
**Dyslexia
Canada**

Impact Report 2021



Illustration by Ben Singleton

Who We Are

Dyslexia Canada is committed to ensuring that every child in Canada with dyslexia gets a fair and equitable education.

Dyslexia Canada was formed in 2016 as a way to ensure that there was a national voice and forum to advocate for all Canadian children with dyslexia. By partnering with professional organizations, experts and advocates, Dyslexia Canada strives to drive systemic change by engaging and educating the public and establishing legislation specific to recognizing and remediating dyslexia.

What We Believe

The education system in Canada must recognize and educate the 10 - 20% of children in the classroom with the invisible reading barrier called dyslexia. These children are the crisis in the classroom today and the face of adult illiteracy tomorrow. They need our help.

Children with dyslexia can learn to read if they are identified early and are provided with a structured, evidence-based approach to reading. Far too many children with dyslexia are not receiving the help they need and deserve and we at Dyslexia Canada, intend to change that.



Our Mission Is To Champion

- The adoption and use of the word dyslexia by all relevant stakeholders, including educators, administrators, legislators, medical professionals, caregivers and children.
- Compulsory screening for dyslexia in kindergarten, no later than the end of grade one.
- Immediate and mandatory provision of evidence-based interventions to all Canadian children with dyslexia.
- Mandatory training for all educators in dyslexia awareness, identification and interventions.
- The provision of resources and support to caregivers, children and teachers impacted by dyslexia.

"Getting my granddaughter involved with the help of your organization is going to make a real change in her life."

- Grandparent of a child with dyslexia

Executive Director Statement

As I reflected back on my comments from the 2020 Impact Report, I was struck by how similar my thoughts and feelings were compared to this past year. Yet again, 2021 was a challenging year. While our hopes for a “more normal” year may have been dashed, we were humbled by the ingenuity, resiliency and supportiveness of our community.

This was truly the year of building and mobilizing our community. In partnership with an international marketing firm, we started off the year with a multi-media advertising campaign, including an immersive, experiential website proclaimed to be “the world’s hardest to read website”. The campaign won multiple awards across the globe and brought international recognition to some of the issues we face here in Canada around dyslexia. We also enhanced our bilingual content and created a more engaging and inclusive website.

Our online peer-to-peer parent community expanded to connect with more parents and our team of volunteers grew to include youth and celebrity ambassadors who have helped to showcase the strength and courage of those #PoweredByDyslexia.

Once again, the most visible sign of our growing reach and community was felt in our annual Mark it Read for Dyslexia Awareness Month campaign. Securing almost 100 lightings, 25 proclamations, National Health Day recognition and overwhelming organizational support, we are showing the country that we are many, we are strong and we deserve to be heard.

We continue to be grateful for the support of IG Wealth Management who have been instrumental in our growth. I continued to be humbled by the talents of our amazing team and dedicated volunteers who have made 2021 the success it was.



Christine Staley, Executive Director

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "C Staley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



Founder Statement

Since Dyslexia Canada was founded five years ago, one of our biggest obstacles has been getting the word dyslexia used within the education system. Parents were told by schools “that word is not used here”, school psychologists could not use it in formal assessments, and very few, if any, teachers were taught about what it was.

The stigma that can come with dyslexia is often amplified when you are told that even using the word is taboo. Children across the country are left to feel stupid, isolated and ashamed.

One of my priorities from the beginning has been to say the word dyslexia, to use it, talk about it and get it into everyday discussion. This past year, I have been extremely proud to see such great progression. I am humbled to see Dyslexia Canada becoming a key platform for young voices to be heard and to see people openly talk about their experiences with dyslexia. Through our Mark it Read for Dyslexia Awareness campaign, Community Connections program, Sharing Stories podcast, events and blogs, community members have been able to come together to share their stories, connect with one another and advocate for positive change.

We know that using the word dyslexia will not fix everything – but it’s a start. As we move into 2022, we are excited by the prospect of real progress in supporting those with dyslexia. With wide-sweeping recommendations on how the entire system must change to assist children with reading difficulties, we hope that the Ontario Human Rights Commission’s Right to Read report will be the catalyst needed to make change in all provinces and territories. We await the Human Rights Commission of Saskatchewan and Manitoba’s own inquiries and are optimistic about some of the discussions being held by a few provincial Ministries of Education to reform the curriculum to align with the science of reading.

