Treasure Mountain Canada 8: Foundation Framework
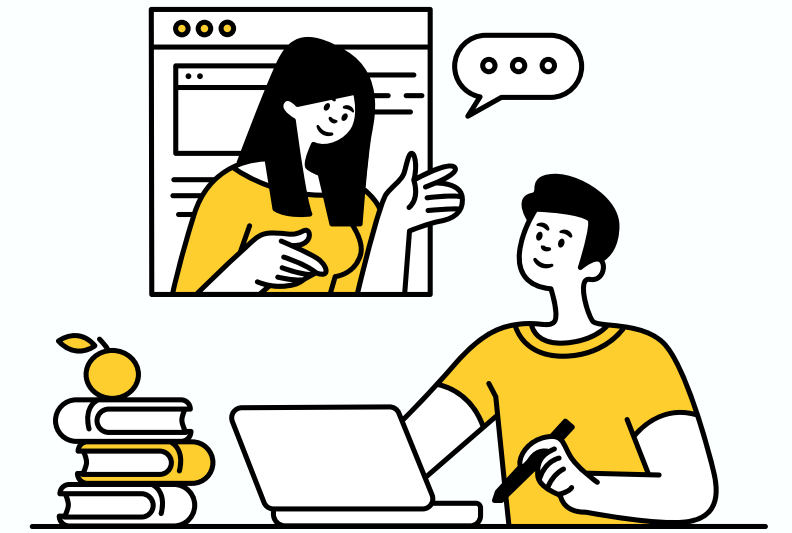
How might we 'sell' the LLC within our schools? To staff? To parents? To students? To administrators?

Presented by: Jeanne Buckley, Magda Kalkowska, Natalie Kekki, Lisa Loffredi

Table of Contents

Who We Are

We are four secondary teacher-librarians. In the fall of 2024, we undertook a research project to inform ourselves about the best practices for advocacy for secondary school libraries. We conducted a review of the literature pertaining to library advocacy including sources pertaining to a variety of library types. From our research, we identified a dozen best practices to use in our own advocacy efforts. Furthermore, we learned that the act of engaging in advocacy play an important role in our construction of our own professional identity. (Hicks, 2016)

One of the themes that emerged in our research was the idea of knowing your community and tailoring your advocacy message to your community pertaining to community needs and goals. To inform this aspect of our own advocacy efforts in the future, we collected data regarding what our students, parents, and staff patrons value as the most important foundation statement of school libraries.

Why We Chose Our Question?

How might we 'sell' the LLC within our schools? To staff? To parents? To students? To administrators?

- In light of changes to school libraries in the province , we believe that advocacy and strategies for branding libraries is relevant at this time.

- In light of changes to the role of secondary teacher-librarians in our board, we believe there is a disconnect between the perception of library by stakeholders and the actual work and services our school libraries and teacher-librarians do and offer.

- We hope to improve our advocacy practices and strategies.

Scan the QR Code

Our Literature Review

Scan the QR Code to access our annotated bibliography of the resources we reviewed in response to our question.

We reviewed 29 articles that highlighted various themes:

- marketing
- branding
- collaborative relationships
- communication
- data collection
- building community

Data Collection

Data was collected from THREE (3) parties:

- Staff
- Students
- Parents

Data was collected at FOUR(4) YCDSB high schools:

- Our Lady of the Lake (Keswick)
- Sacred Heart (Newmarket)
- St. Brother André (Markham)
- St. Robert CHS (Richmond Hill)

