



Board of Education  
School District #38 (Richmond)

# Report to the Board

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TO: The Board of Education (Richmond)

DATE: June 15, 2010

FROM: Marg Dixon, Literacy Outreach Coordinator  
Kathryn D'Angelo, District Administrator, Learning Services

SUBJECT: District Literacy Plan

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The City of Richmond has an approximate population of 185,000 people and continues to be a growing, vibrant and diverse community. Two dominant demographic statistics are that immigrants make up 57.4 % of the total population and that 58.7 % have a mother tongue that is neither English nor French. Also significant is that nearly two thirds (63.7) of the city's immigrants immigrated since 1991. It is these facts that were underlying features in developing the community literacy plan in 2008.

A literacy outreach coordinator was hired effective June 1, 2009 with the responsibility of implementing the community plan.

## **Priorities 2009 – 2010**

1. Connect with recent immigrants to provide information resources on literacy initiatives and services in the community.
2. Increase access to literacy initiatives and services for “hard to reach” populations.
3. Increase the literacy skills of entry level workers in Richmond and increasing the capacity of workplaces to provide literary resources and opportunities.

## **Reflections on the 2009 – 2010 year**

### **Collaboration**

Strong evidence of collaboration exists in the community partner meetings which are held bi-monthly. On average between 12–24 community groups are represented. All of the projects initiated this year involved partnerships with at least two community agencies. Often these partnerships included the School District which connects with other literacy initiatives both within the school district and the community.

This has strengthened the partnership between the school district and the community. Some examples of this collaboration are:

- Early learning through Strong Start / Mother Goose
- SWIS workers

- School District Administration/Literacy Outreach Coordinator
- Continuing Education

Comments from participants have included: “We never worked with the school district before. Now I feel that they are a partner.” Richmond Rood Bank. “It is so great to network with such a variety of agencies.” Touchstone Family Association.

### **Funded Projects**

#### **Touchstone Family Association “Storyline” \$3,000.00**

This project involves developing a library of books to lend to marginalized clients. Barriers such as the mandatory return of the materials are removed. Counsellors will work with the families to encourage a bridging to the public library.

#### **Women’s Resource Centre “South Asian Women and Tots Reading Club” \$5,000.00**

This project encourages immigrant women caregivers to attend weekly sessions at Cambie Public Library. They would listen to early primary stories, receive some training in English and read to each other.

#### **Strong Start/Family Place “Mother Goose” \$2,314.00**

This initiative will offer two sessions of nine weeks duration where literacy skills would be taught to caregivers and their children using the Mother Goose strategies. In particular it will try and focus on the Muslim caregivers in the neighbourhood.

#### **Kwantlen Polytechnic University Speak, Read, Succeed. \$5,000.00**

This project involves tutors being able to assist adults with their basic literacy skills. Assistance will be given in resume preparation, interview skills and basic conversation. It is offered four times a week.

#### **Richmond Family Place “Gardening Fun For Families” \$5,000.00**

This initiative involves active gardening for participants, theme related story telling using a variety of story genres and scrapbooking to detail their experiences. It is a weekly program for participants from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

#### **Richmond Multicultural Concerns Society. “Chai at Chaupal” \$5,000.00**

This project includes two 13 week sessions targeted towards the South Asian immigrant community. It involves information regarding services and resources available and a conversational component. A goal is to develop conversational leaders from the group.

#### **Volunteer Richmond Information Services “Community Connections Project” \$5,000.00**

This project will provide print resources and community information to new immigrants and refugees at community drop in programs.

A total of seven projects received funding from the implementation grant. The amounts varied from \$2314.00 - \$5000. All of them involved at least two community partners with the Richmond Public Library being an integral part of many of the projects. The majority of the projects focused on developing the literacy levels of new immigrants, particularly

caregivers. These projects often involved both caregivers and children in the activities. This was seen as less threatening and a way to more naturally develop literacy in the adults. One participant expressed her goal as, "I just want to be able to sign my name in English."

Two of the projects targeted "hard to reach" populations. The first, "Storyline", developed by Touchstone Family Association involved a communal book exchange where participants were encouraged to take a book and return it if possible. These marginalized individuals did not participate in library programs because of their fear of being unable to return the materials. Gradually a partnership is developing where participants will be encouraged to obtain a library card. A second project "Chai at Chaupal" sponsored by the Richmond Multi-Cultural Concerns Society, takes place at one of the Sikh temples and also at a community center. This involves the development of verbal English literacy in Punjabi women with a goal of developing conversational leaders within the community.

