



*“Bringing Learning to Life”*

# DISTRICT LITERACY PLAN

2008-2009



Submitted by Kathy Martin  
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School District No. 85  
(Vancouver Island North)

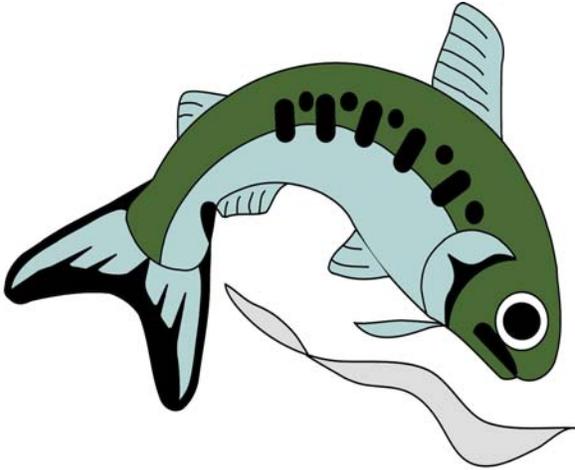
**Table of Contents**

	Page
Early Learning .....	3
School Learning.....	8
Adult Learning.....	15
Signature Page.....	18

**Aboriginal Learning Symbol Explanation:**

The District Literacy Plan addresses the four pillars, Early Learning, School Learning, Adult Learning and Aboriginal Learning. Aboriginal Learning is woven throughout the document using this symbol.





# EARLY LEARNING

## District Literacy Plan

### Background Information

School District No. 85 serves numerous small communities located at the north end of Vancouver Island. Each community presents different successes and challenges in the area of Early Learning. Information provided by the **Early Development Instrument** has played an integral role in our ability to understand and support the needs of children and families in these different communities. Though there is significant physical distance between communities and many remote island communities, the school district and the Mount Waddington Family Literacy Committee work together to ensure all communities have the opportunity to participate in Early Learning events. Such events include Ready, Set, Learn sessions at twenty-four different locations, a Family Literacy Fair held in two communities, and a travelling Literacy Bus that tours the North Island for all family-based events. In addition, the school district houses two StrongStart Centers, one located in the northern community of Port Hardy and the other in Port McNeill. Most recently, we have been approved to initiate an outreach StrongStart model offering service to remote and island-based communities. The Outreach StrongStart pilot will provide an Aboriginal component in the Port Hardy area. The pilot will determine best locations for parents to attend the StrongStart programs two days a week, based on family preference.



School District No. 85 and the Mount Waddington Family Literacy Committee are confident that their family-based initiatives are effective ways to promote the building of school readiness skills. Representation on the Mount Waddington Family Literacy Committee includes Aboriginal Infant Development and HeadStart coordinators from the four local First Nations.



## Community Perspective

The two largest communities on the North Island are Port Hardy and Port McNeill. These communities are significantly different in their rates of vulnerability among young children as indicated by the EDI (cycle 2), with Port Hardy being the most vulnerable.



One of the North Zone elementary schools with a high percentage of Aboriginal students, scored most vulnerable in EDI (cycle 2). Many factors can be attributed to the difference in the rates between Port Hardy and Port McNeill, the most obvious being the socio-economic make-up of each community. As stated in the *Early Years Study 2*, "Childhood vulnerability at [age] 4 and 5 is a socio-gradient" (Williams in Mustard & McCain, 2002). Understanding the unique characteristics and needs of each community is instrumental in ensuring that the services provided are purposeful and relevant for each particular community. We have a strong network of individuals and organizations that are committed to providing children and their families with a variety of services to promote literacy and general well-being among the youngest of our citizens.

As stated in the most recent EDI Results package, rural communities face unique challenges in providing services to their population. On the North Island, the most significant challenges are transportation and the ability to provide equal access to services for all, regardless of where one lives. With no public transit system and the high cost of ferry travel, one solution to date is outreach.

### Successes:

- A growing interest by community members to increase the opportunities for young children in this region, due to programs such as Mother Goose, Family Literacy Committee, and Literacy Now.
- According to EDI data (cycle 2), Port Hardy has experienced the largest decrease in vulnerability in the province.