Our Method

We asked visitors to our libraries to choose one of the following five **'Library Foundations' statements** with the prompt **"Which statement is most important to you?"** The five statements were posted on a board with the title 'Library Foundations' and participants were given a sticker to place near their selected statement. The stickers were colour-coded to represent the participant group: student, parent, or staff.
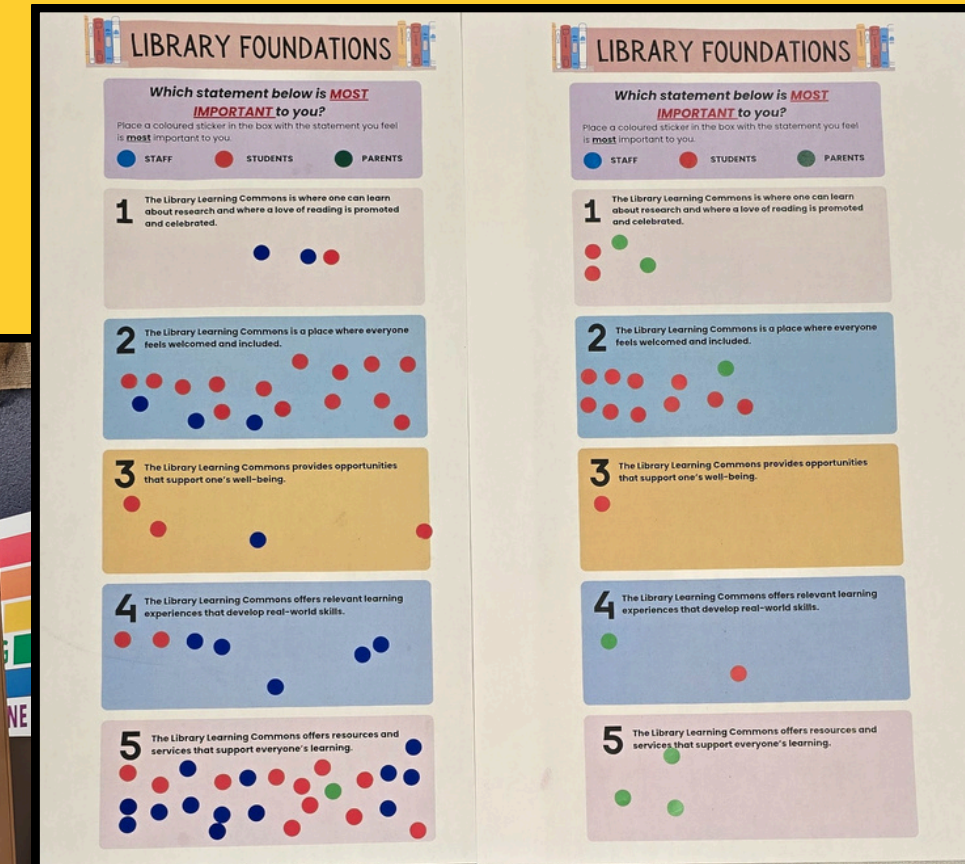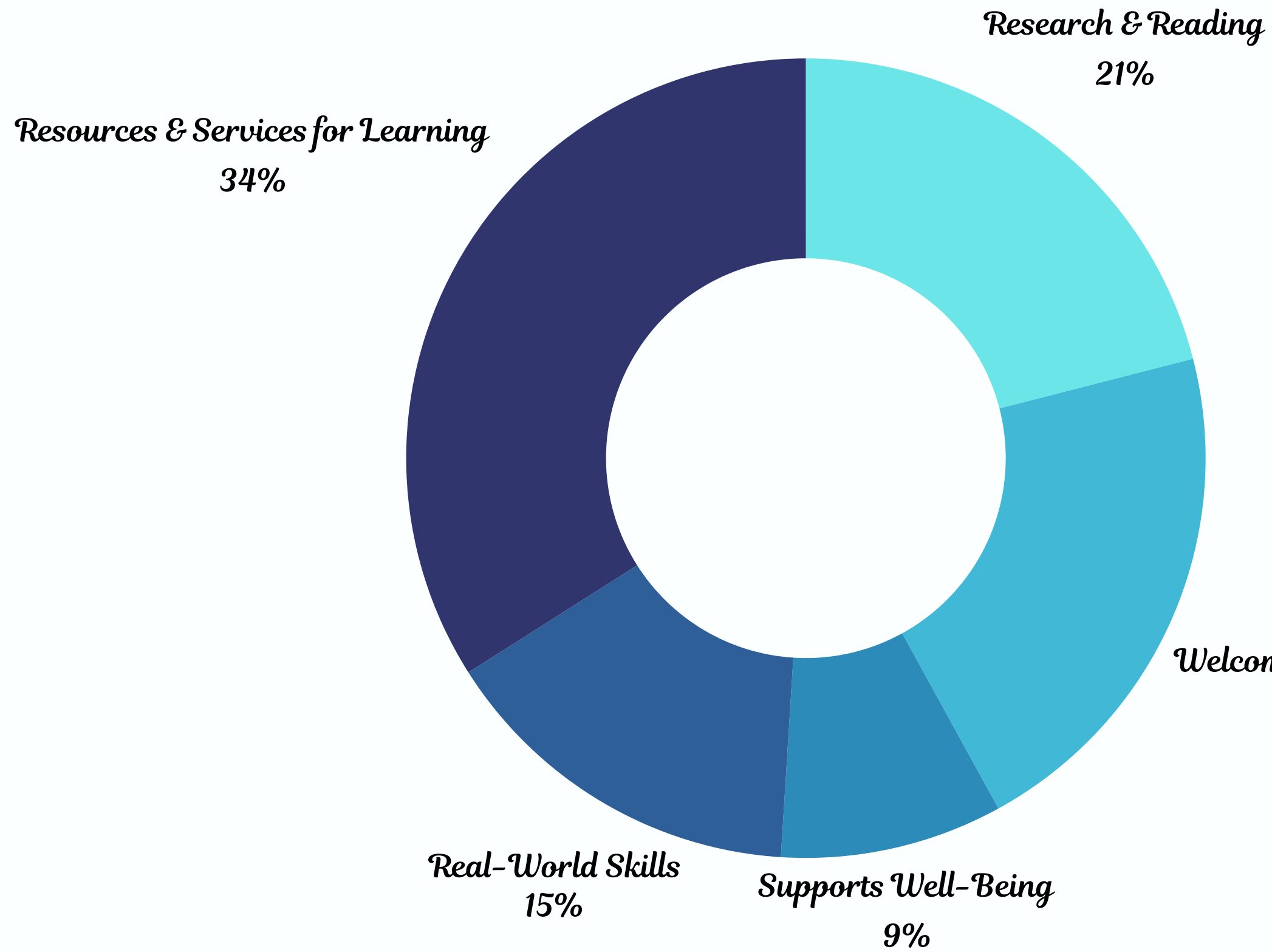
Library Foundation Statements

