



The Letter

SGB
Youth
Literacy



Volume 3, Issue 1

Newsletter of the South Grey Bruce Youth Literacy Council
467 10th St, Suite 303 Hanover, ON N4N 1R3

January 2009

In This Issue

Welcome to the Letter E. In this issue, in addition to news of activities ongoing in our busy office, we are very happy to feature a set of useful family literacy support tips (all beginning with the letter E) provided by retired teacher Jakkie Simmons. We continue to develop and acquire new learning materials for our volunteer tutors to share with their young learners and feature a review of the JUMP Math Program.

We also have announcements about some exciting upcoming events and introduce E is for Elspeth Reid, our aptly named co-op student from John Diefenbaker Secondary School – so read on!

As always, we welcome contributions for the next issue for our Community Letter and Youth Letter, so if you have something you would like to share with readers through this column, please let us know.

Opening Hours for Literacy Office

Tuesday through Friday: 9 AM to 5 PM

Other times by appointment.

THE LETTER

Editors Dyan Jones & Claire Fanger

Layout Claire Fanger & Dyan Jones

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SGB Youth Literacy Council

467 10th St, Suite 303, Hanover, ON N4N 1R3
519-364-0008

The editors welcome submissions of news, facts, links or articles written by community members on topics of interest.

Please send submissions by email to:

info@sgbyouthliteracy.org.

Progress in Our Office

In stride with the times...

In celebrating our third active year in our central South Grey Bruce office in Hanover, we note that our organization first received its designated charitable status thirty years ago. Times do change and people adapt. As we coordinate our volunteer tutor program, we have the opportunity to observe the growing multi-cultural diversity of our region which has resulted in requests to supply tutoring for English as a second language. We can see, too, that as area residents become more technically savvy, solid literacy and numeracy concepts become even more necessary for youth to keep pace in their learning. Our amazing volunteer tutors continue to dedicate themselves to providing effective learning support to meet these needs.

The Youth Literacy Council honours its collaboration with many working partners. In summer, we again assisted Cheryl D. Lindsay, speech and language pathologist, to create a successful summer reading camp with the Hanover Parks and Recreation Department. The highlight of the fall was the performance of Peter and the Wolf at the Victoria Jubilee Hall in Walkerton to a capacity audience of children and adults 'howling' their appreciation. This show was presented by the Youth Literacy Council in collaboration with the Words Aloud 5 Spoken Word Festival (www.wordsaloud.ca). Coupled with this production was The Wolf Call Poetry and Short Story Writing Contest for Youth, supported by the Library Systems of Bruce, Hanover, Owen Sound & North Grey Union and West Grey and many generous community funders. Winning entries were published by The Post, Walkerton Herald-Times and on our website.

We are aware of the challenge of the unsteady economy and its impact on the families that we serve. Since our program is supported entirely by grants and donations, we ever heighten our appreciation of the ongoing creative funding support of our patrons.

Tutor's Tool Bag

This issue's Tutor's Tool Bag column offers an extended set of activities which we hope will be useful for both parents and tutors.

E is for:

