



EST. 1899

United for Literacy
Littératie Ensemble

Student Success Programs for Children and Youth

2024 National Report



Thank you!

United for Literacy's Student Success Programs are possible through the ongoing support of our generous sponsors, community partners, dedicated volunteers, and staff: your contributions have kept kids reading, learning, and having fun throughout the year!



Fredericton, NB



Halifax, NS



Montréal, QC



Waterloo, ON



Winnipeg, MB



Saskatoon, SK



Grande Prairie, AB



Vancouver, BC

OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

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

- **One-to-one and small group tutoring** supported by trained volunteer tutors who use a student-centered 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 book.

For our fiscal year 2024 programming, we're proud to report:

8,058

children and youth supported during the school year through the Student Success Program.

1,828

volunteer placements filled by community members screened and trained to deliver our programs. Our volunteers devoted more than **24,000** hours of their time!

7,333

new, FREE books distributed and **999 activity kits** to keep learners learning at home.



After-school reading at the Pen Pals program (BC)

PROGRAM IMPACT

To capture the impact of our Student Success Programs, we ask our learners complete self-evaluations at the beginning and end of the program. This allows us to see how much their skills have improved, and also how their confidence and self-esteem grew in the process. We also survey parents and educators to help us understand the strengths of our programming. Here's what we heard about the 2023/2024 Student Success Programs:

LEARNERS

- **96%** of learners said that the **Student Success Program** helped them.
- **92%** of learners said their **reading skills** improved.
- **90%** said their **writing skills** improved.
- **86%** said their **math skills** improved.

PARENTS

- **85%** of parents surveyed said that they noticed a difference in their child's **confidence** after participating in a United for Literacy program.
- **91%** of parents noticed improvements in their child's **reading skills**.
- **75%** noticed improvements in their children's **writing skills**.
- **80%** noticed improvements in **math**.

EDUCATORS

- **82%** of educators surveyed said they noticed improvements in students' overall **literacy**.
- **92%** said that their students; **confidence and communication skills** improved.



Strathcona Reading Circle in Edmonton. (AB)

LITERACY CHANGES EVERYTHING

Research shows that socioeconomic barriers impact children as early as kindergarten and that these early symptoms set the stage for the rest of their lives.¹ In fact, by the end of the third grade, children who struggle with their reading are four times more likely to drop out of high school or graduate with delays.²

Research shows that small-group literacy interventions can make a difference when support is...

Individualized

Diversity is a strength, but only when you make room for it! Not only are our programs inclusive of any individual for whom our assistance is welcome and needed, by following the Student-Centered Individualized Learning principles, we ensure our learners are active in deciding what and how they learn.

Consistent

United for Literacy has worked with countless community partners over many years, and, in some cases, decades! The children and youth in these communities have benefitted from our programming on a weekly basis, from one grade to the next. Research shows that consistency plays an important role in creating stable environments, reinforcing knowledge, and building discipline!³

Community-oriented

United for Literacy works in communities where our partners and networks tell us a need for literacy support exists. We then collaborate with community groups and organizations to provide free, appropriate programming. By working closely with local communities, who know best what their learners need, we focus our resources on providing free services that directly address specific literacy needs. These relationships allow us to be more efficient with resources and avoid any duplication of services.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED PARTNERSHIPS

The design of the Student Success Programs tells only part of the story. United for Literacy makes sure that our services are accessible to the children and youth that need us the most. We deliver our programs free of charge and go to learners rather than waiting for them to come to us. At United for Literacy, every place is a learning place! This includes:



Public Schools and Libraries

Nationwide, we work with schools, districts, and libraries to deliver our programming at the heart of communities across Canada. This allows us to reach children and youth in familiar and comfortable spaces. Our partnerships with libraries are also a great way to showcase resources that are available to people of all ages at their local branch: job and career services, languages courses, musical instruments, and more—libraries have it all!



First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Communities

United for Literacy has a long history of working with Indigenous communities across Canada. We partner with community schools or Bands' social, educational, or cultural departments. We are grateful for the vast range of knowledge that has been shared with us by our amazing partners over the years. We are literacy experts but not experts in Indigenous literacies, and we are committed to learning from our shared history. We began the 2024 calendar year with a message from our President and CEO, Mélanie Valcin and board member Kristen Miller reiterating our efforts to learn, listen, and act according to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation's 6 Actions of ReconciliACTION. Read it [here](#).



