

DISTRICT LITERACY PLAN – BURNABY

Update—July 2009

1. Our Community

Burnaby's demographic picture reveals a highly diverse community facing unique challenges. With a population exceeding 216,000, Burnaby is the third largest urban city in BC. Over 80 different languages are spoken in Burnaby and 44% of residents reported speaking a language other than English in their homes. Visible minorities make up 55% of the population, giving Burnaby the fourth highest proportion of visible minorities among cities in Canada. Burnaby is also an economically diverse community with 22% of children and families living below the poverty line, and close to 39% of all Burnaby residents living in rental housing. The recent downturn in the economy has added to the already challenging economic situation for many in Burnaby.

The Burnaby School District provides a comprehensive educational program to meet the individual needs and interests of a large community of early, school-age and adult learners.

2. Our Plan

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

- Program sustainability;
- Support for and enhancement of programs that provide 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 also acknowledged that there was a need to remain open to emerging needs.

Burnaby's **Community Literacy Plan** and **District Literacy Plan** are complementary in their support for Burnaby learners. Each document reflects the personalization of the learner and the belief that "behind the face of every learner is a family, a community and a culture." Together, we strive to meet the needs of each learner in Burnaby.

Burnaby's **Community Literacy Plan** supports the school district in the development and implementation of the school district's literacy plan. The priorities contained in the Community Plan mirror the efforts of the school district to support immigrant families, ELL learners and Aboriginal learners.

3. Partnerships and Collaborations

The primary literacy partnership is between the Burnaby School District and Literacy Now Burnaby. The Community Literacy Plan and the District Literacy Plan both support learning for all age groups, ethnicities and abilities. Both strive to support all learners in acquiring the abilities needed to participate in social, economic, family and community life. Both support a philosophy of lifelong learning.

Community Partnerships are the foundation of Literacy Now Burnaby. The Steering Committee has 14 active members representing the following: community organizations, parent groups, the public library, the school district, colleges, labour, business and government sectors. The Steering Committee meets on average once a month except for July.

The Literacy Steering Committee began to actively implement the **Community Literacy Plan** in January 2009. A Community Literacy Outreach Coordinator was hired and working with the Steering Committee, initiated a community outreach and literacy awareness process, contacting agencies, service providers and leaders in the community. Meetings were held to generate ideas for initiatives that would help to meet literacy gaps, build partnerships and enhance collaboration. A portion of Legacies 2010/Literacy Now money was set aside to fund these activities.

It is important to note that collaboration between agencies and service providers is growing as evidenced by the Learning Table initiative at the South Side Community Church Homeless Drop-In which is a collaboration between Douglas College I CARE, the Kingsway Branch of Burnaby Public Library and Progressive Housing Society. The South Burnaby Neighbourhood House and Bob Prittie Metrotown Branch of the Burnaby Public Library are also partnering on a pilot reading circle at the neighbourhood house. New partnerships and collaborations are also developing out of recent community meetings and workshops.

4. Grants and Initiatives

Funding from *Legacies 2010/Literacy Now* was also set aside to support literacy initiatives within Burnaby. An action plan and timeline for a Request for Proposals for Literacy initiatives was developed and put into action by early March with a proposal deadline of April 22nd. Proposal guidelines and application forms were designed and distributed to local service providers through the Burnaby Interagency Council.

The Funding Committee developed a selection template and the process was designed to ensure that funding decisions were transparent and balanced across age ranges and locations in the community. The results were provided to the Steering Committee prior to the announcements.

On May 6 a community meeting/celebration was held at the McGill Branch of the Burnaby Public Library to provide an update on the **Community Literacy Plan** and announce the projects to be funded in 2009.

Literacy Now Burnaby Grants – May 2009

Boys and Girls Clubs – North Burnaby

An after-School Literacy Program for children age 6-12, with a goal of working with the whole child, integrating literacy with goal setting, building self-esteem, and social development. Club members who have been identified as particularly at-risk due to academic struggles, socio-economic situation, family difficulties, behaviour difficulties, or immigrant/refugee status are paired up with staff mentors.

Burnaby Association for Community Inclusion (BACI)

Expanding the Tutoring Program for Elementary School-Aged Children With Special Needs, by adding one day of tutoring per week, and a "Get Ready for Back to School" session in August, to accommodate more children. Tutoring will focus on what the child and their parents see as their needed area of development. Parents are also mentored to be literacy supporters in their home.

