



District's Digital Conversion Delivers 21st-Century Efficiency and Access

Before the fall of 2017, the libraries at the six elementary schools in West Haven Public School District in Connecticut, used library book cards and card catalogs, which was a model of inefficiency. With none of the books barcoded, inventory and checkout were messy, to say the least. Not only did the process require young students to write names and dates on cards (problematic for many kindergartners), it also meant check-out times and the number of books had to be limited. Educators struggled with how they could offer students the benefits of a 21st-century library within the confines of the existing system.

In late 2016, the decision was made to transition to a system that would give students easier access to more books while allowing staff to record collections digitally, keep accurate inventory, follow trends in student interest and offer the seamless research and tracking they sought.

THE TRANSITION TO DIGITAL

Because of the district's involvement with Follett Destiny® Library Manager at some of its middle and high schools, they knew the system would be a good choice for the elementary libraries, according to Colette Bennett, Coordinator for Language Arts, Social Studies, and Library Media. "Our experience with Follett gave us every confidence in their ability to support our entire district once we moved all schools to the same digital platform," Bennett said. "In Connecticut, Follett is a trusted company for digital software and book purchases, so we knew we were making the right choice." The district integrated Destiny, and in August 2017, the digital conversion was complete in all six libraries.



COLETTE BENNETT

Coordinator
Language Arts, Social Studies,
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"The Destiny platform allows us to work more efficiently across the West Haven Public School District by sharing resources, and now our library collections are public to all stakeholders."



LIBRARY BARCODED IN RECORD TIME FOR A NEW SCHOOL YEAR

Bennett described how, once the decision was made to go digital, barcoding of all the libraries' books had to be tackled. The district wanted to start the new school year with all components in place, so they turned to Follett, which assembled a team to begin the barcoding process. "Although our timetable was short, Follett indicated the barcoding services would be possible," Bennett said. She described a few challenges they had to overcome. "All elementary libraries needed to be barcoded before the students returned to the buildings on Monday, August 28 – and the elementary buildings would only be open from 6:30am to 2:30pm daily. A tall order!"

"These Follett barcoding team leaders are incredible ambassadors for your company."

COLETTE BENNETT
Coordinator

"They delivered," Bennett said. She shared how team leaders arrived on August 15, 2017, and promptly set to work organizing and training the West Haven barcoding teams. "Follett provided five teams that were able to complete barcoding a total of 50,368 books for the six libraries," Bennett said. "We had estimated 48,000 books."

Bennett and the administrators were pleased with the barcoding services, to say the least, and relieved that the six libraries would open for fall 2017 as state-of-the-art operations. "Personally, I cannot say enough good things about each team leader who worked on our barcoding project," Bennett said. "They were knowledgeable, efficient, and professional."

AN EFFICIENT LIBRARY ALLOWS BETTER ACCESS AND LEARNING

What's the difference at West Haven due to the barcoding of its resources? According to Bennett, the ripple effect continues to pay benefits to staff and students alike. "Barcoding all the books in the elementary school libraries allows the librarians to streamline the checkout process for grades K-4. Elementary students are now able to check out more books (up to three at a time) during the library periods, and a desktop computer has been installed at a station in each elementary school library so that students can look for books or check their student accounts. Destiny makes that easy."

She also shared what she then had in store for the district as the barcoding dividends continued to be revealed. "By the end of this school year, we will have trained a team of student library aides who will be able to check in books. This will allow each school librarian more time to conference with students in selecting texts. And thanks to Collections by Destiny®, all our librarians are working more closely with teachers to organize information in all disciplines based on units or lesson topics."

"Now, all our school librarians can spend more time talking to students and recommending texts, since the 'clerk' responsibilities have been moved to a digital platform," Bennett said. "This allows our librarians to help students learn to choose books for themselves and encourage them to talk about how they read as well as what they like to read. Talking about reading is critical to making students lifelong readers. The conversations we can have now with students show that librarians value students' development as readers."



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