



**READING
FOR PLEASURE**



**The Open
University**

Reading for pleasure pedagogy: Reading aloud

Research Summary



Initially when the practitioners in the *Teachers as Readers* (TaRs) project read aloud, this was as part of the formal literacy curriculum and from the text they were currently studying with the children. It was thus linked to, and used for, comprehension and related writing activities. The children did not always view it positively. By unconsciously tethering reading aloud to literacy teaching, many of the teachers offered no provision for hearing literature or other texts read aloud without attendant work. Some did read aloud on other occasions, but this was deemed an 'extra', as icing on the cake, only included when time allowed.

As the research year progressed, and teachers listened to texts read aloud to them in project sessions, they developed new knowledge of the value of reading aloud, its many personal, social and cognitive benefits and a deeper understanding of the pedagogic principles involved. They came to recognise the affective impact of reading to 'reassure, to entertain, to bond, to inform or explain, to arouse curiosity, to inspire' (Trelease, 2013:04).

Nonetheless, it took time for the teachers to find and make the space to read aloud regularly in the classroom and a genuine shift in thinking for them to consider reading aloud as a key pedagogic and professional practice that supports young readers, offers an externalised model of expressive reading, and enables them to access texts beyond their current reading 'ability'. There is considerable evidence that reading aloud to children enables them to process challenging content, text features and vocabulary – even in subjects not normally associated with reading aloud, such as science and technology (Heisley and Kukan 2010). Furthermore, reading to 4-5 year olds more frequently has been shown to lead to higher reading, maths and cognitive skills at age 8-9 (Kalb and van Ours, 2013).

By the end of the year, all teachers reported reading aloud at least 4-5 times per week, some read every day and other at 'every chance we get'. These changes were accompanied and driven by a growing sense amongst teachers that reading aloud is intrinsically valuable, and that books should not be used solely as conduits for delivering curriculum literacy objectives.

"I now read to the class without thinking 'I could do this with it or I could do that with it' and I think the children sit back and think 'I can just enjoy this' ... that had been a big struggle - thinking how many boxes can I tick, what objectives can I cover and you actually then lose the impact of...the book. You know, just enjoy it for a book and a good story and a good emotional journey. "

(TaRs teacher, Birmingham)

As teachers developed their reading aloud skills, they took more pleasure in ‘doing the voices’, inhabiting the text and making it an interactive experience, with in depth or brief conversations about what was being read and additional book recommendations. Teachers also seized informal, unplanned opportunities to read aloud from a diverse range of texts.

The research demonstrated that reading aloud creates a sense of community, building the class repertoire of ‘books in common’ and a shared reading history. Teachers also noted it gives all children access to sophisticated themes and literary language without placing literacy demands on them. At the close of the project, reading aloud was widely viewed as a key strand of a reading for pleasure pedagogy, one which demonstrates the power and potential of literature and thus influences children’s perceptions of the pleasure to be found in reading.

Adapted from pages 94-97 Cremin, T., Mottram, M., Collins, F., Powell, S. and Safford, K. (2014) *Building Communities of Engaged Readers: Reading for pleasure*, London/New York: Routledge.

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

or the core book at

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