- As a result of the EDI (cycle 1) numerous seamless services are offered including Moe the Mouse, Toddler Time, and Aboriginal Learning as Parents (ALAPS). Each year, the Mount Waddington Family Literacy Committee hosts an Early Learning and Literacy Fair which features Aboriginal storytellers such as Victor Reece and Richard Van Camp.

- Kindergarten teachers are able to view and discuss their individual school EDI reports at district-wide kindergarten network meetings.



- Band School pre-school programs and full day Kindergarten provide excellent transition to the school system at all local First Nation Schools. One SD No. 85 elementary school provides full day Kindergarten.

- A growing sense of connectivity exists among most early learning service providers in the region through the Mount Waddington Family Literacy Committee and Ready, Set, Learn events.
- School District No. 85 has recently become the steward for a “Literacy Bus” that travels to all North Island communities for various learning themed events.
- Success By 6 has provided numerous Aboriginal funding opportunities, such as the purchase of Moe the Mouse kits; Ready, Set, Learn Aboriginal outreach trips to all band schools and daycares, including Kingcome Inlet; and, Healthy Kids fairs at all band Health Centres.
- Ready, Set, Learn events are scheduled at over 24 different locations throughout the North Island, including remote locations such as Echo Bay and Kingcome, to ensure that all parents and children have the opportunity to access these services.
- Two StrongStart Centres and the newly implemented Outreach StrongStart have provided parents on the North Island with the opportunity to network with other parents in their community and to learn about ways to help their children become school ready.



### **Challenges:**

- Distance and transportation challenges make it difficult for people to access services or learning opportunities. Some communities are accessible only by boat, others by plane, and still others by lengthy gravel logging roads.
- Aboriginal families who live off-reserve due to lack of housing are less likely to access early learning programs.
- EDI results indicate that the highest rates of vulnerability fall in the domain of Language and Cognitive Development for both Port McNeill and Port Hardy. The Mount Waddington Family Literacy Committee will continue to support and maintain programs such as the Literacy Bus and Mother Goose to help decrease vulnerability in this area.



- Moe the Mouse is one program that reflects Aboriginal approaches to early learning. There is a lack of Aboriginal Early Childhood Education workers in the field to implement approaches that reflect Aboriginal families.
- Funding for Early Learning programs and initiatives is often temporary. How do we design sustainable programs with intermittent funding?
- Other barriers to access: How do we reach those who feel alienated from society, have fear, or are intimidated by programs we offer?

**Goal: To continue to build family capacity for learning by educating and empowering caregivers and children alike.**

<b>Objective 1: Sustain our current programs and the relationships that exist among Early Learning Service providers in this region.</b>
<b>Action Plan:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to work collaboratively with the Mt. Waddington Family Literacy Committee in our approach to funding, resources, and programming.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all Early Childhood Educators and Kindergarten Teachers have access to professional development opportunities.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen communication ties between Early Childhood Educators and Kindergarten Teachers to ensure support of common goals and program expectations.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide consistent family literacy and early literacy programs so that parents can rely on services being there when they choose to access them.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use information provided in the EDI results to help improve current programs and guide the development of new programs.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain current programs that travel to remote communities in order to ensure that all children and families are given the opportunity to participate.</li> </ul>

<b>Objective 2: Promote an awareness of the early literacy programming and resources available in our communities.</b>
<b>Action Plan:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue plans with Success By 6 to produce an all encompassing publication for early learning programming in this region.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build awareness through events such as the annual Early Literacy Fair and the Fall Fair with displays, advertisements, and presentations.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue with plans to create a central Early Years Resource Centre accessible to Early Childhood Educators and parents.</li> </ul>

<b>Objective 3: Provide programming that promotes school readiness skills.</b>
<b>Action Plan:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help family members prepare their children for school with programs such as LAPS and other informational programs.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to emphasize the importance of “learning as a family” at events like Ready, Set, Learn and other early development celebrations.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate parents on the ways school readiness is considered, such as the domains of the child measured by the <b>Early Development Instrument</b>.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide programming that celebrates the cultural make-up of our community.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address barriers to access through continued “remote location” Ready, Set, Learn events and StrongStart Centres.</li> </ul>



**Objective 4: To decrease the vulnerability in all areas of the EDI for all schools, specifically in social/emotional development.**

**Action Plan:**

- The StrongStart steering committee provides regular guidance for the programs and focus at the two StrongStart centers and Outreach StrongStart program. Ready, Set, Learn events target activities to address areas of the EDI school-by-school. Present school-specific EDI results to principals. Ready, Set, Learn to introduce an Aboriginal theme of activities through Mother Goose personnel.



