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BIO

Kim Borden is the Librarian and Head Robotics Coach at Plainfield Elementary School in the Pen Argyl School District in Nazareth, Pennsylvania. She was the Educator of the Year recipient in 2019 from the Pen Argyl School District and in 2017 was STEM Educator of the Year from Colonial IU20. In 2018, Kim was the winner of the America's Farmers Grow Rural Education Grant in the amount of \$25,000. Those funds were used to create a Wonder League Robotics Club for grades 2–3, purchase STEM kits for her building, and provide dynamic professional development for her colleagues in the area of STEM education. She was a 2020 PETE+C presenter with her session “Domo Arigato Mrs. Roboto.” Kim has also won grants from the Northampton County Chapter of Pennsylvania School Retirees, as well as the 2010 Crayola Educators Grant. Kim received her bachelor's in Elementary Education from East Stroudsburg University and her master's in School Library and Information Technology from Mansfield University. Additionally, Kim has her Pennsylvania STEM Certification and is pursuing her School Administration Certification from Delaware Valley University. She lives just outside the heart of the Pocono Mountains in Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania, with her husband and daughter.

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3-Phase Reopening Plan Template for School Librarians

COVID-19 has introduced many concerns to school librarians, including fear of job loss and worries over enormous budget cuts. In Pennsylvania alone, there is a projected [\\$1 billion revenue loss](#) that will inevitably result in heavy cuts for local school districts.

School administrators are being forced to make difficult decisions. But data indicates that library programs can and should safely continue. Librarians have played integral roles in supporting colleagues, students, and families during this crisis, and can continue to do so with the safety of students and staff at the forefront.

To avoid cuts to your library program, it's important to be proactive. Formulate and share your reopening plans with your administration to place the spotlight on the critical services you bring to your school community — because if there is anything we learned from the sudden closure of schools in the spring, it is that librarians are needed now more than ever.

Why You Need to Have a Seat at the Table

Never in my career would I have anticipated teaching through a pandemic. However, being a few months into this unprecedented time in history, it is quite clear that librarians need to advocate for their positions.

Developing and sharing a reopening plan for your library program is the perfect way to illustrate how critical your position is to the success of your students this fall. Many schools are required to submit reopening plans to their state education agencies, and your administration will most likely appreciate the initiative you took to alleviate the burden of work already on their plates.

Being proactive in your position also identifies you as a leader in your school. As U.S. Senator Mike Enzi said, “If you’re not at the table you’re on the menu.” You want to be sure to be part of the decision-making process, rather than having people who may know little about your role making those decisions for you. Do yourself a favor and insist on sitting at the table.

This is the time to volunteer to be on your school’s reopening committee or pandemic response team. Share your expertise and knowledge on how libraries can help in the continuation of instruction as we face the COVID-19 slide. As school librarians, we are authorities in the field of technology; champions of equity, diversity, and digital citizenship; and experts in curating top-notch educational resources to help support instruction — skills that will be more important than ever as we support our students and colleagues throughout the coming school year.

How to Develop a Reopening Plan

When I developed my reopening plan, I knew that it also represented my campaign for saving my position in the library. In the span of a few days, I became well-versed in the fields of budget, space planning, and health. I read as much information as I could from the Centers for Disease Control and my state education agency about their guidelines for reopening schools. I also read about the science of COVID-19, how it spreads, and how long it lasts on a variety of surfaces. I then had to do some self-reflection.

I started by asking myself, “How can I become the point of success for the students and families that I serve?” (Read here for ideas on [how school librarians can serve students this fall](#)). With these answers in mind, I organized my reopening plan into four categories:

- A position statement (a clear statement that supports the vision, mission, and values of education)
- What students need to be successful during a pandemic and what school librarians offer
- What support will be needed to support the execution of the plan

I then created a three-phase reopening plan that detailed the daily activities that take place in the library and how they could be modified. You can do this by thinking of every little thing you do and touch from the second you walk into your space until the time you leave. Then, do the same thing from the perspective of a student. Once you have identified any COVID-19-related safety issues or concerns, solve these problems for yourself and your administration in a reopening plan that is specific to your school library. In other words:

1. Identify your liabilities.
2. Identify your assets (what you already have that can solve your problems).
3. Gather more assets (materials and allies).

Example Reopening Plan

Below you'll find an example plan for a three-phased reopening approach. The phases are meant to be fluid in the event that your school has to pivot into a different learning model during the year. You can download a Word document version of the plan [here](#) that you can customize to your specific school, library, student, and staff needs.

