



Reading Connects

Join the queue

There have been pupils queuing up outside the library at Millbrook Combined School in Buckinghamshire ever since the Library Skills Award scheme was set up. Vanessa Carver, Librarian, explains how the initiative works.









Q How did the idea of the Library Skills Award come about?

A Within a few weeks of starting my job at Millbrook I realised that almost all the pupils in the school thought that the arrangement of the books in the library was random. So I set out to change that by introducing a Library Skills Award scheme for years three to six.

Q What skills do the pupils have to accomplish to gain the award?

A Pupils have a tick list of six skills:

Library Skills		✓
	I understand how fiction is arranged in a library	
We discuss the definition of 'fiction' and I elicit some examples. We then tour the fiction section of the library from A to Z, picking out a few anomalies like double barrelled names. Pupils like the task where I ask them to find where a book written by them would be placed. To help those struggling with the alphabet I incorporate fun alphabet sequencing exercises. They enjoy this skill as it is very active.		
	I found five fiction books in the library using title and author	
I give each pupil a list of five fiction books with title and full name of author. Working individually, pupils collect all five books. They love this because they can turn it into a race and is a bit like a treasure hunt!		

	I understand how non-fiction books are arranged in a library	
<p>We look at a copy of the Dewey guide and see how every subject is allocated a number and non-fiction books are arranged in Dewey code numerical order. We then tour the non-fiction section of the library. Many pupils do not notice that non-fiction books are arranged in subjects and have numbers. I make it fun by inviting the children to shout out which subjects they can see.</p>		
	I found five non-fiction books using my understanding of the Dewey Code system	
<p>Each pupil has a list of five non-fiction books marked with title and author but NOT the Dewey code. Pupils work out the Dewey code using the Dewey book. They may head straight for the fiction section, looking for the authors name but once back on track, they enjoy this task despite it being a bit more challenging.</p>		
	I can use the enquiry facility on the Junior Librarian system to search for a book I would like to read	
<p>We study the enquiry section on the Junior Librarian System. I give the example of a friend who wants to find a book he loves but cannot remember the name or author. All he can remember is it involves a bat! By typing in 'bat' on the enquiry screen, all books that include the word 'bat' in the title, author's name or subject are listed. The children can then see a picture of the cover and search. When I use this example they find <i>The Great Ghost Rescue</i> by Eva Ibbotson, which has bats on the cover. We spend about 10 minutes on this activity. The pupils like this as it is investigative and involves the computer.</p>		
	I can use the library resources to find information for a project or answers to my questions	
<p>I explain how to use a dictionary, encyclopaedia and thesaurus. Pupils then do three tasks for each. For example, an encyclopaedia task mind be to find out a) the population of China b) what kangaroos eat c) when Henry VIII was born. Again, no writing is involved and the children like to see who can find the answers the quickest.</p>		

Q How long does it take to get the award?

A An average of four or five lunchtimes, half an hour each. But if a pupil needs longer, it's no problem.

Q Do they get a reward?

A Once they have completed all six skills pupils receive a badge, a round of applause and their name is put on the Library Skills board, which they love. They also receive their certificate in Achievement Assembly and another round of applause.



Library skills award board displays pupils' names



Library Skills Award badge

Q What happens once they achieve their award?

A They are allowed to use the Junior Librarian computer programme to find books. They can also write book reviews and be a champion for other pupils, helping them navigate the library. When they reach year six, pupils can become year six librarians.

Q How popular is it?

A We have been amazed by the pupils' enthusiasm. I have queues outside the library at lunchtime and regularly have pupils stopping me in the corridor saying, "When is it my turn?". One year four pupil said, "I want to be a librarian when I leave school and now I know what to do". Another said, "Library Skills Award was great fun, I want to do it again". The boys are as motivated as the girls. The problem is finding the time to fit it all in.



Proud owner of a Library Skills Award badge, Annah, year four

Q Why do you think pupils love it so much?

A The sessions involve no writing whatsoever and it is all very active, which is really important. They love using the computer and the reference books, the activities bring out their competitiveness and many treat each activity as a race. They find the sessions a lot of fun. They take a lot of pride in their badges and seeing their name on the progress board. When we asked the children in year two what they were most looking forward to when they moved up to year three, one of the most common answers was, doing their Library Skills Award.

Q What are the benefits of gaining the award?

A Pupils not only develop a better understanding of the school library arrangement, they can also transfer this knowledge to public libraries and secondary school. They can make better choices of books to take home as they have a good understanding of what is available and where to look. This, in turn, has raised the profile of the library and reading in general.

Q Any plans for the future?

A We are hoping to develop an Advanced Library Skills Award. I'm pretty sure there will be queues for that too!