



# Learning It Together: Our Community Talks About Family Literacy

FAMILY LITERACY!

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## An Introduction

“Before beginning a Hunt, it is wise to ask someone what you are looking for before you begin looking for it.” - *Winnie the Pooh*

### What Is Family Literacy?



Family literacy broadly describes literacy activities that parents or caregivers, children, and extended family members participate in together (Anderson, Anderson, Friedrich, & Kim, 2010). Literacy activities include numerous practices and skills that families engage in and develop at home and in community settings, such as cooking, singing, writing shopping lists and playing games (DeBruin-Parecki, Paris, & Siedenburg, 1997). Family literacy is a term used in research and educational programs that underlines the important role families play in literacy development (Nutbrown & Hannon, 2003). Within a discussion of family literacy, it is important to acknowledge “multiple literacies,” such as media literacy, financial literacy and technology literacy, and, most importantly for this research, the experiences of diverse families (Anderson & Morrison 2007).

Family literacy and language activities go beyond reading books. Family literacy is employed to accomplish daily tasks and activities such as writing notes, making shopping lists,

and using a recipe (Thomas & Skage, 1998). Reading signs, logos, and “environmental print” is also an aspect of families’ everyday experiences with literacy (Anderson & Morrison, 2007). Although “shared book reading,” and “family literacy” are widely synonymous or linked, it is important to expand this idea of literacy. Embracing multiple literacies supports diverse literacy strengths and practices, thereby encouraging relevant and culturally appropriate literacy activities within families (Reyes & Torres, 2007).

Family literacy programs typically address the literacy learning of children, adults, and more inclusively, caregivers and their children together. Family literacy initiatives may focus on early childhood education, adult education, and/or interactive projects for the whole family (Hannon, 2000). In this manner, “traditional” or nuclear understandings of family structure can be expanded upon when considering family literacy. Children also actively support parents and caregivers in their literacy pursuits (Anderson et al. 2010). Family literacy is intergenerational and the entire family is involved in the learning process.

Family literacy programs may strive to assist individuals and families who are lower literate and marginalized in a strength-based, culturally sensitive, appropriate, and collaborative manner (Anderson et al., 2010). A family literacy approach of this nature offers empowering literacy opportunities (Thomas & Skage, 1998) by focusing on families’ “strengths and potentialities” or acknowledging families’ unique skills, abilities and goals (Reyes & Torres, 2007). This view of family literacy respects and encourages families’ diverse practices and understandings of literacy. However family literacy is conceptualized or understood, it ultimately recognizes that family members are integral in shaping and sharing literacies within families and communities (Hannon, 2000; Nutbrown & Hannon, 2003; Anderson & Morrison, 2007; Weigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2010)

## Methods



The students of Sociology 4991 at Mount Allison University, in partnership with the Tantrammar Family Resource Centre (TFRC) of Sackville, New Brunswick, worked together to create a research project that would examine the ways in which families experience and define literacy, how they interact with literacy resources, and how community literacy services might better suit their needs. This study was conducted by a group of 18 Sociology students and was supervised by Dr. Vanessa Oliver at Mount Allison University.

Sociology 4991 was created to give upper year students the opportunity to participate in the hands-on theory and process of Community-Based Research (CBR). CBR projects have received growing attention in fields like public health, community development, education, social work, nursing, and sociology over the past several decades. Increasingly academic-community partnerships are at the forefront of creating research that is change and solutions oriented.

The students interviewed 7 lower-income local parents and 7 service providers. The parent participants were 4 moms and 3 dads who between them had a total of 12 children. The providers were from a number of different area community programs. The parent interviews focused on individual experiences with, and definitions of, family literacy and their interactions with community resources, while the provider interviews focused on resource needs and

potential barriers to access for lower income families. Each interview lasted approximately 1 hour and was conducted at a time and place that was convenient for the participants. Interviews were then taped and transcribed.

Before conducting interviews, students completed an extensive literature review of Family Literacy, which included program theory, definitions, directions, setbacks and specialized topic areas such as gender, Aboriginal communities, and the Francophone community. We then underwent an ethical review process and began recruiting parent participants by posting (Appendix A) around Sackville, Amherst, Port Elgin and Dorchester. Most parent participants were ultimately recruited by word of mouth. Service providers were recruited with much assistance from the Tantramar Family Resource Centre. From there we transcribed the interviews, coded them and analyzed what our participants had told us. The final product of our efforts is this report.

## Definitions and Processes

“I think I can, I think I can.” – *The Little Engine That Could*



Throughout our interviews, it became clear that families think about literacy, its meanings and its functions in many different ways. Family literacy activities include many activities and skills that families participate in and develop at home and in the community. As one participant notes, her children learn in a variety of settings: **“they learn a lot like at Sunday School and at church, and with other kids.”** In defining literacy, however, the idea that there are many activities that are enveloped in literacy often goes unrecognized as the typical understanding of family literacy usually only encompasses the notion of reading to and with children:

**“I guess to me it’d just be the ability to read. But also to comprehend what you read. To me I think that’s a big part of it. I’ve seen some kids read but not necessarily understand what they’re reading.” (Sackville Parent)**

All of our parent participants defined literacy in this more narrow way. Although reading books is an important component of family literacy, so are interactions with non-print narratives (such as verbal story-telling and singing), technologies, visual art, games, as well as daily experiences, like cooking or grocery shopping:

**“While the parents are in the other room, the children once again have you know all the toys, play-doh, books, writing materials, crayons, pencils, markers and we also have a circle at the end where we do the singing and reading stories.” (Service Provider)**

Importantly, then, people who advocate family literacy need to make families aware that literacy is broader and can be achieved through all sorts of activities, many of which families are doing everyday.

All of these different types of learning experiences help with the understanding of various kinds of literacy. Having strong skills in multiple forms of literacy can assist families in better understanding and navigating important pieces of their social lives. As one service provider notes,

**“With a looming election, we will be looking at the democratic process and the individual's responsibility to be informed of the issues. Literacy looks at medical literacy, employment, literacy, [all of these things].”**

When literacy encompasses activities like understanding health and wellness, communicating with doctors and nurses, knowing where to find jobs, and even voting for a politician who will represent your interests, we see that these larger, expanded definitions are as important as simply knowing how to read and write.

### Processes

The ways in which people learn are largely dependent on the resources available to them. This is true of both adults and children. When times are tough and families struggle it is often difficult to make learning a priority:

**“I been on my own basically since I was, well since I was a little girl, but since I was sixteen and so my dad taught me some stuff, but I kinda just, you know, I didn’t have a lot of guidance, so, from my family, so my family has their own issues and so... I didn’t have good parents, basically. So I had to teach myself a lot of stuff.” (Sackville Parent)**

Keeping these challenges in mind, learning processes for parents and their children can involve teaching important skills that some families might have missed out on due to other more pressing issues in their day-to-day lives. As one service provider says of her program:

**“[T]hey have cooking classes there for the parents alone, and then they have cooking classes for the parents and child together to get the child involved, and they always serve healthy snacks, emphasis on healthy, and so their modeling, and they send home recipe books you know with what they served and cooked with them so that’s literacy sent home.”**

A family literacy approach of this nature offers empowering literacy opportunities (Thomas & Skage, 1998) by focusing on families’ “strengths and potentialities” or acknowledging families’ unique skills, abilities and goals (Reyes & Torres, 2007).

