



## LITERACY FUND GRANT SAMPLE APPLICATION

### SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC CRITERIA

**11. Please share any other relevant information about your community's socio-economic situation including any government designations or special programs in place.**

- 9.5% of our students are currently in foster care. This does not include those transferred to relatives for care (source: office records).
- 13.8% of our students are special needs, as designated on the Ministry 1701 2015/2016 list (source: Fraser Institute (<http://britishcolumbia.compareschoolrankings.org/elementary>))
- 54% of Kindergarten students were at risk in all areas in September 2015 (source: District Early Success Screen Data)
- 45.4% of students are ESL/EL (Fraser Institute)
- 75 students were on our Speech and Language caseload last year (source: School Speech Pathologist)
- School ranked 939/944 on Fraser Institute (source: Fraser Institute)
- 67% of students/families were unable to pay for school supplies (source: office records)
- 76% students are on our daily breakfast, lunch and snack program (source: office records)

The school's high needs are clearly illustrated and supported with statistical information and references.

### SECTION B: LIBRARY STATUS

This section is based on your school classroom and library demographics.



## SECTION C: LITERACY PROGRAMS

**What is your school currently doing to foster literacy?** Please describe **two (2)** school wide programs that were put in place to encourage literacy at your school. Please include the following information for each of the **two (2)** programs:

### **1. Literacy Program 1**

- a. A brief description of the literacy programs in place and the literacy challenges the program is addressing.

#### **Daily small group literacy.**

According to our school district assessments, Early Success (K-3) and DART (Gr 4-7), many of our students are At-Risk in literacy, and are reading well below grade level (Grades K-3, 69% At-Risk and Grades 4-7, 72% At-Risk). 65% of our Kindergarten students were identified as At-Risk in all areas at the end of September. This is a pattern that we see yearly, as many of our families have low language and literacy skills. Many of our young learners start their educational journey playing catch up and having to spend more time, with more support, learning basic phonological skills that are the foundational requirements of strong literacy. Consequently, teachers in all classes struggle to adequately address the varying levels of literacy and meet the unique literacy needs of our learners.

Our school has therefore implemented a school wide program in which all students receive specific instruction that can better help them develop literacy strategies in small group settings. Students are grouped according to similar literacy needs, oral language and phonological awareness skills and reading abilities. These groups are fluid in the respect that students may move through different groups within the year according to growth, or if they require more specific literacy interventions. Student groupings are carefully monitored to reflect student needs and also to ensure that students receive teaching appropriate to their level and that they feel comfortable and safe in their learning environments. A prime consideration, in addition to developing literacy abilities, is to foster a passion for reading and learning. Teachers collaborate with literacy support teachers to focus on varying teaching strategies that include direct instruction with appropriate guided scaffolding, phonics and vocabulary development, and shared reading and writing opportunities.

Challenges are clearly described

Program is clearly described



b. The Grades being impacted by the program.

All students K-5 are placed in literacy groups according to their current levels in literacy. All facets of literacy, including oral language, reading and writing are a part of these small learning groups. Students receive 45 minutes in the morning, four days per week. Students in Grades 6-7 have similar opportunities and sometimes work in small group settings while other times the literacy support teachers work inside the classrooms to teach collaboratively with the classroom teachers on specific literacy projects.

Illustrates which Grade levels are impacted by the program.

c. The successes to date and any assessment strategies used.

This is our school's primary literacy focus and we acknowledge that though growth is gradual, it is increasing. Students often move up in reading levels but are still deemed at risk because of how many reading levels below grade level they are. Though there is variance in performance among classes, within a year many students often improve reading levels by one half to a full year. For example, a student in Grade 3/4 may progress from PM Benchmark level 8 to level 18, which equates to Mid Grade 1 to Beginning Grade 2. All classes report growth yearly. We continue to work with our colleagues to discuss and tweak this program for further success for our students.

Successes are identified.

Assessment strategies are clearly described.

