



The Power of Small

How Rural Libraries Can Help
Their Communities Thrive

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Calhoun County Library and Museum

About Allie

2015 MLIS, Public Libraries focus - Louisiana State University

2018 ALA Emerging Leader, ArLA Sponsorship

2018 Library Journal Mover & Shaker - Community Builder

YALSA Selected List Volunteer

Accidental hometown library director

Founder of Tiny Library Think Tank

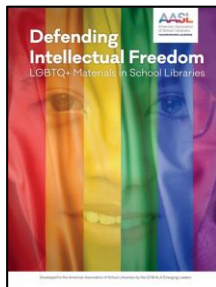


Photo by Doug Gritzmacher for Library Journal

Calhoun County (AR) Library



2-branch system serving 5,247 people (2017)

- Main library + county museum in Hampton, AR
- Satellite branch in Thornton, AR



Gotta Start Somewhere...

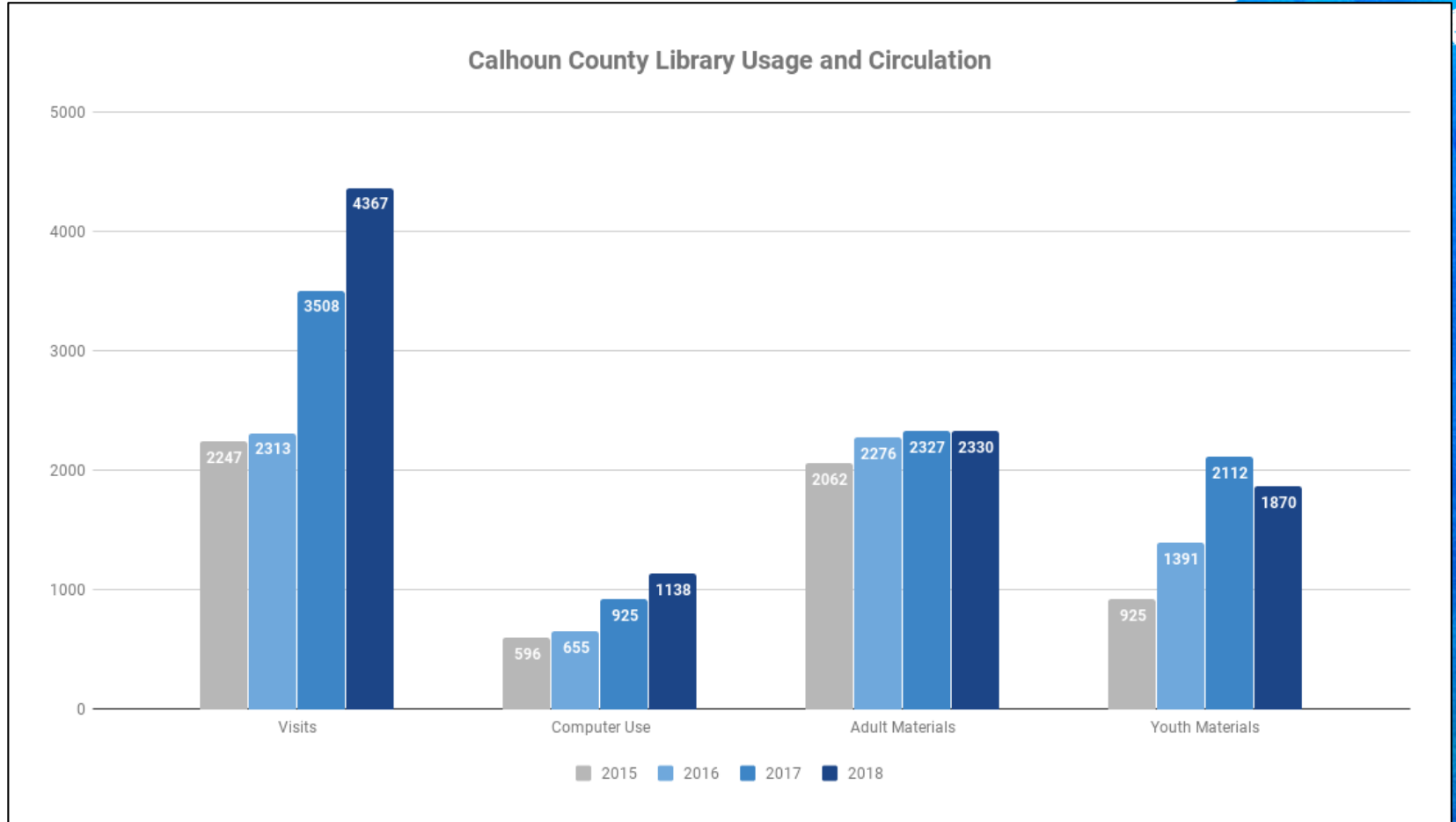
Recent changes and current projects:

