

Does giving ownership of a class library to pupils influence their desire to read for enjoyment at school?

Fiona Kilpatrick, Principal Teacher

What did you plan to do and why?

As a Principal Teacher, who has reading as part of my remit, I originally wanted to re-establish classes using our school library. Since COVID, classes had become reluctant to use their sessions due to varying reasons e.g. time, behaviour, etc. However at the end of January our library was literally packed up over a weekend and turned into a classroom to accommodate classes from a school that suddenly had to close. This meant I had to change my whole project approach. I cover P4 for one hour a week so decided to use that for time for my enquiry.

I had conducted initial research for the whole school to gain an understanding of their reading for enjoyment habits so was able to focus in on the P4 class results. I also used the Scottish Book Trust pupil questionnaire to gain a benchmark at the start. Questionnaire results showed that in a P4 class of 17 children, five children very much enjoyed reading and 11 enjoyed reading quite a lot. Two said they enjoyed reading a bit. These results were actually very positive but when I focused in on the statement 'I cannot find something to read', twelve pupils scored 1 or 2 meaning they couldn't find reading material to suit them. I knew then that the area I had to focus in on was increasing the material available for them to choose from and making the library area more responsive to pupil needs.

Although the reading attitude results were more positive than first expected, I still wanted to see if empowering pupils to change and plan their own reading for enjoyment environment and activities would increase the amount of pupils who would choose to read out with literacy time in the classroom especially with boys.

What has happened in your enquiry?

My first session involved looking at what their current classroom library had and what they wanted to keep. We talked about the different criteria to think about when choosing books to keep e.g. age, look, subject. Pupils worked together to sort the books into keep and sell. They then gave me a list of authors, subject areas and titles they wanted in to their library so I could resource them from our library services dept. The sell pile went to a whole school book sale which was going to raise money for new books.

Next I wanted them to feel they had ownership of their library; that it was a space they had created to fit their needs. We talked about what the space should be used for and what they wanted it look like. They even renamed it the 'Cosy Cave'. They came up with their own rules and gave me a list of how to transform the space.

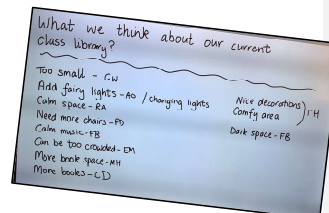
Over a couple of other sessions with them, we focused on activities around reading e.g. making bookmarks and using talk mats so that reading for enjoyment was being promoted and they were being given the tools to develop their reading environment. Each lesson was typically a reading based activity followed by time for reading for enjoyment.

During one session I had asked a pupil from another class to come in and show pupils how to access EPIC reading, an online reading website that would give pupils an even broader range of reading materials.

What impact has this enquiry had?

Pupils:

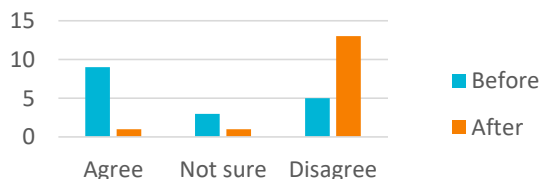
Pupils were very excited to change their library space and reading materials. When the blue box of books arrived from library services, they were desperate to open it and look inside. Pupils commented on the fact it was books they had asked for and the Minecraft and Pokemon books got the biggest cheers.



The enthusiasm they showed as soon as they were given ownership to change their space was overwhelming. They had super ideas and could explain why they thought their idea would be good for change.

I surveyed the class after 6 weeks of working on various reading activities and letting them find reading material that interested them.

I cannot find something to read



Eleven pupils said that changing the library area and having different books would make them choose reading when there was free time in class.

Staff:

While I was only focusing on P4 for my enquiry, a few other members of staff were interested in what I was doing and have since carried out similar activities with their pupils especially giving ownership of choosing the reading materials in class libraries to their pupils.

Myself:

I have enjoyed taking part in this enquiry as it has allowed me to try out ideas from the Reading for Pleasure course. I enjoyed sharing my reading passion with pupils and finding activities to keep them enthused about books. Finally I was able to make links with our school library service and have now arranged for new reading material to be delivered monthly to the class as well as a visit to our local library.

I appreciate the journey of promoting and sustaining reading for enjoyment is a long one but I have definitely enjoyed starting it with P4.

What are the implications and next steps?

I definitely found it challenging to only have one hour a week to promote reading for enjoyment with the class in a way I wanted. Although the class teacher does do reading activities, I felt I couldn't give it the proper push and emphasis to build the reading ethos and environment I wanted for a major change.

Had it been my own space, I feel I could have taken some ideas even further. However I had to be mindful that I was only with the class for an hour a week and it was not my classroom to radically change. I would have liked to have changed the library further by creating sections and genres and creating a class display for book reviews.

However by participating in this enquiry and course, I have been able make a small change to the way P4 feels about reading for enjoyment. I have managed to get reading for enjoyment and the pedagogy of reading onto our school improvement plan for next session. This will focus our whole school on building a reading ethos that encourages all to read and celebrate everything that comes with reading for enjoyment. I also plan to start our Reading Schools Award journey.

References

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