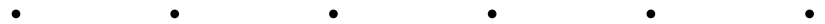




Literacy Now Prince George

Strategic Action Plan



*Finding the magic in
learning to read*

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Literacy Now Prince George

Strategic Action Plan v1

Finding the magic in learning to read

Executive summary

This plan was generated by the members of the Caledonia Literacy Advisory Committee (formerly known as the Prince George Literacy Now Steering Committee), the Literacy Outreach Coordinator and the Regional Literacy Outreach Coordinator on Nov 26th, 2008. The group was facilitated by Dr. Theresa Healy, the regional manger of Healthy Community Development with Northern Health. The 5 hour session produced a consensus on a shared vision and framework for a Strategic Action Plan. It was clear that working sessions to develop a communication plan and training would be needed to enable the members of the steering committee and staff to jointly develop and craft key messages and identify key audiences for their on going work.

What keeps me here, doing this work? I always go back to that small child struggling with reading and that magical moment when they get it; they finally get it.

The plan presented here

- Captures the shared vision.
- Outlines the major overarching goal and the several sub goals identified by the group
- Outlines the objectives attached to the goals and the key actions, resources and people required by each

The group agreed to additional working sessions on February 4, 2009 and March 10, 2009. At these meetings the plan was reviewed and the goals were narrowed to one main project. This project is the creation of a volunteer literacy tutor program in Prince George, and it flows out of the primary goal to develop effective literacy delivery systems outlined on p. 14. All other goals and objectives will be secondary and complementary to this main project.

Agenda

The agenda for the Nov 26th, 2008 meeting was accepted as proposed. See table 1.

Topic	Lead	Notes
Welcome / Purpose of the day introduce facilitator	Theresa	
Review agenda	Theresa	
Opening round	All	
What is our shared vision?	Small groups	
Traffic Lights	Individual / small groups	
Debrief/ Building the SAP	All	
Closing and Evaluation	All	

Table 1: Agenda

Agreements

The session opened with a review of ground rules for discussion and debate:

- Passion and conflict are positive forces – they show we care about an issue and that we are engaged. The critical skill is HOW we engage in those issues where we are different
- Dialogue is not debate: it is marked by informality and comfort, which cultivates conditions for openness and candour

In order to build dialogue we agree that we will:

- Offer other speakers the opportunity to be heard without interruption
- Speak honestly
- Acknowledge both you and others hold important feelings about the issue
- Find real strength emerges when we are prepared to share doubts and fears
- Be ready to admit uncertainty, to learn, and to change
- Believe and act that difference does not equal hostility¹

¹ Adapted from F.Dukes, "Why Dialogic Engagement? Working Papers from The Dialogue Forum Project, Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue, October, 2003

Opening round

The opening round was an ice breaking exercise that also set the stage for “going deep” on the issues that matter to the Steering Committee. Participants were asked to share the name of the organization they worked for and what fueled their passion for the work of literacy.

The major influences identified in the opening round included 1) experiences with education systems and sectors, 2) personal experiences with children and other learners (including one’s own children) and 3) the belief that literacy is crucial to a better educational system and a more just society.

As a parent I was exposed to the wide range of services available for literacy in the 4 different communities I lived in with my son, who was struggling. I learnt the need for good, comprehensive services that are broadly accessible through those often painful experiences.

The opening round set the tone for the session: honest and thought provoking, and showing the depth of passion and conviction the group shared.

The shared vision

Group 1: From the outside in

Overall the vision of this group was comprehensive. They saw the origins of passion for literacy and willingness to work on the issue in a wide range of places yet, from these very different and diverse places, people came together around the shared delivery of meeting needs. The spiral of colour illustrated the dynamic and powerful diversity and the different partners coming together around that shared vision.



