



**READING
FOR PLEASURE**



**The Open
University**

Teachers' knowledge of children's reading practices

Research Summary



Whilst many of the *Teachers as Readers* (TaRs) teachers knew their children's reading scores/levels, their targets and the colour band they were given to select books from, many readily acknowledged they knew little about the children's preferences as readers, their favourite genres, authors, text types for instance or their everyday reading practices at home. So even with knowledge of children's literature, they were not in a position to recommend particular texts to children and some made gender based assumptions about children's preferences.

As the project year progressed, the teachers were introduced to various activities which aimed to develop their knowledge of children's reading practices. This work involved them in finding out about what children and their families chose to read at home. The wealth of texts shared, the range of environmental print encountered and the diverse range of digital reading in which the young people engaged surprised many of the teachers, who began to appraise their often book-based and perhaps book-bound conceptions of reading.

Activities such as Reading Rivers (Cliff Hodges, 2010) and 24 Hour Reading prompted the teachers to reconsider reading in the 21st century. Openness and reciprocity underpinned such activities; teachers shared their own reading preferences/practices and invited the children to recognise and share their own, connecting these to the children's own purposes and contexts and their identities as readers

Over time, children became more vocal about their reading habits and preferences and led their teachers into new textual territories. Their teachers thus developed their knowledge of reading tastes and choices and committed time and space to giving individual readers their attention. This fostered reader to reader relationships and children's reading engagement.

Teachers became acutely aware that 'no two readers are the same' (Cliff Hodges, 2010: 182) and that in order to motivate young readers, it is vital to recommend texts which will engage and interest them; matching the text to the child.

"We know much more now about the children – their histories – where they are coming from. I can tell you what the children like – their tastes in reading – I can't believe that I didn't know these things. It's just been pushed out. There didn't seem any time for this sort of chat."

TaRs teacher, Birmingham)

Through finding out about the children's everyday practices and home based preferences, the teachers began to move away from privileging literature and teacher selected-literary texts and accepted and welcomed a wider range of texts in the classroom. Whilst still acknowledging the potency of literature, they widened 'what counts as reading' in their classrooms. This influenced the young people's sense of self as readers and their interest and engagement in texts.

Adapted from pages 97-99 and 115-118 in Cremin, T., Mottram, M., Collins, F., Powell, S. and Safford, K. (2014) *Building Communities of Engaged Readers: Reading for pleasure*, London/New York: Routledge.

This summary also connects to:

Kucirkova, N., Littleton, K. and Cremin, T. (2015) Reading for pleasure and digital books. *Cambridge Journal of Education*. 10.1080/0305764X.2015.1118441

To read more about the research: see the Executive Summaries, related papers on <http://oro.open.ac.uk/>

or the core book

<https://www.routledge.com/Building-Communities-of-Engaged-Readers-Reading-for-pleasure/Cremin-Mottram-Collins-Powell-Safford/p/book/9781138777484>

or the UKLA/Primary National Strategy professional development guide to developing reading for pleasure (based upon TaRs, Cremin et al., 2008) at

https://ukla.org/shop/details/building_communities_of_readers1

