



Research and Results



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The Benefits of Classroom Libraries that Include Trade Books

Research Foundation

- A common feature of effective reading programs is student access to a wide variety of appealing trade books and other reading materials. (Cullinan, 2000)
- Highly effective literacy educators create print-rich classroom environments filled with lots of high-quality, diverse reading materials. (Morrow & Gambrell, 2000)
- Results of the 1992 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicate that fourth graders who report reading nonfiction books, storybooks, and magazines are more proficient readers than those who read only one or two types of text. (Dreher, 1999)
- Adolescents and young adults need ... access to a sufficient number of books in the classroom on topics that are relevant to the students. (Krisch et al., 2002)
- When classrooms are filled with trade books and teachers encourage free reading, children's reading achievement, comprehension, and attitudes toward reading improve. (Fielding, Wilson, & Anderson, 1989)

Research Implications

Children learning to read need access to meaningful and personally interesting books. Without real engagement with meaningful books, children will not become readers. Effective teachers of reading understand the critical relationship between access to books and reading achievement. They recognize that the availability of reading material is related to how much children read, and that how much children read is related to how well they read. Because a rich and supportive literacy environment is critical to reading success, they provide their students with a rich and extensive classroom library filled with a diverse selection of interesting trade books.

Effective teachers of reading incorporate diverse trade books into their reading curriculum, introducing their students to the wide range of genres, authors, and topics. These teachers know that students who read a diverse range of reading materials are more proficient readers than those who read a narrower selection of texts. A well-stocked classroom library ensures that students will have access to a wide selection of diverse trade books.

The Benefits of Trade Books For Culturally Diverse Students and English Language Learners

Research Foundation

- Trade books are powerful instructional tools for meeting the needs of a variety of students with diverse learning styles. (Flippo, 1999)
- The same language-rich, language-integrated environment that helps native speakers acquire literacy...will also help ESL students add English to their home language. (Piper, 1998)
- Language flourishes best in a language-rich environment. Second language learners need to be exposed to meaningful literacy activities...It is vital for teachers to make reading and writing appealing and significant to the children. (McLaughlin, 1995)
- When the content of texts is familiar and interesting to English-language learners, they are more successful in reading. (Brisk & Harrington, 2000)

Research Implications

Effective teachers of reading understand that children from culturally diverse backgrounds learn best when the classroom environment is respectful of their linguistic, social, and cultural heritage. These teachers surround their students with culturally appropriate and relevant trade books that capitalize on the background knowledge and experiences that their students bring to school. By connecting these children with meaningful multicultural books they can relate to, teachers validate and build on their students' cultural and world knowledge. A rich classroom collection of multicultural trade books, acknowledges the background experience of culturally diverse students, bridges the gap between home and school, and enhances their engagement in reading.

Research suggests that the acquisition of English as a second language is enhanced by native language use. Thus, effective teachers provide English language learners with trade books in both languages.

The Benefits of Reading Practice with Trade Books

Research Foundation

- Wide and frequent reading of trade books increases a student's reading achievement. (Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992)
- Increased frequency, amount, and diversity of reading activity increases reading achievement. (Guthrie et al., 1996)
- The volume of independent, silent reading students do in school is significantly related to gains in reading achievement. (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1996)
- Providing time for independent reading in schools has a positive impact on reading comprehension, vocabulary development, spelling, written style, oral/aural language, and control of grammar. (Krashen, 1993)
- "Reading a lot" is one of the most powerful methods of increasing fluency, vocabulary, [and] comprehension. (Stanovich, 1993)
- Adolescent and young adults' engagement in reading, including the amount of time they spend on reading and the diversity of materials they read, is closely associated with performance and reading ability. (Krisch et al., 2002)
- Students who read widely and frequently are higher achievers than students who read rarely and narrowly. (Guthrie et al., 1999)
- Fourth graders in the United States do better academically when they ... have greater access to books and other reading materials in their environment. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000)
- Reading volume ... significantly affects ... general knowledge of the world, overall verbal ability, and academic achievement. (Shefelbine, 2000)
- Because time spent reading is tied to reading and writing competence, many students who do not read in their free time eventually lose academic ground even if they are not initially remedial readers. (Mullis, Campbell, & Farstrup, 1993)

Research Implications

Children who read voluntarily and extensively practice their reading skills, and reading practice is essential for children to become proficient readers. Research demonstrates a strong correlation between high reading achievement and large amounts of independent reading. Effective reading programs should therefore include independent reading of a wide variety of reading materials, including trade books.

