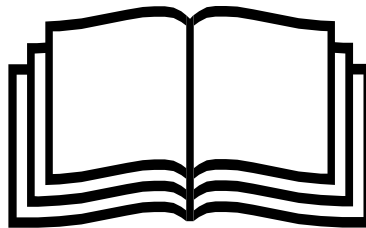

School District 22

District Literacy Plan Update

June 2013

**Vernon, Coldstream, Lumby, Lavington,
Cherryville**



We honour and respect the diversity of our communities.
Our vision is to meet the literacy needs of all.

Prepared by: Amy Doylend and Debbie Schiller, Literacy Outreach Coordinators

2006 Literacy Plan

Focus Areas

1. Increase **awareness** of literacy issues.
2. Improve **access** to and **communication** between programs and service providers.
3. Address **funding** and other supports.
4. Establish a **Literacy Centre**.

Reflections on the 2012-2013 year

1. Task Group

- a. Who takes part in the task group?
- b. How is the work organized?

As previously reported, the Task Group model was abandoned in 2011. Since that time, community tables of the North Okanagan and the board directors of our not-for-profit society have taken on the responsibilities of the Task Group.

The Board of Director's role is to:

- oversee operations of the Literacy and Youth Initiatives Society which manages the Junction Literacy Centre
- review and update a five-year Strategic Plan that ensures the viability of the Literacy Centre and honours the goals of the District Literacy Plan
- hire and supervise an Executive Director to manage daily operations and support the LOCs

LOCs sit at all community tables to:

- develop relationships and gain knowledge of community services
- identify service gaps and work collaboratively to address them (it is our experience that most areas of concern relate directly or indirectly to literacy issues)
- continue with regular meetings to implement plans, evaluate activities and make adjustments to ensure success

The Vernon community is recognized throughout the province for its ability to collaborate and cooperate with each other to meet the needs of all people in the region. For these reasons, our literacy plan is in the capable hands of the community.

2. Community Context

- a. What has happened in the community over the past year that impacts people in the community and the ability of organizations to support literacy development?

Negative Impacts

Unexpected and complete **cut of \$30,000** in funding to support LOCs (now restored). The impacts to community literacy programs and our ability to address literacy issues would have been significant. Of greater concern is the damage this has done to our relationship with Decoda Literacy Solutions. Brenda LeClair (CEO for Decoda) visited us recently to begin the healing process.

The residual effects from **teacher job action** (2011-2012) have a negative impact on the atmosphere in schools and teacher support of some of our programs.

School District (SD) 22 reports that school **enrolment** for the 2013/2014 school year will decline – creating a deficit of 2.2 million dollars.

A **lack of qualified teachers** forced the cancellation of two after school reading programs that are managed by the Junction Literacy Centre. Funding was in place but qualified teachers could not be found. With declining enrolment, many teachers leave Vernon in search of work, and others transition to other jobs.

High **unemployment** rates continue in our region. This puts added stress on families and social services. To find work, more men are working in the oil fields up north, leaving mothers to manage work, children, and households.

As of February 2013, the City of Vernon elected to **charge volunteers** \$25 to complete a Criminal Record Check (CRC). We recruit, train and place approximately 100 new literacy volunteers every year and are worried this cost will discourage new volunteers, especially seniors.

About 80% of our male volunteers are required to undergo an extra **fingerprinting** process, which delays volunteering by about 4 months and costs an additional \$25.

Positive Impacts

Loss of LOC funds **rallied our community** to advocate (successfully!). This included letters of support from SD22 trustees, Okanagan College, Community Futures, and others. The newspaper ran an article and wrote an editorial in support of the work of the LOCs and the Literacy Centre. Our Liberal MLA, Eric Foster lobbied the Education Ministry on our behalf.

CEO of Decoda met with LOCs from our region to **apologize** and re-committed her support of all LOCs and their communities.

