

Literacy Now!

Exploring challenges, capacities
and opportunities for improved literacy
in Kingston Galloway-Orton Park (KGO)

FINAL REPORT

March 12, 2018

Acknowledgements

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01. Introduction

Background

Stakeholders in the Kingston Galloway-Orton Park (KGO) community have initiated various interventions over the years to address challenges related to literacy within the community. As a result, a number of independent programs and services that seek to help struggling learners, educate parents and provide tutoring to youth, exist within the community. However, a more comprehensive approach to providing programs and services is needed.

There are opportunities for change, but those opportunities need to be rooted in sound research, a deeper understanding of the challenges experienced by residents of KGO, and a cross-community strategy (KLIC Terms of Reference, 2016).

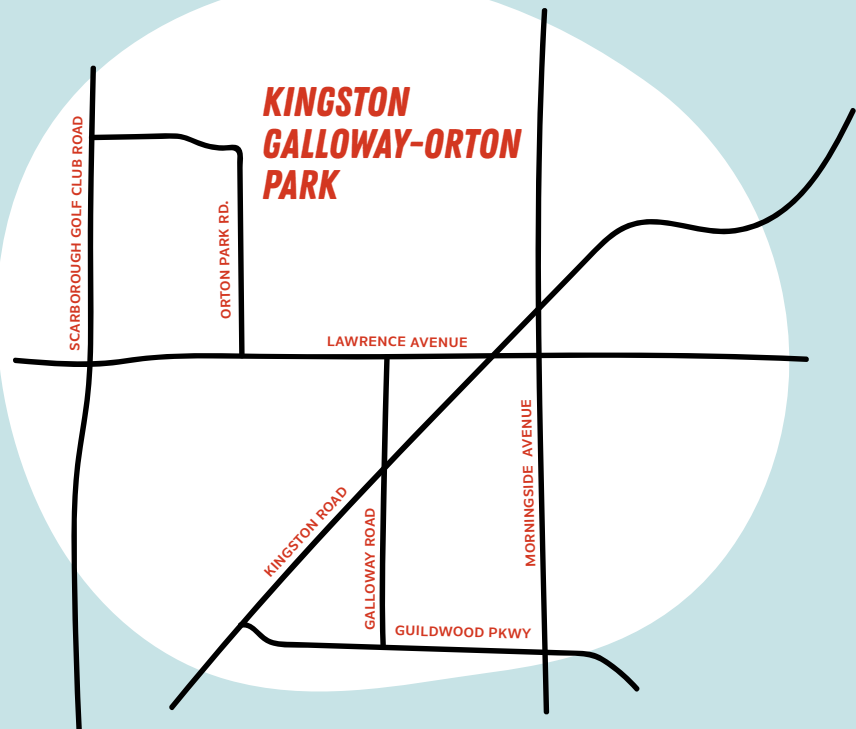
Given the complex and long-term negative impacts associated with low-level literacy, stakeholders working across the KGO community have come

together to form the KGO Literacy Improvement Collective (KLIC) to focus on developing a neighbourhood-based, literacy improvement strategy for the community. The Collective is in its infancy, having held its first meetings in the summer of 2015. The impetus to work together came from MPP Mitzie Hunter and The Reading Partnership, upon seeing the dire need in the community and the positive results of The Reading Partnership's programming. The organizations that make up the collective already have deep roots in the community. While each organization has its own mandate, they all share a common vision for KGO – one where children and families have the resources and support they need to live up to their full potential (KLIC Terms of Reference, 2016).

The KLIC wishes to address longstanding concerns regarding literacy within the KGO community through an evidence-based research process that adheres to the Collective's mission, vision and values, and engages a broad number of stakeholders. As a

Figure 1

The Kingston Galloway boundaries have been defined in the west as Scarborough Golf Club road, east to Manse road, just north of Ellesmere road and south to the railway tracks south of Kingston road.



significant step toward improving literacy at the neighbourhood level, The Reading Partnership, on behalf of the KLIC, commissioned this report to capture a current and useful KGO literacy profile, assess literacy service assets and gaps, and present detailed summaries of literacy intervention models which have had an impact in other communities.

The research report gathers insights, perspectives and responses from various project stakeholders. The report also presents an assessment of the project's purpose, successes, challenges, key learnings and impact. The research methodology included document review, key informant interviews and focus group analysis, as well as community engagement via two public forums.

KGO Neighbourhood Profiles

The following section provides socio-demographic information pertaining to the Kingston Galloway Orton Park community (City of Toronto, 2011). For the purposes of this research, the Kingston Galloway Orton Park boundaries have been broadly defined in the west as Scarborough Golf Club Road, east to Manse Road, just north of Ellesmere Road and south to the railway tracks south of Kingston Road. Figure 1 on page four shows the research area for this project. The KGO community is comprised of four of the City of Toronto's Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIA): Morningside, Woburn, Scarborough Village and West Hill (Fig. 2-5).

Figure 2
Morningside

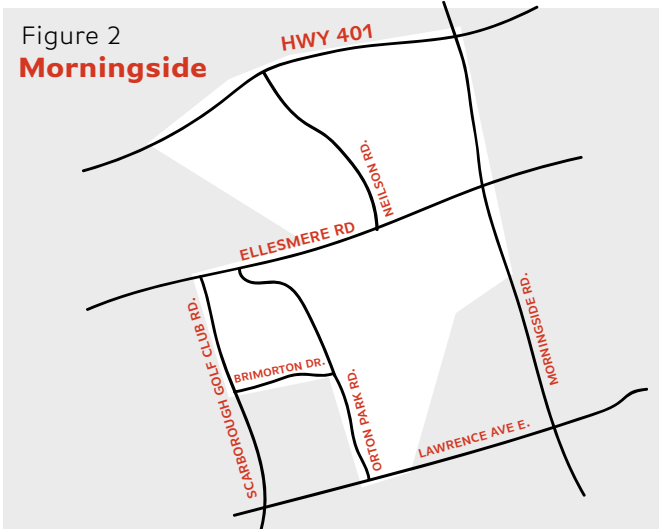


Figure 3
Woburn

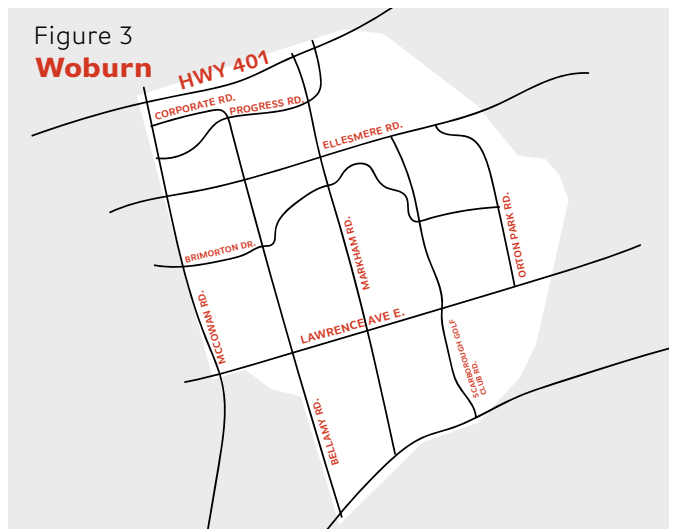


Figure 4
Scarborough Village

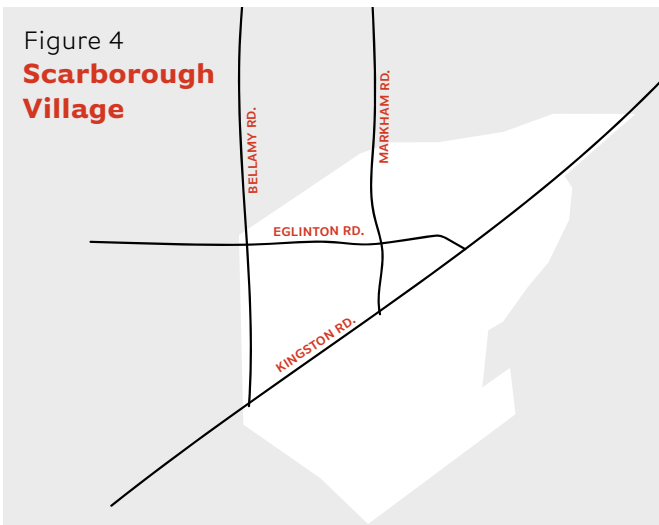


Figure 5
West Hill



Table 1.0: Percentage of Population by Age Group

Age Range	Morningside	Woburn	Scarborough Village	West Hill
Children / 0-14	18%	19%	21%	19%
Youth / 15-24	16%	14%	15%	15%
Adults / 25-64	53%	53%	52%	52%
Seniors / 65+	13%	14%	12%	14%

SOURCE: City of Toronto, 2011 Census / National Household Survey

Table 2.0: Income Status

Age Range	Morningside	Woburn	Scarborough Village	West Hill
Percent of Population in Low Income (LIM-AT)	18%	19%	21%	19%

SOURCE: City of Toronto, 2011 Census / National Household Survey

Table 3.0: Language and Ethnicity

	Morningside	Woburn	Scarborough Village	West Hill
Top 5 Ethnic Origins	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. East Indian 2. Filipino 3. English 4. Canadian 5. Jamaican 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. East Indian 2. Sri Lankan 3. English 4. Canadian 5. Chinese 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. East Indian 2. Canadian 3. English 4. Sri Lankan 5. Irish 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Canadian 2. English 3. Jamaican 4. East Indian 5. Scottish
Top 5 Non-Official Home Language	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tamil 2. Tagalog 3. Urdu 4. Gujarati 5. Mandarin 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gujarati 2. Tamil 3. Urdu 4. Chinese 5. Tagalog 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tamil 2. Urdu 3. Persian (Farsi) 4. Bengali 5. Tagalog 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tamil 2. Bengali 3. Tagalog 4. Persian (Farsi) 5. Urdu

SOURCE: City of Toronto, 2011 Census / National Household Survey

Research Objectives

The research objectives of this project included the gathering of insights, experiences and suggestions from a wide range of KGO stakeholders, as well as the development of recommendations on improving and sustaining literacy improvement initiatives.

In addition to these core objectives, the research project also delivers:

- A literature scan of current and academic and policy knowledge about addressing illiteracy at the community-level
- Recommendations for the implementation and sustainability of initiatives that articulate the long-term vision of the KLIC
- Delivery of a knowledge product (info-graphic) which the KLIC can use to communicate this project to funders, community members and other key stakeholders

Organization of this Report

This report is organized into four sections:

- Section one provides an introduction
- Section two offers a description of the project's methodology
- Section three presents the research findings including analysis from document review, key informant interviews and focus groups with research participants; and
- Section four presents recommendations.
- The literature scan, additional project documents, an overview of the second community forum, and supporting information can be found in the appendices.

02. Methodology

The research agenda for the Literacy Now! project was guided by a community-based research approach which sought to engage a wide range of community stakeholders.

Due to the non-randomized nature of the research approach, findings contained within the final report cannot be generalized. However, every effort was made to engage a broad cross-section of stakeholders who offered valuable perspectives and insights related to their experiences with literacy-focused programming in KGO.

Research Questions

The research questions were designed to gather information that is useful and practical for the purposes of improving and coordinating literacy services and activities in the KGO community, and also to contribute to the KLIC’s knowledge, capacity-building and best practices regarding design and delivery of quality literacy programming.

The project’s research questions are as follows:

1. What is the depth and scope of the problem of illiteracy in KGO, and how can a community-baseline be established?
2. What are the existing community literacy assets in KGO, and what are the identifiable gaps in programs and services?
3. What are some existing neighbourhood-based collective impact models, and how might they be applied to KGO?
4. How can relevant research knowledge be best shared and transferred as a means to inform other communities who have undertaken similar work?

