

Community Success Stories

Learning our way to Economic and Social Inclusion

Early Literacy in New Brunswick

ESLIL FIFERSCY IN NEM BRUNSWICK

Ensemble  pour vaincre
la pauvreté
Overcoming Poverty Together 



Learning, education and training are essential for children, families and communities to reach their full potential and to contribute to the economic and social inclusion in our province. When we work together to provide the resources that support our children's education, we enable them to become positive, well-rounded and confident individuals who are able to contribute their strengths and gifts to their communities. Capacity in public schools could be strengthened, to build on the specialized learning requirements of all children and youth. Literacy is essential to the healthy development of a child which at an early age allows a child to develop vocabulary, imagination and better communication skills. When adults, families and communities create an environment that supports literacy, they instil an awareness and awakening in their children that lasts a lifetime.

Community Success stories

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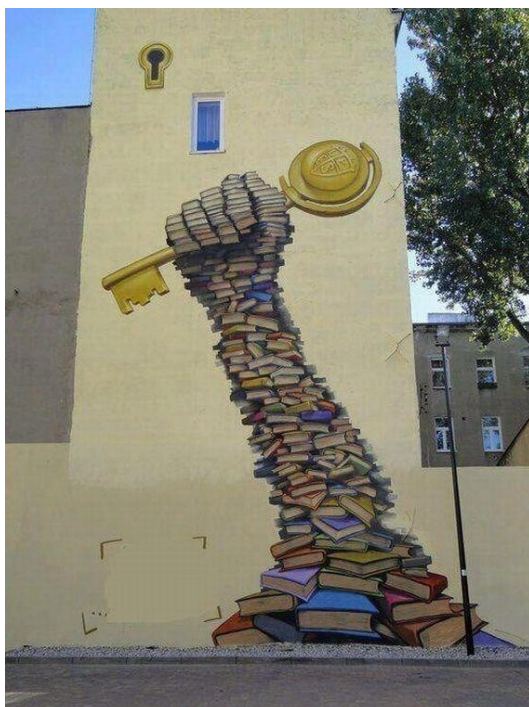
-The New Brunswick Economic and Social
Inclusion Plan
2014-2019



Pillar 2: Learning Child & Youth Education

Priority Actions

8. Reinforce and build upon capacity of parents, families, caregivers and communities to support children and youth in their learning.
9. Support and promote literacy in early childhood development and education.
10. Extend and strengthen the concept of innovative school models, such as entrepreneurial community schools and community-based school programming.
11. Promote afterschool programming and mentoring opportunities that assist with skill development and support participation of children and youth living in low income families.



***The book delivery program is more popular than ever
(Story from CIN Region #4)***

This summer's book delivery program « estival de lecture » from Francophone School District North-West had impressive results.

Approximately 388 students took part in the program during 2013, five times more than in 2010 when the program launched. Volunteer interest has followed the same trend. The

number of community members involved in the program has also multiplied by five, which translates to 254 adult reading mentors for the children, who are between kindergarten and Grade 3.



The central idea of this program is this: each child is paired with an adult volunteer, and every two weeks the adult sends the student a book, along with a message of encouragement on a postcard. In return the student will give a summary of the book and their thoughts before they send the postcard back. Over the summer this process will repeat itself seven times.

Marie-Josée Long, an educational officer with Francophone School District North-West, conceived the book delivery summer reading program in response to her research indicating that students could lose between two and three months of reading ability if they didn't read over the summer, while those who did read could gain a month or more.

Over the summer 2716 books were read and exchanged, compared to 546 in 2010.

The superintendent of Francophone School District North-West, Mr. Bertrand Beaulieu, said he was pleased to see such a positive initiative. Especially since the development of literacy-related skills is one of the three priorities of the district. According to Mr. Beaulieu, the strength of the program is the close collaboration between school, family and community. "All partners play an important role in this adventure."

