Combining Reading Worlds

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Context

I am currently completing a PGCE (M) in Primary Education at the University of East Anglia. Prior to beginning the course, we were advised to begin developing our English subject knowledge, by familiarising ourselves with children's literature. Throughout this journey and during my training as an English specialist, I have begun to consider my role as a teacher of reading. During my first placement, at a rural North Norfolk school, I was hugely supported in this task, as reading was placed at the heart of the school. I aimed to ensure that this love of reading spilled into my classroom practice.

Research inspiration and rationale

I was inspired to create a positive reading culture within the classroom. One of the findings of the Teachers as Readers (TaRs) UKLA project was that teachers should develop a reading for pleasure pedagogy which includes: *social reading environments, informal book talk, inside-text talk and recommendations*. (Cremin et al., 2014) They also found that to foster reading for pleasure effectively, teachers should create reading **communities that are reciprocal and interactive**, while developing their *knowledge of children's reading practices.*

Aims

Within my placement school, the staff had worked hard to create an ethos which valued reading, and effectively nurtured reading for pleasure. The majority of the children were confident readers and appeared to enjoy reading. Prior to the start of the school day, parents were invited into the school to read with their children.

 However, I found very little cross-over between the books children chose to read at home and those read in school. It seemed that the one clear difference between the books read at home and those in the classroom was *choice*. A positive relationship has been found between choice and motivation (Schraw, 1998 cited in Clark and Rumbold, 2006). Gambrell (1996 cited in Clark and Rumbold, 2006) found that 80% of children responded to the question 'What book have you enjoyed the most?' with one that they had chosen. And there is even research to suggest that motivation to read is more important than a child's social background (Guthrie, Schafer, and Huang, 2001 cited in Gambrell, 2011:172).
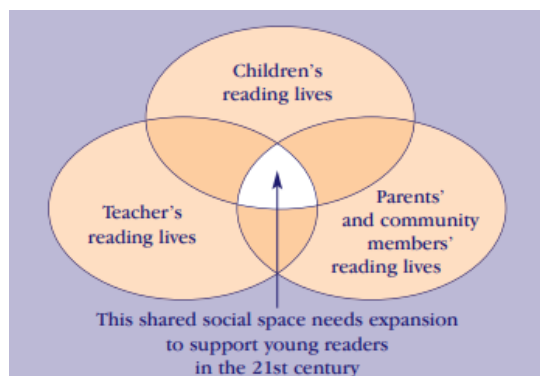

Children's reading lives

Teacher's reading lives

Parents' and community members' reading lives

This shared social space needs expansion to support young readers in the 21st century

Figure 2. A model for the development of shared reading lives: diversity and collaboration.

Within my practice, I aimed to create a **reciprocal and interactive reading community**, supported by a pedagogy which provided *social reading environments, informal book talk, inside-text talk and recommendations.* I hoped to combine the children's two 'reading worlds'. Bhabha (1994 cited in Perkins, 2015:90) explains a 'third space theory', which describes a neutral space where alternate perspectives can be valued and discussed. "A teacher of reading can allow children to bring the knowledge and experiences of reading they have at home and relate them to the new experiences and learning they encounter at school" (Perkins, 2015:90). And Moje et al. (2004) felt, "That when home experiences of reading [were] brought into school, children's learning [was] enriched" (cited in Perkins, 2015:90).

Outline

I hoped to intrinsically motivate (Ryan and Desi, 2000 cited in Clark and Rumbold, 2006) the children to read, generating a desire to read which stemmed from a personal interest; seeing reading as valuable; being curious to learn more; and seeing satisfaction in mastering or assimilating ideas (Wigfield and Guthri, 1997 cited in Clark and Rumbold, 2006).

I created a space where the children could share the material they had previously or were currently reading for pleasure. Within the classroom, I developed a 'reading wall'. Every day, one child would share with the class, and discuss what they had enjoyed about their reading and why they would recommend it to their peers. At the end of the school day, I would update the wall to display their favourite book and their quotes.

In the morning, children would be able to visit the wall and remind themselves of the class's favourite books. This activity was designed to give reading a 'voice' within the classroom and offer an active reading environment, to allow the children to see reading as something which could be completed purely for enjoyment, and to provide children - who perhaps would not typically identify themselves as 'readers' – with an opportunity to become part of a 'reading community'.

Impact

Although it could be argued that by asking the children to share their reading journeys with the class they were motivated by extrinsic factors: reading for recognition, grades and competition (Wigfield and Guthrie, 1997), the process was extremely beneficial to both myself and the children. I was able to gain an insight into their reading practices and identify the features of books which appealed to the individual children.

The children took great pleasure in the activity – checking the wall every morning for the updated images and quotes. The interactive nature of the wall and its constant evolution maintained the children's engagement in the project.

The children appreciated the celebration of books which had not previously been accessible within school - in the classroom there were no copies of any of the books the children chose to put on the wall. The process also supported children who had not yet begun their journey with reading for pleasure, as they were encouraged to engage in the discussion of reading and received recommendations from their peers.

Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

I have begun to develop a practice which values the pleasure reading provides and created an opportunity to share my own personal enthusiasm for reading. Within the classroom, a passion for reading needs to be made visible and practitioners should ensure it can be accessed by all. As I continue my practice, I will value children's reading journeys, by engaging in discussion of stories and sharing the enjoyment they bring.

References

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