The colours representing diversity blend and complement each other were presented as:

Blue: all the students with their questions (elementary, secondary and post-secondary)

Dark Yellow: Health, community health and community based organizations

Black: Regional outreach

Green: Adult workforce: women and men and their literacy needs

Yellow: Community resources like public library

Purple: The champions and guides – federal, provincial and municipal – balance of leadership with collaboration

Teal: Local issues: poverty, food security, transportation, child care issues, barriers, self esteem; cultural divides;

The red line: Barriers: red tape/politics that permeate the work

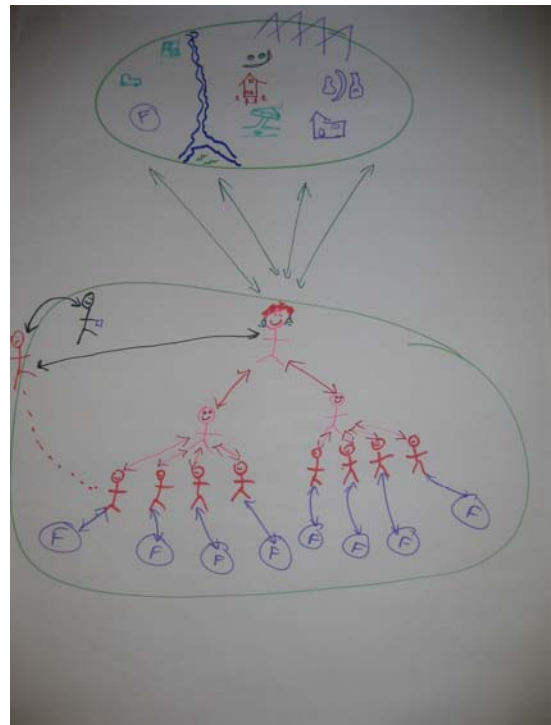
Pink: The five year vision is still unclear – dynamic and emerging

Comments: noted that the role of addiction, abuse, violence in literacy issues was not included.

Group 2: From the inside out

This vision focused on one aspect: the internal focus on the work of the project. From this perspective the community is overarching, includes and prioritizes the learner at its centre. The involvement of stakeholders is integral and shaped around this common focus (i.e. the learner at the centre) there is an effective referral system that links and supports all involved. Because of this system, the community as a whole shows great improvement: crime/jail time down; food is plentiful; transportation is better; children are in school and welcomed; family dynamics are healthy and energizing.

Literacy is a tool and a product, an outcome and a process: Both groups shared a common sense that literacy was more than just learning to read. The skills required for building literacy have outcomes as an accompaniment to improving literacy rates. It is a tool of community development and individual / family healing.

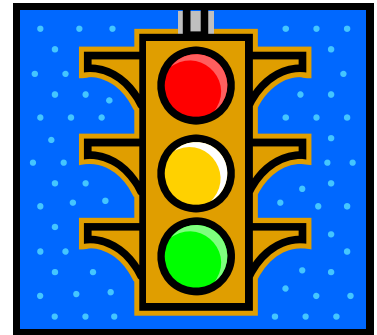


Uniting as individuals from different perspectives, professions and places, the Steering Committee will identify, support and complement existing literacy resources with an approach that centers the learner in a community of integrated and coordinated services and supports. Using literacy as a key, the learner, their family and community will enjoy inclusion and meaningful participation in a healthy and literate citizenship. The outcomes of this visionary approach embraces learners at all levels from school district to college to university; from health care to community based organization, from safe and unsafe places so that they can readily access literacy supports and resources. Such an approach to literacy not only builds reading skills among individuals but also contributes to improved community health and well being.

The Traffic Lights exercise

This exercise allowed the committee to explore: *What does the Steering Committee / the project need to do...to reach the ideal vision?*

This three step process begins with individual members recording their ideas on post it notes: red recalls the barriers or obstacles, yellow post it notes capture the ideal or preferred states and green the actions required to move from obstacle to ideal. Then the members post their data on flip charts that gather all the reds together, all the yellows together and all the greens. Small groups then analyse and present the findings from each group.



