We don't have parents/kids sign a behavior policy because that is part of our policy and procedures and should be understood. We do have the 3 strikes and you're out policy going on with the exception of two young teen boys who liked to drop the F bomb all the time. Since we have spoken to them about this, repeatedly, they have been told they will get no more warnings, be asked to leave the library and their parents will be contacted. the main thing I've found, and I've discussed it with my staff, we have to present a unified front. For a long time, kids knew who they could get away with inappropriate behavior and who they couldn't. I was bad cop. I wear the badge proudly!

Are they all in one big group, or split into separate groups? 30 is far too many for a single game. You really want no more than 6 players plus one person running it. I would assume there's at least 2-3 groups with that many kids, but you might need more. 3-4 players might be more optimal for some kids, especially your troublemakers, preferably in separate rooms. If they are even slightly "on the spectrum" or ADHD or something it might just be a case of too much stimulus and not enough focus on what they are doing.

Aside from that, there do have to be rules that should be followed, and that means there need to be consequences for not following them. Do everything you can to make this program accessible, but if someone is being too disruptive that's not fair to the rest of the kids and should be addressed. I think having a written policy for basically everything is always the best place to start.

 I've had a few touchy teen behavior issues. Addressing it head on is always best and not in front of the whole group. You should make it known to everyone, though, what the behavior expectations are. Then you should address the issues as they come up. If the rule is not to run and the teens run around, then you have to say, sorry but we can't allow that for "x" reason. Either you stop or you will need to leave for the day. It sounds harsh, but just like little toddlers, teens need to know the rules and what is acceptable or not. You can't have a program be successful with a few disturbing everyone. It isn't fair to the majority.

Just give them the boot. Sounds harsh, but by letting it continue, the experience is diminished for the others. If not permanently, then tell them they have to leave for that session and can try again next time. Three strikes and they are out for good.

Teen patrons are subject to regular library policies like adults. If they are disruptive to the library environment, and they do not follow librarian instruction to behave, then they get kicked out for the evening. If they repeatedly break policy, then it's time to consider suspending library privileges/banning them for a short period.

I have a young teens group and has some behavior issues with one of the boys. I basically used 1,2,3, Magic on him. I made him leave the group on the 3rd count of bad behavior. I told him after the program that he was welcome back when he was ready to behave himself. He was absent for a few weeks after, but came back and knows the boundaries now. I know it might be a little different for older teens, but you could still adapt it I think. How old is the offender?

​Funny you would ask.

We have teens hang out every afternoon at our library. Every spring we wind up contacting the principals of the local high school and public school to have them remind students that they are welcome, but they need to remember that we are a library, not a clubhouse. We can and will take names, contact parents, involve local authority and ban them from the library if necessary. Obviously we don't want to, because they are tomorrow's readers and library supporters, and many don't have anywhere to go.

This Tuesday, however, I received a call that they were especially rowdy. So I went to have my customary word with the group. I could hear them from the time I entered the staircase, and as I reached the bottom, there was a loud shout, and a crash, and silence. I found a teen sitting on the floor next to an overturned table, and four other teens shocked speechless. I asked if she was OK, and made sure she didn't need assistance. She said, no, she thought she would go home and put some ice on it. I agreed that was an excellent idea, then turned to the other teens, and suggested that it would also be an excellent idea if they went with her. They didn't protest at all, just quietly gathered their things, and slunk out of the library.

After I finished filling out an incident report, the best part was contacting the parent of one of the teens, who is a personal friend. I suggested she ask her daughter about her adventure at the library, which she did. Long story, short version, the parent thanked me for letting her know, and assured me they would reiterate to the teen that proper behavior is expected of her. I thanked her for her support. And, now the teens, by talking amongst themselves, know that we do know who they are, and that they will be asked to leave if they don't behave. In fact, my workers have commented how there have been no problems since. We'll see how much mileage we get out of this.

I know our situation is different from yours, but I want to empathize and encourage you. I do think it is important for you to state the rules, and a 3-strike plan sounds reasonable to me. Especially if you have supportive parents.

