

AASL Standards-Based Learning

# Growing Teen Engagement

Strategies to Captivate  
Secondary Learners

Jessica Fitzpatrick

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# PREFACE

Positive school library culture plays a vital role in creating an environment where learners can grow and thrive. It goes beyond just providing access to books and resources—it involves creating programming to support the whole learner, including their emotional, physical, and social well-being. A positive school library culture can help learners feel safe, supported, and engaged in their learning. It can also foster a love of reading and of lifelong learning. By focusing on creating a positive school library culture, school librarians and other educators can guide learners to develop the skills they need to succeed both in and out of the classroom.

As learners progress from elementary through secondary education, their developmental requirements shift from a focus on academics to social activities and spending time with friends. Consequently, the school library may not be a priority destination for them, as their interests lie beyond education. However, it's possible to maintain their engagement by adapting to their changing interests and needs.

One way to captivate learners and support their growth is through developmentally appropriate programming. By creating innovative and engaging programming that focuses on social experiences and reflection, secondary school librarians can foster curiosity and instill a growth mindset in teen learners.

Throughout this book, we discuss different ways to create teen-centric spaces within the school library with programs that reflect the learner's interests. We share ideas for developmentally appropriate collaborative lessons, passive programs, active programs, and community outreach efforts that keep learners interested in the school library. By aligning the forthcoming second edition of the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries* with the developmental needs of teens, this book can help school librarians create programming and instruction that captivates, inspires, and retains secondary learners. Utilize its insights to keep your learners coming back for more!

# INTRODUCTION

## Contextualizing Developmental Needs in School Library Practice

Teenagers are at a crucial developmental stage where they are exploring their identities and seeking experiences that help them grow intellectually and socially. Secondary school libraries play an important role in fostering this growth by providing programming that is engaging, challenging, and developmentally appropriate. As such, it is important for school librarians to design programming tailored to the unique needs and interests of teen learners. A successful program should not only be educational, but also provide opportunities for positive youth development.<sup>1</sup> The Center for Early Adolescence has defined seven key developmental needs that characterize early adolescence: (1) creative expression, (2) positive social interaction, (3) structure and clear limits, (4) self-definition, (5) physical activity, (6) meaningful participation, and (7) competence and achievement.<sup>2</sup> We'll explore how school librarians, through developmentally positive programming that aligns with AASL's *National School Library Standards*, can create an environment that is not only welcoming but also magnetic, engaging teens to learn, grow, and thrive.

### THE NEED FOR CREATIVE EXPRESSION

During childhood, the body and mind develop and change rapidly; as children become more engaged with life outside their home and family, it becomes increasingly important for them to have opportunities to express themselves creatively. The arts provide a way for children to express their emotions, experiences, interests, thoughts, talents, and abilities through speaking, writing, singing, dancing, drama, and the visual arts. As children grow into teenhood, the need to create and express themselves also grows. The role of art in supporting teens' developmental growth is essential and can be a powerful, authentic, and meaningful outlet for self-expression.

Creative expression can serve as a peaceful sanctuary for many learners, including those who may not think of themselves as artists. Creating art can provide a sense of comfort or release to process difficult emotions and experiences. It offers learners an empowering, safe space where anyone can express themselves when words do not suffice.

Art is an effective way to build teenagers' self-esteem by giving them the opportunity to acquire various skills and to experience accomplishment through creative expression. The arts provide a supportive and limitless environment, encouraging learners to create without fear of judgment. Creating art allows teens to develop problem-solving skills as they figure out how to bring their ideas to fruition.

### **Creative Expression and the School Library**

On the surface, art and the school library might not seem connected; together, though, they are like spaghetti and meatballs. For one thing, the school library can be a safe environment where learners can express themselves without judgment or wrong answers. Similarly, through art, teens can express their feelings, emotions, and thoughts in a healthy way that reflects their identity and communicates their experiences. Creative expression can be a powerful tool for self-discovery and personal development and an excellent outlet for exploration. School librarians can promote this sense of growth for teens through art-driven programming and school library culture.

