CALGARY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Strategy for School-Age Children

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUMMARY The aim of *The Strategy for School-Age Children* is to support educators and caregivers of elementary children ages five – 12 through Calgary Public Library (the Library) programs, services, collection, and spaces. This strategy directly responds to the Library's Strategic Plan and positions Calgary Public Library as a leader and trusted resource for families, educators, and the community.

The Strategy for School-Age Children

- examines current research and literature about teaching and learning
- is informed by public library practice and analogous contexts including museums and schools
- identifies opportunities for the Library to inform design and delivery of programs and services for children, families, and educators
- is a living document meant to be reviewed regularly in the name of continued better practice and service.

Originally launched in 2019 and revised in 2025 to include post-pandemic research, the revised strategy includes expanded information relating to gender-diverse children, neurodiverse learners, English language learners (ELL), and Indigenous ways of knowing, and aligns with Calgary Public Library's Equity Diversity and Belonging Policy, Truth and Reconciliation Statement, Early Learning Strategy, and Teen Strategy.

CHILDHOOD TODAY

The role of the public library as a community-gathering place and knowledge institution is more relevant than ever. Globalization, multiculturalism, and digitization constantly evolve, connecting people 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 increased immigration and mass migration nationally and worldwide, has prompted dialogue and questions about Canadian identity and culture. Now, Canadian communities are far less homogeneous. Calgary Public Library is committed to equity, diversity, and belonging:

> Everyone has a right to feel respected, safe, and valued within the Library and community. To ensure that, we must work to eliminate societal barriers and create a welcoming space in our programs, services, internal operations, and institutional culture. We have a responsibility to build and maintain an environment of equity, diversity, belonging, and dignity in all spaces we occupy and in all aspects of our community role. We continue to listen, learn, and act in collaboration with Library staff, volunteers, the City of Calgary, partners, and community.

Calgary Public Library is a busy urban library system which serves a diverse and growing population. The City of Calgary has a population of nearly 1.5 million people of which 833,847 are Library cardholders (57.6%). There are 77,474 Library members who are children and teens, 51% of whom are in elementary school. Put another way, school-age children account for approximately 10% of total Library membership. Newcomers now make up 36% of our City's population and are 44% of the Library's card holders, speaking 160 different languages (Statistics Canada, 2021). Children in public libraries and schools represent the diversity of our neighbourhoods.

Technology is ubiquitous. Generation Alpha, children born from 2010 – 2024 (McCrindle et al., 2021), are surrounded by technology from birth; digital media plays a significant cultural role in their childhood. School-age children have constant access to information and digital devices, largely influenced by their millennial parents who frequently share family life on social media. Forty percent of children have a tablet by age two, and nearly one in four have a personal cellphone by age eight, as they start to become more independent, stay home alone, or attend activities on their own (Common Sense Media, 2025).

Everyday experiences blend seamlessly with the continuous presence of digital technologies (Floridi, 2014). Children interact easily with peers worldwide and can access information anytime, anywhere. They prefer visual content over print and respond more readily to visual stimuli. Digital, social, global, mobile, and visual are foundational characteristics of Generation Alpha's identity (McCrindle et al., 2021).

Jukic and Skojo (2021) identify two distinct perceptions of Generation Alpha: positives, such as strong knowledge of technology and media, and negatives, including reliance on technology, reduced socialization, tendencies towards "selfishness," difficulty with critical thinking, and a lack of independence. While contributory, digital influence is not solely responsible for the unique challenges of childhood today. Children's experience is varied, highly impacted by culture, community, and circumstance and is intersectional. To varying degrees, school-age children may experience:

- Covid-19 learning loss
- cyberbullying
- up-ageing ("growing up too fast")
- body image issues
- public self-representation and social media pressure
- overcrowded classrooms
- increased passive screen time
- climate change anxiety
- disconnection from nature
- food, job, and housing insecurity
- mental health issues
- neurodiversity
- high Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) scores (trauma)
- political divisiveness
- diminished reading for pleasure
- decreased physical activity, particularly unstructured and outdoors
- reliance on technology which can contribute to lack of "life skills," such as financial literacy
- low levels of independence
- poor emotional regulation
- poor social skills
- poor critical thinking skills

Research indicates that kids in historically marginalized communities, non-English speakers, and those with lower socio-economic status, fare worse on average in almost all these areas than Caucasian, English-speaking children in middle-high income households. This holds true in Calgary and across research in North and South America, Europe, and Australia.

Because many of Calgary's school-age children were in kindergarten and early elementary during Covid closures, they were taught foundational learning skills online or from educators wearing masks in socially distanced classrooms, or both (Vergara et al., 2022). They continue to meet in virtual spaces such as chat rooms, video games, and FaceTime calls. Digital media is integrated into every aspect of life including the algorithms and platforms that shape news, entertainment, and politics. Innovation pushes change at unprecedented rates, and information overload is real, especially for children who are still developing social and critical thinking skills.

In today's information universe, with jobs that did not exist five years ago, preparing children for specific career paths is not necessarily effective in preparing children for life. For children to thrive as adults, their learning environments must be as flexible and changeable as 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).

SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT

This strategy establishes a clear path for the Library to support the child's transition from infancy through the school journey into adolescence, so that the Library influences life-long learning. Appendix A includes a brief overview of child development in the middle years and examines research in physical, cognitive, cultural, social-emotional, and communication development, dividing children into two developmentally appropriate and distinct age groups: five – eight and nine – 12 (or preteen). There are 116,015 ages five – 14 who live in Calgary (Civic Census, 2021).

LEARNING TODAY

Despite complex challenges children face, they demonstrate resiliency, open-mindedness, global thinking, and empathy, in large part because of their school culture and instructional content and approach. In most Calgary schools, instruction is student-centred — which means it is "inquiry-based." Children have "choice and voice," encouraged to develop their autonomy and self-determination. Children are viewed as contributors with valid perspectives and experiences with 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. Civic literacy, active citizenship, and global awareness are outcomes of inquiry. Children can contribute positively to their local and international communities, rather than passively receiving information. Children gather information independently under the guidance of their teacher, and collaboratively with peers. Different learning styles are encouraged. Inquiry-based learning facilitates motivation and responsibility. Children engage in a variety of hands-on experiences and demonstrate learning in many ways such as with media, through the arts, in discussion, through storytelling, and by writing. Most importantly children make sense of the world through play.

There are as many different terms for the core competencies that reflect how children learn and grow as there are educational institutions. The research of leading psychological and developmental scientists, Michnick Golinkoff and Hirsch-Pasek (2016), conceptualizes learning into six "Cs" which align well with the Library's values and inform this strategy, as described in Appendix B. In summary, the six Cs are collaboration, communication, content, critical (and computational) thinking, creative innovation, and confidence.

THE LIBRARY'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

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

Play and fun are prominent.

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

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

Our vision and strategic priorities for school-age children 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)
    - Nistawatsiman 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.
    - We practise the principles of child-led play.
    - Curiosity and discovery are celebrated. Calgary Public Library fosters a love for learning.

3. Evidence-based practices, current pedagogy, community partnerships — especially those with school board partners — and ongoing research inform the highest standards of innovation and relevancy. Quality outcomes, objectives, and ongoing evaluation are established.
    - Curriculum is augmented; STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) subjects and the six Cs 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 integrated as 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. Indigenuity, defined as the application of deep-spatial wisdom held by Indigenous people to solve the practical problems we face today, is valued (Dr Daniel R Wildcat, 2020).
    - School-age children see themselves reflected in Library spaces, programs, and services, and their developmental needs are met.
    - A child's experiences and perspectives form 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.

