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Room For "Entertainment" In The School Library Learning Commons?

Is there room for "entertainment" in today's school library learning commons? If we can equate "entertainment" and "having fun" with "play," the official answer is "Yes!" In defining the school library learning commons, *Leading Learning: Standards of Practice for School library learning commons in Canada,* 2014 (**http://clatoolbox.ca/casl/slic/llsop.pdf**) advises planners to "Get creative when planning comfortable areas for reading, working and playing to learn" (34). This is an environment where, "critical thinking, creativity, innovation and playing to learn are nourished" (5). It is important not to let prejudices from the past lead teacher-librarians and other educators to downplay the educational strategy at the end of the list.

In times of fiscal restraint, there is a temptation to avoid using activities that may be perceived as frivolous. Budgets may be cut and jobs may be lost if the work of the library learning commons is not taken seriously, and truisms such as "no pain, no gain," suggest that real learning should not be fun. In his 1985 book, Neil Postman warned that we were "amusing ourselves to death." Are we becoming unthinking consumers of entertainment with shrinking capacities for deep reflection and critical thinking? The answer is "not necessarily." It is important to distinguish between commercial entertainment for passive consumption, and educational entertainment that promotes active engagement, critical thinking and problem solving.

Gino Bondi, the District Principal of Specialty Programs for the Vancouver School Board, talks about the Learning Commons as "the place where learning isn't about collecting dots but rather connecting them through cross-curricular partnerships that boost critical thinking, problem solving, decision making and communicating abilities. It's our experiment lab: a place where kids and adults can take risks and experiment with new ways of doing school" (6).
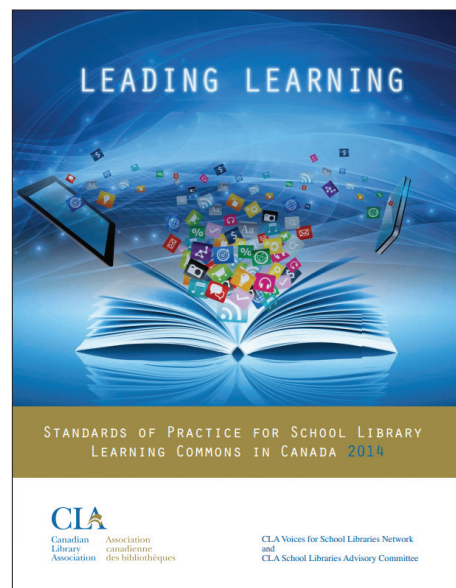
Leading Learning: Standards of Practice for School library learning commons in Canada, 2014 acknowledges the value of "playing to learn" in the school library learning commons.