THE LIBRARY LEARNING COMMONS

The
Library
Learning
Commons

Where All Pathways Meet

A New Vision For School Libraries in the
Grossmont Union High School District

Prepared by Members of the
GUHSD Library Council

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Library Learning Commons
Grossmont Union High School District

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Library Learning Commons Vision

We have the opportunity to re-imagine the Library as a physical and virtual space that will provide essential services for 21st century student learning, and distribute programming that reinforces the library's role as the academic hub of campus. The Library Learning Commons is envisioned as a student-centered, vibrant open studio environment with seamless, coordinated resources and services—a place where students will be able to access the library's extensive print and electronic collections; use state-of-the-art technology for research and coursework; meet with faculty and fellow students in comfortable, flexible furniture configurations and study spaces; and receive direct instruction and support from experts in research, reading, technology, and all aspects of information literacy and lifelong learning. The Library Learning Commons creates a new vision of the library not only as the place where students come together to study and learn, but also as the place where faculty members engage in professional development activities, collaborate on curriculum development, and demonstrate best teaching practices.

What is the Library Learning Commons?

- Campus hub of student and staff activity
- Welcoming and inviting environment
- Point of access for all knowledge resources and services
- Open, varied, and flexible collaborative space
- Showcase of best teaching and learning practices
- Safe, neutral "test box" area for professional development

- Academic and cultural community center for the campus
- Both a physical and virtual space
- Every teacher's second classroom
- Every student's common classroom
- Dynamic entity shaped by changing needs of students and staff

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What does the Library Learning Commons accomplish?

- Organizes library and other campus services, expert staff, resources, collections, and technologies in one location—it is the place students and teachers know to go for anything related to knowledge and learning
- Provides equity and a sense of connection through inclusion of all students and staff, both during and outside of class time
- Connects students with the information, resources, and support they need to succeed on and off campus
- Raises academic achievement school-wide by increasing and improving student use of traditional and non-traditional library resources
- Removes barriers to learning by accommodating a wide variety of learning styles and adapting to students' changing patterns of learning and innovating
- Increases communication and collaboration among students and teachers by providing the space and resources to accommodate and lead meaningful interactions
- Expands the instruction of course-specific curricula by focusing on the core process of teaching and learning, and the creation and construction of knowledge
- Integrates resources and the teaching of information literacy into the entire fabric of the campus
- Promotes a love of reading through displays, programming, and a professionally-developed collection that includes high interest fiction and non-fiction for students and staff
- Enriches the cultural life of the campus through exhibits, events, and other activities, connecting students with the greater local community and world
- Unifies disparate campus groups by serving as a common area and connection point for all grade levels, subject areas, departments, strands, and programs


How Will This New *Library Learning Commons* Be Different From Our Current School Library?

○ It is the center for teaching and learning on campus. The academic hub of the school for students and staff.

○ In addition to traditional library services, students benefit from the inclusion of other, site-specific programs and resources delivered and/or located in or adjacent to the Library Learning Commons. (Examples might include an expanded and staffed career center; counseling services; career technical education resource center; etc.)

○ Student learning takes place in a facility with furniture that is flexible, and can be quickly re-configured to facilitate a wide variety of collaborative groupings.

○ The Professional Development Center for staff is an essential component of the Library Learning Commons. Here, classroom teachers collaborate with the teacher-librarian on curriculum development; Professional Learning Communities meet; best teaching practices are demonstrated for colleagues; new learning initiatives are piloted. Staff has access to a professional development library, extensive educational software, and key technologies (high capacity computer, printer, scanner, projector, etc.).

○ Students, staff, and community members collaborate on decisions about programming and facilities. Decisions are research-based and driven by available data.

○ Students have more autonomy via wireless networking and portable technologies (laptops, eBook readers, etc.).

○ Students have access to a virtual learning commons that is accessible 24/7/365. The virtual learning commons provides a wide range of online academic research databases, a portal to online coursework and credit retrieval, video tutorials about a wide range of resources, and the latest appropriate web 2.0 resources.

○ The Library Learning Commons is also a Student Showcase, displaying student work in both physical and virtual environments.