We use the following data from district assessments:

- Early Success Screens for Grades K-3: This assesses phonological awareness and concepts of print and reading. It is used 3 times per year.
- DART: Reading assessment for Grades 4-7. It is used 2 times per year.
- PM Benchmarks and Fountas & Pinnell Benchmarks Gr 1-7: Quick Reading assessments, used often throughout the year.
- DWW: District Wide Write. It is used 2 times per year.

All of these assessment tools help us track the growth in literacy for our students. Data is recorded every year and submitted to our literacy committee and to the School District in June. Independent student literacy files are kept and updated yearly.



2. **Does your school have a literacy committee?** If so, please describe the role of the committee, its activities and its membership.

Our Literacy Committee is comprised of the Vice Principal and one or two staff members from each division (primary, junior and intermediate). We are also very fortunate to have three parents sit on the Literacy Committee.

The role of the Committee is twofold: First, to encourage literacy and reading engagement in our building. Second, to promote improved instruction and reading scores through guided reading.

Our first goal, encouraging literacy and reading engagement, depends on a strong partnership between staff and parents. In recent years, the Literacy Committee has focused on increasing family engagement in reading. We have hosted "Snuggle Up and Read" sessions in our school library and a popular "Family Literacy Night". In 2016, we welcomed a guest author to read from his latest children's book. In 2017, to celebrate Family Literacy, we hosted a "Snuggle up and read" session for the younger students (K-3). In this session, parents and grandparents would read with their children in the library. The older students watched a theatrical performance, which parents also attended. In 2014, we hosted an African Heritage Expo in our library. Teachers prepared by reading to their classes from a curated selection of books about Black History. At the expo, each class shared their learning with our school community through art, writing and media presentations. In summary, the Literacy Committee seeks to engage the students in school-wide initiatives that bring us together in our school library, as well as unite staff in aligning instruction.

The second major role the Literacy Committee plays is to improve instruction and results for students in reading. Last year, the goal of the Literacy Committee was to find out what guided reading resources would be needed to help close the achievement gap. We conducted an inventory assessment and discovered that we were lacking sufficient guided reading resources for the primary grades. To address this, older books were weeded out and the Leveled Literacy Intervention Kit for Grade 2 was purchased.

**Committee has a diverse membership**

**Detailed clear description of committee's role and activities**



In 2016, the Literacy Committee has been looking at ways to best organize our guided reading resources so that they are easily available to all teachers when needed. We took an old storage room, cleaned it out, and have started to move the classroom guided reading resources there. This is to create a "Book Room" that will house reading assessments and leveled readers that support guided reading. What we have discovered in cleaning out this room and doing an inventory of guided reading resources is that we need more. These resources will be part of our "Wish List."

Finally, the Literacy Committee helps to improve reading instruction. To get teachers talking about literacy and current research on the topic, the Vice Principal has organized a Book Club for teachers. Each month, we get together to discuss an educational research book. We hope that these discussions will help invigorate our teaching practices and spread the word among other teachers.

3. Provide **at least one** example of the principal's leadership in developing and advancing the school's literacy goals and describe a recent success resulting from this leadership.

Both our principal and vice-principal have shown their commitment to literacy in numerous ways. They have been consistently observing guided reading groups and assessing how the children are progressing in reading during the school year.

Though our budget is small, the principal has prioritized literacy and technology. A large amount of our budget was used for supply teachers to release time for teachers across the grades. Three PLC (Professional Learning Community) days were also spent on integrating technology in the literacy program.

The principal knows that, in addition to digital literacy, improving guided reading resources has to be a priority. Therefore, at the end of the school year in 2015-2016, the additional budget was spent on the grade 2 LLI kit, (\$5000) and PD (Professional Development) was delivered at the beginning of the year. The grade 1 and 2 teachers use the LLI (Leveled Literacy Intervention)

Principal leads by example or facilitates others to lead.

Successes are clearly described.



kits daily to help the most struggling readers.

The principal has also committed PD funds to support Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) across the division with a focus on literacy to address the specific needs of students and to support staff. The principal has budgeted several days of supply teacher release time so that the entire teaching staff can have PD and planning time with School Board Resource staff. Our focus is on inclusion and closing the literacy gap among our most vulnerable students.

