

Shared Practice: Creating Reading Environments on a Budget

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Session outline



Guest Speakers:

- **Carrie Lumsden**, Primary Teacher, Dalbeattie Primary
 - **Lynda Cooper**, Library Assistant, The Nicolson Institute
 - **Vivian Mackay**, Clerical Assistant, Halkirk Primary
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- Research insights: why it matters
 - Guest speaker 1
 - Practical suggestions
 - Guest speakers 2 and 3
 - Reflection
 - Further resources

Reading Schools Framework

- **1.2.1 Reading leadership group**
- **1.2.2 Peer role modelling**
- **1.3.2 School environment**
- **1.5.1 Access to high-quality reading materials**
- **2.3.3 Creating learner social networks**
- **2.3.4 Opportunities for learners to respond to what they're reading**

Research insights: four principles

Print collection	Teaching Walls
Reading furniture	Time and Talk

Visualisation of four principles for designing reading spaces - Loh, C.E. (2026)

Print collection

When asked 'when you've finished reading something, how do you decide what to read next?' 56% of learners responded that they look at the shelves. This preferred method highlights **the need for schools to create rich reading environments with books displayed in a way that entices learners.** - Cremin, T. and Coles, B. (2022)

Loh notes the importance of organising books for **visibility and discoverability**, ensuring books are at an accessible height and in lines of vision, rotating books to freshen displays, and providing clear signage of genres which can help learners discover and explore different text genres. - Loh, C.E. (2026)



Teaching walls

- Displays celebrating reading across the whole school showing it is valued
- Peer recommendations and interactive displays
- Advice and information on how to find texts of interest
- Sentence starters to help prompt book chat or ongoing mapping of responses to whole class novel e.g. using Chambers *Tell Me* approach - Sharing enthusiasms, sharing puzzles, sharing connections (Chambers, 2011)
- Making staff and peer reading role models visible e.g. mystery reader, extreme reading

Reading School suggestions for key area 1.2.2 learner role modelling

Reading furniture

NLT school libraries engagement survey 2017/2018 found:

- half the children and young people said the library being **friendly and comfortable** is a reason for going.
- A comfortable library can play a significant role for pupils who find the school environment particularly unwelcoming - Clark, C. and Teravainen-Goff, A. (2018)

'The type and placement of furniture can communicate **and even direct** students towards engaged reading behaviours' - Loh, C.E. (2026)



Time and Talk



- Over a third of children and young people don't use the school library **because their friends don't go** - Clark, C. and Teravainen-Goff, A. (2018)
- Extra-curricular reading groups can provide a sense of **fun, choice and enjoyment**, as opposed to objective led curricular learning - Cremin, T. and Swann, J. (2016)
- 'IBT [Informal Book Talk] can afford meaningful opportunities for children to **build and sustain their social relationships...** [it] enables children to be agentive and to take ownership of their reading experiences, potentially enabling them to **reposition themselves as knowledgeable readers and enact new reader identities.**' - Cremin, T., Hendry, H., Rodriguez-Leon, L., & Hulston, S. J. (2024)

Guest Speaker 1

Carrie Lumsden

Primary Teacher, Dalbeattie Primary
School, Dumfries and Galloway



Practical suggestions (1)



- Apply for our [Reading Schools Fund](#) – open now!
- Grants of up to £500 are available to purchase:
 - Books or reading materials for your school
 - Furnishings for reading spaces
- You need to be currently working on your Reading Schools accreditation through an **approved Action Plan** and **intend to continue to accreditation**.
- We want to **hear from your Reading Leadership Group directly**. It should be **pupil-led**.
- **Deadline is 29 October**

Practical suggestions (2)

- Apply for our [Sensory Stories fund](#)
- Grant of £400 any setting or group that works with children and young people with ASN in Scotland can apply for:
 - Books, props resources
 - Training for adults, storytelling event
- You should be a setting or group that works with children and young people with ASN in Scotland
- Applications are now open. **Deadline is 10 October.**



Practical suggestions (3)



- [Explore other funding opportunities through our Wakelet](#) created by our Regional Outreach coordinator Ella McLellan
- Consider downloading apps like [WeBuyBooks](#)
- Reach out to local businesses for support
- Consider if a portion of PEF funding can be used to help narrow the poverty related attainment gap – see [our article on how RfP can tackle poverty](#)
- Contact your school's PTA, parent council or other parent group for support both financially; for donations of books/furniture; updating displays; reading with children

Guest Speaker 2

Lynda Cooper

School Library Assistant, The Nicolson
Institute, Western Isles



Guest Speaker 3

Vivian Mackay

Clerical Assistant, Halkirk and Raye
Primaries, Highland



Reflection

- Take a couple of minutes to identify an area of focus – **print collection; teaching walls; reading furniture; or time and talk**
- Using your identified focus area, note down **two manageable ways** you can work with learners in your setting to develop your reading environment



Ideas from participants

- During the session, we invited participants to share what has worked well in their settings in relation to Loh's 4 principles.
- Over the next few slides, we've captured what was shared in the chat. If you'd like additional ideas which were shared, please do access the recording of the session on the Reading Schools Website.



