



CANADIAN SCHOOL LIBRARY  
TREASURE MOUNTAIN CANADA SUBMISSION 2025

# **BUILDING INCLUSIVE LEARNING COMMONS**

**DEIDRE-ANN K. GARDENER** OCT, MT

# BIOGRAPHY

Deidre-Ann presently serves as an LLC EdTech Innovation Resource Teacher (K-12) with Peel District School Board. She is a curious teacher-researcher who is passionate about exploring the intersection of pedagogy and the redefinition of learning spaces.

Deidre-Ann holds a Master of Teaching with a focus in curriculum and instruction. She uses this as a foundation for developing programs for multimodal experiences and integration of technology to develop innovative learning experiences. She continues to focus on fostering opportunities for inquiry, prioritizes sharing joy and, building spaces that are reflective and supportive of the diverse needs of all learners and communities she serves.



# THE SPARK

In October 2024, our school had a Scholastic Choice Book Fair. At the book fair, I noted that there were a variety of books with various reading levels, curated sections for identity, cultures/traditions, and priced accessible books. During our Open House, we had a number of students and their families come through (it was crowded and busy). I noticed a few of our students with exceptionalities and their parents at the book fair, and as I watched - there was pure joy. The following day, an EA came up to me asking me for board books (similar to the ones at the book fair) for a student - but we didn't have any. This is where the journey began.

## Guiding Inquiry Question

**How might (I) the TL enhance our schools LLC to be more welcoming and accessible for our students with exceptionalities?**

# RESEARCH: PRESENT LITERATURE

CLICK ON THE TITLES TO READ THE ARTICLES.

## LLC SUPPORT & STUDENTS WITH AUTISM

This article highlights the gaps within school LLCs and their ability to support students with ASD (specifically). It was a mixed methodology study that asked focused on staff and students.

## ACTION RESEARCH & LLCS

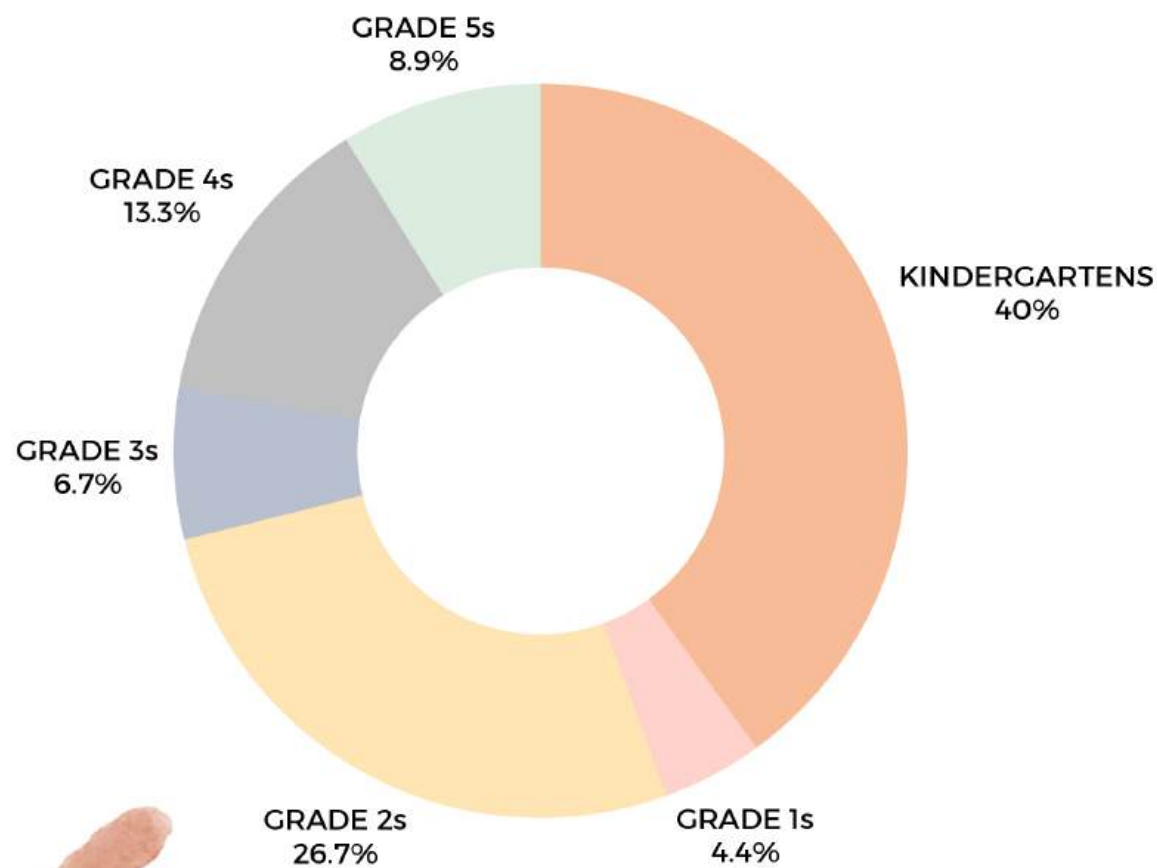
This article talks about the importance of action research in the school libraries, and how it can help ground what is happening in the library through evidence-based strategies.

