

Institution: The Open University		
Unit of Assessment: C23 Education		
Title of case study: Developing effective Reading for Pleasure practices in primary schools		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2006-2017		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Teresa Cremin	Professor	2007-present
Amelia Hempel Jorgensen	Research Fellow	2013-present
Kimberly Safford	Senior Lecturer	2007-present
Joan Swann	Professor	1977-2013
Liz Chamberlain	Senior Lecturer	2015-present
Natalia Kucirkova	Professor	2010-2016, July 2020-present
Karen Littleton	Professor	1995-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2016 - October 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? Yes		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>The research underpinning this case study identified five key elements of an effective strategy for developing reading for pleasure within primary schools. This has resulted in impacts on the understanding and learning and practice of 308 primary schools, 5,320 primary school practitioners (and their pupils), 30 Initial Teacher Education Providers and 3,858 student teachers and on public policy by influencing five national Reading for Pleasure initiatives.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>The Reading for Pleasure (RfP) programme of research at the OU seeks to address recurring evidence that children in England enjoy reading less than their international peers and engage less often. Yet although RfP is now mandated in schools, reading improvement initiatives are often focused on increasing proficiency rather than sustaining engagement by nurturing readers. The RfP research has documented weaknesses in supporting reading for pleasure within schools, including for disadvantaged children and RfP researchers have worked with teachers to identify the key elements of an effective reading for pleasure strategy. Taken as a whole, the research revealed that: i) teachers' knowledge of children's literature is too limited to enable reader development or respond to diverse children; ii) that the diversity of children's informal multimedia reading practices at home is underestimated by teachers; iii) that reading and talk are mutually supportive learning experiences for children and adults. The work argued that to effectively develop children's reading for pleasure, teachers need to develop: a) considerable knowledge of children's literature and other texts; b) knowledge of children's reading practices; c) a reading for pleasure pedagogy, encompassing social reading environments; reading aloud; informal book talk and recommendations; d) independent reading time; e) an identity as 'Reading Teachers'- teachers who read and readers who teach and f) reciprocal and interactive reading communities within and beyond school.</p> <p>A survey was conducted of 1,200 teachers' personal and professional reading practices. The research revealed that teachers have limited knowledge of children's authors, poets and picture fiction creators and instead rely upon childhood favourites and 'celebrity' authors. This limited knowledge impacts on their ability to foster reading for pleasure and reader development amongst pupils [O1]. A second study involved teacher-researchers from five Local Authorities documenting and developing their own and children's reading practices and identities [O2, O3]. Results identified that: developing teachers' knowledge of children's literature positively impacts upon pedagogic practice, reader to reader relationships and the creation of reading communities; teachers who develop their knowledge of children's reading practices widen what counts as reading in their classrooms, which engages children, whose everyday reading are respected; a robust RfP pedagogy encompasses four specific practices: reading aloud, informal book-talk and recommendations, and independent reading time within a highly social reading environment. When responsively combined they make a positive impact on children's RfP; teachers</p>		

who explore their own reading practices develop a wider conceptualisation of reading and of the social nature of reading, this influences their pedagogy and impacts upon children's reading for pleasure. In schools that developed these practices a shift in the locus of control around reading and the creation of newly interactive and highly reciprocal reading communities was observed. A third study involved 18 teachers from five Local Authorities adopting an ethnographic stance and visiting homes, researching children's literacy lives and building on their new understandings in school [O3]. This research identified an urgent need to align professional understandings with the lived experiences of learners and to broaden what is valued as literacy in school. It argued teachers should build on children's funds of knowledge and create 'two-way traffic' between home and school reading. Another study sought to identify the key features of extra-curricular reading groups within the Carnegie and Kate Greenaway shadowing scheme [O4]. The research identified the groups as social reading environments that supported reading for pleasure. In addition, extensive book talk and teacher and librarian knowledge of texts was evidenced, enabling book recommendations to be made and reciprocity to develop in reader- to-reader relationships. Drawing on work which focused on developing an evaluation tool for digital books; 6 facets of reader engagement in relation to digital book apps were identified which expanded understanding about what teachers need to know about children's everyday digital reading practices [O5]. Finally, RfP pedagogy within four case study low SES schools was investigated. The study found that within the schools RfP pedagogies did not support engagement as readers because teachers' understandings of reading were primarily about proficiency. It argued that teachers need to reconceptualise reading as social and volitional and ensure their RfP pedagogies reflect this [O6].

3. References to the research

The underpinning research has been funded by UKLA, The Esme Fairburn Foundation, The Carnegie UK Trust, ESRC and the British Academy. O1, O2, O4 and O6 are peer reviewed.

