



## SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2021.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).


### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: County of Henrico  
Program Title: Tween Services at Fairfield Library  
Program Category: Customer Service

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### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

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## **Program Overview**

Public libraries typically divide their collections and staff into service areas aimed at children, teens, and adults to meet the needs of their users as they age. The transitional time between childhood and teenage years can be challenging for young library users, who may be too mature for the children's area while not yet ready for teen books and programs. This can lead to a loss of engagement and discontinued library use at a critical age for young people. To address this issue, Henrico County Public Library (HCPL) took a holistic approach to implement Tween Services at its new Fairfield Area Library, a state-of-the-art building replacing an aging facility. Adjustments to item catalog records increased discoverability and helped users find materials online, and helped all HCPL locations develop browsable Tween collection displays in their buildings. Fairfield hired a Tween Services librarian to host Tween programming, create interactive displays, and provide on-site reference services. These inclusive innovations were cost-effective, and have proved highly popular. By increasing access to library services for Tweens, from reading material, to programs, to a dedicated space within the library, Tween Services at Fairfield Area Library has increased engagement for library users ages nine to 12.

## **Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality**

The transitional years between childhood and adolescence can be challenging for both kids and librarians. Public libraries can unintentionally lose engagement with library users as they age and transition from children's services to teen services departments. Library staff are dedicated to providing programs and services to meet the needs of their users. Because service areas for users are broad in terms of age, designed to serve generally children, teens, and adult age groups, those in between service areas can be underserved. Henrico County Public Library began to investigate how better to serve the Tween age group, those library users aged nine to 12 who are moving from childhood to their teens. Because every reader is different, there may be Tween

readers who are too mature for the themes found in juvenile books, but who are not ready to read at a teen lexile level; conversely, you may have Tween readers who read at an advanced level but who are not ready for the mature themes of teen literature. Many Tween readers will fall somewhere in between those extremes. Librarians must make similar age-appropriateness considerations when planning programming, as children's programs may be too childish for Tweens. At the same time, teen programs may have too many older attendees, as teens prefer to join programs with their peers. Remedying these gaps in service would require a concerted effort from library staff. There are books for these readers, but they must be made discoverable by the library system when configuring its online catalog and when dedicating shelf display space. Programs would need to be specially planned. When planning for the new Fairfield Area Library, which opened in October of 2019, community input to the planning process communicated a strong desire for the library to support learning for young people. This presented an opportunity for the library system to address engagement issues that can arise for library users in the Tween years, and to do so holistically through collections, programming, and staffing.

### **How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria**

Costs for Tween Services at Henrico County Public Library were limited. Funding for a Tween Services Librarian was approved as part of the Library's budget process and was part of staffing increases required to open the new Fairfield Area Library. The Tween collection consisted of materials the library already owned or already planned to order; it was created by adding identifying information to the items' catalog records in the existing library catalog software. Similarly, Tween materials displays were created by shifting materials to provide additional shelving space. Tween programs have required little in the way of funding. For Pizza and Pages, approximately \$20 of pizza is purchased for each meeting. Other Tween programs have used

existing library resources like 3D printers, the Minecraft server, or craft supplies from the existing Teen Services budget.

### **How Program Was Carried Out**

Henrico County Public Library began to address the emerging need for Tween Services in the spring of 2017, while plans for the new Fairfield Area Library were taking shape. The first priority was making Tween titles more discoverable to prepare Fairfield's dedicated collection for opening day. The Collection Management team was able to identify a method for improving the searchability of books that have Tween appeal through adding a Tween designation to catalog records. This allows library users to browse books for Tweens in the online catalog. The Collection Management team then retroactively reviewed existing titles in the system and identified those that would benefit from the Tween designation. After determining what titles should be classified as "Tween," they were able to use their professional judgement, publisher information, and professional reviews to designate titles at the point of purchase for a standardized workflow. This system was put in place in time to order the dedicated collection for Fairfield Area Library's opening day and has been used ever since. There are currently 2,640 titles (a total of 13,352 items) designated as Tween in the Juvenile Fiction collection and 537 titles (a total of 2,344 items) designated as Tween in the Teen Fiction collection.