1. The LLC is where one can learn about research and where a love of reading is promoted and celebrated.

2. The LLC is a place where everyone feels welcomed and included.

3. The LLC provides opportunities that support one's well-being.

4. The LLC offers relevant learning experiences that develop real-world skills.

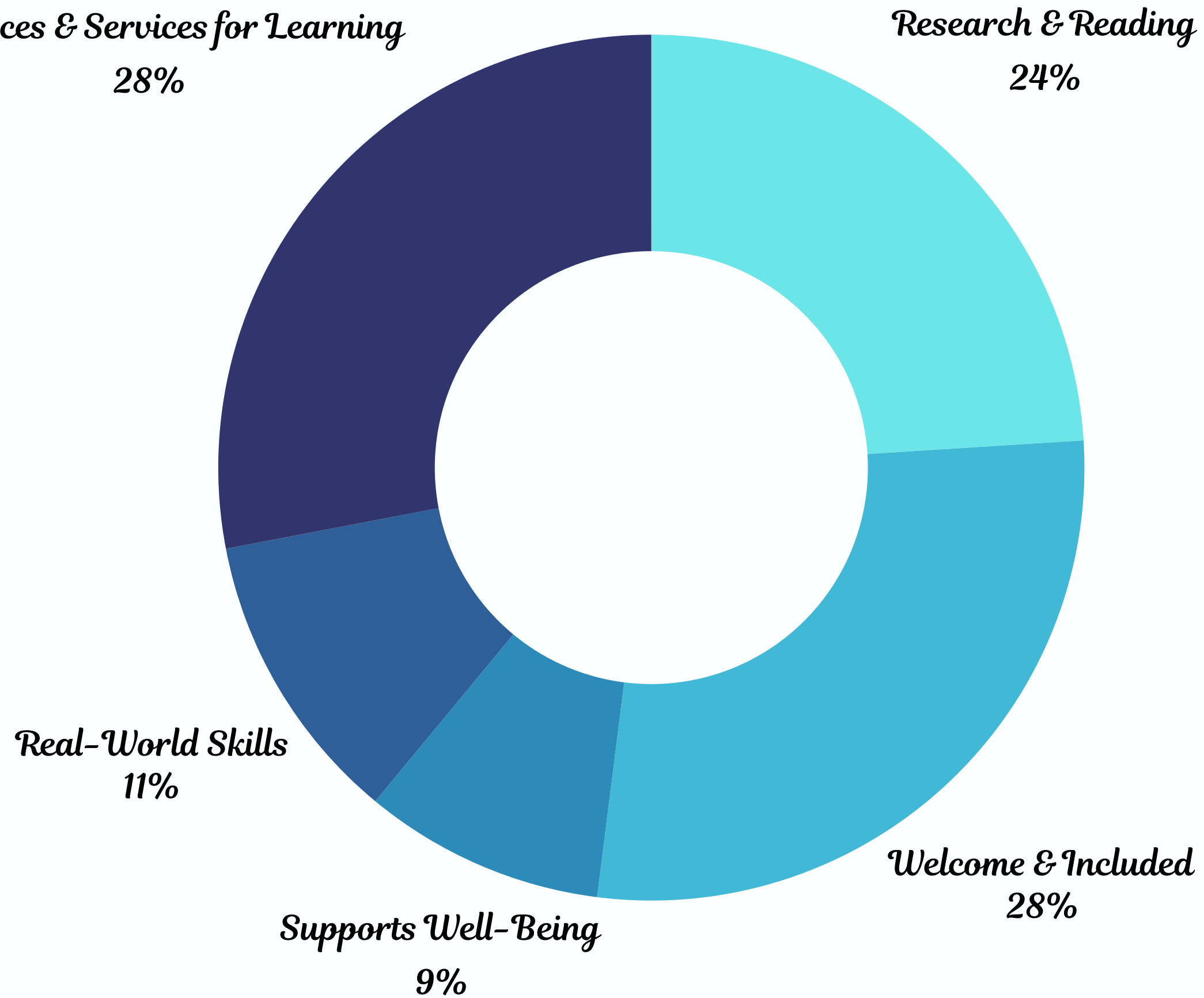5. The LLC offers resources and services that support everyone's learning.

Data Collected from Staff

147 participants across 4 schools

Research & Reading
21%

Resources & Services for Learning
34%

Welcome & Included
21%

Real-World Skills
15%

Supports Well-Being
9%

Data Collected from Students

343 participants across 4 schools

Resources & Services for Learning
28%

Research & Reading
24%

Welcome & Included
28%

Supports Well-Being
9%

Real-World Skills
11%

Data Collected from Parents

223 participants across 4 schools

Resources & Services for Learning
40%

Research & Reading
28%

Welcome & Included
12%

Supports Well-Being
3%

Real-World Skills
17%
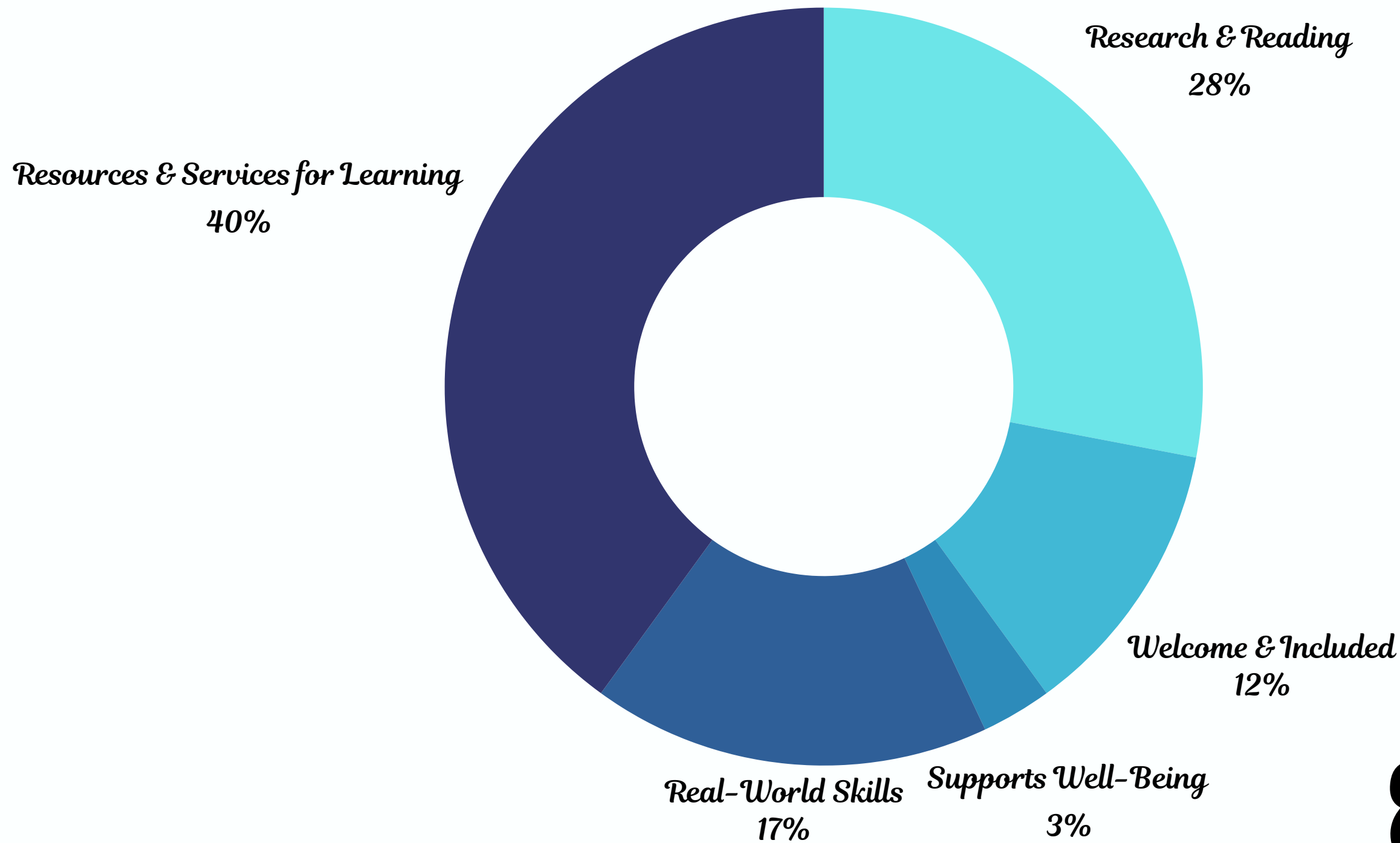
Resources & Services for Learning
32.7%

