Reading for pleasure pedagogy:
Social reading environments

Practical classroom strategies

"Lots of things have developed together though the environment… The climate and culture of reading… Like knowing that some of the children are excited by graphic novels, similar to their reading habits with comics I suppose and computers. Children relax – that creates an atmosphere too."

(TaRs teacher, Birmingham)

1. **Create a comfortable environment**

   First steps can begin with altering the look of your classroom so that you feel it is a space where reading for pleasure is valued. This might mean changing the physical configuration and the displays.

   Think about where you like to read and ask the children where they are comfortable reading. It may not be at a table or on the carpet area, but in a different space. If possible, plan together how you would create the space(s) and ask for advice about what the school could provide to resource the area. Once it has been constructed, review how the children use the space and ask for their opinions and how they may like to see it developed.

2. **Develop book areas/nooks/corners for reading**

   Any area devoted to reading carries significant messages about the value placed on reading in classrooms. Consider how you will create s book area or spaces in your classroom that offer comfort and promotion of reading for pleasure. Make time for children to use these. This might need to be timetabled, but could also include spontaneous times during the week.

3. **Create reading displays**

   Displays carry significant messages and those featuring personal, home and community aspects of reading can add wide appeal to young readers. In order to celebrate and share these displays, include some focused on readers, some on texts/authors and some on where folk like to read. Be sure to update these and make them interactive.

You might like to develop displays of:

- class 'Hot Reads', where you and the class display the texts you are currently enjoying
- 'Wonder Walls' where the focus is on questions and answers about a particular author
- a genre- e.g. poetry or short stories
- a theme/cross curricular topic with related fiction as well as non-fiction

4. Foster interactive reading environments

Fostering an interactive reading environment is not just about what happens in the classroom reading area/corner – it is about the ethos and interaction around reading and readers moment by moment. Seek to create an environment where children feel relaxed and want to share and discuss their reading. You might:

- prompt book chats after independent reading time
- create a regular recommendations slot
- provide post-it notes for children to provide comments on/in books
- collate an anthology of children's book reviews about your reading aloud books with visuals of the books and commentary space
- provide props for playing with/re-creating stories

5. Resource the reading environment

Even if the school budget is limited, think creatively about how you can provide reading materials that will engage children. The Schools' Library Service recommended spending per child is £10 per year but that is not always possible. Consider:

- bringing in widely available and free resources – e.g. leaflets, brochures, appropriate materials from websites
- using social/schools' library service where available
- asking the children to bring in comics and magazines from home
- running Book Swap days where children bring books, receive a voucher and choose a book to take home (bookplates can be useful here to show ownership)
- seeking funding from Parent/Community Associations

6. Use children's ideas to celebrate reading

Discuss with the children how the reading environment, both physical and social, can be enhanced in the classroom. This might include:

- asking them to annotate photos/draw images of the reading area/corner and asking what they would like included/amended
- providing them with a map of the classroom/corridor areas/school and asking them for suggestions about where reading could be promoted
- inviting them to make suggestions about authors and texts they would like to see included in reading areas and the classroom generally

If possible, consider using any funding raised (for example from the PTA) to take children to a bookshop so that they can select texts of their own choice.

7. Develop role play areas based on fictional texts

Whatever the age of your class, role play areas can inspire children to engage more deeply with stories and characters. Choose a text or series of texts: this could be a novel that you are sharing during reading aloud time or that you know children are enjoying and talking about. Keep an element of surprise by adding items to the area on a frequent basis and ensure the children have time to explore the area. Where possible, this could also be in an outside area, it doesn't have to be huge.

8. Develop story boxes/bags based on texts

Story boxes and bags are an excellent way of developing children's understanding and enjoyment of texts, both fictional and non-fictional, and of promoting talk. They could be based on:

- particular stories (e.g. a traditional tale/ picture book you are currently sharing, a book and film you have been working on)
- themes (e.g. under the sea, superheroes, polar adventure)
- a text a child/children have enjoyed. They could be asked to develop their own story box/bags

In the box/bag you could include:

- objects related to the text
- characters in the text
- prompts on a label to encourage questions and talk

9. Liaise with the local library

Arranging a visit to the local library, especially if you can involve parents/carers in accompanying children can be great way into encouraging families to become library members. Provide times in school to ask children to share the library books they have borrowed and encourage them to add recommendations to the book corner/class anthology of recommendations.

Ask librarians into school to talk about events that are happening in the library too to foster the important notion that reading is not only something that happens in school but is a community event.

10. Developing reading environments beyond the classroom

Encourage children to see reading as something that happens not just in classrooms and at home but in wider communities. Consider:

- inviting authors in to school (where budgets allow)
- skyping/linking with other schools
- take part in national competitions. Examples include:
    - UKLA's Our class loves this book
      https://ukla.org/awards/our-class-loves-this-book-the-john-downing-award/
    - Reading Gladiators
      http://justimagine.co.uk/project/reading-gladiators/
    - Booktrust Read for my school
      http://www.booktrust.org.uk/programmes/primary/read-for-my-school/