



# Youth Services

## Three-Year Outlook



WHAT WE  
LEARNED

FOCUS  
AREAS  
AND  
GOALS

INITIATIVES  
AND  
STRATEGIES



# Youth Services Three-Year Outlook

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## MISSION

DPL: Together, we create welcoming spaces where all are free to explore and connect.

DPL Youth Services builds community through welcoming spaces, high-quality services and empowered staff to support youth and families.



## VALUES IN ACTION

**Welcoming Everyone** We make our resources, services and expertise accessible for all, recognize the inherent dignity in each person, and provide safe places where everyone can be themselves.

**Fostering Curiosity** We foster a culture of exploration, innovation, and forward thinking by creating environments that support learning and growth.

**Strengthening Connection** We are neighbors. We foster relationships, listen, and act to build and strengthen our community. We bring people together to share information, ideas, and experiences.

**Challenging Inequity** We work to change inequitable practices, structures and policies, and attitudes that drive them, to provide opportunities for every person in our community to thrive. As we do so, we actively examine our roles in perpetuating oppressive systems.

**Honoring Public Trust** We are accountable to our community, using our resources responsibly. We lead with honesty and integrity, protect privacy, and preserve and share the full history of our Denver community.

## VISION

DPL: A strong community where everyone thrives.

DPL Youth Services: Youth in Denver have the resources, support, and opportunities to be successful, happy and healthy.

# DPL Youth Services Three-Year Outlook

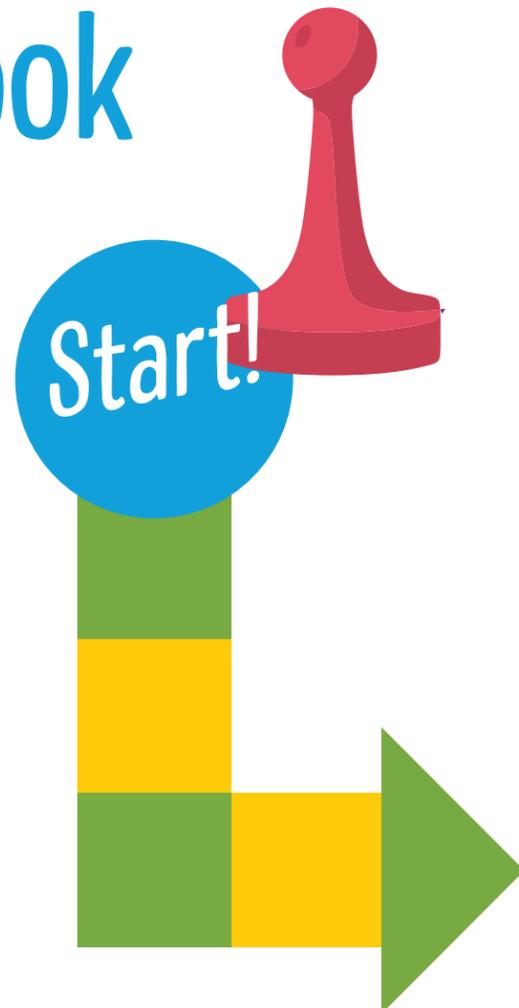
In addition to the mission, vision and values set forth above, the Denver Public Library's Youth Services team is committed to building an equitable future for youth and families in our community. We start with a focus on racial justice, while amplifying community voices in all of our work. We aim to create space for youth and families to actively participate in critical conversations and to lead in the design and implementation of our shared goals.

Youth Services prioritizes services to youth and family populations that have been underserved or oppressed because of race, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, physical ability, immigration status, housing status, and/or socioeconomic status. We are paying special attention to nationally reported youth vulnerabilities such as learning loss, mental health, and youth violence. We are

connecting with communities to determine how the library can best address these issues in Denver.

The goals identified in the Three-Year Outlook were drafted in collaboration with our colleagues and the community. We recognize the importance of continuing to foster authentic and intentional collaboration with both internal and external partners. As we navigate these actions we will continue to align with DPL departments' goals and strategies, as well as community partners' recommendations and expertise.

This Three-Year Outlook also serves as a template for our commitments to a changing landscape and acknowledges that to best serve our community we must be open to many pathways ahead of us. We welcome feedback along the way.



# What We Heard From Our Community

As part of the process of developing the 3-year outlook for the DPL Youth Services Department, DPL staff members, youth, and families engaged in a steering committee to uncover priorities for the department over the next three years. The themes that emerged from this work informed the development of the 3-year outlook, and how that outlook will be implemented. The following summarizes the key themes that emerged through interviews and in the steering committee.

*The quotes in italics below have been shared by steering committee members.*

## Cultural Diversity

Cultural diversity was a primary theme that emerged from the community engagement process, specifically the need for culturally diverse and responsive literature, environments, and interactions. Steering committee participants highlighted the need to create belonging and engagement for youth in library settings by ensuring that they can see and feel their own cultures and identities represented throughout the library. Steering committee members also shared they have had a variety of positive and negative experiences in the library based on their identities and cultural backgrounds. They also expressed the need for more consistent and systemic approaches to representing and honoring the various cultures of youth and families with the goal of increasing youth and families feelings of safety and belonging in the library, and engagement with library staff and in library activities.

