Youth Literacy Programs

A Review of the Literature

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Child and Youth Network (CYN) engaged Kovacs Group Inc. to conduct a high level review of literature and best practices that define and outline youth literacy programs. In doing so, models and activities in the context of the home, school and community were identified.

To support the improvement of literacy for youth, the CYN has adopted a three part plan that includes engagement, direct supports and transitions. With respect to transitions, the CYN plans to help facilitate the provision of diverse supports to assist youth with the development of school and life transitions. The strategy to facilitate direct supports for youth involves the identification and encouragement of direct interventions that support all youth to pass the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) in grade 10.

Many of the programs and frameworks reviewed encompass a wide range of youth from different age groups. This made it challenging to focus the review specifically on a certain age or grade range (i.e., grade seven to ten). As such, for the purpose of this literature review, unless otherwise stated, we have defined ‘youth’ as ranging from age 12 to age 25. In doing so, we were able to incorporate a broad range of programs that can be applied, or modified, to target a variety of youth.

Approximately 140 pieces of literature and research were collected, primarily from Canada, the United States and Europe, and reviewed for common themes, elements, and best practices relating to youth literacy programming. The following report comprises the findings from this review.

The goal of the following literature review and resulting recommendations are to provide a baseline that ensures the CYN proceeds effectively in their goal of making literacy a way of life. The intended audience of this review includes practitioners working in youth literacy, teachers, parents, youth workers, community organizations, government representatives and Board of Directors who have an interest in youth literacy.

2.0 LITERACY

Literacy definitions are moving away from a divide between “literate and illiterate” to one that focuses on a continuum of “lifelong learning” (Richmond, Robinson, & Sachs-Isreal, 2008, p. 17). In this view, literacy is a skill required for everyday life in the home, work, in education, and in the community (Spannier, 2007). The term lifelong learning recognizes learning is not confined to childhood or the classroom but takes place throughout life and in a range of situations (Essential Skills Ontario, 2012).

When defining literacy, it is also important to discuss related essential skills and competencies. Essential skills are identified as those in which people use to perform a wide range of everyday life and tasks (Legacies Now, 2010). Essential skills, under this definition, enable people to participate fully in society through work, school, family and the community.
3.0 LITERACY AND YOUTH

In order to develop effective programs and interventions for youth, it is important to understand why literacy is important in the first place. Youth are unique and different from other demographic groups such as children, adults and seniors and, as a result, programs and interventions should be targeted to be both engaging and sensitive to adolescent physical, cognitive, and social-emotional developmental needs. Likewise, a fuller understanding of the current state of youth literacy in Ontario and predictors of youth literacy are of importance.

The costs of inadequate literacy can have a detrimental impact on the quality of life of both individuals and society. Research has demonstrated youth with poor literacy skills are more likely to drop out of school, experience unemployment for long periods of time and have difficulty participating in community life (Fernandez, 1999).

Despite intentions to ensure everyone has access to education and programs to enhance literacy, barriers still exist and are largely overrepresented in specific groups in Canada. Literacy requirements continue to vary among social and economic groups, with low levels concentrated among the poor, the undereducated, seniors, Aboriginal people and members of minority populations (Decoda Literacy Solutions, 2012). In terms of youth literacy, the following four categories are of particular interest when discussing predictors of literacy: Socioeconomic Status (SES), gender, ethnicity, and out-of-school youth.

4.0 FAMILY BASED LITERACY

The incorporation of family literacy is an important element in the definition of life-long learning and there is a well-established link between the literacy levels of parents and the subsequent achievement of their children (Action for Family Literacy Ontario, 2006). Likewise, providing effective literacy in the family has shown to have a positive impact on literacy skills in youth; thus, acting as a preventative measure.

The term family literacy refers to literacy activities that take place in the everyday lives of families and to the programs that aim to increase family literacy in the home (Malcolmson, 2001).

The large majority of literature and research on family literacy focuses specifically on parents and families of young children. The best known programs are designed for young children and their adult caregivers (Morgan, Nutbrown & Hannon, 2009). Research on family influences and the lives of adolescents, however, indicates that involving families can augment the efficacy of many other strategies for improving a variety of youth outcomes (Cobb, Meltzer & Williams, 2003). Likewise, some research suggests that parental and family attitudes toward school and the emphasis they place on education are better indicators of academic success than family structure, demographics, and income (Cobb, Meltzer & Williams, 2003; Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

A review of the literature on family literacy reveals that most programs encompass similar goals and components. Typically, family literacy programs are located in the community, primarily operate in libraries, family resource centres, community-based literacy and upgrading programs, community centres, school, and Ontario Early Years Centres (Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2006).
Likewise, the central goal of most programs is to provide children with developmentally appropriate learning opportunities to support "school readiness" with a focus on increasing parental involvement in children’s literacy development (Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2006, p. 32). Other family literacy programs are home-based and involve parents or caregivers directly.

There are a variety of programs which represent effective family based literacy models. Specifically, there are five types discussed in this review, including: Ontario Early Year Centres, distribution of family literacy resources, family literacy nights, literacy workshops for parents and family tutoring.

It is evident that children benefit from family literacy programs. Research has demonstrated children’s achievement in school improves, children attend school more regularly and are more likely to complete their education, children’s general knowledge improves, children are healthier, and they have more positive attitudes toward school (Cobb, Meltzer & Williams, 2003; Essential Skills Ontario, 2012; Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2012; Redman, 2008).

In addition, research suggests that parents also benefit from family literacy programs. For example, parents persist in family literacy programs longer than in other types of adult literacy programs, as parents’ attitude about education improves, the value they perceive in education increases, and as parents’ knowledge about parenting options and child development increase they report more confidence in their abilities to foster positive developments in their children (Cobb, Meltzer & Williams, 2003; Essential Skills Ontario, 2012; Ontario Literacy Coalition; Redman, 2008).

**5.0 SCHOOL BASED LITERACY**

There is a wide array of literature that discusses successful components and models of utilizing literacy in the education system. Although research suggests the incorporation of a collective model to address literacy is most effective, educational institutions are still responsible for teaching literacy skills to both children and youth.

Various reports have discussed successful components of school-based literacy programs. For example, The Adolescent Support Framework (Meltzer, Smith, & Clark, 2001), the Nine Elements of Effective Adolescent Literacy Programs as discussed by Reading Next (n.d.), and the model created by York Region District School Board (2007) which encompasses six guiding principles to provide a vision of effective literacy instruction in the classroom.

Other common features discussed include the need to motivate and engage students in literacy programs, the incorporation of technology, creating a supportive learning environment, providing professional development, and evaluating and assessing programs.

It is unlikely that any single program will address all the literacy needs of a school or student. Schools are complex institutions composed of many different types of students who require various types of instruction (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). Some of the program types include: reading and writing skills and strategies in the classroom, work-experience programs, intervention programs, OSSLT preparation, tutoring programs, homework clubs, afterschool/summer programs, support programs for teachers and staff, and English as a second language programs.
6.0 COMMUNITY BASED LITERACY

Strengthening community-based organizations and agencies, and their ability to offer meaningful engagement to youth, provides a promising point of departure for addressing literacy problems (Decoda Literacy Solutions, 2012; Malcolmson, 2001). Research on “community-based organizations” confirms the vital importance of community organizations in providing a supportive network and context for programs directed at youth (Malcolmson, 2001, p. 16). As the Council of the Ministers of Education in Canada (2009) reports, civil society has always been a crucial partner in designing flexible programs for specific groups at the community level—as it is in communities themselves that literacy is practiced and sustained.

There are a variety of definitions that explain community-based literacy programs. Most often, these definitions are closely linked to that of community development initiatives for youth as the two concepts are connected. Likewise, in reviewing definitions of community literacy programs, most include mention of engagement from communities in planning, involvement of community groups, organizations, and individuals in an effort to reach the same goal, and contribute to a system of lifelong learning for all (Literacy More Than Words, 2008).

Models of community literacy programming encompass a holistic response to youth literacy through a combination of a variety of elements. Some of these elements include: the incorporation of meaningful content, youth development, school and parental involvement, engagement and motivation, and the incorporation of technology and the arts.

Many community based programs are innovative and may not be directly tied to literacy. Based on a review of the literature, community based programs most often fell into one of the following themes: under-served and immigrant youth, youth in conflict with the law, community collaboration and partnerships, and voluntary out-of-school innovative community programs.

7.0 COLLABORATIVE MODELS

Although the literature on community-based literacy programs discusses the incorporation of many stakeholders, other literature on youth literacy programming takes even more of a holistic approach and incorporates all three models of literacy (Alberta Education, 2010; Cobb, Meltzer & Williams, 2003; Spannier, 2007; Tri-Cities Literacy Committee, 2012).

The Council of Ministers of Education (CMEC) (2009), for example, developed a literacy action plan to respond to Canada’s literacy challenge. They promote a pan-Canadian approach to raising literacy levels through a commitment by the ministers responsible for education in all of the 13 provinces and territories and a call for action on this shared objective (CMEC, 2009). Through a cohesive, collaborative, and coordinated approach, the CMEC are working together to strengthen individual efforts and initiatives.

Likewise, The Government of Alberta (2010), through consultation processes in literacy, argues that no single sector of society is responsible for literacy education and development. Instead, they propose a model that includes educators, school authorities, parents, communities and students working together to ensure the best opportunities for literacy development in students of all ages and abilities (Alberta Education, 2010).
The Grade Yellowhead Public School District (GYPSD) (2009) provides another example of a collaborative-based model for literacy. In a report published by the Consultus Business Centre (2009), GYPSD describes a vision of literacy as one that:

Requires a coordinated and comprehensive approach to move literacy development outside the school to encompass society as a whole; one that advocates that everyone, both the young and the old, have opportunities to develop and expand their literacy competencies throughout their lives and in many contexts—in families, communities and at work

(Consultus Business Centre, 2009, p. 15).

Finally, Cobb, Meltzer and Williams (2003) propose an Adolescent Literacy Community Mobilization Matrix to provide support and development for community mobilization focused on literacy support and development. This model explains that adolescents operate in numerous and diverse contexts—at school, with family, with peers, in their neighbourhood, as participants in youth programs, at church, in recreation and other youth programs, at work, and in the judicial system—or as they call them “spheres of influence” (p. 12).

8.0 LITERACY PROGRAMS: PROMISING PRACTICES

This section provides an overview of family, community and school-based literacy programs. We have separated these programs from the literature review because we did not find evaluation or research evidence that demonstrates outcome achievement. However, we have included the programs in this report as promising practices to outline the breadth of literacy programs available. Each program is categorized under family, school or community based programming and is listed with a brief description and website link.

9.0 EVIDENCE-INFORMED MODEL FOR YOUTH LITERACY

Through an in-depth analysis of the literature, evidence-based programs and promising practices, a model for youth literacy in London has been developed for consideration by the Child and Youth Network. This model is adapted from the Government of Alberta’s Literacy Collaboration Model (2010) and incorporates elements from the other collaborative models discussed.

This model is based on the successful collaboration of communities, youth, schools, families, employers, the CYN and the City of London to create meaningful literacy programs to support youth and other stakeholders in enhancing literacy skills.

In addition, a thematic analysis of the literature resulted in the identification of eight elements to be considered for all literacy programs for youth regardless of whether they are school-based, community-based or home-based. These include: meaningful content, innovative activities, relationship building, youth engagement, learning strategies, supportive learning environment, wraparound supports, and evaluation and sustainability planning.
10.0 NEXT STEPS FOR CONSIDERATION

The review of literature, evidence-based programs and promising practices resulted in the formation of a collaborative framework for youth literacy to be considered for implementation in London. To build on the momentum of the literature review process and move to model implementation, the CYN may want to consider a four-phase approach: (1) Literature Review, (2) Community Engagement, (3) Implementation Planning and (4) Implementation & Evaluation.

11.0 CONCLUSION

Based on the review of literature, it is recommended the CYN implement a collaborative model to address youth literacy and consider the elements of effective programs identified when developing programming.

Although literature exists on a variety of anecdotal program models and elements, there is a need moving forward to ensure better dissemination, evaluation and comparison of youth literacy programs that have proven effective.

In conclusion, this review provides a starting point for further discussion around the topic of youth literacy programming. Literacy and essential skills are invaluable tools required for youth to be successful in today’s knowledge based society. Developing effective literacy programming in the home, school and community while incorporating successful elements based on evidence will provide youth with the opportunity to work towards successful futures and ultimately, encourage literacy as a way of life.
Overview of the Project

An essential component in achieving literacy as a way of life is the development and implementation of effective literacy programs. CYN explains that children and youth benefit from literacy programs, initiatives and activities which result in better performance at school, increased motivation and engagement in various activities, and higher levels of self-esteem (CYN, 2012).

CYN engaged Kovacs Group Inc. to conduct a high level review of literature and best practices that define and outline youth literacy programs. In doing so, models and activities in the context of the home, school and community were identified.

Many of the programs and frameworks reviewed encompass a wide range of youth from different age groups. This made it challenging to focus the review specifically on a certain age or grade range (i.e., grade seven to ten). As such, for the purpose of this literature review, unless otherwise stated, we have defined ‘youth’ as ranging from age 12 to age 25. In doing so, we were able to incorporate a broad range of programs that can be applied, or modified, to target a variety of youth.

Approximately 140 pieces of literature and research were collected, primarily from Canada, the United States and Europe, and reviewed for common themes, elements, and best practices relating to youth literacy programming. The following report comprises the findings from this review.

Context Setting

London’s Child and Youth Network (CYN) includes over 500 individuals from 150 organizations working together to improve outcomes for children, youth and families in the city of London (CYN, 2012). Through a collective impact model, the community has been working together since 2007 to implement the plan to improve literacy, end poverty, improve healthy eating and healthy physical activity, and create a family-centered service system (CYN, 2012).

The CYN has identified making literacy a way of life a priority area for collective focus. In doing so, by 2015, the goal is to situate London as a provincial leader in child, youth and family literacy. The implementation of this goal is based on an integrated approach to improve literacy through collaboration between the home, school and community.

To support the improvement of literacy as a way of life for youth, the CYN has adopted a three part plan that includes: engagement, direct supports and transitions. With respect to transitions, the CYN plans to help facilitate the provision of diverse supports to assist youth with the development of school and life transitions. The strategy to facilitate direct supports for youth involves the identification and encouragement of direct interventions that support all youth to pass the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) in grade 10.
**Goal of the Review and Intended Audience**

The goal of the following literature review and resulting recommendations is to provide a baseline that ensures CYN proceeds effectively in their goal of making literacy a way of life. The intended audience of this review includes practitioners working in youth literacy, teachers, parents, youth workers, community organizations, government representatives, and Board of Directors.

**Outline of Literature Review**

The following literature review has been divided into eleven sections to enhance readability and to present various themes derived from the literature.

Section 1.0 includes the introduction to the report which presents the overview, context and goal of the following review.

Section 2.0 provides an overview of common literacy definitions. Key elements are discussed as well as essential skills and competencies. Following, an overview of the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) is provided.

Section 3.0 discusses why youth literacy is of particular importance. In doing so, the physical, cognitive and social-emotional development of youth is briefly explained followed by an overview of the status of youth literacy in Ontario. Finally, predictors of youth literacy are discussed.

Section 4.0 presents literature on family based literacy programs. In this section, family literacy is defined by examining common elements in the literature. Next, youth and family literacy is examined more closely and models of effective family based literacy programs are presented. To conclude this section, best-practice programs relating to family literacy are discussed.

Section 5.0 focuses on literature pertaining to school based literacy programs. Here, school based literacy programs are defined and discussed in the context of successful models. Following, school based best-practice programs are explored.

Section 6.0 encompasses literature and research concerning community based literacy programs. Community literacy is defined as it relates to youth literacy and models of community literacy are discussed. Next, best practice community based literacy programs are presented.

Section 7.0 introduces collaborative models of youth literacy. In doing so, common models of collaborative youth literacy programming are presented and discussed.

Section 8.0 provides an overview of family, community and school-based literacy program and a variety of programs are discussed to provide further insight on youth literacy programs in practice.

Section 9.0 presents an evidence-based collaborative framework derived from a collection of themes presented in the literature review that support the goals of CYN’s initiative to make literacy a way of life.

Section 10.0 presents a four-phase approach to implement the proposed youth literacy framework.

Section 11.0 concludes and summarizes the report.
2.0 LITERACY

Traditionally, literacy has been thought of, and taught as, reading and writing skills; however, traditional notions of literacy have been expanded to encompass 21st century literacies (The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, 2007). Literacy has moved from a skill set that is nice to have, to one that is necessary to have if a person wants to meet his or her personal and economic goals (Essential Skills Ontario, 2012). Literacy continues to evolve as the world changes and its demands shift and become more complex. (Literacy gains, 2012).

We require continual practice over time to refine our skills in thinking, reading, writing and oral communication (Literacy Gains, 2012). This is particularly important to youth for a number of reasons. Specifically, adolescence is characterized by a number of transitions and the experience of physical, social, emotional, and intellectual changes and developments (Literacy Gains, 2012).

Defining literacy is an ongoing task that evolves with the shifting demands of our ever-changing society. The proliferation of new digital technologies and the growing accessibility of information on the Internet are transforming how we acquire, create, connect and communicate meaning in a variety of contexts (Alberta Education, 2010).

In the following section, three definitions of literacy will be presented followed by a discussion of common themes. Following, definitions of essential skills and competencies will be discussed. Finally, a brief overview of the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) will be provided.

2.1 LITERACY DEFINED

Literacy is a fundamental human right, a tool of personal empowerment and a means for social and human development which forms the foundation for lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2006). As UNESCO (2013) explains, literacy is fully essential to social and human development in its ability to transform lives. For individuals, families, and societies alike, it is an instrument of empowerment to improve one’s health, one’s income, and one’s relationship with the world (UNESCO, 2006).

One of the most widely accepted definitions of literacy around the world is UNESCO’s (2006) which defines literacy as:

The ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in the wider society (UNESCO, 2006, p.30).

UNESCO’s definition incorporates more than basic reading and writing. TD Bank Financial Group (2013) explains UNESCO’s definition recognizes there is an array of performance related to a “continuum of learning” (p. 3). Further, there is a notion that literacy is inherently a part of education and personal development and allows individuals to be more involved in society (TD Bank Financial Group, 2013).

Another commonly cited definition of literacy is that used by the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS). The IALSS defines literacy as “the ability to understand and employ printed information...
in daily activities at home, at work and in the community to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential” (Essential Skills Ontario, 2012, p. 3). This definition focuses on what a person can do, rather than on a static notion of competency based on level of educational attainment. This definition emphasizes the practical nature of literacy and the need to link literacy skills to a person’s everyday reality (Essential Skills Ontario, 2012).

