



CALGARY
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

SCHOOL-AGE STRATEGY

SUMMARY The *School-Age Strategy* represents a new direction for Calgary Public Library services for school-age children and is a response to the Library's Strategic Plan, *Potentials Realized 2019 – 2022*. Building on the success of the *Early Learning Strategy* for children under five, the *School-Age Strategy* is a framework for the development of programs, services, collections, and spaces that support children ages 5 – 12. This strategy positions Calgary Public Library as a leader in 21st century learning in public libraries and as a trusted resource for families and educators.

21ST CENTURY LEARNING The role of the public library as a community-gathering and learning space is more relevant than ever. Libraries have expanded their role from storehouses of information to vibrant places for the community to investigate, collaborate, and innovate. To keep pace with a diverse society where learning priorities and methods are shifting, libraries — which reflect the diversity of their surrounding neighbourhoods — must also be flexible spaces to accommodate the changing needs of their community.

In today's world, children are no longer served by the memorization of information when knowledge is available on-demand at the click of a mouse, or by the preparation for specific career paths when new jobs are regularly created and invented. For children to thrive as adults, their learning environments must reflect the changeability of their society and teach them how to learn instead of only what to learn.

Our school-age approach is rooted in 21st century learning and teaching, which is student-centred and inquiry-based. Inquiry-based learning teaches autonomy, resilience, and adaptability, mirroring modern workplace and societal scenarios. Inquiry also promotes civic literacy and global awareness, fostering critical thinking skills that will allow children to contribute positively to their local and international communities.

In inquiry-based learning, children gather information on their own, under the guidance of their teacher, and learn collaboratively with peers. Different learning styles are validated, giving children a greater sense of motivation and responsibility. Learning is hands-on and facilitated through a variety of mediums, including digital platforms, the arts, in discussion, through storytelling, and by writing.

RESEARCH This Strategy is informed by a thorough examination of current research in cognitive, physical, emotional, social, and communication development during the school years. Research extensively informs our work, from the design of our Questionarium spaces — based on study into inquiry-based and collaborative learning — to programs and services for school-age children that support learning and exploration. We’ve relied upon the research of Roberta Michnick Golinkoff and Kathy Hirsh-Pasek, leading psychological and developmental scientists, to guide our understanding of childhood learning and development in the middle years.

Our understanding of the core competencies that reflect how children learn and grow in the 21st century was informed by Michnick Golinkoff and Hirsh-Pasek’s “six Cs” of learning. Each “C” represents a fundamental component of school-age learning and successful development.

**SIX Cs
OF LEARNING**

COMMUNICATION



CONTENT



**CRITICAL
(AND
COMPUTATIONAL)
THINKING**



**CREATIVE
INNOVATION**



COLLABORATION



CONFIDENCE



THE SIX Cs OF LEARNING: **Collaboration:** the ability to work with others (teamwork), have social-emotional control, practice empathy, and form communities.

Communication: the ability to speak so others can understand your message, writing clearly, and listening carefully. Effective communication depends on and fosters collaboration.

Content: competencies in subject areas (at the Library we emphasize STREAM: Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Arts, and Math), but also in developing learning strategies. When children have opportunities to develop executive function and self-regulation skills, individuals and society experience lifelong benefits. Learners develop content expertise, then reflect on and share their knowledge.

Critical (and Computational) Thinking: the ability to sift through, analyze, identify, and categorize information and weigh evidence while considering the perspectives of others.

Creative Innovation: the ability to use information in new ways to solve problems and create something completely new. Creative innovation defeats a “fixed mindset” and allows children to imagine possibilities through divergent thinking.

