

# How does regular scheduled informal book talk support a class culture of Reading for Pleasure?

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## What did you plan to do and why?

- **Context:** P6 class of enthusiastic readers. Majority will choose a book to read with little difficulty, settling down to read regularly.
- **Background Reading:** Reading for Pleasure (RfP) literature (Cremin, 2014 and Chambers, 2011) emphasised the importance of talking about reading as much as reading.
- **Review of Practice:** Completed the OURfP pedagogy review and realised that although lots of good reading was taking place, opportunities to share books and reading experiences were much more limited. In fact, although I had introduced daily RfP times, I had probably been quite insistent on it being a time for 'silent reading', underestimating the part informal book chat might have on each other's reading.
- **Plan:** I decided to introduce some book activities to try to encourage informal conversation around books and give learners the opportunity to share what they enjoyed without the pressure of a literacy-based task as a follow-up.

## What has happened in your enquiry?

- I initially explained to my class that I was carrying out a project around informal discussions about books and reading and would be sharing a few activities with them that I hoped would help us to talk more about our reading preferences.
- All learners completed an initial questionnaire on where and how often book talk took place.
- Two book activities happened prior to the start of the enquiry, but as a reading group activity, so had more formality to it.
- 3 activities were chosen from suggestions from the OURfP pedagogy, designed to promote informal book chat
  - Book Blanket
  - Book Blether
  - Individual recommendation to a friend
- All these activities created a buzz in the classroom, with lots of enthusiastic chatter around their book choices.
- A follow-up survey was completed to see how informal book talk had changed.

## What impact has this enquiry had?

- An analysis of the pre- and post-study surveys has demonstrated a small increase in the informal book conversations between children and adults, especially outside of times perceived as official 'reading time' i.e. school library session or daily RfP time, with 9% more children saying they 'often or always' chat with a teacher about books outside these times. The number of children saying they 'never' had the chance to talk to an adult about books dropped from 44% to 4% and those saying they did this daily or weekly rose by 47% to 69%.
- The times during the day that children talked to each other about books shifted, with chat at break/lunch increasing by 16% and outside of school up 11%.
- Along with this data, I have observed several lovely conversations between children, as they share books unprompted and offering insights into their thoughts and feelings on their book. I've seen several books passed from one person to another, including to some of the more reluctant readers, who after hearing how much a friend enjoyed something, asked if they could borrow it. I see children comfortably talking about the books they are reading during quiet reading time and my insistence on silence has stopped. Quiet still, but I am heartened to hear them share their book with someone else. This has been a change in my practice.
- I have also made more of an effort to read books recommended to me by the children especially books outside my typical genre. I am learning to be more open to their choices, gaining a better understanding of why some books have a big following in the process. Manga and the conversations around it has had a significant impact on one child. A dyslexic learner, who felt they would never be able to read, began bringing his Manga into school before realising that some others shared his love of the genre. Being able to talk about it with them has helped their confidence and encouraged their reading. During a recent 'buddy read' with the P2/3 class, this learner shared a picture book with a younger pupil, while a similar session earlier in the year had them almost refusing to participate. The commonality of Manga has enabled children to see each other in a different light almost.
- The clearest impact is that every day, someone in the class either talks to me about a book, brings me a book or has a conversation with a friend over a book. It feels like a community of readers with even those more reluctant readers finding space for them to share their thoughts.

## What are the implications and next steps?

This project was run over a very short timescale, with book talk activities happening close together. It would be better to have had more time between the sessions to see a more natural increase in informal chat.

With more time I would try to talk to the learners in small groups before and after the enquiry to gather their views beyond the questions asked in the survey. I think this would have resulted in more children highlighting the informal chat that I see go on around the class.

- **Next steps:**
  - To survey all members of teaching staff about what informal book talk looks like in their classrooms.
  - Share findings of the enquiry with colleagues and highlight the importance of both regular RfP time in class, as well as time to talk about books.
  - Work with colleagues to embed regular informal book talk sessions across the school.

## References

Chambers, A. (2011) *Tell Me, Children Reading and Talk with The Reading Environment*. Woodchester Stroud: The Thimble Press  
 Cremin, T. et al. (2014) *Building Communities of Engaged Readers; Reading for Pleasure*. Abingdon: Routledge.  
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