

COMMUNITY LITERACY PLAN

QUESNEL, B.C.



DISTRICT LITERACY PLAN

School District #28 (Quesnel)



July 15, 2009

District Literacy Plan – Quesnel

The District Literacy Plan is a statement of our commitment to collaborate with key community stakeholders to improve literacy within our community. It has been built collaboratively on an evidence-based assessment of needs and priorities in Quesnel and surrounding area. We are committed to the ongoing development of this plan. Our Community Literacy Plan is the foundation of this District Plan.

Development Process and Update:

- School District #28 (Quesnel) was a provincial demonstration district and has been participating in provincial and regional meetings.
- The Quesnel 2010 Legacies – Literacy Now Community Plan was submitted and accepted. It is now in year two of its implementation stage. Many of the original recommendations have already been accomplished. These recommendations include hiring a community literacy coordinator (Literacy Outreach Coordinator), securing a working space for the coordinator and creating a partnership between the School District and the Community Plan Task Force.
- A District representative, the District Literacy Resource Teacher, has been involved in the 2010 Legacies – Literacy Now Community Literacy Task Force from its inception. This representative has been and will continue to be a member of the Task Force.
- The Task Force has applied for and received Society status – Literacy Quesnel Society was established in April 2008. The group is now developing an annual Strategic Plan. The District Literacy Resource Teacher for School District #28 presently holds the position of President of the Literacy Quesnel Society.
- The Superintendent and Director of Instruction-Curriculum have met with the Literacy Quesnel Society Chair, Literacy Outreach Coordinator and our Regional Literacy Coordinator (RLC).

District Literacy Plan Partners and Stakeholders:

- Stakeholders in this plan are members of the Literacy Quesnel Society, Community Partners and School District #28. They include representatives from: School District #28, Cariboo Regional Library, College of New Caledonia – Quesnel Campus, Aboriginal Education, North Cariboo Aboriginal Family Program Society (NCAFPS – also known as the “Long Name Society”), Child Development Centre, Child Care Resource and Referral, Business, the community at large, Literacy BC, Public Health, Ministry for Children and Family Development, and members of the Child, Youth and Family Network.

Context and Demographics:

The city of Quesnel is the commercial centre of the North Cariboo. It is located in the Central Interior of British Columbia at the confluence of the Quesnel and Fraser Rivers. The community is situated on the traditional lands of the Carrier and Chilcotin Nations

Serving a population of approximately 3600, K – 12 students in 18 schools, the district administers a budget of approximately \$36 million. A significant downturn in the economy and an aging demographic has led to a steady decline in enrollment.

Community Demographics:

- Population of 27,000 in city and surrounding area
- Aboriginal population made up of members of four Bands as well as those from other Aboriginal groups
- Our age distribution is similar to the provincial average with the majority of the population between 25 – 64 years (54.3%)
- The average family income is \$56,551
- 15.3% of families' income is below \$20,000

School District Profile

- 14 elementary schools
- 2 secondary schools (grades 8-12)
(Fall 2009 - reconfiguring to 1 junior school (grades 8 & 9) and 1 senior school (grades 10 – 12))
- 1 Alternate program
- Distributed Learning
- Continuing Education

Original Community Literacy Plan Goals

GOAL 1:

Establish a vibrant welcoming literacy centre that connects people and groups while also increasing access to programs and information for all literacies for all community members.

GOAL 2:

Increase literacy awareness, resources, programs and supports through community partnerships to encourage a literacy-minded community in which all members support life-long learning.

The District Literacy Plan is built on 4 Pillars of ReadNow BC:

1. Early Learning,
2. School Years,
3. Adult Literacy, and
4. Aboriginal Literacy Success.

The School District Achievement Contract specifically addresses three of the four pillars ie. Early Learning, School Years, and Aboriginal Literacy Success

This document has been built upon the original Community Literacy Plan. It is integral that this plan be revisited as our community changes. This plan must be a living document, responsive to our community's issues, priorities and needs.

District Literacy Plan

1. Early Learning:

Our Early Learning Steering Committee is in the early stages of development. At this time, its primary purpose is to serve as a venue to share information and hold discussions. Stakeholders include representatives from: School District #28, the StrongStart Centres, Community Early Child Development facilitators, Kindergarten Screening partners, Child Development Centre, Child Care Resource and Referral, Aboriginal Family Centre, Public Health, the Public Library, Literacy Quesnel Society and the Community Literacy Outreach Coordinator.

