

Learning Commons Program Review 2024-2025

Introduction:

Highly effective school library programs are built through a shared mission, vision, and investment by the entire school community (MASL, 2017). School libraries support classroom curriculum and learning by providing comprehensive information resources—including books, articles, and digital databases—while fostering collaboration through flexible spaces for group work and project-based learning.

MSAD 75 has embraced a Learning Commons model that transforms the traditional library from a repository of physical materials into a dynamic, technology-rich space where the school community can learn, create, and collaborate. This model serves as a bridge between formal and informal learning, integrating traditional library services with educational technology and multimedia resources to ensure all community members have the tools and support needed to succeed in our digital world. The Learning Commons fosters an inclusive environment where creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration flourish. By moving beyond the traditional library approach, it supports diverse learning styles while ensuring equitable access to educational resources and technology.

This review will evaluate MSAD 75's Learning Commons based on the standards set by the Maine rubrics published by the Maine Association of School Libraries (MASL). This rubric (Appendix A) outlines specific criteria and performance levels to assess different aspects of a library program, such as collection development, instruction, collaboration with teachers, and community engagement, allowing for a structured evaluation of the library's quality and impact. The MASL Program Standards provide an aspirational roadmap toward excellence in school library programs. Our review team is excited to showcase how our dedicated staff and Learning Commons spaces are leading us along this path to excellence.

Program Context (History)

Since the 2018-2019 Learning Commons review, our district has fully transformed its traditional libraries into dynamic learning hubs including opening a brand new state-of-the-art Learning Commons space in our new Mt. Ararat High School. Gone are the quiet rooms with rows of bookshelves, replaced by vibrant spaces where students and teachers actively engage in learning, research, and innovation.

MSAD 75's Learning Commons embraces modern educational approaches through:

- Digital and information literacy development with diverse resources
- Student-driven inquiry and discovery

- Flexible spaces supporting both individual and collaborative work
- Teacher professional development and curriculum planning
- Technology integration and digital content creation with Tech Support for staff and students with Chromebooks, Macbook Airs, Computer Software, Printer/Copiers, Prometheans, and AV Equipment.
- Community engagement opportunities

This design features comfortable seating, adaptable spaces, and integrated technology, supporting a wide range of learning activities and teaching approaches. This evolution reflects our commitment to creating environments that prepare students for success in an increasingly collaborative and digital world.

Staffing Model:

	Library Media Specialist	Library Support Staff
Elementary	1 FTE that is shared BCS, BHM, HCS 1 FTE that is shared WES, WCS	1 FTE at each school
Middle	1 FTE LMS	2 FTE
High	1 FTE LMS	2 FTE

Review Process:

The Learning Commons Review was conducted using a self-evaluation framework based on the Maine Association of School Libraries (MASL) standards. Each school's Learning Commons team assessed their program against these comprehensive standards, which provide benchmarks for excellence in school library services. The scoring rubric ranges from "Developing" to "Highly Effective," allowing schools to identify both areas of strength and opportunities for growth.

This systematic approach enabled each school to reflect on their implementation of Learning Commons services, including curriculum integration, information literacy instruction, reading promotion, and technology integration. The following report details these self-assessed scores, providing evidence-based documentation of how each school's Learning Commons program meets MASL standards while highlighting specific achievements and areas for future development. This

self-evaluation process not only measures current performance but also helps guide strategic planning for continuous improvement of Learning Commons services across the district.

Domain I. 21st-Century Learning: Curriculum Design, Instruction and Assessment Standards

- 1A. Curriculum
- 1B. Collaborative Planning
- 1C. Instruction
- 1D. Assessment
- 1E. Reader Advisory
- 1F. Literacy Instruction

The domain offers guidance on how the Learning Commons program plays an essential role in enhancing student learning by supporting literacy, information literacy, and digital citizenship across academic disciplines. How can the program aim to improve learning outcomes by developing students' ability to locate, evaluate, and ethically use information—skills that are foundational for lifelong learning and success in a digital world?

Descriptors help define how to support students' academic and personal growth by fostering critical thinking and promoting a culture of reading, inquiry, and creativity that consistently supports mastering 21st-century skills.

