

# DISTRICT AND COMMUNITY LITERACY PLAN

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## Reflections on the 2011 – 2012 Year

### 1. 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?*

The communities of Surrey and White Rock have continued to grow and to become increasingly ethnically diverse. Surrey gains over 1000 new residents each month, including refugees who often have very few literacy skills in their own languages and are struggling to cope with their new country. Surrey and White Rock together now contain an estimated population of almost 500,000 people living in a total area of 328 square kilometres. Greater need for literacy support coupled with reduced funding has increased the challenge for organizations to meet the communities' literacy needs. However, both the Surrey School District and Surrey Libraries continue to maintain the same high level of delivery of literacy services to their clients.

Supporting literacy learning for all students remains a priority for the Surrey School District. As the largest district in the province, it is one of the few that continues to increase in size each year. As stated in the Board of Education's goals, particular emphasis has been placed on supporting Aboriginal learners, students who have special needs, English Language Learners and those students who are disadvantaged by poverty or other barriers to learning. In addition, significant efforts are being made to help parents support their children through a variety of family literacy initiatives.

Addressing literacy issues has been, and continues to be, a focus for the City of Surrey. The City of Surrey and Surrey Libraries, in conjunction with their community partners, continue to work on achieving the recommendations identified in the Learning for Life Strategy which came out of the Mayor's 2006 Task Force on Literacy and Early Childhood Development. Work on some of the recommendations is complete while others entail an ongoing commitment and review.

The over 100 organizations involved in providing support for literacy continue to look for creative ways to work together to address the needs of our citizens. The organizations that provide literacy services (mainly English Language Learning), as well as settlement services and employment programs, have spent much of their time crafting funding applications and seeking partnerships in order to continue receiving federal funding for language training, settlement and employment programs. Because the ELSA funding was not renewed for some of the major providers, learners will not be able to find all the services they need through a single agency.

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## 2. Task Group

### *a. Who takes part in the task group?*

The Surrey White Rock Community Literacy Implementation Team is comprised of core members from the Surrey School District, Surrey Libraries, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Community non-profit organizations, the Board of Trade, and members of the community at large. The core team members are very committed to literacy but the complexities of their daily work limit the time they have available to give to the team.

### *b. How is the work of this group organized?*

This core team meets on an “as needed” basis in person, and is kept apprised of literacy issues and events through email communication. Twice a year Literacy Roundtables are held and the invitation to attend is extended to all interested organizations. This year attendees learned about the successful implementation of the Volunteer Tutor Training Program and participated in creating the idea for the Raise a Reader proposal. At these Roundtables there is also the opportunity to share information about other literacy work.

## 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?*

Significant collaborations among agencies delivering literacy services have occurred this past year. Some of the collaborations that occurred are described below:

- “Surrey Kids Read” is an example of just one of many collaborative literacy projects that Surrey Libraries are involved with. Held at Guildford Library this year because of renovations occurring at Guildford Town Centre Mall, this event promotes awareness of the importance of early learning and its role in preparing children for success at school. Surrey Libraries work with SD36, Guildford Town Centre Mall, and the Surrey Leader Newspaper to organize and fund the event. In addition, the Office of Early Learning and Care, the Learning Disabilities Association, Fraser Health, Surrey Parks and Recreation, and Options are all involved and sponsor information tables where families can learn about some of the many services the community offers.
- Surrey Libraries instituted a Library Hour for Adults with Developmental Disabilities and continues to build the resources for this group of clients. An innovative program that is not offered elsewhere in the community, or through other library systems, this program has now been extended to two additional locations. This program is very well attended, with over 60 clients and caregivers attending. At the City Centre location, a young woman with Down syndrome leads the group in song and assists in teaching the group some basic sign language skills.

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- The Aboriginal Department of SD36 collaborated with the Kekinow Housing Society to deliver Family Literacy programs to preschoolers and their caregivers. The Aboriginal Helping Teacher visited each of the five Kekinow Complexes to deliver multiple PALS sessions (Parents as Literacy Supporters), a family literacy program designed to engage families in literacy activities and provide culturally appropriate books to all participants.
- The Proof of Concept for a one-on-one Volunteer Tutor Training Program, with SD36 and Surrey Libraries as partners, became a reality beginning with orientation in September, tutor training in October, and tutor/learner matching in November and beyond. The program has enjoyed success, and plans are to continue and expand it for 2012-2013.

