops with a focus on Clear Language and Design. Over 120 community agency staff and volunteers participated and the workshops have been well attended. There has also been involvement with the City of Burnaby's Social Sustainability Strategy process, Inter-agency meetings, and new members from organizations not previously represented. An exciting new development this year is the Community Adult Literacy Program (CALP) which is a collaborative initiative of Douglas College, South Burnaby Neighbourhood House, Burnaby Public Library, and Literacy Now Burnaby.

## **LOOKING FORWARD**

Literacy Now Burnaby is now looking ahead to 2014 and beyond, planning for the future when implementation funding from *Legacies 2010 - Literacy Now/Decoda Literacy Solutions* may no longer be available. In mid-2010, the Steering

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Committee undertook an assessment of Literacy Now Burnaby, in preparation for an updating of the **Community Literacy Plan**. The assessment posed three questions.

- How well had the Literacy Now Burnaby Steering Committee delivered on the original **Community Literacy Plan**?
- To what extent has this committee reached the community, affecting residents and service providers?
- What directions need to be taken in the future to continue the work of Literacy Now Burnaby?

Out of the results of the assessment and the community forum that followed in November 2010 a new set of strategic directions were developed that will guide the work of Literacy Now Burnaby through the next three years.

### **PURPOSE**

Literacy Now Burnaby promotes literacy and learning for all in Burnaby and celebrates Burnaby as a community that reads, in many different ways and in many different languages.

### **VALUES**

**Working in Partnership:** Literacy Now Burnaby is committed to working in partnership with other community groups and organizations in Burnaby.

**Respect and Equality:** Literacy Now Burnaby values the voice of each partner and each partner has equal voice in decision-making at the Literacy Now Burnaby table.

**Stewardship and Accountability:** Literacy Now Burnaby is accountable to the community for how it uses its funding and practices effective stewardship of its resources. Literacy Now Burnaby's decision-making processes are open and transparent to the community.

### **STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS: 2011-2014**

#### **1. Building Capacity**

*The community placed a high priority on building the skills and competencies of staff and the volunteers of community groups.*

GOALS:

Continue to deliver free workshops in Burnaby that focus on community development themes.

- *Six workshops were held with over 120 participants. The workshops continue to fill to capacity.*

Provide opportunities for networking and information sharing about programs and services and potential for collaboration.

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- *Networking and information sharing occurs at the workshops regularly.*

## **2. Focus on the Vulnerable**

*The community wants to see more of a focus on adults who lack basic literacy skills. Literacy Now Burnaby also needs to advocate and support literacy programs not just for families but for single parents, teens and youth, the poor, the isolated and the homeless.*

GOALS:

Continue to build the awareness of the many aspects of literacy.

- *Ongoing community work at Inter Agency meetings and committee meetings.*

Explore the possibility of developing a volunteer tutor program for low literacy adults and older youth.

- *The new Community Adult Literacy Program has begun successfully and as a result of this priority.*

Work with the City of Burnaby on achieving the goals around literacy included in the City's 2011 Social Sustainability Strategy.

- *We were active participants in the consultation process and are now participating in the second stage. Our area is Learning for Life.*

Continue to work with *Patients as Partners* on the Health Literacy Initiative.

- *We are participating in the Literacy and Libraries initiative.*

Continue to promote the use of clear language by providing free workshops, facilitating a regular get-together of staff and volunteers in the community who are interested in improving their use of clear language and modeling the use of clear language in all of Literacy Now Burnaby's documents and communications.

- *Ongoing workshops this year and regular meetings with staff and volunteers regarding the use of clear language will start in September.*

## **3. Sustainability**

*The community values the efforts of the Literacy Now Burnaby Steering Committee and wants to see it continue. The community would also like to see more opportunities for participation by the broader community on the Steering Committee and more communication about the ongoing work of Literacy Now Burnaby.*

## GOALS:

Refresh the Steering Committee by increasing representation from groups involved in the original planning process and others who have since joined the conversation about literacy in Burnaby in order to encourage broader community participation and collaboration, and expand Literacy Now Burnaby's ability to promote literacy awareness and improve access to literacy opportunities.

