

The Leys Primary and Nursery School



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READER OF THE WEEK

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Context

Our school is a 2-3 form school based in Stevenage. We are seeking to promote reading for pleasure in our school to enable all children to fulfil their potential as we understand that reading is a critical part of attainment.



OU research inspiration and rationale

According to The Building Communities of Readers research project by Teresa Cremin et al. (2014), talking about texts and talking about reading is at the heart of reading for pleasure. They expressed that this book talk was informal and highly reciprocal; it was often spontaneous and involved two-way teacher-child / child-teacher and child-child recommendations and was found in many other un-assessed reading focused activities. This piece of research found that book-talk within the class was fundamental at helping children to be encouraged and enjoy reading.

Other research also demonstrates the importance of book talk, such as Tricia Ebarvia's (2015) reflections on the importance that informal book talk had on her classroom. Moreover, readers need to engage in conversations (McIntyre, 2007; Peterson & Eeds, 2007) and share their own unique responses to literature (Rosenblatt 1978). The current emphasis on guided reading groups often places too great of a focus on strategic reading, with no or limited opportunity to engage readers in sustained and meaningful discussions about literature (Short, 1999), nor the opportunity to develop a reading life (Cooper, 2009).

Aims

- To encourage peer to peer book recommendations so that children can discover new authors/genres which they may have not experienced before
- To create an environment where reading is expressed, encouraged and rewarded
- To make time, on a weekly basis, to ensure book talk is made a priority

Outline

We completed a whole school survey which found that reading talk within the classroom was insufficient. It was found that teachers were discussing texts that were read within literacy and guided reading lessons, but this was on a more formal basis - regarding vocabulary,

sentence types etc. Many teachers stated that they rarely spoke informally to the children about what they were reading at home or books they enjoyed and rarely discussed a range of authors and poets with the children.

In light of this we chose to have a whole school focus on "Informal book talk, inside-text talk and recommendations". In order to do this, we have created a 'Reader of the week'.

One child from each class, from Nursery to Year 6, discusses their home book in an informal way each week.

This child is chosen by their class teacher which allows every child the chance to discuss their book.

Ideas of things to be discussed are as followed:

- Introduce the text (title, author)
- Provide a very brief introduction of the plot (no spoilers). Students are welcome to discuss themes, characters, or conflicts that piqued their interest, but must remember that the purpose is not analysis.
- Share their personal impression
- Share a passage or a quote from the novel
- Conclude and persuade and entice the audience to read this text. They should also share what type of person would like this novel.

The child also completes a short book review, differentiated for age and ability, and this is displayed around their classroom book corner. A bookmark is also placed in the book that was discussed with rating stars attached.

A teacher or teaching assistant in each class also discusses the book they are reading with the same aspects of discussion as the children.

Impact

Although our 'Reader of the week' project has only been in place for a short time we have found many benefits:

- Many children are keen to be 'Reader of the week' and are excited to discuss their book with their class

- Children of all ages are developing skills to describe and interpret the book they are reading
- Children are enthusiastic about reading the book that has been recommended due to the review that they have heard from their peers
- Many children look through the book corner to find the books which have the bookmark in order to read that book
- The book reviews which are on display are being looked at by children from other classes
- More teachers are reading a range of different genre books in order to discuss these with their class
- Some children have decided to complete the book review even if they are not 'reader of the week' which highlights their enthusiasm
- Children are reading books that they may not have considered before
- More children are reading daily at home and this is highlighted through their reading records which that teacher signs daily



Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

This project highlighted the importance of informal reading within the classroom.

I feel that the project was very effective, and we met all of our aims, however I believe we will see more of an impact over time.

I was very impressed with the enthusiasm that the children had throughout - they were very keen to read each other's recommended books and be 'Reader of the week'. I also found that the more enthusiasm the teacher had in expressing and verbalising the book they were reading the bigger impact it had on the children - they began to model expectations.

For future practice, I have decided to extend this project further to involve recommendations throughout the whole school. We will make a whole school display with recommended books from each year group.