

Responses to Summit Feedback Questions

(Condensed Version - 7 Pages)

Question #1

What inspired you to accept this invitation to be here today?

General Interest in the Topic

Literacy is the key to learning, understanding. To function in the 21st century, you must be able to read and comprehend.

The primary means to create change in a community is through education - literacy is the primary source to achieve this goal.

After gaining insight as to the literacy problem, even in Sarasota - a community seen as opulent, well-educated, etc. - I want to try to make an impact on this problem.

Interested from Business Perspective

Every citizen should have a vested interest in literacy. Beyond this, my business's success depends on developing a community of readers.

Impact of Being Part of Solving Community Concern

I strongly believe that it takes an entire community to address literacy issues. This is a perfect format for initiating the planning for action.

The letter I received about this summit made me aware of the extent of agencies in our county doing literacy, and I came to HEAR from them. Now I know I must participate.

The possibility of providing literacy assistance to more adults, teens, and children in the community - partnerships make us stronger.

Interested in New Ways of Enhancing Literacy Efforts

Interested in learning about new ideas and hearing from others on the topic; previous experience in forums like this have been inspiring.

To be involved at the ground level of this discussion and look for linkages to better improve existing literacy services.

Own Work Involves Literacy

I've seen how critically important it is to be able to communicate at every age and within every segment of the community. I've heard from parents, teachers, business people, and children about problems faced when one is unable to read or write.

I have seen the impact of literacy barriers for adults and children and what improvements in literacy can mean to a child and family.

Question #2

Share your excitement about any two literacy endeavors underway in our community.

Accelerated Reader program
America YesRead
Asolo community reading event
Author visits to high schools
Barnes & Noble reading activities
Beginning Reader book club
Big Brothers/Sisters & Reading Rotarians
Big Brothers/Big Sisters/USF
Borders display of Summer Reading List
Born to Read
Brothers & Sisters Doing the Right Thing,
Children First Take Dad/Mom to School
CHIP (Community Health Improvement Partnership)
Church of the Palms tutoring
Computer labs at schools
Computer literacy classes (Spanish) at library
Conversation class - North Port Library
Cyesis parenting classes
Dictionaries to schools
Digital audio book programs
Early Learning Coalition Literacy Mentors
Earning by Learning Program
Emergent Literacy area - North Port Library
English classes in the workplace
ESOL - English as a Second Language
EWT grants for businesses
Familias Triunfadoras - Girls Inc.
Family literacy program (four-pronged)
FCAT tutoring - North Sarasota Library
First Presbyterian tutoring
Flor. Partners in Education literacy training
Forty Carrots outreach programs
Girls, Inc. bilingual education courses
Head Start
Healthy Families
HIPPI YMCA
Hospital Newborn Bags
Infant storytimes
Jewish Family and Children's Service
 B.E.S.T. and SATOSS Programs
K-12 reading plan - Sarasota County Schools
Laurel Civic Assoc. homework/reading help
Literacy coaches in schools
Literacy Council of Sarasota
Literacy Summit
Literacy tutoring
Literacy volunteers at libraries
Manatee Community College
 CLOP, bridge, CSI, kids' college, Sail,
 Academic Resource Ctr., tutoring labs
National Urban League Read & Rise book
Newspaper sections for students
Next Generation program in schools
Nurturing Dad's Initiative
One Book One Community discussion
People and Stories program at libraries
Pot of Beans neighborhood groups
Pre-K program
Project Light - Bradenton
Read 180 program
Reading Festival
Reading First at elementary schools
Reading Partners at Southside
Reading to dogs
Rockin' Readers - kindergarten students
School Workplace Literacy and ESOL
Speech clinic - South County
Story boxes for teen parents & families
Library Storytime program
Library Summer Reading program
Study Anime - read, write, & create
SURE (Sarasota United for Responsibility & Equity)
 Education Begins at Home program
 The Pepper Tree Literary Magazine
TRAM - Teen Reading and Meeting
Tutoring adults
Tutoring at Boys and Girls Clubs
Tutoring for FCATs
United Way Success by Six "Getting Ready
 for Kindergarten Calendar"
Volunteer Connections mentoring program
Wilkinson 5th graders reading to toddlers
YMCA Reads! - elementary schools

Question #3

What possibilities can you imagine for fostering Literacy throughout our community?

Increased Business/Church Involvement

Create a culture of literacy in all workplaces throughout our community in which employers take action steps to engage their employees at work and at home, in activities that engage adults, children, and families in reading and literacy.

Involve private industry; creative ways to disseminate information.

Many faith-based organizations working together to recruit tutors and to train and teach within their own organizations.

Clearinghouse of Literacy Programs

Catalog all literacy programs, best practices, and resources.

Compile a list of agencies that provide these services and make a commitment to communicate their usefulness throughout the community. "Marketing" to the people who are most in need of the services being offered.

One place to present all literacy programs (website) to make community aware.

There should be a literacy volunteer network between the schools, libraries, and other community organizations. If anyone needs help with literacy, someone should have the answer of where to go.

