

## STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*The Strategy for School-Age Children* represents a new direction for Calgary Public Library (CPL) services for school-age children and is a response to the Library's Strategic Plan, *Potentials Realized 2019-2022*. Building on the success of the *Early Learning Strategy* for children under five, the *Strategy for School-Age Children* is a framework for the development of programs, services, collection and spaces that support children ages 5-12 through the target audiences of caregivers and educators. This strategy positions Calgary Public Library as a leader in 21<sup>st</sup> century learning in public libraries and as a trusted resource for families and educators.

*The Strategy for School-Age Children* examines current research and literature in teaching and learning and best practices in public libraries, but also in analogous contexts such as museums and schools. Current Calgary Public Library practices, services, programs and spaces for school-age children were reviewed and recommendations made, with a view to align them with the Library's new vision, mission and values statements outlined in the Strategic Plan. The Strategy suggests new ways to fill in gaps of service guided by principles that inform their design and delivery.

## WHAT IS 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY LEARNING?

The role of the public library as a community-gathering place and knowledge institution is more relevant than ever. Globalization, multiculturalism and digitization have allowed people to connect in new and exciting ways. Traditions and belief systems are shared and adopted at a rapid pace. A national commitment to Indigenous Truth and Reconciliation, as well as worldwide immigration and mass migration, has prompted dialogue and questions about Canadian identity and culture. Society grows less and less homogeneous. The immigrant population in Calgary's metropolitan area more than doubled in a fifteen-year period and Newcomers now make up 30% of our City's population, speaking 120 different languages (Statistics Canada, 2017). Children in public libraries and schools represent the diversity of our neighbourhoods. The nature of work is also changing. In a world where innovation pushes change at unprecedented rates, information overload is real. The amount of knowledge available in books and online is doubling every two and a half years (Weisberg et al, 2016). Children are born into a world where technology is as ubiquitous as a pencil. Expecting the memorization of information in a world of Google and Wikipedia and preparing children for specific career paths, when jobs exist today that did not five years ago, is no longer the strongest way to prepare children for life. For children to thrive as adults, their learning environments must be as flexible and changeable as our society has become; places where "skills are developed across domains and knowledge is transferred from one situation to another, ultimately building the capacity to work in a world where 'how to know' is as important as 'what to know'." (Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2012).

In 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning, instruction is student-centred – which means it is "inquiry-based." Children have "choice and voice", are encouraged to develop their autonomy and self-determination. Children are viewed as contributors with valid perspectives and experiences and the ability to self-assess. "It's just taking them seriously and not talking down to them — and understanding that their intelligence is as valid as anybody else's. There are things that they know about the world that we've forgotten" (O'Donnell, 2018). Inquiry-based learning mirrors workplace and societal scenarios more accurately than a traditional, rote model of learning does. Civic literacy and global awareness are outcomes of inquiry that contribute to children growing into critical thinkers that can contribute positively to their local and international communities. Instead of passively receiving information, children gather information on their own, under the guidance of their teacher, and co-construct the learning collaboratively with peers. Different learning styles are encouraged, and children have an enhanced sense of motivation and responsibility. Children engage in a variety of hands-on experiences and demonstrate learning in many ways such as digitally, through the arts, in discussion, through storytelling and by writing.

There are as many different terms for the core competencies that reflect how children learn and grow in the 21st century as there are educational institutions. The research of leading psychological and developmental scientists, Michnick Golinkoff and Hirsch-Pasek (2016), conceptualizes learning into “six C’s” that align well with the Library’s values and have, therefore, informed this strategy:

