

# Exploring Learning Partnerships Moving Toward Creating a Learning Commons

**H**ow to integrate technology into the school library has been a question guiding my programming choices. I have, however, been encountering an obstacle regularly— my limited knowledge of electronic tools. As I have been busy trying to quickly learn how to use these tools so that I can then incorporate them into the library program, I discovered not only that many students are already familiar with these tools, but also that many more are cropping up each day. In the meantime, students in the library have restricted access to these electronic tools because of my limitations. I must ask myself, am I, the educator, holding back their progress?

I decided to explore student-led tutorials on the operation of an electronic tool. I wanted to have classroom teachers as the learners to experiment with this kind of role reversal, casting myself as the facilitator and observer to document the experiment. If I could find a way to incorporate this kind of partnership in our school library, then I could move forward in creating a Learning Commons in our school while also addressing the issue of ‘catching up’ to student knowledge of electronic tools.

## The Plan

In casual conversations at recess I surveyed students to determine interest in the experiment of teaching their teachers; the response was enthusiastic. While asking around, I learned of the reputations of certain students known as being ‘techies.’ I approached four of these students, two in grade 5 and two in grade 6, to ask them about the programs they were familiar with and eventually determined that Adobe Photoshop Elements 5.0 was the electronic tool to be explored. I was not familiar with this tool and therefore could not interfere in the teaching of the content. Not only were these students familiar with this tool, but it was also Ministry licensed and available on our school computers. Choosing software that could be used as an instructional tool by teachers was also necessary to encourage teacher participation in this experiment, which was my next task. I approached a group of teachers at the end of a staff meeting, and found five keen participants.

The tutorials were held at lunch time in the computer lab and were 30 minutes in length. Coordinating schedules was a challenge, so I had to scale down my original five sessions to three. I wanted to pair up students with teachers they had never worked with before to start the learning partnership from a neutral place.



Photo by:  
Diana Maliszewski