Teens are naturally drawn to art as a retreat or escape from tension. Many teens are juggling so much more than just the emotional turmoil that comes with being a teen: work, family dynamics, schooling, AP tests, preparing for life after high school, just to name a few. Through art (not unlike school libraries), teens can find solitude and a haven from daily pressures.

Art is easily integrated into other academic subjects, such as history, literature, or science. By incorporating art into the school library, students can engage in cross-disciplinary learning that deepens their understanding of various subjects. Not all individuals learn in the same way, and some are better suited to a visual or hands-on learning environment. Art can provide an alternative learning experience through the school library that is particularly beneficial for teens who are drawn to art. Developmentally, art builds teens' self-esteem by teaching them various skills and giving them a sense of accomplishment.

### **Creative Expression and the AASL Standards**

The AASL Standards highlight the crucial role that school librarians play in nurturing the development of learners, including a capacity for creative expression. Teenagers' need for creative and self-expression aligns with the Inquire Shared Foundation, which prompts learners to "build new knowledge by inquiring, thinking critically, identifying problems, and developing strategies for solving problems."<sup>3</sup> Creative expression fosters curiosity and initiative as teens explore topics and ask questions, and as school librarians help learners activate their prior knowledge as context for new meaning. By engaging in various forms of artistic expression, multimedia projects, and writing facilitated through the school library, teens can generate products that illustrate their own learning.

Establishing a school library that is safe and inviting is essential for encouraging curiosity through creative expression; it also promotes empathy and equity within the learning community. Aligning with the Include Shared Foundation, the school library facilitates opportunities to express and experience a variety of ideas through an “environment that fosters the sharing of a wide range of viewpoints.”<sup>4</sup> Fostering creative expression through the school library ensures that learners of all backgrounds, abilities, and interests have a sanctuary where they are included and supported in their growth and self-expression.

Creative expression promotes self-esteem, activating participation and enthusiasm for learning—a central goal of the Explore Shared Foundation. By providing teens with opportunities for tinkering and making, school librarians can model persistence while guiding learners through cycles of design, implementation, and reflection. Through this process, school librarians can help learners develop a growth mindset, recognizing their capabilities and achievements as well as skills that can be developed further.

## **THE NEED FOR POSITIVE SOCIAL INTERACTION**

Although older children still place value on their families, they have likewise become more interested in developing positive relationships outside the family home. These relationships can provide teens comfort, support, and security when encountering and experiencing various new ideas, views, and values. Moreover, this sense of safety can provide a positive platform for teens to process their feelings and practice problem-solving skills when confronting new ideas. Social relationships outside the home can also facilitate a growing sense of community as teens learn how to foster new relationships and communicate in group settings.

### **Positive Social Interaction and the School Library**

The school library acts as a vital hub for fostering positive social interactions among teens through its welcoming and secure environment, which encourages teens to build relationships outside the family circle. Resources such as makerspaces, technology, comfortable seating, and abundant natural light collectively contribute to creating an environment conducive to positive social interaction within the school library. Collaborating with teens to decorate the space, for example, can instill a sense of ownership and meaning around the school library’s ambiance. Beyond providing a safe and welcoming setting, the school library offers dedicated study spaces that encourage teens to work together. Setting aside an exclusive space for teens to collaborate can cultivate a comfortable atmosphere for sharing ideas and knowledge.

School librarians can further facilitate positive social interactions through programming designed to meet the varying needs of learners and encourage collaboration. Through engaging programming, the school library becomes a catalyst for personal



growth and enrichment, helping learners explore a range of ideas and perspectives and nurture positive relationships that broaden their horizons. In this way, the school library serves as a dynamic hub for fostering social and collaborative growth, enhancing and expanding teens' positive social interactions with peers, educators, fellow learners, and the broader community.

