

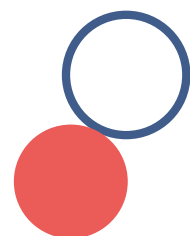
District Literacy Plan

MAY 1, 2012– APRIL 30, 2013

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Working together for literacy



The community literacy plan is one of the tools to support the process of literacy development throughout the community.

It provides the blueprint and information about how community partners are working together to improve literacy.

*Working Together For Literacy
~ Decoda Literacy Solutions*

PREFACE

Literacy Now South Okanagan–Similkameen formed in 2008 as a result of a community consultative process.

These goals guide our ongoing work:

Goal #1: Community members must be aware of literacy issues and literacy programs and resources.

- a. Provide structures to implement the community literacy plan.
- b. Improve awareness, coordination and communication among service providers.
- c. Increase community awareness of the importance of literacy and available resources.

Goal #2: Community members must be able to access literacy programs and resources.

- a. Increase access to and involvement in literacy and learning.

Goal #3: A range of literacy programs and resources must be available to community members.

- a. Maintain and extend successful literacy programs for babies and young children.
- b. Maintain and extend successful literacy programs for elementary school age children.
- c. Maintain and extend successful literacy programs for youth aged 12-19.
- d. Maintain and extend successful literacy programs for adults.
- e. Maintain and extend successful literacy programs for seniors.
- f. Develop employer/employee workplace literacy.
- g. Improve health literacy by supporting the capacity of all individuals to obtain, process and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.

Ongoing work to support these goals is included in Appendix A.

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TASK GROUP

Over the past year, our task group meetings have included representatives from:

- Interior Health
 - (Public Health Nursing—Prevention Services)
 - (Speech Language Pathologist)
- Okanagan College
 - (Instructor/Adult Learning Coordinator, Adult Academic and Career Preparation)
 - (Volunteer Literacy Tutor Coordinator)
 - (Fundamental Instructor)
 - (Aboriginal Recruiter)
- School District #53 (Assistant Superintendent)
- School District #67 (Superintendent)
- Ministry of Social Development (Program Advisor, Employment and Labour Market Services)
- Penticton Museum and Archives (Museum and Archives Assistant)
- Penticton Public Library
 - (Youth Services Librarian)
 - (Public Services Librarian)
- Child Care Resource and Referral
 - (Coordinator)
 - (Consultant)
- Penticton and District Community Resources Society
 - (ECD Hub Program Coordinator)
 - (Executive Director)
- BC Schizophrenia Society, Penticton Chapter (President)
- Okanagan Similkameen Neurological Society Child Development Centre (Child and Family Worker)
- South Okanagan Community Literacy Society (Secretary)
- Okanagan Boys and Girls Club (Family Support Worker)
- Communities for Kids (Coordinator)
- Raise A Reader/PWAP (member)

Our steward, Penticton Wine Country Chamber of Commerce (General Manager) is also a member of our task group.

In addition to our task group, we have three subcommittees which focus on specific areas: adult/workplace literacy, family literacy, and health literacy. These committees include task group members, along with representatives from WorkZone (a local employment agency); and SharedCare (which assists health care specialists in patient communication).

Members of the task group bring their perspectives and experiences to our meetings, which are held in October, December, February, April and June. Their contribution is invaluable in helping us understand our communities, and it is vital during our April meeting, when we reassess the assets and needs in our communities and establish direction for the following year. The results of this meeting, along with this document, are presented at the June meeting.

We also have a four-person executive made up of our steward (Chamber of Commerce) and these task group members:

- Okanagan College (Instructor/Adult Learning Coordinator, Adult Academic and Career Preparation)
- School District #53 (Assistant Superintendent)
- School District #67 (Superintendent)

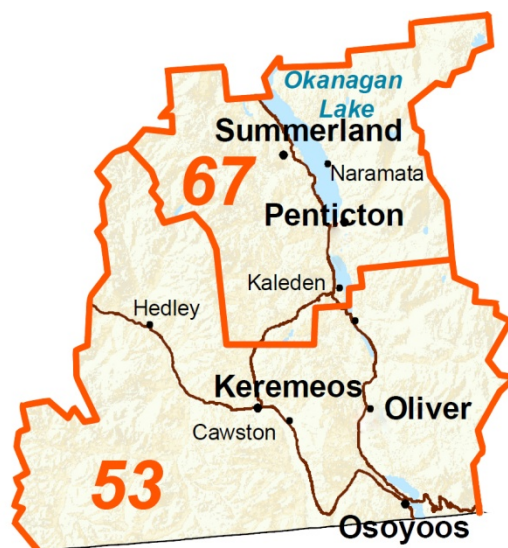
At an executive meeting prior to each task group meeting, the LOC presents a report of activities. The executive makes decisions regarding large expenditures, and is responsible for hiring decisions—posting, interviewing, and contracts—and guidance on the implementation of the plan as requested.

COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Literacy Now South Okanagan– Similkameen serves the region encompassed by two school districts.

To the north, SD#67 includes the communities of Summerland, Naramata, and Kaleden, and the region’s largest community, Penticton.

This district does not have a significant industrial base, and many homes are owned by seasonal residents. It is home to a substantial portion of our wine industry, along with orchardists. Tourism provides seasonal jobs, with many motels accommodating monthly tenants over the winter. Retirees make up nearly one-fifth of our population, more than any other region in BC. Some are baby boomers who have lived much of their lives in the area, while others are drawn here from the Prairies and northern BC by the climate. Pension and



investment accounts for one-third of Penticton's total income from all sources, and is the largest retirement centre in BC, based on a per capita income.

The retail sector is the largest employment sector in the Okanagan; 25% of the jobs are part time and are not well paid.

SD#67 is home to the Penticton Indian Band.

To the south, SD#53 encompasses Okanagan Falls, Oliver, and Osoyoos, along with Cawston, Keremeos and Hedley to the west. This district still has a significant population of orchardists, although many are now converting their land to vineyards. Many of the orchards are owned and operated by immigrant families, initially from Portugal but over the past two generations, primarily from south- central Asia. Along with family members, temporary migrant workers from Mexico and Quebec provide much of the seasonal labour.

Like SD#67, there is no significant industrial base, although the recent announcement of a provincial corrections facility to be built on Osoyoos Indian Band land north of Oliver promises better-paid construction jobs in the short term, and facility staffing positions in the long term.

In addition to the Osoyoos Indian Band, SD#53 serves the Upper Similkameen and Lower Similkameen Indian Bands. Communities in need of significant support include Cawston and Hedley.

The most significant change affecting our communities over the past year has been the restructuring of our employment assistance programs. In the months since the announcement that WorkZone would be closing, there has been a great deal of uncertainty about what services would be offered by other organizations, and how these organizations would involve the experienced personnel who already have a clear understanding of the assets and needs in our communities.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, LITERACY COLLABORATION, GOALS AND ACTIONS FOR THE 2011/2012 YEAR

Collaborations are vital to the work we do:

- Our LOC introduced the Adult Literacy Coordinator from Okanagan College (OC) to the program coordinators at Footprints to Technology, a learning facility for members of the Penticton Indian Band. The OC coordinator now visits Footprints to meet the students when a new session starts.

As a result of having met her, and having the adult lit program explained, some of the students at Footprints have registered with the college and are now attending; Aboriginal attendance in OC's adult program was up markedly this year.

- SharedCare, an organization which helps specialists communicate with their patients, asked us to provide plain language assistance.

- We promoted TD Bank’s “Money Matters,” a financial literacy module for adults. Okanagan College was able to bring the program to Penticton; the local branch freed up staff so they could be trained by the college staff to work with adult literacy students. They then provided a two-day “Money Matters” workshop for the students.
- Working with United Way’s Success By Six and the Okanagan Boys and Girls Club, we hosted a Parent-Child Mother Goose (P-CMG) facilitator training. 20 new facilitators from agencies throughout our region were trained. As a result, partnerships have formed among service providers which have enhanced program offerings. Several sessions have been scheduled:

- evenings in Okanagan Falls through the StrongStart partnership
- CAPC and SD#53 partner to provide PCMG in Oliver in the evenings
- one additional community in SD 53 will offer the program
- family outreach through OB&G Club is running 1 PCMG in April and May
- in Penticton the Infant Development Program is running two PCMG programs, one for 0–2, another for 2–4 year olds. This is to provide service to families on their waiting list.



A committee is meeting in Penticton to work toward establishing this program for the fall at the Community Recreation Centre.

