

# ASSIGNMENT 1

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LIBE 461 63C: Administration of the School Library Resource Centre

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Congratulations on your new position as a Teacher-Librarian! That is fantastic news! Take a moment to recognize you already have many of the qualities and skill sets needed for this role. You have a network of Teacher-Librarians and other colleagues to support you (including me!), and you can do this.

**Define your role as the teacher-librarian.** *Guiding Question: Who do YOU want to be? What are the expectations?*

As a teacher, I am sure you are familiar with wearing many metaphorical hats and juggling various tasks throughout the day. Similarly, your role as a teacher librarian also requires you to embrace numerous duties, such as: innovator, collaborator, resource locator, manager (Harvey, 2005)., just to name a few. You also already carry a personal philosophy that will lead you to shape your vision and mission for this role. It is important that you take a breath before diving into the intricate details of your role and reflect on who you are and what you want to achieve.

Your *philosophy and vision* are rooted in your beliefs of your role as an educator and what you strive for each day. Your philosophy and vision will anchor you and provide a framework for the many roles you will take on as a Teacher-Librarian. For example, a belief you hold for education may be that school should be learner-centered, with a focus on relationships and collaboration. This would consequently drive your actions in a way that progresses towards that belief.

Your *mission statement* sets the tone for the role you and the School Library play in serving the students, staff, administration, and community (Toor & Weisburg, 2015). You can use the school's mission statement as a foundation to guide your mission for the school library. Creating and then applying your mission statement to your actions shows the students, staff, administration, and the community what you bring to the school. You should post your mission statement on your school's website library page if you have one, and definitely display it clearly in the library so that every step you take from this point forward is a step towards your mission. Together, your philosophy, vision, and mission will foster the attitude and perspective you carry with you into your new role and will set the tone for your duties as a Teacher-Librarian.

After reviewing your expectations/duties outlined in your formal job description, keep in mind that there are several other duties that are included in your position as a Teacher-Librarian. According to the internationally recognized *International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) School Library Guidelines* (2015), your duties can be summed up into five broad categories: Instruction, Management, Leadership and Collaboration, Community Engagement, and Promotion of Library Programs and Services.

Instruction: You are a certified teacher, and you will frequently be expected to take on a variety of teaching situations in your role new as a Teacher-Librarian, whether it is with individual students, small groups or full classes. You may even be teaching your colleagues for professional development in topics such as curriculum resources, technology integration, or community programs and services. Based on the *IFLA School Library Guidelines* (2015), your primary areas of teaching may include literacy/reading promotion (such as providing support to struggling readers), information literacy, inquiry-based learning, technology integration (such as multimedia resources), and professional development for teachers.

Management: As the only library staff member in your school, you will be expected to organize the library facilities, resources, and pedagogical programs and services for the schools' optimal use. I suggest you start with the documentation system that is currently being used in the school, but you can later decide what you think is best practice for the school. Since you don't have any library staff at this moment, you could start thinking about possibly recruiting, selecting, and training volunteers. At my school, there are many parent volunteers who help with circulation duties, and we recently even recruited six student library monitors. You can also observe the facilities in your new SLLC, and use

your creativity to rearrange the flow of the library. Feel free to come check out our school library, and be sure to review some of the documents included near the end of this email. As a Teacher-Librarian, you have the ability to cultivate a rich learning environment that is learner-centered, and promotes flexibility, critical thinking and creative thinking. (Canadian Library Association, 2014, p.6)

Leadership and Collaboration: I believe that you are at the heart of the school and will be presented with many opportunities to collaborate and lead. You will be able to contribute your perspective in developing and implementing the library programs and services that will best suit your school's needs. Your leadership will ensure that the library directly contributes to the school's mission and goals. Within the school community, your instruction can provide "school-wide continuity and cohesiveness through activities such as cross-curricular inquiry projects and interdisciplinary learning unit (IFLA, 2015, p. 28), making you a valuable partner in collaborative projects within the school community. For example, our school's goal was critical and creative thinking, with a focus on collaborative learning. The Teacher-Librarian at our school facilitated a school wide STEM project, where different grade groups worked together to create a tower. As a collaborator, your duty is to work with other staff members to provide the *optimum learning experience* for the students. You can contribute your personal area of expertise here by participating in a combination of supportive teaching, parallel teaching, or complimentary teaching (Canadian Library Association, 2014).

