

LearningExchange

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"School ends, but education doesn't."

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Making Time for Learning: Lessons Learned

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From January through June 2017, twelve library teams from around North America participated in an Infopeople initiative called BELC (which stands for Building an Effective Learning Culture). Realizing that staff learning can lead a library to success in meeting strategic goals and providing relevant services to the community, these teams worked together and individually to assess their library's current learning culture and to identify ways to improve it. Time for learning was a recurring topic during the six months. Do library staff regularly spend time gaining new skills, knowledge, and abilities? Do you and your organization spend time reviewing and critically reflecting about what works and what does not work in the organization?

From learner discussions and initiative activities, three strategies for making time for learning emerged.

New ideas to share?

Send your articles to the editors at
editor@alalearning.org



1. Schedule it.

If we put off learning until we have spare time, then many of us won't end up doing any learning! With busy schedules and long to-do lists, making learning a priority often means intentionally scheduling time for it, just as we do for other priority tasks.

Even short amounts of time for learning can be useful. Whether it is fifteen minutes every morning or an hour every week or month, scheduled time for learning can have an impact. Put it on your calendar and set reminders, too.

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Upcoming LearnRT Webinar

Training Staff When You Don't Have Time to Train Staff

October 5, 2017

8am - 9am PDT,

9am - 10am MDT

10am - 11am CDT,

11 am - 12pm EST

Your time is precious, limited, and you can't do everything yourself. You hire people to handle some of the load, but they need to be trained before they can help out. Learn best practices for efficient and comprehensive staff training. Easily track employee training progress with training guides and checklists.

This presentation will offer simplified methods for supervisors and managers to train staff with varying learning styles, and ways to empower staff to take charge of their own training.

[Click Here to Register](#)

President's Message

Dustin Fife, LearnRT President

What We Do

Writing about the mission statement of an organization for its own newsletter is kind of the "Webster's dictionary defines [insert word] as such" of a speech. You probably shouldn't do it, but I'm going to do it anyway. Have you read LearnRT's mission statement lately? Well, here it is:

Through our Mission, the Learning Round Table...

...promotes quality continuing education and staff development for all library personnel. We help you network with other staff development and continuing education providers for the exchange of ideas, concerns and solutions.

...serves as your source for staff development, continuing education assistance, publications materials, training and activities.

...is your advocate for quality library staff development and continuing education at both the local and national levels. (<http://www.ala.org/rt/learnrt>)

I found LearnRT because of the fellowship and outreach of several of the round table's members, but I have stayed because of the mission. LearnRT believes that all employees deserve to learn and grow, and as an organization we are creating opportunities to make that happen.

The part I want to focus on though is, "We help you network with other staff development and continuing education providers for the exchange of ideas, concerns and solutions." LearnRT is a loose affiliation of committed librarians, educators, and trainers, but we are so much stronger when we work together. So, my question to all of you is, are we sharing our ideas, concerns, and solutions with each other?

LearnRT provides several outlets for sharing, including writing for this newsletter. However, there are many more informal mechanisms in place as well, and I want to encourage every member of this team to share and share alike. Write a paragraph about your experience or ideas and share them with the LearnRT listserv. Take a picture or video of a training and share it on LearnRT's social media. Find a new idea or set of best practices and post about them in ALA Connect. We are here to make each other stronger, and nothing will do that more than through sharing ideas and experiences.

Even small bits of shared information can help. I can share an example from my own life to show how easy it is to start a conversation.

When I came to a new organization last year, I realized that not all members of the staff felt like professional development was available to them. I have had to reiterate time and again, that they can choose opportunities to develop themselves. Over the last few months, I have been really pleased as I have seen a marked increase in requests to attend fee-based webinars, state and national conferences, and other in-house or local trainings. I wouldn't have repeated myself so many times if I had not had a former manager do the same thing. So, how do your libraries advertise or encourage professional development?

Writing that didn't take much effort, but it could start a conversation about best practices, or just give others the opportunity to share. That is all I am asking from each of you. Find a small way to share with other members of LearnRT over the next few months. Engage in conversations, share ideas, and help strengthen this incredible group that is committed to helping libraries and library employees everywhere. ▪

Critical Conversations at the Northeast Ohio Regional Library System

Melissa Lattanzi

Education and Events Coordinator, Northeast Ohio Regional Library System

The Northeast Ohio Regional Library System (NEO-RLS) held its first Critical Conversations: Social Issues Explored on May 4, 2017. The day featured speakers discussing how homelessness, mental health issues and the opiate epidemic impact our ability to serve our patrons and communities, what we can do to remain effective and how to face the problems on a daily basis without growing increasingly jaded or discouraged.

Over 30 libraries attended with over 100 attendees. There were three breakout sessions. One session was Working with Those Patrons Experiencing Homelessness. Ryan Dowd the Executive Director of the second largest homeless shelter in Illinois was the speaker. He accidentally became the foremost expert on homeless library patrons after a short Youtube video he made on the subject went viral. He offered techniques on how to speak to these patrons experiencing homelessness with respect and authority.

Elissa Hardy, Community Resource Specialist at Denver Public Library spoke about Trauma Informed Library Services. She explains that everyone has experienced some type of trauma. This session explored the effects of trauma on society and how libraries are directly impacted by the trauma and stress carried by the communities they serve. Understanding the effects of trauma on our community leads to more compassion and allows us to dive into our own problem solving skills more effectively. She provided resources and real life examples, as well as discussing the importance of creating a self-care plan for library staff. The phrase that stuck with me was when someone is suffering from mental illness

it was not "what is wrong with you", but "what happened to you" - a different way of thinking about your patrons.

