

District Literacy Plan for 2012-13
Quesnel, BC
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Literacy Outreach Coordinator: Rebecca Beuschel

The District Literacy Plan 2012 – Quesnel, SD #28

Executive Summary

Each year, the Board of Education submits an update of the literacy plan to the Ministry of Education. The literacy plan is a reflection of the activities offered within the geographical boundaries of SD #28. The plan does not need to be re-written every year, it only needs to be updated using the guiding questions provided by Decoda Literacy Solutions Society, in conjunction with the Ministry of Education.

The plan reflects the goals and objectives for literacy development in our community. Some of the goals are multi-year goals and some are on-going. When new goals or activities are created, these are reflected in the annual update of the District Literacy Plan.

Literacy Quesnel Society (LQS) exists to provide literacy support to the community of Quesnel. Through the work of the Literacy Outreach Coordinator (LOC), activities and services are initiated, coordinated, supported and or enhanced so that literacy is accessible for groups and individuals.

Literacy Quesnel Society works broadly within the community (this is detailed in the plan). Key partnerships exist to support this work. One fundamental partnership is between the society and School District #28. Many literacy activities happen as joint ventures and these are described in the plan but the LOC meets regularly with the Literacy Resource Teacher as well as annually with the Superintendent and the Director of Instruction - Curriculum (or more often if required) and these 'standing' meetings are critical for successful communication and the development of good literacy practices. Much of the literacy success we experience in Quesnel is derived from maintaining good relationships and open communication, and the connection we have with School District administration is a good example of a successful relationship leading to many valuable actions.

The District Literacy Plan 2012 – School District # 28 (Quesnel)

Guiding Questions

Reflections on the current year:

1) Task Group:

a. Who takes part in the task group?

The task group, which we have re-named 'The Working Committee', is made up of five individuals:

- Vicki Esplen, Literacy Resource Teacher, School District #28
- Sandy Meidlinger, Supported Child Development Coordinator, Child Development Centre
- Karen Grunau, private tutor
- Elizabeth Hunter, Museum and Heritage Manager, City of Quesnel
- Janet Brooks, Chief Operating Officer (COO), Literacy Quesnel Society
- Rebecca Beuschel, Literacy Outreach Coordinator (LOC), Literacy Quesnel Society

b. How is the work of this group organized?

Last year, our literacy society worked on strategically defining and separating tasks and purposes. This process is on-going and will be reviewed on an annual basis when the board of directors and the working committee members come together for a team building day in the fall of 2012.

At present, the board of directors meets once every 3 months. Janet Brooks, our COO, organizes the activities of the board and the meetings in terms of setting the agenda and attending to the details of the society.

Our Board of Directors are:

- President, Vicki Esplen, SD #28
- Vice President, Sandy Meidlinger, Child Development Centre
- Treasurer, Kiley Sales, SD #28, Continuing Ed
- Secretary, Poonam Miglani, community volunteer
- Director at Large, John Havens, retired physician
- Director at Large, Beverlee Preston, Pregnancy Outreach Program

The working committee meets approximately once every six weeks. We found that meeting every month was not necessary at this point in our growth but every two months did not give us enough contact or continuity. We have found that the work of the group has usually defined the number of meetings we hold in each quarter of the year. The working committee (formerly the task force) provides feedback to the LOC, acts on the day-to-day activities of the society, develops new project ideas and focuses on on-going outreach activities we are involved in.

2) Community Context:

a. What has happened in the community

Since our last report there has been no significant action in the community to dramatically alter the economic realities or the less tangible "mood" of the community. With a resource based economy, we believe there is a certain tension linked to the vulnerability of being a community dependent on the forestry industry, but for the present, Quesnel seems to be continuing along at a reasonable pace.

- We have a new BC Employment Services Centre – Work BC, which is the result of a provincial initiative intended to streamline services and resources throughout the province.
- To accommodate the needs of the new centre, we moved our office upstairs in the same building.

- There is speculation around mining and significant economic growth in the outlying area of Nazko (approx. 100kms West of Quesnel) which is also one of the larger local Aboriginal reserves.

A recent initiative of the City of Quesnel is the fundraising for a new multi-centre. This is a multi-year project which will have a positive impact on the economy and scope of activities for Quesnel once completed.