Goal 1: Improve Literacy in the Early Years (0 – 5)

OBJECTIVE 1.1

To help parents build understanding and increased awareness of the importance of family literacy in the early years

Actions:

- Ready Set Learn, a six-week program offered in every elementary school
- Ready Set Learn program introduced at the Aboriginal Family Centre
- Extended Ready Set Learn program introduced in Nazko (120 km west of Quesnel)
- StrongStart Centres located in two schools; five schools in the Fall 2009
- Early Learning Centre in Wells (rural community - once a week program)
- Roots of Empathy implemented in many elementary schools in the district.
- Welcome to Kindergarten offered in all elementary schools
- Early Learning Expo
- Partners in Education (PIE) Kindergarten pilot at one elementary school
- Family Story Time Program
- Books for Babies
- Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) programs
- Child Development Centre programs
- Aboriginal Family Centre: "Stay and Play", Aboriginal Literacy and Parenting Skills (ALAPS)
- Three Year Old Screen "Step by Step"
- Mother Goose programming

OBJECTIVE 1.2

Continue to build partnerships to sustain and strengthen all early years programs and services in our community

Actions:

- Early Learning Steering Committee
- Success by Six initiatives

- Early Learning Expo
- Child Youth Family Network
- Kindergarten Screening for all children entering school
- participation in the HELP Project Early Development Instrument (EDI)
- developing a partnership with the Recreation Centre to bring literacy into their “building”
- building a partnerships with our Public Library
- CCRR programs

A snapshot of some of our accomplishments:

- ***Family Story Time Program***

This year, the community has enjoyed 3 different family story time events with nearly sixty families attending. We have successfully diversified our outreach with these events and attracted new families who might not have literacy activities on their radar. All of the families receive free books as well as literacy and local programming information. Each event features new presenters who skillfully model varied storytelling methods.

- ***Early Learning Centre in Wells***

A partnership between School District #28 and the town of Wells (80 km east of Quesnel) has supported a weekly Early Learning Centre

- ***Three Year Old Screen “Step by Step”***

Numerous partners enabled the design and establishment of a community wide process for screening three year old children – a gap identified in our original literacy plan

- ***Pictures of Literacy for Spirit Week*** - Rec Centre and Arena

Reflecting on a barrier identified in the community plan, we planned our Spirit Week literacy event at places where the community members were already “at” – rather than having them come to “us”. The result was that we partnered with the City of Quesnel, who provided staff support and public venues for our Spirit of BC Literacy event. This provided another example of successfully reaching members of the community who might not normally have literacy on their radar.

2. School:

The Plan encompasses the goals from the School District Achievement Contract. The District Literacy Resource Teacher is the link between the School District, the Literacy Quesnel Society and the Community Partners.

Goal 2: Improve Student Achievement in Literacy

OBJECTIVE 2.1

To improve primary students' literacy skills (Grades K – 3)

Actions:

- District Literacy Resource Teacher provides classroom support, consultation, in-service, professional development activities and assessment support for teachers
- District Aboriginal Early Literacy Resource teacher supports Aboriginal primary students who require additional literacy enrichment
- Aboriginal readers who are require additional literacy enrichment are supported through the English Skills Development (ESD) Program
- using classroom assessment data to inform instruction following the Cycle of Instruction (Assessment, Analysis, Planning, Teaching)
- regular meetings with the Aboriginal Early Literacy Resource Teacher and a primary literacy teacher representative in every elementary school to facilitate networking, sharing of information, resources and current literacy research
- supporting a balanced literacy program in all kindergarten – grade 3 classrooms with the support of book rooms of grade appropriate, and leveled texts
- district wide use of assessment tools, performance standards and rubrics in reading and writing
- district wide use of BC Performance Standards Reading for Information – gr.3
- utilizing cross-age and peer support (letter/word/ guided reading buddies)
- offering ½ day - every day kindergarten in a school with a high proportion of at-risk students. (All other schools presently offer full day/alternate day kindergarten implemented 6 years ago as a cost-saving measure.)
- Assessment for Learning (AFL): webcasts and follow up ie. supporting teachers in discovering the overlap between the Big 6 AFL strategies and instructional resources and practices promoted in the district eg. Reading Power – fiction and non-fiction, 6+1 Writing Traits and specific reading strategies
- book tubs at all elementary schools to support “powers” in the classroom. Reading Power and Non-fiction Reading Power by Adrienne Gear
- Partners in Education (PIE), continued pilot
- Peer tutoring in French Immersion
- In-school mentoring program with Big Brothers/Big Sisters
- Roots of Empathy program in many elementary schools

