Getting Schooled: Partnering with Arizona’s largest school district to issue public library cards

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Hello my name is . . .

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Overview (or let's get oriented)

• Background and Planning

• The Process

• Results

• Lessons Learned
Background and Planning
Background (Literacy Matters)

- "Up to half of the printed fourth-grade curriculum is incomprehensible to students who read below that grade level, according to the Children’s Reading Foundation."

- "three quarters of students who are poor readers in third grade will remain poor readers in high school according to researchers at Yale University"

Source: Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters
Background (Inspiration)

- Charlotte Mecklenburg Library launched a program in 2015 to allow students to access library services using their student ID.
- Kansas City Public Library enrolled about 10,000 of Kansas City Public Schools’ 14,000 K–12 students into the library system using their student ID.
- Buckeye Public Library System registered over 400 students using a Google form sign up process.
Initial Brainstorming

• Pilot Project

• Automated sign up as part of registration

• How to build a partnership
Approaching Mesa Public Schools

• Built a relationship with MPS staff doing outreaches for their school summer programs.

• Began having meetings to explore how to partner further

• Identified which MPS staff was interested in making this happen
Getting Buy In from Mesa Public Schools

• Proposed the card idea as a pilot with a single grade

• MPS was excited to try it out

• Decided to start with Kindergarten class only

• Registration is year-round so we began in Feb 2023
Solidifying a plan

- Marketing team developed a letter to go out with the card
- Library IT developed a process for bulk imports
- Operations staff developed a workflow to stuff the envelopes
Getting City Buy In

• Fit well with the city’s larger literacy initiatives

• Easier to get buy in and approval from City Management
Legal considerations

• Drafted an IGA with Mesa Public Schools to define the data transfer that parents/guardians opted into

• This step took a few weeks to get ironed out.
The Process
How do they sign up?

Mesa Public Library Card:

Mesa Public Schools has partnered with Mesa Public Library to issue library cards to students. If you would like your child to be issued a Mesa Public Library card, please select yes in the box below:

I understand that by selecting yes, I agree to allow Mesa Public Schools to share the following information with the Mesa Public Library: my name and email address, mailing address and phone number, and my child’s name and date of birth.

[Save And Continue]
How do we get info from the school?

• SFTP (secure file transfer protocol)

• Batches are uploaded monthly

• In compliance with the IGA
How do we get info into ILS

• Information is downloaded from SFTP

• Information must be formatted

• Information is bulk imported into ILS (Polaris)
How do we get the cards to students?

• Cards are mailed

• Welcome letter is included

• Student resource flyer is included
Results!
Cards issued!

• 1400 cards issued to Mesa Public Schools' Kindergartners!

• This was out of over 3700 registered Kindergartners

• 37% of parents / guardians opted in *
Usage

• 12% of those who registered have used their card

• Of that group, 23% used in person, 77% online

• Comparison group (in-person signups) had around 10% usage
Marketing

• Cost: $1400 total

• About a dollar per card (57 cents was for postage alone)

• About $8.67 per active user (cost per acquisition)
Lessons Learned
Challenges

- Duplicates
- Renewals
- Returned mail
- Getting wrong info from the school
- Student already had a card
- Cost to scale
Bonus Challenge

• We have 1400 Kindergartners registered

• Back checked with Mesa Public Schools they are showing that 2400 kindergartners opted in!!

• This would be a 65% opt in rate!

• We must investigate
Future Ideas

• Use student ID as card

• Opt out approach??

• Distribute through schools

• Print cheaper cards to mail?
Questions?
Holler at us!

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Why is this presentation so short?
Links

• https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2016/01/04/student-id-linking-students-to-libraries
• https://www.cmlibrary.org/oneaccess
• https://www.ccf.ny.gov/files/9013/8262/2751/AECFReporReadingGrade3.pdf