Pimp Your Media Center

By Deborah J. Banks

Whether you are a first year media specialist or you have 30 years' experience, it's time to rejuvenate your media center and make it warm and inviting.

As media specialists, we get so engaged with selecting, organizing, and circulating the collection that we forget about attracting students and staff to the media center. To rejuvenate your media center consider the following tips during the school year:

1. **Media center—not mental institution.** Yes, some days in your media center may feel chaotic, but white walls and dark furniture are so yesterday. Obtain permission from your school administrator to give the media center a splash of color. Colors can be calming, soothing, and happy to those who visit the media center.

2. **Bring the outside inside.** Whether you are a natural green thumb or an artificial green thumb, plants can liven up your media center.

3. **Get me out of this place.** Who will read your books if they are hidden on the shelf? Weed your collection regularly and say 'hasta la vista' to that old tattered book.

4. **Show me the goods.** Display your new books on book cases and tables throughout the media center. If the economy has taken a bite out of your budget, spotlight a popular series or your favorite authors.

5. **The glass is always half full.** Have a quote of the day displayed at the circulation desk or create bookmarks with a daily quote to give to students as they check out books.

6. **Art is beautiful.** Art teachers love displaying their students' masterpieces. Offer to have students' works of art displayed in the media center for all to enjoy.

7. **Let there be light.** Lamps can give your media center that warm, homey feeling. If you are short on cash, consider purchasing table lamps at a yard sale and spray-paint them to add decor.

8. **Not another splinter chair.** Whether reading or relaxing, comfortable cushion chairs will attract students and staff. Check out thrift stores for great bargains on gently used furniture.

9. **Technology savvy.** Use that staff development training workshop you attended and create a quick-reference, user-friendly jump page for students and staff to locate the online catalog and your media center resources.

10. **Create a media newsletter.** Brag about the great things happening in your media center. It's no fun keeping a secret!

11. **Pump up the volume.** Did I say music in your media center? You betcha! Soft, soothing music gives the environment a whole new feel and eliminates the stereotype of no talking in the media center.

12. **Suggestion boxes.** A suggestion box is a great way to let students and staff know you really value their opinions.

If not inviting and appealing, the non-aesthetically pleasing media center is only an empty room with books and computers. The media center is the heart of the school, and the heart of the school is only as good as the students and staff who visit it.

Deborah J. Banks is a library media specialist at Hickory High School in Chesapeake, Virginia, and can be reached at Deborah.Banks@cpschool.com.

Whether reading or relaxing, comfortable cushion chairs will attract students and staff.