*"I would like to see diverse collections representing different identities."*

*"The definition of safety differs by community and cultural background."*

*"As a bilingual person, being identity safe is important to me. The staff at DPL honors my heritage and it makes a huge difference!"*

## Youth Voice

The steering committee emphasized the value of focusing on expanding youth voice in library programming, collections, and spaces, and in interactions with library staff. While there were youth on the steering committee during this process, the steering committee emphasized that there could have been wider representation of youth identities throughout the plan development process. As a result, the steering committee highlighted the need for input from youth as they implement this plan, and the need for youth to be granted more leadership opportunities within the library system

*"There is a lack of BIPOC youth representation in this group."*

*"The library needs places where kids can safely air their thoughts."*

*"Libraries have the ability to empower youth voices outside of home and school."*

## Access to Programming

Finally, increasing youth access to programming was a theme in the steering committee discussion. Many members of the steering committee expressed having positive experiences with library programming and had a desire to provide that programming beyond the library walls and outside of traditional library hours. Through observation and interviewing the Youth Services team identified opportunities to engage youth at different ages and stages in their development with developmentally appropriate programming. While the library already provides high quality programs, the team observed some gaps in service where there is an opportunity to engage youth for more of their developmental journey and into adulthood.

*"It seems like there is a huge opportunity to collaborate with the unaccompanied middle schoolers. They seem to feel ownership over the library, get along well with staff, and are there almost every school day."*

*"It is important that the library is bringing services and resources to the library, so the community could count on their needs being met."*

*"It is important that the library is meeting the community where they are and providing the right resources for the surrounding communities as [their needs] vary."*

*"We need decent resources for supporting different ways of learning. As an example, maker spaces for supporting creativity. Plaza program is very responsive to the needs of each person and intergenerational learning."*

## Staff Support

The need for staff support to increase consistency, positive interactions, and cultural awareness were clear themes in the steering committee discussion. The steering committee highlighted that training and coaching support would help build staffs' skills for positive youth interaction and relationship-building through a lens of cultural awareness and competence.

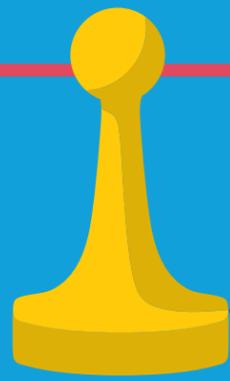
*"I believe there is a need to support staff with the ability to have difficult conversations with youth and facilitate informal learning or maybe social-emotional learning."*

*"Not all staff are youth friendly. How do we get staff aligned with the needs of youth? A child will sense when they're not invited."*

*"Not all youth are treated equally. BIPOC youth are often policed."*

## Thank You

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the group of youth, caregivers, educators, community members and library staff who gathered in-person and virtually to share ideas and feedback for this 3 Year Outlook. Our community steering committee provided valuable insights into the role that Denver Public Library plays in the lives of youth now, as well as the challenges that young people face. We are grateful to the steering committee for generously giving their time to share their experiences and perspectives. This plan for our future is grounded in the collective wisdom of our community.



# Long-Term

## Youth Services Outcomes

**Belonging is the feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group. It is when an individual can bring their authentic self to a community or space.\***



Youth, their families and caregivers feel a sense of physical and emotional safety, regardless of their identities. *(Welcoming Everyone)*

Youth, and their families and caregivers feel a sense of connection to peers, staff, resources, and space at the library. *(Strengthening Connection)*

Youth, and their families and caregivers feel a sense of ownership of their local library location. *(Strengthening Connection)*

Youth develop a sense of self. *(Welcoming Everyone)*

Youth develop a love of reading and learning. *(Fostering Curiosity)*

Youth, families, and caregivers have access to and experience consistent and effective standards of service across DPL locations. *(Challenging Inequity)*

	JUNE 2022	DECEMBER 2022	JUNE 2023	DECEMBER 2023	JUNE 2024	DECEMBER 2024	JUNE 2025
LIBRARY COLLECTION		Develop youth feedback processes.	Develop systems for branches to solicit and leverage youth feedback.				
PROGRAMMING	Map existing programming in alignment with youth developmental progression in library experience.		Share best practices with branches for developing and selecting youth programming.	Coach each branch through a process of selecting new programming.	Roll out new programming offering to branches as needed.		
INTERACTIONS	Convene a youth council to support increased youth voice in library practices through the Youth Belong Project.	Facilitate training for all staff on culturally inclusive interactions with families and youth social-emotional support and development.  Facilitate in-depth training and mentorship opportunities at up to five library locations.		Develop and pilot working group structures to ensure consistent and effective implementation of new practices.	Embed positive youth development training and coaching practices in onboarding and ongoing professional learning for location staff.		
SPACES	Develop Toolkit.	Finalize toolkit for branch use.	Invest in enhancement of youth spaces.				
OUTREACH	Map current outreach services and develop shared goals with internal partners.	Pilot new outreach services.		Review and update services for outreach.		Review and update services with the internal partners (using continuous improvement practices).	
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS			Map priority needs for long term partnerships.				Develop, publish, and use partnership criteria to enhance youth experiences through partnership. (Tool to build capacity of local branches to identify programming that meets expectations for building the progression.)