A newly formed **Optimist club** was looking for an ideal project to meet their mandate. The LOC helped them make the connection to the Early Childhood Development Coalition (ECD) and a powerful partnership was formed. With the focus and energy of the Optimists and the guidance of the Coalition, our first Unplug & Play week was a huge success.

More **“non-traditional” partners** are involved with our Literacy Centre, sitting on our community tables, and participating in our special events.

Okanagan College is providing much needed assessments and programs to address **“Workplace Essential Skills”**. Our adult literacy partners and employment counsellors are relieved to have these services available

3. Community development and literacy collaboration

- a. What are the important collaborations that have taken place to support literacy and the work of the task group?

We are very fortunate to have a community that embraces the focus areas in our literacy plan. All of our previously reported collaborations remain important as they serve to build lasting relationships that allow us to move forward (instead of spinning in circles) and implement our plans to address the issues faced by people in our region.

- b. What are the essential ongoing collaborations?

The following Literacy Centre **financial supporters** ensure stability of our special events and literacy services:

- Nixon Wenger Lawyers: \$10,000 a year for Family Literacy programs
- Vantage One Credit Union: \$5,000 sponsorship of Family Literacy Week since 2009
- Kal Tire: \$5,000 “Presenting Sponsor” for our Spelling Bee fundraiser since 2010
- Interior Savings Credit Union: \$2,500 Spelling Bee Gold Sponsor since 2008
- ECD Coalition: \$6,000 – “For the Love of Reading” project since 2012
- Funds to provide one-on-one or small group tutoring support to “at-risk” children and youth:
 - N. Okanagan Youth & Family Services Society (NOYFSS)
 - Varying amounts from private donors
 - SD 22 & SD 22 Aboriginal Education Department
 - TD Bank, TELUS

Non-traditional and critical collaborators: Optimist Club, Okanagan Science Centre, Bannister Honda, Royal Bank (RBC), Vernon Morning Star newspaper, SUN-FM radio station

Essential community collaborators: School District 22, ECD Coalition, NOYFSS, Boys & Girls Club, Optimist Club, Vernon Library, Okanagan Indian Band, Canadian Federation of University Women, Okanagan College

- c. What makes collaborations work well?

This past year has again proven the necessity for and strength in community collaborations. It is apparent that the best collaborations happen when everyone

has a job to do and there is a sense of team accomplishment. We stand by the statements made on page 6 of the 2012 DLP Update.

4. Goals and actions for the current year

- a. What priorities, goals or objectives have you addressed this year?
- b. What actions were taken to reach these? What organizations and groups participated in these actions?

LOCs worked with the region's community tables to address the following priorities.

*Please note that one or both LOCs were instrumental in addressing the following goals.

North Okanagan Early Childhood Coalition (ECD)

Goal #1 – Achieved

Early Care and Learning Sub-Committee – address the social/emotional needs of children entering all day Kindergarten (K) so they are "ready to learn".

Actions:

1. Work with K teachers to develop tips for parents: "How to get ready for Kindergarten".
2. Provide tip sheet to parents through childcare centres, daycares, pre-schools and workplaces.
3. Work with ECEs and K teachers to develop ideas for "comfort kits" to help children get through the full day.

Partners: Boys and Girls Club, North Okanagan Neurological Association (NONA), Family Resource Centre (FRC), SD22, Vernon Library - Children's Librarian, Okanagan Indian Band (OKIB)

Indications of success: The tip sheet and comfort kit ideas are ready for distribution.

Goal #2 – Achieved

- Screen Smart/Healthy Living Sub-Committee – address the issue of too much screen time for children ages 3 to 12 years by initiating an *Unplug & Play Week* in April/May 2013.

Actions:

1. Work with Optimist Service club to sign on organizations and businesses to host playful activities for every age group.
2. Develop media and communications plan.
3. Work with SD 22 teachers who will use available Screen Smart curriculum and ensure their instruction time coincides with Unplug & Play Week activities

Partners: ECD, Optimist Club, Okanagan Science Centre, Interior Health – Nutritionist, SD 22, Allan Brooks Nature Centre, First Nations Friendship Centre (FNFC)

Indications of success: all activities (in 38 locations) were well attended – over 1700 “draw tickets” were collected and some locations had overwhelming numbers, parents and children reported delight in all the free or low-cost activities.