Our PD has focused on literacy in the following ways: Kindergarten teachers are learning about how to document student reading and writing through the use of iPads; Grade 1 and Special Education are focusing on Guided Reading with targeted students and all primary teachers are digging deeper with oral language literacy. In addition, our staff has also been given opportunities to attend a Professional Learning series focused on Literacy. This series is for Intermediate staff with a focus on learning to complete diagnostic assessment to inform instruction.

With a limited budget and a large list of priorities, the principal has focused on literacy as a priority. He is working to enhance the book collections in the Library and the classroom. A wish list of materials has been compiled by staff and School Board Resource Staff; however, the cost is above the means of the school budget. Some support has been provided through the School Council with limited book purchases to support classroom collections. As well, the principal is looking at a highly successful research-based program to support struggling readers. Again, the program is costly (\$5000) to purchase and to train one staff member.

A very important gap has been identified by the principal is the lack of wireless networking throughout the building. He has made it a priority this year to upgrade the entire wireless network. We have done some fundraising through the school council to help with this but this is still a huge budgetary commitment. We feel that without a strong infrastructure, digital literacy programs cannot be implemented throughout the school.



### Recent Success

There are many successes, small and large, as a result of the principal's leadership. One important success is a renewed focus on guided reading with all of the primary teachers participating in professional development initiatives. The impact on student reading assessments show that prioritizing guided reading is working. The increases in primary reading scores have been particularly significant, with students moving from a DRA level 2 to a DRA level 24 in the space of 6 months.

Another small but important success has been the renewed emphasis on the comprehensive literacy block. This year, the amount of time spent on literacy in the morning jumped from 50 minutes to 100 minutes of uninterrupted time. The principal and vice- principal felt that this change was essential in improving literacy skills in our students.

An important success from a literacy and community perspective is the new and emerging "Book Room." It was inspiring to have such a huge commitment from the parent community in getting this room cleaned out, organized and ready for our new resources.

4. Provide **at least one** example of the staff's leadership in developing and advancing the school's literacy goals and describe a recent success resulting from this leadership.

### ORAL LANGUAGE STAFF INQUIRY PROJECT:

Our school has a 0.5 Early Literacy Support Teacher (ELT) who provides Early Reading Intervention through the Reading Recovery model and Early Reading Intervention (ERI) model. Early Years students are assessed using the Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement by Dr. Marie Clay©1993, 2002 at the beginning of Grade One along with the BURT Word Test, a Reading Record, the PAST-R (Phonological Awareness Screening Tool), and the Record of Oral Language. The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is a

The staff work to improve their own literacy competency.

Successes are clearly described.



questionnaire used by the province to assess the school readiness and the underlying developmental health of children in Kindergarten.

The 2014/2015 EDI results indicate that 39% of our students are considered "not ready" in the areas of Communication Skills and General Knowledge. Many of our students enter kindergarten with very limited oral language skills. Approximately 68% of our students are considered "at risk" (Stanine 1 and 2) in beginning reading and writing skills and oral language skills as they enter Grade One.

Initially, the ELT presented a three year history of Early Literacy Support data to the Early Years (K-3) teaching staff, as "this is a problem, what can we do about it?" Rather than accepting this as status quo, or deciding to focus on other initiatives, staff decided to begin questioning the correlation of oral language development with reading and writing readiness/development as an Inquiry Project. As a collective, this ambitious community of learners began to meet on lunch hours and after school to seek out the assistance of Speech and Language Consultants, Literacy Specialists, etc. to implement a change in their classroom practice. In addition to collaborating on a daily basis, administration has allotted 60 minutes at our monthly staff meeting for this cohort to meet to share and discuss scholarly articles, share activities and lesson, and to invite guest speakers with expertise in the area of oral language.

#### DOCUMENTATION OF SUCCESS:

Each month the Early Years Staff commits to a different oral language topic/focus. Staff spend the month reading articles, experimenting with different lessons/activities, doing independent research on the topic, and sharing newly acquired ideas. At the end of the month, teachers, clinicians, and administration come together to share understandings, ideas, and to collect a bank of resources for oral language development and acquisition.

