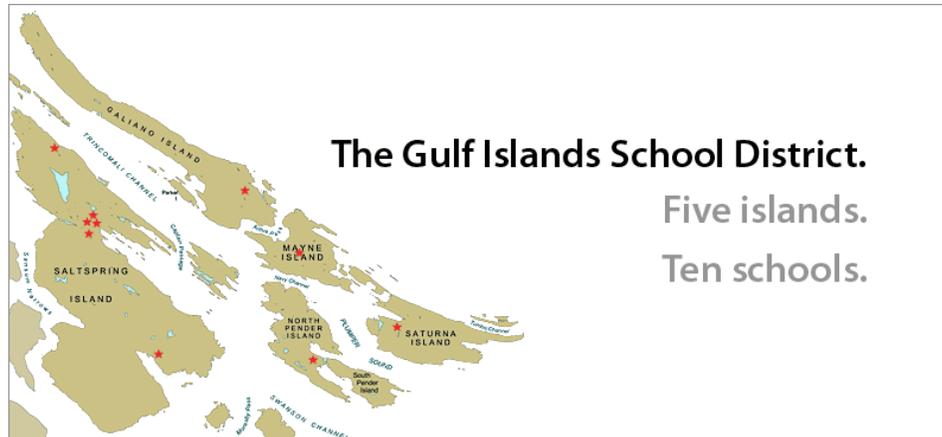




District Literacy Plan School District 64 (Gulf Islands) July 2010

Context



School District 64 is comprised of five island communities in the Southern Gulf Islands of British Columbia – Galiano, Mayne, Pender, Saturna, and Salt Spring. The Gulf Islands enjoy Canada's mildest climate with cool wet winters and warm dry summers. The area is home to a widely varied population in socio-economic terms, boasting many artists and artisans who draw their inspiration from the surrounding natural beauty. The Gulf Islands School District has ten schools, six of which are on Salt Spring Island. The School Board office is located in Ganges, also on Salt Spring.

Approximately 640 students in grades 9 through 12 attend **Gulf Islands Secondary School**, the District's largest school. GISS is home to a relatively large and successful **International Education Program** as well as the **Gulf Islands School of Performing Arts (GISPA)**.

Many middle years and high school students in the district have blended programs where they access educational services in their home community on their home island and also on other islands. Some of this blending is achieved through a combination of electronic and face-to-face learning environments, while many students travel each day to Salt Spring Island via water taxi.

Each of the other schools in the district serves its respective neighbourhood or island. The schools are

- Fernwood Elementary School (K to 5)
- Fulford Elementary School (K to 5)
- Galiano Community School (K to 12)
- Mayne Island School (K to 12)
- Pender Islands Elementary/Jr. Secondary School (K to 12)
- Phoenix Elementary School (alternative K to 7)
- Salt Spring Elementary School (K to 5)
- Salt Spring Island Middle School (6 to 8)
- Saturna Island School (K to 12)

Populations on each island range from 360 on Saturna Island to just over 12,000 on Salt Spring Island.

Reflections on the 2009-10 Year

Early Literacy Update

Over the past two years, we have continued to offer professional development for district-employed and community-based early learning program staff, building community capacity and helping us all speak a common language based in best practice. In 2009-10, this was extended to parents and family members in a big way, with over a dozen workshops for professionals and non-professionals offered evenings, daytime, and weekends. This connection continues to help us get a sense of the early literacy needs for our children and their families, as well as to help families build capacity to support their early learners.

Literacy: K to 12 Update

As in all districts in BC, literacy has been paying a central role for some time. In ours, we continue to update our inventory (also included in the Salt Spring Literacy community inventory) of various programs and practices that support literacy directly in the K to 12 system:

**School District 64 (Gulf Islands):
Literacy/Reading Programs and Strategies
Updated May 2010**

Program/Strategy Name	Grades/Students	Description
Adult mentors and volunteers	K – Gr. 12	We are lucky to have several parents who are professional writers. They have modelled the writing process and led classes through the art and craft of writing. Other parents assist in the classroom with reading or writing tasks.
Buddy reading	K – Gr. 8	Older students are paired with younger students and read to one another. Older

		students guide younger students; younger students help older students solidify their understanding through teaching.
Early Success	K – Gr. 2	Students receive extra assistance with phonemic awareness in a small group setting. Students graduate from this group when they develop these important pre-reading skills
Eat and Read	Gr. 1-5	Teacher reads aloud to students daily while students eat lunch.
Guided Reading	K - Gr. 8	Daily reading instruction in small groups using “just right” texts with students of similar reading abilities. Groupings change based upon development and need. Generally, a mini lesson is followed by students reading the same text as the other members of their small group.
Home Reading	K – Gr. 5	Students take reading material home to practice reading with parents/siblings, grandparents each night. This is the main form of “homework” in these grades.
Journal Writing	K – Gr. 12	Students write (or draw in K-1) from personal experience. Teachers reply to writing with a comment or question that often acts as a prompt for further writing on the subject.
Literature Circles	Gr. 3 - 12	Students choose novels to read, form small groups based on common books, and gather to have discussions about their