Report from a parent with children ages 8 and 11:

“We were screen-free for a week and it was like the boys were in with drawl it really made us realize the negative effects of too much screen time.”

Youth Table

Goal #1 – Remains under development

- Community Action Team, led by the Social Planning Council will address youth violence and drug and alcohol abuse issues by exploring program options that provide recreation, counselling and education supports to youth who have left school and are at extreme risk

Actions: youth-serving service providers met and agreed there are many youth ages 13 to 15 years who are not in school. Discussions have started re: developing a program that meets the developmental and learning needs of youth who will be referred to the program.

Partners: Teen Junction Youth Centre, NOYFSS, MCFD – Youth Justice, Restorative Justice, Community Policing, individuals who have experience with programs that address this issue.

Indications of success: discussions have begun and will continue in September.

Children in Care Table

Goal #1 – Achieved

- Help youth who “age-out” of foster care at age 19 transition more successfully into adulthood, further education, and jobs

Actions:

1. Develop list of skills to be used by Social Workers and Foster Parents to ensure youth in care are ready to live independently.

Partners: Multiple Agencies, including Foster Parents

Indications of success: the Life Skills Checklist was updated, edited for plain language and made available to all interested parties.

Family Table

Goal #1 – Set aside indefinitely

- Explore opportunities to apply for RBC *After School Reading Program* funds (\$40,000)

Actions:

1. Explored possibilities and gained needed partnerships. No parties had the capacity to manage funds as required by RBC Foundation.

Partners: FRC, NOYFSS, SD22 (Director of Student Services and Lead Literacy Teacher)

Indications of success: the success was in the discussions and realization that we will have to find another funding option.

Adult Literacy

Goal #1 – Achieved and ongoing

- Work with Community Futures to develop Essential Skills assessments and training for adults who have difficulties finding and keeping a job.

Actions:

1. Developed inventory of the variety of adult skills assessments that are available in the region.
2. LOCs hosted an information meeting re: new TOWES assessment and services provided by Okanagan College.

Note: TOWES is an effective assessment that accurately measures three Essential Skills needed for safe and productive employment: Reading Text, Document Use, and Numeracy.

Partners: Okanagan College, Community Futures, SD22 (Alternative Learning Program – Open Door), FNFC- Employment Program, Immigrant Services Society

Indications of success: assessments are in place and readily available to employment counsellors and essential skills training is underway at Okanagan College.

Aboriginal Literacy

Goal #1 – Achieved

- Work with MCFD – Aboriginal Team to provide information about family literacy programs

Actions:

1. Met with and provided staff with information and program materials re: Aboriginal PALS program.

Partners: Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) – Aboriginal Team

Indications of success: MCFD staff were familiar with the PALS program and appreciative of the materials and ideas we provided. They plan to incorporate PALS concepts into Foster Parent training and support meetings.

Goal #2 – Achieved and ongoing

- Continue to work with OKIB education staff to provide programs to families living on the reserve.

Actions:

1. Provide a *Parent-Child Mother Goose* program for families with children ages birth to 2 years. Include extra support to address speech and language issues common on the reserve.
2. Provide workshops for parents with children in grades 1 about how to support early reading and math skills at home (Come Read with Me/You Can Count on Me).
3. Provide two Aboriginal PALS sessions for families with children ages 4 to 5.
4. Address the issue of a lack of affordable and available books at OKIB, especially for children (Books on the Bus).

Partners: OKIB Education and ECD staff, SD22 – Aboriginal Education Department (funder).

