

**OLA By-Law 2 Committee Workshop Report**

September, 2019

Challenge:

At the 2019 OLA AGM [a resolution](http://www.accessola.org/web/OLA/About/Archive_of_AGMs.aspx) was put forth to remove reference to Teacher-Librarians in By-Law 2, the by-law that governs OSLA. The rationale was that other OLA divisions do not reference specific credentials or job titles in their by-laws and that by including reference to teacher librarians, other members or potential members of OSLA were excluded. Conversely, the proposal to remove reference to Teacher Librarians, and without the opportunity for discussion amongst members, was perceived as devaluing the role of these members. The resolution revealed tensions amongst members who work in school libraries and the members voted to defer the resolution to a committee who are tasked with developing a new resolution for the 2020 OLA AGM.

Recognizing that the tension needed to be addressed more deeply than simply proposing a re-worded by-law recommendation, OSLA Council and the OLA Board identified the need to engage in a process that would consider the tensions, develop a path for OLA to support the school library sector, and to make a recommendation at the AGM.

The [eight members of the by-law committee](http://www.accessola.org/WEB/OLA/About/OLA_By-Law_2_Consultation_Committee.aspx) are teacher librarians, library technicians, librarians (MLIS), early, mid and later career, K – 12, and from urban and rural school boards.

The goodwill and energy in the room over the two day workshop retreat was palpable.

1. **Workshop**

Process:

Using an Integrative Thinking\* model, the OLA By-Law 2 Committee participated in a two-day workshop to:

* Identify Design Principles
* Offer recommendation(s) for actions the OLA can take to resolve its challenge
* Offer a recommendation for resolution language

***\*****What is Integrative Thinking?*

Integrative Thinking is defined as "the ability to face constructively the tension of opposing ideas and, instead of choosing one at the expense of the other, generate a creative resolution of the tension in the form of a new idea that contains elements of the opposing ideas but is superior to each."

The guiding question was:

How might the OLA ensure all roles are collaborating in service of being a strong, united voice for school libraries?

The process included 4 stages:

* Articulating the models

Identifying two extreme and opposing models and then identifying the benefits of each.

* Examining the models

Identifying similarities, points of tension, assumptions, and elements to keep or discard.

* Exploring the possibilities

Creating a new model from elements of each, elements of one model that benefit the other, applying each model to different parts of the problem.

* Assessing the prototypes:

What would have to be true to make this work?

The committee worked hard at understanding multiple perspectives and different stakeholders and were committed to thinking through possibilities versus immediate solving of the problem.

**Day 1**

**Articulating and Examining the Models: Identifying the Tension.**

Within the first hour on day one, both groups independently identified the need for a vision or a renewed vision for school libraries as the catalyst for strengthening school libraries and the association. The ideas, tensions, and observations were made in this context over the two days.

Contemplating [Together for Learning](http://www.togetherforlearning.ca/) as a framework that could be a starting point for developing a renewed vision was discussed. The groups recognized that the document was created more than a decade ago and there have been changes over time.

Articulating the Models:

Group 1:

“Create a vision that builds on our existing vision with adjustments by reflecting the current landscape.” (descriptive vision)

Versus

“Create a vision from scratch and be prescriptive of what school libraries should look like.” (prescriptive vision)

Group 2:

“Creating and supporting a mandate for how a school library should function and defining the roles necessary for a strong school library” (administrative/foundational)

Versus

“Creating and supporting a strong school library advocacy vision with evidence and research for school boards and school administration to implement.” (philosophical/blueprint)

* Roles and Collaboration in Support of School Libraries

The following videos capture the discussion about different roles in school libraries, different school library staffing models in every board across the province and thinking about a vision for school libraries.

Videos:

# [Identifying Tensions - Group 1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XZODqt7Pscw&list=PLmpsg8Nfuatrv5KC3bczyVn8FOmiK2mXp&index=2&t=0s)

[Identifying Tensions – Group 2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FbtzvUcDEl8&list=PLmpsg8Nfuatrv5KC3bczyVn8FOmiK2mXp&index=2)

[Identifying Models – Group 1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VaedIuQPd3k&list=PLmpsg8Nfuatrv5KC3bczyVn8FOmiK2mXp&index=3)

[Opposing Models – Group 2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1TjDEdW2VUM&list=PLmpsg8Nfuatrv5KC3bczyVn8FOmiK2mXp&index=5)

Examining General Tensions:

* Library funding is problematic. It is not mandated. Lack of direction from the Ministry of Education.
* Not all roles are understood (role of the library and the staff) or are collaborating or are consistently applied across the province.
* People feel their role in the library is precarious.
* Different bargaining unions and inconsistency.