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

In Surrey and White Rock we are fortunate that Surrey Libraries and Surrey School District have worked, and continue to work, closely together with each other. As well, both have a history of outreach and collaboration with many non-profit and service agencies in the community. Through their work they are able to encourage connections between agencies and groups that might not otherwise occur.

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

Successful ongoing collaboration occurs when all parties involved have a common purpose, when all parties can benefit from the collaboration, and when the competition for funds is taken out of the equation. In addition, there needs to be mutual trust and respect, and time to do the necessary groundwork.

## **4. Goals and Actions for the Current Year:**

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

In 2011, the Implementation Team identified one-on-one adult literacy tutoring as a priority goal, and this was the focus of the 2011-2012 year.

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

A Literacy Outreach Coordinator, with literacy practitioner background, was hired to implement the Tutor Training Program. The program commenced with orientation and training in September/October, using the curriculum developed the previous spring. Tutor/learner matching took place in November, and continued throughout the year as needed. Tutors who were trained in the fall are still matched with tutoring students. Partners included Surrey Libraries, SD36, Vancouver Drug Court (for their Surrey residents), and the Aboriginal Training and Education Centre.

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- b. *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?*

The Tutor Training Program was executed as planned. The initial target of ten tutors and ten students was not met, as only eight tutors were available for training.

In addition to the Tutor Training Program, there was an opportunity to create another smaller literacy project, related to health/dental and nutrition literacy, through funding that became available from Raise a Reader. This program will involve PICS, Surrey Libraries, Douglas College, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, and other possible organizations that will join us in the fall when the program is implemented.

### 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 samples to illustrate the impact.*

The responses of community members and literacy providers involved make it clear that our actions have made a positive difference in their lives. Here is a sampling of their reactions from the various demographics impacted:

- Aboriginal parents commented on the Aboriginal resources used, and appreciated the Aboriginal books that were available. Parents talked about reading to their children and how they enjoyed doing so. One parent commented, "I think I will cut the cable and just read to my kids."
- A caregiver of an adult learner with developmental disabilities commented, "Kevin thoroughly enjoys this program as he does not read due to his disability. Kevin enjoys the storytelling with Leslie, as her approach and technique captures his full attention. Kevin looks forward to attending this program, and wishes it would be offered once a week instead of once a month."
- Seniors and refugees participating in ESL programs were given experiences that provided them with daily living skills and helped them feel more comfortable and at home in Canada. They expressed greater self-confidence and willingness to communicate with native Canadians.
- The Tutor Training Program has enjoyed success in its initial year. One individual who could read the alphabet, along with a few one syllable words, in November was able to complete a Surrey Libraries photo waiver form unassisted in early May. This individual has never previously experienced success in his reading.

Another student has improved in all her coursework at the Invergarry Adult Education Centre and said that "The most important skill she has gained is the confidence to continue with her

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education and the ability to identify gaps in her learning. She has also learned strategies for overcoming her challenges. In the past it would have been easy for her to give up on her education goals; the tutor has given her the confidence to overcome hurdles and to continue her coursework" (from the principal at Invergarry Adult Education Centre).

Statistics also indicate that our literacy initiatives are making a difference.

- Over 750 people attended the "Surrey Kids Read" event at the Guildford Library.
- Over 300 developmentally disabled adults took part in a storytelling project.
- PICS (Progressive Intercultural Community Services) continued to offer a blended literacy and settlement program for all vulnerable adults, and also launched Chai Time, a conversational English program for women.

## *b. What are the things that support literacy work?*

Literacy work is no different from any other enterprise. It requires dedicated, knowledgeable champions who need the time and the financial means to draw attention to the issues and propose solutions.

## **6. Challenges:**

### *a. What are the difficulties?*

Non-profit agencies and organizations involved in delivering literacy services are required to expend an inordinate amount of time and energy writing grant proposals and responding to RFPs in order to keep their valuable programs going. Frequently they are competing for the same funds, and this discourages rather than encourages collaboration.

### *b. What would help?*

Stable, long-term core funding, tied to proven results, would lessen competition among agencies, and free them to truly collaborate with others. Communities need the freedom and autonomy to design programs to meet their unique circumstances.

## **For the Coming Year:**

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

Although not a new challenge, one constant for the communities of Surrey and White Rock seems to be rapid population growth and the increasing ethnic diversity of our population. We need to be alert to issues as they arise, and responsive to the needs of our changing demographics.

As a team it is our intention to re-consider our Community Literacy Plan goals in the fall, and determine any other priorities in addition to our main goals described below.

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The size of our communities also presents a huge challenge in keeping abreast of the many literacy opportunities available, and the diverse organizations delivering them.

