

# Delta Community Literacy Committee

## Literacy Plan Report

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## **1) COMMUNITY CONTEXT**

Three important trends, reported in previous updates, continue to be present in our community. First, the municipality of Delta has a slow population growth rate with fewer children less than 19 years of age while the seniors' population is growing. As a result, there is a declining school enrolment rate that is expected to continue for a few more years. Currently seniors make up 13% of Delta's population but forecast reports indicate this could increase to 26% by 2026.

Second, the latest results of the Early Childhood Indicator (EDI) research conducted by Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) were presented to the community. In wave 4, year one (2009-2010), 27.1% of kindergarten children were vulnerable in at least one of the 5 development areas that are rated (5 areas include: physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, and communication skills). This means that there are children entering kindergarten in Delta who are not as ready for school as other children. Interestingly, the language and cognition scale (which includes some components of literacy development) has the smallest proportion of children vulnerable.

Third, within the Delta School District and contrary to the trend of declining student enrolment, there has been an increase in ESL students. In 2009-2010 there were 1549 ESL students up from 1448 in the previous year. The ESL students represent 9.4% of the total Delta student population, with most of these students residing in North Delta. The highest numbers of ESL students and highest proportion of students are in the Kindergarten to grade three age range. The EDI report referred to above notes that Delta district has a high proportion of children who speak English as a Second Language.

In considering these three important trends, the Delta Literacy Committee will continue to support family literacy projects to assist the more vulnerable children and families in our community. But at the same time we will develop the connections made through family literacy support to reach out to adults in the community who have low literacy levels that may keep them from benefitting from what our community has to offer.

## **2) LITERACY ACTION GROUP**

Delta Community Literacy Committee uses collaborative planning to address gaps in literacy support. Through partnerships, the committee provides a community literacy response to the needs of hard to reach individuals and families.

Key literacy priorities of Delta Community Literacy Committee are:

- Establish Delta as a literate community, building a supportive culture.
- Continue to strengthen collaborative school, public library and community partnerships.
- Provide opportunities for all Delta residents to participate in a wide range of learning

opportunities.

- Locate and support the literacy needs of hard-to-reach individuals and families.
- Secure funding to expand and enhance effective and promising literacy programs and practices.

The Delta Literacy Committee is composed of an Action Group and a Steering Committee. The members of the Action group include: Boys and Girls Clubs of South Coast BC, Fraser Valley Regional Library (FVRL) Delta libraries, Delta School District, DiverseCity Community Resources Society, Fraser Health Authority, Kiwanis Club of Tsawwassen/Ladner, Progressive Intercultural Community Services, Tsawwassen First Nation, and individual community members.

The Action Group has both a planning and implementation function. Literacy projects are identified by committee or community members and discussed in terms of the literacy needs the project will address, the resources and support that are available, and how the project will help to address the literacy priorities. The membership for an implementation team is drawn from the Action Group and can be expanded to include other groups and individuals interested in the project.

The Steering Committee oversees the administration of the literacy funding provided by 2010 Legacies Now (now known as Decoda Literacy Solutions). Steering Committee membership is comprised of representatives from the three sponsors of the Literacy Committee: Delta School District, Fraser Valley Regional Library – Delta libraries and Boys and Girls Clubs of South Coast BC.

### **3) COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND LITERACY COLLABORATION**

The work of the Delta Community Literacy Committee is accomplished through collaborative planning and partnerships for implementing projects. Critical to the success of our efforts are the leadership provided and the relationships established by the sponsoring organizations.

The Delta Literacy Committee held a stakeholders meeting in October, 2010 to review actions taken to date as well as to obtain feedback and suggestions for next steps.

Some key highlight from the feedback included:

1. Expand the community school model
2. Use technology to meet instead of having to drive to a meeting place  
For example – Skype, virtual meeting rooms, web pages, or social network services like– Twitter, Face book.

3. Where we have programs that are trusted, family resource centres and Strong Starts, we could use the relationship to enquire as to needs of parents.

Delta has several community planning committees to address issues in the community. In the past year we have strengthened our relationship with both the Early Childhood Development Committee and the Child and Youth Committee in order to facilitate communication and to identify common goals and opportunities to work together on projects that achieve our goals.

#### **4) 2010 – 2011 GOALS AND ACTIVITIES AND INDICATIONS OF SUCCESS**

##### **A) Family Literacy**

###### **1. PALS – Parents as Partners in Literacy**

PALS helps family members and caregivers support their preschool- or kindergarten-aged children's early literacy development. PALS sessions focus on learning through play, and include time for parents and caregivers to talk with a facilitator as well as time for adults and children to learn, play and have fun together.

