

Case Study: Anne Shaw, Learning Resource Centre Manager, Ely College, Cambridgeshire

Reading for pleasure in Years 7 & 8

Anne Shaw, Learning Resource Centre Manager at Ely College, Cambridgeshire, wanted to ascertain whether Year 7 and 8 students were choosing fiction at the correct level, reading and understanding their books and moving to higher level when appropriate. She also wanted to find out what their attitude to reading was, and whether they enjoyed their reading lessons and found them useful as she was interested in why some students were motivated readers whilst others struggled to engage.

She embarked on this study as a result of her annual issue figures showing that there was a drop-off in students borrowing fiction in Year 9 and was interested in whether this trend could be altered by interventions during Year 7 and 8. Academic Mentoring had been introduced across the College which had had an impact on student engagement and Anne saw an opportunity to use this in relation to reading. The National Literacy Trust annual literacy report (Clark and Teravainen-Goff, 2017/2018, London, National Literacy Trust)¹ also influenced her actions. Report findings showed a clear link between school library use and higher literacy levels as well as the fact that students who don't use their school library are twice as likely to have poor mental health.

Anne created a template which she used for short interviews with Year 7 and 8 students during their reading lessons. Each interviewed ended with a recommendation agreed by the student ranging from reading 3 nights a week

before bed, asking for help choosing a book or joining a book group.

During the interview, students discussed whether they enjoyed reading, whether their parents/carers read and if there were books at home. The question relating to reading for longer referred to the reading lesson and whether students felt the lesson was useful and enabled them to develop their reading skills. Anne also explained the importance of reading and how it would help them with their school work. Each student was rewarded with a book mark.

Interviews were approximately 5 to 10 minutes and were carried out over a term. Due to the number of students involved it was not possible to speak to them all so a random selection was chosen from each class; however, all Pupil Premium students were interviewed. Teachers were very supportive of the process and often asked me to speak to particular students who they felt were not enjoying their reading or engaging fully. At the end of each interview all students were told they could ask for help choosing books if they were unsure what to choose.

At the end of the academic year, Anne included the following in her annual report to the Principal and Senior Leadership Team. She also sent a copy to the Head of English.

¹Clark, C and Teravainen-Goff, A. ,School libraries: why children and young people use them or not, their literacy engagement and mental wellbeing, annual literacy survey 2017/2018, London: National Literacy Trust 2018

The results of this survey indicate that:

- There is a reduction in the number of students reading regularly in Year 8.
- Students clearly understand the importance of having a lesson dedicated to reading
- The number of students reading at home reduces from Year 7 to Year 8
- The number of students completing a book reduces slightly from Year 7 to Year 8.

It was interesting to note how parental attitudes to reading were usually reflected in the student's attitude. If the parent/carer was a reader, the student clearly understood the value of reading and expressed a wish to improve, even if they were not reading regularly at present. Those whose parents/carers did not read often showed no interest in reading. The research above suggests that there is an underlying deterioration in attitudes to reading towards the end of Year 8 and this conclusion was confirmed by the loan statistics for Year 9. The results of the survey also showed that the reading lessons were having a positive impact on reading habits for Year 7 and 8 with students appreciating their time in the LRC as it helped them to develop a regular reading habit. As a result of the survey, the English department gave time for Year 9 to visit the LRC to borrow fiction.

Anne states that reading for pleasure is clearly supported across the school and the evidence from the survey has helped to underline the important role the LRC plays. She has also had a noticeable increase in the number of students asking for help in choosing a fiction book; although this is observational evidence, she feels this shows the study has impacted student engagement.

Anne's Interview Template

Name	Do you read regularly?	Can you read for longer now?	Do you read at home?	Do your parents/carers read?	Have you read a whole book?	Recommendation