

# CASE STUDIES: REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES OF HOW LIBRARIES ARE RE-ENVISIONING TEEN SERVICES

## Summer Teen Interns

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### What Did You Want to Achieve?

At the Cabell County Public Library we wanted our summer teen interns to:

- Understand the hierarchy of the workplace. Specifically, what it means to be an employee reporting to a manager.
- Learn about being a part of a team and working together to achieve goals and objectives, ultimately building strong and supportive relationships with peers and adults.
- Have experience in making their own decisions.
- Know that it's okay to make mistakes and try new things. We wanted to empower our teens through education,
- Be motivated individuals who gained confidence, resiliency, and learned to trust themselves as individuals who are capable of giving back to their community and bettering themselves.

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### Overview of the Program/Project

Every summer, as a part of our system-wide summer reading program, The Cabell County Public Library hosts a Super Why Reading Camp. This program is held in partnership with our local PBS station and the camp is designed to help preschool children learn to read. Traditionally, we have teens help with the program. This year, we were fortunate enough to be the recipients of a YALSA and Dollar General Literacy Foundation Summer Teen Intern Grant. As a result we had the funds to hire eight paid teen interns.

These interns assisted library staff at the camps. The teens worked with the small children in a variety of activities ranging from helping with technology to supporting daily reading activities. We also were able to have our teen interns help with a variety of other youth services programs. For example, they helped children sign up for summer reading, helped to host programs, worked with staff in creating and implementing craft activities and helped serve free lunch. When the internship was complete, every participating teen received a stipend.

### What Challenges Did You Face and How Did You Overcome Them?

We really did not face any challenges. Our teen intern program ran pretty smoothly; however, if we are given this opportunity again it would be nice to expand the program outside of our Super Why Reading Camps and allow the teens

more opportunities to help with our summer reading program. This would allow the teens to gain more diverse, hands-on experience working with the community and families. The teens would be able to reach a larger portion of our library demographic, ultimately learning more about our community.

## What Did You Learn?

We learned so much from having a teen intern program! This program enabled our library system to reach our teen demographic like we have never been able to before. We learned that many teens in our community are looking for volunteer and internship opportunities to gain crucial skills needed to thrive outside of high school. We realized there is a significant need for teen volunteer positions within our community. The teens were able to learn about library staff and our profession, and we were able to better ourselves and our organization from working with the teens.

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“Ultimately, our teens were empowered through education, and they gained confidence, resiliency, and learned to trust themselves as individuals who are capable of giving back to their community and bettering themselves.”

## How Does This Work Connect to the YALSA Futures Report and Vision?

Our program connected to YALSA’s Futures Report and vision on many different levels. For example, teen interns were able to:

- Learn, work in leadership roles, build a sense of community, and explore their creativity.
- Gain critical skills needed to enter the workforce.
- Participate in workforce development training through real-world experiences.
- Explore careers in library settings.
- Connect with adult mentors (library staff) and learn through real-life experience.
- Make decisions and become more independent individuals.
- Be a part of a team that worked together to achieve goals and objectives, ultimately building strong and supportive relationships with peers and adults.

Ultimately, our teens were empowered through education, and they gained confidence, resiliency, and learned to trust themselves as individuals who are capable of giving back to their community and bettering themselves.

One of our interns has been volunteering at the library for years. He was the teen intern at the Main Library over the summer. He told library staff that he decided to pursue a career in early childhood education because of the program. It is wonderful knowing that the library and internship program had such a positive impact on this young man and his future career plans!

The most important thing to come out of this program was that the teens were able to build lasting and crucial relationships with the adult library staff. Many of the interns have continued to visit the library, and the teens and their parents would like to see the program continued in the future. Overall, the program was highly successful and allowed us to do our part to help the teens lead successful and fulfilling lives.