

IN THE FIELD

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READING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Practical Suggestions from two Primary School Teachers

Reading Motivation

It can generally be accepted that the reading pattern of children in the primary school is influenced by

1. programmes on television
2. reading habits of friends and peers
3. an interest in favourite authors and topics

The question arises, however, of how to interest the pupils and perhaps more importantly, how to stimulate the interest of the non-active reader. What follows is merely a guide to some of the ways in which teachers can help to stimulate the reading pattern of their pupils. It should be remembered, however, that in order to encourage readers and to stimulate reading interest, the teacher concerned should have a good general knowledge of the material available.

1. The display procedure:

A selection of books from the media centre, book clubs or personal books can be put out on display. These need not necessarily have a book review (although this does help) and can be brought to the attention of the pupils through discussion or by reading extracts from the books to the pupils.

2. The personal choice method:

Whereby pupils discuss their favourite books/authors with their peers, why they like them, what they found most appealing/interesting etc., and having the books available for use by the rest of the class.

3. The thematic approach:

Whereby books dealing with a particular topic being covered in class are brought to the attention of the pupils and used during the theme either as examples of the theme or as supplementary reading.

4. The reading ladder or worm:

Whereby as each child finishes reading a book, he either discusses it with his peers or the teacher and then writes the bibliographic details on a rung of the ladder/or part of the worm's body and an exciting progressive picture is built up. More competitive perhaps, but if the children are divided in groups, the slower reader may be encouraged to read more to help his group win the competition. This develops a competitive spirit, which can be used to motivate reluctant readers.

5. The book review method:

Whereby pupils are required to write a report after the reading of each book. This method is not very popular amongst the pupils as they find it difficult firstly to condense the contents of an entire book to the requirements of the book review, and secondly as it involves what they consider extra work, their enthusiasm to read for enjoyment and further, is dampened.

6. The classification of books by pupils:

Once a book is read the pupils then decide upon a general category heading into which they feel the book falls i.e. adventure, animals etc. The bibliographic details of the book are then written up under the headings displayed in the classroom for the rest of the classes to benefit.

A further method which works well if successfully planned is the Integrated Theme Method

Here the teacher can use annual school events as an integrated theme; for example, the production of the school's dramatic society's play. A Twist in the Tale adapted from the musical Oliver can be used as the basis for a theme revolving around the underprivileged child.

1. The entire school could be involved in promoting reading interest by encouraging individual as well as class participation. Poster painting poetry writing, tape recordings, newspaper articles and a variety of stimulus material can be useful.
2. At the same time, thematic and related literature could be displayed in the Media Centre. A biography on Lord Shaftsbury, the history of orphanages, articles on malnutrition e.g. the Ethiopian Crisis at present, helpful organisations, social work and benefactors.

3. Invite children from the Johannesburg Children's home to see the production. (The mayoral theme in 1984 was the Children's Home).
4. Create interest wheels in class. The cog is the theme and pupils are invited to "add a spoke of interest" to stimulate the non-readers and encourage participation.
5. Supply reading lists (could be done in consultation with the public library as well). Titles which could be included are Daddy Long Legs by Jean Webster, The Little Princess by Francis H. Burnett, Carrie's War by Nina Bawden, I am David by Ann Holmes, Under the Bridge, Charles Dicken's novels which include Oliver Twist, Great Expectation, The Christmas Carol, Hard Times.
6. A reading assignment in the senior classes could be set in and around the England of Charles Dickens. A look at his life and works.
7. Other areas which can spring from the central theme could be, the use of stage make-up in creating various masks, as recently shown on television (Fagan). Books on puppetry, dramatic work, stage work and famous plays.

Specific lesson ideas:

1. Junior classes: A frieze poster paintings of poor children
2. Senior Classes: Music lessons - songs from Oliver
3. Guidance lessons: "Gotta pick a pocket or two" and
"Please Sir, May I have some more!" - moral aspect and implications for today's child.
4. Health: What constitutes a well balanced healthy diet.

The time span should be geared towards maximum interest for a short period of time. From the organisational point of view, the basic idea can be discussed at a staff meeting one week prior to commencement.

An example of a unit of activities on **UNDERPRIVILEGED CHILDREN:** Our Children's Day fell on the 3 November. A speaker from the Welfare organisation could be invited to talk at an assembly on Friday, morning.

The possibilities are endless. What's needed is an enthusiastic teacher, a knowledgeable librarian and a commitment from the staff to implement an interesting programme on such a large scale. All work tackled should be prominently displayed outside the hall, media centre or tuckshop, wherever it would receive maximum exposure.

In this modern day and age when technology tends to discourage the development of sound reading habits, it becomes imperative that educationalists actively seek methods to stimulate dormant interest in the timeless pleasure of reading.