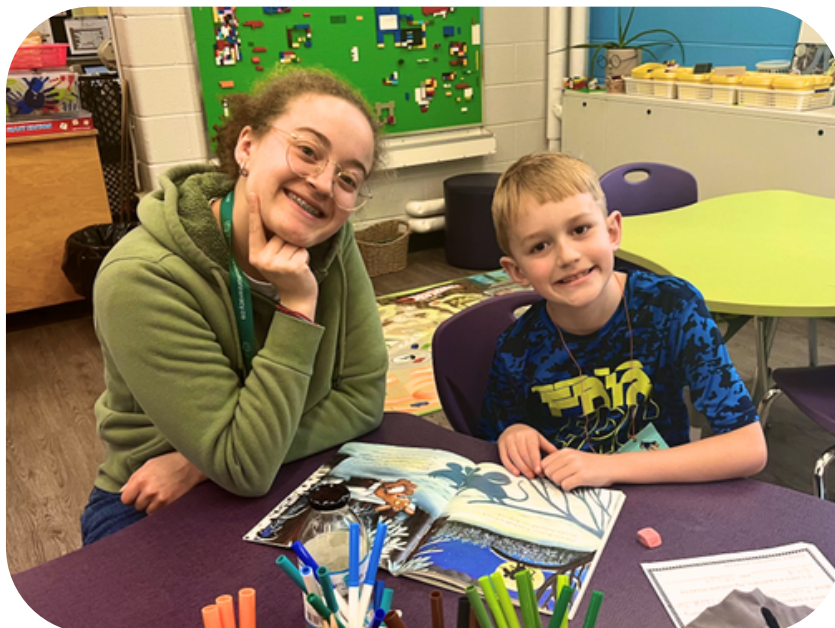
Shelter and Community Housing Establishments

By partnering with shelters, we work with women and children escaping violence at home. Children and youth experiencing homelessness are more likely to be disengaged with their learning. Research describes housing instability as *“the greatest predictor of students’ chronic absenteeism from school”*.⁴ Unsurprisingly, lower levels of academic achievement and significantly higher dropout rates are also reported. According to the National Youth Homelessness Survey, up to 53% of homeless youth drop out of school. Out-of-school youth experience continue to experience significant challenges in securing gainful employment, with a 76% unemployment⁵ rate.



Newcomer Settlement Organisations

Studies have consistently shown that English Language Learner (ELL) students experience lower levels of educational achievement and attainment. In addition to facing language barriers, these students are not given time to adapt to their new learning environments and, as a result, are placed in lower academic tracks. Working with newcomer organisations helps us build culturally responsive learning environments, and parental engagement helps promote self-esteem and positive attitudes to learning, which mitigate the achievement gaps for newcomer children. Integrating learning in safe, familiar community settings is uniquely impactful in engaging newcomer children and youth in their education.⁷



Reading Buddies program in Guelph (ON)

JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

Since 2022, United for Literacy has been working to ensure that our commitment to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion is reflected in every area of our work, no matter how small. We want learners and volunteers to feel safe, supported, included, and well-equipped, and we encourage staff to foster inclusive working and learning environments.



Afterschool learning at Kent Road School (MB)

This year, United for Literacy set out to see how well our Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) principles were applied nationwide. To gain insight, we included a JEDI survey in our evaluation process and asked our tutors, partners, parents, and learners to tell us about their experiences, as they relate to questions of belonging. Here's what they said:

- **94%** of our tutors agreed that **United for Literacy's programs uphold the values of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion.**
- **97%** of parents agreed that the **Student Success Programs create a welcoming environment for their children and community.**
- **97%** of our learners said they felt **comfortable** when attending the Student Success Programs; **95%** said that they felt **seen and accepted in the Student Success Programs.**
- **100%** of our community partners agree that **United for Literacy programs are inclusive.**

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

In addition to our yearly evaluations, we ask learners, parents, and educators to reflect on the impact of the Student Success Programs along with anything else they would like to share. Here's what we heard:

"I come to Homework Club everyday for so many reasons. I first heard about Homework Club from my older sister. She told me how great Homework Club is and the benefits I can get from coming. I can do homework or study, eat food and talk to my peers and Ms. Simonson about anything I need."