### **Positive Social Interaction and the AASL Standards**

Teens need positive social interaction, and the AASL Standards highlight the importance of school librarians in cultivating a supportive and inclusive environment that promotes such interactions. The Include Shared Foundation, for example, emphasizes a “commitment to inclusiveness and respect for diversity in the learning community.”<sup>5</sup> School librarians maintain collections and organize facilities that support developmental, cultural, social, and linguistic needs and ensure equitable access for all learners in the community. When learners can see that they are valued and welcome in the school library, they feel empowered and safe to initiate positive social interactions. This security creates a comfortable atmosphere and learning environment that foster the sharing of their various experiences, perspectives, new ideas, and knowledge.

Collaborative interactions often thrive in an atmosphere of positive social interaction, and school librarians play a critical role in facilitating and encouraging these interactions through engaging programming. Cultivating positive social interaction strengthens a sense of community within the school library, promoting a spirit of enthusiasm and participation in the learning process. This aligns with the Collaborate Shared Foundation, which calls for learners and educators to “work effectively with others to broaden perspectives and work toward common goals.”<sup>6</sup> Positive social interaction encourages learners to explore and seek answers collaboratively. School librarians can create learning opportunities through the school library to support and stimulate discussion and active contributions from all learners. Providing learners with resources, materials, and instruction on communication, teamwork, and conflict resolution can also promote productive collaboration where learners can connect, respect, and respond to multiple perspectives. Facilitating positive social interaction enriches the school library as a hub not only for teens' social growth but also for their development as effective collaborators.

### **THE NEED FOR STRUCTURE AND CLEAR LIMITS**

While teens are eager to explore independence and freedom, they also need clear limits and structured environments as they navigate adolescence to develop the essential skills and qualities of a mature adult. When teenagers are given independence without any boundaries or guidance, they may end up making poor choices

that could have long-lasting consequences. On the other hand, when teens are given too much structure without any room for autonomy, they may feel suffocated and struggle to develop a sense of self. Finding the right balance between independence and structure will vary, depending on the individual situation and each teenager's unique circumstances. But when school librarians provide freedom inside a set of consistently enforced routines, rules, and consequences, teens are allowed to make choices within those parameters, developing decision-making skills and self-confidence. Practicing mature skill sets in a nurturing environment helps them become purposeful, responsible, and reliable adults.

### **Structure and Clear Limits and the School Library**

A structured environment allows teens to engage more effectively with school library resources and activities, creating a sense of purpose and focus in their interactions with the library. The presence of clear limits enhances the exploration of resources as well as the resourcefulness of learners, enabling teens to navigate the school library's offerings with precision and intention. Furthermore, by establishing clear guidelines and expectations that are consistently enforced, school librarians can create an inclusive environment to ensure that all learners feel safe and valued. These guidelines also promote effective collaboration, enabling learners to work together within defined boundaries, fostering a purposeful, productive, and harmonious learning atmosphere.

Structure and clear limits build a supportive framework for teens to learn responsibility and autonomy. By setting consistent guidelines and expectations, school librarians empower teens to manage their time, prioritize tasks, and develop a sense of accountability for their actions. School librarians also play a critical role in curating resources and providing guidance on research methods, ethical information use, and intellectual property. Through these structures, teens cultivate the discipline and organization necessary to handle materials, information, and communication with other people with responsibility and care.

Structure fosters reliability—an essential quality associated with independence. Through collaborative learning opportunities in the school library, teens learn to be dependable and trustworthy by adhering to deadlines and fulfilling commitments. This reliability strengthens their relationships with others and instills self-confidence, as they feel accomplished by meeting expectations. By offering a balanced approach to independence and structure, school libraries create an environment where teens can thrive.

### **Structure and Clear Limits and the AASL Standards**

Teenagers' needs for structure and boundaries align closely with several of the AASL Standards' Key Commitments and Competencies, which can greatly enhance the learning experience in school libraries by providing teens with a sense of purpose.