The school division has responded to the literacy needs put forward by the school's Early Literacy Teacher by assigning an additional Itinerant Literacy Support Teacher (0.125). This allows the ELT to Co-Teach an oral language



literacy block in each Kindergarten/Grade 1 classroom every day. The Early Literacy Support Teacher has been invited to present about the school's "Oral Language Journey" to other Literacy Support Teachers in the division. The library technician has begun to carefully select books to read aloud to students during "book exchange" that connect to the oral language focus.

Although this project is still in its infancy, classroom teachers are reporting a sense of empowerment and are noticing student success when engaging in explicit oral language instruction. Student responses are more detailed, extensive, and they give examples to support their statements. Connections are made between texts/topics and real world examples/experiences and between one text/topic to another.

## SECTION D: PROPOSED LITERACY PROGRAMS

In the event that your school is selected as a grant recipient, describe **two (2)** literacy projects that you plan to undertake with the grant funds. In your response, include the following for each project:

### 1. Proposed Literacy Program

- a. A brief description of the Literacy Project and the challenges the project will address.

#### "Taking off with Reading" Part I: Create a Guided Reading Resource Room Project Description

In line with our school's recent Teacher-Led Inquiry to improve student achievement, participation and engagement in literacy through targeted small group Guided Reading Instruction, there is a need at the school to create a school-wide shared Book Room/Guided Reading Resource Room. A central room in the school has been dedicated for this space and recently cleaned out. Current Guided Reading sets from around the school have been brought together, labeled, and sorted into the new space. These initial steps highlighted many holes and needs for our collection. We are kindly asking the Indigo Love of Reading Foundation for funds to update and enrich our Guided Reading Resource Room to reflect the needs, interests, and cultural identities of our students.

Program is clearly described

Challenges are clearly described



### **Challenges**

After collecting and organizing sets found around our school into one room, a glaring lack of high interest nonfiction texts to support our students' inquiry based learning, culturally relevant and responsive materials to foster inclusion and voice representative of our diverse demographics and current engaging fiction works quickly became apparent. Many of our Guided Reading sets are very old and predominantly fiction based. In addition, many of our sets are incomplete, many having only 2 or 3 of the same title, instead of a full set of 6. There are several DRA levels with only a few sets/titles, not nearly enough for a student to practice their decoding and comprehension strategies before proceeding to a higher level. We also have very little to no math-based texts, nonfiction titles that support each grades' science and social studies content, and texts that reflect an indigenous voice.

- b. A corresponding budget for this literacy project.

### **B) Budget: Total \$70,000 over three years**

Year One = \$32,000: Non-fiction content related (science and social studies) \$17,000; STEM/Makerspace \$500; Fiction - popular picture books \$8,000 (includes math-lit); early readers \$2000; chapter books \$2,000; High interest/Low vocabulary \$1,000; Parent library and dual language \$1500

Year Two = \$23,000: Non-fiction content related \$10,000; STEM/Makerspace \$500; Fiction - popular picture books \$8,000; early readers \$1000; chapter books \$1500; High interest/Low vocabulary \$1000; Parent library and dual language \$1000

Year Three = \$15,000: Non-fiction content related \$5,000; STEM/Makerspace \$1,000; Fiction - popular picture books \$4000; early readers \$1000, chapter books \$1,000; High interest/Low vocabulary \$1,000; Parent library and dual language \$2,000

**Budget is clear**



- c. A timeframe for execution for this project.

As indicated in our budget, we plan to spend smaller amounts each year, with the goal of fine-tuning our collection as we go. By monitoring circulation, we will monitor and address interest trends. The need is significant and it is essential that we have an impact in the first year. In both the STEM/Makerspace, parent and dual language areas, the plan is to spend the same or slightly more by the end of the third year as demand increases.

**Timeline is clear**

- d. An evaluation plan indicating how you will measure improvements in literacy outcomes among the students at your school (e.g. reading and literacy test scores, library circulation, student attitudes toward reading).