Position Statement

It is the position of the [Insert Your School District Name Here] librarians that all library programming can and will be the point of success in serving our students and families during the COVID crisis. We are experts in technology and in curating top-notch educational resources to help support instruction, and we are champions of equity, diversity, and digital citizenship. Using this expertise, we play an integral role in supporting our colleagues, students, and families during this unprecedented time. The data on [student success in relation to school librarians](#) tells us that library programs should continue, and the following plan outlines how to do this safely. The plan details the funding, space, and health concerns for school library services and provides solutions to these critical issues. The plan is meant to be flexible and should change fluidly as new data is provided.

What Students Need to Be Successful During a Pandemic that School Librarians Deliver

- Continued and uninterrupted access to high-quality, librarian-curated print and digital resources (we know that books and resources can continue to be circulated in adherence with CDC guidelines)
- Access and instruction for the use of e-books, online databases, and other online resources
- Rich learning opportunities, support for academic and reading achievement, and the reduction of educational inequities
- Essential inquiry and information literacy skills aligned to state standards
- Classroom instructional support (librarians are masters of curating and organizing resources)
- Technology support for students and staff

- A safe space for connection with all students that supports their social-emotional learning

What Support Will Be Needed to Execute This Plan

- Acknowledgement of the important role of the librarian and the tools and strengths they bring to the table
- A commitment to continuing library services during a time when teachers and students need it most
- A collaborative approach with classroom teachers that leverages librarians' expertise
- Funding to invest in the free resources that are no longer free
- Funding for district schools to participate in Overdrive (allowing access to thousands of high-quality, librarian-curated e-books)
- Investment in health and safety materials needed to make the library as safe as possible for students and staff (see links in Yellow Phase)

Red Phase School Library Services

Learning and instruction are virtual.

Distance Teaching/Learning

- Develop and maintain weekly library and information literacy lessons through Google Classroom.
 - Have clear objectives and learning goals.
 - Prepare video content for asynchronous teaching and learning.
 - Be prepared to meet “face-to-face” (via Zoom or Meet) with students to provide support.
 - Post engaging and interactive content using Google Classroom.
 - Collaborate and support other teachers as appropriate.
 - Develop initiatives to encourage students to read.

Resource Curator

- Maintain a welcoming and accessible library website.
- Compile high-quality digital resources for teachers and students to meet diverse student needs (with the understanding that free doesn't always equal good).
- Provide tutorial videos for teachers and students on how to access online resources.
- Provide tutorial videos showing teachers how to integrate digital resources into their Google Classrooms.
- Assess connections between online classroom needs and the library's e-book collection and other e-book collections (e.g., EPIC, Tumblebooks).

Technology Support

- Provide technology support to teachers, parents, and students, such as the following:
 - Signing on to a Chromebook
 - Signing into a Chrome browser with their personal device
 - Navigating Chrome and accessing Google Classroom
- Participate in webinars or training sessions provided by educational vendors on how to best serve our school community and **share** that information with staff.

Further Reading

The New York City Department of Education has put together a comprehensive list for librarians to help translate in-person services into virtual services:

[Translation of Practice for School Librarian for Distance Learning/Teaching](#)

Yellow Phase Library Services

Learning and instruction are hybrid, with some taking place in the physical school building and some being virtual. The options outlined below include both students remaining in classrooms and students visiting the library. If students enter the library, safety protocols and physical limitations will be enforced.

General Library Safety Guidelines

- All library staff will wear [face shields](#) or masks.
- All library staff will practice frequent hand-washing.
- All library staff will frequently clean heavily touched surfaces (desktops, library countertops, door handles).
- Shelf markers will NOT be used.
- Magazines will NOT be on display.
- Signage promoting [social distancing](#) and [hand-washing](#) will be prominently displayed.
- Visual cues will be used to help provide students with a visual for social distancing ([line-up spots on floor](#), [sit spots on carpet](#), etc.).
- Upon entering the room, each adult and student will get a squirt of [hand sanitizer](#) or be asked to [wash their hands](#).
- A [safety shield](#) will be installed at the checkout station.

General Book Check-In Procedures

- Gloves will be worn by library staff to check in and safely quarantine books.
- Books will be returned to [designated book bins](#) (with wheels for easy transport to the library) located in each hallway of the building.
- Books will be checked in and placed in a designated room or separate area for

a three-day minimum quarantine ([the best disinfectant is time](#)). If needed, books can be treated with [a UV light](#) or wiped with an appropriate cleaning solution.