Furthermore, the Ontario Ministry of Education’s Expert Panel on literacy (2004) defines literacy in a more contextual way to address Ontario students. Here, literacy is defined as “the ability to use language and images in rich and varied forms to read, write, listen, speak, view, represent, and think critically about ideas” (p. 2). This definition gives equal weight to language and images as a means of representing ideas and multiple modes of representation in addition to reading and writing (The Literacy Numeracy Secretariat, 2007). As such, this definition allows for the inclusion of new technologies to amplify the impact of literacy instruction and engagement of youth (The Literacy Numeracy Secretariat, 2007).

The incorporation of technology is especially important when defining literacy as it relates to youth. Youth today are accessing and communicating information in ways unimaginable from even ten years ago (Alberta Education, 2010). Youth connect and communicate through a variety of means, such as blogs, wikis, Facebook, instant messaging and texting. They not only acquire information from print sources but can listen to podcasts, webinars, visit websites to distribute and share images such as Flickr and Instagram, and share video via You Tube and other sites (Alberta Education, 2010).

Literacy definitions are moving away from a divide between “literate and illiterate” to one that focuses on a continuum of “lifelong learning” (Richmond, Robinson & Sachs-Isreal, 2008, p. 17). In this view, literacy is a skill required for everyday life in the home, work, in education, and in the community (Spannier, 2007). ABC Canada (2005) defines lifelong learning as “the notion that learning occurs in many different contexts throughout an individual’s life in both formal and informal settings, at work, at home, and in the community” (p. 3). The term lifelong learning recognizes learning is not confined to childhood or the classroom but takes place throughout life and in a range of situations (Essential Skills Ontario, 2012). In other words, learning is seen as an on-going process engaged with our daily interactions with others and with the world around us (ABC Canada, 2005).

2.2 ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

When defining literacy, it is important to discuss essential skills and competencies. Essential skills are identified as those in which people use to perform a wide range of everyday tasks (Legacies Now, 2010). Essential skills, under this definition, enable people to participate fully in society through work, school, family and the community. The following components typically comprise essential skills:

- Reading test
- Numeracy
- Thinking skills
  - Problem solving
  - Decision making
  - Job task planning and organizing
  - Finding information
- Use of documents
- Oral communication
- Computer use
- Writing
- Working with others
- Continuous learning

(Legacies Now, 2010, p. vi)
Through extensive research, the Government of Canada and other national and international agencies have identified these essential skills (Essential Skills Ontario, 2012). Most commonly, these skills are defined in the context of employment; however, they also provide the foundation for learning in other skills and enable individuals to adapt to community change (Essential Skills, 2012).

In 2009, the government of Alberta launched a review of the School Act to provide improvements to their education system to prepare students for the future. In doing so, they described a need for competencies to be more central in the education of young people if they are to be active participants in an increasingly knowledge-based and globalized society (2010). The competencies displayed in the figure below were derived based on a review of recognized national and international frameworks for learning in the 21st century.

(Alberta Education, 2010, p. 9)

Another model that includes a description of competencies and essential skills is the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS). This survey is often referred to when making inferences about a specific demographics’ level of literacy. The IALSS conducted a seven-country initiative in 2003 in which adults aged 16 to 65 were interviewed and tested at home using the same psychometric test to measure prose and document literacy as well as numeracy and problem-solving skills (Statistics Canada, 2005). Although the IALSS focused mainly on adults, youth from the ages of 16-25 were included and the results are often cited in literature which addresses “literacy levels” and “core competency” (ABC Canada, 2005). As such, it is important to have an understanding of these terms to gain a more complete definition of literacy.
The IALSS outlines the following levels of literacy and scales of competency:

**Literacy Levels:**

**Level 1:** Persons with very poor skills, where the individual may, for example, be unable to determine the correct amount of medicine to give a child from information printed on the package.

**Level 2:** People who can only deal with material that is simple, clearly laid out, and in which the tasks involved are not too complex. It denotes a weak level of skill, but more hidden than Level 1. It identifies people who can read but test poorly. They may have developed coping skills to manage everyday literacy demands but their low level of proficiency makes it difficult for them to face new demands, such as learning new job skills.

**Level 3:** The minimum skills level suitable for coping with the demands of everyday life and work in a complex, advanced society. It denotes roughly the skill level required for successful secondary school completion and college entry. Like higher levels, it requires the ability to integrate several sources of information and solve more complex problems.

**Levels 4 & 5:** People demonstrate a command of higher-order information-processing skills.

**Four Scales of Competency Reported:**

**Prose literacy:** The knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information from texts including editorials, news stories, brochures and instruction manuals.

**Document literacy:** The knowledge and skills required to locate and use information contained in various formats, including job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, tables and charts.

**Numeracy:** The knowledge and skills required to effectively manage the mathematical demands of diverse situations.

**Problem-solving:** Involves goal-directed thinking and action in situations for which no routine solution procedure is available. The problem solver has a more or less well-defined goal, but does not immediately know how to reach it. The understanding of the problem situation and its step-by-step transformation, based on planning and reasoning, constitute the process of problem solving.

*(ABC Canada, 2005, p. 2)*
When discussing essential skills and competencies, it is also important to discuss the Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) framework. The Government of Ontario, through Employment Ontario, funds LBS programs which are mandated to serve adults who want to improve their literacy and numeracy skills to achieve their goals of post-secondary education and training, employment, apprenticeship, secondary school credit, or independence (Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, 2011). There are currently over 300 programs across the province delivered by three sectors, including community-based agencies, school boards, and colleges (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2011). Although LBS programs are targeted for adult learners they are often accessed by youth.

The LBS uses the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) to support the development of adult literacy programming. The OALCF focuses on six competencies, including finding and using information, communicating ideas for information, understanding numbers, using digital technology, managing learning, and engaging with others (Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, 2011). These competencies represent the full range of skills, knowledge, and behaviours addressed in the LBS program (Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, 2011).

The OALCF also uses three levels of performance indicators to describe learners developing proficiency to perform tasks and competencies (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2011). These indicators differ depending on the competency but generally describe the achievement at the end of each level and present a snapshot of the programming focus at that level (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2011).

The primary purpose of the OALCF is to make visible the skills, knowledge, and behaviours that adult learners need to fulfill their responsibilities at work, in the community, and within learning situations (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2011). Further, it extends literacy instruction beyond discrete skill building and focuses, instead, on the interaction of skills, knowledge, and behaviours that reflect learners’ needs, goals, and interests (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2011).

It is imperative to understand core competencies and essential skills when defining literacy as they provide direction for elements and models in literacy programming. Literacy encompasses more than reading and writing skills; it refers to the ability to understand, extrapolate, and communicate materials from several sources, and to use these skills and competencies in everyday life (Willms & Watson, 2008).

The definitions presented in this section provide an overview of those most commonly used in the literature pertaining to literacy today. Although the previously described definitions refer to a variety of contexts, they all share in common important characteristics, including: (1) a continuum of lifelong learning in the sense that literacy is a part of everyday learning and development; (2) the interaction with a variety of social institutions including education, family and community; and (3) the use and incorporation of multimodal and multilayered essential skills and competencies.

2.3 THE ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL LITERACY TEST (OSSLT)

One of the purposes of this literature review is to present information on program models and best-practices that ultimately support youth to pass the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT). As such, it is important to provide a general overview of the OSSLT and what it encompasses. The following section will briefly highlight the purpose and process of the OSSLT.
Students across Ontario write a province-wide test of their reading, writing and math skills at key stages in their elementary and secondary school education (EQAO, 2010). The following stages represent these areas of testing:

**Grade 3:** Literacy and math tested at the end of the primary division.

**Grade 6:** Literacy and math tested at the end of the junior division.

**Grade 9:** Math tested in the first year of secondary school.

**Grade 10:** Literacy as a graduation requirement.


The OSSLT is a provincial test of literacy (reading and writing) skills students have acquired by grade ten and are based on the literacy skills expected in the Ontario Curriculum across all subject areas up to the end of grade nine (EQAO, 2013).

In the reading component of the test, students use reading strategies to interact with, and construct meaning from, a variety of narrative, information and graphic selections to construct an understanding of the meaning of the texts (EQAO, 2011). Students are asked to demonstrate their understanding of explicit and implicit meanings as well as to connect their understanding of text to their personal experience and knowledge (EQAO, 2011).

In the writing component, students are prompted to write two short-responses, a series of paragraphs expressing an opinion and a news report. Through their responses, students are expected to demonstrate their ability to communicate ideas and information clearly and coherently (EQAO, 2011). The passing of the OSSLT for all students to graduate from high school became mandatory in 2002 and continues to be mandatory today. Students who do not pass the OSSLT on the first try are allowed to take the test again the following year. In addition, students are encouraged to enrol in the Ontario Secondary Literacy Course (OSSLC) to meet the literacy graduation requirement if they present literacy challenges.

The OSSLC is a full-credit Grade 12 course that is offered as part of the English program in Ontario secondary schools to ensure that students have the essential competencies in reading and writing that they will need to succeed at school, work, and in daily life (Ministry of Education, 2003). The reading and writing competencies required from the OSSLT form the instructional and assessment core of the course. Students who successfully complete this course meet the provincial literacy requirement for graduation and earn one credit (Ministry of Education, 2003).

The previous section on literacy provides the foundation for the remaining literature review in terms of essential sills and key definitions relating to youth literacy. Namely, the definition of literacy as a continuum of lifelong learning that interacts with a variety of social institutions and incorporates a multitude of essential skills and competencies. It is also beneficial to have a basic understanding of the OSSLT to reference when creating and designing literacy programs for youth. Before we explore specific program models and interventions, however, it is important to discuss literacy and its connection to youth more specifically.
3.0 LITERACY AND YOUTH

In order to develop effective programs and interventions for youth, it is important to understand why literacy is important in the first place. Youth are unique and different from other demographic groups such as children, adults and seniors and, as a result, programs and interventions should be targeted to be both engaging and sensitive to adolescent physical, cognitive, and social-emotional developmental needs. Finally, a fuller understanding of the current state of youth literacy in Ontario and predictors of youth literacy are of importance. In the following section, these elements will be explored in greater detail.

3.1 WHY IS YOUTH LITERACY IMPORTANT

Research shows that youth with strong literacy skills are more likely to be successful in school, in securing employment and in participating successfully in community life (Fernandez, 1999). Initiatives for basic education, economic growth, health and family planning, and social justice are all strengthened and stabilized through attention to youth literacy (Education Development Centre, 2010). Furthermore, it is evident that stronger literacy skills are associated with higher income and greater social and civic engagement (Alberta Education, 2010).

The costs of inadequate literacy, on the other hand, can have a detrimental impact on the quality of life of both individuals and society. Research has demonstrated youth with poor literacy skills are more likely to drop out of school, experience unemployment for longer periods of time and have difficulty participating in community life (Fernandez, 1999).

Willms and Watson (2008) argue the literacy skills of youth are important for two reasons. One is that levels of youth literacy are largely attributable to the quantity of learning experiences during early childhood, and the primary and secondary years (Willms and Watson, 2008). Second, youth literacy is important looking forward, as it is the present youth cohort that will have the longest and most direct impact on future economic performance (Willms & Watson, 2008).

The economic and social implications of literacy and essential skills play a key role in various economic and social outcomes for Canadians. For example, Malcolmson (2001) explains there is a growing perception of cost related to providing for a class of undereducated young people who may face a lifetime of reliance on social safety nets, health care systems and, in more extreme cases, correctional institutions (Malcolmson, 2001).

Literacy has also been linked to health, both physical and mental, in more recent research (Community Literacy of Ontario, 2013; Hitchcock & Crawford, 2005; The Centre for Community Child Health, 2004). For example, the Centre for Community Child Health (2004) reported that poor literacy levels can have a direct and indirect effect on health. Literacy is important in reading and understanding prescription bottles, appointment slips, and other essential health related materials (Centre for Community Health, 2004). Furthermore, Community Literacy Ontario (2013) reports that Canadians with low literacy levels are more likely to suffer poorer health than Canadians with high levels of literacy and a person’s level of literacy is a key determinant of overall health.

The cost of low literacy levels also has a global impact. The World Literacy Foundation (2013), for example, released a report which discusses the economic costs of illiteracy. Results demonstrate the
Based on this information, it is apparent that investing in youth literacy programming is a requirement for the successful, healthy and prosperous development of youth.

### 3.2 PHYSICAL, COGNITIVE AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

When developing programs and interventions for youth it is important to have a basic understanding of youth development. Adolescence is a period characterized by rapid change, shifts in identity, social groups, interests, and communities (Literacy Gains, 2012). It is also a developmental period marked by important transitions and milestones (i.e., school, work, cultural or religious significance) (Literacy Gains, 2012).

In the following section the physical, cognitive, emotional and social development that occurs during adolescence will be discussed briefly by exploring typical characteristics during early adolescence (11-13 years of age), middle adolescence (14-18 years of age), and late adolescence (19-21 years of age).

#### Physical Development

The physical changes brought upon by puberty affect every aspect of the lives of adolescents (Literacy Gains, 2012). During early adolescence, youth undergo puberty, tremendous physical growth, and greater sexual interest. By middle adolescence, puberty is completed and physical growth slows for girls and continues for boys and during late adolescence young women typically are fully developed and young men continue to gain height, weight, muscle mass, and body hair (American Academy of Child and Adolescence, 2008).

Changing bodies may lead to changes in circles of friends, participation in activities such as sports, adults’ view of adolescents, and adolescents’ views of themselves (Literacy Gains, 2012).

#### Cognitive Development

Adolescents experience brain growth which explains a number of changes in learners cognitively (Literacy Gains, 2012). During early adolescence cognitive development is characterized by a growing capacity for abstract thought, limited thought to the future, expansion of intellectual interests and deepening moral thinking (American Academy of Child and Adolescence, 2008). During middle adolescence there is continued growth of capacity for abstract thought, greater capacity for setting goals, interest in moral reasoning, and thinking about the meaning of life. During late adolescence cognitive development is characterized by the ability to think ideas through, delay gratification, examine inner experiences, have increased concern for the future, and continued interest in moral reasoning (Literacy Gains, 2012). Adolescents’ intellectual and cognitive abilities are most often developed through practice, as such, instruction targeting these skills is crucial during these periods of brain growth (Literacy Gains, 2012).
### Social-Emotional Development

Adolescents often feel emotions more intensely than adults. Social-emotional development during early adolescence is often characterized by a struggle with a sense of identity, feelings of awkwardness about one’s self and body, increased conflict with parents, increased influence of peer group, desire for independence, moodiness, rule and limit testing, and a tendency to return to “childish” behaviour (American Academy of Child and Adolescence, 2008).

During middle adolescence, social-emotional development is characterized by intense self-involvement, continued adjustments to changing body, tendency to distance selves from parents, greater reliance on friends and feelings of love and passion (American Academy of Child and Adolescence, 2008).

Finally, during late adolescence, social-emotional development is demonstrated by a firmer sense of identity, increased emotional stability, increased concern for others, increased independence and self-reliance, importance of peer relationships, and development of more serious relationships (American Academy of Child Adolescence, 2008).

This section very briefly explored the stages of adolescent development and is by no means a full representation; however, when working with youth it is important to have a general understanding of these stages of development to support their unique needs and create relevant programming.

### 3.3 Status of Youth Literacy in Ontario

In order to create effective interventions and programs for youth to enhance literacy skills, it is important to have an understanding of the status of youth literacy in Canada and more specifically, Ontario.

According to the results from the PISA (2006), Canadian 15 year old students are among the best in the world in science, reading, and mathematics. Among the 57 countries surveyed, Canada ranked in the top seven (PISA, 2006). Likewise, Statistics Canada (2005) reported secondary school drop-out rates have decreased from approximately 18 percent over 15 years ago down to 10 percent today. Furthermore, in Ontario, the high school graduation rate has increased from 68 percent in 2003-2004 to 82 percent in 2010-2011 (Community Literacy of Ontario, 2013).

Although these findings suggest positive results for youth literacy in Canada, there is still need for improvement. If we examine these results alternatively, we see that 18 percent of young people dropped out before completing their high school education in Ontario (Community Literacy of Ontario, 2013). Furthermore, 16 percent of Ontario students who wrote the grade ten literacy test in the 2011-2012 school year were not successful (Community Literacy Ontario, 2013).

Although Canadian youth rank very well in international standards, far too many still have inadequate literacy skills.

### 3.4 Predictors of Youth Literacy

Despite intentions to ensure everyone has access to education and programs to enhance literacy, barriers still exist and are largely overrepresented in specific groups in Canada. Literacy requirements
continue to vary among social and economic groups, with low levels concentrated among the poor, the undereducated, seniors, Aboriginal people and members of minority populations (Decoda Literacy Solutions, 2012). In terms of youth literacy, the following four categories are of particular interest when discussing predictors of literacy: socioeconomic status (SES), gender, ethnicity, and out-of-school youth. In the following section, these categories will be explored further as they relate to predictors of youth literacy.

**Socioeconomic Status (SES)**

Research has shown an important predictor of youth literacy is family socioeconomic status (Willms, 2006; Willms & Watson, 2008; TD Bank Financial, 2013). Harper and Aglin (2010) explain it is an unfortunate reality that children from low income families often do not do as well at school as children from middle and upper class backgrounds. A recent survey conducted by the Toronto District School Board showed that among students from the lowest income bracket (parents who made less than $30,000 a year), less than half (47%) were meeting the provincial standard in reading (Rushowy, 2010). Alternatively, among students from the highest income bracket (parents who made $100,000 a year or more) nearly two thirds (66%) were meeting the provincial standards (Rushowy, 2010).

Harper and Aglin (2010) suggest the gap in youth literacy between affluent and poor may be due to a number of factors. For example, children from disadvantaged homes often have less access to reading materials such as books, newspapers and magazines, may attend under-resourced schools and day care, have less access to technology, and the parents may spend less time reading with their children at home, due to challenging work schedules (Harper & Aglin, 2010).

Canada is doing better than most countries, however, in ensuring that students learn to read and write regardless of household income (Canadian Council on Learning, 2010). The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) measured 15 year-old students’ reading, mathematics, and science literacy in 2009. Results found that Canada has less variation in reading and mathematics results between students from high and low socio-economic backgrounds—implying less inequality between children from rich and poor families. In absolute terms, however, lower socio-economic family conditions still reduced literacy performance in youth (TD Bank Financial Group, n.d.).

**Gender**

There has been some research to demonstrate differences between males and females pertaining to literacy and youth. The IALS (2005), which deems a youth as a person aged 16 to 25, found that Canadian female youth have stronger prose literacy skills than their male counterparts while males scored higher in quantitative literacy (numeracy and math) (IALS, 2005). The 2008 report, State of Learning in Canada: Toward a Learning Future, found that in 2004-2005 more boys (13%) than girls (7.5%) exhibited delayed development in the area of communication skills. Likewise, this report also concluded the number of young males who are dropping out of school, relinquishing graduation, and dispensing with college or university education is a source of continuing concern (Boys Literacy Teacher Inquiry, 2005).

