

2015 Achievement Awards Virginia Association of Counties

APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 1, 2015.** Please include this application form with electronic entry.

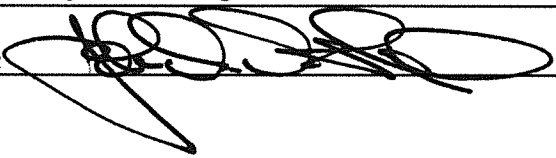
PROGRAM INFORMATION

Locality: Henrico County
Program Title: Promoting Online Homework Help to Teens
Program Category: Customer Service

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Mandy Arnold
Title: Teen Librarian
Department: Libraries
Complete Mailing Address: Tuckahoe Area Library, 1901 Starling Dr, Henrico, VA 23229
Telephone # 804-290-9130 Fax # 804-270-2982
E-mail: marnold@henricolibrary.org

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Name: John A. Vithoukas
Title: County Manager
Signature: 

Overview

In October 2012, Henrico County Public Library (HCPL) launched two online services for library customers, Credo Homework Help and Literati. Both are products of the company Credo Reference. Credo Homework Help includes help from a “live” teacher with math, reading or writing for students in grades third through twelfth. Literati allows library customers to search the full-text of online versions of hundreds of top quality reference books in all major subjects. Access to these online resources was provided to Virginia’s public libraries by the Library of Virginia. HCPL teen librarians coordinated with Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS) to get the word out about these new services, especially Credo Homework Help. Mandy Arnold, Teen Librarian at Tuckahoe Area Library, used several techniques to get the attention of middle and high school students, including in-person presentations at schools, videos and pizza parties.

Problem

It is difficult to convey to students how helpful public library resources can be toward completing their research projects and homework assignments unless they are able to see the tools in action. Credo Homework Help is a unique resource in that students in grades third through twelfth are interacting with a “live” teach to get help in math, reading or writing. For public librarians, regular access to students is often extremely limited. Library staff may speak to a student for a few moments as they look for a book on the shelves or work on an assignment. Finding a way to speak directly to students and show Credo Homework Help and Literati in action was essential.

How the program meets criteria

Finding common sense, yet innovative, ways for public libraries and schools to partner is essential in best serving students. The public library provides many resources that complement curriculum and provide tools to help students succeed. Communicating the value of and demonstrating these tools to both educators and students is essential. The steps and tools used in this outreach to connect students with online Homework Help could be easily replicated for other services that a public library would like to promote to students and educators.

How the program is carried out

After the Library of Virginia announced that they would provide access to Literati and Credo Homework Help, HCPL teen librarians attended webinars and tried the new Credo Homework Help resource for themselves. The teen librarians then brainstormed to figure out how the resource would best benefit HCPL's patrons and how to get the word out to teens in the community.

Mandy Arnold, Teen Librarian at the Tuckahoe Area Library, reached out to the school media specialists at nearby high schools and middle schools in early 2013. She explained what Homework Help is, how to access it using the HCPL website and offered to come to the schools to do a presentation. Additionally she attached Credo's Homework Help FAQ sheet to the initial email message for the school media specialists to share with teachers. This resulted in a live demonstration for hundreds of students.

To prepare for this presentation, Mandy Arnold contacted the Credo Homework Help representatives and explored ways to demonstrate in real-time and use a video demo. The video demo turned out to be the best option since it worked best with the schools' audio visual systems. Ms. Arnold developed a presentation that featured Credo Homework Help within the context of the local library services and online resources. During the presentation, she explained to the audience of students and educators how Credo Homework Help could benefit them and answered questions regarding the times that Credo Homework Help is available, what subjects it covered and if the service offered help with more advanced subjects. An instructional flyer about Homework Help created by Ms. Arnold was sent to schools prior to her visit and was very helpful in answering questions and gave a resource for students and teachers to refer to when they were using Homework Help on their own. She ended the presentation focusing on library programs and age-specific book talks.

In August 2013, Shiva Darbandi, Instructional Design and Assessment Specialist from Credo Literati, contacted Pat Muller, HCPL's Youth Services Coordinator, to take part in a case study which evolved into the Student Ambassador Project. Pat Muller invited Ms. Arnold, in addition to the teen librarians at other HCPL locations, to participate in the Student Ambassador Program which provided training in the best ways to use the services and to train others how to use them.

Using ideas from this training, Ms. Arnold, along with a local high school junior whom she recruited, put together a plan for promoting Credo Homework Help to students. Ms. Arnold began contacting local schools (three middle and four high) to gauge interest in hosting a presentation and/or pizza party. Due to many more snow days than usual and scheduling

conflicts, most of the schools declined. In an effort to reach students regardless of time constraints, Ms. Arnold created an 18-minute instructional DVD compiled from the Credo Reference toolbox videos. One of the DVDs was shared with the librarian at Pocahontas Middle School (900+ students) as a resource to share on the school's closed circuit television system, referred to as Elluminate. Another DVD was given to the librarians at Freeman High School (1,700+ students). A third DVD was sent to Adrienne Minock, Teen Librarian at Twin Hickory Area Library. Mandy created a small poster to display in Henrico County Public Libraries and in middle and high schools.