- **Collaboration:** the ability to work with others, to have social-emotional control, practice empathy and to form communities. Children are relational and should be encouraged to work together to discover information, piece it together, and construct meaning.
- **Communication:** the ability to speak so others can understand your message, writing clearly and well and listening carefully. Effective communication is the fuel that propels collaboration. Communication depends on collaboration, on having others to tell your story to.
- **Content:** competencies in subject areas but also in learning to learn; developing learning strategies. When children have opportunities to develop executive function and self-regulation skills, individuals and society experience lifelong benefits. These skills are crucial for learning and development, but also enable positive behaviour and allow children to make healthy informed choices into adulthood. Children spend only 20% of their time in school and so content can come from anywhere. Learners develop content expertise (mastery) and reflect on and share their knowledge.
- **Critical (and Computational) Thinking:** the ability to sift through, analyze, identify and categorize information intelligently and to weigh evidence, considering the perspectives of others. Content is provided in context to a real-life application to demonstrate relevancy to the child’s experience.
- **Creative Innovation:** the ability to use information in new ways to solve obvious and undefined problems. Defeating “fixed mindset” and imagining possibilities through divergent thinking.
- **Confidence:** the ability to learn from failure, to persist in a problem (resiliency), and to have grit (Duckworth, 2016).

*“Individual success increasingly depends upon children’ interpersonal dexterity, creativity, and ability to innovate. And our collective success — our ability to navigate complexities and to build and sustain a peaceful world — also hinges on these kinds of skills.” (Reimers and Chung, 2016)*

## WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN?

To establish a clear path for the Library to help children transition from infancy through their school journey into adolescence (and so that the Library influences life-long learning) this strategy includes a

brief overview of the middle years to provide informed context for the development of programs and services. It examines current research in cognitive, physical, emotional, social and communication development and divides children into two developmentally appropriate and distinct age groups: 6-9 and 10-12 or preteen. There are 162, 208 children, ages 5-14, in Calgary (Calgary Civic Census, 2019).

The developing brain of the school-age child means that there is a gradual increase toward inquiry, investigation, logical thinking, self-regulation and problem solving. Executive functions such as critical thinking (looking beyond what is literally said or written) and emotional control are established by age ten, but impulse control is not fully realized until early adulthood. Michnick Golinkoff and Hirsch-Pasek (2016) assert that teaching children how to regulate their own behaviour may be even more important than teaching academic skills (p 138). Older school-age children are able to extend their knowledge to new situations, shifting their attention to relations—to the connections things share and not just how they look. (Michnick Golinkoff and Hirsch-Pasek, p138). Healthy risk-taking, where emotions are not involved, but analytical decision-making is, helps school-age children engage in new behaviours and learn new skills while preparing them for assessing risk as they age. Video and tabletop games, theatre, outdoor exploration, building and making, and sports are all opportunities for healthy risks for the school-age child. 21<sup>st</sup> century learners are accustomed to the immediate and social nature of information and communication, however, developmentally, school-age children cannot multi-task well. They learn and remember best by focusing on one thing at a time and screen time should be limited to two hours or less per day (Canadian Paediatric Society, 2017).

The middle years are a time of great physical growth particularly in the preteen years, but motor skills vary significantly among individuals. Fine motor skills become more adept as evidenced by more complex artmaking and writing. School-age children work to develop hand-eye coordination and eventually master the ability for each hand to function independently of the other, which explains their proficiency in video games, crafting, and fidget toys. School-age children take pride in developing expertise and are easily consumed by engaging tasks such as building, drawing or reading. They start to develop “obsessions.”

School-age children are increasingly able to examine themselves inwardly. Their identities as individuals, community members and learners start to form, and they become conscious of differences among peers. They are not only becoming aware of what others may be thinking, but also of stereotypes, particularly related to gender and race, and of bias toward them and others. They can recognize different viewpoints but have difficulty separating their own perspective from that of another. Teasing is prominent and bullying, especially cyber bullying, is increasingly common. 25% of children in grades 4 to 6 have been bullied (Craig & Pepler, 1997) and 25% of Canadian kids between 12-15 have witnessed cyberbullying (Ipsos Reid, 2012).

While family, educators and community mentors are still the primary influence, peer groups and pop culture have growing impact, particularly in the preteen stage. Caregivers start to move away from making all the decisions, as they did in early childhood, to becoming a “gardener”, helping their child to navigate their own curiosities and discoveries, helping them to “weed” through the many outside influences they increasingly face, all while still “fertilizing good ideas” such as helping to determine conclusions and consequences (Payne, 2015). The middle years are the perfect time to introduce discussions of inequality and injustice; empowering children to advocate for themselves and others, which lead to civic engagement and global responsibility in the teen years and beyond.