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

Working closely with the Aboriginal organizations in our community continues to be a high priority goal for the Implementation Team. We recognize that progress in this area will likely be measured in small increments, and we understand the need to be culturally sensitive in what we do.

As the volunteer Tutor Training Program enjoyed a successful first year, the focus is on finding sources of additional funding so that the program is able to continue. PICS, Surrey Libraries and Kwantlen Polytechnic University have made an application for a CALP grant from the Ministry of Advanced Education and Training to help support continued tutor training. Should the grant application not be successful, other potential options are to continue supporting the Tutor Training through the LOC, and to tap into the business community for funding. Also, continued efforts will be made to build capacity within the community by working more collaboratively.

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

Since our goals are literacy goals, they need the same support as our literacy work – dedicated, knowledgeable, goal-oriented individuals with the time and means to find sustainable funding sources.

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## Appendix A: Community Literacy Progress Report

Strategy	Actions Undertaken	Participating Organizations
<p><b>High Priority</b></p> <p>Continue conversations with the Aboriginal community to identify literacy needs and connect with organizations currently focused on work in this area; offer to participate in joint learning and essential skills programs with other institutions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings with Kla-how-eya (ED and assistant).</li> <li>• SD36 providing PALS sessions at five Kekinow sites.</li> <li>• Regular phone and email contact to keep Aboriginal contacts apprised of Implementation Team's work.</li> <li>• Kla-how-eya and Library partnered on Teen Reading Buddies project (ongoing).</li> </ul>	<p>SD36 Aboriginal Department, Kla-how-eya, Kekinow Housing Association, Surrey Libraries.</p>
<p><b>Medium Priority</b></p> <p>Hold periodic community literacy roundtables with literacy partners to support communication and future collaboration.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roundtables held in December and February.</li> <li>• Literacy work progress shared informally among attendees.</li> <li>• Presentations on Intergenerational Literacy Program Research and on Adult Volunteer Tutor Program.</li> </ul>	<p>SD36, Surrey Libraries, Options, Douglas College, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, PICS, Umoja, Surrey Board of Trade.</p>

## Appendix B: Adult Literacy Volunteer Tutor Project

### Purpose of this Document

This document defines the READ Surrey/White Rock Adult Literacy Volunteer Tutor Project in terms of goals, objectives, scope, stakeholders and major deliverables, and it describes how the project will be organized and managed.

#### 1. Project Purpose

The purpose of this project was to implement the proof of concept for a one-on-one tutoring program for adult learners in the Surrey/White Rock area using volunteer tutors.

#### 2. Introduction/Background

Asset research conducted for The Community Literacy and Essential Skills Plan for Surrey/White Rock identified a relative lack of learning services to address the needs and challenges of adults struggling with basic literacy. (See page 23 of the Community and Essential Skills Plan for Surrey/White Rock.)

Further to this, at a planning session in April 2010, the Implementation Team identified the following priority:

“Create a volunteer-based tutoring program for adults learning to read, including a training component for volunteers, in collaboration with Kwantlen.”

#### 3. Objectives

The objective of this project was to develop a community-based volunteer tutor program that provided flexibility, was responsive to local needs, and was sustainable. Key considerations addressed included:

- What is our stated purpose and mission?
- Who are the target audiences (tutors and learners)?
- How will the target audiences be identified?
- What will be the benefits to clients and the community from this program?
- What is required to sustain this program beyond the proof of concept stage?
- What is the timeframe for this project? At what point do we assess the program?

It was decided that the initial target clients for the sample project be English speaking, non-learning disabled adults for whom there are currently few services available, and that the proof of concept phase involve approximately ten learner/tutor pairs.

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## 4. Scope

### 4.1 In Scope:

The proof of concept project includes the following main components:

- a. Identifying and assessing learners and tutors.
- b. Developing and delivering curriculum for training adult tutors.
- c. Matching tutor/learner pairs.
- d. Providing resources and space for tutor/learner pairs.
- e. Monitoring and supporting tutor-learner activities and progress.
- f. Establishing risk management procedures.
- g. Evaluating the success of the pilot with an eye to the future.

### 4.2 Out of Scope:

The proof of concept did not address:

- a. ESL learners.  
Although it was not supposed to do so, the proof of concept did include learners with disabilities as it proved very difficult to find native born English speakers who had no learning disability whatsoever.
- b. Acquiring funding to sustain the program beyond the initial phase.  
Application for a CALP grant has been made.
- c. Hiring personnel to sustain the program beyond the initial phase.

