



## School Library Services Initiative

**Q. What is the *School Library Services Initiative*?**

**A.** Alberta Education has established a *School Library Services Initiative* (SLSI) focused on reviewing K–12 school library services and support resources across the province.

School library services include access to a wide range of learning activities, library professionals, learning resources such as books, films and podcasts, and technology that could be available in an on-site library and/or online.

**Q. Who was engaged in *School Library Services Initiative* development?**

**A.** The SLSI is coordinated by Alberta Education in consultation with a School Library Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from the College of Alberta School Superintendents; Alberta Teachers' Association Specialist Councils—Alberta School Library Council; Educational Technology Council; Alberta School Boards Association; Association of School Business Officials of Alberta; Library Association of Alberta; Alberta Library Trustees Association; Alberta Association of Library Technicians; Alberta School Councils' Association; Alberta Regional Library Systems; University of Alberta; and teacher-librarians (northern and southern Alberta).

**Q. What schools are involved in the *School Library Services Initiative*?**

**A.** All schools in Alberta—public, separate, Francophone, charter and private—are involved.

**Q. Why is the *School Library Services Initiative* important?**

**A.** Literacy is more than reading and writing. Today and in the future, learners must develop expertise with a range of literacy skills and strategies to acquire, create, connect, and communicate meaning in an ever-expanding variety of contexts. The SLSI aligns with the *Action on Literacy* framework: <http://education.alberta.ca/teachers/program/literacy.aspx>

**Q. How does the *School Library Services Initiative* relate to *Inspiring Action*?**

**A.** The SLSI aligns with the personalized learning of each student as outlined in the *Inspiring Action on Education* discussion paper. <http://engage.education.alberta.ca/inspiring-action/>

**Q. How will my school's library change?**

**A.** Each student will have user-friendly, timely access to accurate, reliable, appropriate, current and scholarly information available both in person and/or online, with support and education from library professionals.

**Q. How will the changes be implemented?**

**A.** The changes will be implemented in incremental steps based upon each school's envisioning and creating a school library services plan. The intent of the School Library Services Plan is that it is inter-woven with the overall school plan (i.e. School Development Plan, School Review Plan) and is not an added plan.

**Q. Who will implement the *School Library Services Initiative*?**

**A.** School library teams comprised of administrators, teachers, and library staff (teacher librarians or teacher-designate to the library, library technicians and assistants) planning and working together with the students, parents and community.

**Q. What will be the implementation timing of the *School Library Services Initiative*?**

**A.** Implementation is anticipated to begin in September 2011. Schools will create their own timelines of development based on the context of the school and community in consideration of the essential conditions important for implementation - shared vision, leadership, research and evidence, resources, teacher professional growth, time, and community engagement.

See: *A Guide to Support Implementation: Essential Conditions*.

<http://www.erc.ca/essentialconditions/essentialconditions.html>

**Q. What is a 'School Library Learning Commons'?**

**A.** A prevalent concept for enhanced school library services is that of a central "school library learning commons" in the school. Around the world progressive libraries are moving toward the learning commons concept of flexibility, so activities and spaces in the library and on the library's web site are flexible in design and/or furnishings to accommodate a variety of learning activities; e.g., collaborative community space, a coffee house concept.

A school library learning commons also supports ongoing critical thinking, inquiry, action research, interdisciplinary learning and brain-based learning. A school library learning commons becomes a place of active learning in real-time or online with project, problem-based, experiential, and cooperative learning that is ideally coordinated by a teacher-librarian.

The school library is a gateway to the virtual landscape; e.g., Web 2.0, social networking, podcasts, animation, film, gaming, re-mix, online databases and virtual libraries. Reading fiction and non-fiction in a multitude of formats is cornerstone to a student's ability to access, examine, evaluate, restructure, create, communicate and reflect upon learning and knowledge.

For more information see:

- *Achieving Information Literacy, Standards for School Library Programs in Canada* (2003) <http://www.clatoolbox.ca/casl/slic/>
- American Association of School Librarians. *Standards for the 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Learner* (2007) <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/guidelinesandstandards/learningstandards/standards.cfm>.

**Q. What are the intended outcomes of the *School Library Services Initiative*?**

**A.** To provide each student seamless access to school library services that are user-friendly, timely, accurate, reliable, appropriate, current and scholarly available in person and/or online with support and education from library professionals and the library community.

**Q. How will the *School Library Services Initiative* help students?**

**A.** Extensive research over the past 16 years in 21 American states and in Ontario supports a correlation between advanced student achievement and literacy development with quality school library services. For a detailed examination of the studies see *Research Foundation Paper: School Libraries Work!* (Scholastic 2008). [www.scholastic.com/librarypublishing](http://www.scholastic.com/librarypublishing).

**Q. How much will the *School Library Services Initiative* cost?**

**A.** Implementation for the revised *School Library Services Policy and Guidelines* is intended to be cost neutral to schools and instead requires a shift in resources and philosophy. It is not about budget, it is about access to library services and doing things differently with resources that we already have. Schools will contextually assess existing resources to ensure they are effectively taking advantage of already available resources and services within the community and other locations.