The Curate Shared Foundation emphasizes learners' need to make meaning of information for themselves and others. By providing teens with "strategies for acting on curiosity about a topic of personal interest or curricular relevance,"<sup>7</sup> school librarians enable this growth in purpose and learning.

Through structured environments and boundary-setting, teens feel safe to research and explore independently. When school librarians model and teach "safe, responsible, ethical, and legal information behaviors,"<sup>8</sup> they enable learners to act as information custodians and engage in the learning community as conscientious participants.

By consistently engaging with the learning community around school library policies and resources, school librarians reinforce the fact that information is a shared resource. In a culture and learning climate that fosters teens' understanding of learning as a social responsibility and a civic duty, school librarians can mold learners into not only informed individuals but also reliable and engaged citizens of tomorrow.<sup>9</sup>

## THE NEED FOR SELF-DEFINITION

Self-definition is a crucial aspect of adolescent development. During the teenage years, individuals go through a process of self-discovery where they begin to understand their values, interests, and aspirations. This journey of self-definition is essential; it helps teenagers shape their identities and make informed decisions about their future. Through self-definition, teenagers learn to accept themselves and become more confident in their decisions and interactions with others. This confidence is essential for navigating the challenges of growing up and creating a balanced lifestyle.

### Self-Definition and the School Library

Adolescence is a period of immense personal growth and self-discovery, and school libraries provide a safe and nurturing environment for teens to explore their identities. By offering a wide range of literature and resources, such as books, magazines, and databases—in print and online—school libraries empower teenagers to learn about different cultures, perspectives, and experiences. These resources allow teens to broaden their horizons, challenge their assumptions, and develop an informed and well-rounded sense of self.

Additionally, school librarians can organize active and passive programming, collaborative lessons, and community-outreach programs that encourage self-expression, creativity, and critical thinking. These activities allow teens to interact with like-minded peers, exchange ideas, and develop their unique voices. By supporting teens' need for self-definition through social engagement and active learning, school librarians contribute to young people's holistic development, fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment within the community.

## **Self-Definition and the AASL Standards**

The school library plays a critical role in supporting learners' self-definition, helping them form identities and embark on journeys of self-discovery. School librarians support learners' individual journeys by enabling curiosity and initiative through the school library, "embedding the inquiry process within grade bands and within disciplines."<sup>10</sup> School librarians activate learners' prior knowledge during the inquiry process, allowing them to apply context and new meaning to their selves and their discoveries. As learners enact the Explore Shared Foundation and reflect on their discoveries, school librarians help them recognize their individual strengths and capabilities, which learners can use to define themselves.

Teens' need for self-definition aligns closely with the Include Shared Foundation. By respecting and celebrating individual identities, the school library promotes a commitment to inclusivity and diversity in the learning community. School librarians construct learning opportunities that allow learners to distinguish and recognize themselves as they observe various perspectives and opinions expressed through information resources and from other learners.

When the school librarian guides learners to engage in the respectful communication of thoughts and ideas while listening to others with contrasting points of view, learners understand that every voice is valued and has a place in the community. This focus on self-discovery and identity also promotes effective collaboration among learners. Learning with and from others stimulates learners to contribute actively to discussions and to make meaning together,<sup>11</sup> deepening teens' understanding of and connection to their identities and to their communities.

## **THE NEED FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

Except for infancy, early adolescence is the stage of childhood when physical growth happens the fastest. This is also a period of rapid emotional and mental development, preparing teens for adulthood. Physical activity should include both large- and small-muscle development, exercising the body as well as building the mind.

### **Physical Activity and the School Library**

Libraries have long been a place of knowledge and learning, but the physical benefits of visiting the school library should not be overlooked. The school library is an excellent place to engage the whole learner actively! It is a supportive and safe space for teens to investigate an interest in physical wellness and emotional well-being, providing the resources and information to lead a healthy lifestyle.

