

Dear Community Services Work Group,

I would like to take a moment to thank you for the opportunity to work with you. Your suggestions have given us an opportunity to review current practices while considering new ones.

In reviewing your most recent documents, it is affirming that we have many thoughts in common or have reviewed similar concepts. In particular, a couple of points of agreement are that we do want to promote efficiency and creativity. We want to be prepared for and to address technology changes. We are committed to maintaining high quality services with more flexibility.

Responses to the most recent Engage Gwinnett document are below. We look forward to the opportunity to meet with you again on February 17th.

Observations:

“Only change is Hamilton Mill.” This is the only new facility but the library, like other Community Services agencies, continues to cope with an increased demand for services. The library’s budget has also sustained repeated reductions in State funding.

“Current staff model is rigid.” We hope you received the clarification that only one supervisor is needed at any given time. The additional supervisors have to do with the hours open beyond 40 and the 7 day per week service. You are correct that we should strive for a flexible cost-effective model. In fact, Objective 1.1 of the FY2010 – 2012 GCPL Strategic Plan (approved by the Library Board on June 8, 2009) states: By June 30, 2011, each branch/department will have in place a creative, flexible staffing configuration that supports the delivery of excellent, responsive service.

In 2006, GCPL began to change the direction of its staffing model. Through attrition and work flow shifts, we strove to utilize staff in the most cost effective manners and increase the use of volunteers. The shift was formalized as a goal in the above mentioned Strategic Plan. The recent funding crisis has only made it more important to speed up a transition in staffing models.

“Public library supports pre-kindergarten through 12th grade ...” It is a misnomer that public libraries serve only students. The public library, unlike a school library, is the only resource for pre and post K-12 customers. It is an additional resource for K-12 customers. What frequently surprises some is that sixty-four percent (64%) of the total circulation is adult materials that support and enhance lifelong learning.

Recommendations:

“Level of Expertise’s/education...” Again, only 1 librarian/supervisor should be in the building, primarily so there is someone with the ability to address customer concerns about the content of print/electronic or Internet content and to settle credit report disputes. As you can imagine, with 4,491,505 customers in a year, there are behavioral issues and security issues at the branches that warrant the involvement of a supervisor.

Your recognition of the importance of an active volunteer program to minimize staffing costs echoes our thinking on the matter. Point 4.4 of the GCPL Strategic Plan calls for a 10% increase in the use of volunteers over the next two years. In the last fiscal year, the library benefitted from 20,953 hours of volunteer service.

You might be interested in knowing that on the average, 68 hours per week per branch are required to shelve books after they are checked in. Another 25 hours are spent locating items to fill requests. If each branch was able to add additional volunteers, it would allow the branches to keep better pace with the increases in circulation and free staff to work with customers who request technical or reference assistance and to re-examine workflows for efficiency improvements.

GCPL has a Quality Steering Team that is currently evaluating a staff idea to use teen volunteers as part of an internship program to assist customers with basic technology assistance such as setting up an email account or saving a document to a device. This would enhance services to customers and give teens an activity that could help build their resumes. Currently, staff is not always able to provide as much technology assistance as is requested in addition to connecting customers with the information they seek.

Your encouragement is already bringing dormant ideas back to life and we hope to be able to report back to the community a significant increase in the volunteer support utilized by the library. We think your support for qualified volunteers will improve the library's chances to successfully recruit and retain the assistance we need.

Thank you for the many hours you have invested in learning about Gwinnett County Public Library and your suggestions for improvements and cost savings.