Thank you to all of our wonderful sponsors, volunteers, ambassadors and supporters for helping to make this change happen. And thank you to my fellow dyslexics for being brave enough to say the word dyslexia.



Keith Gray, Founder and Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Gray". The signature is fluid and cursive, matching the printed name above it.





Building Community

One of the themes we hear consistently within the dyslexia community is the feeling of being alone. Parents and caregivers feel isolated in trying to navigate the education system, children often believe that they are the only ones who struggle to learn to read and educators feel that they are unsupported in implementing evidence-based reading instruction in their schools.

2021 has been a momentous year for Dyslexia Canada in terms of creating and building a strong and well-connected community. Parents have been able to come together for support through our virtual platform, kids across Canada have had the chance to meet virtually to talk about dyslexia and reading as well as to attend fun workshops and events, and educators have sought out training on what dyslexia is and how to teach reading.

Throughout the year we recruited celebrity ambassadors and young ambassadors who are great role models for many young Canadians with dyslexia. They have helped to spread inspiring and uplifting messages whilst raising awareness of dyslexia and Dyslexia Canada initiatives. We've also had many dedicated volunteers and young adults share their personal stories and lived experiences through our blog, YouTube series, podcast and more.

"#PoweredByDyslexia is so much more than a hashtag, it represents a community."

- Anna, has dyslexia





137 New Members



17 Volunteers



102 Connections



**20 Discussion
Boards**

Community Connections

After successfully piloting the Community Connections peer-to-peer support program in 2020, we were able to do a full launch in 2021 with the support of the McGraw Family Foundation.

Our Community Connections program offers peer-to-peer support for parents and caregivers of children with dyslexia. The free program allows parents and caregivers to connect with one another, share experiences, and support each other.

In 2022, we will be offering alternative options such as a monthly Peer Support Group and an opportunity for young adults age 18-30.



"As a parent of a child with dyslexia it can feel lonely and isolating. Not knowing who to talk to or where to get support is difficult and overwhelming. Talking with other parents who share similar stories is comforting and reassuring. I love hearing their experiences and knowing that they too understand how I feel."

- Natalie George,
Programs Coordinator

Events

This year, we hosted our first-ever virtual events with the goal of bringing children with dyslexia together from across the country. We also took one of our events international by collaborating with Dyslexia Scotland.

Dyslexia Strengths Studio Workshop - Cartoon Club with Sarah Jane Vickery

We were joined by dyslexic artist Sarah Jane Vickery for an hour of cartooning fun. Attendees had the chance to ask Sarah questions about both art and dyslexia throughout the session. The kids also had the opportunity to interact with one another as well as share their amazing drawings. We also ran a contest where exciting prizes were up for grabs!

Winter Arts Adventure

For this interactive acting and drawing workshop, we collaborated with Dyslexia Scotland and the team behind the young adult fantasy novel Maggie MacCormack and the Witches' Wheel. This event was aimed at kids between the ages 10-16 and offered a unique, one-of-a-kind presentation featuring dyslexic actor and audiobook narrator Linda McDade, and author and illustrator Kaja Blackley.

As a part of this workshop, we ran a creative contest where participants had the opportunity to win an audiobook, an ebook or a signed hardback copy of Maggie MacCormack and the Witches' Wheel. The winners and their artwork were featured on our website and social media.



90 Registrants



7 Prize Winners



2 Countries



Maggie MacCormack
www.wildones.com



Maggie MacCormack
www.wildones.com



Maggie MacCormack
www.wildones.com



Evan



Chicken nuggets



Sharing Stories Podcast

After the successful launch of Sharing Stories season 1 in 2020, we were excited to kick start season 2 at the start of 2021. This season, kids took on the interviewer role, interviewing other children across Canada. We produced special episodes with audiobook narrators, authors and book publishers which gave the opportunity for our young adult volunteers to be the interviewers. We also hosted a giveaway and were proud to share our first episode in French.

