



Connecting Boys with Books: What Libraries Can Do

Michael Sullivan

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Pre-adolescent boys are nearly invisible in libraries. With ever-increasing electronic amusements, how can books and the library compete for their attention? It can be done, according to librarian and educator Michael Sullivan. In *Connecting Boys with Books*, he provides the tools that librarians, school library media specialists, and educators need to overcome cultural and developmental challenges, stereotyping, and lack of role models that essentially program boys out of the library. Attracting boys to library programs in the "tween" years will go a long way in maintaining their interest in books and reading over a lifetime, creating good habits from a young age. Based on his experiences with boys in both educational and library settings, Sullivan's practical and proven programming builds on the unique developmental needs and interests of boys in this middle stage. Certain stories, types of characters, action, humor, and mischief are sure to appeal. Here are the guidelines for connecting with boys by: Finding and promoting male readers as role models; Using the power of chess, games, and other challenging (and competitive) activities; Encouraging physical responses to books in a way that spells "fun" to boys; Talking about books so boys will be enticed to listen; Reaching out with stories that resonate with boys at this stage; Enhancing boys' ongoing journeys by encouraging independent reading; From playing chess to swathing the walls in butcher paper to give boys a physical space to respond to books, Sullivan's practical ideas and developmentally astute insights show librarian and teacher colleagues how to make vitally needed connections with this underserved population.

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