Table 4.0 Summary of Data Sources by Research Question

Research Question	Interviews	Document Review	Focus Group
01. What is the depth and scope of the problem of illiteracy in KGO, and how can we establish a community-baseline from which to work?	X	X	X
02. What are the existing community literacy assets and what are the identifiable gaps in programs and services?	X	X	X
03. What are some existing neighbourhood-based collective impact models, and how might they potentially work in KGO?		X	
04. How can relevant research knowledge be best shared and transferred as a means to inform other communities who have undertaken similar work?	X	X	X

Literature Scan

The literature scan used a targeted approach that captured current academic and policy knowledge about how to address the low literacy rate in the Kingston Galloway-Orton Park (KGO). A full literature review includes primary literature (i.e., reports of individual research studies), and is a major undertaking. In contrast, this scan focused on credible academic, policy and grey literature that summarized the evidence on relevant topics. The literature scan consisted of three steps:

1. Review of background documents indicating the educational challenges faced by residents of the Kingston-Galloway-Orton Park (KGO) neighbourhood and the community's current approaches to literacy programming.
2. Searches on Google Scholar and on the general Web for relevant academic, policy and grey literature.
3. Follow-up review of cited articles, going into more depth on the most promising methods for boosting literacy rates in KGO.

Review of Background Documents

The researcher reviewed background documents provided by the KLIC. These gave an idea of the issues that residents of KGO face which contributed to low literacy rates, and the existing and planned interventions used to address illiteracy in disadvantaged neighbourhoods like KGO.

Google Scholar and Web Search

Google Scholar (Tober, 2011),(Nourbakhsh, Nugent, Wang, Cevik, & Nugent, 2012) for references using targeted search strings: We started with a general search string – *'literacy neighbourhood/community interventions,' 'neighbourhood literacy programs,' 'improving neighbourhood literacy,' 'community literacy definition/practices,' 'community based literacy programs,' 'improving community literacy best practices,' 'neighbourhood literacy program evaluation,' 'literacy definition'* – to get a feel for the vocabulary that is used in the research literature.

This general search overview was useful to find out which search strings would be most appropriate. For example, relevant articles on this first go-around used the words 'literacy plan,' 'publics,' 'collective,' 'local,' 'engagement,' 'promise,' and 'neighbourhoods' in their titles or abstracts.

We then used more focused search strings, including the terms above plus 'rights-based,' 'action plan,' 'rhetoric,' 'cognition' and 'coalition.' Following these initial searches, we duplicated the search strings on a general Google web search to identify recent and highly cited articles that were not included in Scholar.

The researcher used Zotero, an academic reference manager, to share, track and categorize documents.

Key Informant Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with individuals who are involved with KLIC and literacy-based programming across KGO. The researcher also interviewed subject matter experts to gain a comparative perspective on core issues. More specifically, the following key informants were interviewed:

- Current members of the KLIC (5)
- KGO residents (12)
- Educators who work within KGO (4)
- Subject matter experts (4)

A total of 25 interviews were conducted by telephone between January - August 2017. Each interview was audio recorded and was guided by an interview protocol (see appendices). Interviews were then transcribed and analyzed for recurring themes, convergent and divergent points of interest, as well as patterned information.

Focus groups

Four focus groups were conducted with KGO stakeholders between May–August 2017. Focus group participants were mostly recruited and selected by KGO community agency staff. A total of 20 individuals participated in the focus groups.

Table 5.0: Focus group participation by neighbourhood

Neighbourhood	# of participants
Morningside	8
Woburn	4
Scarborough Village	1
West Hill	8
Total	21

Community Forums

In keeping with the community-based research approach, the project hosted two community forums to provide an opportunity for community stakeholders in KGO to both inform and respond to our work.

The first community forum (May 11, 2017) provided an opportunity to gather feedback on emerging findings and to assess the direction of the project. Feedback from this first community forum ensured that subsequent data collection included questions that the community felt were important (e.g., school-based challenges in KGO). A second community forum (November 7, 2017) at the end of the data collection and analysis shared findings with community stakeholders, and asked for suggestions on possible recommendations and actions that could address these findings.

The forums attracted over 200 participants.

03. Findings

The following section presents information gathered from key informant interviews with various KGO stakeholders. Responses focus on challenges, community assets, and areas for literacy-focused service improvement.

Challenges

School-based issues

Like other low-income communities in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), KGO has experienced significant challenges related to low Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) reading competency scores, especially among young learners. School data published by EQAO suggests wide-spread challenges with literacy and numeracy proficiency in local schools which consistently underperform against the provincial literacy and numeracy proficiency average. Several key informants point to a long history of school-based problems as the core driver behind low literacy attainment in KGO. They cite low student expectations, weak parent engagement, racism, disenfranchisement and a lack of accountability as the most entrenched impediments to raising literacy scores across the community.

Some informants shared concerns that safety and security issues were having a direct impact on literacy and academic success among KGO youth. They shared that youth who are hard-to-reach and most in need of literacy support, are often unwilling to attend school due to insecurities about their personal safety. One resident shared that teachers seem intimidated by students and therefore overlook their support needs.

On the whole, K-12 education is seen by most key informants as the epicentre of literacy challenges experienced in KGO. However, low trust between community members and local schools often inhibits the collective work required to bring about improvements. As such, several informants suggest that community agencies should create

joint literacy programs with schools that could potentially help parents to advocate for their children while assisting schools in deepening their relationships with families and other community stakeholders.

Outreach and engagement

While KGO has a variety of programs that offer literacy-focused services, key informants shared that there is much need for improvement in the area of outreach and engagement. There is commonly held belief that youth (particularly Black males) and seniors are not currently engaged in literacy programs. Respondents believe that a lack of translated program engagement and learning materials are two major barriers for potential literacy learners. Youth who do engage with literacy programming tend to be already engaged in some other form of activity. For example, the East Scarborough Boys and Girls Club has had success in recruiting youth into literacy-focused programs through some of their recreation or leadership programs.

Key informants report that experiences with poverty in KGO make outreach and engagement for literacy programs difficult. In this context, where meeting basic needs is seen as paramount, literacy is often viewed as an ancillary activity. KGO has the highest concentration of low-income housing residents in the City of Toronto, making poverty a major contributor to low literacy. Key informants report that there is a lack of literacy infrastructure and capacity in KGO. While there are a handful of agencies that do meaningful work on literacy in KGO, several respondents commented on the ad hoc nature of funding for literacy, which leads to limited outreach capacity, limited program availability and insufficient resources to sustain effective programs.

As such, several respondents expressed the need to develop a civic engagement strategy focused on bringing attention to the issue of illiteracy, one that might increase community advocacy and policy responses in KGO.

Transportation

Key informants report that transportation costs are a significant barrier to literacy learners in KGO. Several informants shared experiences of learners who are entirely dependent on transit tokens provided by community agencies. For learners who are employed, ensuring that they have transit fare for work takes precedent over getting to learning programs. As such, programs that cannot provide transit fare on a consistent basis find it difficult to maintain strong learner attendance. Given the relatively distant geographic proximity of literacy-focused programs in KGO, accessing transportation has become a key barrier in recruiting and engaging literacy learners.

Accessing reading material

Several key informants commented on the fact that beyond community libraries, there is little to no access to affordable reading material in KGO. They view KGO largely as a “book desert” where access to reading material for early learners is scarce and unaffordable. In this context, it is difficult for the community to develop initiatives such as reading clubs, read-a-thons and used book sales that may support a love for reading and literacy.

While the Toronto Public Library is a vital resource for literacy-focused activities, respondents worry that the library’s literacy services are sometimes made inaccessible due to registration or enrollment criteria that don’t adequately take into consideration language and literacy barriers. In addition, informants report that Black, Indigenous and other racialized groups in KGO often do not have adequate access to culturally-appropriate literacy materials that include their perspectives and experiences.

Newcomer and ESL needs

As one of Toronto’s densest newcomer populations, KGO residents have a high need for ESL programming and translated materials. Respondents believe that a lack of translated program engagement and learning materials is

a major barrier for potential literacy learners. ESL programs are often funded separately from literacy programs. As such, it is challenging for literacy-focused programs to address the many needs of learners who might be better served in an ESL program.

Community narratives regarding literacy

While KGO is viewed as a vibrant and diverse community, respondents shared that there are entrenched narratives of poverty that need to be disrupted within the community. Many felt that the low-income status of the community and accompanying media perceptions lead to low expectations that impedes the good work that takes place within KGO. With respect to literacy, several informants expressed the need to engage all relevant partners—schools, residents, agencies and learners—in a community-wide mobilization strategy that might shift the narrative from one of deficit to one of strengths.

“I’m not seeing a huge interest in literacy in KGO. People need to get on with their daily issues. The idea of improving their literacy is on the back burner.”

“Some of our schools have failed the kids. I know a lot of teachers who are scared of our kids, particularly our black males. They don’t know what to do about them, so their (KGO youth) learning suffers.”

“We need to get people understanding their rights and pushing government toward action in KGO.”

“People need jobs. That’s what they worry about. Income is more important than literacy.”

“Poverty is the major barrier. We need more resources in the community to seriously improve literacy.”

"I know a lot of kids who don't read at the right level. It's sad because they fall behind right from the start and never catch up."

"I've lived in KGO for over 6 years and I don't see a lot of men at learning programs. It's mostly single moms who are doing the best they can."

"The library has tutoring programs and other services, but they make it hard to access those programs. This creates a significant barrier."

"I don't think the government cares about what's going on in our schools because it's mostly poor people."

Community Capacity and Assets

Several key informants take pride in the fact that community agencies that offer literacy-focused services have successfully engaged learners from across the four KGO neighbourhoods. According to key informants, one of the main strengths of this community programming is its responsiveness to KGO residents. Several programs are led by literacy workers who either live in KGO or who have long-standing connection with the community. This ensures that learners feel understood and valued. While there is generally strong knowledge about program offerings across KGO, respondents cite the need for improved collaboration between agencies. Through collaboration, agencies may be able to accomplish tasks such as expand outreach and hire additional literacy staff, which are not possible on their own.

KGO has a number of literacy focused programs for adult and youth learners. These include: The Reading Partnership, KGO Adult Literacy Program, East Scarborough Storefront, Frontier College, East Scarborough Boys and Girls Club, Early ON Child and Family Centers and the Toronto Public Library. Informants report that most KGO programs are action oriented and responsive to learner needs. This cooperation and

responsiveness has come about despite limited resources in KGO. For example, although there is no core funding for The Reading Partnership, it has worked collaboratively to distribute resources and deliver events such as the annual Spotlight on Literacy.

Despite these successes, informants suggest that there are key areas for improvement. For example, programs should strive to be as relevant to community members as possible. Several informants suggested that there is a lack of employment-focused literacy programming in KGO. Given the immediate needs associated with income, programs should therefore connect their literacy activities to immediate needs such as resume writing, researching, reading and understanding job posts, etc. Similarly, youth who are not in school or employed require literacy programming that might help them re-engage with learning. There is also an ongoing need for programming to be delivered in a manner that is culturally-appropriate. Many respondents shared that materials currently used in literacy programs do not adequately reflect the cultural and ethnic diversity of the community being served.

"There are good literacy programs in the neighbourhood. I've learned so much just being a participant. They've taught me a lot as a mother and a resident."

"I don't know what I would have done without the Family and Literacy Centre. It was a huge help when I was raising my kids."

"The Toronto Public Library has a lot to offer, but I don't know how accessible their programs are for KGO residents. It seems like it's hard to become a volunteer or to register for some of their programs."

"People want literacy programs that are relevant. I know a lot of people who want a job or better employment, but they're not confident about their literacy skills."

Models for Change

When asked about the future direction of literacy improvement initiatives in KGO, key informants offered responses that focused on the need to secure long-term resources (funding and staff) for literacy programming. For several key informants, there is a strong desire to see the delivery of programming that is flexible, responsive, culturally-appropriate and integrated with schools. The goal of building capacity and ensuring responsiveness requires that agencies work alongside children, youth and their families from pre-school all the way to post-secondary education. Key informants want to see increased community engagement and mobilization. There is a general sense that government will not act to address problems with schools and literacy unless the community demands action. As such, there is a strong desire to bring about and sustain community-based responses to illiteracy that are inclusive, accessible and grassroots in nature.