Shortly after this change was made to the online catalog, another HCPL location, Tuckahoe Area Library, piloted a solution to help families locate books with Tween appeal while browsing the physical collection inside library buildings. Many library users discover new books while browsing the shelves, not just browsing the online catalog, which helped boost physical discoverability of Tween titles. Physical space was set aside in the Tuckahoe library for a Tween display. Books were hand-selected by both Children's and Teen staff, using their subject-level expertise. These

titles were then placed in a new Tween display section, located in a high-traffic area of the library, creating a constantly updated Tween collection that is easily accessed. Selecting books for this section engaged staff from both our Children and Teen departments. This encouraged staff to work across departments and supported opportunities for collaboration. Between 2017 and 2019, HCPL expanded Tween display sections to all nine of its library branches.

When planning the new Fairfield Area Library, the proximity of the site to four elementary schools spurred the library to expand Tween Services beyond the collection. Two schools, Harvie and Ratcliffe Elementary schools, are within easy walking distance. Two additional schools, Arthur Ashe Elementary and Glen Lea Elementary, are a very short drive away. As a result, HCPL anticipated an increase in after-school traffic, specifically with the older elementary-age crowd in need of Tween Services. In order to adequately serve and program for this need, and after community input emphasized supporting younger students, HCPL created a librarian position specifically focused on Tween Services at Fairfield. The library system hired its first Tween Services Librarian in January of 2019.

The Tween Librarian is unique in the organization. The position is shared between the Children's and Teen departments, regularly working on both information desks and programming for both service areas. This enables the individual in this role to serve as a bridge between the children's and teen areas of the library and their users.

The addition of a Tween Services Librarian to the staff at Fairfield has allowed expanded programming with a Tween focus, like the popular Pizza and Pages Tween graphic novel book club. Others included the Dungeons and Dragons club and a variety of programs with an emphasis on STEM, the arts, and popular culture. A program called Custom Snow Globes engaged Tweens with the 3D printers in the library's Digital Media Lab, introducing sophisticated

STEM concepts to young library users with a fun, seasonal craft approach. Just before the pandemic began, HCPL was working to add video gaming opportunities for kids in the Tween age group. At present, gaming in the Teen space is reserved for teens in grades 6-12. Demand from youth in elementary grades is significant, and the library is committed to finding ways to help them engage with gaming in the library in a safe and positive way.

The Tween collection at Fairfield proved to be immensely popular and was expanded shortly after the library opened to accommodate more materials, and Tween-specific interactive displays. Displays are designed to highlight the Tween collection or Tween programs. The first display featured magnetic Minecraft blocks that Tweens could rearrange to build their own creations, which facilitated cross-promotion of the library's virtual Minecraft Club. In November, staff created a Random Acts of Kindness Tween display, to highlight Random Acts of Kindness Day on November 13. Tweens were encouraged to take a folded square from the board that gave them a pandemic-friendly act of kindness to complete. Acts of kindness included writing a letter to a relative, coloring a card for someone at a senior center, or texting a friend who one has not heard from in a while just to say hi. Interactive displays such as the Random Acts of Kindness display serve as what librarians call "passive programming," as they provide educational engagement opportunities to youth who may not be able to or want to attend traditional programs.

Interactive displays for Tweens and the Tween collection at Fairfield library is in high demand, which now includes four spine-out bays of shelving with one bay as display space and can highlight more than 150 Tween books at a time. The Tween librarian with the assistance of Teen staff, is responsible for finding juvenile and teen books to fill the Tween shelves. Because of this success, HCPL will continue to refine and expand Tween Services in the future across the library system.

