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Title of project/innovation/initiative	Mayor's Reading in Schools Program 2013 Coordinated by Logan City Council Libraries
Date initiated	16 April 2013
Date completed	End school term 4, December 2013

The issue/challenge

This Program was a direct outcome from the Logan: City of Choice Summit held in February 2013. The Summit sought to address key challenges in the Logan community, and the Libraries and Cultural Services branch of Logan City Council was recognised as ideally positioned to roll out this project across Council and into three target schools. This has been successfully achieved by recruiting, training and rostering 44 Council staff reading volunteers.

The Program aims to address low literacy levels in Woodridge by encouraging early school age children to develop the reading habit. Regular one-on-one reading with children is critical for children to gain confidence and develop their reading skills. The Mayor's Reading in Schools Program provides 3 – 4 trained Council staff members to model reading on a weekly roster to three target Woodridge.

Project details

The Mayor's Reading in Schools Program was successfully launched on 16 April 2013 in three target schools: Woodridge North State School, Woodridge State School and Harris Fields State School.

44 staff from across diverse areas of Logan City Council volunteer their time to read with grade 1 and 2 students who have been identified by educators as requiring assistance with their reading skills. All staff volunteers took 5 hours out of their workplace to attend Education Queensland's training program, Queensland Ready Readers provided by the Department of Education, Training and Employment. This training introduced staff to Education Queensland's corporate policies and essential information about working with children in schools, including a specific reading and literacy module. Two training sessions were provided: 15 April and 13 May 2013.

Council staff commit to 1 hour per month to read with children, providing weekly visits by 3 – 4 volunteers to each of the three schools. It has been particularly beneficial to the 150 newly arrived and migrant students who participate in the Intensive Language Classes program at Woodridge State School.

School Principals, Heads of Curriculum and Special Education departments, and teachers alike have expressed their gratitude to the volunteer readers in their school. By committing to one hour once a month, Council volunteer readers have guided children on their way to establishing a weekly reading habit.

Program feedback

Some feedback from students, volunteers and teaching staff includes:

They asked me to read to them and they said I was a good reader. I like reading to different people. They were like librarians. **Mohamed – Student, Woodridge State School**

I like to read with the volunteer because they were nice and when they talk to us they talk very nice and slowly. **Xai - Student, Woodridge State School**

I like to read with the volunteer because they were very polite and when they talked they talked so nicely and they are good volunteers. **Sabohat - Student, Woodridge State School**

I love the program. I have never been involved with anything like this before and would do it all again. Most of the children remember me and we talk about anything they like initially, to establish common ground. This relaxes them and the only problem then is stopping them from talking again, ha! **Volunteer, Pest Plant Officer, Animal and Pest Services**

It's amazing how 15 minutes of reading in a child's life makes such a difference (their self confidence, wellbeing, puts a smile on their dial), and it's an uplifting way to commence the day volunteering your time. It's an awesome initiative!

I love the whole experience and would recommend it to everyone :)

Volunteer, Program Leader Events, Community Engagement and Marketing, Logan City Council

I have had both Teachers and the Coordinator from the ESL Program both say that reading ... is something that they may not experience outside of the classroom or School. Some of the children are new to the country, so schooling within Australia may be a potentially daunting experience. If in some way this program can help to reduce any worry the children have, and help them fit into school life and into Logan's Community, I think this is extremely important and beneficial. Also, by introducing them to Council's libraries...will not only enhance the children's education but also their families' life in many ways.

Volunteer, Natural Area Supervisor – Communities, Marsden Parks Depot, Logan City Council

The volunteer council readers coming into our school have been fantastic.

Their time has been valued immensely by the classroom teacher but even more by the individual students receiving the one on one attention. As a school we strategically selected an early years class, where Home Reading by students was significantly below the average for that year level and many of the students in this class have complex social and welfare issues. A significant number of students in this class do not have an adult to read to at home on a regular basis. It is at a crucial point in their education where the efforts we make now will make a lifetime of difference and we need to close the gap. These students have loved the one on one attention and opportunity to be read to, to read with and to practise their skills by reading to a tutor. The volunteers have been very supportive, caring and genuinely interested in the well-being of our students, which is a credit to their professionalism. I also believe it has assisted in breaking down barriers between our services and helps us all see we are truly united in making a difference for Logan students and families, and by working together we can see Logan students achieve. We have loved receiving the assistance of the Volunteer Council Readers and hope this initiative continues or expands in its operation.

Head of Curriculum - Harris Fields State School

They are simply great. It is lovely to see student's eagerness to read with someone beyond their regular teacher. This shows they are confident and brave. **Teacher, Intensive Language Class – Woodridge State School**