Part 1: Barriers and obstacles

Under the red light, the group considered “What is wrong? What is missing? What barriers and issues are we facing as we strive to develop coordinated accessible literacy services that unite and improve the community? Six themes were identified (*see chart 1 below.*)

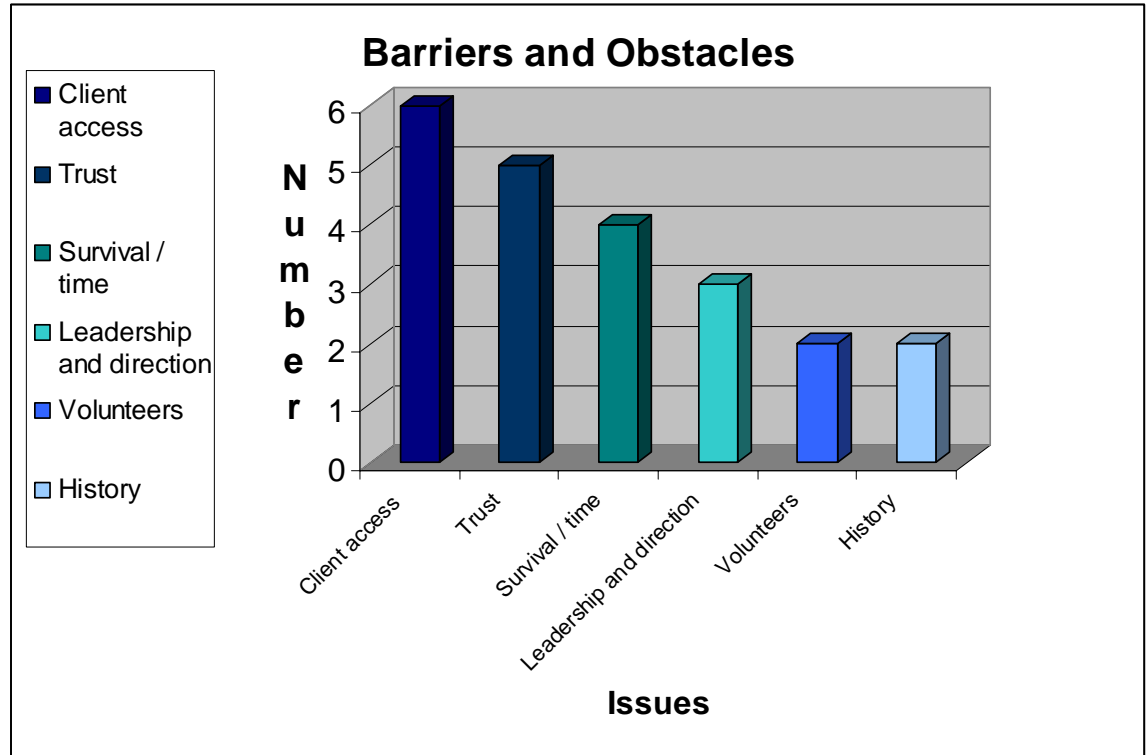


Chart 1: Chart of barriers and obstacles

Direct access was the issue seen as a major concern. Small communities sometimes share literacy resources which impose barriers such as needing travel and associated transportation access issues. Many parents cannot access early learning programs such as Strong Start due to not having a car, or the caregiver has with no means to provide transportation. For adult assistance, the participants noted that some parents cannot attend literacy programs if no provision for childcare is made. Other barriers included:

- Reaching low literacy learners is complicated by an inability to read advertising.
- Access problems related to climate.
- Stigma of low literacy shames possible participants and prevents them from accessing services.

Trust was the second most noted issue. This was trust from the perspective of the learner. It is crucial that learners need to feel safe in order to trust literacy providers to create this space. Location is also affected by trust issues. For example, fear of institutions such as schools, post-secondary institutions and libraries can reduce access. There are internal issues also. Learners can feel intimidated or feel “stupid”. These stereotypes need to be addressed if learners are to come forward. There is also reluctance on the part of some literacy providers to be involved with the ‘Lit Now’ process.

Time and Survival. Another crucial barrier to access is that many people are in survival mode. They are too busy getting basics such as food and housing to address literacy needs. Thus, learners need more time to complete goals. Funders may withdraw crucial financial support too early. Also, hungry children or adults are unable to learn. Adults who have lost their jobs often need re-training to fit into collapsed economy.