## EQUITY BY DESIGN

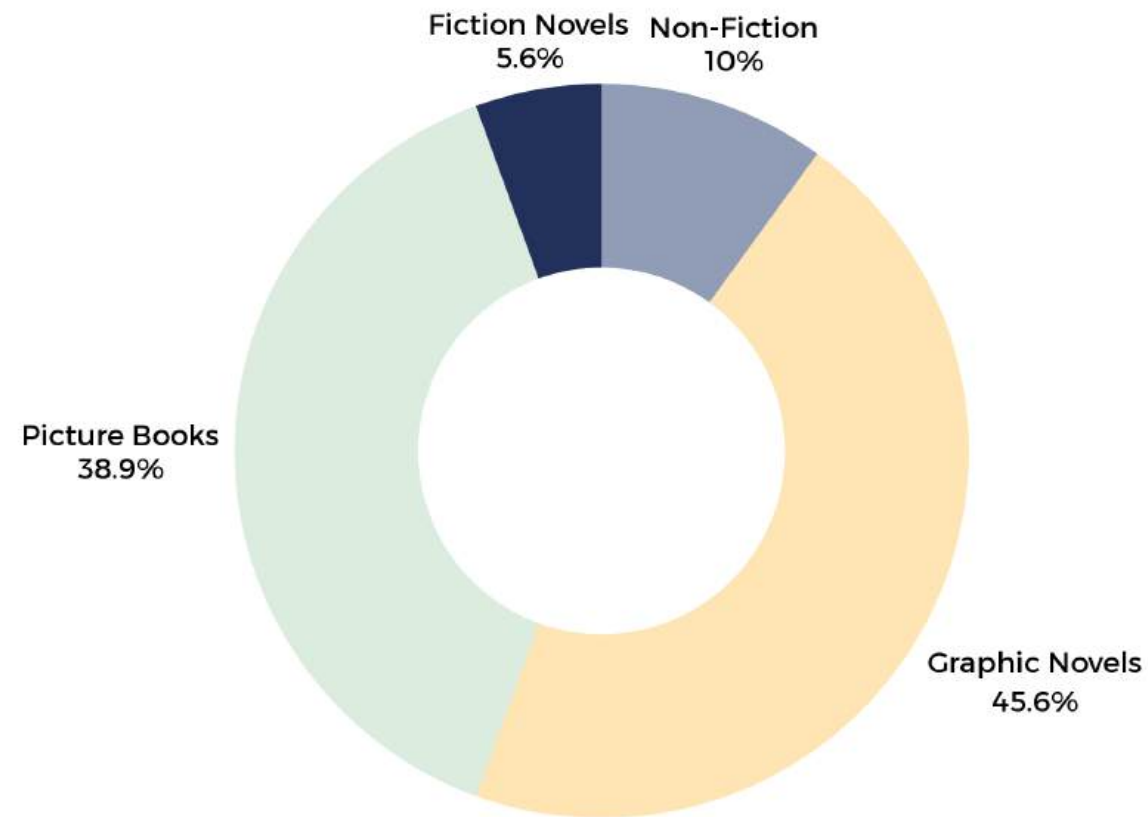
This book explores how Universal Design is inherently equitable, and as we work to incorporate these practices daily, we are consistently disrupting and deconstructing systems that have historically marginalized individuals.

