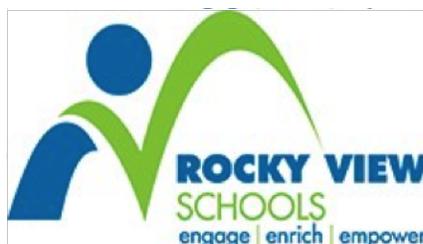


Transformation to Learning Commons Rocky View Schools

PLANNING FRAMEWORK



Rocky View Schools' (RVS) Framework provides a foundation understanding that includes a philosophical stance and a set of exemplary practices for the creation of Learning Commons that are personalized, supportive of Universal Learning Environments and aligned with RVS' 3 Year Plan (3YP).

What is a Learning Commons?

“The role and function of the 21st-century school library has evolved as the result of the exponential growth of information, rapid technology advancements, and the challenge to contribute to student achievement. Libraries of the past supplied resources and provided support . Computer labs provided scheduled access and support to technology. Today we need a learning commons, a learning laboratory that is the foundation of all learning in the school rather than a warehouse of information and technologies. The new learning commons focuses on client-centered programs pushing world-class excellence throughout the school. Teacher librarians [or Learning Commons lead teacher] in partnerships with teacher technologists (the former tech directors) and other learning specialists must look for ways to capitalize on the rich resources, technologies, spaces, and expertise available in the school library to advance best practice pedagogy and energize teaching and learning for today's students and teachers. This new mandate is centered on student performance through improved teaching and learning throughout the school”
(Loertscher, Koechlin & Zwaan, 2008).

Why Learning Commons in Rocky View Schools?

We are committed to preparing learners to be competitive in a global economy given a new social, economic, political and technological reality; we realize that constant change is their future. In order to be relevant, we need to embrace, reimagine and redesign our institutions and ways of thinking.

In transforming to a LC in Rocky View Schools, all stakeholders need to be engaged with a focus on the questions

1. Why a Learning Commons?
2. How does a LC accelerate 21st learning?

The key to transformation is the mindful act of starting in the right place, asking the right questions in the right sequence. Learning Communities need to begin with the concept of “Learning” and engages in fierce conversations that will ultimately identify learning commons strategies from transitioning current library space with the ultimate goal of supporting an engaging learner rich environment.

Learning Commons are dynamic, flexible spaces where experimentation, exploration, construction and research are evident. Learning Commons enable a constructivist approach that allows learners to engage in critical thinking, project-based and inquiry learning within an information h and technology-rich environment.

“The concept of a Learning Commons describes the library of the future as a place in which consumers can access print and digital resources in a learning environment that is supportive of individual study, group work, and a centre of community activities.” (Beagle, 2004).

Built on learning outcomes and 21st Century competencies, Learning Commons are physical and digital “places where you learn, and in learning, become part of a larger world.” (Betsky, 2005) They are driven and designed by the needs of the learners.

In RVS, Learning Commons (LC) are expressions and models of “Next Generational Learning Spaces” that are collaborative and dynamic learning hubs, flexible in design and responsive to learners and learning. Primary and central to the creation of LC is learning and 21st Century competencies. The emphasis is on learning and not entirely on the physical or digital space. It is about the success of learners in terms of learning design, physical design and operation.

RVS is committed to designing LC with the intention that learning is the focus and will be supported and accelerated – and ultimately, where learners take ownership for their own learning. Built around the premise of Universal Learning Environments, LC are collaborative spaces (physical and digital) where individuals access, share, network and construct knowledge.

The following table contrasts a traditional Library model with the emerging and responsive construct of Learning Commons.

Traditional Learning Spaces	Next Generational Learning Spaces
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Defined physical space with specific hours of acces. ● Scheduled story times and book exchanges ● One size model of implementation and support to learning ● Materials (books, AV etc.) on anchored shelves <p>Heavy reliance on print material</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limited student choice within research process and learning ● Librarian designed and led learning projects in cooperation with teachers ● Teachers bringing the whole class to the library to work for the period ● Teachers / library staff facilitate the sign in and out of resources ● Library is the quiet place in the school for kids to read and learn with classmates ● The Librarian managed the library and school learning resources ● The library was the place in the school where learners could access technology on demand ie the web, CD-roms, and physical resources ● A place where all the learning resources were managed ● A place in the school where learning resources were found, accessed and borrowed. ● Labs/pods of computer workstations ● Broad use of internet lacking in depth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Next Generational learning space that encompasses the whole school and beyond ● Learning commons is the hub of and supports learning in the school ● Mindful in design with emphasis on supporting and the actualization of learning for all learners ● Flexibility in physical design not as primary determinant with moveable shelves, furniture and emerging technologies ● Resources / technology available anywhere in the school ● Integrated collection of print, non-print and digital resources ● Knowledge building centres where learners use social networking linked to inquiry to create new knowledge ● Global Awareness and “Connected” orientation ● Build collaborative cultures of learning actualizing metacognitive reflection by individuals and groups of learners ● Flexibility in scheduling and access to material, has an open door policy and capability to host multiple groupings of learners ● Implementation of web based resource management system to allow 24/7 access to resources ● Conversation and discussion as a means of engagement and learning ● Utilizing of assistive technologies as a support of Universal Design for Learning

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Team approach, including the Learning Commons Facilitator (LCF) to actualization of learning ● Student-led inquiry with a focus on metacognition and learning styles ● Flexible and ease of access to technology (laptops, iPads, SMART boards, cameras, iPods, personal mobile devices) as learning tools ● Personalization within a blended learning environment ● Immediate connections to resources ● An environment where learners collaborate with others in the school and beyond ● Production tools and spaces for learners to take their ideas from conception to presentation, using a variety of media (digital, wood, metal, paper, plastic)
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In an RVS Learning Commons students are engaged and empowered by:

- Creating their learning spaces
- a variety of dynamic learning space from large group interaction of individual learning
- Accessing a variety of resources
- human
 - online and Face to Face
 - access to staff who can facilitate a student in accessing online environments
 - access to teacher facilitation and support
- digital resources (content)
 - hard copy resources
 - Hardware and software
- Collaborating with others (both near and far)
- Creating, constructing and publishing
- Presenting, networking and sharing

Learning Commons Supports

To ensure optimum learner success a Learning Commons needs to provide specialized and facilitative staffing to support research, technology learner needs and model 21st century competencies.

The optimum staffing is a full time Learning Commons Facilitator and accompanied by School Computer Technician. Research and technology support may also be supplemented by school staff or student support groups. The importance of adequate staffing is cited by OLA [Together for Learning](#) and CLA [Achieving information literacy](#).

Closing Statement

The LC becomes the “learning hub” that permeates the entire school. It becomes a generative “place that everyone owns and contributes to – one giant conversation that’s both a social and a learning network.” (Loertscher, 2008)

LC are more than the establishment of an information hub or commons consisting of a cluster of network access points and IT tools. Dynamic Learning Commons are designed with learning at the forefront as defined through by learner.