While many parents noted that they followed a similar path to that taken by their own parents and caregivers, others highlighted the ways in which they are teaching their kids in different ways:

**“Me and my wife have taken a sort of different approach with our kids. We have been more interactive with our kids and we let them know that reading can be fun. But I can’t remember playing video games with my parents.” (Sackville Parent)**

Encouraging families to take this creative and interactive approach to learning is an important part of the literacy process. In helping people to understand the concept of family literacy it is important to keep encouraging innovative and new forms of learning at home, at school, at work, and in the community.

## Programs, Resources and Funding

### “The Giving Tree”

#### Programming



Throughout the interviews, one important factor was the interaction between, and the active roles played by, parents and children in literacy. Specific locations that were identified as having little or no access to literacy programs were Aulac, Pugwash, Springhill, Cumberland and rural areas that were outside the town centre. In some cases we heard from service providers that programs that were attempted in those communities had stopped running due to a lack of participation by area families. This lack of participation may be due to a lack of comfort with particular programs or even a lack of variety within the literacy program. Service providers expressed that some literacy programs are advertised in town, but that attendance rates were sometimes low. As one parent said, **“we’ve heard of [programs] but we haven’t used them.”**

Interestingly, however, those literacy programs that do attract numerous participants, such as those at Maggie’s Place in Amherst, are usually entirely full and waitlisted because of a lack of space, resources or facilitators to operate the programs: **“we now have waiting lists because we can only take 15 families” (Service Provider)**. Another factor that determines

whether participants will attend is the location and whether or not people perceive the environment as comfortable and inclusive:

**“[M]ore people use Bridge Street, then any other, uh, because there are kids in here, there’s teens, there’s all ages at different times of the day and, ah, so and people come in and just do their own thing.” (Service Provider)**

### Alternative Programming

Programs that encourage reading via traditional approaches remain important, but they do not appeal to or work for everyone. One parent, describing shared book reading program, did not view it as very helpful for her child: **“it was just [...] a person sitting there reading a book, and they’d show some pictures. Other than that they didn’t really teach too much.”** Another person stated that, **“most of the kids enjoyed the crafts more than [...] the reading component or learning to read [at] listening time.”** One parent described how children come up with creative approaches to reading within this traditional approach: **“they will read pictures and create stories [...] based on what they’re looking at.”** Not all reading-based literacy programs achieve the goal of fostering literacy learning. For example, according to one service provider who spoke about the *Born to Read* program, **“parents of newborns are sent home with a package of books. If the parents can read and hold literacy as a priority, the babies will be read too. Often I see these packets in yard sales.”** Simply having a program in place does not mean that it is meeting the needs of all families. This suggests that current literacy programs need to be expanded or improved upon to genuinely meet families’ literacy needs. It is important to listen to literacy learners of all ages and modify literacy programs accordingly.

Alternative family literacy programs strive to make literacy learning fun and relevant to individuals’ strengths and interests. Alternative or creative approaches to literacy programming

can make learning a more positive experience for people. One parent suggested a more recent understanding of literacy, stating: **“you could teach somebody how to read a recipe and how to cook for themselves. That could be part of literacy too, right?”** Following a recipe and learning how to measure ingredients represents one example of how literacy skills can be fostered in a creative way. There is some evidence that people value creative approaches to literacy learning. A service provider said that cooking, science, and physical activity literacy classes are popular among families. Role-playing, acting, creating art, singing and rhyming are several other examples of what is understood as “multimodal literacy,” or different ways of learning literacy that have been adopted into local programs.

Everyone learns in different ways, and literacy skills can be developed in a way that suits one’s individual learning style. One parent echoes this thought, expressing that **“not every kid learns the same way. [...] We don’t learn the same.”** It is important to acknowledge diverse modes and ways of learning. Computers represent a mode of learning that is being incorporated into more and more literacy programs. **“Including the computers [in the program] has been very helpful. [...] [T]he individuals just come in and learn at their own pace,”** according to an adult education service provider. Yet another service provider was excited about the integration of computers into adult learning: **“The future looks bright and we are currently adding a computer training component to our adult learning class offerings with a mobile computer teacher and lab. A financial literacy curriculum is also being looked at. We are still in the growing phase to date!”** Such learning tools and changes in literacy programs offer opportunities for individuals to develop literacy skills in new and positive ways.

## Accommodation



**“I guess listening to the needs of the client. Each client is different a lot of times they’ve got a lot of barriers. That has been I would think the biggest change I have seen over the years since I’ve been here I haven’t been here that long.” (Service Provider)**

The quote above describes one of the major challenges faced in literacy programming: accommodating individuals from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. The accommodation of people in literacy programs is very important for achieving high success rates. In the interviews, parents and service providers expressed how one-on-one availability of teachers is vital to literacy programs as it affords individuals a tailored approach to their literacy needs. Another important factor was that some program spaces were inaccessible to clients with physical impairments: **“I am not really as accessible for disabilities as I would prefer to be.” (Service Provider)**

The concept of flexibility also interconnected participation and accommodation by conveying how convenient these literacy programs are made for both adult and child learners. The interviews discussed flexible fees, flexible locations, flexible learning and flexible times: **“[W]ith our schedules sometimes it’s just hard to get to places when this stuff is on” (Sackville Parent).**

## Promotion



Sometimes the greatest challenge to literacy programs is getting people through the door. We heard over and over again from both parents and providers that word of mouth is by far the best way to advertise programs in the community:

**“I don’t know, a lot of times, I feel like word of mouth is the best advertisement. You have to get a couple of people who are active in the community to talk about it. [...] Whether it be monetary or whatever, because the results are going to be multiplied if you target the right people.”**

Relying on traditional advertising methods such as flyers and newspaper advertisements is good for attracting some people, but for others those types of materials are not ones they are likely to pick up. This is especially the case among participants who struggle with literacy issues and may be unable to read printed advertising material. As one service provider notes, **“historically and typically advertising doesn’t work because we’re dealing with a cliental that has low literacy rates so they don’t read the newspaper and they won’t read a flier.”** In this case word of mouth, radio and television advertising would be more likely mediums for attracting clients who do not read well.

Several service providers indicated that they would like to have more funds dedicated to advertising their programs in innovative ways that do not simply mention the program, but actually explain what participants can expect when they get there. This approach seems like a good use of funds in consideration of what many parents told us: **“Probably [we don’t go] just because I don’t know much about it. And like, no one’s ever explained.”** Other innovative approaches to bringing participants into programs included providing incentives to participants, such as free giveaways and prizes. It is clear that program advertising needs to be present through outlets that are accessible and that are part of people’s daily routines: **“[I want to know] what the organization consists of and what they really do or like when the activities are cause I don’t find there’s a whole lot of advertising I guess for stuff like that”** (Sackville Parent).

