Encouraging Extensive Reading: The Teacher’s Role

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A Contradiction

- Universally hailed as beneficial, important, and necessary...yet is so **underutilized and even ignored**

(Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009)
Challenges

- Time
- Competing course demands
- Dearth of resources
- Student attitudes
- Skilled readers vs skilled readers
- Teacher’s stance
Convincing Students

- The primary objective: **convince students of its value** so that they will continue reading extensively on their own.

- An obvious but often neglected way to do this is to **model the behaviors of an enthusiastic reader**

  *(Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009)*
The Teacher is a Role Model of a Reader

- Effective extensive reading teachers are themselves readers, teaching by example the attitudes and behaviors of a reader

(Day & Bamford, 2002)
Positioning Oneself as a Reader

- Teachers guide students and participate with them as **members of a reading community**

- Keeping in mind that they are role models may **change teachers’ perceptions** of the classroom and their role as teachers

(Day & Bamford, 1998)
Teachers and Reading

- 73.2% had read for pleasure during the last month; 20.2% during the last three months

- 40% prefer popular fiction while 14% opt for biographies; less than 2% mentioned poetry

- 34% use libraries as a frequent source of reading material

(Cremin et al, 2009)
Teachers and Reading

- Enid Blyton, Roald Dahl, and 19th century classics most mentioned as favourite childhood reading

- Teacher’s knowledge of children’s literature is limited to a few renowned authors

(Cremin et al, 2009)
Teachers and Reading

- 58% could name only one or two poets; 22% named no poets at all; scant knowledge of women poets and multicultural poetry

- Teachers probably tend to select poetry for its capacity to teach particular language features rather than enjoying it for its own sake

(Cremin et al, 2009)
I read very few novels and less poetry
I must confess that poetry is not the material that I read most
Whenever I have time I like to read novels... more than poetry
There is a tendency to go for prose when it comes to reading for personal pleasure
Mostly for work purposes not for pleasure
A Poet on Teachers’ Reading of Poetry

I don’t think they do read it as much as we suppose they do because sometimes if I mention a poet’s name to a teacher they don’t know who that person is and if I mention certain poems or certain anthologies it’s a very restricted canon of work that teachers have read and it’s usually poetry from very deep in the past

John Rice
Do your teachers read poetry?

- They don’t mention it…I assume they would
- Yes…one of them does because she has a poetry club so she’s quite into that…the others I don’t know
- Yes…she always tells us read this…it’s a really good book
- I think so…I think it’s sort of necessary to read poetry if you’re an English teacher…they haven’t told us about it though
- I don’t know…they never told us I think
- I don’t know…I’ve never heard them mention anything
Would you like your teachers to share their poetry reading with you?

- Obviously teachers have a huge influence on the students...so it would help many students to take the initiative to read more poetry.

- It’s good because...having suggestions and an opinion from someone who actually knows good poetry is better.

- I think yes because students like me who don’t read poems...we don’t know what’s good and what’s not.
Would you like your teachers to share their poetry reading with you?

- I think it sort of encourages the students to have more confidence.
- Having someone teaching you who has read a lot of poetry is sort of encouraging...you can trust the person.
- It encourages you even more...like we see someone who likes poetry and we get more encouraged to read it.
The Medway Project

- Aimed to develop 43 teachers’ positioning as teachers who read and readers who teach

- Teachers’ increased knowledge, pleasure and use of poetry widened the children’s repertoires and experience of poetry, positively influencing their understanding and attitudes (Cremin, 2010)
Teachers as Readers

- talk with students about their reading lives
- tell students how they select a text, why they sometimes reread a text or do not finish it
- talk to students about who influences them as readers—who inspires them
Teachers as Readers

- tell students about troubles they have had with reading
- tell students about the strategies they find helpful as readers
- tell students about what they are learning from reading

(Commeyras et al, 2003)
The Reading Community

- Teachers positioned as fellow readers
- Emphasis on student selection
- Sharing of recommendations
- Book talks
References