Learner, British Columbia

"Every unit that I've done with you, I've understood it way better! I need more explanation for me to understand math units, and the easier methods you taught me have made math a lot easier for me and my mental math. You helped me understand math more... If any of my friends are in trouble, I will definitely recommend them to see you!"

Learner, Alberta

"Thank you for doing Comic Book Club. My daughter cried happy tears when she was selected to join the club!"

Parent, Saskatchewan

"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, Manitoba

"The students really liked attending. For some of them this was the first time they have ever participated in an after school program due to the pandemic. The grade 2 students are now asking if they can be a part of it next year."

Community Partner, Ontario

"I have formed a meaningful connection with my student and have learned a lot in the process of tutoring her! I really enjoy the hour I spend teaching her and it makes me feel accomplished when I see the growth she has made since the beginning of our work together."

Volunteer Tutor, Québec

"Volunteering as a tutor with United for Literacy has been an immensely rewarding experience, and I feel fortunate to have crossed paths with such a dedicated learner. Working with them has been a collaborative process where we both learn and grow together. Witnessing their progress is incredibly fulfilling. Their perseverance and dedication serve as a reminder of the impact that learning can have on someone's life."

Volunteer Tutor, New Brunswick

"B.'s [learner] report card showed improvement across all his subjects not just reading. He loves to read with Madeleine [tutor] and now goes all on his own to the school library to borrow books for home!"

Parent, Nova Scotia

ONWARD AND UPWARD

In 2024, United for Literacy **celebrated our 125th anniversary**. This milestone would not have been possible without the continued support of learners, volunteers, community partners, and staff! Since 1899, we've remained true to our commitment to listening and learning from each of the communities we serve. This approach has ensured that United for Literacy remains responsive to learners' changing needs from one decade to the next! As proud as we are of our deep history, we're even more excited for the equitable future we continue to build, together.

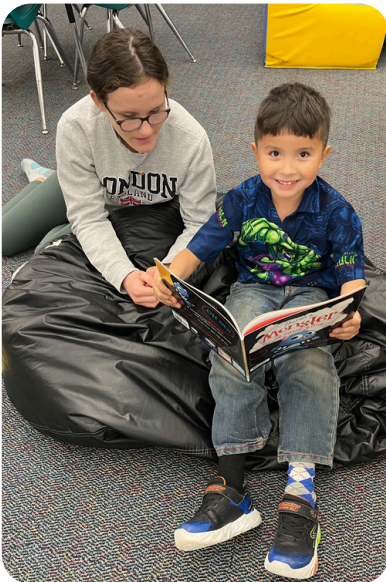
**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT.
LITERACY CHANGES EVERYTHING!**



Reading outdoors in Sherbrooke (QC)

CITATIONS

- [1] Centraide du Grand Montréal. "Vivre En Situation de Pauvreté." Centraide Du Grand Montréal, United Way of Canada, 17 Oct. 2024.
- [2] Hernandez, Donald J. "Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation." Foundation For Child Development, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 31 Oct. 2016.
- [3] Marin, Javier. "Why Consistency Matters in Your Child's Education: The Key to Academic Success." AE Maths & English Tuition Center, 19 Nov. 2024.
- [4] National Low Income Housing Coalition. "New Study Finds Housing Instability Is the Greatest Predictor of Students' Chronic Absenteeism from School." National Low Income Housing Coalition, 17 Dec. 2018.
- [5] Gaetz, Stephen, et al. Without a Home: The National Youth Homelessness Survey. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2016.
- [6] Lara, Carla Camila, and Louis Volante. "The Education and Integration of Immigrant Children in Ontario: A Content Analysis of Policy Documents Guiding Schools' Response to the Needs of Immigrant Students." Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy, 2019.
- [7] Walker, Shontoria, and Laveria Hutchison. "Using culturally relevant pedagogy to influence literacy achievement for Middle School Black Male Students." Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, vol. 64, no. 4, 15 Dec. 2020, pp. 421-429, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.1114>.



*Reading Club
in Grande Prairie (AB)*



*Book giveaway
in Halifax (NS)*



*Homework Club
in Hamilton (ON)*