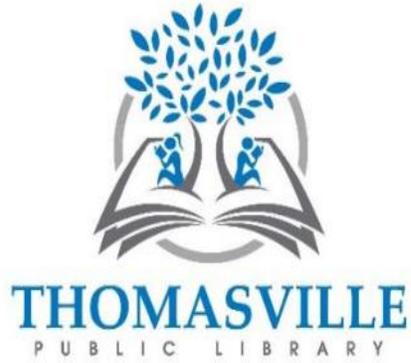


# WHO'S IN CHARGE HERE?

HARNESSING THE POWER OF HOMESCHOOLERS WHILE  
FOSTERING RELEVANCY WITH ALL STUDENTS



**Gina Wilson, MLIS**  
**Thomasville Public Library**  
**Thomasville, Alabama**



ALABAMA



## Busy in 2015:

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**45,663**

**Visitors**

**8,864**

**Official Pop. Served**

**11,587**

**Computer Users**

**15,000**

**Wireless Users**

**40,840**

**Borrowed Items**

**Sq. Ft.:**

**4,404**

**Staff:**

**3.87 FTE**



# Thomasville Public Library

K-12 Pop.: ~2,325

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Public (1,600)  
Private (600)  
Homeschooled (125)

Gina Wilson, Director since 2007. Homeschooler for 10 years prior to becoming a librarian, but very supportive of public and private schools.



# HOMESCHOOLERS LIBRARIES

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**1.77 M Home Educated  
Students in U.S. (2012)**

[nces.ed.gov](http://nces.ed.gov)

[www.time4learning.com](http://www.time4learning.com)

# What's On The Web

- **KY Dept. of Education** [education.ky.gov/federal/fed/pages/home-school.aspx](http://education.ky.gov/federal/fed/pages/home-school.aspx)  
With printable pdf: KY Homeschool Information Packet
- **Homeschool Legal Defense Organization** [hslda.org](http://hslda.org)
- **“Back to Homeschooling at the Library” – cool article NYPL Blog**  
[www.nypl.org/blog/2012/09/04/back-homeschooling-library](http://www.nypl.org/blog/2012/09/04/back-homeschooling-library)
- **Can you homeschool without a computer and internet access?**  
*You can home educate with what you have on hand or can borrow from friends and relatives. You can use the **public library**.* [a2zhomeschooling.com](http://a2zhomeschooling.com)
- **‘Use your local library. Become a regular.’** [homeschoolcentral.com](http://homeschoolcentral.com)

# THE KUDZU EFFECT

**Kudzu: a lush, green vine; if left untended, kudzu will quickly spread to engage and cover every available surface.**



**[tipsfromashton.wordpress.com](http://tipsfromashton.wordpress.com) (image)**

“People have been known to leave home on vacation down here only to return a week later to find cars and other large objects buried under it's lush greenery.”

**([gagirl.com](http://gagirl.com))**

# Developing Positive Perceptions of Home Educators

Homeschoolers have a varied and extensive need for information. Many articles advise them to request and expect much of their local public library. Librarians that are not prepared for such an interactive relationship

can be caught off guard. Initial and ongoing planning and staff training may address the root causes of librarians' negative perceptions in order to give more effective library service to homeschoolers.



NCES.org

1.7 Million  
Homeschooled  
Students

## Problem:

With such a clear affirmation of effective service to home educators, why do some librarians continue to report negative perceptions?

## What Home Educators Want:

- Group tours
- Events during school hrs
- Robust website & social media
- Free meeting space
- Free classes
- Online/phone reference
- Online reservations
- Extended due dates
- Special borrowing privileges
- Interlibrary loans

## Reported Negative Perceptions

- Concerns with excessive use
- Inadequate staffing/funding
- Attempted censorship
- Homeschool Stereotypes
- Negative literature
- Book challenges
- Complaints 'Just To Complain'

[tvillelibrary@gmail.com](mailto:tvillelibrary@gmail.com)

Gina Wilson, MLIS

Thomasville Public Library, Thomasville, Alabama

## Developing Positive Perceptions:

Offer a clear policy to address expectations of homeschoolers.

