

## The Learning Commons

The idea behind the Learning Commons is that it provides opportunities for a variety of learning to go on in the library. At the elementary level there are many things that can happen that don't seem like "library activities" because in the Learning Commons, it's not just about reading, but encompasses all types of literacy and peer activities.

The Learning Commons is driven by student needs, and there is a push toward student-led activities. According to the BCTLA video, in universities and high schools, peer-led services are the mainstay of the Learning Commons. In elementary school, there can be a different focus taken, but in keeping with the idea that children learn and develop through play and active participation. Literacy in the library can begin with play challenges and literacy opportunities and expand into the digital library as the students enter into the intermediate grades. With the digital library comes new information that the students can find for themselves.

### How to make it happen!

First of all, do some research and find out what a Learning Commons is, and how it could change the life of your library. Dream big about what you want, but then be realistic and make a plan for what you need. The school administrator needs to be on board, so make a meeting to talk about your ideas. Also try to have a couple of the teachers with you. It doesn't have to include all the teachers to start, perhaps just a few that you have already made a connection with. When you make a plan, you need to be open to changing it.

The next thing is to weed your collection. Get rid of the books that have sat on the shelves for so long and not been taken out. Use the copy status cookie on the circulation page of Destiny, to find out how many times a book has circulated that year or, if you can, get access to a Titlewise reading from Follett, which will provide an in-depth picture of your library acquisitions.

Moveable furniture is also an asset, so that as needs change, the actual space can change. You need to look for pieces that are functional and can be used in a variety of ways.

Though our prep times are scheduled in, any collaborative blocks can be used to organize learning activities with a colleague who has some insight into the Learning Commons, who may seem to be on board trying new literacy initiatives. Bringing in interactive games and puzzles, lego tables, and changing literature areas, is a good way to start. Activities that have student participation are sure fire ways to have the students interested and tuned in.

At Holly we have a small area outside the library, basically a hallway that has extra room, but no real purpose. We have put couches and tables in the area and it is quite functional and moveable. Inside the library, there are often two sets of classes; an intermediate learning group at the back, and a primary library group at the front of the library. Outside the doors, they are usually smaller groups of students and teachers.