**Objective 5: To decrease the vulnerability percentages at the one elementary school identified in the EDI (cycle 2) report.**

**Action Plan:**

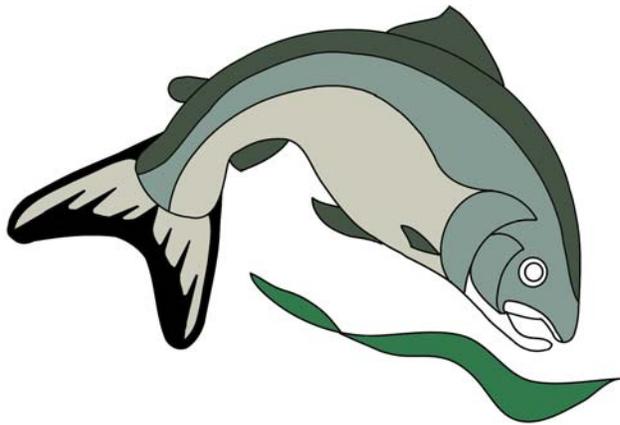
- Introduce Toddler Time program utilizing Success By 6 funding; expand Grandparents Reading Program to early learning; create a 'hub' early learning center in the spare room by the entrance of the school; and provide additional in-school support by the Early Learning Helping teacher with the 'Kindergarten Learning Project'.



**Objective 6: To increase the number of Aboriginal families accessing early learning programs, such as StrongStart programs, Mother Goose sessions, ALAPS, and Ready, Set, Learn Events.**

**Action Plan:**

- Use the Literacy Bus to extend visits to the mall and doctors' offices, and incorporate more Aboriginal content (Kwak'wala nursery rhymes, books, art and dance projects, role models, etc.) into the programming.



# SCHOOL LEARNING

## District Literacy Plan

### Background Information

School District No. 85, centered at the northern end of Vancouver Island, covers a total of 13,738 square kilometers and includes the island communities of Alert Bay and Sointula.

Serving a population of 1500 students in 12 schools, the district administers a budget of approximately \$18 million. During the past 10 years, there has been a significant decline in student enrolment due primarily to the weakening economy of this resource-based region.



The First Nations Education Council (F.N.E.C.) is made up of delegated representatives of Da'naxda'xw First Nation, Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nation, Kwakiutl Band Council, Musgamagw Tsawataineuk Tribal Council (Kwicksutaineuk/Ah-Kwa-Mish First Nation, 'Namgis First Nation, Tsawataineuk First Nation), Quatsino First Nation, Whe-La-La-U Area Council (Maməlilikala, Tlowitsis Tribe, Tlatlasikwala First Nation), Metis/Off- Reserve representative and School District No. 85. F.N.E.C. completed the Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement Report Two in the spring of 2008. Information from the second report is extrapolated into the District Literacy Plan 2008.



School District No. 85 is proud of its excellent programs, capable students, competent personnel, supportive communities, and Aboriginal history and culture. Rich Aboriginal heritage is exhibited throughout the district. The district has published a number of Aboriginal learning resources, including "My Elders Tell Me" and a series of books focused on our local First Nations' villages. Goal Three of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement states "All students will experience an enhanced academic environment as a result of Aboriginal content at all levels of the curriculum."

All the North Island communities served by School District No. 85 are rural and two of them are remote. All our communities have experienced a decline in population directly affecting enrolment numbers at their respective feeder schools. This has resulted in multi-grade classrooms becoming the norm in most of our schools. It is an increasing challenge to provide a variety of courses at the secondary level. Declining secondary enrolment has motivated School District No. 85 to explore effective, alternative models for the delivery of core curriculum and specialty courses.

## **Community Perspective**

### *Community Demographics:*

The population of Vancouver Island North (*the Mount Waddington Regional District*) is 11,651 (2006 Census). This represents a decline of 1,460 from the 2001 Census.