THE LIBRARY'S TARGET AUDIENCES AND THEIR NEEDS

While children ages five – 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 have substantive agency, it is imperative the Library direct its message and promotion to caregivers and educators. Caregivers and educators are the bridge to the child. "Caregivers" are parents, but also grandparents, relatives, and other caring adults, such as from a community agency or a nanny. "Educators" are the child's classroom teacher, but also those who dedicate their careers to a child's learning: for example, Learning Commons and classroom assistants, school librarians, principals, administrators, aftercare and out-of-school providers, community partner organizations, and pre-service teachers. The educator as professional, distinct from their role as a child's advocate and influencer, is a lifelong learner who seeks the Library's resources and support, particularly within their professional practice, and are a discrete target audience.

Caregivers As Supports to Children

The caregivers of school-age children visiting the Library have needs for their children that differ from their own needs. Thus, it is important to understand how these needs intersect or may diverge. The Library must work to educate caregivers about the important role the Library ought to play in their child's school and developmental journey. Caregivers make decisions about their child's time after school, on weekends, and in the summer months. Many caregivers engage the Library to support their child, when struggling in school or with reading. They may need extra support in English language learning 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 programs while at the Library with their family or visiting on their own. The Library frequently serves families with children spanning different ages, where a caregiver's attention is pulled in multiple directions during a Library visit. Families where siblings, teens, and elderly guardians are caregivers are a sub-set of "caregiver" with unique needs. The Library should be flexible, adaptable, and responsive to caregivers in all their iterations.

Family literacy focuses on improving the reading and writing skills of the entire family, irrespective of age or ability. By reading to children and regularly engaging in fun literacy activities, caregivers model literacy and hone their own skills. Family literacy activities strengthen relationship amongst family members which, in turn, encourages lifelong learning. "Without adult support and a strong foundation at home, a child is less likely to read fluently and to be successful and engaged in school" (ABC Life Literacy Canada). A 2025 study by NielsonIQ found that even though reading aloud to children is a proven way to boost their enjoyment of reading, the number of parents reading aloud to children is at a historic low. "The data revealed that many parents don't find enjoyment in reading to their children, with only 40% of parents saying it is 'fun for me'. Children who are read to daily are almost three times as likely to choose to read independently compared to children who are only read to weekly at home. It's never too late to start, or resume, reading with children."

Since the Library primarily promotes its programs through the website and social media, digital literacy and inequity can be a barrier to caregiver engagement. Caregivers that are less engaged may be unaware of what the Library can offer their child, or, perhaps, view free programming as less quality than programs charging fees. Some may be hesitant about libraries as an institution and may have little experience of them from their own childhood. Intergenerational trauma negatively impacts literacy. Acknowledging that previous negative experiences with libraries or with government agencies (of which public libraries are often associated) may contribute to apprehension about visiting Calgary Public Library is very important. The lack of a 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) made the Library seem foreign and likely unwelcoming to Indigenous families (Alberta Government, Public Library Services, 2018). The Library's continued commitment to truth, reconciliation, and decolonizing the Library by working with Indigenous communities aims to positively impact the Library's relationship with these families going forward.

The Library must be culturally informed and responsive, continuously working to understand and value traditional parenting practices of Indigenous

communities and immigrant cultures. In an extensive cross-United States study, caregivers from countries and communities where income inequality is great adopt a more intensive and controlling style of parenting than do parents in countries where income gaps are smaller (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019). Newcomer families may hold high academic expectations for their children and assume that the Library will practise the same rigor and traditional practices as their schooling. Caregivers must feel safe and welcomed and be provided with opportunities for support. Therefore, it is designed to be universally appealing, inclusive, respectful, and accessible.

Indigenous scholars underscore that children are "bringers of light" (Cajete, 2000, p. 96), with "status, responsibility, and respect" (Red Horse, 1997, p. 246); and that their presence sustains the community and creates new roles and relationships within and between generations (Ullrich, 2019). Western perspectives on child development often portray intergenerational learning in Indigenous communities as a direct relay of information from the caregiver, Knowledge Keeper, or the Elder to the child, but largely overlooking the importance of the lessons that adults and Elders learn from *children* and the ways in which lessons foster connectedness (Waters et al., 2024). The traditional Indigenous parenting approach of providing autonomy to children and the reciprocity of the caregiver-child relationship (Cheah & Chirkov, 2008) can be inspirational for the Library, particularly in aiming to foster self-efficacy and placemaking; to create a feeling of belonging and recognition as part of the Library and public space.

Educators as Supports to Children

For some children, the first exposure they 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. Many schools lack resources that the Library can provide. Through their partnerships with the Library, school boards have demonstrated how valuable they feel the Library is to their students. Teachers and administrators wish to supplement curriculum with the expertise and real-world examples the Library provides.

Limited resources and travelling to libraries by school bus is not always feasible, 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. This problem leaves an interesting gap, and an opportunity, the Library can fill. Indeed, 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) is critical to sharing support and resources.

Educators as Professionals

After the school day ends, educators have little involvement in the lives of the children they teach, but as professionals they 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 must feel valued for their considerable contributions to learning in Calgary and ought to be applauded and thanked for connecting families to the Library. Moving beyond the view of educators as another ordinary, adult patron, the Library would do well to recognize and celebrate educators' vital roles as the Library's advocates and experts. In 2025, there were 43,500 members of the Alberta Teachers' Association, the professional association that represents all teachers and teacher administrators in all schools in Alberta's public, separate, and francophone school divisions, and represents teachers in some charter and private schools. We know educators are a large group and can serve as bridge to Calgary families and children who otherwise may not connect to the Library. The education profession is under a lot of pressure; and educators are compelled to increasingly rely on the free programs and services of the Library.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF AUDIENCES THROUGH SPACES, COLLECTION, PROGRAMS, AND SERVICES

Spaces

Inspired by the success of the Library's Early Learning Centres and modeled after Learning Commons, which replaced traditional school libraries (Faber, 2012), the Questionarium is the dynamic, play-based learning space in the Children's Library, designed to entice school-age children ages six – 12 years old (with an emphasis on the older child, ages eight – ten) 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 curriculum-connected 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 after school, on weekends, and during the Ultimate Summer Challenge, and is busy during the week with visiting school, homeschool, and recreation groups.

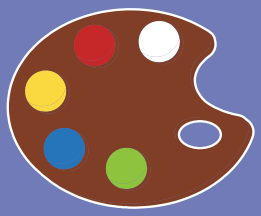
Each Questionarium contains mobile, modular, adaptive, interactive "zones" — a term, which although less common than "stations" in a school's learning commons, is less static and does not imply a reliance on furniture. The Questionarium can support multiple disciplines, forms of play (independent or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

BUILD AND MAKE

Patrons are encouraged to build using materials such as Keva Blocks, LEGO, Play-Doh, and loose parts.

CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Patrons are invited to express their ideas and participate in making through activities such as dramatic play, podcasting, creative writing, and art.



PROBLEM SOLVING AND CHALLENGES

Patrons will engage in mathematical, scientific, digital, and engineering challenges, for example tabletop games, puzzles, and science experiments.

IDEA SHARING AND TALKBACK

Children are invited to share their ideas and reflect upon thought-provoking questions through activities such as writing, voting, and drawing. They are invited to display their work and their thinking: learning is made visible.

PHYSICAL PLAY

Patrons engage in physical activity, i.e. jumping varying distances, dance, drama games, or participation in kinetic collaborative video games and virtual reality. Full body play is encouraged.

RETREAT

The Questionarium provides opportunity for quiet reflection, introspection, and rest.