In 2010, thirty-two Delta Early Childhood Educators and others were trained as PALS facilitators. The ECD educators are able use the PALS training in their day to day early learning settings. To ensure that PALS for Immigrant Communities (IPALS) and Aboriginal communities (APALS) reached families that may not otherwise access a family literacy program, an IPALS group in North Delta and APALS for South Delta were planned and implemented.

###### **1. a) PALS for Immigrant Communities (IPALS)**

IPALS group met weekly in North Delta between October and December, 2010. Attendance by parents/grandparents and preschool children averaged 20 per session. The group was conducted in both English and Punjabi. Participant feedback forms were very positive about their experience with the IPALS group. The ECE facilitators who led the group provided feedback regarding ways to improve this group when offered again. The Strong Start Facilitators and Jarvis SWIS workers were provided information to help with inviting families to participate in this program.

“This program makes my son to learn about stories. It was best change in him, I really appreciate this program. It was also fun for parents” IPALS Parent comment

##### **Indications of Success**

The three top themes of parents' feedback are:

- children's positive interaction with other children,

- the opportunity for children to have time away from their parents (learning independence) and
- Parents' time with the facilitator to learn about how to support their child's development and talk with other parents.

### **1. b) APALS for Aboriginal Communities (APALS)**

APALS group meets monthly, alternating the location between the Early Childhood HUB in Ladner and Tsawwassen First Nation. It started February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011 and will continue monthly until January 12, 2012 with a break for summer. The group meets in the early evening and shares a meal. Fifteen children and their siblings and family are the target for participation but 24 came to the February session. The facilitators have commented that the material provided in the APALS kit is creative and culturally meaningful.

The partners for this project are Tsawwassen First Nation, Surrey Aboriginal Culture Society and S. Delta Family Resource Programs (HUB)/ Boys and Girls Clubs of South Coast BC. The facilitators from each agency meet after each session to evaluate and jointly plan future sessions based on the experience and feedback from parents.

#### **Indications of Success**

A new collaborative partnership was formed to provide this group to reach the broader Aboriginal community in Delta. Early feedback from the parents, children and facilitators is very positive. Formal feedback will be conducted later.

There are opportunities for families to connect to other learning and cultural programs.

### **2. Food Bank Book Distribution**

Food Banks in North and South Delta provide space on a monthly basis for the book and literacy kit distribution. Other partners include Reading Tree which provides books, Delta libraries which provide magazines, and staff who attend quarterly meetings with information and resources on library programs.

Parents select from a range of infant, toddler, preschool and school-aged books. They have the opportunity to discuss the literacy needs of their children and are provided with information on family literacy activities and programs that support their children and themselves. On a quarterly basis, literacy kits are distributed for children. They contain activities and supplies that encourage literacy such as activity books, games, arts and crafts, journals, school supplies, etc.

At the requests of the adults, adult reading materials are now provided – books, magazines and newspapers.

Community information – information regarding low cost/no-cost family and adult literacy programs is provided to members of the community.

### **Indications of Success**

Two hundred households have access to books and literacy information that they did not have before.

Feedback surveys from participants about books/literacy kits and community information are positive:

- Survey responses indicate that the service is useful to families (both parents and grandparents) and they appreciate the opportunity to select books for their children and themselves, as well as the literacy resources which are provided through the kits.

“Good program, well organized and so great to see this program. Some families can’t afford books as well as food. Education is important and this helps families attain part of this goal.”  
Comment from Food bank volunteer.

- Parental suggestions for improvements – such as encouraging recycling of the books once they are read, having a food coupon exchange, and providing books of other interests.

### **3. Aboriginal Early Years Literacy Kit (AEY kits)**

In September 2010 the AEY kits were presented to the seven Strong Start Programs (Delta School District) and two Family Resource Programs (Boys and Girls Club). The presentation was made on a professional development day. Each kit included books, felt stories, posters, music, finger puppets, and a craft resource book. These resources were introduced into the early child development centre to help create a welcoming environment for Aboriginal families attending the program.

Elder Ruth Adams from Tsawwassen First Nation made the presentation and explained the importance of the kits. She pointed out that incorporating the various Aboriginal resources into the day to day activities of the early learning centres creates the opportunity for all children and parents, regardless of heritage to learn more about traditions and the history of the land that is shared with the Tsawwassen First Nation and the Delta community.