### Program Funding



Interviews with both parents and service providers showed that funding is a critical piece of the family literacy-programming puzzle. Both lower income families and community-based

agencies are stretched for money in Sackville. Many of the community programs that are offered operate on tight budgets and are under-resourced. Programs that are free to participants are those that were seen as most beneficial and as those that were most likely to attract families. Programs that charge even a nominal fee can create a barrier to service use:

**Interviewer: So the program isn't financially supported in any way?  
Service Provider: No, just parent fees, it's totally parent fees.**

When asked about the cost of parental fees in her program, she responded that:

**“Full time, which is 4 mornings, which is 2 and a half hours, is \$120 a month, and part time, which is 2 sessions per week at 2 and a half hours, is \$80 dollars a month.”**

Programs that are run from user fees exclude many member of the community who are sometimes already struggling to pay for more basic things, like rent:

**“Okay, at the moment because money is kinda tight, we are living with my mom and we have, it's kind of like an apartment in the basement.” (Sackville parent)**

From these exchanges we see that creating free and accessible programming is key to reaching as many people as possible. The problem is that money for community based agencies is also limited, and although many service providers would like to see their programs running for free and being sustainable so that they are available to people year in and year out, the financial reality is different:

**“I would like to see the program full time. That will probably never happen because we're just funded year-to-year. There's no core funding so I have to apply every year for funding. The family literacy program again we have to apply extra for.”**

Given this type of funding model, service providers find themselves trying **“to spread the [the dollars] out as much as we can.”** In order to run well and in a stable way, programs need to have core funding that they, and their participants, can rely on. Creating a program that only lasts a short while does not provide providers and parents with the time necessary to familiarize

themselves with the program and to create the trusting relationships that are crucial to successful learning.

Currently, there are initiatives in the works that might provide more stability for Sackville's programs:

**“Sackville community association is now being [...] enticed to join south eastern NB charitable groups and to work together to find ways to have sustainable money coming in. For example, 2 or 3 groups, like one group can't, have get a place to run, but three groups might be able to, between them, get enough to have one person to be a secretary and have three groups in one place and be able to pay the rent.” (Sackville Service Provider)**

Lacking core funding for programs, these sorts of partnering initiatives could provide a method for doing more with less. It should be noted, however, that in order to really tackle the literacy problems in New Brunswick, community groups, who are doing a good deal of the on the ground work, are going to need stable and sustainable core funding from the government. The current patchwork of funding, which requires community providers to stitch together small, one-time funding is not an ideal solution. In fact a good deal of resources are used up just in having to continuously apply for grant after grant.

As a result of these limited resources, our community programs rely heavily on the unpaid work of volunteers. One provider mentioned the important “Christmas Cheer” program, which **“is all donations from people in town, completely, and the only overhead we have is mailing out letters once a year. That's it, very, very little overhead. Nobody's taking salary, nobody's taking pay.”** As has been seen in many other cities and towns, the important work of caring for citizens in communities is being privatized and downloaded onto volunteers. Proper funding from government would help to alleviate some of that work and allow staff members to be decently paid for their labour: **“To have more staff would be great. I'm part time and the other two instructors are part time as well. No one has had a raise since we started.”**

On the other hand, one provider cautioned that **“throwing money at the problem”** is not the answer: **“The problem will be alleviated not so much by money, but by teachers who are dedicated to making a difference.”** In the course of our study we certainly met any number of providers who were dedicated to creating change in their communities. Perhaps, then, one response would be to pool the existing resources and create partnerships between community service providers in the area, working smarter with the resources at hand, rather than working harder to make due on shoestring budgets. Several providers and one parent also suggested that the Sackville Library could be used to a greater extent. Funding is a critical issue in the running and in the success of local programming. Whether applying for new funding or pooling resources and partnering together, it is clear that literacy programming requires adequate, stable and long-term financial commitment.

## Schools and Secondary Helpers

“I’ll tell ya, six hours a day of school IS NOT enough.” – *Matilda*

### Problems in the School System



There are a number of different issues that participants raised in regard to the current school system. Both parents and service providers brought up issues related to staffing, especially in relation to resource teachers that can provide more one-on-one time to students who require extra help. Teachers are overworked, and, with larger class sizes, they are spread very thin. As one service provider said:

**"I would like to have, um 5 or 6 of me in each school in the district. That would be ideal to help out classroom teachers. In fact, wouldn't it be ideal if they had a literacy specialist in each classroom helping with children. But that's not, uh that's not feasible."**

Issues surrounding class sizes were also frequently raised. Two participants remarked how this was detrimental to the literacy needs of students: **"you have large class sizes, it kind of restricts, what you can do."** When the teachers are forced to cater to larger class sizes it is more difficult to devote specialized time to students who are struggling or who simply learn differently:

**"You know, I went to grade eleven, then after I finished my first semester I quit 'cause I just... I got to the point where I just didn't understand what I was learning and there was like twenty five kids in the classroom and it's pretty hard to grasp it when you don't got anybody to come along side you and kinda show you the way"** (Sackville Parent).

Individualized attention makes learning easier. The current system does not provide schools and teachers with enough resources to ensure that each student is receiving the attention they need.

A number of participants also explained that the current system does not allow much deviation from the standard way of learning. Students are presented with one model of learning and are expected to succeed. One participant elaborates on this problem by explaining how schools need to be more willing to adapt to different learning styles: **"Like, not every kid learns the same way, I guess sometimes is what I'm trying to say. Like, we don't all learn the same."** According to both parents and service providers, under the current system students are advancing through grade levels, even if they are unprepared or do not demonstrate good learning outcomes. In the words of one of our parent participants:

**"Because people are just shoving them along. It's not so much the teacher's fault, I don't think. I think it's more the government because the government is pushing them and pushing them to get these kids moved on and so that other kids can move on, but I don't think they're doing it the right way."**

Service providers, especially those in adult learning environments are echoing this concern: **"I have more high school graduates who are illiterate in literacy and numeracy skills."** If students have not adequately grasped the learning outcomes of previous grade levels, they may not reach the literacy levels expected of them upon graduation. This is a serious disadvantage as those who come back to learning later in life often feel judged or embarrassed about a lack of literacy that is not about their intelligence level, but rather about a systems failure that has not provided them with the proper attention and assistance they require.