Children in the middle years are moving past foundational skills and are instead learning how they learn. As such, they are less able to distinguish between their desire to be good at something and their actual competence; they tend to have an inflated sense of their ability (Ontario Ministry of Child and Youth Services, 2017, p27). Adults can support by encouraging autonomy and self-efficacy (the belief in the ability to achieve one’s goals) rather than self-esteem, especially if self-esteem is based on unrealistic feedback about ability. Setting high but realistic challenges and supporting children through the process can encourage confidence, mastery, resilience and grit. (Duckworth, 2016) The traditional Indigenous parenting approach of providing autonomy to children can be inspirational for the Library as it aims to foster self-efficacy through its spaces, programs and services (Cheah & Chirkov, 2008)

As they age, children begin to act based on what they perceive will gain them a reward for doing the right thing or will gain them social approval. They begin to understand the methodology behind school and what is expected, which can sometimes squash their natural curiosity and desire for play. For example, children who struggle with reading and writing in school, often show competence in this area outside of school. (Knobel, 2001). School-age children can quickly develop a fixed mindset, especially about their own abilities. Caring adults play an important role in fostering a growth mindset (Dweck, 2016), such as through modeling experimentation, perseverance and failure.

Children in the middle years join sports teams, after school clubs and other social groups outside their family home. They look for safe opportunities to practice independence and for greater levels of responsibility. They are expected to regulate behaviour and to adhere to situational norms. School-age children may be seen unaccompanied in our libraries. They become better at remembering unfamiliar faces, such as those of various Library staff, and are increasingly sensitive to expressions of anger or sadness. Ambiguous expressions and body language, such as crossed arms or avoiding eye contact, are generally misinterpreted as “angry” (particularly for children who have experienced trauma). Cultural connections support the development of personal knowledge, identity and social skills. Indigenous and Newcomer children in the middle years are developing competencies in the cultural practices of two or more cultures and worldviews (Ontario Ministry of Child and Youth Services, 2016) and may experience

effects of intergenerational trauma. Newcomer children also often carry the responsibility of acting as translator in the family as their English language and literacy skills learned in school sometimes surpass their parents' abilities.

The school-age child is eager to give reasons and explain choices, compare what they hear to their own knowledge and perspectives, and to decide what is true and isn't true. This explains the interest in non-fiction, such as *Ripley's Believe It or Not!* Sharing ideas with peers help language skills improve even further. The ability to construct complex sentences begins at age nine or ten. They have an appreciation for jokes and word play and can use comparative and descriptive words and the passive voice. School-age children move from learning to read to reading to learn and begin to understand nuance in language. In native English speakers, phonetic awareness is generally established by age seven and phonics instruction does not significantly boost the reading comprehension of children with reading difficulties beyond first grade (National Reading Panel, 2000). By age ten, most children can derive meaning from words that they are unfamiliar with by analyzing component parts. Writing for school-age children can be complex and creative. Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit Disorder, mental health issues and learning disabilities that can affect learning first emerge and are typically diagnosed before the age of 14. Kutcher et al. (2009) state that "approximately 15 to 20 percent of Canadian children and adolescents suffer from some form of mental disorder – one in five children in the average classroom."

For all school-age children, play and other forms of symbolic representation, such as artmaking and dance, are essential forms of communication. Between six and ten years of age, children start to produce narratives that express the character's mental states, feelings and thoughts. (McKeough, 1992, p172) Guided play and open-ended activities at the Library give children the time and space to do the complex work of play. "Explorations include the metaphorical basis of children's perceptions and conceptions that are often non-figurative and abstract. Facilitators/educators choose the materials and set them up; the children move freely within the organized choices." (Edwards, Gandini, Forman, 2011, p315) In Library programs, services and spaces free play, building, making and storytelling bridge the communication gap for school-age children who have not yet fully learned how to express their feelings.