- *New members have been added to the Steering Committee: Burnaby City Hall Social Planning Committee, the South Burnaby Neighbourhood House, the SFU Education Department, Frontier College, and Burnaby Multicultural Society.*

Look to the model created by the Early Childhood Development Table in Burnaby, and implement **Action Teams** that have responsibility for, and authority to, develop and plan activities that deliver on Literacy Now Burnaby priorities.

- *Two Action Teams began in the fall of 2010.*

Develop a logo, promotional materials and a web presence in order to raise the awareness and visibility of Literacy Now Burnaby and its work in the community.

- *The logo and promotional materials are complete. The web presence is in process.*

Explore strategies for increased communications with the broader community regarding literacy and the work of Literacy Now Burnaby.

- *In process.*

Identify **Literacy Champions** in the community who can raise the issue of literacy in the local media and garner political interest.

- *TBD*

Identify other sources of funding in order to expand the activities of Literacy Now Burnaby and its Action Teams to mitigate the impact should funding from *Legacies 2010/Literacy Now* come to an end.

- *TBD*

Link up with other Literacy Now groups in the area to share ideas and successes.

- *The Literacy Outreach Coordinator attends Decoda meetings and we work closely with the Tri-Cities of Port Moody, Port Coquitlam and Coquitlam.*

## Plan for 2012-2013

The work plan has been updated for 2012/2013 based on emerging needs and the outcome of 2011-12 activities.

In 2012 -2013, the Steering Committee will focus directions on a few priorities where a real and sustainable difference can be made.

Examples:

- Providing opportunities for networking and information sharing about programs and services and the potential for collaboration.
- Increase membership in the Steering Committee to include new partners.
- Creating a mechanism for local agencies and organizations to share information about training and professional development opportunities on community development themes.

The action teams will develop terms of reference and work plans for 2012-2013 focusing on:

Community Capacity: Focus on those capacity building approaches that directly relate to literacy, giving top priority to helping local organizations become more skilled at designing and implementing relevant clear language approaches.

Examples:

- Continuing to offer literacy skill development workshops.
- Establishing and supporting a group of people interested in working together to develop strong literacy skills in Burnaby.

Vulnerable People: Focus on adults who lack basic literacy skills and on advocating and supporting literacy programs already in place in the community.

Examples:

- Work with the Work BC employment services provider to embed literacy and adult learners within the new employment services system in Burnaby.
- Support South Burnaby Neighbourhood House in developing its volunteer-based adult tutor program.

Sustainability: Continue with the media stories and public events to celebrate literacy, build community and community leader awareness of the importance of literacy and learning, and advocate for increased local embedding of literacy and learning issues in the City of Burnaby related programs and agencies (e.g. Parks and Recreation)

Examples:

- Encourage information sharing and build awareness of literacy issues in Burnaby.
- Update the Directory of Literacy Providers and Programs in Burnaby.
- Undertake to provide annual updates to the Mayor and City Council, the School Board and the Public Library Board.

Burnaby's **Community Literacy Plan** and the **School District Literacy Plan** continue to complement each other to support Burnaby learners. Together, we strive to meet the needs of each learner in Burnaby.

Examples:

- Value the ongoing strong relationship between the Burnaby Public Library and the School District
- Continue to offer Early Learning Opportunities for families, such as: Strong Start; Ready, Set, Learn; Creative Play; Songs and Rhymes; Preschool Library, Welcome to Kindergarten, Parents as Literacy Supporters (PALS)
- Develop partnerships that support students and their families literacy skills, such as: Immigrant Youth in School Program; Youth in Transition and Partners in Education with the Canucks Family Education Centre

### **CONCLUSION**

Literacy Now Burnaby's plan for the next two years builds on the existing strengths of this organization. It is based on the feedback from partners and supporters in the community. The Steering Committee believes that this new strategic plan offers a firm basis from which to move forward. We believe that this plan will increase literacy awareness and re-enforce the culture of collaboration and partnership that exists in Burnaby.