# RESEARCH: LLC STREET DATA

## LIBRARY TRAFFIC TO THE LLC IN A 10 DAY CYCLE



## CIRCULATION DATA FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER



## INTERPRETATION OF STREET DATA

In reflection of this data, I concluded that students in Kindergarten had the most frequent visits because it was built into their routine, as opposed to the junior grades where work could result in students not attending library exchange. Additionally, I thought it was important to note that our Grade 4's who are our 3rd highest group, account for almost 40% of our Graphic Novel Check-Outs!

# APPLICATIONS OF THE SCHOOL LIBRARY LEARNING COMMONS FRAMEWORK

The data that was collected through the LLC was then assessed through the **School Library Learning Commons in Canada: A Framework for Success**. The following elements were used throughout the process and supported the implementation of action research. The specifics of these applications will be highlighted in depth later in the presentation.

## PHYSICAL & VIRTUAL LLC SPACE

“...Students and teachers need to know that real time support, expertise, resources and technologies are always available and that the LLC is a stable extension of every classroom...”

## ACCESSIBILITY

“Library learning spaces, resources, collections and instructional practices need to accommodate for the needs of all learners, following the principles of Universal Design for Learning...”

## LLC MANAGEMENT

“...routines should always support the library’s mission to engage readers and inspire learning. Library management is deeply entwined with ethics...”

# THE ACTIONS

THE FIRST STEP WAS TO BUILD A SENSORY PERIOD FOR OUR STUDENTS WITH EXCEPTIONALITIES, FOCUSING SPECIFICALLY ON OUR ASD CLASS AND STUDENTS IN MAINSTREAM IN PRIMARY.

The focus of the Sensory Period was to give students with exceptionalities an option to come to the library and build a routine to exchange books, have books read to them, and/or have an alternative space.

## **Our Sensory Period includes:**

- Soft lighting and a bank of lights turned off
- All windows are open to allow for natural light
- Sensory visuals provided on the TV
- In a corner of the library a tent was available
- A LED starlight projector displayed the aurora borealis (northern lights) on the ceiling
- Additional plants and a variety of seating options were available
- Soft ambient music provided and/or
- Reduced technology related noise (i.e., computers)

# WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?



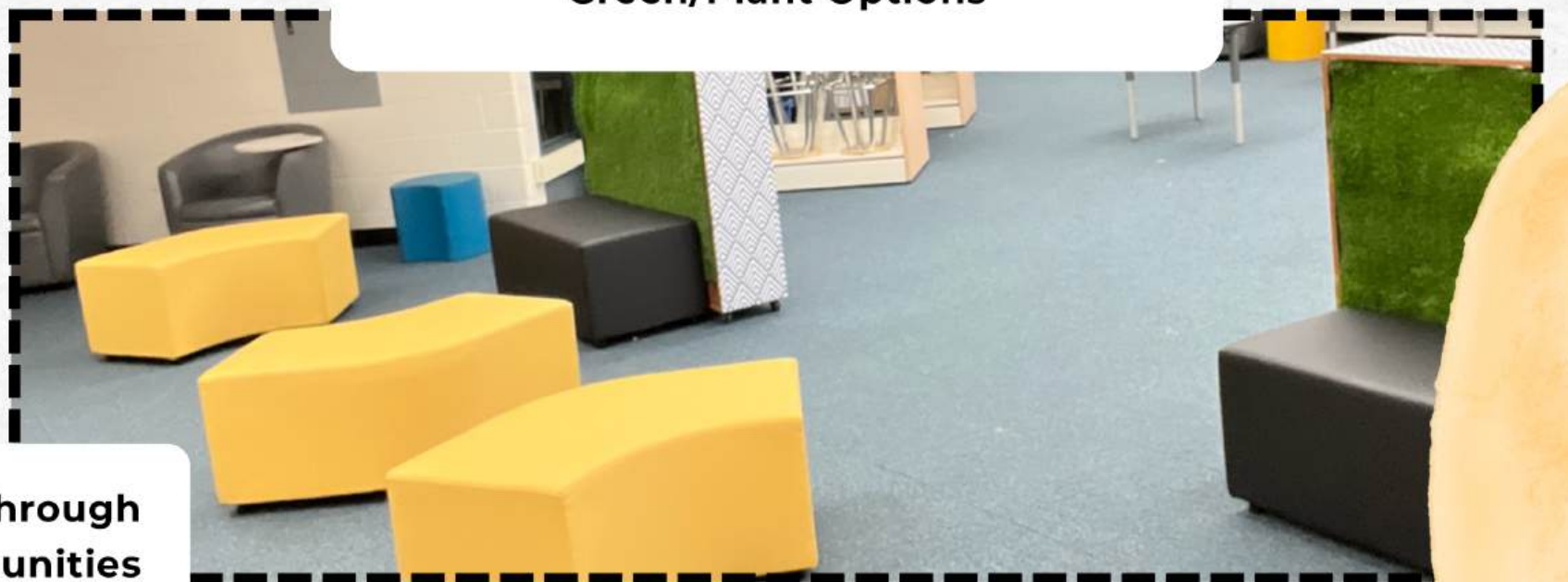
Clearly Labelled Sections of the LLC



Whiteboard Tables with Common Learning Supplies



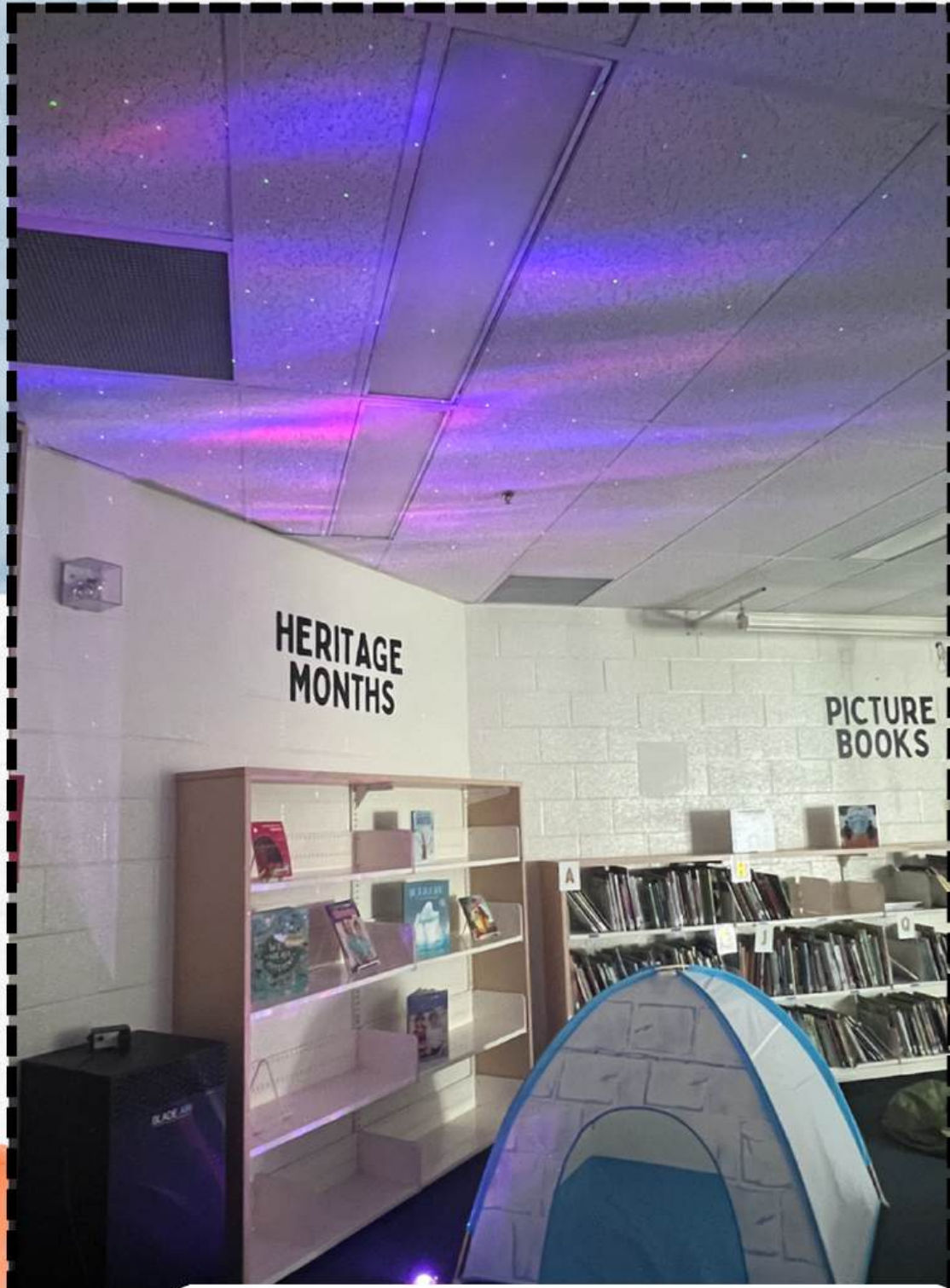
Flexible Seating Options With Green/Plant Options



