



Steering the ship

Rowena White, Reading Connects contact for Fulford School in York explains why student participation in setting up their Reading Champions scheme is at the heart of its success.



The idea of running Reading Champions at Fulford was to solve the problem we had with our Book Review Club, which was oversubscribed. The club had been running for three years and reviewed books supplied by Harrogate Book Club for the Red House Children's Book Award. Membership had to be limited because we did not have enough books to review. There was a demand for a second more informal book club aimed

at the less able reader. Having talked to our pupils we asked a panel of eight boys to form a steering group. The group met on several occasions to discuss how the new club should be run. We based the club on the Reading Champions framework of three levels – bronze, silver and gold. At the students' request, we also added a fourth level – platinum. The criteria, set by the students, were as follows:

Bronze:

- Read five books and write two book reviews on Access-It, the resource centre database.
- Design a word search

Silver:

- Read eight books and write five reviews on Access-It
- Prepare an activity for the Book Review Club/Reading Champions club
- Design a photographic poster/display promoting books

Gold:

- Read 15 books and review seven books on Access-IT

- Design a webpage or electronic map of the resource centre
- Organise a book-related event as part of a team (maximum four)

Each member of the club was issued with a target card and goody bag consisting of special pens, bookmarks, badges and chocolate. Members would be free to choose their books but only two choices could be from our comic book collection and only for bronze level. Activities would be aimed at boys but the club would still be open to girls.



We planned to launch the club with a 'guess who' competition, photographing male members of staff hiding behind their favourite book. The Reading Champions WWE competition added another initiative with which we could promote the club. This proved very popular, particularly with the more reluctant readers, and our first five champions were students who would not usually choose reading as their favourite pastime! The steering group decided to meet on a fortnightly basis, with one meeting entirely devoted to looking at target cards and writing reviews. A book-related activity was organised at the end of each month.

Membership has fluctuated since we started, with several members choosing to leave the club once they attained their bronze level. At the highest point we had over 40, members and nearing the end of the summer term we had a committed membership of 25.

We market the Reading Champions club through our internal e-mail, VLE, library skills classes and on the school's website. We have a web page dedicated to the club which is constantly updated by Alastair, one of our sixth formers. Alastair also e-mails every member before each meeting.



We endeavour to make the club relaxed and enjoyable. My husband and I are constantly trailing the chocolate counter for bargains to give as prizes. Indeed our local Co-op lets me know of any offers coming up, so really Reading Champions has

inspired support from people from diverse walks of life! We ensure all activities are book-related and activities have included book bingo, book beetle, general knowledge quiz, music quiz, code breaking, 'Who wants to be a Book Millionaire', 'Book Deal or No Deal', 'Eggheads', treasure hunts around the resource centre, and the odd end-of-term party.

There is no doubt that the scheme has helped reluctant readers. Jack and Mike, both big fans of WWE, joined Reading Champions so they could enter the WWE

competition for which they won their bronze awards. Both boys continued to achieve silver awards.

The more competent readers have benefited from taking on leadership and buddying roles. Chris, Ben, Tom and Elliot, whose parents had previously expressed their concerns about their relationship with their peers, now take on leadership roles and regularly run meetings. I have tried to stay in the background and provide support, ideas and chocolate, rather than running the club. The real success of the club is down to the students who front it, three sixth form students: Paul, Clara and Alastair.

We plan to run the club again next year but will be meeting weekly and setting up a formal buddying scheme where experienced members will mentor the new Year 7 members. By implementing such a scheme, we hope to encourage more students to stay and undertake the silver level award.



We are also trying to get families on board the reading wagon. In September we plan to introduce Read On, a reading club for all the family, and we are especially keen to get dads involved. One of our maths teachers has already agreed to spearhead the campaign with his family. The idea of the club is to read or view six items from our stock and together write a review for Access-IT. We plan to open the resource centre in the evenings so that families can choose their items together.

I am very fortunate at Fulford School. I am never short of help from our students which enables my staff and me to spend time on extra curricular activities to promote reading throughout the school. An ordinary state secondary school with extraordinary students!