- Written policies
- Website
- Teen collection
- Summer Reading Program
- Retroactive automation



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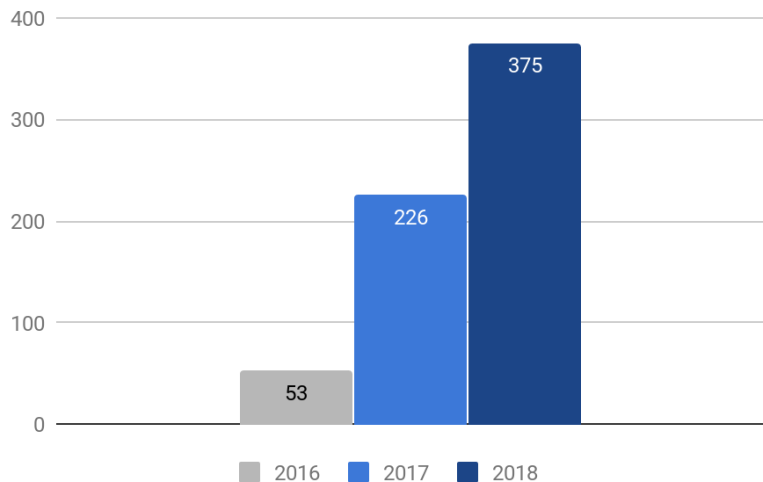
Measuring Results



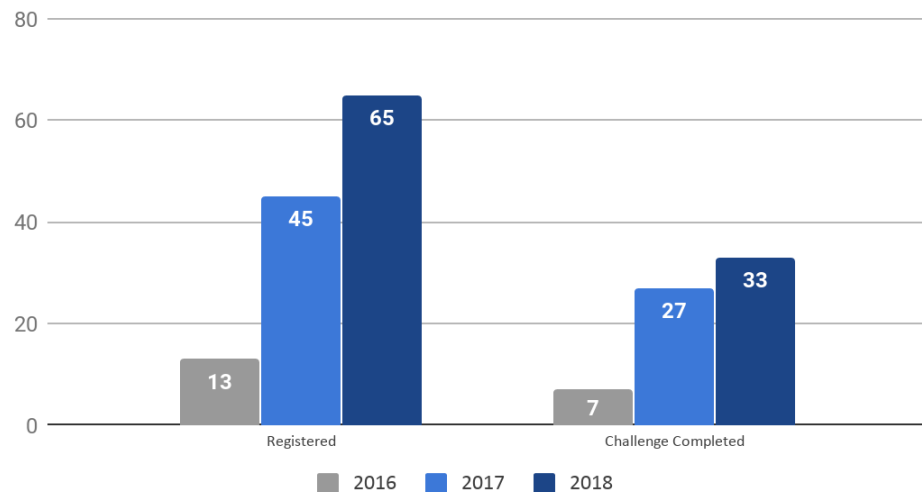
Measuring Results

Summer Reading Program participation is also increasing.

Attendance at Summer Reading Program activities has increased seven-fold.



Five times as many children participated in 2018 Summer Reading Program as 2016.



Libraries
support
communities.



Small and rural
libraries account for
80.5% of public
libraries in the US,
and serve over **46
million people.**

Swan, D. W., Grimes, J., & Owens, T. (2013). *The State of Small and Rural Libraries in the United States* (Research brief No. 5). Washington, DC: Institute of Museum and Library Services.

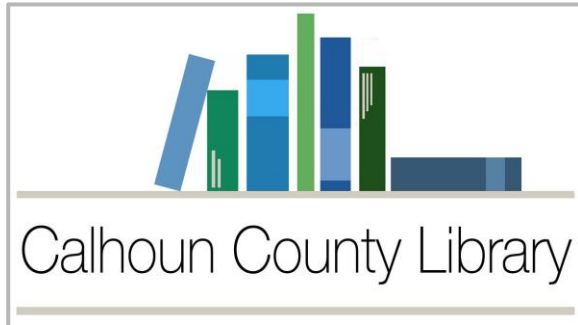
“Rural” and “small” are
relative terms.