Examining Tensions in the School Library Sector:

Both groups identified tensions:

* What are the underlying reasons for an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ tension? What other tensions are there? Can we use inclusive language that provides clarity and respects the expertise of different roles?
* There are many different staffing models in every board across the province. Do we reflect the current situation and work together recognizing our differences? Or do we identify a preferred future and work towards that? How can staffing be local and flexible and also result in school libraries that contribute to provincial student success?
* Do we focus on a prescription for staffing libraries or do we focus on defining successful school libraries? When can we ‘have your back’ (ensuring that all roles feel supported and respected) and when can we promote a prescribed solution (a desired future for a robust school library model that would have a variety of roles working together to support student success)?
* Together for Learning can provide a foundation, has credibility and there are many elements that remain true and valid. Some elements are not inclusive. Can we make changes and build on this vision? Building a new vision could be inclusive, have broad consultation, and produce a new framework. This could be time consuming and costly.
* Who is involved in developing a new or renewed vision? OLA and OSLA, school library staff, Educators (non-library), Boards and Administration.

**Day Two:**

**Exploring the possibilities and assessing the prototypes. Discussing connections between two models:**

Group One Models:

Build Upon an Existing/Traditional Vision for School Libraries

* May be easier to update versus start from scratch.
* Is understood by Boards.
* Elements can change to reflect current realities.

Develop a New Vision

* Could be more inclusive.
* Requires extensive consultation with a range of stakeholders.
* A fresh mind-set.
* Starts with current landscape.

Group Two Models:

‘Foundational’: Provide an administrative model for schools

* All roles defined
* Standard/formula funding
* Student Success
* Bench-marks
* Professional development directed at specific roles

‘Blueprint’: Provide a philosophical vision for schools

* Impact driven
* Evidence based
* Implemented by people in power
* Flexible funding /implementation model
* Broad professional development opportunities

Videos:

[Identifying Tensions and a New Vision – Group 1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8kRGEsvywY&list=PLmpsg8Nfuatrv5KC3bczyVn8FOmiK2mXp&index=6)

[Discussion of benefits and challenges of each model – Group 2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1TjDEdW2VUM&list=PLmpsg8Nfuatrv5KC3bczyVn8FOmiK2mXp&index=5)

**Taking the best elements from different models identified by group 1 and group 2:**

* Supporting everyone who works in school libraries. ‘We have your back’.
* Engage educators, Boards and Administration.
* Defining expectations of the school library/learning commons.
* Work from a vision for a great school library.
* Collaboratively creating a vision and a roadmap.
* Valuing roles and subject association status.
* Define a clear roadmap while allowing local implementation.

**What are our recommendations?**

* Renew and revitalize the vision for school libraries using a consultative and collaborative process (research, survey, consult, engage and repair relationships)
* Learn about how different school boards deliver a school library program (visit, communicate, engage with external decision makers)
* Honour the local flexibility while providing the framework, programs and services to help people deliver the best school library program. (resources, standards, supports)
* Ensure Ontario’s school libraries have credibility and people care about them (value, student success).
* Make this a living document - recognize the evolution of school libraries.

Videos:

[Ideas for Next Steps – Group 1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5A1_DpMjj4w&list=PLmpsg8Nfuatrv5KC3bczyVn8FOmiK2mXp&index=7)

[Ideas for Next Steps – Group 2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=okTE2y7qZ7I&list=PLmpsg8Nfuatrv5KC3bczyVn8FOmiK2mXp&index=8)

1. **Resolution to Revise OLA By-Law 2**

The committee acknowledged that the opportunity to more deeply explore issues facing school libraries and OSLA helped view proposed changes to the by-law with a fresh perspective.

The Proposed Resolution for the 2020 Ontario Library Association Annual General Meeting can be found on the [AGM section](http://www.accessola.org/web/OLA/About/Board_of_Directors/Annual%20General%20Meeting/OLA/About/Annual_General_Meetings.aspx?hkey=a387356c-2780-4e10-a28d-cd964fa881cf) of the OLA web-page.