Sharing Stories is Dyslexia Canada's first podcast. In each episode, guests of the show share their latest book recommendations and tell us a bit about their dyslexia. We add all of the book recommendations to our website as well as resources for accessing audiobooks and more.



10 Regular Episodes



21 Kids



4 Special Episodes



4 Special Guests and Hosts



1560 Episode Downloads

Ambassadors and Volunteers

This year we welcomed four celebrity ambassadors and three young ambassadors to the team. We also welcomed many new volunteers from across Canada. Our ambassadors and volunteers bravely shared their stories and experiences of dyslexia and helped to advocate for change. From blog posts to Youtube videos, to raising awareness at our Mark it Read campaign, our ambassadors and volunteers made their voices heard.

We also had volunteers work on a variety of projects 'behind the scenes' including French translations, video editing, research, marketing and more.



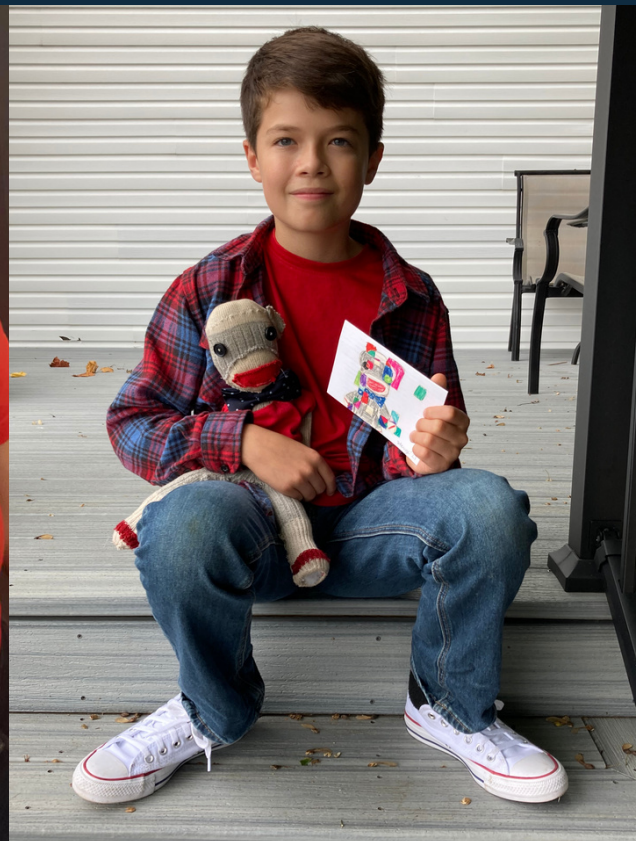
3 Young Ambassadors



4 Celebrity Ambassadors



30 Volunteers in Canada





Advocacy



Making the widest impact and delivering the most meaningful results means taking action as an advocate for policy and practice change. Over the year, Dyslexia Canada has continued to support, engage, and collaborate with partners across Canada on how this will be achieved, knowing more will be accomplished together.

"As a child, I had homework full of red pen marks. I was scolded, mocked and told that I wouldn't amount to much. Thank you for helping my son have a different story and understanding of his learning [disability]."

- Parent of a child with dyslexia



ProBono Students Canada

Our ProBono Students Canada project has continued into its second year. We have added two more provinces to the work and three more students. Initial planning has started with an academic partner to take the content and create online modules that would be fully accessible for parents, caregivers and other professionals.



7 Law Schools



17 Law Students



8 Canadian Provinces

Human Rights Commission

We continue our work with local groups to meet government officials and Human Rights organizations. Dyslexia Canada continues to work with literacy advocacy groups in Ontario as well as directly with the Ontario Human Rights Commission to provide information and resources in aid of the Right to Read public inquiry. Manitoba Human Rights Commission announced their inquiry with a report to be released in the first half of 2022. Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission is continuing its investigation with a parent and teacher survey postponed but to be released in early 2022.



Curriculum Change

Dyslexia Canada has worked with provincial groups to meet with and advocate for curriculum change. In Ontario, we have joined the Literacy Alliance of Ontario, a group of like-minded organizations focused on providing information and data to educate stakeholders on evidence-based curriculum changes. Presentations have been given to professional associations, school boards, teacher groups and ministry officials. In Alberta, Dyslexia Canada publically supported the review and update of Alberta's K-grade 3 English Language Arts Curriculum.



