

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

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As a library we can help our youth to learn valuable lessons that will help them through life. How do we get their heads into learning life skills

This can be as simple as facilitating the passing down of knowledge from one generation to the next.

The search for knowledgeable people shouldn't be too hard. We are surrounded by knowledgeable people in our communities all the time. You can turn to a local mechanic for help teaching lawnmower repair. You could ask a bicycle shop to help set up a bike repair station outside the library. A local teacher might help set up an interview skills class. Your neighbor could teach sewing. A fisherman could teach fly tying. The possibilities are endless. You will be surprised how many people around you can be a very valuable resource for these tasks, and that most will be thrilled that you asked them.

What is in this tool?

This tool will help you think through how your library can facilitate knowledge sharing to the younger generations, as well as some concrete ideas to get you started. The goal is to give children a way to be independent and inspire them to take the initiative to be self-sufficient and productive.

Further Resources:

Want to learn more about seeking contribution from community members? Try the "Pathways to Belonging: Contribution" tool. Want to learn more about tapping into existing community knowledge: try the "Awakening to Community Potential" tool.

IN THEIR WORDS

"Knowledge is wealth, knowledge is-- is-- you've gotta-- it makes you independent, you know. The library makes you independent because of the fact that, hey, I can come here, I can find this out, and not necessarily have to talk to somebody if you're not a very social person or a person that can self explain to someone-- explain to someone what you are looking for. There are the books; there's the information. There it is, right there. And it's a thing of immense service that you can't get anywhere else."

Mark, interview #8-3-16

WHAT DO KIDS NEED AND WANT?

First, identify what youth in your community are interested in learning. It is always a good idea to let youth guide what you decide to do. Observe what their common activities are, talk to them about skills they would like to learn, or give them some options on a cork board and each time a child comes into the library give them three pushpins to place next to the skill they are most interested in. Some libraries form a youth advisory board. Whatever you do, remind them that this is about empowering them to be independent.

Some categories to consider include: tool use/engine repair (for example, lawnmower repair), transportation independence (for example, bike repair), introduction to career opportunities (for example, making video games), outdoor skills (for example, bushcraft), computer skills (for example, how to use photoshop), or adult life skills (for example, how to tie a tie).

Write down some ideas you have for things the children in your community might like to learn:

Which of these are things that the library could do on its own?

Who in your community can you ask to help teach these skills? Who can help the library identify what tools or resources they should have on hand?

Would it help for the library to have some tools or resources on hand? Look at your list above and write down some ideas for tools or resources the library should have.

ELK RIVER EXAMPLE

In Elk River the library has a large open parking lot and is located across the street from our town's central park. From here I can see kids riding their bikes and skateboards – and when they suddenly aren't. Simple repair needs can keep a kid from their main source of transportation if they don't have access to supplies, tools, and skills. So, we created a bike repair workshop.

Consider making a small public work station outside the library or at a park with air compressor, small tool kit and a place to keep a few donated bike parts (eg. tires, tubes, a patch kit).

Where in your community would be the best place to have something like this?

Where in town has a place for something like this (for instance, with adequate space and power)?

Where has a community member that can help if needed?

Where in town give children the best access?

IDEAS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Set up small classes at park or Library so community members can contribute and teach youth how to repair their transportation i.e. Bicycles, Scooters, and Skateboards.

This tool could also be used in other communities and for other things like a winter transportation repair station where instead of bicycle repair it could be ski, snowboard, and sled repair and maintenance. The tools will change but the idea is basically the same.