

August 2022 Newsletter

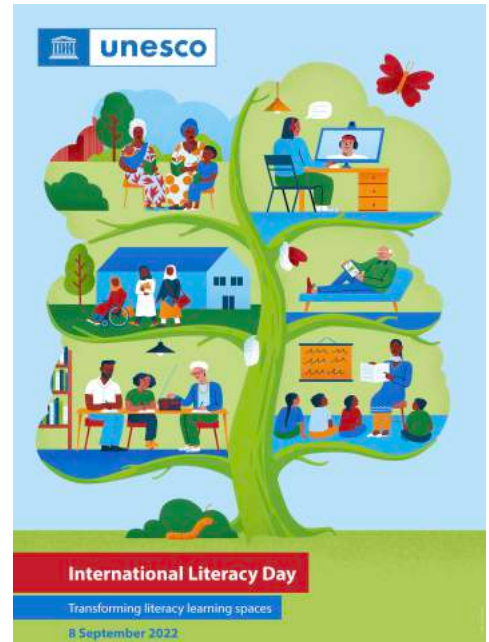
Celebrate Literacy Day: 8 September Transforming Literacy Learning Spaces

Since 1967, International Literacy Day celebrations have taken place annually around the world to remind the public of the importance of literacy as a matter of dignity and human rights, and to advance the literacy agenda towards a more literate and sustainable society. Despite progress made, literacy challenges persist with 771 million illiterate people around the world, most of whom women, who still lack basic reading and writing skills and are faced with increased vulnerability.

Rapidly changing global context took a new meaning over the past years, hampering the progress of global literary efforts. In the aftermath of the pandemic, nearly 24 million learners might never return to formal education, out of which, 11 million are projected to be girls and young women. To ensure no one is left behind, we need to *enrich* and *transform* the existing learning spaces through an integrated approach and enable literacy learning in the perspective of lifelong learning.

This year's International Literacy Day will be celebrated worldwide under the theme, "**Transforming Literacy Learning Spaces**" and will be an opportunity to rethink the fundamental importance of literacy learning spaces to build resilience and ensure quality, equitable, and inclusive education for all.

How can Rotarians get involved? Get to know your community and the challenges to learning. Begin by holding conversations to determine your community's specific needs. Invite organizations who work with literacy and education programs to speak at a Rotary meeting. Ask how school enrollment or attendance been affected as a result of school closings during the pandemic? How are educators helping children accelerate their learning after time lost during school closings? Now, more than ever, we need to work to create flexible, innovative options for when, how, and where opportunities for learning can occur. Could Rotarians partner with organizations to offer classes outside traditional school hours (evenings, weekends) or offer alternatives to public school classes or as reinforcement option? Perhaps there is a need to work with young learners learning fundamental literacy and math? Is technology an option to accelerate learning for children with disabilities? How is your community supporting education for refugees, immigrants, or transient families? And do remember to inquire as the needs of adults with low literacy and numeracy skills. The possibilities to get involved are only limited to our willingness to hold conversations, ask questions, and commit to ensuring that all children and adults have access to multiple pathways to learning.



Literacy Awards, 2022



BELRAG is pleased to announce the 2022 Literacy Awards. Four projects will be selected to receive an award of \$500 USD each. Share how your Rotary Club is improving the quality or access to education in your community. The application is straightforward: describe your project by telling how your club determined the need, explain what Rotarians (and community partners) are doing to address that need, and share results have come about as a result of your project. Let us know how Rotarians are involved and how the project is promoted. Share a couple of photos (be sure to have permission to use photos) Submit entries to literacyaward@BELRAG.org by 30 September 2022 Examples of previous project awards, tips on submitting a successful project, and the evaluation rubric are posted on the BELRAG.org website.

Why Should Rotarians Become Involved in Early Years Initiatives?

Have you ever watched a new baby and wondered what is going on in their tiny head? *Does she recognize me? By my voice? Or my face? Does he like when I sing a song to him? How can I tell? What is going on in there?*

Research can help us answer these questions. We now know that early child development is recognized as **the most essential learning period in our lives**. It shapes the person we will become. The brain of a newborn is filled with billions of neurons but the wiring mechanism – the synapses that connect those neurons, are limited. The neural pathways connected to body functions are active at birth but others, over time, have to be stimulated so there is a flow of information between the neurons. These **neural pathways** are critical to our language, vision, intellectual, social and emotional development. In most cases, babies have an equal capacity to learn and grow but interactions with their environment determine how these children can thrive and develop their unique personalities and abilities.

