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Case Study Analysis
Study of After School Dilemma at S & P Library

INTRODUCTION

An analysis of the case *Study of After School Dilemma at S&P Library* written by Ed Chancy and Jessica Wilson. The format for this analysis is based on the principles found in A Model for Case Analysis and Problem Solving written by Edward G. Wertheim.

FACTS OF THE CASE

School-age children are left alone at the library during after-school hours and repeatedly disrupt weekday library functions. Undesired behavior includes policy and civil infractions (assault and attempted rape). An employee and patron have been victimized due to the misconduct during after-school hours. The library is currently suffering under budgetary restrictions that make hiring additional personnel difficult, if not impossible. The local community does not have any dedicated after-school resources, potentially increasing the number of teens at the library during these hours.. Employees are frustrated with the situation as the solutions they have implemented have not had a lasting impact on the situation.

CAUSES

There appear to be several causes affecting the library's ability to solve this problem. First, parents and/or guardians are not properly supervising their teenagers. Second, the library director has not taken action to correct the situation. Third, it appears there is no library policy regarding this issue. Fourth, the teens lack meaningful opportunities during the after school hours. Fifth, the community remains uninvolved in this community issue. Finally, the library lacks funding to hire security personnel or offer additional teen programming..

ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

Many possible solutions to this challenge exist. Ultimately, the solution will need to be uniquely tailored to meet the needs of the library and the community it serves. Most importantly, the library needs a strong policy regarding this issue, but in order to develop the policy, many constituents, such as the library board of directors, the library staff, library patrons, and community leaders, may need to be contacted and involved. There might be more than one solution and the solutions listed below may be overlapping or concurrently executed.

First, the library director should create a library policy regarding this issue. He or she may want to solicit input from the staff regarding the details of the new policy. The library may also want to conduct a survey of patrons to solicit input. The director should solicit the support of the library board of directors. At a minimum, the board of directors needs to be advised of the problem if they do not know already. The policy should have serious consequences if it is not followed. Examples of such are if parents leave their children alone at the library, they will be contacted to join them or pick them up and if they do not after a set amount of time, the authorities will be contacted. Another example of such possible repercussions would be if a child is under the age of 16 and has not been picked up by a parent/guardian at closing time, authorities will be contacted to escort the child home. If any assault or attempted assault on behalf of the teenagers occurs again, the police should be notified immediately. The library policy will need to be written to meet the needs of the library and the community it serves. The policy needs to be posted in highly visible locations and publicly advertised (posters, newspapers, on the library's website, etc.) so that all patrons are aware of it. Once finalized, consequences must be executed or the policy will not be taken seriously.

One possible solution would be to contact the parents of unsupervised adolescents who misbehave. If teens disobey library policies, their parents could be notified that they must accompany and supervise their kids on library premises. If the library desires to implement this policy then guardians will need to be made aware of the new policy immediately.

The library director should notify the Library Board of Directors and community leaders of the challenge if they have not already been notified. The community should be involved with creating solutions because this is not solely the library's concern. For example, the community could create and fund more after school programs, athletic programs, a recreation center, parks, etc., so more meaningful, quality opportunities will be available to these children during the after school hours. Another solution would be that the community could offer more funding to the library so it can create better after school programs and/or hire security.

A public hearing regarding the policy might need to be held. This would be an opportunity for the library to reach out to the community and its leaders to attend and discuss the challenge and possible solutions. The more community members involved, the more likely the library will receive "buy-in" for its policy and support from these important constituents.

The library should talk with the teenagers causing the trouble and try to determine what type of activities they would like to have available after school. This would be helpful to know if a public meeting is held to discuss possible solutions. The library might want to start a Teen Advisory Committee. There have been many success stories with these committees because if the kids involved feel much more invested in the library and they are able to serve as a guides towards any programs and services in which this age group shows interest.

Finally, once the policy is in place, like all policies, it will need to be periodically reevaluated for effectiveness and possible improvements. If the kids are still causing problems, then the library director or staff may want to go over the policy with them to make sure they are aware of the policy and understand it. They should then be given an opportunity to abide by the policy, but if the policy is continuously ignored, they will face consequences.

Discussion Questions

1. What could have been done to keep the situation from escalating to its current point? What policies or actions could library administration have considered?
2. How can the library best address its teen patrons who are causing problems, while still providing quality service to the rest of its teen customers?
3. Many of the possible solutions to this issue raised by library staff seemed limited by fiscal concerns. What are the library's options for dealing with these budgetary issues?