NEW HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS CASE STUDY

When New Haven Public Schools (NHPS) sought better library software, they renewed their partnership with TLC.

The Story

This Connecticut school library needed its software to aid staff in their daily tasks. When these functional requirements were not met in Follett Destiny, the school expected the vendor care team to provide answers. Unfortunately, Follett addressed neither.

With the Follett relationship soured, NHPS found solutions with a previous software vendor, TLC. New Haven Public Schools and TLC rekindled their partnership.

NHPS migrated to TLC’s library management system, Library Solution for Schools, to start the 2021-22 school year. Throughout the year, the librarians appreciated TLC’s unmatched care and attention to detail. They anticipate a seamless transition into the next academic year and beyond.

Building a Vendor Relationship

The school district values the people behind the software and empowers marginalized groups. Even as a smaller company, TLC stood out as a certified woman-owned organization. Together, the vendor partnership flourished with three pillars: attentiveness, accuracy, and needs fulfillment.

Librarian Responsibilities

Librarian Responsibilities Pre-2020

Librarian Responsibilities 2021-2022

Attentiveness

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and the district’s one-to-one technology rollout, library roles expanded. Traditional librarian tasks blended with managing technology and teaching classes. It was a balancing act of competing responsibilities.

Between these added duties, the librarians would have limited time for unexpected tasks. They needed their library software to be effective to support their daily workflows. If the system hiccuped and required vendor support, they expected an attentive team. Yet, the librarians’ simple questions or requests for troubleshooting often went unanswered.
Where Follett faltered in communication, TLC excelled. TLC listened to what New Haven librarians were experiencing and crafted solutions.

By discerning pain points and areas for growth, TLC shared a direct comparison of the two systems. They provided a sandbox system to imitate real-world scenarios. TLC outlined functionality, data handling processes, and cost transparency. This helped NHPS stakeholders make an informed decision about switching library management systems.

"TLC showed us what they could provide us: what we felt like we were paying for with Destiny, but not actually getting." — Kim Rogers, Librarian Lead at New Haven Public Schools

**Accuracy**

Accurate student and collection data is the cornerstone of a library management system. Any issues in the setup can compound over time, which NHPS experienced firsthand with Follett Destiny.

A split-campus library was set correctly as two branches, but the records for both locations were set to one of the branches. That campus librarian had to move each individual record to the correct space, without vendor help.

In contrast, TLC prides itself on accuracy during implementation and beyond. The company provides a dedicated data team to make migrations easy, prevent errors, and even detect inaccuracy.

For example, TLC’s data implementation team discovered that NHPS had ~16,000 duplicate barcodes in their previous system. ~13,000 of which were between two schools, a mistake that happened during the initial Follett Destiny implementation.

TLC’s data team worked with the district to establish correct locations, collections, and circulation rules. A diligent process confirmed that every single record moved to the new system, properly. TLC’s attention to detail and accuracy earned the librarians’ trust.

"Everything that we needed to be right has been right with TLC." — Kim Rogers, Librarian Lead at New Haven Public Schools

**Needs Fulfillment**

While the impact of a positive vendor relationship was critical, it hinged on whether the software would fulfill their needs.

A primary concern for NHPS was that students aged up through the system between school years. In their previous system, one high school had 1,500 students enrolled while their Destiny software showed over 5,000 students. Students who had graduated NHPS and enrolled in college still had accounts in the K-12 library system.

When active student data needed to increment to the next grade level, it took longer and longer each year. Students would keep their former roster and circulation rules as late as November the following school year.

"There always seemed to be some problem with the data transfer." — Kim Rogers, Librarian Lead at New Haven Public Schools

With Library-Solution for Schools, students age up to the next grade every year, before the school year starts. TLC integrates its library management system with NHPS’ student information system. Student accounts update weekly throughout the school year. As students transfer between schools or leave the system for any reason, their accounts are updated.
Another feature NHPS librarians appreciate in their day-to-day roles is the customizable PAC. Rather than every school library synchronizing its online catalog, each school has autonomy. TLC provides different instances of the PAC to accommodate differing needs across the district.

For example, each school’s PAC can link to the librarian’s website, the school’s website, and to their MackinVIA e-resources. Each librarian can also choose which age-appropriate PAC to link, based on grade. For equitable access, younger grades can use Kids PAC, while older students can enjoy a more traditional catalog.

Sustaining the Momentum

New Haven Public Schools completed its first academic year with Library•Solution for Schools. As part of their new customer care, they had monthly check-ins with a dedicated support team. By establishing a relationship with TLC support early and often in the first year, success was part of the equation from the beginning.

Going forward, the school librarians know they have a team they can rely on, where no question is too small. They appreciate that TLC support provides answers like "that will work" — rather than “that should work” — while taking the time to explain how.

The librarians know where they can find more resources. They can contribute to an ever-growing community of other school librarians. Additionally, they can lend their voices to the future of the product through an available idea portal and at the annual user conference.

Migrating to a new library system is a process, but its continued success is a partnership.