

Does having access to reading for pleasure books in the playground contribute to an increase in reading enjoyment for primary aged children?

Linda McGregor, Principal Teacher, Dingwall Primary School

What did you plan to do and why?

I planned to introduce "Reading Trolleys" into the playground at break and lunch to allow pupils to access reading for pleasure materials at these times.

The reasons for implementing this were:

- During my research on reading for pleasure, one of the key themes was the need to provide more space and opportunity for children to read for pleasure within the school day.
- The feeling among staff that there has been a decline in the number of pupils who are choosing to read for pleasure and a reduction in the opportunities to do so.
- A whole-school move towards providing a greater range of activities in the playground.
- Engagement with the Reading Schools program. We have just achieved our Core accreditation and are working towards Silver which encourages the provision of opportunities to read out with the classroom.

Before introducing the Book Trolleys I created a Reading for Pleasure Attitudes survey based on the Reading Schools Learner Attitudes survey. I surveyed 25% of pupils across the school, from P1-7 (105 pupils).

What has happened in your enquiry?

- I worked with the Book Busters (Reading Schools pupil group) to create two Book Trolleys – one for P1-3 and one for P4-7. Each trolley contained a range of fiction and non-fiction texts, chosen by the pupils, and some carpet tiles for the pupils to sit on.
- The trolleys were introduced in assemblies by the Book Busters who explained how they would work and answered questions.
- The trolleys were put into the playground on a Wednesday and Friday at break and lunch. They were manned by the Book Buster pupils on a Rota system.



What impact has this enquiry had?

The initial survey results showed that across the school 25% of pupils said they read for pleasure daily, and 35% read at least a couple of times a week. Overall 67% of pupils said they enjoyed reading either very much or quite a lot, with very similar numbers in both the upper and lower stages.

The same pupils were surveyed 4 weeks after the Book Trolleys were introduced and the results were mixed. In P1-3 the number of pupils who said they enjoyed reading increased to 75%, but in P4-7 it dropped to 52%.

75% of P1-3 pupils said that they had used the book trolley, with 77% saying they would be using it in the future. This is compared to 37% of P4-7 pupils who have used it, and 55% who said they would use it in the future.

The impact therefore appears to have been more positively felt in the infant classes.

Observations:

- The P1-3 Book Trolley has been very popular, with pupils flocking around it to choose books. Pupils were observed to select books to read independently but also appeared to enjoy sharing books with their peers.
- Fewer P4-7 pupils chose to use their Book Trolley and when they did, they tended to read individually. More girls than boys were observed to use it at this stage, where as at P1-3 level the split was more even.



Quotes:

- "I like how there is boxes of nice books and mats to sit on" (P2 pupil)
- "I like when you sit down and read in the sun with your friends, it feels good" (P3 pupil)
- "I'd like a tent to read in" (P1 pupil)
- "I don't like running around, so it has been so nice to have something else to do in the playground at lunchtime." (P5 pupil)

What are the implications and next steps?

Implications:

We are going to continue with the Book Trolleys for the rest of this term, putting them out two days a week. The overall feeling among both staff and pupils is that this has been an enjoyable experience for a large number of pupils. After the summer we may look at increasing the number of days per week they are available. We also need to think about how we can increase engagement among p4-7 pupils.

Next Steps:

- When the pupils were surveyed after 4 weeks of the Book Trolleys they were also asked for suggestions on how we could improve/change the system. Suggestions included putting more carpet tiles and some travel rugs in the trolleys so that they could spread them on the grass to read, more books for boys and more graphic novels. We will act on all these suggestions for after the summer break. Other suggestions such as pop-up tents and audio books will also be looked into.
- We will also reconsider the positioning of the P4-7 trolley to try to improve its visibility, as some pupils in P4-7 said they hadn't seen it, and take on board some of the suggestions as to the type of books pupils would like to see in the trolleys.
- We are going to create a Rota for older pupils to read to the younger pupils during Book Trolley days. This was also suggested by pupils and will hopefully increase engagement within both age groups.

Future Plans:

- We would like to create a log seating circle in the playground so that pupils can use this for reading at break and lunch, but also for classes to use.
- Longer-term we are going to look into a permanent structure in the playground for books, like a shed.

References

<https://www.scottishbooktrust.com/articles/the-joy-of-reading-outside>

Clark et al (2024) "Children and Young People's Reading in 2024"
National Literacy Trust Report

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