



# Teachers' knowledge of children's reading practices

## Practical classroom strategies

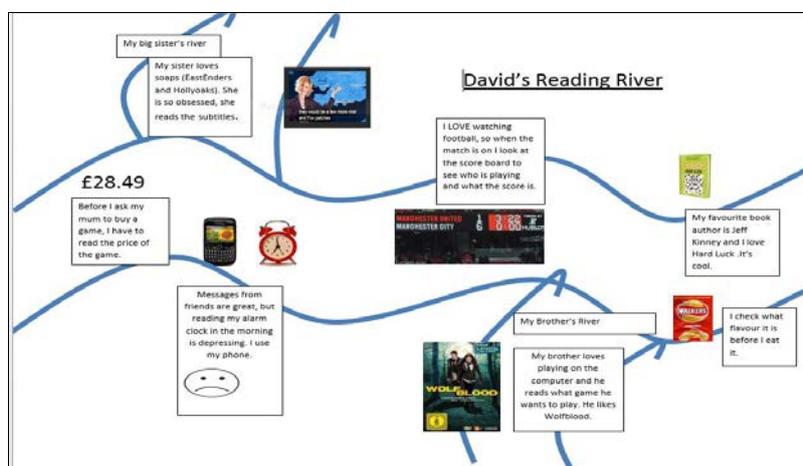
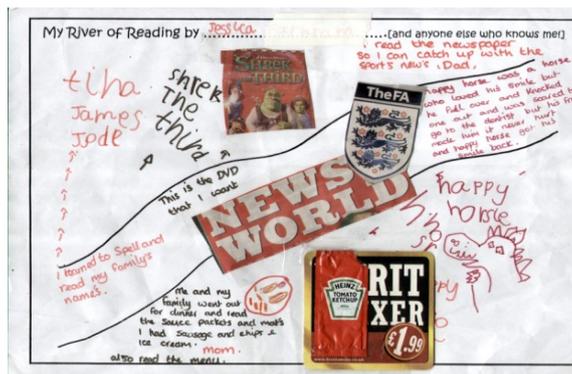


*"The children have taken me on a journey into what they read outside school – I never realised really it was so wide- now we have a much greater choice in school."*

(TaRs teacher, Kent)

# 1. Reading rivers

Invite the children to create collages reflecting their reading over a specific period: a weekend, the Christmas holidays, half term... They can draw, stick, write about anything they read, for example: comics, football programmes, DVD cases, TV cereal boxes, road signs, maps, apps, games, and so on. Parents and other family members too could contribute their reading over the period. These collages can then be shared in school and discussed so that what the children count and value as reading in school can be widened.



As unique individuals, children all have different practices and preferences as readers. In responding to these try to avoid creating any implicit hierarchy of reading materials in the classroom.

## 2. Reading surveys

Find out what children read by offering your class or the whole school a survey. This could document:

- the kinds of reading they undertake, i.e. ticking from a list or set of visuals
- their favourite reading materials
- reading frequency: daily; once a week; once a fortnight
- enjoyment in reading ( a scale or smiley faces to select)
- self-confidence as a reader- how do they rate themselves
- completing sentences: I would read more if.....

The National Literacy Trust run annual surveys. You could either take part or borrow/adapt some of their questions and then compare your class's results with theirs.

<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/>

## 3. Observe, document and act

Take opportunities to observe children reading during various times/activities/events in the school day. This might include during silent reading, library sessions and more informal book talk as well as planned reading sessions during the day. You might decide to focus on a child/group of children whose attitude to reading puzzles you or those whose behaviours you want to develop and share with others. Take notes of your observations, the texts they have chosen, the people they choose to sit with and talk to and consider the implications of these observations for yourself and the children so that you can further engage them with reading.



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#### 4. Home reading board

Create a home reading board, encouraging the children to bring in anything they have read recently to display or stick on the board. Bring in your own examples as well.

Members of an older class might create sections for different kinds of examples: social media, game-related reading, comics and magazines, books, newspapers, junk mail etc. These will highlight diversity and be child-initiated. You might add post-it notes with why the texts were read or who it was shared with etc.

#### 5. 24-hour reading at home and school

Invite the class and take part yourself in documenting 24 hours of reading. Try to record everything you read in that time and create a list or use photos to share. Displays or PowerPoints can be produced which again highlight diversity and your own and the children's own preferences, interests and reading 'work'. (Your own, for example, might include travel info, blogs, recipes, Tweets, education materials, children's writing...). Given the breadth of the children's interests, you might consider seeking a wider range of materials in school or revisit what counts as reading there.



(TaRs teacher's display of What we Read in 24 hours)

#### 6. Reading conferences

Hold reading /writing conferences with groups of children to discuss the texts they are currently enjoying reading/writing, both at school and at home and to share their pleasure in these texts. The composition of these groups could sometimes be based on your 'normal' guided reading groups but should also be formed on the basis of your observations of children who might share a particular interest in a theme/genre or a common attitude to or lack of confidence in reading.

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## 7. Desert Island texts

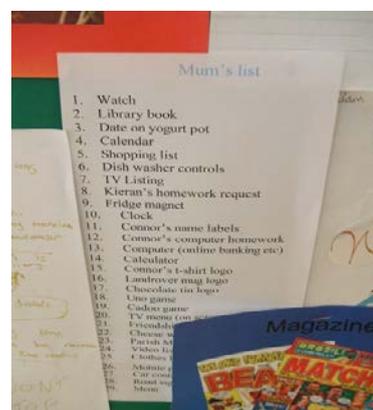
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(TaRs teacher with her *Desert Island Texts*)

## 8. Parents' reading practice

Invite the children to document their parents' reading at home, they might take photos for a display, ask their parents to create lists or make lists of what reading they see them engage in over a weekend. In this way they become 'reading detectives' documenting the myriad of everyday moments when adults read the Lotto results, the teletext, the post, magazines, junk mail, recipes, Facebook, ingredients etc.



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## **9. Children as reading researchers**

Invite children to be school 'reading researchers' and investigate perceptions about reading in the class/school. You could support them to design their own questionnaires/surveys. Look at the results together and discuss what they have found out and possible consequences for class/ school provision.

There is support for the tradition of involving children as researchers at The Open University's Children's Research Centre:

<http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/childrens-research-centre/>

## **10. Encourage sharing via Twitter**

Some schools have been very successful in developing their knowledge of children's reading practices via Twitter. For example, providing they are comfortable in so doing and you have ethical permission to do so, you could invite parents to Tweet some visuals of their children reading at home, alone or to their siblings. This might include short clips filmed or simply photos with a caption.

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