On February 24, 2014, Pat Muller and Mandy Arnold presented Homework Help to nearly 40 Henrico County Public School librarians. Out of this program, Mandy was able to connect with school librarians who were interested in hosting presentations at their schools.

By March 11, 2014, Ms. Arnold had drafted a Literati Scavenger Hunt, an online quiz that required student participants to access Literati and Credo Homework Help to answer a series of research-based questions. The 15-question survey was promoted on HCPL's Teen Scene blog (hcplteenscene.org) and received 25 responses. One Kindle and one iPod Shuffle (from Twin Hickory's allotted incentives) were given away as scavenger hunt prizes on April 21.

Ms. Arnold was able to incorporate brief Literati and Credo Homework Help demonstrations into other events occurring at the library in March 2014. These three impromptu presentations resulted in 36 middle and high school points of contact. Some of these students were hearing about Literati and Credo Homework Help for the first time. They were impressed by the

simplicity of the search, the straightforward and vetted results, and the useful tools. Credo Homework Help was a big hit as students expressed how nice it would have been to have the help of an online tutor when they were just entering middle school. One Kindle and three \$5 McDonald's gift cards were given as prizes at these presentations, which were provided by Credo Reference.

On April 10 and 11, 2014, Mandy presented to 70 students at Freeman High School. Ms. Arnold gave away goodie bags filled with snacks and informational materials about Literati and Credo Homework Help. At the end of each of the two presentations, she gave away one iPod Shuffle as a door prize. During the evening after the first of these presentations, she saw one young man from earlier that day that was in the library using Homework Help for his Calculus homework. The young man thanked her for coming to show him and his fellow students about the tools, and he explained that the tutor on the other end had really surprised him by helping with a difficult subject, such as Calculus. He commented, "They actually know what they're doing."

On April 28, more than twelve weeks after the Student Ambassador Program began Ms. Arnold and Ms. Minock hosted final pizza party events at their respective libraries. The "Homework Help and Free Pizza" event at Tuckahoe Area Library drew 28 students and parents. Following the presentation, Ms. Arnold conducted a Q & A session and gave away the last of her local prizes, one Kindle and seven \$5 McDonald's gift cards. Once again, participants were impressed by the Literati search and results, the contextual Mind Map feature, and the prospect of free tutoring through Homework Help.

The incentives and party allotments were an effective use of resources offered by Credo Reference. By offering door prizes and food, Ms. Arnold saw a clear increase in interest and participation.

Staffing & Costs

Incentives for door prizes at pizza parties were provided by Credo.

DVDs	\$7.36
Bottled water, snacks, candy	\$87.63
Pizza	\$52.65
<u>Snacks and party supplies</u>	<u>\$17.19</u>
Total	\$164.83

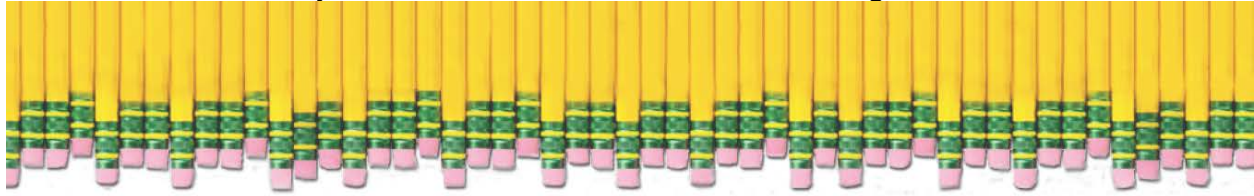
Results

The video demo was a great success. Guiding students to make connections between their school needs and Homework Help's services seemed to work well. Students needed to see and understand how it related to them and that it could be a perk to chat with a tutor anywhere they have internet access. In January 2013, HCPL's online Homework Help usage jumped from four to 574 after the school presentations. These numbers have remained fairly steady, with an average of 50 to 70 students accessing Homework Help each month during the school year. Stats show that the large majority of students are seeking help with math homework. In February 2013, Credo Reference interviewed Ms. Arnold and wrote an article about her

PROMOTING ONLINE HOMEWORK HELP TO TEENS – 2015 VACo Award Entry 6

partnership with schools to get the word out about Credo Homework Help and Literati. Credo Reference shared this article with public libraries throughout Virginia.

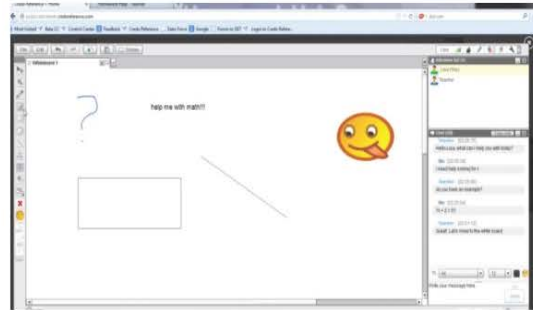
Article written by Credo Reference and shared with Virginia Public Libraries



Homework Help

is a free service provided to you by Literati Public and the State Library of Virginia. State certified teachers offer live tutoring after school and on Saturdays. This service is found on the Literati Public platform and can be used both in the library and at home.

