

Environmental Scan of the Thornhill School Library

Including SWOT Analysis

Elements of the Thornhill School Library:

- Our organization consists of 1 librarian that services 384 students and approximately 25 faculty members and staff in K-5 school library.
- Interdependence between our organization and others includes service that relies on students and teachers visiting the library. The school and parents provide the customers. Parents donate to keep library open. The principal must advocate for the library and see it as an important asset to the school, just as the parents should.
- The library's typical input includes books and research materials, Internet access and links to relevant, grade-appropriate sites; research training; and multimedia information (e-books and video) for learning and pleasure.
- Throughput of the library usually includes learning to read efficiently for pleasure and for information, and learning to perform grade-appropriate level of research through the library program. All activities and the library program are developed and managed by the librarian.
- Our organization's ideal output is literate students performing grade-appropriate level of research, having important and satisfying reading experiences, and students that are ready for the research demands of middle school.

Common Variables of Environmental Scanning for Thornhill School Library:

- Our customers include students, faculty, and parents.
- Possible competitors are the Internet, other school programs (computer labs or other school programs that might want the library space). The market is currently improving somewhat in that the school district seems to be valuing libraries more. They are willing to train clerks in order to better serve their constituents. Only the wealthiest schools have librarians (i.e. schools with families that are able to pay for such programming). Other district schools have volunteers or part-time clerks that keep the library open and running.
- Our funding sources include Measure G (an education parcel tax measure passed in 2008 in Alameda County, CA), the PFC (Parent Faculty Club), and donations (books from parents and other sources).
- Suppliers include the book sellers (Follett, Baker & Taylor) and parent donations.
- The organization's labor issues include the parents paying the librarian's salary. There is pressure to keep the parents happy but also manage the library for the true customers (students). In this project, the librarian is a parent who has her children at school. This concerns some parents about the possibility of favoritism for the librarian's children over their children.
- Our legal/regulatory factors include the fact that the head librarian does not hold a teaching credential, which might be a hindrance. However, school rules are such that a teacher is required to be present with the students in the library. It is not a prep time for the teachers. The previous librarian did hold a teaching credential. However she did not have a MLIS.

- Economic trends affecting the library involve the district's recent consolidation of some library clerk jobs. Conversely, it seems that the library might be gaining some importance in the Oakland Unified School District, or the district would like the public to believe that. It is noted that a library symbol is part of a recent OUSD logo. Thornhill School-specific economic trends are promising. The former librarian retired after a long tenure. She was compensated well, so the PFC is pleased that they do not have to pay the current librarian as much as they paid the retired librarian at the end of her tenure. The PFC finances are currently healthy and robust.
- The technology of the organization is currently comprised of three computers (two for student use and one for the circulation desk), a projector, and a document camera.
- Political changed/trends effecting the organization include the PFC president stepping down after this year. Every two years a new president is elected to lead the PFC. It is challenging to see potential trends in regards to the library, but the last librarian was here for 27 years and not much has changed in the library in that time. The outlook is good for the current librarian unless the powers that be decide to make some sweeping changes. However, all actions must be voted on by the PFC Board.
- Sociocultural factors affecting the library include its location. The library is in a wealthier area of Oakland with a diverse community served. The area is currently in a cycle of heightened crime, which coincided with the economic downturn. The crime may frighten some families away or prevent others from moving in.

Organizational Culture of Thornhill School Library:

- Heroes include Kathryn Fitelson, the former librarian (1984–2011).
- Stories include photographs from the library when the school first opened in 1958. There are also photographs of past library displays and directions for setting them up. Some of these items still exist but are not in use now. For instance, a giant Santa Claus cutout would not be considered a decoration that would make students feel included in the community, so the decoration is not used. Santa would come to school and be in the lobby for the kids. I've displayed some of the old decorations this year which celebrate secular holidays.
- Symbols for Thornhill School include the Thunderbird, which is the school mascot. The library symbol would be Beverly Cleary. A postcard addressed to the students at Thornhill is framed and displayed. Ramona is pictured on the door as a big mural. As already mentioned, a library symbol is part of a new OUSD logo.
- Ceremonies of the organization include the fifth grade favorite library memories display, which is done at the end of the school year. The Back to School Donation Drive has historically been a fundraiser for the library. Students whose parents donate are honored with a bookplate in a book of their choice. The old filmstrips are still shown to the students, which is carried over from the previous librarian. These include classics stories, such as *Ribsy*, *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*, *The Wish Giver*, and *Sign of the Beaver*.

SWOT

- Strengths of the library include a possible budget increase for next year, continued good relations with the students, teachers, parents, principle, and district. The librarian is

working towards a MLIS. Forthcoming assistance from the District Librarian in weeding and organizing the existing library collection.

- Weaknesses involve parental approval as required for continued success. A dated collection is another weakness. Modernization and collection weeding recommended. The librarian does not have a teaching credential.
- Opportunities include updating the collection and modernizing the library with budget money. This could include e-books and newer books. Advocating for the library in the weekly newsletter, which could include information on improvements and activities. The PFC may be receptive to supplying funds for the librarian to obtain a teaching credential. Possible collaboration with the computer teacher to teach fourth and fifth grades computer research skills. Add parent volunteers.
- Threats to the organization include some vocal parents talking about closing the library and putting more into computer programs. Modernization will help both the library and the vocal minority come to a mutually beneficial agreement.