

The Rotary International On-line DISTRICT LITERACY SEMINAR Fall, 2009

This on-line training tool has been developed for Rotary club presidents, the chairs of literacy-related club committees, and district literacy leaders. The content of this on-line seminar parallels the information found in the RI Literacy Resource Group's *Leadership Manual*. Any Rotarian can read that manual, on-line, at www.rotary.org/literacy. It appears there IN ALL OFFICIAL LANGUAGES.

The sponsor of this on-line seminar is your RI Literacy Resource Group (RILRG). That resource group is composed of 53 zone coordinators, 6 area coordinators, an assistant general coordinator and a general coordinator. All of those volunteers were appointed by President John Kenny. Their job is to work through the Rotary districts to enable each and every Rotary club to play a role in the world-wide movement for educational access and excellence.

IF YOU DON'T HAVE THE TIME TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS SEMINAR, PLEASE AT THE VERY LEAST READ AND SHARE WITH YOUR CLUB THE FOLLOWING TWO VERY SHORT DOCUMENTS:

1. *2009-10 Literacy Resource Group Guide to Literacy Service Projects and Awards for Clubs.*
2. *Literacy Awards Certification Form*

Both of those documents are available on-line at www.rotary.org/literacy and they are available in all official Rotary languages.

I. The No Rotary Literacy Leader Left Behind Test: What Every DG, ADG and Club President Should Know about Rotary and Literacy

For decades Rotary leaders thought of literacy in terms of clubs from wealthy nations providing support for basic reading projects in developing countries. That is still a common view. Here is how one new zone literacy coordinator put it after attending the RI Convention in 2009 and participating in the literacy breakout sessions:

“Thank you for the inspiring seminars in Birmingham. I found them interesting but perhaps slightly outside my expectations of Rotary action... I rather expected that we would discuss literacy projects .. (which) come down to basics – provide money for schools in poor countries.”

That expectation is still quite common and the foremost challenge of every district literacy seminar is to change that expectation. At the end of an effective district literacy seminar every participant should be able to answer the following questions (This is an open book test);

1. How does the RI Literacy Resource Group define literacy?
2. Briefly, what kinds of projects do clubs and districts do in each literacy category?
3. What is the relevance of the RILRG to the literacy work of the club?
4. What are the standards of literacy plan excellence according to the RILRG?
5. What is the District Literacy Award? Is it an accreditation standard?
6. What are the suggested literacy project goals for clubs?
7. What are the special emphases of the RILRG and how do they relate to the clubs and districts?
8. How should club literacy plans relate to the RI Strategic Plan?
9. What is the relevance of *Every School a Star* and *Rotary Reads* to the work of a club?
10. What are the sources of additional information?
11. How can the club contact the RI Literacy Resource Group?
12. Is there an emerging FUTURE VISION for Rotary and literacy?

II. How Does the RILRG Define Literacy?

How a club defines literacy will make a significant difference in terms of what kinds of service project the club identifies. For that reason the RILRG suggests that the club's literacy leaders should use several different definitions to scan the environment for opportunities. This idea is similar to a physician using several different tests to try to determine the nature of an illness.

One of those definitions is used more frequently than the others and that is the one emphasized in this literacy seminar. That definition identifies three categories of educational needs:

1. Basic Literacy – The ability to read, write and compute at the level achieved by a person with a primary school education.
2. Functional Literacy – The skills and knowledge which an adult needs in order to function successfully as a worker, a citizen, and a parent
3. Character Literacy – The skills and knowledge which an adult needs in order to get along with others, be a positive influence in the work place, family and community, and support world peace and understanding.

III. What Clubs and Districts Do: and Where to Find More Examples

You can view a large variety of club literacy project examples on-line at www.rizones30-31.net. For purposes of this on-line literacy seminar, however, we will focus on general categories.

In the category of BASIC LITERACY we find Rotary clubs doing such projects as:

1. Partnering with local primary schools to provide reading mentors, books, dictionaries, supplies, equipment and even facilities
2. Partnering with not-for-profit agencies which try to rescue children who are left out of the formal school system or falling behind.
3. Partnering with a school or a not-for-profit agency to rescue adults who never learned how to read. Some clubs work with a government agency to do this.
4. Taking a basic literacy program into a jail or prison.
5. Taking a basic literacy program into rural villages where there is no school
6. Supporting early childhood projects which reach out to poor families whose children would otherwise start school being far less ready to learn to read than the children of well-to-do families. *Imagination Library* is an example.
7. Strengthening community support for schools and teachers by presenting teacher recognitions with ample local publicity.