## Beyond the Classroom



The gaps in learning in schools and the busy schedules of parents mean that many families are turning to outside resources when it comes to learning. Parents and teachers are, in many cases, unable to handle the needs of our community’s learners. Secondary helpers we heard about in our interviews included: extended family, family friends, play schools, day cares, Sunday schools, tutors, technological aids, and therapies. Extended family and family friends helping out with family learning came up in almost all of the interviews. One parent brought up the role of the extended family: **“Ya I guess it’s really the whole family for us. Whoever is around helps takes an active role in helping our kids get educated and learn whatever they can. So it’s a family effort.”**

In some cases, parents do not have extended family to rely on, or require assistance from people who are not members of their families. Several parents suggested that tutors are in high demand to help kids get to where they need to be in school: **“I think that there is a huge demand right now for people, who, for people who are looking for tutors for their children, if their children aren’t doing well.”** Often, however, hiring a tutor can be very expensive and families who would like to give their kids extra help are simply unable to afford it. Providing

tutoring services for free, possibly in a joint effort with Mount Allison, would be of great benefit to the overall community.

Importantly, it is often parents themselves who are seeking assistance in upgrading or improving their literacy skills. Adults who did not learn well in the classroom as children, often do not find that teaching style very effective or engaging. One service provider talked about a program that recognizes these barriers and attempts to provide more inclusive learning services:

**“So it’s, I guess the individuals just come in and learn at their own pace. So it’s not like an instructor at the front of the class teaching you each person may be working on math but there could be someone working on fractions and someone else could be working on multiplication. That sort of thing. So it’s very independent learning and individualized.”**

When secondary helpers include teachers who are responsive to students’ needs, learners are empowered to learn at their own pace and in ways that are best for their particular style of learning.

## Everyday Obstacles to Learning

“Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!” – *Alice In Wonderland*

### Employment



Two key themes that relate to employment which are evident in our findings include the need for additional staffing positions both in schools and in community organizations, and an emphasis on the need for further education and adult education in our community.

The service providers who were interviewed noted that the creation of additional positions would improve the overall programs being offered. More staff positions would allow the work to be distributed among the part time employees and those who volunteer their time. Volunteers make up a significant portion of the people who offer their time to help run literacy programs; however, these volunteers can become overtaxed. Employees, such as school-based resource teachers, core program staff, and volunteers assist those struggling with reading, writing, and other literary activities. Employees should be better compensated for the high volume of work they do on a daily basis:

**“To have more staff would be great. I’m part time and the other two instructors are part time as well. No one has had a raise since we started so that sort of thing. We’re very fortunate that anyone that’s in the adult education industry you kind of have a bit of a passion for it because a lot of it you do volunteer work as well as when your working.”**  
(Service Provider)

Post-secondary education is known to be intimately related to better employment prospects; however, many people are unable to take on the financial burden of post secondary education or encounter other barriers to continuing education, not the least of which are difficulties with literacy. Other common examples included having a small child and having to delay further education, as it is very difficult to juggle education and childcare. Service providers indicated that jobs that at one time would not have required higher education are now requiring it of their employees:

**“In the old days you could work with a grade 10 or 9 if you had good work ethic but now those same companies even if they have these people employed those folks are coming back to us with a tutor or whatever to try and get their GED diploma to be able to keep their jobs. I think the work force is demanding that you have to be higher skilled and be able to read documents because there’s so much.” (Service Provider)**

Several of the parents noted that they hoped to continue their education once their child had reached school age or once they had the resources to do so. Since education is vital for obtaining a good job it is important that people experiencing setbacks with literacy or those who are keen to continue to learn are able to receive the appropriate assistance in their community:

**“I’m a stay at home mom and I plan on furthering my education along the line when [my child is] in school – which will probably be next year. And as for now, I’m just staying with him and taking care of him.” (Sackville Parent)**

It is critical that those providing services in the community are aware of the obstacles that face some parents in furthering their own literacy and learning needs. Assisting parents with their literacy needs will in turn benefit their children to whom parents can pass along their new knowledge and skills. Through these mechanisms, families are also able to increase household income and to find jobs that are less precarious and that may provide more stable working hours.

## Income



Every family has a different way of budgeting their income and distributing their resources in the most helpful way possible. Many parents require programs and services with no fees or with fees that are affordable and geared to income. Participants do not want to feel judged or excluded as a result of their income status. In some situations families are struggling to afford day-to-day necessities and to adequately provide for their kids. Parents now feel that they are required to provide more resources for their children at home, which is particularly the case with computer and Internet access:

**“You’ve got enough money for rent, and maybe, not enough food, then you got electricity in your house, you’ve got Internet for your kids, uh, there’s just not enough to go around.”**

These obligations put a lot of strain on family members, particularly parents, who are required to do more with less. Many families have at least one parent working full time and for long hours, but in jobs that do not pay enough to allow people the extra income they need to put their children in extracurricular programs. In some cases, families move in with extended family members in order to help ease the burden. Extended family members, such as grandparents, often assist parents in making ends meet and in providing accommodation or childcare.

## Time



Through the course of our research we found that time was, indeed, of the essence. Many people note that there are not enough hours in the day to do all of the things they need or want to do. Several of our participants noted that time is the primary barrier to furthering their own education and also to doing learning activities with their children. Three general themes, associated with time, include conflicting schedules, the importance of family time, and the overall lack of time. In two parent families, both parents are often working outside of the home and parents are too tired or run out of time to learn with their children. In single parent homes, these challenges are even greater:

**“I think part of it is time. Hmm, we don’t have a lot in our day, so it’s off to school and work and were all home by supper and then everyone is getting ready for bed ...”  
(Sackville Parent)**

Some of the participants noted that they try to combat this barrier by planning family activities, encouraging their children to cook with them and doing their best to incorporate at least one bedtime story into their child’s routine. Some parents also try and incorporate outside literacy programs such as activities held at the library, Maggie’s Place, and through other programs. However, many of these activities are held at specific times that do not always suit working parents schedules:

**“Having these literacy days offered more than once...like have it at different times, maybe like during the week, and on weekends and just giving different times. I think for us it would probably make it easier to find time.” (Sackville Parent)**

Based on participants’ responses, it is obvious that time influences family literacy and usually presents a barrier to families interacting and learning literacy skills together. Planning literacy activities into the family’s daily routine and establishing programs that offer literacy activities at different hours during the week or on weekends would help strengthen literacy skills.

### Transportation



When living in a more rural area, transportation often becomes a barrier to access. In some cases, our participants are able to walk to where they want to go and transportation is not an issue. This is the case for community members that reside in central Sackville as most locations, such as the library and the schools, are in walking distance:

**“One of the things about Sackville is that it’s small enough that you can get everywhere pretty easy” (Sackville Parent)**

In cases in which community members live on the outskirts of Sackville, the lack of publicly available transportation is an issue. Some families do not have access to a vehicle, others only

have access to one family vehicle and must juggle their schedules, and some parents do not have a driver's license in the first place:

**“[T]hat’s another reason why I want to get my driver’s license, so that I can... so that I can, you know, be able to have more freedom myself and more independence so I can take them wherever they want to go or where I want to go.” (Sackville Parent)**

As this participant indicates, the inability to get to programs can often limit one's ability to participate in community events and programs. Finding alternative modes of transportation, like taxi vouchers or carpools, would be of great benefit to those families who live outside of walking distance and for whom transportation creates a barrier to access.