Many other trained facilitators are incorporating the new rhymes and stories into their existing programs.

- The plain language workshops we have provided for the community have helped us increase awareness and develop partnerships.



One of the agencies which participated in the past shared their experience: Plain language helps their clients, staff and volunteers communicate better, make fewer mistakes and save time. It helps them clearly communicate with other agencies—e.g. the physicians who must complete the confusing application forms for the clients’ benefits—so that these forms are completed correctly and the client can obtain what they need as quickly as possible.

This agency has reworked their own written materials—rack cards, intake forms, promotional posters—and are seeking funding to help rework some of the

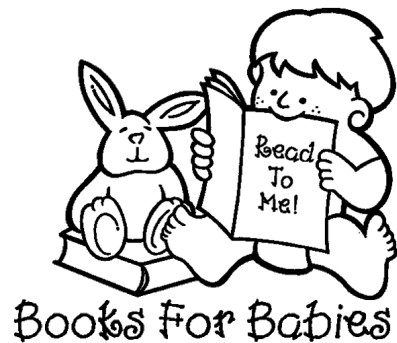
opportunities for their further participation, we have developed a One To One newsletter, *Connect*, which we will distribute to the volunteers and the schools three to four times per year. The first issue was delivered on May 18, 2012.



To encourage parents of the One To One students to read with their children at home, we created an updated version of the parent handbook created by Junction Literacy Centre in Vernon, *Stress Free Reading At Home*, renaming it Read With Me!

In future, we hope to be able to introduce *Come Read With Me!* sessions, either for parents of all grade one students, or for parents of students in the One To One program—and our intention is that this booklet could be used for both programs.

- Literacy Now South Okanagan–Similkameen hosts an annual Family Literacy Day Celebration at our largest shopping centre on the Saturday closest to Family Literacy Day (January 27). Along with entertainment, we invite service agencies to set up information booths with free family activities throughout the mall area. These service agencies tell us that this event helps them reach marginalized populations who may not otherwise connect with their agencies. The celebration draws people from the surrounding communities, and attendance is growing.
- We also host an Adult Spelling Bee Challenge in May. This annual event provides an opportunity to talk about the literacy challenges in our community, and raise funds for community literacy projects.
- We have approached many service clubs to seek funding to re-establish the Books For Babies program in Naramata, Penticton, Keremeos, Kaleden, Cawston and Hedley. As of May 31, we have raised \$800 toward our target of \$4,300.
- LNSO-S brings literacy information to other community events such as the Oliver Family Fair, the CFK Parenting Conference, and the Rotary International Children's Festival. In 2012, we attended a Baby Talks session for new parents in Osoyoos, visited two StrongStart Centres (Okanagan Falls and Keremeos) and attended Kindergarten Health Fairs in Penticton, Osoyoos, Oliver, and Summerland. In May, we participated in Ready Set Learn events at several elementary schools (Giant's Head, Trout Creek , Kaleden, Keremeos) where we were given the opportunity to address the parents of approximately 105 children who will enter kindergarten in



the fall. These proved a more valuable opportunity to engage the parents about helping their children get ready to learn to read.

- In September of 2011, we participated in the annual Seniors' Symposium. Although we had a door prize that initiated some conversation, we realized that we need a way to better engage seniors at this event.

Along with hosting four meetings for each of our three subcommittee annually, we regularly attend meetings with several other community support organizations to keep aware of which agencies are providing various services, and to strengthen our ability to work with these organizations where we can help to make a difference in literacy-based issues.

Collaborations work best when participants feel a sense of having accomplished something. We are working to ensure that our subcommittee meetings are not only an opportunity to share information, but also an opportunity to initiate and strengthen positive changes in our communities.

In addition to collaborating within our area, we have developed supportive relationships with other literacy outreach coordinators. These relationships help all of us stretch our limited funding because we are able to share the resources we develop, and assist and advise one another.

GOALS AND ACTIONS FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR, MAY 2012– APRIL 2013

During our April task group meeting, participants discussed how we might best address literacy needs of our community over the next year. These suggestions were consolidated in to nine goals, and sent to all members of the task group for prioritization. This process revealed that the task group was most interested in the following three goals:

Goal #1: To increase community awareness of adult literacy programs offered in Penticton and the South Okanagan so that individuals who want to increase their literacy skills are referred to the program that best meets their needs.

