

Developing a culture of reading for pleasure in Year 6

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Context

Jesse Gray in Nottingham is a larger than average primary school in an affluent area. Although our children are lucky enough to have books bought for them at home, we found that there were still children who claimed to *'hate' reading*; many felt that it was a *chore* that they had to complete and they felt *pressure to finish a book* because their parents had told them to. We wanted to change this and felt it was our duty to allow children to love reading again!

As a school we have recently shifted to whole class reading and therefore reading was on our School Improvement Plan. Following a conference, we realised that we needed to reprioritise reading for pleasure and reconsider the message our classrooms gave about reading and the time we afforded it.

OU Research inspiration and rationale

Following a conference on RfP where the key note speaker was Teresa Cremin, and then by reading 'Building Communities of engaged readers' by Cremin et al. (2014), our Literacy achievement leader (Charly Soulsby) was inspired to boost the profile of reading for pleasure at Jesse Gray.

Based on this research and our own questionnaire outcomes, confirming the need for change, we decided as a Y6 team to focus on the strands:

4. *Reading Teachers: teachers who read and readers who teach*
5. *Reading communities that are reciprocal and interactive.*

We knew that by reinvesting our own time in reading children's books, and by sharing this with our classes, that we would be able to give higher quality recommendations to the children that needed them. We are firm believers in the fact that there is no such thing as a reluctant reader, only a child who has not been given the right book YET. This, therefore, became our mission- read the best books, recommend the best books and allow every child to find pleasure in reading!

Aims

- To become Reading Teachers and up-to-date with children's literature
- To foster a culture of book bletcher
- To encourage genuine peer to peer book recommendations as research has shown

ones we could never finish -the children felt like they had been set free and stopped wasting time plodding through a text they hated that would probably turn them off reading entirely.

We gave them time to choose the right book for them and held RfP reading afternoons which involved biscuits, blankets and hundreds of first chapters printed off from [Lovereadingsforkids. https://www.lovereadingsforkids.co.uk/](https://www.lovereadingsforkids.co.uk/)

They were invited to read as many first chapters as they could and the following day we were both inundated by emails from parents thanking us for the time we had given it and children who had lists of books they wanted to read!



Displays in the Year 6 Area

Our research made us re-evaluate the message our classrooms were sending out about reading. Our displays above our book cases had inference questions littered all over them-it was only when we reflected on this that we realised just how off putting this was! Without hesitation, the questions came off and we replaced them with some of the best book covers we could find. These book covers were then made interactive with some simple speech bubbles that the children could write on to make their recommendations clear to their peers.

We now know that peer to peer recommendations have far more impact than even teacher recommendations and this gave them the space to do it in one sentence rather than having to write a turgid book review! In 6M they use their display as a working wall with new book covers chosen and added by the children themselves. They have ownership of the display and it is now a vital part of the classroom.





Spreading the book love

As Literacy Achievement Leader, Charly has made it her mission to spread the book love across school.

"I started a library club this year for Y5/6. Their role was to look after the library, keep it tidy and scan the books in and out, but it was also to help me in my mission to develop a culture of reading across school. I gave them complete ownership of the library and they chose what they wanted to add to it and how it should be run; they bought bean bags and made sure that each year group had its own dedicated day. They chose the books that we ordered this year and we invested heavily in up to date fiction. They choose the books that are put on display and we try to have as many covers facing outwards as possible.

*We also gave out **surprise Christmas presents for each class**. We chose 5 brilliant texts for each classroom, wrapped them up and left them in each classroom without any explanation in the run up to Christmas. This created such a buzz around school - the children were so excited about the presents left and it made each book even more special and made books important again! I also led a curriculum evening and shared my passion for RfP with all the parents that attended, it was crucial to share my knowledge and ensure that they understand just how important RfP is and how they can achieve it at home"*



Dear whoever you are.....
Thank you so so much for the AMAZING and LOVELY books! The books are so unusual and rare we have never seen them before - ever! What a great surprise it made us so happy!
Merry Christmas!
Thank you! Love 1WV

Impact

Jack
Good book recommendations!

Max
This year the teacher (Mrs Soulsby) helped people to find the right book and to take time to read a book e.g. don't just skip at the first page.

Giving me amazing books to read.
Alia

Maddie
• Reading books as a class/class books.
• Reading displays.
• Just having time to read our books in class before or during school.

Reading the school books here inspired me to read more.
Cohen

- Jesse Gray have brought lots more good books this year.
- We have talked about books a lot more.
- Teachers have helped us to find the right book.

Sophie

Talking about lots of different books and giving a book a try.
Heaven

Mrs Soulsby has helped me become a reader as she found me the ~~write~~ right book such as (holes, by Louis Sachar; the footballer books and the David Baddiel like ani-mal.com.)
Oli Booth

Having chats about books and listening to other people's book recommendations.
Mia

I found the right book which made me really like reading.
Oscar

this year I think what has made me is that the teachers made me read new books until I found the right one for me.
Izzy

the displays with great recommended books have inspired me to read more.
Ellen

These quotes speak for themselves. The children were asked what has helped them to become a reader this year and this is what they said:

Oscar: "I've asked for 5 books for Christmas... I got them all from there!" (Points to

display)

Sophie-response to the question “What made you a reader?”: “The year 6 teachers, because they actually talk to us about books”

Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

Becoming a reading teacher has made us fall back in love with reading!

We feel so much more confident blethering about books now and children across school feel like they can talk to us about what they are reading every day because we make the effort to do so with them. As soon as you open that dialogue with children it becomes second nature; on the days we forget to talk about books they start up the conversations anyway!

Our efforts have paid off and our classrooms are now filled with book blether, peer to peer recommendations and stacks of books that have been carefully selected through research, Twitter recommendations and books we have given ourselves the opportunity to read. Not only have we succeeded in making the majority of our classes' readers (there's always one who still hasn't found the right book YET), but we have also seen how this has impacted on their attainment in both reading and writing.

We cannot wait to do this all again with our new classes next year!