Things work much
differently in “tiny” libraries.



Tiny Library Think Tank on Facebook

- A spin-off of the massive [Library Think Tank](#) (formerly known as #ALATT)
- Now has over 600 members



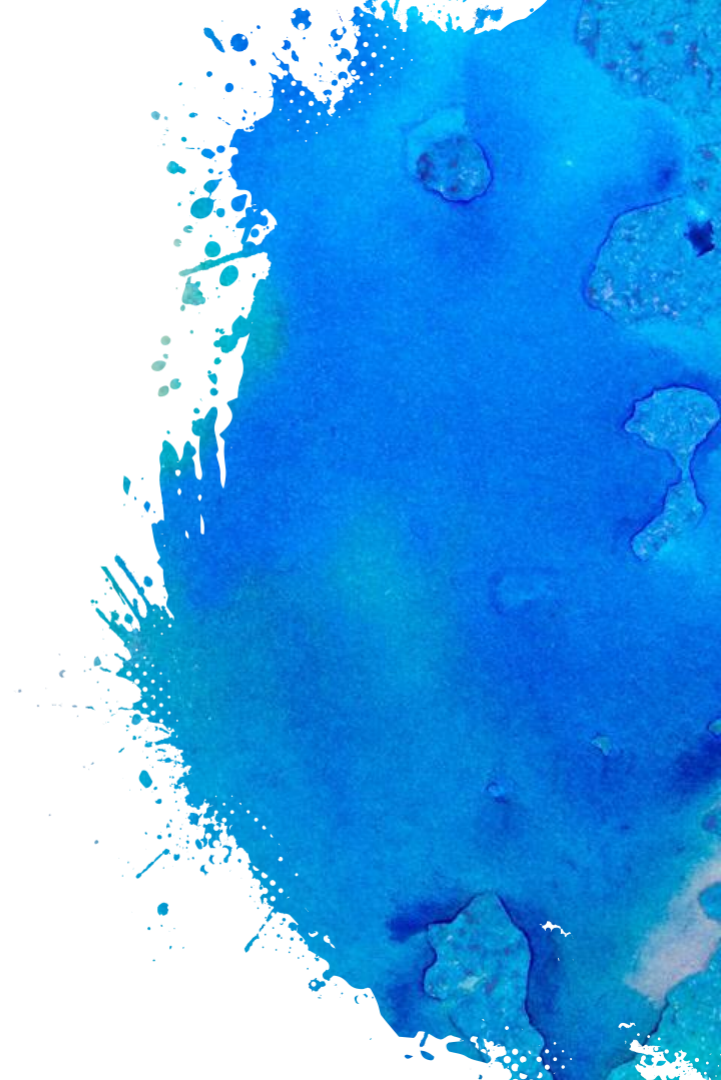
Tiny Library Challenges Opportunities:

- Increasing Community Engagement
- Allocating Resources Effectively
- Evaluating Services Provided
- Serving ALL Members of the Community
- Making Volunteer Help Actually Helpful
- Working with a Growth Mindset
- Avoiding Burnout

And doing it all with a miniscule staff, and probably not even a private desk.



Who are your
stakeholders?



Stakeholders are:

- Patrons
- Staff (managers and employees)
- County elected officials
- Potential partners
- Local business and industry leaders
- FUTURE library users



Don't lead with the library.

- Schedule appointments and just listen.
- Ask stakeholder:

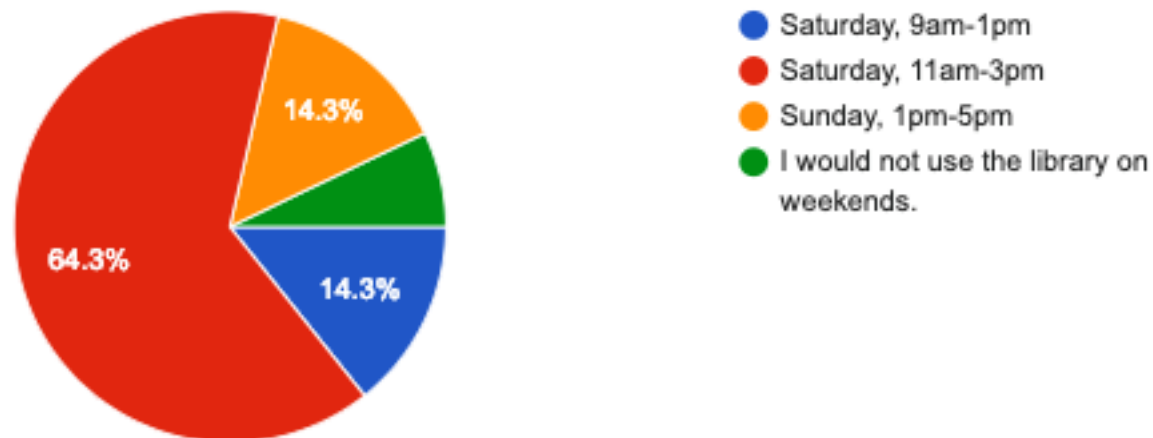
“What do YOU think are the major issues facing our community?”