In addition to the academically more-complex mental processing that begins to develop in adolescence, teens can encounter a number of mental and emotional developmental challenges. Teens are learning how to navigate complex social situations,

form meaningful relationships, measure and manage new emotions, and establish their own sense of identity. It's a time of inquiry and exploration as they begin to understand their place in the world and what they want from life. Bibliotherapy and human-focused programming through the school library that promote empathy can support social-emotional development for teens.

Physical engagement is also essential for teens' healthy development. By staying active and engaged in their own physical wellness and growth, teens can set themselves up for success in adulthood. Physical engagement also often requires collaboration, fostering teamwork and communication among teens. By supporting learners' needs through dynamic programming that creates opportunities for teens to pursue and engage with information and each other, school libraries are a haven to support the whole learner—mind and body.

### **Physical Activity and the AASL Standards**

Teens' need for physical activity aligns seamlessly with the AASL Standards and reinforces the school library's role in holistic development. Incorporating the principles of health and wellness into school library programming upholds the Include Shared Foundation by ensuring that all learners feel valued and engaged. When learners feel physically and emotionally safe in their surroundings, school librarians can facilitate exciting opportunities for informed conversation and active debate. School librarians foster an atmosphere where learners feel empowered to seek interactions with others, reflect on their learning, and demonstrate empathy.

Consistent with the Collaborate Shared Foundation, physical activity often also requires learners to work toward common goals. Learners can communicate, deepen their understanding, make decisions, and solve problems more effectively when they work together.

## **THE NEED FOR MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION**

Teens desire opportunities to participate in activities that impact their lives directly. They find meaning and direction when immersing themselves in activities with real-world connections. These experiences, whether through clubs, volunteering, or creative projects, allow teens to find and foster their individual abilities, skills, and interests. In this way, meaningful participation promotes not only a better knowledge of their place in society but also how they might contribute to it constructively.

### **Meaningful Participation and the School Library**

The school library plays an essential role in promoting meaningful participation; it is a dynamic space where teens actively shape their own learning experiences, ensuring

that their voices and choices are heard and their interests are valued. School libraries empower individual learners to explore their hobbies with confidence by providing a range of books, resources, and online tools. Furthermore, school librarians encourage teens to take ownership of their own learning journey and a comprehensive approach to education with programming that promotes creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration.

The school library is also a hub for growing the next generation of leaders and changemakers as a conduit between the classroom and real-world experiences. School librarians facilitate programming to connect learners with local community organizations, mentorship programs, and service opportunities, allowing teens to put their knowledge into action and supporting their need to make a positive impact on the world around them. School libraries nurture seeds of possibility as a supportive community and ensure that teens have the tools they need to cultivate their own lives and grow a better future for themselves and others.

### **Meaningful Participation and the AASL Standards**

The AASL Standards play a critical role in the overall development of teens, especially when providing authentic and meaningful learning experiences through the school library. School librarians encourage curiosity and initiative in learners as they engage in inquiry-based processes and seek to solve problems with real-world connections.<sup>12</sup> When learners pursue questions of personal interest, they shape their own learning experiences and stimulate deeper inquiry, fostering personal connections with information and reflective learning.

Meaningful participation in school library programming promotes learners' engagement in an iterative process of inquiry and stimulates problem-solving through cycles of design, implementation, and reflection.<sup>13</sup> Learning extends beyond the classroom through reading, writing, and self-directed hands-on activities while school librarians prepare students to engage with other learners and the global learning community. Through participation, learners are able to relate their own experiences to the perspectives of others as they co-construct and innovate solutions to a challenge.

### **THE NEED FOR COMPETENCE AND ACHIEVEMENT**

During this stage of rapid growth, it is normal for adolescents to feel self-conscious or doubt their talents. Teens may need multiple opportunities to demonstrate to themselves and others that they are capable and can do things effectively. The need for competence and achievement can be met through different means: getting good grades, participating in sports, or accomplishing personal goals, for example. Building resilience and confidence in their abilities through their achievements leads to teens' increased self-esteem and self-worth.