### **Success Evaluation**

One aspect of the success of each of the projects has been the increasing number of participants. Although all of the projects are run on a "drop in" basis there are many participants who attend consistently and with each sessions the number of participants is increasing. On average each project has between 12-20 families participating which often means that the actual number of participants at any of the family session actually is in excess of 30. In one session there was observed to be healthy competition between several participants as to who could learn more English each week.

### **Challenges:**

Predicting the number of participants each session is difficult in a drop in situation. Preparation of materials and refreshments can be challenging. However, none of the projects were willing to go to a registered format as it was felt that the informal setting was more encouraging for both new immigrants and our "hard to reach" populations

### **Critical Factors:**

With each of the projects it was essential to keep referring to the original goals. As the projects developed it was sometimes necessary to modify the goals in relationship to timelines, for example, the Strong Start/Mother Goose initiative was delayed as the leaders waited for Mother Goose training. Also the Chai at Chaupal project was slow in the beginning as it took longer to seek out participants. Also sometimes there was a more diverse group of clients both linguistically and culturally so adjustments had to be made.

This was observed in the "South Asian Immigrant Women and Tots Reading Club" where there were also two grandfathers that participated. The participation of the Richmond Public Library was critical in many projects. The expertise shared and the encouragement given were crucial to the success of the projects. The Richmond Public Library also has been an extremely active participant on the Richmond Literacy Task Force.

## **School District #38 Richmond**

### ***Intermediate Reading Initiative - A Focus on Elementary-Secondary Transition***

This project continues to complement literacy instruction in the school district by enhancing and expanding initiatives currently underway to support literacy for adolescent learners. It will continue to focus on all students in Grade 8, with some sites expanding to include Grade 9, as well as in some elementary schools with extension to the intermediate grades.. One of the intentions of this extension to the elementary level is to strengthen the mutual exchange of information between elementary and secondary schools regarding student profiles and instructional practices. In this way, the instructional program for students will become more coherent by connecting the elementary and secondary schools. At the Grade 9 level the intent will be to continue; and further the explicit literacy learning across curricular areas.

### **Priorities 2010 and beyond**

1. Coordinate and streamline Richmond literacy activities and resources.
2. Promote the importance of literacy and lifelong learning to all residents in Richmond.
3. Capitalize on the strong family structure in Richmond to promote literacy to the community.
4. Increase the awareness of health literacy resources for Richmond residents.
5. Organizations in Richmond will work together in a collaborative fashion to increase literacy in Richmond.
6. All non-English speakers should have an understanding of the importance of literacy in their first language.
7. Carry out research to ensure that the best literacy programs are offered and the needs of the community are fulfilled.

A long term vision of the literacy task force was to have a central facility where a variety of literacy activities could take place and resources could be housed. The approval of a Neighborhood Learning Centre on the site of Samuel Brighthouse Elementary offers a perfect opportunity for this vision to be realized. Many community partners have expressed interest in this facility and have offered suggestions as to how their programs and services could be enhanced with such a facility. Scheduled to open in the spring of 2011 this will be a focus for the District Literacy Plan.

Work with Kwantlen Polytechnic University and Douglas College has just begun to address the issue of enhanced literacy for entry-level workers. This goal will need to be further explored in the coming year. There is a potential partnership being explored with WorkSafe BC that may prove of assistance.

There is an ever-increasing need for tutors for basic adult literacy development. This has become much more evident during 2010 and will need to be addressed during 2011. Partnerships with Pathways Mental Health Association and the City of Richmond are being explored.

Richmond has one of the lowest health literacy levels in Canada. Partnering with Vancouver Coastal Health and the Public Library will explore ways to enhance the literacy levels of community members. This work was begun in 2009 but needs to be further developed.

In order for the goals of the Richmond District Literacy Plan to be achieved, several strategies are required:

- ensure sufficient funding is available to initiate or continue projects that make a difference in the literacy levels of community members
- ensure that all actions initiated are sustainable
- ensure that a communication strategy is undertaken that enables community leaders to actively endorse the District Literacy Plan
- ensure that ongoing evaluation strategies are used that will direct future activities
- ensure that as pre-school children enter school, literacy supports continue to be offered to the families and caregivers.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Community Partners**

Richmond Public Library

Richmond Children First

SUCCESS

Kwantlen Polytechnic University

City of

Douglas College

Pathways Mental Health Association