

Co-located School and Public Library Feasibility Checklist and Implementation Guide

Checklist

The checklist which follows was developed to help community members, working with professional library personnel, decide whether separate school and public libraries, a combined school and public library, or some other alternative will offer the best library services in their particular locality (*Statements that reflect statutory requirements are indicated with an asterisk [*] and must be checked "Yes."*)

Planning

Yes **No**

1. Mission statements for both the public library and the school library media programs are clearly understood and supported by all parties. Further, there is an understanding of how these missions coincide and how they differ and how they will be carried out.

Yes **No**

2. There is knowledge of any existing planning documents for the public library and school library media programs, and agreement on how these documents can be integrated and priorities established.

Yes **No**

3. A preliminary study of the feasibility and suitability of the combined library program for the community has been conducted, including the review of alternatives to establishing a combined library.

Yes **No**

4. Concerned groups have examined carefully the complementary role of the school and public libraries and are aware of the range of services and resources which must be offered to meet the needs of both user populations.

Yes **No**

5. Community members are involved in and are supportive of the decision to have a combined school and public library program.

Yes **No**

6. The jurisdictional boundaries of the school district and the public library area are identical or nearly so.

Public Library Services Branch
Ministry of Education

Yes No

7. The two boards which are to govern different parts of the combined program have defined their responsibilities in a formal agreement drawn up during the planning phase.

Yes No

8. The issue of dissolving the combination has been discussed and all parties agree on how assets will be divided.

Governance

Public Library

Yes No

9. *The public library program will be established in accordance with the *Library Act*.

Yes No

10. *A legally appointed and constituted public library board will govern the operation of the public library program.

Yes No

11. *The public library board will have exclusive control of the expenditure of all moneys collected, donated, or appropriated for the public library fund.

Yes No

12. *The public library board will employ a library director who is qualified and maintains the appropriate level of certification under the provisions stated in the *Library Act*.

Yes No

13. *The district has a written long-range plan for library services which was formulated by teachers, library and audiovisual personnel, and administrators and was approved by the school district board.

Yes No

14. The salaries and benefits of all employees will be similar, based on comparable qualifications and job expectations.

Administration and Funding

Yes No

15. General procedures for operating the combined library have been discussed, and all parties agree on principal elements, such as hours of operation, responsibility for expenses, access to resources and activities, user rights and responsibilities, and authority for daily decision making.

Public Library Services Branch
Ministry of Education

Yes No

16. The public library will be a member of a public library system and actively participate in its programs of service, including reciprocal borrower's privileges and interlibrary loans.

Yes No

17. *The public library board will follow statutory requirements as to fiscal year, audits, budgeting process, and annual reports to the municipal governing authority.

Access to Information And Materials

Yes No

18. A collection-development policy consistent with the mission statements has been developed to guide selection of material for both school and public library clientele.

Yes No

19. The issue of access to material for all age groups and maturity levels has been discussed in detail and is thoroughly understood by all parties, and a process for allowing users access to resources has been decided and is supported by all parties.

Yes No

20. An acceptable use policy on Internet access consistent with the mission statements of the school and public library has been developed and is supported by all parties.

The Physical Facility

Yes No

21. *The building that will house the proposed combined school and public library is in compliance with local standards for persons with disabilities.

Yes No

22. The building is easily accessible to the public and to students and teachers. There is an entrance directly into the library from the outside at ground floor (entry at grade without steps or ramp).

Yes No

23. The building design permits nearby parking for library users (within 200–500 feet from library entrance) as well as easy access to the library from classrooms.

Yes No

24. The building provides adequate space to implement the full range of library services consistent with the library's comprehensive long-range plan, the *Library Act* and Library Board policies.

Public Library Services Branch
Ministry of Education

Technology

Yes **No**

25. There is agreement on how equipment, software and other aspects of technology will be purchased or licensed and how access will be provided to students, school staff, and the public.

Attitudinal Factors

Yes **No**

26. Decision makers, administrators and employees are genuinely enthusiastic about the project and dedicated to making it work, despite inevitable difficulties.

Yes **No**

27. Improving service, rather than saving money, is the overriding concern in planning a combined library.

Yes **No**

28. The concerned groups in the community realize that a combined library program is not necessarily a more economical means of offering adequate library services to both students and community members than school and public programs in separate facilities would be.

Yes **No**

29. Adults (not only parents of students) feel comfortable and welcome in the school building (or other site of the combined library) and are accustomed to using it for public functions.

Yes **No**

30. The mixing of preschoolers, children, teenagers, and young and older adults is not seen as threatening or uncomfortable by any of the potential users or the responsible agencies.

31. The combined library provides the best opportunity for your community to obtain the following:

Yes **No**

a. Professional library personnel with a specialization in school librarianship.

Yes **No**

b. Professional library personnel with a specialization in public librarianship where no such position previously existed.

Yes **No**

c. A means for strengthening available material resources.

Yes **No**

d. An adequately planned program of services to meet the needs of both public and school-based users.

Establishment of a Combined School and Public Library

This section is to be used after a community has undertaken a responsible decision making process and decided to create a combined library. This section contains procedures which will help a community to meet the legal and practical requirements for creating a combined school and public library. Publication of this information in no way implies endorsement of the combined library concept. It merely recognizes that combined libraries are a reality, and is intended to help people interested in creating one to meet statutory requirements and to optimize the library's potential for success.