Success of our updated and culturally responsive Guided Reading Book Room will be measured in several ways: Teachers will note student progress with decoding and comprehension strategy application, critical thinking skills, and an increase in their ability to read more challenging and varied texts through the ongoing use of DRA, CASI, running records, and anecdotal observations throughout the school year. To directly see the impact of the new small group targeted materials (book sets) we will compare this current year's EQAO data (pre Book Room) to the upcoming school year's data (post Book Room). Attention will not only be on the difference between the percentage of students reading at/above level but also on the Student Engagement Data, e.g., "I like to read", "I am a good reader", and "I am able to understand difficult reading passages". Teachers will also reflect during collaborative inquiry meetings on observations in class of student engagement, noted by a change in independent reading stamina, student's responses to reading, and visible enjoyment in the wonderful world of reading.

**Evaluation plan is clearly described**

In addition, we will evaluate this plan by measuring improvements in literacy outcomes among the students in the school in these quantitative ways:

Kindergarten:



Currently, in SK, in February, only 37% of our students are reading at standard. (Standard, according to Ministry guidelines, between a PM 4 and 6.)

#### Grades 1-3:

Currently, at least 15 students in, or 27% of our primary population, are reading below standard.

With the exception of the LLI kits, all of our guided reading resources are either outdated or non-existent. We expect to see large jumps next year, after the completion of our Book Room. We think that primary reading will really "take off."

#### Grades 4-6 "Reading to Learn"

Although our students at this age can decode very well, they need to improve in their higher order thinking skills. According to the most recent EQAO data, our junior students need to work on the following skills: inference, summarizing, and synthesizing information. The Circle of Life, Trickster Tales, and Nelson reading grades 1-6, as well as Scholastic guided reading grades 1-6, will provide specific strategies for teachers to improve these skills.

#### Grades 7-8: Inclusion, and Mental Health and Wellness

Based on report card data, overall our grade 7 and 8 students are good readers. However, the student census, Equity Focus group and Healthy Relationships survey, have all indicated that some of our students need to explore and talk about issues around self-esteem, personal identity, sexual orientation, gender, and oppression. With our outdated libraries, students have indicated that are not seeing themselves reflected in the books. We need to update our library to serve these students. Measures of success will be future focus group data and student surveys.

#### Our Special Education Classes:

Our five Special Education classes also take part in guided reading.

Learning to read takes longer, and progress is shown in a more subtle way, but all 5 teachers are committed to guided reading. This year, teachers are focusing on 2-3 students per class to move them up 3-6 PM levels.



### 3. Turnover Plan:

Many schools will experience turnover in key roles (e.g. principal, librarian, educators on the literacy team) in the course of the three year Literacy Fund grant. Describe the transition plan that you would put into place in the event that your school is selected as a grant recipient and some of these key people change.

In the event that there is a turnover of **any** staff during the course of the Indigo Grant the following plan would be implemented:

- New teaching staff are customarily paired with existing staff in a mentor/mentee capacity. Part of the responsibility of the existing staff is to explain school procedures to the new person. In the case of the Indigo Grant, it would be part of “the introduction to our school.”
- It is customary either at the end of June or beginning of September Staff Meeting to remind the entire staff “how we do things at our school.” A discussion about the Indigo Grant would be included in that part of the Staff Meeting.

In the event that there is a turnover of **key** staff during the course of the Indigo Grant, the following plan would be implemented:

- Clear and comprehensive documentation of the plan, past and future would be part of the Grant’s implementation. This would include for example; the Grant application, timelines, long term plans for expenditures, updated budget sheets etc. This information would be made available to the new key staff.
- In most cases current and new individuals would meet and discuss the Grant. Sometimes this is not possible, that is if transitions occur due to health concerns. If the Key transitioning staff are not available to meet, other staff (see below) would assist the new person.
  - The School Literacy committee would monitor and oversee the transfer of information.
  - Any amendments to the original plan would be discussed with the committee.
  - Hopefully Foundation (Love of Reading) staff would be available to assist when necessary

Plan is detailed and comprehensive.

Plan specifies which people/positions are in charge of overseeing turnover.