

page TURNERS

Nurturing a love of reading amongst tech-savvy but struggling teens might seem like a tall order – yet it's both achievable and important, says **Susie Musgrove**...



Engaging children and young people in reading for pleasure is high on the national agenda. In its publication, *Encouraging reading for pleasure* (June 2012), the Department for Education states:

“The Government is committed to improving literacy skills for all pupils. A key part of this commitment is promoting the importance of reading for pleasure. We want teachers... to support children to enjoy reading and enable them to read a wide range of good quality literature.”

Ofsted has also highlighted the importance of developing a whole-school reading culture in its latest report on secondary schools, and the latest PIRLS survey of 325,000 students

across 49 countries found that there is a strong correlation between how much children enjoy reading and their attitudes towards it, and their levels of achievement in literacy.

So, it seems that we are all agreed that we should be encouraging the young people in our care to develop a love of reading. However, this is a task that appears to become more difficult to achieve in the secondary environment; the National Literacy Trust's 2011 survey of 21,000 children and young people found that not only do Key Stage 3 and 4 students enjoy reading significantly less than Key Stage 2 pupils, they are also much less likely to rate themselves as good readers, or to have positive attitudes towards reading.

Of course this issue is not a new one – NLT research



THRILL SEEKERS

PACKED FULL OF FANTASTIC COLOUR ILLUSTRATIONS, WITH STORYLINES BASED AROUND REAL LIFE SITUATIONS AND ROLLER COASTER ADVENTURES, THE NEW SERIES FROM BADGER LEARNING – THRILLS AND SPILLS – IS SURE TO HOLD THE ATTENTION OF AND ENGAGE EVEN THE MOST RELUCTANT OF READERS. (READING AGE 7.5-8, INTEREST AGE 8-14, BADGERLEARNING.CO.UK)



reports in 2005, 2009 and 2010 all found the same pattern – but it is still as important as ever to do as much as we can to engage our reluctant teenage readers, increasing their confidence and making them see the value and relevance of reading in their lives.

Is there a magic formula, a reading Holy Grail, which will transform all your students into bookworms? The answer to that remains unknown. However you can certainly follow a few common principles: getting the whole staff team on board; modelling positive reading behaviours; creating eye-catching displays; making links with students' families; developing and maintaining an exciting calendar of reading events; and importantly, talking to students themselves to find out about their interests, then teaching them strategies for choosing the right reading material to suit them.

To give you some inspiration, National Literacy Trust network members have been sharing what has helped them to embed a reading culture in school and build students' confidence. From the introduction of eReaders to jumping on the Hunger Games bandwagon, there are plenty of ideas that you can take away and build on to hook your students in...

Pam Plowman, Guilsborough School Academy Trust and Specialist Technology College

“One of the most surprisingly successful interventions in my Paired Reading initiative is the inclusion of Kindles for my reluctant readers. They have been a regular workhorse for the last academic year, generating a waiting list for use. The Kindles overcome so many issues with reluctant readers – an example could be the fact that no-one else in the room can tell what you are reading, whether difficult, easy or even a picture book. This element gives the reader privacy, but a sort of street cred, too, as he or she is reading electronically. They are also useful for visually impaired students, owing to the opportunity to raise the font to a readable size and not have massive page sizes in hard copy material.”

Peter Ratcliffe, Longdean School

“We’ve tried to capitalise on the popularity of *The Hunger Games* through displays around the school, as well as encouraging classes to have a go at the online games on

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thehungergames.co.uk through the interactive whiteboard during tutor time. An awful lot of students are reading the books – many students preface their comments with ‘I don’t really read, but...’. In addition, teachers have been encouraged to put up displays in their classrooms of books that have meant a lot to them, which is a great way to start conversations about reading, particularly with boys, who can sometimes be pleasantly surprised by what they see!”

Barbara Band, The Emmbrook School

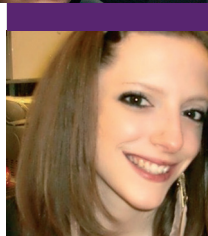
“Many students feel that unless it is a fiction book, it doesn’t count as ‘reading’ thus they label themselves as ‘non-readers.’ In order to increase their confidence, I use First News with the whole class. They each have a newspaper to browse for about 10 – 15 minutes and then share something interesting they’ve found with the rest of the group. This usually leads to further discussions and many of them are surprised at how interesting they find the newspaper. You can also do this activity using a range of magazines. When I do this activity, I talk about different types of reading, how each requires a different skill, and how they are all valid and necessary.”

Rosalind Buckland, Ripley St Thomas High School

“Convincing the most reluctant readers of the need to read is always a challenge. One way that we have sought to address this is through the tried and trusted use of role models.

We have produced short ‘Need to Read’ videos, which show pupils (predominantly boys and especially those who are not convinced of the merits of reading) conducting interviews with adults from a range of professions, in particular professions that these pupils have a realistic expectation of aspiring towards. The focus of the short questions used during the interviews, is how reading is used and needed in the context of these ‘real’ jobs, e.g. chef, taxi driver, football player, policeman, paramedic and even a farmer.

The videos are used for development, in class, assembly and also shared with the wider community on the school website.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

SUSIE MUSGROVE IS SCHOOLS OFFICER AT THE NATIONAL LITERACY TRUST. THE NATIONAL LITERACY TRUST NETWORK PROVIDES RESOURCES, INSPIRATION AND SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS. FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BECOMING A MEMBER AT LITERACYTRUST.ORG.UK/SCHOOLS



From the boys’ perspective, these videos are both challenging and empowering and the interviews clearly have a real impact on their attitudes towards the need to read.”

Sue Bastone, Licensed Victuallers’ School

“At LVS, we have a range

of strategies to encourage a reading culture and engage our students. We took on Accelerated Reader two years ago and, whilst I know there is much controversy over this programme, it has served as a very useful tool to identify those students who are not engaged with reading. We use AR in conjunction with School Librarian of the Year Adam Lancaster’s ‘Showing Impact’, which we feel gives us the qualitative evidence we need to support the quantitative data we get from AR. Using these methods, we identify students who need mentoring and have set up a buddy scheme with sixth form students which has had a tremendous impact. Lower school students have been persuading the sixth form students to buy the books they recommend!”

Tracy Hall, Saltley School

“It’s all about communication: asking the right questions, taking the time to listen, remembering our own experiences. You may say, ‘What questions?’ Well for me it’s, what do you like to watch on telly? What are your hobbies and interests? Do your parents or relatives read at home? Tell me about yourself. As book lovers, from simple conversations we can suggest many great titles.

I myself try and read as much children’s fiction as possible as I can be honest with my opinion and relay that to my young audience. Children will engage on a one to one basis if the common interest and discussion is honest and valuable. Many pupils will become totally engrossed in a discussion if the person they are talking to shows the same enthusiasm for the text. Just reading and talking about a great story can bring down barriers and gain a common interest. From this interest good relationships can be built and progress can be made.”