The third breakout session was led by Jennifer Lloyd, Director of the Drug Abuse Outreach Initiative, with Ohio Attorney General, Mike DeWine. She shared insights into the opiate epidemic that is facing Ohio and the nation. She brought a human perspective to the users and their struggles and clearly articulated that this disease has no boundaries. She gave us many things to be aware of in our library.

Our keynote speaker was, Dr. Kendra Albright, Director of Kent State University's School of Library and Information Science. She tied things together by focusing on the use of information and communication to solve human problems. She talked about her specific research on HIV/AIDS and demonstrated how her interdisciplinary research agenda draws from theories and methods from psychology, economics, political science, and anthropology, resulting in extensive collaborations with other academic disciplines. She is co-editor of the 2014 graphic novel AIDS in the End Zone, which was written by teens incarcerated at the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice. She shared her experience in creating this graphic novel with these teens. What a great idea for libraries to involve your community.

The day ended with attendees finding answers to their concerns and questions of how to help these populations in the library. The panel consisting of Ryan Dowd, Elissa Hardy and Jennifer Lloyd gave insightful, thought provoking and practical advice to all the attendees. ▪

Jami Carter, director of the Tooele City Public Library in Utah and BELC mentor, has found it effective to have library staff set one training goal each week that is achievable in one hour. Using a self-directed achievement approach for this learning has had a powerful effect on the library's culture. See more about this approach at: http://www.webjunction.org/events/webjunction/Self_Directed_Achievement.html

Scheduling learning time as an individual is a great idea, as is scheduling time as a team for learning. Regularly scheduled learning time at staff meetings, for example, is a way to keep learning together as a team.

2. Share it.

Sometimes it makes sense to focus on a learning goal as an individual; but learning together is often beneficial. Whether working together to solve a problem, complete a task, create a program, or share resources, finding ways to support collaborative learning is powerful.

Staff meetings are a natural place for sharing learning. You could take turns teaching other staff about a topic. Or consider having everyone read the same article and then discuss it when you meet.

BELC participant Renee Bettencourt shared the Learning Circles model, which has been a great motivator for her because she knows that others are counting on her. "Form a team of 4 like-minded people. Each week one person researches and shares some form of quick, short type learning like

locating a video or handout. No more than five minutes to review. Rotate each week who is responsible for bring a learning to the group. You get to reap the rewards of others and you have a little friendly pressure to provide for the group."

3. Make it matter.

When discussing time for learning, BELC participants noted the importance of the topic. If it's something that really matters, then you will find the time for it. When following our passions and our curiosity, then we're more likely to prioritize the time needed for learning. Relevance to current projects and needs (rather than undefined potential future needs) was also often a factor.

There's no question that society is changing rapidly. The skills, knowledge and abilities that we possess today may not be adequate for the roles we will want and need to play tomorrow. Ongoing professional learning by library staff is a key factor in creating organizations that are poised to take advantage of opportunities to more effectively meet the needs of their communities. Making the time for ongoing learning needs to be a priority. Schedule it, share it, and most importantly, make it matter.

To learn more about Infopeople's BELC initiative, see <http://www.infopeople.org/belc> .

Creating An Engaging Internal Library Culture

Courtlan Thomas, PhD

Director of Learning Resources - Lakeland, Polk State College Library

Culture is something that exists in all libraries regardless of type. Library literature databases include many articles about culture and libraries. Phrases such as assessment culture, research culture, quality service culture, culture of partnerships, culture for learning, organizational culture, and marketing culture focus on "how to's" for academic, public, and special libraries. While it is important for libraries to understand that these different cultures can be created within our libraries, a profound piece of the library's culture begins and ends with the leaders and the team; those key personnel who champion the day-to-day operations and strategic plans of the library. Through strategically and intentionally building an internal culture of engagement with our coworkers, using the three observations below, we can help optimize an engaging culture for our patrons.

First, identify the desired behaviors practiced by the library team, regardless of the position. These desired behaviors are expressions that demonstrate and identify your internal culture. Some examples of desired behaviors are teamwork and collaboration, optimal problem solving and decision making, motivation, openness to change, friendliness, and accountability. The optimal culture is created by coworkers who most closely engage in the desired behaviors.

Unfortunately, a culture can be created with undesirable behaviors as well, and if those behaviors are allowed to continue, then the risk of negative attitudes, poor morale, stagnation, and even unethical decision making can poison the work environment. What are some undesirable behaviors that can create a toxic culture for your library? Examples include lack of desire to help colleagues or serve patrons, tardiness, procrastination, apathy, undermining decisions, working in silos, resistance to change, and more.

Second, maintain collaborative communication echoing the desired behaviors with the team. Post these behaviors on a wall in the employee lounge, share examples of the behaviors in employee communications, and have coworkers reflect and share positive experiences while engaging in desired behaviors often. Work together to create ways to celebrate highly-committed employees who demonstrate consistently the expected desired behaviors. Approaches to celebrate those who work to build the desired culture include highlighting and thanking them for their commitment, whether it is a private "thank you" in the office or a public acknowledgment such as in a meeting, employee newsletter, media stream, or award. Those who are actively opposed or negative toward cultural change are not always the people who will change, so highly committed library staff should devote development to coworkers who are engaged and committed, but extend the invitation to all.

Finally, value your coworkers. Working in a library means working with people. Creating an optimal internal culture requires care for your coworkers that extends beyond a pay check and benefits. Care is a meaningful concern for the welfare of each of your team members. According to The Disney Institute Employee Engagement training material, "The extent to which you genuinely care for people is the extent to which they will care for customers—and each other."

A library culture is not created and forgotten; it must be communicated, maintained, and nurtured. Recognizing your library's culture by defining the desired team behaviors, collaborating, celebrating, and caring for each other will create an environment reflecting an engaging internal culture. .