

# Case study

## At the top of their game

Irfan Master, project manager for Reading The Game, tells us about an exciting project involving football clubs, schools and libraries.

Take five young people from Years 7 to 11 from five different schools, sprinkle a bit of storytelling dust, give them a captive audience and what do you get? Reading Champions, of course. Young leaders, who are motivated to perform, interested in reading and keen to tell tales both tall and small.

In March 2008, the National Literacy Trust's initiative Reading The Game (RTG) in partnership with Youth Sports Trust (YST) developed and launched an exciting pilot project called Reading Champions - Young Leaders, working with local schools in Sandwell, Brentford and Brent. Partnerships were also developed with two football clubs local to the schools, West Bromwich Albion FC and Brentford FC.

On the training day held at Brentford FC, professional storyteller Pat Ryan trained the young people in the art of storytelling. Overall, the young people had a great time and were natural performers. Staff from the community education team at Brentford FC were also kind enough to take the entire group on a ground tour, including a penalty shoot out on the hallowed turf of Griffin Park.

That was just the first leg. Next, was a specially organised day where they told stories in the public library to local school children, mainly Years 3, 4 and 5. The primary school children were in awe as they sat down for the session. To them, these young people were the embodiment of cool. They had the trainers, the hair style they weren't allowed to have and the swagger they hadn't yet perfected. And they were here in a library, telling stories, telling them reading was cool.

The young people performed to a packed house. They told wonderful riddles, executed difficult action rhymes with their own variations and kept the audience hanging on their every word. Teachers, librarians, storytellers and members of the public were all spellbound. The day was a great success and the young people were a credit to their schools. Natural performers. Role models. Cool cats. Reading Champions.

But the story doesn't end there. The goal behind the day in the library was to instil the young people with confidence so they could go back to their respective schools and contribute to embedding storytelling and the promotion of reading into their school literacy programmes in a number of different ways. To date, the majority of the young people have been visiting local feeder primaries and telling stories to packed houses. They've also been telling stories to their peers in assemblies and in the playground. Both football clubs have also been impressed by the commitment of the young people and have got them involved in some of the literacy work they do in local schools. Not surprisingly, they weren't the only ones impressed:

"Wow, they're really good! I'll put my feet up then, shall I?" Tony Dallas, storyteller at a Young Leaders/Reading Champions day in Heston library.