The Francophone School District North-West was supported by the New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation through the North West Community Inclusion Network (Region #4)

Some Highlights

- The book delivery summer reading program was originally conceived in 2009 as a pilot project for grade 2 students at the Écho-Jeunesse school in Kedgwick.
- In 2010, the program was officially launched at the district level. At that point the 15 elementary schools in the district were invited to be part of the program. As of 2013, 13 of those 15 schools had signed up.
- The volunteers are from the community, from all different sectors, they are retired teachers, district employees, firefighters, police and hockey players.
- Literacy is defined as the capacity to understand, interpret, evaluate and put to use information drawn from multiple sources, both written and spoken to effectively communicate and integrate the information into daily life. (*Department of Education and Early Childhood Development*)



Learning opportunities for families and young children in Saint John's low-income neighbourhoods (Story from CIN Region #2)

For several years now, individuals and groups from the community, schools, government and business have been working together to make sure that all children in Saint John have the best possible start in learning and in life.

This is critical in a city now tied with Toronto for the highest rate of child poverty in Canada (28%), and where poverty is concentrated in six very distinct neighbourhoods.

There is widespread agreement in our community that we cannot afford the economic and social costs of so many children being left behind, and that investing in learning – from cradle to career - is the best way to break the cycle of poverty. We have a common vision of building an early learning community in each of Saint John's priority neighbourhoods where parents, schools and community partners work together for the optimum development of all young children.

The push to ensure that children and families get the support they need in the early years took a big step forward in 2009 with the establishment of the Early Learning Centre (ELC) at Saint John the Baptist/King Edward School. The ELC is managed by the YMCA, working in partnership with the Family Resource Centre and many community partners.

In 2012, ESIC began funding efforts to bring more parenting programs and activities directly to families with children 0-5 in low-income neighbourhoods. Thanks to the funding provided by ESIC, and many contributions, in time, space and people from local partners, ongoing weekly parent/child playgroups are now operating in all six priority neighbourhoods. They are coordinated by the Family Resource Centre in four neighbourhoods, and the YMCA in two neighbourhoods. Over 160 families are now attending playgroups, opening the door to many other programs and activities, and they are starting to see positive results.



Over half of the parents who participated in the 2014 play group evaluations said that, since coming to play group, their children sit quietly for a longer time, play more with other children stick with a task longer.

Over 60% of parents also said they read and play together at home with their children more since coming to playgroup.

These are all critical school-readiness skills, but also building blocks for a successful career and a better life.



Parents talk highly about what they have learnt about being a parent – and a family – from attending playgroups and other programs:



“I am not alone in the world with problems; everyone has challenges. There are many different positive parenting methods, and always more to learn. I have learned more about building community around the kids and working with other parents to ensure that all the kids are happy and comfortable.”

-Playgroup Parents



Because ESIC took the lead in funding this project, several foundations and other groups have added their support to the cause. This means that even more programs and activities will be available for parents and young children in the coming years.

But most importantly of all, this hard work and learning can also be very enjoyable for everyone involved:

“Both my one year old and four year old always have fun playing with all the different toys...during story time the kids have a blast singing and hearing the stories. I especially enjoy how parents can talk and enjoy time, with not just their children, but other parents as well.”

“I really enjoy the socializing my 2-year old gets with other kids. She has made really good friends here, and so have I! The staff is exceptional with children, and it is well put together!”

-Playgroup Parents

*Preschools in the Communities Where the Children Live
(Story from CIN Region #7)*

Jane Wood, Program Director, Family Early Childhood North Thanks to a grant from ESIC and support from the Northumberland Community Inclusion Network (CIN) 91 children in the area were able to attend a free preschool from January to April 2014.

The project was a partnership between the CIN, A Family Place and Family and Early Childhood North.

The project was to provide a free half day per week preschool in their own community for children identified with concerns on the Early Years Evaluation Direct Assessment (EYEDA).



The EYE-DA is part of a province wide transition to school initiative that is designed to identify literacy problems at an earlier age so that children can arrive at school ready to learn.

By providing a preschool free of charge in a child's own community and in the school the child will attend we wanted to ensure that the children would arrive at kindergarten with a comfort level regarding the school and with enhanced preschool skills.

The preschool had an emphasis on the top skills that teachers have identified that make a child ready to learn; the ability to verbalize needs, to follow directions, to be attentive and not disrupt the class and to be sensitive to the needs of others.

We offered a preschool in Miramichi and Blackville in the schools that the children would attend. Following the Early Years Evaluation Direct Assessment, parents were made aware of the preschool in their area and invited to have their child attend.