## WHAT ARE THE LIBRARY'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN?

Calgary Public Library's vision and strategic priorities will be implemented for school-age children through best practices in 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning, which are guided by the following four principles:

1. The Library has a societal responsibility to provide a nurturing environment for children.

- The Library embraces its role in a child’s “natural protective network” which “is the principle of child, family, extended family, community, and Nationhood, contributing to the successful life way of the child.” (Simard and Blight, 2011, p31)
- Istawatsiman is a Blackfoot word which means rearing children with all the traditional teachings of our people, that include compassion, harmony, trust, respect, honesty, generosity, courage, understanding, peace, protection, and knowing who your relatives are. (Lindstrom et al 2016)

## 2. Play and fun are prominent.

- Intrinsic motivation outweighs extrinsic motivators.
- Learning and discovery are celebrated. Calgary Public Library fosters a love for reading and learning.

## 3. Evidence-based practices, current pedagogy, community partnerships, especially those with school board partners, and ongoing research inform high standards of innovation and relevancy. Quality outcomes, objectives and ongoing evaluation are established.

- Curriculum is augmented; STREAM (Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Arts and Math) subjects and the six C’s guide programming decisions, in tandem with the patron’s own self-directed, interest-driven learning.
- Foundational reading, writing and numeracy skills are reinforced.
- Materials, loose parts, technologies and the Library’s Collection are valued entry points for learning in experiential, hands-on and open-ended ways.
- School-age children are guided through inquiry; given opportunities to reflect on, share about and co-construct their learning experiences.
- Technology is a tool for learning, a resource and a social connector.

## 4. An intersectional lens is applied to better relate to and affirm all children.

- Children are viewed holistically. The Library supports balance within the four quadrants of human existence: physical, emotional, spiritual and mental/intellectual (Castellano, 2002).
- The Library has a strengths-based approach, which is a philosophy of practice that draws one away from an emphasis on procedures, techniques and knowledge as the keys to change. Instead, it reminds us that every child has unique strengths and capabilities that will determine their evolving story as well as define who they are - not what they’re not (their deficiencies). (Resiliency Initiatives, 2011).
- The Library aligns its practice with the City of Calgary particularly in its aim to offer equitable service to school-age children and their families. “Equitable’ or ‘Equity’ means conditions are adjusted to meet people’s diverse needs, strengths and social realities. It requires recognition that different barriers (often systemic) exist for diverse individuals or groups.” (City of Calgary Social Wellbeing Policy, 2019, 3.1.7)
- School-age children learn *through* culture, not just about culture. Indigenous perspectives, worldviews and ways of knowing are authentically integrated.
- School-age children see themselves reflected in Library spaces, programs and services and their developmental needs are met.
- A child’s experience and perspective forms in the context of their home life. It is necessary for the Library to consider the whole-family context and support caregivers to better serve children.

## WHO ARE OUR TARGET AUDIENCES AND WHAT ARE THEIR NEEDS?

While children ages 6-12, are the primary participants in Library programs, services and spaces for school-age children, to get them there, the Library must purposefully engage caregivers and educators. Because the school-age child does not often have a lot of agency, it is important the Library direct its message and promotion to caregivers and educators as a priority because caregivers and educators are a bridge to the child. “Caregivers” are parents, but also grandparents, relatives and other caring adults, such as those from a community agency. “Educators” can be a child’s classroom teacher, but also anyone dedicating their careers to a child’s learning, such as Learning Commons and classroom assistants, principals, administrators, aftercare and out-of-school providers, community partner organizations and pre-service teachers. The educator as professional, when considered separate and distinct from their role as a child’s advocate and influencer, is a lifelong learner looking to the Library for resources and support and can be considered a third target audience.

