**Indianapolis, Indiana**

**Overview**

With 10 school districts in its service area, the Indianapolis Public Library (IndyPL) took a one-district-at-a-time approach to ensure library access for all students, beginning with a district with which the library already had a productive working relationship. Since joining the Leaders Library Card Challenge, IndyPL has created partnerships with three school districts and distributed nearly 33,000 e-resource cards.

**Partnership Highlights**

IndyPL’s collaborative work with school districts in its service area includes these components:

* **E-resource Cards.** To increase library access, IndyPL created a special student electronic card using the student’s state testing number, a unique identifier that stays with students even if they change schools. Students use their e-resource card to access library digital materials and may check out up to three print or audio books at a time. Parents may “opt out” of having their children automatically receive an e-resource card. While there are no fees or fines associated with use of e-resource cards, students that already have library cards with fines of $5 or more are enrolled in an “earn and learn” program which allows them to “read off” their fines with guidance from school media specialists and teachers.
* **Library-School Service Agreements.** To document partnership roles and responsibilities, the library and school districts enter into joint service agreements. The service agreement for the first Leaders Library Card Challenge partnership between IndyPL and the Metropolitan School District of Lawrence Township covers services to be provided by the two parties, communication and information sharing responsibilities and school data needed to provide library access to all students. Lawrence District Superintendent Shawn Smith said the partnership agreement and shared commitment have made the working relationship “more methodical rather than hit or miss.” This initial agreement provides a model for collaborative work with additional school districts.
* **Shared System Members**. IndyPL’s shared system program, which has been in place for 22 years, supports and complements the goals of the Leaders Library Card Challenge by connecting school and public library resources. Libraries in the 49 schools that are shared system members function as “mini branches” giving students easy access to both the resources in the school library along with Indy PL’s 2.1 million books. Members use the IndyPL circulation system, and their materials are processed and catalogued by public library staff. Lawrence Township – the first IndyPL Library Card Challenge partner – was the first entire school district to become a shared system member.

**Sustaining the Partnership**

Beyond ensuring top leaders stay connected to and committed to the goals of the partnership, IndyPL identified three factors that contribute to long-term success:

* Involvement of school media specialists who are the day-to-day front-line resources and serve as in schools and become champions for the collaborative effort
* Identification of a front-line library contact person who can gain the trust of school personnel, sustain the partnership work on a daily basis and solve problems when they occur
* Training for media specialists to deepen their understanding of library learning resources to support classroom work and increase their ability to be informed champions.

For more information, contact Cordia Watkins, Membership Access Coordinator at cwatkins@indypl.org.

*The Leaders Library Card Challenge is supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and is led by the Urban Libraries Council. For more Information, email* *info@urbanlibraries.org**.*