Most significantly, there is a **window of opportunity** after which the synapses begin to wither and die and the connectivity diminishes. If children in their first critical six years have positive, integrated, investigative, and challenging experiences, they are on a strong learning trajectory upon which they can build their future development. It becomes much more difficult to alter this learning trajectory once these windows of opportunity close. A child born with cataracts, for example, who does not receive corrective surgery until age 5 or 6 will not have developed neural pathways needed for vision and so will not develop optimal vision. If the surgery is performed before age 2, there is an opportunity for the neural pathways to develop which can result in normal vision.

Children in their early years learn best by doing, so it is especially important to provide hands-on activities. Children should be able to handle, manipulate, explore, and experiment with materials familiar to them from their environment so that they can relate to everyday life. Rotarians who understand this critical stage of child development will recognize the value of assisting schools in acquiring or making play-based materials for children to use. They will help communities to open or expand early years centres. They will also assist in providing professional learning opportunities for teachers and the parents of young children.

An effective early years program will mitigate many of the problems faced by older children. They will be in a stronger position to learn, to be empathetic to others in their community, to listen, speak, read and write at a higher level. When teachers use child-centred teaching methods, children will become problem solvers rather than rote learners.

The world needs the next generation to be problem solvers who are ready to take on the challenges facing us.

Joan Littleford, BELRAG Board of Directors
RC Whitby (Ontario, Canada)
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Grants Available: Early Learning Through Community Initiatives

Application goes live Sept. 1!

Funding Opportunity for Early Learning Community Projects

APPLY BY OCT. 15

Rural eligibility requirements - see overview for details

BELRAG and Save the Children are pleased to announce funding opportunities for Rotary and Rotaract Clubs involved with early learning projects. Clubs may apply for grants of up to \$15,000. **US-based Rotary Clubs with projects that serve rural, low income communities are eligible** to apply. Projects should support locally designed and implemented community-based programs that support Kindergarten Readiness, 3rd grade proficiency in Reading, or 5th grade proficiency in Math.

Save the Children is committed to supporting innovative approaches early childhood education. For more information, grant eligibility guidelines, and examples of previous project, plan to join us for a [webinar](#) on Thursday, August 25 (4:00 Eastern) to learn how your Club can apply for one of these grants to support your community-based initiative that supports early learning. Applications are available on 1 September. Additional information and project exemplars are on the BELRAG website.

<https://savechildren.zoom.us/j/97255008523?pwd=Uys5elBPZktzTFd4Z2xXNGROZDE2dz09>
Meeting ID: 972 5500 8523 Passcode: 943113

Math Games: Engage Students in Learning

Educators know that games can provide an enjoyable opportunity to practice concepts and engage students in critical thinking. Many games can be created quite economically, using common materials found in a classroom or at home. Many games can be adapted to meet the needs of learners. A basic game format can be used to practice different concepts and the rules can be adapted to enable students of many abilities to be involved. There are so many learning activities and resources: it is important to choose activities that both immerse students in the subject matter as well as challenge them. In their 2018 *Australian Primary Mathematics Classroom* article “Five Principles of Educationally Rich Mathematical Games”, three educators describe the five key principles they believe are integral to the best math activities.

The Five Principles for Educationally Rich Math Games:

1. Students are engaged

- Playing a good math game should generate enjoyment, engagement, and mathematical conversations
- If students are on task and there is discussion in the classroom about the mathematical topic, it is an indicator that students are engaged.
- Change the games often to keep student interest high, avoid boredom

2. Skill vs Luck

- Every mathematical game should include equal portions of skill and luck
- Solely skill based games can be demotivating for students that are not as mathematically-able
- Luck gives all students an opportunity to both win and lose.

