



Premier League challenge

Football is used to incentivise students to read for fun at Lodge Park Technology College, Northamptonshire. Wendy McCabe, Library Manager at the College explains all.

As a Reading Champions school, I was interested in developing a project that would both motivate year seven boys, in particular reluctant readers, to enjoy reading for pleasure. So a team reading challenge based on football was the perfect idea.

I initially visited all of the year seven tutor groups to explain the idea of the challenge and to see how much interest there was. I was pleasantly surprised at the huge positive response that I got from the students who were very keen to take part.



Let's get reading!



The champion team: Matthew, Noel, Daniel and Josh

in the library as the students discovered which team they would be playing for.

We had 17 teams of four “players” with one member nominated as team captain. Each team represented a Premier League team. Initially, we invited the teams to the library to attend a live draw to find out which Premier League team they would be representing. The captains from each team had to pick a numbered ball from a bag. Each number represented a different team from the Premier League. It was very exciting and there was a real buzz

Once the teams had been chosen, the players picked a book or magazine to take away to read. For every book read, the students scored a goal for their team and could then put a sticker next to their name on the league table, displayed in the library. A review sheet about the book had to be filled in before they could score their goal and get their sticker. The aim was to get as

many “goals” as possible.

A transfer window was later opened to allow players to move teams or recruit new players. The challenge continued for five months, the end coinciding with the end of the real Premier League. Over 300 books were read by the students during the challenge. Sunderland were crowned the League Champions and were presented with a trophy during assembly. Each team member also received a sports voucher and book tokens.

I had lots of positive comments from the students about how much they enjoyed the challenge. Josh said, “It wasn’t boring because it was about football and not just reading.” Noel added, “It was great being able to work together as a team and we encouraged each other to keep on reading...If we read a book that we had enjoyed we could recommend it to each other”. Daniel said, “I liked checking the League table to see how we were doing”. The League Table was a real talking point, not just for those taking part. Matthew, team captain said, “The live draw was cool and it was exciting finding out which team we would be playing for. I felt really proud being the captain of the team and lifting the trophy.”

Many of the boys were pleasantly surprised to discover the variety of reading materials available and were pleased to learn that magazines like ‘Four Four Two’ also counted towards goals scored for their team. It was extremely rewarding to see the boys who would not normally set foot in the library, suddenly become familiar faces and more confident readers.

I will definitely repeat the challenge with next year’s year seven students. Next time I will have five players in a team, which will create the opportunity for the students to play five a-side matches during the challenge to gain extra goals for their team. We could even have a final play off between the top two teams, to decide the overall champions.

For next year, I intend to try to get some sponsorship from local, sports related businesses to contribute to the prizes at the end of the challenge. I would like to look at the possibility of recruiting a sporting personality to present the trophy to the champions. The possibilities are endless, I cannot wait for next year.

See the ‘how to’ guide below:

	Guide to setting up a “Premier League Challenge”
1	Visit all year seven classes to explain the challenge and gauge interest.
2	Students organise themselves into teams of five and nominate one team member as Captain.
3	Hold a live draw to pick team names. You could use numbered balls, with each number representing a team name, and get the Captains to pick a ball.
4	Each player chooses a book or magazine to read and writes a review on it.
5	Create a ‘League Table’ with all the team names listed and display in the library.
6	For every book/magazine read and review written, the student gets a sticker to put next to their team name on the ‘League Table’. Each sticker represent one “goal”.
7	Players could play five a-side football matches during the challenge to gain extra goals for their team.
8	At the end of the challenge the two teams with the most stickers (goals) could have a final play-off match to decide which team is the overall champion team.