- Take notes.
- Ask yourself: “What can the library do?”
 - Example: summer activities for kids



If the library was open on the weekend, which hours would be most convenient for you?

14 responses



Other Ways to Assess Community Needs:

- Youth/teen advisory groups
- Focus groups (patrons and non-patrons)
- Community meetings
- Surveys

Thinking Strategically About Resource Allocation



What is your most
valuable and limited
resource?



Time.



Time Management for Really, Really Busy People

- Plan well, and plan often.
- Interval training, but for work.
- Don't make anything from scratch if you can help it.



Indirect Financial Assistance

- Partnerships with local schools, businesses, organizations
- Local newspapers



Provide programs that benefit the entire community and partner with other community groups as often as possible.

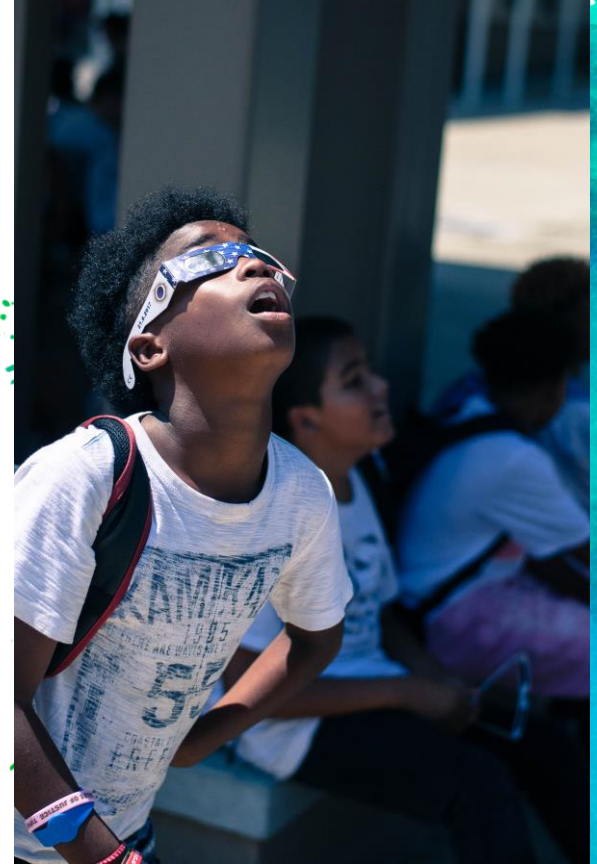


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Using Surveys to Gather Community Feedback



Survey Advantages and Disadvantages

Good news:

- Data is great to show stakeholders
- Quotes for marketing materials and promotion
- Data to use to support decisions

Bad news:

- Data is not very reliable
 - Only works if we remember
 - Questionable honesty
- Only surveys current users



Serving ALL
Community
Members



Your community is more diverse than it appears.

All citizens deserve public library collections that accurately reflect the world around them. Avoid becoming an echo chamber. Use titles by authors of all backgrounds and with characters of many identities in every book display.

If possible, purchase all requests.

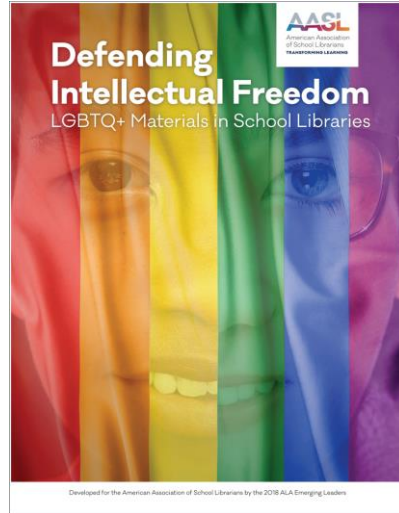
Read way outside your personal box as often as possible.



