

# Doorways of Imagined Possibilities



**Aimee  
Durning**

## **Context**

The University of Cambridge Primary School is the first primary training school in the country, committed to high quality teaching and learning that is rooted in research. We adopt a principled approach in all we do. The school opened in 2015 and is a three form entry primary school. I am the Teaching Assistant Coordinator with a number of strategic responsibilities as well as being involved in the day to day learning of individuals and groups. I currently work in Year 3.

## **OU Research inspiration and rationale**

At UCPS we believe that every opportunity in the day is a doorway through which learning can take place. I have been excited about stepping through the many doorways that have arisen so far. I am an avid reader. I joined UCPS because it was clear from the outset that our work and decisions would always be based on well-regarded academic ideas and research.

Last year, I read several books about reading and the reading environment. For example: *The Book Whisper* by D Miller, *The Reading Environment* by A Chambers, *Developing Critical Thinking Through Picture* books by M Roche and *Understanding Reading Comprehension* by W Tennent. This last one opened a new door to me (just like my book door does for the children of UCPS). I read for the first time about a concept called 'reciprocal reading'. This led me to Palincsar and Brown's research around reciprocal reading.

In addition to this I read, Amelia Hempel Jorgensen and Teresa Cremin's '*Understanding Boys (Dis)engagement with Reading for Pleasure*' and explored the OU's *Research Rich Pedagogies* website strand on *Teachers as Readers* and reading for pleasure which reinforced my thinking about teachers' attitudes to reading & readers and how important it is that the children recognise their educators as genuine readers. I realised that my personal 'gut feeling' about reading was strengthened by the reading journey I was on; that it is essential that we value what children have to say about the books they read or the connections they have made. Twitter (Jon Biddle and Claire Williams especially) also played a part in the creation of my book door.

I felt I needed to create a focal point that would cause a gentle buzz about reading, that would hopefully over time become a powerful message that reading is magical and would help create a community that is interested in what our young people have to say

about books, endpapers, visits to the library, authors and all things reading related.

I contacted Katherine Rundell and with her permission I set about creating, The 'Book Explorer' door.

(Created at home during the October half term 2017)



## Aims

- To create a focal point for reading discussions in the Learning Street.
- Encourage children to read *The Explorer* and other books
- Improve staff and children's knowledge of children's literature and authors
- To promote reading for pleasure through the door and Secret book Club



## Outline

There are two main initiatives which I have led: the doorway to magical reading worlds and the second is the Secret Book Club.

In our school, there are no corridors – instead we have Learning Streets. The Book Explorer Door appeared in the learning street in October 2017. The children's reaction to it was so inspiring and created exactly the buzz I was looking for. Within a week, my copy of *The Explorer* was lent out to a child in Year 3. Since then three children and a parent have borrowed my copy. The enthusiasm was tangible and seemed a response to the exciting doorway.

The door opens into a small group room. On the wall in the room I have created a magical reading forest. Reading is Magical is signed on this wall. These are many of the front covers of the picture books I have read at Secret Book Club. Therefore not only have we had discussion about the door but the fact that all of these picture book covers open the door to other worlds.



## Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

The TaRs research has had an enormous impact on my practice. I'm constantly thinking of ways to incorporate the research strands into our daily routines at the school. In Year three the children experience read aloud sessions each day from their class teacher, Mr Drane, which is fantastic. These sessions are so valuable.

The children know I'm always available for a bit of informal book talk and recommendations and I now recognise from the research the importance of these conversations.

I'm now creating a social reading area outside on the playground. Even on the coldest days of this year the children have asked me to put the cushions and reading material out. Hopefully when the weather has improved this small space for a reciprocal reading community will flourish.

During February the UCPS Teachers Reading Group was established. The main aims of our group is to encourage our teachers to read for pleasure, to increase our knowledge of contemporary poetry, latest book releases and to choose a book at each session, which must be read before the next meeting. This first meeting has had an unexpected impact. We tweeted about the book we had chosen, '*The Light Jar*', one children informed me that his mum had purchased the book and they read it in a week. Already a child has borrowed my copy. We also held a parents' reading for pleasure workshop at the end of January and March 2018 will see our first parents' reading for pleasure group.