

The Leaders Library Card Challenge

Community Profile

Jacksonville, Florida

Overview

Duval County Public Schools (DCPS) and Jacksonville Public Library (JPL) are working together to increase the high school graduation rate, improve grade-level reading proficiency and broaden awareness of library learning resources. The collaboration includes virtual library cards using student IDs, field trips to the library to ensure kids understand the power of their cards and educator cards with expanded borrowing privileges to make the library an integral part of classroom work.

Partnership Highlights

Jacksonville is a consolidated city-county government with one school district serving nearly 117,000 students in 163 schools. The library has 21 branches and 450 employees, serving a population of 913,000.

Recognizing that both the library and school system were facing challenges – a 74 percent high school graduation rate, only half of 3rd graders reading at grade level, and library circulation and use trending downward – library and school leaders decided to work together to get library cards in the hands of all 56,000 elementary school students as efficiently as possible. Assumptions that guided the library-school district partnership include:

- **Using student IDs for library cards supports rapid distribution and ease of use, particularly for young children who are less likely to carry a library card.** Students can check out three books, use library computers and access online resources and databases – all with no fees or fines.
- **Classroom field trips to neighborhood branches connect children to the resources and opportunities available in library branches.** The field trips include a library tour, a presentation about what the library offers and assistance in choosing a book to take home after the visit. The school district arranges and pays for transportation from the school to the neighborhood library.
- **Ensuring that teachers have easy access to library resources is important to carry out shared learning goals.** JPL and DCPS created a special card that allows teachers to check out up to 100 items for six weeks and place holds on up to 50 books with no fines for overdue materials. Teachers must cover the cost of any lost or damaged books. Parents of homeschooled children are eligible for educator cards.

Jacksonville Public Library and Duval County Public Schools recently entered into a three-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to document their partnership focusing particularly on procedures for sharing data needed to issue virtual cards using student IDs for library cards while protecting privacy of student records.

The Leaders Library Card Challenge

Community Profile

Enthusiastic Response

Students, teachers and parents embraced their new learning resources enthusiastically:

- More than 60,000 students used their cards to check out books or use library electronic resources
- Nearly 28,000 students visited the library on a school field trip
- Educators checked out more than 45,000 books

In addition, the library's urban core branches have seen a significant increase in children visiting library branches, particularly to use library computers. One student brought his parents to the library on the weekend after his field trip to share the library experience with them.

The library-school partnership extended over the summer with outreach about library resources and opportunities at school camps.

A Continuing Partnership

With a three-year MOU in place, future plans for continued collaboration include integrating school and library learning curricula and bringing charter and private schools into the learning partnership.

For more information, contact Amber Holley at amberh@coj.net.

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.
