



Context

I am currently a second year student enrolled on the BA QTS Primary Education course at Liverpool Hope University. My enhanced subject specialism is in English. As part of my studies I have recently taken part in a 'Reading for Pleasure' programme as part of a partnership with Knowsley council.

Research inspiration and rationale

As a keen reader and a passionate advocate of the immeasurable value literature holds in an individual's life, I was extremely keen to fully immerse myself in this project.

Theoretical research also raised many interesting points of consideration. The TaRs research suggested that many children were finding themselves disengaged with books due to the context in which they were used within the classroom (Cremin et al., 2014).

Literature is used throughout the teaching of most subjects however within the teaching of English the variety of texts and methods of usage have become increasingly dated.

Further to this, the NUTs guidance on reading for pleasure suggests that as a child progresses throughout school the notion of reading a story or enjoying a text is recognisably mostly replaced by a need to decipher and interpret literature often in extensive detail. These factors are greatly contributing to a disconnection with reading.

My attention was particularly captured by the suggestion of creating reading communities that are reciprocal and interactive (Cremin et al., 2014). Being based predominantly within the early years foundation stage (EYFs) throughout this programme, my personal goal was to create an immersive reading experience that would both capture the children's imagination and develop a passion for reading from an early stage. At this early stage in the setting I was placed the children in the reception classroom appeared particularly disengaged with books and stories so my aim was to create a means to

Aims

- To engage children with books and develop a love for stories that would greatly benefit them throughout life.
- To create an immersive and engaging reading experience.
- To understand the interests of the children and ensure literature choices were relevant to engage their interests.

Outline

The Reading for Pleasure programme took place on Monday afternoons within the Early Years of a local school. After registration and an afternoon input on a range of topics, the children were provided with snack and sent off to continuous provision. It was at this stage it was my role to engage groups of children to share and enjoy a carefully selected story. Being unfamiliar with the setting proved tricky initially as even with a class list, identifying 5 children at a time from a class of 30 spread across a large classroom and outdoor area was time consuming. Further to this, I became aware very quickly that my power of persuasion was going to be no match for the green, bubble water nor the construction themed sand table. It became very clear that to engage more than a handful of children and encourage them to engage with stories, I required more than a simple book.

I took time to speak to the children and discuss their favourite stories, and if they in fact enjoyed reading or being read to. I was very surprised by their responses and quickly discovered that not only was I contending with continuous provision, but the majority of the class did not appear to enjoy books.

I spent the following week researching methods to engage children with stories and decided upon the use of puppets when telling a story. Animals had been a popular theme from the previous week's discussions, and the class had been discussing Africa in their direct teaching, so I chose '*Handas Surprise*' by Eileen Browne. Being familiar with this text and having witnessed its usage in a previous EYFs setting, I felt the text had great potential for success. Each child was given a mask and when 'their animal' featured within the story, the child would select the corresponding fruit from the basket. However, I found that the children were still disengaged with the story, many of the children asked to leave to continue with their tasks around the classroom and admittedly this was disheartening.

Completing further reading around the subject, I felt a affinity to the TaRs concept of 'interactive reading'. I began considering the classroom environment and how areas were decorated and displays used. The children had recently read 'The Three Little Pigs' and there was a display on the wall depicting drawings the children had created

throughout their study of the text. Other areas of the classroom also had a 'Three Little Pigs' theme. To me this defined immersive learning, cross curricular links using the text and the children engaging with it in many ways. Most importantly, the children could recall the story and enjoyed it.

With only around 10 minutes for each group of children immersion into the story required a high impact approach that completely engaged the children and permitted them to experience the story and develop an enjoyment for storytelling. The concept I developed was the notion of 'Jump into Books'.

As a child I was a keen reader and I particularly enjoyed the works of P.L. Travers. I began to think of the magical moment where the characters within Mary Poppins jump into the chalk painting and are instantly transported to a magical world. This concept was what I wanted to promote to show how wonderful books are.

I decided upon 'The Rainbow Fish' by Marcus Pfister. My text choice was again due to considering the interests of the children, underwater was certainly a predominantly favoured theme, and also based on the colours and artistic license the story would lend.

I transformed the reading area into an underwater theme, bringing some soft toys for the children to hold whilst enjoying the story and visually setting the scene for the text.

Before each group of children entered the reading area I set the scene and explained how we were going to jump into the book. The area was separated by a rope on the ground and the children joined hands and on the count of three they jumped into the book. Once in the reading area the children seated themselves and talked about what they believed the story might be about. The environment stimulated high quality discussion.





As the story book was covered by a cloth, the children made their predictions solely based on the reading area. When we unveiled the story the children were very excited. They listened intently and engaged with the story throughout. In complete contrast to the previous weeks the children did not want to leave the reading area and some children returned again and again throughout the afternoon to share the story once more.

Impact

"I don't want to read, can I go choose?" Child A, week 1. Upon initial interaction with the class the general interest in reading was low. This was due to a variety of contributing factors, including the timing of the programme. Being situated within the classroom during the children's free choice time presented a great challenge as there was a lot going on all at once and the notion of sitting and being read to was not an immediate choice for many children.

Discussion with colleagues led to dedicating time to engage with the children and beginning to develop an understanding of their favourite story books. This was extremely valuable advice.

Reading around the subject was another valuable exercise as it led to the thought process behind my final ideas. It was The TaRs focus upon 'interactive reading' that particularly engaged and provoked thought. In the modern classroom subjects display their current stages of work, such as English and Mathematics working walls. This process permits a child to engage completely with the subject, to use the area as reference and to promote their subject development. For a teacher to use this tool sufficiently, they must themselves have a sound subject knowledge and dedicate time to use the resources effectively to ensure pupil progression.

Reading is absolutely vital to ensure the development of a child throughout their academic life and beyond. Vast numbers of studies attribute reading to be so proficient that it can have such a noticeable effect upon an individual's life that their potential and achievements are measurable against this.

Considering this research, I took this role very seriously and faced with reluctant readers I knew drastic action needed to be taken to challenge the children and work towards helping them to develop a love of reading at this young age.

During my time within the setting I moved to different classes, later in the afternoon the children had experienced 'jumping' into the book, when I returned to the classroom there were several children seated within the reading area engaging with books and sharing stories.

I have decided to continue the reading for pleasure programme and I hope that my personal passion for books will have a positive impact upon the children as I will strive to engage them with books as much as possible.

Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

TaRs, point 5: create reading communities that are reciprocal and interactive. This particular concept shaped the second half of my volunteer placement entirely. The notion of interacting with the text led to my consideration of how we teach. Bruner's theory of the scaffolded progression through concrete resources to pictorial and finally abstract initiated a lot of thought. I began to think of the way a story is shared with a group of children. Very often an adult will hold the book at the front of the class and read aloud, ensuring to share the images within the story. However, I began to consider this concept in relation to the unique child.

A VARK test will identify how an individual best learns. However, reading a story book aloud, this activity may lend itself to auditory learners and visual learners. However, this does not lend itself to kinaesthetic learners. Nor does it immediately engage the EAL learners within the classroom or those children with specific SEN needs.

By creating an immersive reading environment I felt the setting captured most children, even those who had previously shown great reluctance to leave activities to engage with books.

This approach is most certainly one which I would use again.

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