



EST. 1899

United for Literacy
Littératie Ensemble

**STUDENT
SUCCESS
PROGRAMS FOR
CHILDREN AND
YOUTH**

**National Report
2022–2023**

Books for all

The impact of our Student Success Programs would not be possible without the support of generous funders and partners, including our national book partners, **Scholastic Canada's Classrooms Care** and **First Book Canada**.

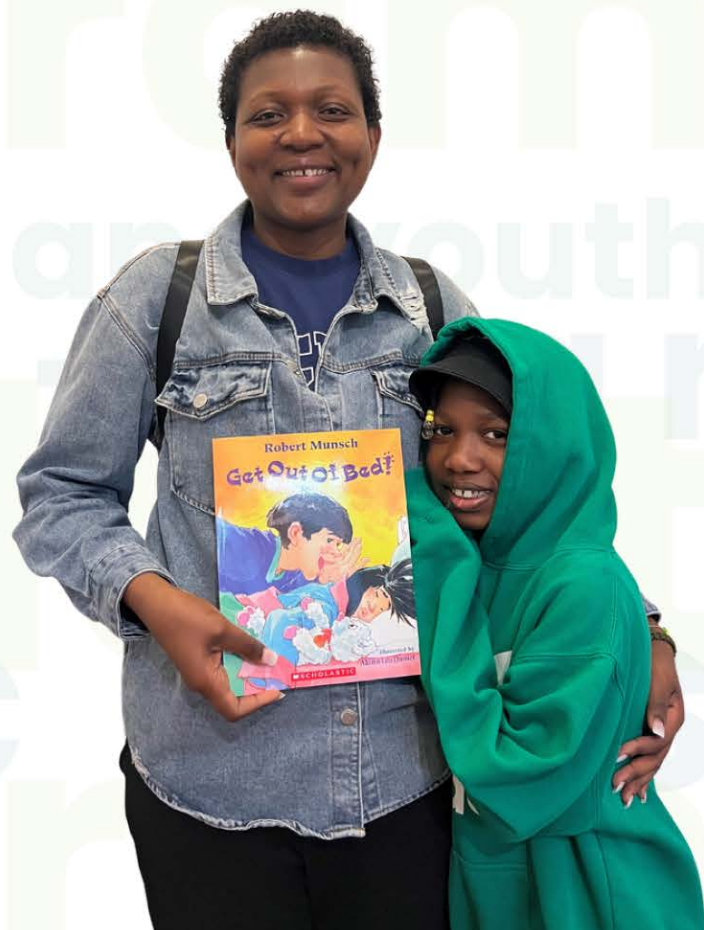


Children and youth who read a lot show higher levels of self confidence, creativity, empathy, and perform better in school.¹ While most children between six and eight years old in Canada read often, only one in four youth aged 15 to 17 do. By promoting a love of reading, we plant the seeds of lifelong learning. This leads to adaptable, more resilient adults.²

In 2022–2023, United for Literacy distributed more than

6,900

free, high-quality books to learners taking part in our Student Success Programs.



To learn more about our programs, please visit our website to find our closest regional office.

If you are interested in volunteering with us, you can find local information on social media or submit a request on our website.



@UnitedForLiteracy

2022-2023

This year, the Student Success Programs supported children and youth through online and in-person activities, including:

- **One-to-one and small group tutoring** supported by trained volunteer tutors who use a student-centred approach to building skills.
- **Homework clubs and after-school programs** that support learners with schoolwork while building connections between school and real-world learning.
- **Reading Circles** that support early literacy while encouraging a love of books.

In 2022-2023, United for Literacy reached:

8,923 children and youth from kindergarten to Grade 12 in Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia

We delivered:

239 free children and youth programs and distributed **1,396** literacy kits across **53** communities

We recruited, screened, and trained:

1,689 volunteer literacy tutors across all programs



Why literacy matters

One in five (20%) racialized families in Canada lives in poverty. In contrast, only 1 in every 20 non-racialized families does. The impact of growing up in poverty follows children throughout their lives, in virtually every area.³ As early as kindergarten, children from poor families tend to have a harder time with tasks like holding a pencil correctly or tying their shoes. They struggle more with instructions and expressing themselves. They also experience language delays, hyperactivity, and behavioral problems at a higher rate.^{4,5} Unsurprisingly, those children struggle more with staying engaged at school later on.⁶

“Engaged students are 2.5 times more likely to say that they get excellent grades and do well in school, and they are 4.5 times more likely to be hopeful about the future than their actively disengaged peers.”⁷

The Student Success Programs are designed to promote student engagement in children and youth from low-income, newcomer, Indigenous, and racialized communities.



We follow a philosophy of Student-Centred Individualized Learning, which means that learners are active in deciding what and how they want to learn.



We believe that every place is a learning place, so we go where people are, rather than expecting them to come to us.



Research shows that culturally responsive instruction can boost student engagement in learning.⁸ We prioritize hiring staff and recruiting volunteers from the communities we serve.



Impact

At the beginning of each year, we survey learners, parents, and educators to understand each learner's needs when they sign up for our programs. At the end of the year, participants fill out the same survey. This allows us to see the changes in their responses and evaluate the impact of our programs. On the 2022/2023 Student Success Programs:



92% of learners said **their reading skills improved.**
86% said **their writing skills improved.**
85% said **their math skills improved.**



82% of teachers and educators observed **an improvement in their students' reading skills.**



89% of parents observed that **their child's reading skills improved after participating in the United for Literacy program.**

81% of parents observed **improvements in their child's math skills.**



In their own words

People with higher levels of literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving skills report better health and stronger connections with their communities and society. Literacy upgrading also has a positive impact on higher earnings and job retention.⁹ Through our children and youth programs, we aim to help learners succeed today and tomorrow.

