

CHANGING CHILDREN'S PERCEPTION OF READING THROUGH PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

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Abstract

This talk is about sharing the findings from a qualitative research on the impact of parental involvement on children's perceptions of reading. Two workshops had been conducted in SK Kunak 2 to introduce parents to rhymes and story-telling with children at home. To investigate the impact of these workshops on the children's perceptions of reading, we recorded videos of pre-intervention and post-intervention interviews. The aim of the talk is to inspire the audience through some of the highlights of the research. Audience will also be engaged interactively through reflective activities, feedback sharing and Q&A sessions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading for Pleasure – The Importance and Benefits

Clark and Rumbold (2006) define reading for pleasure as "reading that we do of our own free will anticipating the satisfaction that we will get from the act of reading. It also refers to reading that having begun at someone else's request we continue because we are interested in it." Citing Nell (1988), "reading for pleasure is a form of play that allows us to experience other worlds and roles in our imaginations. Reading for pleasure is also described as a "hermeneutic, interpretative activity, which is shaped by the reader's expectations and experiences as well as by the social contexts in which it takes place."

According to Krashen (1993), "When children read for pleasure, when they get 'hooked on books', they acquire, involuntarily and without conscious effort, nearly all of the so-called 'language skills' many people are so concerned about: they will become adequate readers, acquire a large vocabulary, develop the ability to understand and use complex grammatical constructions, develop a good writing style, and become good (but not necessarily perfect) spellers. Although free

voluntary reading alone will not ensure attainment of the highest levels of literacy, it will at least ensure an acceptable level. Without it, I suspect that children simply do not have a chance".

Substantial body of research that supports the importance of reading for pleasure is highlighted by the National Union for Teachers (NUT). NUT cites OECD in stating that: "Finding ways to engage pupils in reading may be one of the most effective ways to leverage social change." Also according to NUT, "Analysis showed that students whose parents had the lowest occupational status but who were highly engaged in reading obtained higher average scores than students whose parents had high or medium occupational status but who were poorly engaged in reading." The following are other researches cited by NUT on the importance of reading for pleasure:

- The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS); focusing on 10 year olds: "...there is a strong association between the amount of reading for pleasure children reported and their reading achievement."
- Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which concerned with 15 year olds: "...in almost all countries, students who enjoy reading are significantly more likely to be good readers."
- Guthrie and Wigfield (2000): "...as students become engaged readers, they provide themselves with self-generated learning opportunities that are equivalent to several years of education."

"If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales. If you want them to be more intelligent, read them more fairy tales."
~ Albert Einstein

"Every man who knows how to read has it in his power to magnify himself, to multiply the ways in which he exists, to make his life full, significant and interesting." ~Aldous Huxley

The Role of Parental Involvement in Children's Reading Development

A report by Clark (2007) of the National Literacy Trust on 'family involvement at school' has revealed that: "In a recent study (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins and Weiss, 2006) for the Harvard Family Research Project, it was found that family involvement in school matters most for children whose mothers have less education. More specifically, the authors found that increases in family involvement in the school predicted increases in reading achievement for low income families and that family involvement in school matters most for children at greatest risk. More specifically, Dearing and colleagues found that if families who were initially uninvolved in the school became more involved, their children's reading improved. Importantly, their results indicated that even one or two additional involvement activities per year were associated with meaningful improvements for children."

Another report for National Literacy Trust by Close (2001) also reveals the same findings. In discussing parental involvement and reading achievement, Close cites findings by various researches on the subject of 'school-initiated parental involvement and home reading'. Below are some of the findings:

- For children between the ages of 5 – 14, reading activity at home has significant positive influence on students' reading achievement, attitudes towards reading and attentiveness in the classroom (Rowe, 1991).
- The involvement of parents in school initiated interventions raises achievement when the structures are in place for effective partnerships (Wolfendale and Bastiani, 2000).
- Parents who have received training and are confident can help improve poor readers' interest in and enthusiasm for reading and their reading competence (Toomey, 1993).
- Parents who listen to their children read contribute to their child's success in school (Tizard, 1982) and this intervention works well for weak

readers and minority groups (Macleod, 1996).

"Children are made readers on the laps of their parents." ~ Emilie Buchwald

"There are many little ways to enlarge your child's world. Love of books is the best of all."
~ Jacqueline Kennedy

References

- British Council. (2012). *LearnEnglish Family Workshops: Parental Involvement in Reading*. British Council.
- Clark, C. (2007). *Why Families Matter to Literacy - A Brief Research Summary*. London: National Literacy Trust.
- Clark, C., & Rumbold, K. (2006). *Reading for Pleasure: A Research Overview*. National Literacy Trust.
- Close, R. (2001). *Parental Involvement and Literacy Achievement*. London: National Literacy Trust.
- Krashen, S. (1993). *The Power of Reading*. Englewood, Col.: Libraries Unlimited, Inc.
- National Union for Teachers (NUT). (n.d.). *Reading 4 Pleasure*. United Kingdom: National Union for Teachers (NUT).

Internet Resources

Researches on Literacy:

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

Rhymes and stories:

<http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org>

Comic strips by Mr. David Lee Finkle:

<http://www.mrfitz.com/>

(Facebook: *Mr. Fitz Comic Strip*)