3. Mathematics is central

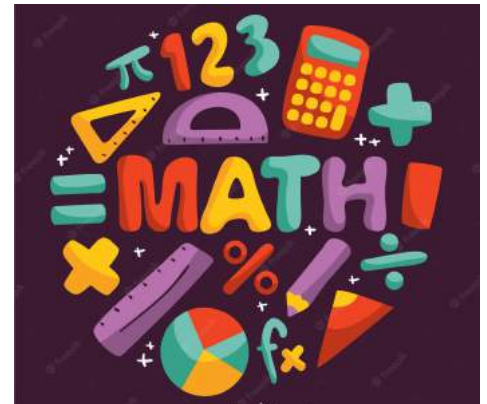
- gameplay and game strategy should be focused on the underlying mathematical concept of the game.
- games that are too competitive can distract students from the underlying mathematical concept of the game.

4. Flexibility for learning and teaching

- Games should have differentiation and various correct approaches for diverse learners.
- Good math games can be used to demonstrate multiple underlying mathematical concepts.

5. Home-School connections

- games should foster connections both in school with peers as well as at home with one’s family.
- having activities that engage students and their adult guardian can foster engagement in learning with the school.



Get Involved with BELRAG!

There are many ways to get involved with BELRAG and help promote quality literacy and education projects throughout the Rotary world. Will you join our team?

- **Technical advisors** to assist with Rotarians planning grants and projects.
- **Communication Team**
 - Newsletter: editors to set up format, writers to create content, share great Rotary stories
 - Facebook page - share and post activities, information
- **Webinars:** We have an ambitious plan for BEL-related webinars in the coming year. Do you have an area of expertise or a program that would be of interest and benefit to Rotarians? Individuals with technical expertise to manage webinar production are also needed.
- **Membership Team** - help us connect with Rotarians to get involved and stay in touch with BELRAG members by promoting membership & resources. Goals for the coming year are to reach out to Rotaractors and to facilitate better opportunities for Spanish speaking members For more information: cfj2@icloud.com
- Complete the BELRAG Member Survey to let us know your expertise and [interests](#)

BASIC EDUCATION & LITERACY MONTH \$500 AWARDS

CELEBRATE & BUILD AN AWARENESS OF ROTARY'S COMMITMENT TO BASIC EDUCATION AND LITERACY IN OUR COMMUNITIES

FOUR AWARDS OF \$500 (USD)

THREE AWARDS FOR ROTARY PROJECTS
ONE AWARD FOR ROTARACT PROJECTS

Applications must be received by 30 September, 2022
(Project should be currently implemented or ongoing)

To enter:

- Describe your project: tell how your club determined the need, what Rotarians are doing to address that need (any community partners)
- Explain the impact, and tell who benefits from the project
- How are Rotarians involved?
- How is the project promoted?
- 2-3 photos (include a signed release for photos of children)

Include:

- Name, contact info of Rotarian submitting application
- Club name & District number
- City, State/province/Country

Send to: literacyaward@BELRAG.org

For further information, guidelines, project evaluation rubric
BELRAG.org

Rotarian submitting project must be a current member of BELRAG



RILM Happy Schools Transform Learning Spaces

The year ahead is a challenging year as we have just come out of the pandemic and I understand that nearly 20 Million out of nearly 250 million School Children have permanently dropped of the schools in India. If we have to march towards the fulfillment of our goal to make India a “totally literate” country, we cannot afford to have even a single child out of school as they will eventually add to the back log of 280 million Adult illiterates in the country.

Making sure that the school infrastructure is complete, safe /secure and attractive is hence a pre-requisite to attract the every child in the rural parts and the suburban parts of our cities, to enroll and attend the schools. Hence we Rotarians have a great role pay by adopting such Government and Government aided schools, which lack the basic infrastructure. RI President Jennifer Jones has given us the innovative theme “Imagine Rotary”. If we wish to imagine a fully literate India within the next decade let us take action at the ground level and provide our deprived children the most modern gadgets and facilities so that they love to attend such “Happy Schools” to acquire knowledge and skills to make India a fully developed country in the near future.

H. Rajendra Rai, Member - National Executive - (Happy School Vertical, RILM)

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Happy School programs, a component of RILM (Rotary India Literacy Mission) encourages Rotarians to provide and upgrade the infrastructure and scholastic facilities in schools to make them secure and happy places for student learning. The focus of a Happy School are to ensure a well maintained and secure school building, adequate and functional separate toilets for girls and boys, hand washing stations, clean and adequate drinking water for students and teachers, a library, play materials for sports and games, desks for students, well maintained space for teachers, and book bags for students.

