Best Practices for Volunteer Engagement

January 23, 2016

After a STEAM volunteer’s application and background check has been processed, the volunteer coordinator will contact the new volunteer and the librarian at the volunteer’s chosen branch. The volunteer coordinator will conduct a general orientation for the volunteer. The librarian will contact the volunteer to schedule a library-specific orientation and to provide information about the program that the volunteer is attending. It may be easiest for the librarian and the volunteer to schedule the library-specific orientation on the same day as the connected learning program.

Library-Specific Orientation:

On the day of the scheduled orientation, the librarian must:

- Let staff know that a volunteer will be coming that day
- Have front desk contact you so you can greet both the volunteer
- Introduce yourself
- Provide a tour of the library
- Introduce the volunteer to staff including branch manager
- Reinforce library guidelines
- Review the information specific to first interaction
- Talk about expectations, theirs and yours
- Review volunteer’s skills and comfort level with working with teens
- Ask volunteer if they need any other information
- Thank the volunteer for coming to visit your library

Library Program Procedures:

A week or so before the program, the librarian should:

- Confirm the program location, date and time with the volunteer
- Prepare the Volunteer Planning Sheet
- Email the Program Guide, Volunteer Planning Sheet and an estimate of number of teens attending to the volunteer
- If applicable, check YouTube for video examples that should be emailed to volunteers
- Thank them for volunteering. With each communication, find a different way to say ‘thank you’. (Ex: “Thank you for taking the time to be with us”; “We know your time is valuable, we appreciate your help.”)

Day of the program:

- Let the front desk know a volunteer will be coming on the particular day
- Have front desk contact you when the volunteer arrives
- Come to the front desk to greet the volunteer, or arrange a meeting place and let the front desk guide the volunteer to you
• Introduce yourself. Review program guide, volunteer planning sheet and equipment required to conduct the program. If volunteer did not bring the Volunteer Planning Sheet, give volunteer another copy of the planning sheet.

Preparing for and at beginning of program:

• Have nametags for the teens attending the program. It is best practice to have the volunteers address teens by name and build rapport.
• Introduce Volunteer to teens attending program

During the program:

• Be aware of the needs of the volunteer
• Keep volunteer engaged in the program. If the volunteer seems hesitant, step in. Suggest how the volunteer might help a particular teen with the task at hand.

After the completion of the program:

• Ask the volunteer to complete the STEAM Volunteer Survey
• Ask the volunteer to give feedback about satisfaction with the volunteering experience and any suggestions he/she might have to improve the program

Thank the Volunteer!