I will typically have this issue crop up a few times each year in various programs, particularly craft night or WWE nights. If it is a teen that I typically have no behavior problems with at all I might let it slide a bit during one session, with some gentle corrections. I then try to pull them aside either after the program, or another day before the next session of that program, to let them know that that behavior cannot continue, and to find out what is going on. (Often its trying to impress someone)

If they are a teen that I have had to talk to before, or if they reach a certain rowdiness/inappropriateness level, it is an immediate ejection from the program. My rule is that they do not have to leave the library (unless it is a very serious issue) but they will not be staying in my program. I usually make a point to say that they are welcome to come to the next session and try again.

My hard and fast rules tend to be no screaming, no running, no name calling. It is very rare for me to have to eject a teen more than once, and it is very rare that a teen will refuse to come back based on that ejection. I do occasionally have to talk with parents that feel I may have singled their child out, but typically once I inform them of their behavior, and that they will receive another chance, that tends to be less of a concern.

It also tends to introduce an element of self-policing to my programs. I have maybe ejected 3 people this entire school year (from 35+ programs), but kids will tell other kids that, "Ms. Jennifer will kick you out if you don't stop." It also reassures my teens that are there for the focus of the actual program that I will not let it be side-lined by poor behavior from other teens.

I think having the parents come and review/sign the patron code of conduct (or how ever you word your policy on patron behavior) and/or children in the library policy would essentially be enough. I would be hesitant to have a separate form that outlined a different expectation of behavior that what is a voted on policy. Library policies are (or should be) voted on by the board and reviewed by a lawyer to make sure that all the i's are dotted, so to speak. If you were to use a contract, I would have it voted on by the board at the very least, as they are the ones who will have to speak to it/support it in the event a parent is unhappy with the arrangement. Your policy should have steps in place already to have a kid removed from a program and/or the building if they are not abiding by the rules.

If you have a patron code of conduct, that would probably already cover the rules they are breaking. We would probably give them a warning and tell them that if they can't follow the library rules then they would not be able to attend next time or need to leave for the day. If it keeps happening, you can warn them that they will no longer be able to attend that group for the duration of that program and inform them that you will be calling their parents to inform them of it.

Sometimes all it takes is a stern warning.

We don't have a large teen event like this but we did have several teens using our computers after school last year. We required that all of those using the computers take home our "Children in the Library" policy to be signed by parents which outlined appropriate behavior and we also included that because this is an adult area, we would not tolerate misbehavior. If a problem arose, we sent the troublemakers on their way and they were not allowed back into the library that day. We also instituted the 3 strikes and you are out. We are a small library and could easily write down problems with specific kids so we knew where each kid was in standing. Since then, we have implemented an incident book where staff has to document the behavior, date and sign. This helps tremendously. It took care of the few that were ruining it for all, allowing the others a far better experience.

For the past 12 years I was a high school media specialist (currently working public library and loving this role too). Here’s my 2 cents…

The students want to be there! Most students want to enjoy being there. Next time you have the program take 10 to 15 minutes at the beginning to ask the whole group (make sure the offenders are there) what type of behavior they find acceptable and what type of behavior is unacceptable.

At this point you can either have the whole group come up with standards of behavior to agree upon as well as consequences (they will absolutely know why this is happening and the offenders won’t like that it’s about them—do not call them out on it in front of the other gamers). Or the conversation might be enough to let the offending students know that you and your volunteers are aware and that the others don’t want their time disturbed.

Then you can make a short poster while they are playing outlining what they said acceptable behavior looks like and before they leave bring them all back together, ask them if this can be agreed upon and the have everyone sign the poster.

Teens want to comply with their peers (more than with adults) so this usually helps them monitor their own behavior.

Something like-

We all want to enjoy ourselves and respect each other so…

We don’t run while the games are going on

We speak in reasonable voice levels

If we don’t comply then-

1- We will get a warning

2- Our parent will be notified

3- We won’t be allowed back

Again, they want to be there so once they realize that they can’t act that way it should cease-unless there are other behavior issues at play which then I would definitely speak to the parent to see what measure you can take that will help the teen.

Also, the other attendees will appreciate your efforts—usually kids don’t like it when other kids ruin the fun.

I used to run a program at the Bridgman Public Library years ago and I did send home a letter stating the rules for the behavior I expected and the 3 chances, etc., when they signed up. I don't remember if I had the parents sign it, but it did make them aware of the behavior policy. I would say have the parents sign something as well so you are covered that way. I did wind up having to tell one boy he could not return after the 3 chances, but I did it with his Mom. It worked because everyone else shaped up afterwards. Fortunately, he was the only one I had to let go.