- Aboriginal population is 2,601 (2001 census figures)
- Average family income is \$62,800
- Percentage of adults (age 25-54) with high school completion is 72%

### *School District Demographics:*

- Approximate student population is 1500
- Approximate Aboriginal population is 500
- 9 elementary schools (K-7), including two remote, one-room schools
- 1 elementary junior/secondary school (K-10)
- 2 secondary schools (8-12) including two off-site alternate programs.
- 2 StrongStart centres located in two elementary schools
- Grade 12, six-year completion rate (2006-07) for all 18 and 19 yr. olds is 77% (Aboriginal: 57%; Non-Aboriginal: 86%)

### *Students at a Glance*

- 869 elementary students
- 736 secondary students
- 30% of student population is Aboriginal
- 116 ESD students
- 17% designated Special Needs students
- 101 low incidence special education students
- 185 high incidence special education students

- \* As the District Literacy Plan was written in the spring of 2008, the data is from 2007.

### **Report on Early Years Achievement (Kindergarten—Grade 3)**

#### **Successes:**

- 96% of grade 3 students met grade-level expectations in spring 2007 DART reading assessment (62% fully met)
- 90% of Aboriginal grade 3 students met grade-level expectations in spring 2007 DART reading assessment (57% fully met)

#### **Challenges:**

- Fall 2007 PM Benchmarks, grade one, show 16 out of 24 Aboriginal students are at risk of not meeting the district standard
- Fall 2007 PM Benchmarks, grade two, show 10 out of 15 Aboriginal students are at risk of not meeting the district standard

### **Report on Middle Years Achievement (Grades 4 – 9)**

#### **Successes:**

- Grade 6 students have improved over three years from 85 to 88% of students meeting grade-level expectations using the DART (District Assessment Reading Team)
- 84% of Aboriginal grade 6 students who wrote spring 2007 DART met expectations
- An increase in grade 6 DART Reading of 6% for Aboriginal students
- An increase in grade 9 DART Reading of 4 % for Aboriginal students
- An increase in grade 4 FSA Writing of 1%
- Grade 7 FSA reading meeting or exceeding expectations increased by 14% and FSA writing by 1% for Aboriginal Students
- Increases in year-end report card passing grades for Aboriginal grade 9 students: Math increased by 20%, Social Studies increased by 15%

#### **Challenges:**



- 19% of Aboriginal grade 6 students were excluded from or did not write the spring 2007 DART reading assessment



- Aboriginal results in grade 4 FSA Writing

- Grade 4 FSA results in Reading for boys and Aboriginal students (52% of Aboriginal students met or exceeded expectations)
- Grade 7 FSA results in Reading and Writing for boys (51% met or exceeded expectations in reading) and in Reading for Aboriginal students (41% of Aboriginal students met or exceeded expectations – 5 year average)
- Grade 9 DART Reading results (64% of non-Aboriginal students who wrote and 59% of Aboriginal students who wrote met grade-level expectations)
- 23% of grade 9 students and 38% of Aboriginal students were excluded or did not write the spring 2007 DART reading assessment

### **Report on Graduation Years Achievement (Grades 10 – 12)**

#### **Successes:**

- English 10 Provincial exam results and participation rates improved from 2004-2006 for all students
- Year end grades at the secondary level in academic areas show an increase in passing grade 10 English by 22% for Aboriginal students
- English 10 results for C+ grade increased by 4% for Aboriginal students
- English 12 results for the Provincial exam show an improvement from 2001-2006
- English 12 results and participation rates on the Provincial exam improved for Aboriginal students from 2001-2006

#### **Challenges:**

- Successful transitions from grades 10-11 and 11-12 are a significant challenge for Aboriginal students
- English 10 participation rate for Aboriginal students, while improving, is a challenge
- Communications 12 results on the Provincial exam show a downward trend from 2001-2006, particularly for Aboriginal students
- Our six year Dogwood completion rate, while improving, still leaves 50% of Aboriginal students and 55% of Students with Special Needs without the necessary credentials for post-secondary options

**Goal: Success rates of student achievement in literacy will improve for all students by addressing areas of need over the next three year.**



**Objective 1: To improve the reading fluency and comprehension of Aboriginal students in Grades 1 and 2 as measured by the PM Benchmarks, so that 75% of students are meeting the District Standard for the end of Grade 2 by 2010.**

**Action Plan:**



- Implement the Oral Language and reading continua of the Kindergarten Learning Project (KLP) in Kindergarten classrooms.