**Q. What is a ‘library professional’?**

**A.** A library professional is a person with a master’s degree in library science and/or information science and engaged in library service, in charge of any specialized body of resources. Librarians who teach in schools also must have a teaching degree. A library professional is also a certificated teacher with a Masters in Education (Teacher–Librarianship) or Diploma (Teacher–Librarianship) and/or Masters in Library and Information Studies.

**Q. Will all schools have a library professional?**

**A.** Access to qualified library professionals such as teacher–librarians, teacher–technologists, community librarians and school library support personnel such as library technicians and library assistants can be provided using a variety of school-based, team or shared access models (e.g. vice-principal, technology teacher, language arts teacher, district teacher-librarian, feeder schools, virtual librarian).

**Q. How does *School Library Services Initiative* relate to GOA library policy?**

**A.** The revised draft *School Library Services Policy and Guidelines* aligns with and supports the proposed GOA *Integrated Library Policy* under development.

**Q. How will the *School Library Services Initiative* work with community libraries?**

**A.** Alberta's library sector includes school libraries, which are under the jurisdiction of Alberta Education to support student learning in public, separate, Francophone, private and charter schools. An MLA Committee Library Report was released on April 16, 2009; five specific accepted recommendations that impact the SLSI are:

- Recommendation 1: Create an integrated library policy to guide decision-making and strategic planning and investments for libraries. The government will involve several ministries (including Municipal Affairs, Service Alberta, Advanced Education and Technology, Education, Culture and Community Spirit, Employment and Immigration, and Aboriginal Relations) in establishing an integrated library policy for all publicly funded libraries.
- Recommendation 9: Establish a standing committee of assistant deputy ministers (ADMs) to coordinate government policies and program initiatives that impact publicly funded libraries. Municipal Affairs will establish an ADM Standing Committee with representation from Service Alberta, Advanced Education and Technology, Education, Culture and Community Spirit, Employment and Immigration, and Aboriginal Relations.
- Recommendation 11: Actively find ways for public libraries and schools to work together on student supports, co-location, staffing, literacy and sharing of resources, including video conferencing. Municipal Affairs will continue to participate in the School Library Review. Municipal Affairs will actively encourage municipalities to consider co-location of libraries and school libraries in new subdivisions.
- Recommendation 14: Develop a province-wide technology plan to create seamless access, including a single library card available to all Albertans. Municipal Affairs will work cooperatively with TAL [The Alberta Library] in developing a province-wide technology plan.
- Recommendation 17: Provide access to and purchase licenses for all electronic databases on a provincial (rather than a municipal or regional) basis.

For the complete News release, recommendations and report, visit:

<http://alberta.ca/acn/200904/25715AF69E6BB-BADC-ACB8-B247942628738419.html>

**Q. Does recommendation #11 pertain more to smaller municipalities?**

**A.** No. Currently, 20 percent of Alberta public libraries are co-located in schools and four schools are co-located with public libraries in larger municipalities. Depending on the nature of the school or community, library partnerships can be as basic as the public library staff visiting schools to promote services or as complex as a co-located school/public or academic library. A province also can provide collective online services; e.g., the Alabama Virtual Library <http://www.avl.lib.al.us/about/index.html> or OhioLink Digital Media Center preK–12

<http://www.infohio.org/er/OhioLINKDMC.html>. The On-line reference center on [learnalberta.ca](http://learnalberta.ca) provides virtual resources and in-services.

**Will schools be expected to extend library services beyond school operational hours in order to provide access to members of the community?**

**A.** As is currently the case in some communities, schools and communities may collaborate to create agreements with respect to the operational hours of the school library and community access.

**Q. What is happening with the *School Library Services Initiative* right now?**

**A.** SLSI is developing support resources to help schools enhance library services. These will include student learning models, innovative models for seamless access to school library services across the province and in-service models to build capacity for school library service development. The SLSI also will explore sharing licensing for digital resources with Municipal Affairs and Advanced Education and Technology.

**Q. What is the *School Library Inventory Survey*?**

**A.** In June 2009, the School Library Inventory Survey was e-mailed to principals of each school in Alberta to determine the current state of student access to school library services. Specifically, the survey gathered current information on Alberta K–12 library staffing and facilities, and access to technology, resources and services. Information gathered from this Survey will help determine how to work toward seamless student access to school library services.

Survey results, from 2009, about the state of school library services, confirm the need to review and update the 1984 school library policy and are informing the draft of the revised policy and support resources currently under development. Information on the School Library Survey, including the Summary of Results and the presentation and research that has informed the initiative, *Transforming Canadian School Libraries to Meet the Needs of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learners: Alberta Education School Library Services Initiative - Research Review and Principal Survey Themes*, can be viewed at [www.education.alberta.ca/departments/ipr/slsi.aspx](http://www.education.alberta.ca/departments/ipr/slsi.aspx).

**Q. When will a revised school library policy be available?**

**A.** It is anticipated that a new school library policy will be shared with school jurisdictions and schools in spring 2011.

**Q. Where can I find additional information on the *School Library Services Initiative*?**

**A.** For additional information about the SLSI, please contact Judith Sykes, School Library Services Manager, Education Program Standards and Assessment Division, at 403–297–5024 (toll-free by dialing 310–0000 first) or by e-mail at [Judith.Sykes@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Judith.Sykes@gov.ab.ca).