"Nothing you do for children is ever wasted"

Garrison Keillor, Author

An experienced, qualified early Educator was hired to provide a free half day per week preschool in each community from January to April 2014. She prepared all the activities to use at the preschool and all the instructions for the facilitators which are now available to use in any future programs.

We held the preschool in the elementary school in each community thereby getting children and parents comfortable with the school environment and school personnel. This also eliminated the expense of rent.

We had success with the children who attended. We had one child in Blackville who on day one of the preschool refused to interact with anyone or participate in any of the activities. By the end of the program he was very comfortable and could print his name and was sad when it was time to leave for home again. All of the children who attended made some progress as recorded by a pre and post look at their skill levels.

We are looking forward to providing the preschool again this year and hope to put the things we learned to use to make the project even better this year.

- Jane Wood, Program Director, Family Early Childhood North



The Milltown Elementary School After School Programming (Story from CIN Region #8)

The Milltown community needed quality, structured after school programming that supports academics, skills, and healthy choices and that is accessible to all children in the community.

So, Milltown Elementary School formed a partnership with the Boys and Girls Club of Charlotte County to overcome this challenge. The Boys & Girls Club now provides our school with an MES Outreach Worker that delivers after school programming within our school.



We have two after school programs:

Literacy Mentoring (Gr. K-2) In preparation for the end of grade 2 literacy assessments, and with the knowledge that learning reading skills by grade 3 is of utmost importance to lifelong success, we decided to focus on literacy with this group of students. This program is offered to K-2 students two days per week, from 2:00-3:00 pm, in six week sessions from September to June. Students are matched individually with trained volunteers, with a focus on the four essential components which good readers need to acquire in order to be considered proficient readers: comprehension, accuracy, fluency, and expanding vocabulary, referred to as the Word Café.

After School Program (Gr. 3-5) Why is it important for our students from low-income families to attend after school programming? Our after school program helps to reduce poverty by engaging children in activities that will support them academically and socially, as well as provides role modeling and encourages positive behaviours and healthy choices. Our after school program, also, provides structure and supervision during the critical after school hours when children are most likely to be physically assaulted, bullied, participate in crime, and use drugs. Non-participation in an afterschool program can also be a precursor for teen pregnancy, which in turn can be a precursor for poverty.

The literacy teacher felt that Kaden could benefit from the literacy mentoring program. Kaden's mom agreed. Kaden didn't.

In the beginning, he would mope slowly to the program, with his head hanging low while muttering "I hate literacy". Some days he would try to tell us that he wasn't supposed to go to literacy mentoring that day.

Kaden was matched with Frank. Frank was a kind, gentle man; a senior citizen who volunteered and trained for the program. Frank and Kaden met for one hour, twice a week; reading together and doing literacy activities.

Over the six weeks, the moping got less, and less. As time went by, Kaden would say things like, "Frank is a very nice man." Kaden began to look forward to his time with Frank. When their sessions ended, Kaden brought Frank in a thank you card and a gift certificate for Tim Horton's. Kaden had moved up one guided reading level over the six week period that they were together. Kaden continues to make improvement in literacy and Frank continues to mentor other students at Milltown Elementary School.



"All of my students looked forward to going and I think they felt special being a part of it. So, you have happy kids that are practicing literacy skills! You guys have created a win-win program!" - Mr. Williams, Gr 2.

"I do feel the program was very helpful and effective! Students did make improvements. I feel this program is important as many students involved are getting that much needed time to practice that they might not get elsewhere outside of school. Every little bit of extra time makes a difference!" - Mrs. Concepcion, Gr. 2

"Thought it was very worthwhile... great opportunity for those children to get more practice time which is what they need to make gains. Keeping it to grades one and two works - catch them early in their educational career." - Mrs. Lord, Literacy Lead Teacher



