

Context

Currently I am the English Coordinator/Reading Champion at Moorlands Primary Academy in Norfolk. Our school has had a turbulent few years (high turnover of staff, disappointing KS2 SATs results) and is looking to rebuild. Creating a genuine reading culture is at the centre of this.



Research inspiration and rationale

In a 2013 survey conducted by the SoA, 99.4% of respondents felt that author visits were 'high priority and valuable in encouraging R4P'. In addition, the Teachers as Readers project (Cremin, 2014) emphasised the importance of teachers increasing their subject knowledge of children's literature and developing reciprocal reading communities. By working alongside an author, we felt schools would have extra support in reaching those goals.



Aims

- To improve the children's knowledge of current authors.
- To provide an extra opportunity for teachers to increase their subject knowledge.
- To create a schoolwide 'buzz' about Reading for Pleasure among pupils, staff and parents.

Outline

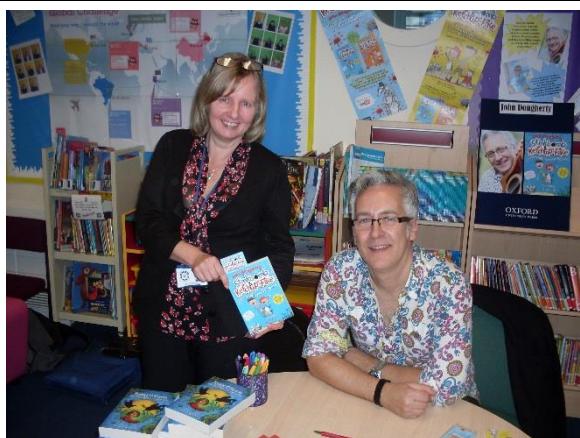
- After deciding that organising regular author visits would be a great way to raise the profile of Reading for Pleasure, we looked at a school at which authors were available to be Patrons of Reading and decided to contact John Dougherty.
- We sent John an initial email to tell him a bit about the school, its attitude to reading and the impact that we felt a patron could have. This was then followed up by a phone call where we discussed visit fees, what we wanted to achieve from the first visit and what else a patron might offer our school community.



- We purchased several copies of John's books for the school library and classrooms and created a display in the library and introduced the initiative to all staff.
- During John's first visit, he led two whole school assemblies (one for parents) and spent a short amount of time in each class, sharing his favourite books with the children. He also met with interested parents and signed books after school.
- John visited the school six times during his tenure. Each visit had a slightly different focus, although all were related to Reading for Pleasure.
- Between visits, John kept in touch with the school via a [blog](#) and by sending regular [video messages](#). The school also sent him letters and emails.

Impact

- Working closely with John for two years helped transform the school's attitude to reading for pleasure.
- Most members of staff read at least one (generally more) of his books before his first visit, helping improve their knowledge of children's literature. They also read his new books as they were published and were more confident in recommending these texts.
- During his tenure, approaches to developing Reading for Pleasure were shared and discussed regularly in staff meetings.
- On his first visit, almost 200 books were sold to children.
- The children took great pride in 'their' author and enjoyed being kept up to date with details about his new books (there was huge excitement when he sent the school the unpublished manuscript for one of them).
- Numbers attending his parent sessions increased steadily throughout his tenure. One of the most successful sessions was when he shared tips about reading with children at home.
- The local library were invited in whenever he visited. They met with parents during signing sessions and handed out membership forms, which led to many families joining the public library for the first time.
- There was always a big increase in books borrowed from the school library directly after one of his visits.
- Almost 200 patrons now work in schools across the UK.



Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

Working with a patron helped Moorlands staff become 'Reading Teachers'- which the TaRs project describes as teachers who read and readers who teach, and who explore the synergies of being both readers and teachers. John shared his knowledge of children's books with the staff and it also gave them an opportunity to develop reading communities with children, families, authors and the local library.

After seeing the potential of the initiative, I became very involved with helping coordinate it across the United Kingdom. I was one of the

organisers for the third Patron of Reading conference in Manchester and manage the Patron of Reading website (www.patronofreading.co.uk) and Twitter account (@[patronofreading](#)).