



Limitless Libraries is the groundbreaking partnership between Nashville Public Library (NPL) and Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) whose goal is to improve student success by enhancing school libraries; sharing resources; and providing access to high quality books, online resources, and other learning materials.

Limitless Libraries:

- Gets NPL services and materials to students and teachers where they are—at school.
- Breaks down barriers to access: MNPS students can access NPL materials, even if they can't get to an NPL location.
- Increases available resources: MNPS librarians can harness NPL's purchasing power and receive lower rates on materials. Larger orders equal lower prices.

Accessibility

MNPS students (currently in grades 3-12) can request materials from beyond their campus:

- Student ID cards are also NPL cards, which allows students to request materials from NPL's catalog of 2 million-plus items.
- Items are delivered to school and can be returned to their school libraries.
- Delivering NPL materials to students at school eliminates any transportation or other barriers that might stand in the way of accessing NPL's collection.

History

In 2009, then-Nashville Mayor Karl Dean asked Nashville Public Library to take the lead in a new partnership between the city's public library and public school libraries. NPL recommended ways to partner with school libraries, foster resource sharing between NPL and Metro Nashville Schools, and improve student access to learning materials. NPL was charged with collection development and purchasing for school libraries in order to help schools meet state standards for volumes and quality of materials.

A pilot project with three high schools and a ninth grade academy began in 2009. City funding was expanded to carry the program forward to all 16 area high schools in the 2010-2011 school year. Now, Limitless Libraries partners with all MNPS school libraries.

Using their school IDs as their public library cards, students and teachers order Nashville Public Library materials from their school libraries. Nashville Public Library and Metro Schools deliver their orders to every Metro school, every weekday.

The result: For eight years, students have borrowed hundreds of thousands of books, movies, and other items from NPL, without ever leaving campus.



[More Results](#)

Borrowing has increased at school libraries; so has collection quality. Nashville Public Library has infused nearly \$7 million into school collections, helping local schools meet or exceed state collection standards.

Take the Harris Hillman School as an example. This Pre-K through 12th grade school serves students with severe disabilities. When Harris Hillman's librarian, Stephanie Rausch, began working there, the school had only 1,000 books total in its collection - most of them picture books.

"I feel strongly that we need to be providing our students with materials appropriate for their age levels, while making accommodations as necessary," Rausch said during an NPL interview. "And Limitless Libraries enabled us to purchase and have access to materials other than picture books, such as fiction, non fiction, and other, more age-appropriate books for the students and teachers to use."

The Library also brings technologies to school libraries, including hundreds of checkout laptops for homework, iPads, 3-Doodlers, and 3-D printers.

Finally, NPL has also infused \$4 million into actual school library spaces, transforming them from dingy, outdated book areas into colorful, interactive learning hubs with multipurpose classrooms, reading nooks, and "makerspaces."

In all, eight school libraries have been renovated or built new. The Library can offer more collection resources and more school library renovations, thanks to private and corporate donors who have embraced Limitless Libraries. In all, supporters have donated **\$2,968,914** through the Nashville Public Library Foundation.

[Growth](#)

"One of the best-known full-scale partnerships" between schools and public libraries--Library Journal, April 2017

Through Metro funding, bolstered by private support given through the Nashville Public Library Foundation (NPLF), Limitless Libraries adds to school library collections and sometimes remodels or builds school libraries.

As of 2017, Limitless Libraries has expanded to all 125 MNPS traditional schools, serving students in grades 3-12. Additionally, Limitless Libraries has a pilot initiative planned in some Nashville charter schools for the 2017-2018 school year: granting digital NPL cards to students and teachers at KIPP, LEAD, and Valor schools.

Finally, thanks to a new, joint integrated library system (ILS) that Metro School libraries and Nashville Public Library share, school librarians can more easily manage circulation and borrowing.