

# Literary Circle

2023 Donor Report



## Reading Leads to Success

Building children's literacy is one of the most effective ways to ensure children achieve their full potential. Reading is one of the key indicators of a child's future success, happiness and well-being.

Experts say that 75% of children who do not overcome their reading difficulties by Grade 3 never catch up, and may also develop low self-esteem and a lack of confidence as a result.

Toronto Public Library is uniquely positioned to support young readers by offering easy access to vital resources through programs like **Leading to Reading (LTR)**. Building on more than 40 years of success, LTR leads to measurable gains in reading levels for participants by providing the tools kids need to develop skills and build confidence.

In 2023, the service supported **830 kids** who were reading and/or writing below their grade level. With a network of **800 skilled volunteers** and expert TPL staff, kids were encouraged to learn and practice their literacy skills in a fun and safe environment.

Thanks to donor support, the service is **now available at 27 library branches across the city**, with 13 LTR services delivered in Neighbourhood improvement areas (NIA).

### Thanks to you: Leading to Reading Expansion

School closures during the pandemic had a devastating effect on children's learning, especially on low-income and racialized students in Toronto. **Your donation helped TPL expand the LTR service to eight new branches** last year, providing greater access to enhance the learning experience for children.

### New! Special 2024 pilot: introducing therapy dogs

In collaboration with One Health Partners, TPL is piloting therapy dog visits at two library branches that offer the LTR program to help kids reduce anxiety and improve their well-being.



## Social Impact

TPL's Leading to Reading program offers accessible and barrier-free reading support for children in equity-seeking groups. Recent feedback shows that:

- Participation in **LTR improves student confidence and reading enjoyment**, two key factors for lifelong reading success.
- Parents expressed high satisfaction with the program. Most importantly, **children reported that they enjoyed reading and writing more** after participating.

### Samantha and Dominic

"I couldn't really read that well because of big words and sometimes I didn't understand them. It feels good to learn how to read better and I feel comfortable when I'm at the Library with my tutor." - **Dominic, 7 years old**



### Mitchel, Aki and Saku

"When Saku reads, we feel sparks! You almost want to cry. We don't know how to read in English properly and he is speaking English to the level where he is teaching us and we've started reading together." - **Mitchel, Saku's Dad**



### Ose and Shauna

"I was struggling with words and was mispronouncing them a lot. Today, I can read novels, graphic novels, and all the big thick books I am assigned to read at school that I wasn't able to read before I joined Leading to Reading." - **Ose, 13 years old**



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## Teen Councils: Engaging our City's Youth

Generous donors like you also helped the Library establish a new model for delivering services through TPL's Teen Councils program. The program helps teens **reimagine their role in society** and empowers them through specialized learning opportunities to **gain knowledge, and build leadership and life skills**.

Teen Council events and special projects include creating branch-specific newsletters to promote programs to teens. The Council also advises on all aspects of the **Young Voices** magazine to help select the work that will be published alongside professional artists.

Led by external presenters and experts, Teen Council Members receive training that included: communications and public speaking; goal setting; planning and preparing verbal presentations; time management; and civic engagement/cultural awareness building.

## Making a Measurable Impact

- ✓ The **Teen Council Volunteer Survey** from June 2023 is the first of what will be an annual evaluation survey, created using tools from the City of Toronto Youth Outcomes Framework.
- ✓ From the **106 teens who participated** (52% of Teen Council) in this skill-building questionnaire, TPL found **76%** of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, "Because of my experience in the Teen Council, **I am now more confident** that I can work well with others to **solve a problem**."
- ✓ **68%** of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, "Because of my experience in the Teen Council, **I am now more comfortable speaking in groups**".

“*I joined Teen Council to **enhance my leadership skills and showcase my initiative**. As a volunteer, I help plan, run, and set up programs for other teens to enjoy, as well as brainstorming new ideas for the benefit of the community. I like that my work makes **a positive impact on my community**.*”

- Avril, Teen Council Member, Forest Hill branch

## Teen Councils make a difference:



**200** Teen Council members collaborate and bring their perspective to the creation, delivery and promotion of TPL programs, services, collections and spaces for young people.



**16** in-person specialized core training sessions were held last year based on teens' specific needs and interests.



With **21** Teen Councils established in branches city-wide, each council consists of 10-15 members ranging from age from 13 to 17.

Thank you for making this important work possible.

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