## **Competence and Achievement and the School Library**

School libraries play a pivotal role in fostering competence and achievement, both academically and personally, for young learners. The school library provides resources to help all learners develop and demonstrate skills, build confidence and resilience, and experience the fulfillment of bringing their ideas to fruition.

School libraries support learners in developing their academic competence by offering opportunities to practice or demonstrate acquired skills through inquiry-based lessons and other programming. By prompting teens to ask questions and explore topics that pique their interest, school librarians help them refine their research skills and become critical thinkers. School libraries also ensure that all learners have equal access to resources and opportunities, promoting competence and achievement for every individual, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities.

As a hub for exploration, school libraries provide a variety of resources and experiences for learners to expand their knowledge and grow their confidence and resilience. In the school library, teens are encouraged to take risks, learn from mistakes, and develop a growth mindset. This cultivates creativity, reflection, and problem-solving skills. Nurturing a positive self-image for teens and focusing on their strengths are important aspects of developing eager explorers and lifelong learners.

Experiencing the achievement of goals, as an individual and in a collective group, is a crucial aspect of adolescent development. School libraries promote teamwork and shared learning experiences for teens through projects and programs where learners exchange knowledge and build competence as a collective effort. School librarians play a central role in creating engaging collaborative programs that inspire teens to be active and dedicated learners and leaders. When learners are able to scaffold their skill sets to engage in meaningful work, the sense of pride, self-worth, and fulfillment that accompanies their accomplishments is a powerful motivator for them to achieve their full potential.

## **Competence and Achievement and the AASL Standards**

Providing opportunities where teens can showcase their skills, focus on strengths rather than weaknesses, and learn to handle criticism constructively is critical to their development, fulfillment, and future success. The Inquire Shared Foundation plays a key role in fostering competence and achievement for teen learners. School librarians help teens hone their research skills and become critical thinkers by encouraging them to ask questions rooted in prior knowledge and curiosity and to make thoughtful choices around their information sources. The products that learners create to illustrate their thinking processes and new knowledge allow them to display and celebrate their abilities.

Through the Explore Shared Foundation, school librarians help learners develop resilience as they persist through activities of self-directed tinkering and making.

School librarians foster an atmosphere to support teens' growth mindset as learners identify their own potential by accepting feedback and engaging in self-assessment, leading them again through cycles of design, implementation, and reflection.

By promoting teamwork and shared learning experiences, school librarians encourage teens to learn with and from others by contributing to discussions and making meaning together. Collaborate strengthens a sense of collective growth, as well as individual competence and confidence as learners contribute to the team. Their sense of pride and accomplishment is amplified as learners work together, scaffolding their skills, stretching their goals, and expanding their achievement.

## **SUPPORTING TEENS WITH ENGAGING SCHOOL LIBRARY PROGRAMMING**

Imagine a learning ecosystem designed with intention and purpose in mind. Thoughtful school library programming aims to unlock each learner's potential and guide them along pathways to success. Using the AASL Standards as a compass, school librarians navigate these pathways, steering learners toward the acquisition of crucial skills and competencies that extend beyond the classroom. The magic of thoughtful programming makes learners more than just passive recipients—they are active agents on their own learning journeys, each with their own developmental needs and aspirations. School librarians strive to create programs that become catalysts for transformation, enabling learners to take charge of their own intellectual journeys, become independent, and create a brighter future.

Thoughtful programming could come into play in a variety of forms, from collaborative lessons, where a school librarian and content-area educator work together; to passive programming, where the learner takes charge; to active programming, where the school librarian facilitates everything; and even through a community-outreach program. Well-planned programming can build competency in our learners while meeting their developmental needs and make a lasting impact.