Research & Reading
24.8%

Welcome & Included
21.8%

Real-World Skills
13.9%

Supports Well-Being
6.9%

Overall Data

713 participants total
(4 schools, 3 stakeholders)

Data Results Analysis

- Overall, all three of our stakeholders (staff, students, and parents) believe that the most important role of the library is the provision of resources and services that support all students' learning. Our libraries and librarians continue to be perceived by patrons in their traditional roles.

- Our stakeholders do not view the learning commons as a place that supports their well-being. In high school, this might be due to the prominent role of guidance (and chaplaincy in Catholic schools) in supporting students' mental health needs.

- After 'Resources & Services for Learning', staff and parents value the importance of research and reading in the LLC, however, students value the importance of feeling welcomed and included.
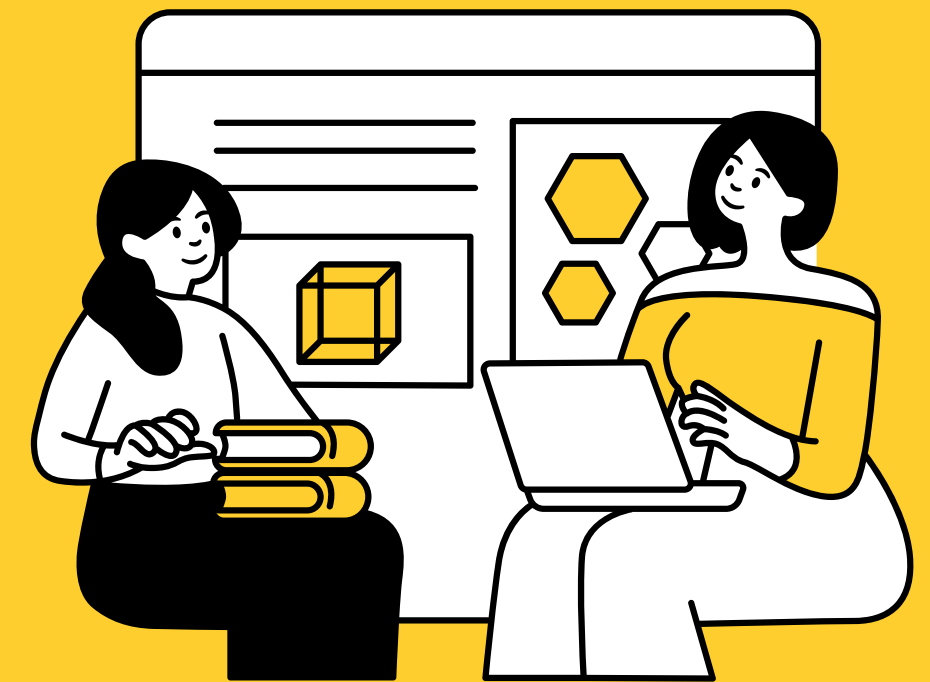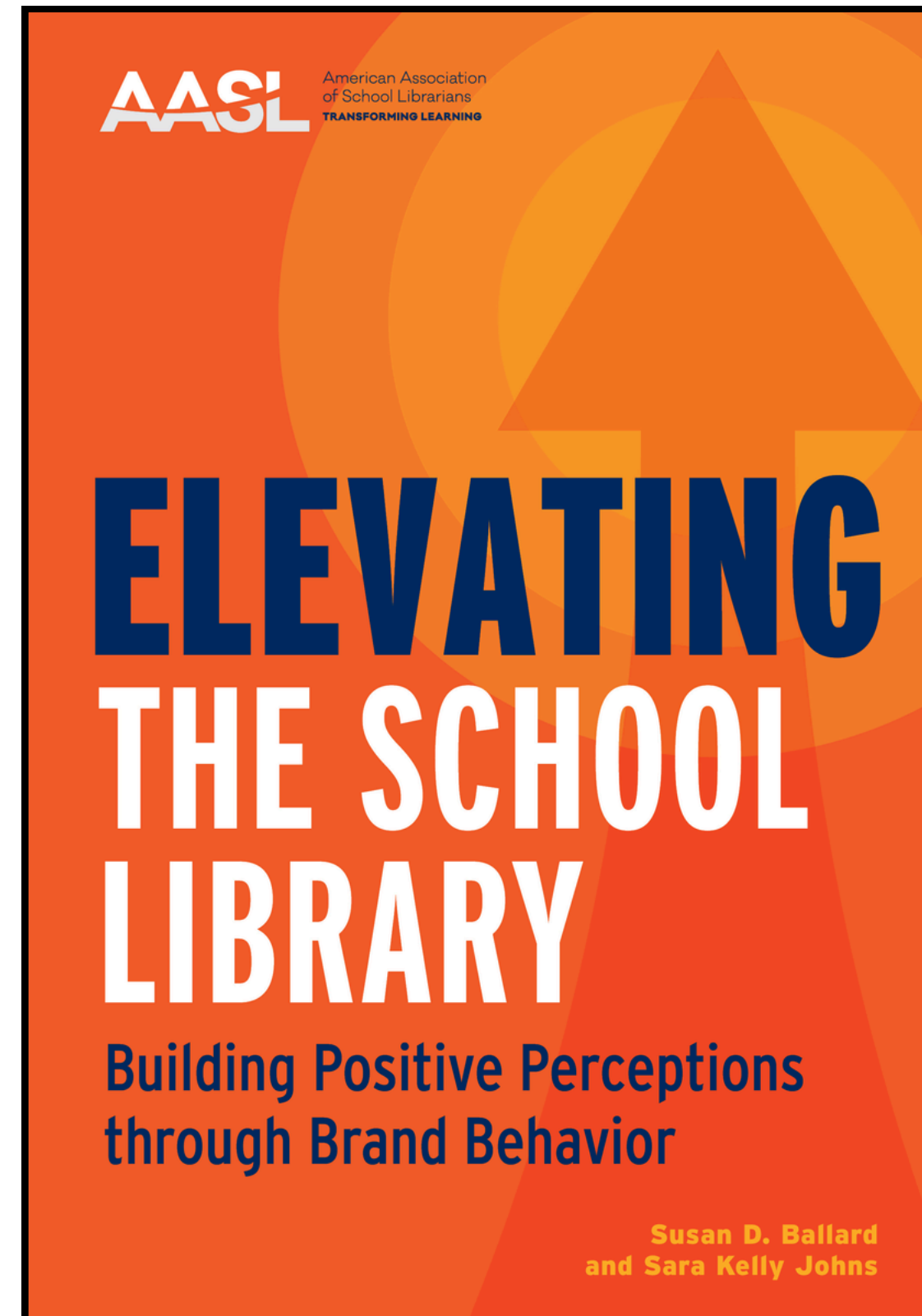
AASL Publication