Collections and Digital Resources

Collections at Calgary Public Library are patron-centred and support play, learning, and growth. Both physical and digital collections are the pillars which underpin foundational reading, writing, and numeracy. Collections support inquiry-based learning and are developed to enrich curriculum and support school success, and span a range of subjects, formats, languages, and reading levels appropriate for children ages five – 12. Collections must be current, relevant, and approachable, and must include both new and classic titles. Child-centred 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. At the Library, collections for school-age children are developed to foster inclusion, reconciliation, and connection. Juvenile collections support early literacy, learning, and empowerment.

Print Collections

Print collections are also 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 motivating children to read.

Curated Collections

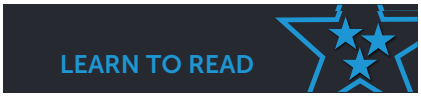
Child-centred curated collections encourage reading and exploration, are inclusive, and reflect the wide range of childhood experience. These collections are displayed in prominent locations at community libraries; books are displayed face forward. Shelving is designed with children in mind. These collections introduce children to new formats and subjects and enjoy high usage. The Juvenile Nonfiction Theme Collections include the categories *Facts, Tales, Science, Animals, Make It,* and *Our World*. The "Orange Box" Paperback curated collection contains six child-focused themes reflecting 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 (referred to internally as Z books) are suited to all stages of childhood and are also enjoyed by adults. Many children have their first reading experience with picture books. In early grades, picture books are used for story time. Picture books cover a range of subject areas and reading levels. Picture books include books without words, classic tales, and classic reading series.

Learn to Read Collection

Calgary Public Library exposes children to rich and diverse books and is committed to foundational literacy that includes programs and services supporting how to read the books. Introduced in 2023, Learn to Read is a curated collection that reimagines patron discovery of easy readers, in turn supporting development and mastery of reading skills.



The Learn to Read Collection comprises the Library's Easy Readers or Levelled Readers (also referred to internally as the beginning reader collection or the X books collection) and decodable book series. X books are initially categorized into reading levels by the publisher, to varying degrees and criteria, and then categorized again by the Library as one, two, or three stars. Children enjoy X books because they are character- and interest-driven stories, often taken from popular culture, and for their non-fiction themes. X books are valuable because they help children learn to love to read and to practise reading. Recently, X Books and other levelled readers were removed from schools as a tool to teach reading and have been replaced by decodable books.

Decodable books teach children to read. They are designed to provide opportunities for emergent readers to apply phonological skills progressively because texts are composed of varying degrees of decodable words based on the systematic progression of taught skills (Cheatham & Allor, 2012; Buckingham, 2018). Decodable books are grounded in reading science and are recommended by Alberta Education as a preferred format for learning to read. Decodable

books were implemented in classrooms in 2023, to replace the use of levelled readers. Additionally, decodable books are proven to support learning to read for dyslexic children. Decodable books located in the Library's Learn to Read collection help emergent readers practise word recognition skills they learn in school. In 2024, "decodable" was included as a new subject heading in the Library's catalogue.

Front-facing shelving and cover stickers in the Learn to Read collection enhances discoverability and shelving efficiency. Staff sort books into three levels based upon an internal criteria pertaining to beginner, intermediate, and advanced reading levels, as well as series and content. The sticker on the book cover also corresponds to the shelf name.

Decodable eBooks and eReading technology, such as read-aloud print books with built-in audio and speakers, show "real promise" in assisting young children to learn to read (Biancarosa & Griffiths 2012). In one study, for example, eBooks improved phonemic awareness and print-concept awareness among preschoolers — especially those with learning disabilities (Shamir & Schlafer 2011). Another study (Korat & Or 2010), showed a net positive for parents and the way they interact with their children when reading eBooks together, thereby validating digital resources as a resource for family literacy.

Juvenile Fiction

Juvenile fiction meets the reading needs of children five – 12 years of age and ought be used alongside the Learn to Read collection to help emergent readers develop language comprehension skills, i.e. vocabulary, background knowledge, and syntax. This fiction collection includes a range of materials from beginning chapter books for new readers to complex works of fiction. Graphic novels are included in the juvenile fiction collection.

Juvenile Non-fiction

Non-fiction books are information books. Juvenile non-fiction

captures the interests of children ages five – 12 years, encompassing a full range of topics. The text and images range from simple to more complex. The collection includes books that will assist a child through developmental stages and key life events. Similar to the digital collection, the non-fiction 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) and seasonal collections. School-age children have access to the full Library book collection with their parent's guidance and multilingual learners are always encouraged to read in their home language.

Seasonal collections are a curated themed collection of children's books about celebrations that change through the year to reflect topics suitable to the current month. Seasonal collections broaden the Library's tradition of holiday book displays by including a wider variety of seasonal experiences which recognize the diversity of celebrations in Calgary.