Canada

Mark it Red
READ

Awareness

This year, we have had people across Canada bravely share their personal stories about their dyslexia journey. Many experiences included the lack of awareness around dyslexia and its impacts on day-to-day life.

Many Canadians do not know what dyslexia is and for some, they only know of dyslexia's myths and misconceptions. At the start of 2021, we set out on a mission to change the narrative through our first-ever national advertising campaign. We continued these awareness efforts into the fall, through our annual awareness-raising campaign, Mark it Read.

Despite the success of both campaigns, there is still much to do to bring awareness of dyslexia and the changes we need to see not just in the classroom, but in the beliefs and understanding of Canadians across the country.

"I'm happy to see the stigma lifting even a little and this can only happen with awareness."

- Anne Marie, donor and grandparent of a child with dyslexia



It's Hard to Read

We teamed up with dentsumcgarrybowen to launch our first national advertising campaign entitled It's Hard to Read. The purpose of the bilingual campaign was to raise awareness whilst providing an insight into the daily reality of a child that lives with dyslexia. The campaign also aimed to build empathy, stir curiosity and dispel myths that surround the learning disability. This was achieved through the distribution of It's Hard to Read campaign materials online, in print, and on the radio. The campaign gained international recognition and won multiple awards.



17K Website Visitors



114K Digital Spots



7392 Radio Spots



10 Print Insertions

to Welcome
to the world's
hardest-to-read
website
to the world's
hardest-to-read
website
to the world's
hardest-to-read
website
to Welcome

Bienvenue sur
le site le plus
difficile à lire
au monde
le plus
difficile à lire
au monde
le plus
difficile à lire
au monde
Bienvenue sur



Mark it Read

In partnership with IG Wealth Management, we celebrated our fourth annual Mark it Read campaign for Dyslexia Awareness Month. To kick off the month, we hosted a Virtual Launch Party in collaboration with the International Dyslexia Association of Ontario. Dyslexia Canada celebrity ambassador Taylor Reid spoke at this event, sharing personal stories and experiences as well as answering questions from event attendees.

Throughout October, we were excited to witness our first flag raising, to be featured as a Health Promotion Day on the Health Canada website, to offer resources and tools through an online digital toolkit and to have merchandise available such as postcards, bookmarks and t-shirts. We also were successful in obtaining a lighting in every Canadian province, two provincial proclamations, 13 media interviews and 17 media features.

During Mark it Read, we worked closely with 19 organizations across the country and saw eight local and five provincial representatives acknowledge the month. Through our awareness efforts and thanks to our community partners and volunteers, we were able to fundraise over \$61.7K.



90 Lightings



23 Proclamations



52 Schools



45 Businesses



47 Libraries



**16K Website
Visitors**



**95 Contest
Entries**



65 T-shirts





Communications

As a national charity, our online communications platforms allow us to spread awareness, news and messaging right across the country. During 2021, we released monthly themed newsletters filled with resources and tools and we also received over 350 emails in which we provided support and guidance to parents, caregivers, teachers and community partners.

We were also proud to launch our bilingual website which is now available in both official languages. Whilst launching the French version of our website, we restructured the content and implemented an accessibility plug in making the site more accessible for people with disabilities.