A majority of Rotary clubs do these things only in their local community. But a significant number of clubs do one or more of these things as an international service project.

In the category of FUNCTIONAL LITERACY we find Rotary clubs doing such projects as:

1. Partnering with middle schools, high schools or not-for-profit agencies to provide remedial reading, writing and math programs for teens at risk.
2. Supporting projects which teach household financial literacy (consumer economics)
3. Supporting projects which teach marital and parenting skills
4. Supporting projects which teach adult immigrants the language and customs of the new country.
5. Supporting projects which teach personal health care literacy.
6. Providing scholarships for youth who would otherwise not be able to pursue advanced education and thereby realize their potential.
7. Providing student recognitions which encourage effort and excellence.
8. Supporting vocational courses which provide young or older adults with a marketable skill (including the skills needed to start a new small business).
9. Supporting job shadowing and career awareness projects.

In the category of CHARACTER LITERACY we find Rotary clubs undertaking such projects as:

1. Teaching the Four-Way Test -- At the primary, middle school or high school level.
2. Supporting emotional or critical thinking courses.
3. Supporting the character literacy projects of other agencies such as the *Laws of Life* program.

4. Supporting self esteem projects such as the *Who is Nobody Project*
5. Promoting projects which create awareness of the basic meaning of life and work values of Rotary -- Service Above Self/ They Profit Most Who Serve the Best -- by speaking to students at any and all levels of the formal education process.
6. Promoting public awareness and appreciation of the Service Above Self philosophy of life by presenting awards or recognitions to youth or adult role models.
7. Supporting “teen rescue” projects which rehabilitate young adults who are at risk of drifting into a life of unemployment and petty crime.

IV. What is the relevance of the RILRG to the Literacy Work of the Club?

The RI Literacy Resource Group has four functions all of which relate to clubs. They are:

1. Find out what clubs and districts are doing in terms of literacy projects
2. Share those findings with the rest of the Rotary world
3. Encourage clubs and districts to undertake projects and become aware of standards of excellence.
4. Facilitate club and district efforts to find and promote literacy projects.

The two roles of the clubs (and districts) with respect to the RILRG are to:

1. Tell the RILRG what the club is doing
2. Take advantage of the services offered by the RILRG

V. Standards of Literacy Plan Excellence

Over the past six years the RI Literacy Resource Group has come to the conclusion that an excellent club literacy plan should include more than one literacy project. That conclusion is based on observing the pattern of literacy work observed in a small number of districts which completed a census of club literacy project activity. There are only 3 such districts, all of them in North America.

One of those three is District 5450 in Colorado which conducted a literacy census in 2007-08. Certain patterns stand out in that case:

1. Twenty or more clubs undertook a project in the following categories: Four-Way Test projects (28 clubs), school partnerships (25 clubs), international literacy projects (24 clubs), dictionary projects (24 clubs)
2. Between ten and 19 clubs undertook a project in the following categories: college scholarships (16 clubs), student-of-the-month (15 clubs), Books for Babies (13 clubs), Read to Me (13 clubs), Imagination Library (11 clubs), various kinds of book gift projects other than or in addition to a dictionary project.

3. One or more clubs undertook a variety of other projects such as: BrainWise (emotional literacy program), financial literacy, newspapers in education, teacher of the month recognition, Junior Achievement (economic literacy), food for students from poor families, and chess club.

A similar pattern emerged from the reports of the two districts where all clubs earned the District Literacy Award in 2008-2009. The fact that every club in those two districts did at least 5 literacy projects is another marker of excellence.

It is tempting to use these patterns as the basic standard of excellence. If that were the case then we would define an excellent club as one which does at least five literacy projects including a Four-Way Test project, a school partnership, a dictionary project and an international literacy project plus one or more additional projects

The RI Literacy Resource Group actually considered something along those lines and ended up with a compromise. The RILRG set a standard of excellence as doing five literacy projects BUT with no specification of what those projects should be. Suggestions were made, to be sure. Those are listed in two of the sections which follow in this on-line literacy seminar (VII:Suggested literacy project goals for clubs and VIII:special emphases of the RILRG).