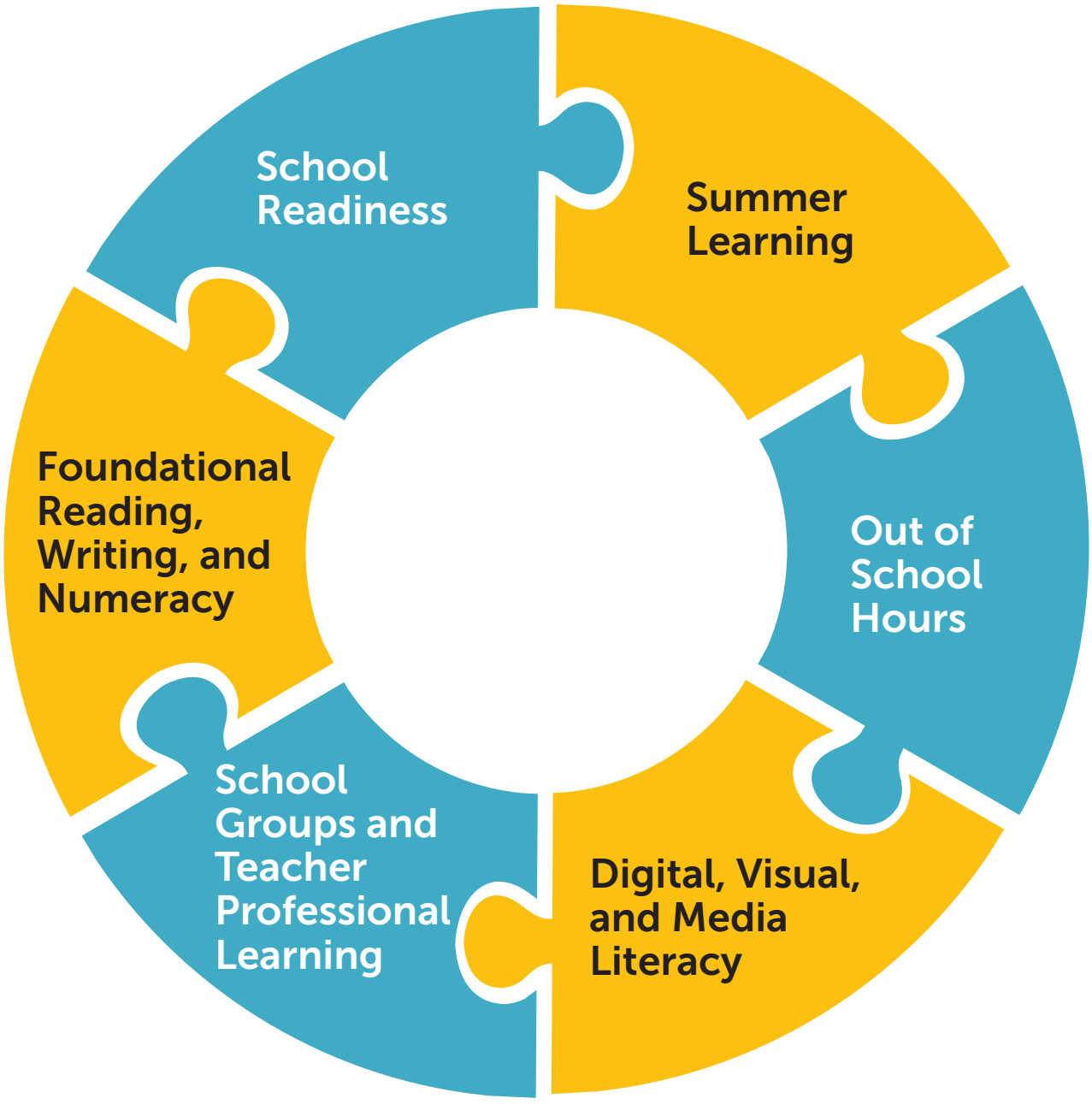
Digital Collections

Caregivers and educators have special value and an active role as digital mentors, helping children live meaningful lives, online and off (Samuel, 2015). The eResources of public libraries are safe, authoritative, and accessible online ecosystems for discovering and exploring content, developing proficiency in motor coordination, practising logic and thinking, and honing online navigation and other behaviours. The suite of digital resources licensed by the Library for school-age children optimizes current visual and audio capability as well as traditional print interfaces, providing an engaging and navigable fit for school-age children. Selected eResources are firmly grounded in the Library's guiding principles for school-age learning including experiential, hands-on explorations, offering sites such as *National Geographic Kids* and *World Book Kids*. *Bookflix*, *TumbleBook Library,* and *Early World of Learning*, featuring read-aloud components and interactivity to reinforce foundational reading, writing and numeracy skills, *SOLARO* and *brainfuse* offer enhancement and augmentation of Alberta Education curriculum, including test practice and live tutoring.

Remote access to the Library's digital content, at home, 24/7, at their convenience supports children who have home computers and internet, or who use a computer at a Library. 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 benefit and learning. A three-way shared licence for *TumbleBook Library* removes the cost-barrier for individual schools and opens access for children to use Library eResources at school. The Library manages technologies, including creating 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 an opportunity to borrow high quality eBooks in various languages allowing access to features like class sets and special education modifications.

Programs and Services

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



School Readiness

Preschoolers' executive function, or self-regulation, correlates with their early literacy, vocabulary, and math skills and helps them transition to the more structured environment of school. Research reveals 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 were not "ready to learn" in Grade 1 on at least one of five dimensions measured by the Early Development Instrument or EDI (Cooper, Merrill, 2013). Ages of four – six are an important transitional time as children navigate great developmental shifts enroute to becoming independent learners and readers. Calgary Public Library is committed to preparing pre-kindergarten children for a positive start to their school journey.

Although optional in Alberta, in Calgary, approximately 13,000 children enter Kindergarten each fall. This pivotal year may be when children get their first Library card independent from their parents; the pride of "being a student" cannot be underestimated. Fostering a relationship with the public library at this crucial stage increases the likelihood of a child becoming a lifelong Library user and demonstrates to caregivers the support the public library will provide 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 for a child's social-emotional wellness (particularly self-regulation), early literacy, numeracy, and play.

Foundational Reading, Writing, and Numeracy

The Library both complements 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 caregivers in their child's reading journey and complementing the work of educators by augmenting curriculum.

Individuals with stronger literacy skills have been shown to have higher income, better health, greater social and civic engagement, lifelong access to learning, and less negative involvement with the justice system. Possessing adequate literacy skills means being able to understand, evaluate, use, and engage with written texts. It also means being able to participate in society, develop your knowledge and potential, and achieve one's goals. The pandemic highlighted the impact of intergenerational poverty and marginalization that contribute to low levels of literacy in Calgary, and also worldwide.

"The news is not good," said Peggy Carr, the commissioner of the USA National Center for Education Statistics, adding: "We are not seeing the progress we need to regain the ground our students lost during the pandemic, and when we are seeing signs of recovery, they're mostly in math, and largely driven by high-performing students. Low-performing students are struggling, especially in reading" (Education Week, 2025).

University of Alberta's Dr. George Georgiou has been measuring the reading performance of Alberta students since 2008. When he tested K – 3 students in the fall of 2020, he found their literacy skills, on average, to be eight months to a year below grade level, stating that "remote learning and a lack of direct intervention for the struggling readers had taken a negative toll" (McMaster, 2023). The Calgary Boad of Education identifies 26% of students in grades 1 – 4 as being "at risk" for literacy development (AERR, 2022-2023). Children most at risk are those with multiple barriers including being newcomers, ELL learners, Indigenous children, children living in poverty, and those with learning or attention disorders or deficits.

Children from historically marginalized communities may not have experienced formal childcare, lessons, camps, or tutoring; they likely have fewer books in the home and have less access to technology. They may also attend an Equity Factor school with less parent council support and, therefore, less discretionary spending. "For schools in very affluent communities, the learning losses are less than in areas where the schools serve mostly lower socioeconomic status families, or families that have many children who are English Language Learners or immigrants" (Dr G Georgiou, 2021).

In Calgary, 25% of public-school students are an English as an additional language learner. In 2023, the Calgary Board of Education's student population increased by 7,029 students between September 2022 and September 2023, an unprecedented enrolment increase year-over-year of 5.4%. While illiteracy is a problem in any language, learning English adds another layer of complexity to learning to read in Calgary schools. Existing literacy interventions at school and in the community target the bottom 30% of readers, those with the most severe challenges. However, for these families, cost, location, and availability are substantial.

These often-insurmountable barriers leave a large contingent of children who do not need serious intervention but are not skilled readers, who require more practice and 1:1 support to succeed. These children are more likely to remain in the "missing middle" as they age. Scholastic (2017) has identified a "decline by nine" — the percentage of children who report reading books for fun (five to seven days a week) drops from 57% to 35% between the ages of eight and 10. The decline by nine occurs at the pivotal point in a reader's development when they should be moving from learning to read to reading to learn.

Reading has two basic components: word recognition (decoding) and language comprehension. This concept is widely accepted throughout the science of reading and is the basis for Alberta's English Language Elementary school curriculum as implemented in 2024. The second component, "language comprehension," expects learners to read widely from texts that they want to read, building their background knowledge and vocabularies while developing morally, emotionally, and intellectually (Ivey & Johnston, 2013). The Library excels in providing this opportunity. In the context of the Library's commitment to foundational learning, "foundational" refers to supporting people in learning the word recognition components. For the Library to achieve meaningful foundational reading, writing, and numeracy outcomes, it is necessary to focus on the print and text literacy needs of populations whom we are already well-positioned to serve, and who may have little or no community supports. The Library has opportunities for growth in foundational literacy, this being the focus of a multi-year project commencing in 2024.

Out-of-School Hours

School-age children visit our libraries after school in search of a welcoming space where they can play with peers, work on school assignments, and safely and productively occupy their time. Calgary children enjoy up to 67 hours of discretionary time per week (Ferguson, 2017). Afterschool programs leverage the critical hours between the time school ends and caregivers return home from work. Such programs provide children, especially those who don't have access to other activities, with exciting, engaging experiences that help them learn academic, social, and professional skills. In less affluent communities, middle years children between ages nine – 14, who are no longer required to be in care after school, may no longer be involved in afterschool programs or activities. Rather, they are more likely to be home alone or be caring for younger siblings while parents work and commute. They may have less time, or less physical space, for studying and for doing schoolwork and are less likely to have homework help from an adult with comparatively higher education and literacy than they have. Children in quality out of school programs (which also include PD days, and spring, fall, and winter break) 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 older school-age children during a vulnerable time. The Library's out-of-school programs have the ability and flexibility to be creative and provide individualized learning. Out-of-school activities are programs that children want to attend. The best Library out-of-school programs work closely with schools and community partners to provide activities that enhance and complement, but do not replicate, the school day.

