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DR. KIM COCHRANE

*Library Media Specialist,
Fitchburg Public Schools*

• **Setting Up New Elementary Libraries Is a Huge Undertaking Made Easier with Follett New School Library Service**

• Once Fitchburg Public Schools administrators gave the green light to establish first-ever libraries at its elementary schools, Dr. Kim Cochrane, the district’s Library Media Specialist, knew exactly what to do next.

• “Immediately after finding out the new libraries were going to be a reality, I reached out to Follett,” she said. “I had been using Follett Titlewave for several years, and we already were using Follett Aspen, its student information system, so it was an easy sell. I knew Follett had the knowledge base and the personnel to help us tackle this huge project.”



Cochrane explained the three campuses involved – McKay and Reingold Elementary Schools (K-5) and South Street Early Learning Center (preschool and kindergarten) – would each be starting from scratch. “The first step was getting book lists because we needed thousands of books,” she said. “Follett’s Curation Team provided me with lists for each library level, which I went through with a fine-toothed comb.”

Since Cochrane teaches a graduate course on children’s literature at nearby Framingham State University, she’s well versed about what’s new and popular across the preschool to fifth-grade levels.

“I made very few changes to the lists, as the books were mostly exactly right for our students,” she said. “The collections all were well balanced between fictional and informational books, and reading and interest levels, plus included books appropriate for our extremely diverse student population.”

While the level of content experience from Follett was crucial to the process, it was the company’s white glove service – including grade-appropriate, colorful signs and genre labels – that simplified things for the schools once the books were delivered.

“Having everything ready to go right onto the shelves was hugely helpful,” Cochrane said. “I couldn’t believe how clear and simple it could be to get so many boxes onto the correct shelves quickly and easily.”

Even when Cochrane and her team had questions about the shelf-ready service, Follett Shelving Team Lead Steve Short was there to lend a helping hand.

“I have never dealt with anyone from a company of Follett’s size and breadth who was so keen to help me with everything I needed,” she said. “We had far more books than shelves, and Steve was able to make it all work.”

Anna Hill, Principal of Reingold Elementary School, assumed her new position when the project was nearly completed but had a chance to see what she termed “the ownership Follett took in the delivery and setup of the books.”

“Dr. Cochrane was able to focus more on the students in front of her than on setting up the collections themselves because of the efforts from Follett,” Hill said.





Helen O’Hara, Media Specialist Teacher at Reingold Elementary School, is thrilled with the new libraries and what they symbolize for students. “It means the absolute world to student achievement to have updated library collections at every elementary school,” O’Hara said. “Our school had no functioning library collection prior to our partnership with Follett, and simply having access to a strong, diverse collection is a huge difference. Many of our students would not have access to free books otherwise. When students take pride in using their library – knowing where their favorite books are, completing books and returning them on time, showing other students what they’ve just finished – the positive effect spills over into the classroom. Students who have struggled in my class have absolutely shown a more positive attitude after becoming comfortable library users.”

Now that her school has a fully functional school library, Hill couldn’t be more thrilled.

“It has created excitement among the students about reading, and they are seeing it as a pleasurable activity,” she said. “Now students will read more, thus getting more independent practice applying reading strategies they learn in class, thus improving

achievement. Additionally, having books that serve as a mirror into their own lives, or a window into the experiences of others, will improve the feeling of belonging and empathy within our school community.”

Cochrane has accomplished a lot in her career, but she is particularly honored to have seen this project through from beginning to end.

“I am proud to think I had something to do with whatever success we have had bringing libraries back to the Fitchburg Public Schools,” she said. “As for Follett, it is big enough to take on a huge project like this yet small enough to have the personal touch needed to make the customer feel comfortable and supported every step of the way.”

“Follett is probably the most widely used and most respected resource for collection development in school libraries, and they can help you build an engaging and diverse collection from scratch.”

HELEN O’HARA
*Library Media Specialist,
Reingold Elementary School*