



## Middle Childhood Framework

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| <b>Date:</b> | January 20, 2014             |
| <b>To:</b>   | Toronto Public Library Board |
| <b>From:</b> | City Librarian               |

### **SUMMARY**

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This report provides an overview of the *Serving Toronto's Children Ages Six to 12: Toronto Public Library's Middle Childhood Framework* that has been developed to address the needs of children in the middle years ages six to 12 and support the delivery of more effective and responsive services and programs to this age group. The Middle Childhood Framework represents a new direction for Toronto Public Library (TPL) services to school-aged children. Building on the success of the Ready for Reading programs and services for the early years, the Middle Childhood Framework provides a blueprint for supporting the healthy growth and development of school-aged children as they transition into independent and self-reliant learners.

The Framework reviews the background of children's services and outlines a vision and mission for this initiative. Based on research, the Toronto Public Library Strategic Plan, the City of Toronto Middle Childhood Strategy, and three service pillars, the Middle Childhood Framework positions the Library as a place and space that supports creativity, encourages discovery, celebrates the joy of reading and promotes self-directed learning for children ages six to 12.

Current practices, services, programs and spaces for this age group will be examined and aligned with the new vision and mission. As well, to support this process, a consistent system of assessment and evaluation will be developed and applied, along with quality standards and indicators.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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There is no financial impact to the 2014 operating budget arising from this report. Future year impacts will be determined as part of the development of the multi-year implementation plan.

The Director, Finance & Treasurer has reviewed this financial impact statement and is in agreement with it.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

At its February 25, 2013 meeting, the Library Board approved the Toronto Public Library Strategic Plan 2012 – 2015 Work Plan for 2013 that includes Objective 12, “Address the needs of children in the middle years by developing a new framework for services and programs to deliver more effective and responsive services.”

## **ISSUE BACKGROUND**

Children’s services have been a cornerstone at TPL since Yorkville Branch opened with a space for children and their teachers in 1907 and Lillian H. Smith was hired as the first children’s librarian in 1912. Since then, services to children ages birth to 12 have continued to flourish and develop, and children’s collections, programs and spaces have remained integral to public library work.

In 2006, TPL created Ready for Reading for the early years to focus service more strategically on early literacy. Ready for Reading is a research-based approach to early literacy with consistent application across the system. Ready for Reading has gained wide community recognition and the program has made great strides in extending our reach, inside our branches and beyond, in our role as early literacy experts.

In 2009, TPL’s Children and Youth Steering Committee (CYSC) recognized the need to use a similar approach in establishing and promoting services for school-aged children, ages six to 12.

At the same time, the City of Toronto was engaged in the process of developing a Middle Childhood Strategy Framework which was produced in May 2009. The City has since produced the Toronto Middle Childhood Strategy (2012), Toronto Middle Childhood Implementation Plan (2013) and Toronto Middle Childhood Guiding Principles (2013), which help guide the Library’s work, ensuring that the Library remains a key player and partner in serving Toronto’s children as they grow.

## **COMMENTS**

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TPL’s Middle Childhood Framework (Attachment 1, which will be distributed at the January 20<sup>th</sup> Board meeting) builds on the work done by the City of Toronto and connects to the current TPL Strategic Plan 2012 – 2013 (<http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/about-the-library/strategic-plan/>). The strategic plan concepts of Read, Learn, Create and Deliver are strongly reflected in the Middle Childhood Framework. A vision, mission, guiding principles and objectives have been developed. Three main service pillars: Joy of Reading, Literacy and Learning, and Fun and Play, provide the organizational and branding framework to articulate to parents, children and stakeholders the unique value of programs and services for the Middle Childhood Framework at the Library, and help to differentiate the Library’s programs and services from others in the community. The pillars will also form the framework staff use to consistently plan, deliver and evaluate high quality programs and services for children ages six to nine and ten to 12, and their families.

While the Middle Childhood Framework will evolve over many years, ten priorities were developed for 2013 – 2014. These include projects and programs currently under review (online presence, Grade 4 Outreach and Leading to Reading) as well as those in the incubation stage. A detailed work plan will be developed in 2014 that includes each of these priorities. A comprehensive, multi-year implementation plan will be developed for longer-term priorities to explore.

In September and October 2013, the draft Middle Childhood Framework report was presented for consultation and feedback to the Toronto Child and Family Network, Middle Childhood Matters Coalition Toronto, Toronto District School Board, Toronto Catholic District School Board, Usability Matters and Toronto Public Library staff. Overall, reaction to the report was positive and enthusiastic, and much of the feedback has been incorporated into the report. Consultants remarked that the report is timely and leading-edge, and many offered to collaborate and partner with the Library on this initiative.

The Framework will be presented to multiple key stakeholders in early 2014, with the goals of raising awareness of this strategic initiative, and beginning to position the Library as a key provider and partner in the development and delivery of Middle Childhood services to Toronto's children. Activities include:

- report distribution and presentation to Toronto Public Library Board (January 20);
- participation in the Middle Childhood Matters Coalition event at City Hall (January 21);
- conference session at the Ontario Library Association Super Conference (January 31);
- targeted earned and social media outreach (February);
- staff workshops (beginning February and running into the spring).

## **CONCLUSION**

The Middle Childhood Framework represents a new direction for TPL services for school-aged children and their parents and caregivers. Building on the success of Ready for Reading programs and services for the early years, the Middle Childhood Framework provides a blueprint for supporting the growth and development of children as they transition into independent, self-reliant learners.

Based on research, the Toronto Public Library Strategic Plan, the City of Toronto Middle Childhood Strategy, and the three service pillars, the Middle Childhood Framework positions the Library as a place and space that supports creativity, encourages discovery, celebrates the joy of reading, and supports self-directed learning for children ages six to 12.

## **CONTACT**

Anne Bailey; Director, Branch Libraries; Tel: 416-397-5944; Fax: 416-393-7083;  
E-mail: [abailey@torontopubliclibrary.ca](mailto:abailey@torontopubliclibrary.ca)

Linda Hazzan; Director, Communications, Programming and Customer Engagement;  
Tel: 416-393-7214; Fax: 416-393-7083; E-mail: [lhazzan@torontopubliclibrary.ca](mailto:lhazzan@torontopubliclibrary.ca)

## **SIGNATURE**

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Jane Pyper  
City Librarian

## **ATTACHMENT**

Attachment 1: *Serving Toronto's Children Ages Six to 12: Toronto Public Library's Middle Childhood Framework* (to be distributed at the January 20<sup>th</sup> Board meeting)