To: Dr. Erika Paterson

From: Jenny Bachynski

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Subject: Proposal for Increasing Visibility of the Vancouver Public Library’s

 Children and Infant Literacy Programs

**Introduction**

The Vancouver Public Library (VPL) has wonderful and diverse infant and youth programs for the public. These programs are free and accessible at all library locations across the city. An example of the classes offered are: baby story times, children’s book clubs, technology programs, teen/children mentoring programs, writing camps, bilingual programs, as well as other excellent curriculum.

The library programs are extremely important for the city for two specific reasons. Firstly, children’s literacy greatly benefits the future generation, as well as provides positive long-term impacts for the city by having literate, educated citizens. Secondly, we must protect libraries as institutions that allow for all citizens to have equal access to books and other resources. If libraries are not being used to their full potential, the programs will suffer.

**Statement of Problem**

The Vancouver libraries do a fantastic job in offering programs that will help youth excel, but everyone would benefit by increasing the visibility of these programs to new parents, people unfamiliar with library culture, and most importantly, low income families. As a parent in the community, I believe there are many young families unaware of the excellent, free resources available. There are three key goals to be reached: increase literacy in children from low-income families, allow new parents to connect to their community and other young families, and provide support for the library and its longevity.

**Proposed Solution**

The proposed solution is to increase the city’s knowledge of these programs through basic marketing strategies. Librarians could elevate their visibility in different areas of the community - visiting schools and/or pairing up with childcare centres. Promotional materials could be offered in locations where families spend time: doctor’s offices, swimming centres, book stores, transit. It is of high importance to place promotional materials in lower-income areas, notably the Downtown Eastside Women’s Shelter or the Sheway Outreach Centre.

**Scope**

To better understand how the VPL is spreading word of their programs and to see how aware young families are of what is available to them, I plan to query the following questions:

1. What marketing strategies are already in place by VPL?
2. How much of its marketing focus is on low-income areas?
3. How many young families are using these library programs? How often are they using them and at what branch locations?
4. If families are using the VPL programs, how did they find out about them?
5. What is the best way to spread information about the VPL through the DTES?

**Methods**

My primary data will be collected from three specific avenues. I plan on contacting the marketing department at the VPL to inquire about strategies, as well as the Branch Head of the DTES library locations. I will need information about the attendance of children in these specific neighbourhood libraries. My second action will be to survey parents in the city to establish if they are using the library programs, and if so, how they heard about them. Lastly, I will be interviewing a contact of mine who has worked on bringing a children’s music program to the DTES.

Secondary sources will include publications on the benefits of early childhood literacy and the benefits of library culture in communities.

**My Qualifications**

I have my own young family and am immersed in the VPL culture. I am extremely grateful for the opportunities that VPL offers, and I found these programs essential when navigating new motherhood. I am a couple classes from finishing my B.A in English literature and will be pursuing work in children’s literacy and literature once I have completed my degree. I also have post-secondary and professional experience in design, and have worked on many marketing-driven projects.

**Conclusions**

The VPL is vital for young families and their children. The programs offered and the support given is invaluable. It is our responsibility to extend these advantages and let them be known to everyone. By investigating the five questions I mentioned earlier, I feel that we can gather enough information to extend the programs reach and encourage larger groups of citizens, and their children, to become part of this community.