### CAREGIVERS

The caregivers of school-age children visiting the Library have needs for their children that differ from their own needs and it is important to understand how these intersect and may diverge. The Library must work to educate caregivers about the important role the Library can play in their child’s school journey. Caregivers are making decisions about their child’s time after school, on weekends and in the summer months. Many caregivers engage the Library to support their child who may be struggling in school: a reluctant, or more optimistically, a “striving reader”. (Harvey, Ward & Pilkey, 2017, p35) They may wish for extra support in English Language Learning (ELL) or numeracy or may wonder what to do with a confident reader who is bored by the choices at home and school. School-age children sometimes attend programs against their will, having been registered by a well-meaning caregiver, and other times stumble upon them while at the Library with their family or visiting on their own. The Library frequently serves families with children across different ages, where a caregivers’ attention is pulled in multiple directions during a Library visit. Families where siblings, teens and elderly guardians are caregivers are a sub-set of this audience with unique needs the Library should be flexible toward.

For caregivers that are less engaged with the Library, it can be assumed that they are unaware of what the Library can offer their child or perhaps, don’t value free programming as being as high quality as paid. Some may be hesitant about libraries as an institution and may have little experience with them in their own childhood. It is important to acknowledge that previous negative experiences with libraries or with government agencies (which public libraries are often associated with) may contribute to apprehension about visiting Calgary Public Library. The lack of public library presence in First Nations communities prior to provincial government changes in 2016 (when non-resident fees for people living on-reserve and on-



settlement were eliminated) may make the Library seem foreign and even unwelcoming to Indigenous families. (Alberta Government, Public Library Services, 2018) The Library's commitment to truth, reconciliation and decolonizing the Library by working with Indigenous communities should positively impact our relationship with these families going forward. It is important the Library work to understand and value traditional parenting practices of Indigenous communities. Caregivers need to feel safe and welcomed and be provided with opportunities for support. Information is therefore designed to be appealing, inclusive, respectful and accessible, particularly to Newcomer and Indigenous families. For the children whose caregivers are less available to them, the Library must also engage their teachers.

## EDUCATORS AS SUPPORTS TO CHILDREN

For some children, the first exposure they will have to the Library is through school. Teachers and administrators support a child's learning while also supporting the child's caregivers in doing the same. Educators are regularly asked by caregivers to share ways to support children outside of the classroom and therefore need to be kept informed of Library programs and services. Some schools may lack resources that the Library can provide. School board partners have demonstrated how valuable they feel the Library is to their children. Teachers and administrators wish to supplement curriculum with the expertise and real-world examples that the Library can provide. Limited resources mean travelling to libraries by school bus is not always an option, especially for schools in First Nations communities. Outreach programs are valued as is the Library's no-charge policy. Schools also expect that parents will support their school-age child's education outside of school, yet many parents cannot meet that expectation, leaving an interesting gap, and opportunity, for the Library. The Library's relationship with out of school care providers such as before-and-after care facilities and community partner organizations like the YMCA, Calgary Afterschool and the Boys and Girls Club are important for sharing support and resources.

## EDUCATORS AS PROFESSIONALS

After the school day ends, educators have little involvement in the lives of their children, but as professionals, seek affordable, enjoyable and accessible professional learning opportunities outside of work. An opportunity to share knowledge with the Library and their peers is welcomed, as is networking. Educators need to feel valued for their contribution to learning in Calgary and thanked for connecting families to the Library. Moving beyond the view of educators as another ordinary, adult patron, the Library is well served to recognize and celebrate the educators' vital role as the Library's advocate and experts we can learn from.

## HOW ARE THE NEEDS OF OUR AUDIENCES MET THROUGH OUR SPACES, COLLECTION, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES?

### SPACES

Inspired by the success of the Library's Early Learning Centres and modeled after Learning Commons, which have replaced traditional school libraries (Faber, 2012), the Questionarium is a dynamic play-based learning space in the Children's Library designed to invite school-age children aged 6-12 years old (with an emphasis on the older child, ages 8-10) to wonder, experiment, discover, and create.