Confidence: the ability for children to learn from failure, to persevere in problem solving, and to have grit (perseverance).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES Our vision and strategic priorities for school-age children are guided by the following four principles:

1. The Library has a societal responsibility to provide a nurturing environment for children.
 - We embrace our role as a contributor to their successful development, as part of a child’s natural protective network. This includes the child, family, extended family, community, and Nationhood.
 - We draw upon the concept of *Istawatsiman*, a Blackfoot word which means rearing children with all the traditional teachings of the Blackfoot people, including compassion, harmony, trust, respect, honesty, generosity, courage, understanding, peace, protection, and knowing who your relatives are.
2. Play and fun are prioritized as an integral part of childhood learning.
 - We celebrate learning and discovery.
 - We aim to foster a love of reading and learning through our spaces, collections, and programs. Learning and discovery are celebrated.
3. Ongoing research and community partnerships, especially those with school board partners, inform high standards of innovation and relevancy.
 - School curriculum is augmented with Library resources and programs; programming decisions are guided by STREAM subjects and the “Six Cs,” along with school-age children’s self-directed, interest-driven learning.
 - Reading, writing, and numeracy skills are reinforced along with an exploration of materials, loose parts, and technologies available in the Library’s collection, which are valued entry points for learning in experiential ways.
 - We view technology as a tool for learning.
4. An intersectional lens is applied to better relate to and affirm all children.
 - We view children holistically and support balance within the four quadrants of human existence: physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual.
 - We take a strengths-based approach to learning.
 - We align our practice with the City of Calgary in our aim to offer equitable service that can be adjusted to meet the diverse needs of school-age children and their families.
 - School-age children learn through culture, not just about culture. Indigenous perspectives, worldviews, and ways of knowing are authentically integrated.
 - School-age children see themselves reflected in Library spaces, programs, and services and their developmental needs are met.
 - A child’s experiences and perspectives form in the context of their home life. It is necessary for the Library to consider the whole-family context and support caregivers to better serve children.

WHO WE SERVE While children ages 6 – 12 are the primary participants in Library programs, services, and spaces for school-age children, the Library aims to engage and support caregivers and educators because we recognize that they are a bridge to the child. Caregivers are parents, but also grandparents, relatives, and other caring adults, such as those from a community agency. Educators can be a child’s classroom teacher, but also anyone dedicating their careers to a child’s learning, such as learning spaces and classroom assistants, principals, administrators, aftercare and out-of-school providers, community partner organizations, and pre-service teachers.

SCHOOL-AGE SPACES The Questionarium is a dynamic play-based learning space in the Children's Library designed to invite children ages 6 – 12 years old (with an emphasis on children ages 8 – 10) to wonder, experiment, discover, and create. Children may engage independently or collaboratively, including with caregivers, educators, peers, and staff. It offers hands-on STREAM activities, Library and externally presented programs and demonstrations, attractive collections, and facilitation by staff with support from volunteers.

The Questionarium can support multiple disciplines, forms of play (independent or collaborative), and supplement school subject areas. A variety of zones can be combined or reduced depending on the size of each Library location.

These six Questionarium zones include building and making, creative expression, problem solving and challenges, idea sharing and talkback, physical play, and retreat.



1. BUILD AND MAKE:

Children are encouraged to build using materials such as Keva Blocks, LEGO, Play-doh, and loose parts.

2. CREATIVE EXPRESSION:

Children are invited to express their ideas and participate in making through activities such as dramatic play, podcasting, creative writing, and art.

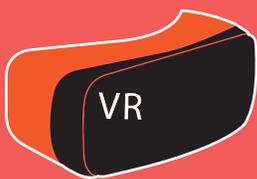


3. PROBLEM SOLVING AND CHALLENGES:

Children will engage in mathematical, digital, scientific, and engineering challenges, play board games, and solve puzzles.

4. IDEA SHARING AND TALKBACK:

Children are invited to share their ideas and reflect on thought-provoking questions through activities such as writing, voting, and drawing. They are invited to display their work, making their thinking and learning visible to others.



5. PHYSICAL PLAY:

Children engage in physical activity such as jumping varying distances, playing kinetic collaborative video games, and using virtual reality technology. Full-body play is encouraged.

6. RETREAT:

The Questionarium provides opportunity for quiet reflection, introspection, and rest.



COLLECTIONS AND DIGITAL RESOURCES

Our collections are patron-centered and support play, learning, and growth. They are both physical and digital and are the cornerstone for foundational reading, writing, and numeracy. School-age collections support inquiry-based learning and are developed to enrich curriculum and support school success. They span a range of subjects, formats, languages, and reading levels appropriate for children ages 6 – 12 and are chosen for their relevance and appeal. Both new and classic titles are included. We curate our child-centered collections to be inclusive, encourage reading and exploration, and reflect the wide range of childhood experiences.

