

# School Library Advocacy Toolkit

*For promoting Quebec school libraries*

*A guide to help share the importance  
of school libraries and library personnel  
in 21st Century schools*





The Quebec School Librarians Network (QSLiN) is a committee consisting of the board librarians from nine (9) Quebec english school boards and Ministry of Education representatives. The mandate of this committee is to consult inform, exchange and develop as a way to better support, increase visibility and promote the importance of school libraries.

Developed by The QSLiN Advocacy subcommittee.  
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# Advocacy Toolkit

## Executive Summary

The Toolkit can be used by library personnel to raise awareness of both the value of the school library, and the supporting evidence that shows the relationship of student learning outcomes to a library staffed with trained library personnel. The Toolkit is available in a pdf format for printing and is accessible online at <http://qslin.org/library-advocacy/>

### **Goal**

Backed up by relevant research, we wish to demonstrate with specific examples, ways to advocate and promote school libraries within the school board and to the outside community. Using a three year plan to advocate, collaborate and build relationships with stakeholders: within the school board (in schools with educators/consultants, administrators, and students) and outside of the school board (in the community with families, city officials etc).

### **Focus Area 1: Setting Goals and Objectives**

In line with the partnership agreement between Quebec Ministry of Education and the school board.

In line with the MESA agreement between the board and the schools.

In line with the school board strategic plan.

SMART goals.

### **Focus Area 2: Effective Use of the Evidence Base**

Make point form notes of the main findings from the existing evidence that you have compiled so that users can adapt this information.

Evidence must also be specialized on a per school library basis for maximum effect.

### **Focus Area 3: Understanding the Environment**

In order to begin to orient communications, define goals and make long and short term plans.

Identify the people who can affect change.

Identify the people who will oppose change.

### **Focus Area 4: Working in Partnership**

Marketing/advertising or partnering with public library/other libraries for shared goals.

Know and build allies among the stakeholders within your school.

### **Focus Area 5: Communicating Key Messages**

A timetable of planned communications could also be helpful.

Make good use of PA announcements, the Principal's Monday memos, newsletters, etc.

### **Focus Area 6: Organizational Capacity**

Know your realistic budget and your talent pool.

Make use of your human resources by acting as a coordinator and project manager.

Recognize the strengths and weakness in yourself and in others and delegate responsibilities and tasks.

### **Focus Area 7: Monitoring and Evaluation**

Track your important tasks, groups, timelines and people.

Get event/activity feedback.

Present your initial strategy to administration.

Show your results.



# GOAL

Backed up by relevant research, we wish to demonstrate with specific examples, ways to advocate and promote school libraries within the school board and to the outside community.

# RESEARCH

The following research was consulted in order to develop this toolkit; many thanks to:

Australian School Library Research Articles  
National Values Profile of Canadian Libraries  
National Statistical and Values Profile of Canadian Libraries Report to Executive Council  
School Libraries Impact Studies  
The Value of School Libraries  
Powerful Libraries Make Powerful Learners  
Why School Libraries Matter  
ALA Toolkit for School Libraries Media Programs



# THREE YEAR ADVOCACY PLAN

Within board: in schools with partners, administrators, students:

- monthly/yearly library stats snapshots (templates)
- newsletters, reports etc.

Outside of board: in communities:

- marketing/advertising (online bulletin boards, local papers, etc.)
- partnering with public library/other libraries

The chosen model was based on a toolkit created by the Union for International Cancer Control. Their model was chosen because it was effective and clear, and communicated objectives similar to our own. The following focus areas are from their document 'Advocacy Toolkit - Practical Tools' (2014):

Focus Area 1: Setting Goals and Objectives

Focus Area 2: Effective Use of the Evidence Base

Focus Area 3: Understanding the Environment

Focus Area 4: Working in Partnership

Focus Area 5: Communicating Key Messages

Focus Area 6: Organizational Capacity

Focus Area 7: Monitoring and Evaluation



# FOCUS AREA 1

## Setting Goals and Objectives

The school library's goals and objectives should be:

- In line with the partnership agreement between the Ministry of Education and the school board
- In line with the MESA agreement between the board and the schools
- In line with the school board strategic plan
- SMART goals

# FOCUS AREA 2

## Effective Use of the Evidence Base

This requires a fine understanding of the available research. It must also be specialized on a per school library basis for maximum efficacy.

From the UICC Toolkit:

*"the data and research are available and the challenge... is to identify, interpret and communicate the existing evidence to create sustained positive change. Presenting the evidence effectively means that it needs to highlight the facts behind the issue, the specific feasible proven solution and, where possible, provide success stories of the solution(s) working in practice in the particular setting."*

# FOCUS AREA 3

## Understanding the Environment

This focus area is linked to communications, strategy and operations and is unique to each school. It can be a part of the large document above, its own short page. Library personnel need to ask themselves the questions below in order to begin to orient their communications, define their goals and plan their long term and short term plan (operational and strategic thinking; e.g. - Incrementally working to achieve a 3-year plan comprised of multiple smaller projects).

