

# Families...Read Together

**The Role of the School Library in  
Promoting Family Literacy**

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## Links to the Community

The school library has always been an important place for school children: to find answers to pressing questions, to explore new worlds, to have a quiet area in which to think. What is often less evident is that the school library is also a meaningful link between parents and school itself. It can serve as a resource for information on parenting, a source of books with which to share quality time with children, and a welcoming area for a school visit.

The theme of Family Literacy and the School Library provided the focus for this IFPCA project. Our goal was to promote the notion of literacy within the family by looking towards the school library as an integral part of the community, and the foundation for a family of lifelong learners.

It is with great appreciation that I acknowledge the assistance and expertise of Patricia Aspley, Library Resource consultant for the P.S.B. of Chateaugay Valley, who served as my link with the Board's youth sector schools to encourage the development of library-related initiatives. The enthusiasm and creativity with which these schools responded is outlined in this resource booklet, compiled by Mrs. Aspley, which we hope will inspire further efforts to keep the momentum going for family literacy.

I wish to thank the principals and library resource personnel of our Board's youth sector schools for their participation and cooperation in this project, administered through the Adult Education sector, as well as the department of Educational Services for their support and encouragement. It is through partnerships such as these that enriching opportunities abound.

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As the original focus of this local IFPCA project was to be the School Library and its link to the community, a decision was made to make this a cooperative effort between Adult Education and the Youth Sector of the Board.

1994 had already been designated as the International Year of the Family, a fact which was reflected in the Canadian Children's Book Centre's Choice of Theme for their book week 'Families...Read Together'. The goal of this book week was to help Canadians discover the joy of

reading as a shared activity.

In light of these two events it was decided to sponsor a number of activities which centered around the theme of Family Literacy; activities which would promote reading within the family and which would emphasize the role of the school library in promoting Family Literacy.

A number of activities were initiated at the Board level. These included the distribution of promotional material in the form of posters, bookmarks and pamphlets, the provision of resource material for parents, and the purchase of a Reading Tent.

Each school in the system received a direct grant which enabled them to initiate their own unique Reading/Literacy Projects. Schools participated with enthusiasm and developed a number of inventive programs.

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# Board - Level Initiatives

## Reading to Children

Every family with a child in our elementary system received a copy of this brochure which outlines the **why, when, where, what** and **how** of reading to children.

## Family Reading Night

Each school in the system received promotional material, in the form of posters and bookmarks, designed to encourage family reading at home as an alternative to television and other activities.

## Families Reading Together

Posters with illustrations that emphasize the importance of reading and spending time with family. Each elementary school received two laminated posters from this series.

## Canadian Children's Book Week Kit

The Canadian Children's Book Centre chose Family Reading as the theme for its 1994 Book Week, and every school received a promotional kit containing a poster, bookmarks and a copy of Our Choice.



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## Reading Tent

A Reading Tent has been made available, on rotation, to any school wishing to use it to promote their reading activities. This comes as a complete kit and contains the following:

- A 10' x 10' Tent
- 2 Weatherproof Banners, each 3' x 6'

Read to succeed

Explore New Worlds - Read!

- A collection of books for children and young adults



## Parent Bookshelf

A number of schools already had a selection of material available to parents. This portion of the project would see those collections expanded, or, if no such collection existed would form the foundation of a collection. Materials provided under this project were limited to those dealing with reading and book selection for children and young adults.

Copies of the following titles were presented to each school:

- What do children read next?
- What do young adults read next?
- Sélection de livres pour enfants et pour adolescents
- Littérature pour la jeunesse: Publications Québécoises
- The Reading Solution by Paul Kropp
- Too Good to Miss: Classic Canadian Children's Books
- Reading: A Lifelong Adventure



### **CD-Rom Newdiscs**

A one year subscription to 'Actualité Québec' and the 'Canadian Newdisc' made it possible to introduce this new form of information technology to many students within the Board.

### **Mini Grants to Schools**

To encourage schools to reach out to their communities, and to highlight the role of the school library in promoting Family Literacy, a direct grant of \$200.00 was made available to each school library for a Reading/Literacy Project.

Two awards of \$500.00 collections of books were offered to those schools presenting the most creative literacy projects.

Following the completion of this portion of the IFPCA Project schools were provided with a synthesis of all the projects so that ideas could be shared.