Furthermore, provincial results from the Ontario Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) for students in grades three and six show that boys do not perform as well as girls in reading and writing (Boys Literacy Teacher Inquiry, 2005) and results from the EQAO OSSLT in 2011-2012 indicate more girls than boys continue to pass the test (EQAO, 2012).
Aboriginal and Immigrant Youth

Research has demonstrated lower literacy levels among some Aboriginal populations compared to other groups in Canada. This is especially apparent for Aboriginal communities living on reserves. The Ontario Native Literacy Coalition (2003) states that in Ontario, 31 percent of Native people living on reserve have no formal education or less than grade nine compared with 10 percent in the non-Native population. Likewise, research shows that youth aged 16 to 25 whose parents had little or no education, scored even lower literacy levels than similar youth (Ontario Native Literacy Coalition, 2003).

Whether a youth is an immigrant and if so, how recently he or she immigrated is also a factor that warrants consideration (Essential Skills Ontario, 2012; Willms, 1997; Willms & Watson, 2008). Results from the IALS (2005) suggest that newly arrived immigrants tend to possess literacy scores that are substantially below the average of their native-born counterparts; however, the gap gradually decreases the longer immigrants are in the country (Willms & Watson, 2003). Currently, there is no found research to answer the question if this learning curve could be steepened dramatically with intensive language programs for new immigrants (Willms & Watson, 2008).

Out-of-School Youth

Research has largely concluded youth who are out-of-school, or drop-out of school, are at a greater risk of poor reading and writing skills (Raudenbush et al., 1996; Willms, 1997). A study completed by Willms (1997) for example, surveyed out-of-school youth and found that a larger percentage perceived themselves as having poor reading and writing skills compared to youth who were in-school. Moreover, the differences between those who dropped out of school and high school graduates were only slightly reduced when control variables were removed suggesting the lower scores associated with dropping out are not simply an artifact of the respondent’s family background (Willms, 1997).

The previous section highlights the importance of ensuring youth are equipped with the proper education and opportunity to develop literacy skills. It also demonstrates there is still work needed to be done to balance inequalities between youth from minority groups and disadvantaged backgrounds. These are all important factors to consider when assessing what kinds of interventions may be most beneficial in improving outcomes for youth literacy. In the following sections of this review, literacy programming will be explored in four domains including, family based literacy, school based literacy, community based literacy and collaborative-based literacy.
4.0 FAMILY BASED LITERACY

The majority of family literacy program models focus on children and parents. Although not directly relevant to the importance of youth literacy, the following section on family literacy has been included in this review for a number of reasons. Namely, the incorporation of family literacy is an important element in the definition of life-long learning and there is a well-established link between the literacy levels of parents and the subsequent achievement of their children (Action for Family Literacy Ontario, 2006). Likewise, providing effective literacy in the family has shown to have a positive impact on literacy skills in youth.

4.1 FAMILY LITERACY DEFINED

The term family literacy refers to literacy activities that take place in the everyday lives of families and to the programs that aim to increase family literacy in the home (Malcolmson, 2001).

Malcolmson (2001) categorizes definitions of family literacy in two groups: (1) definitions that view family literacy as what families do together in the home and in the community or neighbourhood; and (2) definitions that focus on what families and literacy practitioners do together in planned programs, usually located in community settings, but sometimes integrated into home-based support services for parents (Malcolmson, 2001, p. 66). Moreover, the literacy practices of the broader community influence, and are influenced by, the literacy practices of families (Homer, 2008).

Family literacy is not just about reading and writing, but is about developing stronger relationships between parents and their children, getting families involved in the education of their children, and building stronger families and healthier communities (Action for Family Literacy Ontario, 2006). Research demonstrates that crucial literacy development occurs between birth and five years of age as this is the time when the foundation is laid for literacy and lifelong learning (Alberta Education, 2008; Legacies Now, 2010). The higher the level of a parents education, and the more often literacy practices are embedded in family daily life, the higher the likelihood the child will succeed in school (Community Literacy Ontario, 2013). As such, parents play a vital role as their children’s first teachers.

4.2 YOUTH AND FAMILY LITERACY

The large majority of literature and research on family literacy focuses specifically on parents and families of young children. The best known programs are designed for young children and their adult caregivers (Morgan, Nutbrown & Hannon, 2009).

Research on family influences and the lives of adolescents, however, indicates that involving families can augment the efficacy of many other strategies for improving a variety of youth outcomes (Cobb, Meltzer & Williams, 2003). Likewise, some research suggests that parental and family attitudes toward school and the emphasis they place on education are better indicators of academic success than family structure, demographics, and income (Cobb, Meltzer & Williams, 2003; Henderson & Mapp, 2002).
As youth develop and move through elementary and secondary grades, parents/guardians generally become less involved for many reasons (Morgan, Nutbrown & Hannon, 2009). The National Urban League (2008) explains there are many reasons why this is the case, including that youth are seeking more independence, autonomy and self-determination, families may live further from the high school and be less likely to spend time there, secondary school curricula becomes more difficult and complex for parents and guardians to understand, students have more teachers, and parents of older children are more likely to be employed. As such, the following four areas of support have been suggested for organizations serving/training parents in supporting youth literacy:

**School Literacy:** Parents/guardians should be aware of the school district’s efforts to support adolescent literacy. This includes informing and perhaps training parents on the academic standards, testing requirements and graduation expectations for middle and high school students. Parents/guardians should also have the opportunity to tour schools and meet administration to help strengthen school-family relationships. Parents/guardians should be introduced to useful techniques for working with school personnel and teachers on literacy goals for their young person. They should be supported, though trainings on how to set goals with the teachers of their young person and to create systems for monitoring their young person’s academic performance and literacy development.

**Home Literacy:** Parents/guardians must be supported on how best to integrate the literacy expectations from school into the home environment. Parents/guardians should talk to their young people as often as possible, asking questions about their school work, books or magazines they may be reading and current events. Parents/guardians should also provide a “text rich” home environment by placing books, periodicals, newspapers or displaying framed poetry or quotes on the walls. Parents/guardians should also model good literacy behaviour by reading themselves. By modeling good reading habits, parents/guardians are reinforcing the importance of literacy in the home.

**Computer/Technological Literacy:** Parents/guardians must be aware that computer/technology “literacy” exists and is ever changing. Parents/Guardians should be aware of the technology adolescents are using in school and out-of-school. Are computers used in the school and for what purpose? Is your young person using technology in his/her after-school program? If so, how is it supporting literacy? Parents/Guardians should set guidelines and limits for the use of all these technologies, ensuring that their young person has a balance between traditional literacy (i.e., sustained periods of reading, writing and conversation) and new media “literacies” (i.e., Internet, cell phones, computer gaming, texting).

(National Urban League, 2008, p. 1)

Some research indicates there are more programs located in schools that are targeting school-age children as well as preschoolers and their families. For example, an increasing number of Canadian classroom teachers are making the effort to learn about their students’ home literacy practices and to view those home literacy practices as resources for curriculum development (Morgan, Nutbrown & Hannon, 2009).

The previous section outlined what is meant by family literacy programs as they relate to youth. It is evident that, although family based literacy programs are most often directed towards families and younger children, the incorporation of family literacy in the lives of youth is important for a number
of reasons. In the following section, models of effective family literacy programs are presented and discussed in greater detail.

4.3 MODELS OF FAMILY LITERACY

A review of the literature on family literacy reveals that most programs encompass similar goals and components. Typically, family literacy programs located in the community operate in libraries, family resource centres, community-based literacy and upgrading programs, community centres, schools, and Ontario Early Years Centres (Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2006). Likewise, the central goal of most programs is to provide children with developmentally appropriate learning opportunities to support “school readiness” with a focus on increasing parental involvement in children’s literacy development (Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2006, p. 32). Other family literacy programs are home-based and involve parents or caregivers directly.

Malcolmson (2001) explains that effective family literacy programs most often incorporate the following elements:

- Provide regular, intensive literacy support over long periods of time.
- Are flexible in design and adaptive in the strategies used.
- Are the products of strong community partnerships.
- Are embedded in webs of community literacy supports such as libraries and adult education programs.
- Strengthen staff competence through continuous training and growth opportunities.
- Address the total needs of the children with a major emphasis on literacy skills.
- Educate parents about quality early childhood programs.
- Address parent and family needs for developing short-and long-term goals that coincide with their educational pursuits.
- Integrate early childhood and related program components.
- Adapt to the work and family lives of parents.
- Utilize technology.
- Address parent competence in various parenting skills.
- Enhance the parent-child relationship to the highest possible level of functioning.
- Strengthen the literacy focus within the parent and child relationship.
- Focus on building vocabulary, literacy enjoyment, and comprehension of concepts and ideas.
- Assure that families have the health and well-being to carry out the literacy and developmental tasks of parenting and family life.

(Malcolmson, 2001, p. 403-405)

The Action for Family Literacy Ontario (2006) builds on the previous explanation to incorporate the importance of valuing families’ use of first languages and diverse cultural practices and providing resources that increase adults’ and children’s motivation to learn.

Often referred to the pedagogical approach, certain models of family literacy are described under a method of teaching or instruction. Literacy B.C. (2008) for example, proposes a four-component comprehensive approach when delivering a family-focused approach to literacy. This includes: direct adult, parent education and support, direct child, and parent and child together.
Although these components operate most effectively when fully integrated, they are often housed in one location/program or offered in various locations/programs in a given community (Literacy B.C., n.d.).

Similarly, Essential Skills Ontario (2012) presents a model originally created by Nickse (1993) as a typology for family literacy programs, basing categories on the extent to which participants receive direct teaching and on the intended audience for the program activities. This model includes:

1. Direct Adult/Direct Child: parents and pre-schoolers participate in separate, structured literacy experiences.
2. Indirect Adult/Direct Child: the program is developed for the children. Parents may attend, but they do not receive direct support for their personal educational goals.
3. Direct Adult/Indirect Child: Parents participate in structured literacy activities and/or language classes. Parenting issues might be addressed. Children might receive childcare, but children do not participate.
4. Indirect Adult/Indirect Child: parents and children attend programs such as library story times that encourage sharing and enjoyment of literacy experiences together. No direct teaching is provided.

(Essential Skills Ontario, 2012, p.29)

Likewise, Essential Skills Ontario (2012) discusses a model to explain the concept of learning in family literacy programs. Here, two conceptualizations of family literacy are presented including learning to participate in literacy enhancing activities with your child, and learning to directly increase literacy skills levels (Essential Skills Ontario, 2012, p. 13). Based on research conducted by Essential Skills Ontario (2012) they assert the focus of most family literacy programs is generally on facilitating the emergence of knowledge and skills that support literacy acquisition, rather than on achieving prescribed learning standards.
In the previous section, models of family literacy programs were explored to highlight components of effective models. Evidence suggests a variety of components and multiple methods can be involved in creating an effective family based literacy program. In the following section, specific programs relevant to family literacy will be presented.

### 4.4 PROGRAMS AND FAMILY LITERACY

There are a variety of programs which represent effective family based literacy models. In the following section, major themes derived from the literature on family based programs will be presented focusing on five main types, including: Ontario Early Year Centres, distribution of family literacy resources, family literacy nights, literacy workshops for parents and family tutoring.

#### Ontario Early Years Centres

Perhaps one of the better known family literacy programs is the Ontario Early Years Centre (OEYC) programs which provide sites across the province for children up to age six and their parents/caregivers to participate in a range of programs and activities. OEYC programs and services are free and universal in their service delivery approach and focus on a variety of services, including: those that prepare individuals for parenting, those that assist parents in supporting their child’s emergent skills, those that allow parents to learn new parenting skills, and those that offer information and referral to other community programs (Essential Skills Ontario, 2012).

Although family literacy programming offered by the OEYC may vary from one location to another, most programs involve parent-child interaction (Essential Skills Ontario, 2012). Parents are targeted for the purpose of learning literacy-enhancing strategies to be applied on the child with the goal of facilitating and supporting the child’s literacy development (Essential Skills Ontario, 2012). The chart below presents some of the structured and unstructured programs offered at OEYCs.
Distribution of Family Literacy Resources

Some family literacy programs focus solely on the distribution of resources to families. For example, community volunteers and/or staff of literacy or family support organizations develop and distribute literacy "kits" to families (Redman, 2008). Resources generally consist of children’s books, games, craft activities and materials, and information for parents.

Resources can also be made available online for parents as well as for children and youth. For example, many school boards have developed web pages to provide information on the OSSLT to provide students and parents with hands-on experience for the kinds of material they will encounter in the test (Ministry of Education, 2004).

Family Literacy Nights

Family literacy nights are planned events to bring children and their parents into a school or public library for a reading experience (Chance, 2010). During these events, typically parents learn how to share books and read with their children and have time to share interactive reading activities.

The North West Territories Literacy Council (n.d.) created a How To Kit for family literacy in which a variety of activities are discussed ranging from reading and telling stories, cooking, saying rhymes, playing games, and making crafts. This kit also includes tips for scheduling and organizing family literacy nights and resources for parents.

As Chance (2010) explains, however, no matter how programs are scheduled, there are two major underlying objectives for family literacy nights including, the enticement of parents into the school so they can become comfortable with an educational system, and to give parents time to practice techniques to help their children read and be successful in school.

Literacy Workshops for Parents

During literacy workshops, parents participate in workshop training to help them support the development of their children’s literacy skills at home (Redman, 2008). Some programs help parents develop reading strategies and encourage them to read to children at home, while other programs teach parents to engage in dramatic play, which develops children’s self-esteem and discipline (Redman, 2008). Other programs provide information to parents such as resources and brochures.

The Region of Peel, for example, through the Ontario Early Years, provides a variety of language and literacy workshops for parents covering a variety of topics, including: brain development and sensory stimulation, helping your child learn to talk, language learning and your child, language in play, reading and story books, creating a print rich home, telling and writing down stories, mathematical language, and babies and play (Region of Peer, n.d.).

Family Tutoring

Family tutoring programs help parents and tutors work with children and youth to develop and improve their reading and writing skills. Goals of family tutoring include: providing parents, tutors, and volunteer readers with new skills and strategies they can use, to help their children or learners with reading and writing; developing a positive attitude towards lifelong learning; providing reading and writing support; and to working with the whole family to strengthen literacy skills (Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2006).
4.5 DOES FAMILY LITERACY WORK?

There is a lack of research that evaluates family literacy programming. The majority of literature available discusses the various types of program models, as outlined above. What is evident, however, is that children do benefit from family literacy programs. For example, research has demonstrated children’s achievement in school improves, children attend school more regularly and are more likely to complete their education, children’s general knowledge improves, children are healthier, and they have more positive attitudes toward school (Cobb, Meltzer & Williams, 2003; Essential Skills Ontario, 2012; Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2012; Redman, 2008).

In addition, research suggests that parents also benefit from family literacy programs. For example, parents persist in family literacy programs longer than in other types of adult literacy program, as parents’ attitude about education improves, the value they perceive in education increases, and as parents’ knowledge about parenting options and child development increase they report more confidence in their abilities to foster positive development in their children (Cobb, Meltzer & Williams, 2003; Essential Skills Ontario, 2012; Ontario Literacy Coalition; Redman, 2008).

As stated before, there is a lack of research to account for family literacy programs. There is a need to evaluate programs to share best-practice research in the field of family literacy programming. Furthermore, some literature suggests gaps exist in current family literacy program provisions. For example, Essential Skills Ontario (2012) notes that there are issues in terms of coordination and integration of family literacy programs with early learning programs as well as addressing the literacy skill needs of parents/guardians.

Likewise, research explains there are few partnerships that exist among child-focused and adult-focused literacy programs for the purpose of information sharing, improving programs and outcomes, and avoiding duplication of services (Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2012).

Finally, some research explains that while there are training opportunities for Ontario’s family literacy practitioners, many do not find them adequate or identify a need for more in-depth training (Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2006). For example, a survey conducted by the Ontario Literacy Coalition (2006) with family literacy practitioners, found 70 percent of respondents would like more professional development opportunities.

The previous section on family based literacy programs provides an overview of the best practice literature currently available. In doing so, family literacy was defined by discussing common definitions which typically focus on families and young children. Following this, family literacy was explored more specifically in the context of youth and family literacy. Here, it was demonstrated that parents can be involved in youth literacy programs in a variety of ways depending on the program model. Next, models of family literacy were presented which outlined a variety of components found in effective programs. Finally, family literacy programs were explored by reviewing Ontario Early Year Centres, distribution of family literacy resources, family literacy nights, literacy workshops for parents, and family tutoring programs.

Literacy programming is also important in other contexts. In the following section, school based literacy will be explored in more detail.
5.0 SCHOOL BASED LITERACY

The goal of literacy instruction in schools is to enable students to make meaning from and in the wide range of texts they will encounter and produce at school and in the world (Literacy for Learning, 2004). There is a wide array of literature that discusses successful components and models of utilizing literacy in the education system. Although research suggests the incorporation of a collective model to address literacy is most effective, educational institutions are still considered primarily responsible for teaching literacy skills to both children and youth.

The following section highlights the major themes found in the literature on school based literacy and discusses models of best-practice.

5.1 MODELS OF SCHOOL LITERACY

Various reports have discussed successful components of school based literacy programs. To assist teachers and administrators in developing a cohesive approach to adolescent literacy, the Center for Resource Management (CRM) developed the Adolescent Literacy Support Framework (Meltzer, Smith, & Clark, 2001). This framework, based on research from a number of fields, provides a comprehensive overview of components to be addressed in effective literacy programs in middle and high schools. The four components are:

- Address student motivation to read and write (i.e., making connections to students’ lives, having students interact with each other and with text, and creating responsive classrooms).
- Implement research-based literacy strategies for teaching and learning (i.e., teacher modeling, strategy instruction, uses of multiple forms of assessment, emphasis on reading, writing, speaking, listening and thinking, and creating a student-centered classroom).
- Integrate reading and writing across the curriculum (i.e., supporting English, math, science and social studies classrooms through literacy development).
- Ensure support, sustainability, and focus through organizational structures and leadership capacity (i.e., meets the agreed-upon goals for adolescents in that particular community, utilizes best practices, involves ongoing support for teacher professional development, and has a clear process for program review and evaluation).  
  \((\text{Meltzer, Smith & Clark, 2001, p. 18})\)

In addition, Reading Next (n.d.) proposes nine elements of effective adolescent literacy programs for instructional improvement, including:

- Direct, explicit comprehension instruction
- Effective instructional principles embedded in content
- Motivation and self-directed learning
- Text-based collaborative learning
- Strategic tutoring
- Diverse texts
- Intensive writing
- A technology component
- Ongoing formative assessment of students
Irvin (2006) explains that these elements can be found in dynamic, student-centered, classrooms where students interact with each other, the teacher, a variety of texts, and technology. As such, this research suggests adolescent learners should have multiple opportunities for choice, interaction, and technology.

