



## RE[ad]SEARCH, Vol. 3

January 22, 2014

### CBE Watch

#### 1. New Schools Update

Two new schools have been announced in our neck of the woods since the last issue, in addition to nine modernizations. Schools will continue to be announced as they are finalized. Click [here](#) to see the full list of new schools announced since 2011 in a convenient format.

#### *New Projects:*

##### **Calgary, Aspen Woods**

**School District:** Calgary Roman Catholic Separate School District

**Project:** New K-6 Elementary School - Aspen Woods

**Opening/Final Capacity:** 750/750

##### **Rocky View, West Airdrie**

**School District:** Rocky View School Division

**Project:** New K-4 Elementary School - West Airdrie

**Opening/Final Capacity:** 600/600

#### 2. CBE Three-year School Capital Plan 2014-2017

*The document isn't new, it was approved in May 2013, but I read it for the first time. Here is some information relevant to us:*

##### **The capital priorities for the three-year period consist of:**

- 25 new school construction projects totaling \$530 million
- 24 major modernization projects totaling \$330 million

**Student Enrolment:** The CBE's current student enrolment of 107,104 is forecast to increase to 121,133 students in 2017. The largest increase over the five-year timeframe will be Grades 1-3 students.

**Forecasted Suburban Growth – 2011-2015:** The Suburban Residential Growth 2011-2015 indicates that 99% of the population growth over the past five years has been in the developing communities. The new Calgary Municipal Development Plan supports more intensification into developed areas of Calgary; however, forecasts over the next five years estimate 99% of the population growth will continue to occur in the new suburbs.

**Full Day Kindergarten:** The Province has recently indicated they would like to review the learning benefits of full-day kindergarten. In terms of the CBE schools, the mandating of full day kindergarten in all elementary

schools would have significant planning, accommodation, staffing, transportation, community engagement and cost implications. Should there be a provincial requirement for full day kindergarten, a number of schools at or near full capacity would have emergent space issues. There are approximately 50 schools where there would be insufficient space for a proposed full day kindergarten, and one or more classrooms would be needed beyond current capacity to meet this mandate. Possible impacts on 50 plus schools would be a change in grade levels provided in the schools and increased bus transportation of students. The overall CBE school utilization rate would increase from 80% to 83% with full day kindergarten and there are significant implications for many schools that are approaching, or at, 100% utilization.

### 3. CBE Three-year Education Plan 2013-2016

*This one is new (published December 2013). Includes Provincial Achievement Test scores but nothing that isolates reading.*

“When the 2012-13 provincial budget was announced, the Province made a commitment to providing predictable and sustainable funding for school jurisdictions. As a result, the 2012-13 budget reflected a stable year and future. However, the budget announcement for 2013-14 did not carry through with this promise and the CBE faced another \$62 million funding shortfall and uncertainty for the years to come. As a result, significant staffing cuts were made to central services during the 2012-13 fiscal year to prepare for a difficult budget in 2013-14. The impact of those cuts on the CBE’s ability to support student success is being carefully monitored. Cost saving strategies and system re-design continue to be a priority in order to operate within a reduced budget and minimize the impact on our schools. Progress is being made in streamlining, but securing funding that keeps step with costs remains a priority. The uncertainty of future funding creates a challenge to plan for the support of educational needs over the longer term.”

## Article Watch

### 4. Closing the 'Word Gap' Between Rich and Poor. *Rhode Island Public Radio, Dec. 29.*

- In the early 1990s, a team of researchers decided to follow about 40 volunteer families — some poor, some middle class, some rich — during the first three years of their new children's lives. Every month, the researchers recorded an hour of sound from the families' homes. Later in the lab, the team listened back and painstakingly tallied up the total number of words spoken in each household.
- What they found came to be known as the “word gap.”
- It turned out, by the age of 3, children born into low-income families heard roughly 30 million fewer words than their more affluent peers.
- Research since then has revealed that the “word gap” factors into a compounding achievement gap between the poor and the better-off in school and life. The “word gap” remains as wide today, and new research from Stanford University found an intellectual processing gap appearing as early as 18 months.

### 5. Reading Advocates Work with Pediatricians to Increase Literacy. *Triangle Business Journal, Dec. 17.*

- Groups like Reach Out and Read partner with pediatricians to integrate a literacy portion into regular checkups, starting as early as six months old.
- “People trust their physicians, really more than anybody else,” says Callee Boulware, executive director of Reach Out and Read Carolinas.

