

August 24, 2021

Dear Community,

I need to share my thinking with you about suspending ImagineIF's Wired Wednesday program.

You may be thinking:

"We rely on the library for safe, free afterschool care."

"Our taxes pay for this service!"

"My child is not disruptive after school at the library. I don't see why we are being punished."

"My tween's needs are as important as young children's and adults."

"The Wired program was the only thing my kid looked forward to all week."

"The library should hire volunteers to run the program."

"Can't you let the kids do the activity in the green space outside?"

"I get that the whole community has to solve this problem. What do we do in the meantime?"

All Columbia Falls tweens and teens need year-long access to free, safe, and developmentally-supportive spaces staffed with caring adults. Fulfilling this need is beyond the scope of a single organization, and is certainly beyond the scope of the library alone.

ImagineIF created Wired Wednesdays in 2017 in response to the high numbers of youth flooding the library afterschool. Wired has been a safe learning environment for tweens and teens ages 9-14 on early-out days.

The program has also stretched the limits of our spaces, staff time, and relationship with the City of Columbia Falls.

We have a responsibility to serve patrons of all ages, and that requires providing tweens and teens with rich, hands-on learning opportunities and safe, supportive spaces.

However, we do not have enough staff hours or sufficient space to be an afterschool drop-off center for Columbia Falls youth, and **it would be irresponsible for us to continue Wired Wednesdays with our current resource constraints.**

We remain committed to providing access to the following:

- learning interactives,
- games,
- books,
- computers,
- and a rotating set of educational toys that appeal to tweens and teens .

This fall we will also offer hands-on learning kits for youth to take home.

We want to be part of the solution, but we need the community's help.. What are we missing?

We're listening and would love to hear your thoughts on how to meet these young people's needs.

Warmly,
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