

Got, got, NEED!

How we've jumped on the trading card trend to boost reading in our school

JOHN ROWE

very teacher and parent knows that rewards are one of the simplest way to motivate children. They can encourage students to learn and can also reinforce positive behaviours. While I'd like to think that reading should be its own reward, it's undeniable that some children need an extra incentive to develop good habits and eventually choose to read for pleasure. Alongside my deputy head, Jack Pittaway, we've recently launched a new project in my school after studying Chinese research on the impact of children's reward systems. The research found that traditional rewards – like stars and stamps – are often valued less by children. Instead, it's been proven that you can achieve more positive outcomes by rewarding students with things that continue to have a value after they've been earned.

This idea led to us devising our own trading card game system called Character Clash. The more children push themselves with their reading choices, the more

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Our end-of-KS2 reading outcomes have been consistently above national averages for the last few years, both in terms of attainment and progress. We're looking to build on this to ensure children do as well as they can by rewarding them for reading more and developing a lifelong love of books. Since we launched the project last month, we've already noticed a sharp increase in the number of children completing quizzes on the books they've read. Boys in particular have shown considerable improvement in their levels of engagement with reading and now equal the girls in terms of completing quizzes – a gap we've been keen to address for a while. Interestingly, the research that our project was based on also reported positive outcomes for boys. Like many schools, despite our best efforts, engaging boys in reading was often hard to achieve. However, it seems that the trading cards and will hopefully help our boys to develop good reading habits.

We plan to review the impact of our new scheme at the end of the summer term, but if what's needed to help children develop confidence and acquire a lifelong reading bug is handing out a few cards, I certainly think it's worth it. **TP**

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