

Case Study: Meena Vyas, Librarian and Learning Resources Centre Manager, Sir Jonathan North College, Leicester

Learning and Relaxing via Reading for Pleasure

Meena Vyas is the Librarian at Sir Jonathan North College and one of her aims is to motivate and inspire children to read for pleasure, and make them lifelong readers. To achieve this she works very closely with other curriculum teams within the school, as many studies have shown the positive impact of cross-curricular reading.

In doing this she tries to provide as many different access points and formats as possible; so it can be a fiction book, non-fiction book, graphic novel, newspaper, magazine, a DVD of a book made into movie, a talking book or web access to free reading resources which students can read online or via downloading such eBooks from the local Leicester city libraries.

By participating in various reading challenge programmes the Library develops a love for reading for pleasure and learning in students that can have a huge impact on their understanding of the world, their wellbeing and their educational attainment across all curriculum areas.

Reading programmes have included Readathon, BookBuzz, Leicester's Reading Rampage, DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) plus the various reading challenges offered by Leicestershire County Council's Creative Learning Services. The Library also encourage students to follow the Summer Reading Scheme run by The Reading Agency and Leicester City Libraries. Once a year, the Creative Learning Services are invited to give book talks on the latest titles on offer and so keep the momentum of reading on-going; the Library's borrowed motto is 'Every little helps' to nurture a love for reading!

The power of words can change lives – they can be painful or give joy so the Library encourages students to appreciate this via the word of the month. This activity encourages them to find the meaning of a word and, hopefully by learning, this they will be able to use a dictionary, internet,

thesaurus or even an encyclopaedia and incorporate these words in their day-to-day lessons.

The Library also aims to inspire students to read the books on offer via student bulletins, displays, book talks in Library lessons, competitions, book clubs, and lunchtime events, with incentives like chocolate bars and free books as prizes for completing certain tasks or participating in events or competitions.

For students who arrive at the college and are not able to read or write fluently in English, resources are provided in either dual language or their first language to help them. Meena works closely with the Skills4Learning team and SENCO to provide resources at the appropriate level e.g. dyslexic-friendly resources or large print for the visually challenged. This year she is involved in a monthly Reading & Maths Café whereby the school are working with student and their parents on various tasks to improve both their reading skills and their knowledge in Maths.

The Library has taken part in 9 for 9 and 10 for 10 Book Challenges to encourage older readers, as evidence shows there is quite a drop-off rate in terms of reading for pleasure between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Speakers and authors are invited to talk about an issue covered in one of the books. For example, inspired by the book *Sophie Someone* by Hayley Long, Nirmala Bhojani and Sandra Pollack spoke to students about empowering women. Nirmala Bhojani is a Life-coaching & Management speaker and organiser of Women of the World Awards, Leicester. Sandra Pollack is a multi-award winner and owner of Open Mind Coaching, UK, who sponsor EMWA – East Midlands Women's Awards.

As the Library participates in the Year 7 BookTrust BookBuzz programme as well as the 7 for 7 Book Challenge, these two initiatives were combined and all Year 7s encouraged to sign up and undertake the challenge between October to March.

Between the BookBuzz and 7 for 7 programmes, there were 20 titles, and each time a student read one of the listed books and completed the accompanying quiz, they received a small prize. One of the books in the 7 for 7 challenge was *The Girl who Drank the Moon* by Kelly Barnhill, a Haiku poetry book that tied in with National Poetry Day in October. A visit by Shruti Chauhan, a 2018 Saboteur winner for the Best Spoken Word Poet awarded by The Arts Council, England, was also arranged. At the end of the challenge in March, all participating students were invited to a party to celebrate their reading and received a certificate.

Step Reading certificates, part of the Wider Reading Scheme, are also provided in weekly Library lessons. This scheme encourages students to explore various fiction genres and authors as well as reading non-fiction such as poetry and completing a Shakespeare project. The Library gives students a voice via the book suggestions box plus Library Clubs such as Fiction Book Doctors and Non-fiction Book Boosters. Meena also has a LRC committee which meets once each term.

The Library endeavours to be inclusive to all students regardless of their background and circumstances, and to ensure that a range of diverse and appropriate books are available for all students, reflecting their own backgrounds and experiences. One of the things it offers is a free book for all year 7s via the BookBuzz programme run by BookTrust; the cost is split between Library and the English Faculty.

All of this supports the school's mission statement, outcomes to provide the best education and learning and which, ultimately, has an impact on overall GCSE exam grades. References for evidence include:

- https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/284286/reading_for_pleasure.pdf
- <https://readingagency.org.uk/news/blog/reading-for-pleasure-in-schools.html>
- Kennedy, Rebecca and Bearne, Eve (2009) 'Summer Reading Challenge 2009: Impact research report'. The United Kingdom Literacy Association/The Reading Agency.

Statistics of students attending events, or participating in competitions, library clubs, etc. (open to all years 7 – 11) are kept. In 2017, 30 students across all year groups participated in Summer Reading Challenge. In 2018 32 students participated.

In academic year 2014-2015, Meena introduced library lunchtime events, activities and competitions based around local, national and international issues which were either linked to the curriculum e.g. British Science week, Remembrance/Poppy Day, linked to learning for leisure and pleasure e.g. BookBuzz design a book cover competition, or crafts based around a theme such as Christmas, Diwali, Ramadan or Chinese New Year.

The statistics of students participating in these various programmes shows that they are becoming ever more popular:

In academic Year 2014-2015 - 106 participated

In academic year 2015-2016 – 334 participated

In academic year 2016-2017 – 534 participated

In academic year 2017 – 2018 – 716 participated

The impact of this has been that students have won national competitions or been runners-up, have been invited to perform and received prizes, and have had their self-confidence increased as well as being a role model for others in the school.

- In 2016 Sir Jonathan North School took part for the first time in the Kidz Lit quiz and won the East Midlands heat.
- In 2016 two of the student's poems written for Holocaust Memorial Day were selected and the students invited to perform their poems at the De Montfort University, Leicester.
- In 2017 a student won a class visit for the National Harry Potter Competition to design an alternative professor.
- In 2017 a student's BookBuzz alternative book cover was in the top 50 and on the gallery - www.booktrust.org.uk/news-and-features/features/2017/february/bookbuzz-design-a-book-cover-2017-winner-and-runners-up/

- In 2017 a student was a finalist in a snap poetry competition organised by Staffordshire Snap on the theme of *'Nighttime'* and was invited to perform her poetry.
- In 2017 a student won a monologue competition set by the authors Perdita and Honor Cargill, winning a free visit from them.
- In 2017 our book trailer reviews have been showcased at the Reading Rampage Celebration Event.
- In 2018 students were runners-up in the Harry Potter competition for the best display on the theme of *'Creatures in the Classroom Competition'*.

Tips:

1. Do not be afraid to enlist help from other faculties in the school; try to work on projects together.
2. Advertise and market your event, activity, visitors, etc. as much as you can via library lessons, student bulletins, staff, displays, social media and parent newsletters.
3. You will face some setbacks. Not all students will take interest in reading or participate in Library events. It can be disheartening at times but take it in stride and do your best to motivate and engage them in your projects.