What is a Combined Library?

As used in this document, the term *combined library* means an entity which meets the legal requirements to function both as a school library and as a public library and provides its services from a single facility. The *Library Act* does not provide for a truly combined library with a single governing body. A combined library in BC must meet the relevant statutory requirements for operating both types of libraries contained in the combination. This means that some of the streamlining that people hope will result from a combination may not occur. The cost efficiencies associated with combined libraries are primarily in the area of capital costs. One building is cheaper to construct and operate than two buildings. One set of office equipment is less costly to purchase and maintain than two sets. However, the requirement to have properly certified staff for both types of library means that the opportunities for cost efficiencies related to staffing are not what some people would expect. Collection dissimilarities make cost savings there less than might be anticipated.

Getting Started

Librarians are a major source of information on how to set up the library properly. Early in the planning process, planners should involve the librarians who will be expected to work in the combined library. Also, before doing anything of a formal nature, they should contact the administrator of the public library system in which the community is located and the staff at the Public Library Services Branch working with these agencies. This will save time up front and save headaches later.

Interested Parties

Three parties will have a beginning-to-end interest in the operation of the combined library. They are the public library board and/or trustees, the school board, and the municipal governing body. Each has a specific role related to library or instructional matters defined in the statutes. The creation of a combined library means that the roles will be played out in a special situation. There is nothing in the creation of a combined library which alters the role or responsibilities defined for each party in the statutes. In BC statutes, the municipal governing body has less authority over library operation than the library board. For planning purposes, however, it is probably simplest to treat the three parties as co-equals.

Basic Considerations

Parties involved in a combined library have long-term interests which must be protected by a carefully written master agreement. The agreement should be buttressed by a series

Public Library Services Branch
Ministry of Education

of well written policies which cover operational matters. The content of the master agreement should be outlined by a committee made up of members of the school board, the public library board, and the municipal governing body. It cannot be overemphasized how essential this agreement is to the long-term success of this enterprise. It is important to take the necessary time to do it right. Drafts should be sent to the library system administrator and the PLSB advisor for their comment.

There can be a temptation to place more in the master agreement than is wise. In the paragraphs below, matters to cover in the agreement are listed separately from matters which should be treated in policies. The master agreement should deal with the fundamentals of governance, staffing, funding, ownership, and termination of the agreement.

Other matters which must be committed to writing can be handled through policies. Asking two questions will help to determine whether a point should be a part of the master agreement or of a policy manual: Is this of overriding importance? And, Is this likely to be changed during the time frame of the agreement? Yes to the first and No to the second suggests the matter is a good candidate to be placed in the master agreement. The successful operation of a combined library depends on doing a number of things right. In the grand scheme of things, however, some are more important than others. Some are less likely than others to change with any frequency. Below are a number of items to deal with in order to set up and manage the combined library properly. They are grouped according to whether they belong in the master agreement or whether they should be the subject of policy statements.

The Master Agreement

1. *Governance.* The master agreement should list the parties entering into the agreement and cite the statutory authority for entering into an agreement of this sort. Ordinarily the parties to the agreement should be the school board, the library board, and the municipal governing body. It is essential to understand that the village board or city council may not act on behalf of the library board unless authorized by the library board to do so. The agreement should also cite the statutes under which the parties will operate the library.

2. *Staffing.* Because a combined library is two libraries sharing one facility, staffing requirements for both types of libraries must be met. Appropriate school personnel must be working during the school day. Appropriately certified public library personnel must be working when the facility is functioning primarily as a public library. The intention to meet staffing requirements should be stated in the agreement.

3. *Funding.* It is important to determine and put into the master agreement the financial responsibilities of each party. This includes both capital and operational costs.

4. *Ownership of assets.* The agreement should clarify the ownership of assets brought into the shared library (such as equipment, collection, etc.) and how ownership will be determined in the event of termination of the combined library agreement.

Public Library Services Branch
Ministry of Education

5. *Physical plant.* The agreement should state the requirements that must be met by the party providing the physical facility for the combined library. This can include the library's location in the building, public access to the library, maintenance, and more.

6. *Termination of the agreement.* The agreement should state the conditions related to termination of the agreement.

Policies and Practices

1. *General policies.* Since the missions of a school library and a public library are fundamentally different, the policies and procedures under which they operate will be different. It is very important that each library have in place clear policies which deal with important library functions such as collection development, meeting room use, Internet access, and handling disruptive patrons.

2. *Special policies.* A combined library will require some policies to cover matters unique to such a library. For example, a policy may be needed to cover the circumstance when an expelled student wants to use the public library. Or a policy may be needed related to the effect on operations when one of the parties observes a holiday or professional development day.

3. *Advisory Committee.* Problems which need resolving will arise from the combined library. There should be a standing committee of members of the boards and library staff to review problems and make recommendations to the boards for resolving them.

4. *Personnel.* Each board will hire its personnel and establish the policies related to their compensation and performance.

5. *Public parking and entrance.* If the library is part of a school building, it will need to be located where the public library patrons can access it directly from an outside parking lot. This will encourage adult usage of the library during the day and reduce distractions during instruction. A policy should clarify who may park where.

6. *Staff involvement.* Staff should have a significant voice both in planning the combined library and in its operation. Involving them will reduce problems after start-up, and personnel will be more supportive of the idea than they otherwise might be.