

August 31, 2007

The new school year begins this Tuesday and as always it promises to be extremely busy. In the Ministry we are preparing materials that we hope will be helpful in your implementation of new programs. As September is Literacy Month, I wanted to feature some of the activity in this program area.

In 2005, the Ministry of Education assumed responsibility for literacy and early learning. Since that time, the Ministry has been working on the development of a literacy action plan for the province. ReadNow BC is a framework that provides for a coordinated and targeted approach to improving literacy throughout all life stages.

Canada currently ranks 3rd in adult reading literacy scores behind Norway and Bermuda. Nationally, British Columbians' reading literacy is 4th behind Yukon, Saskatchewan and Alberta. While this is impressive, the aim of this plan is for BC to have the highest literacy scores on the continent. Through this plan, we expect to see BC move from the 4th highest jurisdiction in Canada to 1st in the world within 10 years.

ReadNow BC is designed to ensure that all British Columbians understand the value of literacy and have access to programs and services that will enable them to read and enhance their quality of life. The plan recognizes the challenges across all ages and builds on current findings, successes and achievements. To ensure this is achieved, the plan is focused on four pillars:

1. School Readiness in Young Children
2. Reading Success in Schools
3. Reading Success for Adults
4. Reading Success for Aboriginal People

An important part of the plan is enhancing the role of communities in the coordination and provision of literacy programs and services. Communities, including schools, colleges, community organizations, businesses and residents, have a range of resources to assist in these areas, but no agency currently provides leadership in the task of coordinating local community-based responses to educational, training and labour force requirements.

As you are aware, under recent legislative changes to the *School Act*, Boards of Education in collaboration with post-secondary institutions, libraries, key literacy stakeholders and community organizations, will ensure the development and implementation of District Literacy Plans. Beginning in 2007, 10 school districts will give leadership to implementing these plans and provide "best practices" in the new model, to share with other communities. The enhanced role of communities in the continuum of service provision will ensure British Columbians have multiple choices in accessing innovative literacy programs and services locally.

In order to achieve British Columbia's number one goal of being the best educated, most literate jurisdiction, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with other government ministries, Boards of Education and school districts, post-secondary institutions, early learning programs, public libraries, Literacy Now, Literacy BC and other key community stakeholders, is implementing ReadNow BC over the next three years. Your role as partners will be critical to successfully achieving our goal.

The activities at the district and provincial level are important and help guide your work. However, the real challenge is your ability, with the professionals in your school, to ensure each student has the opportunity to become literate. The functionally literate student who can participate in our democratic society to the fullest should be our vision.

This newsletter has been in place for the past year and a half. I'm interested in your reactions to the newsletter and your suggestions of other ideas and projects that might be reported on in the newsletter.

I will be focusing on more operational ideas this year so you are kept informed of initiatives and projects being implemented across the province.

Have a great year!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed D', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Emery Dosdall, Ed D
Deputy Minister of Education