



School receives literary grant

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Glen Elm School has found the pot of gold at the end of the reading rainbow.

The Regina elementary school is one of 20 Canadian schools to receive a literary grant from the Indigo Love of Reading Foundation. The school will receive \$45,000 over three years for resources to increase literacy among students.

"We get \$15,000 a year for three years, which is unbelievable," said Glen Elm Principal Dianne Gulka-Tiechko.

"It is going to make such a difference for our students and of course we're always trying to promote student achievement and improve it. Certainly literacy has been a real focus of ours this year and the resources are really going to help us for next year."

Gulka-Tiechko received a phone call Wednesday informing her of the big win and she quickly got on the intercom to announce it to the whole school, which has about 150 students from pre-Kindergarten to Grade 8.

"The cheers rang through the hallways from the students and the staff with excitement. It is a windfall for our school. Kids love books, kids love reading and you just never have enough (books) ... They'll be ecstatic with all the new resources we'll be getting for them," she said.

The funding will be provided as credit at Chapters Indigo stores and as cash. Gulka-Tiechko said that while the main focus will be book resources for students, the money may also cover some technology, such as literacy-focused software and books on CDs.

Heather Reisman, CEO of Indigo Books and Music Inc., said Glen Elm met the criteria of the grant program by demonstrating that despite being an economically challenged school, it has found ways to promote literacy. Its proposal also laid out a clear plan for how grant money would be spent, explained Reisman, noting the school has "compelling ideas" for increasing student achievement.

"They had an unbelievably well-put-together application, which means that even with little money, they were doing a lot to make literacy a big deal ... They had really been thoughtful even without money in how to encourage literacy," said Reisman.

"That's very important to us that the principal and librarian can demonstrate that even with minimal resources, they've made literacy a priority. Then we know that if we give them real money, they'll know what to do with it."

A committee drawn from the school's staff developed the proposal for the grant, which Gulka-Tiechko said outlined the school's dedication to literacy and innovative programs, such as several literacy groups and a boys literacy program offered with the Dewdney East Community Association.

"In it we highlighted all the things we were trying to do and of course what always came up was that we were always short of resources. Even though we overcame some of the other obstacles and were innovative in the things we're trying, we're always short of resources," she said.

For the past four years, the foundation's literary grant program has annually provided \$1.5 million for selected Canadian elementary schools. The grants are helping to revitalize school libraries, which Reisman said are "literally dying" from a lack of resources and often carry books that are on average 30 years old.

"Anybody who thinks kids don't love to read would be shocked," said Reisman.

"The principals and the teachers in these schools, they give their heart and soul and they don't even have books. This is a real issue."

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