Leadership and direction was also identified by several participants and was confirmed again in the discussion. The role of the group as leader, as able to inform all levels of government, needs to have a clear knowledge of the present state of literacy and where funds and support need to be applied. There is a lack of core funding resources in community learning which must be addressed. Social service groups are not working together due to worries accessing the *same* funding and competitiveness undermines collaboration

Volunteers. The lack of volunteers or an aging volunteer base was also noted. We need more volunteers from all walks of life to meet needs of a diversified learner base. Are we accessing retired teachers and administrators to capability?

History. The understanding of the place of literacy was also identified. The community as a whole may have biased perceptions of literacy, or view learning as prerogatives of the rich or privileged. Sometimes low literacy levels are familial and intergenerational and there are severe foundational root causes.

Part 2: Ideal and preferred states

The yellow or preferred and ideal states yielded five major themes with one overall ideal. The summative statement captured a “big picture” view of Literacy as tool of social and community development:

‘Have every community engage and support learners. This means the promotion of literacy as more than reading or numeracy. Personal satisfaction and enjoyment must be as important as economic benefits.’

(See Chart 2 Below)

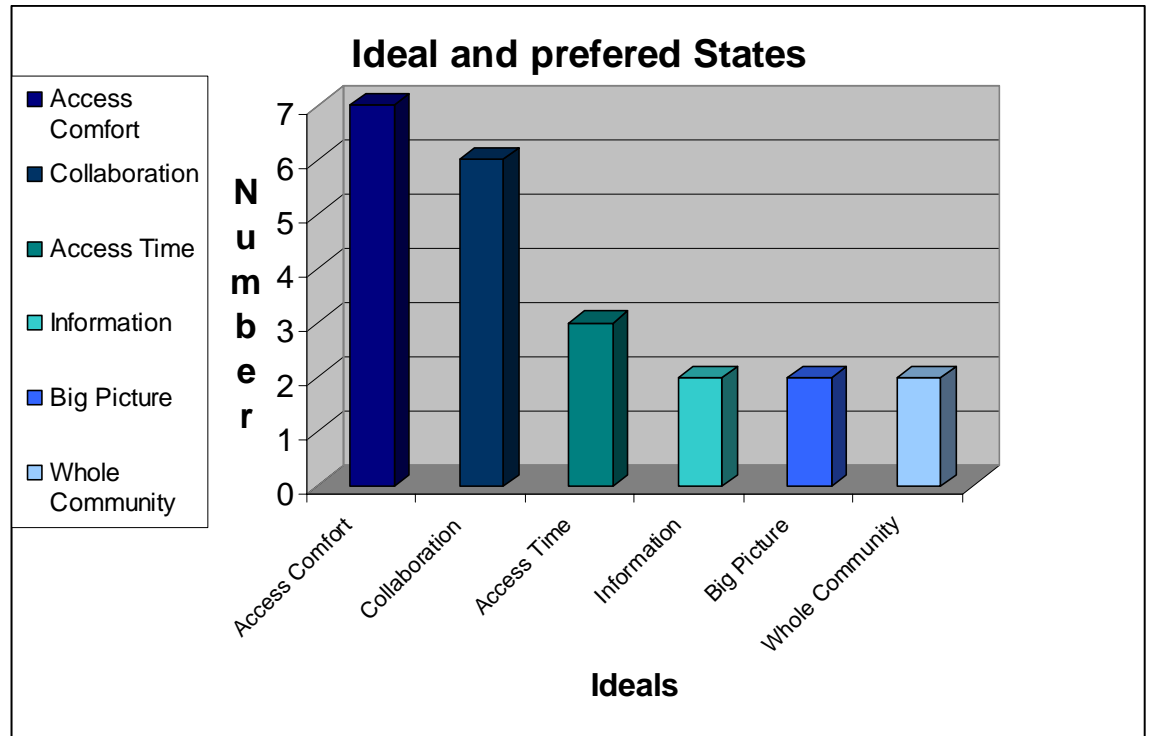


Chart 2: Ideal or preferred states

Safety and comfort in access was clearly a concern for many. Ideas that caught these ideals included literacy ‘safe’ pods in every community – rather like a literacy version of “block watch”. Expanding hours of access to include weekend and evening access and including things that would heighten sociability and act as incentives were also mentioned (such as having food available) there was a strong consensus to make literacy resources friendly and approachable to “bring education into community and ‘off the hill’.” Communities need to define ‘safe’ or ‘trusting’ environments and be involved in how