## 5. Approach and Timeline

SD36 Invergarry Adult Education Centre and the Surrey Libraries partnered to develop and deliver the proof of concept project. The program began in September with an orientation session to determine appropriate tutor participants. Training commenced in late September and concluded on October 13, 2011. Tutors and learners were matched in October/November. Tutoring is still ongoing and we still receive calls from learners requesting a tutor.

## 6. Major Stakeholders and Deliverables:

The Proof of Concept Project included the following:

Step	Milestone	Deliverable	Responsibility	Target Date
1	Recruiting and selecting tutors	Criteria and expectations of tutors, 'advertising' for and interviewing of tutors	Tutor Coordinator, Surrey Libraries, SD36 Invergarry Adult Education Centre	Completed by September 2011

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2	Identifying and assessing learners	Identify ten English speaking adults with low literacy and no learning disabilities	Referrals from Invergarry, Surrey Libraries, Vancouver Drug Court, ATEC; assessment by Invergarry if applicable	Sept./Oct. 2011
3	Delivering the tutor training	15 hours total, six sessions of 2.5 hours; location and time - Surrey Libraries evenings.	Tutor Coordinator	Sept./Oct. 2011
4	Matching tutor/learner pairs	Interview questions for learner/tutors; time/place for interview; matched pairs created	Tutor Coordinator	Initial group completed by Nov. 2011  Additional matching ongoing.
5	Identifying and providing resources and space for tutor/learner pairs	Literacy resources (books, paper, etc.) to be used in tutor sessions; tutoring took place at Surrey Libraries and Invergarry Adult Education Centre	Surrey Libraries, Invergarry Adult Education Centre	Sept. 2011
6	Maintaining records of tutor/learner activities, and progress	Database of tutors and learners; regular reports on tutor/learner activities	Tutor Coordinator	Ongoing
7	Providing on-going support to tutor /learner pairs	Regular conversations with pairs, new resources, recognition and celebration	Partner organizations, as appropriate	As needed
8	Establishing Risk Management Procedures	Roles and Responsibilities documents, Criminal Records checks, etc.	Tutor Coordinator and former Literacy Outreach Coordinator	Sept. 2011
9	Evaluating the success of the program	Program assessment tools; report on pilot with recommendations for future	Invergarry Adult Education Centre, Surrey Libraries	June, 2012

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As the proof of concept has been successful, it is necessary to secure ongoing funding to sustain and possibly expand the program. Development of a web presence through Surrey Libraries has assisted in providing information about the program to organizations who may be interested in referring potential learners or tutors.

## 7. Budget

Budget item	Approximate cost	Funder
Tutoring materials (adult literacy level books, workbooks, paper, pens, computer access, concrete math learning materials, etc.)	\$400.00	LOC budget Surrey Libraries
Photocopying expenses	\$862.90	LOC budget SD36
Curriculum delivery and tutor/learner identification/matching costs. Tutor/learner support (Sept. 2011 - June 2012)	\$34,773.75	LOC budget Surrey Libraries

## 8. Links and Dependencies

This project was dependent on the following:

### 8.1 Issues and constraints: (short-term and long-term)

- a. Will we be able to identify ten learner/tutor pairs that fit our criteria?  
Twenty students accessed the program, some of whom fit the criteria and others who did not. At any given time, there were eight tutor/learner pairs.
- b. Will we have ongoing funds to sustain the program beyond the proof of concept?  
PICS, Kwantlen Polytechnic, and Surrey Libraries have applied for a CALP grant for the coming year. However, if this grant does not materialize, there is a possibility that the LOC could again operate in a dual role.
- c. What happens with tutor/learner pairs if the long-term program does not go ahead?  
Some pairs have chosen to continue the tutoring/learning on their own.

### 8.2 Assumptions:

- a. The current partners are able to commit to a longer term project if the proof of concept is successful.
- b. This program will provide a lasting benefit to the community.

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## 9. Risk Assessment

The possibility exists that:

- a. One or more of the partners is unable to fulfill their role.
- b. We will not be able to secure sufficient funds to continue the project beyond the proof of concept stage.

## 10. Project Governance and Management

- a. Surrey Libraries was the host agency and worked in collaboration with the other partners.
- b. A major responsibility of the Literacy Outreach Coordinator was to take on the dual role of Volunteer Tutor Trainer/Coordinator as well as Literacy Outreach Coordinator. Although this was at times taxing, the duality proved to be beneficial, as it provided the LOC with a holistic view of the proof of concept.