

# LEADING, LOVING AND LEARNING

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## THE LIBRARY'S ROLE IN THE EMERGENCE OF THE LEARNING COMMONS, A WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH TO COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY

This year, at Father Michael Goetz Secondary School, a focus on inquiry has been shaping the way teachers and students are using their school library. On a daily basis, teachers are bringing their classes to the library to take part in activities that promote critical thinking and problem-solving. A culture of inquiry has been born and is beating a pulse that permeates the entire school. Teachers from the English, ESL, Science, Religion, Dance, History, and Physical Education departments have engaged in learning-focused conversations with the Teacher-Librarian to co-create inquiries that align teaching with current professional practices.

A vision for 21st century learning is outlined in Together for Learning, School Libraries and the Emergence of the Learning Commons, (a document created by the Ontario School Library Association), which details the necessary response in education to the new learner – a learner who is growing up in a media-saturated environment to which she expects to have immediate and easy access. She wears

multiple personal electronic devices, learns new technologies rapidly, constantly multi tasks, and is used to learning informally. (OSLA) It is imperative that we respond to our new learners so that school life is meaningful, stimulating, and prepares them appropriately for their future in a rapidly changing world.

How are our roles as educators evolving to support learning in the 21st Century?

This challenge and responsibility lies with all staff, including the Teacher-Librarian, whose evolving role into educational developer provides the dynamics for the emergence of the learning commons – “a flexible and responsive approach to helping schools focus on learning collaboratively”. This whole-school approach emphasizes the need to expand real and virtual learning options, meet the diverse abilities of learners, provide equitable access to resources, and use new technologies for critical and creative thinking.

At Father Michael Goetz Secondary School, as the role of teacher-librarian continues to evolve towards the role of collaborator and coach, the library has now become a catalyst through which inquiry is modeled and used on a regular basis. In reference to his Grade 10 Applied English class, provided feedback on an exit ticket: “I felt the inquiry went very well. It was interesting to see opinions form, then change through discussion”. In regards to her 12 University Exercise Science class, one teacher stated, “Students were focused and engaged and used their time wisely,” while the teacher noted that the Grade 9 Applied English class, “students responded very well to all the activities and they supported each other in their groups”. Teachers from across subject areas, grades and levels have been extremely receptive and have taken shared practices back to their classrooms where students further engage in the inquiry process.