



**UCL**

Institute of Education



Helping student teachers see the  
wood for the trees  
**the children's book corner**

Sue McGonigle UCL IoE

[s.mcgonigle@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:s.mcgonigle@ucl.ac.uk)

@suemcgonigle

# the children's book corner

## Context

- Developing students' knowledge and experience of children's literature is a key element of the Primary PGCE programme at UCL Institute of Education and the focus of much of my work as Lecturer in Primary Education.
- The children's book corner resource, opened in March 2015, is a major part of this drive and a joint collaboration between the PGCE English team and the UCL Institute of Education library.



# the children's book corner

## Context

Children's literature features strongly within the English programme and PGCE as a whole. The importance of developing knowledge of children's literature begins before the course starts with our **pre programme reading list** and **story sack task**.



# the children's book corner

## Context (cont.)

**Student book groups** have been a part of the PGCE programme for a number of years. These were introduced to expand students' knowledge and enjoyment of children's literature (TaRs 1 & 4) ; awareness of themselves as reading role models (Lockwood, 2008); develop their experience and confidence with booktalk (Chambers,2011) and awareness of the importance of creating social contexts to promote reading for pleasure (TaRs 3).



Set up in an informal café style students and tutors discuss a range of literature including picture books, novels and poetry helping to develop the sense of being part of a community of readers (TaRs 5). Aidan Chambers open framework (Chambers, 2011) provides a useful starting point for discussions.

# the children's book corner

## Context (cont.)

**The library collection** contains an extensive selection of books which is regularly used by students. However these are displayed according to the Dewey system and so the collection does not provide an indication of:

- Which age group a book is suitable for;
- Which books might be most supportive of children's development as independent readers;
- Which might be highly engaging as read aloud texts or rich texts worthy of in depth exploration.



## Aims

- To enable students to have immediate access, on site, to a curated selection of children's literature to support their confidence in making choices about books for focus work during their school experience placements.
- To guide choice for classroom collections, books to read aloud or focus on for a unit of work in their future careers.
- Through the collections and displays to further enhance students' knowledge and experience of children's literature building on our student book groups and PGCE programme as a whole.
- To indicate the importance of the classroom reading environment and book displays and the kinds of 'unspoken' messages that can give about the value placed on books and reading for pleasure.
- To provide a teaching tool for tutors supporting some of the key messages in the PPM English module, children's Literature and English specialisms.

## OU Research inspiration and rationale

### **(TaRs 1)**

This initiative is inspired by research into the need for teachers to develop their knowledge of children's literature and the importance and value of introducing teachers (and student teachers) to a wide range of literature. (Commeyras, 2003); (Cremin et al, 2014); (O'Sullivan, O. & McGonigle, 2010)

Research has shown that many teachers rely on their own childhood favourites when making choices. (Cremin et al, 2014); (O'Sullivan & McGonigle, 2010). We feel it is essential that developing this knowledge is prioritised during ITT so that teachers enter the profession with a sound introduction to a broad range of contemporary literature, writers, illustrators and poets. In addition, experience has shown that student teachers benefit from guidance in making selections in terms of age group suitability and range.

### **TaRs 3**

We wanted to model the power of an attractive reading corner in making books and reading inviting (Chambers, 2011; Lockwood 2008) so that students recognise the importance of the physical space and display in creating a context to promote reading for pleasure and support independent reading - while also recognising it is not just 'window dressing!' and the social environment created is crucial (Cremin, 2016)

# the children's book corner

## Outline

**The children's book corner** is now a display collection of books for the Primary and Early years classroom within the UCL Institute of Education library. We have created two broad collections – a read aloud collection and an independent read collection each organised into phase group sets (EYs, Y1&2, Y3&4, Y5&6). There are also now author focus sets and an area set up as a classroom book corner.





# Phase group collections

The year one and two collections with - read aloud collection displayed on the left and independent reads on the right



# Author focus area



There are also author focus book sets for each phase group and regular displays to provide a model for classroom contexts



**Part of the space is set up as it might be in a classroom book corner with** books organised in an inviting and inclusive way eg: *Long reads/ shorter reads or by genre - adventure stories/poetry/ traditional tales etc*

There are displays of work based on books and a comfortable area for browsing and reading



A slideshow running on a digi-frame provides more images of classroom environments to from our partnership schools to inspire the students.



Story sacks are included to indicate a playful approach to exploring texts.



Institute of Education



A year one and two focus display on Pumpkin Soup



# the children's book corner

## Special Visitors!



The author SF Said was our special guest at our grand opening and writer, performer and broadcaster Michael Rosen visited after working with a group of IoE students.

