



What is A Learning Commons ?

RATIONALE

This document has been developed to provide a shared vision, core resources and additional supports for educators within Grand Erie District School Board who are committed to the development and transition from a traditional school library model into a Library Learning Commons.

The Ontario School Library Association and the Canadian Library Association have set out a basic framework for the Learning Commons space in the documents, *Together for Learning*, and *Leading Learning*, respectively. These documents acknowledge that the Learning Commons space is to be flexible, responsive and inclusive. In this way, each space will be unique taking into consideration the student, community and staff needs and resources. These documents are recognized as core resources to support the growth and development of a Library Learning Commons space.

LIBRARY LEARNING COMMONS

A Learning Commons is a departure from the traditional understanding of the role of the school library. The transition to Library Learning Commons is a whole school approach, presenting exciting opportunities for learning multiple literacies and collaboration among teachers, teacher-librarians and students (Leading Learning, 2014). Within the Learning Commons model, inquiry, project/problem-based learning experiences & MakerSpaces are designed as catalysts for intellectual engagement with information, ideas, thinking, and dialogue (Leading Learning, 2014). Important components of the Learning Commons space include Physical & Virtual Space, Equitable Access, Learning Partnerships, and Technology to support learning (Together for Learning, 2010).

The philosophy that everyone is a learner and everyone is a teacher is the focus of Library Learning Commons community hub (Leading Learning, 2014).



Leadership in the Learning Commons is team-based rather than centralized in a single individual. Each school begins with the functions desirable in the Learning Commons and then organizes various leadership teams to carry out those program elements. The new learning commons: Where learners win (Koechlin, Loertscher, and Zwaan, 2011, p. 147)

ENVIRONMENT

A Library Learning Commons space is a flexible environment that encourages collaboration, the use of a variety of resources, and access to technology. The environment is responsive to the school population, but offers a setting which encourages creativity, innovation and inquiry based learning. A Learning Commons provides both a physical and virtual learning environment to support students as active, participatory learners. A MakerSpace area within the Library Learning Commons provides students an opportunity to create and explore original content while pursuing unique interests across the curriculum.

The evolution of the Learning Commons virtual and physical space is reflected in the flow chart in Leading Learning (Leading Learning, 2014, p. 19-20).



SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Every member of a school's population will ultimately participate in the creation of a Learning Commons, but the concept's early coordination and leadership will rest with the library expertise (Together For Learning, 2010). The shift to Library Learning Commons may be included in the School Improvement Plan to support student achievement (Leading Learning, 2014). Some ways of encouraging involvement from a variety of stakeholders may be to introduce the transition at staff meetings, School Improvement team meetings, by creating a Learning Commons committee, and discussion at Parent Council meetings.



Learners move beyond merely retrieving factual information to constructing personal meaning and building individual and collective knowledge. As learners read, research, experiment, discover, perform and create in the Learning Commons, they collaborate with others to test, confirm and enrich their learning (Together for Learning, 2010).

A FOCUS ON STUDENTS

The Learning Commons impacts students' learning directly through offering a space for collaboration, and access to resources which support multiple literacies. The resources and technology as well as flexible learning spaces enhance differentiated instruction and accessibility during the information creation process. A 'MakerSpace' environment within the Library Learning Commons allows students to create original content while pursuing unique interests.

In the Library Learning Commons students have the opportunity to develop and understand their own personal, social and cultural identity when learning. Students have access to "a rich, broad-ranging, diverse, and inclusive resource collection, as well as a stimulating learning environment" (Leading Learning, 2014, p.33) where they can develop self-confidence and skills in collaboration and leadership in personally meaningful ways.

CORE RESOURCES

Canadian Library Association. (2014). *Leading Learning: Standards of Practice for School Library Learning Commons in Canada*. Ottawa: Canadian Library Association.

Ontario School Library Association. (2010). *Together for learning: School libraries and the emergence of the learning commons: A vision for the 21st century*. Toronto: Ontario School Library Association.

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

Donnelly, Andria C. (2015) *The Library Collaboration & Flexible Scheduling Toolkit: Everything You Need to Know to Get Started*. California: Libraries Unlimited.

Fleming, Laura. (2015) *Worlds of Making: Best Practices for Establishing a MakerSpace for Your School*. Thousand Oaks: California Sage Publications.

Frey, Nancy. (2010) *The Effective Teacher's Guide: 5 Ways to Engage Students and Promote Interactive Learning*. New York: Guildford Publications.

Jones, Jami Biles, and Lori J. Flint. (2013) *The Creative Imperative: School Librarians and Teachers Cultivating Curiosity Together*. California: ABC-CLIO.

Martinez, Sylvia Libow and Gary Stager. (2013). *Invent to Learn: Making, Tinkering, and Engineering in the Classroom*. Torrance: California Constructing Modern Knowledge Press.

Wallace, Virginia L., and Whitney Norwood Husid. (2011) *Collaborating for Inquiry-Based Learning: School Librarians and Teachers Partner for Student Achievement*. California: Libraries Unlimited.