Another model found in the literature was created by the York Region District School Board which was heavily influenced by research and literature on educational effectiveness (York Region District School Board, 2007). This model encompasses six guiding principles to provide a vision of effective literacy instruction in the classroom to promote improved student achievement in literacy learning and to foster a commitment to lifelong learning:

- Literacy is the responsibility of every teacher in every classroom. Explicit literacy instruction is planned and takes place within and across divisions and departments.
- Assessment drives instruction. Use of system, school, classroom, and individual literacy achievement data directs ongoing instructional decisions and actions.
- Literacy instruction motivates, engages, and supports all students in their learning.
- Ongoing professional learning, collaboration, and leadership support effective literacy instruction.
- Literacy instructional practices are regularly reviewed and refined to ensure that the needs of all learners are met.
- School, home, and community partnerships enhance literacy instruction.

(York Region District School Board, 2007, p.5)

**Engagement and Motivation**

One of the most common features discussed in the literature on school-based literacy is the need to motivate and engage students in programs. Studies of adolescent literacy programs have found that emphasizing grades is not effective in motivating students to become better readers and writers over a long period and it is necessary to interest students in literacy (Lander, 2010).

Motivation and engagement are important elements in any literacy program. Engaged readers and writers are always motivated, and once they are engaged in a specific reading or writing task, they often take pleasure in it and are motivated to continue with the task because of the pleasure it brings (National Institute for Literacy, 2007).

Research provides insight into what exactly motivation and engagement mean in school literacy programs. One study, for example, asked students to identify what they needed in order to be engaged in the classroom. Results demonstrated students requested the following ten elements: to be taken seriously, to be challenged to think, to nurture self-respect, to show how they can make a difference, to allow students to do things their own way, to be pointed towards goals, to be made to feel important, to build on their interests, to tap into their creativity, and to bring out their best self (Educational Leadership, 2008).

Other research suggests providing students with opportunities and choice to select for themselves, the materials they read and topics they research, can enhance motivation and engagement (Biancarosa, 2004; Learning Point Associates, 2005; Malcolmson, 2001). Building choice into the students’ school day by incorporating independent reading time is an example. Self-regulation to encourage
motivation, Biancarosa (2004) argues, however, is only developed when students are given choices and the instructional support and aids needed to succeed at their chosen task.

Furthermore, other research suggests ways to engage and motivate students in literacy and learning is to promote relevancy in what students read and learn, for example by “tuning in” to the lives of students in order to understand what they find relevant and why (Biancarosa, 2004).

**Technology Component**

Technology plays a significant role in teaching literacy in school. Technology is both a facilitator of literacy and a medium of literacy and, as Biancarosa and Snow (2004) argue, effective adolescent literacy programs should use technology as both an instructional tool and instructional topic. Examples include the use of Smart Board technology, which has shown to be very effective with all students, especially those with special needs, and the incorporation of different activities such as website design, podcasting, blogging and filmmaking (Consultus Business Centre, 2009).

Technology can help teachers provide needed supports for struggling readers, including instructional reinforcement and opportunities for guided practice (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). For example, by incorporating computer programs that help students improve decoding, spelling, fluency, and vocabulary. The purposeful integration of technology can positively influence students by making school meaningful and by offering a stimulating environment (Literacy for Learning, 2004).

**The Learning Environment**

Creating a learning environment to help adolescents in their development is a crucial role of any educator. Some literature discusses the importance of “class building” to ensure youth feel comfortable as active participants and to break down barriers to provide supportive learning environments (Malcolmson, 2001).

Literacy Gains (2012), for example, suggests the following five components to help educators create a positive learning environment for students:

- **Affirmation**: when learners feel a sense of affirmation they feel listened to, they feel safe, accepted, and acknowledged.
- **Challenge**: when learners feel an appropriate sense of challenge they are engaged in learning that complements who they are. They are stretching their abilities, they are accountable, and they know they are accomplishing goals that are different than what they have achieved in the past.
- **Contribution**: when students feel they are making a contribution, they feel like they make a difference, they bring perspective, they are connected, and they help others succeed.
- **Power and Autonomy**: when learners have a sense of power and autonomy, they feel they can make choices, and they know what quality and success looks like and they know how to get there.
- **Purpose**: when students feel a sense of purpose they understand what they need to do, they know they make a difference, they see significance in what they are doing, and they are absorbed in a process to a desired goal.

(Literacy Gains, 2012, p. 20)
Furthermore, research demonstrates a large majority of the factors that lead to successful engagement in literacy learning involves good teachers who are dedicated to working with youth and are able to develop rapport with them (Department of Labour, 2010).

**Effective Instruction and Professional Development**

Effective instruction is often cited as an important component in school based literacy research. For example, the National Council of Teachers of English (2007) suggests the following strategies for teachers to improve adolescent literacy instruction:

- Teaching with approaches that foster critical thinking, questioning, student decision-making, and independent learning.
- Addressing the diverse needs of adolescents whose literacy abilities vary considerably.
- Possessing personal characteristics such as caring about students, being creative and collaborative, and loving to read and write.
- Developing a solid knowledge about and commitment to literacy instruction.
- Using significant quality and quantity of literacy activities, such as hands-on, scaffolding, mini lessons, discussions, group work, student choice, ample feedback, and multiple forms of expression.
- Participating in ongoing professional development.
- Developing quality relationships with students.
- Managing the classroom effectively.

*(National Council of Teachers of English, 2007, p. 1)*

Professional development is also cited in the literature as an important component in teaching literacy to ensure proper dialogue and approaches are being practiced. In York Region, for example, the district school board has developed a comprehensive literacy plan known as the Literacy Collaborative (LC). The LC is a learning structure that embraces long-term professional development designed to provide a comprehensive school-wide approach to literacy instruction.

The goals of the LC are to increase students’ literacy achievement by using assessment data for instruction and selection of resources, build teacher and administrator capacity in literacy instruction and establish sustainable, collaborative professional learning communities within and among schools across the district (York Region District School Board, 2007). In doing so, a core literacy team at the school provides on-site professional development to support balanced literacy programming and monitors the ongoing progress of all students (York Region District School Board, 2007).

**Evaluation and Assessment**

Evaluation of literacy programming in schools was discussed as an important component to determine which aspects of the program are working, which ones need to be revised, and to make decisions about instruction (Lander, 2010). Districts and school boards can help teachers and instructors by providing support of this type by making evaluation tools easy and accessible. Typically, research suggests ongoing formative and summative assessment of students and programs as they relate to literacy. Formative assessment includes the informal, often daily assessment of how students are progressing under current instructional practices (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). Summative assessment, on the other hand, is more formal and provides data that are reported for accountability and research purposes (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004).
The previous section explored common models of school based literacy programs. In doing so various elements were discussed which often comprise these programs. In the next section, specific literacy programs found in schools will be presented.

5.2 PROGRAMS OF SCHOOL BASED LITERACY

It is unlikely that any single program will address all the literacy needs of a school or student. Schools are complex institutions composed of many different types of students who require various types of instruction (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). In the following section, some of the program types will be briefly discussed, including: reading and writing skills and strategies in the classroom, work-experience programs, intervention programs, OSSLT preparation, tutoring programs, homework clubs, afterschool/summer programs, support programs for teachers and staff, and English as a second language programs.

Reading and Writing Skills and Strategies in the Classroom

To improve reading skills and strategies, EQAO (2012) suggests providing daily reading time in all subjects, both independent and guided, to increase fluency and proficiency and to build subject-specific knowledge and vocabulary. Examples include using small-group activities such as reciprocal teaching which can simultaneously build multiple comprehension strategies such as summarizing and clarifying vocabulary and content (EQAO, 2012). In EQAO’s OSSLT Curriculum Connections, links are identified between the OSSLT and course-based reading and writing expectations to enhance subject specific supports and prepare students for the OSSLT.

Using differentiated learning structures is also recommended to provide multiple ways for students to demonstrate their learning (i.e., oral and visual). For students who struggle with print format, incorporating visual tools, such as concept maps and word charts can be useful.

In terms of writing, research suggests providing students with samples to compare with their own work so they can identify differences, for example, by using a newspaper to show the different elements such as a heading, objective, point of view, dates, quotations and narrative. Writing templates may also be useful for some students to help them understand the relationships among text forms, content, audience and purpose (EQAO, 2012).

In addition, consistently providing opportunities for non-fiction writing in the classroom allows students to practice writing. Likewise, EQOA (2012) suggests using a variety of instructional strategies such as think-aloud, place mat, group writing, whole class discussions and software to guide this work.

Another technique discussed in The Summary of Results and Strategies for Teachers (EQAO, 2012) suggests teaching students revising and editing strategies to build writing proficiency, for example, providing time for peer editing of a first draft of an assignment.

Work-Experience Programs

High schools across Canada offer a wide variety of work-experience programs for students. In Ontario, students can enrol in the Special High Skills Major (SHSM) program, the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP), and co-operative education programs. These programs are also commonly referred to as school-to-work programs (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009).
Current research on the effectiveness of such programs suggest that they have a number of important benefits including, improved self-esteem and increased motivation; however, there is little evidence to suggest they contribute to improved academic achievement (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009). For example, a research report released by the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) (2009) reviewed 35 international studies that looked into the effectiveness of high-school work-experience programs and concluded that the impact on academic achievement (i.e., changes in grades, grade-point average, and standardized scores) was inconclusive. More positive results, however, were found regarding the impact of such programs on high school graduation rates and career preparation (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009).

There is some research to suggest employees who offer literacy and essential skill programs within the workplace will see an increase in positive safety records, improved worker confidence, productivity and performance, and increased staff retention (Consultus Business Centre, 2009).

**Intervention Programs**

Intervention programs are discussed in the literature as designed specifically to target teachers and/or students in middle and high school grades who are reading significantly below grade level and to provide literacy instruction that is intended to increase achievement at a rate faster than average (Shanahan, 2005). Intervention programs may be intended as core or supplemental for an entire class, an individual, or a small group and may include laboratory or computer-based instruction (Shanahan, 2005).

The purpose of intervention programs are to accelerate literacy development so that students are able to make substantial progress towards accomplishing reading tasks appropriate for their current grade level (Institute of Education Sciences, 2008).

**OSSLT Preparation**

Most school boards have developed learning materials and practice tests which mirror questions found on the OSSLT. Whether in the form of reading materials or in-class preparation (or a combination of both), literature suggests these methods are effective (EQOA, 2012).

The Halton District School Board, for example, produced a 23-page student guide for the OSSLT which provides students with both general guidelines for large-scale test taking and specific advice on handling the types of questions they will encounter on the OSSLT. This guide is written and illustrated in an approachable and friendly style and is entitled “Hey you in Grade 10: how about a few pointers for that literacy test.” The Ministry of Education (2003) states this guide condenses a wealth of information into an easily digestible and highly accessible format for grade ten students.

At Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board, student success on the OSSLT has been enhanced considerably with an integrated, cross-curricular approach that stresses consistent development of language skills across all curriculum areas and distributes workload among all teachers, rather than placing exclusive responsibility for literacy on the English department (The Ministry of Education, 2003).

In this approach, all grade ten students receive three weeks of literacy preparation in all four of their classes. Materials are distributed to students in homeroom classes and students are provided with
individual packages which they are responsible to bring to their classes each day. On the second day, they bring their literacy materials to their second period class, where they complete assigned exercises with the teacher. This process continues on days three and four, rotating through each period, and students spend a minimum of one-half hour working on their literacy assignments during the school day. The success of this approach is reflected in the comments of students who have taken the OSSLT with far greater comfort and confidence (Ministry of Education, 2003).

Furthermore, secondary schools in the Lakehead District School Board have devised an overall school-based strategy for improving student performance on the OSSLT. This strategy states that:

- Individual schools take primary responsibility for putting programs in place to improve student success, and are considered accountable for test results.
- Each school creates a literacy team, which includes representatives from most or all subject areas.
- Various strategies are employed by each literacy team, which uses resource materials provided by EQAO, and materials developed by board staff.
- After test results have been received, school leaders meet to share strategies of their literacy teams and to develop best practices.

(Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 23)

**Tutoring Programs**

Many Canadian schools have introduced tutoring programs that take place during or after school to assist students succeed at school (Harper & Aglin, 2010). These programs typically involve teachers, parents, volunteers from the community, and fellow students who work one-on-one or in small groups with students who require additional assistance (Harper & Aglin, 2010). Many teachers, educators and researchers report positive effects of tutoring on students’ academic success.

For example, at the District School Board in Niagara, grade nine students who are identified as having weak reading and writing skills can receive one-to-one tutoring from senior students. This program is designed specifically to prepare students for the OSSLT by first beginning with a diagnostic literacy test, modelled after the OSSLT, to determine areas of weakness. Following, the senior student tutor, under supervision of the English teacher, researches strategies for teaching literacy skills and then applies these strategies in one-to-one tutoring session, with particular emphasis on those areas of weakness identified in the diagnostic test. The Ministry of Education (2003) reports that this program has proven highly effective and has provided a valuable learning experience for both groups of students.

Research conducted by Frontier College (2006) of 13 programs, including one-to-one tutoring and peer tutoring, for grade 7-12 students in Ontario, found that in all programs, the students benefited from the individualized attention they received and the mentorship the tutors provided to the students. Likewise, students who returned in following years did so because they reported the program helped them to do better academically and they enjoyed the program (Frontier College, 2006). Furthermore, 94 percent of students stated their study skills have improved through the tutoring program and 100 percent reported they would recommend the program to other peers (Frontier College, 2006).

This same research report also found that one-on-one programs work most effectively with grade 7 and 8 students, while for high school students, drop-in programs and in-school tutoring worked best.
Homework Clubs

Some schools have implemented after-school programs in the form of homework clubs with a focus on helping students with homework. According to Frontier College (2006), homework clubs are typically supported by a student centered individualized learning philosophy which allows for students’ individual needs and goals to be met as they do their own lessons with the help of tutors. In this setting, students typically bring their homework to the session and actively contribute to their own learning (Harper & Aglin, 2010).

Research completed by Frontier College (2006) reports that students from low income families who attended homework clubs improved academically, showed significant gains in oral reading ability and in English grades. Moreover, when asked, most students reported they felt the program helped them do better at school, they enjoyed the program, and they liked working with the tutors (Frontier College, 2006). Interestingly, many of the students who participated in the homework clubs reviewed in this study were English language learners, suggesting these individuals may receive additional benefits from interacting with and receiving homework help from highly competent English speakers (Frontier College, 2006).

Afterschool/Summer Programs

Afterschool programs that employ a positive youth development approach can help students to overcome critical barriers to learning and support academic achievement and well-being (Hall et al., 2003). Afterschool programs are usually considered as an extension of the education system; however, they are also discussed in the literature on youth in community literacy programs. Cobb, Meltzer and Williams (2003) suggest the following benefits of afterschool programs for students:

- They support the development of a range of non-academic competencies and characteristics that, in turn, support young people’s academic learning. For instance, the social and critical thinking skills that young people learn in a project-based, collaborative after-school learning experience help young people succeed during the school day.
- They ensure that young people have critical developmental inputs that help to ensure academic success, and ensure that young people are fully prepared and fully engaged. For instance, after-school programs put children and youth in frequent and close contact with caring and encouraging adults, an important precondition to learning.
- They create a rich alternative to the learning experiences that students experience in schools. After-school programs provide opportunities for development and enrichment through activities that are often not available during the regular school day and thereby also offer positive alternative choices for time spent outside of school.
- They help to eliminate the consistent barriers to learning faced by young people. For instance, after-school programs can offer a level of engagement and specific supports that may reach youth that have otherwise been unreachable because of disruptive behavior, lack of interest, poor sense of self or repeated failure.

(Cobb, Meltzer, & Williams, 2003, p. 26)
In addition, literature suggests the importance of ensuring afterschool programs do not simply duplicate or extend the school day, but offer high-interest alternatives that supplement school-day learning in a variety of ways (Britsch, 2005). Furthermore, other sources believe that afterschool programs should be entirely different from school, without any academic activities, while others believe that an afterschool program is an ideal opportunity to help struggling students improve academically (Britsch, 2005).

Regardless, research has demonstrated that more often than not, youth who participate in afterschool programs are more likely to succeed academically, are more self-confident, have stronger social skills, learn how to handle conflicts in an acceptable manner, help to develop relationships between youth and caring adults, and help to develop partnerships between families, schools and communities (Frontier College, 2006; Mediavilla, 2001).

A report published by Boston’s Afterschool for All Partnership (2004) explains that providing afterschool programs directed at literacy enhancement should include creative activities that support students’ literacy development, but also maintain the relaxed environment of afterschool. Program examples discussed include reading aloud, story and literature dramatizations, book discussion groups, and literature circles.

**Support Programs for Teachers and Staff**

The creation of support programs to assist teachers was discussed in some of the literature. The Durham District School Board, for example, created literature circles to provide staff and students with ways to construct meaning in what they read and develop a deeper understanding of content in books. At 24 schools, teachers meet regularly in small “literature circles” to discuss reflections about preselected books on literacy instruction. Following this, teachers either conduct a student literature review circle in their own classrooms or explicitly teach their students a strategy that was used in their own literature circle. Finally, they meet with their peers again to share and discuss their observations of the classroom activity.

The Ministry of Education (2006) reports that these programs have fostered professional dialogue that has exposed teachers to new research on learning and equipped them with the confidence to apply some of the new strategies they have learned in their classrooms.

In addition, the Waterloo Catholic District School Board distributes weekly e-mail literacy tips from the program services department to teachers every Monday morning to help ensure teachers in all subject disciplines share a common methodology and language while at the same time, have access to a wealth of teaching strategies and techniques (Ministry of Education, 2006). The Ministry of Education (2006) reported that this program has enjoyed substantial success with approximately 70 percent of recipients opening their weekly literacy tips every Monday.
English as a Second Language Programs

Research demonstrates that second-language learners in English-language schools benefit academically, socially, and emotionally when they are encouraged to talk, develop, and maintain proficiency in their first language while they are learning the language of instruction (Literacy for Learning, 2004). The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat (2007) explains that teachers can promote strong development among English language learners by supporting students in relating their pre-existing knowledge to new learning. The following strategies have been proven effective in linking English language learners new learning to their prior knowledge, and in promoting active literacy engagement:

- Purchase dual language books and encourage students to bring these home to read with parents; provide opportunities for bilingual students to write in both their first and second languages in order to create their own dual language books.
- Encourage newcomer students to write in their first language and then work with more fluently bilingual students, older students, parents, bilingual teachers, or community volunteers to translate their first language writing into English; publish these dual language stories on the school web page or in book form.
- Provide encouragement for students to present their individual or group project work (i.e., a poster or PowerPoint presentation) in both English and their home languages.
- Across the curriculum, look for ways in which students’ prior knowledge and experience can be expressed and expanded. For example, in mathematics, have student’s carryout surveys of the languages they know and how they use them and then graph the results.