Below are some community-based intervention models that respond to the literacy programming needs identified by KGO stakeholders:

Promise Neighborhoods' have been implemented in several US cities and deliver "cradle-to-career" emphasis on early-childhood literacy, combined with the effective instruction found in participating schools. This approach has shown an increase in literacy rates and overall academic success (Biglan et al. 2011; Center for the Study of Social Policy 2016: 10-26).

Community-Based Learning models emphasize that, "education must connect subject matter with the places where students live and the issues that affect us all." With that in mind, this model links schools with community partners to create curriculums that place students physically in their community spaces to facilitate active learning (Coalition for Community Schools 2006: 1). This model requires a high degree of trust between local schools and community agencies.

Chicago's Engaged Library initiative has successfully aided community development by turning libraries into active sites of learning that engage directly with community networks. (Silver 2014: 1; Kretzmann et al 2005: 3). This model responds to KGO stakeholders who wish to see improved program integration, and also capitalizes on the Toronto Public Library's current role as the only site that offers large-scale access to reading material.

Community-Based Early Childhood Initiatives show how local communities "can bring together the full range of policies, programs, strategies and opportunities" that are essential to helping families raise children that are successful at all stages of life. They do this by mobilising and aligning all available service sectors, including parenting education, childcare and family support, health and mental health, K-12 schools, child welfare, family literacy, higher education, workforce development, substance abuse treatment, food security, economic and housing development and law enforcement and legal services. Funds can be drawn from state, federal, private local, local public, grass-roots fundraising, private and corporate donations (Schumacher 2013: 2, 8, 11). This approach aims to address the "root-causes" that underlie many of the problems associated with illiteracy.

Diamond Educational Excellence Partnership (DEEP) joined with Chollas-Mead Elementary School and the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) to create the Summer Readers-Future Leaders community-based summer learning program. This five-week program "offered 84 rising second-and third graders opportunities for reducing summer reading loss, building reading skills, increasing motivation to read, improving social-emotional development and physical health, and engaging in hands-on science activities linked to the preservation of natural resources" (Lee and Gianzero 2013: 1).

Key informants suggest that combatting KGO's "book desert" status should be part of all community literacy planning. Once successful program that has provided a community with greater access to literacy resources is the Books in Motion initiative. Based in several small communities in the Northeastern United States, Books in Motion is a monthly public library book club that invites kids and adults to read a preselected book, gives free copies of the books to participants, and culminates in a family film night in which club participants view the book's movie adaptation at the public library. This program boosted intergenerational literacy rates, increased access to literacy resources and introduced readers to texts that would have otherwise been too hard for them to read on their own (Ness 2010: 134, 143).

Decoda Literacy Solutions' Community Literacy Planning Guide recommends developing community literacy plans that serve as statements "about how individuals and organizations are engaged in collaboration to support the development of literacy strategies." Collaborating to create a community literacy plan involves learning how community groups work and interrelate, getting input from all community stakeholders, respecting minority viewpoints and forging a willingness to commit to the beliefs and values of the collaborative process. This is coalition building in action (Decoda Literacy Solutions 2012: 46-47).

"There are several literacy models we can look at in KGO, but their success will depend on funding and sustained leadership."

"We need programs that work together. There's no point working in isolation. The challenges are too big."

"I think we need to develop an action plan that includes ways to measure improvement. I've read too many reports."

"You can't increase literacy without working with schools because that's where our children get their start. I've had to advocate for my child from day one."

Program Evaluation and Shared Accountability

While most key informants reported that literacy programs in KGO offer sound learning opportunities for KGO participants, several believe that there is a need for improved evaluation of existing programs. Informants suggest that there are too many programs that do not update their approaches to meet the needs of their learners. There is also concern that learning outcomes and the overall effectiveness of literacy programming is mostly unknown. The lack of available data on literacy program learner completion and outcomes was mentioned frequently as a strong indication that programs are not meeting the needs of learners. As such, respondents feel there should be shared evaluation measures, transparent data sharing, collective approaches and increased accountability to learners and funders.

"I'm not sure if our literacy programs are actually leading to employment or training outcomes for our learners. We don't really have the data."

"We have to hold each other accountable. I know we compete for funds, but it's not about that, it's about the learners."

"I want to know if what we're doing is having a real impact in the community. That's important to me."

Knowledge Mobilization

Key informants were asked to discuss ways that the KLIC can share information captured from this research project with the wider KGO community. A distinction was drawn between promotion of research and storytelling. For several respondents, storytelling relates to the value of literacy activities and their impact on lives. Storytelling is also seen as the documentation of a literacy journey, and the role that community members play within it. While some informants did not think that the wider community would be particularly interested in learning about this project or literacy activities, most felt that it was a worthwhile endeavour that should be given further attention. Suggestions for storytelling about literacy tended toward creative modes of expression, with visual projects being mentioned repeatedly.

The following presents the most common suggestions for effective storytelling about literacy:

- Spoken word and poetry events, speeches
- Documentary
- Photo collage/mixed media, on display in public places; photography with accompanying text
- Learners who achieve literacy goals should share their story in person or via video
- Engaged youth should lead info sessions at community agencies and schools
- Produce videos that are funny, showing what actually happens during literacy programs
- Well-done, colourful posters are key

Respondents also suggest that town-hall events are a proven way to engage KGO residents. Many shared their experiences participating in such events in the past and found them to be on the whole engaging. While literacy should remain the central focus, informants suggest that literacy improvement should be connected to citizen engagement regarding voting and capacity-building. In order to achieve strong interest in discussions about literacy, infographics and easy to access promotional materials should be

developed. Knowledge products concerning

literacy need to be translated into several languages. Ultimately, knowledge mobilization should be conducted by tapping into existing programs and services where KGO residents already go such as schools, community centres, places of worship, etc.

"I've seen the town hall format work. It has to be well-organized and people have to feel like it's worth the effort."

"Social media campaigns are interesting, but they may not attract the most hard-to-reach residents in KGO."

"We need to get people mobilized. Literacy has to be tied to food security, anti-poverty, newcomer settlement and other basic needs."

"I think this is where getting the local councillor and MPP involved is key. They can share what's happening in KGO through their networks."

"In other cities you have the library leading the charge on this. We can create a documentary or a public awareness campaign to get people excited about reading and learning."

04.

Conclusion & Recommendations

As noted above, there are several ways to achieve improved community literacy interventions in the Kingston Galloway-Orton Park (KGO) community.

Whatever the differences in approach, however, effective community literacy programming should be undertaken with the understanding that literacy is concurrently a human right, an autonomous set of learnable skills, and an applied process that must be considered in light of available texts and relationships between residents.

Because literacy is a right that directly affects and shapes the social fabric of communities, community literacy programs should be designed in accordance with the input and needs of all community stakeholders. In this respect, community literacy takes the place of specific educational programming and public discourses. Quality community literacy programs recognize the interrelated social and educational needs of communities and place these needs in specific cultural and geographic contexts.

Creating literacy-rich home environments is the first step in designing effective community literacy programming. Parents who are involved in, and learn from, literacy programming will in turn learn how to help their children achieve their literacy goals. KGO's has literacy programs and workshops that already incorporate parents and children, and this approach should extend to potential new programs. Literacy begins in the home, but it needs to also be promoted in a wider neighbourhood context to include schools, community centers, health organizations, after-school programming, libraries, local businesses and community development and planning organizations, among other stakeholders.

Above all, community literacy interventions should be designed with an awareness of the social, economic and cultural contexts of the KGO neighbourhood. Programming must recognize the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of both adult and child participants, and it should be based around an action plan that emphasizes community health and the continued development of children throughout all stages of life. The following recommendations point the way towards effective, intergenerational community literacy interventions that benefit the long-term well-being of the entire KGO community.

Recommendations

The following recommendations can be grouped into three broad categories: Community Engagement, Service Development and Knowledge Sharing.

Community Engagement

1. Develop an outreach strategy/campaign that utilizes materials in multiple languages and invites participants to engage with literacy learning opportunities across KGO.
2. Develop both a KLIC events calendar and a promotional "roadshow" that aim to recruit and engage learners by leveraging existing programs and services.
3. Create a high-quality engagement video that promotes existing literacy learning opportunities that can be shared with various KGO agencies.
4. Draft and implement a "Literacy Improvement Charter" that calls for more inclusive programming, diversity, relevance and situated learning. This should include ways to measure success against the charter's stated goals and principles.

Service Development

5. Create a multi-agency KGO service "pipeline" that provides literacy supports for learners pre-school to post-secondary/apprenticeship/training or employment. This requires shared resources, coordination and partnership, robust referral systems, shared evaluation measures and outcomes.
6. Increase and expand employment-focused literacy program content in KGO.

7. Increase opportunities for learners to shape their literacy program experiences and share stories about their literacy journey.

8. Connect literacy programming to other high value issues such as food security, voter engagement and employment.

Knowledge sharing

9. Implement a cloud-based information portal for info-sharing, best practices and knowledge transfer between literacy-focused agencies.
10. Develop a strategy to secure the necessary funding and resources to implement a community-based literacy action plan.

05. Appendices

Appendices

01. Literature Scan

Defining literacy

Literacy is a multifaceted, dynamic concept informed by educational, geographical, economic and political contexts and guided by specific social and cultural values. “Literacy is a complex process that involves building on prior knowledge, culture, and experiences in order to develop new knowledge and deeper understanding. It connects individuals and communities, and is an essential tool for personal growth and active participation in a democratic society.” (Literacy for Learning 2004: 17)

There is no single, all-encompassing definition for “literacy.” Different countries, organizations, cultures, and societies, educational institutions and international agencies all have different definitions of literacy informed by a variety of criteria. The term “literacy” appears to be simple but it is actually deceptively complex. Most everyone has a basic understanding of literacy that relates to a set of cognitive skills denoting a certain level of competency at reading, writing and communicating. In the most “generic” sense, being a “literate” person means that you can read, write and speak. This “generic” conception of literacy stems from the original meaning of the English word “literate,” which entailed being “familiar with literature” or “well educated” and “learned” in a general sense. Since the late nineteenth century, being literate also came to refer to people who were “knowledgeable or educated in a particular field or fields.” (Literacy for Life 2006: 148)

Literacy in Ontario

According to Community Literacy of Ontario:

“Four in ten Ontarians aged 15 and over do not have the literacy skills they need to meet the demands of modern life. 1.3 million people (16.2%) struggle with very serious literacy challenges. They have difficulty with even the most basic written materials. Another 2.1 million people (26%) can work with print information but not well. A further 1.8 million (21.3%) working age Ontarians struggle with very serious numeracy challenges and they have difficulty with even the most basic math. Another 2.4 million people (29.1%) can work with numeracy but not well. Despite the need less than 5% participate in adult literacy programs” (Community Literacy Ontario, 2017).

