Clinton-Macomb Public Library, Michigan
ConnectED Experience

This is the full Q&A with staff from Clinton-Macomb Public Library referenced in the article Library Access for All Students: Stories from Five ConnectED Libraries.

1. Can you briefly describe the nature and scope of your program and how you established the partnership and program in your community?

Larry Neal, Library Director: In April 2015 the Clinton-Macomb Public Library (CMPL) received an invitation from the White House staff on Domestic Policy to participate in a call, "to discuss your library's commitment to ensure that all children in your community can access library resources to further their education." The premise of the program was straight forward and highly aligned with CMPL's mission. To participate the library board, elected officials and school superintendents had to agree to:

- Support student learning and school success through programming and other activities that develop students' language, reading and critical thinking abilities
- Provide digital resources such as ebooks and online collections to learners
- Provide broadband access through public computers and Wi-Fi
- Give access by providing every student with a library card

Thankfully the relationships that the library has cultivated over the years with the schools and local elected officials made it a couple of quick phone calls to get everyone on board; in fact CMPL was the first library in the country to sign up for the challenge.

CMPL serves 30,000 students in two entire school districts and parts of four others. We decided to start with Chippewa Valley Schools (CVS), one of the original partners of the library district. For the 6,000 students who already had library cards, no further action was necessary. For the remaining 10,500, the parents were notified with the chance to opt out (very few did). The student's basic contact information was then added to the automation system including the student ID number which serves as the library card number. These student cards have full access to the library's electronic resources and in-house Internet access. Checkout privileges of physical materials require a parent or guardian signature. Since starting the program in September 2015, nearly 1,000 students have secured a full-access library card.

2. Where were points of push back (internally? schools? parents?) and how did you overcome them?

Larry Neal, Library Director: The biggest concern was how to handle any parent who did not want a child to be part of the program. We developed an opt-out process whereby the school notified all of the parents of the program in advance and then removed any child to be opted out from the list of students sent to the library. (**Jamie Morris, Head of Community Relations, Marketing and Development:** Happily, very few students opted-out of the program.)

We had some concern about giving students who did not live in the library's service area access to resources that are limited to our taxpayers, especially those that had a specific cost per use. Ultimately we decided that it was a cost of doing business and if it meant that our own residents increased their use because a teacher could comfortably assign all students to use the resource without having to worry about where each student resided, that it justified the cost. Ultimately we ended up negotiating an unlimited use license for that particular resource provider which negated the concern.

3. Was there immediate interest with the schools you worked with or did that take some nurturing?

Larry Neal, Library Director: The first superintendent contacted by the library was already thinking about how to make things work before the call ended. The library was approached by one of the other districts it partially serves when it became aware of the first district's partnership with the library.

We also tried to anticipate concerns the schools would have and worked with our board to make our policies as "school friendly" as possible. This included the issue with non-resident student, but also teachers as well. We already extend courtesy privileges to anyone who works in our library district but enhanced the level of access for teachers so that they would have the same level of full access to our electronic resources that their students have.

4. Were there many surprises as you planned and executed the initiative, good or bad?

Larry Neal, Library Director: We found out that many students memorize their student ID numbers but not their library card numbers. We decided that it should be up to the student to decide what number they preferred and made our system more flexible. We were surprised to find one of our districts has very short student numbers.

Juliane Morian, Associate Director/Head of User Experience: This was problematic only for database authentication that relied on a barcode prefix to validate. Since the Student ID could be as short as four digits, it was hard to track and communicate all the barcode prefixes associated with that set of patrons.

5. What was the response to the cards? Have you had increased usage/visits?
Lisa Muvenna, Head of Youth and Teen Services: The response has been fantastic. Before ConnectED, it was much more difficult to get into classrooms as teachers and school staff are busy. Since we have started promoting ConnectED, teachers are coming to us. They want to learn what their library card can do at staff meetings and how they can use it in the classroom. They are using us to recommend books or to teach databases that fit their curriculum. In 2014 we saw 1,114 kids in school outreach and tours. In 2015 (when we started ConnectED), we saw 12,152. In the first 6 months of 2016, we have seen 10,986.

Database	September 2014	September 2015
Biography In Context	27	803
Career Transitions	36	156
Culture Grams	15	81
Learning Express Library	75	256
Novelist	61	109
Pronunciator	45	122
Tutor.com	141	455

6. Has this program led to any other school partnerships or programs?

Larry Neal, Library Director: Shortly after the program launched one district asked that we be part of their AdvancED accreditation process. Our relationship with the schools has been greatly enhanced by this program, which was also launched in conjunction with the hiring of our first dedicated School Outreach Librarian. Teachers are requesting a significantly greater number of in-class instruction visits. A couple of schools have asked to be able to use the library's summer reading program, just to name a few.

Since four of the school districts we serve are also served by other libraries, we have led partnerships with the libraries and other school districts to keep the program as uniform and easy to implement as possible. Given that our libraries vary vastly in size and resources, this has been a challenge to keep everything coordinated. Thankfully everyone understands the value and importance of the program and as worked very cooperatively.

7. If you had to do it all over again, what would you do differently?

Juliane Morian, Associate Director/Head of User Experience: Knowing that our ultimate end-game was to be invited into the schools and teach information literacy skills, in hindsight it would have been smart to design menu of curriculum topics our team could teach. We didn't do this at first—instead, we said yes to everything hoping to get our foot in the door. If we had a set list of presentations and lessons plans that our team could present, it would improve the scheduling and delivery of outreach to schools and make it sustainable for our small but nimble staff.

Jamie Morris, Head of Community Relations, Marketing and Development: Communication among all staff would have also been faster. We would have a team that visited a school in the morning and by afternoon, we'd have someone at the circulation desk asking about specific resources and information may not have been communicated by then. As our school visits increased, we became more active in our communication to all staff, informing them of what resources had been discussed at an outreach so that everyone was up to speed on questions that might come through the door.

8. Any advice for libraries thinking about doing something like this? Any resources you would point them to?

Larry Neal, Library Director: ConnectED Library Challenge Program

The Urban Library Council is also working to capture the tools and experience of the first cohort working on the ConnectED Library Challenge to share with others.

Lisa Muvenna, Head of Youth and Teen Services: From somebody in the trenches, my advice would be flexibility. Figure out where your library's boundaries are in terms of rules and where you can give a little bit. One of the things that helped us is that all staff members are enabled to waive a certain amount of library fines per user. We encountered quite a few teens who hadn't been to the library in 10+ years due to fines on their cards from when they were four or five. Our goal was to get their cards working again so that they could use us.