they are created. Families need to feel connected with the larger community and learners need to feel comfortable and ‘at home’ in literacy programs. If individuals can feel safe, they are enabling ‘self declaration’. Funders need to build in time to build trust with learners, keeping funding in place. People given easy access to programs in another community: “We need an increased willingness for all partners to seek help from the best resources. We need teamwork and cooperation to offer re-training to those persons whose jobs have been lost.”

Collaboration: finding ways of working together was another key issue. This partnership needs to be fostered at all levels. Elders, parents and children need to be engaged in the promotion and delivery of literacy. A funding advocates to develop, encourage stakeholders to address core funding issues would be an important support to collaboration. In too many instances, agency staff does this off the side of their desks without any dedicated resources. The investment of scarce community resources into these individual and competing competitions is not conducive to building collaborative relationships among service agencies and organizations.

Ways to bring agencies together would include more coordinated meetings of groups, more core and sustainable funding for agencies and literacy providers. The creation of one central shared vision will emerge as communities build plans together, understanding how individual mandates contribute to an overall embracing of complementary not competing visions.

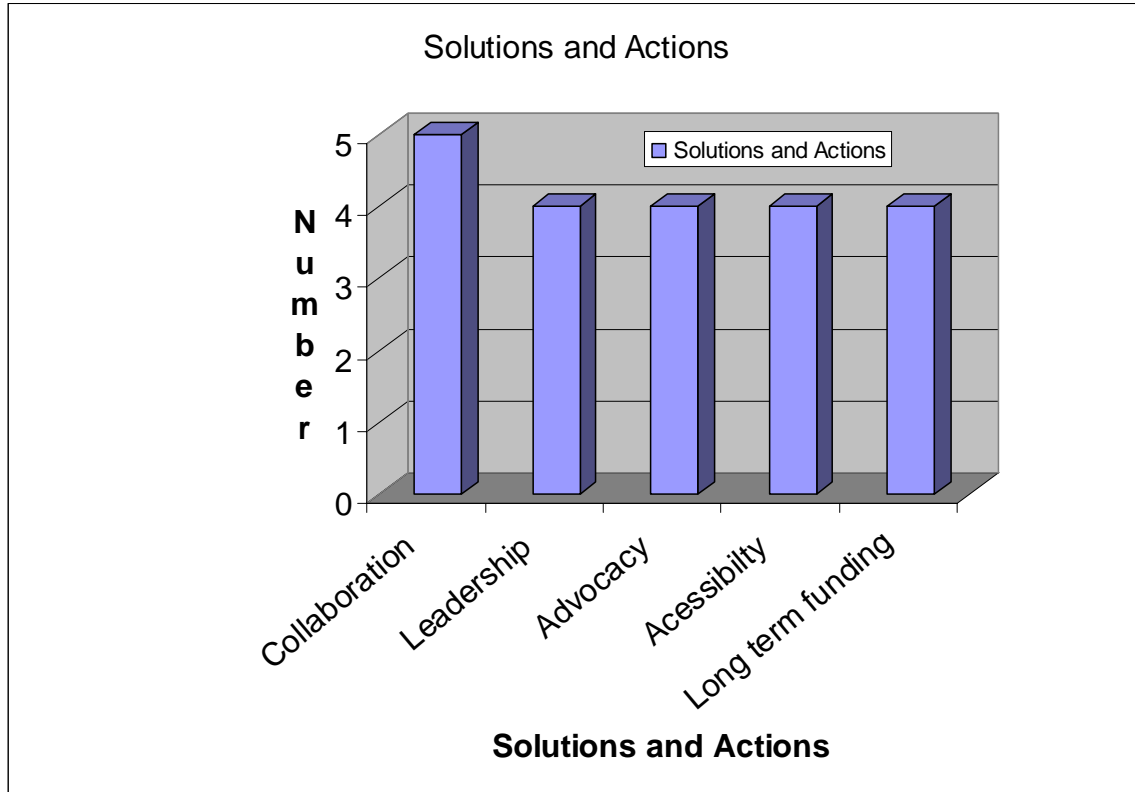
Information was seen as being twofold in scope. Learners need to be given access information for learning opportunities. Not only do learners need to know ‘where to go’, but also ‘why and when to go’. The nature of low literacy encourages different methods of getting this information to learners. Word of mouth can be successful in supporting access to opportunities, as learners trust their peer group and their success stories. People who ‘want to help’ need information on resources for them and their skills. Opportunities and information on agencies providing these opportunities should be visible within the community.