The Ontario Literacy Secretariat’s Literacy and Numeracy Strategy mandates all schools to improve literacy:

“A solid foundation in literacy and numeracy gives students the widest range of choices in school and beyond. When students develop strong reading, writing and math skills early in life, they are less likely to get discouraged and drop out of school later.” (Ontario Literacy Secretariat: 2017)

“That's why the Ontario government is committed to helping students improve their reading, writing and math skills. Our goal is to have 75% of Grade 6 students reaching the provincial standard in reading, writing and math. And we are committed to giving students the resources and supports they need to reach that goal.” (Ontario Literacy Secretariat: 2017)

Multiple literacies

Scholars from different fields who study literacy at least agree that literacy is not one thing; rather, there are multiple literacies. These include “functional literacy,” “cultural literacy,” “utilitarian literacy,” “digital literacy,” “media literacy,” “information literacy” and many more. (Cambridge Assessment 2013: 8-21; Keefe and Copeland 2011: 92-96)

While the existence of multiple literacies can be confusing, the basic understanding that literacy is not a single thing will benefit the KGO initiative and its goal to “improve the lives of youth and open up opportunities for lifelong success, enrichment and health.” Literacy is both a cognitive ability and an ongoing process guided by different interrelated criteria for achieving multiple goals. We will use this framework to define literacy for the purpose of KGO’s needs.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines literacy as both a human right as well as a collection of “skills and competencies” related to “a continuum of how well we can negotiate with reading and writing in print or digital form.” (Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy 2015: 2) These skills and competencies are “fully essential to social and human development in its ability to transform lives.” (UNESCO, January 12, 2016. [“Literacy.”](#))

In its most recent Global Literacy report, UNESCO outlines four discrete understandings of literacy: (UNESCO 2006: 148-152)

1. Literacy as an autonomous set of skills: Literacy as an autonomous set of tangible reading, writing and oral skills “independent of the context in which they are acquired and the background of the person who acquires them.”
2. Literacy as applied, practiced and situated: Literacy as applied in accordance with different social and cultural context, as opposed to a universally applicable set of teachable skills.

3. Literacy as a learning process: Literacy as “an active and broad-based learning process” as opposed to “a product of a more limited and focused educational intervention.”
4. Literacy as text: Literacy should be considered in terms with its subject matter, because people read texts that “vary by subject and genre...by complexity of the language used and by ideological content.”

In addition, Keefe and Copeland offer a set of “Core Definitional Principles” of literacy that comport with distinct and near-universal values that sanction the fundamental human right to thrive in the world to the very best of one’s ability: (Keefe and Copeland 2001: 97)

1. All people are capable of acquiring literacy.
2. Literacy is a human right and a fundamental part of the human experience.
3. Literacy is not a trait that resides solely in the individual person. It requires and creates a connection...with others.
4. Literacy includes communication, contact, and the expectation that interaction is possible for all individuals [and] has the potential to lead to empowerment.
5. Literacy is the collective responsibility of every individual in the community; that is, to develop meaning making with all human modes of communication to transmit and receive information.

By combining the above understandings and principles of literacy, we can offer a definition of literacy for the purpose of KGO’s goal of improving literacy rates in troubled neighbourhoods.

A definition of literacy for KGO

Literacy is both a human right as well as an autonomous set of communicative skills that all people are capable of acquiring in order to understand their place within specific social and cultural contexts and to improve the overall well-being of themselves and their communities.

This definition of literacy is not meant to be universal or final. It is meant to offer a guiding foundation on which KGO can build its community literacy interventions.

Rights-Based Approach to Education

UNESCO states that literacy is “a fundamental human right and the foundation for lifelong learning,” that is “fully essential to social and human development in its ability to transform lives.” (UNESCO, January 12, 2016. “[Literacy](#).”) Therefore, literacy interventions at the individual and the community level should be approached under the banner of a rights-based approach to education.

The right to an education falls under the larger spectrum of human rights, which the United Nations defines as “universal legal guarantees protecting individuals and groups against actions and omissions that interfere with fundamental freedoms, entitlements and human dignity.” (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights 2006: 1) A multitude of global human rights treaties have affirmed that the goal of an education is “to promote personal development, strengthen respect for human rights and freedoms, enable individuals to participate effectively in a free society, and promote understanding, friendship and tolerance.” With these points in mind, the core components of a rights-based education include the following: (UNICEF and UNESCO 2007: 7)

- Free, compulsory primary education for all children.
- An obligation to develop secondary education, supported by measures to render it accessible to all children, as well as equitable access to higher education.
- A responsibility to provide basic education for individuals who have not completed primary education.

The rights-based approach to education “promotes social cohesion, integration and stability” by focusing on the development of families, schools and neighbourhoods. It also promotes peace and non-violent conflict resolution and contributes to positive social transformation by empowering all stakeholders with the desire to strive for social justice in their communities and the broader world. Finally, a rights-based approach to education is cost-effective, sustainable and builds community capacity because it promotes “inclusive, participatory and accountable education systems that respond directly to the expressed concerns of all stakeholders.” This proactive, holistic approach aims to address the roots of social problems rather than merely reacting to their symptoms. (UNICEF and UNESCO 2007: 12-13)

Conceptual framework for a rights-based education

A rights-based approach to education, whether enacted at the school or community level, should be based on a conceptual framework that includes the following three components: (UNICEF and UNESCO 2007: 27-37)

1. The right of access to education: Children should have continued access to quality education throughout all stages of childhood and beyond, including access to follow-up adult education after the age of 18.
2. The right to quality education: This includes a broad, relevant and inclusive curriculum that emphasises basic literacy, essential life skills, healthy lifestyles, critical thinking and non-violent conflict resolution. This curriculum must be offered in a safe and secure environment and be assessed with an eye towards students as active contributors, rather than passive recipients, in the educational process.

3. The right to respect within the learning environment: Education, like all human rights, is inalienable. Any learning environment must respect children's identity, their physical and personal integrity and their right to freedom of expression and participation in the educational process.

Ontario's 21st Century Competencies Framework document, reiterates that literacy is foundational to all forms of communication:

Communication in a 21st century context refers not only to the ability to "communicate effectively, orally, in writing, and with a variety of digital tools" but also to "listening skills" (Fullan, 2013, p. 9). Many frameworks include information and digital literacy in the concept of communication (e.g., the British Columbia Ministry of Education's Cross-Curricular Competencies). Other frameworks, such as P21, have distinct information, media, and technology skills. Some jurisdictions (e.g., England, Norway) include information and communications technology (ICT) skills with literacy and numeracy as foundational curriculum

A rights-based approach to education is particularly relevant to KGO's goal of implementing community literacy initiatives as the foundation for achieving broader goals of positive social change in East Scarborough. As Becker and Vollehoven write, a rights-based education leads to the kind of "transformative action" that points the way "towards an open and democratic society, based on human rights, which may be marked by caring and compassionate human relations." (Becker and Vollehoven 2015: 1-2)

To put it simply, a rights-based approach to literacy education will respect and foster the equal rights and human development of all members of the KGO community regardless of age, sex, creed, race, ethnic background, socioeconomic standing and educational level.

Defining community literacy

The previously noted definition of literacy is immediately applicable in a community context. First, we need to define what we mean by a "community." A commonly accepted definition of community is "a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings." (MacQueen et al. 2001: 1929)

Community, however, also involves the ways that people experience their relationships with others within a specific geographical area. With this in mind, MacQueen et al describe five Core Elements of a Community that relate to peoples' experiences, and which are applicable to KGO: (MacQueen et al. 2001: 1930-1932)

1. Locus: a sense of place: "Locus encompassed the idea of community as something that could be located and described, denoting a sense of place,

locale, or boundaries.” These boundaries could include neighbourhood, block, street, etc.

2. Sharing: common interests and perspectives: “Sharing referred to the existence of shared perspectives and common interests that contributed to a sense of community.” These perspectives and interests could include values, passions, activities, ethnic backgrounds, etc.
3. Joint action: a source of cohesion and identity: “Joint action was described as a source of community cohesion and identity.” Examples of joint action include socializing, volunteering at library, spearheading community initiatives and events, etc.
4. Social ties: the foundation for community: “Social ties were described in terms of interpersonal relationships that formed the foundation for community.” Social ties can exist between family members, friends, neighbours, committee members, and, in general, between people who respect and trust each other.
5. Diversity: social complexity within communities: “Diversity emerged in discussions of social complexity (e.g., communities within communities, stratification, interwoven groups, hidden communities, or multiple levels of community).”

A definition of community for KGO

For KGO’s purposes, a community constitutes both physical and discursive spaces with defined boundaries in which diverse groups of people share a sense of common interests through which they form social ties that allow them to experience a sense of cohesion and identity.

A definition of community literacy for KGO

Eleonore Long writes that community literacy specifically revolves around the notion that communities must do more than learn to read and communicate; rather, the “skills” aspect of literacy should work in tandem with the “applied” aspect to enact positive social change. Community literacy involves local people “going public” via the framework of local publics: “symbolic constructs enacted in time and space around shared exigencies.” (Long 2008: 15; Turner and Hicks 2011: 1)

Community literacy, then, happens within the framework of local publics, “where intercultural partners can inquire into and deliberate about problems, working toward both personal and public change.” With this in mind, community literacy can “work toward a model of local public discourse, one that fills the gap between descriptive accounts of situated literacy and more abstract theories of public discourse.” (Higgins et al. 2006: 10)

Long’s and Higgins’ definition of community literacy incorporates UNESCO’s point that literacy is not only an acquired set of skills; it is also a constant applied learning process that is “fully essential to social and human development in its ability to

transform lives.”

Long and Higgins explain the four-step process of community literacy by which different groups within a shared space can use an acquired set of skills to create local publics for the purpose of enacting positive social change: (Higgins et al. 2006: 11-33)

1. Assess the rhetorical situation: This involves identifying the problem and the potential audiences who might address the problem. Rather than seek a single solution to a problem, this step should involve input from all stakeholders whom the problem affects.
2. Create a local public: A local public consists of more than just a public meeting; it involves willing and able participants creating a discourse to identify and address a problem.
3. Develop participants’ rhetorical capacities: This involves overcoming the “barriers to substantive dialogue” (i.e., “differences”) that prevent different people from finding common ground. You have to identify the barriers before you can knock them down.
4. Support personal and public transformation through the circulation of alternative texts and practices: By assembling a counterpublic of people from different backgrounds to challenge the status quo, you offer an alternative narrative to address long-festering issues.

This definition of community literacy, with its emphasis on using acquired skills as a process for enacting social change, is particularly suited to KGO. Not only can this approach to community literacy help “find solutions to youth illiteracy in a low-income Toronto neighbourhood,” it can also take the intervention one-step further by using increased literacy to combat social problems such as persistent poverty, food insecurity and a high unemployment rate.

In other words, it is not enough to find a better way to teach residents of KGO to read, write and communicate. These residents also need to understand how reading, writing and communicating can help them improve their own lives and improve the overall quality of life in their community.

Situated Cognition and community literacy

The literature reveals that effective community literacy interventions are rooted in various applications of situation and place-based learning. Situated Cognition theory is the ideological foundation for this type of learning.

Notions of Situated Cognition date back to the early 20th century, but Brown et al fleshed out this theory in 1989 when they wrote that, “knowledge is situated, being in part a product of the activity, context, and culture in which it is developed and used.” Situated Cognition theory posits that knowing cannot be separated from doing, a contrast to most educational frameworks that decontextualize knowledge from

social, cultural and place-based variables. In the latter approach to learning, “[t]he activity and context in which learning takes place are thus regarded as merely ancillary to learning.” (Brown et al. 1989: 32; Roderick 2013: 53)

Behrman expands on Situated Cognition and explains its relevance to community literacy. “[S]ituated cognition theory holds that learning is always a contextualized activity occurring within a community that has both social and physical features,” he writes. In this respect, learning is both an individual and social process that is intermeshed with activity and influenced by cultural contexts. This is what makes Situated Cognition relevant to community literacy. Behrman writes that, “learning occurs through active participation in a community of practice.” This process then transforms the community because “individual knowledge influences the common knowledge of a group.” (Behrman 2002: 26-27; Goldblatt: 2005: 283-292)

Brown et al also emphasize the connection between Situated Cognition and community learning. Groups and communities are essential to learning as a process of enculturation, which involves “social interaction and the circulation of narrative” that can only take place within groups of people. (Brown et al. 1989: 35; Froiland et al 2011: 37-39)

In addition to the context of cultural groups, place is another aspect of Situated Cognition, embodied in the physical and cultural spaces where members of groups and communities learn. For example, the Coalition for Community Schools’ Community-Based Learning model emphasizes that, “education must connect subject matter with the places where students live and the issues that affect us all.” With that in mind, their community schools program links schools with community partners to create curriculums that place students physically in their community spaces to facilitate active learning. (Coalition for Community Schools 2006: 1)

Other successful community learning initiatives are rooted in Situated Cognition via their emphasis on group, community and spatial context to boost literacy rates. The literacy program enacted in Manitoba’s Westgrove Housing complex noted significant benefits from on-site delivery of literacy interventions. Similarly, Chicago’s Engaged Library initiative has successfully aided community development by making libraries into active sites of learning that engage directly with community networks. (Silver 2014: 1; Kretzmann et al 2005: 3)

Situated Cognition theory emphasizes the social, cultural and place-based connections that underpin effective community literacy interventions. KGO would benefit from considering how their own plans for literacy intervention programs can use Situated Cognition to boost overall outcomes.