- **Encouragement:** Literacy activities must be sufficiently challenging that the child is able to learn from them, yet not so difficult that the child becomes frustrated. When going to the library, try to narrow down choices to one or two books for the child to read (independently or with support), and two books for the adult to read to the child. This will help to ensure that the child always enjoys the reading activities and has sufficient encouragement to continue.
 - **Effective support:** Support will be effective if it helps the child to reach the next step in independent learning. To enable delivery of effective support, first gauge the child's reading level: If, in a 100-word passage, the child makes more than 10 errors, the book is too hard. If less than 5 errors are made, the child should be able to read the book independently. If the child makes 6-10 errors, the book is at the child's instructional reading level. To provide effective support, parent or tutor should select books at the child's instructional reading level.
 - **Ears:** A child with good hearing may still have central auditory processing difficulties which make it hard to tune in to instructions. If tuning in is a problem, cue the child to ensure that his or her attention is focused on instructions coming up.
 - **Eyes:** If the child needs glasses, always encourage him or her to wear them. Sometimes the glare from a page can impede reading. A yellow plastic transparency may be useful in eliminating glare and putting the print into focus. If tracking print is a problem, provide a clear plastic ruler to hold under the line of print; point to the spot where reading is to start.
- **Elucidation:** Explain the steps to be taken at the outset of each session. Try to model what you want to child to do before beginning. For example, if you are working on reading, read aloud first to model what fluent reading sounds like, taking notice of the punctuation to enliven oral expression. Then ask the child to read a paragraph over until he or she is able to read it fluently with good expression. This will build confidence and put the high frequency words into the child's memory so that they will be recognized the next time they are encountered
 - **Equipment:** Children need frequent practice forming letters and writing sounds and words. **Magna Doodles** are great for writing dictated sounds or words because he child can correct errors easily. **Magnetic letters** can also be used for word making activities. Limit the number of letters to those in the five or so words to be practiced. (Magnetic letters can be used to stamp words on Magna Doodles too.)
 - **Emphasis** should be given to the difference between phonemic awareness and phonics. "Phonemic awareness" is about the sounds heard in speech; "phonics" is about the letters representing those sounds and how they go together to represent words. A child has to have the ability to understand the sounds that make up spoken language before they can unlock the mysteries of written language.
 - **Education through Play:** There are many simple games which can help to teach writing skills and make practice fun. 1) use the game of "*Hangman*" on the magna doodle to practice high frequency words. 2) use the *Rhyming Challenge* to teach how changing letter sounds can change words. Write a word and challenge the child to write a rhyming word by changing the first letter. For example the child says the word "cat", and then works out what other rhyming words he or she could spell by removing the "c" and substituting other letters. This game could be extended to teach alternate spellings for vowel sounds in homophones (such as pair/pear or stair/stare).

[En.wikipedia.org/wiki/E](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E) is an interesting website with historic and intriguing information about the letter E.

This is nifty: www.dltk-teach.com/alphabuddies/letter-e.html.

Another fun place to go on the web is the Flat Stanley page: www.flatstanleyproject.com. (The Youth Literacy Council is a participant.)

A site embracing excellence in ideas: www.ted.com

Jakkie Simmons is a retired teacher and youth literacy volunteer. She taught high school in Britain and elementary grades in Canada. She has also worked as a resource teacher, kindergarten teacher, literacy teacher, and teacher of special needs children.

Everyone loves the *Frog and Toad* series by Arnold Lobel. We've created Guided Reading kits, available on loan from our Resource Centre, to enliven reading skills. Guided Reading kits are offered for *Frog and Toad* stories.



United Way Backpack Program

We are proud to be a member agency of United Way of Bruce Grey. In preparation for school each fall we distribute new backpacks full school supplies to families free of cost, upon request, as part of the United Way Backpack Program. Contact our office before school lets out for the summer if your family wishes to participate.

Students Help

With funding support from Service Canada, the Youth Literacy Council hired Jenna Weber of Chepstow as our summer student. She is studying to be a speech and language pathologist at University of Western Ontario. Jenna assisted at the summer reading camp and created many Guided Reading kits for our Learning Resources. She also tutored two young learners at our office throughout the summer. Even though she has now returned to university, Jenna remains active in our organization as a volunteer tutor.

Elsbeth Reid has been assisting our co-ordinator, Dyan Jones, throughout this fall semester as our co-op placement student from John Diefenbaker Secondary School. She is responsible for designing learning games and a dynamic PowerPoint presentation for our organization. The Youth Literacy Council is an excellent learning situation for these students and we appreciate their wonderful energy.

Family Literacy Day January 27

The South Grey Bruce Youth Literacy Council is keeping Family Literacy on the map! The Municipal Councils of Brockton and Hanover each issued official proclamations to regard January 27 as Family Literacy Day. This gesture is given additional spotlight by The Post, Walkerton Herald-Times and Hanover Honda.

Board News

The Youth Literacy Council congratulates Claire Fanger, currently holding the office of secretary on the Board of Directors. A medievalist with a PhD from the University of Toronto, Claire recently accepted a position as assistant professor at Rice University in Houston Texas. Claire has worked for Youth Literacy in many capacities over the years. She served as chair in the crucial period during the move to the Hanover office, when the Youth Literacy Council was working to obtain the Trillium grant which has been so instrumental in supporting our revitalization. Claire will continue to serve out her term as secretary before moving to Houston in July, 2009. We applaud her success and we will miss her talented input!