*A Learning Commons is a whole school approach to building a participatory learning community. It is a common or shared space that is both physical and virtual. It is designed to move children beyond mere research, practice and group work to a greater level of engagement through exploration, experimentation, and collaboration. This space transforms teaching and learning by inviting staff, caregivers and children to co-create knowledge. Inquiry, project/problem-based learning experiences are designed as catalysts for intellectual engagement with information, ideas, thinking, and dialogue. Reading thrives, learning literacies and technology competencies evolve, and critical thinking, creativity, innovation and playing to learn are nourished. Everyone is a learner; everyone is a teacher working collaboratively toward excellence. A Learning Commons is about changing school culture and transforming the way teaching and learning occur. (Canadian School Libraries, 2018)*

A "participatory learning community" begins with hands-on STREAM activities, Library and externally presented programs and demonstrations, attractive collections, and facilitation and engagement by staff with support from volunteers. Children may engage independently or collaboratively, including with caregivers, educators, peers and staff. The Questionarium is heavily used afterschool, weekends and during the Ultimate Summer Challenge and is active during the week, by school, homeschool and recreation groups visiting the Library.

Each Questionarium contains mobile, modular, adaptive, interactive "zones", a term, which although less common than "stations" in a school's learning commons, is less static sounding and does not imply a reliance on furniture. The Questionarium can support multiple disciplines, forms of play (independently or collaboratively) and curricular areas. A variety of zones can be combined or reduced, depending on the size of each library location:

1. **Build and Make:** Patrons are encouraged to build using materials such as Keva Blocks, LEGO, Play-doh and loose parts.
2. **Creative Expression:** Patrons are invited to express their ideas and participate in making through activities such as dramatic play, podcasting, creative writing and art.
3. **Problem Solving and Challenges:** Patrons will engage in mathematical, scientific, digital and engineering challenges such as a Tower of Hanoi inspired puzzle and science experiments.
4. **Idea Sharing and Talkback:** Children are invited to share their ideas and reflect on thought provoking questions through activities such as writing, voting and drawing. They are invited to display their work and their thinking and learning is made visible.
5. **Physical Play:** Patrons engage in physical activity such as jumping varying distances or kinetic collaborative video games and VR. Full body play is encouraged.
6. **Retreat:** The Questionarium provides opportunity for quiet reflection, introspection and rest.

## COLLECTION AND DIGITAL RESOURCES

Collections at Calgary Public Library are patron-centered and support play, learning and growth. They are physical and digital and are the cornerstone for foundational reading, writing and numeracy. Collections support inquiry-based learning and are developed to enrich curriculum and support school success. They span a range of subjects, formats, languages and reading levels appropriate for children ages 6 to 12, having currency, relevance and appeal, and include both new and classic titles. Child-centered curated collections encourage reading and exploration, are inclusive and reflect the wide range of childhood experience. Digital resources recognize that school-age children inhabit a rich and complex online world. Collections for school-age children at Calgary Public Library are developed in alignment with the Strategic Plan 2019-2022 to foster inclusion, reconciliation and connection. Juvenile collections support early literacy, learning, and empowerment.

## PRINT COLLECTIONS

Print collection are designed to meet the reading and developmental needs of children. The core print collections for school-age children are curated theme books, picture books, easy readers, juvenile fiction and juvenile nonfiction. Books in the Juvenile collection have appealing characters, plots and topics that motive children to read.

- Curated Collections

Child-centered curated collections encourage reading and exploration, are inclusive and reflect the wide range of childhood experience. These collections are displayed in prominent locations in the community libraries, the books are displayed face forward and the shelving is designed with children in mind. These books introduce children to new formats and subjects and have high use. The Juvenile Nonfiction Theme collections include the categories *Facts*, *Tales*, *Science*, *Animals*, *Make It* and *Our World*. The Orange Box Paperback curated collection has six child focused themes that reflect childhood experiences and

interests: *Um...Awkward*, *Building Worlds*, *Bam Pow Gotcha!*, *Creatures Great and Small*, *Magic and Creepiness*, and *Space and Star Stuff*.

- Picture Books

Picture books are read through all stages of childhood. Many children have their first reading experience with picture books. In the early grades, picture books are used for story time. Picture books cover a range of subject areas and reading levels. Picture books will include books without words, classic tales and classic reading series.

