

Action Item 4: Proposed Changes to LOPL Student Access Pilot

For the PINES Subcommittee Meeting, December 2019

Submitted by: David W. Singleton, Live Oak Public Libraries

Report from the Pilot:

Live Oak Public Libraries (LOPL) was approved for a pilot with Heard Elementary School, with students receiving physical cards and checkouts limited to two (2). Because this program was an opt-in model, with parent signature required, it has had very limited success, with only four (4) applications returned out of 185 students, despite promotion and library engagement.

Using an opt-out (instead of opt-in) model, Savannah-Chatham County Public School System (SCCPSS) and LOPL are piloting a student access program using the student ID number as the library account number for all pre-K to 12th grade students. Working cooperatively with the schools on sharing of limited student identifying data, approximately 42,000 students will have public library accounts starting with the launch in February 2020. Parents will be made aware of the program before launch, with an opportunity to opt out of the program for their child/children.

In discussions about the pilot over the last few months, both LOPL and SCCPSS staff have suggested that a checkout limit of two (2) is very limited and much less likely to engage students. As a SCCPSS Academic Affairs official recently said, "Students are not likely to take the program seriously if they are limited to 2 checkouts." Other successful student access programs in Georgia and North Carolina have higher checkout limits, including the NC Cardinal consortium (10), Charlotte Mecklenburg Library (10), Durham County Public Library (5), Cobb County Public Library (5) and Fulton County Public Library (50).

Despite perceptions that students use largely digital materials, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library found that about 66% of students checked out physical items during the first two years of that program.

We believe that the pilot will be significantly more effective, with more students engaged and using library resources, if the checkout limit is increased from two (2) to five (5) items.

Recommendation 1:

Live Oak Public Libraries respectfully recommends that the limit on physical item checkouts for the student access pilot be increased from 2 items to 5 items to ensure optimal student engagement and to align with other successful student access programs in Georgia and North Carolina.

Recommendation 2:

Live Oak expands the pilot program from one school (Heard Elementary) to a school district (Savannah-Chatham County Public School System (SCCPSS)).