Family involvement in community literacy

Literacy begins in the home. Researchers have discovered that families play an essential role in the development of children's language and literary skills. Children who grow up in homes with many books, and who have parents who read to them, will display greater literacy skills than children who do not grow up in literacy-rich home environments. (Kim and Byington 2016: 1)

The literacy-rich home environment supports the development of emergent literacies among kids, defined as "early literacy behaviours, skills, and concepts of young children that develop into and precede conventional literacy." Children who are exposed to literacy in the home, school and wider community display higher levels of emergent literacy than those children who lack such opportunity. (Spedding et al 2007: 7-10)

Effective community literacy interventions for children and adolescents integrate families as key components of wider communities. As Kim and Byington write, community-based family literacy programs can both "enhance the literacy of the entire family," as well as create a 'cycle of literacy' that triggers parents' desire to boost their children's literacy skills. This then pushes parents to develop their own literacy skills in a process that filters into the broader community. Multiple social contexts are required to support the development of children, and neighbourhoods are one of those contexts. Family literacy programs "focus on family life and parents' facilitation of emergent literacy within their neighborhood," and "neighborhood parent social networks have been linked to family literacy and early literacy development." (Kim and Byington 2016: 1-2; Anglin 2008: 5-8, 14; Spedding et al 2007: 9-11, 15-17)

The Center for the Study of Social Policy's Early Childhood-LINC (Early Childhood Learning and Innovation Network for Communities) offer a developmental model for linking neighbourhood and family learning via Community-Based Early Childhood Initiatives. These initiatives involve multiple community stakeholders who target "their youngest children and the environments in which they live, learn and play." (Schumacher 2013: 2; Redding et al 2011: 46-53) In order to be effective at promoting community literacy and other health and educational interventions, community early childhood learning systems must be grounded in the following set of core values: (Schumacher 2013: 3)

- Understanding the essential role families play in raising healthy and resilient children
- Intentional development activities increase parenting skills that, in turn, benefit outcomes for kids.
- Early childhood development depends on aligning multiple systems, including education, mental health, community programs, parenting, etc.

- Results must be shared across multiple sectors.
- Data-driven program and system improvements are essential.
- A sense of community and social networks should be fostered within neighbourhoods and communities.

Effective Community-Based Early Childhood Initiatives show how local communities “can bring together the full range of policies, programs, strategies and opportunities” that are essential to helping families raise children that are successful at all stages of life. They do this by mobilizing and aligning all available service sectors, including parenting education, childcare and family support, health and mental health, K-12 education, child welfare, family literacy, higher education, workforce development, substance abuse treatment, food security, economic and housing development and law enforcement and legal services. Funds can be drawn from state, federal, private local, local public, grass-roots fundraising, private and corporate donations. (Schumacher 2013: 2, 8, 11)

Effective Community literacy interventions that engage and align all community sectors, from the family unit outward to neighbourhood organizations, can help link the primary goal of literacy development with broader goals of promoting community development and achieving social justice.

The Ontario Literacy Coalition notes that family literacy programs fall under a wide-range of pedagogical frameworks that “are characterized by their inclusion of both parent/caregiver and child.” While these programs and frameworks will differ in their approaches, goals and target audiences, they generally fall under two approaches: constructivism and instructivism. Constructivism “conceives learning not as the transmission of knowledge but rather the construction of meaning, and teaching as the facilitation of this process.” Constructivist approaches are child-initiated and centred and they rely on play-based approaches. They are also informal and emphasize personal and social development, allowing children to construct their own knowledge. By contrast, Instructivism characterizes programs where “knowledge is objective and the teacher/instructor imparts given (or objective) knowledge.” The instructivist approach is teacher-initiated and directed, emphasizes basic academic skills, is formal and structured and relies on the teacher delivering core knowledge in a didactic manner. (Ontario Literacy Coalition 2010: 10-12)

Family literacy programs can be either constructivist or instructivist, or they can combine elements of both approaches. From a target audience perspective, however, these programs must ensure that parents and caregivers learn how to enhance children’s early literacy. Both parents and children should learn how to collaborate to enhance the literacy skills of both. (Ontario Literacy Coalition 2010: 13)

Community literacy interventions that incorporate family literacy have met with notable success. The Nunavut Literacy Council enacted several community-based

literacy programs for children from working families in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut that successfully strengthened family and community links through intergenerational literacy learning. (Crockatt and Smythe 1999: 1-2) Similarly, the Bowness Montgomery Early Literacy Initiative in Calgary, Alberta emphasized the importance of parent-child interaction in the development of early literacy. The program promoted the development of literacy and communication skills among children who interact with their parents and other adults. "Building strong healthy families helps build effective functioning communities in which everyone can succeed." (Sangha et al 2009: 9-15)

In another successful family literacy initiative, the Diamond Educational Excellence Partnership (DEEP) joined with Chollas-Mead Elementary School and the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) to create the Summer Readers-Future Leaders community-based summer learning program. This five-week program "offered 84 rising second-and third graders opportunities for reducing summer reading loss, building reading skills, increasing motivation to read, improving social-emotional development and physical health, and engaging in hands-on science activities linked to the preservation of natural resources." (Lee and Gianzero 2013: 1)

The Summer Readers-Future Leaders program components were multi-faceted and participatory. They included the following activities: (Lee and Gianzero 2013: 13-15)

- Teachers trained in Common Core standards instructed students in the areas of word recognition, fluency, academic language, English language and comprehension.
- Instructional units linked literacy to the arts by incorporating dance, theater and drawing/painting into literacy activities.
- The San Diego Science Project and Groundwork San Diego collaborated to create Earthlab, a hands-on, outdoor-learning space where kids examined natural environments and kept scientific journals in which they used academic vocabulary to document their findings.
- The program connected kids to community literacy resources by busing them to the local library, where they participated in summer reading presentations, checked out books and engaged in the library's own summer reading program.
- "Swim and gym" character development programming held at the YMCA incorporated basketball, swimming, soccer and other sporting activities.

Moreover, each of the Summer Readers-Future Leaders program components offered opportunities for family and community engagement. Families participated in all arts, science, fitness and literacy events. Programs provided workshops in which parents learned how to better support their children's learning and literacy development, while facilitators convened weekly meetings of program partners to discuss activities, progress and challenges. Program evaluation indicates that Summer Readers-Future Leaders achieved many of its targeted goals concerning community literacy, and even in areas where the program fell short of its goals, it nonetheless developed the

partnership capacity with participating stakeholders to develop future initiatives to increase success rates down the line. (Lee and Gianzero 2013: 51)

The home is the first community that kids will experience, and connected, engaged families create vibrant communities. It is therefore vital that community literacy interventions incorporate family literacy into their development and application. Nearly all of the interventions highlighted in this literature review focus on integrating families into community literacy programs in different ways.

State of literacy in KGO schools

While there is much data on Canadian literacy rates at the national and provincial levels, data on precise literacy rates within specific communities is lacking. The most recent (2011) data from the City of Toronto's demographic profile of the West Hill (KGO) neighbourhood reveals some general information about educational achievements for adults between the ages of 25-64 as of the year 2011. The percentage of adults who held no educational certificate was 13 percent, slightly below the Toronto city rate of 11 percent. However, the percentage of adults with a high school diploma was 29 percent, slightly higher than the Toronto rate of 21 percent. The percentage of KGO adults who obtained a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree was 58 percent, lower than the Toronto rate of 69 percent. (City of Toronto. 2017, March 25. [Neighbourhood Demographics, West Hill](#))

Beyond basic educational statistics in KGO, it is possible to summarize school board literacy data reports to show how students in KGO's public and Catholic schools measure up against Ontario Provincial Standards in reading, writing and mathematics. This provides a glimpse of basic literacy rates within the KGO student population, and community organizations can incorporate this information into neighbourhood literacy initiatives that serve children and adults.

The tables below list each of the public and Catholic schools in the KGO community, along with percentages of students who meet or surpass Ontario Provincial Standards in reading, writing and math, as well the percentage of secondary school students who successfully took the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT). Summaries of the tables are as follows:

Summaries of Table 1

- The combined school average for primary (Grade 3) students who met or surpassed the Ontario provincial standard in Reading as of March 2016 is 67.3 percent.
- The combined school average for primary (Grade 3) students who met or surpassed the Ontario provincial standard in Writing as of March 2016 is 74.5 percent.
- The combined school average for primary (Grade 3) students who met or surpassed the Ontario provincial standard in Math as of March 2016 is 59.4 percent.

Summaries of Table 2

- The combined school average for junior (Grade 6) students who met or surpassed the Ontario provincial standard in Reading as of March 2016 is 66.2 percent.

- The combined school average for junior (Grade 6) students who met or surpassed the Ontario provincial standard in Writing as of March 2016 is 68.8 percent.
- The combined school average for junior (Grade 6) students who met or surpassed the Ontario provincial standard in Math as of March 2016 is 42 percent.

Summaries of Table 3

- The combined school average for secondary (Grade 9 and above) students who participated fully in the OSSLT is 84 percent.
- The combined school average for secondary (Grade 9 and above) students who participated fully, and who were successful in the OSSLT is 58.6 percent.

The percentages of students in KGO schools who met or surpassed Ontario Provincial Standards for Reading, Writing and Math varied by school even within the community. The same goes for secondary students who successfully completed the OSSLT. The most significant takeaway from the schoolboard data is that a little over 50 percent of secondary students who participated fully in the OSSLT were successful. This reveals, in part, that KGO student literacy rates drop noticeably from the primary to the secondary school level.

Table 1: Percentage of All Primary (Grade 3) Students at or Above the Provincial Standard in Reading, Writing and Math, 2014-2016

School	Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Galloway Road Public School	81%	84%	76%
St. Margaret's Public School	61%	66%	52%
Eastview Jr. Public School	46%	56%	35%
West Hill Public School	77%	84%	61%
Joseph Brant Senior Public School	62%	68%	58%
Willow Park Junior Public School	57%	67%	49%

St. Martin de Porres Catholic School	69%	82%	65%
Golf Road Junior Public School	66%	75%	60%
George B. Little Public School	56%	69%	55%
Averages	63.8%	72.3%	57%

Source: Education Quality and Accountability Office, Toronto Neighbourhood Guide.

Table 2: Percentage of All Junior (Grade 6) Students at or Above the Provincial Standard in Reading, Writing and Math, 2014-2016

School	Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Galloway Road Public School	61%	54%	29%
St. Margaret's Public School	44%	44%	18%
Eastview Public School	42%	45%	15%
West Hill Public School	78%	78%	57%
Joseph Brant Senior Public School	65%	65%	48%
Willow Park Junior Public School	61%	71%	31%
St. Martin de Porres Catholic School	82%	91%	72%

Golf Road Junior Public School	74%	81%	52%
George B. Little Public School	79%	78%	51%
Averages	65.1%	67.4%	41.4%

Source: Education Quality and Accountability Office, Toronto Neighbourhood Guide.

Table 3: Percentage of All Secondary (Grade 9 and above) Students who participated fully in, and were successful on the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), 2014-2016

School	Percentage of Students Who Participated Fully in OSSLT	Percentage of Fully Participated Students Who Were Successful in OSSLT
West Hill Collegiate Institute	88%	76%
Sir Wilifred Laurier Collegiate Institute	98%	84%
Sir Robert L Borden Business and Technical Institute*	66%	16%
Averages	84%	58.6%

*School is closed

Source: Education Quality and Accountability Office, Toronto Neighbourhood Guide.

