

SDSL's Cornerstone Newsletter

South Dakota State Library's e-newsletter

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The Basketball Diaries: Lessons in Leadership from Middle School Sports

From the desk of [Kim Bonen](#), Electronic Resources Coordinator...



You may be wondering what basketball (and sports in general) have to do with libraries. Quite a lot, actually. After watching my niece's basketball game this past week, I was struck by the similarities of a good sports team and a successful library's workplace culture.

Collaboration

My niece is a point guard. Her job is to get the ball to people who are open for the shot. She runs the ball a lot but doesn't always get the points. She does get assists, rebounds, and blocks – all of which help make the game happen.

Similarly, not all library staff may be front and center all the time. But - that doesn't mean they aren't important in making it all come together. The cataloger working in the back room, the janitor cleaning up the spills, the staff out on the floor shelving books; everyone works together to contribute to the big picture - and is appreciated for their efforts.

Communication

The players didn't stop talking to each other while on the court. Most importantly, they watched and listened to each other. Directions were called out and nonverbal signals given to help execute plays.

Great teams don't stop talking. Staff should feel comfortable communicating with their coworkers and know that they are being heard. A safe, collaborative workspace leads to maximum productivity and happy workers.

Encouragement

At one point during the game several fouls in a row were called against our team. The players were clearly getting tired and frustrated. The coach chose that moment to call a time out. I watched

everyone gather round coach for their pep talk and plan of action. As they broke away and ran back onto the court there was renewed energy - and something else I had seen throughout the game - comradery. Words of encouragement, high fives and fist bumps were shared between the players.





How does your staff encourage each other? Sometimes a simple “nice job” or “thank you” can make all the difference. A positive support system is an invaluable resource. Remember, there is a network of supportive librarians across the state and right here at the State Library.



About SDSL

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The South Dakota State Library provides leadership for innovation and excellence in libraries and services to state government.

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