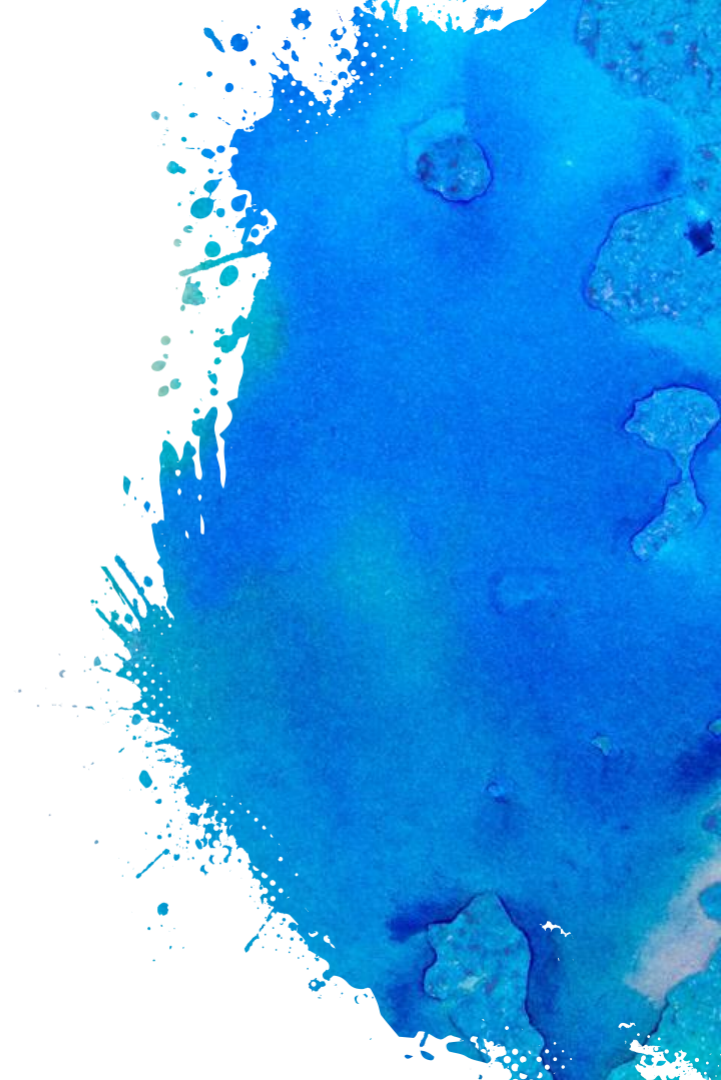
Resources for Increasing Diversity

Ordering procedures

Defending Intellectual Freedom: LGBTQ+ Materials in School Libraries



Volunteers: Help or Hassle?



Both!

Getting the most out of your volunteers:

- Volunteer paperwork
 - Written policy with signature
 - Privacy policy for patron protection
 - Information form
- Be very selective
- Project-specific or permanent schedule
 - No random drop-ins



Teen Volunteers

- Snacks
- Free books
- Recommendation letters
- Volunteer hours
- Respect and trust

Tips:

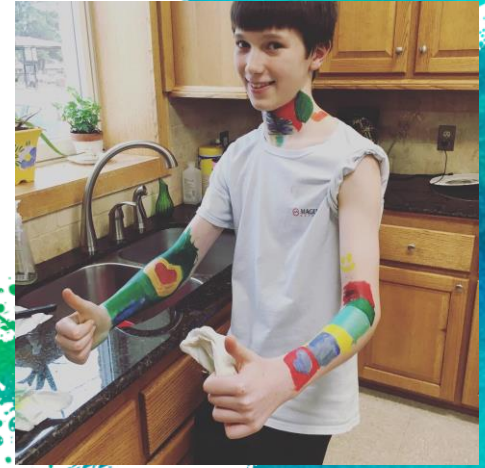
- Require set schedule/advance notice of absence
- Train and practice
- Give them some autonomy, such as choosing tasks from a list



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My teen volunteers:

- Plan and execute youth programs
- Create floats for county fair and Christmas parades
- Cover and process books for cataloging
- Alphabetize, shelve, and shift books
- Provide minor technical assistance to patrons
- Prepare for and assist with summer reading activities



Social Media for Tiny Libraries



Tips for Using Social Media Effectively:

- Be personal and informal
- Post regularly
- Choose the most-used platforms for your patrons



[The Shareable Clique](#) on Facebook



[Library Market](#) on Dropbox

Use a Growth Mindset to Prevent Stagnation



“You must have worked very hard”

vs.