Literacy Programs in KGO

The Kingston-Galloway Orton Park Neighbourhood has a number of organizations that provide literacy-focused services. The Toronto Public Library, East Scarborough Boys and Girls Club, Frontier College and the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) Adult Literacy Programs are some of the main literacy-focused service providers in the neighbourhood.

The Kingston-Galloway Orton Park Neighbourhood has hosted two major interventions geared towards boosting literacy rates in the area: The Reading Partnership and the KGO Adult Literacy Program.

The KGO neighbourhood is a diverse area with high concentrations of immigrant residents. According to city data, 61 percent of the community's resident are visible minorities (NIA Community Profiles, 2014). KGO is considered a low-income community that includes four of the City of Toronto's 31 Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (West Hill, Morningside, Woburn and Scarborough Village). On average, 56 percent of KGO residents have low literacy skills, which is much higher than the provincial average. KGO students display lower academic performances compared to those of neighbouring communities (NIA Community Profiles, 2014). Community schools tend to be overcrowded and underfunded, and low literacy rates within families prohibit the development of literacy-rich home environments. ([The Reading Partnership TIP](#), 2014). KGO's community literacy initiatives operate within this socioeconomic environment.

Reading Partnership

The Reading Partnership (TRP) began as a grassroots, community-led solution hosted by The East Scarborough Storefront's resident leadership program, Neighbourhood Trust. Today, TRP has grown into a larger initiative, and now operates as a project on Tides Canada's shared platform. Tides Canada is a registered charity dedicated to a healthy environment, social equity, and economic prosperity. The shared platform provides governance, grant and financial management for social and environmental projects across Canada, allowing each project to more effectively achieve their missions. TRP focuses on the importance of family involvement in community literacy. Its project's mandate is to "empower parents to share and lead in teaching their children to read, while working collaboratively to promote literacy in the Kingston Galloway Orton Park (KGO) community." (The Reading Partnership, January 28, 2017)

The Reading Partnership's signature program, *Reading Partnership for Parents* is the organization's signature program 6-12- week play-based literacy program for caregivers and kids. It empowers parents with the skill, knowledge and resources to teach their children, aged 4-6, to read, and actively engages them on a weekly basis, guiding them through the process of working together, and challenging parents to create positive reading and learning environments at home. The program establishes supportive environments for parents who face barriers to engaging in their children's learning to come together and work collaboratively to support their children's literacy development, while forming their own support network. The program has reached over 200 families through partnerships with the Scarborough East Ontario Early Years Centre, Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities, Native Child and Youth Services and other local organizations.

One of The Reading Partnership's key events is the annual Spotlight on Literacy forum. The forum is open to members of the KGO community and features dynamic speakers and a giveaway of 1,500 books, as well as food. The purpose of the forum is to "connect [parents] to the resources and supports that exist in the community" that they may be unaware of. In this respect, Spotlight on Literacy highlights the existing KGO community support services while also discussing how to expand on them. The forum provides food and childcare to make it easier for all parents in the community to attend. ([The Reading Partnership Spotlight on Literacy](#), accessed January 27, 2017).

As founder Camesha Cox writes, The Reading Partnership "serves as a model for establishing a local culture of reading and learning that calls for not only parents, but the entire community to be active and engaged." (Cox, September 11, 2014)

KGO Adult Literacy Program

The KGO Adult Literacy Program is a grassroots, volunteer-run program that helps adults 21 years of age and over in the KGO neighborhood to better develop and refine their reading, writing and math skills. Phylcia Davis founded the program, which began as a ten-week pilot venture in the summer of 2013 and has since become a core component of KGO's community literacy initiative that offers a "safe, welcoming and non-judgmental environment" where adults can improve their literacy skills. (Ferenc, Leslie, October 9, 2014)

The KGO Adult Literacy Program helps combat the "hidden" problem of adult literacy, which often goes undressed because adults who struggle with reading can be too ashamed to seek out the help they need. Participants of the program (many of whom are Canadian-born) have reported not only a boost in their own literacy skills, but the program has also helped them become more engaged with their children's schoolwork. In this respect, the program also helps improve family literacy rates. (KGO Adult Literacy Program – [A Short Film](#), 2015; [The Reading Partnership TIP](#), 2014).

KGO has thus far implemented the above initiatives to combat low literacy rates within the community. However, other like interventions exist in Canada and the U.S. that offer useful collective impact models from which KGO can glean ideas, directions and strategies.

Importance of place in community literacy interventions

The importance of place – whether it be in the form of on-site program delivery or culturally relevant education and intervention – should be a key component of community literacy programs. Carrière et al note that people care most about the places where they live. They therefore have a built-in stake in the developments that affect their communities. With this in mind, interventions can emphasize programs built around neighbourhood collective agency: defined as "residents' desire and capacity to work together to improve daily life and promote equity and social justice

in their neighbourhood.” Neighbourhood collective agency helps to connect “the power of people to the power of place” in order to bring neighbourhoods together and “improve their immediate local conditions of daily life.” (Carrière et al 2016: iii-iv)

Neighbourhood collective agency has already shown promising results in the KGO area via the East Scarborough Storefront, a community hub that helps residents, social service providers, academic institutions and businesses and planners to discuss, develop and run community development programs. By focusing on “planning and networking practices that create community connections among residents, organizations, and institutions,” the Storefront model has helped to counter narratives that stigmatize KGO as ‘unsafe,’ disconnected and impoverished. (Carrière et al 2016: 13, 31)

Other community literacy programs have embraced place-based delivery and neighbourhood collective agency. For example, the Westgrove Literacy Program operated out of the Westgrove Housing Complex in west Winnipeg, Manitoba. Program implementers discovered that residents of housing complexes were often reluctant to leave their domiciles to attend service programs due to the cultural stigma associated with living in public housing. As a result, the Westgrove Literacy program was held at Westgrove Resource Centre. The community resources centres served as safe space to build relationships, combat social isolation and resolve conflict, which made it a natural choice to host the Adult Literacy Program. (Silver 2014: 3, 9, 12).

The Westgrove Adult Literacy Program was the first step in a process of “laddering,” in which residents transform from being passive recipients of their fate into engaged agents of change for their communities. The literacy program served as the “first rung” on the ladder of opportunity that saw participants become individuals that are more independent. People who participated in the literacy program took part-time jobs, became community volunteers, formulated clear educational goals, worked towards high-school accreditation, gained improved levels of self-confidence and started reading to their children. (Silver 2014: 10, 18)

Chicago’s Engaged Library initiative is another example of how placed-based interventions can be powerful tools for improving community literacy. A simple concept undergirds this program: libraries are no longer dusty old repositories where books wait to be checked out. Instead, “new” libraries are “an active and responsive part of the community and an agent for change.” Libraries in Chicago’s Englewood neighbourhood have undergone significant renovations and expansions to transform them into centers of physical space that serve as hubs of community connections. With the addition of amenities like meeting spaces, internet access and new educational programs, libraries become active sites where community members interact. (Kretzmann et al 2005: 2, 24-25)

The Engaged Library Initiative recommends that libraries partner with local businesses and schools in reciprocal relationships. For example, Marc Shulman, the owner of Chicago's Eli's Cheesecake Café, has collaborated with the Austin Irving Library branch by allowing his café to serve as a site for branch programming and author talks. Libraries have also been cooperating with local schools to create programming for young people. For example, children's librarians actually visit public and private schools and organize summer reading programs with input from teachers and students. (Kretzmann et al 2005: 17-18, 22-23)

Established place-based webs of family, school and community interaction can be an effective tool to promote literacy across communities, districts and neighbourhoods.

The Growing Better Beginnings family literacy program launched in 2005 for families in Western Australia with children 0-3 months in age. This program used multiple integrated resources, including reading packs with age-appropriate materials delivered through libraries to kindergartens and pre-primary schools, Discovery Backpacks filled with books, CDs and games, book sets at libraries set aside specifically for schools to borrow, information literacy databases for parents and training handbooks for library staff. Growing Better Beginnings integrates families, schools and libraries in a single program. As a result, parents, teachers and librarians reported that it strengthened early literacy learning and home literacy practices and encouraged family library membership. (Barratt-Pugh and Maloney 2015: 367, 377)

Engaging public amenities such as libraries is a major step towards a broader approach that could work in the best interest of KGO's literacy strategy. Integrating different places/environments — homes, libraries, schools, community associations, etc. — in the service of boosting literacy rates creates a web of connections and services that can benefit the larger goal of community improvement.

Combatting book deserts

It may seem like a simple observation — people who have greater access to books and other texts will read more — but disadvantaged neighbourhoods demonstrate disparities in the availability of public amenities and resources such as parks, libraries and reading materials. Neuman and Moland write that, "neighborhoods of concentrated poverty constitute 'book deserts,' which seriously constrain young children's opportunities to come to school 'ready to learn.'" Book deserts are neighbourhoods that are barren of books. These communities lack the necessary resources that can support children's early literacy skills and interest in reading. (Neuman and Moland 2016: 2, 16)

Combatting book deserts should be part of all community literacy planning. Once successful program that has provided a community with greater access to literacy resources is the Books in Motion initiative. Based in several small communities in the

Northeastern United States, Books in Motion is a monthly public library book club that invites kids and adults to read a preselected book, gives free copies of the books to participants, and culminates in a family film night in which club participants view the book's movie adaptation at the public library. This program boosted intergenerational literacy rates, increased access to literacy resources and introduced readers to texts that would have otherwise been too hard for them to read on their own. (Ness 2010: 134, 143)

The Imagination Library program has also shown success in getting more books in the hands of kids in disadvantaged communities. This book program is the brainchild of the Dollywood Corporation, whose benefactor is famed country music artist Dolly Parton. The program's goal is "to put age appropriate books into the hands of children every month during their first five years" in order to "increase the number of literacy experiences for children in participating households." (Montclair 2010: 3) In 2008, the Imagination Library program distributed books in 30 remote First Nations and the Métis Nation in British Columbia. The program has shown success in providing access to poor communities, most of which do not have public libraries, and children who participate report an increased interest in reading more. (Montclair 2010: 7-15)

Although it is not a comprehensive structural approach that directly addresses the root causes of low literacy rates (poverty, poor home environments, etc.) the Little Free Library program has become popular in communities across North America. This program recognizes the need to create literacy-friendly neighbourhoods" where "readers are seen in their natural habitat instead of corralled into the confines of a building" and "books are rarely pristine...since they are constantly used by the next reader." (Little Free Library: 7) The Little Free Library builds miniature libraries filled with donated books that all community members can access. This is an effective way to make books more visible in communities.

Community Partnerships

It is often difficult for small community organizations to secure necessary resources to effectively address challenges with literacy. As such, partnering with larger institutions with shared goals is one strategy that has shown positive results.

Ryerson's School of Early Childhood Studies (ECS) 11-week "We Will Read" program is a partnership with the Toronto District School Board that connects ECS students with Grade 1 students who have difficulties with reading. "Ryerson students take part in one-on-one sessions with the younger students four times a week, for a unique, sustained educational experience."

While partnerships focused on literacy offer a range of benefits, it is important that they are established on shared principles such as equality, cultural understanding, collaboration and respect.