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?**

The important collaborations are the ones that allow the work of literacy development to happen in Quesnel. These developments differ in size and impact but all are important. We believe that if an activity impacts the life of just one person in a positive way, then it is an important development. Collaborations with our community services and groups/businesses/companies represented by the individuals on the working committee and the board are crucial to our success. Below is a list of some of these collaborations and the activities they support.

Collaborating agency

North Cariboo Aboriginal Family Program Society
 Cariboo Regional District Library
 Quesnel and District Parent Advisory Committee (DPAC)
 School District 28 (and many individual schools)
 Child Development Centre
 Pregnancy Outreach Society
 Ministry of Children and Family Development
 Quesnel and District Museum and Archives
 Quesnel Rotary Club
 Quesnel Lions Club
 Northern Health – public health nurses
 Quesnel Employment Services
 City of Quesnel
 Quesnel Child, Youth and Family Network Society
(Network Committees include: Adult Services Team, Parent Child Resource Team & Children First, Success By Six)

Sample activity

Tutor training/CALP
 Providing space & support
 Funding support for workshops
 One to One, Roots of Empathy, B of D
 Joint funding workshops, B of D
 Presenting to clients, B of D
 Committee collaboration
 Event support, working committee
 Fundraising, LQS board
 One to One program support
 Books for Babies
 Potential partnership discussed
 Committee participation, story time
 Funding workshops, committees

* B of D = Board of Directors

b. **What are the essential ongoing collaborations?**

The essential collaborations that support ongoing projects are with School District #28, Child Development Centre, Northern Health, North Cariboo Aboriginal Family Program Society, Lions Club, Rotary Club and our committed volunteers on the Board, the working committee members and those involved in volunteering with programs.

c. **What makes collaborations work well?**

Collaborations work well when there is common interest, a shared mandate and a level of trust amongst organizations and the people guiding them. Collaborations and partnerships require time and understanding. No one can be rushed or pushed into working together. Creating opportunities so groups can participate to varying degrees allows for people or groups to contribute as they can and does not place unnecessary restrictions on them.

4) Goals and actions for the current year:

a. What priorities, goals or objectives have you addressed this year?

- i) Strategic Planning
- ii) Expanding our activities and outreach
- iii) Delineating task force activities from board activities

b. What actions were taken to reach these? What organizations and groups participated in these actions?

- i) A session on strategic planning. Our first step was organizing a day of professional development for the board and working committee members. We arranged for a facilitator outside of our group to lead us through the day's activities. This action was positively received by everyone as the day's outcomes included new working relationships, common understandings, the foundations for new vision and mission statements and goals for the society. We have since decided to make this an annual activity. This day has helped us set a strong sense of who we are, what we are doing and why we are doing it!

- The Roots of Empathy program became a part of our outreach activities. The LOC was facilitating this program on a volunteer basis and it was decided that the link to literacy is strong and we wanted to include it.
- Free story time events continued in various locations throughout the community.
- A series of workshops on Emotional Literacy was organized with over 300 secondary school students and adults participating (funding contribution from Children First)
- A breakfast open house event was hosted when we moved to our new location.
- A community word building game (Word Wizards) was organized, together with some of the downtown businesses in celebration of family literacy day (January 26).
- Involvement in the Community Response Network (CRN) financial literacy 101 training.

- ii) The task force activities are defined as day to day activities. The board activities centre on policy and budget details. Specific committees of the board have been designed to focus on key areas such as policy and procedure manual, insurance and budget.

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?

- We were faced with the unexpected news that we needed to relocate. BC Employment Service Centre (Work BC) was newly contracted to a local company who required the entire floor of the location we were in to house their new offices. We worked together with them, and our landlord, to negotiate a space in the same building but on a different floor. The employment agency was very cooperative in helping us move to our new location and helped arrange for new signage. As a result of relocating, we held a breakfast open house event and invited all community members. We had 26 people visit our space and some of these people have attended subsequent literacy events.
- We responded to unforeseen requests to reinstate a program at one of the rural schools. The Parents In Education (PIE) program was one we have run in the past and the request came to offer it again. The program focuses on parents as advocates for their children within the school setting and offers activities to help parents understand the school system and the curriculum.
- We were asked to assist with literacy assessments of members of the Nazko First Nation. There is potential for economic growth in that area and the band manager wanted to be prepared for training needs. We helped facilitate the assessments.