Elementary Domain 1:

The elementary Learning Commons program operates at a developing to effective level across the district, with variations among schools reflecting both strengths and opportunities for growth. While maintaining a written curriculum that integrates information literacy and research skills, the program excels particularly in literacy promotion through diverse initiatives including weekly read-alouds, a Woofs and Books program, book talks, and school-wide events such as Battle of the Books and March Madness-style nonfiction competitions. The Library Media Specialist (LMS) and Learning Commons paraprofessionals deliver lessons incorporating critical thinking strategies, makerspace elements, coding instruction, and digital citizenship through delivery consistency varies among schools.

The program demonstrates forward momentum in several key areas while acknowledging the need for continued development. Notably, inquiry-based learning is supported through thinking routines like See-Think-Wonder, and student engagement is fostered through varied assessment methods including exit tickets and SeeSaw documentation for K-2 learners. Professional collaboration is developing, with the LMS attending curriculum planning meetings and providing resources, though there are opportunities to strengthen co-teaching relationships and curriculum mapping. Current focus areas for improvement include formalizing assessment documentation, expanding digital literacy integration, standardizing lesson delivery across schools, and deepening connections with the district's curriculum, all while maintaining the flexibility to meet individual school needs.

Middle School Domain 1:

The middle school Learning Commons program operates at the high end of "Developing to Effective," with several areas achieving "Highly Effective" status. The program excels through a comprehensive approach that combines structured curriculum delivery with dynamic literacy promotion. The Library Media Specialist delivers information literacy and research skills through Target classes while collaborating extensively with ELA and Social Studies departments. This instruction incorporates critical elements such as media literacy, cyberbullying prevention, and responsible information use through innovative teaching methods including the Question Formulation Technique (QFT) and makerspace activities.

Particularly noteworthy is the program's exceptional commitment to reading promotion and literary engagement. The Learning Commons hosts the district-wide Battle of the Books tournament that now attracts approximately 175 participants and includes author visits with writing workshops. The Learning Commons has been thoughtfully organized to enhance accessibility, with strategic book displays, and creative promotional activities such as book fairs, reading challenges, and innovative contests. The program demonstrates strong inclusivity through individualized book recommendations, maintenance of a curated "Hi-Lo" collection for struggling readers, and collaboration with teachers to support diverse learning needs. While formal assessment was more structured when Learning Commons classes were part of the Exploratory program, current Target classes maintain high standards through embedded learning targets and real-world skill applications.

High School Domain 1:

The high school Learning Commons program currently operates at varying levels of effectiveness across different service areas. The program demonstrates particular strength in targeted academic support, with the Library Media Specialist providing specialized information and digital literacy instruction through collaborative partnerships. Notable examples include work with AP 2D Art classes, support for 9th-grade research projects in Social Studies and Science, and individualized assistance for Senior Papers and Eagle Legacy Projects. The LMS has also developed valuable partnerships with the Technology Integrator to create Digital Citizenship and Academic Honesty Modules for grades 9-12.

The program is actively working to strengthen its foundations and expand services. The LMS maintains a flexible schedule and attends Department Head Team Meetings, though curriculum integration remains at a developing stage. Reading promotion initiatives include a weekly student book club, Poetry Out Loud events, and diverse collection development incorporating multiple formats and reading levels. Looking ahead, the program has established clear 3 year goals for enhancement, including implementing author visits, school-wide reading initiatives, and expanded collaborative planning with content area teachers.

Domain II. The Library as Learning Commons: Collection Development and Library Management Standards

- 2A. Materials and Resources
- 2B. Access
- 2C. Funding
- 2D. Space
- 2E. Environment
- 2F. Technology
- 2G. Library Media Specialist (LMS) Access
- 2H. Support Staff
- 2I. Schedule

Domain II of the MASL rubric highlights the Learning Commons' role in creating an inviting and accessible learning environment while effectively managing resources that meet diverse student and staff needs. A highly effective Learning Commons is organized to support a culture of exploration, inquiry, and literacy. This includes maintaining a welcoming library environment with comfortable spaces for both individual study and group collaboration, as well as providing access to a range of high-quality resources that reflect multiple perspectives and learning styles.

