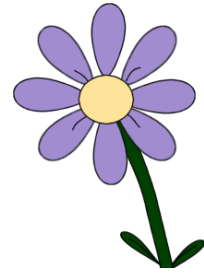




Blossoming into Life-Long Readers

Hannah Burgess



Context

I am a second year, BA Hons Primary Education (5-11) student teacher at Sheffield Hallam University. For this project, I worked with a mixed Y3/4 class, at a junior school in Chesterfield. I was fortunate enough to be working with a school that really valued reading, especially reading for pleasure.



OU Research inspiration and rationale

From the outset, I was inspired by the Teachers as Readers (TaRs) research (Cremin et al., 2014), which highlights that in order to foster Reading for Pleasure effectively, teachers must have excellent knowledge of children’s literature in order to promote and encourage children’s sharing of books.

As noted previously, because the school had such an incredible ‘Reading for Pleasure’ ethos, the children were already very passionate about reading. Therefore, I needed to consider ways in which I could take this interest and develop it further. From observations, I noticed that the children were always eager to ask the teacher what books they should read next. In addition, I observed two children summarise their books together and then, swap them with each other. This suggested to me that the children would perhaps benefit from an area in which they could recommend books to each other more regularly and openly. I was inspired to research this in more depth and therefore, I decided to conduct a survey to gain pupil’s opinions on reading.

Research Rich Pedagogies

Girl Boy

Do you enjoy reading?

Yes Sometimes No

Do you like to read at home for fun?

Yes Sometimes No

Do you struggle with knowing what to read next?

Yes Sometimes No

Is there somewhere in your classroom which helps you decide what to read next?

Yes Sometimes No

Research Rich Pedagogies

As expected, an astonishing 95% of children said that they enjoyed reading. My final question was ‘Is there somewhere in your classroom which helps you decide what to read next?’; this related solely to book recommendations. Interestingly, 83% of children said there was already an area which helps them to decide what they should read next.

I wanted to delve deeper and find out from pupils what could make this area even better. Listed below are just a few comments the children made...

Children's Comments:

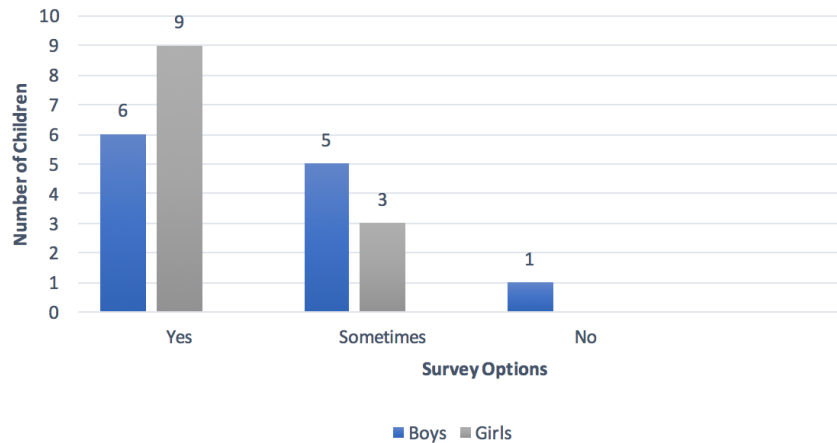
📖 "It would be better if we had a recommending area, where the books that are really good go".

📖 "It would be better if we could recommend to each other".

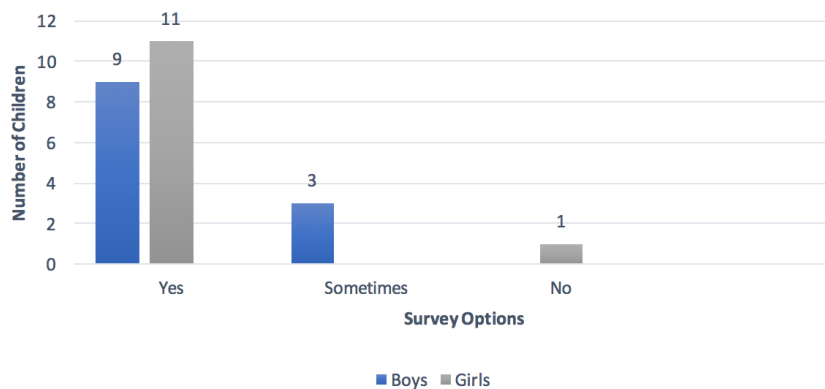
📖 "It would be even better if there was a reading wall because you would know what you want to read".

From this research, I decided it would be useful to create a reading space where children could recommend books to each other.




Do You Enjoy Reading?



Is There Somewhere In Your Classroom Which Helps You Decide What To Read Next?



Aims

-  To increase my own subject knowledge of children's literature; enabling me to be able to recommend books to children.
-  To encourage children to develop their own subject knowledge, allowing them to explore a wider range of reading texts.
-  To create a reading environment which offers children the opportunity to make book recommendations.

These specific aims all sought to respond to the needs of the children and school. This is because I was adding another dimension to their already high RfP ethos by creating a space where opportunities for reading were widened.

Outline

Firstly, I created a time for both myself and the children to discuss books. I decided the best way to do this was by holding a book club. I was able to do this over a few afternoons by taking a group of children out each time. During this time, the children were able to explore the class book-shelf, the school library and use the iPads to find a book they had read and enjoyed. After this time, I asked the children to design a summarised version of their favourite book by getting the children to create mini books. On the different pages, I asked the children to:

Page 1) Draw a front cover of their recommended book.