The call number begins with the letter Z and these are sometimes referred to by staff as Z books.

- Easy Readers

Children learning to read will engage with all parts of the juvenile collection. The easy readers support reading development. Caregivers will draw on the easy reading collection to help children develop reading skill. The collection includes books with simple sentences and basic vocabulary and advances to books with more complex sentences and vocabulary. Easy readers include a range of subject areas that will appeal to children. The call number begins with the letter X and these are sometimes referred to by staff as X books.

- Juvenile Fiction

Juvenile fiction meets the reading needs of children 6 to 12 years of age. The fiction collection includes a range of materials, from beginning chapter books for new readers to complex works of fiction. Graphic novels are included with juvenile fiction.

- Juvenile Nonfiction

Nonfiction books are information books. Juvenile nonfiction interests children 6 to 12 years of age and encompasses a full range of topics. The text and images will range from simple to complex. The collection includes books that will assist a child through developmental stages and key life events. As with the digital collection, the nonfiction books enrich curriculum and support school success.

The Juvenile Collection includes other books resources such as world language books (especially those that support the home languages of Calgary families), readalongs (a book and CD package) and holiday books. School-age children have access to the full Library book collection with their parent's guidance and for ELL learners, are always encouraged to read in their home language.

## ERESOURCES AND DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

Caregivers and educators have special value and an active role as digital mentors, helping children to live meaningful lives online as well as off. (Samuel, 2015) Library's e-resources represent a safe, authoritative, and accessible online ecosystem for discovering and exploring content, developing proficiency in motor coordination, practising logic and thinking, and honing online navigation and behaviours. The suite of digital resources selected for school-age children optimizes current visual and audio capability as well as traditional print interfaces, providing an engaging and navigable 21<sup>st</sup> century fit for young children. Selected eResources are firmly grounded in the Library's guiding principles for school-age learning including experiential, hands-on explorations, with such sites as *National Geographic Kids* and *World Book Kids*. *Bookflix*, *Tumblebooks* and *Early World of Learning* feature read-aloud components and interactivity to reinforce foundational reading, writing and numeracy skills, *Solaro* and *brainfuse* offer enhancement and augmentation of Alberta curriculum content resources, including test practice and live tutoring.

Remote access to digital content, at home, 24/7, at their convenience supports caregivers outside the classroom. eResources are a convenient tool to access technology at the child's own pace and comfort, reinforcing the Library as a safe, welcoming, engaged supporter. The Library's digital content provides real-world examples and reinforces the value of technology skills, shared by educators. Partnerships with Calgary school boards have led to projects of mutual relevance and learning, such as a three-way licence for *Tumblebooks*, removing the cost-barrier for individual schools and opening access for children using Library eResources at school. The Library manages technologies, such as the creation of the federated search tool *Study Buddy*, to assist school-age children, educators and caregivers in inquiry-based learning, whether inspired by curiosity or curriculum and providing research support to school assignments. The *Overdrive* and *Libby* collections provide children and educators with opportunity to borrow high quality ebooks in various languages with access to features such as class sets and special education modifications.

## PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Library programs and services for the school-age child can be categorized into five main strategic areas:

### 1. SCHOOL READINESS

Preschoolers' executive function or self-regulation is linked to their early literacy, vocabulary and math skills and help them transition to a more structured environment once they reach kindergarten. Research shows that children who have good self-regulation skills are more likely to do better in reading and math achievement in elementary school (Blair and Razza, 2007). In 2011, one in four Calgary children was not "ready to learn" in grade one on at least one of five dimensions measured by the Early Development Instrument or EDI (Cooper, Merrill, 2013) The ages of 4-6 are an important transitional time as children