Effective resource management in the Learning Commons (LC) encompasses several key responsibilities. First, the LC curates a diverse and relevant collection of books, media, and technology to support the curriculum, student interests, and evolving educational standards. This collection reflects the cultural diversity and varied reading levels within the school community. Second, the LC ensures these resources are accessible to all members of the school community. To maintain a current and relevant collection, the LC regularly evaluates and updates its holdings. Finally, LC staff assist with on-site technology troubleshooting to ensure equitable access to digital resources. (Appendix C).

Elementary Domain II:

The elementary school libraries demonstrate several strengths alongside notable areas for improvement, which collectively highlight both effective practices and opportunities for growth across the district. A clear strength is in collection development, where a practice exists to incorporate student and staff suggestions and facilitate interlibrary loans, ensuring access to diverse perspectives and digital resources. This is supported by the staff expertise of Library Support Staff in each library, some of whom provide direct instruction and Reader Advisory services. The integration of technology within library spaces—including Promethean boards, digital microscopes, and access to state-provided research databases—further enriches the learning environment, with an expanding use of instructional software. Physically, some libraries feature flexible furniture arrangements and dedicated areas for storytelling, makerspaces, and displaying student work, creating a positive, welcoming environment that promotes the 4Cs: collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity

Despite these strengths, certain areas for improvement have been identified, particularly in collection currency, as many libraries have outdated materials and an imbalance in genre representation, with limited funding hampering updates. In some buildings accessibility within these collections could also

improve, with inconsistent signage across libraries and varied policies regarding overdue or lost materials, creating potential barriers for students. Staff workload is another concern; LC paraprofessional responsibilities range widely, with some overwhelmed by additional teaching duties, technology support, and administrative tasks. If the district were interested in attaining a Highly Effective rating in Library Media Specialist (LMS) [Access], another LMS would need to be added at the elementary level to reach the recommended ratio of approximately 1 to 500 students with well-qualified, adequate support staff to meet the program needs. This would afford skilled instruction for K-5 and even out paraprofessional responsibilities (see Appendix D).

To address collection challenges, it is recommended that the LMSs at all levels create a 5-year plan for collection development across the district. To support this, a regular audit of each library's collection and a district-wide library practice of addressing overdue and lost materials would create consistency and ease of access across schools. Increasing access through flexible scheduling, such as a rotating library timetable, could guarantee equitable use of library resources, even where space is limited. Finally, piloting extended library hours at select schools could gauge student engagement benefits before scaling up district-wide.

Middle School Domain II:

The analysis of the middle school library system shows both significant strengths and targeted areas for improvement, with the program largely rated as Effective to Highly Effective. Key strengths include a solid collection policy that could be enhanced by formally including "student interest" as a criterion for book purchases. The current collection creates balance across grade levels, genres, and reading levels, with an emphasis on diversity and a mix of fiction and non-fiction. Collection maintenance is also ongoing, with frequent weeding to keep materials relevant, supported by easily accessible collection statistics that aid in collection development and promotion. Students and teachers are encouraged to suggest new titles, and an active interlibrary loan system supplements the collection. Additionally, students benefit from a digital library catalog and access to state research databases, promoting a tech-friendly and resource-rich environment. However, materials in languages other than English are not included, though the Destiny Learning Commons catalog offers Spanish and French options.

The Learning Commons offers a dedicated MakerSpace where students engage with hands-on activities such as board games, yarn crafts, art supplies, and Spero robots, which complement screen-free time. Technological tools such as Promethean boards, portable DVD players, and document cameras are accessible, supporting both classroom and independent learning activities. To foster ease of access, the library collection has been genrefied and improved with clearer signage for nonfiction sections. Importantly, overdue materials do not result in fines or revoked privileges; instead, students are provided multiple options for replacing or covering lost books, underscoring the library's empathetic approach to learning.

Budget constraints, however, present challenges. The school is creative in using funds earned through two annual book fairs and pursuing grants to support programs like the Battle of the Books tournament. Additionally, consortia buying options such as SORA and Demco help stretch funds, and partnerships with reputable vendors like Follett and Scholastic ensure access to quality resources. District librarians are advocating for a budget model that adjusts for book price inflation on a per-student basis, a potential step toward more stable funding.