The Big Picture. The big picture here is to promote a literate community. Literacy needs to be seen not just as reading and writing, but as a skill set that has a direct impact on everyday life. Engagement with literacy leads to increased personal and community economics, better health, reduced crime and justice issues, reduced poverty levels and an increased personal enjoyment of life.

Whole community. Literacy is not the job of any one agency or organization. Schools, libraries, city council, non-profit agencies and other organizations such as the PGNFC all come together with individual members of the community to promote literacy in all its forms. Social issues such as poverty, homelessness and increases unemployment impact on the priority given to literacy by community members. Although the connection between literacy and these problems is strong, the need to provide basic survival needs will always come first. All community members need to recognize and support the need for increased literacy levels.

Part 3: Solutions and actions

The last set of data, the “green light” items, revealed the key areas the group saw as potential actions and solutions to moving forward. Five major themes were identified, with a question that uncovers proposed solution. An overall question emerged from this work: Would a role for Lit Now in the facilitation of learners and programs be the answer?



Leadership and Commitment. Set up a process that involves library, PGNFC, and schools, for people that want help and people that want to help. Active leadership commits to the ‘blending’ of effective and functioning systems and structure so that stakeholders are focused and work effectively. This process extends from the top (providing services), to bottom (affective delivery) of literacy support systems. Effective leadership supports a comprehensive ‘push’ to make this a community priority. Every neighbourhood would combine their expertise, by having educators and learners work together within community frameworks (e.g. community projects, food banks, collaborative research and problem solving).

Community collaboration and engagement starts small at the individual level and builds relationships. Have lots of community events, community services and programs, creating a stronger ‘buy in’ by families and community. In addition, the need for more *action* groups rather than *sharing* workshops was identified. These groups meet all service areas. We need to work on advocacy together, forming stronger relationships to build powerful messages to community. Communities need to support family oriented learning that include soup kitchens, and programs in schools that ensure children are fed. Engage communities through SD57 and City PG. Initiate discussions about literacy and get everyone to buy into the community concept (e.g. like shovelling the ice rinks in their neighbourhood).

Advocacy/promotion/awareness: Bring workplace/health/financial and personal literacy to communities by advertising: TV, newspapers, radio, etc. Adult learners need to be given information in terms of their existing literacy levels. A community advocate promotes services directly to people who need them. Success stories from individuals who have come from a state of literacy from non-literacy send a very positive message and promote very possible inclusivity. A promotional campaign that focuses less on the written word and more on the media would reach more people that might access the opportunity

Accessibility: Providing transportation for parents to take their youngsters to literacy programs, might require the implementation of bus passes, taxi passes or even a ‘Literacy Bus’ that takes you to a program in another community. Literacy programs held in locations with other programs that can all share childcare costs. E.g. the YMCA is another good option. Considerations should be given to the delivery of literacy programs in locations where people naturally gravitate (e.g. downtown).

Long Term Core Funding. There is an immediate need for funding from the government for food and housing programs, recognizing the literacy element included in this combination. Lobby government for increased but stable core funding for literacy programs. *Take action!* Having the funding run in longer cycles than 8-12 months could change the final report date.

This green light section became the focus for the action planning. The group was encouraged not to lose sight of the other material generated to this point and to carry forward the visions, the barriers and the ideals as the Strategic Action Plan emerged. .