**10 Electronic
Newsletters**



**5.2K Email
Opens**



**1557 Email
Subscribers**



**2.3K Followers
360 Posts**



**1.8K Followers
225 Posts**



**1.1K Followers
341 Tweets**



**325 Followers
288 Posts**



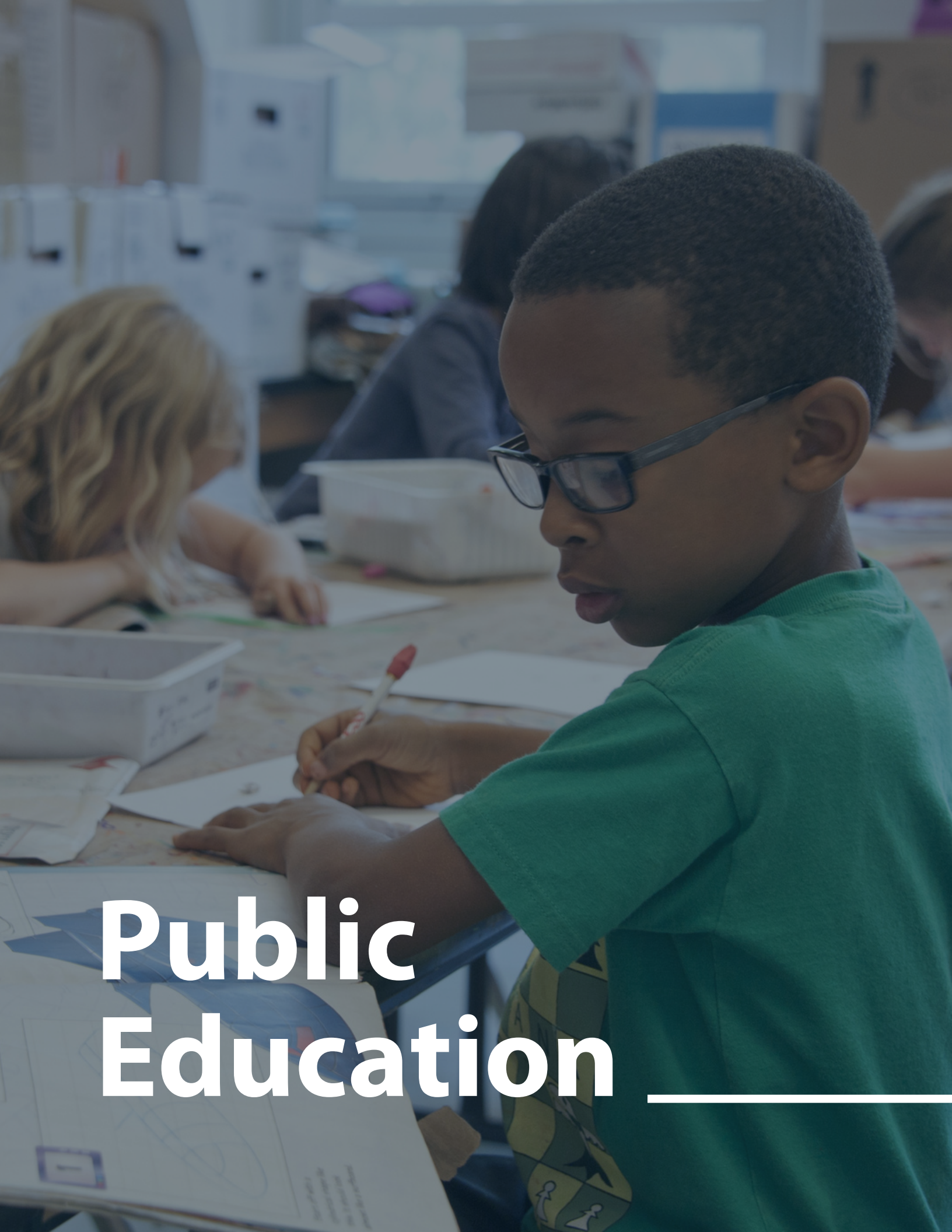
**64 Subscribers
32 Uploads**



**53K Website
Visits**



**92K Website
Pageviews**



Public Education



Dyslexia Canada offers public education for free for people right across the nation. Again this year, we were able to offer a series of informative webinars with professional and academic guest speakers. We also partnered with other organizations to offer online seminars as well as adding new tools and resources to our website.

"[We] love the work Dyslexia Canada is doing to support all children with language-based learning differences in Canada."

- Erica, donor and parent of a child with dyslexia

Webinars

Dyslexia Canada Webinars

We released the second series of free educational webinars for parents, caregivers, teachers and other on-the-ground professionals. Topics included getting ready to read, assistive technology, literacy development, building a support team and IEPs.



**5 New
Webinars**



**507 Webinar
Registrants**



**250 On-
demand views**



**6 Guest
Speakers**

Partner Webinars

We partnered with The Learning Disability Association of Wellington County and the Centre for Equitable Library Access to offer online informative series about dyslexia and creating dyslexia friendly libraries. These webinars had an audience of over 100 people.

