



Follett provides customized integrated literacy solutions that engage and improve K-5 learning outcomes.

ROCKFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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THE CHALLENGE

To maximize limited instructional time while enhancing literacy skills and content knowledge, Rockford Public Schools took an innovative approach when building an integrated literacy curriculum that combined four content areas: language arts, science, social science and health. Their vision was unique: each of the content areas would be aligned with authentic trade books that would spark student excitement and interaction. However, during a recent three-year review, Rockford's K-5 Curriculum Leadership Teams (CLTs) determined the resources being used did not effectively align to the Integrated Literacy Curriculum. To address this problem, Rockford's Curriculum Deans and the CLTs reached out to Follett and its Custom Classroom Curation services and other vendors to find solutions.

"The biggest reason for turning to Follett was that traditional textbook companies were unable to provide authentic texts related to our district's unique curriculum," Cory L. Nilsen, Dean of the K-12 Social Science Curriculum Department, said. "We were endeavoring to integrate language arts, science, social science and health, and, at best, most companies were trying to sell us separate titles for each area, which was the opposite of our aim. Follett grasped our integrated concept from the beginning, and rather than selling us a prepackaged, one-size-fits-some kit, Follett sought to meet the curricular objectives of our district that were aligned to standards and outcomes."



"The trade books in the Follett classroom libraries allow students to engage with authentic texts in a way that is meaningful in learning about content and solving real-world problems. Rather than simply reading texts for only reading's sake, students are now engaging with texts with a bigger purpose. Students are able to see the purpose of reading as a way to explore the world around them."

DAVID R. ALLEN

Dean
K-12 Science Curriculum Department

Nilsen's CLT colleague, David R. Allen, Dean of the K-12 Science Curriculum Department, added, "We'd had difficulty finding resources that truly aligned to the proper content for science (and social science) at each grade level. Because one of our major goals was ensuring that all standards could be met, it was critical that we found resources that could properly align as needed. Follett became the partner that could help us achieve our goals."

A third member of the team, Mellissa Douglas, NBCT, Dean of Curriculum Elementary Literacy, was especially pleased with Follett's approach to Rockford's problem. "Our integrated literacy curriculum is unique and combines multiple resources that create a menu of options for our teachers. That was the challenge. The Follett curriculum team was very diligent and strategic in how they aligned grade-level texts to the essential learning outcomes of the Rockford 205 curriculum. When given the task of finding authentic texts that support our curriculum, Follett demonstrated the ability to collaborate and align resources."



THE SOLUTION

While Rockford worked with and used multiple vendors in the alignment and evaluation process, Douglas and Nilsen shared that Follett stood out. According to Nilsen, "Follett was able to provide a truly customized solution for our curriculum and provide a high level of true alignment."

In collaboration with the Rockford deans and the CLTs, Follett and its Curriculum Alignment Service built classroom libraries by putting together age- and reading-level appropriate collections of books by classroom, which were then reviewed by the CLT. The feedback from Rockford about the evaluation process has been overwhelmingly positive. "Our CLT chose Follett as a resource because they were impressed with the authentic texts, alignment to content and thoughtful effort put forth by the Follett team," Douglas shared.

The Rockford team agreed that turning to Follett for classroom libraries allowed them to have texts that truly engage students in interacting with the content of science and social science in authentic ways. "While the basic content could have been found in a more traditional textbook (with varying degrees of true alignment), Follett was able to provide authentic and engaging text sets that allow students to truly engage in literacy practices in the way scientists do to explore the correct content," Allen said.

"From the social science perspective, what Follett brought to the table was the ability to provide a diverse set of texts, both informational and literature, at grade level, which allow students to confront the concepts and skills of social scientists in authentic ways," the team explained. The process was simple and efficient for Rockford, due to the fact that Follett provided engaging texts on topic, at grade level, and in paired sets, which enables their use for multiple purposes and needs throughout each unit.

Flexibility is essential when it comes to creating truly useful and appropriate classroom libraries, and one of the features Rockford looked for when it turned to Follett. "Follett gave us the ability to align directly to the content topics of both science and social science, as well as health, as necessary. Follett met the topics, quantity, and aims of our curriculum, without forcing us to purchase a prepackaged kit," Nilsen shared.

The actual delivery of the materials was also a plus for Rockford. When Follett materials are delivered, they are grouped by classroom, so teachers don't have to wade through boxes of books to find what they need.

"Classroom libraries were delivered to our distribution center before being delivered to classrooms," Douglas said. "The texts were organized by classroom and labels were provided for the texts. While unpacking the boxes took time, once the books were organized, many teachers reached out with positive feedback."



"The authentic texts in the Follett classroom libraries provide great opportunities for research-based instruction and support content standards. Our teachers use the texts to practice close reading, model mini-lessons and provide students with exposure and practice with rigorous texts."

MELLISSA DOUGLAS, NBCT
Dean
Curriculum Elementary Literacy

THE RESULTS

The experience at Rockford has changed the way students learn and educators work with students. With the classroom libraries now in place, students are more engaged, teachers have more choices and district outcomes are being met. The team admits there were a few glitches along the way, but pointed out how the Follett team reacted quickly to help resolve any issues as soon as they arose.

“What we asked of Follett’s curriculum alignment team was to look at the content themes and Essential Learning Outcomes our teams had created, based upon the four sets of standards, and find us one mentor text, one piece of grade-level literature and one piece of grade-level informational text, and to do this in English, Spanish and Arabic,” Allen said. “Follett was able to provide everything but the Arabic. Arabic we knew was a long shot, but we had to ask since we do offer classes in Arabic in the district.”

After year one of implementation, the CLT has received feedback – both positive and suggestive – about the chosen texts. “Many of the texts are aligned nicely and support the curriculum effectively,” Douglas said. “Some feedback provided has allowed opportunity for reflection and growth with regard to preferred texts. Given the unique design of the Integrated Literacy curriculum, we anticipated that some texts would work better than others. The feedback received from teachers will allow the CLT to continually enhance the effectiveness of Follett classroom libraries in the future.”

COLLABORATION BEYOND THE ORDINARY

The Curriculum Deans and the CLTs were extremely pleased with the level of service they received from Follett throughout the entire curation and evaluation process. “The biggest advantage to our teams was that Follett was able to help us locate a plethora of titles on topic and grade level without our teams having to wade into the seemingly infinite possibilities,” Allen said. “Additionally, when we did spot titles that concerned us for one reason or another, Follett’s team was quick to help us identify an appropriate replacement title that would meet our needs.”

Nilsen was equally impressed with the level of customization available from Follett and the personalized approach of the Follett team. “Follett was a great partner in finding titles that met our needs in terms of content and readability. Additionally, they helped us find appropriate titles within the budget we had for the project. Whenever we had a concern about a title – whether it be content, readability or cost – our sales representative quickly contacted Follett’s curriculum alignment team to find us an immediate suitable solution.”

FOLLETT’S CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT SERVICE

In addition to Custom Classroom Libraries, Follett offers a Curriculum Alignment Service. Licensed teachers align books and other resources like makerspace, technology or hands-on materials around a school’s or district’s criteria. Criteria can include various reading levels and measures, standards and subjects.

Customers can request books that:

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- Have multiple points of view
- Address student populations
- Support district goals like community engagement, speaking up or LBTGQ issues

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“The greatest enhancement to teaching and learning is that we are, for the first time in my six years in this position, teaching science, social science and health in a clear, consistent, guaranteed and viable manner. Gone are the days of there being disparity between what is taught for science, social science and health from building to building – or worse, classroom to classroom within the same building.”

CORY L. NILSEN

Dean
K-12 Social Science Curriculum