



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: April 16, 2019
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Meeting Date: April 24, 2019
TO: Library Board
FROM: Kurt Heinrich, Chair, Community Relations, Planning & Development Committee
SUBJECT: Vancouver Public Library-Vancouver School Board Relationship

SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of the relationship between Vancouver Public Library and the Vancouver School Board, and collaboration between the organizations, in response to trustees' inquiry at the February 2019 Board meeting.

PURPOSE

This report is for information.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board receive this report for information.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

VPL places a strong emphasis on the importance of services for Vancouver's children, teens, and families. The Library actively seeks to build relationships with public partners and community organizations that support this key demographic, and collaborates with them to provide enhanced opportunities to learn, play, grow and discover. Collaboration with the Vancouver School Board makes it possible for the Library to reach children and teens we may not see at the library and allows us to further VPL's strategic goals.

BACKGROUND

VPL has a long history of successful collaboration and partnership with the Vancouver School Board (VSB). The VSB is a valued partner, with over 54,000 students in Kindergarten to Grade 12 classes. Like the Library, VSB believes in the importance of promoting a love of books and reading with children and youth and works to support lifelong learning.

In 2004, VSB and VPL adopted a formal partnership agreement that outlined mutual expectations for school and library relationships and roles in providing library services for children and young adults. In this agreement, both parties acknowledged the importance of giving young people the best possible library services, providing access to expert staff and high quality materials that support personal reading and informational needs, encouraging library card acquisition, and developing productive relationships between library and school staff that lead to enhanced services and programs for young learners.

Even before this agreement was formalized, Vancouver Public Library and the Vancouver School Board had come together to support children, youth, and families in numerous ways. From previous joint school and library operations in the Britannia Community Services Centre and the former Strathcona Branch, to visits from children's librarians to classes across the city, the Library has worked with VSB to support students in every stage of learning.

DISCUSSION

VPL has many active partnerships and ongoing collaborations with the Vancouver School Board. This includes a position on the VPL Library Board for a Vancouver School Board Trustee who acts as a liaison between the two organizations. Across VPL's 21 locations, Library staff have forged relationships with local school teachers, teacher-librarians, and support staff, and regularly work to create opportunities for school and public library connections.

Most communication between the Library and VSB occurs at the local level, with branch children's librarians connecting directly with teachers, teacher-librarians, and principals at schools in their neighbourhood. Children and Teen Services supervisors are responsible for coordinating city-wide programs and services with VSB contacts.

VPL's Assistant Manager, Early Years works closely with the VSB Early Learning Coordinator to support early literacy and to provide education and resources for parents and early childhood educators. Examples of regular collaboration are provided below.

There is currently no similar city-wide contact at VSB to coordinate public library service for elementary and secondary school students. Until 2016, a Teacher-Librarian Mentor was VPL's main contact for communication with VSB teacher librarians.

In addition, until 2016, the Manager of Services for Children & Teens was a member of the School Library Resource Centre Consultative Committee which met quarterly to strategize and collaborate to support learners. Committee members included the Teacher-Librarian Mentor, teacher-librarian representatives from elementary and secondary schools, and representatives from Langara College, SFU, and UBC. This committee ceased in 2016.

Over the last decade, there have been reductions in the number of teacher-librarians and many schools now have a part-time teacher-librarian for one to four days per week. This has impacted the opportunities for communication and collaboration.

Children & Teen Services Librarians recognize the importance of maintaining positive relationships with VSB partners and respect the role of the teacher-librarian. VPL positions its services as a valuable addition to the work of school libraries and strives to support schools, curriculum, and student interests while recognizing the value of school libraries.

Examples of collaboration and partnership include:

StrongStart Early Learning Centres

StrongStart is the VSB's primary program offering for parents and caregivers of children ages 0 to 5. The Library has an agreement with the VSB to provide deposit collections of gently used, withdrawn library books to all 19 Vancouver StrongStart locations. Collections are refreshed each year, and help to ensure that children and families have access to high-quality, age appropriate reading material. Children's librarians are invited to visit the programs to share stories and talk to caregivers about library services for families.