## Social Obstacles to Learning

“What is essential is invisible to the eye” – *The Little Prince*



Some service providers perceive that their programs are accessible for all community members:

**“Typically it’s everybody [who participates in the programs]. It really is.”**

They may fail to appreciate the kinds of social barriers which can act as deterrents for potential participants:

**“The only barrier is themselves [...] they really have to be ready and they have to be in a good place in their head.”**

Throughout our research, we hear that barriers do exist: gender, socioeconomic status, exceptionality and sense of community belonging can influence program participation.

## Stigma

### *Income*

Sackville is far from a homogenous community; there is great diversity in income and education levels:

**“This community is really weird because there’s a divide in [...] the people who are really well off (the upper class) [...] then [others] fall off into a lower class.” (Service Provider)**

Program providers observe that lower-income families perceive differences in social class through income markers - such as clothing, strollers, toys and cars - when attending community events and work this into their identity. This proves to be a very strong barrier for participation in community services related to family literacy and as a result some families are less likely to utilize the services available to them:

**“They see some of the strollers that the moms have, they see the toys the kids have, they see the cars that come in and, um, that all reminds them that they are less than.” (Service Provider)**

Providers often do a lot to make their programs accessible; however, something like social stigmatization based on income can prove to be a huge barrier. Even if the program is perceived to be exclusive, some families will be unlikely to join:

**“They may well be accepted, but they feel they might not be.” (Service Provider)**

## *Exceptionalities*



Exceptionalities – specifically a child’s learning and behavioural difficulties – are often a source of anxiety and worry for parents. One couple we talked to had a young child with some concentration and temperament issues; their anxiety centered on his ability to transition to a school environment and participate in community events among other children and parents. When asked about challenges that they could foresee at community events, they answered:

**“The biggest challenge that we really see at this point is him sitting there for a period of time to enjoy the activity.” (Sackville Parent)**

They stressed the importance of one-on-one activities for their child and discussed the success they have seen with therapists. While they were taking full advantage of these available services and were happy with their child’s progress, dealing with these exceptionalities is a continued issue and is incorporated into their identity as parents:

**“We didn’t know if he would have a struggle at first because he was behind. And, you know, we...it’s not like we felt like bad parents, we just felt like we weren’t great parents because we didn’t want to compare but when you see the other children that are achieving so highly and for some reason your son’s behind, it’s kind of like, “wow, what did we do wrong?””**

Despite their use of all these services, their intensive time commitment and everyday success with their child, the couple sometimes struggles to feel a sense of achievement when they

compare themselves with other members of the community. This can be a source of stigmatization and exclusion.

### Inclusion

#### *Exceptionality*

In dealing with exceptionalities (in the context of limited resources and funding), providers can sometimes prevent inclusion. In trying to reach as many students as possible, a program provider we talked to is selective with the students she helps:

**“if they’re very much at risk, I wouldn’t take them[...]I take the demographic that would fit about the middle of average students[...] that are at risk of slipping so, which is very nice.”**

While we acknowledge that this is a strategy for effective service provision, students with the most need are excluded from getting the help they require. Serving those students who require the most help is essential to improving literacy rates and to creating a more equal Sackville.

#### *Gender*



As seen in the research of others, family literacy programs tend to be unwelcoming environments for men for a variety of reasons (Anderson et al., 2010; Bauman & Wasserman,

2009; Macleod, 2000; Macleod, 2008). Although many women work outside the home and men show increased interest in being involved in their children's lives (Bauman & Wasserman, 2009), early childcare and literacy development tends to be viewed as the responsibility of mothers. Fathers are somewhat involved in their own children's literacy development (Anderson et al., 2010), but perceived "gender roles" often prevent men from attending family literacy programs (Macleod, 2000; 2008). These gender issues came up in our research when a service provider discussed how they interact with families:

**"We do it all through the woman, all through the mother. We contact the mother every year to get updates as to the needs of the children."**

**"We just want to make sure that the information gets to the mother because mothers more often have more to do with the children and we don't want to have the father have all the power [... so] we are especially targeting women and children."**

We understand that this can be seen as a form of empowerment and independence for the mother; however, it is concerning that women's roles are limited to the traditional domain of the home. At the same time, fathers who are interested in being involved in their children's learning are excluded, as is seen in another interview:

**"We definitely [have] less single fathers coming, but [...] we really do have a wide range of people."**

That said, there is evidence that more men are entering family literacy programs and being involved with children's learning now than in the past:

**"When I first started [working here] I would say our registration [was] 95-98% women [...], this year alone [we have] 95% [of] young men [participating]."** (Service Provider)

Service providers note that one way to be more inclusive for fathers is choosing activities that are more hands on:

**"Science things [...bring in] a lot of dads."**

This is again reflected in literacy research. Men often have trouble relating to sedentary literacy activities and prefer to engage in physical activities (playing, sports, drawing, etc.) with their children (Macleod, 2000; 2008). It is important that providers understand this and work to dispel myths that literacy is the sole responsibility of women and that literacy only involves reading. By including fathers whenever possible, we decrease the burden of responsibility placed on mothers.

### *Social Capital*

In the Sackville area, friendships and relationships are important ways in which parents learn about services, decide to participate, and these relationships positively affect their experiences. Without this sense of community belonging, families may feel unwelcome or may not be aware of available services:

**“I just can’t think of [any programs that are offered]. Maybe if I would have grown up in this area I would have found [out] about [them], but we only moved here when I started going to school.” (Parent)**

However, once in these programs, participants can build community connections and suggest that their friends participate as well, as one service provider mentioned:

**“It provides the mothers with other mothers to talk to, it provides them with information of, uh, how to meet people in town, um, what’s available for you and your child in terms of programs.”**

**“If you got one that came with a friend and the two of them came and did their own thing then the word would go out to all their friends and then they’d start coming.”**

*Including the Family in Family Literacy (or Family Building)*



When parents have not had experiences with community services as children, they are often less likely to take part in these services with their own families. Service providers note:

**“If you’ve never joined a group as a child, chances are you won’t encourage your child to join a group.”**

Similarly, parents’ past experiences with learning come to influence their children’s learning and literacy:

**“[P]eople who can’t read are more likely to have children who can’t read I guess.”**  
(Sackville Parent)

As previously discussed, strong family ties have the potential to improve literacy and learning. We have also seen that learning experiences can strengthen family relationships. When asked about how successes in their children’s learning made them feel, parents responded that it was a very positive experience:

**“I [‘ve] been teaching her how to bake some cookies and stuff and she dumps the flour right in it and everything, so she’s learning how to do that. Like, you know, measuring it out. So, that makes me feel good too, ‘cause I’m able to pass down something to her.”**

**“Awesome [laughing]. It makes you feel like a great parent if you know they’re actually learning from you and able to communicate back after.”**

When one member of a family engages in further learning, they can often support and encourage other members of their family:

**“[My] husband, now that I’ve gone back to school, [...] wants to learn how to read more and stuff and be able to do stuff, so... so he’s asked me to teach him, so when he’s ready I’m going to teach him how to read and write, and stuff [...] by me going back to school, that’s helping him. Giving him encouragement to better himself.” (Sackville Parent)**

These types of positive experiences are essential to both family literacy and family relationships.