“You must be very smart”



Growth Mindset:

- Believing intelligence/talents can be developed
- Increases self-esteem, resilience after failure
- Better overall outcomes



What's My Mindset?





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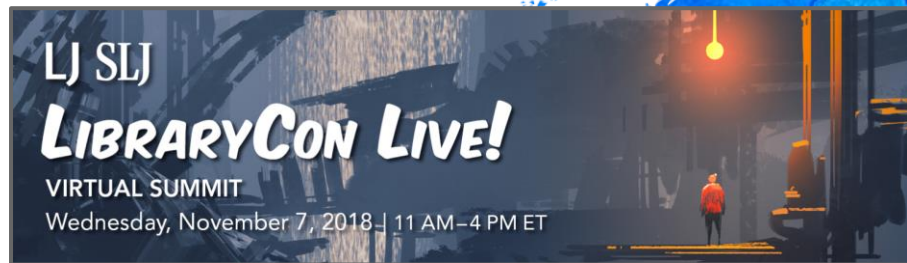
Take the Mindset Assessment to Learn More About Your Mindset

Our mindsets exist on a continuum from fixed to growth, and although we'd like to always have a growth mindset, the reality is that we can only be on a journey to a growth mindset. The goal is to recognize fixed mindset elements in ourselves and then reflect on feedback and strategies for how to improve.

The Mindset Assessment is a quick diagnostic tool drawn from research-validated measures for people age

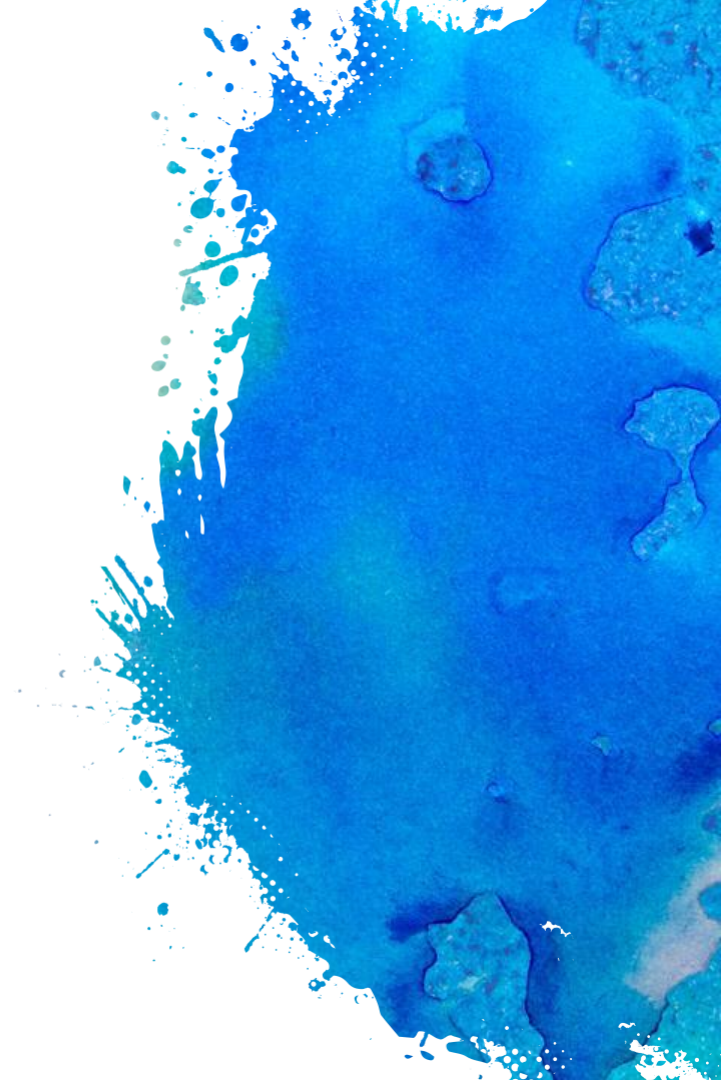


Favorite Free PD Resources



You can do
ANYTHING,
but not
EVERYTHING.

-- David Allen



How to Avoid Burnout When You Can't Go to the Bahamas

Engage in professional development often.

Take breaks. Go OUTSIDE.

Straighten your workspace regularly.

Keep your old to-do lists and calendars.

Find a good emotional balance.

Develop a 2-minute meditation practice.



Thank you!

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