



A book a day

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Context

Promoting a love of reading is an area for improvement highlighted in the school improvement plan of the school in which I have just completed my final placement as a third year trainee teacher at Edge Hill University.

During my first week on professional practice, I observed that the majority of children did not appear to find reading enjoyable. On inspection of the library's stock, I found it consisted mostly of KS1 books and the only KS2 books were old fashioned and in bad condition.

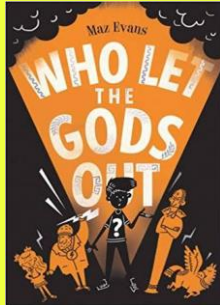
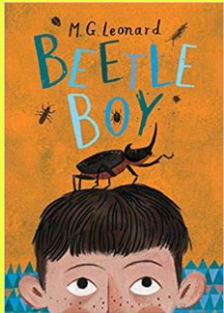
Research inspiration and rationale

The Teachers as readers (TARs) reading for pleasure pedagogy, particularly the idea of informal book talk described in *Teachers as Readers: Building Communities of Readers* inspired me to develop reading for pleasure in my Year 5 class.

In a literate environment, 'children's voices are valued,' (Goodwin,2018:3.) Children need to feel respected and empowered to read more through being given personal book recommendations and the freedom to express personal thoughts. Although children should have freedom of choice, Gamble and Yates (2008) state that teachers can be extremely significant in extending children's current interests by discussing and introducing them to 'new' authors, books and poems. Furthermore, discussions allow children to achieve reading and writing fluency; motivating talk based activities help children use more abstract language (Dawes 2011). This is why I was inspired to create a reading for pleasure project focusing on book talk.

Aims

- I aimed to develop book talk as a way of addressing a perceived lack of interest in reading.



Outline



I initially borrowed a selection of 25 children's books from my university library. I then discussed with the children in my class the different types of books they enjoyed reading, what genres they preferred and the types of things they were interested in.

Following this, I introduced the children to my reading project of 'A book a day' until the end of the year. I explained this would involve sharing a book a day and reading the title, the blurb, and a chapter of a book. For the first week I brought 5 high quality and modern KS2 books that I had read before and shared one a day with my class, these were 'A Place called Perfect' by Helena Duggan, 'Beetle Boy' by M.G Leonard, 'Who Let The Gods Out?' by Maz Evans, 'Cogheart' by Peter Bunzl and 'Wonder' by R.J. Palacio. After the first week, I brought another 30 books and wrapped them up in Christmas paper. I said that every day I would be giving a book to someone in the class. The child would unwrap the book and the child or me would read the title and the blurb to the rest of the class, the class would then have an informal discussion about the book and children who had previously been given a book were given the opportunity to talk about their book and share their thoughts and opinions. The child who had unwrapped the book would then decide whether to read the book or to put it in the reading corner for others to read.

Impact

Through this project, children had the opportunity to read and explore a total of 55 books of different kinds. I was careful to give each child a book that matched their reading ability and their interests. 27 of the 30 children decided to read the book that they had been given.

Many of the children were very eager to talk to me about their book, what it was about and what they enjoyed about it. This both encouraged the children's love of reading and enhanced the relationship I had with each individual child in the class.

Furthermore, 'A book a day' was beneficial to the relationships between the students in the class. Before I gave a book to someone I would say why I had chosen to give them a book that day, e.g "I'm giving a book to this person today because they have been extremely resilient." Occasionally, I would ask the class who they thought deserved a book and to explain their choice, this promoted positive praise and the sharing of good behaviour and learning habits.

I was very surprised at the significant increase in book talk throughout the school day. Rather than putting the book back in the reading corner when they had finished with it, many children would pass the book to a friend or swap it. They would talk about the book and why they think their friend should read it. These brief discussions were informal yet rich. I found that although children were encouraged to read books that I had recommended they were very influenced by the thoughts, opinions and recommendations of their friends.

Throughout my placement, access to a wider variety of books and increased opportunities to discuss books triggered a transformation in children's attitudes to reading and, most importantly, reading for enjoyment.

Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

The TaRs research shows that teachers need knowledge of children's literature. For this reason, I constantly keep up to date with and read modern high-quality children's literature. Before I gave a child a book or shared a book with my class I ensured that I personally had read the book to make sure it was appropriate and to be able to discuss with individuals about the books.

TaRs research highlights how reading is intrinsically worthy of discussion. The impact of teacher-lead and child-led discussion was effective in increasing children's motivation to read more books and to read for pleasure.

Next steps

I have understood the impact of taking time to provide children with a wide range of high-quality books. The books, both fiction and non-fiction exemplified many kinds of structure and appealed to children with many different interests. Book discussions encouraged children to choose to engage in reading. As an NQT I will ensure there are many opportunities for the children I teach to both read independently and share and explore a wide variety of literature through book talk with me and their friends. To further support reading for pleasure, I will monitor how effectively the school library is being used and consider different ways of promoting social reading, for example, through reading buddies, matching a child in KS2 with a child in KS1 to read and discuss books.