

SCHOOL DISTRICT #81 FORT NELSON

District Literacy Plan June 2009



District Literacy Plan

June 2009

Introduction

District Literacy Plans provide a way for each school district to work with community partners to improve literacy locally. The British Columbia School Act (18.1) states that a Board of Education must, on or before July 15th of a school year, establish and make available to the public, a District Literacy Plan for the school year, setting out the plan for improving literacy in the geographic area of the school district. (District Literacy Plan Guide 2009)

The Fort Nelson Board of Education recognizes the importance of improving access to literacy programs for all. *“As a community of learners we embrace opportunities to build successful futures.”* (S.D. #81 Mission Statement) The District Literacy Plan is a statement of our commitment to work collaboratively with key community stakeholders to improve literacy within the Fort Nelson community.

Action planning has focused on the four pillars of Literacy: Early Literacy Success for Young Children; Reading Success in Schools; Reading Success for Adults; and Reading Success for Aboriginal People. However, now that we are in our third year of implementation, we are seeing an increased overlap in these areas.

Reflecting on the 2008 Plan

This year our priority has been to increase outreach in our community. The Fort Nelson Community Literacy Society has had programs at their in-town location, in partnership with Northern Lights College, through the Fort Nelson Aboriginal Friendship Society; at Dorothy’s Place, a B.C. Housing subsidized housing; and at Prophet River First Nations. Special events have taken place at the Fort Nelson Public Library; Chalo Independent School at Fort Nelson First Nation; Phoenix Theatre; and three out of four in-town district schools.



One of our biggest challenges is in increasing participation. It is especially difficult getting people to come out to events in the winter months and unfortunately that is about 5 months long. Our other main challenge is to retain staff for consistency and trust. Fort

Nelson tends to have a rather transient population and we find that our programs do much better when we have consistency of staff.

We continue to use participation rates as part of our evaluation along with CALP Community & Adult Learning Program Benchmarks. Our schools use a combination of provincial, district and school data that includes: Benchmarks, DRA, Yopp-Singer, FSA and Provincial exam results, Smart Writing and Great Leaps data

The Literacy Outreach Coordinator position as part of the Fort Nelson Community Literacy Society had increased collaboration and built on existing principles.

The literacy programs offered on-site at Prophet River First Nations is an initiative that is promoting family literacy and increasing literacy for vulnerable learners.

Participation in regular Community Round Table meetings and Success by 6 meetings has helped build collaborative and positive working relationships and to develop a better understanding of community perspectives and literacy needs. One result that we have seen is an increase in the Literacy Society's membership. Participation in these community meetings has also expanded our knowledge of what literacy programs are taking place through other organizations such as: Traditional Parenting and Storytime at NRAWS (Northern Rockies Aboriginal Women's Society); Books for Babies, Kindergarten Book Project and Mother Goose, through the Fort Nelson Public Library; and Homework/Library Time through the Fort Nelson Aboriginal Friendship Society.

We are proud of the literacy events and programs that took place this year. These were:

- On January 23rd, we celebrated Family Literacy Day by participating in the Guinness World Record attempt for most children reading with an adult – multiple locations. We had 570 participants including community members, RCMP, Firefighters, etc. reading with children at G.W. Carlson Elementary School, R.L. Angus Elementary School, Chalo School, Prophet River School, Deh Zona Family Centre, Mountain View Child Care Centre and the Fort Nelson Public Library. We came in first in Canada for a non-profit community group and received a \$1000 award that will go towards a Family Literacy event next year. Each school that participated was given a Guinness World Record Book and Playschools and Daycares received mini Mortimer books.



- We were proud to receive top provincial participation rates and scaled scores on our Grade 4 FSA for the second year in a row.
- Childcare courses leading to the establishment of family/home daycares as well as the first course required for Early Childhood Certification through Northern Lights College were offered. The School District supported these through the Early Childhood grant and the Fort Nelson Community Literacy Society supported with in and out of class support.
- We opened our second Strong Start Centre at J.S. Clark Elementary School with 45 registrants. We purchased books and furniture appropriate for preschoolers for both schools that house Strong Start Centers to promote the use of our school libraries by Strong Start caregivers.
- The Fort Nelson Community Literacy Society hosted Barbara Adler, the youngest performer in 2002 to win a spot on the acclaimed Vancouver Poetry Slam team. She conducted poetry workshops on May 4th and 5th for students at Fort Nelson Secondary School and for the community.
- Northern Lights College's Career and College Prep continues to offer continuous intake literacy courses for adults, which includes computer literacy. Recently an introductory course on computers offered in the evening was so well-received that they offered another.
- G.W. Carlson Elementary presented a Cyber-Bulling workshop to parents.
- In-town tutoring for adults, ESL and skill upgrading was available and had 15 registrants and 50 drop-ins.
- Adult literacy programs based around family were held in-town and in Prophet River. These programs focused on building relationship and trust while building on basic life skills, and entry to college classes. Parents were encouraged to bring their children to encourage the value of learning through the family.
- The Fort Nelson Community Literacy Society celebrated International Adult Learner's Week with an event at the Phoenix Theatre displaying adult student work and international cuisine. It was a fun event and provided an opportunity for introducing the work of the Community Literacy Society. This was attended by several School District employees.



- We continue to use the Great Leaps Reading Program with students from grade 1 to 12. Students practice reading fluency with an Educational Assistant on this weekly program. Many students have made “Great Leaps” in their reading and gone up many reading levels.
- The Fort Nelson Community Literacy Society hosted a Literacy Halloween Party for children. This was a popular event as with our recreation centre roof collapsing the year before, the annual town Spookorama event for children was cancelled.
- J.S. Clark Elementary School introduced the Welcome to Kindergarten program which included two literacy centers. They had 35 children attend.
- Ready Set Learn continues to be held for preschoolers in all of our elementary schools, including Toad River School. This is delivered in collaboration with the Fort Nelson Family Development Society and Success by Six.

Thinking about the 2009 Plan

Since the 2008 plan was submitted, the Canfor Polar Board, Takama Plywood, and Woodlands Divisions have all been closed. Oil and Gas exploration and development is on the rise with the Horn River Shale Gas development proceeding. Families have left and more transients are coming in. Much of the oil and gas growth has been in camps out of town with workers flown in from Alberta. Our school-age population continues to decline and is projected to be down from 852 to 837 FTE for September 2009.

Our Community Plan was developed in 2005 and has since been in implementation. No adjustments to the plan having currently been made.

Long Term Goals:

- Have appreciation for and build upon the strengths of existing learning programs and resources that allow all community members to become literate and develop enthusiasm for lifelong learning.



- Create learning programs and resources to support youth and adults who are not well served by the mainstream learning programs.
- Embed learning and literacy activities in all community settings, for example: workplace, senior's complex, recreation pursuits, youth programs, health programs, churches.

For 2009/2010 we are looking at offering more short courses such as the Intro to Computing offered this year. There has been discussion on courses for operating your iPod, doing your own taxes etc. The School District also has an interest in encouraging courses in economic literacy as after Planning 9 there does not seem to be a secondary course provided for all students dealing with financial planning. We would also like to look into a program for youth who have left school early for work or for lifestyle reasons. A longer range future goal is to provide service to people during the winter months through the use of a Book Bus that would serve in-town residents as well as residents in Prophet River and Toad River.

We are looking forward to continued partnering and collaboration with the Fort Nelson Community Literacy Society, Northern Lights College, and the many partners at the Success by 6 table. It has been an exciting year working together to enhance literacy in Fort Nelson.