Objectives:

- a. To facilitate dialogue between service providers that offer adult upgrading programs so that there is a clear understanding of which agencies provide which services in both the Penticton area and the South Okanagan–Similkameen.
- b. To more fully understand the needs for adult literacy programs for the people living in smaller communities (SD53) so that we can assist in responding to these needs.
- c. To explore the creation of a document which maps
 - i. who the providers are,
 - ii. what they offer and to whom,
 - iii. where they are located and
 - iv. how their programs are provided.
- d. To provide this comprehensive information to agency staff who serve adults and employers so that more adults are referred to these services.

- e. Collect existing referral numbers and sources for 2010, 2011 to establish baseline measures.
- f. Collect ongoing data:
 - i. source of referral,
 - ii. numbers,
 - iii. course of action taken,
 - iv. outcome of the action.
- g. To assist in recruiting more volunteer adult tutors for Okanagan College in Oliver and Osoyoos and Hedley.

We have begun working to promote better communication between those delivering adult learning opportunities about the programs currently available, and an additional need to better disseminate this information to service agencies who can refer clients, and to the general public.

To address this, we have initiated the first interagency meeting to bring the agencies delivering the programs together on May 30, 2012. We are also looking for an effective way to open communication between these agencies and the other community support agencies, and with those in the business community who may be able to use their services to support and assist their employees.

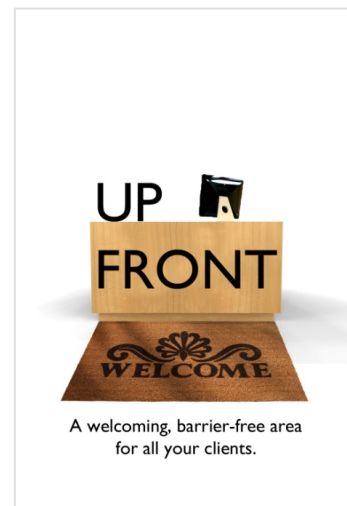
Goal #2: To provide organizations and businesses with the information they need to publish materials in plain language so that people can: find what they need, understand what they find and act appropriately on that understanding.

Objectives:

- a. To offer plain language workshops bimonthly to the community without cost.
- b. To target these to health care services and non-profit agencies, with a marketing/ communication strategy to do this.
- c. To collect outcome measures from the workshop attendees by asking
 - i. how their practices changed
 - ii. how their printed materials changed
 - iii. the impact of the changes on their clients
- d. To provide follow-up assistance to participants to reword their printed materials if they experience difficulties.
- e. To expand plain language workshops into creating literacy friendly environments.

Examples:

- i. clear signage for direction
- ii. friendly literacy supportive reception
- iii. organized print materials
- f. To advocate with government agencies to create plain language materials.



Acting on these objectives, we have scheduled a plain language workshop for June, the first in 12 months, and we have created an easy-to-use booklet, UP FRONT, which encourages businesses and service agencies to assess their reception areas using five criteria (uncomplicated, proactive, friendly, responsive, organized, non-judgemental, and tuned-in), and includes suggestions for positive change.

Goal #3: To have successful One To One tutor programs offered in district schools that desire the program, so that the reading levels of the children participating improve significantly over the course of the intervention.

Objectives:

- a. To provide a clear understanding of the requirements of the One To One program to the school coordinator and teacher.
- b. To obtain a commitment from the schools participating, to implement the program as intended.
- c. To recruit, train and follow-up with the One To One volunteer tutors for each school.
- d. To communicate to all volunteers and schools through a monthly one to one newsletter
- e. To create internal efficiencies for training and follow up.
- f. To collect outcome measures of the program for students and tutors.
- g. To procure additional funding for the One To One program.

This has been a difficult year in the public education system. We hope to move forward with this objective in September.

ADJUSTMENTS MADE TO OUR PREVIOUS PLANS

1. This has been a year of transition for Literacy Now South Okanagan-Similkameen. From September through November, a voluntary reduction in our LOC's hours and then her resignation resulted in much of our organization's work continuing through the assistant LOC. With the hiring of an LOC new to the work and to the community, the following months have been focussed on orientation and re-establishing connections.

