



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2023.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).


PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: County of Henrico
Program Title: The Library Learning Commons Project
Program Category: Customer Service

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Title: Deputy County Manager for Administration
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Program Overview

Henrico County Public Schools' (HCPS) Library Learning Commons project reimagined the school division's libraries by designing a library environment that empowers agency and amplifies deeper learning for all students. Updated Library Learning Commons spaces will provide learners with varied opportunities to:

- Access diverse collections: Provide easy access to diverse collections supporting personalized selections based on interest to cultivate a love of reading and LifeReady literacy and grow as global citizens.
- Collaborate: Provide collaborative spaces where learners can form partnerships with other learners, share learning and engage in student-led presentations to better develop communication and collaboration skills.
- Create: Provide a collaborative workspace for making, learning, exploring and sharing that cultivates a "maker mindset" and develops critical and creative-thinking skills. Creating can be digital, physical, spatial, or experiential and allow learners to connect and create with their talents, interests and passions.
- Showcase learning: Provide space that encourages students to showcase their learning, demonstrate progress and receive feedback developing communication and collaboration skills.
- Independent space: Provide a space for processing and evaluating information and constructing meaningful knowledge to support student learning goals and develop critical-thinking skills.

In 2022, 32 HCPS school libraries were selected for updates to support the Library Learning Commons project.

Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality

Feedback data from staff members and students across the division highlighted barriers to the openness and inclusivity of library space for all learners. This affected the culture of the library space and the number of patrons and events happening in libraries.

Barriers highlighted by staff and students include:

- Library entrances were outfitted with large security gates that would trigger alarms at random times, creating an unfavorable first impression.

- These library security gates also reduced the space near library entrances, hindering mobility and access. We found that this and the alarm noise caused distress for some learners with disabilities.
- The outdated furnishings were heavy and difficult to maneuver and rearrange within the space for varied learning experiences. They made the spaces feel unwelcoming.

Previous funding constraints perpetuated these barriers. Only recently, no funds were designated to refresh the interiors of school libraries. Schools received funds for library furnishings when a school was built or renovated, depending on the budget for the renovation. Henrico County has schools ranging in age from 10 to 97 years, except for three major renovations funded by the county in 2021. At the start of the 2021-22 school year, some schools were still outfitted with the original furnishings from the years they were built.

How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria

The mission of Henrico's Library Learning Commons is to provide every student with a learning environment that provides opportunities to think, create, share and grow through inquiry, inclusiveness, collaboration, curation, exploration and engagement on their journeys to be life ready. This is happening through increased student involvement in what is happening in Library Learning Commons spaces, better meeting students' needs and preparing students to be life ready. The project is an effective and innovative way to accomplish these goals.

How Program Was Carried Out

The Library Learning Commons program asserts that libraries should be welcoming, comfortable, flexible and inclusive. Having an inviting space encourages staff and student engagement and frequent use. Updating a school library space serves a variety of purposes:

- Adding flexible gathering spaces embodies the values expressed in the Henrico Learner Profile, HCPS' blueprint for learning. The profile promotes inquiry, creativity, collaboration and community.
- Adding new library furnishings supports flexible, mobile and purposeful use of library spaces. New library furnishings support collaborative learning as well as focused individual study.

- Extra storage and moveable tables and carts help support “maker space” areas. New, flexible furnishings and storage options have encouraged the creation of more maker areas, maker hubs and mobile maker spaces.
- The removal of library security gates has created a more welcoming atmosphere.

These changes support our mission to provide every learner with an environment that promotes opportunities to think, create, share and grow through inquiry, inclusiveness, collaboration, curation, exploration and engagement on their journey to be life ready.

When determining which schools would be selected for the Library Learning Commons project, program organizers considered the following:

- The year the school was built.
- The year of a school’s most recent renovation.
- The enrollment of each school.
- The school’s magisterial district location in Henrico County.
- The current state of the school’s library, as determined through school visits, surveys and conversations with library staff.

Preparation: February - May 2022

We started this project by asking the question: *“Do our Library Learning Commons spaces still serve our students on their journeys to becoming life-ready?”* During our initial work, we focused on:

1. Student and teacher voices: Use previous project prototyping and feedback to review student and teacher voices about the libraries and use them to outline the vision for Library Learning Commons spaces.
2. School-based review: School librarians and library staff assessed the state of their spaces and used the assessment tool to identify needs. Provided data to the school division’s library specialist by Feb. 15, 2022.
3. Communicating the vision: Library specialist and/or school librarian met and shared the vision and designed selection parameters with the innovative learning coach and school principal to help schools make informed decisions for their school’s Library Learning Commons spaces. Completed by May 18, 2022.

4. Selections: The school librarian, the innovative learning coach and the principal met to discuss parameters for design decisions and collaborated to make tiered selections to share with the library specialist by May 24, 2022.
5. Aggregate purchase data by school and vendor for delivery verification and inventory by May 31, 2022.
6. Needs presented to HCPS' director of teaching, learning and innovation and the chief of learning for purchase approval by May 31, 2022.

