

5| TRANSFERENCE OF READING FROM SCHOOL TO HOME



Alderwood
Primary School

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1| INTRODUCTION

I am currently employed as a Learning Support Assistant at Alderwood Primary School in Eltham and I have been there for the past 18 months. Before this, I worked as an Early Years Practitioner within the school's Children's Centre Childcare Provision. I have worked within early years since qualifying in 2005, with both the CACHE Diploma Level 3 in Early Years Education and the NVQ in Childcare Level 3.

Coming from an early year's background, I have always recognized the importance of early print and reading with children to increase their self-confidence and to encourage pre-writing skills and phonics knowledge. Being an LSA within a busy Year 3 class, one of my daily responsibilities includes sitting with the children to review their reading records which they use at home to record what they have been reading. The school's reading records are set out clearly, with helpful pointers and tips for parents and carers to aid the school in adequately supporting the children in what the parents feel they may need help with regarding reading. It was during the task that I noted that a proportion of the class were not engaging in reading at home in ways we would have liked, leading me to question why this was. Parents are busy people too, many need to work long hours to make ends meet and there are some who need more support and guidance about what they can do at home with their children to support their reading. The aim of this investigation was to empower children to believe and experience reading for pleasure in school in the hope that this pleasure will be transferred by them into the home and so see an impact upon them and their families.

2| THE ACTION

The core aims of investigations based around an action research approach is for an individual to identify an area of improvement they see as needed, and for the individual to carry out subsequent critical thinking and a slow reflection upon the changes made to the said area and so evaluate if the changes have caused any impact.

In planning my investigation, I wished to look at encouraging reading for pleasure in the home, and how at school we could implement measures to support children to recognize the pleasures involved. We felt that reading at home will be vital in encouraging all children to enjoy reading and so help them develop the skills needed to read fluently too. What could I do as a hands-on supportive LSA for these children to improve this for them?

I wanted to become better informed in this area of teaching and learning, I chose to do a number of theoretical and topical research readings. From reading Merisuo-Strom (2006), it was evident that there is a strong link between the types of reading materials available within school and the amount of independent reading completed by children, especially boys at home and elsewhere. There was a belief that there was sometimes all round embarrassment for some children in admitting to enjoy reading, and that many schools struggle to accommodate and provide reading materials desired by all the children. So for me and my investigation, evaluating and looking at what types of books and reading materials we have to ensure we provide a literacy rich environment is important, including catering for what boys wanted. Worthy et al (1999) also believed in this division between girls and boys and the willingness to read being related to the types of literature available within schools. So again, for both the groups that I was teaching and the school: do we foster children's interests concerning literacy and would this help in transferring reading from pleasure from school to home?

The report "Reading for Pleasure: What we Know Works" by the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (2014) was extremely useful as it gave clear information as to what had already been tried and tested in many schools. It led me to evaluate what we value in our school, and how families of the children under our care may not share the same reading ideals and practices.

From reading the research already conducted, I was particularly interested in our "reluctant readers", those who did not seem to read regularly at home and appeared not to enjoy reading in school. I worked daily with this group of children to encourage reading for pleasure, to become fully immersed within a text that may otherwise be out of reach to them be it from lack of opportunity to read such a book because of its lack of availability in the home. By becoming immersed in a text from me reading to them, with the pressure released from them of having to read the text themselves and being in such a relaxed atmosphere, I wanted to encourage a pleasure for reading. I further modified my practice to include small craft workshops centered on the text with the sample group to encourage the investment of interest in characters, themes and the story in the hope it improved the likelihood of the reluctant readers reading for pleasure.

I was aware that I was no longer just a Teaching Support Assistant but I was now becoming an investigator. I ensured that the teacher and Headteacher were aware of my work and approved all my actions. Although many of my actions were part of the normal practice of school life, some of what I was doing involved collecting different forms of data and discussing it with colleagues from other schools doing their own projects. This is why I asked for the assent of the children involved and talked to them about what I was doing and how any data collected from them would always be kept anonymous to those outside of the school. They were all keen to help me, but I made it clear that if they changed their minds that would be fine.

I wanted to evaluate what was already in place in school in terms of reading for pleasure. Perhaps what is already there could be modified to seek improvements in reading for pleasure in the home from children across the school. It is for this reason that I also sought to renovate the school library into a haven, with easily accessible, well-displayed and catalogued books for all. The children were given timetabled regular slots to access this and read freely, to enjoy a choice of texts otherwise limited to them in their classroom book areas. The school library had no regular adult to supervise it, with no filing system, defined fiction and non-fiction sections and limited seating areas suitable for children above KS1. Providing children with a more diverse range of books to use in their homes may offer increased levels of reading for pleasure at home.