Setting the plan into place.

Reviewing the findings as a plenary, the group began to craft the outline of a Strategic Action Plan. The group identified six goals. At the March 10th meeting, the committee decided that there will be one primary goal, and that each of the other goals can be realized through that.

1. Primary Goal: Develop effective literacy delivery systems (i.e. develop a volunteer tutor training program)
2. Secondary Goal: Build Infrastructure for project (role as integrator)
3. Secondary Goal: Support/Improve the Library as Literacy Resource
4. Secondary Goal: Build a Community Approach to Literacy
5. Secondary Goal: Support and Complement what’s existing already
6. Secondary Goal: Increase Accessibility to Literacy Supports

Each of these goals is presented below in a strategic plan table format.

Goals

1. Primary Goal: Develop effective literacy delivery systems

Objectives <i>How do we reach the goal?</i>	Actions <i>What do we have to do?</i>	Resources <i>What do we need to do?</i>	People <i>Who do we need? Who will lead?</i>	Timelines <i>When do we start? Stop?</i>	Success indicators <i>How will we know we did a good job?</i>
Develop accessible, safe affordable, effective collaborative programs	Identify key partners/sources Host a proactive planning meeting. "Literacy Watch"	A place that is comfortable. No stereotyping, good for celebrations and festivities	Coordinator, ensure not lost; S/C terms and conditions	Ongoing	Criteria for measuring: accessible, safe affordable, effective collaborative using qualitative and quantitative evaluations
	Match Tutors and Learners; by defining learners and audiences; Outreach to groups-to recruit tutors (e.g retired teachers, student volunteers)	Brainstorm Ages, programs, locations	Coordinator to lead		1. Referrals from organizations. 2. Differences in types and process of referrals 3.# of matches 4.# of tutor trainings and # of tutors 5.#of tutor hours
		Speak at Rotary Retired School teachers Other venues	Coordinator "Speakers corner" – Steering Committee members other affiliations opportunities To speak to issues as educational	Ongoing	
Focus on					
Shared and sharing information resources tools;					

2. Secondary Goal: Build Infrastructure for project (role as integrator)

Objectives <i>How do we reach the goal?</i>	Actions <i>What do we have to do?</i>	Resources <i>What do we need to do?</i>	People <i>Who do we need? Who will lead?</i>	Timelines <i>When do we start? Stop?</i>	Success indicators <i>How will we know we did a good job?</i>
Explore the potentials and models of establishing a visible physical space	Find a host in kind Explore ideas of multiple places within the community to meet the diversity of needs. Share potentials and resources.	Library; Parkwood mall; School	In the interim all will explore potential options/ locations (e.g. partner agency with those who offer literacy skills)	May need to wait until after funding announcements to pursue fully? In short term develop knowledge bank and understanding	Partnership / knowledge of initiative Strengthened understanding of mandate through asking what is more preferable
<p><i>Notes: this may need sustainable funding to be able to work? In the interim make this a central focus which then attracts funding; the gain/loss cycle that brings down morale. Opportunities in the upcoming election? Interim measures may increase interest in sustaining the initiative; resource sharing /collaboration necessary in hard time may find a willing and interested partner. Thinking inside the box: using storage containers as cottages, offices etc. Need care that we don't lose the focus of getting out into the community and being neutral.</i></p>					
Objectives <i>How do we reach the goal?</i>	Actions <i>What do we have to do?</i>	Resources <i>What do we need to do?</i>	People <i>Who do we need? Who will lead?</i>	Timelines <i>When do we start? Stop?</i>	Success indicators <i>How will we know we did a good job?</i>
Terms of reference Who is a member? Discuss place of early learning; successx6; Children First: Who is doing what? When?	Identify, clarify committee; review what exists	Small working group to craft working draft			Terms of reference is crafted, reviewed, corrected affirmed and approved
Develop an annual calendar of events: Recognize real time available to group over the course of the year	What events / obligations already in place? What new opportunities available (e.g. heart month = romance novels?)	Research needed; members to contribute what they know (commercial, educational, etc.)	Coordinator will draft first version and collaborative building from there	On every agenda item – update calendar, build in an ongoing way	Calendar is an effective planning tool