Every year, we ask program participants and the people invested in their learning to tell us about their experience with the Student Success Programs in their own words.

Here's what we heard:

"Over all I think the program is well run and is needed for our African NS students who could be struggling with their learning. Thank you to all of you for your help my child!"

Parent, Africentric Literacy Club (Dartmouth, Nova Scotia)

"I have been tutoring for 17 years, eight of which have been through Frontier College/United for Literacy with four of these in Fredericton. I have tutored people of all ages but I particularly enjoy the recent immigrant students I have now at George Street Middle School. These students have many challenges, with language learning being one of the most significant. It is very rewarding to see the progress they make each year and to see the smiles on their faces as they realize they can communicate in the language of their new country."

Volunteer, George Street Middle School One-to-One (Fredericton, New Brunswick)

"I have had an amazing experience being a one on one tutor so far! It is fulfilling to be able to positively impact the lives of my learners and watch them learn and become more confident each session. My learners always make me laugh and smile and I have fun during our sessions as well. One of my favorite activities is when my learner is able to read and spell a new word. We both draw the word and see who drew the best picture. My learner always insists that their drawing is the very best and we have a great time."

Volunteer, Jamaica Association of Montreal (Montreal, QC)

"I learned how to do fractions here, and my school said that's grade 6 math while I'm only in grade 5! I am ahead of my friends. I also learn new words every week."

Learner, Winnipeg Online Homework Club (Winnipeg, Manitoba)

"It is actually incredibly difficult to put into words what my experience working with United for Literacy has been, but I will give it a go. I have been volunteering with United for Literacy for 3 years now and each moment has been so special to me. Newcomers Homework Program has become a home away from home, seeing the learners each week grow and progress through their studies! It is a privilege being able to see their growth over the past few years, and I tend to get a little emotional when I see that some of them are now going into High School. The conversations we share, to laughing during our icebreaker game, to our debriefs at the end of the session are all so special. I firmly believe I have learnt more from the learners than I have taught them. I would recommend this opportunity to anyone, it has truly been life changing."

Volunteer, Regent Park - Newcomer Tutoring Program For Children (Toronto, Ontario)

"As the school year draws to a close, I wanted to extend my heartfelt appreciation for the incredible support and guidance you have provided to H., through One-on-One Math tutoring. His progress over the past year is truly remarkable, and we are immensely grateful for your dedication and efforts."

Parent, Saskatoon Public Library One-to-One (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan)

"Reading is getting easier and I am speaking more English. I am understanding more words and it is getting easier for me to step out of my comfort zone in group work because I finally understand what I am reading."

Learner, Avondale School One-to-One (Grande Prairie, Alberta)

"The homework club is the best. It is fun and friendly. I feel happy when I come to homework club. I don't have much time to play games sometimes. The snacks are good, and I like the rice cakes a lot. I like drawing in the homework club. I like playing scrabble. The teachers are good.

I like working on divisions, times, plus, minus. I don't like it when we don't get enough time to play."

Learner, Hillside Homework Club
(Burnaby, British Columbia)



CELEBRATING 125 YEARS of empowerment through literacy!

In 2024, United for Literacy will celebrate its 125th anniversary. We are grateful to the learners, partners, and staff who have chosen to believe in the power of literacy over so many years. The pandemic marked a time of unprecedented need across the country. At the same time, it challenged our ability to maintain our reach throughout the communities who needed us the most. **COVID-19 changed everything but our values.** We carried on. We digitized our programming and reached those unable to connect digitally any way we could, including by phone and via radio broadcast.

We are proud of the resilience of the United for Literacy community over the past 124 years. We look forward to celebrating with you.

Learning together. Learning for all.

References

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- [3] Canada Without Poverty. “Facts about Poverty.” Canada Without Poverty, October 17, 2022.
- [4] Pratt, Megan E, Megan M McClelland, Jodi Swason, and Shannon T Lipscomb. “Family Risk Profiles and School Readiness: A Person-Centered Approach.” Early Childhood Research Quarterly, February 16, 2016.
- [5] Centraide. “A New School Year, the Same Inequality: Challenges for Young Montrealers.” Centraide du Grand Montréal, July 11, 2023.
- [6] Jensen, Eric. “How Poverty Affects Classroom Engagement.” ASCD, May 1, 2013.
- [7] Hodges, Tim. “School Engagement Is More than Just Talk.” Gallup.com, October 25, 2018.
- [8] Will, Madeline. “Teachers of Color Are Linked to Social-Emotional, Academic Gains for All Students.” Education Week, February 22, 2022.
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Literacy is...

...transformational

It changes lives, families, and communities. It feeds growth, unleashes potential, and empowers people with the capability and confidence they need to realize their goals.

...urgent

Everyone can learn. But not everyone can access the help they need. Canada's literacy divide widens daily because so many people and communities lack adequate literacy support.

...dynamic

Society demands increasingly sophisticated understanding of written language to fully participate in daily life.

...vital

to Canada's long-term success. Solving systemic literacy challenges is key to advancing social equity and prosperity across our country.

...achievable

Bridging the literacy gap is something we can do. It's our most effective, achievable tool for change. Results are demonstrable at personal and systemic levels.

**Literacy changes
everything.**



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