## 6. Reading with Your Child. *Reading Is Fundamental (US)*

*A beginner guide to reading aloud, with one recommendation we've been talking about recently.*

### **Advertise the Joy of Reading!**

Our goal is to motivate children to read so they will practice reading independently and become fluent readers. That happens when children enjoy reading. We parents can do for reading what fast food chains do for hamburgers... ADVERTISE! And we advertise by reading great stories and poems to children.

## 7. Raising Readers. *Reading Is Fundamental (US)*

*A few new and interesting ways of saying an old message; "literacy nutrition" is my favourite. I will look for comparable Canadian data.*

- Many pediatricians believe that a child who has never held a book or listened to a story is not a fully healthy child. Reading aloud to young children is so critical that the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that doctors prescribe reading activities along with other advice given to parents at regular checkups.
- Some experts believe that for America's poorest children, the biggest obstacle to literacy is the scarcity of books in many homes. And while books are available at public libraries, only 37% of children aged 3–5 visit a library at least once a month.
- Parents are truly their children's first and most important teachers. It is clear that parents should not leave to schools alone the important tasks of language and literacy development.
- A 5-year-old who has not been read to daily will enter kindergarten with far fewer hours of "literacy nutrition" than a child who has been read to daily from infancy. No teacher, no matter how talented, can make up for those lost hours.
- Parents cannot assume that schoolwork makes up for too much television. Children of all ages watch as much TV in one day as they read for fun in an entire week. Overall, children under age 13 spend 90 minutes a day in front of the TV—one-quarter of their free time.
- The vocabulary of the average children's book is greater than that found on prime-time television.

## 8. Goal: 1,000 Books before Kindergarten. *School Library Journal, Jan. 16*

- Marilyn Jager Adams, professor of cognitive and linguistic sciences at Brown University, argues that students need to know close to 100,000 words in order to be critical thinkers and strong readers. It's a daunting number, one that's virtually impossible to reach by studying vocabulary lists alone. Rather, Adams says students need to read more often; that by doing so, they will then be able to tackle increasingly challenging texts as they gain comprehension skills.
- What does this have to do with early learning? Plenty. If our nation is challenging its students to be more rigorous readers, it stands to reason that our littlest learners need to enter school ready to learn to read, which includes an early introduction to a host of varied vocabulary. The best way to teach those skills is by instilling a love for stories at the youngest age possible, via programs for parents and caregivers that model best reading practices.
- Children's author and reading advocate [Mem Fox](#) encourages parents to "read at least three stories a day; it may be the same story three times. Children need to hear a thousand stories before they can begin to learn to read. Or the same story a thousand times!"

- Early literacy research shows that this benchmark has merit—but how is a short-staffed, bustling library to achieve this? Through “[1,000 Books before](#)” programs. The concept, which libraries across the country are embracing, is brilliantly simple: Patrons register and receive a journal in which they track books that they read to their children. Most libraries group books into sets of 100 titles, and patrons collect a small incentive from the library for reaching their goals. After reading 1,000 books with their parents, children are often awarded a certificate and gift book to mark their achievement.
- The initiative has a long-term goal as well, to create lifelong library users in the community that Bremen Public Library serves. Out of about 100 students per grade at the local school, roughly a quarter of them complete the program before entering kindergarten, Krost estimates. Students who finish reading all the books get their picture taken and sent to the local weekly newspaper.
- [A similar initiative] also partners with two local hospitals to promote the ideas to new moms.
- So, let’s go back to that original, daunting number. A five-year-old entering kindergarten will have heard 1,826 stories if he/she listens to just one story a day. Suddenly, 1,000 books before kindergarten sounds doable, doesn’t it?