- O1. Cremin, T.,** Mottram, M., Bearne, E., & Goodwin, P. (2008) Exploring teachers' knowledge of children's literature, *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 38, 4, 449-464. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057640802482363>.
- O2. Cremin, T.,** Mottram, M., Collins, F., Powell, S., & **Safford, K.** (2009) Teachers as readers: building communities of readers, *Literacy*, 43,1,11-19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-4369.2009.00515.x>.
- O3. Cremin, T.,** Mottram, M., Collins, F.M., Powell, S., & **Safford, K.** (2014) Building Communities of Engaged Readers: Reading for pleasure London and NY: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315772585>.
- O4. Cremin, T., & Swann, J.** (2016) Literature in Common: Reading for Pleasure in School Reading Groups. In Rothbauer P. et al. (Eds). *Plotting the Reading Experience: Theory/Practice/Politics*. Wilfrid Laurier University Press pp.279-300.
- O5. Kucirkova, N., Littleton, K., & Cremin, T.** (2017) Young children's reading for pleasure with digital books: six key facets of engagement. *Cambridge Journal of Education*. 47, 1, 67-84. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2015.1118441>.
- O6. Hempel-Jorgensen, A., Cremin, T.,** Harris, D., & **Chamberlain, L.** (2018) Pedagogy for reading for pleasure in low socio-economic primary schools: beyond 'pedagogy of poverty'? *Literacy*, 52, 2, 86-94. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lit.12157>.

4. Details of the impact

Impact has been developed by working with a range of beneficiaries including: 1) Primary school practitioners with responsibility for reading including: English Subject Leaders, teachers, head-teachers, school librarians, teaching assistants and external reading consultants or literacy specialists 2) Initial Teacher Education stakeholders including teacher educators and student teachers 3) The Department for Education and related government bodies with a role in developing reading skills in primary education. Two key pathways to impact the research team have developed are an interactive RfP website and Teachers' Reading Groups (TRGs). Advised by a reference group of current teachers the RfP website hosts accessible resources which engage teachers with the OU research-informed approach to effective RfP. Users can upload 'Examples of Practice' explicitly linking change in their RfP practice to the research. TRGs are

local CPD-focused groups run by volunteer leaders. The RfP research team support TRG leaders by offering training, mentoring and resources. Texts for the TRGs have been donated by the OU, UKLA and commercial publishers. TRG Members are supported to plan and implement changes to their practice as a result of their engagement with the research findings. Overall, these and other activities have had an impact on:

- **The understanding and learning and practice** of primary schools, primary school practitioners (and their pupils), Initial Teacher Education Providers and student teachers by transforming whole school RfP practice; shaping RfP related Initial Teacher Education provision; and influencing pupils reading practices and attainment.
- **public policy** of Department for Education and related bodies who have a responsibility for developing reading skills in primary education by influencing national RfP initiatives.

Transformed whole-school RfP practice: Between 2018 and 2020, **69 schools** have paid for sustained support from the RfP team who have worked with the English Lead, Head Teacher, and change management team to develop their RfP practices. In 2018-2019 in Macclesfield, the RfP team worked with The Aspirer Teaching Alliance to support development across five schools. In the West Midlands they worked with the Birmingham Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust (BDMAT) to support development across eight schools. In 2019-20 the RfP team worked with eight Nottingham and eight Birmingham schools, in 2020-2021 with 27 Sheffield and Rotherham schools, linked to St Wilfred's English Hub, and a further 13 Birmingham schools. Development days were held to enable staff from participating schools, including teachers, teaching assistants, senior leaders, and head teachers, to engage with the research (approx. 1,500 practitioners in total). Consequently, RfP Lead Teachers have developed 'Action Plans' for their school and individual teachers have planned change to their practice. End of year one evaluation data from across the Aspirer and BDMAT Trusts revealed that 96% indicated that the RfP research had considerably influenced their own and their staff's RfP pedagogy **[C1]**. At the end of year school conference, teachers from schools in the Aspirer Trust shared the practices they employed to engage the whole staff team with the RfP research such as including examples from the RfP website on the agenda for every staff meeting **[C1]**. Examples of whole-school practices adopted by one of these schools, Puss Bank School and Nursery, include: teachers taking time to share their reading preferences and habits with their classes, teachers creating a 'book door' leading into their classroom and introducing birthday book gifting **[C1]**. The Head teacher of Peover Superior Endowed Primary School describes how engaging in RfP research started a ripple-effect within the School and Trust leading to outcomes such as an NQT winning a RfP Teacher of the Year award and the head-teacher offering RfP in-service training to eight other schools within the wider Trust **[C2]**. The RfP team is currently working with **34 government funded English Hubs** and their 170 English Leaders (each Hub works with 120 schools in high challenge areas) by contributing to the Hub training programme. In 2020, 141 Leaders attended five RfP training sessions led by Cremin in London, Wilmslow, Wakefield, and Bristol. After the training, 85% of attendees reported that they intended to implement what they had learnt, with examples including: '*staff training on not killing stories*' and '*getting to know my children really well*'. The person responsible for leading training across the Hubs testifies that the RfP research has "*enriched teachers' understanding of why and how they should put reading for pleasure at the heart of their schools*" **[C3]**. The Strategic Lead for the English Hub covering North East London and Essex testifies that they run a TRG group with 18 school representatives and that evaluation responses are very positive with all participants reporting that "*it had already transformed (or was transforming) the teaching of Reading for Pleasure in their school*" **[C3]**. Further evidence of impact on whole school practice can be found in testimonials from **school leaders**. For example, at St Mathews C.E Teaching and Research School, RfP is embedded through activities such as introducing 'reading aloud' at the end of every day, incorporating Reading for Pleasure weeks on a two-week cycle and training teachers on understanding the pedagogy behind RfP **[C2]**. Sneiton St Stephens Church of England Primary School have responded to the RfP research by making sure everybody (including the caretaker) was reading more current children's literature; doing a 'book swap' for children on a Monday morning in the hall before school and holding reading assemblies which parents are invited to **[C2]**. At the University of Cambridge Primary School an RfP culture has been developed through setting up a TRG group for teachers and learning coaches, establishing a separate 'parents RfP' group with

