

READING BOOKLET

DAY 8 LITERACY SPECIALIST TRAINING DEVELOPING CHILDREN'S LOVE OF READING

1. THE RIGHT BRAIN FOR READING

Ruth Miskin

Maryanne Wolf, in 'Proust and the Squid', explains what goes on in Gabriel's brain now that he's a fluent reader. Here's a potted version.

Gabriel picks up a book and his brain leaps to attention – he cuts out whatever is going on around him. He loves the book so much he *wants* to pay attention.

In the first millisecond...

His eyes sweep across the page and, without a single moment of conscious awareness, he associates specific letters with specific sounds and specific letter patterns with specific words. His eyes make small movements called 'saccades' as he takes in about 15 letters at once, giving him a preview of what's about to come a millisecond later. As he gathers all this information it fast-forwards to the area of his brain that handles language.

In the next milliseconds...

He draws upon his knowledge of real and imagined worlds and fills the gaps that the writer leaves from the page. Gabriel takes in the meaning and implication of every word and selects the most appropriate, given the context. He generates his own inferences and hypotheses, constantly predicting what might happen next. If he forgets what's just happened, then his eyes flit back to pick up the information he needs.

Gabriel has made an emotional engagement with reading, one that Maryanne Wolf describes as "the tipping point between leaping into the reading life or remaining in a childhood bog where reading is endured only as a means to other ends". Gabriel's limbic system has been activated. He's in there with his hero – feeling what he's feeling – anxious for him, desperate that something awful could happen. His feelings drive him forward...deeper into the story. Those black marks on white paper evoke an entire universe of meaning for Gabriel.

2. PLEASE DON'T PAY CHILDREN TO READ

Ruth Miskin

I find it shocking that primary-age children should be paid for reading a book. Many schools in the UK and in the USA are awarding certificates, stickers, points – and even points with a monetary value – for each book a child reads, sometimes verified by a quiz on the text. Offering a reward that has to be earned suggests to children, at an early age, that reading is an unpleasant task which they need to be bribed to do. Children should read because they love reading, not because they are getting paid or rewarded by their teachers. Readers keep reading because they are intrigued by the stories and want to know what happens next.

Schools using a 'pay-by-book' or 'count the number of words read' system defend the inducement by saying that the end justifies the means. They believe that if children are reading, for whatever reason, they will do better. Research – and common sense – suggests otherwise. By offering a reward we are saying "this task is useful but undesirable, so we need to persuade you to do it". Besides suggesting that reading is a task and not a pleasure, giving rewards takes away self-motivation and replaces it with calculation.

American psychologists Mark R. Lepper and David Green set out to test the efficacy of rewards on pre-school children. Children who were known to enjoy drawing were asked to draw with crayons for six minutes. One group were told to expect a reward of a certificate with a gold seal and ribbon for taking part. A different group were not promised or given any reward. Children who expected a reward drew for just half the time compared to those who did not receive any reward. In addition, judges rated the pictures drawn by the children expecting a reward as less aesthetically pleasing.

Like caffeine, rewards may offer a short-term boost, but the effect wears off quickly and reduces long-term motivation. The other problem lies in knowing when to stop. If you pay once, then you have to keep on paying because the chances are that the child will stop once no reward is in sight. If you give children stickers, tokens, certificates (or points with monetary value) for every three books they read, will they read a fourth? If you count the words they read, they will soon work out that they can get more rewards by choosing easier books. They play the system. Even worse, they begin to measure themselves and each other according to word count: "You have only read 4,000 words? You must be a bit stupid."

There are better ways to foster a love of reading, starting by making sure they can read – and by reading to them – every day. Reading is its own reward; there are worlds to discover inside books, and children can find people just like them and who are different. A book can make them feel happy, sad, excited, touched or even angry at times. No sticker or points towards a cinema ticket can provoke such an emotional reaction.

3. BEST BOOK CORNERS: YR to Y2

Ruth Miskin

Aims

- To persuade children who are still learning to read to retell a story/ poem; for those who are able to read, help them re-read the story
- To discuss favourite books and those we think children will enjoy
- To share our excitement for children's books and ensure children have access to the best books available, written by authors for children to enjoy.

Organise books in a central storage area/ library

Organise books alphabetically in broad age-ranges:

- picture books for 4 to 5-year-olds
- picture books for 5 to 7-year-olds
- series of books for 6 to 7-year-olds
- non-fiction for 5 to 7-year-olds.

Discard tatty and dull books!

Note: 'Decodable books' should be stored in a separate area and not mixed with these books in the library or classroom book areas.

Set up class area

- Lay a carpet large enough for at least half the class to sit comfortably.
- Have a working wall - provide a large whiteboard/ pinboard for teachers and children to write a comment or stick up a picture about a book, photo of themselves reading it at home. Let children pin up their own things – make the wall interactive and change regularly.
- Choose a low teacher's chair – nothing grander or more comfortable than children's chairs.