## **Financing and Staffing**

Costs for Tween Services at Henrico County Public Library were limited. Funding for a Tween Services Librarian was approved as part of the Library's budget process and was part of staffing increases required to open the new Fairfield Area Library. The Tween collection consisted of materials the library already owned or already planned to order; it was created by adding identifying information to the items' catalog records in the existing library catalog software. Similarly, Tween materials displays were created by shifting materials to provide additional shelving space. Tween programs have required little in the way of funding. For Pizza and Pages, approximately \$20 of pizza is purchased for each meeting. Other Tween programs have used existing library resources like 3D printers, the Minecraft server, or craft supplies from the existing Teen Services budget.

Library systems with limited resources can still engage Tweens successfully through their collections and via programming, even without investing in staff, as HCPL has done during the economic downturn brought on by the pandemic. There is no question that the presence of a Tween Services librarian helped to grow and nurture the library's engagement with Tween users. However, because the foundation of Tween Services at HCPL was in the collection and through programs, other systems could have less specialized staff create displays and programs to engage tweens.

## **Program Results**

Tween Services have proven immensely popular at HCPL. The Fairfield Tween collection has expanded three times since the library opened in October 2019 to accommodate demand. At first, the featured Tween collection took up one bay of face-out display shelving, showcasing approximately 12 books at a time. The books flew off the shelves, and two additional rows of

spine-out shelving were added. After the library reopened from its initial pandemic-related closure, spending reductions caused fewer new books to be added to the collection, though the Tween display continued to be popular. The Tween display overtook a bay from the New Books section in order to meet demand, this time with denser, spine-out shelving to fit more titles. Since that shift was made the shelves have been refilled several times.

Programs have had excellent attendance. The Custom Snow Globes 3D printing program for Tweens in December 2019 had 14 participants. The Mad Scientists Club for Tweens, held in January 2020, had seven attendees. In-person sessions of Pizza and Pages: A Graphic Novel Book Club for Tweens, were held monthly starting in January 2020, had between six to nine attendees, with several repeat visitors. Dungeons and Dragons clubs for Tweens have been expanded to library locations across the system and have continued during the pandemic as popular virtual programs. The interactive Tween displays, serving as passive programs, have also successfully engaged Tween library users. The Minecraft display had 25 Tweens participate. The Random Acts of Kindness display offered 20 assignments, 17 of which were claimed. In addition, the display included blank cards that Tweens could take to write a kind note to someone they care about or to a local Senior Center. More than 45 cards were taken.

Tween Services have been so popular at Fairfield Area Library that the head of Teen Services at Fairfield, responsible for supervising the Tween Services Librarian, has dedicated a section of the Teen area to Tween Services. Because the Teen Room features two distinct areas, one near the entrance with a different colored carpet where the Tween books are kept, it was feasible to split the room into a Tween Room and Teen Room at no cost. The head of Teen Services at Fairfield Library worked with the Collection Management team to coordinate the expansion of the Tween



shelving area. This section now functions as Fairfield's designated Tween space, the first of its kind in the HCPL system.

### **Brief Summary**

Henrico County Public Library debuted Tween Services with a holistic approach to meeting the emerging need for library services aimed at young people ages nine to 12. The transitional time between childhood and the teen years can be a time of disengagement for young library users, who are not adequately served by either the children's or teen service areas in the library. HCPL hoped to avoid losing these young library users at this critical developmental stage. In order to do so, the library adopted a holistic approach to serving tween library users – one that considers collections, staffing, programming, spaces, and services. The opening of the new Fairfield Area Library presented a perfect opportunity to do this, as the new library would replace an aging facility and feature an expanded footprint as well as expanded services and amenities. This new library was able to hire a Tween services librarian to host programming, create interactive displays, and provide in-person reader's advisory and research assistance tailored to Tween interests and needs. The library's collection management team increased discoverability of teen items both in the online catalog and on the shelves at Fairfield – and soon at other library locations across the system. Now at Fairfield, Tweens have their own section of the library in a comfortable area within the larger Teen Space. These innovations were cost-effective and have proven successful at engaging Tween library users at HCPL.

## Tween Services at Fairfield Library

### Supplemental Materials