Objectives <i>How do we reach the goal?</i>	Actions <i>What do we have to do?</i>	Resources <i>What do we need to do?</i>	People <i>Who do we need? Who will lead?</i>	Timelines <i>When do we start? Stop?</i>	Success indicators <i>How will we know we did a good job?</i>
Sustainability of current position/s	Evaluation of current position; including host agency issues	Summary reports; Monthly reports	Coordinator to produce final report drawing on reports for micro and macro perspectives		Final evaluation report provides solid ground for forward looking solution
	Evaluation of project	Focus groups to explore issues Funding for year 2 & 3	Determine key informants Co chairs to host		

3. Goal: Support/Improve the Library as Literacy Resource

Objectives <i>How do we reach the goal?</i>	Actions <i>What do we have to do?</i>	Resources <i>What do we need to do?</i>	People <i>Who do we need? Who will lead?</i>	Timelines <i>When do we start? Stop?</i>	Success indicators <i>How will we know we did a good job?</i>
Support the library as source of support	1. Increase meeting rooms for 'anon' style meetings 2. Library tours e.g. Literacy Mondays. tour of tools and supports 3. Presentation to city in support	Coordinator work with library to develop	Library representative on steering committee to keep committee informed of emerging opportunities to support	Get on city agenda to present	Library values the support City sees good advisor in action

4. Secondary Goal: Build a Community Approach to Literacy

Objectives <i>How do we reach the goal?</i>	Actions <i>What do we have to do?</i>	Resources <i>What do we need to do?</i>	People <i>Who do we need? Who will lead?</i>	Timelines <i>When do we start? Stop?</i>	Success indicators <i>How will we know we did a good job?</i>
Build community awareness	Media outreach	Media exposure Pamphlets Citizen story	Coordinator	Ongoing	# and type of presentations Attendance records and minutes of meetings Feedback from presenters/ presentations (e.g. Kiwanis, rotary) <i>(Notes: could learn from evaluation of family literacy month – e.g. other radios stations beside CBC; CBC value is getting to smaller communities with no other station)</i>
	Host info sessions	Accessible space advertising	*Lead is coordinator *Have steering members attend as time permits	Started; ongoing	
	Speak from the same page	Key messages to present to city hall (include value of library) Library board	Steering Committee members, Coordinator facilitator	Ongoing	
	Identify catalysts	Book exchange events Magazine drops (related to people's interests like car mags) Laundromats "Bring a book" Take one" at cafes, etc	Coordinator Identify book drops Identify magazine drops	Drafts to come to S/ c meetings	

5. Goal: Support and Complement what's existing already

Objectives <i>How do we reach the goal?</i>	Actions <i>What do we have to do?</i>	Resources <i>What do we need to do?</i>	People <i>Who do we need? Who will lead?</i>	Timelines <i>When do we start? Stop?</i>	Success indicators <i>How will we know we did a good job?</i>

6. Goal: Increase Accessibility to Literacy Supports

Objectives <i>How do we reach the goal?</i>	Actions <i>What do we have to do?</i>	Resources <i>What do we need to do?</i>	People <i>Who do we need? Who will lead?</i>	Timelines <i>When do we start? Stop?</i>	Success indicators <i>How will we know we did a good job?</i>
Acknowledge complexity of barriers and challenges in reducing them Develop meaningful outreach that reduce barriers	Collaborate with community partners and build partnerships to create meaningful participation that helps people over the barriers	Two hour session of S/C to tap into expertise and creativity	Steering committee and facilitator	Allocate Time at March 12 meeting 1-3	↑ #'s of persons accessing services

Next Steps

There was some discussion about *Finding the Magic in Reading* as a vision statement for the group. If we define literacy only by the term “reading”, are we diminishing or limiting what we are trying to accomplish?

The next step is to solidify the LOC position for 2009-2010, and provide direction to the LOC to start the process of creating a volunteer tutor training program.