(The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, 2007, p. 2)

There is some literature which discusses school literacy programs for English as a second language learner. For example, Literacy for Learning (2004) suggests it is important to provide scaffolded support that builds on the strengths of the student’s first language. Scaffolding is the process by which the teacher (though it could be another adult or peer) organizes learning that is unfamiliar or beyond a learner’s ability in such a way as to assist the youth in carrying out the new task (Harrison, 2004). In doing this, the teacher helps students make meaningful connections that support literacy development language in the language of instruction, while at the same time enabling students to develop content knowledge in all subjects (Literacy for Learning, 2004).

Based on the literature presented in this section, it is apparent literacy programming in schools take a wide range of structures. Creating engaging and motivating content while encouraging a supportive learning environment appear to be essential components. Professional development to ensure teachers and relevant stakeholders are knowledgeable about effective instruction was also noted as an important component. Likewise, evaluation and assessment of literacy programs was discussed in terms of determining which aspects of literacy programs are working and which ones need to be revised. Finally, it is also apparent there are a wide variety of literacy programs currently being implemented in schools based on the discussion of the program types presented above.

The next section will explore community based literacy programs for youth by reviewing the literature relating to various models and program features.
6.0 COMMUNITY BASED LITERACY

Strengthening community based organizations and agencies, and their ability to offer meaningful engagement to youth, provides a promising point of departure for addressing literacy problems (Decoda Literacy Solutions, 2012; Malcolmson, 2001). Research on community based organizations confirms the vital importance of community organizations in providing a supportive network and context for programs directed at youth (Malcolmson, 2001, p. 16). As the Council of the Ministers of Education in Canada (2009) reports, civil society has always been a crucial partner in designing flexible programs for specific groups at the community level—as it is in communities themselves that literacy is practiced and sustained.

In the following section, community based literacy programs will be explored in greater detail. In doing so, community literacy will be defined for the purpose of this review including an overview of youth development initiatives at the community level and some common definitions of what is meant by community literacy.

Next, models of community literacy will be presented. Here, various elements which comprise effective community based literacy programs for youth are listed and discussed.

Finally, community based youth literacy programs are discussed in the following areas: under-served and immigrant youth, youth in conflict with the law, community collaboration and partnerships, and voluntary out-of-school innovative community programs.

6.1 COMMUNITY LITERACY DEFINED

There are a variety of definitions that explain community based literacy programs. Most often, these definitions are closely linked to that of community development initiatives for youth as the two concepts are connected.

Community development happens when people come together to share their knowledge and ideas with others, develop relationships of mutual trust, understanding and belonging, and feel they are part of something bigger (Literacy More Than Words, 2008). Literacy More Than Words (2008), a pan-Canadian interactive literacy forum, defines community development as:

| A process that seeks to strengthen individuals and groups of people by providing the resources and skills needed to affect change in their own communities (par. 6). |

Likewise, the Education Development Centre (2010) discusses promising practices in youth development in their program guide for out-of-school youth. Aspects of youth development discussed are choice, voice, social interaction, self-confidence, and self-efficacy:

- **Choice:** Youth are motivated to read and write when they have some choice. This includes choice about the goals they have that can be advanced through literacy; topics they want to focus on in reading or writing; the materials and books they use; the structure of their classes; and how and where to share their own ideas in speaking or writing.
Voice: Because voice is a critical marker of self-identity, building up one’s own voice is a key developmental task for youth. Older youth often express themselves publicly and expect their voices to be heard and respected.

Social Interaction: The most powerful experiences for youth often are situations that involve interacting with other youth, listening to different viewpoints, and respectfully exchanging ideas.

Self-Confidence: Youth feel more valuable and confident when they have developed the skills in reading, writing, speaking, and math that let them present themselves to the world as capable individuals.

Self-Efficacy: The attainment of literacy skills, with the resultant ability to pursue information and skills independently, is a crucial part of self-efficacy.

Likewise, in reviewing definitions of community literacy programs, most include mention of engagement from communities in planning, involvement of community groups, organizations, and individuals in an effort to reach the same goal, and contribute to a system of lifelong learning for all (Literacy More Than Words, 2008).

For example, Legacies Now (2010) published a Community Literacy Planning Guide which summarizes a framework for effective practice. In here, effective community literacy programs are defined as being community based and learner-centred.

Community Based: Community based programs are part of an overall community plan; responsible to local, cultural, social, economic and educational realities; supported by community resources; and supported by people within the community such as librarians, counsellors, literacy instructors, healthcare workers, volunteers, service club members, teachers and others.

Learner-Centred: Learner centred programs: assess and build on the learners’ context, perceptions, and uses of literacy and language; uses and builds on the learners’ prior knowledge, language and vocabulary, and experiences; focuses on themes and content that are meaningful to the learners’ lives and futures; and builds a strong sense of the learners’ identity as part of the community.

In addition, this report suggests that elements of effective programs should include content that is relevant and materials and resources that encompass a wide variety of print materials, media objects, people, places, events and experiences (Legacies Now, 2010).

More commonly, definitions of community literacy discuss components of what comprises an effective literacy program for youth in the community. As such, in the following section, some of these models will be presented.

6.2 MODELS OF COMMUNITY LITERACY

Models of community literacy programming encompass a holistic response to youth literacy through a combination of a variety of elements. In the following section, some of these models and elements will be highlighted to provide a fuller picture.
In a practitioner guidebook published by Moje and Tysvaer (2010) based on research on over two dozen youth literacy programs, eight program areas of consideration were highlighted that were proven to bolster efforts in developing community literacy programs. These include:

- Alignment of program goals with literacy activities, instruction, and professional development
- Assessment of participants
- Structured literacy foundations
- Focus on student engagement and motivation
- Incorporation of tutoring strategies
- Provision of one-on-one support
- Planned transfer opportunities
- Program evaluation

(Moje & Tysvaer, 2010, p. 26)

Similarly, The Education Development Centre (2010) explains that youth literacy and development programs should be organized to support the growth of participants by promoting positive relationships among peers and providing opportunities for youth to learn and model healthy behaviours. Likewise, activities should connect youth with caring adults while challenging youth to build their own competencies (The Education Development Centre, 2010).

Sanders and Smythe (2002) state that community literacy programs should involve all participants in key decisions, respond to community needs, be part of a larger educational plan, use community resources, incorporate the cultures and languages of the learners, and be orientated to finding solutions and taking action to make a positive change in people’s lives and in the life of the community (Family Literacy Society of Alberta, 2002, p. 96).

Furthermore, Literacy Now (2010) presents seven guiding principles for community literacy programs in their community literacy planning guide which include the following:

- **Relationships and Collaboration:** Communities build and support networks, partnerships and mentoring relationships.
- **Innovation:** Communities value new ways of viewing existing programs, new partnerships and new ideas for programs.
- **Respect:** People are treated with respect and will be encouraged to freely share their ideas. Diversity is welcomed and valued.
- **Capacity Building:** Programs and projects promote and sustain lifelong learning for all participants and focus on improving the life chances of children and adults.
- **Access for All:** All community members have the opportunity to be part of the planning process and the programs. Community members respect the hopes and dreams of everyone and there is a place for all.
- **Strength Building:** Communities respect, build on and enhance past and current practices.
- **Sustainability:** Success grows from long-term, sustained commitment to literacy learning.
- **Joy:** People are involved in friendly and enthusiastic ways, celebrating success from time to time.

(Literacy Now, 2010, p. 4)
Likewise, Moje and Tysvaer (2010) reviewed promising practices and literature that support adolescent literacy development in out-of-school time and found four common program elements, including: meaningful content, youth development principles, school linkages, and parental involvement.

- **Meaningful Content:** In terms of meaningful content Moje and Tysvaer (2010) explain that some programs engaged youth in creating fun and engaging curriculum that was project-based and responsive to student interests while others reflected student cultural and community backgrounds. For example, a program focused on creating comic books intentionally chose topics that would provide students with opportunities to reflect on their own personal identities where as a youth theatre program coordinated neighbourhood field trips where students recorded living histories of residents in a city and then used these stories to construct a play.

- **Youth Development Principles:** Youth development principles refers to a “process which prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically, and cognitively competent” (Moje & Tysvaer, 2010, p. 9). Having youth as leaders in steering literacy programs is one example discussed by Moje and Tysvaer (2010). Here, each activity would have enough structure to ensure youth are challenged, but also enough flexibility so that, as youth gain experience, they assume responsibility for the direction of the activity.

- **School Linkages:** School linkages remain an important component for literacy programs and out-of-school youth. Moje and Tysvaer (2010) suggest that schools should work with community agencies to construct a unified system of youth development, a joint enterprise that recognizes the common goals of schools and community agencies while respecting their inherit differences and strengths. In other words, literacy programs for out-of-school youth need to seek a balance between connecting with schools, yet maintaining some independence so as not to appear as an extension of the regular school day.

- **Parental Involvement:** When considering parental involvement, Moje and Tysvaer (2010) found each program they reviewed differed on the involvement of parents. Some programs required parental permission for participation, while others intentionally did not seek any additional input or roles of parents.

Another important feature discussed specifically in the literature on community-based literacy initiatives is the importance of engagement and motivation. Youth face a number of barriers which can impede their participation in literacy programs and social and cultural attitudes that regard reading and writing as not important or not “cool” can deter some youth from participating in literacy programs (Cobb, Meltzer & Williams, 2003, p. 6; Fernandez, 1999). Cobb, Meltzer and Williams (2003) explain that breaking down barriers to motivate youth to willfully engage in literacy tasks depends on the tasks being meaningful, authentic, and sufficiently scaffolded with reading and writing instruction to support success. Perrin (1998) suggests “literacy” may not be the most appropriate term to use with youth when attempting to engage them to participate in programs due to the unwillingness to acknowledge weakness and face being stigmatized.

The Department of Labour (2010) in New Zealand released a report focusing on engaging young people in literacy skills development. Results found the following features as distinct for young people to encourage motivation and engagement: the importance of extrinsic motivation which appears to be more heavily weighted to paid work rather than learning; “hooking-in” to learning through different kinds of approaches, including involving parents; the importance of mentoring and counselling; and the attitudes to anything that is like school (The Department of Labour, 2010, p. 21).
In a study of youth literacy practice in Scotland (Hall et al., 2008), the “hooks” for getting young people involved were the activities offered which had an appeal to young people, or an end goal that articulated with their ambitions (The Department of Labour, 2010, p. 22). Activities included digital photography, magazine making, cinema visits and outdoor pursuits. Likewise, goals included those that would improve young people’s health, employment, housing and educational prospects (The Department of Labour, 2010). Furthermore, successful methods for recruiting were word of mouth, referrals from other agencies and working with other providers; working with leaflets, outreach work and media advertising were much less successful (Department of Labour, 2010).

Involving youth in the development or structure of a program is another documented strategy to increase motivation and engagement in community literacy programs. The City of Toronto (2006) released a report entitled Involve Youth: A Guide to Meaningful Youth Engagement which states the structure and form of youth engagement may vary widely between organizations; however, providing opportunities for capacity building and leadership, and encouraging youth to develop a sense of self-awareness encourages engagement and motivation for participation. This report identifies four aspects of youth engagement programs and approaches, including:

- Providing opportunities for skill development and capacity building: youth activities seek to develop academic, intellectual, civic, emotional, physical, employment, social and cultural competence.
- Providing opportunities for leadership: there is a transfer of leadership which gives decision-making power to the youth. At a minimum, this means allowing youth the ability to make decisions in the design and direction of their own programs. For example, youth acting as decision-makers in various levels such as serving on boards and committees or youth-led advisory boards and youth councils.
- Encouraging reflection on identity: youth are supported in their development of a critical and political analysis of identity issues. For example, by providing anti-oppression training, discussion and creative expression.
- Development of social awareness: youth are encouraged to reflect on the responsibilities of citizenship and are provided with the skills, training, and resources to become agents of change in their own communities.

(City of Toronto, 2006, p. 15)

This report explains that positive reinforcement is an important aspect of youth engagement programming that can be applied to community literacy programs. For example, by ensuring the contributions of young people are generously acknowledged both publicly and privately, by including awards, certificates and graduation ceremonies are some examples (City of Toronto, 2006).

Another common engagement feature found in many community-based literacy programs reviewed included the incorporation of technology and the arts. The National Center for Technology Innovation (2010) explains that tapping into the interests of youth during their free-time to support literacy programming can both motivate and engage youth in participation. Likewise, MacLean (2002) explains that arts-based projects are ideal as outreach tools for youth, to engage them in learning and to provide opportunities for referral to existing literacy and social support programs. The inclusion of technology and art is “cool” to youth, and for this reason, many literacy programs have utilized them for motivation and engagement (Malcolmson, 2001).
The previously discussed models and elements of effective community-based youth literacy programs provide an overview of the main components found within most programs. As demonstrated by this overview, many of the elements discussed within each model often overlap. The findings presented in this section are derived from evidence-based practice and as such, are replicated in many of the program examples discussed in the following section on specific programs and community literacy initiatives in practice.

6.3 PROGRAMS AND COMMUNITY LITERACY INITIATIVES

The following section presents a review of the literature on community programs and initiatives that include the development of literacy and essential skills as a goal. Upon initial review of programs, little research was found based in evidence. Some programs, however, did include evaluations and were developed from evidence-based practice. In addition, many community-based programs are innovative and may not be directly tied to literacy. As such, finding programs was a challenge. The following section, however, provides an overview of a variety of community-based programs designed for youth with a focus on literacy. These programs were categorized into the following sections for readability: under-served and immigrant youth, youth in conflict with the law, community collaboration and partnerships, and voluntary out-of-school innovative community programs.

Under-Served and Immigrant Youth

Some of the literature available discussed community literacy programs specifically for under-served and immigrant youth. Research suggests these groups are often at a heightened risk for lower levels of literacy.

Fernandez (1999) for example, identified effective literacy programs for young people living in poverty in two areas of Canada (Toronto and Newfoundland). Findings report that programs aimed at supporting this group should be flexible, goal-orientated, work-related and focus on computer literacy, job-searching and work experience (Fernandez, 1999). Likewise, young people interviewed for this report stated that staff should be flexible, open-minded, culturally sensitive, and patient instructors who can help them to set realistic goals (Fernandez, 1999). This study also concluded that additional supports, such as financial, transportation, mentoring, daycare and work experience, should also be considered for this group in terms of attracting youth and help guarantee success (Fernandez, 1999).

The incorporation of work experience or an employment element was also found in other literature. For example, Ladanchuk (1997) explains that many youth leave school to find employment only to find later they don’t have the skills to secure a job that can support them. As such, research indicates that learning and employment have a strong correlation which can be generalized to youth learners and can be reflected in youth literacy programming (Ladanchuk, 1997).

One of the most well-know and best-practice program models found in the literature on community literacy for youth is Pathways to Education. Pathways to Education is an integrated, community-based program that provides comprehensive supports to students in low-income communities with high dropout rates (Pathways to Education, 2010). The program was built on the understanding that schools alone cannot address the complex challenges and barriers faced by young people in economically disadvantaged communities. As such, Pathways to Education provides targeted academic, social, financial and advocacy supports for the educational attainment of youth (Pathways to Education, 2010).
Highlights of program features are listed below:

- The program reaches out and encourages all youth to participate.
- Support is provided to students throughout their full-term in secondary school and young people are challenged to be responsible and accountable.
- Students and their parents sign a contract in which they agree to comply with the program requirements related to school attendance and program participation.
- Academic and social supports are delivered in large part by volunteers who are recruited, trained and supervised in delivering after-school tutoring and extra-curricular mentoring activities.
- Students receive assistance to address financial barriers to school participation, such as for transportation to school or lunch while at school.
- Students have financial incentives in the form of a bursary for each year of program participation to offset the costs of post-secondary education or training.

Research results from program evaluations demonstrate that Pathways to Education has improved credit accumulation and reduced absenteeism by participating students (Pathways to Education, 2010). Likewise, 80% of graduates from Regent Park have gone on to post-secondary education and over 90% of these students are the first in their families to go on to university of college (Pathways to Education, 2010).

The program employs Student-Parent Support Workers (SPSWs) to work with students on every aspect of the program. The SPSW acts as a coach and mentor and has a number of responsibilities including mentoring school attendance, gathering information from the schools, supporting student reflection, and providing feedback to program management.

Group mentorship is another element of the Pathways to Education program. This component focuses on healthy social development and confidence building in a positive and safe environment that encourages youth to dream and plan for a successful future. The program includes group mentoring for younger Pathways students and later, specialty and career mentoring for older students as they progress through school.

The program also incorporates program facilitators for tutoring who become well-acquainted with the students and often meet with students twice a week. Program facilitators for tutoring work in pairs for combined expertise in the core subject areas in high school and have a strong repertoire of tutoring techniques.

Another program discussed in the literature for marginalized youth was developed by the Toronto ALFA Centre, entitled Build Ya Skillz and offered eight black youth between the ages of 16 and 24 a 16-week course which incorporated both traditional and alternative means to increase awareness, access, ability and action, and to instill a love of reading and learning (Homer, 2008). The following highlights some of the features of this program:

- Students studied computer and internet skills, creative writing, multi-media (radio, film, video), cultural studies, literacy, life and job skills, Black history and community awareness.
- Each student had a trained tutor who offered one-to-one support.
- Guest speakers and field trips rounded out the course for a holistic approach to self-education and personal development.

(Homer, 2008, p. 2-3)
The approach which formed the basis for the Build Ya Skillz program was built on experiential learning and social investigation (ELSI). The researchers who evaluated this program concluded that any literacy programming aimed at serving this target groups should:

- Be short term (i.e., 8 to 10 weeks)
- Have clear goals and objectives
- Have concrete transferable skills
- Have a final product

(Homer, 2008, p. 126)

Likewise, a program funded by the government of Alberta entitled The Bridge Program, offers support designed specifically for immigrant youth with interrupted formal education or who are no longer able to study in a high school setting. The overarching goal of this program is to help learners improve their literacy skills in order to transition to the next step of their educational or employment pathway. Evidence suggests youth, upon completion of this program, have continued with education, high school or a career program—suggesting the program is working effectively at giving learners the academic and social support they need to overcome barriers (Bridge Program, 2013).

