Perceived Chaos:

Taking Time with Teens
Falling into the Teen Trap

488 Best Teen Library Programs a.k.a. Pinterest wormhole

Yalsa Teen Programming HQ

Teen Librarian Toolbox

Teen Services Underground

So many places and Youtube videos for great ideas!

But we’ve all been there, planned that, prepared for all those, and maybe a few teens signed up, possibly a teen or two came to the program.

Then it’s lather, rinse, and repeat.
Step outside the box of comfortable organization.

Welcome to Chaos!

Ok, not really, but it can look and sometimes feel like it.
Unschooling for Teen Librarians

“Unschooling encourages exploration of activities initiated by the children themselves, believing that the more personal learning is, the more meaningful, well-understood and therefore useful it is to the child.” - Unschooling wikipedia

While true for our teens, it’s also true for us - those who serve teens in libraries. We can explore other, more personal and more meaningful, engaging programs for our teen patrons. We should not be limited to what others have done before us!
● Not sharing the library with anyone else
● After hours - check on insurance coverage
● Not necessarily overnight
● Have enough adult presence to fit your number of teens as well as space
What You Need

- Time
- Choices & Options
- Food
- Willing Staff & Willing Teens
- Whistle
Regular Schedule

- Special Party or Reward
  - Summer Kick-Off or ending party
  - School break weeks
- Once per season
- Once per month....

Allow for Several Hours

- 2 hours GOOD
- 5 hours BEST!
Several Options

Activities

- Board Games (Apples to Apples, Secret Hitler, Funemployed, SuperFight)
- Social Online Games (Jackbox Party Pack, Town of Salem)
- Book Dominoes/Book Crafts
- General Crafts
- Henna & Jagua Temporary Tattoos
- Stop Motion Video & other video creations
- Passive Activities - Children’s Room

Nothing Scheduled & NOTHING Mandatory!

Give them choices & see what they do!
Games of All Sorts
Book Dominoes
Temporary Tattoos & Crafts

Needle Felting

Glass Votive Holders

Sock Puppets
Lego & Stop Motion Movie Making

Building & Set Design

2015 Rochester Teen Film Festival
Most Original Story
Children’s Room - Passive

Dress-Up, building projects, finger painting and chalk...plus hide-and-seek are popular. For the sleepover, the Discovery Room was the chosen “crash” spot.
And of course there’s reading, computers, hanging out....
Food

- Delivered, Prepared, or Easy
  - Pizza
  - Ramen Noodles
  - Sub Sandwiches
  - Making Pizzas

- Interactive - Part of the Events
  - Baking and Frosting Cookies
  - Ice Cream Sundaes
  - Cupcake Wars

General Junk Food Snacks
Willing Staff

- Someone who is okay with teens being teens;
- Someone who can keep up with teens (who move very quickly even when they are told not to run, and can be good at hiding even in a fully-lit library);
- Someone who has time to work after hours, or who can shift their working hours to adjust;
- Someone who can take and give out good-natured teasing is a must!
Willing Teens

- Need to be self-starters;
- Are ready to find things to do even if it’s not force-fed to them;
- Ready to meet new people and try new things.
Permission Forms

- Approve the official wording with existing library policies and governing board
- Include a section with teen responsibility
- Include a section with guardian responsibility
- Clearly worded expectations and outcomes
- Example ([https://goo.gl/1MSKRF](https://goo.gl/1MSKRF))
Know Your Teens

Are you working with “tweens” or “teens” - it makes a difference!

Know the teens who will be participating - another reason for permission forms.

Use your best judgement when allowing participants. Teens can enjoy getting “edgy” when they are on their own, while others may not like it.

Make sure you can strike a balance.
How long do we have left?

Or how much longer can I survive?

It never fails. An hour in, I think “Ok, this is staring out just fine.”

An hour and a half later, I think, “Oh, how can we ONLY be half way...?”

Thirty minutes later, I think, “Yeah, I’m not sure I’m gonna make it.” (Generally the whistle comes out about now.)

Forty-five minutes before the end, I think, “This is excellent! We’re in the groove! I could go for another two hours. But...time to start cleaning up.”
So What About You?
What are your successes?
What didn’t go as well as you hoped?
What kind of chaos lives in your library?
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