Program providers can help facilitate these kinds of family building experiences by shaping activities to promote family learning:

**“Our program targets adults 18 years and older. However, if parents require help, advise and support are offered to help with problems which the parents are encountering with their children and their children's education.”**

## Maggie's Place: A Case Study in Successful Programming

"Like and equal are not the same at all." - *A Wrinkle in Time*



Maggie's Place Family Resource Center provides free services for families in the Cumberland County area. Maggie's Place has been chosen as a case study for this report as it provides an exceptional model for the resources and programs necessary to provide successful literacy programs for the *entire* community, not just for the community's most privileged. Owing to its 15 years of experience as well as its high usage by people from all backgrounds within the Amherst, and surrounding areas, Maggie's Place is well known in the Cumberland County area as an excellent resource.

From a child's birth, parents are encouraged to use the facilities and information provided at Maggie's Place. The Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) has funded numerous programs at Maggie's Place. Having programs designed to accommodate parents and children from a very young age at Maggie's Place has proven to ensure that parents feel comfortable coming back to Maggie's Place year after year and has built a sense of trust between parent/caregiver and the staff at Maggie's Place:

**“So a lot of [lower income families go] to Maggie's Place and it's not as much of a problem. But it took them years to establish trust, the clients too. So I am interested to see if we can get somebody in the door, if they will be able to establish trust and then start coming to the programs, because the programs are one's that they're interested in.” (Service Provider)**

### Starting Early



**“And its families [our emphasis] as well, but its 0-6 ---trying to get there-- to instead of dealing with the problems after, we are trying to prevent them.” (Maggie’s Place Service Provider)**

The prenatal programs are designed to offer support and information to expecting parents and parents with babies up to 1 year old. Programs include Babies Come First Club, Snuggle Bugs, Bosom Buddies Peer Support Group and Terrific Toddlers. Maggie’s Place also provides additional services including home visits, books, videos, breast pumps and nutritional supplements which are all free of charge.

Maggie’s Place provides a variety of “drop-in” programs throughout the week that do not require pre-registration from parents/caregivers. The flexibility allows parents/caregivers not to feel pressured under time constraints and provides a relaxed atmosphere. “Coffee & Conversation” on Monday mornings at Maggie’s Place is designed to encourage discussion of parenting issues and timely topics including nutrition, parenting, and crafts. Maggie’s Place provides a facility to parents to have their baby weighed, ask a Public Health Nurse any questions and receive information and support regarding breastfeeding and other issues.

### Programming

“In every job that must be done, there is an element of fun. You find the fun and the job's a game.” – *Mary Poppins*



**“Friday’s that is with parents and children and we always have books and things available, we have play-doh, we have art, and then we end all of our programs with doing a circle so the Friday fun is the parents and children sit together, we sing, we read a story, we do finger rhymes and finger plays and things like that.” (Maggie’s Place Service Provider)**

“Once Upon a Time” is a drop in program at the Four Fathers Memorial Library, located in Amherst, who Maggie’s Place partners with on Wednesday mornings. The Group provides time for children, parents, and caregivers to get together to read a story, participate in songs, rhymes, finger plays, and have snack. “Friday Fun Times” emphasize the importance of play and the positive interaction between child and caregiver. During the play group children and parents/caregivers participate in free play, circle/story time, create art, and are provided with a nutritious snack.

Staff at Maggie’s Place are aware that successful literacy programs need to be fun and that recruiting more participants for literacy programs is much easier when things are hands-on, such as cooking and science, which often more dad’s participate in. Staff at Maggie’s place emphasize that not calling an activity or program “family literacy” really helps in recruiting participants. Staff also mentioned that literacy is a loaded word, which people just assume is reading and writing: **“[Family Literacy] really scares some people and it also has kind of a**

**boring kind of idea around it.”** Many Maggie’s Place programs are designed for parents just as much as children. Parents are provided with free childcare and are able to learn new skills while their children are in another room. Parents/caregivers are given the opportunity to learn low budget healthy cooking etc.

### Involving The Whole Family



Staff members at Maggie’s Place have noticed that their demographic of single fathers is low and the majority of participants in activities and programs are moms. Maggie’s place has emphasized that if a child has two parents, playing with both of them is an essential part of teaching family literacy. “Me and My Dad, Science is Fun” is a program at Maggie’s Place in which father’s/male caregivers are invited to bring their children in for a few hours of science and play through experimenting with things in the kitchen with their father/male caregiver.

Maggie’s Place has emphasized the need to ensure that parents/caregivers understand that literacy can be found it just about anything. Programs also provide parents with the materials and tools needed to expose their children to literacy, which is equally important. The toy lending library, book lending library and clothing trade has proved to be an asset to Maggie’s Place in regards to enhancing family literacy in the community:

**“... its free once again, you can come in, the children can choose toys and also all of our fun kits have toys like say there is a dinosaur fun kit- there would be the dinosaurs [...] so we have that- we also have kits that parents can borrow so if you are having trouble potty training there is a kit that you can take, if there has been a death there is a kit that you can take with just resources, books, ways to talk to your children about things and we also have another shelf that has DVDs and videos of [...] parenting strategies [...], prenatal information, labour, things all about that and there also books so there’s videos and books and there’s also children’s books that you can take out too.” (Maggie’s Place Service Provider)**

### Transportation



**“We live 15 minutes away. That would be the main barrier. With my schedule not meeting up with everything else ...” (Parent in regards to family literacy programs in Sackville)**

Transportation is a barrier for many families in accessing programs for family literacy in the Sackville community. Maggie’s Place has provided multiple options to overcome these barriers. Maggie’s Place provides taxi tokens for those who do not have access to transportation in getting to the programs located at Maggie’s Place. For those who live in the Cumberland County area, outside of Amherst, Maggie’s Place does numerous outreach programs in order to accommodate and remove barriers. “POP-UP” (Pre-School Outreach Program- Utilizing Play) is offered weekly in communities throughout Cumberland County and provides a free pre-school playgroup for parents/caregivers and their children ages 0-6. The playgroup meets to create art and participate in rhymes, songs, stories, finger play and games and is provided with a nutritious snack.

### Flexibility

**“So I guess, I...we haven’t taken part in any because of...well timing, things come up...we’re busy and work schedule doesn’t always work out.” (Sackville Parent)**

Staff at Maggie’s Place often provides specific family literacy workshop days on Saturdays. This is essential in providing parents/caregivers who typically work during the week an opportunity to access information/programs on the weekends. Staff members have found that these programs have recently brought about an increase in participation, as there are constant waiting lists because the program can only admit 15 families per workshop/program, suggesting that there is a need for more programs/activities like this that working parents/caregivers can attend.