Summer Learning

The Ultimate Summer Challenge (referred to internally as "USC") is an integration of a variety of formats that challenge Calgarians to read every day in July and August. The Ultimate Summer Challenge includes hands-on, pop-up activities, community outreach, programs, book displays and activity stations, external presentations and performances, reading tracking digitally or on paper, and online challenges. The Ultimate Summer Challenge capitalizes on the magic of summer, to help kids discover new things, pursue a passion more deeply, and be delighted by the energetic activity that has taken over their local Library. This program is rooted in inquiry, supports curricular connections and the integration of experiences for school-age children in three key areas of impact: supporting school readiness, reducing the effects of "summer slide," and fostering social-emotional growth.

School Groups and Teacher Professional Learning

The Library has an opportunity to invite classes to its locations to participate in school programs that augment curriculum and demonstrate the role of the public library in their academic and social life. Children who do not 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 staff member at school, without having to pay for a school bus and coordinate permission forms to bring classes to the Library. In virtual school programs, the Library beams experts, Library staff, Knowledge Keepers, artists, and authors into classrooms at a scale previously unfathomable (that is before the widespread normalization of live, online programs during the Covid-19 pandemic). Educators also have online opportunities to obtain information and book programs, as well as request a virtual meeting with the School Support Librarian, download Learning Resource Packs with curriculum-connected lesson plans and the Library's video content, and sign-up for a monthly Educator eNewsletter, all through the Educator webpage.

In part because of its longstanding formal partnerships with the Calgary Board of Education and the Calgary Catholic School Board, Calgary Public Library engages educators beyond our webpage. There are over 38,000 educators working in primary and secondary education in Calgary (data calculated

from 2022, Alberta Sector Profile). Educators are a bridge to Calgary families and kids who otherwise may not connect to the Library. They are important Library allies and use the public library for their professional practice. Calgary Public Library partners with the Calgary City Teachers' Convention, hosting workshops and facilitating sessions at Central Library. Many educators rely on the free programs and services of the Library. The Library has an ongoing opportunity to build new relationships with educators and thank those who are Library users and advocates for their students.

Digital, Visual, and Media Literacy

When used intentionally and appropriately, technology and interactive media are effective tools to support learning and development. "Screen time" refers to time spent with any screen, including smart phones, tablets, television, video games, computers, or wearable technology. The family media environment has been transformed by Covid-19. Many researchers now reject the term "screen time" altogether.

Given the many and diverse activities involving screens, it is increasingly clear that what children are *doing* with screens is much more important than *how much time* they spend using a screen device. In a position statement published in 2023, the Canadian Pediatrics Association acknowledged that counting screen time minutes is an outdated approach in a post-pandemic world (Ponti, M. 2023).

> Digital media habits for children are evolving. In a 2021 study, preteens spent five hours and 33 minutes on screens compared with four hours and 44 minutes in 2019. Among the younger age range (ages 0 – 9), screen time remains steady at about 2.5 hours per day, but there has been a shift in how time on screens is being used. Gaming time has surged 65% in four years, and traditional TV viewing has declined, while short-form video platforms like TikTok and YouTube are on the rise, underscoring the increasingly complex media environment parents must navigate in their children's early years. In both age groups, boys are on screens more than girls. (Racialized) children use them more than white children, and children from lower-income households are spending nearly twice as much time with screens as those from higher-income households; 3:48 versus 1:52 hours daily (Common Sense Media, 2025).

Screens themselves are not inherently bad, but excessive access, particularly unmonitored browsing engaged in by children under the age of eight will displace activities key to healthy child development: physical activity, sleep, self-regulation, focus, language acquisition, critical thinking and discernment, and adversely impact academic achievement including reading. Cell phone use in Alberta classrooms was banned in 2024. While 75% to 80% of parents express concerns about screen and social media's impact, three-quarters also recognize the potential for learning and connection. Parents of young children face the dual challenge of navigating screen media use and preserving fundamental childhood experiences, including daily reading (which has declined from 64% to 52% among five- to eight-year-olds since 2017), despite overall screen time remaining steady (Common Sense Media, 2025).

A groundbreaking 2018 study by Horowitz-Kraus confirmed what many caregivers, doctors, and educators were noticing; its title says it all: "Brain connectivity in children is increased by the time they spend reading books and decreased by the length of exposure to screen-based media." Following Horowitz-Kraus' findings, a longitudinal study published just prior to the pandemic found that excessive screen time led to emotional dysregulation and negatively affected mathematics and literacy outcomes in school-age students (Cerniglia, 2021), similarly, navigating the tension between balancing technology's risks with its benefits is a challenge and an opportunity for the Library.

In the current post-pandemic culture and digital world, how do we help children become literate? The Library has an opportunity to consider technological advancements in the same way that it now considers books, play, and storytelling — as a tool to help children understand and make meaning from what they consume. A future approach might be a cross-departmental approach to digital literacy that balances technology access with the historical perspective of patrons; for example, wanting the Library's children's spaces free of screens.

Attention to digital citizenship, including digital and media literacy, as well as issues of digital equity are essential. Renowned researcher and curriculum

developer, Dr Faith Rogow, the founding President of the National Association for Media Literacy Education, says this: “We may be able to keep kids away from screens or certain aspects on screens like certain social media sites, but we can’t keep them away from their culture and we certainly can’t make education about telling them their culture is somehow bad. Because children and adolescents can have many kinds of interactions with technology, rather than setting a guideline for specific time limits on digital media use, evidence suggests considering the quality of interactions with digital media and not just the quantity or amount of time … . When we shift the paradigm from safety to education, we open design to activities and interactions that provide children with the full benefits of being literate. In a digital world, those benefits cannot be achieved without allowing children to engage with technology” (Rogow, 2024).

APPENDIX A: DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

Physical Development

Fine and Gross Motor Skills: 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."

Older school-age children can 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). As children grow older, they become increasingly able and motivated to plan, and ever further ahead. This is the drive that leads self-directed learners to think about goals big and small, and to deliberately seek out the knowledge and practice needed to achieve those goals. Research by cognitive scientists has shown that children who have ample free time to play and explore on their own and with other children, independent of adults, develop this capacity more fully than do children who spend more time in adult-structured activities. (Barker, J., 2014)

Healthy risk-taking: An environment 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, free play, and sports are all opportunities for healthy risks for the school-age child.

> Part of gaining independence is gaining courage — courage to face the challenges and deal with the emergencies that are part of every life. In their play groups, away from adults, children everywhere play in ways that adults might see as dangerous and might prevent … . Children imagine themselves dealing with trolls, witches, dragons, wolves, and other kinds of predators and murderers. In all such play, children are learning how to manage fear, a crucial skill in the face of the real-life dangers that confront everyone at some points in their lives. In play amongst themselves, children create their own activities and solve their own problems rather than rely on a powerful authority figure to do these for them. This is one of the great values of playing away from adults. In such play, they must, as it were, be the adults, precisely because there are no adults present (Gray, P. 2017).

Cognitive Development

Executive function: 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).

Autonomy: Children in the middle years are moving past developing foundational skills and are 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 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.

Academics: 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 are expected to move from learning to read to reading to learn and begin to understand nuance in language. Phonetic awareness and other structured literacy skills are a curriculum focus in Kindergarten through to Grade 3, after which research shows that 75% of children who do not overcome reading difficulties by the end of Grade 3, do not overcome them at all. (Dr Georgiou, 2021) To identify literacy challenges early, Alberta Education is implementing screening programs in Kindergarten to Grade 3 beginning in January 2025.

