As schools work to build a true Learning Commons, they will soon embrace the many benefits for all.

The New Learning Commons will serve many functions in a school. We are not throwing anything away, but rather adding value to what we already have. Some possibilities are noted in the chart.

Multiple Functions of a Learning Commons	
Traditional Library • Access for students throughout the school day • Teacher-librarian instruction and support • Rich curriculum resources and technologies • Fostering of independent reading • Inquiry learning • Support for differentiated learning • Comfortable areas for work and play • Independent, small group, and class work areas • Displays of student achievement	**Virtual Library** • Access 24/7/365 • Digital curriculum support resources • Classroom and library project/assignment development • Collaborative work spaces for students and teachers • Learning tools and tutorials/advice • Creation and communication tools and spaces • Connections to community experts • Client-based support
Knowledge Building • Guided inquiry and problem-based learning • Relevant real world learning assignments • Design for both content and process learning • Continuous assessment and metacognition • Development of multiple literacies • Seamless technology integration • Higher order thinking skills • Collective knowledge building • Teaching and learning efficiency; efficacy	**Sustained School Improvement** • Demonstration lessons • Embedded professional development • Center for professional learning teams • Evidence-based practice • Collaborative assignment design and implementation • Culture of inquiry • Coordinated implementation and accountability of school-wide initiatives

Now, where and how do we start our transformations?

Guiding Principles

First, you need to develop your vision and the guiding principles for how best to proceed. Start by studying the needs of teachers and learners today. Ask where you and the facility fit in designing and supporting teaching and learning for the 21st Century. Consider how to turn your library "client side" by involving teachers and students in development. Determine how to free up space to ensure the flexibility needed in this common learning lab. Collaborate with staff to ensure that your program provides "just in time" support and skills development. Design a program in the Learning Commons that aligns with school improvement initiatives. Think about how you can involve other learning specialists, classroom teachers, administrators, parents, and students in the development of learning partnerships. Move to the centre of teaching and learning!

Infrastructure

Consider your current staffing, time, and budget. Take inventory of collections, furnishings, technologies, and connectivity. Investigate wireless networks, cloud computing, and best communication systems. If your school has isolated computer labs consult with the staff and students and think creatively to determine how you might marry your library facility and program to deliver coordinated learning and space for everyone. Develop virtual calendars that will help your school community plan for multiple uses of the Learning Commons. When you have done your homework, write a proposal/action plan. You are ready to begin the transformation. It's time to reinvent!

Physical Spaces

Don't let books and computers get in the way of active learning opportunities. Because the Learning Commons facility will be used for many functions, the space needs to be as flexible as possible. The smaller the library, the more flexibility you will need. If at all possible, relocate shelving so that it is on the walls. Free up as much space as you can by getting more resources into circulation. Consider allowing classes to borrow more books for their classroom collections and rotate them often so the students always have lots of new books to choose from right at their fingertips. Assess how much of your print reference section is still relevant and useful. Be rigorous about weeding. Think about the 24/7 access you can provide to learners by investing in excellent databases and interactive reference resources and the space this will free up in your facility for other functions. Use your new-found space for flexible, multipurpose teaching and working areas for both staff and students.