Coalition building for community literacy

By definition, community literacy intervention requires the participation of multiple stakeholders from within the community. Decoda Literacy Solutions' Community Literacy Planning Guide recommends developing community literacy plans that serve as statements "about how individuals and organizations are engaged in collaboration to support the development of literacy strategies." Collaborating to create a community literacy plan involves learning how community groups work and interrelate, getting input from all community stakeholders, respecting minority viewpoints and forging a willingness to commit to the beliefs and values of the collaborative process. This is coalition building in action. (Decoda Literacy Solutions 2012: 46-47)

Programs developed via coalition building with the shared goal of collective impact are more likely to achieve success at the broader community level. Collective impact argues that, "large-scale social change requires broad cross-sector coordination," even though the social sector "remains focused on the isolated interventions of individual organizations." (Doughty 2012: 3) Under the collective impact model, a successful community literacy coalition will bring disparate stakeholders together via a Common Agenda (shared vision for change), Mutually Reinforcing Activities, Backbone Support Organizations, a Shared Measurement System(s) and Continuous Communication. By devising a collective impact model driven by a common agenda, communities can more effectively pursue literacy infusion, in which "literacy becomes a common goal of all organizations" and each stakeholder/agency fulfills both a specific mission and contributes to the shared common agenda of expanding literacy in the community. (Doughty 2012: 3-5)

Decoda's Community Literacy Planning Guide identifies several examples in which coalition building resulted in the creation of shared spaces for community literacy programs. When the community coalition of Smithers, British Columbia learned that food insecurity was a barrier to participation in the adult literacy program, they developed the Ground 2 Griddle Neighborhood Kitchen. A joint initiative between the Princess Street Neighbourhood Garden, the Smithers Community Services Association and other stakeholders, the Neighbourhood Kitchen combats food insecurity and promotes experiential literacy learning. Participants learn reading and math via "reading recipes, cooking skills, healthy eating, food safety, basic math, budgeting, organization and planning." (Decoda Literacy Solutions 2012: 53)

When BC Housing allotted funds to renovate and restore a child care centre in a disadvantaged neighbourhood in Campbell River, a coalition of agencies that included Campbell River Family Services, Parks and Recreation, FASD Key Worker, Vancouver Island Health Authority and others worked together to create the Gathering Place Family Resource Centre. This centre hosts a multitude of Aboriginal education

programming that includes community literacy interventions for adults and children. (Decoda Literacy Solutions 2012: 52)

Several community improvement programs (which include dedication and literacy) have been built on collective impact models. Probably the most famous example is the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) and the Promise Neighborhoods movement that it inspired. Founded by Geoffrey Canada back in 1970, the Harlem Children's Zone is "a non-profit operation that funds and operates a neighborhood-based system of education and social services for the children of low-income families in a 100 block area in Harlem, New York." (Whitehurst and Croft 2010: 1) Built on a "cradle-to-career" continuum of community supports, HCZ offers a holistic, neighbourhood-based approach to solving the problem of multi-generational poverty that "focuses primarily and intensively on the social, health, and educational development of children." (Harlem Children's Zone 2009: 4)

Improving literacy rates is just one facet of the HCZ approach to children's development and continued well-being. Its Theory of Change involves five core principles: Harlem Children's Zone 2009: 11)

1. "Select a specific neighborhood and work comprehensively and at scale within it."
2. "Create a pipeline of support" by linking programs and schools to one-another.
3. "Build community among residents, institutions, and stakeholders."
4. "Evaluate program outcomes."
5. "Create a culture of success."

The success of the HCZ has been mixed. Whitehurst and Croft found that HCZ Charter Schools did indeed result in greater academic success among students enrolled, though they could not find a corresponding connection between HCZ's emphasis on community development and students' academic performances. (Whitehurst and Croft 2010: 6-9)

Evaluations of the Promise Neighborhoods initiatives (which were created by U.S. President Barack Obama and directly based on the HCZ Theory of Change), have demonstrated greater success and the value of coalition building for early childhood learning success. Biglan et al. and the Center for the Study of Social Policy note that Promise Neighborhoods' coalition-based interventions do prevent multiple problems that are themselves interrelated. Most significant for the purpose of KGO and this review, Promise Neighborhoods' "cradle-to-career" emphasis on early-childhood literacy, combined with the effective instruction found in participating schools, has shown an increase in literacy rates and overall academic success. (Biglan et al. 2011; Center for the Study of Social Policy 2016: 10-26)

Beyond the Promise Neighborhoods initiative, New York City's Young Adult Literacy Program (YAL) demonstrated the value of coalition building to achieve increased

literacy rates among its participants. YAL targets “16- to 24-year-old young adults who read at the fourth- through eighth grade levels, and serves them until they are academically ready to enter a program that prepares them for a high school equivalency (HSE) certificate.” (Hossain and Terwelp 2015: iii)

The highest performing YAL sites shared management staff who worked together effectively and who had experience working with disadvantaged youth in a variety of community and school contexts. These sites also benefitted from “a collaborative, structured community environment” that was part of a broader continuum of youth services and community partnerships that worked together to achieve a common goal. Having goals shared by all stakeholders, as well as the literacy program participants themselves, were a key component of the most successful implementation sites. (Hossain and Terwelp 2015: 43-50) Coalition building is also at the heart of creating the “local publics” that are essential to developing successful community literacy programs and interventions.

Culturally appropriate interventions

Effective literacy programs recognize, and make use of, the cultural diversity of the respective communities that they serve. This point is especially relevant to KGO given its ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse population. The neighbourhood includes a large percentage of visible minorities, such as Black, South Asian and Southeast Asian populations, among others. (Abbas 2011:25-28)

With this in mind, community literacy interventions in KGO should be planned with the knowledge that, “literacy instruction that is culturally responsive promotes high achievement among culturally and linguistically diverse students.” Literacy programs that involve culturally appropriate situations and use culturally valued content hold the promise of higher literacy rates. (Callins 2004: 3-4; NWT Literacy Council 2004: 279-295; Carroll 2015: 52-53) Formal literacy instruction is too often “socially and culturally organized to ignore the kinds of literacies students acquire and develop throughout their everyday lives.” (Pacheco and Gutiérrez 2009: 64) Thus, culturally sensitive approaches to community efforts can also help address cultural deficits in schooling.

Some of the most important examples of culturally appropriate community literacy programs involve interventions delivered to Aboriginal communities in Canada’s North. The Nunavut Literacy Council implemented a series of community literacy programs in the small village of Cambridge Bay. These efforts succeeded in boosting children’s’ literacy rates due to an emphasis on Ilippalliannarniq, “an Inuit approach to intergenerational learning.” (Crockatt and Smythe 2000: 1) Facilitators conducted the programs in Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun, English and French. Some of the programs included the following: (Crockatt and Smythe 2000: 5-11)

- The Living Library: A “family and community literacy activity” that involves gathering traditional stories from the community. Children, elders and families interviewed, transcribed, discussed, edited and translated oral histories to create historically and culturally valuable literary texts.
- May Hakongak Community Library Reading Tent: Local artists and volunteers painted a tent that then hosted story times by families and storytellers alike during community events.
- After-school Homework Club: Students and parents volunteer as tutors at the local library, where they have supervised reading activities and get help with homework.
- Read To Me Kits: The Nunavut Literacy Council produces these kits and distributes them to all new parents through local health centres. The kits include Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun and English storybooks, t-shirts and pamphlets that explain why reading to children is important.
- Books in the Home: The Cambridge Bay Childcare Society implements this program, in which facilitators meet with parents and children over the course of four to eight weeks to share books and stories and participate in crafts related to the books they read. Parents also keep journals over the course of the program.

Two significant literacy models emphasize cultural awareness by focusing on the educational needs of Latino immigrants in the United States. El día de los niños/El día de los libros (Día) is a cultural celebration that honors childhood and reading, promotes bilingual and multilingual literacy [and] highlights multicultural and international children’s literature.” The other program, Noche de Cuentos (Noche), is “a family literacy program promoting storytelling’s role in the transmission and preservation of cultural heritage while developing the reading and cultural literacy skills of new Latino immigrants.” (Naidoo et al 2010: 1-2)

School libraries throughout the United States have hosted variations on both of the above programs, which are heavy on family involvement. Día’s primary goal is to bring literacy programming to populations that cannot always come to the library. Thus, it hosts literacy programs in hospitals, nursing homes, churches, shelters, Head Start centers, community festivals and other locations. (11) Specific examples of Día programs include, but are not limited to, the following: (Naidoo et al 2010: 11-13)

- Multicultural authors and storytellers visit underserved neighborhood libraries, schools and afterschool sites.
- Bookmobile services that provide book give-a-ways to underserved children.
- Library card sign-up during summer reading programs.
- Children with special needs organizations in the areas of autism, child development, speech development, child-care resources, providing information to at risk families.
- Other educational systems and children museums offering multicultural activities that expand Dia’s mission.

Noche is the other program that serves Latino populations. It has been particularly effective at serving Latino immigrant populations, who might otherwise not have access to, or the awareness of, culturally appropriate library programs. The program

also encourages libraries to collaborate with Latino community organizations. (Naidoo et al 2010: 8-9) Specific examples of Noche programming at specific locations include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Half Moon Bay Branch of the San Mateo County Public Library System (California): This branch's public outreach librarian worked with fifth grade students from local schools "to collect, write, and create family storybook albums based on the students' family stories." The students then shared their stories in a community forum.
- National City Public Library (California): This library hosted a family-centred evening storytelling program where participants made family history scrapbooks detailing their immigration journeys and hopes for the future.
- Salinas Public Library (California): For this program, the community's grandmothers (abuelitas) shared their life stories with community families. Told from the oral tradition, participants then gathered the stories and had them bound in a book, which serves as a public record of the event, as well as the grandmothers' history.

Creating culturally appropriate community literacy programming is an effective way to promote inter-generational literacy learning, integrate multiple community stakeholders and ensure greater literacy outcomes for participants.

Conclusion

There are many options for community literacy interventions in Kingston Galloway Orton Park (KGO). Whatever the differences in approach, however, effective community literacy programming should be undertaken with the understanding that literacy is concurrently a human right, an autonomous set of learnable skills, and an applied process that must be considered in light of available texts and communicative relationships between people. Because literacy is a right that directly affects and shapes the social fabric of communities, community literacy programs should be designed in accordance with the input and needs of all community stakeholders. In this respect, community literacy takes the place of specific educational programming and public discourses. Quality community literacy programs recognize the interrelated social and educational needs of communities and place these needs in specific cultural and geographic contexts.

Creating literacy-rich home environments is the first step in designing effective community literacy programming. Parents who are involved in, and learn from, literacy programming will in turn learn how to help their children achieve their literacy goals. KGO's existing literacy programs and workshops already incorporate parents and children, and this approach should extend to potential new programs. Literacy begins in the home, but it should be also promoted in a wider neighbourhood context to include schools, community centers, health organizations, after-school programming, libraries, local businesses and community development and planning organizations, among other stakeholders.

Moreover, community literacy interventions should be designed with an awareness of the social, economic and cultural contexts of the KGO neighbourhood. Programming must recognize the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of both adult and child participants, and it should be based around an action plan that emphasizes community health and the continued development of children throughout all stages of life. Following these recommendations will point the way towards effective, intergenerational community literacy interventions that will benefit the long-term health of the entire KGO community.

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03. Project Documents



KGO Literacy Research Interview Protocol
Interview Participant Name & Contact Information
Interviewer Initials

Interview Date
Interview Time
Any follow-up required?
Additional comments
Email request for interview
[date]

Dear [interviewee-name],

My name is Neil Price, and I am a research consultant working with the Kingston-Galloway Orton Park Literacy Improvement Collective (KLIC). I am writing to request a phone interview with you regarding your involvement in literacy focused activities in the Kingston-Galloway community.

I would appreciate it if we could book a time for an interview either this week or next week. Ideally, we will need approximately 25-30 minutes for the interview. Information gathered from your interview will be used to inform a final research report.

Please let me know a convenient time to conduct the interview with you via phone. I have provided my contact information below. Thanks very much for advising the KLIC on this important issue.

Neil Price, Senior Consultant

416-801-7018

Email: neil@logicaloutcomes.net

Introduction & Background:

Hello, this is Neil Price, calling to interview you regarding KLIC research project. I'm interested in hearing about your experiences working to improve literacy in the Kingston-Galloway area. Your insights will be used by the KLIC to complete a final report.