While the Alberta English Language Arts and Literature curriculum continues to support word recognition skills and decoding throughout grade levels, higher level reading skills are emphasized in upper elementary. By Grade 4, it is expected that 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. Low literacy and reading challenges became very apparent if not already recognized at an earlier stage.

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.

Neurodiversity: 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% of Canadian children and adolescents suffer from some form of mental disorder." Additionally, 750,000 school-aged children (one in five in the average classroom) have dyslexia, a learning disability that affects print and text literacy. In the classroom, the Alberta Teachers' Association stated in 2024 that 53% of teachers reported "having requested specialized assessments (such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, or psycho-educational evaluations) for their students this school year. However, more than half (56%) of teachers anticipate that their requests will not be fulfilled by the end of the school year, thus rendering them ineffective."

Cultural Development

Identity (Gender and Race): 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, race, and economic status, and of bias toward them and others, including their caregivers and family members.

Gender identity first emerges in early childhood and research suggests that some children may recognize a degree of mismatch between their gender identity and their assigned sex as early as age two – three years (Reilly, 2019). By age six – seven years, children begin to appreciate gender as an identity independent of external features. They may start to reduce outward or stereotypical expressions of gender (caregivers will notice less of an obsession with superheroes or princesses), though they often continue to show affinity for same-gender peers and gender-typed toys and clothing through middle childhood. Like their cisgender peers, school-age gender-diverse children can have a strong sense of gender identity and a preference for peers of the gender with which they identify, along with the objects and activities that are important to their peer group (Canadian Paediatric Society, 2023).

A 2025 UK study declared a crisis in boys reading for pleasure with data showing only 12% of 12- to 13-year-old boys read for fun. Not because of their sex at birth or because of neurology, the reading habits of boys differ from girls because of patriarchal views. For example, NeilsonIQ BookData's research also highlighted that infant and toddler boys and girls are treated differently by their caregivers and educators, with only 29% of baby boys read to "every day / nearly every day" compared to 44% of baby girls in the same age group (NeilsonIQ BookData, 2024). With the direct correlation between early literacy and reading later in life, it is important to acknowledge the effects of the patriarchal system of which we learn, teach, and play.

Culture: Cultural connections support the development of personal knowledge, identity, and social skills. Indigenous and Newcomer children in the middle years develop 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. 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. 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.

Social Emotional Development

Bullying: School-age children 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. Twenty-five percent 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). The multifaceted nature of harassment and bullying must also be understood within an intersectional framework. In the 2021 study, *Every Class In Every School*, the first national survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Canadian schools, almost two thirds (64%) of 2SLGBTQ+ students and 61% of students with 2SLGBTQ+ parents reported that they feel unsafe at school. Many racialized students reported being targeted due to their racialized identity as well as their sexual and / or gender identities.

Influence: 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). As they move into their preteen years, their communications with one another have ever more to do with the emotions and struggles they experience. They can be honest with their friends, because their friends are not going to overreact and try to assume control, the way that their parents or other adults might. The school-age years are the perfect time to introduce discussions of inequality and injustice; empowering children to advocate for themselves and others, which lead to active citizenship and global responsibility in the teen years and beyond. Opportunities to share their ideas and feedback at the Library can help children feel a sense of belonging in our libraries.

Communication Development

Media: Today's children 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. Preteens commonly engage in various online activities, including playing online interactive games, sending and receiving emails, and using social media. Notably, social media has emerged as a central platform for socializing and communication among "digital natives" — the first generation to be raised entirely within the internet and social media landscape (Turner, 2015). Four evidence-based principles— minimizing, mitigating, mindfully using, and modelling healthy use of digital media — can be used to guide children's experience with a rapidly changing media landscape. (Ponti, 2021)

Body Language and Trusted Adults: 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 practise 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). Library policy and trauma-informed training support staff in "duty of care": knowing which interactions require intervention for the safety of the child. Any Library staff member may be perceived as a trusted adult, someone for a child to talk to without judgement, particularly for those without a safe connection at home or school.

APPENDIX B: SIX CS

- **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).

"Individual success increasingly depends upon children's 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)

APPENDIX C: REFERENCES

Alberta Government, Education. (n.d.). Programs of Study. Retrieved from http://www.learnalberta.ca/ProgramsOfStudy.aspx?lang=en

Alberta Government, Public Library Services. (n.d.). Indigenous library services. Retrieved from http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/public-library-service-indigenous-services

Alberta Teachers' Association (Fall 2023) *Reporting on Class Size and Complexity, Aggression, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Alberta's K–12 Schools, Edmonton:* Alberta. Retrieved from COOR-101-39_ReportingOnAlbertaK-12Schools_2024-02-14.pdf

Alberta Teachers' Association (2016) *Education is our buffalo: A teachers' resource for First Nations, Metis and Inuit Education in Alberta*, Edmonton: Alberta. Retrieved from https://www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Human-Rights-Issues/Education%20is%20Our%20Buffalo%20(PD-80-7).pdf

Alexander, K., Entwisle, D. & Steffel Olson, L. (2007) Lasting consequences of the summer learning gap. *American Sociological Review*, 72, (2), 167 – 180.

Anderson, M. (2018, September 27). A majority of teens have experienced some form of cyberbullying. Pew Research Centre. Washington: DC. Retrieved from https://www.pewinternet.org/2018/09/27/a-majority-of-teens-have-experienced-some-form-of-cyberbullying/

Barr, D., Harrison, J., & Conery, L. (2011). Computational thinking: A digital age skill for everyone. *Learning & Leading with Technology*, 38(6), 20 – 23.

Barker, J. et al (2014). Less-structured time in children's lives predicts self-directed executive functioning. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5, 1 – 16.

Bay Area Discovery Museum and Center for Childhood Creativity. (2017). *Creative summer learning experiences*. Retrieved from https://calchallenge.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Creative-Summer-Book_FINAL_5.8.17.pdf

Bay Area Discovery Museum and Center for Childhood Creativity. (2018). *Promising practices: A guide for library staff*. Retrieved from http://448bn62kp97s14oorg3xs7hn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/03/PP_03.2018-1.pdf

Bay Area Discovery Museum and Center for Childhood Creativity. (2016). *Reimaging school readiness: A position paper with key findings*. Retrieved from https://centerforchildhoodcreativity.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/03/CCC_SchoolReadinessPositionPaper_Electronic.pdf

Bell, M. K. (2016). Teaching at the intersections: Honor and teach about your students' multiple identities. *Teaching Tolerance*, (53). Retrieved from https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/summer-2016/teaching-at-the-intersections

Brisson-Boivin, Kara. (2018). "The Digital Well-Being of Canadian Families." MediaSmarts. Ottawa.

Blair, C., & Razza, R.P. (2007) Relating effortful control, executive function and false belief understanding to emerging math and literacy ability in kindergarten. *Child Development*, 78, 647 – 663.