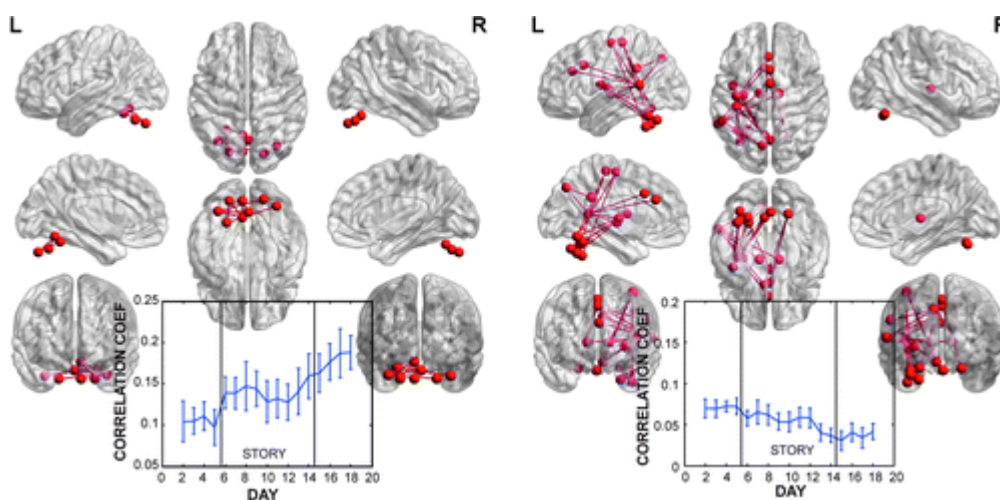
**9. Reading Recovery Program Helps Struggling First Graders Improve Their Literacy Skills. *Oakland Post online, Jan. 14***

- “We have over 20 years of data in the U.S. that show when we intervene early we can turn struggling non-readers into readers and writers.”
- The program takes the bottom percentage of 1st graders learning to read and works with them for 12-20 weeks for 30 minutes each day.
- “Seventy-five percent of these low performing children are able to reach grade level expectations,” Schwartz said.

**10. Reading a Novel Changes the Brain, Study Shows. *School Library Journal (US), Dec. 27***

“It seems plausible that if something as simple as a book can leave the impression that one’s life has been changed, then perhaps it is powerful enough to cause changes in brain function and structure,” says neuroscientist Gregory S. Berns. Berns says the scans also show “long-term changes in connectivity, which persisted for several days after the reading.”

*Here is the gist of the effect reading can have on the brain. Before and after pics.*



### 11. **A Book for Two.** *Design Week (UK), Dec. 20*

- A Book for Two, as the name suggests, is intended to be read with a partner. Each side has different sections of the same text and the pair take it in turns to read out their sections. Certain paragraphs appear on both sides and are intended to be read aloud at the same time.
- A Book for Two brings a new dimension to the process of reading, encouraging interaction in an activity usually reserved for the individual.

## Technology Watch

### 12. **Ebook Usage in School Libraries Expected to Rise Incrementally.** *School Library Journal, Jan. 14*

In its conclusions, the survey confirms a “slowly growing trend” toward ebooks, especially as children at younger and younger ages have access to tablets or ereaders—although many parents, teachers, and children themselves prefer to remain immersed in print books. So as the kids born in 2007, the same year the iPhone was introduced, start elementary school this fall, they will likely grow up “ambitextrous,” comfortable and open to reading both formats.

### 13. **Engaging with Ebooks Can Aid Children’s Literacy, Study Finds.** *The Digital Shift, Jan. 15*

*I will read the full report and summarize it for you soon.*

- The impact of electronic devices on young children’s literacy skills is largely a positive one.
- The authors speculate that the “spatial and temporal synchrony” of children looking, listening, *and* touching while reading may be the “sweet spot” that garners their “attention to e-text in ways that support early literacy experience and learning.”
- However, the amount of time children spend on touching screen while reading bears further examination.
- The full report is called [Young Children’s Engagement With E-Books at School: Does Device Matter?](#)

### 14. **Panel Explores Thoughtful Use of Digital Technology for Young Children.** *Education Week (U.S.), Dec. 13*

- A panel of experts offered a nuanced view on the often-quoted recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics, which say “television and other entertainment media should be avoided for infants and children under age 2.” What’s also important, they said, is to weigh the types of media that children are consuming: they may be appropriate if they’re actively engaging children, if those activities are meaningful for young children, and if they offer a way for children and parents to interact. Also important, they say, is the response of an individual child: some may be mesmerized by a screen, others may not find it quite as attractive.
- In response to a question, Truglio said that she felt that there was no cut-off age in which digital technology should be used, if the interaction is appropriate: “If a parent is using a screen with a 6-month old, and they’re looking at family photos or a simple e-book, that’s not bad,” she said.
- “We’re all suggesting that parents use this as a platform or a tool, not as an end in itself.”