		reading. Students usually write about their reading in response logs and often do comprehension activities after reading.
Men with Books	Gr. 3 - 6	Male students discuss common books and articles that they have read. The discussion often leads to related topics, demonstrating to the students the social value associated with reading.
PAWS to Read	K-5	This is a program we had last year and hope to continue this year. Selected students read to a specially trained therapy dog and her owner. It was very motivational to the students involved.
Personal Narrative Writing	Gr. 3 - 5	Students write on individual experiences in narrative form.
School wide writes	3-11	Students in the entire school engage in a similar writing assignment. Sometimes the purpose of these writes is for assessment. Sometimes they are for celebration. Each year Fulford school published a writing anthology.
Shared Reading	K- Gr. 12	Students read as a group – choral reading, Reader’s Theatre, poetry.
Writing workshop	1-5	Students are involved in the process of writing with guidance from teachers and peers. They select a piece of writing and take it through drafting, editing and publishing.
Word Wall Spelling	K-3	Students construct personal spelling

		dictionaries as they discover new words.
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Literacy: Community – Update: 2009-10 in Review

School District 64 (Gulf Islands) has grown much closer to the Salt Spring Literacy Foundation over the course of the past few years. This year was a turning point for our partnership in that Salt Spring Literacy became the stewards of the literacy coordinator funding from Literacy Now, as opposed to the school district. The Foundation has now taken on the responsibility of coordinating the community literacy effort on Salt Spring Island and to assist with the training and capacity-building on the other four islands in the district, working in order of priority.

The 2009-10 year has also seen closer workings between the school district and the Foundation in other ways. For example, shared professional development and in-service was offered many times throughout the school year for both teachers and literacy tutors. Also, high school students have become involved with Salt Spring Literacy, both as clients where they receive assistance in the evenings from literacy tutors (helping with writing and reading, especially for ESL students) and as tutors themselves. Many students in the district train as peer tutors, and this training becomes the base for their work with Salt Spring Literacy.

In order to centralize community based literacy services the Salt Spring Literacy Society now supports a full time central facility, complete with personal study space for independent learners and a computer suite available for general use and a twice weekly drop in program for those needing computer assistance. It has become a very friendly social hub where community members can drop in, chat, get tea and coffee, all of this helping to de-stigmatize what literacy support can sometimes be seen as.

To further enhance the connection with that demographic Salt Spring Literacy launched a blog site giving a voice to the homeless, ex homeless, vulnerably housed and low income people on the islands where they can showcase their art, poetry, fiction and blog about their real life experiences. This has been well-received so far.

Because the society has recently become the English as a Second Language Settlement Assistance Program (ESLSAP) provider for the community, there are greater resources available for the assistance of the adult ESL community on the island. While children in the school district's K to 12 system receive strong ESL support, there has been a trend of ESL adults leaving the island for larger urban centres due to lack of support, a situation an ESLSAP program is now helping to address.

Literacy success requires partnership with other community-based organizations. Salt Spring Literacy Society and the school district enjoy close relationships with a number of key local groups with compatible goals, including, but not limited to:

- Copper Kettle (homelessness support),
- CARE (employment support),
- the Land Bank and the Land Trust (affordable housing initiatives),
- AA and NA (drug and alcohol addiction support),
- Yellow Submarine (mental health support)
- Core Inn (youth at risk), and
- the Public Library

Volunteers at the Salt Spring Literacy Foundation now come from throughout the communities in the Gulf islands – and not just Salt Spring Island. Local business owners, church affiliates, adults practicing what the Foundation refers to as 'alternative' lifestyles, well known artists and musicians, chefs, shelter workers, retired teachers, etc.

The age range of tutors and volunteers is equally broad, with the youngest tutors (provided by Gulf Islands Secondary School) being sixteen and the oldest in her mid-eighties. Currently there are over 45 learners meeting with tutors and another handful of learners using the centre for independent study on a weekly if not daily basis.

The Salt Spring Literacy Foundation has continued to evolve and to grow as the school district's connection with the Foundation has also evolved, becoming stronger and more integrated. The goals of the Salt Spring Literacy Foundation include:

1. To provide centralized community services
2. To provide literacy services for adults
3. To support current early learning and family literacy work

The Salt Spring literacy program inventory has been updated and is posted on the Salt Spring Literacy website, and now includes our own district's inventory. A PDF version of this colour-coded inventory makes it easy to match resources with the different ages and needs of their clientele.

The Salt Spring Literacy Foundation has noted the following as their main accomplishments of note of the past year:

- The most important impact of the literacy society's work this year is clearly that a greater number of community members are receiving help. More people are getting jobs, fulfilling their ambitions and building their self esteem. There is also the far reaching impact of breaking the cycle of illiteracy for the children of these learners. Concurrent with the increase in clients is an increase in the

number of volunteer tutors who are gaining the satisfaction and personal enhancement that tutoring provides.