The obvious reason for not specifying projects is that conditions vary from one community to another. Some of the very best club efforts reported in recent years involve situations where a club undertook one very significant project such as organizing and staffing an adult literacy project; starting or staffing a basic reading project for children not being served by the formal school system. Even if the clubs conducting those projects did nothing else, they should be very proud of what they did and they should be recognized for that excellence.

VI. The District Literacy Award for Clubs: An Accreditation Standard?

The RILRG decision to make five literacy projects the standard of club excellence is enshrined in the criteria for the District Literacy Award. It has been suggested that this award might be considered the standard for accreditation. For that to be so then every Rotary club in the world should be potentially capable of earning the District Literacy Award. That appears to be possible. In fact, as mentioned earlier, last year there were two districts where every club earned the award --- District 5000 (Hawaii, USA) and District 6900 (Georgia, USA). It is rumored that District 1960 (Portugal) intends to join that elite group this year.

All club presidents should know about this award. They should also know that a copy of the award application form is available at www.rotary.org/literacy.

All ASSISTANT DISTRICT GOVERNORS should also know about this award and should encourage their clubs to earn it.

VII. More About the RILRG's Suggested Goals and Awards

The RILRG did not specify projects which had to be completed to earn the District Literacy Award. But the RILRG did put together a list of suggested club literacy goals. That list is as follows:

1. Conduct an International Literacy Day project
2. Conduct a Literacy Month project in March
3. Conduct a dictionary project or other book project
4. Conduct a vocational service literacy project
5. Participate in an international literacy project. Consider one also involving health, hunger and water (The focus of other RI resource groups)
6. Share information about your club's literacy projects with your district literacy chair and/or your district governor.
7. Earn the District Literacy Award.

Clubs and districts should also be aware of additional awards available from the RI Literacy Resource Group. Those awards are:

1. The Zone Literacy Award – A club must complete ten literacy projects including one project from the list of special emphases, a book (or dictionary) project, and either a Literacy Month project or an International Literacy Day project.
2. The Innovation in Literacy Award – This award recognizes a club project which the zone, area or general coordinator determines to be a significant innovation.
3. Local Literacy Leader Recognition – This award can be given by a club to a local individual whom the club deems to be a local literacy leader worthy of recognition. Literacy Month is one good time to present such an award and to do so with plenty of local publicity.
4. Vocational Service Role Model Recognition – This award is given by a club or district to a person or organization which exemplifies the vocational service values of Rotary in the workplace. The recipient could work in business, government or the not-for-profit sector. Vocational Service Month would be an ideal time to make such an award. Be sure to get plenty of local publicity and consider having the role model appear in a local school to expound on his or her Service Above Self approach to one's career.
5. Four Avenues of Service Recognition – This award is given to a club which qualifies for the District Literacy Award AND completes at least one literacy project in each of the Four Avenues of Service.
6. Vocational Service Character Literacy Recognition – This award is presented to any club which completes three vocational service literacy projects including a Four-Way Test project.

7. Area Literacy Award – This award is presented to an individual, club or district in recognition of distinguished service. Clubs, districts or zones may submit nominations to the area coordinator.

VIII. More About the RILRG’s Special Emphases – Including Early Childhood Projects and Imagination Library

The RILRG also suggests that clubs consider doing projects in a number of specific areas and in some cases the RILRG suggests one or more possible specific programs in a given area. The suggested areas are:

1. School partnerships at any level
2. Four-Way Test projects
3. Projects to teach reading using a method which Rotary clubs have used successfully in the past
 - a. The Concentrated Language Encounter (This has been used successfully in many countries including Brazil, Egypt, the Philippines and Thailand)
 - b. Yo Puedo (used successfully in Mexico)
 - c. Others to be publicized as they are made known to the RILRG
4. Projects using computers to teach basic reading skills
 - a. The CALS or Computer-Assisted Learning Solution project (This was a special project championed by Past RI President Wilf Wilkinson.
 - b. Others listed at www.rotary.org/literacy and www.rizones30-31.net.
5. Projects which help provide reading readiness to young children in at-risk situations.
 - a. Imagination Library (RI has a formal partnership with this project)
 - b. Souns
 - c. Books for Babies
6. Local and international book donation projects
7. Projects in partnership with the International Reading Association
8. Character literacy projects such as *BrainWise*, *Who is Nobody*
9. School, teacher and student recognition projects
10. Projects to reduce child mortality (This was the emphasis of Past RI President D.K.Lee).

