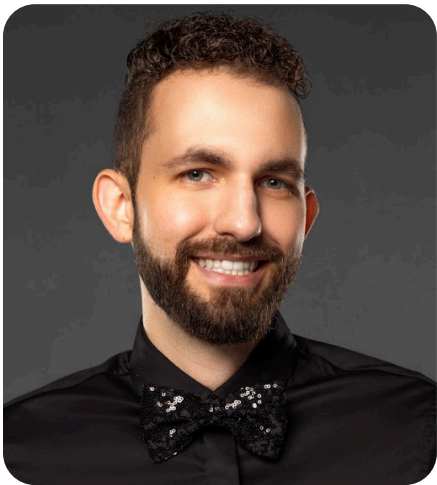




## Like a Phoenix Rising from the Ashes

Follett Content Solutions and schools across the globe share a common goal: student success. It's the reason we do what we do – and we do it by being a true educational partner to educators. This story personifies the level of partnership we have with the districts we serve. When a disaster struck, our teams sprang into action.

The first day of the new school year was fast approaching, and for the Alhambra Elementary School District in Phoenix, Arizona, the excitement level was higher than normal – in part because a truckload of library books was on its way. Considerable effort had been poured into revitalizing the district's libraries and much time spent with a comprehensive weeding process.



“Follett was relentless in making sure we had what we needed.”

**TANNER R. KENT**

*Specialist,  
Educational Services,  
Alhambra Elementary  
School District*



The shelves were understandably bare, but a freight truck was en route from Illinois to Arizona with 21,000 brand-new books. Then the truck’s trailer caught fire. Although no one was injured, the books were a total loss. Those that weren’t burned to ash were destroyed by water used by firefighters to extinguish the roadside flames.

News of the blaze was soon delivered to district personnel by Charla Bennett, a Follett Consultant who has been with the company for seven years.

“We had been working on this project for almost two years, so understandably, I was shocked and worried with the start of the new school year being only a few days away,” said Tanner

R. Kent, Specialist, Educational Services, for the Alhambra district. “I didn’t want our staff or students to come back and see our library shelves essentially empty.”

Bennett did more than deliver news of the fire: She came armed with a solution.

“I worked with my regional director, Timothy Edmonds, and he assured me that my teammates at Follett would help fix the situation – and quickly,” Bennett said. “At first, I didn’t know if we were going to make delivery of the books before school opened, but I could assure Tanner that we were doing everything possible to meet the originally scheduled delivery days.”

Time was of the essence, Bennett continued, because she and Follett were committed to every one of Alhambra’s 16 campuses having a beautiful, new, refreshed library collection come day one of the new school year.

From the outset, Kent said, he and his district felt Follett was part of their team and brought a can-do attitude to a situation that otherwise could have been bleak.

“It was clear we were going to weather things together,” Kent said. “Follett was relentless in making sure we had what we needed. Charla was responsive and quick to understand our needs. She made this process a joy, and even though she works with many other districts, I never felt like she wasn’t 100 percent focused on us throughout.”





Meanwhile, back in Illinois, the Follett Warehouse Team worked feverishly to pick and sort the same 21,000-book order, process in True Dewey order, box shelf-ready, load them onto a truck, and prepare for the shipping of what amounted to two large new school libraries.

Once the books were delivered anew to the Alhambra School District, this time without incident, the on-site Follett team went into action.

“Honestly, it happened so quickly that I continue to be astounded how they assembled and processed our order to be shelf ready,” Kent said. “They didn’t take shortcuts and didn’t leave us to finish the work, including something as simple as discarding shipping boxes and packing materials. When I learned they came back the next day with the delivery truck to take care of this, it felt so right. It was another way Follett showed they wanted our libraries to be ready for our community.”

Make no mistake, libraries are important to the educators and students at the Alhambra district.

“As a district, we want our students to have as many opportunities as possible for their future, and we know education is an equalizer,” Kent emphasized. “We have prioritized putting books in the hands of our children and building a culture of literacy. Our students see they are cared for and their futures invested in each time they get to choose from thousands of new books. These books allow our students to have windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors as they continually develop a social and global consciousness that encompasses a profound respect for all humanity.”

He added that the Alhambra students are excited to read, and continue to learn to read, because of what is available to them. “The relationships students are forming with their peers, as well as the caring adults in our schools, are because they are circled around to enjoy a great book,” Kent said.

Bennett said it’s important for a vendor such as Follett to understand its relationship with a school district as a true partnership and not merely transactional.

“It requires one to think from the perspective of the school district – anticipating their needs, communicating openly, being accessible, and presenting different options that will help them reach their goals,” Bennett said. “This entire experience showed our commitment to give Alhambra teachers and students the best possible outcome, one that we had assured them we could provide. That is why we expended every available resource and effort to accomplish what the district ultimately was counting on.”



“In times of adversity, it is the resilience and determination of individuals like you that truly shine. The incident with the truck fire could have easily caused delays, impacting the educational experience of our students. However, your team’s quick thinking, resourcefulness, and willingness to go above and beyond was truly remarkable.”

**DR. CECILIA MAES**

*Superintendent,*

*Alhambra Elementary School District*