One Virginia librarian embraced the new tool enthusiastically and set out to create several presentations and community outreach programs to help publicize the service. Her outreach efforts exposed Homework Help to hundreds of students in her community and her results were immediate. Before the presentations, the County of Henrico Public Library had only 4 student requests for Homework Help. In the month and a half following Mandy's presentations, that number has grown to 574 and still counting!



QUICK TIPS!

The Literati Public team used Mandy's story to create some quick tips for a successful Homework Help rollout:

1. Attend a Homework Help Training
2. Involve your colleagues. Brainstorm ways your library can both use and promote Homework Help in your community.
3. Develop an outreach plan. Contact local schools, tutors, and enrichment programs – offer to visit and present in person.
4. Contact the Homework Help trainers (training@credoreference.com). They want to help you and have the tools to do so. (And they're super friendly...and witty!) Together with the Homework Help team, discuss the best way to present the product to others.
5. Develop a training presentation that offers context for Homework Help.
6. Finalize details for presentation and create handouts and fliers. (Again, ask the folks at Credo to help!)
7. Be at your best on presentation day. Show up early and make sure everything is working.
8. Pay attention to your attendees during your presentation and be prepared to take questions.
9. Give participants the help documents and fliers that you've already created and tell them how they can contact you (or the trainers at Credo) for additional assistance.

Q&A with Mandy A.

We asked the librarian, Mandy Arnold, Teen Services Librarian from Tuckahoe Area Library in Henrico how she successfully launched Homework Help in her community. We also asked her if we could share her successes with her peers in libraries throughout Virginia and of course, she happily obliged.



Mandy Arnold, Teen Services Librarian, Tuckahoe Area Library pictured in her natural habitat.
(Left to Right) Meaghan G., Camille K., Nadne L., Mandy A., Nathan L.

How were you so successful in getting the word out about Homework Help?

First, I attended Credo Reference's free Homework Help webinar and acquainted myself with the system by trying it out one evening.

Then, I brainstormed with my colleagues from a nearby branch and discussed ways Homework Help would benefit our patrons. We had been considering peer tutoring in the library, but Homework Help turned out to be a more convenient and effective approach to meet the needs of local students.

Next, I developed an outreach plan to educate local students. We have contact information for all of the local middle and high schools we serve. I reached out to the school media specialists, explained to them what Homework Help is, and offered to come to their schools to present on it. I attached Credo's Homework Help FAQ sheet to that first message for the school media specialists to share with teachers. Together we scheduled a live demonstration for hundreds of students.

What did you do once you had the presentation booked?

I started the presentation planning process by contacting the Homework Help representatives. We explored ways to demonstrate in real-time and via a video demo. The video demo turned out to be a great option as the system is turned off during the school day when most presentations would be taking place, and also because it doesn't "bog down" the system.

Then I developed a PowerPoint presentation that featured Homework Help within the context of our local library services and online resources. I ended the presentation focusing on library programs and age-specific booktalks.

And then finalized plans with the school contacts and sent/delivered flyers for each of the students. The flyer included brief instructions for accessing Homework Help through our library's website.

How did you ensure a successful presentation?

The preparation I had already done helped a great deal. All I needed to do was show up early at the schools to set up for F2F and Illuminate presentations. I tested both the video demo and our website to make sure I could project the step-by-step login process.

When I had the students' attention, I instructed them about how Homework Help could benefit them. I asked questions and related their school needs to the Homework Help system and services.

Finally, I allowed the students and teachers to ask questions and referred them to the flyer for help.

How did you feel it went?

The video demo was a great success. Guiding students to make connections between their school needs and Homework Help's services seemed to work well. They needed to see/understand how it related to them and how it could be a perk to chat with a tutor anywhere they have internet access (even in their PJs at home).

Homework Help Quarter Sheet created by Mandy Arnold for school visits

Homework Help

*Henrico County Public Library now offers
Literati Public's FREE online tutoring service!*



What is Homework Help? A free service that pairs students & certified teachers in a virtual classroom to work one on one to solve homework problems, explain lessons, & review information taught at school.

Who can use it? Students in Grades 3 - 12

When is it available? Monday - Thursday, 3pm-9pm & Saturday, 9am-3pm

Who are the tutors? State-Certified Teachers

Which subjects are covered? Reading, Writing & Math

How do I get started?

1. Go to www.henricolibrary.org. Hover over "Online Resources" & then select "Research Databases".
2. Scroll down & open Literati. Log in with your library card.
3. On Literati homepage, click Homework Help tab (right).
4. Enter your first name, grade level, and subject.

Within minutes, you will be paired with a teacher and your free Homework Help session will begin!