## Impact

Evaluations have been very positive. Over 90% students in 2017 felt their knowledge and experience of children's literature had developed considerably throughout the course and the children's book corner was seen as an important part of this.

The book corner is a great resource and inspiration for classroom displays

The book corner is really useful for widening my knowledge of children's books. I have recommended books for independent reading and aim to use it to select literature to plan around for SE3.

I have used the book corner to plan for my class. I've also enjoyed reading in the book corner when I'm free!

# the children's book corner

## Impact



The children's book corner is proving an invaluable resource for our current students not only on the primary PGCE programme, but also the EY pathway, Teach First and Masters programmes.

The resource has also been introduced to our partnership schools during mentor development days.

The booklists are freely available via our library guides so they can continue to provide support to students as they begin their careers. Interested schools and teachers can access the booklists here:

<http://libguides.ioe.ac.uk/childrensbookcorner>

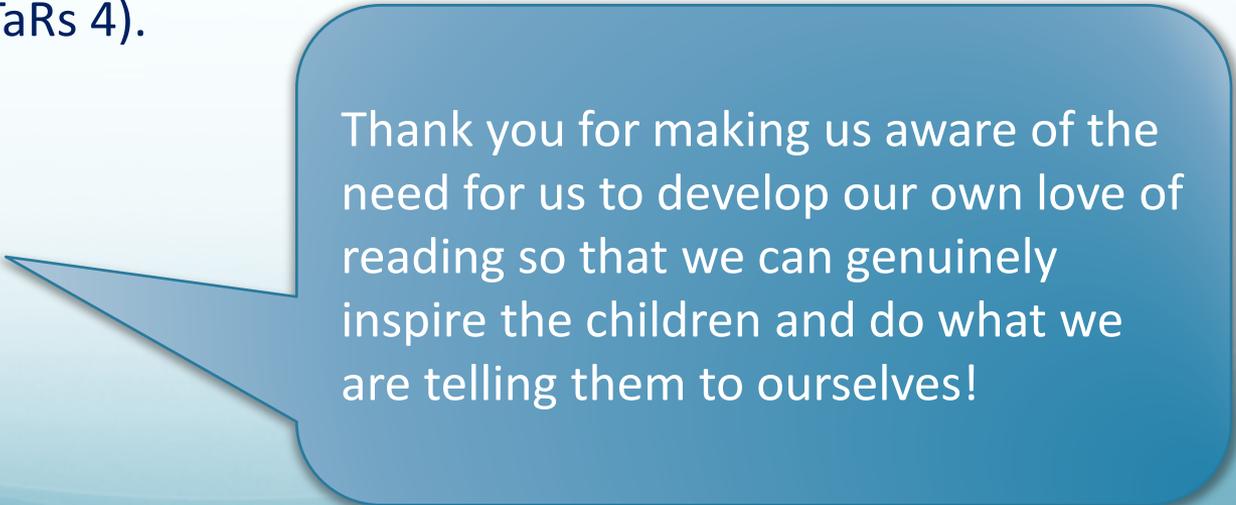
Schools or individuals wishing to visit the book corner should contact Sally Perry, Curriculum Resources Librarian [sally.perry@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:sally.perry@ucl.ac.uk)

## Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

We plan to continue to develop this resource and encourage our current students, past students and partnership schools to make good use of it.

We hope to encourage more students to contribute to the displays so that it becomes a place to showcase the work they have done to engage children with books and reading.

We hope our students will leave IoE with a commitment to become true Reading Teachers (TaRs 4).



Thank you for making us aware of the need for us to develop our own love of reading so that we can genuinely inspire the children and do what we are telling them to ourselves!

## References

- Chambers,A. (2011) *Tell Me, Children, Reading, Talk and the Reading Environment*
- Commeyras, M., Bisplinhoff, B. S. and Olson, J. (2003) *Teachers as Readers: perspectives on the importance of reading in teachers' classrooms and lives,*
- Cremin,T. Mottram,M. Collins,F. Powell,S. Safford,K (2014) *Building Communities of Engaged Readers: Reading for Pleasure*
- Cremin,T. (2016) Reading for Pleasure: not just window dressing  
<http://cprtrust.org.uk/cprt-blog/reading-for-pleasure-just-window-dressing/>
- Lockwood,M (2008) *Promoting Reading for pleasure in the Primary classroom*
- O'Sullivan,O & McGonigle,S. (2010) *Transforming Readers: teachers and children in CLPE's Power of Reading project;* Literacy UKLA

For more information contact Sue McGonigle [s.mcgonigle@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:s.mcgonigle@ucl.ac.uk)  
[@suemcgonigle](https://twitter.com/suemcgonigle)