The Learning Commons space is well-suited to accommodate various activities, with a flexible central area used for school and community events, and a range of seating options—from tables and chairs to comfortable lounge areas. This multifunctional setup also supports student gatherings and clubs, and the portable Promethean board and other AV equipment allow for diverse presentations. The LMS fosters a positive and respectful atmosphere with welcoming signage and decor that encourages creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking. Student visits are encouraged through regular pass-based access during study halls, English Language Arts classes, and other blocks. Interactive displays and promotions are frequently updated, supporting the school culture of Focus, Respect, Responsibility, and Kindness.

Staffing is robust at the middle school, with a certified LMS supported by paraprofessionals who manage circulation, technology maintenance, and reader advisory services. Library services are accessible throughout the school day, with staff available for consultations with students and teachers. Although students do not commonly use the library after school, the LMS supports after-school clubs based on student interest, including a Book Club and News Club, and actively communicates with students, staff, and parents outside of regular hours.

These findings underscore a well-rounded and effective middle school library program that supports academic and personal growth through thoughtful collection management, technology integration, and a welcoming, flexible space that adapts to a variety of student and staff needs. Addressing budget concerns and potentially expanding the collection to include non-English materials could further strengthen the program, ensuring it continues to meet the diverse and evolving needs of the school community.

High School Domain II:

The High School Learning Commons is a well-developed and accessible resource center that serves as the central hub for academic and creative support for students and staff and scores as highly effective. Open from early morning until late afternoon and accessible online 24/7, the Learning Commons provides a welcoming and inclusive environment where students and staff are encouraged to explore, interact, and express themselves. The collection is carefully curated to reflect diverse perspectives, interests, and age levels, with materials selected to directly support curriculum goals and extracurricular needs. The Learning Commons also includes a range of high-quality resources like Sora for digital books, the Destiny catalog, statewide research databases, and ample supplies for

creative and academic projects. Equipment and tech tools—from robotics and VR kits to 3D printers and recording equipment—are readily available in the Media Maker Space, which is organized for ease of use and a variety of learning styles.

Staffed by a certified Library Media Specialist and library paraprofessionals, the team is skilled in technology support, instructional integration, and fostering a positive, inclusive culture. Staff are well-trained, and approachable, and assist students in locating materials, accessing tech support, and navigating digital citizenship and academic honesty resources, which are taught in collaboration with classroom teachers. The LC’s engaging displays, rotating promotions, and dynamic online presence further solidify its role as a trusted center for both academic and personal growth.

The Learning Commons physical space, designed with flexibility and community use in mind, supports a wide variety of school and public events, from Poetry Out Loud competitions to parent workshops on career planning. Furniture, including shelving on wheels, is easily movable, allowing the space to adapt to different needs. In addition to the main library areas, there are specialized spaces, such as seminar rooms, group study rooms, and a makerspace with tech tools for content creation. The Learning Common’s accessible design, which includes ADA-compliant entrances, natural lighting, and comfortable seating, ensures a positive experience for all visitors. However, a budget that has remained flat over several years presents a challenge; while consortia purchasing and strategic donations help extend resources, securing more sustainable, student-driven funding is a priority.

In summary, the High School Learning Commons excels as a versatile, engaging, and well-staffed environment that supports both academic rigor and creative exploration. The commitment to student-centered learning and inclusive practices has made it a vital part of the high school experience, the LC fosters a culture of inquiry and respect, helping students and staff alike to engage meaningfully with resources, technology, and each other.

Domain III. Librarians as Leaders: Professional Development and School Leadership Standards

- 3A. Professional Development
- 3B. Instructional Leadership
- 3C. Administrative Support
- 3D. Ethical Use of Information
- 3E. Program Planning and Evaluation
- 3F. Communication & Reporting
- 3G. Program Advocacy

Domain III of the MASL rubric emphasizes the Library Media Specialist’s role as a leader within the school community. With expertise in both library science and education, a Maine state-certified Library Media Specialist (LMS) serves as a vital resource, guiding instructional practices, fostering collaboration, and supporting the educational goals of teachers, students, administrators, and families.

Effective LMSs are visible, trusted, and respected members of the school community who provide specialized guidance in areas like technology use, inquiry-based learning, and children's and young adult literature.

The LMS's leadership role can adapt to meet the unique needs of the school. They may serve on leadership teams, contribute to curriculum planning, or lead professional development sessions on digital citizenship, ethical information use, and intellectual freedom. Through these varied roles, LMSs not only enhance student learning outcomes but also promote a safe, inclusive, and ethically responsible learning environment.

