Teen Services That Matter
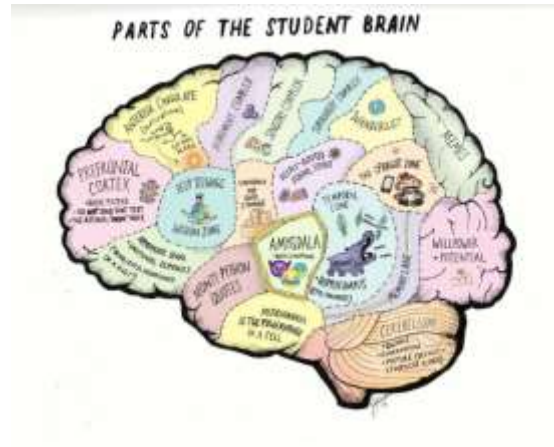
Designing Supportive Library Experiences

Who am I?

Kym Powe (she/her)

- CT State Library Children and YA Consultant
- Believer in Mermaids and Fairies
- Older sister
- DnD player
- Plant mom
- Cozy gamer
- Crocheter
- Theatre kid
- Former Teen

PARTS OF THE STUDENT BRAIN

Who are teens?

What's happening in their brains?

The Teen Brain

- 18 years old= legal adulthood
- About 25 years old= completing adolescence
- The prefrontal cortex develops last
  - Helps make good decisions
  - Think about the future
  - Helps identify consequences
- The Limbic System develops quickly
  - Immediate gratification
  - Controls emotions
- The Striatum releases dopamine into the brain
  - Is a key part of the brains reward system
  - The teen brain very sensitive to different rewards
  - It's also connected to risk taking
- "How do I provide opportunity for healthy risk?"

It's not all negative

- Not fully developed
- Can't analyze risk, reward, consequence
- High stress = fight or flight
- Misinterpret social cues
- Misinterpret facial expressions
- Risk-oriented

Teens are primed to learn

- Cognitive, neurological & behavioral flexibility
- Reward-driven
- Passionate
- Resilient
- Motivated by risk

Teens are future library users!

What do teens need?

Ages and Stages

8–10-year-olds

- We may try out **sarcasm**, but we still often do not understand it

- Rules are not so rigid anymore. We want to **know the reasons** for the rules we are asked to follow.

- Help us find things we are good at and give us plenty of **opportunities to be successful**

11–13-year-olds

- Due to rapid changes of puberty, we often feel **uncomfortable** about our bodies.

- We are beginning to realize that sometimes the way we speak at home or with friends is **not appropriate in every setting**

- **Do not single us out** in front of our peers for praise or criticism

14–18-year-olds

- We are very **concerned with our body image,** and we are swayed by images we see in media.

- Push us to stretch our thinking by providing us with **real life problems to solve**, make decisions, reflect, and evaluate.

- Hold us to high standards and **hold us accountable** for the success or failure of our plans to keep us on our toes

Adolescence

"Adolescence is a **sensitive** period of neurodevelopment that is especially affected by the environment. Deeply rooted, and growing, structural inequities curtail the **promise** of this developmental period."

-National Academy of Science

Social and Emotional Learning

- **Self-Awareness** Understanding our culture, thoughts, feelings, potential
- **Self-Management** achieve goals, coping with stress
- **Social Awareness** Empathy, understand social norms
- **Relationship Skills** problem solving, conflict management, advocating for ourselves and others
- **Responsible Decisions-Making** Critical thinking, analyzing impact

Source

CASEL Framework

COMMUNITIES

FAMILIES & CAREGIVERS

SCHOOLS

CLASSROOM

SELF-AWARENESS

SELF-MANAGEMENT

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

SOCIAL AWARENESS

RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

SEL Instruction & Classroom Climate

Schoolwide Culture, Practices & Policies

Authentic Partnerships

Aligned Learning Opportunities

Public Libraries and SEL

- Teens from different schools congregate and interact.
- Teen's co-design programs for other teens of younger children.
    - Connected Learning and program design
- Teen learn to lose during library programming.
- Teens learn to taking ownership and build leadership skills.
    - Portion of the library collection
    - Junior Friends of the Library
    - Teen library board position

