

How does modelling reading through book talk influence Primary 5 pupils' attitudes and reading habits?

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What did you plan to do and why?

I used the Reading Schools Pupil Attitudes Survey to begin my enquiry. From this I noticed the children in my class had a very limited list of authors and books which they enjoyed. Although many enjoyed reading, there was also a limited number of genres they enjoyed.

I planned to incorporate book talk within my classroom and share my reading preferences with the children. My initial idea was inspired by Teresa Cremin's discussion of children's pleasure in reading being significantly inspired by reading communities (2019).

The National Literacy Trust also found that children seeing a role model reading encourages them to read (Cole et al. 2022).

What has happened in your enquiry?

I introduced Drop Everything and Read (DEAR time) into my weekly plan to ensure children had an opportunity to read and see myself read. During this time I would read a book of my personal choice. After reading, this would be added to our class library.

Each week after DEAR time we would spend time discussing our books as a class and with partners. I would model book talk first, using question prompts to discuss my current book and reading habits.

The children were included in all book talk discussions. This often became an interesting class discussion about genres, authors and book recommendations.

Throughout my enquiry, the children had opportunities to use our book talk discussions to create presentations which highlighted their book preferences.

What impact has this enquiry had?

As a result of my enquiry, the children in my class have started reading outside of school more often. They have also been exposed to more books, genres and authors.

In my class of 18 children, the children collectively named 12 different authors which they enjoyed in the pre-survey. After incorporating book talk and teacher modelling they have now listed 21 different authors.

There has also been increase in the amount of genres the children discuss and enjoy. In the March pre-survey, only two pupils picked ten or more of the genres listed on the survey. By May, this increased to eight pupils choosing 10 or more genres which they enjoy.

Three genres in particular had a great increase: adventure, fantasy and sci-fi. This was interesting due to the fact these were genres we had exciting discussions about as a class. During these discussions I shared current books I was reading, which over March-May were predominantly sci-fi and fantasy.

To support my enquiry I also asked the children to draw and write about 'Mrs Menzies as a Reader' before and after completion. I used this to measure how my role modelling impacted their reading attitudes and habits.

This measure showed the children learned a lot more about my reading habits and preferences during this enquiry. Many of the children listed fantasy and sci-fi as my favourites.

As well as this, The Wild Robot by Peter Brown was also listed often as a favourite book of mine. This was notable as Peter Brown was one of the highest listed authors in my second survey. In the pre-survey only one pupil listed Peter Brown as an author they enjoy. In the post-survey, ten pupils have now listed Peter Brown. The Wild Robot books were discussed often as I read the sequel novel and shared my feelings about it with my class during this enquiry.

What are the implications and next steps?

The clear outcome of my enquiry has been that the children in my class have become more confident and passionate readers. They can discuss authors and genres they enjoy and my own personal preferences and modelling of reading have impacted their choices.

This enquiry has led me to believe this would be more beneficial to children if book talk and DEAR time were a clear routine set early in the school year. To develop this further, I would like to introduce book talk to future classes early in the school year.

I would like to think of ways this could be incorporated across our school by discussing this further with colleagues. I am also interested in finding out how book talk and teachers as reading role models could impact literacy attainment.

References

Cole, A., Brown, A., Clark, C. and Picton, I. (2022). Role models and their influence on children and young people's reading. London: National Literacy Trust

Cremin, T. (2019). Reading Communities: Why, What and How?. Sheffield, UK: NATE.

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