○ Community partnerships help shape Library Learning Commons programming through guest speaker programs tied to Career Technical Education pathways, and informational programs about a wide range of local resources (libraries, performing arts, student employment, post-secondary options including college and careers, healthy lifestyle choices, etc.).

○ The Library Learning Commons is Communication Central—the place students and staff go to find information about school and community activities, meeting dates and times, etc. District and site publications, organizational charts, resources, and need-to-know bulletins are available here.

○ The Library Learning Commons is the Campus Cultural Center, hosting student and community music performances, art gallery displays of student work, visiting artists/authors, etc. Here, students develop an appreciation for the arts and establish connections to the greater school community.

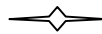# The Library Learning Commons Serves Multiple Functions

Traditional Library Functions

The Library Learning Commons provides traditional library functions similar to public and academic (college and university) libraries/learning commons. This means that the Library Learning Commons needs to be made open and available for students to use throughout the school day, including before and after school, at lunch, and on breaks. Students should have access to resources and to staff trained in information science. Library Learning Commons spaces should include comfortable areas for quiet reading, display areas to develop interest and build community, independent work areas for individual study, and more.
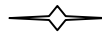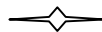
Library Learning Commons as Community Center

The Library Learning Commons benefits from the "community center" trend already implemented in many public and academic libraries/learning commons, which are becoming increasingly focused on being user-centered facilities. As a community center, the Library Learning Commons not only offers traditional library functions, but also provides additional services such as community spaces and meeting rooms that are used for both library programming and as reservable spaces for other groups. As part of the user-centered movement, the Library Learning Commons may also reshape expectations for usage (e.g. acceptable noise levels and food/drink policies) and change the allocation of resources (e.g. increasing access to new technologies and expanding collections of popular items).

Library Learning Commons as Knowledge Center

High school and academic libraries/learning commons serve a shared function of unifying the many strands of academic inquiry into one central hub where both students and staff go to access and share knowledge. As a knowledge center, the Library Learning Commons is the place on campus where best practices in teaching and learning take place and where new ideas are developed and experimented with. It is where different individuals, groups, or classes meet and gather to collaborate and where students go to receive tutoring, professional advisory, and other specialized services. Also, as the form of resources and the ways and places of accessing resources constantly evolve, it becomes more important than ever that the Library Learning Commons provides students with specialized guidance in navigating the information world.

Library Learning Commons as Common Classroom

A major way that K-12 libraries/learning commons differ from both public and academic libraries is in how they serve as a "common classroom"—they are every teacher's second classroom on campus and they are staffed by librarians who are also teachers. Whole classes make visits to the Library Learning Commons during the school day for a variety of purposes. Thus, spaces and organization of resources must be designed to flexibly accommodate various, concurrent configurations from large group instruction to small group collaboration. The Library Learning Commons should provide an environment that supports social learning while simultaneously supporting traditional library functions such as quiet, independent work areas.

Library Learning Commons
Facility Design Elements

Guiding Principles

- The *student as learner* will be the primary focus of all decisions. The Library Learning Commons concept is based on client-side principles and academic achievement for all students is paramount.

- ***Construction and configuration flexibility*** are extremely important. Constantly evolving needs and priorities will require the space to adapt in multiple ways (movable furniture, shelves, partitions, equipment, etc.)

- The facility will be ***developed for the future as well as the present***. Accommodations for the requirements of current and potential technologies will be made.

- The facility will provide an environment that is ***inviting, comfortable, safe, easily supervised, well lit, environmentally conscious, and provides accommodation*** for users with multiple learning styles and disabilities.

- Site Teacher-Librarians will be ***active participants*** in all aspects of the design process and ensure that the Library Learning Commons is part of a campus-wide vision.

> "The learner must be at the heart of a well-designed school library."
>
> DR. ROSS J. TODD

Structure/Floor Plan

- Areas and furniture that can be configured in a variety of ways—for full class instruction and presentations, small group study sessions, independent study, etc.

- Appropriate teaching/learning technologies in each of the flexible, instructional spaces.

- Clear "line of sight" visibility to all student areas for supervision/safety.