- After the three-day quarantine, books will be returned to the shelves for checkout.

General Book Checkout Procedures

These ideas are flexible and can be combined with each other as best suits our students' needs.

Curbside/Concierge Book Checkout

(for students who choose to continue distance learning)

- Students and parents will use the online card catalog to place holds and reserve books (an online video tutorial will be provided for parents and students to learn this skill).
- Parents can come during designated curbside pickup times to retrieve their student's books.
- Books will be [bagged](#) and labeled.
- Curbside returns will be quarantined as described above.

Option #1 (most restrictive)

In-School Concierge Book Checkout

- Students will not visit the library.
- Library space can be used for other purposes while the librarian runs concierge and curbside services.
- Book checkout limits will be increased:
 - Grades K–2: Up to 5 books
 - Grade 3–5: Up to 4 books
- Students will be taught to use [Destiny](#) to place holds and reserve books ([librarian will push into classrooms to teach and reinforce this skill](#)).
- The librarian will pull reserved books from the shelves, bag, label, and deliver the books to the student.

Option #2 (moderately restrictive)

Library Visits for Checkout Only

(no lesson, see below for how to deliver library lessons)

- Classes (or partial classes) will visit the library in staggered intervals, allowing ample time to sanitize heavily touched surfaces.
- Upon entering the room, each adult and student will get a squirt of hand sanitizer or be asked to wash their hands.
- Students will be reminded to keep a safe distance from each other as they browse for books.
- Students will be reminded to only touch books they want to borrow.
- Students will check out their books and line up immediately on the [spots designated on the floor](#).

Delivering Library Lessons in Classrooms

The librarian will push into the classrooms and teach information literacy and technology skills. The initial focus of instruction for the school year will be focused on the skills needed to log in and access Google Classroom (skills needed if school closes again). Accessing additional library resources will also play an integral part in instruction provided by the librarian. Library lessons will be 30 minutes each and will be scheduled by the building principal in conjunction with the librarian. Library lessons will be co-taught between the librarian and the classroom teacher.

Green Phase Library Services

Students attend in-person classes in small groups and receive instruction and checkout time in the library.

General Library Safety Guidelines

[Same as Yellow Phase](#)

Option #1 (most restrictive)

Library Visits for Checkout and Storytime

(library lessons will continue in classrooms)

- Small groups (or partial classes depending on schedule set by district) will visit the library in staggered intervals, allowing ample time to sanitize heavily touched surfaces.
- Upon entering the room, each adult and student will get a squirt of hand sanitizer or be asked to wash their hands.
- Students will be reminded to keep a safe distance from each other as they browse for books.
- Students will be reminded to only touch books they want to borrow.
- Once students check out, they will find a seat on one of the available spots on or near the story carpet.
- The librarian will read aloud a book from the collection and engage in a short book discussion.
- Students will line up on the designated line-up spots and return to their classroom.

Option #2 (least restrictive)

Library Visits for Checkout and Lesson

- Small groups (or partial classes depending on schedule set by district) will visit the library in staggered intervals, allowing ample time to sanitize heavily touched surfaces.
- Upon entering the room, each adult and student will get a squirt of hand sanitizer or be asked to wash their hands.

- Students will be reminded to keep a safe distance from each other as they browse for books.
- Students will be reminded to only touch books they want to borrow.
- Once students check out, they will find a seat at a table or another designated spot in the room (clearly marked for social distancing).
- Students will attend a lesson provided by the librarian.
- Students will line up on the designated line-up spots and return to their classroom.
- If library Chromebooks are used for the lesson, [proper sanitizing protocols](#) will be followed:
 - Power down device
 - Spray microfiber cloth with a 70% alcohol/30% water solution and wipe down Chromebook

Funding Opportunities

- [COVID-19 Rapid Response Grants](#)
- [COVID-19 Response Student Success Grants](#)
- [COVID-19 Response Learning & Leadership Grants](#)
- [IMLS CARES Act Grants for Museums and Libraries](#)
- [Institute of Museum and Library Services](#)

References

- [“Health and Safety Considerations for Reopening K–12 Schools”](#)
- [“How to Sanitize a Chromebook”](#)
- [“How to Sanitize Collections in a Pandemic”](#)
- [“Preliminary Reopening Guidance: Pre-K to 12”](#)
- [“Why School Librarians Matter: What Years of Research Tell Us”](#)