

Developing Independent Readers

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Context

- We work in a large, mixed high school in Calderdale, West Yorkshire. We have a larger than average SEN intake and are involved in measured interventions on a daily basis, therefore we are actively working, researching and discovering literacy issues constantly. One of the barriers we come across is the lost habit of reading for pleasure. As a department we have decided to work on the Pupil Premium students and find out why they no longer choose to read or why it is seen as a chore.
- As part of our whole school development plan there is a continued push on growth in reading, oracy and writing. Therefore, our research from the intervention team's point of view was to focus on disadvantaged and disengaged students to enable them to find joy in reading and build confidence. Thus enabling them to access the wider curriculum and school community.



OU Research inspiration and rationale

Our inspiration for the research came from our ongoing intervention practice with students who struggle to access all aspects of the curriculum and school life, especially literacy and wellbeing. From our initial findings we decided to focus on independent reading time for disadvantaged and disengaged students.

The OU research (Cremin et al., 2014) informed our plan and we adapted their findings to suit our work: They found that in order to foster RfP effectively in our school, teachers need to develop:-

1. *Considerable knowledge of student's needs.*
2. *Knowledge of children's reading practices*
3. *Our reading for pleasure pedagogy which we adapted to include:*
 - *Social reading and intervention environment*
 - *Confidence building through targeted, measured interventions to enable reading aloud in a small group leading to the ability to offer to read out loud in class*
 - *Independent reading to become a joy*
 - *Informal book talk, inside-text talk and recommendations*

We wanted to use the Learning Resource Centre and all its attributes for empowering and nurturing reading as a pleasure in order to try and build reading communities that

are reciprocal and interactive through clubs, interventions and the provision of a safe environment.

Aims

- To increase independent reading
- To show students the benefits of reading for pleasure
- To enable students to have a choice of what they choose to read

We intend to share our findings and outcomes with the Intervention team and cascade throughout the whole school community.

Outline

After much discussion with the team we decided to focus on Pupil Premium students to attempt to re-engage them in reading for pleasure.

- We selected students from previous interventions and data.
- Next step was to introduce the programme to them and gain their consent.
- Twice weekly sessions were set up and took place in the Learning Resource Centre during form time.
- We then tested each student using a comprehension test.
- Each student answered a questionnaire regarding their reading habits
- From this **questionnaire we worked with the students to select reading material.**
- Reading practice was established then built on.
- Discussions took place with students to measure impact and enjoyment.
- A reward trip included a visit to the Central Library.
- During the programme, **positive praise** and pre and post information was given to students to pre-empt any anxiety and create a pleasurable experience.
- At the end of the programme we retested to be able to measure outcomes and impact in order to incorporate the programme into the whole school plan.



The reward trip to Halifax Central Library was a direct result of our RFP research in collaboration with our other literacy interventions.

Impact

As part of our research we measured the impact by testing using the Salford Sentence Reading Test and the wellbeing and pleasure of the students.

The results tracked over a period of 3 months showed that students' reading and comprehension had dramatically improved:-

H - Reading age improved by 3 months and comprehensive age by 15 months

J - Reading age improved by 4 months and comprehension age by 13 months

H: I'm thinking about what I'm reading more, and choosing books I actually like.....not just reading for the sake of it. I've found myself re-reading words so the sentence makes sense.'

J: RfP has made me think about using more or different words in class, and making me write more in lessons. RFP doesn't have to be just about books. It's ok to use phone, Ipad and magazines sentence makes sense.'

Their obvious punctuality to sessions highlighted their enthusiasm to understand the pleasure that can be gained from reading. At the end of the session, students were given the option to continue reading if they wanted to. Many commented positively on these sessions.

Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

We have discovered that by introducing students to different types of written media, perhaps thus widening their understanding of what reading is or can be, they have discovered the joy of escaping into a mindful activity and the pleasure it brings.

Our next focus will be for staff to concentrate on developing their knowledge of children's reading practices, as recommended by the TaRs research (Cremin, 2014) and for students to develop independent reading time.

Furthermore, we are now continuing the research by rolling out the structured programme within a team of 20 TA's using the same format and feeding into the school's Development Plan.