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Tips and tools from your school library

LOW HANGING FRUIT

How to Make Students Fall in Love with Reading

By Jeannie Standal

The best kept secret for encouraging kids to read is simple and free: give students time to read what they want to read. Adults who are fans of points, levels, and quizzes might be throwing this article away right now, but there is a substantial body of research that shows no difference in reading gains between students who read according to levels, and students who read what they like. Some studies even show better results for long term reading habits for those students who are allowed to self-select their reading material. Although this information is specifically about recreational reading, this approach will help improve students' required reading, too.

But students need a little structure, right? Enter the Reading Challenge, or Book Bingo, or any other reading games and activities that can help kids pick titles. We could be bias, but who doesn't like a reading challenge with wacky categories that are fun to check off? Here are a few ideas:

- Tap into students' other interests like sports, music, dance, video games, camping, dinosaurs, movie characters, and more with categories like: a book that is also a movie; or a book featuring your favorite hobby; or a book that takes place on planes, trains, or autos.
- Make up categories to read in different situations: listen to a book on your way to school, read a book in a park, read in a tree, read on a swing, read upside down. This type of challenge is especially great for kids who read slowly or who enjoy Guinness Book of World Record style books.
- Target those times when people used to read, but now might be on their devices: read a book while sipping your favorite beverage, while in a waiting room, before lights out, on the bus.
- Play genre or format bingo and let students pick books that make bingo by reading outside their usual genre for format: read a sci-fi story; read a fantasy novel; read a graphic novel; listen to an audiobook; or read a romance (it is February, after all).
- Rather than trinkets or pizza, reward reading with more self-selected reading time and/or free books.



Happy Readers Valentine's Day!

LINKS TO MORE LEARNING



Ultimate Book Nerd

This program, put on by in various incarnations in libraries and schools throughout the state, issues the challenge to read 50 books—one each in 50 assigned categories—in a year in order to claim the coveted title of Ultimate Book Nerd! There's a set of categories for teens and adults, and one for kids aged 12 and under. Audiobooks, e-books, and graphic novels all count. And, while this particular challenge is specific to Boise Public, there's nothing stopping you from implementing it in your own classroom, with categories and prizes of your choosing! You can also use BPL's categories, recommended titles, and printable logs and other ideas for tracking progress. There's also a mailing list and a Facebook group. Check it out and encourage your students to join the illustrious ranks of the Ultimate Book Nerds in 2022! <https://www.boisepubliclibrary.org/programs-services/booknerd/>

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS



Speed dating — books!

What could be a more appropriate classroom activity for Valentine's Day than speed dating — books? This can serve multiple purposes: helping students get to know each other better, become acquainted with a variety of genres, and, of course, find their next true book love! And it can be done on the cheap! For more information and inspiration, check out [this blog post](#), and take note—your school librarian is an invaluable resource!

DIGITAL TOOLS



Novelist K—8 Plus

Regular Low Hanging Fruit readers—we know you're out there!—might notice this fabulous readers' advisory database gets plugged a lot, and that's because it's so great! What better way to court K—8 readers than with a fun, colorful, comprehensive resource that takes their interests into account (title, author, series, topic, tone, writing style, pace, and so much more!) to help them find their next great read? Find it here:

<https://lili.org/dbs/novelist-plus-k-8/>.