navigate great developmental shifts to become independent learners and readers. Imagine Calgary's target #96 demonstrates the City's commitment to school readiness by stating that "by 2016, by the age of six years, 95 per cent of Calgary children will exhibit school readiness, as reflected by physical well-being and appropriate motor development; emotional health and a positive approach to new experiences; age-appropriate social knowledge and competence; age-appropriate language skills; and age-appropriate general knowledge and cognitive skills." (City of Calgary, 2006) Calgary Public Library continues to help prepare pre-kindergarten children for a positive start to their school journey. In Calgary, approximately 13,000 children will enter Kindergarten each fall. This year may be when children get their first Library card, independent from their parents, and the pride in "being a student" cannot be underestimated. Fostering a relationship with the public library at this crucial stage increases the likelihood of children becoming lifelong Library users and demonstrates to caregivers the support the public library provides to school readiness. Outreach to schools and in-library programs for children and their caregivers, as well as school readiness resources, school board and community collaboration and targeted collections, give caregivers the strategies and support necessary to make social-emotional wellness (particularly self-regulation), early literacy, numeracy and play a priority in the home – preparing their child for a successful first year of school.

## 2. FOUNDATIONAL LITERACY AND NUMERACY

This is a new approach for the Calgary Public Library as we consider the Library's role in teaching reading. The Library both compliments and differs from the work of schools. The Library fosters a love for literacy and numeracy through play and pleasurable experiences with books, story, and language. Children have more choices and autonomy at the Library than at school and have unlimited access to high quality materials. The Library is a place to further their inquiries and learning from school and can address gaps to increase learning success by supporting caregiver's in their child's reading journey, particularly striving and reluctant readers and those in vulnerable situations, and by complimenting the work of educators by augmenting curriculum.

## 3. AFTERSCHOOL

School-age children visit our libraries afterschool looking for a welcoming space where they can play with peers, work on school assignments and occupy their time. Calgary kids can have up to 67 hours of discretionary time a week (Ferguson, 2017). Afterschool programs leverage the critical hours between the time school closes and when caregivers return home from work to provide children, especially those who don't have access to other activities, with exciting, engaging experiences that will help them learn academic, social and professional skills. The research is clear: children in quality afterschool programs are more likely to come to school and stay in school, more likely to hand in their work and get better grades. Library spaces and programs play an important role in engaging young learners during a vulnerable time. Afterschool programs have the ability and flexibility to be creative and provide individualized learning. Afterschool programs at the Library are programs that children want to attend.

The best afterschool programs work closely with schools and community partners to provide activities that enhance and complement, but do not replicate, the school day.

#### 4. SUMMER LEARNING

Ultimate Summer Challenge (USC) is the Library's largest program serving over 26,000 children and teens in 2019. USC is an integration of a variety of formats which include hands-on, pop-up activities, a 40-hour reading challenge, large-scale installations, community outreach and collaboration with partner camps, Library programs and half-day clubs, book displays and intrigue stations, external presentations and performances and online challenges. USC capitalizes on the magic of summer to help kids discover new things, pursue a passion more deeply, and to be delighted by the energetic activity that has taken over their local library. USC is rooted in inquiry, supports curricular connections and the integration of experiences for families with children 0-5 years, school-age children and teens 13-17 in three key areas of impact: supporting school readiness, reducing the effects of summer slide and fostering social-emotional growth. Requiring a Library card in 2018 not only improved data collection, but also had the surprise outcome of signing up 3,664 children as new members. 25% of total USC registrants get a library card for the first time because of the program! In 2019, registration in the program more than doubled again with a 53% increase (26,511 registrants). With the launch of the new 2019 Summer Kids Guide and website, the Library offered 735 free programs in July and August, providing fun learning opportunities especially to those children without access to camps, lessons, and vacation opportunities. The 40-Hour Challenge Map and online Teen Takeover got Calgary kids reading over 296,000 hours in 2019. In 2019, both school boards signed on as official sponsors and we secured a five-year funding commitment.

#### 5. SCHOOL GROUPS

The Library has an opportunity to invite classes to the Library to participate in school programs that augment curriculum and demonstrate the role of the Library in their academic life. Children who don't visit the Library with their family may still be introduced as part of a school group visit. Outreach programs are a welcome opportunity to have a Library experience at school without having to pay for a school bus and coordinate permission forms to bring classes off-site. Educators need online opportunities to find out information and to book programs, as well as pre and post visit support.

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