

# Book corners on a budget

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## Context

We are the English Team at Ladygrove Park Primary School in Didcot, Oxfordshire. The school is a two form entry, outstanding school serving a suburban community. The number of children with SEND, EHCPs and EAL is about the national average.

Traditionally our school performs well in end of key stage assessments in reading. However, part of our school development plan this year comprised of promoting reading for pleasure; encouraging children to acquire the *will*, not just the skill.

## OU Research inspiration and rationale

We completed the 'Review Your Practice' documents which were created as part of the Teachers As Readers project (Cremin et al., 2009), from which we acknowledged that our communal reading areas did not foster a love of reading. They were often used for storing work books, multiple dictionaries, and were filled with old, well-used books. Due to class layout, teachers often commented on how difficult it was to create an inspiring space that children wanted to read in. Teachers were also pressed for time.

We felt that the elaborate reading corners we found online represented an unrealistic goal. Keeping these displays fresh, tidy and up-to-date would take lots of time on the children's part - time that could be spent reading! Updating 15 books corners would also be extremely expensive and we had no allocated budget. Therefore our aim was to complete the project without spending a penny!

## Aims

- To create inviting and inspiring places to read with the children
- To organise material with children so that they have ownership of their reading environment and are more likely to use the space
- To organise reading spaces so that they are accessible

## Outline

During the planning stage of this project we gathered the views of the children. This is what they told us:

"It's really hard to find books we want."

"I try to find the next book in a series and I can never find it." "The dictionaries are taking up too much room."

"It's difficult to find the books we want; they are messy. Could we label them?"

"It doesn't look like a book-corner, just shelves."

After collecting the views of children and completing a learning walk to evaluate the effectiveness of books corners, we decided to undertake a whole school revamp as an event one afternoon.



The expectations were explained to teachers in a staff meeting, and photos and ideas were shared showing how books corners might look. We lead an assembly to raise the profile and give the children some time to plan how they were going to organise their book corners. Teachers followed up the assembly with a discussion. Staff raided their garages and cupboards and a plea was put out into our weekly newsletter for donations of cushions, throws, baskets and anything else that could be used. We found that children wanted to bring something in to make their book corner a more inviting space; they were owning it!

We spent an afternoon revamping the book corners, and in assembly the following week before and after photos were shared with the classes.

## Impact

The impact of revamping our book corners has been better than we expected. The afternoon created such a buzz and comments such as, “I remember this book; I’m going to read it again” and “I can’t believe I haven’t read this book before” rang out along the corridors. Not only did the afternoon ensure that the book corners were organised and accessible, but it also refreshed and renewed the children’s interest in the books in their classroom.



Each class decided to organise their book corner in different ways. Some organised books in alphabetical order (by author), others chose to group books according to genre, whilst others created small sections for popular authors. We also had children making a range of inspiration quotations, recommendation posters/boards, reading buddies and bookmarks which were made available to readers. Some children even used upside down yoghurt pots as book stands (very thrifty!). Walking around the whole school, there really was a lovely sense of

everyone being involved and contributing in some way. Children were required to use their imaginations to use what they had to carry out their vision.

Although the impact will need to be measured over time (and I am sure the book corners will need to be refreshed at regular intervals throughout the year), the children immediately expressed more positive views about their revamped areas. Some children told us, “It is now more of a calm space where I can find the book I want”; “It looks like a place I would like to read in”; “I have found a book I’d like to read.”



## Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

Without TaRs research we believe that our reading corners would have remained the same. Reflecting on your own preferred environment for reading is certain to make you consider whether the environments in your school appeal to your children. One of our teachers summed it up nicely. She said, “In the past I always spent the school holidays creating elaborate book corners for the children. I thought this was what they wanted but now I see that I was doing it all wrong. I should have allowed my children to decide on how they wanted the book corner to look. It is for them after all (however much it upsets my desire for everything to look perfect)!”