Assessing School Library Programs with Leading Learning
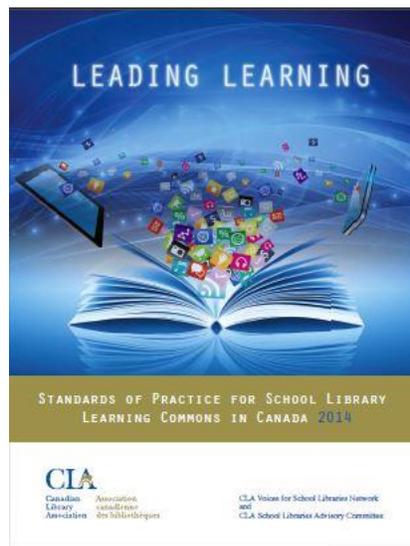
Saskatchewan School Library Association

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Good Spirit School Division

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With the release of the Canadian Library Association's document *Leading Learning: Standards of Practice for School Library Learning Commons in Canada* in May 2014, the educational sector once again had a reference for measuring school library programs. The Good Spirit School Division, a largely rural school division in east central Saskatchewan, welcomed the arrival of the document as a means to shine a spotlight on their school libraries in order to plot a pathway forward in developing vibrant school library programs responsive to student needs. The school division had the following questions:

1. In what areas of the school library program do we see growth?
2. What areas of the school library program appear to be static?
3. What role do students play in school library programs?
4. What evidence shows that the school library is the bedrock of our literacy programs?

Leading Learning was created to answer such questions. Developed collaboratively over a period of two years with input from school library sectors across the country, including the Saskatchewan School Library Association, the tenet of the document is reflected in its title. School libraries should lead learning into the future. The intent of the document is to guide school libraries as they transform *from* traditional storehouses of knowledge where students receive assistance in using resources effectively *into* learning communities where students make connections and collaborate with others to make meaning and learn. A framework of five core standards of practice was developed each supported by a growth continuum of indicators of success. [Leading Learning (2014) Canadian Library Association](), page 8.

Standards of Practice for School Library Learning Commons in Canada

Good Spirit School Division began the process by simplifying the criteria into a revised framework of three key components for each of the five standards and assessing them using the same continuum of indicators (Appendix A). A baseline of current expectations for the school library was set. The baseline was differentiated for schools with teacher-librarians and those without. Personnel at the division level and at the school level each used the instrument to complete an assessment of the school's library program. Then the team of division level personnel, school administrator (when available), teacher-librarian and library technician met to share their perspectives. Each component was discussed and the indicator of success was placed by mutual consensus.

The next step was to review the areas of success and identify the areas where the program was not meeting the baseline expectations. Goals were set. Additional details and descriptions of the indicators of success was gleaned by referring to the *Leading Learning* document. For every indicator at every level, the "See It In Action" link connects the reader to real examples from school libraries Canada-wide. Truly, a wealth of current information has been curated for teacher-librarians, and it is all available from the one document.

Good Spirit decided to assess about seven school libraries per year. Now in the Spring of 2016 the first group of schools has entered its second year where the focus is on completion of the goals. The second group has completed the assessment, identified goals, and is now crafting action plans. The goals and achievements are as diverse as the educational communities who devised them. Following are some of the paths taken to improve school library programs to support student learning.

1. Increase student involvement in school library programming by convening after-school Makerspaces.
2. Engage student readers by redesigning the fiction shelves to allow for better displays.
3. Increase teacher-librarian time to support inquiry learning.
4. Instituting the school library as the place to come for mentorship with new technologies.
5. Remove the desktop computers and establish a mobile device-friendly collaborative working space.

In the end, the consensus is that the lens provided by the *Leading Learning* document to analyze existing programs was much appreciated. As school libraries change and evolve, it is helpful to shine a spotlight on what greatness for school libraries can look like and how it can be achieved.

