



**Coast Mountains Board of Education  
School District 82**

**District Literacy Plan  
2008/2009**

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## REGIONAL, COMMUNITY AND DISTRICT CONTEXT

Coast Mountains School District is located in the northwest of British Columbia. The surrounding school districts are Prince Rupert, Nishga, and the Bulkley Valley. It is however, unlike its neighboring districts in that it covers a large geographical area. Coast Mountains School District consists of Terrace/Thornhill, Kitimat, Kitwanga, Hazelton, and Stewart. The school board office is located in Terrace. Kitimat is a 45 minute drive from the Board office, Kitwanga 1 hour, Hazelton 1.5 hrs and Stewart is 3.5 hours. Coast Mountains School District encompasses three Aboriginal nations; the Haisla, T, and Gitksan. The Haisla nation is centered in Kitimaat Village. The Tsimshian Nation has three distinct communities in the Terrace/Thornhill area. The Gitksan Wet'suwet'en Nation of the Hazelton area are made up of a large number of band communities. There are also federally run Band schools in the Hazelton area. The communities of Terrace/Thornhill, Kitimat and Hazelton have a number of independent schools as well. In the Terrace area there is also a Friendship Centre that runs literacy programs. Many of the Aboriginal communities have HeadStart programs. Throughout this region there are also programs through Northwest Community College, and the University of British Columbia.

The Northwest region has been in a serious economic recession. This has resulted in families having to relocate to other parts of the province. It has also left many families where the major breadwinner has had to leave the community leaving the other parent to raise the children without that ongoing support. This has had a significant effect on some of our families. However despite difficult economic times, many families have committed to staying here as long as possible.

School District 82 serves a student population of approximately 5 200 students in twenty two schools. Currently there is one StrongStart in the district, with one more planned for the 2008/2009 school year. The District is also involved in a StrongStart Outreach Program in the Hazelton/Kitwanga area. Coast Mountains School District has experienced an enrolment decline over the past ten years that has had a significant effect on the District programs and services.

The District currently employs 860 people, making it one of the larger employers in the region. The 2008/09 operating budget is approximately \$53 000 000.

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.

The challenges of collaboratively planning one Community Literacy Plan are enormous. The work for the coming year is to promote community awareness of the District Literacy Plan and to share with each community what is happening elsewhere and to continue to share the themes throughout the District. The thread that binds the district is Coast Mountains School District.

## CONNECTIONS – BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Formal community literacy planning is new to Coast Mountains School District. There are existing partnerships in every community between the community and the schools, but they have been somewhat informal. The process of producing a District Literacy Plan has been positively received by these partners and will continue to grow and develop. This process has given District Staff a way into community literacy planning tables 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 had strengthened the partnerships that were informally there and has given way for formal partnerships that will benefit all learners.

It is necessary for the District to work individually with community partners in the many and diverse communities. This has meant many meetings in each community and that has stretched our capacity at the District Office. New responsibilities in the area of community literacy, combined with our new responsibilities in the area of Early Learning have certainly stretched District Staff. If we wish to make these partnerships real and be truly engaged with the communities we will need to look at the job responsibilities of all District Staff and reorganize to ensure that consistency with each community partnership is maintained.

Community planning has been ongoing in the communities of Terrace/Thornhill, Kitimat and Hazelton.

## GOAL ALIGNMENT

Our District Achievement Contract has Literacy as its major focus. In this Contract the K-12 work around literacy is organized around goals, objectives, and actions, including strategies and structures for reaching our most vulnerable learners. Coast Mountains School District Achievement Contract goal in the area of literacy is: to improve student achievement in reading. The objectives underwriting this goal are: to improve reading K-3, to improve reading 4-7, and to improve reading for all Aboriginal students K-12.

A major area of community literacy planning has been to build and strengthen relationships through collaborative work with community partners. This has been mostly successful, but particularly so in Kitimat and Hazelton. 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

As stated earlier in this document it is necessary for the District to work individually with our three major communities; Terrace, Kitimat and Hazelton. Each of these communities has a functioning Literacy group that has met and developed community plans. Hazelton is on the second wave of their plan, Kitimat submitted its community plan at the end of May and Terrace has their community plan almost ready to submit. Coast Mountains School District has had a seat at each of these community tables.

