



**READING
FOR PLEASURE**



**The Open
University**

Reading for pleasure pedagogy: Informal book talk, inside-text talk and recommendations

Research Summary



Whilst at the start of the *Teachers as Readers* (TaRs) project, teachers reported that during guided reading, comprehension sessions and indeed almost all literacy lessons, children were involved in talking about texts, they acknowledged that this was mainly teacher-led, often relating to vocabulary, grammatical features and specific lesson objectives. This was clearly necessary, but they recognised that there was almost no space and time for child-led book talk of a more informal conversational nature.

Through discussing their own current reading of adults' and children's books with one another in TaRs sessions, the teachers began to appreciate the motivating power of such book talk, the non-assessed nature of it and the way in which it led to book recommendations, tempting them to try new authors or texts. It was not easy however for the teachers to step aside from the prescribed and assessed agenda and make time for casual classroom conversations about what individuals were reading and what they thought of this.

Over time however, in response to the improved resources and environments and read aloud provision, this kind of talk flourished. Teacher involvement and interest in the children's talk about texts was key to the effective practice which developed. The project significantly extended Chambers' (1983) original conceptualisation of book talk to encompass a wider range of discourse about books and other texts, as well as talk about reading and being a reader. In TaRs, book talk involved close conversations, reader to reader (both teachers/ children and children/ children) about specific texts, characters and scenarios, named authors or poets *and* about themselves as readers, their preferences and practices.

Children were encouraged to talk to one another about their current reading and, over time, spontaneous child-led text talk also emerged. This child-initiated text talk, what the project named 'inside-text talk', complemented book talk and arguably enriched it. Children's 'books in common' - books that several friends or peers had read, and books that teachers read to the class, often several times - frequently formed the basis of children's inside-text talk conversations. In these, children would often quote from a text, (sometimes in unison) refer to a theme or character from a text and make connections to a text which demonstrated that they knew each other as readers.

Teachers realised that their growing knowledge of children's literature enabled them to join in such inside-text talk conversations with increased assurance and genuine engagement. Their knowledge also enabled them to make recommendations to children about what else they might find engaging to read. In many cases such recommendations became two-way as children also suggested books to their teachers.

The informal book talk and inside-text talk conversations that were documented were rooted in a shared pleasure in reading, an interest in others views and 'books in common'. Teachers initially viewed these as interesting conversational encounters but, as with reading aloud, over time they began to observe the pedagogic purposes of such social interaction in children's development as readers.

“...they need advice much more than I realised. Before the project our talk about books would be based on re-telling – say in guided reading they would have the book open ... and they would be looking back at it to remind themselves of the plot. Now, when we talk about reading it’s different talk, it’s about their enthusiasm for the book, what they have liked about it and why. It isn’t forced. ... I have just realised how important such talk is. It just wasn’t part of my thinking before.”

(TaRs teacher, Birmingham)

Thus a key impact of the classroom talk about texts was the shared understanding amongst children, between teachers and children, and amongst teachers, that reading is intrinsically worthy of discussion.

Adapted from pages 97-99 and 115-118 in Cremin, T., Mottram, M., Collins, F., Powell, S. and Safford, K. (2014) *Building Communities of Engaged Readers: Reading for pleasure*, London/New York: Routledge.

To read more about the research: see the Executive Summaries, related papers on <http://oro.open.ac.uk/>

or the core book

<https://www.routledge.com/Building-Communities-of-Engaged-Readers-Reading-for-pleasure/Cremin-Mottram-Collins-Powell-Safford/p/book/9781138777484>

or the UKLA/Primary National Strategy professional development guide to developing reading for pleasure (based upon TaRs, Cremin et al, 2010) at

https://ukla.org/shop/details/building_communities_of_readers1