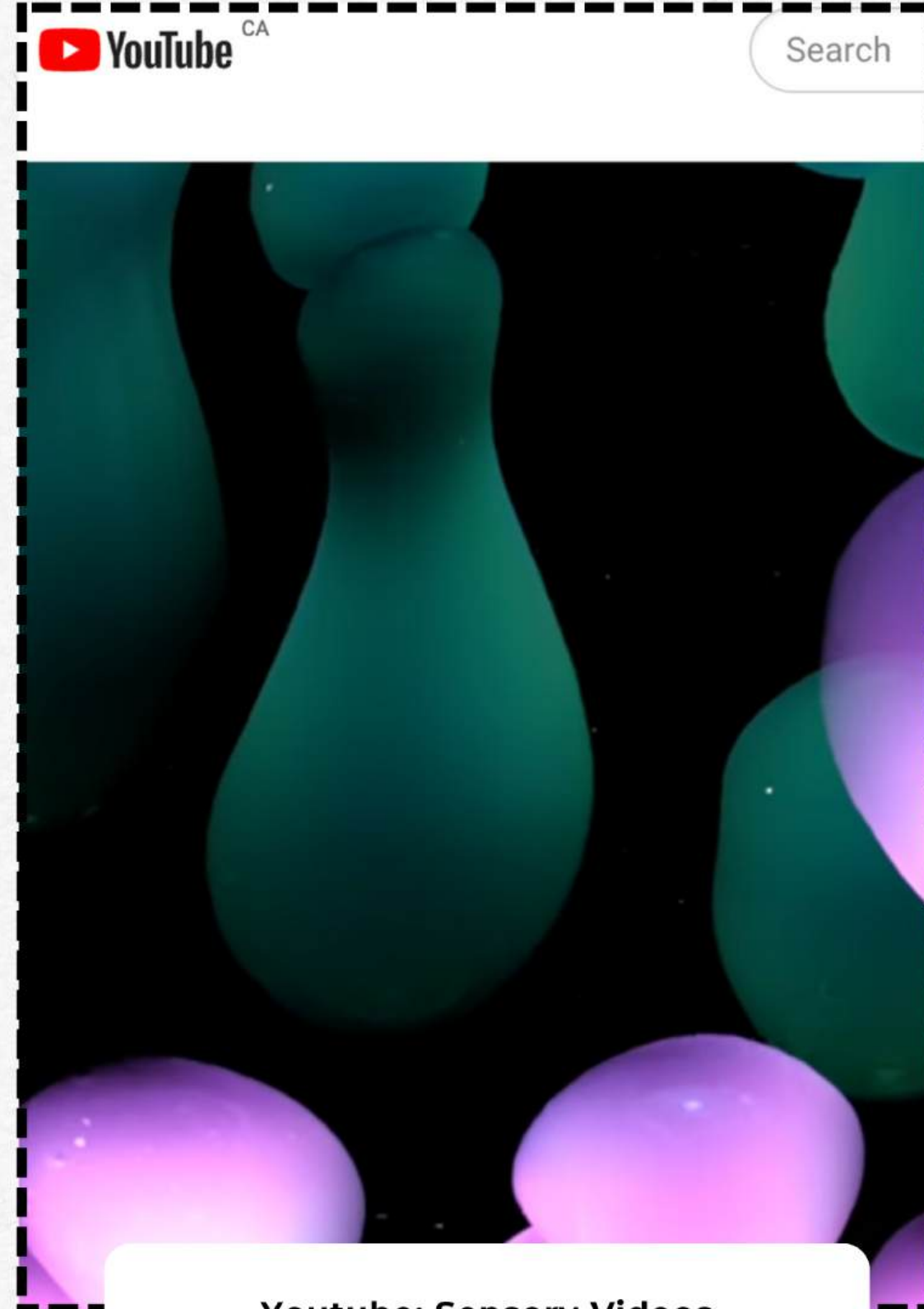
Connections to Curriculum Through Experiential Learning Opportunities



# WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?



Tent with Northern Lights Above



Youtube: Sensory Videos

## BOOK EXCHANGE

Kindergarten	Grade 1 to 3	Grade 4 to 5	Sensory Space
Day 4 Period 3 and 4	Day 3 & 7 Period 4	Day 2, 5 & 9 Period 2	Day 2 Period 3
Day 6 Period 5 and 6	Day 4 & 9 Period 6	Day 6 Period 8	Day 5 Period 5
			Day 9 Period 7

## BOOK EXCHANGE EXPECTATIONS

During designated Book Exchange Times, please:

- Send a small group (3-4) of students who have books to return to the library first
- Ensure students know their student numbers (or have it written on a cue card)
- Provide a time frame for students as to how long they will be in the library (e.g. 10 mins)
- Please call the library if students have not returned to class within the specified time

\*At this time, it is encouraged that book exchange is an opportunity to build independence, rather than a wh

Digital Announcements for Sensory Time

# ESSENTIAL FOR SOME, GOOD FOR ALL

TO BUILD IN ACCESSIBILITY FOR OUR STUDENTS WITH EXCEPTIONALITIES AND FOSTER A SENSE OF BELONG, AS WELL AS INDEPENDANCE, I HAVE:

Purchases Board Books with Textured Items, and created bags for checking out books.



## The Physical Environment

- Traffic Patterns
- Density of Areas
- Arrangement of Furniture
- Heights of Bookshelves

## Materials & Resource

- Representation and Celebration
- Different Types of Materials, such as Braille, Textured and Audiobooks

## Assistive Technology

- ScreenReaders
- Magnified Text Software
- OpenDyslexic Fonts

# APPLICATIONS OF THE SCHOOL LIBRARY LEARNING COMMONS FRAMEWORK

## PHYSICAL & VIRTUAL LLC SPACE

“...Students and teachers need to know that real time support, expertise, resources and technologies are always available and that the LLC is a stable extension of every classroom...”

The term “third-space” as coined by Ray Oldenburg, an American Sociologist. It is defined as an additional space separate from the two usual social environments. When it is applied to the contexts of schools, it can be viewed that a “third-space” is required. Third-spaces may be available for a number of different students, given their interests and programming variance.

However, for many of our students with exceptionalities, most programming takes place within their homeroom. It was important for me to be intentional about how the Library Learning Commons could be used as a third-space for our students in congregated classes as well as our students who were in mainstream programs and required variety in their routine.

# APPLICATIONS OF THE SCHOOL LIBRARY LEARNING COMMONS FRAMEWORK

## ACCESSIBILITY

“Library learning spaces, resources, collections and instructional practices need to accommodate for the needs of all learners, following the principles of Universal Design for Learning...”

The school library strives to be accessible to all.

By focusing on both the physical space and the resources (including accessibility features and various formats), the LLC continues to offer students opportunities to enhance their literacy skills. This includes embracing new literacy methods such as audiobooks and tactile books.

This approach fosters a positive connection between the library and the diverse resources that capture students' interests.

# APPLICATIONS OF THE SCHOOL LIBRARY LEARNING COMMONS FRAMEWORK

## LLC MANAGEMENT

“...routines should always support the library’s mission to engage readers and inspire learning. Library management is deeply entwined with ethics...”

Sensory Space was offered three times during a cycle to accommodate for the schedules of students with their Educational Assistants.

It should be noted that the LLC has always been available to students in congregated classes, and the creation of Sensory Space was developed to directly support program planning and provide another method to of literacy in a reduced sensory environment. Additionally, on days the LLC was not available, books were provided to classrooms.

# CONCLUSION

In conclusion, enhancing the Library Learning Commons (LLC) to be more welcoming and accessible for students with exceptionalities involves several key strategies. By embracing the concept of a "third-space," you can create an inclusive environment that serves both congregated classes and mainstream programs. The focus on accessibility through sensory spaces, multiple formats like audiobooks and tactile books, and flexible scheduling ensures that all students can benefit from the LLC.

Collaborating with other educators in the building is essential to integrate the LLC into the broader educational framework. Scheduling library time to be available for all students and designing the space to provide a curated experience will further enhance its effectiveness. Supporting and empowering learners through multi-modal experiences, such as interactive displays and peer support programs, can foster engagement and inclusivity.

Ultimately, the goal is to support lifelong learning and curiosity by providing resources and opportunities that cater to students' interests and needs. By continuously seeking feedback and making necessary adjustments, the LLC can remain a dynamic and responsive space that promotes literacy, inclusivity, and a love for learning.

# REFERENCES

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