



MANAGEMENT REPORT

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TO: Library Board
FROM: Kurt Heinrich, Chair, CRPD Committee
SUBJECT: **Supports for Children, Teens, Caregivers & Educators during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

SUMMARY

This report provides information on the Library's actions to support early literacy, elementary, and secondary school educators, caregivers, students, and home learners during the COVID-19 pandemic.

PURPOSE

This report is for information.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Library Board receive the report for information.

INDIGENOUS CONSIDERATIONS

The Library's services for educators and learners provide access to collections and programs that highlight, acknowledge, and honour the unique cultures and experiences of Indigenous communities, including individuals living in an urban setting. This aligns with the BC K-12 curriculum, which embeds Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in the curriculum, and with the BC Early Learning Framework, which aims to resist the legacies of colonization, and contribute to lasting reconciliation through early education.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

The 2020-2023 Strategic Plan includes Goal 1.1 *Champion early literacy and opportunities for lifelong learning* as part of the Learning & Creativity Pillar.

BACKGROUND

During the COVID-19 pandemic, VPL has directed significant resources towards collaboration with and support of educators and children including Vancouver School Board's (VSB) teachers and students. We share the VSB's commitment to student learning and resilience, and our teams have worked together to bridge barriers to virtual access, address digital literacy gaps, and assist the school community in working and learning remotely. The Children's & Teen Services team has been supported in these efforts by many other VPL staff, notably those in Digital Services and Marketing and Communications.

DISCUSSION

VPL works collaboratively with VSB teachers, teacher librarians, and administration to achieve shared goals around literacy, resiliency, and lifelong learning for children and youth. During the pandemic, new services have been co-developed by teachers and VPL librarians, and brought online to respond to unprecedented challenges for our shared audiences.

New services include collection and resource enhancements, student/teacher-specific programming, and targeted access strategies that help teachers and students/families find and use relevant tools and information.

Services for Teachers

Student/Teacher-specific programs

- Newly developed suite of K-12 class visits, workshops, tutorials and webinars to guide students in accessing VPL eBooks and digital resources.
- Virtual Summer Reading Club class visits to share opportunities for reading and learning over the summer break.
- VSB teachers who do not live in Vancouver can now receive a full-service VPL library card thanks to negotiations with VPL digital vendors. This non-resident teacher card allows full access to our eBooks and audiobooks, streaming media, and research databases for a temporary term (during the COVID-19 restrictions). All VSB teachers can now access, explore, and share VPL digital resources with their VSB students, regardless of their residency.

Targeted access strategies

- Educator newsletter, to highlight literature and library-related topics of interest to K-12 teachers and teacher librarians (launching in October).
- Educator web page on VPL's website – this page was co-developed with advice from VSB educators to match K-12 interests in searching for VPL resources around grade levels and curricular topics.

- Web portal for virtual class visit and workshop bookings to facilitate online K-12 class visits from VPL Children’s Librarians via Microsoft Teams.
- Continued outreach to individual schools and teacher librarians through strong existing relationships, to offer professional advice and resources on literary and information topics.

Services for Parents and Students

Student and Early Years-Specific Programs

- Virtual programs to support early and emergent literacy for young children (storytimes, babytimes, read-alongs).
- Multilingual virtual storytimes to support the early learning and language acquisition of younger children.
- American Sign Language-translated virtual storytimes to support early learning and language acquisition for younger children in the Deaf community.
- Book chat programs to provide facilitated community conversation opportunities for teens learning English.
- Reading Buddies programs to support teens seeking volunteer credits towards graduation, and primary-aged emergent readers.
- Anti-racist workshops for parents, teens and children, supported by resource lists of anti-racist literature (workshops coming Fall 2020).

Targeted Access Strategies

- Online library card registration, to ensure access for families who cannot visit our physical spaces at this time.
- Redeployment of \$16,000 Vancouver Public Library Foundation grant to fund digital hardware to provide more equitable access to learning for teens.
- VPL Kids Facebook page, created to feature reading and learning content for families with school-aged children.

Collection and Resource Enhancements

- Substantial investment in additional eBooks and e-audiobooks for children and youth.
- Digital guides to clarify K-12 learning options available to BC parents during a transitional time.
- Digital guides to support families with children learning from home.
- Resource lists highlighting VPL’s digital resources for children around curriculum topics.
- New databases to support popular learning topics (e.g. French language learning).
- Evidence-based, age-appropriate coronavirus resources for parents and children.

- Takeout bags of personalized, age-specific print resources to meet the reading and home learning needs of families who cannot visit the library themselves.
- 2020 booklists focused on e-content to ensure from-home access for families who prefer not to visit the library in person.

Comments from teachers who received virtual class visits in April, May, and June:

- *"I just want to thank you again Lindsey. That was great! The students were really engaged and it's good for them to learn how to access reading material over the summer. We will send the information to parents."*
- *"Thanks again for teaching our classes about registering for the card, accessing the online collection and the summer reading program. The content and pacing were perfect! You were so patient with the blurters (harder for us to "control" online than in person haha)."*
- *Thanks for helping our students get access to reading material through the VPL website. A lot of our students didn't know these resources existed, and are excited to start using them!*

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The support that Children & Teen Services provides for children, teens, caregivers and educators including Vancouver School Board's teachers is within the approved VPL annual operating budget.

FINAL REMARKS

The library has an ongoing commitment to support learning for children, teens, caregivers and educators and will continue to develop and deliver services to meet their needs.