



REPORT TO THE LIBRARY BOARD
MEETING DATE: SEPTEMBER 22, 2011

Session:	Public Session
Subject:	R.E.A.D. Program
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Presented By:	Nancy Collister
Purpose of Report:	For Receipt <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Library Board receive this report.

ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY

The R.E.A.D. Program (Reading Enjoyment and Development) has been offered at London Public Library in some form for over 30 years. Four years ago, it became a core program and much has changed since that time.

BACKGROUND & REVIEW

Background

R.E.A.D. is a program that offers one-on-one assistance to children between the ages of 7 and 12 years who struggle to read or who are reluctant readers. Children are paired with a trained volunteer and meet once a week at the Library for 60 minutes from October to April.

The goals of the program are to:

- Inspire a love of reading;
- Create a positive relationship with a volunteer reading partner;
- Motivate children to read and use the Library;
- Encourage families to read together; and
- Introduce children to a variety of reading materials.

The program was first offered at the Crouch Branch Library over 30 years ago. It expanded to the Sherwood Branch about 10 years later and then to Jalna Branch about 10 years after that. East London Branch came on board 5 years later. Each of these was administered in a different way, typically by community volunteers, and with varying degrees of Library staff involvement.

In 2006, the decision was made to bring each of the differing programs together into one consolidated, core service program administered by Library staff. In 2007, the position of Literacy Facilitator was created to oversee the R.E.A.D. program at Crouch, Jalna, Sherwood and East London Branches. In 2008, the program was expanded to include three more locations in neighbourhoods with high needs (Pond Mills, Beacock and Central) and at that time a part-time Literacy Facilitator position was added.

In 2010/2011, the program was administered by Literacy Facilitators, Frances Cutt and Becky Ellis, at seven branch library locations: Beacock, Crouch, Central, East London, Jalna, Pond Mills and Sherwood, with support from Ellen Hobin, Manager of Volunteer Services. Volunteers are recruited by Ellen and then they are matched with children by Frances and Becky; these pairs meet once a week from October to April for one hour.

Training and ongoing regular support is provided to the volunteers through training sessions, tracking of and comments added to each child's "Activity Log" on a weekly basis, a website for volunteers to get resources and suggestions, and a newsletter for the volunteers which highlights events, opportunities and tips. Year-end celebrations are held to acknowledge and praise the children for their hard work and accomplishments and to publicly thank the dedicated volunteers.

In 2010-11, there were 137 children matched with volunteers. This was up from 129 pairs in 2009-10 and 90 pairs in 2008-09.

Beyond the numbers, the strength of the program lies in the relationships developed between the children and their partners and the long term benefits of improved reading interest and ability. Here are what some of the parents and participants have told us:

"My child enjoys reading and reads more at home. Also she is more confident in her reading. And I can tell from her daily speaking and reading that she learns a lot." - Parent

"My son's reading has improved. He has always loved books but felt he was not smart because he struggled to read. He seems more confident now and he is reading more at home by himself." - Parent

"My son's self-esteem has grown since beginning the R.E.A.D. Program. He is still behind the other children in his class. I sometimes find him reading to his younger sister. He has come a long way from not being able to use sight words to now comprehending sentences. We are extremely happy with the program. We have had amazing volunteers. My son looks forward to coming each week. In fact we have recently had 2 weeks off and he has stated on his way home from Cubs, 'when can I go reading with Joanne?'" - Parent

"Great program, excellent communication and resources. This program is so enjoyable and organized. I appreciated the newsletters as they were very helpful" – Volunteer

"If I could change anything about the R.E.A.D. Program, I wish the Library was a castle and all the books were about princesses!" - Allison, age 7

R.E.A.D. Program Review, 2011

In the spring of 2011, a review of the R.E.A.D. program was conducted to assess the impact of fundamental changes made to the program since 2007 and to determine next steps. We wanted to be sure we were offering the program at locations that needed it and where it could be supported by staff, volunteers and the community. We also wanted to get feedback from all staff directly involved in the program to ensure procedures were thorough and appropriate and to make any necessary changes.

The feedback from the review was very positive. Community feedback is extremely positive and shows the value of the program to the participants, their families and volunteers. The roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers in delivering this program are clear and the work done by the Literacy Facilitators has resulted in a consistent and efficiently run program.

Some minor recommendations were brought forward related to housekeeping-type procedures. These have subsequently been implemented. One major recommendation was to replace the R.E.A.D. program at the Crouch Branch with a drop-in homework club which would better address the needs of the children in this community. It is anticipated that being able to drop in, rather than register and commit to an extended period of time, and to get support for more than just reading is going to better serve these children. A partnership between the Library and Frontier College has been established to pilot a drop-in homework club at Crouch beginning in October 2011. Since there is a need for the R.E.A.D. program in other neighbourhoods, the Cherryhill Branch Library will offer the program. This has been met with great enthusiasm by staff at Cherryhill and it will begin this fall.

NEXT STEPS

Next steps include the following actions:

- Implement Crouch Branch Library “Homework Club” pilot;
- Launch R.E.A.D. at Cherryhill Branch Library; and
- Continue to monitor and evaluate the R.E.A.D. program across the system.