What is your school library brand?

Branding applies to school libraries as well. This book demonstrates the power of branding as a tool to communicate the library's value, clarify the role of school librarians, and emphasize their importance to stakeholders.

- *includes templates, checklists, and worksheets to assist you in undertaking school library branding, a rebrand, or a brand rehabilitation;*
- *offers concrete guidance and techniques for engaging effectively with your community by creating a strategic communications plan;*
- *walks you through incorporating the use of data and community demographics analysis to improve your practice;*
- *presents a focused exploration of brand behaviour, emphasizing the impact, influence, and integrity of brand credibility;*
- *analyzes the work of Jim Collins (Good to Great), John Kotter (Our Iceberg is Melting), and others to shed light on the importance of the "business" aspects of the school library;*
- *spotlights successful and unsuccessful examples of branding from the realm of both business and libraries, connecting them to the AASL Standards.*

AASL American Association of School Librarians TRANSFORMING LEARNING

ELEVATING THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

Building Positive Perceptions through Brand Behavior

Susan D. Ballard and Sara Kelly Johns

PODCAST

Listen to the Authors' Podcast: Building a Brand

Best Practices

10 BEST PRACTICES for School Library Advocacy

01. Data Collection
Gathering data and feedback on all library activities helps identify trends, demonstrate transparency, evaluate program effectiveness, and strengthen advocacy efforts.

02. Identity & Belonging
Developing a library environment and advocacy strategy that promotes identity and belonging by showcasing the school's diversity, minimizing access barriers, and sharing inclusive narratives.

03. Marketing
Libraries need strategic marketing to stand out in a competitive information market and demonstrate their value to the community.

04. Branding
Connecting library branding to core values and community needs fosters positive perceptions, turning patrons into passionate advocates for the library.

05. Use of Social Media
Engage with your community to teach digital citizenship, promote reading and writing, celebrate the positive contributions of *all libraries*, while modeling responsible use of social media. "All libraries rise and float together."

06. Effective Communication
Every message from teacher-librarians should reflect library values, creating a welcoming atmosphere and boosting the library's reputation through positive word-of-mouth.

07. Building Community
Teacher-librarians must be involved in the wider school activities and support the overall goals of the school and board to be more impactful.

08. Collaborative Relationships
Librarians must develop trusting relationships with all stakeholders in order to be successful advocates.

09. Services & Customers
When librarians know and understand the personas of their school community, they can more effectively customize their programs and services to meet their patrons' needs.

10. Engagement
Librarians transform lives. How this happens has to be made visible for the community.

CLICK ON THE IMAGE FOR AN ENLARGED VIEW OF THE INFOGRAPHIC

Data Collection

1 Best Practice

Gathering data and feedback on all library activities helps identify trends, demonstrate transparency, evaluate program effectiveness, and strengthen advocacy efforts.