As well as providing flexibility for families, Maggie’s Place also has a number of resources to help families out at times when they need a little extra:

**“[Maggie’s Place] get[s] things from the food bank that they can giveaway, and that lures clients in. They have free diapers for people that are in a crisis, and they call that Maggie’s closet. For example, if a mom, at the end of the month, didn’t have enough money, like I know a single mom here, and she’s run out of money by the 15<sup>th</sup>, if she was there, there could be, could go in with something she had in her house that she didn’t need right then, and trade it for diapers. So everybody doesn’t use it, but it is there for those in the most need” (Sackville Service Provider)**

### Spreading the Word

Several of our parent participants pointed out that program advertising was lacking in Sackville:

**“Well for me I think that I have heard about it...the literacy day...quite a few times from the playschool but besides that I haven’t really seen any advertising for it. So, I dunno...maybe the word isn’t getting out enough.” (Sackville Parent)**

Maggie’s Place sends out newsletters four times a year in order to advertise their family literacy programs, whether they are the ones that run all year round, such as drop-in programs or workshops that happen once a month that require pre-registration. On top of putting specific

workshops in the newsletter, Maggie's Place advertises their programs via the radio and newspaper in Cumberland County. Workshops/activities at Maggie's Place are also placed in Community Happening letters that are often given out through the school system.

### Funding



**“I would like to see the program full time. That will probably never happen because we’re just funded year to year.” (Sackville Service Provider)**

Importantly, one of the reasons that Maggie's Place works so well is that it is adequately funded by a number of sources: “Maggie's Place core funding is provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada's Community Action Program for Children (CAPC) and the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) in agreement with the province of Nova Scotia and from the N.S. Department of Community Services. Other funding comes from the United Way of Cumberland County, Municipality of Cumberland County, N.S. Child & Youth Strategy, S.O.A.R., S.P.A.R. and Pugwash and Area Community Health Board, and through the generosity of the community.” (Maggie's Place Family Resource Center, pg 1, Winter 2011).



## Recommendations

“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not.” –  
*The Lorax*



Throughout the project we heard many excellent suggestions for the greater inclusion of all Sackville families, not just those who are privileged enough to have the time, money and resources to participate. These recommendations tend to focus on greater accessibility and inclusion, but also touch on resources, adult learning, advertising and partnerships between community groups.

### 1) Provide outreach programs

Taking services to the people, rather than having people come to them allows those in more rural areas who are lacking transportation to benefit from literacy programming.

### 2) Provide access to transportation/travel vouchers

In a rural community, people are often unable to arrange travel to programs that are occurring downtown. By providing vouchers or taxi fares to those who need them programs are more inclusive for everyone.

### **3) Offer flexible program hours**

Ensuring that program hours provide opportunity for those who work shift work or who work non-standard hours to attend literacy programming is key to inclusion. For adult learners, holding programs in the evenings or on weekends may increase participation. For family programs, many parents are swamped through the week and would prefer to attend programs on the weekends.

### **4) Provide childcare for parent-oriented programs**

Many adult learners would like to upgrade their skills, but find it difficult to find the time away from their responsibilities as parents. Finding a babysitter is often difficult, especially because this also means paying someone to watch the children. Providing free on-site childcare would be a huge bonus for busy parents.

### **5) Waive program fees**

Entry fees can be big barriers for lower income families; therefore, providing programs free of charge would encourage more people to attend. Other suggestions in this area include having a pay what you can box where people can anonymously donate to programs based on their ability to contribute.

### **6) Pay attention to the context of people's lives**

Informing providers about other barriers that community members accessing services are faced with may help them to better understand the needs of their clients. Providers should attempt to gain an understanding of their clients' current learning abilities and life circumstances to avoid being discriminatory or judgmental. Individuals' choices are often constrained by social circumstances and they may feel judged or marginalized in certain settings. Focusing on the larger issues of income, employment, ability, gender and diversity would go a long way to making people feel more comfortable.

### **7) Offer programs dedicated specifically to the needs of lower income families**

Sackville, although small, shows a great diversity of experience between families. Some lower income families have had negative experiences with integrated programs and would prefer not to have to risk being judged by others who do not understand the challenges they face in their day-to-day lives.

### **8) Co-locate resources**

To decrease transportation issues and to provide confidentiality, allowing people to enter a larger resource centre with a number of services would allow families to access all of the services they need in the same building. These services could include a nurse practitioner, the food bank, literacy programs, information sessions and lending libraries for educational games or DVDs. This way, families can access whatever they need without feeling the stigma of having people know exactly which services they are drawing on.

### **9) Start early**

Drawing parents in from the time mothers are pregnant or when children are very young helps to build trust in a program from the beginning. Informing parents of what resources are, and will be, available to them and to their children as their children get older helps to create relationships with families. Trust and relationship building are absolutely essential in making families feel comfortable and included.

### **10) Advertise programs through a number of different outlets**

Advertising in school/community newsletters, the local newspaper, on the radio, the Internet, or TV ensures that people are hearing about the services and programs available to them. One suggestion was to create a newsletter specifically for literacy activities that could be placed in doctor's offices, at the food bank, in coffee shops, at bingo, in the grocery stores etc. Another was creating a website, something like [www.learningsackville.ca](http://www.learningsackville.ca), that would be a one-stop shop for all the programs in the area, their times, dates and activities.

### **11) Spread the word about Family Literacy as a concept**

Most people still think of literacy as being limited to reading books. Using some of the above listed media outlets, explaining to families that literacy includes more than reading and that they are, in fact, working on their literacy skills in many of their day-to-day activities, such as shopping or baking. This could include writing a weekly excerpt in the local paper that suggests one activity that families can do together to promote literacy.

### **12) Network and partner with other available programs and services**

As one service provider pointed out, Sackville has several programs to assist families with learning. All community groups are under-resourced and rely heavily on the work of volunteers. Joining forces to create literacy events, a group website or write grants would assist all community groups in growing their resource base. A list of local programs and providers can be found on pages 28-32 of the Learning It Together Literature Review (Appendix B)

### **13) Incorporate Adult Learning into professional development and Employment Insurance approaches**

Adult learners often cannot afford the time in the evenings or time away from work to upgrade their literacy skills. Having employers provide skills training in literacy as professional development would be a great way to help employees further their careers. For those who are out of work, our current EI scheme tells recipients that they cannot attend classes and must be looking for work, even when work is clearly unavailable. Integrating adult learning into this model would help participants increase their skills and qualify them for more jobs.

### **14) Lobby government to allocate resources where they are most needed**

Class sizes are too large, children are not getting the one-on-one help they need, adult learners need small class sizes with focused and individualized attention, literacy programs cannot afford the staff they need to provide sustainable and ongoing programs. Governments need to be made aware that the citizens of New Brunswick are concerned about the staggeringly low levels of literacy in our province. Adequate community program and school funding is a necessity, not a luxury.