Community Engagement: You are responsible for managing the school library in a way that engages all the diverse populations of the school. Your school may have a diverse group of learners, families, and community members, and it is important to cultivate a learning environment that is accessible and inclusive to all the members. I suggest you immediately start learning more about your student population, staff, families, and the community beyond your school. You can conduct a community analysis, give out surveys, interview different members of the community, or simply go out and meet people and start to build relationships. Your programming, collection development, and outreach efforts will be shaped by the "diverse cultural, linguistic, indigenous, and other unique populations in the community" (IFLA, 2015, p. 8). You should create a sense of belonging at your SLLC, where all students feel comfortable and safe.

Promoting library programs and services: You will build such a great SLLC program, and you will also be responsible for promoting the library and all that it has to offer. You can create a written promotion plan to outline how you will meet the needs of the target groups in the school to be a partner in their learning, and a provider of programs, services, and resources. Create a promotion plan that will have students meaningfully engage with information and services, with equal opportunities for achievement for all students.

Once you determine the expectations that the school community holds for you, in addition to the expectations that you hold for yourself, you are ready to take action. There are a number of steps you can take to help you establish yourself as a committed stakeholder of the school learning community and start working towards your mission statement.

**1. Gather information about the school.** *Guiding question: How can you adapt your role to meet your school's needs?*

Before you can take action, you need learn about the community. Review the official School Growth Plan to learn about your school's focus for the year. Some examples of possible goals are literacy, mathematics, social-emotional learning or Indigenous learning. This will help you learn the needs and priorities of the school so that you can adapt your action plan to fit the school. You may also gather information about your school by conducting a school community analysis. This can be done either formally or informally, and will likely include various sources of valuable information. For example, you may collect data

about the learners by using existing demographic data (such as Census) or student test data (such as the Fundamental Student Assessment). You can visit the BC Ministry of Education or your city/town's website to access detailed demographic data specific to your community. You can also directly ask for information by surveying or interviewing key informants such as administrators, staff, students, and parents. This invaluable information will help you understand the needs of your school community and guide your instruction, management, community engagement, and library services in the months and years to come (Mardis, 2015). When conducting a school analysis, Lamb and Johnson (2007) recommend that you also look towards relationships beyond the school community, such as organizations, groups and people that may make good partners for the school library program.

## **2. Find out key initiatives and take leadership.** *Guiding question: How can I get involved?*

The school library is often considered the “hub” of the school community; therefore, it is important that you as a Teacher-Librarian play an active role in the school community. You should get involved in the school through department meetings, such as the Primary/Intermediate team meetings, technology committees, budget/finance committee, professional development committee, PAC meetings, or anything else that contributes to the learning community. I recently worked with a Teacher-Librarian who, in addition to various other committees, also participated in School-Based Team to provide input and support. As a teacher who works with almost all the students in the school, you will be able to make insightful contributions when working with other members of a student's support team, such as the classroom teacher, resource teacher, and counselor. Your knowledge of the students, curriculum, and community will make you a valuable partner in collaborative initiatives in the school. Your role in leadership initiatives and school committees will not only show your commitment to the learning community, you will also be able to advocate for library programs and funding opportunities. You can volunteer to take part in school planning and provide your insight to the school development plan while integrating into it the perspective of the SLLC Standards. As a Teacher-Librarian, you have the unique ability to facilitate cohesiveness to your school community by being at the forefront of planning, implementing, and leading initiatives in the school.

## **3. Your School Library Learning Commons.** *Guiding Question: How can I use the SLLC mandates to create the optimum student learning experience?*

I strongly recommend you review The Canadian Library Association's *Standards of Practice for School Library Learning Commons in Canada* (2014) and the BC Teacher-Librarians' Association's document called *From School Library to Learning Commons: A Pro-Active Model for Educational Change*. Student engagement and student achievement are at the forefront of the library, and the Teacher-Librarian is responsible for adapting their instruction, management, and collaboration accordingly.