*based on *Leading Learning* (2014) Canadian Library Association

Community of learners					
	EXPLORING	**EMERGING**	**EVOLVING**	**ESTABLISHED**	**LEADING**
Visibility on the school improvement plan	School is exploring ways for the library to address shifts in learning needs.	Ensures collections, facilities and programs are guided by school, division and provincial policies	Programs are designed to support the school library.	School improvement plan has established goals for the library program	School library team builds learning communities and is responsive to evolving changes.
Student and community partnerships and involvements	Students are welcomed contributors to school library operations.	Students are consulted	Students contribute talents to build programs	Student expertise is utilized to implement the school library program	Students and community lead special projects and initiatives in the school library.
Budget	$0 – 9 /pp/yr	$10 – 14 /pp/yr	$15 – 18 /pp/yr	$19 - 22 pp/yr	$23+ pp/yr

Personnel					... to achieve school goals
	EXPLORING	**EMERGING**	**EVOLVING**	**ESTABLISHED**	**LEADING**
School-based administration collaboration	Investigates ways to support the school library program.	Supports school library programs.	Creates opportunities for use of the school library program.	Encourages teacher-librarians to collaborate to utilize the school library to its fullest.	Administrators are advocates and ambassadors for advancing the school library program.
Library technician collaborative role	Library technician is developing skills to manage collections and facilities.	Library technician assists students and teachers in the library.	Library technician works with students and teachers in the library to fulfill the needs	Library technician works collaboratively to implement policy and procedures	Library technician works collaboratively beyond the school.
Collaboration at the division level	Division-based personnel to support library programs is not available.	Accesses division level personnel for help in developing library programs	Works with division personnel to develop supports to enable library transformations for learning success.	Works with division personnel to ensure that all disciplines utilize the library for learning success	Division-based staff collaborate with other provincial and national education leaders to build school library capacity.

Instruction					
	EXPLORING	**EMERGING**	**EVOLVING**	**ESTABLISHED**	**LEADING**
Teacher-librarian instructional role	No teacher-librarian	Teacher-librarian role, but with limited time	Teacher-librarian helps to achieve the literacy goals of the school	Teacher-librarian works with teachers and students to implement inquiry	Teacher-librarian leads collaborative site-based research on the impact of the school library.
Instructional partnerships	Little or no instruction occurs	Teachers are supported in their instruction.	Teachers and teacher-librarian work cooperatively to achieve learning goals.	Teacher-librarian collaborates with teachers to plan, teach, and assess.	Teacher-librarian fosters student and teacher technological capacities and digital literacies.
Inquiry	Students do not come to the library for research/inquiry units.	Students do research/inquiry assignments in the library on occasion.	Inquiry learning experiences are designed for students that are in a real world context and relevant for students. (guided inquiry)	Inquiry learning experiences are designed for students that accommodate student choice of topics.	Students are engaged in inquiry learning experiences based on their choice of topics in a relevant, real world context.

Literacies					
	EXPLORING	**EMERGING**	**EVOLVING**	**ESTABLISHED**	**LEADING**
Reader engagement	Not all students access the school library.	Students self select texts for independent reading.	A systematic approach to reader engagement is employed including organized reading programs.	A culture of exchange of reading experiences is established.	Students build a community of readers.
Digital literacies	Not all students have access to supports in information literacies.	Students receive support in information literacies in preparation for research and inquiry.	Information literacy instruction is integrated into inquiry units.	Teachers instruct and collaborate to engender a deep understanding of digital literacies.	Teachers and teacher-librarian empower students to take ownership of their digital responsibilities.
Circulations / pp/yr Elementary: High school: K – 12:	Library is open for circulating materials.	0 – 25 0 – 9 0 - 15	25+ 10+ 15+	50+ 20+ 30+	100+ 30+ 50+

Environment					… for participatory learning
	EXPLORING	**EMERGING**	**EVOLVING**	**ESTABLISHED**	**LEADING**
Physical space	Methods to overcome significant limitations of the facility are being explored.	Facility is reviewed and redesigned to support individual, small group and whole class use.	Facility is reviewed and designed to be flexible and responsive to needs of individuals and groups.	Facility is reviewed and designed to engage students in participatory learning as individuals and in groups.	Programs are developed that extend the facility beyond the school library walls.
Virtual space	The establishment of virtual learning spaces is being explored.	Personnel maintains web presence of online resources.	Personnel ensures access to virtual resources.	Students are engaged learners in participatory learning using virtual resources.	Students build their own virtual learning networks which extend beyond the school library walls.
Collection	Methods to overcome significant limitations to the collection are being explored.	Materials are selected that are inclusive and support student needs.	Collection is developed for curricular support.	Collection is developed for curricular support, to respond to student needs, and to ignite student interest.	Collection is augmented by collaborative consultation with the school community to empower personalized learning.