Is this still a good time for you? [If not, reschedule]

CONSENT

Before we start, I'll just describe how I will be using the notes from our conversation. I will be taking detailed notes, and will be analyzing the notes later for common themes to help write a report that will be submitted to the KLIC. The themes will not be attributed to specific people. However, in some cases it may be possible to guess the speaker's identity from the content. If you are concerned about the confidentiality of any particular point, I can remove it from the report or we can discuss how to disguise the source.

Is that okay? [Make sure to get explicit verbal consent]. Do you have any questions?

[Interviews are open-ended and the questions below are just probes and guides; most interviews will not address every question, but will follow up on interesting ideas and directions.]

Interview Questions

1. In your view, what is the depth and scope of the problem of illiteracy in KGO?
2. What do you think community organizations and literacy leaders can do to establish a community-baseline from which to work?

3. What are the environmental factors which contribute to low literacy in KGO?
4. How accessible are existing services?
5. What are the existing community literacy assets in KGO?
6. In your view, what are the identifiable gaps in programs and services?
7. Who is accessing existing literacy services in KGO, and who is not?
8. Do you know of any existing neighbourhood-based collective impact models, and how might they be applied to KGO?
9. How can relevant research knowledge be best shared and transferred as a means to inform other communities who have undertaken similar work?
10. What creative processes can be used to broaden community engagement and dissemination of our research findings?

Closing questions

11. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience working on literacy in KGO?
12. Is there anyone else I should consult on this topic?
13. Is there anything you have said that you would like me to leave out or disguise in the final report to make your comments more anonymous?
14. What are the most important issues to capture in my notes for this conversation?

Final Closing Statements

We've covered all the official questions I have. Did you want to add any other comments?

Is it okay if I name you as a key informant in our final report, without attributing specific comments to you? [If not, that's fine; we won't name you.] Are there any points you would like to withdraw from the final report? Any concerns about confidentiality or anonymity?

Do you have any questions about our research?

If any questions occur to you later, please contact Neil Price at neil@logicaloutcomes.net

Thanks very much for your time.

04. Community Forum Overview

Purpose of this document

The following is a summary of findings gathered from the Literacy Now! Community Forum held on November 7, 2017 at Cedarbrae Public Library.

Background

In keeping with the community-based research approach, the Literacy Now! project hosted two community forums to provide an opportunity for community stakeholders in KGO to both inform and respond to our work.

The first community forum (May 11, 2017) provided an opportunity to gather feedback on emerging findings and to assess the direction of the project. Feedback from this first community forum ensured that subsequent data collection included questions that the community felt were important (e.g., school-based challenges in KGO).

A second community forum (November 7, 2017) at the end of the data collection and analysis shared findings with community stakeholders, and asked for suggestions on possible recommendations and actions that could address these findings.

The forums attracted over 200 participants.

Forum Process

The 2nd Community Forum was designed to engage community stakeholders in a participatory consultation process that sought to elicit responses to emerging findings and recommendations. As such, every effort was made to center community voices and opinions through guided group discussions. Forum participants were divided into groups and were led by volunteer facilitators through a series of questions linked to the project's recommendations.

The forum was started through a "fast round" which encouraged participants to contribute their initial responses to the projects 10 recommendations:

1. Develop an outreach strategy to invite community members to engage with literacy learning opportunities across KGO. This strategy should include promotional materials that have been translated into the many languages used by KGO's diverse community members.
2. Develop a KLIC events calendar and a promotional "roadshow" to recruit and connect learners to existing programs and services.
3. Create a high-quality engagement video that promotes existing literacy learning opportunities that can be shared with various KGO agencies.
4. Draft and implement a "Literacy Improvement Charter" that calls for more inclusive programming, diverse learning opportunities, and situated learning. The Charter should include ways to measure success and track performance. Service Development
5. Create a multi-agency KGO service "pipeline" that provides literacy supports for learners throughout their educational journeys, from pre-school to employment. This requires sharing resources, increased partnership between existing agencies, robust referral systems, and shared evaluation measures.
6. Increase and expand employment-focused literacy program content in KGO.
7. Provide learners with opportunities to inform the development of literacy programs. This can be accomplished through encouraging learners to share stories about their literacy journey, and engaging in participatory program evaluation.
8. Connect literacy programming to other high value issues such as food security, voter engagement, education and employment. Knowledge sharing

9. Implement an online tool to be used by literacy-focused agencies to share best practices and other knowledge products.
10. Develop a strategy to secure the necessary funding and resources to implement a community-based literacy action plan.

The guiding question for the “fast round” was as follows:

“What ideas come to mind when you think about this recommendation?”

Participants were given two minutes to review and respond to each recommendation.

After initial responses were gathered through the “fast round”, participants were asked to conduct a “deep dive” discussion focused on the following six questions:

1. Which recommendation/s excite you the most?
2. Which recommendation/s do you think will have the greatest impact in the community?
3. Which recommendation/s will address the most pressing issues/needs in the community?
4. What work needs to be done to achieve the recommendation/s?
5. Who in the community needs to be involved in working on this recommendation?
6. What does success look like?

The final segment of the forum invited participants to rank the project’s recommendations. Each participant was given a ballot (see Appendices) to indicate their top three recommendations. In addition, participants were asked to record the names and contact information for stakeholders they thought would be instrumental in moving specific recommendations forward. Once this round was concluded, the facilitator summarized the discussion with the broader forum during a debrief.

Findings

Recommendation	Summary of participant responses	Key quotes
Develop an outreach strategy to invite community members to	Participants emphasized the importance of ensuring that literacy outreach and engagement activities are created in accessible and relevant ways. For example, several respondents	“We need to go through teacher-parent associations and councils to implement this strategy.”

<p>engage with literacy learning opportunities across KGO. This strategy should include promotional materials that have been translated into the many languages used by KGO's diverse community members.</p>	<p>mentioned the need for translated materials, engagement with existing programs and productive cross-agency collaborations.</p>	<p>"Collaboration between agencies is key." "Focus on where people already are." "We need flyers and communications in multiple languages."</p>
<p>Develop a KLIC events calendar and a promotional "roadshow" to recruit and connect learners to existing programs and services.</p>	<p>While the idea of an online events calendar focused on literacy programming garnered some support, most respondents cautioned about the challenges of keeping such a tool relevant, up-to-date and universally accessible. Generally speaking, respondents felt the events themselves were more important than the tool.</p>	<p>"This would be good if it's available everywhere across KGO." "I don't know how many people in KGO would use this." "It's about building relationships through events, not the tool."</p>
<p>Create a high-quality engagement video that promotes existing literacy learning opportunities that can be shared with various KGO agencies.</p>	<p>Most respondents cited the need for engaging audio-visual materials to promote literacy programs in KGO. However, issues related to audience and accessibility were mentioned frequently.</p>	<p>"Who would be the target audience for this video? It might be hard to choose." "How will agencies share the video? What's the best way to do that?" "This video should show success stories that we don't usually see in KGO."</p>

<p>Draft and implement a “Literacy Improvement Charter” that calls for more inclusive programming, diverse learning opportunities, and situated learning. The Charter should include ways to measure success and track performance.</p>	<p>The idea of a Literacy Improvement Charter for KGO garnered positive responses which call upon government, local agencies and residents to cooperate in drafting the document. There were concerns about whether this would be a “top-down” exercise that would create barriers for people with low-level literacy. Respondents also raised concerns about following through on the Charter and evaluating its success/impact.</p>	<p>“Who will develop this charter? Is this about a top-down approach?”</p> <p>“The Ministry of Education should be developing this.”</p> <p>“This has to be a collaboration between TDSB and KGO residents.”</p>
<p>Create a multi-agency KGO service “pipeline” that provides literacy supports for learners throughout their educational journeys, from pre-school to employment. This requires sharing resources, increased partnership between existing agencies, robust referral systems, and shared evaluation measures.</p>	<p>This recommendation garnered significant excitement among participants who shared the need to have continuous literacy programming along the learning journey. Respondents cited the importance of close cooperation between agencies, adequate funding and ongoing evaluation.</p>	<p>“I love this idea!”</p> <p>“We will have to make sure this is multifaceted to succeed.”</p> <p>“How would we fund this? Very ambitious.”</p> <p>“Create a tool that demonstrates a pathway between one literacy initiative to the next.”</p> <p>“This would require significant funding to be accomplished.”</p>

<p>Increase and expand employment-focused literacy program content in KGO.</p>	<p>Respondents viewed this as a salient and important recommendation. With unemployment and under-employment being significant challenges in KGO, there was strong support to ties these issues to underlying low-level literacy.</p>	<p>“Include employers to help determine needs.”</p> <p>“This is a great way to focus on working population.”</p> <p>“This should be delivered at existing ESL programs.”</p> <p>“What are employers identifying as needs?”</p>
<p>Provide learners with opportunities to inform the development of literacy programs. This can be accomplished through encouraging learners to share stories about their literacy journey, and engaging in participatory program evaluation.</p>	<p>Respondents cite the need for ongoing opportunities to hear from literacy learners, and to gather ideas on how to make programming responsive and relevant.</p>	<p>“Development more feedback loops to literacy programs. This leads to improved development.”</p> <p>“Community-wide story-sharing opportunities.”</p> <p>“Create more literacy forums like this one to gather ideas.”</p>
<p>Connect literacy programming to other high value issues such as food security, voter engagement, education and employment. Knowledge sharing</p>	<p>Respondents largely agree that literacy programming should be tied to pressing issues like food security, housing and political participation. However, they emphasize the need to think about these issues through a diversity and anti-oppression lens.</p>	<p>“This is what literacy programs were about in the past.”</p> <p>“Food security would have to be culturally relevant for this to work in KGO.”</p> <p>“This would be a way to engage people in the issue of literacy.”</p>

<p>Implement an online tool to be used by literacy-focused agencies to share best practices and other knowledge products.</p>	<p>While respondents see the value in using an online tool to share best practices and knowledge products, concerns about accessibility and language translation were wide-spread.</p>	<p>“This could be done using YouTube.”</p> <p>“What about translations, captioning and people who don’t have hi-speed internet?”</p> <p>“I love the idea of connecting KGO literacy programs through a shared Facebook page.”</p> <p>“Can we use existing platforms to achieve this?”</p>
<p>Develop a strategy to secure the necessary funding and resources to implement a community-based literacy action plan.</p>	<p>The vast majority of respondents agree that none of the preceding recommendations can be fully implemented or sustained without adequate funding. There is strong interest in seeing all levels of government playing a direct role in funding literacy in KGO.</p>	<p>“This is something we definitely need.”</p> <p>“Funding=government”</p> <p>“We need to look for funding from a variety of sources—government, private sector and foundations.”</p>

Recommendation Voting

As noted above, each forum participant was provided with a ballot to rank their top three recommendation choices. While each recommendation generated at least 4 votes, recommendations 1, 5, 7, 8 and 10 appeared to garner the most interest.

RECOMMENDATION VOTING

ANALYSIS (n=18)

1= 1st choice

2=2nd choice

3=3rd choice

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
		2	3				1		
3			1			2			
			2		1		3		
2						3	1		
2	1				3				
2			3	1					
			2	3					1
1						2	3		
							3	1	2
			2		1		3		
				1		3			2
2				1			3		
				3			2		1
				3			2		1
		3				2			1
				1		2			3
3						1		2	

Conclusion

The 2nd Literacy Now! community forum was a valuable and participatory opportunity to engage directly with community members who have an interest in improving literacy across the neighbourhood. While efforts were made to make the forum's processes and materials as accessible as possible, there were some challenges with meeting the various levels of comprehension within the room. Some participants felt less involved in the forum than others. As a result, future forums will need to be more responsive to this challenge. Overall, the forum was an appropriate way to conclude a research project that aimed to be firmly rooted in community voice, interests and engagement.

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Please visit www.readingpartnership.com to download the community info-booklet.

Please contact The Reading Partnership for further information at info@readingpartnership.com