Choose the right books for your classroom

- Start by selecting 30 to 40 books (20 favourites from previous year) and introduce more week by week, taking out others as the year progresses.
- Choose books for all children: those who are still learning to read will retell the story; those who are able to read, will re-read the story.
- Consider if the story, poem, rhyme, n-f book:
 1. Elicits a response: curiosity, anger, excitement, enjoyment, amusement, interest,
 2. Has a strong narrative
 3. Extends vocabulary (not too many new words at once)
 4. Connects with something they know/ we're teaching
 5. Uses illustrations to support the narrative.

Top five books

- Display the current top 5 books on an outward facing shelf in order of preference (stack copies behind).
- Add numbers 1 to 5 under the books.
- Add bookmarks: This book is exciting / This book is funny / This book is sad.
- Provide children with 2 named sticks to place in voting pots 1 to 5.

- Count the sticks at the end of each week and reorder the books.
- Discuss which lowest scoring books should be removed from the top 5 every 2/ 3 weeks.

Organise familiar books

- Display familiar books on lower shelves and in boxes.
- Encourage children to take these home.

System for returning books

Hold a parents' meeting to explain your system for book exchange.

Organise time to read

- Plan a quiet time every day for children to read to themselves, or to each other.
- Plan for an adult to read with small groups of children who are not read to at home.

Read aloud

Read aloud books to children with love, confidence and enjoyment - every day.

Bs to avoid:

Bookbanding

Breaking up stories – by analysis

Badges stickers and points

Bribery

Bunting

Beanbags

Broomsticks

Book days

Book diaries

Broccoli

Billboards/ posters.

4. BEST BOOK CORNERS: Y3 to Y6

Ruth Miskin

Aims

- To persuade children who can read, to read widely and often – for no other reason than to enjoy reading
- To discuss favourite books and those we think children will enjoy
- To share our excitement for children's books and ensure children have access to the best books available, written by authors for children to enjoy.

Organise books in a central storage area/ library

Organise quality books alphabetically in a central storage area/ library in broad age-ranges:

- Picture books for 7 to 9-year-olds
- Picture books for 9 to 11-year-olds
- Poetry books 7 to 11-year-olds
- Fiction for 6 to 7-year-olds, 7 to 9-year-olds, 9 to 11-year-olds
- Non-fiction for 6 to 7-year-olds, 7 to 9-year-olds, 9 to 11-year-olds.

Discard tatty and dull books!

Choose the right books for your classroom

- Start the year with a range of 30 to 40 books with a few copies of some, if possible (including favourites from the previous year).
- Introduce more books each week with children's help and take others back to the central storage area.
- Consider if the story, poem, rhyme, n-f book:
 1. Elicits a response: curiosity, anger, excitement, enjoyment, amusement, interest, challenge, fulfilment, comfort, escape
 2. Has a strong narrative
 3. Extends vocabulary (not too many new words at once)
 4. Connects with something they know/ we're teaching
 5. Uses illustrations to support the narrative.

(Note – a book may be chosen that does not necessarily meet all criteria).

Set up class book area

- Provide a working wall: large whiteboard or pinboard.

Display Top 10 Books

- Display the current top 10 books on an outward facing shelf in order of preference (stack copies behind).
- Add numbers 1 to 10 under the books.
- Provide children with 2 named sticks to place in voting pots 1 to 10.
- Count the sticks at the end of each week and reorder the books.
- Discuss which lowest scoring books should be removed from the top 10 every 2/ 3 weeks.
- Make a sign-up grid – head columns with photos of book covers, spaces underneath for children to sign up to read or when read (they don't need to read all 10 books).
- Display other books on lower shelves and in boxes, ready for children to take home.

Recommend books

Set up weekly book talk sessions.

- Record children's recommendations and post them on the working wall (large pinboard or white board)
- Make a sign-up grid: children write a recommended book at the start of each row. Other children sign when they have read it
- Let children pin up their own things – make the wall interactive and change regularly
- Have templates where children can add post-its 'Children who read this book, also read this one'
- Print and display book reviews/ blogs from newspapers
- Ask other teachers and parents to write a review/blog of books
- Read aloud reviews and intriguing extracts
- Organise groups of children to take turns in setting up a table-top display of their favourite books e.g. a dinosaur display.

Organise time to read

- Offer regular space and time for children to read a book of their choice in a quiet classroom
- Listen to lowest 20% children read individually.

Read aloud

Read aloud books every day with love, confidence and enjoyment, including fiction, poetry and non-fiction.

Read favourite stories and poems to our own and each other's classes.