**Youth in Conflict with the Law**

There is a small body of research that looks specifically at literacy programming for youth in conflict with the law. Many young offenders in custody receive literacy programming; however, often these opportunities are removed once they are released back into the community. Thus, supports for youths’ successful transition from the criminal justice system to the community are invaluable (Colenutt & Toye, 2012). Likewise, raising literacy levels for youth in conflict with the law, their families and communities has been shown to be a contributing factor in reducing criminal involvement for youth already involved in crime, and for increasing employment and reducing recidivism in offenders (Colenutt & Toye, n.d.).

Colenutt and Toye (n.d.), for example, present five elements that should be considered when developing literacy programming in for youth in conflict with the law:

- Employment training: Employment training is an important element in literacy programming for youth in conflict with the law. It creates more incentive to participate and leads to employment opportunities and decreased recidivism. Embedding literacy activities within vocational training can be an effective strategy.
- Cooperation of all services: Cooperation of all services is vital to holistic success for youth interacting with these services. Anecdotal evidence shows that case conferencing appears to be a strategic way to coordinate services and supports for youth in conflict with the law in a timely manner.
- Successful interventions: Successful interventions are strategic, tailored to each individual learners’ needs and circumstances, and account for the self-direction of the learner. Initial assessment to determine each individual’s reading level, abilities, strengths and interests, as well as weaknesses and needs, allows for effective individualized instruction.
- Short-term, Intensive: Short-term, intensive literacy programming can be effective and this is encouraging for young offender centres and open custody group homes where youth may only be a resident for a matter of days, weeks or months.
One-On-One and Small Groups: One-on-one and small group (less than five participants) instruction appears to be an effective way of teaching reading skills. Teaching assistants or tutors can complement traditional instruction, providing valuable one-on-one support. 

*(Colenutt & Toye, n.d., p. 6)*

In terms of actual programs, one of the most well-known (and one of the only) programs designed specifically for at-risk youth in Canada is the “New School at Surrey” which combines literacy development, academic subjects, social and emotional development, and art and technology in a two-year program designed to help students upgrade a wide range of skills and reintegrate into the school system.

The New School at Surrey targets at-risk, youth aged 15 and 16, who have significant challenges with literacy and have either dropped out of school, have behaviour issues, and/or have failed to complete previous grades. Program evaluation of this initiative during a two year period in 2002-2004 yields successful results, including: most students became active readers, stayed in school, developed essential academic and behaviour skills, and moved back into conventional or alternative high school programs. A total of 19 approaches to instruction and support were identified as contributing to the success of the program which are outlined below:

1. Offering a comprehensive and holistic approach: Understand that literacy development goes beyond reading and writing. As such, content is presented in ways that are relevant and engaging to youth.
2. Focusing on youth with significant literacy issues: The program focuses on at-risk youth with significant literacy challenges who have been unsuccessful in other school options.
3. Establishes a safe and separate learning environment: A supportive and safe learning environment that deals with bullying, harassment, and intimidation to foster a space where youth can feel comfortable to take risks.
4. Hires qualified and professional staff: Staff have the patience and an ability to confront negative behaviour without resorting to yelling, harsh language, or intimidation.
5. Implements progressive discipline and restorative action: Zero tolerance is not effective and can be counter-productive. Instead, progressive discipline that encourages coaching and reintegration is successful.
6. Keeping classes small: Maintaining small classes (20 or fewer) is critical for the operation of the class.
7. Using team coaching: Two staff are in the classroom at all times.
8. Having a full-time counsellor as part of the team: A full-time counsellor is needed to assist students with short-term crisis management and long-term social and emotional development.
9. Collaborative management is used: Staff meet weekly for two or three hours to discuss student progress and challenges to develop strategies for each individual.
10. Implementation of a two-year program: A two-year program is required to overcome the multiple deficits faced by the students.
11. Provide a full-day program.
12. Provide explicit instruction across the curriculum: Explicit instruction is a systematic instructional approach that incorporates group instruction with a high level of teacher and student interaction, close alignment of curriculum, a focus on big ideas, building background knowledge, reinforcement of fundamental skills, modeling, scaffolding, guided practice, corrective action, and feedback.
(13) Teaching students how to learn: This includes strategies for organizing materials, focusing on assignments, coping with distractions, reading various types of text, and avoiding distractions in school, at home, and from friends.

(14) Implement project-based learning: Project-based learning provides alternative ways to engage topics that do not rely principally on reading. For example, art-classes and technology-based projects.

(15) Focus on social and emotional development.

(16) Providing regular access to creative activities: The creative arts offer multiple ways for students to experience success while they build their literacy skills.

(17) Integrate technology in instruction and student activities: As with the arts, the use of technology in the classroom can enhance engagement.

(18) Conduct regular assessment and data tracking: Assessment and data tracking are important in order for data collection to be of use.

(19) Provide transition assistance: transition assistance and follow-up are key to helping students find appropriate options for continuing their education after completing the New School.

Although these programs only serve a select segment of the population, research demonstrates youth in conflict with the law often have lower literacy rates than youth who are not. As such, when developing community-based programs for youth, this is a population that should be considered.

**Collaboration and Partnership Programs**

Collaboration and partnerships are elements frequently discussed in the literature pertaining to community literacy programs. Some community-based literacy initiatives have a primary focus on building collaboration and partnerships between a variety of stakeholders. In the following section, some of these initiatives and models will be discussed in more detail.

Richmond, Robinson and Sachs-Israel (2008) discuss five groups that should be involved with partnerships for literacy programming in the community. These include: governments, civil society, communities, the private sector, and universities. Here, government has the responsibility to make sure everyone has the chance to acquire literacy, civil society plays a role in designing flexible programs for specific groups at the community level and lobbying for the interests of vulnerable populations, communities act as the location for the practice of literacy and is fundamental to ownership, the private sector has an interest in an educated workforce and should develop workplace literacy and skills programs, and finally, universities and research institutes need to take a stronger role in providing evidence of solid research for sound policy-making and analyzing good practice (Richmond, Robinson & Sachs-Israel, 2008, p. 74).

Likewise, Spannier (2007) also argues that community-based literacy programs require engagement from a variety of stakeholders including the following:

- **Service and Support:** Literacy organizations, volunteers, social-planning agencies, transition agencies, media, faith organizations, community, village, band, and municipal governments.
- **Education:** Preschools and daycare centres, public and independent school districts, community colleges and universities, continuing-education and postsecondary institutions.
- **Child and Family Development:** Recreation centres, youth centres, social-development agencies, and government industries and agencies.
- **Health**: Health-care providers, mental-health organizations, crisis-support organizations, wellness centres, and government ministries and agencies.
- **Business and Financial**: Community economic development agencies, trade unions, professional and business associations, chambers of commerce, credit unions and banks, community service organizations, and community futures organizations.
- **Justice and Legal**: Restorative justice programs, legal aid, and family-assisted organizations.
- **Culture and Heritage**: Aboriginal organizations, heritage organizations, cultural groups, libraries and museums, and sports and recreation groups.
- **Employment**: Employment and assistance centres and training centres.

*(Spannier, 2007, p. 30)*

A practical example of this type of model is The Weaving Literacy Project which incorporates collaboration and partnerships by building a cooperative environment among community groups, agencies and community members for addressing literacy and learning in a holistic way. This approach places community groups and members in “the driver’s seat” for deciding what kinds of literacy and learning activities are most needed in their own communities (Malcolmson, 2001, p. 123). These types of integrated, community-building approaches to literacy incorporate many elements including:

- Creating opportunities for people to come together to learn about things that are important to them, to share ideas and to develop networks.
- Linking literacy and learning to existing community activities and projects where people already feel comfortable and have few barriers to participation.
- Include opportunities for literacy and community-building within existing community activities and projects.
- Collaborating with, not competing with, other community groups when setting up new projects of applying for new funding.
- Seeing the community as a whole and working to reduce institutional barriers to the services and supports people need.

*(Malcolmson, 2001, p. 123)*

Another program example includes community initiatives that create literacy tasks groups. Decoda Literacy Solutions (2012), for example, explains that literacy is often “joined up” to many aspects of the lives of individuals and communities (p. 37). As such, to support literacy effectively, we need to place literacy in the context of community and connect it with real life issues and events (Decoda Literacy Solutions, 2012). To act on these “joined up” issues, they continue, communities need to join up agencies, organizations, and institutions that focus on these various issues, providing a place and opportunity to pool resources as well as to experience and view things through a literacy lens, for example by creating a Literacy Task Group (p. 37).

Literacy Task Groups are typically comprised of a variety of interested individuals including early childhood education, the K-12 system, post-secondary institutions, libraries, businesses, the health sector, local government, First Nations communities, immigrant communities, community service organizations, and other task groups (Decoda Literacy Solutions, 2012). Task group members continuously ask questions, such as: Where are the literacy gaps and opportunities in our community? What can we contribute to a possible solution? What is the best thing that we can do for people in our community?
Essentially, Decoda Literacy Solutions (2012) states, the work of the task group is about solving problems in the community—figuring out what the problems are, thinking about how they can be addressed, and talking and working together to identify solutions.

Collaboration is also key to support the development of literacy strategies. As Decoda Literacy Solutions (2012) explains, broad based discussions facilitated through community collaboration help people in communities to:

- Understand the broad social, historical, and community context of literacy and learning.
- Link the formal, non-formal and informal learning that is happening in communities.
- Increase partnerships and cooperation to take action.
- Expand on and develop new ways to support the development of literacy skills in individuals.
- Develop a strong base of evidence to inform policy and promote good practice.

(Decoda Literacy Solutions, 2012, p. 41)

Similarly, Tri-Cities Literacy Committee (2012) discusses the importance of creating a Community Resource Map to distribute to teachers, counsellors and other community agencies to enhance coordination of services for community literacy practices. Likewise, they explain that having a monthly newsletter and website, which includes information about community literacy events and literacy information, is beneficial in promoting collaboration and partnerships as well as enhancing education for all sectors.

As was discussed in this section on community collaboration and partnerships, a variety of stakeholders comprise effective community responses to literacy. Engagement from community members and the formation of Literacy Tasks Groups to initiate literacy programs are effective ways to enhance engagement, creation and education of best-practice literacy programs.

**Voluntary Out-of-School Programs**

Out-of-school programs include a vast array of enrichment opportunities for youth in a variety of contexts encompassing a myriad of activities (Moje & Tysvaer, 2010). Moje and Tysvaer (2010) for example explain that, from teen drop-in centers, to YMCAs, creative writing clubs, and apprenticeship opportunities, many organizations have become more intentional, innovative, and sophisticated than ever before in responding to academic and enrichment needs of youth during non-school hours. One particular area of intentionality and innovation, they continue, has been the development and/or enhancement of young people’s literacy skills and strategies. In the following section, some of the programs that fall under these strategies will be discussed.

The Department of Youth and Community Development in New York (2006) launched an adolescent literacy pilot program to help youth develop reading and writing skills needed to succeed in high school and beyond. The programs were operated by eight community-based organizations in 11 sites. An evaluation was completed during the first two years of implementation showing positive results. Of the programs evaluated, six were theme-based and provided literacy learning experiences grounded in the theatre, study of the urban environment, and use of technology. The following highlights some of the key features of these programs:

- In the theatre programs artists worked alongside instructors to incorporate interactive drama and performance art techniques into literacy.
For the study of the urban environment, one program engaged participants to develop a screenplay for a film, analyzing the problem that teenage girls face in the inner-city using their neighbourhood as a backdrop.

Another program entitled “technology corner” conducted its program in a computer lab and in the second year, students created websites and public service announcements about community issues of interest and importance to them. Using online software, these students also kept on-line journals, submitted comments to discussion boards, and created websites based on the curriculum topics.

(Bat-Chava, Abruzzo & Lauckhardt, 2009, p. 4)

Other programs evaluated incorporated more traditional approaches to literacy instruction with most using packaged literacy curricula. Some of the programs incorporated one hour of explicit literacy instruction followed by several project-based clubs that incorporated literacy. For example, some of the clubs included photography, comic books, drama, robotics, kickboxing, and Latin dance. In the robotics program, participants were engaged in reading and following directions to build robots and researching and developing presentations about their robots (Bat-Chava, Abruzzo & Lauckhardt, 2009).

Moje and Tysvaer (2010) identify four types of out-of-school programs that address literacy activities which include the following:

- Literacy and Academic Development: Similar to the tutoring programs discussed in the school-based literacy programs previously, these types of programs usually include tutoring a student one-on-one during summer and after-school hours.
- Literacy Enhancement: Enhancement programs engage young people in a range of abilities using language creatively and purposefully. For example, through reading and writing comic books, poetry, novels, and information texts, the focus is on motivating students. Students often self-select to participate in these programs as they offer an alternative to the traditional school day.
- Academic Enhancement: As opposed to focusing on literacy skills specifically, many programs designed for youth in the community setting broadly incorporate academic achievement as a whole.
- Social Development: Social development is often considered as literacy programming for youth during out-of-school time. For example, an adventure-based summer program may ask participants to write about their outdoor experiences each day.

(Moje & Tysvaer, 2010, p. 1-2)

The Real Stories Teen program in New York, co-developed by Youth Communication and Development Without Limits, provides yet another example of an innovative after-school program that fulfills literacy and youth development goals (Jonas & Gurna, 2008). This program uses stories written by teens for their peers and excerpts from young adult novels to engage teens in discussions and activities about issues that are important to them—identify, relationship, family, race and culture, sexuality, social justice and more. The workshop-orientated activities and rich discussions are highlights of the program along with relationship development with fellow peers (Jonas & Gurna, 2008).
This section provided an overview of best-practice programs found in the literature which focus on community-based literacy programs. This research suggests a variety of innovative programs are currently in operation that often incorporate innovative approaches rooted in community and youth development.

In the following section, collaborative models of youth literacy will be discussed and some common models will be presented.
7.0 COLLABORATIVE MODELS

The previous sections on family literacy, school literacy and community literacy, for the most part, examined youth literacy separately. Although the literature on community-based literacy programs discusses the incorporation of many stakeholders, other literature on youth literacy programming takes even more of a holistic approach and incorporates all three models of literacy (Alberta Education, 2010; Cobb, Meltzer & Williams, 2003; Spannier, 2007; Tri-Cities Literacy Committee, 2012). In the following section, four of these models will be discussed in greater detail.

The Council of Ministers of Education (CMEC) (2009) developed a literacy action plan to respond to Canada’s literacy challenge. They promote a pan-Canadian approach to raising literacy levels through a commitment by the ministers responsible for education in all of the 13 provinces and territories and a call for action on this shared objective (CMEC, 2009). Through a cohesive, collaborative, and coordinated approach, the CMEC are working together to strengthen individual efforts and initiatives. The vision proposed by the CMEC recognizes that literacy needs an integrated approach from the early years through to adulthood. In doing so, they argue that acquiring and developing literacy skills are a part of everyday living—at home, school, work, and in the community (CMEC, 2009).

(CMEC, 2009, p. 7)

In working through this plan, the CMEC created a Literacy Action Plan, which includes a five-point plan that recognizes the role of provincial and territorial governments in raising the literacy levels of Canadians. In doing so, the CMEC have committed to raising awareness and connecting with literacy organizations, practitioners, and learners, through sharing information and ideas on policy and evidence, and on practices that work from coast to coast (CMEC, 2009).
Likewise, the Government of Alberta (2010), through consultation processes in literacy, argues that no single sector of society is responsible for literacy education and development. Instead, they propose a model that includes educators, school authorities, parents, communities and students working together to ensure the best opportunities for literacy development in students of all ages and abilities as depicted in the model below which highlights the dynamic nature of literacy learning (Alberta Education, 2010).

![Literacy Collaboration Model](image)

(Alberta Education, 2010, p. 6)

The Grade Yellowhead Public School District (GYPSD) provides another example of a collaborative-based model for literacy. In a report published by the Consultus Business Centre (2009), GYPSD describes a vision of literacy as one that:

Requires a coordinated and comprehensive approach to move literacy development outside the school to encompass society as a whole; one that advocates that everyone, both the young and the old, have opportunities to develop and expand their literacy competencies throughout their lives and in many contexts—in families, communities and at work

(Consultus Business Centre, 2009, p. 15).
In doing so, the GYPSD initiated a Community-Supported School-Based Literacy Partnership Enhancement Project which includes the following goals:

- Establish the parameters for a shared understanding of literacy to inform and guide the work of the division’s literacy project.
- Enhance the division’s literacy leadership capacity through projects within the school system and with community partners involved in literacy initiatives.
- Identify and report on existing literacy practices in GYPSD and community.
- Recommend ways to enhance literacy within the GYPSD and with the community partners.
- Recommend ways to enhance literacy in GYPSD.

Finally, Cobb, Meltzer and Williams (2003) propose an Adolescent Literacy Community Mobilization Matrix to provide support and development for community mobilization focused on literacy support and development. This model explains that adolescents operate in numerous and diverse contexts—at school, with family, with peers, in their neighbourhood, as participants in youth programs, at church, in recreation and other youth programs, at work, and in the judicial system—or as they call them “spheres of influence” (p. 12). They continue to explain that there are many leverage points for stimulating literacy development and support in each sphere of influence, for example, individual relationships can be leveraged to encourage a community based program to incorporate literacy development in their programming.

The previously discussed models are derived from diverse contexts for differing purposes; however, they all share in common a collaborative framework for addressing youth literacy. These models all argue the importance of engaging multiple sectors and stakeholders in the creation, development, implementation and evaluation of effective literacy programming.
The following section provides an overview of family, community and school-based literacy programs. We have separated these programs from the literature review because we did not find evaluation or research evidence that demonstrates outcome achievement. However, we have included these programs in the report as promising practices to outline the breadth of literacy programs available. Each program is listed with a brief description.

**8.1 FAMILY BASED LITERACY PROGRAMS**

**Aboriginal Head Start Program**

Based on culturally sensitive family literacy programming, Aboriginal Head Start is a federally-funded, community-run initiative administered through Health Canada. Aboriginal Head Start programs promote Aboriginal cultures and languages, education, health, nutrition and counselling. The goal of the Aboriginal Head Start programs include the promotion of spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical growth of each child, encouraging a desire in the child for lifelong learning, and supporting parent participation in all aspects of program planning, delivery and evaluation. These programs also involve the local community for recognizing and supporting extended families in teaching and caring for children, ensuring the program works and is supported by other programs and services, and ensuring the best possible use of financial resources for child, family and community outcomes.


**Alberta Enterprise and Advanced Education**

Alberta’s Enterprise and Advanced Education initiative provides a inventory of programs and service delivery organizations relating to family literacy.