EVIDENCE

- We need to "develop goals, objectives, action steps, and performance indicators related to the success with which the library is involved in and works the political process, the degree to which advocacy is accomplished, and the degree to which factors related to becoming a successfully networked library are being accomplished." **(McClure, Feldman and Ryan, 2007)**
- Use free/low cost data, such as database usage and book loans to advocate for specific demographics. **(Sweeney, 2021)**
- Data confirms that public libraries are valued by Ontarians, who also want libraries to adapt and offer trendier programs, including makerspaces. **(Abram, 2017).**
- Business marketing strategies include personalization, use of data, keeping things updated, more visuals, and decluttering. **(Libberton, 2023)**
- Share evidence-based practice (EBP) data with stakeholders to demonstrate library effectiveness, enhance connections, and evaluate programs to meet community needs **(Kirkland, 2023).**

Library-Specific Data Sources

Access Data (access to facilities, resources, and services)	Physical Space Data (The physical space should...)	Staffing Data (Qualifications)	Resources Data (technologies/resources available in or through the school library)	Collaboration, Social Networking, & Communication Data (access to web-based productivity and	Usage Data (Who uses the facilities, collections, and services that school libraries provide and for what purposes?)	Budget Data (analysis of the budget that supports the school librarian's work)
Days/hours open and closed and for what purpose (testing, etc.)	The space should accommodate one class for instruction	Credentialed - holding a state endorsement as a school librarian	Physical number of books or other content formats	Online publishing (e.g. blogs, including a library-based blog)	Circulation records (monthly and average daily)	Funds allocated for the purchase of books - both print and digital title (e-books) - and processing costs if purchased with books
Schedule (fixed, flexible, or responsive combination)	Accommodate individuals and small groups working independently	Alternative certification - state-issued letter of eligibility as a school librarian	Print and electronic subscriptions to magazines, journals, and newspapers	Photo- and video-sharing sites (e.g. Flickr, Google Photo, Vimeo, Shutterfly)	Collection maps	Funds allocated for the purchase of school library materials other than books -periodicals (paper or electronic) -technology and media resources and related equipment
Organization of resources (Dewey Decimal Classification system, genre, or combination	Be ADA compliant	Credentialed teacher-holding a state teaching credential with no school librarian endorsement and being paid as a teacher	Automated catalog	Photo- and video-sharing social networks (e.g. Instagram)	Number of classes scheduled	Funds available for supplies, equipment, and furnishings (replacement and new)
Resources accessible per Americans with Disabilities Act standards	Accommodate the collection, furnishings, and equipment	classified employee - paraprofessional, aide, clerk, technician, assistant, and the like, no paid as a teacher	Library web page with access to online library catalog	RSS and news feeds (e.g. CBC, Globe and Mail)	Individual use including before, during, and after school	Funds available for conferences and professional development
	Be flexible, allowing for different configurations depending upon need	Hours worked/paid-more than full-time; full-time; half-time; less than half-time	Library web page without access to online library catalog	Image Generators (e.g. Animoto, Pixton)	Units of study supported by grade/subject area and level of collaboration	Sources of funding to purchase library materials -general (district or school) -fund-raising (e.g. parent groups, book fairs, DonorsChoose) -Title I (or other federal sources) -Donations -Other (e.g. one-time discretionary grants to the school/district)
	House a production or innovation area	Extended year days for staff, beyond those required by contractual agreement	Automated library circulation	Tagging and social bookmarks (e.g. Pinterest, Wakelet, Padlet)		
		Adult volunteer(s) and hours worked	Automated textbook circulation	Wikis (e.g. PBworks, MediaWiki)		
			Wireless Internet access for learners	Online productivity tools (e.g. Google for Education apps, Canva)		
			Collaboration software (e.g. Google for Education apps)	Cloud-based file hosting		
			Paid online access to full-text periodicals, full-text reference books, primary sources, or other subscription databases or portals in the school library	School library (e.g. LibraryThing, Goodreads)		

Access Data (access to facilities, resources, and services)	Physical Space Data (The physical space should...)	Staffing Data (Qualifications)	Resources Data (technologies/resources available in or through the school library)	Collaboration, Social Networking, & Communication Data (access to web-based productivity and	Usage Data (Who uses the facilities, collections, and services that school libraries provide and for what purposes?)	Budget Data (analysis of the budget that supports the school librarian's work)
			Remote access to paid online full-text periodicals, full-text reference books, primary sources, or other subscription databases or portals	Video (e.g. YouTube, TeacherTube, SchoolTube, Hulu)		
			DVDs/video collection, video streaming, or both	Downloadable audio files (e.g. podcast)		
			Audiobooks (in any format)	E-books and audiobooks (e.g. Sora, OverDrive)		
			E-book readers/portable devices	Virtual school/course/classroom (e.g. Blackboard, Moodle, Schoology)		
			Integrated online information searching that includes your library catalog, paid-access databases, and open educational resources	Videoconferencing (e.g. Skype, GoTo Meeting, Zoom, Google Meet)		
			Computers housed and available in the school library for direct instruction and student use	Student e-mail accounts		
			Devices available for sign-out (computers, tablets) and hotspots	A library social media account (e.g. Twitter, Facebook)		

CLICK HERE

CLICK HERE

SOURCE: Ballard, S. D., & Johns, S. K. (2024). Elevating the School Library: Building Positive Perceptions Through Brand Behavior. ALA Editions.

School Library Annual Reports

Sacred Heart CHS
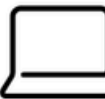Library Yearly Report
2023-2024

This report evaluates the use of our Library Learning Commons and the library services and programming that have been offered this year.
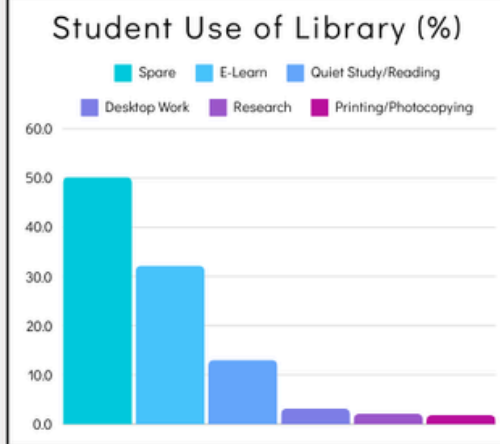
Student Visits
12,500