- The Early Learning Support Teacher will co-ordinate parent literacy initiatives such as Aboriginal Literacy and Parenting Strategies; Ready, Set, Learn; and, Learning as a Family is Fun.



- Early Learning Helping Teacher to align resources and in-service.



- More First Nations Early Literacy (FNEL) time will be allotted to the classrooms with a higher number of children at risk for literacy learning.



- First Nation Early Literacy program to focus on oral language from K to grade 3, implementing an inclusive approach in the regular classroom following a six week model for three north zone schools; the one south zone school to follow suit. The new format will include traditional oral storytelling using First Nation role models.



- Begin a pilot Outreach Strong Start with a focus on Aboriginal learners.



- Increase the Aboriginal literature content by targeting English as a Second Dialect funding toward Aboriginal libraries or guided reading Aboriginal resources.

- Purchase primary resources in reading and oral language for all students.

- Involvement in Literacy Now.

- Opened two StrongStart Centres.

- Oral Language is a focus of a Network of Performance Based Schools project.



**Objective 2: To improve the reading comprehension of Aboriginal students in Grades 3 and 4 as measured by the grade 4 FSA, so that 73% of students are meeting or exceeding expectations in reading by 2010.**

**Action Plan:**



- Supplement the Reading Zone and classroom libraries with current, multileveled resources which are relevant and appealing to Aboriginal students. Example, classroom library bins.



- Bring teachers together for an in-service focusing on effective comprehension strategies using Aboriginal-themed materials. Example, Boys' and Aboriginals' Reading Comprehension (BARC).

- Pilot Literacy in Action Grade 4 at Fort Rupert Elementary, with support from the District Literacy Support teacher.



**Objective 3: To improve the reading comprehension of boys and Aboriginal students in intermediate grades as measured by the Grade 7 FSA, so that 73% and 63% of students, respectively, are meeting or exceeding expectations in reading by 2010.**

**Action Plan:**



- Supplement the Reading Zone and classroom libraries with current, multileveled resources which are relevant and appealing to boys and Aboriginal students. Example classroom library bins.



- Bring teachers together for an in-service focusing on effective comprehension strategies, using Aboriginal-themed materials when appropriate. Example, Boys' and Aboriginals' Reading Comprehension (BARC).

- Pilot "Literacy" in a Grade 5 classroom, with in-service support.

- Pilot National Geographic reading kits in an intermediate classroom, with support from the District Literacy Support teacher.

- Implement a new District Writing initiative.



**Objective 4: To improve the reading comprehension of Aboriginal students in Grades 8 and 9 as measured on the Grade 9 DART (District Assessment of Reading Team), so that 69% of students meet or exceed expectations by 2010.**

**Action Plan:**



- Schools purchase current materials for classroom libraries. Example, classroom libraries field study.



- First Nations In-school Support Workers focus support on Grade 8 students.



- Sustain English Skills Development intervention strategies in addition to the core English program.

- Implement reading across the curriculum strategies for all students in Social Studies and Science, with in-service support. Example, asking better questions in-service and sessions with Leyton Schnellert.



- Island Leadership Coalition project to identify successful attributes of academic success for Aboriginal students.



- Continue to implement an Inclusive Education model.



**Objective 5: To increase the number of Aboriginal students completing the BC graduation program with the BC Dogwood Diploma from 57% to 62% in 2009.**

**Action Plan:**



- Secondary Schools to offer Kwakwala Language in 2009/10 school year. FNEC is supporting the development of Kwakwala IRP.



- Offer First Peoples English 12 at both secondary schools in 2009/10 school year.

- Secondary Schools commit to ensuring students 'opt-in' for the best educational courses and counsel those students who 'opt-out', including consultation with parents.



- Increase the number of Aboriginal students enrolling in English 12 versus Communication 12.



- Increase FNISW and/or Native Support Program (NSP) in English 12 subjects.



- Increase the Aboriginal literature content by targeting English as a Second Dialect funding toward Aboriginal libraries or guided reading Aboriginal resources.