**Bookmates**

Bookmates is a not-for-profit organization focused on the development and delivery of family learning programs to enhance the learning of both children and adults through the following activities: developing family literacy and learning programs in partnership with community organizations and parents, training people to facilitate programs for families in their own communities, providing programs for groups of parents and children through the support of a community organization, and promoting awareness of family literacy and learning in Manitoba and beyond.

Source: [www.bookmatesfamilyliteracycentre.ca](http://www.bookmatesfamilyliteracycentre.ca)
Books for Babies

Books for Babies is a community-based literacy program focusing on the importance of reading to newborns. Each year, the B.C. Library Association and the provincial government distribute more than 40,000 Books for Babies reading kits to new parents.

Source: www.books4babies.bclibrary.ca

Centre for Family Literacy

The Centre for Family Literacy is the first of its kind in Alberta and Canada and is recognized for its innovative programs and services. Literacy programs offered include 3,2,1, Fun!, adult tutoring, Alberta Prairie Classroom on Wheels, Books for Babies, Financial Literacy, Learn Together-Grow Together, Literacy Classroom on Wheels, Rhymes that Bind and Multicultural Rhymes that Bind, and Storysacks.

Source: http://www.famlit.ca/index.shtml

Family Literacy Program

The Family Literacy Program is a free series of nine workshops designed for families with children up to six years of age. Sessions are located at elementary schools and community locations throughout Peel. The workshops are facilitated by volunteers including: Early Childhood Educators, teachers and other community professionals who are experience in early literacy. Parents learn tips to incorporate language and literacy into everyday activities. Each workshop includes stories, songs, snack time, and a family activity.

Source: http://www.peelregion.ca/children/programs/family-literacy/

Parent-Child Mother Goose Program

The Parent-Child Mother Goose Program® is a group experience for parents and their babies and young children. The program introduces adults and children to the pleasure and power of using rhymes, songs, and stories together.

Parents gain skills and confidence which can enable them to create positive family patterns during their children’s crucial early years. Children benefit from enjoyable, healthy early experiences with language and communication.

Source: http://nationalpcmgp.ca/

Parent and Family Literacy Centres

Parenting and Family Literacy Centres (PFLCs) serve families with young children from babies up to age six. The program is accessible to all families in the community and provides an inclusive environment where each child is unique and develops within the context of his or her family. The centres have a number of key goals including: providing optimal child development through positive parent-child interaction, offering a family literacy program that develops early literacy and numeracy.
skills which provide the foundation for ongoing learning, increasing parents’ knowledge, involvement and comfort level with schools, helping children transition more easily to school by allowing centre staff and teachers to work together, and early identification of child with special needs.

Research conducted by the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) in 2008-2009 shows that after almost three years of schooling, students who attended a PFLC, especially the regular participants, continue to demonstrate a clear advantage over their school peers.

Family-centered activities and services include reading together, lending library, music and story time, helping the whole family, learning through play, and connecting to the community.


**Parents as Teachers National Center**
The Parents as Teachers National Center, based in St. Louis, Missouri, provides parents with child development knowledge and parenting support.

Source: [www.parentsasteachers.org](http://www.parentsasteachers.org)

**Project READ**

Project READ is supportive of parents who wish to improve their knowledge and skills to foster emerging literacy in their children. Project READ is a dynamic community collaboration promoting the growth of literacy and essential skills in Waterloo-Wellington. They offer a variety of programs focusing on family literacy including: Get Set Learn (GSL), Get Set Learn Afterschool, Certified Training, and Family Literacy Booklets.

Source: [http://www.projectread.ca/what-we-do/family-literacy](http://www.projectread.ca/what-we-do/family-literacy)

**8.2 COMMUNITY BASED LITERACY PROGRAMS**

**Aboriginal Summer Literacy Camp**

Frontier College’s Aboriginal Summer Literacy Camps address what educators refer to as “summer learning loss,” the decline in student performance between the end of one school year and the beginning of the next. This loss is most prevalent among children of lower socio-economic status and those whose lives outside of school do not include regular access to learning and literacy support.

The purpose of Frontier College’s Aboriginal Summer Literacy Camps is to respond to the need for quality learning supports for children in Aboriginal communities during the summer months. Camps involve a variety of hands-on, interactive literacy games, story-telling, arts and crafts, drama, music and cultural activities to create a fun and engaging experience for children from 5 to 16 years of age.

The Aboriginal Summer Literacy Camps following five fundamental principles: Community based (camps are tailored to reflect individual communities), Respectful (local cultures, traditions and languages will be included in a respectful manner), Inclusive (programs involve parents, elders and
community members), accessible (everyone who is interested is welcome and there is no cost to families), and community empowering (programs will foster active community ownership and, where possible, staff are hired from the community).


**BUILD (Berkeley United in Literacy Development)**

BUILD provides one-to-one literacy tutoring after school with an emphasis on reading for fun. Our model emphasizes:

- **Individualization**: BUILD matches each child with a personal tutor. Tutor/tutee pairs meet at least twice a week for 30-45 minute long reading sessions that include word work, fluency practice, or reading comprehension, depending on the child’s needs.
- **Tutor Training**: Training is critical to BUILD’s success. All tutors are trained in partnership with district literacy specialists in a balanced literacy approach with an emphasis on “just right” reading.
- **Classroom Connections**: Tutoring is closely coordinated with school day staff. Tutors communicate with their tutee’s teacher to make sure they provide the literacy support that is needed.
- **“Just Right” Reading**: Tutors are trained to help children read “just right” books—books that are just at or slightly above their reading level. Research has shown that the more time students spend reading “just right” books, the faster they increase their reading skills.
- **Extra Reading**: Instead of pulling students away from class time during the day, tutors work after school to supplement the amount of time students spend reading.

Commitment: Each BUILD tutor is matched with a child who they then tutor for the entire semester or academic year. This allows each tutor to develop a strong working relationship with their tutee.

Source: [http://publicservice.berkeley.edu/build](http://publicservice.berkeley.edu/build)

**The Comic Book Project**

The Comic Book Project, a national program hosted by the Teacher’s College at Columbia University, partners with existing school—and community-based organizations—to engage fourth through eighth grade students in reading, writing, designing and publishing comic books in afterschool and summer programs across the country. The program has three goals: academic reinforcement for students who are struggling in school, social skills building, and community building. Each year, the Comic Book Project chooses a theme for their publications, such as community leadership, and encourages students to express their own unique identities creatively within the thematic area. Instructors use the comic book as a vehicle for motivating students to engage in highly expressive literate activities. Kits are available online to model program implementation.

Source: [http://www.comicbookproject.org/](http://www.comicbookproject.org/)
Community School Programs (CSP) London, Ontario

The YMCA Community School Programs (CSP) offer interest based clubs over the lunch hour and after school in 13 elementary schools in London. These programs are made possible through the support of the United Way, in partnership with the London District Catholic School Board and Thames Valley District School Board.

Our literacy based clubs promote positive life skills such as physical activity, healthy lifestyles, and self-esteem. We offer a wide range of exciting clubs that are based on students’ interests within each school such as Mini Chefs, Yoga Kids, and Video Drama, as well as clubs which offer vital services to the school community such as Homework Club and Breakfast Club. In addition to clubs running during the school year, PD Day Programs and the Summer Fun Club, are offered at selected schools.

Source: [http://ymcawo.ca/community-school-programs](http://ymcawo.ca/community-school-programs)

Crouch Library Homework Club

The Crouch Library Homework Club is an opportunity for elementary school students to get help with their homework in a fun, accessible environment. Tutors help learners with homework and conduct literacy activities and games.

Source: [http://www.frontiercollege.ca/english/literacy/london.html](http://www.frontiercollege.ca/english/literacy/london.html)

The Digital Visual Poetry Program (DV Poetry)

The DV Poetry Program began with writing workshops and proceeded to multimodal composing via computers. Participants record and digitize their voices as they read or recite their poems, search for images to illustrate their words and ideas, select or compose a sound track as background music and then assemble the whole digitally, adding transitions to connect images, adjusting pace and timing, and sometimes adding special effects. The result is a three to five minute movie later shown to a wider audience of friends and family. The DV Poetry Program meets during weekday evenings for eight-to-ten weeks cycles.


For Youth Initiative (FYI)

For Youth Initiative’s Vision is to create healthy communities where youth are fully engaged and equal participants in society. FYI’s Community Engagement stream is defined by our engagement and partnerships with every aspect of the community we serve, from youth and families, to allied agencies and service providers, educators, advocacy groups, businesses and non-profit funders. FYI provides programs and services that develop the assets necessary to increase the safety of youth and their leadership in the community. FYI is an organization that embeds leadership opportunities in all we do, ensuring that youth have opportunities to grow, learn, and be an integral part of the development of a safe and prosperous city.

Source: [http://foryouth.ca/](http://foryouth.ca/)
Frontier College Children and Youth Support Programs

Frontier College provides a directory of over 90 children and youth programs in Toronto that support literacy. The interactive directory is a resource for program coordinators, parents and volunteers who are seeking information on learning programs such as homework clubs and reading programs for children and youth living in Toronto. Each program listed is accompanied by a brief overview of the program and a direct link to the program’s website and contact information.

Source: http://learningprograms.ca/directory/search/?go

Grade 7 Wrap Around Project (CYN)

Grade 7 Wrap Around Component (led by the Education, Literacy & Employment, Training & Targeted Strategies Working Group)

- Begins with youth in grade 7, supports them and helps with transition through grades 8 and 9 and then follows them through secondary school into post-secondary school or employment.
- Focus is to lift youth out of poverty by helping them achieve positive educational outcomes which in turn result in engagement in the workforce.
- Takes a holistic, integrative approach and involves parents and other significant adults, the school, and the community or neighbourhood.

Source: http://londoncyn.ca

Harlem RBI

Harlem RBI is a unique year round youth development program in East Harlem, New York offering a variety of enriching activities centered on literacy. Although Harlem RBI began as a little league baseball program for neighborhood youth, the program has grown to include a sophisticated literacy component in which youth are grouped according to reading level and have various opportunities to develop reading and writing skills. The curriculum includes individual work, such as independent reading and writing in reading response journals, and teamwork that links morning classroom instruction to the afternoon baseball game.

Founded in 1999, the program serves 600 low-income children annually ages 7 to 18. Last summer 86% of youth improved their reading scores or kept them constant, showing no summer learning loss, while 92% of children improved in reading comprehension. Among parents surveyed, 90% reported an improvement in their children’s work and attitude towards school.

Source: http://www.harlemrbi.org/

Inner City Visions (I.C. Visions)

I.C. Visions is a recreation centre in Toronto that serves inner city youth. The centre runs a variety of programs to reach the youth. One in particular focuses on hip-hop culture. The centre is an urban music orientated drop-in which provides music industry workshops and seminars, talent showcases and competitions and an art and photography project, a basketball program and a clothing line division.

JVS Toronto

This program provides youth, newcomers, women and persons with disabilities access to current and relevant information that leads to better understanding of money management skills in peoples’ daily lives. The ability to make informed financial decisions is essential for basic functioning in Canadian society as in all countries with complex financial systems. These decisions range from simple daily spending and budgeting, to choice of insurance, banking or investment products, to saving for major life events like retirement and education, or purchases like a home. These individual and household decisions and behaviors have profound impacts on the financial security, well-being and inclusion of individuals and families.


KidzLit

The After School KidzLit program is a reading enrichment program designed specifically for use in out-of-school settings, though it is also successful in the classroom. It increases young people’s motivation to read and builds their literacy skills. At the same time, it develops core values of helpfulness, fairness, personal responsibility, and respect for others.

Leaders use a five-part process in which children hear engaging books read aloud—or read them independently—and make connections to their own lives. They express their feelings and grapple with big ideas through discussion, drama, art, movement, and writing. The program is aligned with the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) standards.

Site staff who have used Kidzlit report that youth participants show an increased enjoyment of literature and desire to read, an enhance vocabulary, a greater ability to express ideas, stronger relationships with peers and adults, a greater understanding of self and others, and a strengthened commitment to shared values.

Source: [http://www.kidzafterschool.org/](http://www.kidzafterschool.org/)

Mosaic Youth Theatre

Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit is an internationally acclaimed youth development afterschool program that concentrates on helping young artists excel on stage and in life. Mosaic’s mission is to empower young people to maximize their potential through professional performing arts training and the creation of first-rate theatrical and musical art. The Mosaic Youth Theatre has two main programs for youth.

Youth participating in the afterschool program are expected to attend two weekday evening sessions and one four-hour Sunday session each week. Activities include learning the crafts of theatrical and music arts, conducting research for productions, and practicing future performances. Themes and storylines delve into personal and social issues that are relevant to the young participants, such as the history of Motown and the influence of teenagers in the early days of Motown’s history in Detroit.

Source: [http://www.mosaicdetroit.org/home.htm](http://www.mosaicdetroit.org/home.htm)
My Action Plan (MAP)—Boys and Girls Club of London

MAP is a program aimed at helping youth to continue on to the road to success in school. MAP is based on four guiding principles. These four main pillars of support include: Academic, Social, Financial and Advocacy supports for each youth. A student’s MAP is developed to meet the needs of that individual youth, and involves the commitment of the youth, his or her parents as well as other partners who will help provide the youth with the best possible opportunities for success. Students will enter into the program in three phases, depending on what grade they are in.

The JUNIOR phase is aimed at students in Grade 4 to 8, and focuses on building basic skills, keeping students motivated and interested in school, as well as addressing individual needs of students for wrap-around support.

The SENIOR phase is aimed at students in Grade 9 to 12. Students will work with staff and volunteers to map out their academic, career and financial maps for the future. Building on the communication stream established in the Junior phase, students will continue to develop life and leadership skills as well as participate in regular mentoring and tutoring sessions.

The EXCELLENCE phase focuses on those students who are working to complete Grade 12 and are preparing for or are in post-secondary education programs (including university, college, trade school, apprentice training or preparing for fulltime employment).

There are a number of incentives for the students participating in the MAP program at each phase. These incentives include life skills development, academic and career counselling, financial incentives and partnership building through mentorship and tutoring. Financial incentives are subject to available funding. Staff, volunteer mentors and tutors work with youth to meet the program expectations and outcomes.

Source: [http://www.bgcgolf.ca/mapapplication.pdf](http://www.bgcgolf.ca/mapapplication.pdf)

Pathways to Education

Pathways to Education is helping youth in low-income communities graduate from high school and successfully transition into post-secondary education. Pathways addresses systemic barriers to education by providing leadership, expertise and a community-based program proven to lower dropout rates.

The Pathways program provides a comprehensive set of academic, financial and social supports to youth. The results of this unique program have been ground-breaking, reducing high school drop-out rates by as much as 70 per cent, and increasing the rate at which youth go on to college or university by up to 300 per cent. Founded in 2001, Pathways operates in 12 communities across Canada with programs in Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and Manitoba.

Source: [http://pathwaystoeducation.ca](http://pathwaystoeducation.ca)
Reel Youth

Reel Youth supports municipalities, schools, youth groups, businesses, and service agencies looking for exciting and meaningful ways to engage youth and adults in producing and distributing digital media. Reel Youth offers a variety of programs focusing on topics such as video production, Claymation, music video, touring film festival, photography, broadcasting, adult training, and professional services.

Source: [http://www.reelyouth.ca/programs2.html](http://www.reelyouth.ca/programs2.html)

The Remix Project

The Remix Project was created in order to help level the playing field for young people from disadvantaged, marginalized and under served communities. Our programs and services serve youth who are trying to enter into the creative industries or further their formal education; The REMIX Project provides top-notch alternative, creative, educational programs, facilitators and facilities. Our mission is to help refine the raw talents of young people from across the GTA in order to help them find success as participants define it and on their own terms.

The Remix Project runs a variety of programs for youth including: creative arts, recording arts, the art of business, the art of photography, and the city life film project.

Source: [http://theremixproject.ca/site/](http://theremixproject.ca/site/)

This is Literacy (CYN)

This Is Literacy.ca is an initiative of the Literacy Implementation Team of the Child and Youth Network. On the website, over 40 sources are listed highlighted literacy programming and resources in London, Ontario.

Source: [http://www.thisisliteracy.ca/professionals/websites](http://www.thisisliteracy.ca/professionals/websites)

Trail Blazers

Trail Blazers is a camp which gives students from lower income families an opportunity to engage in enrichment and literacy activities. Participants are encouraged to read, give presentations to their peers, and write for the camp magazine. The children also learn responsibility by making their own beds, scheduling group activities, and aiding in the organizational elements of the camp. By the complete of camp, young people walk away with a great learning experience and a portfolio of literacy work. Trail Blazers was established in 1938 and annually serves 266 students between the ages of 7 and 17.

Young Adult Literacy Program

The Young Adult Literacy initiative creates several pilot literacy projects for young adults based on best practices. Programs include targeted instruction, work readiness, and support services. The programs target curriculum and instructional approach to the needs and interests of young adults who read at Pre-GED level. The program offers a work readiness or internship/job placement component, modest participant incentives, and case management services to support sustained participation. Programs serve cohorts of approximately 20 students and engage them for six months or longer, as most students need to advance several grade levels to enter GED programs or realistically compete in the job market.


Youth At Work

Educacentre in British Columbia offers a program for young people aged 15 to 30 who face major barriers to employment. The 22-week program includes: the acquisition of basic skills that improve access to the job market, work experience, and job search assistance.


Youth Education for Tomorrow (YET)

The Youth Education for Tomorrow (YET) program provides customized literacy experiences for diverse ages, grades, and reading level groups four days a week, an hour and a half each day. The program is composed of:

- Read-alouds, which last for approximately ten minutes where teachers read a short text,
- Shout-outs, where students respond to the initial text,
- Writing using Balanced Literacy components,
- Word works, where students play games to develop specific skills,
- Independent reading for 30 minutes using the 100 Book Challenge, and
- Pre- and post-testing progress assessments.

The program has served over 500 afterschool classrooms across the country. Participants have shown literacy improvement of an average of 1.2 grade levels with at least 180 days between tests.


Youth Literacy Program (YMCA)

The YWCA of Canberra’s Youth Literacy Program has been developed in partnership with the University of Canberra, Lanyon High School and the YWCA Mura Lanyon Youth and Community Centre. The program aims to:

- Improve the literacy learning opportunities and outcomes for students who are struggling to acquire sound literacy skills and to prevent their disengagement from school.
- Showcase effective literacy teaching practice.
Develop a model for literacy support that can be adopted and implemented at other sites
Adopt innovative and cutting-edge literacy teaching practices that incorporate the use of technology and e-readers

An integral part of the program is the use of e-readers as tools to motivate the students to read and write. At the conclusion of the pilot we will present each participant with a book pack to keep. We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of the Australian National University, the University of Canberra and Canberra Toyota in providing donations towards purchasing the books for the presentation.