- At least one designated computer area specifically for class use. Other computers could service small groups and individual drop-in students.

- Adequate space for shelving of the print (book) collection.

- Designated area(s) for independent reading with comfortable seating.

- Small areas (or separate rooms) for study. Moveable wall panels/systems could partition off such separated learning environments.

- Entry/foyer large enough to accommodate student gathering and transitional traffic.

- Double doors at main entrance/exit.

- A large, centrally located circulation desk.

- Signage that provides guidance to students and staff.

- Multiple display areas strategically placed for maximum effect.

- Office space for the Teacher-Librarian with windows to allow for visual supervision and the ability to be made private as needed.

- A minimum of one work area that includes a sink and sufficient room for Library Technician and Teacher-Librarian to do book repair, process books, etc.

- Sufficient storage spaces, including cabinets that can be locked to secure high value items, e.g. school historical archives, etc.

- A staff bathroom.

> **"Investing in only 5% of the school's real estate [the library]... has an impact on 100% of the students."**
>
> **THE ROBIN HOOD FOUNDATION**

Infrastructure

- Electrical system sufficient to accommodate current and future technological needs. Outlets need to be located throughout the facility at regular intervals.

- Wireless and wired technology infrastructure with a high bandwidth and the flexibility to accommodate a wide range of current and future technologies. Computer/data ports need to be located throughout the facility at regular intervals.

- Meets specific needs of various areas: circulation desk, OPAC (On-Line Public Access) stations, etc.

- Sufficient lighting:
  – lots of natural light available throughout facility
  – interior luminosity that meets National Library Standards
  – multiple light switches throughout the facility for darkening individual areas
  – lighting on dimmers for maximum flexibility

- Windows treated to screen ultraviolet light that could damage books and create excess heat. Windows that are easily opened and adjusted.

- Heating/air conditioning system that is controlled on site, inside the facility. Climate control system that includes dust filters.

- Excellent structural acoustics and materials to minimize noise transfer.

- Building materials that are durable and easily maintained and cleaned.

- Hot water in the library sink, needed for ongoing cleaning.

> "Schools with stronger school library programs average 10-20% higher test scores."
>
> KEITH CURRY LANCE

Furniture

- Moveable furniture for maximum flexibility (minimal built-ins, countertops, computer tables, etc.)

- Low, flexible, mobile shelving as an option for part of the collection.

- Moveable, transparent wall panels/systems that provide areas (or separate rooms) and some sound reduction.

- Computer furniture that includes an ample side work area adjacent to each computer.

- Comfortable seating that can be put in a variety of configurations/arrangements.

- Sufficient number of chairs to accommodate multiple classes, attendance at library-sponsored events, etc.

- Tables, both large and small, arranged to accommodate study needs of independent, small group and large group learners. (5 feet allowed between tables)

- Book trucks (carts) of various sizes and configurations.

> "The effectiveness of technology is directly proportional to its transparency."
>
> ERIKSON/MARKUSON

Technology

- 40 up-to-date desktop computers (minimum) and 40 up-to-date laptop computers (minimum) for student use. Up-to-date software on each station.

- Management software allowing staff to view each student computer screen, e.g. "Remote Desktop."

- 4 dedicated computers (minimum) for staff to manage circulation and collection management.

- 5 barcode scanners, at least 1 that is wireless.

- 5 dedicated computers for online public access catalogues.

- Theft-prevention system, placed relatively close to the circulation desk to provide for the most effective use of equipment.

- Telephones for staff--at least one that is portable.

- 1 black and white photocopy machine, coin-operated.

- 1 color printer/copier for staff use.

- 2 printers (minimum) for student use and 1 for staff use.

- LCD ceiling-mounted projectors for each instructional space and at least one portable LCD projector.

- 1 large High Definition TV with cable access (or the ability to broadcast cable television programs via computer/projector).

- A document/photo scanner.

- 1 DocuCam for demonstrations.

- FAX machine.

- Interactive Whiteboard or tablet.

- Several computers equipped to be used for online coursework/distance learning, including DVD players, etc.

- Video conferencing equipment (including digital video cameras, audio-system, etc.)

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