Bs to avoid

Bookbanding

Breaking up stories – by analysis

Badges stickers and points

Bribery

Bunting

Beanbags

Broomsticks

Book days

Book diaries

Broccoli

Billboards/ posters.

5. BENEFITS OF READING ALOUD (The long version for parents)

Ruth Miskin

Did you know that *being read to* is the most powerful predictor of your child's future reading comprehension?

By reading aloud a story to your child every day, you are fusing the act of reading with comfort and love: when *you* love a book, your child will want to hear it again and again. Children are wired to thrive on repetition, so when you've read *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, what do you see?* for the hundredth time, remember you are hardwiring their brains for success. The exponential effect of reading to children is huge; read to your child and this is what you give them for free:

- *Your* attention
- The ability to pay attention, to focus on something shared
- Time to chat
- A breadth of vocabulary and a deeper understanding of language
- Knowledge of new places and people: real and imagined
- Knowledge of how stories work
- Understanding of analogy
- The ability to think ahead, hypothesize and to infer what characters are thinking
- Opportunity to discuss moral issues: right from wrong
- Phonological sensitivity to alliteration, rhyme and rhythm.

Did you know that if you read aloud for 30 minutes a day, your child will have had 750 storytime hours even before they start school? Let the authors do the work for you; all you need to give is a bit of time and a lot of love.

BENEFITS OF READING ALOUD (The short version for parents)

Did you know that *being read to* is the best way you can help your child progress at school? In 15 minutes a day, your child will learn:

- How to pay attention, to focus on something together
- A wide vocabulary
- To pick out sounds and rhymes
- About places and people
- To think about the next bit of the story
- To put themselves in other people's shoes
- To think about right from wrong
- How to chat about the story.

6. HOW TO READ ALOUD (The long version)

Ruth Miskin

1. Make reading to your child feel like a treat. Introduce each new book with excitement.
2. Make it a special quiet time away from the hustle and bustle of the rest of the day, snuggle up close to your child.
3. Affect curiosity in what you're going to read.
"Who's Next?" This should be funny – It's about a little boy queuing for the loo.
4. Read the whole story the first time through without stopping too much. If you think your child might not understand something, say something like: *Oh, I think what's happening here is that...*
5. Chat about the story.
I wonder why he did that...?
Oh no, I hope she's not going to...
I wouldn't have done that, would you?
I bet she's feeling desperate now...
6. Know not to ask questions to test your child on what they remember.
7. Link stories to your own and your child's experiences and link these experiences to other stories...
This reminds me when we queued for the loo when we went camping. Do you remember?
8. Read your child's favourite stories over and over again.
9. Get your child to join in with the bits they know. Build suspense each time, hesitating so your child can jump in before you say the word.
10. Read with enthusiasm. Don't be embarrassed to try out different voices.
11. Keep reading to your child, even when they can read for themselves.

HOW TO READ ALOUD (The short version)

1. Make reading to your child feel like a treat.
2. Make it a special quiet time - snuggle up close.
3. Show excitement about what you're going to read
4. Read the whole story without stopping too much. If you think your child might not understand something, say something like: *Oh, I think what's happening here is that...*
5. Chat about the story.
6. Don't ask questions to test what they remember.
7. Link stories to your own and your child's experiences and link these experiences to other stories.
8. Read your child's favourite stories over and over again.
9. Get them to join in with the bits they know.
10. Read with enthusiasm - try out different voices.
11. Keep reading to your child, even when can read for themselves.

7. GET PARENTS ON BOARD

By hub literacy specialists

- Organise 'bitesize' parent meetings throughout the year, relevant to the reading progress of the children: meetings on how to practise reading single letter-sounds; blending sounds to read words; reading vowel digraphs/trigraphs; reading a decodable text.
- Organise parent sessions at times when parents are already in school e.g. after a class assembly, concert, 'stay and play' session.
- Organise parent sessions at different times of the day: before school, during the school day, straight after school, evening.
- Make it an event that is not to be missed e.g. 'bagels and books', 'phonics party'.
- Invite parents to watch a phonics lesson/ reading lesson in action.
- Organise a fun activity for parents to do with their child following the parent session.
- Meet parents outside of the school environment: use family liaison workers to discuss reading at home with parents.
- Provide leaflets/films to support content of the parent session.

Expect 100% attendance

- Send personal invites from the headteacher to the parents of the lowest 20%.
- Organise for the children to write personal invites to their parents.
- Text or call parents to remind them about the parent session.
- Explain to parents that children will only be given a decodable book to bring home if the parents attend the session.
- Meet parents individually if they are unable to attend the parent session.
- Ask parents of lowest 20% to attend one-to-one practice sessions.
- Target specific audiences who spend time with the child e.g. after school childcare, grandparents, older siblings, male role models.