This transition also revealed a weakness: as our organization's work has grown and solidified, it needs to be documented. In the absence of clear records showing what needs to be done and when, much time is spent rebuilding this knowledge from year to year; this is especially time consuming when there is a change of LOC.

We are in the process of establishing "how to" packages for our events, complete with timelines and resource records. This information will also help us define our needs when we seek sponsorship for some of our events and initiatives.

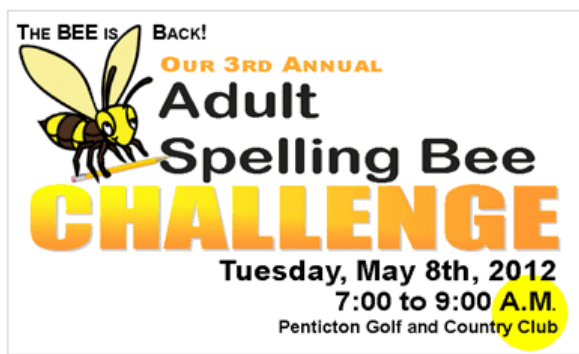
2. Our organization had been planning to host a literacy conference in May 2012. As a result of the LOC transition, this event was postponed until May 2013. At the task group

meeting in April, when gaps and needs were addressed, it was clearly decided that a conference was the lowest ranked initiative. This is no longer an objective for 2012-2013.

3. Our Health Literacy Subcommittee had implemented an Ask Me Three campaign. Research showed this made little difference to patients and to physicians' practices. In light of this, the committee planned to explore a teach back module for primary health providers. To proceed we would need increased membership on this committee. To achieve this, we will target plain language workshops for health care providers and begin to build relationships in the health sector so we can address this goal in the future.

INDICATIONS OF SUCCESS

How do we know it's working? As described above, we have seen increased enrollment of Penticton Indian Band members in our college's adult upgrading classes. Participation in events like Family Literacy Day and the Adult Spelling Bee Challenge continues to grow



steadily.

There are signs of a growing understanding of literacy issues in the greater community. At one time, people were more surprised when we told them that 42% of working-age Canadians do not have the literacy skills needed in today's world; now, they are more interested in hearing what this means, how it impacts those individuals

and the community as a whole.

The stigma around low literacy may also be dwindling. An automotive technician tells us that over the past year, several of his customers have volunteered that they don't read well. People are more willing to tell their stories, and more aware that in doing so they may help others decide to seek help—and to seek it early on, instead of waiting.

We feel that having people with low literacy tell their story in a way that is accessible to others with low literacy is vitally important. We have been struggling to find a way to add these stories to our website. The cameraman filming our Adult Spelling Bee Challenge is interested in featuring adult learners on their station's website; we can then provide links from our own. This is a huge step forward in getting the message to those who most need to hear it.

The funding we receive through Decoda is vital to our work. An LOC who is knowledgeable about the issues in our community, and well connected to those who may have the solutions, is essential. No other agency or organization has responsibility for maintaining this knowledge base in a way that is accessible, or for ensuring that this information is

accessible to everyone throughout the community. No other agency has the mandate to collaborate with service providers to address literacy gaps and their contribution to creating changes.

From the strategic planning work the task group undertook in April we now have three succinct goals with action plans, timelines and measurable outcomes. All of these goals will put us front and centre in the community and will create relationships and collaborations to support literacy. This will have ripple effects into the greater community as it builds capacity and affects the lives of so many individuals.

CHALLENGES

The biggest challenge we currently face is sustainability. Ideally, we would like to know that there will always be funds available for the LOC position, including the miscellaneous expenses that go with the job, along with some funds to help get programs off the ground. We recognize that this funding may not be available in the future. We have a short window of opportunity, perhaps as little as one year, during we must not only continue with all of the work we are already doing—we must also come up with and implement a strategy to “market” ourselves to corporate and charitable sponsors and government agencies, so that they will continue to support the work we do.

We believe that by seeking financial backing our work, we will encourage these agencies to become more aware of literacy needs and programs, and this is a plus. However, we are not yet in a position to market ourselves effectively; creating an effective “marketing plan” will take significant resources from our limited funds and time.

A marketing plan could ensure that we make best use of our resources, targeting our requests for funding and in kind support clearly. It would also help us assess what’s already working well, which strategies are not working, and determine whether these need to be redesigned or discarded.