Indications of success:

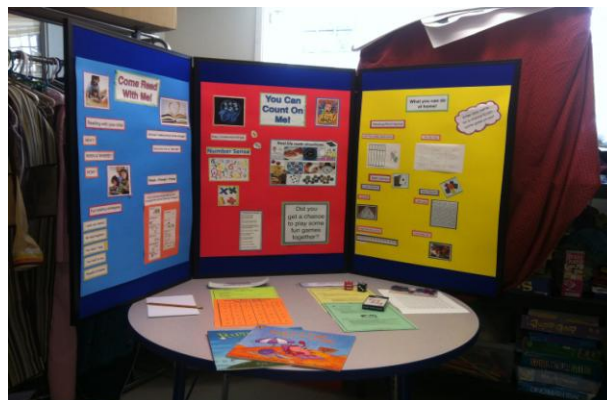
Quote from OKIB Principal/Director

“We now have a parent that rides the bus with the children. She fully supports the program and makes sure the children read and respect the books.”

Quote from father who attending A-PALS session (Storybook reading)

“I really appreciate being able to spend the time with my son and play with him at the different stations.”

Come Read with Me/You Can Count on Me display board



Parent Comments:

“The word cards are great! Thank you.”

“I love the cookie sheet idea!”

“Reader’s Theatre sounds like a fun way to read together.”

Student Comments:

“Thank you for all my stuff! I can’t wait to go home and use it all.”

“The dice games are the best!”

“I am going to use the flashlight when I read my new book tonight.”

Junction Literacy Centre

Goal #1 – Achieved

- Update Literacy Centre website: www.junctionliteracycentre.ca

Actions:

1. Develop a more current looking website that is easy to update. Create a new logo and tagline: “... spreading seeds of literacy and learning.”

Partners: patient web developer provided support at a discounted rate

Indications of success: positive response from the community about the new website. Our executive director is very happy that she can easily make changes to the site without IT support.



Goal #2 – Achieved

- Evaluate, adjust, and maintain all literacy programs and services that the literacy centre provides (see programs below).

For the Love of Reading Project

Develop various programs and events that support the love of reading concept.

- Give and Take Bookshelves (targeted to “hard to reach families)

Actions:

1. Provide free books and magazines to “hard to reach” families and individuals in the community

Partners: Canadian Federation of University Women, Salvation Army Food Bank, Vernon Secondary School, (1) Strong Start Centre, First Nations Friendship Centre, White Valley Community Resource Centre

Indications of success:



A volunteer restocks the shelves at the Food Bank every day!

Parents at the Strong Start are managing the bookshelf on their own.

Friendship Centre staff report their families are also replenishing their bookshelf.

- Books on the Bus with SD22 (targeted to school-age children and youth)

Actions:

1. Help students who endure long bus rides to develop a love of reading by providing a good assortment of high interest books and comics.
2. Encourage students to read on the bus, take books home, and return them to the bus (if they want to).
3. Improve student behaviour and safety.

Partners: SD22 – Transportation Department, volunteer sewer, Vernon Lions Club

Indications of success: Excellent feedback received from one bus driver. Another SD 22 bus driver has requested books and holders for his bus for next school year.

Quote from a Cherryville mother: *“My children are now reading chapter books because of the books on the bus.”*



The Vernon Lions Club organized a book collection and donated over 125 books to the Books on the Bus.

- Books for Babies and Toddlers (universal program)

Actions:

1. Provide age-appropriate books to families during the 6 and 18 month vaccination appointments

Partners: Interior Health Centres, Nixon Wenger Lawyers, RBC volunteer

Indications of Success:

Email from PHN and the acting Team Leader at the Vernon Health Unit:

“I see sheer delight on both the parent’s and toddler’s faces when we give out your fun books at Child Health Clinics. Often they’ll sit and read these interactive books together while waiting before or after their immunization. Distributing the books is a favourite activity of our nurses and volunteers. Giving a choice of three books adds to the fun!”



Senior’s Computer and Technology Support Program

Maintain current program with the training and information materials needed to ensure its long-term success

Actions:

1. Help seniors with their computer and technology skills.
2. Tutor in the community to address the issues of seniors living in isolation and becoming housebound.
3. Encourage seniors to explore medical and healthy living websites.