Our print collections are designed to meet the reading and developmental needs of children. The core print collections for school-age children are curated theme books, picture books, easy readers, juvenile fiction, and juvenile non-fiction. Books in the juvenile collection are chosen for the appealing characters, plots, and topics that motivate children to read.

We curate our digital resources keeping in mind that most school-age children inhabit a rich and complex online world. The remote, 24/7 access we provide through our Digital Library supports caregivers outside the classroom. eResources are a convenient tool to access technology at a child's own pace and comfort, reinforcing the Library as a safe, welcoming, engaged supporter. The Library's digital content connects learning to real-world examples and reinforces the value of technology skills, a perspective shared by educators. Partnerships with Calgary school boards have led to projects of mutual relevance and learning, removing the financial barrier for individual schools and providing access for children to use Library eResources at school.

SCHOOL-AGE PROGRAMS Our programs and services for the school-age child can be categorized into five main strategic areas:

1. SCHOOL READINESS

Self-regulation skills are fundamental to school readiness. A preschooler's self-regulation ability is linked to their early literacy, vocabulary, and math skills and helps them transition to a more structured environment when they reach kindergarten. Research shows that children who have good self-regulation skills are more likely to do better in reading and math in elementary school. The ages of 4 – 6 are an important transitional time as children navigate great developmental shifts to become independent learners and readers.

Through our programs, the Library continues to help prepare pre-kindergarten children for a positive start to their school journey. In Calgary, approximately 13,000 children will enter kindergarten each fall. It's a time when children may get their first Library card, become independent from their parents, and take pride in being a student. Outreach to schools and in-library programs for children and their caregivers, targeted collections, school readiness resources, and collaboration with school boards and the community give caregivers the strategies and support necessary to help prepare their child for a successful first year of school.

2. FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING AND LITERACY

The Library fosters a love for literacy and numeracy through play and enjoyable experiences with books, stories, and language. The Library is a place to nurture and address gaps in a child's learning. We aim to increase learning success by supporting caregivers in their child's reading journey — particularly reluctant readers and those in vulnerable situations — and by complementing the work of educators by augmenting curriculum with quality programs and excellent school-age resources.

3. AFTERSCHOOL

School-age children visit our libraries after school looking for a welcoming space where they can play with peers, work on school assignments, and occupy their time. The Library offers dedicated afterschool programs to leverage the critical hours between the time school closes and when caregivers return home from work to provide children — especially those who don't have access to other activities — with exciting,

SCHOOL-AGE PROGRAMS engaging experiences that will help them learn academic, social, and professional skills. Library spaces and programs play an important role in engaging young learners during a vulnerable time. Afterschool programs have the ability and flexibility to be creative and provide individualized learning. Our engaging afterschool programs work closely with schools and community partners to provide activities that enhance and complement, but do not replicate, the school day.

4. SUMMER LEARNING

Ultimate Summer Challenge is an annual program which serves the largest audience of any Calgary Public Library program. Over 26,000 children ages 0 – 12 and teens ages 13 – 17 participated in 2019. Ultimate Summer Challenge is rooted in inquiry-based learning and integrates a variety of formats, including hands-on activities, pop-up activities, a 40-hour reading challenge, large-scale installations, community outreach and collaboration with partner camps, Library programs and half-day clubs, book displays and intrigue stations, external presentations and performances, and online challenges. Ultimate Summer Challenge supports curricular connections and the integration of experiences for families with children 0 – 5 years. The program focuses on three key areas of impact: supporting school readiness, reducing the effects of summer slide, and fostering social-emotional growth.

5. SCHOOL GROUPS

The Library invites classes to participate in school programs at the Library that augment curriculum and demonstrate the role of the Library in their academic life. Children who don't visit the Library with their family may still be introduced to us as part of a school group visit. Outreach programs, where the Library visits students at their place of learning, are a welcome opportunity to have a Library experience at school without having to pay for a school bus and co-ordinate permission forms to bring classes off-site. Additionally, our website is curated with educators in mind, providing online opportunities to find out information, book programs, and find pre- and post-visit support.

For more information about how the Library can support you and your student(s) on their learning journey, visit calgarylibrary.ca/students.

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