OBJECTIVE 2.2

To improve intermediate students' literacy skills (Grades 4 - 7)

Actions:

- District Literacy Resource Teacher provides classroom support, consultation, in-service and professional development activities for teachers
- Aboriginal readers who require additional literacy enrichment are supported through the English Skills Development Program
- using classroom assessment data to inform instruction following the cycle of instruction (Assessment, Analysis, Planning, Teaching)
- intermediate literacy representative established in each school to facilitate networking, sharing of information, resources and current literacy research
- district wide use of assessment tools, performance standards and rubrics in reading and writing. For teachers: to inform instruction and for students: to reflect and take ownership
- focusing on reading in the content areas through the implementation of literacy materials that are leveled, and that integrate with the Science and Social Studies curriculum
- establishing and continuing to build book rooms of appropriate, and where applicable, leveled texts in every school
- literature circles and guided reading supported through provision of resources and demonstration lessons
- Assessment for Learning (AFL): webcasts and follow up ie. supporting teachers in discovering the overlap between the Big 6 AFL strategies and instructional resources and practices promoted in the district eg. Reading Power – fiction and non-fiction, 6+1 Writing Traits and specific reading strategies
- Universal Designs for Learning (UDL) Pilot Project 2007-08 supported by Ministry of Education and Set BC - has developed into a SmartBoard project that supports differentiated instruction to meet the needs of students with a wide range of needs in the intermediate grades.

OBJECTIVE 2.3

To improve students' reading comprehension skills (Grades 8 – 12)

Actions:

- District Literacy Resource Teacher provides support, consultation and in-service for teachers
- Aboriginal readers who require additional literacy enrichment are supported through the English Skills Development Program
- district wide assessment of grade 8 and 9 students' reading for information skills (using District Assessment of Reading Team - DART)
- Assessment for Learning: webcasts and follow up ie. supporting teachers in discovering the cross curricular impact of the Big 6 AFL strategies

- providing alternatives to text books through the use of supplementary reading materials to support low level readers such as Kurzweil Software program used to adapt textbook to speech
- Universal Designs for Learning (UDL) Pilot Project 2007-08 at Quesnel Secondary School supported by Ministry of Education and Set BC - has developed into a SmartBoard project that supports differentiated instruction to meet the needs of students with a wide range of needs in secondary grades.
- Core courses are offered in a linear timetable to support improved students achievement.
- Reconfiguration of our secondary schools, from two grade 8 –12 schools to one grade 8 and 9 school and one grade 10 – 12 school has supported the linear timetable

A snapshot of our accomplishments:

- *over the last seven years, there has been a steady 9% increase in the graduation rate for all students*
- *Primary – students are learning to use their “Reading Powers” - making connections, visualizing, asking questions and inferring to help them understand what they are reading*
- *Intermediate – Teachers and parents are seeing their students/children “devouring” books at their own level, through the Literature Circles program*
- *Secondary –Reconfiguration was initiated to allocate resources more effectively with the goal of improved student achievement*

3. Adult:

An Adult Literacy Focus Group has been established to investigate present programming and identify gaps. Stakeholders include: School District #28, College of New Caledonia – Quesnel Campus, Continuing Education, Businesses and Ministry services that offer career counseling and retraining, Seniors groups, Aboriginal Service providers and the Literacy Outreach Coordinator (LOC), representing Literacy Quesnel Society. There is an agreement within the group to collaborate when one group is in need of another group's expertise/assistance/support. All stakeholders are aware of the needs of our adult community but at this time we do not have a structure in place (beyond Continuing Education and the College) to address low literacy issues. It is our challenge to work together to create such a structure.

Goal 3: Improve Adult Success in Literacy

OBJECTIVE 3.1

To create partnerships with existing programs and services

Actions:

- continue to develop and strengthen the adult literacy focus group
- develop partnerships in the community where adults already meet (eg. Women's Resource Centre, Seniors Advocacy Group, Friendship Centre, Seasons House, Aboriginal Family Centre)

A snapshot of our accomplishments

- ***Aboriginal Literacy And Parenting Skills (ALAPS) Program:***

Aboriginal Literacy And Parenting Skills (ALAPS) program was implemented through NCAFPS. Training was offered free of charge to community members and 11 facilitators (mostly Aboriginal) were certified as ALAPS facilitators. Two programs, each with 2 facilitators were delivered in the community. The LOC was also able to travel to Alberta for 2 training sessions to become a certified trainer. Another facilitator training workshop will be held in October 2009 as the program continues to build.