Online Resources

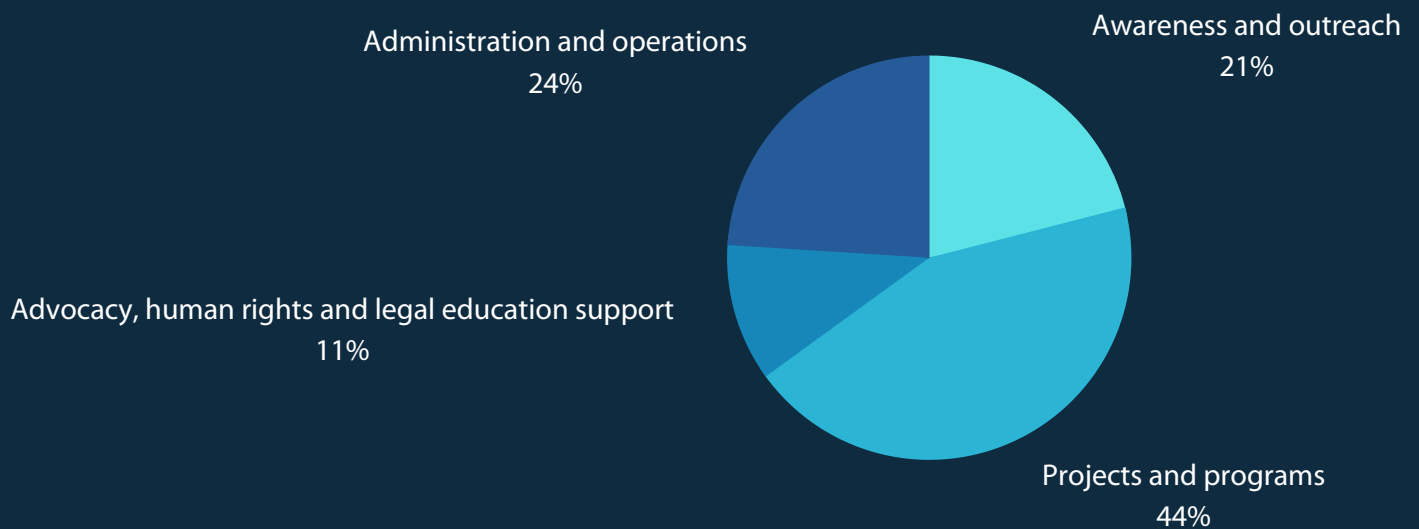
On the Dyslexia Canada website throughout 2021, we added a new website page, titled Tools, to share guidance on dyslexia-friendly reading material, assistive technology and more. We also released 17 new blog posts which included content such as dyslexia stories, resources for adults, where to find audiobooks and much more.



Finances

Financial Report

Together with our team of volunteers and staff, Dyslexia Canada works hard to ensure our administrative costs are as low as possible and the majority of donor dollars goes towards awareness and outreach, advocacy and human rights, and projects and programs for children with dyslexia and their families.



Every donation to Dyslexia Canada is important and we are incredibly grateful to each and every donor for making us your charity of choice. When supporting Dyslexia Canada, you can be confident you are making a difference in the lives of the 10 - 20% of children in each classroom with dyslexia. By choosing Dyslexia Canada once again in 2022, you can help show children struggling to read that they are not alone, give them a place to showcase their strengths and see that they can do whatever they put their minds to.

Thank you for giving generously.



Partners

Partners

Thank you to all our partners. We are grateful to have the support of so many great organizations that share our belief that every child with dyslexia in Canada deserves a fair and equitable education.



McGraw Family Foundation



Friends

We would like to thank our friends who continue to provide generous support. We are proud to work alongside the many charities, non-profits and organizations that strive to see children with dyslexia receive the education they deserve. Together we work to support and advocate for families across the nation.





Board of Directors

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Kirsten Downey



Thank You

Dyslexia Canada is thankful for the generous support from our donors, partners, volunteers and community members. We appreciate the ongoing commitment and contributions that allow us to continue to ensure that every child in Canada with dyslexia gets a fair and equitable education.

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