



NEWS LOCAL

EDUCATION

Banting secondary school in London launches innovative way to get book reviews to students



By Kate Dubinski, The London Free Press
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Nick Ashmore of Banting shows how students will be able to scan the QR code on library books with their smart phones, and get a quick YouTube video review of the book, done by a student. The project is just at the testing stage, but already 20 books have been reviewed by students and are available at the school. (MIKE HENSEN/The London Free Press)

Just scan, click and watch.

Not the way most high school kids would think about getting a book review, but it's the new way at Banting secondary school.

The London high school has launched an innovative way to get book reviews into the hands of students using iPads, QR Codes, iPods, smartphones, YouTube and, yes, old-fashioned books.

"What I really like about it is that we're using current technology — YouTube, iPads, iPods — to bring a sense of fun to the library experience as well as promote literacy," said Martha Grandmont, the school's teacher librarian.

"There's been a lot of talk as we've been recording in the library — students have been engaged and interested in participating — so we know this will increase voluntary reading in the school and further develop a culture of reading in Banting."

The idea goes like this: students read a book, then choose to record a short review of it using a signed-out library iPad.

A teacher checks the review and uploads it to the Banting Library YouTube channel.

Teacher Bill McKeown creates a QR Code (Quick Response Code — a two-dimensional, machine-readable bar code attached to items that record information related to the item) that gets affixed to the book, allowing students who want to read the book quick access to the video review.

Students can also visit the YouTube channel from home to check out reviews and get suggestions for books they want to read.

"QR codes are a technology our students are familiar with," said McKeown, the school's computer facilitator.

"Some of the books will be showcased and some will be catalogued like any other book. It'll be almost like a treasure hunt. Students will pull a book off the shelf, turn it over and see if there's a QR code and go from there."

So far, 10 reviews have been posted to the YouTube channel, ranging from French and English titles and fiction and non-fiction.

Student buy-in is key.

On Monday, the library will welcome all 1,350 Banting students to the library. They'll be able to browse newly purchased books and will be encouraged to do their own reviews.

"Here at Banting we're always looking for new ways that we can engage students around literacy," said principal Paula Greenberg.

"The Quick Response Code project is one of many kinds of initiatives we have going on at the school that help students get engaged with the reading material."

Last weekend, Greenberg was shopping when a parent approached her, excited about the QR review project. The parent's child, not a regular reader, wanted to get a book from the library just so he could do a video review.

"To me, that says that what we're doing to try to engage students in reading, and voluntary reading in particular, is working and can only benefit students in terms of their overall literacy skills," Greenberg said.

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WHAT STUDENTS SAID

"I think it helps students choose a good book they'd be interested in reading ... I would like to know the level of the book before I picked it up. I like the fact that you have someone your own age review a book, someone with the same reading level and some of the same opinions as you. That's what enticed me to do the project, not being on camera or being on the Internet."

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— **Julia White, Grade 11**

"You have a whole school telling you what they think of the book. It gives you a good range of opinions. It's something cool and different. It's cool to see your friends giving reviews. When we were all watching each other's reviews in class, it was cool to see everyone's faces on the big screen."

— **Nick Ashmore, a Grade 11 student whose class participated in A pilot project of the reviews. He reviewed the play No Exit, by existentialist author Jean Paul Sartre. Ashmore's review was done in French, because Banting has a French immersion program.**