Evaluate patron needs annually; avoid reactive programming.

Decide how much is fair, what your library can do, and communicate this consistently and courteously.

Offer frequent staff development- include part-timers!

Train staff to expect & embrace robust interactions.

Protect broad mission of public libraries to serve many diverse populations and offer free access to information.

Foster stellar communication skills for public assistance (eye contact, positive body language, neutral questions, assist)

Avoid stereotyping; learn to recognize contentious literature.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Public libraries currently provide substantial and invaluable services to homeschoolers. To improve perceptions of homeschoolers, libraries must conduct proactive, rather than reactive, planning and training. Library staff members should be prepared for robust interaction, and maintain open, positive communication, both verbal & non-verbal. Every patron request is not met with an automatic 'Yes', and librarians should remain mindful of local budget and staff, and the need for services to a broad range of patrons.

# WHAT HOMESCHOOLERS WANT

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Homeschoolers' wants are similar to those of students & parents from public and private school settings.

# WHAT HOMESCHOOLERS WANT: DIGITAL SERVICES

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- **Robust website**
- **Online & phone reference**
- **Online reservations**
- **Information Sharing via Social Media**

# WHAT HOMESCHOOLERS WANT: AT THE LIBRARY FACILITY

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- **Group tours**
- **Events during school hours**
- **Free meeting space**
- **Free classes/workshops**

# WHAT HOMESCHOOLERS WANT: PARENT EDUCATORS

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- **Extended due dates**
- **Special borrowing privileges**
- **Interlibrary loans**

# Librarians Homeschoolers

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**Right? YES! 😊**

# NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF SOME **US** LIBRARIANS

1. Concerns with excessive use
2. Inadequate staffing/funding
3. Attempted censorship; control of the collection & book challenges



Kudzu Effect

# **GREAT** 'PROBLEMS' TO HAVE!

1. A busy library is a relevant library
2. Track usage; advocate for more staff
3. Challenges (free speech) It's the American way. Embrace it!



LET'S  
TALK  
ABOUT  
POSITIVE  
ENGAGEMENT



# LET'S TALK ABOUT POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT



## Improve Engagement:



**a clear & consistent policy**



**staff training**



**balanced approach to programming**

# POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT & POLICY

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- Annual evaluation of services
- Clear policy
- Handle patron requests consistently
- Keep your sense of humor handy



# POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT & PLANNING

---

Avoid Reactive Programming

When In Doubt, 'Think It Out'



"He who fails to plan is planning to fail."



*Winston Churchill*

# BALANCE - POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT

Consider budget  
and staff time

Ask yourself  
'If I do this, can I  
do something  
similar for other  
student groups?'



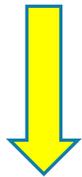
Special events;  
don't cater to  
homeschoolers or  
you will alienate  
others

When in doubt,  
'Think It Out'.

# BALANCE = POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT

Allocate most resources so that all students can access them.

This will allow smaller student groups to receive more services without draining too much of the overall budget.



**\$5000 budget & 1000 staff hours to divide among 2,325 total students, homeschoolers here would only get \$48 & 10 staff hours for proprietary events and services!**

<b>1600 Public</b>	<b>\$3441</b>	<b>688</b>
<b>600 Private</b>	<b>\$888</b>	<b>178</b>
<b>125 Home</b>	<b>\$48</b>	<b>10</b>



# POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT & STAFF DEVELOPMENT



***TRAIN STAFF***

**Include part timers**

**Role play or use real examples**

***TEACH POSITIVE  
COMMUNICATION***

**Smile, eye contact, positive body  
language, neutral questions, assist**

***MENTOR***

**Newer staff members**

# POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT: STAFF DEVELOPMENT



Train staff  
to expect &  
embrace  
robust  
interactions



# POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT: Preparing for Success

**Train staff to expect & embrace robust interactions**

- 1. Set up the reception desk:**
  - Drop off area for returned items.
  - Request slips for reference help
  - pencils, bookmarks.
- 2. Process all check ins together.**
- 3. Process request slips while family browses.**
  - Note info directly on slips & return them.
- 4. Ask everyone to get checkouts ready before approaching the desk.**