Domain III District Wide:

Across elementary, middle, and high school levels, Learning Commons staff have a strong commitment to professional growth, collaboration, ethical standards, and effective resource management. Library Media Specialists across grade spans engage in ongoing professional development through district-offered sessions, self-initiated learning opportunities, and active membership in professional organizations like MASL, AASL, ACTEM, and TCEA. Participation in conferences, ed camps, and online forums enables LMSs to stay current on educational trends, which they, in turn, share with colleagues through staff training, consultation, and paraprofessional support.

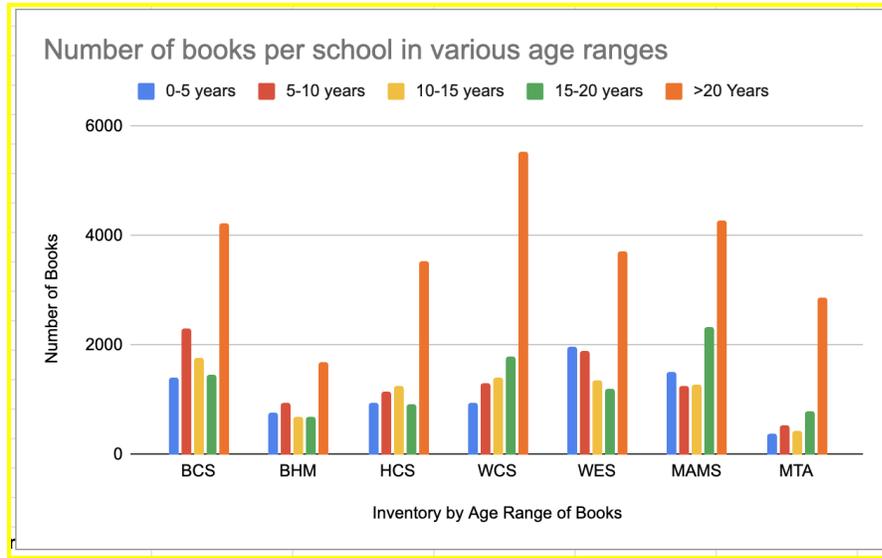
While the direct involvement of LMSs in school leadership and curriculum teams varies by building, all staff contribute meaningfully to district-wide library and technology initiatives, helping staff meet curriculum standards and maintain alignment with educational objectives. Relationships with administrators across grade spans help in defining Learning Commons goals and receiving fiscal and verbal support for library programming.

Staff promote ethical standards, student intellectual freedom, and digital safety, evidenced by clearly defined collection policies that support the Library Bill of Rights and procedures for handling material challenges. Across all levels, staff ensure that students receive instruction on copyright, plagiarism, and citations, and act as resources for staff on ethical information use. They work with technology departments to safeguard student privacy by reviewing digital resources and enforcing acceptable use policies.

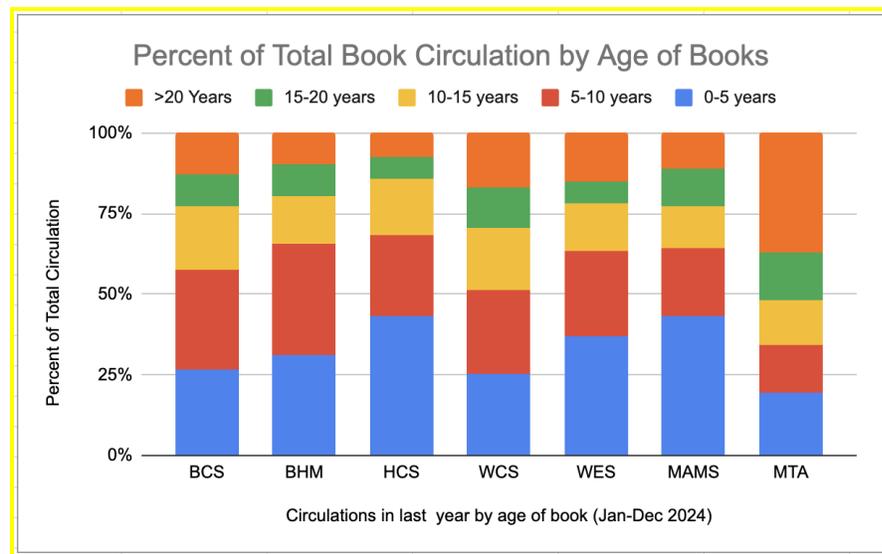
To support resource management and program evaluation, LMSs gather and analyze data on library collections and circulation to inform budget decisions and resource needs. At each level, LMSs support communication with the school community, curating resource lists aligned with the curriculum, maintaining web pages, and conducting grant writing to fund Learning Commons initiatives. While involvement in budget decisions may vary, the commitment of staff to provide quality resources and programming remains consistent across all grade spans, enhancing educational experiences for students and supporting staff at every level.

