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BEYOND BOOK JACKETS: CREATIVE BULLETIN BOARDS TO ENCOURAGE READING

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The use of bulletin boards by teachers and librarians for the purpose of motivating students to read is a time-honored and widespread practice. The wisdom of this convention is that the jackets of books displayed on a bulletin board will encourage students to seek out and read the books depicted by the display. Examples of this approach, which can be seen in nearly every North American school and library, owe their effectiveness to the way the book jackets project images of activities that engage young people's interest.

By using techniques that employ these motivating factors in addition to student interest, teachers and librarians can create many new types of bulletin boards which also effectively encourage reading. The additional motivational elements are self-concept, attitude toward reading, and peer influence. The rationale and application of each factor is illustrated through three general bulletin board types.

Interactive Bulletin Boards

The links between positive self-concept and increased motivation to read, and suggestions for improving self-concept through reading, have been described often in the professional literature. Fredericks (1982) included self-concept as an important factor in reading because it helps provide the desire and a will to read. Alexander and Filler (1979) stressed the importance of feedback over a period of time in developing the kind of self-concept which has a positive influence on students' reading. Quick (1973) has explained how success and achievement are related to self-concept development and reading improvement. To the many lists of suggestions for helping students develop and maintain positive self-concept, interactive bulletin boards should be added.

Bulletin boards for which students' reading behaviors over a period of time are accompanied by changes in the display may be called interactive. An example is Color Your Life With Books. The display consists of a collection of crayon boxes each bearing the name of a student, and a category marked "key", which shows different cutout and colored crayons for different book categories (red for romance, blue for biography, etc.). When students finish reading a book, they write the name of the book on an appropriately colored crayon and put it in their crayon box.

A variation of this type of bulletin board is Reading Opens Many Doors, a display consisting of cutout doors, each corresponding to a different book category. Students read books, they write the name of their book and their own name inside the appropriate door, or make a new door when a new category is needed.

Interactive bulletin boards contribute to developing positive student self-concept in several ways. First, student names are displayed on the bulletin board, promoting the students' sense of belonging in the class. Second, students' names are displayed in a positive way, i.e., in association with books. Additionally, as the students finish books and interact with the display, the bulletin board provides constant feedback related to the students' achievement.

Integrative Bulletin Boards

Displays in which books and reading are integrated into conventional bulletin board themes may be called integrative bulletin boards. The value of these bulletin boards is their potential to build positive attitudes toward reading, motivating children to read. This potential is illustrated by three different integrative bulletin boards each relating to one of the three dimensions of reading attitude as identified by Teale (1981).

Displays which integrate books and reading into the conventional "proverbial message" bulletin board are allied with the individual development dimension of students' attitude toward reading, which Teale defines as "the value placed on reading as a means of gaining insight into self, others, and/or life in general." An example is It's What's Inside That Counts, an integrative bulletin board that illustrates the title by depicting a shy but thoughtful child in patched clothes reading a book whose tattered pages have seen better days. The child's expression of intelligence and reserve carries the double message that people and books are worth "getting into".

An integration of reading and books into conventional subject area "informational" bulletin boards helps to develop the reading attitude dimension which Teale has described as utilitarian, or "the value placed on the role of reading for attaining educational or vocational success... ." To create this type of integrative bulletin board teachers and librarians first need to identify reading resources (such as books, newspaper and magazine articles, reference materials) which are related to the topic of the informational bulletin board. Then these resources in the form of lists, book jackets, magazine covers, newspaper articles, or whatever are incorporated into the display. An example is a geography bulletin board that incorporates references to informational books on a shelf below with a map display of the regions of the Southern Hemisphere.

To foster the enjoyment of reading, which is Teale's third dimension of reading attitude, reading and books can be integrated into bulletin boards which have "holiday" themes. Both Thanksgiving and Christmas bulletin boards could read Wish For a Book with only slight changes in the display.



The considerable power of peer influence is the operative factor in encouraging reading by means of bulletin boards which display student reading choices. To make effective use of the finding of Anderson and Lawson (1981), that children are more likely to influence the reading choices of other children than either librarians or teachers, bulletin board displays could highlight in clear and large print the names of the books children are reading or have read. Such a display should be placed at the students' eye level in a conspicuous part of the classroom. One example of a student display bulletin board is The Reader re a u e, a dinosaur whose scales are construction paper strips on which are written in dark, large letters the name of a student and the book s/he has read.

Another example is The Sky Is the Limit in Reading, in which a blue sky bordered by a rainbow is filled with fluffy white clouds and airplanes, each displaying the name of a student and the book read.

The description of the three types of bulletin boards above is not to suggest that displays incorporating two or even all three of the motivating factors cannot be created. In fact, they can and should be. In utilizing the ideas presented in this article, teachers and librarians should feel encouraged to go beyond book jackets and create original bulletin boards which employ many motivational factors that encourage reading.

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