Burnaby Family Life

A Lending Library of Take-Home Kits in several languages and interactive educational toys to go with them (for immigrant children in our daycares, their parents, siblings and extended families) The literacy lending library will allow new immigrants to have access to materials at home that their children are exposed to in their childcare programs.

Burnaby Multicultural Society

Pilot 5 month program - A special "English Conversation Class" where newcomer seniors have the opportunity to socialize and, in the process, learn English for their day-to-day communication. Experienced mainstream seniors are recruited to moderate the classes. This has enhanced the ability of the newcomer seniors to learn, share, socialize and integrate into the Canadian way of life.

Cameray Child and Family Services

Family Literacy Circle - To encourage families to read at home. Three 6-week cycles of story time for families of children 0-5 years old, with emphasis on families with low income and English as a second language. Literacy will be promoted through the use of different mediums including reading age-appropriate story books, singing songs and rhymes and use of puppet shows, finger plays, felt-stories and will include social elements.

Douglas College, I CARE and Burnaby Public Library, Kingsway Brach

Supporting the Learning Table at the Progressive Housing Outreach at Southside Community Church by adding resources for a lending library. The Centre is for people dealing with homelessness. About 50 to 75 people attend each week. The Learning Table is there one day a month providing activities that include reading, writing, word games and donated books. This has been done with very limited resources. The service will be expanded to include a small special collection lending library.

Second Street Community School

A "talk" program for children 3-5 years old from homes with a mother tongue other than English and their parents or caregivers. "Leaves of Literacy" books which link early social, emotional and cognitive development with literacy. Following the stories children will be involved in observation, discussion, reflection, music, movement, art, or drama.

South Burnaby Neighborhood House/ Burnaby Public Library

Pilot 2 month program - A free Adult ESL Reading Circle to meet weekly at the South Burnaby Neighbourhood House. This fun, informal reading program will aim to increase the enjoyment of reading with group conversations about the stories and how they relate to our lives. A librarian will facilitate the discussions and provide articles and readers. It is for adult English learners who want to improve their reading skills in a non-stressful, social environment.

It is important to note that there were no proposals for programs or services focused on older youth or for adults who were not associated with a specific learning group. There appear to be gaps in literacy services and opportunities for those groups, thus a focus for the coming year.

Capacity Building Initiatives

A Proposal Writing Workshop, hosted by the Literacy Now Steering Committee, with presenters from the Vancouver Foundation, was held May 11th at the McGill Branch of the Burnaby Public Library. The purpose of the workshop was to increase community capacity in general and to strengthen community groups' ability to leverage funds for literacy initiatives. Local service providers were invited through the Burnaby Interagency Council, with a request to pass the invitations to others in the community who might be interested.

Of the thirty participants who attended, many were new to proposal writing and in positions with their agencies where they would have a role in fundraising for programs.

5. Evaluation - The Major Impacts of This Work

- **Provided Funding for Literacy Initiatives in Burnaby**

Funding eight literacy initiatives in Burnaby, projects which address a wide variety of age groups from early childhood to seniors, has been the most significant activity undertaken by Literacy Now Burnaby in 2009.

- **Increased Awareness**

There has been a notable increase in literacy awareness in the community. Discussions are taking place, ideas for future initiatives are forming and service providers and public institutions are working together to improve services.

- **Heightened Enthusiasm and Collaboration**

More than 30 active participants shared ideas for the future and plans for future collaboration at the May 6th community meeting. One of the key results from the workshop portion of the meeting was increased enthusiasm (both noticed and mentioned by all who participated) for working together and a request that we meet together regularly for this type of capacity building.

- **Worked to Build Community Capacity**

The proposal writing workshop held May 11 helped keep up momentum for working together to improve literacy access for Burnaby residents. A list of other funding sources was provided to participants to encourage future program and service growth. Literacy Now Burnaby is committed to continuing to host workshops on topics of interest that increase community capacity building.

- **Forged New Connections and Generated New Ideas**

Douglas College held an Essential Skills workshop for literacy programs in the college region in June. This was initiated by the Regional Literacy Coordinator and the Community Literacy Coordinators. There were six participants from Burnaby, including four from the School District. There is thought in using the Essential Skills format as a possible foundation for youth programs and possibly other curricula as well.

Additional meetings are scheduled to investigate the possibility of adapting the Essential Skills program for "At Risk Burnaby Youth". Through Literacy Now contacts, other programs offered around the province have been identified and the resources used as well as the experience gained by the delivery of these programs will help with the development of a program in Burnaby.