Circulation and Age of Collections Statistics

The chart below shows the number of books in each age category for each school. The “>20 years” category is in orange, and the graph demonstrates what a large proportion of older books we have.



The next chart shows the percentage of total circulation comprised by each age span of books. It shows that older books don't circulate well. When there are too many old and unappealing books, the new and compelling books are effectively hidden in the clutter and students have trouble accessing them. Older nonfiction books contain information that is outdated or no longer relevant.

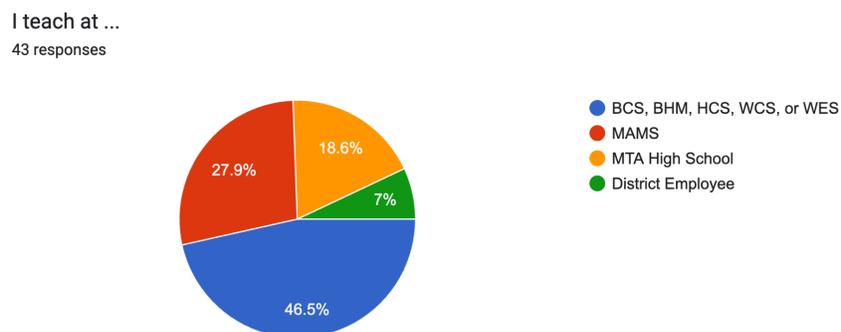


Circulations in the last year by age of book (Jan-Dec 2024)						
	0-5 years	5-10 years	10-15 years	15-20 years	>20 Years	Total Circulation
BCS	2,626	3,033	1,917	1,003	1,253	9,832
BHM	1,202	1,334	573	376	371	3,856
HCS	1,428	812	588	220	240	3,288
WCS	1,722	1,747	1,290	870	1,127	6,756
WES	3,366	2,427	1,353	633	1,378	9,157
MAMS	2,749	1,341	807	763	689	6,349
MTA	2,128	97	92	99	244	2,660

Staff Survey

Staff were surveyed to gather feedback on the Learning Commons, focusing on its current use, resources, and areas for improvement. Responses highlighted the importance of the Learning Commons as a space for accessing books, engaging in technology-based activities like coding and robotics, and fostering digital citizenship skills. Staff shared insights on how students use the space, with many emphasizing the value of high-interest reading materials and interactive learning opportunities. This feedback will guide future planning and improvements to better meet the needs of students and educators.

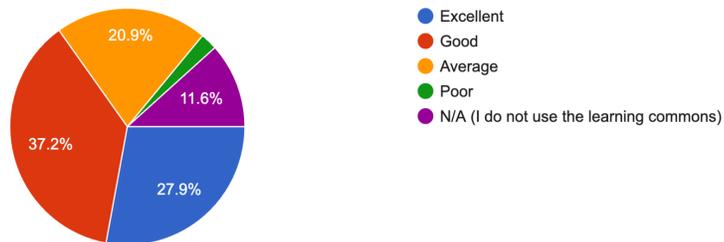
Highlights from the survey include forty-three responses with balanced representation:



From the responses, 83% of staff reported having used the Learning Commons with overall positive ratings of the available resources.