Blevins, W. (2016). A fresh look at phonics, grades K-2: *Common causes of failure and 7 ingredients for success*. Corwin Press. Thousand Oaks: California

Calgary Board of Education. (2024). *Annual Education Results Report*, *2023-2024*. Retrieved from: https://cbe.ab.ca/FormsManuals/Annual-Education-Results-Report.pdf

Calgary Board of Education (2018). *Three Year Education Strategy, 2018-2021*. Calgary, AB. Retrieved from https://www.cbe.ab.ca/FormsManuals/Three-Year-Education-Plan.pdf

Calgary Civic Census (2019). Calgary, AB. Retrieved from: https://www.calgary.ca/CA/city-clerks/Document/Election-and-information-services/Census2019/2019_CensusResultsBook.pdf

Canadian Library Association (2014) Leading learning: Standards of practice for school library learning commons in Canada, Ottawa, ON. Retrieved from https://apsds.org/wp-content/uploads/Standards-of-Practice-for-SchoolLibrary-Learning-Commons-in-Canada-2014.pdf

Canadian Paediatric Society (2017, November 27). Screen time and young children: promoting health and development in a digital world. *Paediatric Child Health*, 22(8): 461 – 468. Retrieved from https://www.cps.ca/en/documents/position/screen-time-and-young-children

Canadian Paediatric Society (2023) An affirming approach to caring for transgender and gender-diverse youth. *Paediatrics & Child Health*, 28, 437 – 448 https://doi.org/10.1093/pch/pxad045

Calgary Public Library (2017). *Early learning strategy*. Calgary, AB. Retrieved from https://d4804za1f1gw.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2014/10/29093638/Early-Learning-Strategy.pdf

Cajete, G. (2000). Native science: *Natural laws of interdependence*. Clear Light Publishing.

Canadian School Libraries (CSL) (2018). *Leading learning: Standards of practice for school library learning commons in Canada*. Retrieved from http://llsop.canadianschoollibraries.ca

Castellano, M. B. (2002). Aboriginal family trends: Extended families, nuclear families, families of the heart. Contemporary Family Trends. The Vanier Institute of the Family.

Cerniglia, L., Cimino, S., & Ammaniti, M. (2021). What are the effects of screen time on emotion regulation and academic achievements? A three-wave longitudinal study on children from 4 to 8 years of age. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 19(2), 145 –160. https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718X20969846

Cheah, C. S., & Chirkov, V. (2008). Parents' personal and cultural beliefs regarding young children: A cross-cultural study of aboriginal and Euro-Canadian mothers. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 39(4), 402 – 423.

City of Calgary (2019) Social Wellbeing Policy

City of Calgary (2016). Imagine Calgary: Calgary's Plan for Long Range Urban Sustainability.

Clinton-Lisell, V., Strouse, G. & Langowski, M. (2024). Children's engagement during shared reading of ebooks and paper books: A systematic review, *International Journal of Child-Computer Interaction*. 39. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijcci.2023.100632.

Common Sense Media. (2021) Retrieved from: https://www.commonsensemedia.org/research/the-common-sense-census-media-use-by-tweens-and-teens-2021—

Common Sense Media. (2025) *The Common Sense Census: Media Use in Children Zero to Eight*. Retrieved from: https://www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/research/report/2025-common-sense-census-web-2.pdf

Craig, W. & Pepler, D. J. (1997). Observations of bullying and victimization in the schoolyard. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology,* 13(2), 41 – 59.

Creating a Nation of Learners Strategic Plan 2012-2016. (2012). Washington, D.C.: Institute of Museum and Library Services. Distributed by ERIC Clearinghouse.

Csillag, J. (2019). Reading and writing milestones: How (and when) children develop. Retrieved from https://www.noodle.com/articles/reading-and-writing-milestones-how-and-when-children-develop

Cooper, Merrill (2013). Positive Social Ties. *Family and Community Support Services*. The City of Calgary

Dabrowski, Joan and Marshall, Tanji Reed (2018). Motivation and engagement in student assignments: The role of choice and relevancy". *The Education Trust*. Washington: DC. Retrieved from https://www.forestoftherain.net/motivation-and-engagement-in-student-assignments-the-role-of-choice-and-relevancy.html

Doepke, M., & Zilibotti, F. (2019). Love, money & parenting: How economics explains the way we raise our kids. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Duckworth, A. (2016). Grit: *The power of passion and perseverance*. New York: Scribner.

Dweck, C. S. (2016). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Dyslexia Canada (2024) Mark it Read 2024 Breaking the Silence on Dyslexia, press release.

Edwards, C., Gandini, L. & Forman, G. (2011). *The hundred languages of children: the Reggio Emilia experience in transformation, 3rd edition*. Santa Barbara: CA. Praeger.

Faber, C. (2012) *Library to learning commons implementation guide*. Calgary: Alberta, Calgary Board of Education. Retrieved from http://school.cbe.ab.ca/School/Repository/SBAttachments/354d1bc8-48c9-4ab3-a841-53bf738562a5_learning-commons-implementation-guide.pdf

Ferguson, Eve (2017, May 7) Afterschool programs for teens to get 'refreshed' with new strategy. Calgary Herald. Retrieved from https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/after-school-programs-for-teens-to-get-refreshed-with-new-strategy

Floridi, L. (2014). *The fourth revolution: How the infosphere is reshaping human reality*. OUP Oxford.

Freire, P., & Macedo, D. (2018). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Gartrell, D. (n.d.) Readiness: Not a state of knowledge, but a state of mind. Washington: DC. National Association for the Education of Young People. Retrieved from https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/readiness-not-state-knowledge-state-mind

Georgiou, George. (2021). Covid-19's Impact on Children's Reading Scores: Data Trends and Complementary Interview. 2. 34 – 39.

Golinkoff, R. M., & Hirsh-Pasek, K. (2016). *Becoming brilliant: What science tells us about raising successful children*. American Psychological Association. Washington: DC.

Gray, Peter (2017) The Culture of Childhood: We've Almost Destroyed It, Retrieved from https://medium.com/the-mission/the-culture-of-childhood-weve-almost-destroyed-it

Harris, Angela and Leonardo, Zeus. (2018). Intersectionality, race, gender subordination and education. *Review of Research in Education*, 42,1 – 27

Harvey, S., Ward, A., & Pilkey, D. (2017). *From striving to thriving: How to grow confident, capable readers.* New York: NY. Scholastic Teaching Resources.

Horowitz-Kraus T, Hutton JS. Brain connectivity in children is increased by the time they spend reading books and decreased by the length of exposure to screen-based media. Acta Paediatr. 2018 Apr;107(4):685-693. doi: 10.1111/apa.14176. Epub 2017 Dec 27. PMID: 29215151.

Institute of Museum and Library Services (2013). *Growing young minds: How museums and libraries create lifelong learners*. Washington: DC

Ipsos Reid. (2012, March 19). *The internet a new school yard for bullies?* [Press Release]. Retrieved from https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/internet-new-school-yard-bullies

Knobel, M. (2001). "I'm not a pencil man": How one student challenges our notions of literacy "failure" in school. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 44, 404 – 414.

Kutcher, S., Venn, D., & Szumilas, M. (2009). Mental health: The next frontier of health education. *Education Canada*, 49(2). 44 – 45. Retrieved from http://www.cea-ace.ca/sites/cea-ace.ca/files/EdCan2009-v49-n2-Kutcher.pdf

Langer, J. A. (n.d.). *Reading and Writing in School-Age Children: A Developmental View*. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED258135.pdf.

Lee Valley, C., Castaneda, L., & Scanlon, M. (2016) *Shoreline kindergarten readiness report*. Foundry10. Seattle: WA. Retrieved from https://www.foundry10.org/research/shoreline-kindergarten-readiness

Lindstrom, G., Choate, P., Bastien, L., Weasel Traveller, A., Breaker, S., Breaker, C., & Good Striker, E. (2016). *Nistawatsiman exploring First Nations parenting: A literature review and expert consultation with Blackfoot elders*. Calgary, AB: Mount Royal University.

Madigan, S., Browne, D., Racine, N., Mori, C. & Tough,S. (2019). Association between screen time and children's performance on a developmental screening test. *JAMA Pediatrics*.

McCrindle, M., Fell, A., & Buckerfield, S. (2021). Generation alpha: *Understanding our children and helping them thrive*. Hachette Australia.

McKeough A. (1992). A neo-structural analysis of children's narrative and its development. In: R. Case (Ed.), *The mind's staircase: Exploring the conceptual underpinnings of children's thought and knowledge* (pp. 171 – 188). Hillsdale: New Jersey. Erlbaum.

