

Moving Forward: A National Summit on Libraries and Literacy

Summary from Tables: Morning Sessions

Wednesday, June 14, 2006

Table: Family Literacy Initiatives

Time: 10:30 – 11:30, 16 participants

Time: 11:30 to 12:30, 14 participants

Participants' experience with theme area:

- Participants included one adult learner, one corporate partner, and many public librarians involved in literacy action networks.

Opportunities:

- Family literacy has the opportunity to reach level 1 populations through their children, increasing literacy rates over time;
- Family literacy has the opportunity to reach hard to reach communities because of increased cultural relevance
- Partnerships to increase funding (with private donors or across institutions) and to share knowledge
- Look for local donors where national ones are not available
- Parenting literacy – reach parents through parenting skills classes- introduction to library resources. Employment classes are another opportunity
- Reaching hard to reach populations
 - o May need to go into non-traditional library locations
- Partner with community leaders
- Everyone wants to help their children learn

Challenges:

- Definitions
 - o 4 component model (direct parent, direct child, child-parent, parent education)
 - o Is literacy alienating those it would serve through its name?
 - o Should be defined more broadly
- Level 2
 - o Beginning readers, not thinkers
- Level 1
 - o Too much focus on level 2, not enough on level 1 readers

- Need advanced vocabulary for advanced thought
- Need for books, funds!!
 - Provincial disparities in funding (ie. No funds for Eng language literacy in Quebec; No government funding for children over 6 in Alberta, charges for library cards)
- Need to make libraries more family friendly – meet changing needs of community- but will vary from place to place- some need more noise, others want quiet
- To charge or not for programs
 - if you charge, you will be excluding many of the most needy members of the community/preaching to the converted
 - But each community is unique- some have more funds
- PR: getting the word out
 - Need to advertise in visual/auditory mediums – not in print!
 - (but this can be expensive)
 - How to reach the level 1 population
- Reaching rural, northern, isolated, or native communities
 - Need to go out into the community, and try to bring community back into the library
- ESL
 - Transportation issues
 - May not be literate in their first language
- Lack of parental involvement
- What they want or what they need?
- Generational cycles of illiteracy
- Turf wars (fighting for dollars)
- Too many cultures (100+) per community to serve adequately
- Need for communication on the National level; need National Literacy Organization
- Creating a safe, trustworthy library space

Project or action ideas:

1. Puppet shows at city festivals with library advocates on hand to talk with prospective learners
2. Send books home with children with activities to do with their parents
3. Summer Reading Club
4. Invite parents into library to read with/to their children (Come Read With Me, MELD)
 - find ways to entice patrons back into library, ie. On the third visit, they receive a free book; child can do craft from book while parents are being given instruction
5. Contests (individual writing contests or community wide circulation contests)

6. Involve parents (and Grandparents)
7. Bus trips to libraries with parents and children
8. Present all new parents with a bag of library goodies (Invitation to join, info about programs, starter card if possible). This can be done in partnership with Public Health.
 - Follow up with programs such as “Read to Me Jamboree”, a party in the library, free books
9. One book, one community – can be done in partnership with local bookstores; consultation with local community leaders
10. Expand notions of literacy/library outreach to include puppet shows, music, draw and tell, crafts, computer literacy
11. Family Literacy Day is a good way to springboard into other programs and attract funding