- Increase transition opportunities for students by FN Staff from elementary to secondary; secondary to post secondary.



- Expand BARC to the secondary level.



- NISS (FN room) and PHSS (NSP) room to house a classroom library with 500 titles through book drives and donations.



- English as a Second Dialect is offered from grades 4 to 10. At the elementary level teachers provide First Steps (Pearson) oral language strategies weekly. At the secondary level the grades 9 to 10 students receive oral language strategies based on 'Student Diversity', F. Brownlie, C. Feniak, L. Schnellert. The program will be encouraged to move to an inclusive model in the regular classroom versus reception, pull-out methods.



# ADULT LEARNING

## District Literacy Plan

### Background Information

School District No. 85 is made up of many small, resource-based communities linked by road, water, and air. Travel is often a challenge for families and communities to develop methods to support each other. Each community is unique, based on the population, the industry, and the life-style. There is definitely not a “one size fits all” solution and this is true for literacy needs as well as other challenges. The opportunities for post-secondary education is not immediately available for many of our community members and they are further limited as many people do not have the basic literacy skills to tackle distance education, forms, paper-work, newspaper, or leisure reading. Along with these restrictions is a lack of resources and opportunities in many of the outlying communities.

### Community Perspective

Members of our North Island communities are restricted by a vast number of literacy challenges. Young adults who have quit school to find a job in the resource industry find their lack of education restricts their employment. Parents with poor literacy skills experience difficulty helping their children with homework. Many adults have limited opportunities as they are restricted by their lack of skill and confidence. Most of these community members do not seek out education, literacy skills, or upgrading for a variety of personal reasons. We need to develop a model that builds relationships to provide safe and supportive programs for both small groups and individuals. By supporting the improvement of the literacy skills of our North Island community members, we are developing capacity and improved health within our communities.

### Successes:

- Organized Literacy Now Committee
- Active participation in Literacy Now Committee
- Expanded Preschool Literacy to Family Literacy

## Challenges:

- Distance and remoteness of communities
- Lack of resources, both human and material
- Closing of Continuing Education Centres in Port McNeill and Port Hardy
- Need to identify members of our communities desiring assistance
- Providing a program that meets the needs of our community members
- Examine a means to deliver the service of literacy
- Teaching basic skills to a point that formal training is not a threat

**Goal: To increase community capacity for all adult learners.**

<b>Objective 1: To build partnerships with other community groups for adult literacy.</b>
<b>Action Plan:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue active participation in Family Literacy Committee and Literacy Now.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop partnerships with Regional Library, North Island College, and Discovery College.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a method of communication between partner groups.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebrate partnerships through on-going dialogue, events, and meetings.</li> </ul>

<b>Objective 2: To increase family literacy.</b>
<b>Action Plan:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interact with preschoolers and parents using Mother Goose in libraries; Ready, Set, Learn; StrongStart Centres and Outreach; and Kwa'kwala Nursery Rhymes.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage family learning with school-based events such as Family Math Night, Family Computer Time, Literacy camp out, Christmas concerts, assemblies, Open House, etc.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Model how to read to children to parent groups through regional library with Author in Residence and Mother Goose.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand paper bag book exchange from South Zone to North Zone, and include other ages in families.</li> </ul>



**Objective 3: To bring adults together with students.**

**Action Plan:**



- Introduce model of Grandparent Council at Fort Rupert Elementary to other schools.



- Encourage the creation of a film to show “How Literacy Impacts Life” or “Importance of Literacy.”

- Provide more opportunities for Elders and Role Models to share oral language traditions.

**Objective 4: Support literacy opportunities in communities in partnership with Literacy Now.**

**Action Plan:**

- Provide reading material in communities by distributing West Coast Reader. Work with community services to facilitate this.

- Explore the possibility of working with partners to contribute to community programs such as a community kitchen.



Submitted to the Board of Education, School District No. 85 (Vancouver Island North) on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July, 2008.

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Kathy Bedard  
Superintendent of Schools

Approved by the Board of Education, School District No. 85 (Vancouver Island North) on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July, 2008.

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Ann Hory  
Board Chairperson

**Reporting Distribution:**

Submitted to the Minister of Education on or before July 15, 2008.

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