Janis Walker's ELF Story

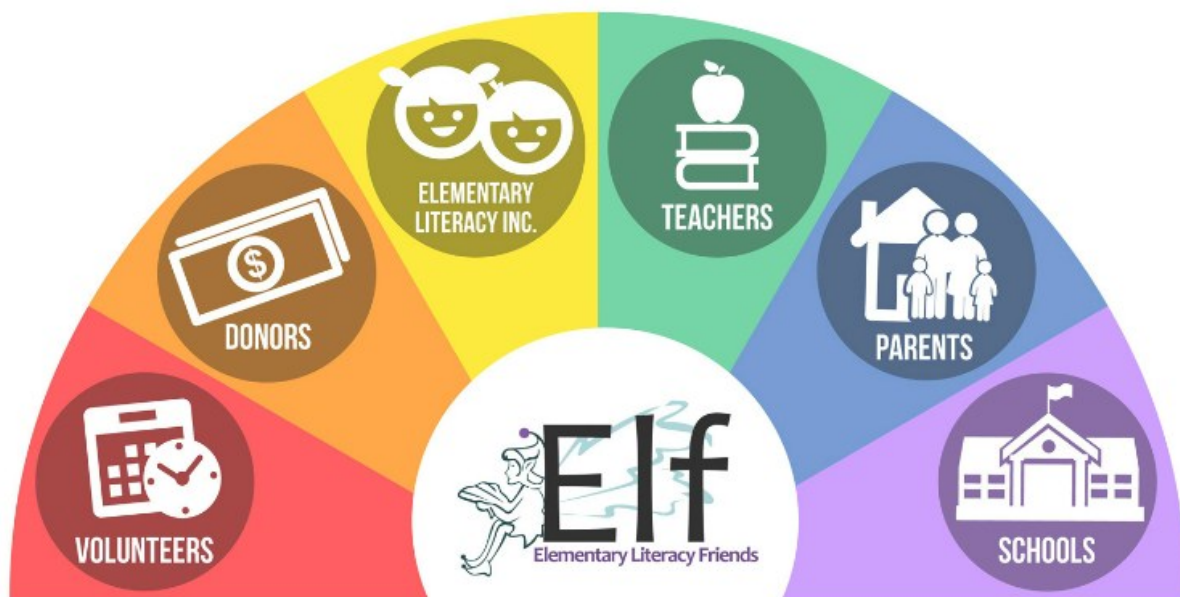
I have always enjoyed sharing my love of reading with children. It is so rewarding to watch a student's literacy skills develop and the child become a full-fledged reader. In 2012 I retired from a career in teaching elementary school. The last 10 years of my career I worked as a literacy lead helping children become better readers. I enjoyed helping to ignite a passion for reading in students. Some children develop their reading skills easily but many benefit from additional one-on-one support.

Soon after retirement I was asked to become a trainer for ELF where I began teaching volunteers how to work with a student one-on-one and follow the ELF program. The ELF program provides one more layer of support to those students needing a boost in their reading skills. As a teacher I always appreciated having volunteers helping out in the classroom but sometimes I felt that I wasn't able to make the best use of their time. ELF provides training, materials and a program for the volunteer to follow which is as much a help to teachers as it is to the volunteers, I think.

Part of the ELF's program effectiveness is that it is based on the current NB curriculum literacy outcomes. Volunteers are not teaching anything new; rather, they are supporting and reinforcing what is being taught each day in the classroom. The encouragement the ELF volunteer provides while the student practices his/her reading helps to build student's reading confidence. Students go back to the classroom more confident to participate in reading activities throughout the day.

When I started with the ELF program we were partnered with less than 20 schools in the province. I am happy to be a part of its growth. As part of that growth, my role has evolved and I am now the ELF Program Coordinator in addition to being a trainer for the Fredericton area. In the last three years ELF has expanded to over 100 schools in the province. Volunteers have commented that they find the short-term commitment of the program manageable and their experience tutoring highly satisfying. Many volunteers choose to reoffer for a second session later in the year or the following school year. This fall we placed over 450 ELF volunteers with students in schools sharing the gift of literacy! If you are at all interested in our program, please contact me, I'd love to have you join us in supporting schools, families and students for ensuring all children across New Brunswick achieve literacy.

Janis Walker
ELF Program Coordinator



Elementary Literacy Inc. is a charitable organization that offers Elementary Literacy Friends (ELF) to Anglophone elementary schools and Communauté Littératie Enfants Francophones (CLEF) to francophone elementary schools across the province. In close collaboration with schools, the organization recruits, trains and places volunteers in schools for working with students one-on-one to improve their reading skills. For more information please visit our website at www.elfnb.com or www.clefnb.com or call us at 1-855-898-2533



Merry
Christmas

Joyeux
Noël

Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation
Société de l'Inclusion Économique et Sociale

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

The 12 Community Inclusion Networks and the NB Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation wish all New Brunswickers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2015.



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