It would be extremely helpful to know that the LOC funding will be available over the next two years, so that we could use some of our existing funds to accomplish this and work toward securing new sources of funding.

It may also be time to consider becoming a society, so that we can better access charitable funding. This, too, takes time.

Additional gaps and challenges identified by our task group:

- During our transition phase, we have not offered plain language workshops.
- LNSO-S has not yet begun to build relationships with the provincial and federal governments.
- We need to broaden our collaboration with service providers to better understand how we might reach the lower socio economic populations.

- Okanagan College needs adult volunteer tutors in Oliver, Osoyoos and Hedley . They have advertised but don't have enough. Transportation is a barrier to tutors travelling to that area from Penticton. Some funding for gas reimbursement is available for students driving from Oliver to Osoyoos. Although adult tutoring is available year round in Penticton, in Oliver and Osoyoos it is available less than 10 months of the year.
- Because those who access tutoring are often lacking the most basic computer skills, delivery through the internet is not really a viable option.
- Adults seeking employment can access basic assistance in computer use through employment agencies, but once they are working there are few technology learning opportunities that relate to employment. We don't know whether or not it is possible to improve technology learning opportunities through the libraries. The community is not aware where other public-use computers are located. We need to find this information and share it broadly.
- We have not been reaching out to outlying communities: Hedley and the Indian Bands in the Similkameen. The school district reports parents are not participating in the school where their children are now bussed to. We do not have a real understanding of their community needs. A community needs analysis would provide us with concrete information to know how we can support these communities.
- SD53's biggest concern is the families living in poverty who are not getting the supports. They see the poverty level increasing.
- Poverty remains one of the biggest barriers to participation in programs to improve literacy. When adults are struggling to obtain safe housing and food, there is little likelihood an they will even be able to think about learning programs. When they do enter programs, the stresses associated with poverty make it difficult for them to attend, engage and learn.
- For these families, transportation can also be a barrier to accessing programs.
- We've noticed an increasing problem with parents staying connected to their devices instead of interacting with their children. The "child comes first" message is not being received. Very young children are plugged into technology, instead of interacting with their parents. This is not advantageous for their development and language learning. Parents must be made aware of the importance of conversation and word play—rhyming, singing, reading.
- Some families are not interested in making changes.
- Some families have a mistrust of the educational system, and this impacts their children's school experience.
- Some adults have mistrust of agency programs. Often, they need to build trust with one person before this can begin to change.

- We have only begun to promote teach back strategies with health providers. Currently we lack engagement with health literacy stakeholders; they are not present on our health literacy committee. Other organizations—the Patient Voices Network, for example—are working to make a difference in how the health care system communicates; some Interior Health staff is receiving centralized plain language training through their organization. Although there are needs in this area, our task group has suggested we pull back from this area for a while.

The good news: Literacy Now South Okanagan–Similkameen is known in the community. We are dedicated to promoting awareness of the importance of literacy for all ages. We have a face, and we are good at engaging the public.

As we continue to work on the plan created through the needs assessment, we know that we are good at making ideas happen—and that we enjoy the support of an army of collaborators who are all working together for literacy.

APPENDIX A: ONGOING INITIATIVES

- Website
- BUZZ
- Rack cards
- One To One program
- Community Literacy Directory

APPENDIX B: OTHER COMMUNITY ASSETS

During our April task group meeting, participants contributed the following community assets not listed elsewhere in this document.

- StrongStarts are major assets for our communities, and attendance of Indo Canadians has increased. In the past year, two StrongStarts in SD53 offered Parents as Literacy Supporters (PALS) programs.
- Teachers and facilitators operating private preschools in partnership with SD53 must participate in preschool/early learning professional development.
- The children’s librarian from the Penticton Library makes connections with the parents in the community by attending programs at different agencies, like Interior Health’s Baby Talks. Families learn about the library’s services, and now have a familiar person to see there. These families begin taking their young children to the library’s programs.
- Community family “Hubs” are being planned for two of our communities. Oliver’s Hub is expected to open in Sept 2012, and family literacy programs can be run from this location.
- The college’s volunteer tutors are flexible; they are able to meet with students in the community.
- Along with continuing to promote Ask Me 3, which encourages patients to ask essential questions of their health care providers, we have promoted a greater awareness among health care providers of the need for clearly asking patients if they understand the information shared with them through “teach back.”