New Books Added
175

Devices Loaned Out
88

Student Use of Library (%)
- Spare
- E-Learn
- Quiet Study/Reading
- Desktop Work
- Research
- Printing/Photocopying

Library Programming
(No. of Library Workshops)

Curriculum Support

- Coding: 48
- Tales from the Heart: 22
- Design Thinking: 20
- Science Mythbusters: 20
- Research & Inquiry: 17
- Forest of Reading Program : 14 (FLS Students)
- Library Orientation : 13
- iRAP Creator's Anthology : 12 Onboarding & Support

166 Total Library Workshops

Database Usage

12
No. of Research Databases Offered

Most Popular Databases

- Issues & Controversies — Infobase
- Today's Science — Infobase
- Health Reference Center — Infobase
- GALE POWER SEARCH

Library Book Clubs

Sacred Reads Student Book Club
5
No. of Books Read

Staff Book Club
4
No. of Books Read

Library Website & Instagram Usage
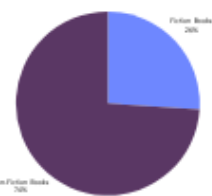
1551 Users
9023 Page views

150 Followers
87 Posts

No. of Lunch n' Learns (PD for Staff)
3

Library Collection

- Non-Fiction
- Fiction

4216 Total Books

SACREDHEARTLIBRARY.EDUBLOGS.ORG

2 Best Practice

Developing a library environment and advocacy strategy which promotes identity and belonging by showcasing the school's diversity, minimizing access barriers, and sharing inclusive narratives.

Identity & Belonging

EVIDENCE

- "We transform lives - and we are vastly important and critical to the success of our society and people." **(Abram, 2017)**
- **Ballard & Johns (2024):**
  - advocates for collections that represent the student body, ensuring every student sees themselves reflected in the library's resources.
  - encourages creating a library space free from barriers (physical, intellectual, and time-related), promoting inclusivity and a sense of belonging.
  - suggests engaging with the school community in ways that challenge stereotypes and establish the library as a central, approachable hub of the school.
- **Foote (2013):**
  - highlights the importance of crafting narratives that make stakeholders feel included and valued, ensuring they see their own stories and concerns reflected in the library's vision.
  - emphasizes creating a safe, trusted environment where stakeholders can connect with the library's mission and recognize shared goals.

3 Best Practice

Libraries must engage in deliberate and strategic marketing efforts to distinguish their services in an increasingly competitive information market and ensure their value remains clear to their community.

Marketing

EVIDENCE

- It is imperative that libraries "distinguish themselves in potential users' minds because they are no longer the only providers in the information market" (Roughen and Swain, 2020). Consequently, libraries have to make a concerted effort to market themselves to remain relevant and valuable to their community.

- In order for our advocacy to be successful, McClure, Feldman and Ryan (2007) point out that "there are numerous planning approaches available to support the library, but it may be less important *which* process is used than that some process is in place."

4 Best Practice

Connecting library branding to core values and community needs fosters positive perceptions, turning patrons into passionate advocates for the library.

Branding

EVIDENCE

- "Various aspects of the library express its brand, including the physical environment, behaviour/service philosophy, communication (images, words, tone and employees), programs, services, and partnerships. The library's brand reflects its mission and communicates a message that demonstrates the unique value the library promises to deliver to the community." **(Singh and Trinchetta 2019)** In the modern digital environment, library branding has to move beyond just the provision of books. Understanding the specific needs of the community will dictate your branding efforts, while customer engagement will spur library advocacy. "In other words, brand advocates are highly satisfied customers with a positive perception of our libraries, brand, product, or service." **(Singh and Trinchett, 2019)**

- "Branding helps libraries...to focus on who they are and who they want to be." **(Roughen and Swain, 2020).**

- Clark (2009) underlines that "good library promotion involves communicating not only what the library does, but also why it matters." Therefore, "when networking, librarians should not whine about lack of funds, but instead focus on the positive contributions of the library to the community, and why those contributions matter." **(Reed, 2001, as cited in Clark, 2009).**

Establishing Your Brand with Target Audiences

Knowing the main areas of interest for each target audience that school libraries serve provides focus when developing appropriate messaging and deciding on one's brand.

- **PARENTS** need assurance that their children are enhancing literacy skills, developing a love for reading and learning, and understanding the value of critical thinking.

- **STUDENTS** should understand that the school librarian is there to help them find resources for pleasure reading, academic content, or any information they are curious about.

- **TEACHERS** are interested in how school library services benefit classroom curricula and help them improve their practice.

- **PRINCIPALS AND OTHER ADMINISTRATORS** require data and research that demonstrate the positive impact of school libraries and school librarians on student achievement.

- **SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS, LEGISLATORS, POLICYMAKERS, AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY** require data and research as well, but they may also benefit from a clearer understanding of the school library's role and the responsibilities of school librarians.

5 Best Practice

Engage with your community to teach digital citizenship, promote reading and writing, and celebrate the positive contributions of all libraries, while modeling responsible use of social media - "***All libraries rise and float together.***"

Use of Social Media

EVIDENCE

- The idea is a collaborative effort or a "unified voice" (OLA Advocacy Toolkit, 2019, p. 6) to advocate for the institution of the library and not solely for the promotion of our own space.

- Another good suggestion offered by OLA is to use social media as an engagement tool and not simply to promote programming and services (Advocacy Toolkit, p. 20). This means creating posts which allow for feedback from your community or from some other opportunity for you to build relationships with your community. Examples include behind-the-scenes content of getting ready for a special event, the impact of programming on students or teachers or highlighting special collections (Advocacy Toolkit, p. 21).

6 Best Practice

Every interaction and message from teacher-librarian should align with library values and standards, fostering a welcoming atmosphere and promoting positive word-of-mouth that enhances the library's reputation.