20 parents, running workshops for parents and developing a RfP professional development course for 50-60 practitioners from 20 schools [C2]. The RfP research has informed whole-school approaches in a further 67 schools, as evidenced by the **case studies** of whole-school change that have been uploaded to the RfP website by teachers [<https://tinyurl.com/ya48rfkb>]. For example, a teacher at Moorlands Primary Academy describes how they recruited 35 staff to become 'reading buddies' to less experienced readers in the school and how this has led to "significantly more book talk around the school".

Shaped RfP related Initial Teacher Education provision: Since 2016, the RfP team have partnered with 30 Initial Teacher Education providers including Edge Hill University, Cardiff University, University of Glasgow, Sheffield Hallam, Roehampton, University of the West of England, and St Mary's University College Belfast. The RfP team supports them in using RfP findings within their teaching materials, activities, or assignments. In addition, 14 universities have established their own TRG groups for ITE students, or in combination with local teachers. At the University of Greenwich, RfP is embedded in the BA QTS course (500 students since 2017); School Direct (80 since 2017); the PGCE (360 since 2017) and CPD in 11 schools has been run. In Year 3, a specialist course is run for around 20 students per year who want to develop their RfP practice, where they either examine their understanding of children's books or their own identity as a reader [C4]. The University of Roehampton directs students to the RfP website to inform their developing practice and Year 2 BA QTS students (320 per year) are tasked to undertake a RfP case study during their placement. A senior English lecturer testifies how engagement with RfP has also influenced her own practice and the RfP ethos of 40 other staff at Roehampton, with examples including staff having posters on their doors to identify what they are currently reading [C4]. At the University of the West of England, the RfP research is shared with first year students and PGCE students (660 students since 2018). First year students focus on RfP as part of their placement and, drawing on RfP research, write an assignment that reflects on the effective teaching of reading [C4]. A 2019 survey of 20 partner Initial Teacher Education providers working with student teachers from a range of courses revealed that RfP research findings had been shared with 4,300 students and developed with 1,238 students. Regarding the impact of the RfP research on students, respondents felt there had been an impact: on students' knowledge of children's literature and other texts (82% agreeing or strongly agreeing); on RfP pedagogy in terms of social reading environments (94% agreeing or strongly agreeing), Reading Teachers (94% agreeing or strongly agreeing), reading aloud (88% agreeing or strongly agreeing) and independent reading (82% agreeing or strongly agreeing); and on reading communities (71% agreeing or strongly agreeing) [C5].

Transformed primary school practitioners understanding and implementation of RfP: To date around 450 detailed accounts of RfP practice that has been influenced by OU RfP research have been uploaded to the RfP website by teachers, librarians, teacher educators and student teachers from over 25 schools in England (e.g. Bexley, Birmingham, Cambridge, Coventry, Dagenham, Grimsby, London, Northampton, Macclesfield, Manchester, Margate, Rochdale, Weston-Supermare & York) Wales, Republic of Ireland, Dubai and Pakistan [<https://tinyurl.com/ya48rfkb>]. Since 2017, the RfP team have supported 200 'Teachers and Reading Groups' (TRGs) across the UK and 4 international groups, involving approximately 3,600 members, who collectively are teaching approximately 900,000 pupils. A 2019 survey of 63 TRG leaders and 357 TRG members revealed that engagement in the RfP research had influenced TRG members knowledge and understanding of: children's literature and other texts (91%), children's reading practices (85%); RfP pedagogy-social environments (81%); RfP pedagogy-reading aloud (74%); RfP pedagogy-independent reading (75%); RfP pedagogy-informal book talk (85%); Reading teachers (87%) and reading communities (89%). TRG leaders indicate that this had contributed to an increase in confidence and a sense of being empowered to make changes in practice. TRG members also report impacts on their own knowledge and practice. For example: "*My attitude towards it [RfP pedagogy] and awareness of the importance of it has changed my practice*" (literacy lead, KS1) and "*it [the TRG] has kept me focused on my aims and ensured I kept up with what I have wanted to achieve*" (literacy lead, KS2) [C6]. A TRG leader in Rochdale testifies that as a result of attending the training and becoming a TRG leader they i) invited the Mayor and head of the Royal British Legion into school to read stories to the