McMaster, G. (2023) Alberta elementary students reading skills rebound with extra help. *Folio*. University of Alberta. Retrieved from: https://www.ualberta.ca/en/folio/2023/02/alberta-elementary-students-reading-skills-rebound-with-expert-help.html

NeilsonIQ BookData (2025). *Understanding the UK children's book consumer*. Retrieved from: https://www.book2look.com/book/k11qr5FMFM

National Reading Panel. (2000). *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. Bethesda: MD. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health.

Navarro, J., Johnstone, F., Temple Newhook, J., Smith, M., Wallace Skelton, J., Prempeh, K., Lopez, LS.,C., Scheim, A., Bauer, G. on behalf of the Trans PULSE Canada Team. Health and well-being among trans and non-binary youth. 2021-06-25. Retrieved from: https://transpulsecanada.ca/research-type/reports

Jukic, R., & Skojo, T. (2021). The educational needs of the alpha generation. 2021 44th International Convention on Information, Communication and Electronic Technology (MIPRO), 564 – 569. https://doi.org/10.23919/MIPRO52101.2021.9597106

O'Donnell, D. (2018). *Haircuts by children: And other evidence for a new social contract*. Toronto: ON. Coach House Books.

Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services. (2017). *On my way: A guide to support middle years child development*. Retrieved from http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/documents/middleyears/On-MY-Way-Middle-Years.pdf

Payne, K. J. (2015). *The soul of discipline: The simplicity parenting approach to warm, firm, and calm guidance--from toddlers to teens.* New York: NY. Ballantine Books.

Peet, L. (2017). Public Partners: From shared systems to automatic library card sign-ups, more public libraries are teaming up with public schools to achieve greater impact. *Library Journal*. 36 – 40

Peter, T., Campbell, C.P., & Taylor, C. (2021). Still in every class in every school: Final report on the second climate survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Canadian schools. Key Takeaways. Toronto, ON: Egale Canada Human Rights Trust.

Ponti, M. (2023) Screen time and preschool children: Promoting health and development in a digital world. *Paediatrics & Child Health*. 28(3). 184 – 192 https://doi.org/10.1093/pch/pxac125

Red Horse, J. (1997). Traditional American Indian family systems. *Families, Systems, & Health*, 15, 243 – 250. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0089828

Reilly M, Desousa V, Garza-Flores A, Perrin EC. Young children with gender nonconforming behaviors and preferences. J Dev Behav Pediatr 2019;40(1): 60 – 71. doi: 10.1097/DBP.0000000000000612.

Reimers, F. M., & Chung, C. K. (2016). *Teaching and learning for the twenty-first century: Educational goals, policies, and curricula from six nations*. Cambridge: MA. Harvard Education Press.

Resiliency Initiatives. (2011). *Embracing a strengths-based practice and perspective in education*. Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees

Rogow, F. (2024) Teaching Critical Thinking About TV, Videos, Online Games, and Apps in Early Childhood, Early Childhood Investigations Webinars, http://www.earlychildhoodwebinars.org/webinar-resources/

Samuel, A. (2015, November 4). Parents: Reject Technology Shame. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2015/11/why-parents-shouldnt-feel-technology-shame/414163/

Scholastic Canada (2017) *Kids & family reading report Canadian edition*. Retrieved from http://www.scholastic.ca/readingreport/index.php

School-age creative learning and development: What to expect. (2019). Retrieved from https://raisingchildren.net.au/school-age/development/creative-development/school-age-creative-development

Shamir, A. & Shlafer, I. (2011). E-books effectiveness in promoting phonological awareness and concept about print: A comparison between children at risk for learning disabilities and typically developing kindergarteners. *Computers & Education*. 57. 1989 – 1997. 10.1016/j.compedu.2011.05.001.

Sherer I, Hanks M. Affirming pediatric care for transgender and gender expansive youth. Pediatr Ann 2021; 50(2): e65–e71. doi: 10.3928/19382359-20210115-01 peg

Schwartz, Sarah (2025) Reading scores fall to new low on NAEP, fueled by declines for struggling students. *Education Week*. Retrieved from: https://www.edweek.org/leadership/reading-scores-fall-to-new-low-on-naep-fueled-by-declines-for-struggling-students/2025/01

Simard, E., & Blight, S. (2011). Developing a culturally restorative approach to aboriginal child and youth development: Transitions to adulthood. *First Peoples Child & Family Review*, 6(1), 28 – 55.

Stanford Children's Health (n.d.). The growing child: School-age (6 to 12 years). Retrieved from https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=the-growing-child-school-age-6-to-12-years-90-P02278&sa=U&ei=eMq7VNe2I8_4yQSX-oCwAw&ved=0CEIQFjAI&usg=AFQjCNFn5tO-78ISMzUno4_7cO4dCvft1Q

Statistics Canada (2017). 2017: The year in statistics. *Statistics Canada*. Retrieved from https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/blog/cs/2017-year-stats

The Calgary Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee (2017) *Indigenous Policy Framework for the City of Calgary.* Calgary, Alberta. City of Calgary. Retrieved from https://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/CNS/Pages/First-Nations-Metis-and-Inuit-Peoples/First-Nations-Metis-Inuit-Peoples.aspx

The Calgary Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee (2016) *White goose flying: A report to the City of Calgary on the Indian residential school truth and reconciliation, calls to action.* Calgary: Alberta. May 2016. Retrieved from https://pub-calgary.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=28404

O'Donnell, D. (2018, April 3) Would you let a 10-year-old cut your hair? Artist argues we should give kids more control [Radio Program]. *The Current*. Toronto: CBC

Toronto Public Library. (2014). *Toronto Public Library's middle child framework: Serving Toronto's children ages six to 12*. Retrieved from https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the library/pdfs/board/meetings/2014/jan20/18_2.pdf

Ullrich, J. S. (2019). For the love of our children: An indigenous connectedness framework. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 15, 121–130. https://doi.org/10.1177/1177180119828114

Urban Libraries Council (n.d.) *Public partners for early literacy: Library-school partnerships closing opportunity gaps*. Washington: DC. Retrieved from https://www.urbanlibraries.org/assets/___ULC_Opportunity_Gap_Report.pdf

Urban Libraries Council (n.d.) *Leadership brief: Library-school partnerships to improve reading proficiency.* Washington: DC. Retrieved from https://www.urbanlibraries.org/files/Library-School-Partnerships-to-Improve-Reading-Proficiency.pdf

Vergara D., Antón-Sancho Á., Maldonado JJ., Nieto-Sobrino M. (2022) Impact of Using Facemasks on Literacy Learning: The Perception of Early Childhood Education Teachers. Eur J Investig Health Psychol Educ. 2022 Jun 17;12(6):639-654. doi: 10.3390/ejihpe12060048. PMID: 35735469; PMCID: PMC9222086.

Waters S., Richardson M., Mills SR., Marris A., Harris F., Parker M. (2024) Beyond attachment theory: Indigenous perspectives on the child–caregiver bond from a northwest tribal community, *Child Development*, Volume 95, Issue 6, 18 June 2024. doi:10.1111/cdev.14127 November / December 2024

Weisberg, D. S., Hirsh-Pasek, K., Golinkoff, R. M., Kittredge, A. K., & Klahr, D. (2016). Guided play: Principles and practices. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 25 (3), 177 – 182.

Wolf, M., & Stoodley, C. J. (2008). Proust and the squid: *The story and science of the reading brain*. New York: NY. Harper Perennial.

Younging, G. (2018). *Elements of Indigenous style: A guide for writing by and about Indigenous Peoples.* Toronto: ON. Brush Education.