

SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF CLASSROOM LIBRARIES

PENDER COUNTY SCHOOLS | NORTH CAROLINA
11,000 STUDENTS | 19 PREK-12 SCHOOLS

INTRODUCTION

In an effort to enhance literacy and foster a love for reading among students, Pender County Schools embarked on a significant project to implement classroom libraries across its district. Partnering with Follett Content, the district aimed to provide high-quality, diverse, and engaging reading materials to students from kindergarten through sixth grade. This case study explores the journey, challenges, and successes of this initiative, highlighting the critical role played by Follett Content in achieving the district's goals.

BACKGROUND

Pender County Schools, a medium-sized district with approximately 11,000 students and 19 schools, faced the challenge of providing adequate reading resources to its growing student population. With plans to expand to 20 schools, including new elementary and middle schools, the district recognized the need for a robust solution to support literacy development.

Craig Lawson, the district's media director and technology instruction leader, spearheaded the project. Craig's passion for technology and education, combined with his ability to collaborate with experts, made him an ideal leader for this initiative. Craig had a long-standing relationship with Follett Content, having worked with them on various projects over his 20-year career.

The primary goals of the classroom libraries project were as follows:

- Enhance literacy and reading engagement among students.
- Provide diverse and high-quality reading materials tailored to different grade levels.
- Ensure effective storage and management of classroom library resources.
- Support teachers with supplementary materials aligned with the district's curriculum.



“The classroom library sets have been a valuable addition to our curriculum. They provide a wealth of resources that support our literacy goals.”

Craig Lawson

District Media Director
Pender County Schools

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The implementation of the classroom libraries project was a multifaceted endeavor that required meticulous planning, collaboration, and innovation. The process involved several key steps, each critical to the project's success. From initial planning and collaboration to the selection of reading materials and logistics of distribution, every aspect was carefully managed to ensure the best outcomes for the students and teachers at Pender County Schools.

- 1. Planning and Collaboration:** The project began with extensive planning and collaboration between Pender County Schools and Follett Content. Craig worked closely with Karei Swift and Laura Jedrzejewski from Follett Content to outline the project's scope, logistics, and timelines. The team focused on identifying the specific needs of each classroom and selecting appropriate reading materials. Karei Swift, senior sales consultant for Follett Content, who had developed a strong relationship with Craig over the years, emphasized the importance of trust in this partnership. "Craig trusted us based on the many years of working together," Swift noted. This trust was crucial in gaining the district's confidence in Follett Content's ability to deliver.
- 2. Selection of Reading Materials:** Follett Content provided a wide range of books, carefully curated to meet the diverse interests and reading levels of students. The selection process involved input from teachers, literacy specialists, and curriculum experts to ensure alignment with the district's educational goals. Laura Byars, Follett Content's then manager of curricular alignment, played a pivotal role in this process. She developed a deep understanding of the project's specific needs and worked closely with Follett Content's Curation Team to on the selection and recommendation of materials.
- 3. Logistics and Distribution:** One of the significant challenges was the logistics of distributing the classroom libraries to multiple schools. Follett Content played a crucial role in coordinating the delivery of books and storage solutions. Lawson noted, "The storage solution provided by Follett Content was a game changer. It addressed a common issue where districts provide resources but lack proper storage and management solutions." Jedrzejewski, who managed the project, introduced innovative solutions to

streamline the process. She suggested using bamboo rolling carts for classroom libraries, a new product that had not yet been introduced to the market. "We were able to identify a new product and work it into the bid. We created a product that we've never used before," Jedrzejewski said. This solution allowed for easy storage and display of books, creating inviting reading corners in classrooms.

- 4. Training and Support:** To ensure the successful implementation of the classroom libraries, Follett Content provided training and ongoing support to teachers and media coordinators. This included guidance on managing the library resources, integrating them into the curriculum, and using supplementary materials effectively. Jedrzejewski emphasized the importance of communication and trust with the customer. "He trusted my judgment, where if a book wasn't in, I could grab another copy of another book with him knowing that I was going to do so with the best of interest at heart," she said.

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

The journey to implement classroom libraries was not without its challenges. However, through strategic problem-solving and the unwavering support of Follett Content, Pender County Schools were able to overcome these obstacles and achieve their goals. This section outlines the key challenges faced during the project and the innovative solutions that were employed to address them.

- 1. Changing Classroom Numbers:** One of the challenges faced during the project was the fluctuation in classroom numbers from year to year. Lawson mentioned, "If I had it to do over again, I would have tried to get better projected numbers for the following school year." Despite this, the team adapted by updating and adding classroom sets as needed.

2. **Budget Constraints:** Budget constraints were another hurdle. The district had to balance the cost of new materials with other financial priorities. Follett Content's flexible solutions and support helped the district maximize its resources and achieve its goals within budget. The project was funded through ESSER Funds, which provided the necessary financial support.
3. **Staffing and Training:** With a limited number of staff and many hats to wear, Lawson relied heavily on the expertise and support of Follett Content. He emphasized, "Having partners that go above and beyond to act as team members is invaluable. Karei and the Follett Content team were instrumental in providing the necessary support and training."
3. **Improved Resource Management:** The storage solutions provided by Follett Content ensured that the classroom libraries were well organized and easily accessible. This improved resource management allowed teachers to focus more on instruction and less on logistical challenges.
4. **Positive Feedback from Educators:** Educators across the district praised the quality and relevance of the reading materials. One literacy specialist noted, "The classroom library sets have been a valuable addition to our curriculum. They provide a wealth of resources that support our literacy goals." Lawson also highlighted the positive feedback from teachers and librarians. "The feedback that we've received so far has been very positive. The unpacking of the books went very smoothly, and the teachers were thrilled with the new resources," he said.

IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

The successful implementation of classroom libraries in Pender County Schools, in partnership with Follett Content, demonstrates the power of collaboration and strategic planning in achieving educational goals. Despite challenges such as changing classroom numbers and budget constraints, the district's commitment to enhancing literacy and the unwavering support from Follett Content led to a transformative impact on students and educators alike. Key outcomes included the following:

1. **Increased Student Engagement:** The availability of diverse and engaging reading materials led to increased student interest in reading. Teachers reported higher levels of student engagement and enthusiasm for reading activities.
2. **Enhanced Literacy Skills:** The classroom libraries supported the district's literacy curriculum, providing students with additional resources to develop their reading skills. The integration of supplementary materials from Follett Content further enriched the learning experience.

Lawson's leadership, combined with the expertise and dedication of the Follett Content team, ensured that the project not only met but exceeded its objectives. As the district continues to grow and evolve, the foundation laid by this initiative will serve as a model for future projects aimed at improving educational outcomes.

As Karei noted, "Trust was the key. Craig trusted us, the district trusted us, and we trusted each other to deliver on our promises." The partnership between Pender County Schools and Follett Content exemplifies how effective collaboration, innovative solutions, and a shared commitment to educational excellence can lead to successful outcomes. The classroom libraries project has set a new standard for resource management and literacy support, benefiting students and educators for years to come.