### **Limitations of the Research**

"So be sure when you step, Step with care and great tact. And remember that life's A Great Balancing Act." – *Oh, The Places You'll Go!*

No two families will experience life in quite the same way. This study does not claim to be representative of all Sackville families, but rather gives voice to the experiences of 7 parents (3 dads and 4 moms) in the Sackville community. The main goal of this project was not to generalize, but rather to seek out rich and important information that speaks to the day-to-day realities of these particular families and the work experience of 7 literacy service providers. Our sample size is too small to show statistical significance, but it is large enough to provide important experiential information.

Throughout this project it was very difficult to find families who were keen on talking to us. There are any number of reasons for this reluctance, but we hypothesize that lower income families are understandably concerned about important issues such as being judged and maintaining confidentiality. In a small town, anonymity is important and sometimes difficult. Given more time we would have liked to build the trust of our community through creating relationships and mutual understandings. As researchers and members of the community we would like to work toward improving some of the divides that exist between Mount Allison and the greater Sackville community.

As a result, those parents who did agree to be a part of this work were somewhat self-selecting, which means we may not have reached those in our community who we would most likely to benefit from literacy programming in Sackville. We are extremely grateful to those people who did work with us in the course of our interviews. Your thoughts and opinions are the foundation of this report.

Finally, another limitation of our study was created by the time-limited nature of our school term. Thirteen weeks was a short timeframe in which to produce the ambitious project we wanted to complete. We have worked as hard as possible to manage the tight timeline.

## Conclusions

"Second star to the right and straight on 'til morning." – Peter Pan



Family literacy is an important concept in helping to build literacy and learning through our everyday activities with our families, our friends and our communities. Expanding the definition of literacy to include activities outside of reading shows us how we are always learning and how even the things we do at home on a daily basis can be a form of learning. This research has shown us that families are interested in literacy and literacy programming and that they know how important it is to their family, to their children and to their children's futures. Providing literacy programs and events in the Sackville community is critical in increasing our literacy rates and promoting the success of our young people and their families. In so doing, however, we must create programs that are inclusive, accessible and well advertised through as many mediums as possible. Teaching literacy to whoever would like to learn, young or old, is a key service to provide in our community. We hope that through the pages of this report it has become clearer how we can open these opportunities to everyone and how we can continue to focus on learning it together.

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## Appendix B

### Literacy Programs in Sackville and Surrounding Area

#### Children's Programming

##### *Libraries:*

##### ->Summer Reading Club Program:

- Takes place in all three libraries- Sackville, Dorchester and Port Elgin
- Starts in the month of June and ends in the month of August
- Children sign up free of charge
- Non-competitive club
- The goal is to encourage young people to join
- Advertised weekly during the summer via local news papers and posters that are posted around town
- Weekly activities are designed in addition to this to encourage participation in the summer reading club program
- Activities take place at the library and are run by summer employed students
- Activities vary from craft making, to field trips to local establishments (i.e., Owens Art Gallery)

##### ->Story Time:

- Takes place at all three local libraries
- Free of charge
- Librarian reads to children for 30 minutes
- Performed by summer employed students during the months of June, July and August

##### ->Read-To-Me:

- Takes place at all three local libraries
- Free of charge
- Takes place between the parent and the child
- Time varies according to the conveniences of the parent and the child
- Usually takes places in the summer to encourage and maintain reading skills

Port Elgin Public Library: Library Manager- Kathleen Grigg Tel: (506) 538-2118

([PortEPL@gnb.ca](mailto:PortEPL@gnb.ca))

Sackville Public Library: Library Manager- Alan Alward Tel: (506) 364-4915

([spublib@gnb.ca](mailto:spublib@gnb.ca))

Dorchester Public Library: Library Manager- Krista Johansen Tel: (506) 379-3032

([DorchPL@gnb.ca](mailto:DorchPL@gnb.ca))

### ***Schools:***

#### Port Elgin Regional School:

Tel: (506) 538-2121 Fax: (506) 538- 2112

After School Homework Club with PEDVAC

- Free of charge
- Takes place at PERS on Mondays and Tuesdays Starting January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011
- Takes place at the Murray Corner Rec Center on Thursday
- Students must bring a note from parents giving them permission

#### Family Literacy Week

- Participating in the Reading Rocks Challenge sponsored by Gumdrop Books
- Students are reading to earn books to bring home or to put in the school library
- January 28th community members are invited to read to the students

#### Salem Elementary School:

Tel: (506) 364-4270 Fax: (506) 364-4269

#### Family Literacy Week

- Wildcats hockey members are coming in to read with students this week. Kick off is Jan. 20th and the team members will be coming to Salem for 5 consecutive weeks

Family Literacy Day (Tantramar Family Resource Centre)

- Free soup served
- Pajama themed
- Variety of literacy based activities will take place

Marshview Middle School:

Tel: (506) 364-4086 Fax: (506) 364-4095

Dorchester Consolidated School:

Tel: (506) 379-3000 Fax: (506) 379-3042

Buddy Program where older Students read to a younger group of children

Mount Allison Mentor Program

- Students travel to the Dorchester school and work with the children on literacy and numeracy
- Takes place with children in Kindergarten to grades 1-2

**Family Literacy Day**

- Takes place January 27<sup>th</sup>
- A variety of literacy activities and games will be played
- About introducing the idea of literacy

***Villages:***

Port Elgin

->PEDVAC:

- Hold workshops for parents to assist their children with their reading skills
- Provide homework assistant two afternoons a week at the Port Elgin Regional School and one afternoon a week at the East Botsford Recreation Centre
- Work closely with Port Elgin Regional School on their literacy programs

## **Adult Programming**

### ***Laubach Literacy New Brunswick:***

Free of charge literacy and numeracy training

- Volunteer organization
- Non-profit organization
- Uses the Each One Teach One philosophy

Local places that encourage and support Laubach literacy:

#### **1. Tantramar Literacy Council**

- Chairperson: Cynthia Adams
- 536-0245
- [cegadams3@eastlink.ca](mailto:cegadams3@eastlink.ca)
- Provide assistance in helping people over 19 years old in attaining their GED and/or upgrading
- Free of Charge
- Takes place behind Mount Allison University in the Octagonal House

#### **2. Port Elgin Literacy Council**

- Chairperson: Val Goodwin
- PEDVAC Inc
- 538-7638 (W)
- [pedvacfoundation@nb.aibn.com](mailto:pedvacfoundation@nb.aibn.com)
- In addition provide addition adult literacy aid in the form of:
  - One on one tutoring with adult and student
  - Students are chosen by the Port Elgin Regional School from local area
  - Free of charge
  - Takes place wherever the tutor and adult feel most comfortable

#### **3. Dorchester/Westmorland Literacy Council**

- Chairperson: Bill Snowdon
- 379-4064 (W) 536-2993 (H) 379-4204 (F)

- [wesnowdon@eastlink.ca](mailto:wesnowdon@eastlink.ca)
- Part of rehabilitation of incarcerated individuals:
  - Upgrading opportunities
  - GED graduation opportunities
  - Voluntary on inmates' behalf
  - Part of the prison system- no charge
  - Special Ed. Teachers as well
  - Seven teachers
  - Averaging from 80 to 100 students