IX. How Should the Club Literacy Plan Relate to the RI Strategic Plan

The Rotary International strategic plan lists seven priorities which can help guide the literacy activities of clubs. Five of those relate directly to club literacy projects.

The most important priority of the plan calls on clubs to identify and address opportunities for service projects.

A second priority related to literacy is increasing a club's capacity to serve by recruiting new members. Want to expand your club's work in literacy? Recruit new members in literacy classifications.

A third priority is to strengthen Rotary's use of the Four Avenues of Service framework. The RILRG has framed the District Literacy Award brochure with this in mind.

A fourth priority of the strategic plan is to emphasize Rotary's unique commitment to vocational service. Helping young people develop a Rotary-like vocational service character is a literacy task and the RILRG encourages clubs to consider projects which develop character literacy. Four-Way Test projects fit in here nicely.

A fifth priority of the strategic plan is to strengthen Rotary's public image. Two of the RILRG emphases for 2009-10 provide excellent opportunities to do that. Those two are: promote International Literacy Day and promote Literacy Month.

X. Rotary Reads and Every School a Star

Thanks to the efforts of the Rotary Club of Belleville (Canada) and the International Reading Association, clubs where English is spoken have available two very useful on-line tools which can be consulted in the process of choosing projects and programs.

One of those tools is the *Rotary Reads* manual prepared by the Rotary Club of Belleville (Ontario, Canada) in collaboration with the District Literacy Committee of D-7070. This manual makes a useful distinction between "instructional programs" and "augmentative programs." It then describes and assesses the degree of difficulty of a number of different programs. Club literacy leaders should find the assessment technique informative and useful. The vision behind *Rotary Reads* is to provide descriptions and evaluations of a large number of possible literacy programs. The current edition covers 8 instructional programs and 7 augmentative programs. We hope that many more program descriptions will be added in future editions. An on-line copy of *Rotary Reads* can be accessed at www.rizones30-31.net (Look in the literacy downloads section).

The second tool is *Every School a Star*. This publication was produced as a joint effort of staff at Rotary International and the International Reading Association. The booklet provides guidelines for starting a school partnership program and then briefly describes a variety of literacy projects completed in the past by Rotary clubs. *Every School a Star* can be accessed on-line at www.rotary.org/literacy

XI. Sources of Additional Information and Inspiration

1. In all official Rotary languages – at www.rotary.org/literacy
2. In all official languages *Project Link* at www.rotary.org.
3. In English

- a. www.rizones30-31.net – This is the secondary web site used by the RILRG. Go to the literacy section of this web site.
 - b. The World-Wide Literacy Newsletter – This appears monthly and is posted on www.rizones30-31.net
 - c. *Rotary Literacy Projects Around the World:2008-09* – This summary of literacy projects around the world is available in the download section of the literacy pages on www.rizones30-31.net,
- 4. In Portuguese – www.rotaryeduzona20.cjb.net
 - 5. In other languages – These will be added to the on-line training seminar as soon as they are made known to the RILRG

XII.How to Communicate with the RILRG;

- 1. A list of all members of the RILRG and their contact information is available at www.rotary.org/literacy.
- 2. You are welcome to e-mail the RILRG General Coordinator, Richard Hattwick, at ----- richardhattwick@bellsouth.net

XIII. The Future Vision of Rotary and Literacy: Inclusion and Excellence

Here and there, around the world, there are Rotarians who harbor a vision of Rotary leading a world-wide campaign for literacy inclusion and excellence. Their immediate goal is to achieve 100 percent basic literacy everywhere. Once that is done work will continue on the goals of high world-wide levels of functional literacy and character literacy.

When the campaign to eradicate polio is successfully completed, those Rotary literacy champions will nominate literacy as Rotary's next major corporate effort. In all probability the proposal will be to achieve 100 percent basic literacy, world-wide, by a certain date. Whether or not the RI board and The Rotary Foundation Board will adopt that new goal will depend in large measure on what clubs do now. A large number of successes at achieving basic literacy in local projects this year and the next several years will clearly strengthen the case for literacy as Rotary's next major initiative when the time comes to make that choice.

Truly, in this regard, THE FUTURE IS IN YOUR HANDS.