Effective teachers of reading recognize that students need to read a lot to practice and refine their reading skills, and they provide their students with blocks of time within the school day to read books beyond their textbooks. They also encourage their students to read outside of the school day and year, as research shows that even proficient readers eventually exhibit academic declines if they do not read in their free time. They promote independent reading outside of the school by such means as daily at-home reading assignments, setting high expectations for their students, providing summer reading lists, encouraging parent involvement, and working with community groups to provide access to books.

While the best predictor of reading success is the amount of time spent reading, reading achievement is also influenced by the frequency, amount, and diversity of reading activities. Effective teachers of reading engage their students in reading for a variety of purposes—for pleasure, for exploration, and for information to perform a task. These teachers recognize that not all students enter reading through the same door, so they provide them with a wide range of meaningful reading activities, including those that promote social interaction with their peers.

Effective teachers of reading know that diverse readers span a range of reading interests and abilities and need access to a wide variety of engaging books in their immediate environment to meet their reading needs. They stock their classroom library with a large number of trade books, reflecting different genres, topics, authors, and reading levels. By providing access to a rich classroom library, teachers promote greater amounts of reading, increased reading frequency, and more diverse reading experiences among their students, thus helping them to attain greater levels of reading achievement.

"Increased frequency, amount, and diversity of reading activity increases reading achievement."

—Guthrie, et al., 1996

The Benefits of Trade Books in Relation to Reading Comprehension

Research Foundation

- The single most valuable activity for developing children's comprehension is reading itself. The amount of reading that children do is shown to predict the growth in reading comprehension across the elementary school years even after controlling for entry-level differences. (California Department of Education, 1996)
- Students who read actively and frequently improve their comprehension of text as a consequence. (Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992)
- The amount of reading is a strong predictor of reading comprehension, outweighing intelligence, economic background, and gender. (Reutzel & Gikkubgsworth, 1991)
- The best strategy for developing comprehension is for teachers to require students to read a significant amount of age-appropriate materials. (Honig, 1996)
- An abundance of interesting books in the classroom promotes the use of comprehension strategies. (Guthrie et al, 2000)

Research Implications

Because effective teachers of reading recognize that teaching skills and strategies in the context of real reading assists their students in polishing and integrating their newly acquired reading skills, they give their students extended reading practice with books of their own choosing. These teachers understand that to improve reading skills, students need direct instruction followed by meaningful practice with appropriate text. Thus they allocate a substantial amount of time each day for free voluntary reading. To facilitate their students' independent reading, they stock their classroom with engaging trade books, representing a wide variety of genres, topics, authors, and reading levels to accommodate individual reading needs.

The more children read, the more they build their background knowledge, which in turn strengthens their ability to comprehend. Effective teachers of reading facilitate the expansion of background knowledge by providing frequent and varied opportunities for their students to interact with a variety of trade books.

Effective teachers of reading know that comprehension is enhanced by reflection and social interaction. Therefore, they provide their students with multiple opportunities to respond to their reading and interact with their peers through a variety of activities such as book clubs and discussions. Student interaction in discussions promotes their ability to think critically and promotes a deeper understanding of what they have read.

The Benefits of Trade Books in Relation to Vocabulary

Research Foundation

- Vocabulary growth is heavily influenced by the amount and variety of material children read. (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998)
- Children expand their vocabularies by reading extensively on their own. The more children read, the more their vocabularies grow. (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001)
- Children learn an average of 4,000 to 12,000 new words each year as a result of book reading. (Anderson & Nagy, 1992)
- Independent reading is a major source of vocabulary growth. (Nagy & Anderson, 1984)

Research Implications

According to the research, the majority of vocabulary growth occurs not as a result of direct instruction, but as the result of reading voluminously. Effective teachers of reading know that for students to own a word, they need to see the word used in meaningful contexts a multitude of times. By reading voluminously, students are exposed frequently and often to words in meaningful contexts, thus increasing their opportunities to learn new words. Even a moderate amount of daily independent reading of trade books has a positive impact on increasing vocabulary. Students at all levels who read independently acquire new words as the result of reading more.

Effective teachers of reading facilitate increased vocabulary growth by promoting increased independent reading of trade books, both in and out of school. As books are rich in academic words, the extended reading of trade books not only increases vocabulary in terms of quantity, but it also enhances vocabulary in terms of quality.

Increased vocabulary knowledge helps students understand what they read, and reading comprehension is enhanced when students understand the meaning of words. Thus there is a reciprocal benefit to independent reading of trade books—vocabulary growth and reading comprehension.