- Salt Spring Literacy is more widely known throughout the community and is raising awareness of national and local literacy issues. An increasing number of people in the community regard Salt Spring Literacy as an important community service, for example when looking for a new location for the Centre two separate landlords offered the board heavily subsidized accommodation because they felt literacy services are crucial to the community.
- Salt Spring Literacy has spearheaded a shift in understanding of the concept of literacy in the community; more people on Salt Spring now understand a broader concept of literacy and the counterpart, the broader concept of illiteracy.
- The Salt Spring Literacy Society has made significant moves towards de-stigmatizing literacy problems through strategic advertising campaigns, outreach and open and frank discussion. An outreach research project is currently being investigated to find new learning methods that would further promote the de-stigmatization of literacy problems.
- Finally, by expanding the centre's programming through ESLSAP, the Travelling Book Box, a blogsite and increasing the range of tutor skills, Salt Spring Literacy is reaching a broader range of learners. This has altered the impact Salt Spring Literacy is having on the community as a whole by helping people across the entire spectrum of the Salt Spring demographics.

Community Literacy – What's Ahead in 2010-11?

This coming year, Salt Spring Literacy will be targeting a range of early school leavers who did not need to graduate to find employment, with the goal of upgrading their literacy skills. Upgrading would enhance their own self esteem and likely advance their career opportunities. For example, with advanced literacy skills some may achieve journeyman status if they are currently construction labourers.

From experience over the past few years, it appears that this group is typically uncomfortable with one to one tutoring, and is equally uncomfortable attending the K to 12 school programs, even those intended for adults. The Salt Spring Literacy Society will collaborate more closely with the School District to find ways to expand the services offered at the Centre to include different face-to-face and online training programs for this group.

Another emerging area of focus for this upcoming year will be ESL mothers with young children. With the responsibilities of being a full time mum with young children they do not have adequate time to work on their language skills, yet that also puts them at greater risk of isolation. This has led to a new initiative, which will begin in the new school year; Friday Family Literacy. This will enable both the mother and child to receive the assistance they need. The program will also be open to Canadian speakers both to promote integration and also to help fulfill an objective of supporting family literacy in general. Because Fridays are not school days in SD64, a number of working parents take Fridays off too, making this an optimal day for a family literacy initiative. There are a number of specialist volunteers preparing to help run this program; the Foundation and SD64 will work together on this planning.

An ESL Film Night is ready to be launched for members of the ESL community to come and watch a movie followed by a guided discussion. This will provide both listening and speaking practice, often the weaker language skills amongst the ESL community. This program was adapted from the original conversation class model which struggled to achieve adequate enrolment. The ESL community on Salt Spring typically works long hours. By making the class more like a night out it may become more popular. This is already taking place on Pender Island, coming from a demand from the large number of ESL workers in two seasonal resorts there.

A variety of new workshops for both learners and tutors are in the planning stage. This summer the centre is hosting a workshop on communicating with the hard of hearing, and will go on to offer a free course in ASL if there is a need. A series of workshops on Know Your Rights (including topics such as housing rights, healthcare right, parental rights, and your rights when interacting with the police) is in the planning stage. As well, a series of day long workshops for the homeless to encourage their skill-set in appealing fields such as poetry, song writing, art, photography and graphic illustration is planned for later on this year. A series of ESL methodology workshops is planned to compliment the introductory workshops for tutors that are offered regularly.

The School District and the Foundation are working jointly to develop a financial literacy workshop for adults and youth, recognizing the breadth of what literacy can mean, and the connection between financial well-being and literacy.

The public on three islands will be partnering with Salt Spring Literacy, other literacy groups, and the School District to offer an afterschool study and homework support club, with SD64 providing advice on effective ways to support independent study in the library. This program will launch in the next school year.

Perhaps the most dramatic adjustment in the Salt Spring Literacy community plan for 2010-2011 is to expand to other Southern Gulf Islands. This is a big project; each island presents its own unique challenges not the least of which being they are separate islands, physically separated from the central core on Salt Spring. The needs on each

island vary, as do the resources available. The coordination of this effort has been challenging for the School District, and will continue to be so even with the involvement of the Salt Spring Literacy Foundation. Nonetheless, Salt Spring Literacy is committed to increasing literacy services and support across the entire school district. The society's slogan has been expanded to include a reference to the Southern Gulf Islands as opposed to just Salt Spring Island, and the society's website refers to this commitment. With the relationship between SSI Literacy and SD 64, there should be real progress by the end of the 2010-11 school year.

Measuring Progress

At this early stage of a very complex task covering five islands and over a dozen distinct communities, progress will be measured mostly through:

- seeing the implementation of new programming,
- increasing numbers of learners,
- an increased volunteer base,
- new grants and donations,
- an expansion of the subjects and fields offered by tutors and other programs,
- by reaching new parts of the Southern Gulf Island communities.

Tangible proof that the above criteria are being met in 2010-2011 will demonstrate that community based literacy continues to be developing positively in School District 64. Measuring opportunity and uptake is our current metre-stick. It is anticipated that our efforts will eventually lead to the development of more specific learner outcome and community capacity outcome measures.