

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

# Implementing Connected Learning and Twenty-First-Century Skill Development in Programming

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## What Did You Want to Achieve?

At Nashville Public Library, staff are being intentional about incorporating connected learning and the development of twenty-first-century skills into program planning and design. This is important so we can offer teens leadership opportunities, take their interests to heart when planning programs, become more production-centered, and help them grow into adults who will be successful in life.



## Overview of the Program/Project

I led staff through an all-day professional development training that focused on many of the concepts outlined in the Futures Report such as connected learning, mentoring, HOMAGO (Hanging Out, Messing Around, Geeking Out), and twenty-first-century skill development. During this training, I introduced staff to the program planning and reflection sheets I had developed. I followed up with staff as necessary to ensure they understood and were applying the concepts to program design.

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

I think that the greatest challenge was introducing the concepts to a brand-new team of staff and facilitating a shift into planning programs that are designed around specific outcomes. Staff submit monthly program planning and reflection sheets so that they can be intentional in the design and planning of programs. The sheets also demonstrate how deeply staff understand the concepts and how well they are applying the concepts to program design.

Our Outcomes: Through library use and participation we want teen users to:

- Further develop 21st century skills
- Do better in school
- Develop their interests and passions
- Be better prepared for adulthood
- Develop a lifelong passion for public libraries

## What Did You Learn?

If staff are excited about the evolution of teen services in libraries, then there are more opportunities to think differently about what programming can look like in twenty-first-century libraries. Staff went through growing pains but are committed to learning to adapt programs based on teen interests and to develop production-centered activities that engage teens.

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

Twenty-first-century skill development and connected learning are at the core of the Nashville Public Library's Main Library Teen Center. Staff have embraced the concepts and continue to work with teens to design programs that draw teens to them.

Nina NeSmith, a Teen Services Specialist at the Library, stated it this way:

“The application of twenty-first-century skill development is very helpful in allowing me to have a goal for what I want teens to take out of programming. I am able to identify soft skills that teens need to develop in adulthood, thus developing skills for job readiness and life. For instance, in the program I created and facilitated in the fall called Mission Makeover, I focused on skills essential in professional development and job readiness like dress and grooming, how to create a résumé, and proper interview etiquette. It also presented the perfect opportunity to incorporate connected



learning principles so that the teens had tangible products that could be used in both the present and future. Teens were able to choose interview attire from a 'boutique' created through donations from library staff and peers. They even got to model their ensembles in a fashion show. The teens also created résumés, made soaps, and created 'professional' hairstyles throughout the program series. Using twenty-first-century skills along with a sprinkling of connected learning is an awesome recipe for creating quality programming for the teens we serve.”