**Youth Speaks**

Youth Speaks, a San Francisco non-profit with affiliate sites throughout the United States, promotes youth voice through Spoken Word performance, education, and youth development activities. In addition to performances, school assemblies, and artist-in-residency programs, Youth Speakers runs several drop-in-afterschool workshops in schools and community centres around San Francisco where young people have the opportunity to express themselves creatively through writing. The goals of the afterschool workshops are to bring together youth of diverse backgrounds, give them tools to critically analyze and articulate issues important in their lives, increase their excitement about reading and writing, and revitalize the popularity of the poetic art form. Afterschool workshops include open mic, free writing exercises, poetry readings, and group discussions.

Source: [http://youthspeaks.org/](http://youthspeaks.org/)

### 8.3 SCHOOL BASED LITERACY PROGRAMS

**Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board**

Every summer since 2008, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board has partnered with not-for-profit groups through the Focus on Youth program to support them in delivering free or low cost summer programs and activities that keep young people safe and active.

Programs and activities are focused on: literacy and numeracy, sports and recreation, culture and the arts, leadership development and mentorship, and programs targeted at meeting the needs of specific populations (e.g. newcomer children, street-involved and homeless youth).

Our goal is to enhance high quality summer program opportunities for children and youth throughout Hamilton by: offering free use of school space for organized, community-based programs, improving the quality of life for children and youth in high and moderate needs communities who otherwise would have limited access to organized summer programming, providing employment opportunities for youth in Hamilton with a focus on hiring and supporting the employment experiences of “at-risk” youth, providing leadership training and learning opportunities for youth employed within the program, strengthening collaborative efforts with community partners to build capacity to support children, youth and families in our high and moderate needs school neighbourhoods, providing as many free program opportunities as possible for children and youth in Hamilton.

Source: [http://www.hwdsb.on.ca/students/foy/](http://www.hwdsb.on.ca/students/foy/)
hArtworks

hArtworks is an inner-city public middle school literacy magazine written and edited by the students of Charles Hart Middle School, created by the school and the D.C. Creative Writing Workshop. The program gives students an opportunity to exercise their creative energy, speak their minds, and be heard by an audience throughout the city. Started in 1999, the program annually serves over 400 students in grades 4-12. Students in the program have showed increased grades in English, improved literacy skills, higher engagement in extracurricular activities, and increased rates of pursuing higher education.

Source: [http://www.dccww.org/programs.html#afterschool](http://www.dccww.org/programs.html#afterschool)

John Paul II School Literacy Program Calgary

John Paul II School, with help of the Calgary Catholic Education Foundation, was able to implement a literacy program throughout the school called Literacy Place. This program gives teachers the resources to expose their students to a wealth of knowledge and print materials. These materials include both fiction and non-fiction books, stories, poems, and a wide range of different texts to help students on their reading and writing journeys. The literacy program has been a great help to the school, teachers and ultimately the students.

The literacy program has helped the students not only become better readers and writers, but also to instill a love of reading and writing. Students have had the chance to take part in numerous literacy exercises which they have found rewarding while still making reading fun. One student said, “I like literacy exercises, I have learned a lot of new words.”

The literacy program also helps teachers monitor and assess the reading progress of individual students through a focus on comprehension and word-solving strategies, discussion of a wide range of fiction and non-fiction topics, and enrichment of students’ oral language development. The program has given teachers the resources to create a safe and comfortable atmosphere where students are able to improve upon their literacy skills.

Limestone District School Board Summer Literacy Program 2013

The Limestone District School Board offers a summer literacy program for students in grades 7 to 8 who require remedial assistance in the areas of reading and writing. The program is free for students and runs over the course of a two-week intensive program which focuses on literacy skills development important for success in school and for the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test. Students are taught in small groups by a qualified teacher with the assistance of a tutor. The program runs from 8:30 to 2:30 on weekdays. Students are referred to the program by their teacher or literacy tutor. The program is specifically designed to assist students who: perform at level 1 or 2 in reading and writing, have either been deferred or unsuccessful on the OSSLT, and have an IEP and/or are identified with a learning disability.

Source: [http://www.limestone.on.ca/programs/Summer_Programs/literacy_Program](http://www.limestone.on.ca/programs/Summer_Programs/literacy_Program)
The Peer Tutoring Literacy Program (PTLP)

In the Peer Tutoring Literacy Program, younger readers are paired with trained tutors from Grades 5, 6, and 7. The tutors and readers meet twice a week for 30-minute guided reading sessions during class time. To minimize the loss of class instruction, tutoring takes place during silent reading time early in the morning. During the school year, there are three tutoring terms, averaging eight weeks each. Readers are chosen on the basis of teachers’ recommendations and assessment of their reading skills. Trained tutors are paired with readers by the teacher coordinator following input from the classroom teachers.

The PTLP is implemented by a teacher coordinator and a parent volunteer. The teacher coordinator contributes to the selection of readers and tutors, and is responsible for training tutors and parent volunteers. Materials are available for download.


Think Ink and Step Into Stories

By working with Public Schools, Catholic Schools, Alternative Schools, Private Schools and home-schooled children as well as libraries throughout our community, Step Into Stories and Think Ink have become effective tools for teachers as well as for children and their families in growing early literacy skills, fostering a love of reading and promoting literacy and creativity, while demonstrating the power of words to enlighten, inspire and entertain.

Source: [http://www.writersfestival.org/schools](http://www.writersfestival.org/schools)

Write to Read

This program is a school-based initiative operating within the United States whose broad target is at risk or economically-challenged youth writers having both the desire and aptitude to write. Write to Read includes a series of weekly writing workshops in September during the school year and culminates with a contest in which entries are judged by publishing industry professionals. Winners are honoured at an Awards Banquet attended by publishers and civic leaders with a special keynote speaker. The program’s central educational focus lies with the building of students’ self-esteem.

Source: [http://www.youthliteracy.ca/pdf/new_school_lit_review.pdf](http://www.youthliteracy.ca/pdf/new_school_lit_review.pdf)
9.0 EVIDENCE-INFORMED MODEL FOR YOUTH LITERACY

9.1 COLLABORATIVE YOUTH LITERACY MODEL

Through an in-depth analysis of the literature, evidence-based programs and promising practices, a model for youth literacy in London has been developed for consideration by the Child and Youth Network. This model is adapted from the Government of Alberta’s Literacy Collaboration Model (2010) and incorporates elements from the other collaborative models discussed.

Collaborative Youth Literacy Model

- **Design**
  - Community
    - Community organizations that provide literacy programming.
  - Youth
    - Youth have a personal investment in their own development.
  - Schools
    - Thames Valley District School Board, the London District Catholic School Board, private schools and school authorities.
  - Families
    - Literacy development in the home.
  - Employers
    - Provide opportunities through employment, training and community service.
  - CYN & the City of London
    - Collaboration, coordination and support.

- **Develop**
- **Implement**
- **Evaluate**
- **Analyze**
There are two components of the proposed Collaborative Youth Literacy Model. The inner circle focuses on core elements of the model and the outer circle focuses on ensuring continuous development and innovation through implementation.

It is important to note that each circle represents a cycle that promotes continuous collaboration between stakeholders and a continuous process of program design, development, implementation, evaluation and analysis. The continuous process encourages collaboration, relevancy and effectiveness.

**Inner Circle: Core Elements**

The inner circle represents the successful collaboration of communities, youth, schools, families, employers, the CYN and the City of London to engage in meaningful literacy programs to ultimately enhance the literacy skills of youth.

The community represents the organizations that provide literacy programming. Community involvement is important in providing innovative programs that engage youth to develop and enhance literacy skills, especially during out-of-school time.

Youth involvement is essential in terms of providing programs that are youth-driven and encourage youth to take a personal investment in their own literacy development. This occurs by providing youth with a supportive and engaging learning environment to increase active participation.

Schools represent the Thames Valley District School Board, the London District Catholic School Board, private schools and school authorities. Engaging these stakeholders in the development and implementation of literacy programs for youth is essential to ensure youth are obtaining effective literacy instruction and necessary interventions. Likewise, this is also important to ensure school authorities are educated in best practices and promote these practices within the school system.

Families are where children first learn basic literacy education. Engaging parents and families in literacy programming is important for the successful development of literacy skills in youth. Parents of youth should also have the opportunity to be engaged in literacy programming where necessary in terms of participation in programs (i.e., as volunteers) as well as education and training.

Employers can provide opportunities for literacy skill development through employment, training and community service. Literacy programs can be developed within these structures to further enhance literacy development and engage youth.

The CYN and the City of London can be seen as the collaborators, coordinators and support needed to ensure the successful development of the proposed model. The CYN and the City of London act as the connector that brings all the stakeholders together to engage in meaningful dialogue, promote best-practice research, and ultimately work towards the goal of making literacy a way of life.
Outer Circle: Continuous Development & Innovation

The outer circle represents the management of the model as well as its successful implementation. This includes a continuous cycle of design, development, implementation, evaluation and analysis of youth literacy programs throughout the City of London.

The continuous cycle is an important feature of this model to ensure literacy programs are relevant and create meaningful impact in the lives of the stakeholders to promote the City of London as a leader in evidence-based literacy programming for youth.

The design of literacy programs should be based on best practice and evidence-based research. This promotes program effectiveness and impact. Likewise, implementation of literacy programs developed should be managed collectively by both the organization who will be running the program and by the CYN to ensure there is awareness of the various literacy programs in effect throughout the City.

Evaluation and analysis are essential components of this model to ensure the literacy programs put into practice are continuously enhanced and remain effective. It is important to establish measurement tools to measure program effectiveness, process and impact.

Summary

The model promotes a collaborative framework to consider moving forward with youth literacy programming in the City of London. Based on the review of literature, this model can act as a both a starting point and reference point throughout the implementation of CYN’s initiative to make literacy a way of life.

The success of this model is dependent on a collectivist approach to promoting literacy programming, ensuring the proper management of these programs, and incorporating relevant elements into the practice of all youth literacy programs. In doing so, London will be established as a leader in evidence-based literacy programming for youth.
9.2 ELEMENTS OF YOUTH LITERACY

A thematic analysis of the literature resulted in the identification of eight elements to be considered for all literacy programs for youth regardless of whether they are school based, community based or home based. The following section provides a brief overview of each of these elements.

**Meaningful Content**

Meaningful content refers to ensuring the content is relevant and important to youth. This begins with ensuring programs are infused with the essential skills and competencies inherent in the attainment of literacy skills. Content should also be relevant to the developmental stage of the youth (i.e., early, middle or late adolescence). Likewise, consideration should be given to predictors of youth literacy (i.e., cultural differences, gender, SES, youth in conflict with the law, out-of-school youth) when developing meaningful content. Finally, programs should be fun and employ engaging curriculum responsive to the interests of the youth.
Innovative Activities

Innovative activities refer to the utilization of framing literacy programs through unique elements, such as art and technology. Providing innovative activities occurs by tapping into the interests of youth to motivate and engage them in participation. Examples include, photography, website design, drama, poetry, and film.

Relationship Building

Relationship building refers to social interaction with peers as well as relationship development with community organizations, mentors and other adults who can support youth. This is evident through methods which incorporate mentors in after-school and community programs. Research demonstrates that including an element of relationship building is important to augment the efficacy of many other strategies for improving youth outcomes.

Youth Engagement

Youth engagement refers to incorporating participatory approaches to program development and implementation. It is important for literacy programs to motivate, engage and support youth in their learning. Motivation and engagement are thus important elements in all literacy programs. Research demonstrates that engaged participants are usually motivated and as a result will often take pleasure in programs and are more likely to continue (National Institute for Literacy, 2007). Elements for consideration include providing choice, opportunities for capacity building and leadership, encouraging self-reflection, development of social awareness, and incorporation of art and technology.

Evidence-Based Learning Strategies

Evidence-based learning strategies refer to the use of strategies that have demonstrated results and impact. Creating programs based on elements found in evidence-based practice is essential in ensuring programs remain relevant and impactful for improving the literacy skills of youth.

Supportive Learning Environment

A supportive learning environment refers to both the physical learning space and the creation of a social environment that supports learning. This includes the development of youth-centered programs based on social interaction, choice and voice. In doing so, programs should assess and build on learners’ context, perceptions, and use of literacy and language, use and build on the learners’ prior knowledge, language, vocabulary and experiences, focus on themes and content that are meaningful to the learners’ lives and futures, and build a strong sense of the learners’ identity as part of the community (Literacy Gains, 2012).

Wraparound Supports

Wraparound supports refer to supporting, educating and informing parents and professionals on how to best meet the needs of youth. This includes providing professional development opportunities to inform parents and professionals on best-practice methods and strategies for implementing youth-based literacy programs. Creating opportunities for discussion and support is also important.
For example, creating models of literacy collaboration for the exchange of best-practice methods, involving multiple stakeholders and providing resources and guidance.

**Evaluation and Sustainability Planning**

Evaluation and sustainability planning refers to measuring the impact and effectiveness of the program and leveraging results to build long-term sustainability. Evaluation of programs is an ongoing process and should be incorporated into all literacy programs to refine and ensure the needs of the youth are met. It is important to ensure evaluation tools are made available for teachers/facilitators of literacy programs to make this process easy and accessible. Sustainability planning is important when developing literacy programs as well to ensure success for long-term, sustained commitment to literacy learning within families, schools, and communities.
10.0 NEXT STEPS FOR CONSIDERATION

The review of literature, evidence-based programs and promising practices resulted in the formation of a collaborative framework for youth literacy to be considered for implementation in London. To build on the momentum of the literature review process and move to framework implementation, the CYN may want to consider a four-phase approach:

**Phase 1:** Literature Review: The literature review has been completed as evidenced by this report. The review of literature includes academic and grey literature and evidence-based and promising practices youth literacy program models. A collaborative framework has been designed to support the improvement of literacy for youth.

In reviewing the literature on best-practice models it became evident through both the research and discussions with the CYN Implementation Team that there are areas that need to be further researched. Although literature exists on a variety of anecdotal program models and elements, there is a need to ensure better dissemination, evaluation and comparison of youth literacy programs that are proven effective. Likewise, there is a need to examine the impact of literacy programs on youth transitions specifically.

**Phase 2:** Community Engagement: The next step would be to contextualize this literature and the literacy framework within the specific needs of the City of London. This would include the collection of primary research with stakeholders in London, for example, interviews, focus groups and data collection with youth, community agencies, school representatives, parents, and other individuals to determine the current scope, need and future direction of youth literacy programming in the context of the city of London. This work would serve the dual purpose of facilitating a local needs assessment and environmental scan and collecting data to inform the literacy framework. The outcome of this research would be a literature and community informed framework for youth literacy in London.

**Phase 3:** Implementation Planning: During the implementation planning step, a strategy would be developed to facilitate the implementation of the framework. The exploration of key components such as resources, partnerships and processes would be addressed prior to implementation. The development of an implementation map would guide the model integration process.

**Phase 4:** Implementation & Evaluation: Finally, the last step would be to develop a measurement tool that can be used to evaluate youth literacy programs moving forward. This would not only encourage the continuous evaluation and improvement of literacy programs, it would also help to establish London as a leader in evidence-based literacy programming.
11.0 CONCLUSION

The previous report analyzed over 140 pieces of literature pertaining to youth literacy and youth literacy programming. In doing so, literacy was examined in three specific contexts including the home, the school and the community. Based on the evidence derived from this analysis, a best practice model was developed for CYN to consider for further discussion.

This model incorporates participation from a variety of stakeholders including the community, youth, school, families, employers, the CYN and the City of London. In doing so, a variety of program elements were also presented for consideration including: meaningful content, innovative activities, relationship building, youth engagement, learning strategies, a supportive learning environment, wraparound services, and evaluation and sustainability planning.

In conclusion, this review provides a starting point for further discussion around the topic of youth literacy programming. Literacy and essential skills are invaluable tools required for youth to be successful in today’s knowledge based society. Developing effective literacy programming in the home, school and community while incorporating successful elements based on evidence will provide youth with the opportunity to work towards successful futures and ultimately, encourage literacy as a way of life and establish London as a leader in evidence-based child, youth and family literacy.
APPENDICES

- Literacy Program*
- Literacy program PDF
- Youth transition high school + literacy
- Youth literacy programs PDF
- Literacy 10 to 16 years PDF
- Literacy development school age PDF
- Toronto youth Literacy programs
- Literacy programming
- types of youth literacy program*
- Models of youth literacy program*
- youth program + literacy
- Family literacy program*
- Best practice literacy program
- Literacy planning guide
- Ontario literacy
- School transition
- Transition planning
- Literacy in America + youth
- Literacy + engagement
- OSSLT
- OSSLT program*
- OSSLT + transition*
- School programs + literacy
- Best practice literacy + United States
- Literacy PDF
- Literacy + youth PDF
- Adolescent* + youth PDF
- Program characteristics + adolescent* literacy
- Adolescent literacy program
- Adolescent* literacy program PDF
- Literacy literature review PDF
- Literacy Planning
- Literacy model
- Comprehensive literacy model
- Community literacy model
- School literacy model
- Holistic literacy model


Fernandez, P. (1999). Research into providing literacy/upgrading programs to youth who have dropped out of school. Frontier College.


Youth Literacy Programs A Review of the Literature


About Kovacs Group Inc.

Kovacs Group Inc. is a consulting firm that helps purpose-driven organizations to reach their highest potential. We leverage our skills, expertise and experience to exceed client expectations and deliver exceptional results. Kovacs Group Inc. focuses on four core areas: research and evaluation, organizational development, facilitation and community collaboration, and strategy and planning.

Kovacs Group Inc. seeks to achieve positive social change by collaborating with organizations to create innovative solutions. We are passionate about helping organizations develop strategies to change their corner of the world – wherever that corner of the world may be.
Nicole Kovacs

Nicole Kovacs, Principal Consultant of Kovacs Group Inc., has significant experience addressing the complex challenges experienced by local, national and international organizations.

Nicole has a B.A. Honours in History, a post-graduate degree in Training and Organizational Development and a Master’s degree in Business. She has over 12 years of experience facilitating robust, comprehensive research and then translating the data into actionable recommendations that serve to enhance communities. Nicole strives to develop evidence-informed strategies and solutions that create lasting social impact. With extensive experience managing projects from concept to completion, Nicole is known for her ability to deliver results.

Laura MacDiarmid

Laura MacDiarmid has a demonstrated passion for engaging in community research initiatives. An Associate Consultant at Kovacs Group Inc., Laura has significant experience in research and development at the community level and has a passion for delivering impactful results for partnering organizations. Laura has worked on a variety of projects with local agencies to meet the needs of their research initiatives. Laura has an undergraduate degree in Sociology and a Master’s degree in Criminology.