Effective Communication

EVIDENCE

- Word-of-mouth is a powerful advocacy tool **(Singh and Trinchetta, 2019)** which can take place through face-to-face communication or digitally. However, library messaging must be organized, consistent and strategic to ensure positive word-of-mouth which bolsters the library's reputation among patrons. **(Singh and Trinchetta, 2019)**

- The authors emphasize that "positive interaction between staff members and patrons, along with fostering a welcoming atmosphere, can help develop relationships, thus promoting communication and a greater understanding of needs in the community." **(Singh and Trinchetta, 2019)**

7 Best Practice

To be more impactful, teacher-librarians must be involved in the wider school activities and support the overall goals of the school and board.

Building Community

EVIDENCE

- "The more deeply and productively embedded the librarians are in the actual activity of community...the greater the opportunity for the knowledge and skills of librarians, and the true potential of libraries, to be visible and relevant." **(OLA Advocacy Toolkit, 2019, p. 18)**

- **Singh and Trinchetta (2019)** state that "to garner community support, advocacy efforts must continue to strengthen community connections by enriching and improving people's lives."

- Wendy Newman makes a strong argument that "it is essential to anchor library advocacy, not in a goal of great libraries, but in a goal of great communities [because this] positions the library advocate as being in the community business, and therefore more supportable, than being strictly in the library business." **(Advocacy Toolkit, 2019, p. 18)**

8 Best Practice

Librarians must develop trusting relationships with all stakeholders in order to be successful advocates.

Collaborative Relationships

EVIDENCE

- Advocating to the decision-makers will help create a "networked" library which is valuable because when librarians become "masters at perceiving an opportunity" this network will be invaluable in supporting our library efforts **(Abram, 2017).**
- "Decision-makers are much more likely to be receptive to your advocacy efforts if you are already known and trusted by them" **(Advocacy Toolkit, p. 6)**
- **Ahlfeld (2019)** encourages teacher librarians to "join every committee at your school and in your district that you have time for. Simply by rolling up our sleeves and participating in the minutiae of running a school, the school librarian can become more visible and more valued."
- It is through the honest communication of the assessment results with decision-makers and other stakeholders that the library shows it is "fully committed to accountability, transparency and collaboration" and in turn, this "commitment to assessment and improvement...ultimately builds trust in the library (Albert 2017). Some suggestions for data collection offered by the OLA include stories, testimonials, feedback from students and teachers from program evaluations, and statistics on library programming use **(Advocacy Toolkit, p. 9).**

9 Best Practice

When librarians know and understand the personas of their school community, they can more effectively customize their programs and services to meet their patrons' needs.

Services & Customers

EVIDENCE

- **Ahlfeld (2019)** points out that school librarians have a unique opportunity to engage students because we can offer personalized learning. For example, the library can expose students to different skills through STEM, maker spaces, and other educational technology to prepare them for a career. Students can "geek out and satisfy personal curiosities" **(Ahlfeld 2019)** in a library based on personal interests.

10 Best Practice

Librarians transform lives. How this happens has to be made visible for the community.

Engagement

EVIDENCE

- **Hicks (2016)** divides the storytelling process into two categories: show and tell. Showing demonstrates the value of library services through: gathering statistics (circulation, gate count, etc.); developing a business plan for stakeholders; effective signage and layout changes; presentations and training opportunities. Telling communicates that librarians are attentive and helpful, fostering relationships with patrons through: social media engagement; community meetings; distributing flyers and bookmarks; library-related kits and informative games.
- To gain support, relatable stories are essential **(Abrams 2017)**. **Singh & Trinchetta (2019)** emphasize that positive library experiences can increase interest in services.
- **Ahlfeld (2019)** advocates for a student-centered storytelling approach, emphasizing authentic narratives that highlight diverse library uses and benefits.
- Additionally, promote library engagement with swag like stickers and tote bags **(OLA Advocacy Toolkit, p. 19).**

LIBRARIES TRANSFORM
Toolkit

BECAUSE THE BEST SEARCH ENGINE IN THE LIBRARY IS THE LIBRARIAN.

BECAUSE A LIFELONG LOVE FOR LEARNING BEGINS IN THE LIBRARY.

BECAUSE LIBRARIES ARE TECH HUBS FOR NAVIGATING THE INFORMATION AGE.

BECAUSE #BOOKTOK AND BOOK CLUBS ARE TRENDING ON TIK TOK.

Posters

Instagram Posts

Presentation Slides

Source:
https://ilovelibraries.org/librariestransform/toolkit/

Next Steps

- To share what we learned with our TL colleagues.
- To use what we learned to create a unified and consistent advocacy plan for our secondary school libraries.
- To support our colleagues in the implementation of the advocacy plan.
- Conduct school library program assessments using checklists (see Elevating the School Library).
- To monitor successes and needs for improvement of the plan and modify accordingly.

Questions We Still Have

- Should future advocacy efforts use language that resonates with the statement(s) that our audience feels is most important despite that it somewhat reflects an outdated understanding of the library?

- Should future advocacy efforts educate our audience about the contributions of the modern library and/or refer to them, despite that they have not selected them as the most important? Or Both?

- Are there different advocacy strategies that would resonate most with the board-level decision-makers?

Stay in Touch!

Lisa Loffredi

Sacred Heart CHS (Newmarket)

lisa.loffredi@ycdsb.ca

🌐 sacredheartlibrary.edublogs.org

📷 @sacredheartlibrary

Jeanne Buckley

St. Robert CHS (Thornhill)

jeanne.buckley@ycdsb.ca

Magda Kalkowska

Our Lady of the Lake CA (Keswick)

magda.kalkowska@ycdsb.ca

📷 @ollcalibrary

Natalie Kekki

Brother Andre CHS (Markham)

natalie.kekki@ycdsb.ca

"Lasting change is a series of compromises. And compromise is all right, as long [as] your values don't change"

-Jane Goodall (2002)