### **Collaborative Lessons**

Collaborative lessons can be useful to engage teens actively in their educational journey while supporting their developmental needs. Learning opportunities developed to combine the professional knowledge and skills sets of both the school librarian and content-area educator often involve interdisciplinary connections that resonate with the developing brains of learners. Collaborative lessons respond to teens' preferences for practical applications and hands-on experiences by combining real-world applicability with active learning methodologies. Often allowing learners to shape their own learning within parameters, collaborative lessons provide teens with choices and independence while also polishing vital skills, such as information literacy, critical



thinking, problem-solving, and communication. Finally, teenagers learn and develop crucial relationship skills through social engagement during collaborative lessons. These lessons employ a holistic approach that speaks to teens' developmental needs, providing them with the tools they need to flourish academically and prosper in their future endeavors.

### **Passive Programming**

Passive programming is a strategic avenue for captivating teenagers' developmental interests and fostering their skill development while meeting their developmental needs. Often a come-and-go activity prepared by the school librarian, passive programming as a strategy meets the needs of teens by supporting self-directed learning while allowing them to participate in activities at their own pace, need, and desire; this can be especially helpful for reaching the overscheduled teenager. By offering a variety of options, passive programming empowers teens to choose activities that pique their curiosity, promoting independent research, time management, and organizational skills crucial for future academic and social pursuits.

Passive programming is also a great way to engage teens who may not have the confidence to participate in active programming and allows learners to explore the school library at their own pace. The school library's relaxed and socially welcoming environment encourages low-pressure social encounters, which aid in the development of interpersonal skills during this critical stage of identity exploration. Passive programming allows teenagers to flourish autonomously while in the safety of the school library.

### **Active Programming**

Active school library programming meets teenagers' developmental needs by coordinating group activities, workshops, and conversations. Active programming fosters enthusiasm and independence by providing programs that are relevant to teenagers' interests and objectives, bringing teens into the school library of their own will. The school library is transformed into a vibrant hub for collaborative exploration where teens may exchange ideas, debate topics, and nurture important collaboration skills. These experiences help them develop strong communication and teamwork skills that will be useful in their personal and professional lives. Teenagers gain practical skills and problem-solving talents through participating in hands-on meetings, experiments, and interactive sessions. This dynamic method fosters adaptation and critical thinking, preparing learners to face real-world situations confidently.

## Community Outreach

Participation in community outreach activities helps learners gain the experience of giving back, building up the community in the process. Community-outreach programs that involve learners in activities that give back to the community provide a profoundly successful approach to supporting teenagers' developmental growth and competency, creating a sense of purpose, positive impact, pride, and belonging, and contributing to a fulfilling learning environment. Teens learn social responsibility and empathy through initiatives that help their local community directly, increasing their knowledge of societal challenges and actively participating in positive change. These programs provide a real-world context, allowing teenagers to apply classroom knowledge in real-world settings, improving their problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Working with the community also develops important interpersonal and communication skills and fosters initiative and leadership as teens take control of projects, embrace positions within teams, and create positive change.

## KEEP THOSE FIRES BURNING FOR LEARNING!

It's clear that the school library is more than just a repository of books. It's a hub of teen growth and discovery—a proverbial campfire for collected explorers, teachers, and learners! The tradition of gathering around the campfire creates a space and context for understanding others and ourselves, for the sharing of news and information or stories for enjoyment, and for the building of community. Through an exciting blend of programming that allows teens to be creative, to socialize, to explore passions and exercise independence, to nurture personal wellness, to participate in meaningful activity, to celebrate their abilities and achievements, and to do so within healthy boundaries, school librarians can fan the flames of learning in every teen. Guided by the AASL Standards, these programs aren't just about filling shelves—they're about igniting passions, sparking curiosity, and empowering teens to create their own paths to success. So, let's roll up our sleeves, throw another log on the fire of innovation, and watch our learners reach their full potential through the school library!

### NOTES

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FOR REVIEW ONLY

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