Friends of Youth Literacy

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Maureen Barclay	Hanover Public Library
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Holly Bowen	Jack Reid Leisure Products
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Rudy Derksen	Victoria Jubilee Hall
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Affiliate Organizations & Working Partnerships

ABC Canada, Bluewater & District School Board, Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board, Bruce County Public Libraries, Durham Art Gallery, Edge Hill Country School, Hanover Public Library & Friends of the Library, Keystone Child Youth and Family Services, League of Canadian Poets, Ontario Early Years Centre – Hanover, Ontario Literacy Coalition, P.E.P.P., Project Canoe, QUILL Network, Walkerton & District Community Living, West Grey Public Libraries, Victoria Jubilee Hall, Words Aloud Spoken Word Festival, Youth Roots.

Fundraising Activities and Support

Community Contributions

We are thankful for many independent fundraising efforts made on our behalf. The Queen's Bush Book and Author Fair held in July at Nature's Millworks in Paisley gives charitable support to the Youth Literacy Council. We also appreciate the Christmas fundraising event at Bruce Dale Press in Port Elgin. Members of the Canadian University Women's Club in Hanover contributed to the purchase of gift certificates for books for each of our young learners. Our Board of Directors were active in presenting the splendid Eduard Klassen Festive Harp Concert at the Victoria Jubilee Hall. Thank you as well to Paul Charette of S.H.H.S. We are deeply grateful for donations to the Youth Literacy Council made in memory of Joseph Filsinger.

We appreciate the 2008 Foundation support received from the Sarah Badgely Literacy Fund for Rural Learning, Grey Bruce Community Foundation, George Lunan Foundation, and United Way Rotary Children's Fund, permitting new Learning Resource acquisitions.

Music Benefits Us All *Stay tuned for more details!*

On Saturday March 28th there will be a Celtic Music Night at 7:30pm, at the Paisley Town Hall Theatre & Royal Canadian Legion Branch 295.

Back Eddie's Presents:

Scatter the Cats & The Thogs

\$20 tickets www.backeddies.com

This is a fundraiser for the Youth Literacy Council. Details on our website www.sgbyouthliteracy.org Randy Martin of Track 6 Studio is donating his time and expertise to record musicians/songwriters of our region who are contributing songs for a compilation CD, our major fundraising event for 2009, complete with CD Release Celebration.

Youth Literacy Council Memberships

Last summer, our Board of Directors sanctioned the implementation of a membership program for interested supporters. While parents and tutors automatically become active voting members of the South Grey Bruce Youth Literacy Council, others may gain this right by subscribing to the \$20 membership. You will receive our newsletters and updates and provide additional support to our organization.

Tutor-Learner Matches

We are currently supporting 17 active tutor-learner matches, and have a steadily growing waiting list of young learners. Help us grow!

The South Grey Bruce Youth Literacy Council, a community-based organization, will strive to assist youth, ages 6-18, who are struggling in school, in their quest to improve basic reading, writing and math skills, so that they may enjoy full participation as citizens in the community.

--Mission Statement

Why Do So Many Kids Struggle with Math?

JUMP Math to the Rescue!

Reading is a much cherished and necessary skill, but proficiency in math is not less important. There are many people who struggle with the basic arithmetic skills. In the book *Why Numbers Count*, LA Steen states unequivocally that "innumeracy perpetuates warfare, harms health and weakens families." In this work climate, some firms administer standardized math tests to prospective employees, which challenges many who did not develop a strong mathematical foundation. For those with poor numeracy skills, even tackling one's income tax or framing a budget can be daunting.

John Mighton, University of Toronto professor, created a math program called JUMP (Junior Undiscovered Math Prodigies) originally designed for inner-city kids but now gaining respect worldwide. It is a back-to-basics approach that stresses pencil-and-paper work, learning concepts in steps, computational fluency and extensive review. Current math teaching follows more of an inquiry based method. Mighton sees the need to change the culture of self-defeat that persists in many young people who are challenged by math.

The Youth Literacy Council appreciates the generous donor support which has enabled us to add the JUMP Math Learning Series of Workbooks and Teacher's Manuals to our Learning Resources Collection. Tutors are using these techniques to strengthen the math skills of young learners. The Youth Literacy Council resources are available for loan to all who need them.

And on this note of numeracy: We welcome new volunteer tutor Jen Heerema, a math specialist, who supplies in-school math tutoring at John Diefenbaker Secondary School.

☀ Upcoming Spring Tutor Enrichment Session ☀

Invitations will be sent prior to the event. You may also look for event details which will be posted soon at our website: www.sgbyouthliteracy.org. All are welcome.

*Live as if you were to die tomorrow;
Learn as if you were to live forever.*

- Mahatma Gandhi



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