



**Salt Spring Island  
Public Library**

**School District No. 64 (Gulf Islands)**

**District Literacy Plan**

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## **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 Southern Gulf Islands School District has eleven schools, ten of which are in the Southern Gulf Islands and one that is in North Vancouver (not serviced by other Southern Gulf Islands service providers other than SD64).

Approximately 640 students in grade 9 through 12 attend Gulf Islands Secondary School (GISS), 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). Some students are not able to commute by water taxi but are able to connect with their peers directly at organized monthly gatherings or virtually by computer.

Adult learners in the Southern Gulf Islands are supported by Salt Spring Literacy, Salt Spring Library, Salt Spring Community Services and through various distance education institutions such as SIDES. Post secondary students who are in need of tutoring can often find help at Salt Spring Literacy or the Salt Spring Library. Salt Spring Literacy invigilates exams for over seven post secondary institutions.

**Community Based Literacy Programming**  
**Geographical region: SD64**  
**2012 Progress Update**

**Task Group**

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Community consultation facilitated by the Literacy Outreach Coordinator (LOC) occurred in many ways in 2012-2013:

**Salt Spring Literacy Board**

The board represented a variety of community members; retired educators, politicians, government workers, social workers, university students, general community members and adult learners.

**Working Committees of 2012-2013**

- Vocational Rehabilitation:
  - representatives from Salt Spring Literacy, Salt Spring Community Services, a vocational rehab expert, business owners and volunteer students
- English as a Second Language:
  - University level experts and former instructors, ESL tutors and interested community members, Salt Spring Literacy representatives

**Extended Community Consultation**

Members of the wider community are encouraged to give input through a variety of contexts. The LOC and other literacy staff and volunteers do outreach in the community (community meetings, sitting on other boards or task groups, and one to one), the downtown Literacy Centre is a hub where people can drop in and learn about plans for the future, ways to participate or make their own suggestions, and a weekly news email is sent to approximately 300 community members.

## Community Context

The economic downturn continues in the region. Food bank usage continues to be unusually high and there is anecdotal evidence that once again this summer the tourist dollars will not equal those of previous years. In response, the newly established Community Economic Development Commission is developing a short- and long-term economic development strategy for the island. It is hoped this will be finalised in time for next year's District Literacy Plan. As the strategy is likely to have recommendations for the community this may impact future projects for Salt Spring Literacy.

Beacon Community Services took over operations in April 2012 for the employment support on island. The change in management did mean the downtown shop-front unemployment office was closed. The new employment office is located inside a larger facility, slightly out of town, in the Community Service buildings. The benefits of this move include a cheaper rent and easier access for those already using Community Services (mental health counselling, the food bank and the New Beginnings Vocational Rehabilitation Program etc).

It should be noted there is a change in the funding arrangement with Beacon operating under a fee for service model. Although this may offer taxpayers better value for money it might also mean that those requiring a greater input of time (the more needy) are overlooked in favour of a quick return (the less needy). Crucially however, some key staff transferred from CARE to Beacon. This means relationships between Beacon and existing community organisations (Literacy, IWAV, SSICS, Library etc) continue as does the relationships with community members.

The Salt Spring Public Library has reopened in its exciting new facility. During construction some library services were interrupted (computer support, exam invigilation) and Salt Spring Literacy took over provision of these services for the community. The new library is open with a much larger capacity, including meeting rooms, large activity room and with updated computers secured with support from Salt Spring Literacy and a donation from the Salt Spring Foundation. The strong partnership between the Library and Literacy may mean that new services are provided through collaboration utilising the new space. The need for computer access and support increased dramatically for Salt Spring Literacy during their renovations since the new building has opened; most community members are able to access newer computers at the library. The library has also undertaken a "Tech Café" series and is increasing their techno-literacy programming. Book launches and author speaker series are also being facilitated. Those learners that are already established, who require drop in support, or whom cannot or will not access the library, continue to access services at Salt Spring Literacy.

The increase last year in second stage housing for women connected with the local Transition House has provided better access to literacy services. The purchase, a collaboration between Island Women Against Violence and Abbeyfield has increased housing stability for women formerly residing in the transition house. This has allowed for more learners who have access to stable housing also access to literacy services in the community. Any increase in affordable housing assists literacy development in our community.

Salt Spring Literacy in partnership with Salt Spring Community Services continues to run a full time vocational rehabilitation program funded by the United Way of Greater Victoria until December 30, 2013. On July 1, 2013 Salt Spring Community Services will take the lead on the project and Salt Spring Literacy will take on the role as supportive agency. This program, intended for people with notable and multiple barriers to employment (addiction, mental health issues, long term income assistance recipients), has proven so needed and so successful that the larger organization was determined to be most suitable to take the lead. Through literacy support ranging from traditional literacy skills through to life skills, participants are fully supported for six months as they learn to reengage with the local workforce.

This program was developed as the result of research conducted by the Literacy Society in previous years, and a successful trial of life skills workshops in 2011. Although the health authorities had identified the need for a vocational rehabilitation program for the island a number of years ago the funding was reassigned to another region before the program became operational. The current program is operating at full capacity with 14 to 19 learners per 4-month session.

### **Literacy: K to 12 Update**

As in all districts in BC, literacy continues to be a central focus. Here are a list of some of the current programs and strategies that support literacy for the K to 12 population on the Southern Gulf Islands.