The document *From School Library to Learning Commons: A Pro-Active Model for Educational Change* (2017) is a great starting point because it provides a clear explanation of the roles of the Teacher-Librarian, the LLC, and a comprehensive rubric of the performance standards of the including Physical and Virtual Space, Technology, Access, Learning Partnerships, and Staffing. It is based on two core values: Access and Student Success. It includes a checklist to help you assess your current school library, determine your point of entry, more accurately plan for the transition into a Learning Library Commons or a Virtual Learning Commons. I think you will appreciate that the document for its clarity, relevant context, and narratives of different teachers around BC who have experienced what you are experiencing right now.

The *Standards of Practice for School Library Learning Commons* (2014) document is also a practical guide for because it provides various rubrics for assessing your School Library Learning Commons, plus key steps for strategy implementation and progression.

*The Leading Learning Framework: Standards, Themes and Growth Indicators for School Library Learning Commons* (Canadian Library Association, 2014, p.10) categorizes the themes of an SLLC for each standard:

- a. Facilitating collaborative engagement to cultivate and empower a community of learners
  - b. Advancing the learning community to achieve school goals
  - c. Cultivating effective instructional design to co-plan, teach and assess learning
  - d. Fostering literacies to empower life-long learners
  - e. Designing learning environments to support participatory learning
- (Canadian Library Association, 2014, p.10)

Each standard is then divided into a comprehensive and detailed rubric of growth indicators for each theme on a five-point scale (Canadian Library Association, 2014, pp.11-20), much like an assessment tool you would use to assess student academic progress. The five-point scale provides a continuum of *transitional growth stages*: **Exploring, Emerging, Evolving, Established, Leading into the Future** (Canadian Library Association, 2014, p.9) which will help you to determine your *entry point* and begin developing a long term plan to excel forward along the continuum.

It is important to keep in mind that different aspects of your SLLC may correlate with different growth stages. In the appendices of the document, you can find various useful guides for your planning. For example, Appendix 1 (p. 29) provides discussion questions for each standard, which you can bring to a planning team. Appendix 2 and 3 (p. 31-32) provide clear templates for an action plan in transitioning the SLLC, including spaces to reflect on goals, budgets and resources, success indicators, as well as reflections around ‘*where are you now?*’, ‘*where do you want to go?*’, and ‘*how will you get there?*’ for each standard.

### **3. Stay connected with your school community and other TLs.**

Finally, the most important piece of advice I can give you is to focus on relationships. As a teacher, you know the importance of cultivating meaningful relationships with students, staff, administration, and the community. As a Teacher-Librarian, this is just as important as you will consistently be interacting with almost the entire school community. Your relationships with the student population will directly affect their engagement with the SLLC. Using your mission statement as a guide, create an environment that fosters belonging, community, and shared respect. Make sure to build rapport with each student and family you meet. You can also set up class visits or get involved in extra-curricular activities such as Student Council or various sports teams. Your relationships with staff members and administration are also vital in your role as a Teacher-Librarian. Stay connected with them by sharing your mission and goals for the library, and collaborating with them in school planning and building on strategies for school goals.

I also encourage you to stay connected with colleagues and organizations outside of your direct school community. For example, you can coordinate with the local public library by initiating joint reading and literacy promotion, class visits, and joint marketing of library services. Your SLLC fits into a grand *ecosystem* of libraries and showing students that they belong to an interconnected network of library services will help to engage them and progress the SLLC in the long term.

Staying connected with other Teacher-Librarians through social media and support groups will prove to be very beneficial for you. Just like how you reached out to me, I encourage you to stay connected with other TLS in BC and around the country. This is important not only to share resources and gain new perspectives, it will also provide you with a sense of community and support.

I hope that all of my advice will guide you in starting your new and exciting role as Teacher-Librarian. I wish you the best of luck, and let’s stay connected so we can continue to learn together.

## References:

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- Toor, R., & Weisburg, H. K. (2015). *"Your Philosophy."* *New on the Job: A School Librarian's Guide to Success*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Chicago: American Library Association.