### **Indications of Success**

Seven Strong Start and two Family Resource Programs representing 500+ children and parents/caregivers have access to literacy resources with an Aboriginal culture focus.

As a result of the introduction of this kit, a parent in one program has become a volunteer and now provides additional cultural information and activities for the parents to use with their children.

Facilitators have provided anecdotal reports on positive impacts for individual children and parents and there is a request to provide a follow up training session for facilitators to learn ways to enhance the use of the resource materials in the kit.

#### **4. Parent Child Mother Goose (PCMG) – accredited family literacy program**

The Parent-Child Mother Goose Program is a group experience for parents and their babies and young children with a focus on the pleasure and power of using rhymes, songs, and stories together. Parents gain skills and confidence which enables them to create positive family interactions during their children's crucial early years that give their children healthy early experiences with language and communication. To meet the requirements of accreditation, facilitators must take certified training. Training was provided by the Literacy Committee for two early childhood educators from Boys and Girls Club, to ensure that sufficient facilitators are available.

To meet the community demand for Parent Child Mother Goose, the Delta libraries and the Boys and Girls Clubs of the South Coast partner together to provide nine sessions (three for each community of Delta) per year. An additional two groups were offered this year to help address the wait list.

#### **Indications of Success**

PCMG is offered three times per year in each of Delta's three communities. The groups are always full and there is always a wait list.

Parent feedback consistently commented on:

- The attachment and nurturing experience that the group provides for parent and child created through sharing songs and rhymes together
- The positive impact at home – mainly mothers attend the group but several commented on teaching their husbands the songs and the calming effect that the songs and rhymes on their child at home
- The socialization opportunities for both parent and child
- Connection with other community resources

“For me, it has been nice to have one to one connecting time. It has been great hearing my husband sing the songs even though he has never been”.  
PCMG Parent comment

## **B) Adult Literacy**

Delta has a higher than average school graduation rate and a higher level of participation in post secondary education than most communities. Among the adult learners attending Foundations or High School Completion there are three predominant groups – students recently graduated from secondary school who want to improve their grades to meet post secondary entrance requirements, adults who have been working for several years but are being held back in their career because they do not have Grade 12, and immigrant adults who are learning to speak and write English. These groups of adult learners are connected and engaged in formal adult education programs to improve their literacy skills.

However, like all communities, there are pockets within Delta of people who have lower literacy rates. Groups most at risk include people of low income, Aboriginal people, and immigrant and new Canadians with limited English. Literacy BC reports that better literacy skills among adults improves employment prospects and income, reduces dependence on social assistance, promotes health, reduces criminal behaviour, and raises productivity levels. Literacy skills are crucial for capturing and sustaining the knowledge required for the economy and labour market to develop. Improved literacy skills also help to integrate immigrants into the workforce and the community.

The Delta Community Literacy Committee will work collaboratively with adult learners and the community organizations they are connected with to develop a pilot bridging activity to help adults with low literacy skills to connect with adult education programs. Our strategies will include:

- building on the connections made through family literacy programs
- expanding our partnership with the Delta School District to include the Delta Aboriginal Advisory Committee in order to engage and support adults who may be experiencing barriers to learning
- participating with the Delta Community Employment Advisory Committee (a new committee) to provide a link with agencies and groups working with adults where low literacy skills are a barrier to employment or employment advancement.

## **C) Community Literacy**

Literacy, and the importance of supporting individuals and families in attaining higher literacy rates, is not always recognized as an important community issue. The Delta Community Literacy Committee is involved in literacy campaigns that raise awareness not only of the importance of supporting literacy skill development for individuals and families, but also of the benefits to communities when residents are literate.

Christmas Book Drive – November/December 2010 - in support of Deltassist Family and Community Services Christmas Toy Depot - A campaign to collect book donations was organized among the members of the Delta Literacy Committee as well as community groups. This year Black Bond Books in Ladner participated as a community drop off for donations along with the Delta libraries. Four hundred and thirteen books were donated. Promotion of the campaign resulted in several media announcements in support of the project.

Family Literacy Day – January 27, 2011. This annual event is supported by several of the Delta Literacy Committee members. They organize activities in their programs to celebrate the day. Resource material was circulated to assist them with their plans.

Water in Words Story Telling Contest – March 20, 2011 – World Story Telling Day – Organized by Laura Thomas, local children’s story teller. Twelve student finalists performed the short stories they submitted to the contest. The Delta Literacy Committee provided prizes for the 12 finalists and participated in the community resource information displays at the event.