Purchase: June 2022

- School librarian(s) and the innovative learning coach provided school-based details and points of contact for delivery and communication over the summer to the library specialist by June 3, 2022.
- A communication system was developed for the library specialist to provide updates on the status of deliveries and confirm orders for payment by June 10, 2022.
- By June 15, 2022, all requisitions were made.
- June 21, 2022: Closeout and professional learning (librarians and innovative learning coaches)

Launch: July-August 2022

- Ongoing professional learning for librarians and innovative learning coaches
 - Aug. 8, 2022 - Curriculum design day
 - Aug. 11, 2022 - Teacher conference
 - Aug. 17, 2022 - Elementary librarian professional learning
 - Aug. 18, 2022 - Secondary librarian professional learning
- School-based setup
 - Evaluated existing layout and plan for redesign
 - Involved students, staff members and administration
- Implementation
 - Removal of old furnishings
 - Placement and use of new furnishings
 - Collaboration with staff
- Cross-school support (administration and innovative learning coaches)

Concept revision and reinforcement: September 2022 to present

- Ongoing professional learning for librarians and innovative learning coaches.
- Ongoing teacher professional learning in support of Library Learning Commons concepts being applied to classroom settings.
- Redesign of space and extension of newly defined area.
- Added items based on effectiveness.
- Added items based on the requests of student and teacher needs.
- Continued to add flexible, comfortable, fun, collaborative and creative spaces.
- Students and staff continued researching, collaborating, ideating, reflecting, receiving feedback, refining, showcasing, learning and building on new concepts.

Financing and Staffing

Funding was provided by the division in the amount of \$600,000, which was dedicated to new school library furnishings.

The HCPS Department of Teaching, Learning and Innovation purchased 150 copies of “The Space: A Guide For Educators” to facilitate professional development with librarians and innovative learning coaches to support their role in realizing their school’s Library Learning Commons vision. The total cost of the books was \$2,700.

Program Results

The results are overwhelmingly positive. Having moveable tables, seating, and shelving allows for easy transition of teaching spaces and is best practice for collaborative learning and meeting needs of learners. The libraries have been transformed to student centered learning commons with events being hosted in an environment better suited for them. From collaboration on mobile white-board furniture to seating that moves and accommodates the size and needs of all students. Because students took ownership in the creation of the space, they are more comfortable using the space for various activities and events. We have seen a huge increase in the number of author visits and guest speakers as well as clubs and events in the library learning commons because the spaces are inclusive and inviting as well as functional. We know librarians are more invested in their libraries because they are asking for more ways to transform the space and make it better. Administrators and parents are noticing as well and offering continued support to help the library learning commons evolve and be successful.

Overall effects of transformed space making it more welcoming and inclusive

- Portable white boards, cabinets and tables allow students to “leave their mark” through artwork, poetry, questions, goals, etc.
- Students provided input about what should be purchased and how it should be used. This resulted in more voice and choice for students.
- Quick and easy transformation of space.
- More diverse learning and relaxing spaces - individual, collaborative, whole class.
- Flexible spaces used for different activities at the same time.
- More student meetings (clubs, activities, collaborating) and overall, more use of space
- More staff usage through teaching, tutoring, displays, meetings, clubs, book fairs, guest speakers, spelling bee, staff events, county events, community events and professional learning.
- Multiple groups are meeting for different purposes at the same time in library.
- Tables are easier and safer for students in wheelchairs and with special needs to use.
- Old furnishings were piecemeal, assembled from donations. Furnishings didn’t match and students didn’t treat it very well. Students now have more pride in the spaces and are taking better care of them.
- Color and coordination of furnishings create a brighter and more inviting atmosphere.
- Variety of seating options allow for students to choose spaces that best suit their needs.
- Front-facing shelves have encouraged more diversity in what is checked out. Prior to this students chose from books put on a table, which didn’t afford students many choices.
- Removal of library security gates make the library more welcoming by not hindering students from entering.
- More modern feel to library space.

Brief Summary

By revitalizing 32 libraries across Henrico County Public Schools, the Library Learning Commons project has been able to successfully make these spaces more accessible, welcoming and inviting for students to use in advancing their education. Barriers to entry like dated furniture, uncompromising spaces and lack of creative outlets were directly addressed through this project, making these dozens of libraries into engaging, versatile work spaces that both students and teachers are enthusiastic about using. Students and teachers were essential parts of the renovation processes at all of these schools, meaning their libraries now properly reflect the needs and desires they expressed most. Most any type of accommodation can now be met, whether it’s

multiple groups looking to meet at the same time or students with special needs being able to functionally access or use different spaces. Using the Henrico Learner Profile as a guidepost for further innovation, the Library Learning Commons project will continue to make libraries evolving, inviting environments going forward.

The Library Learning Commons Project Supplemental Material

LLC Inspiration: [Inspiration Gallery](#)

LLC picture folder:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/14OByplwZne4K1q8wVfyXxHARdQLtyWcz>

Resource: Hare, R. L., & Dillon, R. (2016). "The space: A guide for educators." Blend Education.