From the UICC Toolkit:

*"A successful advocacy strategy needs to consider carefully both 'Who can make it happen?' as well as 'Who will oppose this succeeding?' Understanding both requires mapping out the key stakeholders, identifying key decision-makers and power brokers on specific issues, and organizations and individuals with complementary and competing interests. In many cases, distinct groups of organizations may be striving for the same goals and objectives..."*

# FOCUS AREA 4

## Working in Partnership

This can translate to marketing/advertising (online bulletin boards, local papers, etc.) or to partnering with public library/other libraries for example, promoting library familiarity and comfort or creating a library habit.

Partnerships that are outside of the school environment do not just happen. Internal stakeholder partnerships may include teachers, tech consultants, custodial staff, administration, library boards, parents, student clubs, student groups like student council, or volunteers. It is important to know and find allies - and to put them to work for your shared cause.

Partnership collaborations may include such functions as marketing/advertising (online bulletin boards, local papers, etc.) Don't forget to give credit and recognize your partners for their contributions.

From the UICC Toolkit:

*"A cornerstone of successful advocacy is connecting with a diverse array of stakeholders and building strong partnerships that form a broad base for advocacy at [multiple levels]. Beginning from the planning phase, a participatory approach that involves all stakeholders should be encouraged..."*



*Example: This school library partners with the local used book store to promote a love of reading.*



# FOCUS AREA 5

## **Communicating Key Messages**

Tracking communications and ensuring a concerted flow of key messages to all stakeholders is vital. A tool, such as the simple one available through the link below, is recommended for this task.

Sample Google Template: <https://goo.gl/dDXlis>

Work with board librarians, or library technician colleagues to develop a format to track time and marketing of library programs. A board-wide standard would be useful and efficient.

When marketing or advertising, use the best media available. (This could include online bulletin boards, local papers, etc.)

Make good use of local institutional channels, including PA announcements (have kids read them!), the Principal's Monday memos, assorted newsletters, emails, Twitter, Facebook, school or library website and/or blog posting, etc.

From the UICC Toolkit:

*"A responsive and dynamic communications strategy to disseminate your key messages should first identify the target audience with a key criteria being 'Who can make it happen?... and then align the channel of communication (e.g., personal contact, press release, social media, etc.) with this particular audience. A variety of communications platforms may need to be managed if multiple audiences are being targeted."*

# FOCUS AREA 6

## Organisational Capacity

Depending on one's objectives, library signage or library media (such as posters, etc), can be considered elements of library advocacy. Typically, funds are available for this kind of thing from regular library budgets.

A volunteer labour force consisting of school personnel, parents, and committee members can give a school library's advocacy budget an edge though it puts the onus on library personnel to become event planners and project managers.

Besides knowing your budget, know your "talent pool." Student council has been doing effective event planning? Partner with them. One of your parents sits on another library board? Approach them as a possible ambassador. Your custodial staff moonlights in woodworking? Make use of her ability by planning a shared goal, while possibly saving money, and building stronger relationships for your library.

If you have goals, but are not the right person to lead these projects, find someone who is. Use your list of allies, stakeholders and decision makers (as identified in focus areas 3 and 4). Work with this person to produce consistent results by maintaining regular communication. Keep your correspondence and any coordinating documentation to stay organized.

From the UICC Toolkit:

*"A strong internal champion for the campaign, who has the skills to develop and lead the advocacy strategy and communications plan, and who has the support of executive management to move initiatives forward is also essential. Additionally, investment in training may be required to equip key staff with core advocacy skills in communications, research and analysis."*

# FOCUS AREA 7

## Monitoring and Evaluation

Keep a binder, an Excel spreadsheet or a Google spreadsheet to track your important tasks, groups, timelines and people.

Get event/activity feedback. Use this feedback to inform others how the activity or event will be done in the future, or if it should be revisited or replaced.

The following templates could be of use to you in tracking tasks, showing your work, and getting your administration up to speed and on board for projected library planning and development.

Templates for evaluation:

- The Unquiet Library Annual Report: <http://goo.gl/jP4nXs>
- Creekview High School Annual Reports: <http://goo.gl/2d74Jx>
- Allion Elementary Annual Report: <https://goo.gl/81MZPm>
- Lasalle Community Comprehensive High School Annual Report: <https://goo.gl/eJ9AIC>

From the UICC Toolkit:

*"Planning, monitoring and evaluation form the foundation of an advocacy strategy – they are interrelated and of equal value in the success of your advocacy efforts. As a consequence, a framework for monitoring and evaluation should be built into advocacy programmes from the start and carried out through the lifetime of the project."*