The Benefits of Reading Trade Books Aloud

Research Foundation

- The most important activity for building the knowledge and skills ... required for reading is that of reading aloud to children. (Adams, 1990)
- Reading to children...increases their knowledge of the world, their vocabulary, their familiarity with written language ... and their interest in reading. (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001)
- Reading out loud to children is a proven way to develop vocabulary growth and language expansion and plays a causal role in developing both receptive and expressive language capabilities. Reading out loud can also enhance children's background knowledge of new concepts that may appear in both oral and written language. (Lyon, 2002)
- Children ... who are read aloud to daily score significantly better on measures of vocabulary, comprehension, and decoding ability. (Bus, van Ijzendoorn, & Pelligrini, 1995)
- You can help your students become more fluent readers by providing them with models of fluent reading. (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001)

Research Implications

Research shows that the opportunity for students to listen to books read aloud benefits their oral and written language and is strongly correlated to successful literacy development. Effective teachers of reading know that reading aloud encourages reading engagement, builds comprehension and vocabulary, and promotes fluency development. Thus they read aloud frequently in class. A rich classroom library representing a variety of reading levels supports teachers in reading aloud books that promote reading growth.

Effective teachers of reading know that reading aloud books that are more difficult than their students are able to read independently bridges the gap for those students with limited language experiences in their background. Thus, a rich and varied classroom library filled with diverse trade books representing a variety of different reading levels, genres, authors, topics, and cultures can be an equalizer for students of diverse backgrounds and limited language experiences.

Reading aloud to students allows teachers to model reading strategies. Effective teachers of reading understand that the modeling of reading strategies through reading aloud supports readers in learning how to make meaning from diverse types of text, such as informational and narrative texts. To this end, these teachers read aloud from a varied array of trade books that introduce students to the different genres and types of text. A well-stocked classroom library filled with a wide variety of trade books provides depth and breadth in terms of the number and type of books for modeling strategies by reading aloud.

The Role of Motivation in Trade Books

Research Foundation

- There are three potential stumbling blocks that are known to throw children off course on the journey to skilled reading. The third obstacle ... [is] the absence or loss of an initial motivation to read or failure to develop a mature appreciation of the rewards of reading. (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998)
- Access to books through classroom and school libraries ... motivates students to read. (Gambrell, Codling, & Palmer, 1996)
- Motivation and reading development are fostered when children are immersed in a book-rich environment, engaged in interactions with others about books, and given the responsibility for making decisions about what, when, and how they read. (Gambrell, 1996)
- Student ownership of literacy is increased when students have access to a diverse range of interesting and appealing books representing a variety of genres. (Au & Aslam, 1996)

Research Implications

Research demonstrates that the availability of books is a key factor in reading development. When students are immersed in book-rich environments, motivation to read is high. Effective teachers of reading increase their students' motivation to read by increasing the number and diversity of high-interest trade books available in the classroom. These teachers promote student choice in the selection of books to read and assist their students in finding books matched to their appropriate level of challenge.

A key to teaching all children to read is engagement in an exciting literate atmosphere that stimulates and supports reading. Effective teachers recognize that students need both skill and desire to read if they are to develop as proficient readers. They facilitate engagement in reading by modeling their own love of reading, reading aloud, book talking, providing access to a wealth of trade books, engaging students in a variety of activities with diverse texts, including daily independent reading of self-selected trade books, and providing book-related incentives that recognize students for their reading and emphasize the value of reading.

The Benefits of Trade Books in Relation to Fluency

Research Foundation

- Fluency develops as a result of many opportunities to practice reading with a high degree of success. (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001)
- Independent reading is a major source of reading fluency. (Allington, 2001)
- Adequate progress in learning to read beyond the initial level depends on sufficient practice in reading to achieve fluency with different kinds of texts. (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998)

Research Implications

Research suggests that the independent reading of trade books is essential to increasing fluency. Effective teachers of reading know that fluency develops from an abundance of reading practice with books the reader can read with success. Through the process of reading an abundance of books at their independent reading level, students become more fluent at reading, thus gaining competence and confidence as readers. To encourage reading practice, effective teachers of reading initiate an independent reading program and provide their students with access to enjoyable trade books at their independent reading level. A well-stocked classroom library provides students access to trade books representing a variety of genres, topics, authors, and reading levels, thus ensuring each student the opportunity to experience reading success.

Effective teachers of reading understand that when reading to develop fluency, students need to read books that are neither too hard nor too easy for them. Text that is too hard impedes comprehension, and text that is too easy does not promote vocabulary growth. Effective teachers know the reading levels of their students and the reading levels of the trade books in their classroom, so that they can match their students to texts that can be read with success, thus assisting their students to grow as readers. Matching students to text is critical to establishing an optimal learning environment for reading.

Effective teachers of reading recognize that fluency varies with the type and readability of the text. These teachers strive to provide their students with a wide range of reading experiences with books representing a variety of genres and writing styles. A large and varied classroom library supports student interaction with diverse books.

"Fluency develops as a result of many opportunities to practice reading with a high degree of success."

—Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001

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