"How do I provide opportunities for healthy risk."
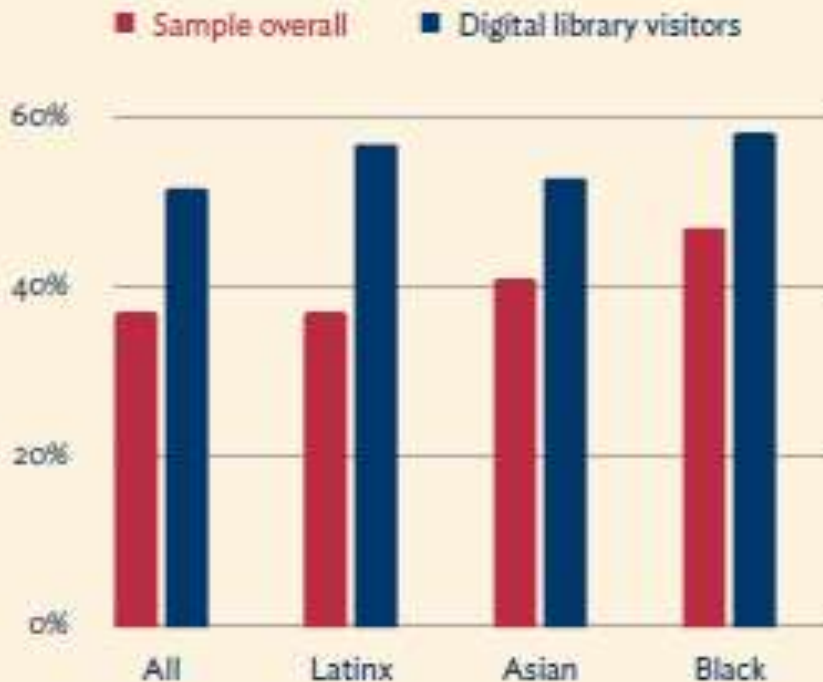
Teens and the library

Gen Z and Millennials

- Gen Z is 12- 27 years old
- "Gen Z and Millennials are consuming books: on average they buy 1 ebook, 1 audiobook, and 2 print books per month."
- "Gen Z buys and reads more than Millennials in all formats… [and] the younger Gen Zers are, the more print books they buy."
- "54% of Gen Z and Millennials report having used physical libraries with a twelve-month period."
- "Browsing public libraries is Gen Z's #3 preferred place to discover books."
- "There was a 23% point increase in Americans who attend library programs from 2014 to 2019."
- "43% of Gen Z and Millennials don't identify as readers. Of that "non-reader" group, 54% have been to their local library in the past twelve months."

BIPOC Patrons and Digital Collections

BIPOC Patrons Use Digital Collections More
Than the General Population

■ Sample overall ■ Digital library visitors

Chart showing percentages for All, Latinx, Asian, and Black with Sample overall (red) and Digital library visitors (blue) bars, Y-axis from 0% to 60%.

Digital library services

BIPOC patrons
Borrow digital library materials like ebooks and audiobooks

African American or Black
Highest physical and digital library use: 63.9% had visited the local library in the last 12 months.

Asian and Asian American
Browsing shelves in public libraries is the #3 preferred method of book discovery

Latino, Latina, Latinx
Browsing shelves in public libraries is the #3 preferred method of book discovery

What does this tell us?

- Teens identify when they're treated differently from other library patrons. This includes younger children and older adults.

- Negative experiences with one or two librarians will affect how teens feel about the library overall

- Teens are primed to learn, and the library is a space for them to learn, develop, and fail safely.

- What we see in the teens who *do* come in the library may not be indicative of *all* teens.

- Intersection matters.

How do we get teens in the library?

But how

"[Teens are] not going to come to our programs if they don't know you... Being able to develop those relationships and understand what they need [is crucial]..." – **Jessica Chaney, former Teen Services Coordinator, Memphis Public Library**

"While traditional partnerships with schools to parks and recreation departments align with many teen services and interests, restricting partnerships to these organizations limits possibilities in supporting teen culture, identity, and opportunity."