\*Cornell University 2022, Diversity and inclusion statement

# Youth Services Focus Areas



## Library Collection

The library collection includes all print, digital, and streaming content available through the library. Materials can be checked out or used at a library location, or on a device.

### Three-year goal:

Youth Services will foster connection between youth and the library collection by bringing youth voice into the development of suggested reading, library resource lists, promotion, and presentation of library materials. *(Fostering Curiosity)*

### Objectives:

1. By December 2022, Youth Services will develop a process to solicit ongoing and regular feedback from youth and families through the website, open forums, surveys, etc.
2. By December 2024, youth and family-created lists and displays will be available in multiple DPL spaces (in-person and virtual).



## Programming

Programs are scheduled events planned by library staff with a specific audience in mind. They may happen regularly, like Storytime, or more occasionally, like author events.

### Three-year goal:

Youth Services will build a spectrum of tiered program opportunities across all ages and stages. Youth Services will support locations to implement programming based on community context, desire, and need. *(Fostering Curiosity, Strengthening Connection)*

### Objectives:

1. By June 2022, Youth Services will work with location staff, youth, and families to map gaps in existing programming in order to prioritize opportunities for new programming that meet the needs of Denver's young people.
2. By December 2022, Youth Services will collaborate with location staff to share priorities for creating new programming that equitably meets the needs of youth and families across the ages and stages of their development.
3. By June 2023 Youth Services and location staff will identify new and existing programs that meet the needs of families and youth in Denver.
4. By June 2023, Youth Services will work with location staff to create ongoing support for gathering and implementing community input in program development.
5. By June 2024, Youth Services, in collaboration with other programmers at DPL, will develop a spectrum of ongoing program opportunities for youth and families that locations may choose to implement.



## Interactions

Interactions are the conversations and other behaviors shared among youth, families, and library staff, as well as youth, families, and their peers.

### Three-year goal:

Youth Services will support the development of staff across the Denver Public Library to ensure they are prepared and supported to serve a diverse set of youth and families.

*(Welcoming Everyone, Challenging Inequity)*

### Objectives:

1. By June 2022, Youth Services will convene a youth council to support increased youth voice in library practices through the “Youth Belong Project”.
2. By December 2022, Youth Services will facilitate training for all staff on culturally inclusive interactions with families and youth social-emotional support and development.
3. By December 2022, Youth Services will facilitate in-depth training and mentorship opportunities at up to five library locations.
4. By December 2023, Youth Services will develop and pilot working group structures to ensure consistent and effective implementation of new practices.
5. By June 2024, Youth Services will embed positive youth development training and coaching practices in onboarding and ongoing professional learning for location staff.



## Spaces

Spaces are the areas of a library set aside for youth and families, with the goal of enhancing engagement. They include physical spaces in library locations, virtual spaces, and places in the community where the library is able to connect with youth.

### Three-year goals:

1. The Youth Services department will create a toolkit to support the development of accessible, engaging, and culturally responsive spaces and places.  
*(Welcoming Everyone)*
2. Youth Services will guide the investment of resources to enhance youth spaces that meet the needs of a diverse set of youth and their families and caregivers.  
*(Welcoming Everyone, Challenging Inequity)*

### Objectives:

1. By June 2022, Youth Services will develop a toolkit to support space design and solicit input and best practices from locations and DPL staff to enhance its initial design.
2. By December 2022, Youth Services will finalize the “space design toolkit” and ensure its alignment with the values and desired outcomes of DPL and Youth Services.
3. By June 2023, Youth Services and DPL will invest resources in library enhancements of youth spaces and places.



## Outreach

Outreach focuses on connecting youth with the library in places other than library buildings. It can include library card sign-ups, school visits, Mobile Services stops, book giveaways, off-site programs, and more.

### Three-year goal:

Youth Services will collaborate with internal and community partners to create an aligned and comprehensive outreach strategy that meets the needs of youth and families in each community DPL serves.

*(Strengthening Connection, Challenging Inequity)*

### Objectives:

1. By June 2022, Youth Services, in collaboration with internal and external partners, will map current youth outreach activities and identify shared goals for the future.
2. By December 2023, Youth Services will develop and pilot an outreach strategy that aligns with internal goals and the needs and developmental stages of Denver youth.
3. By December 2024, Youth Services will review the youth outreach strategy and update the strategy based on lessons learned from outreach piloting.



## Community Partnerships

Community partnerships are the relationships developed with other youth-supporting organizations. Most are local and connect the library to other government agencies and non-profit institutions.

### Three-year goal:

Youth Services will leverage local partnerships and community relationships at library locations and departments to advance programming, outreach, and location services.

*(Strengthening Connection)*

### Objectives:

1. By June 2023, Youth Services will map priority partnership needs for youth programming in Denver Public Libraries with a focus on enhancing equitable access for youth and families.
2. By June 2024, Youth Services will have criteria for location staff to identify community partners that advance youth experiences.