school's most vulnerable children; ii) started the Rochdale Children's Literature festival with 8 TRG members which involved pupils as festival ambassadors; and iii) buddied up less experienced readers with members of staff [C2].

Influenced pupils' reading practices and attainment: Practitioner uploads of practice case studies to the RfP website, school evaluations and practitioner testimonials highlight pupils are more enthusiastic, willing, and able to voice their views about books and identify themselves as readers. Their perceptions of why we read have changed from predominantly functional to pleasurable. For example, responses to the 2019 TRG member survey included: "*some Year 2 boys formed their own book club in the playground where they were sharing books by the same author*" [C6]. St. Matthew's C.E. Teaching and Research School reports that: "*we've found that that engagement with RfP [...] has enabled our children to really take on board any type of reading that they do across the curriculum*" [C2]. A teacher from University Cambridge Primary testifies: "*the RfP work was instrumental in helping us create that culture which has transformed children's lives*". They described how a Year 6 boy who'd hated reading in Year 2 asked if he could "*run an intervention group with Year 1 children who find it difficult to read*" [C2]. Elmhurst Primary School reports that in 2019 the number of pupils reaching the 'Higher standard' increased from 30% to 43% [C3]. Whole-school data from schools in the BDMA and Aspire Trusts shows significant shifts in readers' attitudes through baseline/end-of-year surveys. For example, a shift from 44% to 97% KS1 students liking reading at Victoria Road Primary School; a shift from 3% to 60% KS2 students liking reading at Coleshill Church of England Primary School) and 50% to 75% KS1 and KS2 students liking reading at Nethersole Church of England Academy [C1].

Influenced national RfP initiatives: The scale and quality of impact of the RfP research has been recognised by the Department for Education (DfE) who during the pandemic invited Cremin to advise on the Reading for Pleasure component of the BBC BiteSize resources which were created to support home-schooling and to work with the Oak National Academy to produce a daily reading curriculum for 5 to 16 year olds for 2020-2021. In addition, at the request of the DfE, Cremin has developed a tool for Schools to audit their RfP practice. Linked to this work Cremin has been asked to Chair the DfE RfP subcommittee and has been asked by the Minister of State for School Standards to serve as one of three 'reading experts' on the English Hubs Council programme [C7]. These appointments have enabled Cremin to make a significant contribution to the initiation and launch of the first National Reading Together Day (16/07/2020). Co-ordinated by the Reading Agency, the aim of the event was to encourage families and young people to read together by participating in a shared schedule of events [C7]. Cremin also initiated an OU RfP partnership with the Reading Agency to launch a Teachers Reading Challenge (Aug to Oct 2020). [<https://teachersreadingchallenge.org.uk/>]. The 2,500 teachers who signed up to the Challenge were supported to use the OU RfP pedagogy to source book recommendations, take part in discussions and produce and share 2,000 book reviews. Commenting on the success of all the initiatives outlined here, the DfE English Hubs Policy Team Leader concludes that the RfP research has played a "*a highly important and influential role on our policy-making, which has resulted in excellent outputs such as the Reading Together Day and various helpful documents, products and tools for schools across the country*" [C7].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact.

- C1.** Survey data & case studies. Transformation of whole-school RfP practice, and influencing pupils reading practice and attainment. Aspirer and BDMAT Trusts.
- C2.** Letters. Transformation of whole-school RfP practice and influencing pupils reading practice and attainment. Three head teachers, one Literacy lead and one TRG Leader.
- C3.** Letters. Transformation of whole-school RfP practice and influencing pupils reading practice and attainment. Strategic leaders, The English Hubs.
- C4.** Letters. Shaping of RfP related Initial Teacher Education provision. 3 ITE providers.
- C5.** Survey data. Shaping of RfP related Initial Teacher Education provision. 20 ITE providers.
- C6.** Survey data. Transforming practitioners RfP understanding and practice and influencing pupils reading practice and attainment. TRG Leaders and members.
- C7.** Testimonial. Influencing national RfP initiatives. English Hubs Policy Team Leader, DfE.