With any form of investigation, observations are a vital part in evidence gathering and in measuring the results of any intervention put in place for their success. With the group of children, I discussed reading with the children, alongside the reading group activities to gauge their enjoyment in such activities and to gather suggestions from them on how this can be improved and changed. I also conducted regular conversations with my class teacher, English subject leader and Head of School regarding how the project was taking shape. Reflection was to be continual, always looking at what works best for the sample group, class and individuals and reasoning as to why this was.

3| EVALUATION OF THE ACTION

A Small Survey

I believed it was important to also look at the class as a whole, especially when comparing the research I had previously read concluding that boys and girls can read differently, often choosing their preferred texts according to different criteria. To do this I felt it was best to conduct a simple questionnaire, giving multiple choice options and small open questions so each child was able to access the task regardless of their ability. The aim of this was to give an open and honest opinion about reading at home, the types of materials they enjoyed reading and what they felt helped them to read at home. Could we offer any of these things suggested by the children themselves that could make a positive impact upon their home reading?

Results for this could be easily collated into measurable data:

1. Preferred choice of text to read, non-gender specific.

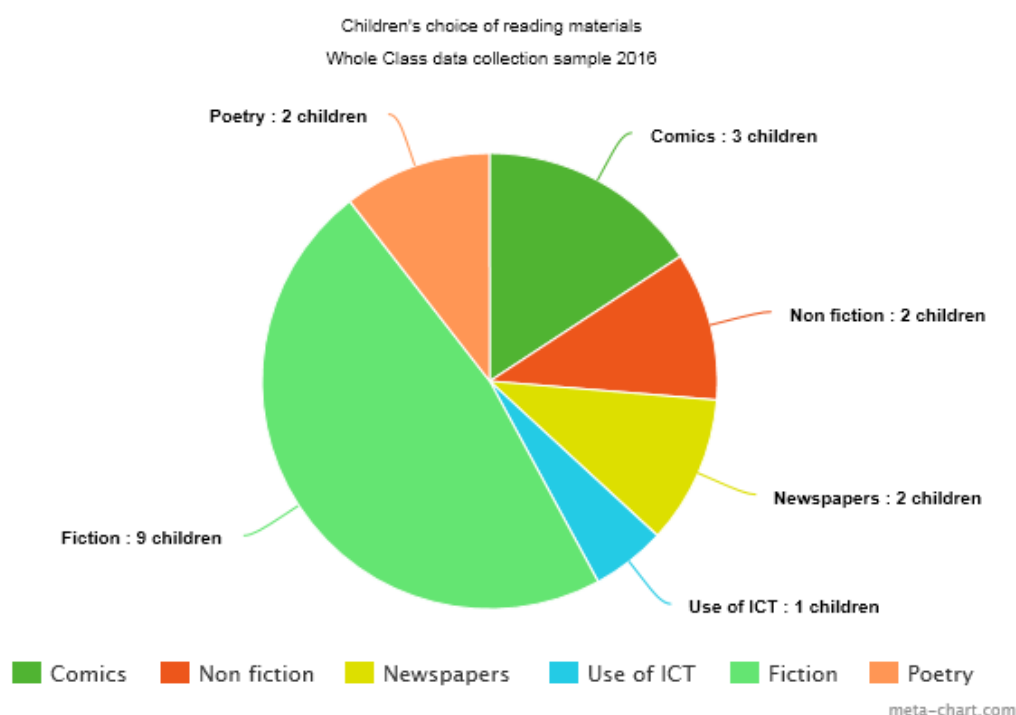




Fig.1 – School library.

4 | REFLECTION AND IMPACTS ON PRACTICE

Upon starting my investigation, I was of the opinion that I could change the world, by engaging all children in books and creating beautiful intimate spaces for them to read.

My investigation looked for ways to highlight the importance of reading for pleasure and to encourage children to begin to understand that reading can bring them pleasure too. I hoped that by raising the profile in school it may encourage more reading for pleasure at home.

The investigation convinced me that more needs to be done:

1. Creating a reading guide for parents that describes what they can be done at home with their children. Making them understand that it is not always about reading lengthy texts and books, it can be as simple as instructions, comics and signs whilst out.
2. Continuing the Reading for Pleasure scheme in class and to the whole school. To operate on a termly basis with at first reluctant readers, but hopefully with all children over the course of the year to empower them to love texts and create the desire to want to read away from school.
3. Possibly opening our school library with an official borrowing scheme, providing children access to a range of literature that they could share in the home that they would otherwise not have access to. This would need strict staff supervisions, consistent monitoring and must be parent approved and supported.

After this Project, I have come to simple conclusions... read to a child and they will enjoy a story. To enjoy a story is to have a desire to read and know more. Moreover, to have this empowers a child to become an independent reader.

5 | BIBLIOGRAPHY

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