



Quick tips for building a school that reads

By Talk for Writing Consultant, Maria Richards

We all know the importance of strengthening and increasing the amount children read and, as Pie Corbett would say, 'helping children to catch the pleasurable habit of reading.'

As part of our recent Talk for Writing research, many of the training centres have shared their experience and success in building reading for pleasure into the culture of the school. Inspired by this, I have worked with one of my local schools to really focus on building the reading culture. Here are our top tips to getting going:

1. Be enthusiastic! If you show you love reading and books, the children will love it too! Promote, discuss and give time to reading for pleasure. Recommend books and show how important reading is to you. All teachers have a favourites shelf or box that the children can choose from.



In year 3 & 4, pupils are collecting beads for their reading key rings. When they finish a book, they can add a bead (right).

Quick tip: Need to keep up with all the books out there to share with pupils? Visit Love Reading 4 Kids <http://www.lovereadings4kids.co.uk>

2. Create welcoming reading areas. Find a space in your room to create a special place for reading. Timetable reading for pleasure with groups in the reading space and school library.



Year 5's Reading Boat



Classes visit the local library



Quick tip: For hours of inspiration on reading environments, join PINTEREST <https://uk.pinterest.com> and start collecting ideas like these <https://uk.pinterest.com/explore/reading-corners/?lp=true>

3. Give the children what they want to read. Stock your classroom and library with a range of reading material to capture every child's interest. If you have a local public library, try to visit regularly so the children get an opportunity to choose new things to read. Ask the children what they'd like to see in the class library. Ensure that all class libraries have a selection of different books and genres.



Quick tip: Survey the children to find out their reading habits and what they'd like to see in school in terms of reading materials. For example:

- How much do you enjoy reading?
- How often do they read, when and where?
- What are you reading now?
- What should the school buy for reading?

4. Read aloud to the children every day. Without fail, as a non-negotiable, all staff read to children every day from a list of well-chosen, high-quality literature: picture books and short chapter books in KS1 and novels in KS2. Also, tell the world what you're reading!



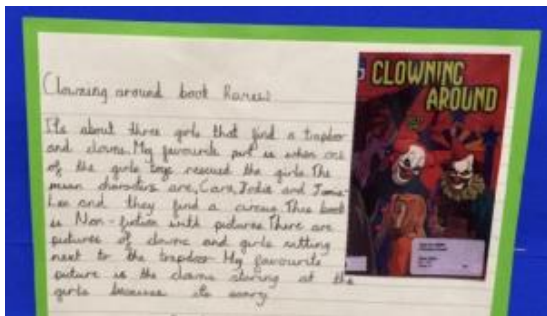
Quick tip: To find out more about building a reading spine of quality books through the school, listen to Pie here: <https://shop.scholastic.co.uk/piecorbett> and find out more here: <http://www.scholastic.co.uk/piecorbett/resources>

5. Have a culture of recommending books to each other. This should be children to children, teachers to children, teachers to teachers and children to teachers! Each class has their own system of book reviews and recommendations.





- ‘Get caught reading’ – publish photos of ALL staff reading their books when they are not supposed to be!
- Extreme Reading Competition – photos of the children reading in unusual places.
- Bedtime Stories – have regular sessions where children come back to school in their pyjamas, have hot chocolate and cookies and have stories read and shared with them and their parents too.
- Secret Readers – each term, have a timetable of ‘mystery’ readers (could be other staff, pupils from the Secondary school, parents, local business people) who turn up to read the class reader instead of the teacher.



Quick tip: Find out who else is available to promote reading in your local community. Many businesses are happy to support this. For example, in Taunton (Somerset), the Hydrographic Office has a team of staff who regularly visits schools and read to and with children.

Quick tip: For an inspiring and engaging way of recommending new books to children, visit the Trailer Blazers website from the Guardian <https://www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/series/trailer-blazers> Find ‘book trailers’ (like film trailers) advertising what’s out there. This is my favourite at the moment: <https://www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/ng-interactive/2015/feb/06/hoot-owl-by-jean-jullien-video>

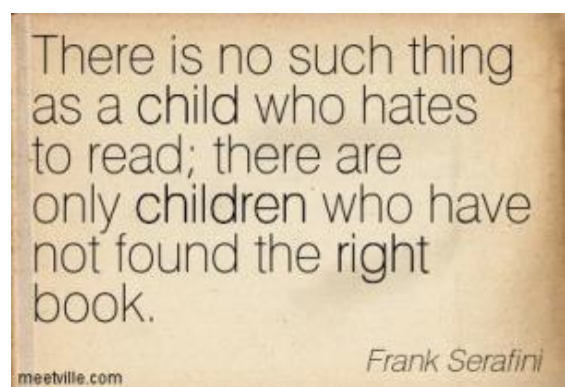
In a society where reading for pleasure isn’t necessarily the first thing that children choose to do, we can really make a difference to help build their love for reading. By embedding reading for pleasure into our school culture, we can open up the world to children, build their vocabulary, their experiences, their knowledge and their love for books, all from the comfort of our class reading corners. When children read for pleasure they read, as Pie says, ‘avidly and greedily.’ Let’s help our children to get there!

6. Hold regular events for promoting and enjoying reading. Go beyond World Book Day (focusing on the books not the dressing up) and exploit every opportunity to promote and enjoy reading throughout the year.

Final thought:

Here are a few ideas to plan in:

- Termly, make your door into a book cover voted by the children
- Using your class reader, hold a ‘Book Immersion Day’ and come off timetable to enjoy a variety of ways to interact with the book.
- Hold regular Read-a-thons – these could be sponsored and funds used to buy new books.
- Book Buddies – timetable regular slots for children in different classes to be buddied and read for pleasure together.
- Hold a Book Swap
- D.E.A.R. – sound the bell and Drop Everything And Read



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Contact Maria via the Talk for Writing Trainers webpage.

