Standards of Practice for School Library Learning Commons in Canada 2014

CLA
Canadian Library Association

CLA Voices for School Libraries Network and
CLA School Libraries Advisory Committee
The library-as-learning commons functions as the hub of the school, where teachers and students collaborate, inquiry-based learning is promoted, and teacher-librarians provide instructional support to every teacher in the school while fostering a thriving reading culture. *Library to learning commons: A recipe for success* (Hayes, 2014, 1)

Key Leaders: Working Together Leading Learning for the Future

**School principals** as curriculum leaders and site managers of their schools will provide the leadership, budgets and support for moving forward with library learning commons transitions and implementation of national and regional standards.

> At the school level, the principal is key in establishing and encouraging working partnerships among staff and students. The principal must provide the climate for co-operation, experimentation and growth. The Learning Commons has great potential, but only when everyone participates. *Together for learning* (Ontario School Library Association, 2010, 40)

**Teacher-librarians** have the specialized skills, knowledge and training to implement needed change. Volumes of research point to the positive influence excellent teacher-librarians have on teaching and learning. Each school and district should work creatively to ensure that all students have the benefit of teacher-librarian expertise in information literacy and technology in learning as well as in supporting independent reading and evolving literacies. Dr. Ken Haycock writes:

> The role and impact of the teacher-librarian can be synthesized quite simply: teacher-librarians impact student learning and achievement by forming strong and positive relationships with members of the school community, especially the school principal; by collaborating with classroom colleagues to plan, develop and assess independent learning abilities in students; by fostering a recreational reading culture in the building; and by providing informal staff development opportunities. K. Haycock (personal communication, December 8, 2013)
The Library Learning Commons Leadership Team represents the learning needs of the entire school community. Working together with classroom teachers, students and community, the vision and action plan for developing and sustaining each school Library Learning Commons will evolve.

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, 147)

The School Community, as individuals and as a collective body, has a role to play in shaping the Library Learning Commons and utilizing its potential for school improvement.

The Learning Commons must be fluid; it must grow and evolve with school needs, emerging technologies and global realities. It requires leadership to succeed, and that leadership can only come through the willing co-operation and collaboration of everyone participating in the school learning process. Together for learning (Ontario School Library Association, 2010, 40)

Learning Commons Support Staff are critical to managing and maintaining best resource collections, facilities and technologies for modern learning. These important players support the entire learning commons community and may be on site at the school, travelling between multiple schools or working centrally to keep information systems running.

Key Steps for Implementation: Essential Process and Conditions for Success

1. Establish a Learning Commons Leadership team representative of the school community.
2. Create a vision for library learning commons.
3. Integrate the school library learning commons standards of practice into the overall school development plan.
4. Review the existing resources and learning programs you already have in your school to build on.
5. Develop an action plan with the help of the Learning Commons Leadership team.
6. Implement teaching and learning aligned with Standards of practice for school library learning commons in Canada.
7. Celebrate successes but keep on getting better.

As schools immerse themselves in the journey of adopting the learning commons perspective key steps and helpful tools to support the process follow. It is to be emphasized that the transformation from school library to the learning commons perspective is a “whole school” transformation. Thus this integral work around learning and teaching should not be viewed as “extra work” or needing “extra time” but inherent and vital to the support and growth of the whole school development plan.

Establish a Library Learning Commons Leadership team representative of the school community. The principal and teacher-librarian or learning commons teacher invite participation from
other administrators, teaching specialists or lead teachers, learning commons support staff (technicians, clerks, classroom teacher(s), student(s), parent(s) and/or caregivers and local public library or other community representation. The team, along with the entire staff and students, should work through the steps pertinent to the school to adopt a school library learning commons perspective that facilitates sustainable growth through the indicators of the five national standards.

Create a vision for library learning commons. Study the professional research, evidence and literature on this approach to school wide learning. Examine current pedagogical studies and weave key ideas into the elements of a learning commons to deepen understanding. Engage the entire school: teachers, students and other members of the community in study and renewal. (See Recommended Resources, Appendix 8, and National Project (Voices for School Libraries Network, 2014) site for resource suggestions).

Integrate the school Library Learning Commons Standards of Practice into the overall school development plan. It is not an “added” plan but a whole school learning and teaching philosophy supported by extensive research (International Association of School Librarianship, 2008) for student success. Review the five standards and indicators of success for Leading learning: Standards of practice for school library learning commons in Canada. Align indicators with school and district goals and initiatives asking questions such as, how could the LLC help to address school goals? (See Appendices 1 & 2)

Review the existing resources and learning programs already in place in your school and build on that success. Chart where you are on the growth continuums for each standard and begin or continue your journey to impact and enhance student learning success. Prepare a needs assessment to review where your school is with regard to various key components of a LLC and then chart where you want to go. For example: staffing, budget, library physical and virtual spaces, computer labs, culture of collaboration, inquiry learning, wireless infrastructure, mobile technologies, and central support.

Develop an action plan with the help of the Learning Commons Leadership team. Collaboratively develop a learning commons plan for moving forward based on your vision for the library learning commons, school goals and needs, strategies and actions, responsibilities, time, budget and your own indicators of success. Where are you now, what do you want to achieve, what actions do you need to take, what will it cost, how long will it take, who is responsible, who can help? (See Appendices 3 & 4)

Implement teaching and learning aligned with Standards of practice for school library learning commons in Canada. Foster a collaborative school culture of inquiry and participatory learning in both physical and virtual environments. Establish excellent instructional designs that engage learners in developing 21st century skills and literacies and knowledge building through utilization of exemplary technologies and resources. Build learning environments that support and nurture inquiry, experimentation, innovation, creativity and playing to learn. (See Appendices 5 & 6)

Celebrate successes but keep on getting better. Construct venues for collaborative sharing and continued knowledge building. Assess results and set goals for improvement. Support experimentation with new strategies and technologies and infuse collaborative teacher research in school improvement and future directions for the library learning commons.

The ‘work’ of the learning commons is to facilitate and lead a new culture of learning that truly addresses the needs of 21st century learners and teachers. It is about everyone working together to get better and better at thinking, questioning, analyzing, creating and generally improving as learners. Learning to learn and knowledge-building form the program focus in the learning commons. Fostering ‘habits of mind’ and ‘learning dispositions’ are conducive to success. See (Koechlin, 2009)

Looking for references or bibliography? More than 240 resources related to this publication are available at http://clatoolbox.ca/casl/slic/llbibliography.pdf