In Kitimat a strong Task Group was formed in October 2007 with representation from the following groups:

- Coast Mountains School District
- Kitimat Youth Centre
- Kitimat Parents
- City Council
- Retired Teacher/Tutor
- Kitimat Child Development Centre
- Kitimat Public Library
- Northwest Community College
- Rio Tinto Alcan
- Kitimat Community Services
- Kitimat Adult Literacy Program

This group met many times throughout the year and completed the Kitimat Community Literacy Plan using the Literacy Now guide book. It was a very committed group who will act in the coming year as the task group that will oversee the work of community literacy in Kitimat. The goals of this group for the coming year are:

- To increase public awareness of literacy issues, current services/activities in the community
- To inform decision-makers about literacy issues and needs
- To create coordinated interagency network that works on literacy related issues
- To build partnerships with other agencies and groups with an interest in literacy

- To maintain dialogue between government and other interested parties about our local literacy priorities and seek out funding opportunities
- To work in collaboration with the Haisla community
- To ensure that the needs and opinions of learners are reflected in literacy policy and programming
- To provide specific life enhancement opportunities for learners based on needs
- To incorporate an ongoing integrated assessing/teaching/learning process
- To develop and maintain a one stop shop for literacy, birth to seniors – “a hub”

In Hazelton the group there is very independent. The District office had an ongoing communication with Lesley Hart the coordinator from the Upper Skeena Region. This group has received Phase 2 funding from Legacies 2010-Literacy Now. They have set 4 goals for the coming year:

- Train local community members to better support literacy initiatives
- Raise local awareness about literacy
- Network with local players in literacy and link them to community leaders
- Link local literacy providers to existing and new resources

In the Terrace/Thornhill area the group has completed the Community Profile and Literacy Inventory. The Community Plan is in process, but has not yet been sent off to Literacy Now. The task group members and community partners are:

Kitsumkalum Band  
 MLA Skeena region  
 NWCC  
 Choices Community Living  
 Kalum Community School Society  
 Skeena Family Resources  
 Kermode Friendship Society  
 Northwest Counselling  
 Nisga'a Society  
 Make Children First



Kitselas Band  
Metis Association  
Employment Resource Center  
Skeena Junior Secondary School  
Coast Mountains School District  
Family Place  
Terrace Child Development Center  
Terrace Library

## GOAL TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY LITERACY

To continue to work toward creating a culture of learning throughout the School District.

Focus Area	Actions
K-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue to work with schools addressing the specific needs of vulnerable learners</li><li>• Continue to meet with teachers and other support staff to ensure that the strategies and structures in place are the best ones to support the targeted learners.</li><li>• To continue to work to create school teams with a high level of professional dialogue and partnerships.</li><li>• To host Education Community Forums throughout the District.</li></ul>
Early Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue to create awareness throughout all communities about the importance of the early years.</li><li>• Continue to develop partnerships with early learning partners (i.e.: the early learning coalition that exists in the Terrace area.</li><li>• Continue to work on the full day Kindergarten programs to ensure that the culture component is strong.</li><li>• Promote the use of the now</li></ul>

	<p>annual EDI data throughout the district.</p>
<p>Adult Learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek out community partnerships wherever possible.</li> <li>• Help promote that adult literacy impacts on the learning of children.</li> </ul>
<p>Aboriginal Learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to support the partnership between the FN Education staff and Literacy Coordinator.</li> <li>• Continue with Family Literacy events</li> <li>• To continue to develop the capacity of the First Nations Support Workers to meet the needs of Aboriginal learners.</li> <li>• To contact 2010 Legacies and the Aboriginal Engagement group to assist us in developing further strategies to work with our Aboriginal communities.</li> </ul>

## CHALLENGES OF COMMUNITY LITERACY PLANNING

The most challenging element of community literacy planning in Coast Mountains School District is the many, diverse communities that it serves. For example, coming up with a community plan that serves all of the Hazelton area would be nearly impossible. There are in reality approximately ten different separate communities surrounding the town of Hazelton. There are many federally funded Band schools that operate independently of each other. The villages that comprise the Hazelton area are long distances from one another and not generally connected by common work. There are still many people throughout the District when if asked about community literacy planning or district literacy planning they would not have any idea of what you were speaking.

There is also the challenge of working with community members who are not certain that the School District has the business of community literacy planning. Often the District is seen as a large fish, one who likes to be in control of what is happening. It has been a good lesson for both the School District and the communities to learn that we have the same goal in mind, that it is advantageous to pool our resources and work together. This is an area that will grow over the next year or so as we continue to work together on common areas.

Another area of challenge is around the District capacity to do this work. This is very time consuming work, with much travel throughout the District. We will need to formulate a plan at the District Office of who is going to take responsibility for this work. Perhaps it needs to be a person who is community based. The School District may need to look for an administrator or teacher in each community who is passionate about this work and give them some release time to do the work.

## NEXT STEPS

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

The District Office needs to continue the work in each community that has begun this year. The School District has a seat at each community table and needs to ensure that they are active participants. The School District needs to look at who in each community can commit to the ongoing work with these committees.

PRESENTED TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICT 82:

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Lorrie Gowen  
Board Chair

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Rob Greenwood  
Superintendent

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Date