- ***Season's House:***

This is a new community resource for Quesnel that provides both transitional housing (up to 2 years) and emergency accommodation for people who would otherwise be without shelter. The LOC was able to initiate a working relationship with both staff and guests of Season's House. The first step was to start a conversation about literacy needs of the guests accessing Season's House. The LOC is working on building the connection to literacy for these community members who have significant personal challenges to work through. This outreach work has had a successful start and will continue.

4. Aboriginal Literacy Success:

We are very much aware that this pillar needs to be embedded within the Early Years, School and Adult Pillars. It also needs to be addressed as a stand alone issue. Representatives from School District #28, Aboriginal Education Council and Aboriginal Service Providers and our Literacy Outreach Coordinator will continue to work together to support the literacy needs of our Aboriginal Community.

Goal 4: To Support Literacy Success in Early Learning, School, Adult and Community Programs for our Aboriginal population

OBJECTIVE 4.1:

To support our Aboriginal families and individuals in their literacy needs

Actions:

- acknowledge and work around the barriers to participation in community programs
- build relationships in a respectful manner
- take small steps
- recognize and acknowledge the cultural literacies of the Aboriginal people
- build greater awareness of the importance of family literacy
- continue to encourage participation in community programs
- continue to encourage representation on Early years and Adult literacy committees

A snapshot of our accomplishments:

- ***Aboriginal Literacy And Parenting Skills (ALAPS) Programs:***

This program was facilitated with cultural sensitivity in mind. Aboriginal women facilitated it at 2 centres – the NCAFPS and on reserve in the Red Bluff community. The delivery of ALAPS was designed to meet the needs of Aboriginal parents as they explored parenting and literacy issues. This program will continue in 2009 with more parenting programs as well as a second facilitator training session.

- ***Mother Goose at Aboriginal Family Centre:***

Trained MG facilitators offered this program to parents in a setting that was familiar and comfortable for them. The Aboriginal Family Centre is a place where parents already meet and bring their children. Having the MG program on site was able to help remove the barriers to accessing early literacy and encourage participation.

How the Literacy Outreach Coordinator position has supported and enhanced community literacy

Having a Literacy Outreach Coordinator, dedicated to focusing on and improving access to literacy in Quesnel has significantly raised the profile of literacy throughout our community. In the past, many different people may have tried to push the literacy portfolio within their organizations and out in the community with mixed results. Now that our community has a coordinator dedicated to this task, the awareness around community literacy is increasing through media interviews, public events, presentations and individual conversations.

The Literacy Outreach Coordinator has been able to network in the community and follow up with people who want to learn more or just talk about literacy. Sometimes the contact has been with an individual person, sometimes the contact has been with a large service club. The value has been in having a person who can always give that literacy voice to events and activities. There is a flow of information regarding literacy that was absent in the past.

Through face-to-face connecting and conversations, the Literacy Outreach Coordinator has been taking the "literacy message" to the community – reducing some of the barriers that may block someone from moving forward. These connections have resulted in a broadening of representation and membership in the Literacy Quesnel Society.

Literacy Quesnel Society is actively collaborating with many other service groups and organizations to promote and enhance literacy. The key to keeping community literacy alive and making it a priority for many people is having this Literacy Outreach Coordinator position sustained and allowing for growth as the community's needs change over time.

Literacy Partners in Quesnel

The stakeholders listed below support literacy initiatives in our community.

Stakeholders	Early Years	School Years	Adult Literacy	Aboriginal Success
Cariboo Regional Library	x	x	x	x
Child Care Resource & Referral	x			x
Child Development Centre	x	x		x
Child Youth Family Network (Parent Child Resource Team)	x	x	x	x
City of Quesnel	x	x	x	x
College of New Caledonia			x	x
Community at Large	x	x	x	x
Continuing Education			x	x
Literacy Quesnel Society	x	x	x	x
Ministry for Children & Family Development	x	x	x	x
New Focus Society	x	x	x	x
North Cariboo Aboriginal Family Programs Society	x		x	x
Public Health	x	x	x	x
Quesnel Employment Services			x	x
School District #28	x	x	x	x
Seniors Advocacy Group			x	
Success by Six	x		x	x