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STUDENTS' LOVE OF READING INTENSIFIES AS THEY QUICKLY FIND TITLES THAT MATCH THEIR INTEREST

New Texas Middle School Library Embraces Genrefication with Help from Follett Content

**BULVERDE MIDDLE SCHOOL | COMAL ISD
NEW BRAUNFELS, TEXAS**

DISTRICT OVERVIEW

Comal Independent School District (ISD) is located in New Braunfels, nearly halfway between Austin and San Antonio along the I-35 corridor. The district is home to 35 campuses, including a new middle school – Bulverde Middle School – that opened recently. Comal ISD is one of the fastest growing school districts in the state of Texas, adding about 1,000 new students every year.

EMBRACING GENREFICATION

Opening a new school is always a daunting task for any district, filled with scores of deadlines that must be met before the new year starts. Opening a library at a new school is no different. Jillian Pratt, the district's Director of Digital Learning and Library Services, was more than ready to meet the challenge with her team and she was certain of one thing: She wanted Bulverde Middle School's new library to be genrefied from the outset.

“Genrefication is important to me as a director because I know the value of it firsthand,” said Pratt, who spent her first 12 years in education as a teacher and later as an elementary school librarian. “During the pandemic in 2020, I spent my time genrefying the fiction in our library. When students finally returned to campus, there was a newfound love of reading.”

Organizing her library’s collection by subject, category, or genre rather than by title or author, made it significantly easier for students to find book titles that interested them.

“After genrefying the fiction, I was inspired to complete our collection,” she recalled. “The phrase ‘I don’t know what I want to read’ became obsolete among our students.”

Hence, Pratt collaborated with the Follett Content team and other Comal ISD middle school librarians in the district to build the Bulverde Middle School collection. Not only would the new Bulverde students benefit, but so would Park “Blake” Pearson, the first-ever librarian at the new middle school.

“This is my first experience with a library organized by genre and, now that I’ve seen how fantastic it is, I’d never go back to another system,” Pearson said. “With Follett Content’s help, genrefication has made the library more accessible and enjoyable for our students. Students were immediately drawn to the sections that fit their interests, from mystery to fantasy or sports fiction, without needing to search by title or author. It was incredible to see them confidently browsing through genres they loved, finding books that intrigued them, and making connections with stories they were excited about.”

Pearson said he’s indebted to Pratt, Follett Content, and the other district librarians for creating what he termed “an amazing, diverse, and engaging collection of books” prior to his hiring. “Their hard work and dedication have made a significant difference, and I’ve seen firsthand how much my students enjoy and connect with the books in our library,” he said.

To help create the well-rounded collections for Bulverde, the middle school librarians used Titlewave® – just another reason Pratt and Pearson are grateful for the genrefication partnership they forged with their Follett Content representative, David Sanders.

SHELVING, TAGGING, SORTING: A HUGE TASK MADE EASY

Prior to submitting their order, Pratt said she worked with Follett Content and Sanders to choose genres that were common in middle school libraries. The books were then delivered, processed, and sorted by genre.

Follett Content helped simplify the process by offering labeling options, tags in Titlewave, and genre processing.

Tagging and shelving books by genre can be an enormous undertaking – one that requires more time and staff than most libraries possess. Follett Content has the services to help new libraries get up and running quickly and accurately, and Pearson saw the efficiency unfold before his eyes.

“Shelving the books was an incredibly smooth process because each box was numbered, making it easy to track which books went where,” Pearson emphasized. “It was unbelievable how precise the shelf markers were, clearly identifying how many inches the books would take up on each shelf. This level of organization saved so much time and effort. Plus, having each box labeled by genre made it even easier to install the books in the right sections. Everything came together seamlessly!”



AN INVOLVED PARTNER IN EDUCATION

As for Sanders, Pearson touted what he brought to the project, going “above and beyond” with his ongoing support.

“David has been responsive, knowledgeable, and always willing to help with any questions or issues that arise. Whenever I’ve needed support, he’s been quick to respond, whether it was for product inquiries, ordering assistance, or resolving any issues,” Pearson said.

Furthermore, the librarian stressed that Follett Content has been “more than just a vendor.”

“They’ve been a partner in shaping our library into an inviting, user-friendly space that caters to students’ interests and needs,” he noted. “Follett Content’s role in our journey to the new library was essential in streamlining the process of genrefication with our collection. They offered a comprehensive selection of books and resources that aligned with our genrefication goals.”

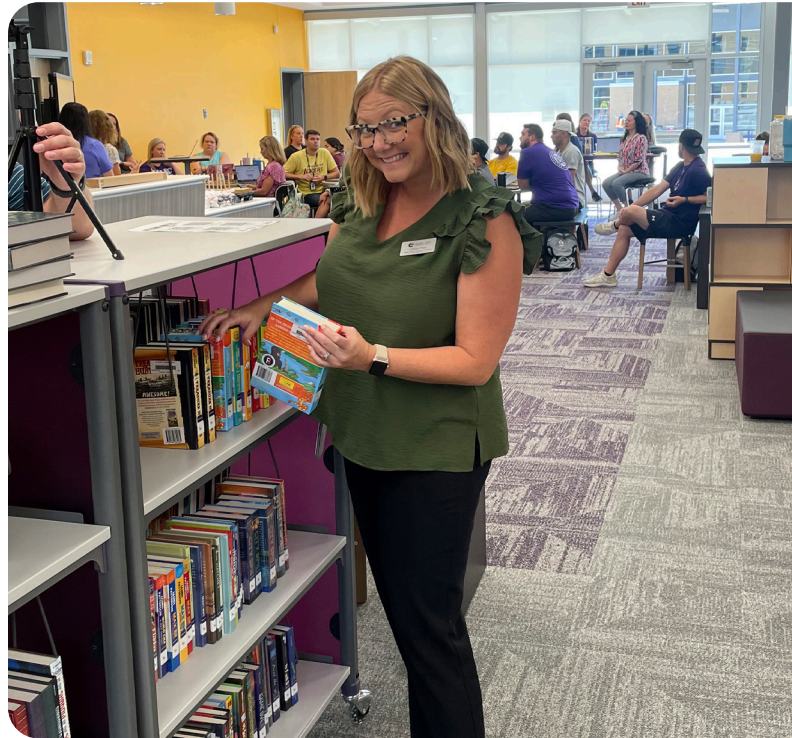
And where are things today? On a recent visit to the library at Bulverde Middle School, Pratt said the building was buzzing with students excited to find their next read.

“Plus, Mr. Pearson was facilitating a ‘genre book tasting’ where students were sampling books from different genres before they headed to the shelves to check out,” she said. “The students were actively engaged in finding their next read by narrowing down their interests by genre. Genrefication improves reading scores and circulation and fosters a love of reading. I highly encourage genrefication in school libraries.”

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