Welcome to Kindergarten

Most Vancouver schools host a Welcome to Kindergarten program in May or June for parents and caregivers of children aged 4-5 who will be entering Kindergarten that year. This annual program helps to prepare children and families for the transition to Kindergarten and introduces them to school staff and community partners such as VPL children's librarians. VPL staff attend each Welcome to Kindergarten program to share early literacy tips and an interactive storytime with event attendees. The Head of the Children's Library is a member of the Welcome to Kindergarten Advisory Committee. This important event positions the Library as a key part of the City's early education environment.

Ready Set Learn

Similar to Welcome to Kindergarten, Ready Set Learn is a program developed to help parents and caregivers prepare their preschoolers for success in school and foster lifelong learning. Children's librarians use the opportunity to connect with families, share resources, and deliver a fun and inspiring storytime program.

Elementary Schools

Children's librarians welcome VSB classes to library branches all year round. Teachers bring classes in for tours, stories, an introduction to library materials that complement curriculum, and instruction in research skills. Children's librarians are welcomed into the schools in the spring to inspire children to register for Summer Reading Club. These visits can be to individual classes, school assemblies, or multi-classroom meetings in the school library.

Grade 7 Library Skills Programs

Recognizing the importance of building information literacy and critical appraisal skills for school aged children, children's librarians have offered a longstanding "Library Skills" workshop that introduces Grade 7 students to the library catalogue, website, databases and more. This popular 90 minute program is held twice a week at the Central Library throughout the school year and is consistently beyond capacity.

Secondary Schools

Teen services librarians regularly connect with the VSB to offer author readings at VPL or at schools. Collaboration with the VSB helps to ensure that many teens have access to readings and workshops with their favourite writers.

Library staff work directly with secondary school teachers to share information about VPL's programs and services and to encourage teen writers, artists, and creators to contribute to the teen-focused publication *ink*, first published in 2018. VSB classes are interested in VPL's Inspiration Lab so public library staff work with teachers to accommodate class visits and introductions to lab equipment.

VPL has traditionally enjoyed a stronger and more robust history of relationships with elementary schools and VSB service for younger children, than those with secondary schools. Reasons for this include a longer history of established relationships around annual events such as Summer Reading Club and the added complexity of coordinating access to secondary school students who have different teachers and classes throughout the school day, compared to elementary school students who are in one class together and whose visits can be coordinated through a single teacher. To further support Vancouver secondary students, VPL has hosted Teen Advisory Groups at the library since 2005. These connect directly with teens and invite them to help shape library services and programs for youth.

Community Schools Teams

VSB Community School Teams provide programming which supports student development. Children and Teen Services librarians attend quarterly Community School Team meetings along with teachers, principals, community school coordinators, and other community partners to share information about relevant programs, services, trends and best practices for working with

youth. Relationships are developed locally based on the needs of children in specific neighbourhoods.

An example of a successful partnership between VPL and a Community School Team was the 2014 technology-based program *Your Creative Lab* for children in Grades 5-7. Participants attended a daily after-school enrichment program at an elementary school in southeast Vancouver where there is a large population of school-aged children and few accessible opportunities for after-school activities. The curriculum was designed to help children develop the confidence and motivation to engage in creative digital projects. Post-program evaluation by caregivers, VSB, and VPL program staff indicated that the program achieved its goals of increasing digital literacy and community connections.

Facilities

As mentioned above, VPL's relationship with the Vancouver School Board has also included joint operations and shared facilities arrangements. Britannia Branch is located within the Vancouver School Board's Britannia Secondary School. Until 2017, the library functioned as a joint public and school library. After discussion and consultation with VPL, the secondary school removed its collections to the high school learning commons in December 2017 and the elementary school removed its collections in June 2018. Britannia Branch now functions solely as a public library. The former Strathcona Branch also functioned as a joint public and school library until 2017, when VPL opened the full-service náča?mat ct Strathcona branch.

FINAL REMARKS

Vancouver Public Library is pleased to be able to partner and collaborate with the Vancouver School Board in support of healthy child and adolescent development, lifelong learning, and a love of reading. The collaborative relationships span decades and have resulted in many notable successes and achievements. Staff look forward to ongoing and new opportunities for partnership.