

Tips for an Effective Lending Library

Children that participate in RIF programs get to choose a book(s) to take home and own. However, we also want to ensure these children have consistent access to a variety of books all year long. Lending libraries are a great way to continue to motivate children to keep on reading and discovering new books. They also provide opportunities to teach children how to take care of books and to model effective strategies for selecting interesting and appropriate reading material.

Here are five ways to make sure your lending-library books are in constant circulation.

1. Display Books Face Out

No matter how the saying goes, we still judge books by their covers. So why keep the covers hidden? Instead of shelving books with the spine out, try turning a few faces out. Watch how quickly those books fly off the shelves. Publishers pay big bucks to have their books face out at local bookstores because it increases sales. You can use the same technique to increase circulation in your lending library.

2. Display Books at Eye Level

Another marketing technique is to shelve books at your customers eye level. Food manufacturers pay a lot of money to rent prime real estate on your local grocery shelves. If your RIF kids (your customers) are five years old, books should be shelved much closer to the floor than if you are serving teenagers.

3. Organize your Library by Reading Level

It is important that children read books at their reading level. If children read books that are too easy they do not make progress and if they attempt to read books that are too difficult they become discouraged. In both cases, children lose interest in reading. Organize your lending library by reading level and model how to select books from the correct reading level. Children also need to know what their reading level is so they know which books to get; consider posting a chart with each child's reading level or having a label in their book bag/box that has their reading level. Be sure to update these frequently as children in younger grades quickly move through levels.

4. Talk It Up

Enthusiasm is contagious: If you are enthusiastic about a book, children are sure to catch it. Highlight two, three, or ten books in your library that children are less likely to choose on their own. Read them aloud, read parts of them aloud, or just talk about them in an animated way. Your infomercials will remind children that the books you are holding are available for them to read. Notice how popular the titles you advertise become, compared with equally interesting shelf-bound books. If your lending library cannot meet the high demand of your advertised



books, and popular books are frequently unavailable to would-be readers, suggest children borrow books by the same author, or that are about a similar topic.

5. Review It

Each week, invite children to read and write reviews of seldom-read books, or books recently added to the collection. Post the positive reviews on a bulletin board near your library. Remind children that opinions are personal; negative book reviews may discourage other children from choosing a book that may be perfect for them.

Source: Reading Is Fundamental

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