Creating Models

Be a community that is a gold standard for other communities.

Community-wide theme embraced by all.

Youth teaching youth; bringing heroes to Sarasota to reinforce the importance of reading; more cooperation of various agencies to understand which people are receiving help. A council for literacy coordination.

Easier Access to Services

Expand resources to languages other than English and Spanish.

Information available in a non-reading format.

Transportation for families to the library and the programs they offer.

Unified message; easy access to services from many portals.

Library Involvement - New Ways of Providing Service

Libraries without walls (no fines; free access to computers; Internet on street corners).

Make new connections in the community; e.g., libraries going into businesses to assist with literacy (rather than just being sponsored by businesses).

Set aside rooms on weekday evenings and Saturdays for literacy tutoring; continue meeting parents at birth of children through the Born to Read program.

More Volunteers/Tutors/Tutor Training

Focused programs to target specific literacy needs; collaborated training for volunteers; more parental involvement; mentors modeling literacy.

More mentors for middle and high school students to help them stay in school.

Strong network and partnership; to have every student in need partnered with a tutor, every family in need partnered with a program.

New Types of Programs

Adult tutoring programs in workplaces as part of benefits plan for "unskilled" workers.

Look at the Okolona Project inspired by Bill Raspberry (*Washington Post*)

Community book clubs focusing on fostering reading for middle and high school students, perhaps using the community "One Book" concept.

Training our young adults to tutor/read to elementary or younger students - even possibly visiting child care centers.

Work toward small demonstration projects to test ideas.

Parent/Family Involvement Increased

Better funding to focus on prevention, start at birth-age 5 instead of remediation in third grade; enough volunteers to mentor academically struggling children in school and after school and involving their parents; parents learning how to be their child's first teacher, so all children begin school ready to learn, with parents cheering them on.

Concentrate on reading fathers!

Ways to address literacy needs of entire family, offering babysitting if necessary.

Partnerships/Centralization

A coordinated effort to reach everyone who needs help reading so that all our citizens can take advantage of the opportunities that are available in creating their future.

Countywide coalition (made up of all the groups) but with one name - collaborative PR and strategic locations to reach communities in need.

Funding more coordinated; less competition for same dollars.

More partnering, working together to make the already established programs even more successful, or duplicated in other areas.

Periodic Meetings/Summits to Update

Coordination of focus groups to follow up on this meeting within neighborhoods and invite them to tell us what they need, and shape what programs they want.

A Literacy Day - perhaps one in North and one in South County. All of the agencies' representatives here today would be able to have information tables; testimonials by those who have benefited would also be good.

Periodic "literacy summits" to update all involved on recent developments and to make new partnership connections.

Question #4

What concerns do you have about improving literacy in our community?

Cultural Barriers

Cultural literacy of volunteers.

Non-reading "culture" among some populations.

Denial of Problem; Indifference

Apathy of clients and public.

Denial. Many people do not want to admit that Sarasota County has a literacy problem.

Increasing Diversity in the Conversation

Each person must take responsibility to involve those who were not represented today.

We are a big and growing county, and I'm concerned that we are leaving out some important people and not reaching them. The people here today are all committed in some way.

Lack of Coordination; Territoriality

Being able to get all groups to coordinate, not duplicate, efforts. On the other hand, independence fosters creativity and has the necessary lack of dictatorial control.

Great ideas have been generated today. We really do need to centralize all that Sarasota County is doing for literacy. My concern is who? how? financial? time?

Sustaining the collaborative conversation.

Lack of Funding

Collaborating versus competing for funding.

Lack of resources to achieve goals.

Motivating Those Who Need Services

How can we work through the sociological barriers that hinder non-readers, particularly in immigrant populations to help non-readers discover the value of learning to read.

How to reach out to non-reading parents.

Motivating families to become involved and wanting to stay involved.

Not Affordable

Not enough will change. The underprivileged citizens who have the highest illiteracy rates will be squeezed out of our county and will no longer be "our problem."

We forget the limited resources of low-income people when getting the information out or offering the program.

Not Enough Volunteers/Personnel

Are there enough volunteers for this entire community to cover all the various areas that need to be covered?

Enough volunteers in other languages; effort involved in getting the information to folks who can't read.

Political Issues

Latent hostility to undocumented immigrants - desire not to "reward" illegal presence.

Many illiterate people are transient or illegally in the US so they may not declare their needs. But their illiteracy impacts us nonetheless.

There is a political issue regarding ESL training and immigration issues. Some volunteers and funding sources are hesitant to act if a student is not here legally.

Reaching Those Who Need Services/Differing Needs

Accessibility (the income gap, the education gap).

Doubts about helping children and their parents at the preschool level.

Doubts about identifying and serving adults who can't read.

Finding ways to work with English learners outside of school system.

Sustaining the Effort

Fear that this discussion stays here instead of an action plan.

Lack of long-term commitment.

Maintaining a "driving force" to keep awareness of need and programs in the public's attention.

Sustaining the effort.

(END)