



Reading for Pleasure in a Hospital School: merging art with science.

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Context

I work as a science teacher in The Children's Hospital School at Great Ormond Street and University College Hospitals. We work with children who are in-patients at both of these hospitals across the entire educational spectrum; Nursery, Primary, Secondary and SEND. I became involved in a Teachers as Readers Group (TRG) set up by a colleague (see the case study *Reading for Pleasure in a Hospital School: a Teachers' Reading Group*).

OU Research inspiration and rationale

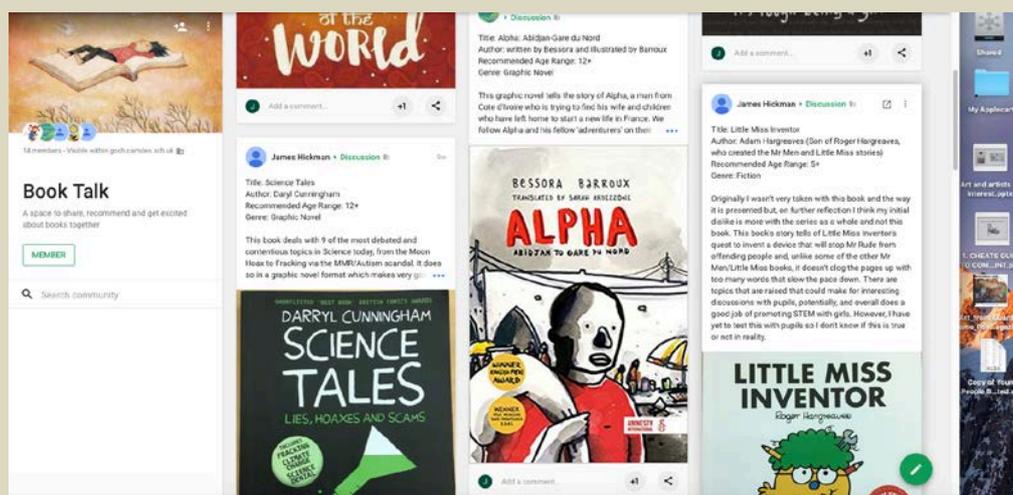
From hearing about the group through my colleague, and knowing the personal benefits and joys that I gain from reading, both fiction and non-fiction, I wanted to personally focus my approach on increasing my knowledge of children's literature, which I currently felt was very poor, and becoming a 'Reading Teacher' because I felt that sometimes the message you present through your actions can be just as, if not more, powerful than the message you present through your teaching and I want children to engage with literature of all kinds.

Aims

Personally, my initial aim was to increase my knowledge of children's literature that had a specific science focus; either the non-fiction based personal stories (Women In Science/Science Tales), the factual explorations of interesting ideas (100 Things To Know About Space/I Contain Multitudes) or the fictional stories (Little Miss Inventor) so that I could inform children of these stories and books that may be of interest to them when teaching my own subject. This would show that I am not only a science teacher who reads but also a science reader who teaches. I also have a passion for science and hope to use reading as a way to engage children with the subject. Any literature I come across that can help me do this is always going to add value to my practice.

Outline

Our group met on 5 occasions across the course of the academic year and during these meetings we would share the books we had read and our thoughts on these books. Each teacher had different personal foci and so the reading list discussed was diverse and spread across the entire educational spectrum. We also set up an online platform where we shared (and continue to share) reviews of these books, and other books we read. (For more details of this programme, see the case study *Reading for Pleasure in a Hospital School: a Teachers' Reading Group.*)



Impact

From a personal perspective I have felt that the impact on my own practice has been to inform that ways in which I ask all pupils I work with about their current reading habits and try to understand what may have led them to be the readers they are. I spend more time talking about my own reading habits and, when finding out about theirs, try to suggest books that I feel they may enjoy or talk about books I have enjoyed recently, thus showing how I am a reader and how much I value reading. I feel that this has created an irreversible and very pleasing change, but it is also just the beginning of my journey along this path of weaving reading into my teaching. This is a career-long path I will walk and so I must continue to engage with the process to be able to pass the benefits of reading on to all the children I work with.

Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

As I have moved forward in this practice I have become more focused on being able to recommend books to children that I can actually give them a copy to read. I want to help create a reading community within, and hopefully then outside, the hospital through discussions about a book we have both read. This means moving away from a complete focus on science-based books and more onto books that we have access to in our school library.

This focus will also help to show that, as a reader, I am not defined by my role as a science teacher and can merge the arts with the sciences in a way that may sometimes surprise children.

As a group, the TRG are going to continue our meetings but start to become more streamlined in our group practice by all reading the same book so that we generate more of a conversation, rather than a collection of monologues. And we are hoping to open up our online reading platform to allow all children to see the books we have read and our thoughts on them so that they can be a part of our conversations too.