Multipurpose Shed & Renovation of 2 Class Rooms

RC Madras Magnum, RID 3231

The school had only 4 classrooms between 470 students with no dining area for eating lunch. RC Madras Magnum built a multipurpose shed which can be used as dining shed and various other extra circular activities. The club also renovated 2 unused rooms and converted them into classrooms to ease the congestion of students from the existing classrooms.



Global Grant Project of RC Parkala

RID 3182

Rotary Parkala handed over a Toilet Block with 12 toilets for Girls, one Generator, Science Lab, Computers, Laptops and Digital classroom to Parkala High School. This project was executed using the funds of a Global Grant worth USD 32583 from TRF.



Happy School Project of RC Ambernath Smart City, RID 3142

RC Ambernath City successfully executed a Happy School project in a Government Secondary School in Milhe village located in the interiors of Murbad District. The project was Inaugurated by DGE Rtn. Kailash Jethani (Current DG). They constructed a new classroom, also made structural repairs and painting. The club donated tables, chairs, cupboards, a water purifier, library books, projector and screen.



Promote Education & Literacy All Year Round

Though Rotary emphasizes *Basic Education and Literacy Month* each year in September, there are many opportunities to bring awareness and support the different aspects of solving the challenges of literacy for all. September is the perfect time for your club to become aware of the education needs in your community or to learn about projects around the world where Rotarians are making a difference through education and literacy projects. Consider promoting different aspects of education throughout the year

- 8 September - **Literacy Day** (*Transforming Literacy Learning Spaces*)
- September 18-24 - **Adult Education and Family Literacy Week**
- 10 November - **World Science Day for Peace and Development** (*Building Climate-Ready Communities*)
- 3 December - **International Day of Persons with Disabilities**
- 24 January - **International Day of Education**
- 4 February - **Take Your Child to the Library Day**
- 11 February - **International Day of Women and Girls in Science**
- 2 March - **Read Across America Day / Dr Seuss Day**
- 8 March - **International Women's Day**
- 14 March - **Pi Day - International Day of Mathematics** (Albert Einstein's Birthday)
- 1-7 April - **Week of the Young Child**
- 16 April (USA) - **Library Day** - *celebration dates vary by country*
- 23 April - **World Book Day**

BELRAG Newsletter: Coming Themes

BELRAG newsletters will feature stories and information based on different themes related to education and literacy. If your club or district is involved in a project focused on one of these themes, do **share your story with us**. Articles should be 500 - 750 words. Include 2-3 photos - especially those showing Rotary As People of Action (be sure that you have permission for photos to be published!) Submit your article to carolyn@litrag.org by the 25th of the month preceding publication. Themes planned for the next months include:

September - Literacy & Education Resources: highlighting quality programs that provide education resources for communities and club BEL projects. Do you have a great project that puts books in children's hands? - or a replicable program that provides books or technology?

December - Education Supporting Children with Disabilities: up to 150 million children (*World Health Organization / World Bank*) live with disabilities (physical, cognitive, social/emotional) and those children are 10 times less likely to go to school than their peers. This newsletter will spotlight Rotarians who are providing access to education, specialized training for teachers to support every child's learning, and community awareness programs to rally support for inclusive education.

February and March - Science, Technology Engineering & Mathematics (STEM): a solid grasp of math and science is essential for everyone to function effectively in a modern world. How are Rotarians encouraging and supporting an interest in STEM? We will discuss quality programs that support STEM studies - from developing basic numeracy skills to encourage girls' interest in STEM to ensuring teachers are well trained in teaching maths and sciences and using technology to enhance learning. A broad topic that will STEM two newsletters!

April - Early Childhood Education: investing in quality early learning - the physical, cognitive, linguistic and socio-emotional development of children from birth to early primary school - is shown to have a profound impact on brain development. A child's first years affects their health, behavior, and learning capacity - ultimately affecting their productivity and earning potential. In April, BELRAG will share more about why Rotarians should be involved in initiatives that support parents and communities and what clubs are doing to support quality early learning programs.