<b>Program/Strategy Name</b>	<b>Grades/Students</b>	<b>Description</b>
Changing Results for Young Readers	K – 3	The goal of the Changing Results for Young Readers initiative is to increase the number of BC children who are engaged, successful readers. This initiative focuses on current research and an understanding of what fosters reading success. Educators from seven district schools were involved in active and ongoing classroom inquiry as part of this initiative.
French Immersion Program	5 – 12	A diagnostic and leveled reading program was introduced and implemented in the District’s French Immersion Program. In addition, support continued for the Grade 5 AIM language learning. Existing literacy programs were enhanced by teacher professional developing activities.
Buddy Reading	K – 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 – 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	1 – 5	Teacher reads aloud to students daily while students eat lunch.
Guided Reading	K – 8	Daily reading instruction in small groups using “just right” texts with students of similar reading abilities. Groupings change based upon development and need.
Home Reading	K – 5	Students take reading materials home to practice reading with parents/siblings, grandparents each night. This is the main form of homework in these grades.
Journal Writing	K – 12	Students write (or draw 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.
Adult mentors and volunteers	K-12	

### **Community Development and Collaboration**

Collaboration continues to be one of the key factors in supporting literacy in our community. Perhaps the most important collaboration for literacy on Salt Spring Island in 2012/2013 is between Salt Spring Island Community Services (SSICS) and Salt Spring Literacy. Although there has been a connection for a number of years, in 2011 it was formalised with a joint program funded by the United Way of Greater Victoria. This was a six-month trial of life skill workshops for people with mental health and addiction issues. In 2012 the funding was extended to run a full time, year round program.

This much needed and overdue program is life changing for the more marginalised members of our community. The collaboration was the crucial factor both in securing the funding and in operating the program. This is an ongoing collaboration, with roles and responsibilities shifting and developing as the program itself develops.

Other important collaborations this year in our community include:

### Community Collaboration

Long established and ongoing collaboration between local organisations for community development and literacy include SD64, the Salt Spring Public Library and Salt Spring Literacy. Current trends in Literacy support diversity in approaches to Literacy that include increased inter-agency partnerships, holistic literacy support that includes food security, financial and legal literacy, self-advocacy and non-violent communication. Increased collaboration between community agencies has created a wonderful foundation for increasing literacy in the community.

<b>Goals and Actions for 2012-2013</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Partner</b>	<b>Adjustment</b>
One to one tutoring	Continued	N/A (although many agencies refer learners to Literacy)	None.
Employment support	The vocational rehab program	SSICS/ Salt Spring Literacy/ United Way	Ongoing partnership with SSICS and funding from the United Way of Greater Victoria enabled this full time program.
Support for mental health and addiction	The vocational rehab program, Yellow Sub	SSICS	A partnership with SSICS and funding from the United Way of Greater Victoria enabled this full time program.
Outer Island support	Planning	Creating connections between SD64 and the libraries on the outer islands	As no funding has yet been secured Literacy is currently expanding our online resources.
ESLSAP	Continued and expanded	Possible future support from SS Archives	In addition to the ESLSAP program and English Practice Groups, A revamp of the programs wrapped up in May 2013.

Tutor support and handbook	Adjustments underway	N/A	There has been an increase in tutor training and support. The Salt Spring Literacy Resource centre/library has expanded and is an invaluable centre accessible by educators on the Southern Gulf Islands. The Tutor Handbook is due to be finished July 2013. A tutor survey was completed.
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**SD64 Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement**

This was a transition year for Aboriginal Education in School District No. 64. We were working under the goals of our first Enhancement Agreement (EA) as we progressed towards writing and eventually signing our second EA. As a result of this transition time, we continued to support our students with the guidance of the goals in the first EA.

On May 20, 2013 our Aboriginal Education Advisory Council, School Board Trustees, Superintendent, parents, community members and the Ministry of Education met on Galiano Island and signed our new Enhancement Agreement. We are very proud of our new EA and look forward to implementing the goals / strategies / action plan over the next five years.

The following goals were in place to support the development of Aboriginal students in School District No. 64:

- 1) All Aboriginal students will achieve academic excellence.
- 2) All Aboriginal students will demonstrate an increased sense of belonging.
- 3) All students will demonstrate a deeper understanding and appreciation of the histories, languages and cultures of the Aboriginal communities from an Aboriginal perspective.

**Challenges**

The persistent challenges in the region remain the same. Geographic isolation, under-housing and insecure housing, lack of public transportation, limited resources and lack of income security. Lack of secure funding, as seen when the funding for the Literacy Outreach Coordinator position was cut from Salt Spring Literacy. We anticipate this funding only to be secure for the current fiscal year. Transfer of the ESLSAP program from the provincial to the federal government drastically changes the context for English as a Second Language funding to rural communities like ours.



## **For the Coming Year**

June 30, 2013 was the Grand Opening for the new Library on Galiano Island. The library will be an invaluable resource for the island and a great literacy resource. Public programming is set to begin right away with a summer reading program. There is a meeting room that can be accessed for individual or group study sessions.

Continuing with the momentum that has been gained over the last 12 months, we hope to collaborate more between the islands on projects already in place such as making distribution hubs for the Salt Spring Travelling Book Box, doing workshops and classes in collaboration with the Salt Spring Library, collaborate on the implementation of the new Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement, contribute to local food security initiatives and programs, and support the further development of the vocational rehabilitation program.