**Create a self-check station; train families to check their own items out.**

**Consider issuing a family card w/large check out limit; much easier for family visits and renewals.**

# POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT: STAFF DEVELOPMENT



**Protect the broad mission of public libraries  
to serve a diverse population and  
offer free and equitable access to information.**



**\*Balance services among all student groups**

**\*Plan most group activities after regular school hours**

**\*Foster all students' support & trust**

**\*Gain relevancy!**

# Cooperative Relationships in the Community & with the Library



**Pictured: 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Class- Thomasville Elem. School**

# Students + Libraries = Win-Win



**Library Scrapbook Project  
Volunteers**



**Summer Program Volunteers**



**Facility Maintenance Volunteers**



**Story Hour Volunteers**



**Story Hour Angels**

**Students from public, private, & home settings working together at TPL**

# Most TPL Resources Available to ALL Students

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## FACILITY with Extended Hours

computers, Word, PPT, Excel, Wifi,  
study space, books, eBooks, ILLs, AV

## STAFF HELP

Reference & Computer Assistance

## POLICIES

3 Renewals On Most Items & 35 Book  
Check Out Limit; *must comply w/  
library's guidelines for fair use*

## PROGRAMS & SERVICES

### During 'non' school hours

Book Clubs 3<sup>rd</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>, Teen Read Week  
Events, Seasonal Events, Summer  
Library Programs, Reading Contests

### By Appt.

Volunteer/Community Service Hours  
Library Tours & Workshops

# TPL Services Targeting Specific Subgroups

## Thomasville City Schools

- Multiple copies of titles on required reading list
- Books marked to coordinate with AR Program
- Special events at school facility
- Teachers can suggest & request materials
- Teachers get 'teacher' card w/perks

## Boys & Girls Club

- Library programs at facility
- Special borrowing privileges
- Customized summer program
- Repository for selected books
- Institutional borrowing privileges

## Homeschooled Students

- Resource File: local & state groups; legal info; websites
- Story Hour for 3s & 4s: **vacancies filled by students to 2nd grade**
- Parents get first chance at 'deletions'
- Teen volunteers get limited staff privileges
- Parent educator gets 'teacher' card w/perks

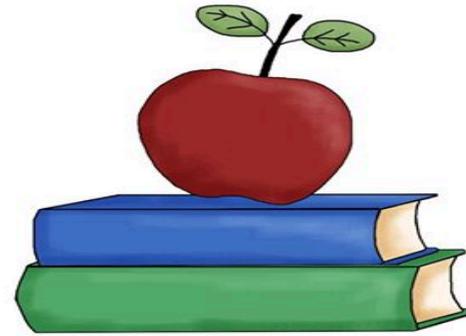
## Thomasville PL perks for teachers: public, private, home

We created new patron class **'Teachers'**

- \*3 days grace
- \*fine cap
- \*Up to 5 renewals on **most** items
- \*Free card (inc. adjacent counties)

### Items **NOT** eligible for renewal

- \*On hold to another patron
- \*On the school's required reading list



Who  
qualifies?  
All teachers  
in Clarke  
County and  
adjacent



Thomasville Public  
Library  
is excited to  
announce  
**FREE LIBRARY**  
Cards for  
**TEACHERS**  
(Effective 1/21/2016)

Teacher Perks:

- . 3-day Extended Over dues
- . Special Check Out dates
- . Fine Cap \$3





**Gina Wilson, MLIS**  
**Thomasville Public Library**  
**Thomasville, Alabama**

Q & A

[TvilleLibrary@gmail.com](mailto:TvilleLibrary@gmail.com)



[ThomasvillePublicLibrary.org](http://ThomasvillePublicLibrary.org)

# Good news!

On 1/20/16 Mayor Sheldon Day of Thomasville, AL, announced a \$3.5M building project to build a new public library and career readiness center.



Thomasville Public Library  
Thomasville, Alabama

**donofro**  
architecture + planning + eco/energy + interiors  
[www.donofro.com](http://www.donofro.com)