Partners: Seniors’ Bureau, Schubert Seniors’ Centre, City of Vernon (funder), Vernon Public Library

Indications of Success:

Email received from 85 year-old “Thelma” with Computer Support Program

“I just have to tell you Kathy, how much I have gained through your visits to teach me how to use this computer. I know I am far from finished with the learning process, but what I have so far has sharpened my desire for further knowledge.

Since suffering from the stroke, and consequently the concussion, I have become quite isolated, but that feeling has eased considerably now that I am able to keep in closer touch with family and friends without leaving the home.

Skills Boost Programs

- Provide after school, one-on-one/small group tutoring by qualified teachers.

Actions:

1. Hire qualified teachers to tutor children and youth whose families are not able to pay for such services.
2. Seek funding from a variety of corporate foundations, social service agencies and private donors to pay the teachers.
3. Provide feedback to donors and referring agencies re: student progress.

Partners: SD 22, SD 22 Aboriginal Education Department, variety of funding partners

Indications of success:

- demand for the program has increased over the year
 - 48 children and youth received one-on-one tutoring
 - 53 children in grades 1 to 3 participated in after school reading “clubs” at 3 elementary schools
- many children and youth made significant gains in their reading, writing or math skills
- most participants gained confidence in their ability to learn

Letter from the SD 22 “Alternate Learning Program” coordinator/teacher:

I know that the tutorial support provided, has met the special learning needs of many of our students. The Skills Boost Program fills a need by engaging our learners, providing focused academic support for them, and building their self-confidence. The teaching staff at ALP appreciates the expert assistance that the Junction Literacy Centre tutors provide for our students. I strongly endorse the program and hope that ALP students will continue to benefit from the much needed support the Junction Literacy Centre tutors provide via the Skills Boost Program.

*Please refer to our website for more information about our programs

www.junctionliteracycentre.ca

- c. What adjustments were made to the plan? That is, as the year progressed were there new opportunities or were there changes that did not allow for some actions to be taken?

Adjustments made to the 2012 Plan

- **OKIB Grade 1 parent workshops (Come Read with Me/You Can Count on Me)** were modified to increase parent participation. The workshops were combined

and provided during student-led interviews. This was very successful and we were able to reach every family.

- **NEW Soup and Stories event during Family Literacy Week**
Families were invited to the Okanagan Science Centre to enjoy a warm cup of alphabet soup and listen to an old-fashioned story. Silver Star Rotary members made and served the soup.
- NEW program called **Pawsitive Reading** began in May. Children who struggle with reading, read out-loud to a trained St. John Ambulance therapy dog. We worked closely with the Boys & Girls club to provide this program. 10 children were selected to read 20 minutes once a week for a total of 7 weeks with the therapy dog, "KC".
- **SD 22 Books on the Bus** program was dropped from one bus route. The driver had a difficult time with behaviour management. Another driver has requested the program for next school year.
- **After School Reading Program** was funded for (5) schools, but reduced to (3) schools because of a lack of qualified teachers.
- **Books for Babies and Toddlers** was expanded to support the Nurse Family Partnership Program through Interior Health. The families in this program also receive a book at birth and 2 years.

5. Indications of Success:

- a. How do you know that actions taken are working to support literacy?
What impact have the literacy initiatives had? It is important to include examples to illustrate the impact.

(See Question 4 – Indications of success)

- b. What are the things that support literacy work?

This year, the board and staff of the Junction Literacy Centre created an annual **Literacy Award**. The award is named in honour of Ruth Kovacs, a dedicated volunteer with the One to One Children's Literacy Program. It will be given each September (International Literacy Month) to an individual, business or organization that demonstrates Ruth's exceptional commitment to literacy.

Our organization also hosted the 6th annual Adult **Spelling Bee** fundraiser. 145 people participated in the fun morning event which raises funds (\$19,600) and also helps us increase awareness of literacy issues and the programs that address them.