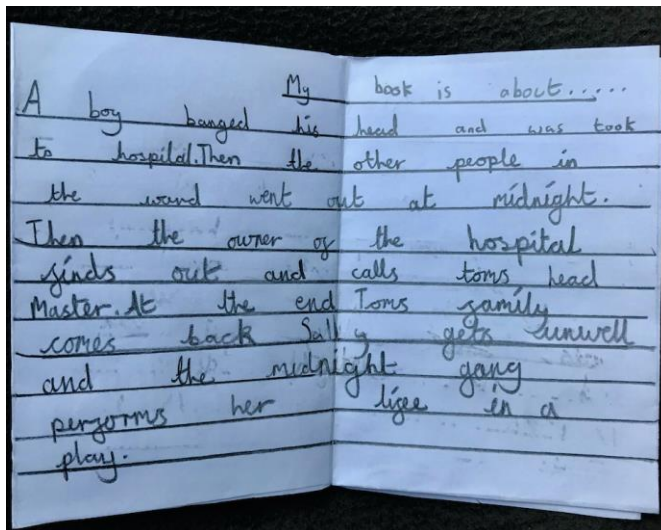
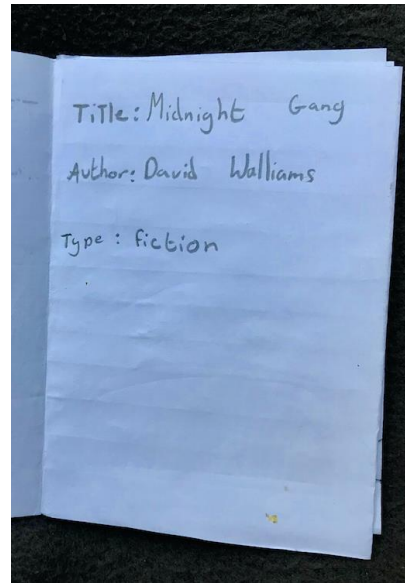
Page 2) Include the book title, author and whether the book was fiction or non-fiction.

Page 3-4) Write a short review of their book.

Page 5-6) Recommend their book to someone else in the class who they think would enjoy their book. Give it a rating out of 5 stars.

Once the children had created their mini books, I displayed them all so that they were dangling from a tree, which was then placed in the classes reading corner. The class teacher and I also created a summarised version of our favourite books, which were then also displayed. This worked well as the children were seeing the teachers act as 'reading role-models', which sparked children's interest and engagement.

In addition, extra books were left beside the reading tree for children to add to this if and when they wanted; encouraging proactive reading for pleasure.



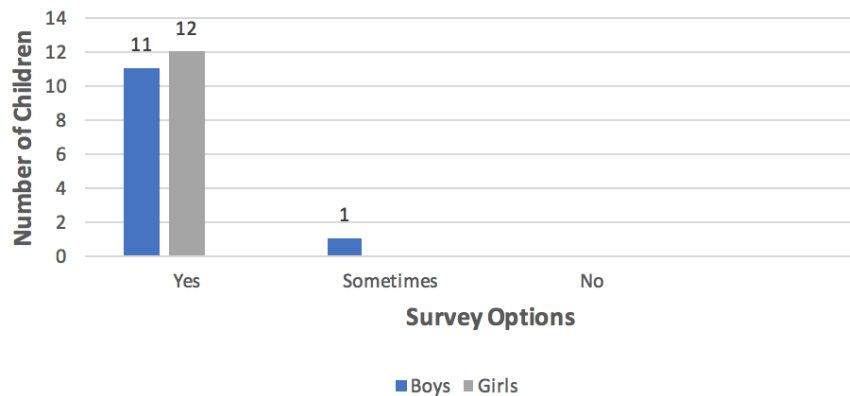
Impact

I felt the clearest way to show the impact of my project would be by repeating my survey. Pleasingly, the results to my question 'Is there somewhere in your classroom which helps you decide what to read next?' went from 83% of children saying 'yes' to an astonishing 95%.

Furthermore, the finished tree display sparked a lot of interest amongst other children and staff. I observed children bringing in children from other classes to show off their book recommendations. I felt the display was an area the children felt proud of as they had each made a contribution to the reading area.

Moreover, the display meant children did not have to wait to ask the teacher what they should read next, instead, they had a range of genres to choose from their peer's recommendations. I believe this worked well as the recommendations were personal to each child. For example, one child was heard saying, "Have you read 'Gangsta Granny'? I was recommended it but, I think you'll like it as well as "it's super exciting!" Therefore, showing how the display created a snowball effect of book recommendations; inspiring and engaging all children in RfP.

Is There Somewhere In Your Classroom Which Helps You Decide What To Read Next?





Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

The TaRs research documented the need for teachers to have considerable knowledge of children's literature. Therefore, through the process of children creating book recommendations for their friends, myself and the class teacher were able to see each child's individual interest. This was useful as we were able to steer and guide children to a wider variety of texts to enjoy.

Furthermore, the TaRs project states teachers must 'make time and space for children to explore texts in greater depth, share favourites and talk spontaneously about their reading'. Through dedicating a few afternoons solely for book discussion, I was able to foster a safe environment where children could discuss their book recommendations.

My next steps to support children's RfP will be to develop my project across the whole school. I feel all children and staff will see the benefits of fostering an area where children can recommendation books to each other.

Finally, I believe parental involvement in fostering children's RfP is crucial. In future, I will create a list of the children's book recommendations for children to take home.