

New Horizons LEARNING CENTRE

Unlocking Potential
through Learning



The Building Blocks to Book Talk

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I am KS1 Leader at New Horizons Learning Centre a Social, emotional and mental health school in South Gloucestershire. We are across two sites, a primary and a secondary campus. I have a class of 7 pupils all who have EHCPs and are working below age related expectations.

This project links to one of the standards strands in our School Development Plan - **Reading across the school will be a key focus**, using the reading comprehension package (VIPERS) to support the development of reading.

OU Research inspiration and rationale

There is a general dislike to reading across the school, quite often linked to poor previous experiences, low self confidence or no excitement in sharing stories. In order to break down the barriers of reading and include pupil choice in the decisions I decided to focus on.

A reading for pleasure pedagogy which includes:

- *Social reading environments*
- *Informal book talk, inside-text talk and recommendations*

In the article Read Communities Why, What, How? (Cremin, 2019) shared the data that in England children who reported liking reading the most, scored, on average, 45-points more than those who reported that they do not like it in the PIRLS assessment, (McGrane et al., 2017).

Aims

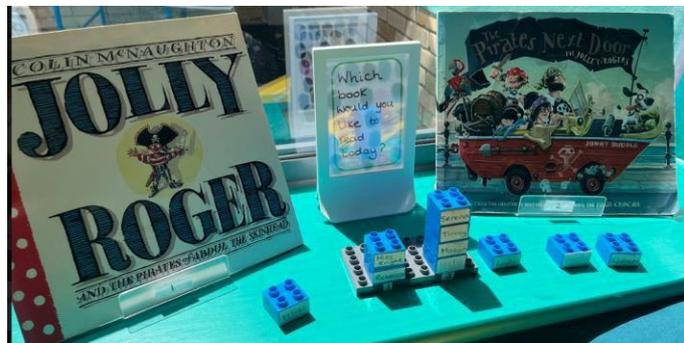
- Respond to lack of interest
- Encourage discussion around choice
- To introduce and discuss different types of texts
- To encourage links between books and engage in discussion
- To develop social reading environments

Outline

Where possible the children always had a story at the end of the school day, this was always the adult's choice and was quite often met by moans and groans from the children. Once started the children were engaged and followed the story but the excitement was not there.

The Building Blocks

During a week when we were looking at data handling and graphs in maths I introduced a building block voting system. All the children have a block with their name on as do the adults. Each day 2 books are displayed on stands in pride of place. They are carefully chosen to include a range of topic linked stories, non-fiction books, poetry books, magazines and encyclopedias etc.



The Book Talk

At first the focus was on the excitement of their book winning, hearing lots of “Yes my book won” or “Oh but I wanted to read the other one”. This quickly became an exciting part of the day with the children asking “Is it story time yet?”.

When reading the chosen texts, the adults in the class are able to discuss specific text types, features and similarities. After the story each day the children are invited to share a thought, feeling or memory linked to the story.

As the weeks went on, the engagement of the book voting station remained high, the children can be heard saying things like “This one looks like the other we have read”, “I want this one because it’s about real things” and even trying to persuade the adults and sway their voting “I think you should choose this one because



Being able to curate the books included in the choices means I am able to cater for individual pupil's interests, any themes that are popular and any religious or topical events like ‘Mr Wolf’s Pancakes’ on Shrove Tuesday or ‘The Queens Knickers’ around the time of the recent jubilee.

The Results

This practice has not only firmly established story time as an essential part of the school day that the children look forward to but has also engaged children in the book area as a whole. If we have shared a story during story time it is then added to the windowsill and often children like to revisit them the next day. The children have begun to look at the book area more regularly and talk to adults about the books they enjoy and why.



Reading Around the Classroom



The classroom reading area is along the windows, cushions have been added and blankets are readily available. Topic related books are on display for the term and these are changed with each theme to ensure pupils don't become bored of them. General books, stories that have a strong PSHE link and magazines are consistent and remain on display or in baskets to be selected. When accessing the enhanced provision (called 'Busy Bee' time) children can select books at any time and are

invited to read wherever they choose. This may be in the reading area, in the quiet den, outside or in the highly coveted 'Teacher's Chair'. For story time itself the amount of discussion has grown dramatically and we regularly move story time to outside. When we had ducklings in the classroom the children were very keen to read to them as well!



Impact

The Building Blocks to Book Talk work has fully engaged all pupils during story time in the KS1 classroom. They all show interest in casting their vote and making their choice and have usually done so by lunchtime every day.

The reading environment is being visited much more frequently and most children are keen to look at books either themselves, with an adult or occasionally together.

The development of RfP has become embedded in all staff's practice in KS1. In our Monday morning circle time adults often share that they read a book over the weekend or bought a new book, making pupils aware of teachers as readers.

I completed the KS1 reading survey before introducing the building blocks and then again at the beginning of June.

- **At the beginning no children said they loved reading, 50% said 'Reading is ok' and 50% said 'I don't like reading'.**
- **In June 42% said they loved reading and 58% said 'Reading is ok', which means nobody dislikes reading!!!**

In the initial survey **only 14% of pupils thought they were good at reading and this had increased to 58% in June.** The other 42% said they were ok at reading which means unlike the initial survey where 28% of pupils thought they were not good at reading yet, all pupils' perception of their own proficiency in reading has improved since starting the development work.

All of the children were also more confident in listing what they liked to read albeit stories, magazines, non-fiction etc or to name the books themselves. One child has developed a love for Mr Men stories, one loves to explore nonfiction books and share the knowledge he learns about the tallest, fastest things etc. The status of reading has been truly elevated amongst the children.

The children overall are beginning to become more familiar with stories that they enjoy and can explain why. One pupil explained 'I like this book (*The Lion Inside*) it's like the other one we read about the Koala (*The Koala Who Could*), I think it's because they were made by the same person' This opened up a discussion about finding authors who you enjoy and reading more of their work. We then went on to order Rachel Bright's latest book '*The Whale Who Wanted More*'.



Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

The development of the 'Building Blocks to Book Talk' has made a real difference. Next year I'll be sharing the model with all other classes across the Primary site. I have already had discussions with staff about how engaging it has been and as my class is mixed year 1 & 2 it will be easily carried up into KS2. Some teachers may be concerned about the lack of time, however the general timetable for the school day has been altered so that from September 2022 a designated reading time is ensured. I have had conversations with KS2 staff already about the variety of books and even though my class is not ready for chapter books, that is definitely something that can be included at KS2. It is vitally important for SLT and other staff to understand the value of 'just talking about books'.