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# School - Based Activities

School libraries do much more than merely lend books: an essential part of their mandate is to promote the entire reading experience with such activities as storytelling, reading programs, book talks and other activities. They hope, in fact, to assist in creating a community of lifelong readers.



The challenge lies in encouraging children to continue to read when there are so many other activities competing for their time.

One solution to this is to assume a proactive role in the promotion of Family Literacy; to make parents aware that they have the most important and lasting influence on their children as readers and to demonstrate that reading is a wonderful way for families to spend time together.

The focus of this section of the IFPCA Project was to explore ways in which the school library is linked to the community, and to demonstrate its role in promoting the importance of Family Literacy.

The following is a brief outline of the many projects undertaken by the schools of the P.S.B.C.V.


## **Families...Read Together Festival**

This was an evening activity - a celebration of literature and literacy - to which children, parents and grandparents were invited.

Following a community supper the focus shifted to a gala storytelling event in the school gymnasium.

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Each of the teachers had agreed to choose and read a story book, as well as to create an appropriate setting, and to wear a suitable costume. Themes included other countries and cultures, 'The Cat in the Hat', Giants, Penguins and Chocolate. The settings ranged from a thatched hut to a Giant Hershey Kiss.

In all there were eleven sessions, with visitors of all ages being invited into each habitat to listen to a story.

Part of the IFPCA funding was used for the purchase of books, which were then offered as door prizes.

The school also chose this occasion to officially reopen its renovated school library, and to give recognition to its library volunteers.

This evening was designed to highlight the important role that parents play in the development of literacy skills, and aptly demonstrated that reading together can be an enjoyable family pastime.



### **Library Newsletter**

One school chose to divide its IFPCA funding. Part would be used to support a number of library activities such as an 'I Love to Read Week', a Young Authors week, and a library open house. The balance would be used to establish a library newsletter.

The school wished to develop a closer relationship with the parent community and the public associated with the school, and felt that this was a way to invite more participation in library/reading activities.



The newsletter would focus on updating the community on the resources and activities developed by the library. These would include:

- Materials available to the children in support of project work required by the teachers
- Activities related to the building of awareness in such areas as substance abuse, development of positive social skills, literature and literacy
- Resources available to help in the development of parenting skills
- The opportunity to become involved in the measures designed to encourage the development of reading and literacy
- Book Fairs
- I love to Read Week



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### **Birthday Book Club**

Children and their families were encouraged to donate a book to the library in celebration of the child's birthday. In this way favourite books could be enjoyed by the entire school population.

### **Library Open House**

A showcase event where parents and children were invited to investigate what the library had to offer in terms of resources and services. It also presented an opportunity for children and parents to share their favourite books.




### **'Les magiciens des mots' (Performers for Literacy)**

One school chose to use its IFPCA grant to fund this bilingual presentation, which encourages families to become more involved in reading with their children.

'Les magiciens des mots' encourages the participation of national and local celebrities in these events which are given in local community centres, schools and libraries. Efforts are also made to encourage full coverage by the local media.

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Many parents who had previously quickly entered 'Les magiciens des mots'  
Objectives:

- To encourage children to read, and to promote reading as an appealing activity
- Provide teachers and parents with tips on storytelling, and reading with children
- Organize presentations of 'Jeux-Contes' during community events in order to promote reading within the family
- Use the media to promote reading
- Work with other organisations in promoting the practical advantages of reading
- Raise the visibility of authors and performers
- Familiarise families with Canadian literature for children.



### **Remember Your Childhood**

Given that the library is located on the second floor, this school looked for ways to make it more approachable and accessible.

It was decided to create a bulletin board display of Caldecott medal winners in the main lobby of the school. This display was an attempt to appeal to the child in both the parent and the student and was entitled 'Remember your childhood'.

the school to pick up their child, or to drop off a lunch, began to linger and share with their children the books they remembered from their own childhood.

Plans for IFPCA funds included the purchase of replacement copies of some of these Caldecott winners, and also the purchase of material for a 'Parents Bookshelf'.



### **Family Reading**

Parents often recognise the importance of reading with their children, but feel that they lack the necessary skills.

This project was designed to assist parents in a number of ways

- to help parents select suitable materials and to have the books available to loan to them
- To show parents how to get the most out of the available material
- To assist second language families
- To help parents help their children to read

A number of meetings were planned. The initial meeting would be an information meeting where books for different reading levels would be discussed, and information on where to find these books would be shared. Discussion would also centre on how to encourage a child to read.