Read for Life Adult Literacy Campaign – Fraser Valley Regional Library - The Delta libraries participated in an adult literacy campaign March/April of 2011. The campaign had many media elements to promote awareness of the resources available to adult learners through the library. In partnership with the Delta libraries and Delta School District Adult Basic Education, a feature newspaper article was prepared that told the stories of several adult learners who are building their literacy skills. Follow this link to see the article.

[http://www.bclocalnews.com/richmond\\_southdelta/southdeltaleader/community/118591689.html](http://www.bclocalnews.com/richmond_southdelta/southdeltaleader/community/118591689.html)

Delta School District Powwow – April 22/ 23, 2011 – Literacy display, handouts and distribution of books, literacy kits and community information. One hundred and eleven books and 23 literacy kits were distributed to families and children attending this event.

#### 4) Delta Literacy Committee 2010 – 2011 Goals and Actions

Goal	Actions	Partnerships
<b>A) Family Literacy</b>		
To support parents and families in providing their children with developmentally appropriate (early) learning and (early) literacy experiences	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. IPALS – 10 weekly sessions offered in North Delta</li> <li>2. APALS – 10 monthly sessions in South Delta, scheduled to complete January 2012</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. IPALS –North Delta Family Resource Programs, Jarvis Elementary/Strong Start Program/</li> <li>2. APALS – Surrey Aboriginal Cultural Society/ Tsawwassen South Delta Family Resource Program (HUB)/Boys and Girls Club</li> </ol>
	2. Food Bank Book Distribution	Surrey (N.Delta) and S. Delta Food Banks, Reading Branches and Boys and Girls Club/Family Resource Programs
	3. Aboriginal Early Years Literacy Kits	Delta School District – Strong Start Programs (7), Family Resource Program (2)
	4. Parent Child Mother Goose – certified training for 2 new group facilitators	Delta Libraries and Boys and Girls Club/Family Resource Programs
<b>B) Adult Literacy</b>		
To improve the communication to adult learners regarding literacy opportunities	Food Bank adult education Information sharing	See above
To learn more about the needs of adult learners in Delta	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Input from adult education programs serving Delta</li> <li>2. Build on the connections of family Literacy programs to develop projects to reach out to adults not currently accessing formal adult literacy programs</li> </ol>	<p>Work in progress</p> <p>Connecting with existing family literacy programs to explore potential partnerships for bridging programs to reach out to adults with low level literacy skills who are participating in informal programs but are not connected with formal adult education programs</p>
<b>C) Community Literacy Awareness</b>		
Increased awareness in community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Christmas Book Drive –Nov/ Dec/10</li> <li>2. Family Literacy Day Jan/11</li> <li>3. Water in Words Story telling Mar/11</li> <li>4. Read for Life Adult Learners media campaign Mar/Apr/11</li> <li>5. Delta School District Powwow – Apr/11</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Deltassist, Black Bond Books and community members</li> <li>2. Materials circulated to Strong Starts, Family Resource Programs branches for use on Family Literacy Day</li> <li>3. Sponsor of story telling contest for Delta students</li> <li>4. Delta Libraries (FVRL), Delta Adult Education, Surrey Adult Education</li> <li>5. Book Distribution</li> </ol>

## 5) Challenges

Challenges facing the Delta Community Literacy Committee:

- Time commitment for developing and maintaining collaborative efforts – there is an overlap of membership among the different community committees and staff time becomes a concern for some organizations. Some agencies and organizations have experienced restructuring that has impacted their staffing and level of involvement.
- The absence of a post secondary institution in Delta - In other communities post secondary institutions are a good source of resources, people, knowledge and materials.
- Many of the agencies providing services in Delta are not based in Delta. Finding space for meetings and projects is difficult.

## 6) The Coming Year

Priorities/Goals	Activities	Partnerships
Family Literacy – to continue to support investment of previous years projects	PALS and PCMG groups targeted to hard to reach families  Food bank book distribution  Follow up training for Early Years program facilitators for enhancing use of AEY kits	School District, Delta libraries, Family Resource Programs/Boys and Girls Club, Strong Start Programs, Reading Tree and Food banks
Adult Literacy – to develop a pilot bridging project for hard to reach adults	Invite and identify community committees and organizations to initiate the formation of collaborative	Delta Aboriginal Advisory Committee  Delta Community Employment Advisory Committee
Community Awareness and Education	Co-sponsor community event in North and South Delta for parents with new babies	Early Childhood Development Committee