Engagement

"Authentically engaging teens also requires new partnerships with community organizations focused on offerings in areas such as the arts, athletics, media technology, and youth organizing. All of this requires a cultural shift that goes beyond the implementation of specific programs- including:

- A **focus** on **relationship-building**
- A **tolerance** for **risk-taking**
- **Flexibility** in **responsibilities and schedules**
- **Re-envisioning** use of **community and library spaces**
- **Involving youth and staff** in planning, decision-making, and implementation
- And **openness** to **experimentation**"

USE CONNECTED LEARNING PRINCIPLES WHEN DESIGNING LIBRARY PROGRAMS

Connected Learning Scenario
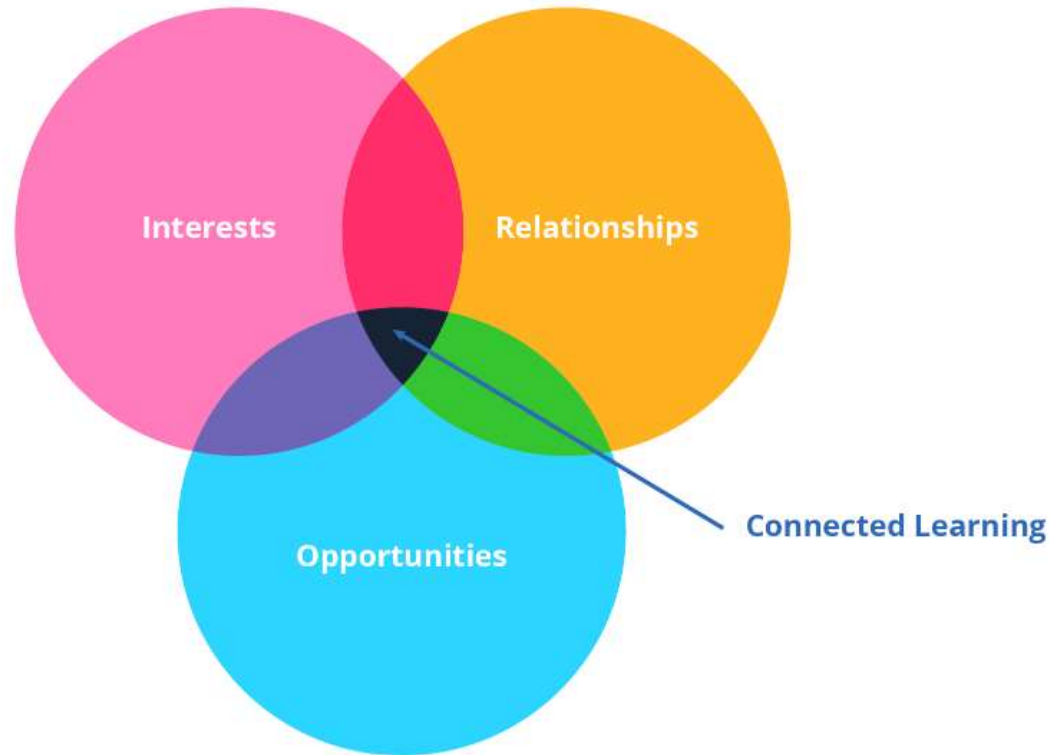
Use connected learning principles when designing library programs

Library Initiatives

CT Pages

Where do we go from here?

Tall Toddlers vs. Tiny Adults

Teen Brains

- Powered by amygdala
- High Stress: fight or flight
- Judge neutral behaviors as negative
- Reward-driven and motivated by risk

Adult Brains

- More developed pre-frontal cortex
- Higher level reasoning
- Better able to assess others' behaviors
- Can analyze risk/ reward/ consequences

Behavior

Brain, nature, nurture, vibes

What to do about challenging behavior

- Be proactive
- Build relationships
- Reward positive behavior
- Establish clear rules and consequences
- Enforce rules equitably
- Keep them busy
- Be consistent
- Avoid power struggles

Positive interactions with teens

- Prioritize positive statements
- Get to know their names
- Be consistent, patient, fair, & kind
- Treat as you would all other ages
- Asked open-ended questions
- Explain code of conduct and WHY
- Be clear about rules and consequences
- Connect to emotions

Developmental Assets:

- **Empowerment:** Young people need to feel valued and valuable. This happens when youth feel safe and respected.

- **Boundaries and Expectations:** Young people need clear rules, consistent consequences… and encouragement to do their best.

Resources

- [One Trusted Adult: how to build strong connections and healthy boundaries with young people](#) (214p.)
  - [One Trusted Adult: Teen Summit Webinar](#)
- [The Promise of Adolescence: Realizing opportunity for all Youth [PP]](#)
- [Transforming Outcomes Through Community Engagement: How Public Library Leaders Foster Connected Learning Teen Services](#)
- [Gen Z and Millennials: How they use public libraries and identify through media use](#)
- [The Teen Brain Video](#)
- [Maybe She's Just Strict to Everybody](#)

Questions

For Assistance:

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