



“Civic engagement in public education.”

Read to Succeed SIC Goals and Project Ideas for Middle Schools

Middle school students are beginning to assert their independence, but they still need parents and teachers supporting their reading at home and school. Students at this age need to see the relevance of reading in their lives so it's important that magazines, books, and other materials address their interests as well as educate them. Since teens want to "fit in," getting the community involved - preachers, athletic coaches, business people - makes reading an "approved" activity.

Goal I: Increase Student Interest in Reading a Wide Variety of Books and other Texts

Teenage students need to read, read, and read some more. The more they read, the easier it is to read and the better their writing skills. Of course, they need to keep up with the school's required reading but reading for fun is important also.

Projects ideas for this goal:

1. Create small libraries around the school that have a wide variety of engaging books for different reading levels.

Place many different types of books at different reading levels around the school - in the cafeteria, at the end of a hall, wherever students congregate. The goal is to address a wide variety of interests by including mysteries, historical fiction, biography, autobiography, poetry, nonfiction, graphic novels, multicultural resources, magazines and comics.

2. Bring the books to where the families are, use donated books, graphic novels, and magazines to create small informal libraries throughout the community.

Think beyond the school and home. Place donated books and magazines in locations such as the laundromat, barbershop, community center, apartment complex, doctor's office, and social services offices. Put them anywhere parents and their teen can pick up a book and read while waiting. Don't be surprised if the materials disappear as teens take them home to enjoy and share. Check out one such project at <http://kalw.org/post/richmond-mom-brings-literacy-laundromats#stream/>. Another way to get teens and the community reading is to establish "Little Free Libraries," mailbox-sized library boxes, in locations that are convenient for teens and families. For more information about this movement and to find existing locations in South Carolina, visit <http://littlefreelibrary.org>.

3. Work with the public library to get families and teens to visit regularly and borrow books.

For example, transportation can be a barrier in getting to the library. Explore the possibility of your SIC working with a local library and community groups to create a library bus that takes books to neighborhoods or that provides regular trips to the library. Encourage the library to establish and highlight a reading section targeting middle school reading levels and interests. Work with a business to see if the owner will provide Wi-Fi access to the neighborhood. Or see if a business will help with the cost of outfitting school buses into Wi-Fi hot spots so that students with long commutes can access digital books and other online resources while they ride. See how one school district in Arizona adopted this approach at <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2015/04/13/wi-fi-hubs-on-buses-connect-students-in.html>.

Goal II: Increase Parent Knowledge, Skills, and Confidence in How to Help Their Children become Proficient Readers and Writers

Middle school is a time when parents traditionally are less involved with their teen's school work. However, parents need to understand that their involvement is more important than ever. Many parents need help in building the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to support their teen's literacy development. Parents need information and support so that they can help at home.

Project ideas for this goal:

1. Organize parent workshops or distribute parent-friendly brochures or flyers addressing one or more of the following suggested topics (feel free to brainstorm additional ideas):

- Sources for parent "refreshers" on middle school skills so they can help at home (For example, scholastic.com offers a "Parent Guide to Reading for Ages 11-13" as well as refreshers on other middle school subjects on its website. Public librarians can recommend books and other materials that can help parents "get up to speed").
- Information on the skills middle school students are expected to master at each grade level in reading and writing (For an easy to understand explanation of the skills and why they are needed as well as activities and information sources to help parents work with their teens, see: scfriendlystandards.org).
- Literacy strategies that parents can use with their teen at home (See scfamilyfriendlystandards.org for some suggestions).
- Where to find lists of books that are right for a teen's reading level.
- What to do when a teen is a reluctant reader.
- Reminders, for example, of the importance of sufficient sleep at this age, the need for a quiet homework spot, and checking to see that assignments are done.
- How parents and teachers can partner together to support literacy development.

2. Organize or provide support for school family literacy nights or similar family events at school.

There are many ways that SICs can contribute, such as providing volunteers, finding community resources, helping with publicity, and making phone calls and personal invitations to individual

parents to ensure a good turnout. Literacy nights are usually held at the school, but don't limit yourself to the school if there are other locations in the community that may enable you to reach more parents.

3. Create a lending library at the school for parents (and a virtual equivalent on the school's website) containing books, videos, audiotapes, and other materials that explain how parents can support their teen's literacy development.

Goal III: Decrease Summer Reading Loss, Especially for Struggling and Low Income Readers

Students who do not read at all over the summer months will likely experience summer reading loss. This achievement loss can have an especially significant impact on struggling readers as summer reading loss accumulates over time. Low income students are especially at risk of experiencing summer reading loss because it is more difficult for them to access books and reading activities during the summer months.

Project ideas for this goal:

1. Organize and support a contest to reward students for reading over the summer or talk with teachers about giving extra credit for additional reading.

Many teens need a little added bonus or boost to get them interested in reading. Many parents and students are not in the habit of reading and these types of activities can get a teen motivated and, with encouragement, may lead to a dedicated reader. Keep in mind that these projects work only if all the students have ready access to books and magazines.

2. Organize or provide support for a summer book club or tutoring program.

Check to see if there is a local organization that already delivers reading enrichment activities to teens. If so, see what your SIC can do to increase the number of students served during the summer months. If not, check to see if a local government agency or state-level non-profit can help you bring a provider to your community. If your school attendance zone includes densely populated areas like apartment buildings, consider asking the apartment manager if you can use the community room during the summer months for book clubs or tutoring sessions that are staffed by volunteer teachers, parents, and community members.

Finding Partners

Your SIC will likely not have all of the expertise and resources it needs to implement these project ideas by itself. That's when it's time to look for partners who can bring the missing pieces to the table.

The Read to Succeed law encourages schools to develop partnerships with a variety of different community partners. These include public libraries, local arts organizations, community non-profits, social service agencies, businesses, faith-based institutions, pediatric and family practice personnel, and SCETV. Professors and graduate students at local colleges of education are also good resources. Every SIC will have unique needs -- let those needs drive your search for potential partners.

Don't forget to check the resources available within your school and district. Partnerships between SICs and PTAs/PTOs can be very effective. District personnel as well as school administrators, media specialists, reading coaches, and other teachers can often provide

valuable advice and expertise. In any case, your SIC should always consult with the principal and school literacy instructors early on to ensure that your SIC's goals and activities are aligned with -- and do not duplicate -- other ongoing efforts to support improved student literacy.

Finally, there are a multitude of resources on the Web with many great ideas for literacy goals and projects. One site that our office has found particularly useful in addressing the needs of middle school readers and their families is "All About Adolescent Literacy" (www.adlit.org).

Have Questions? Contact the SC-SIC office at 803-777-7658 or sic@mailbox.sc.edu and a member of our staff will be happy to help.