- We are able to respond to needs in a timely manner because we have a paid LOC with the flexibility to go where the need exists. By having an LOC we are able to develop a trusted presence and develop partnerships with community groups who can call on us.

5) Indications of success:

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

- Since moving into our new space, which is at street level, we have had several people walk in and inquire about literacy programs or support. We have had increased interest in our activities and had 2 people attend our AGM who had never been in touch with us before. This supports our idea that having a literacy office in a central location will help increase the awareness and access to literacy support.
- We have been able to supply the community with 2 additional bright red bookshelves, one of which has gone to the community centre and school in the aboriginal community of Nazko. The other unit is planned for the Tourist Information Centre.
- There has been an interest in expanding the One to One Literacy program to Red Bluff Lhtako Elementary. We currently have the literacy program at two schools and hope to build on this success, by expanding to a new location in September 2012.
- In celebration of family literacy day, we organized a game in the community similar to “scrabble”. Local businesses had bags of random letters. Participants had to visit the businesses to get letters to build words. There were prizes for participants at the end of the game period. This was the first time that local businesses had joined with us for a specific literacy initiative.
- Quesnel Rotary Club hosted a fundraising dinner “A Toast to India” and designated half of the proceeds to go towards supporting a literacy project in Quesnel and the other half to a project in India. The details of the local project are under development.
- Last May, the LOC travelled to the remote aboriginal community of Kluskus, together with members of Quesnel Rotary, the RCMP and the Lieutenant Governor, Steven Point and his staff. The trip was intended to strengthen ties amongst the groups participating. Quesnel Rotary Club is working with the LOC and members of the band to develop and support a suitable project.

b. What are the things that support literacy work?

- Funding that is not tied to specific activities but that supports literacy growth in whatever form it requires.
- Literacy Outreach Coordinator position. This enables work to be done, initiatives to be started and relationships to be built in support of literacy development.
- Support for the LOC. Decoda has just employed a person to fill this role and it is important as a network of support helps to build and sustain the person doing the work at the local level.
- Community interest and support.

6) Challenges:

a. What are the difficulties?

- Funding is an on-going challenge. The support we receive from Decoda Literacy Solutions Society is tremendous but is restricted to supporting the activities of the LOC. As we continue to grow as a society, we will have to determine ways to find funding for administration and rent amongst other things. We would like to develop a contingency fund but we are not sure if this will give the impression of having money and not spending it. The reality is that funding agencies want their money spent but as a responsible group,

we also want to be able to put a safety net into place, should we ever be faced with the scenario of downsizing our service to the community or closing our centre. A contingency fund would allow us to continue operating for a month or two to find alternative funding or close things up rather than suddenly shutting the doors. We feel it is a sensible and prudent way to operate and therefore need to determine if this is considered a legitimate budget item.

- Reaching the people that may benefit from support, but for whatever reason do not access that support continues to be a challenge. We continue to offer an array of activities in the hopes of attracting more people, specifically those hard to reach individuals.
- One of our hopes is that we could have representation from our local public library on our board. At this point, due to limited flexibility in their staffing we have been unable to secure a representative. Library staff members participate in our activities and support us by supplying a venue for events such as story time and our Word Wizards game.

b. What would help?

- Secured funding for long term planning
- Face to face networking opportunities for LOCs. Bringing everyone together is a huge expense but perhaps there could be rotating opportunities to meet with LOCs outside of set regions so that valuable sharing and networking can happen.

For the coming year:

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

The newly opened Work BC (Employment Services Centre) has the potential to create new opportunities for programs and partnerships with our outreach program. We plan on working with the staff or the centre in the fall to determine needs and develop activities.

2. What goals, priorities or objectives will you work on in the coming year? What actions are planned against those goals?

- Expanding workshop opportunities and activities to reach young people. We coordinated the emotional literacy workshops and included 260 grade 8 & 9 students. There is significant interest in having the grade 8 students participate in social media workshops that we are coordinating for September 2012.
- LQS development and team building. In the fall of 2011 we devoted a day for professional development for all board members and committee members. We were able to get to know one another more, set some strategic directions for our activities and share our hopes and preferences for literacy development in Quesnel. We have planned another similar day in the fall of 2012.

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

Financial stability: As with any activity, there needs to be surety of money so the activities can move ahead. We hope the position of the LOC and the funding required to sustain the outreach activities and the support of our society will continue.