Our literacy work is also supported by:

Training - hundreds of volunteers and parents to read with children in ways that improves confidence and passes on a love of reading. This builds our community's capacity for literacy awareness.

Increasing public awareness - through traditional and social media (Vernon Morning Star, SUN FM Radio, Junction Literacy Centre website, face book page).

Community involvement and participation - with traditional and non-traditional partners.

Networking - with other Literacy Outreach Coordinators about twice a year in the Okanagan/Shuswap/Thompson region. We eagerly share our programs, services and best practices with each other.

Community presentations – LOCs often provide power point presentations to service clubs and other interested groups.

The Junction Literacy Centre - is a resource centre for information about all literacy programs and services in the region. It is also the home base for the LOC and other literacy coordinators and a gathering place for community partners as we work towards a healthy and prosperous society.

Currently, the Centre manages:

- *One to One Children's Literacy* program – hosted by all 16 elementary schools
 - 14 SD 22 schools, one private school and the OKIB Cultural school
 - 150 trained volunteers read with over 250 children each year
 - Volunteers give over 3,000 hours every year to this program
- *Skills Boost* program
 - Qualified teachers provide one-on-one and small group tutoring to children whose families are not able to pay (includes the After School Reading programs, One-on-one tutoring and Baby Steps to Grad)
- *For the Love of Reading initiative* that includes:
 - Books for Babies & Toddlers, Books on the Bus, Give and Take Bookshelves, OKIB family literacy programs
- *Come Read with Me/You Can Count on Me* workshops for parents with children in grade 1
- *Family Literacy Week* – media campaign, Screen Smart awareness and children's book exchange
- *Senior's Computer and Technology Support* program – we match volunteers to seniors who call us for help
- *Pawsitive Reading Program* in collaboration with the Boys & Girls Club

6. Challenges

- a. What are the difficulties?
 - Fear that we will lose core funding for the LOC position, especially after the decrease in funds in 2011/12 and temporary cuts in 2013.
 - Decline in volunteer recruitment over the last 2 years
- b. What would help?
 - Reliable and fair core funding for the LOCs that respects the impact they have on community literacy development.
 - A provincial and local campaign that highlights the personal and community benefits of volunteerism.

Goals and Priorities for the Coming Year

Are there new opportunities, challenges, or issues in your community? How will you respond to those?

Challenges:

- many children still do not have their own books at home
- the EDI continues to be high in our region (38%), although we expect to see an improvement once this year's results are available
- Parent attendance at "Come Read with Me and You Can Count on Me" workshops is very low in "high needs" schools. We are planning some creative ways to offer these terrific workshops to all families.

Goals and Priorities for the Coming Year

LOCs will work with the region's community tables to address the following priorities:

1. Early Childhood Development Coalition
 - Early Care and Learning Sub-Committee – continue to address social/emotional needs of children transitioning into Kindergarten
 - establish an Early Years Fair (provide ASQ screening)
 - support new daycare opportunities in elementary schools (Ellison Elementary)
 - host parent workshops (Boys & Girls Club)
 - Unplug & Play Sub-Committee
 - maintain and expand on the success of our first Unplug and Play week
2. Youth Table – continue to collaborate with partners to plan a program and seek funding for out-of-school/barely in school youth 13 to 15 years old.

3. Junction Literacy Centre Programs

- evaluate, adjust, and maintain the literacy programs and services provided by the centre:
 - continue to work with community members to acknowledge and address **gaps** in literacy programs and services
 - advocate for the **re-instatement** of the Books on the Bus program with SD22 (to be removed due to safety concerns and lack of proper testing – we have asked that the testing be completed)
 - work with elementary school staff to **improve attendance** at grade 1 parent workshops
 - seek funding for a **“financial literacy”** program aimed at grade 3 students

What will be required to meet the goals and effectively employ actions for the coming year?

We will:

- maintain excellent communications with partners/collaborators/funders
- adjust and expand partnerships as we address new issues
- address funding needs as they arise
- continue to believe in and to pursue our vision that *the literacy needs of every person in the North Okanagan are met*