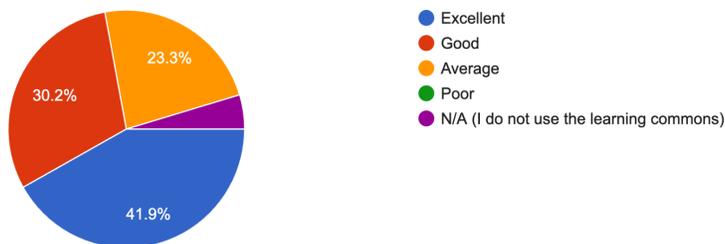
How would you rate the resources available in the learning commons (digital learning commons (website), books, technology, etc.)?

43 responses



How would you rate the accessibility of the learning commons (hours, location, ease of finding materials, ease of website use, etc.)?

43 responses

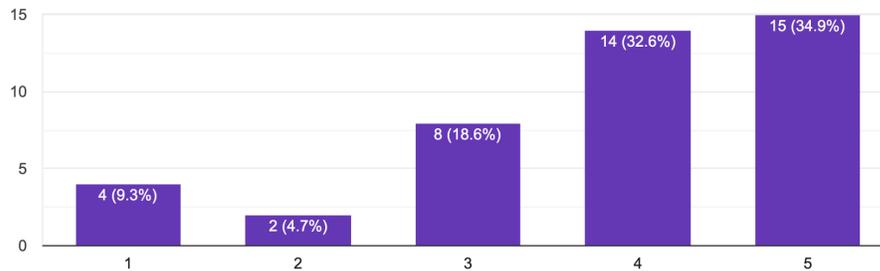


Other responses included 76.7% of respondents attending professional development sessions or workshops offered by the learning commons. Survey responses revealed several areas of interest for professional development related to the Learning Commons. Staff expressed a need for training on digital tools such as Promethean Boards, Canva, and AI applications, as well as sessions focused on accessing and utilizing online resources for research and reading. Digital citizenship and online safety were highlighted as important topics, with teachers wanting to reinforce these concepts in their classrooms. Other topics requested include practical skills, including conducting student research and using Learning Commons resources effectively.

Respondents offered feedback related to how they feel students best use the Learning Commons with students primarily using the Learning Commons to check out books for independent reading, including high-interest fiction and nonfiction titles. It is also seen as a valuable space for accessing resources such as technology support, research materials, and project assistance. Many students engage in activities like coding, robotics, and digital citizenship lessons, which help build 21st-century skills. The Learning Commons is viewed as also serving as a quiet study area, a space for collaboration, and a hub for student clubs before and after school. Overall, the Learning Commons is seen as an integral part of the school community, offering support, engagement, and learning opportunities across various needs and interests but also most importantly a space that creates a reading culture in the school.

Does the LC help create a reading culture at the school?

43 responses



Goal #1: Over the next 5 years, standardize budgets across the district to represent adequate per-pupil annual expenditures for collections with an immediate goal of bringing collections up to date for average age and to support the curriculum changes so that teachers and students have resources for the units currently being taught.

Goal #2: A well-defined curriculum (Appendix B) to ensure consistent instruction, promote equitable access to learning opportunities, and empower students to become independent, critical thinkers prepared for future academic and professional challenges.

Goal #3: Identify and deliver professional development opportunities for staff in the areas of technology integration and available Learning Commons resources and applicable use for instruction. Prioritize opportunities for Learning Commons staff to have the ability to pursue professional development.

Program Evaluation Committee Members:

Jessica Belanger, Assistant Principal, Mt. Ararat High School

Jodi Crawford, Library Media Specialist Mt. Ararat High School

Corrie Calderwood, STEM Teacher Mt. Ararat Middle School and Mt. Ararat High School

Rick Dedek, Principal Woodside Elementary School

Gretchen Hartley, Library Media Specialist at Williams Cone School, and Woodside Elementary School

Amanda Hersey, Assistant Superintendent

Nick Riggie, Director of Technology

Lisa Roberts, Library Media Specialist Bowdoin Central, Bowdoinham Community, and Harpswell Community

Erin Scott, Learning Commons Paraprofessional Woodside Elementary

Karen Silverman, Library Media Specialist Mt. Ararat Middle School

Appendix A: [MASL Standards](#)

Appendix B: [Proposed Updated Curriculum](#)

Appendix C: [Incident IQ Troubleshooting Report](#): This report shows the Tier 1 technology supports offered by the Learning Commons Staff

Appendix D: [Students Reach Greater Height with School Librarians](#)