

Reading for Pleasure Pedagogies: Opening the Reading for Pleasure Treasure Chest! Leo Ford



Context

- I'm deputy head here at Whitfield St James' Church of England (VC) Primary School in Glossop, the High Peak in Derbyshire. We are situated very close to Greater Manchester.
- We are a larger than average primary school which serves a diverse socio-economic community. Our curriculum is delivered through a thematic approach and our aim is to 'deliver an interesting and engaging curriculum that encourages children to enjoy learning, be inquisitive and think independently'.

Rationale

- Since starting in January, it was clear that Reading for Pleasure wasn't something that was undertaken in every classroom or something that happened at different times in the school day.
- In terms of choosing what to read, children were offered a library book but often this was to be read at home, reading for pleasure was only done in some classes. There seemed to be little pleasurable reading taking place outside of classrooms and the quiet area of the playground had become the opposite.
- After attending an Open University Reading for Pleasure conference in Macclesfield and looking around the host school, it was clear to me that I needed to explore how to use all available spaces in our school to give the children the opportunity to read for pleasure. Reading for Pleasure research (Cremin et al., 2014) demonstrates that well-stocked, attractive book areas, time to browse these resources and unstructured access to comfortable and appealing reading areas helps broaden children's reading choices and encourage informal book talk. It raises the profile of reading, inviting children to undertake this activity and can spark informal book talk. Reading is a social activity, and I was very keen to develop the children's desire to read.

Aim

The aim of this project is to encourage reading for pleasure at different points in the school day - especially during lunch times and playtimes and to re-establish the quiet area in the playground where children can choose to read for pleasure.

Outline

I conducted a whole school 'What is Reading for Pleasure?' assembly. In this, we looked at what reading for pleasure might mean and I discussed how my love of reading has changed over time (from a reluctant reader to an 'everyday' reader). I introduced the children to my favourite books and we talked about theirs.

The English subject leader/librarian/school librarians have updated the school library and sent a letter to parents asking for books to be donated to school - the amount we received was overwhelming. We have also invested thousands to buy new and updated books in order to entice our readers.

The librarian and I met with our school librarians to ask them to choose books for a new Reading for Pleasure chest, making sure that there is a range of differing genres, styles and texts to tempt different age ranges. They have also been bag packing in Tesco to raise even more funds!

I then led another assembly to introduce the Reading for Pleasure chest and we discussed the importance of RfP in school, sharing books with each other and having discussions about what we like and equally importantly, what we don't like about reading. My aim was to open discussions about our reading preferences and behaviours and to encourage the children to see each other and the adults as readers.

Impact

Since introducing the Reading for Pleasure chest, I have noticed an increase in children using quiet areas to share a book, read with each other and also noticed some children choosing to bring in their own books from home to read in these spaces.

On occasions, when someone has forgotten to take the Reading for Pleasure chest outside, I have had children coming to find me to ask where it is. We have also had children asking for different books in the chest and recommending books to the librarians.

Impact

In order to continue to build book stock, we sent a request home to parents for book donations; our community rose to the occasion providing many more new books!

The children also bag packed at our local Tesco store to raise money to fund our library and this is now a focus for our PTA fundraising.





Reflections

By creating attractive and inviting reading environments and providing a wider range of texts to tempt the children, I have seen that children are more likely to choose to read in their free time. As the Teachers as Readers research (Cremin et al., 2014) suggests, these interactions are informal, social and reader-led and we are beginning to see a community of young readers developing.

Within school, I need to promote RfP even further. Ensuring that children have a wider range of books (chosen by themselves) in the chest and updating this regularly will be the first steps.

I would also like to develop social reading environments as part of classroom practice, making it more of a priority in school time, maybe during guided reading sessions or at specific times of the day to enable children to choose reading material and undertake in informal talk about their reading, learning from and with each other and adults.