Subsequent meetings would feature talks and demonstrations of reading techniques.

### **Oral History Project**

Storytelling has long been the way of passing along history and traditions to the next generation. Within families the tales were often rich with details about local history and anecdotes about family members and local personalities.

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Oral history is recognized as a relatively recent phenomenon resulting from the increasing popularity of the portable tape recorder. These recordings are, however, unique documents which form a valuable addition to the historical record.

With this in mind, members of a small rural community are being asked to record some of their stories for the benefit of local children. A tape recorder and tape will be supplied in order for the story teller to record at home, alternatively recordings may be made during visits to the school.

Volunteers will document these stories in written form, with illustrations being provided by a number of students. Bound editions of these stories will then be placed in the school library for all to share.


### **Library Video Project**

This video was intended to serve as an introduction to the types of materials and services offered by the school library.

It was intended that it serve a threefold purpose:

- As an introduction to the library for new students, it would form part of the Secondary 1 library orientation programme.
- As an information and promotional tool to be used, for example, on a 'Meet the Teacher Evening', by highlighting new resources and services parents would be made aware of what was available to their children, and would also be encouraged to contact the library directly for information on a variety of topics



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- This video was to be written and produced by the media literacy class, by involving these students so closely in such a project it was hoped that they too would become more aware of what the library has to offer.

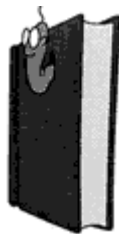
### **Multicultural Year/Author Visits**

One school had chosen multiculturalism as its school project for the year and as part of this project used its IFPCA funds to purchase books on Native American, and other cultures, to add to the school library.



Through her work local artist and author C.J. Taylor has shown youngsters around the world the richness and diversity of Native American folklore. As part of this multicultural project she was invited to speak to the students about her work, literacy and native culture.

### **I Love to Read Week**



Two schools chose to concentrate their efforts on a 'I Love to Read Week' with each school underlining the importance of family reading during the various sessions. The following are just some of the ideas included in these celebrations of reading:

- *Heart Bookworm.* All grades were assigned a particular colour of cut-out hearts. As a book was read it was

recorded on the heart. Each day these were added to the 'My Heart Goes Out to Books' display.





- *Slogan Bingo.* Banners featuring 'I love to read' week slogans were made by each class. The letters were covered. Letters were called out (like bingo) and the first banner uncovered won.
- *Post Office.* Each class chose an address with a reading theme complete with a class postal code. Students sent mail to one another via the interclass postal system.
- *Dear/USSR.* Each day at a specific time everyone in the school stopped work to read.
- *Guest Storytellers.*
- *Book Draw.* As each child completed a book they were given a ticket for the book draw.
- Posters, Bookmarks and Buttons with a reading theme were produced by students
- Book exchanges within a class, or between classes
- *Family reading time.* Each student was given a chit for the time spent reading with a family member. These were then used for books draws.
- *Family Donations.* Books were donated to the school library in the name of local families.
- Student/Teacher Reading Competitions
- *Mystery Readers.* Students were asked to identify taped readers.



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# Sources

## Reading to Children

*Federation of Women Teachers'  
Associations of Ontario*  
1260 Bay Street  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5R 2B8

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## Families Reading Night

*Carr McLean*  
461 Horner Avenue  
Toronto, Ontario  
M8W 4X2

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## Families Reading Together

*Children's Book Council*  
568 Broadway, Suite 404  
New York NY 10012

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## Reading Banners

*Partners in Learning Programs Inc.*  
16464 Via Esprillo  
San Diego, California 92127

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## Les Magiciens des mots

1187 St. Moritz Court  
Gloucester Ontario  
K1 C 2B2

## Canadian Children's Book Week

**Too Good to Miss: Classic  
Canadian Children's Books**

## Reading: A Lifelong Adventure

*Canadian Children's Book Centre*  
35 Spadina Road  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5R 2S9

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## What Do Children Read Next?

## What Do Young Adults Read Next?

*Gale Research Inc.*  
P.O. Box 33477  
Detroit, MI 48232-5477

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## Sélection de livres pour enfants et pour adolescents.

## Littérature pour la jeunesse: Publications Québécoises

*Communications-Jeunesse*  
5307 boul. St. Laurent  
Montreal (Quebec)  
H2T 1S5

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# PLANNING A READING FESTIVAL FOR YOUR SCHOOL?

