

Words Matter!

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Boys and reading in Finland

- Overall decline in literacy and reading for pleasure, particularly among boys (16% of boys has poor literacy skills)
- Drastically widened gender gap (boys below OECD average in reading)
- Boys in vocational schools in vulnerable position
 - > 57 % of students in vocational schools suffer from reading difficulties (Amisbarometri 2017)
 - > recent cuts in mother tongue and literature syllabus in vocational schools

Words Matter!

- Inspiration from 'author visits' organized by the Finnish Reading Centre
- Implemented by Finnish Reading Center, funded by private company UPM
- 100 workshops in 23 vocational schools: rap lyrics and media
- 2017-2018
- aim: to provide hands-on solutions for reading engagement among vocational students
- Materials for teachers available in www.sanathaltuun.fi

Evaluation

- 3000 students in 24 vocational schools all over Finland through 100 workshops were reached
- OTUS Research Center evaluated the project impact
(365 responses to feedback questionnaires + observation in 3 workshops)

Outcomes & Impact

1. Students' self-assessment of their literacy skills was high
2. Reading was not considered important by the students
3. The students were not interested in the workshops before they attended them...
4. ... but the workshop discussions inspired the students to reflect
5. Rap music inspired the students

Outcomes & Impact

6. Half of the students learnt something, 20% reflected their relationship with reading
7. Critical reading skills and multiliteracy were developed
8. Understanding the concepts of reading and text changed
9. Wider public attention for the situation of the boys in vocational schools was gained
10. Normative masculinity and negative school attitudes were challenged

Lessons learnt – how to engage boys?

- Invest in idols and examples
- Read aloud
- Listen to the boys – give them credit!

Sources

- PIRLS 2016 Encyclopedia, Finland
- Literacy in Finland: Country Report. Children and adolescents. March 2016. ELINET European Literacy Policy Network.
- Kaisa Leino: The relationship between ICT use and reading literacy: Focus on 15-year-old Finnish students in PISA studies. Finnish Institute for Educational Research Studies 30, 2014.
- www.sanathaltuun.fi