- **Identified Gaps in Service**

Gaps in services for youth were noticed in the funding approval process and noted at the community meeting. Since that time, the Literacy Coordinator has connected with the Ministry of Children and Family Development Office in Burnaby and the Manager of Youth Services for School District #41 and preliminary discussions around literacy and gaps in services and programs for youth have taken place.

- **Taken Advantage of Opportunities**

The Vancouver Foundation connection resulted in a follow up meeting with the Director of Youth Homelessness and the Literacy Outreach Coordinator. That meeting happened on the day that a new funding initiative was announced to address youth homelessness in Metro Vancouver. Burnaby is now eligible and the Literacy Coordinator registered immediately for the mandatory information session.

6. Implications for Burnaby

The Literacy Now Burnaby initiatives have increased literacy awareness and re-enforced the culture of collaboration and partnership in Burnaby.

Literacy Now Burnaby's goal is to build a more literate community by continuing to explore opportunities for increased cooperation and collaboration amongst the various sectors and learning partners in Burnaby throughout the fall and into the future, as funding permits.

The plan is to continue to expand capacity to provide services, and expand opportunities for all learners in Burnaby. Ongoing dialogue and co-planning with community agencies, ministries, services and organizations has been and will continue to be a focus.

7. Future Directions

Burnaby Reads Day

Literacy Now Burnaby and its partner organizations will be marking International Literacy Day on September 8, 2009 by celebrating Burnaby as a community that reads. We believe that Burnaby is a community that values reading as a foundation skill for lifelong learning. We experience Burnaby as a community that reads in many different languages and we want to celebrate the many ways people in Burnaby read, everyday by inviting all residents to take eight minutes on the 8th and read. Mayor Corrigan and Council will proclaim September 8, 2009 as "Burnaby Reads Day" in Burnaby.

Health Literacy Prototype Collaborative

Four communities in BC are taking part in a new initiative to improve Health Care by improving Health Literacy and Doctor Patient Communication. The communities are Victoria, Tri-Cities, Hazelton and Burnaby. This prototype collaborative is sponsored by Patients As Partners, Primary Care Division of the Ministry of Health Services of British Columbia with the support of Legacies 2010 Now and administered by ImpactBC. Other organizations are providing collaborative direction, oversight, and expertise: British Columbia Medical Association, Fraser Health Authority, Interior Health Authority, Northern Health Authority, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, Vancouver Island Health Authority, and the Health and Learning Knowledge Centre of the Canadian Council on Learning.

The Burnaby pilot consists of Dr. James Hii Medical who practices at Burnaby General and two of his office staff, literacy practitioners and learners from Douglas College, a Vancouver Coastal Health staff member who is on the Health Literacy Faculty Committee and the Burnaby Literacy Coordinator. The Literacy Coordinator and the Vancouver Coastal Health staff member are coordinating the group, activities and dealing with reporting.

Fall 2009 plans for capacity building and literacy awareness

Plans are in place for free community workshops on a variety of community capacity building topics. One workshop, planned for September, will focus on "Financial Literacy". It is being presented by Family Services and the audience will be community service providers/front line workers who will learn about the service and can then book the free clinics for their agency and clients.

We will continue to build public awareness. Local Burnaby newspapers are happy to publish "Stories" and we plan to have some Literacy related stories to share in fall after our funded projects have had some time to become established. The Burnaby

Board of Trade Newsletter has published several literacy related articles and is open to continuing to do so.

New Initiatives

The concept of recruiting volunteer seniors to assist with literacy in schools and with community agencies is being explored. It is based on a program that is successfully running in Nelson where a group has been funded by New Horizons to assist with literacy in schools. The senior volunteers have been provided with literacy training and funds for other costs for the project. The program has noticeably increased intergenerational communication, understanding and friendships in the community.

Project Evaluations

Funded projects will be contacted and visited one or more times over the summer and fall to see how things are progressing. We will look at what is working well with the project and who is benefitting. The information gathered will be shared with the Steering Committee, the School District and Legacies 2010/Literacy Now.

8. In Conclusion

Literacy Now Burnaby will continue to explore options for increasing cooperation and collaboration amongst the various sectors and learning partners in Burnaby. The cooperation and collaboration inherent in ongoing dialogue will continue to afford opportunities for literacy awareness and support throughout the community.

July 15, 2009