



Reading Communities

Practical classroom strategies



“Over time we’ve built really reciprocal classroom reading communities where children and teachers talk about what they’re reading and really connect. There’s focused time of course but we’re all in it together as readers.”

(TaRs teacher, Birmingham)

1. Focus on developing reader-reader relationships

This is key. Such relationships are built over time through:

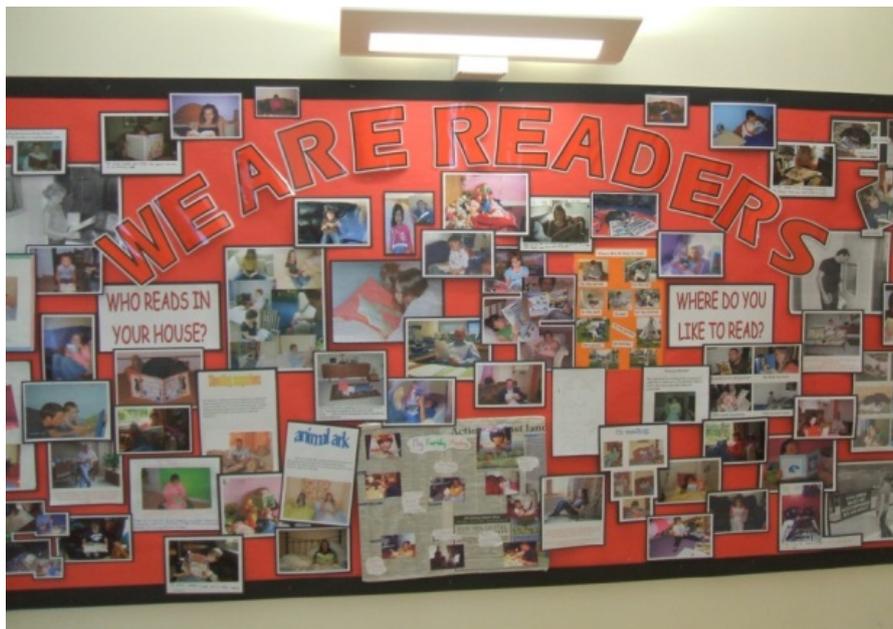
- knowing your children as readers
- having a rich repertoire of books and other texts with which you are familiar
- being passionate, and socially interactive as a reader

Seize opportunities for informal book talk, making connections between reading and children's life experience and exploring personal experiences about reading in your discussions.

2. Create displays of your readers

By profiling diverse readers at home and school, you can build a sense of community, demonstrating difference, similarities and everyone's engagement. Possible suggestions include:

- *Readers in Disguise*, where school staff take photos of themselves reading but in disguise, and children guess who the readers are, based on the text and their knowledge of staff interests
- *Extreme Reading*, where staff, parents and children take photographs of people reading in unusual places: a mechanic under a car, a swimming pool attendant, a child in a supermarket trolley
- *Who reads in your house?* Where staff and children take photos of anyone reading at home in whatever context and display these.



Reading communities take time to build. They are relationship strong and highly interactive, and shift reading from an individual private pursuit to a more collaborative social activity.

3. Invite readers into school

As well as displaying images of diverse images of readers in school, invite these readers to your classroom to share their experiences and enjoyment of reading. Ask children to design invitations and posters to celebrate these events and write thank you letter afterwards.

4. Regular reading time with parents/carers

Once a week/month/half term, as appropriate to your school/setting, 15 minutes before school, set time aside for parents and carers to come in with their children to share texts. You might invite the TA to read in the reading area too. Vary the texts available, e.g. picture books, magazines or non-fiction. Creating an informal atmosphere allows parents and carers time without home pressures to read and talk about texts.



5. Family reading groups

Once a fortnight/month/half term create an after school time with tea and cookies to share books in family groups. Start small - it will grow. The local library may be able to provide book sets to borrow. Keep it low key and start each time by reading aloud and sharing your passion for reading and texts you have enjoyed or are currently sharing with the class.

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6. We're going on a reading hunt

Invite the class to join you on a reading hunt in the local community to take photos of the myriad of signs, labels, symbols, texts evident locally and the reading available in the immediate community. Make a montage and explore, for example, the multiple languages used. You could ask children to take their own photos too as a homework project and possibly to ask their family/home community about what they notice.



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7. Book celebrations and festivals

Many opportunities exist to celebrate the power of literature and other texts. Class and school communities participate for example in World Book Day, Readathons, The Big Read and so on and can run their own reading events/festivals/competitions and involve authors. Alone these can be tokenistic, but as part of planned support for RfP they work well.

8. Establish regular library visits

Map in opportunities to visit both the school and the local library regularly with your class. Be sure this is not just about book swapping time but also for book browsing, talking, sharing, and recommending – reading is a social process. Make time to discuss with children *how to select* books, as this can seem overwhelming for inexperienced library visitors.

9. A summer reading challenge

Before the end of the school year, discuss with the children the reading you are looking forward to over the summer and what they might like to read. These discussions could include:

- sharing the texts you are planning to read and why
- a 'countdown to summer' reading display where you reveal a different text in the final two weeks of term (similar to an advent calendar!) to add elements of surprise
- informing children (and parents) about summer reading events in the local community – e.g. library and bookshops

Alternatively, encourage them to enrol in the Reading Agency's fabulous national Summer Reading Challenge

<http://summerreadingchallenge.org.uk>

10. Celebrate communities of readers

Reading is a social event! Consider how you might be able to build in opportunities to celebrate this through:

- classroom discussion
- Inviting children and staff beyond your classroom to share reading
- holding events for parents/carers
- inviting authors in

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