Sharing information little and often

- Send sound cards home.
- Give children a sticker on their jumper with the sound they have learnt that day.
- Display the sound taught each day in the classroom window.
- Share information and films on the school website/ social media/websites such as SeeSaw/ Tapestry e.g. children showing correct pronunciation of sounds, reading sound cards speedily in action.

Encouraging parents to listen to their child read

- Set clear expectations for parents to hear their child read every day.
- Take homework off the table: ask parents to prioritise listening to their child read and reading to them.
- Open the classroom doors early to invite parents into the classroom to listen to their child read – daily, once per week.
- Train parents to teach reading in given Phonics programme so they can become 'reading champions' for other parents.
- Teach parents who have reading difficulties to read alongside their child.

- Praise the parents: send postcards home to recognise that parents are listening to their child read every day.

Encouraging parents to read aloud to their child

- Share clips of teachers reading a bedtime story on school website or social media - record one teacher per week in advance or live-stream.
- Invite confident parents to read a story to a small group of children each week in their home language, if appropriate. (Practise with the parent first though.)
- Share a recommended storytime list, including suggested story websites, e-books and audio books.
- Set up an afterschool book/ drama club for the lowest 20% pupils: the children join-in with a story and role play based on this story. Involve parents for the last 10 minutes of the session.
- Send home story bags including a picture book to read to their child and related items/activities.
- Open the school library before and/or after school. Invite parents to read to their children in the library.
- Organise regular class visits to the local library: enrol the children and then ask parents to collect their child from the library.
- Set up a book exchange or second-hand book shop in school.
- Set up a book vending machine.
- Organise author visits and invite parents.
- Praise the parents: send postcards home to recognise that parents are reading to their child every day.

8. TEACHING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES ALERT

Ruth Miskin

A whole research industry continues to grow to monitor the effect of “comprehension strategies” or “reading skills” to help children understand what they are reading.

So, what are these comprehension strategies? We hear about monitoring comprehension, making inferences, active listening, graphic organisers, mental imagery, prediction, to name but a few. Do they make any difference? Not with children under the age of nine, according to several large research studies. And, above that age only a few children appeared to have benefited and even then, their gains didn't increase after six weeks.

There is a problem with the research according to Daniel Willingham, professor of cognitive psychology at the University of Virginia. He points out that all the studies measured *average* gain, when in fact, fluent readers in the class will have not benefited from the strategies because they had already picked up the skills naturally, by reading a lot.

Willingham sees little value in the strategies he calls “a bag of tricks” and makes the point that a broad vocabulary is by far the most important factor because you can't understand the meaning of a sentence if you don't know the meaning of most of the words in it.

RECOMMENDED READING

The Reading Mind, Daniel Willingham

Raising Kids who read, Daniel Willingham

The Proust and the Squid, Marianne Wolf

Storytelling in early childhood, Teresa Cremin

Yes! Noah Goldstein, Steve Martin, Robert Cialdini (Persuasion techniques)

Daniel Willingham

The privileged status of story

<https://www.aft.org/periodical/american-educator/summer-2004/ask-cognitive-scientist>

Can reading comprehension be taught?

http://www.danielwillingham.com/uploads/5/0/0/7/5007325/willingham&lovetta_2014_can_reading_comprehension_be_taught.pdf

Rewards

<https://www.aft.org/ae/winter2007-2008/willingham>

Frank Cottrell-Boyce

Destroying stories: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/oct/17/frank-cottrell-boyce-schools-destroying-stories-david-fickling-literacy-power-books>

Teresa Cremin

Long term goals for reading: <https://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/teaching-reading-what-are-our-long-term-goals>

Reading for pleasure: Just window dressing? <https://cprtrust.org.uk/cprt-blog/reading-for-pleasure-just-window-dressing/>

Requiring reading for pleasure <https://cprtrust.org.uk/cprt-blog/requiring-reading-for-pleasure>

Reading communities: the why, how and

what <https://researchrichpedagogies.org/recommends/>

Reading communities and books in common <http://www.naae.org.uk/reading-communities-and-books-in-common/>

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The right brain for reading: <https://www.ruthmiskin.com/en/about-us/blog-news/article/ruths-blog-right-brain-reading/>

Comprehension strategies alert: <https://www.ruthmiskin.com/en/about-us/blog-news/article/ruths-blog-teaching-comprehension-strategies-alert/>

Reading aloud to children: <https://www.ruthmiskin.com/en/about-us/blog-news/article/ruths-blog-wired-thrive-repetition/>

<https://www.ruthmiskin.com/en/about-us/blog-news/article/ruths-blog-again-again-why-reading-your-child-every-day-predictor-later-reading-comprehension/>

No carpets for older children: <https://www.ruthmiskin.com/en/about-us/blog-news/article/ruths-blog-recycle-your-carpets-6-good-reasons-disband-carpet-areas-key-stage-2/>