

Covid-19 GRMS Library Adjustments

As with everyone else in the country, we had to come up with a plan quickly to continue to provide services to our students once school was closed. In our situation, we had just started Spring Break with all intentions of seeing our students in ten days. However, we never had a chance to see the students again so all our plans for library services had to be moved virtually. Luckily, since I do teach one elective section of TV production 7th period I was quite familiar with our district learning management system “Schooly” as were most of the students in our middle school. I was familiar with all the features except I had not used the Discussions and Video Conferencing tools which did become very important during the last quarter of the year when we no longer had face to face contact with our students.

The first thing we rolled out was reminding students and teachers of all the electronic tools they could use for instruction from our virtual library website <https://www-grms.stjohns.k12.fl.us/media/>. Since all the students with IEPs or 504 plans with reading identified are eligible for using Learning Ally we ensured all the students continued to use the audio books available to them. We had already been assisting students in selecting audio book titles in all of our remedial reading classes every Friday throughout the year and providing silent sustained reading time for them. For our general population, we wanted to increase our ebook collection. Luckily, our primary ebook vendor Mackin notified us that many publishers were donating their materials for the remainder of the school year and increased our available books to 3,746 titles with many remaining until September 2020. For summer, we wanted to make sure our students had ebook access to the 15 new titles of our Florida reading program for 2020-21 school year the Sunshine State Young Readers Award (SSYRA) program. However, we were out of funds for the school year. I had just finished with several large print book orders before Spring Break and had intended to use my Spring Book Fair money to purchase the Sunshine State Young Reader books in May. My Book Fair was canceled so I had no way to fund those. Fortunately, a business partner volunteered to donate \$1,000 which allowed me to purchase three copies of each of the 15 SSYRA titles to add to our MackinVIA ebook collection!

We have always worked very closely with our local public library and knew they had many more materials available electronically than we do. The public library made free temporary 60 day library cards available to all of our students so they could access all of the electronic content. I asked Ms. Phillips, our youth services public librarian, if she would be willing to do a Zoom call that we could record so our students would know how to access all the content, she agreed and we posted that for our students very soon after the quarantine began. In the afternoons, the public library was also doing Facebook live video courses on how to use the many resources they have available.

Our LMS “Schooly” wound up being a lifesaver for most of our students. However, since we are a Title One school and many of our students in poverty live in remote rural areas, technology access was a huge issue for many of our students. The district purchased hotspots for the rural areas that took quite awhile to arrive, then once they arrived they didn’t work way out there. It took quite a long time to finally get them connected and by then some students were disengaged. That was unfortunate. We did make phone contacts with some students and parents which did help some of the students become reengaged. In Schooly, navigating is through courses which of course Library is not a course. However, there was an option to create a group that looked like a course. I created a **GRMS Virtual Library group**, that is where we posted our discussions, set up our virtual Makerspace challenges and had a Friday morning video book club conference. Our school continued a regular period schedule

Monday through Thursdays and Fridays were open. I was able to attend some of the content area teacher's virtual video conferences during Monday through Thursdays regular classes but mostly monitored the GRMS Virtual Library that we had set up on Schoology. In our GRMS Virtual Library Discussion area we had the following discussions, **1. Tell Everyone what you are currently reading, 2. Learning Ally, what book are you listening to, 3. Reading and Discussing SSYRA books, 4. Makerspace Challenges, 5. Minecraft Club, 6. If you were any animal what would you be?, 7. Quarantine Hobby Ideas, and 8. Meme Wars.** The last four were student created. Fridays allowed us to have a virtual library time using the video conferencing tool. We met at 11:00 and then the students wanted it to become more of a book club. They would discuss what they were currently reading and were quite enthusiastic about encouraging other to read the books they liked. They also came up with virtual activities we could post on the Discussion board. They did a Meme of the week where they suggested a Meme topic and students could find or create a meme related to that topic. The students came up with the game rules and monitored it to make sure it was school appropriate which it always was. I posted virtual Makerspace ideas and was hoping that would take off but it never did. I posted a LEGO maze challenge the first week, then a JENGA block challenge the second week but never got anyone to participate even after having the content area teachers remind the students it was up.

Since the library produces the school video news program, we continued that through the quarantine time. The students took video footage of them engaging in school activities week after week and my TV production students would help edit and do voiceovers virtually. It kept the school community engaged as a total entity which was difficult when we weren't together physically and included all members of our student community including our self-contained ESE students. You can view the news programs at this link. <https://www-grms.stjohns.k12.fl.us/newsletter/>

Overall, we made the best of a difficult situation and tried to stay in contact with all our students. The outlook for the coming year is still in flux. The plan today is for us to return to school for preplanning August 20th and for students to return August 31st. Our library is a huge physical space and I believe we can serve the students and provide social distancing with no problems. The school is still trying to determine the scheduling for all courses. I am hoping to have small groups all day long and seeing all students at least every two weeks and allowing and promoting walk ins at anytime of the day everyday.