Ideas from participants: print collection (1)

- Small school – book boxes around school; small library in dining area
- Basket in -school library add a new book in every month for book of the month. A lot of children go to this book because it's displayed in a nice basket
- Putting books front on as well as side on. Learners might choose ways of organising texts that adults wouldn't go with but they definitely engage better when displayed in a way that works for them!
- Our school have lots of books in a whole school library. They also have class libraries but pupils are in charge of creating their class libraries so they can rotate and change dependent on interests
- Learners creating labels for displays - it's about them taking ownership
- Rotate class collections in our year group to allow children regular access to a fresh selection. This is from our school library service.
- A "recommendation shelf"- aim for pupil ownership, Book tasting cafe, Padlet, visual reading library, book talk, "I am currently reading" on classroom doors to display current class text, library set out to be stage-friendly, class vote for class book for snack time

Ideas from participants: print collection (2)

- Portable pupil run library into the playground at lunchtime which caused great excitement.
- Choose a weekly librarian in my P2 class. We work together to choose which books should be displayed and how. This gives all the children a chance for their favourite books to be displayed in the library and share their interests with their peers. It's encouraged a lot of great discussion around books!
- Create displays of books to match a school theme
- I order in new books for ELC at the start of term and one is "delivered" every other week as a book club

Ideas from participants: teaching walls (1)

- We have a very simple 'This Book or That' every day. They access the display and vote for the book they'd like to be read at storytime. There's often much discussion and they are always trying to sway each others vote. They discuss the illustrations, their experience of the book if they've read it before etc.
- Posters displayed that say if you like this book then you'll like x, y and z. It's very visual and my P2s can access it well. The goal is that as we progress through the year rather than using these pre-made displays, the children will be able to work together to make their own recommendation posters.
- QR codes displayed with children's book reviews around our school library, we also have ask me what I'm Reading displays on classroom doors
- Guess the teacher's favourite childhood book - match teacher to book display.
- We have "I am reading" on all teacher doors (large secondary school, all departments)

Ideas from participants: teaching walls (2)

- We used A3 paper and designed a book cover for our favourite book on one half and wrote some words to describe it on the other then got our photos taken holding it with the design facing out and us peeking over the top as if our nose was in the book. Teachers and pupils did it.
- We also created door posters last year for Book Week with childhood pictures of English teachers and a bit about our favourite childhood books - this generated a lot of discussion, initially about the pictures but a good opener for "book talk"
- In a school I was at, not quite a working wall but more of an event I suppose? They had done something similar to the Voice with a mystery teacher reading part of their favourite book and poster around the school with a silhouette of the teacher, it got children quite excited.
- Guess Who's Reading? (pics of book and eyes of teachers peeping over top)
- Pets Reading books photo display caused lots of chat.

Ideas from participants: reading furniture

- Bringing in a basket with blankets, fairy lights and nice cushions
- furniture at the right height
- a little tent with cushions
- In my classroom library we have soft lighting/fairy lights, blankets, cushions and teddies that can be used as reading buddies.
- Limited to my classroom at the moment and furniture is tight, so I tend to dim lights slightly (not enough to cause squinting!) and pop a fireplace or other comforting background video on our shared board during personal reading time. Not necessary furniture, but it creates a warm and cosy environment for reading
- Mindful music

Ideas from participants: time and talk

- I started book club before going on maternity leave, now that I'm back I'll be starting it back up again! A number of children have asked when it will be running again which is great! It's a relaxed book club that anyone can join, they can ask questions about authors, read with friends or simply read quietly. It was very successful!
- We have learning partners that rotate in our classroom and we have times when the children can talk about their current book with their learning partner (so that it is different children each week.)
- Previous NQT had an informal reading club running which the new NQT has taken on, and it has been incredibly popular.
- Book bag is a good idea
- We have a book and crafts group where pupils enjoy chatting about books while doing crafts - we try and link these to our book displays and pupils often like to add what they've made to the display
- Very interested in setting up a lunchtime book group with a focus on pupil voice/book talk.

Further resources and next steps

- [Book Discovery Guide](#) – full of a range of text recommendations
- [Apply for Reading Schools funding](#)
- [Apply to our Sensory Stories fund](#)
- [Explore further funding opportunities using our Wakelet](#)
- [Keeping your library up to date](#)
- [ASN-friendly library toolkit](#)
- Participate in the National Literacy Trust's [School Libraries for Primaries programme](#)

Upcoming CLPL

- [What is Read Write Count with the First Minister?](#) Tuesday 15 September, 4–5pm
- [Start and Spark: Action Plans](#) Tuesday 22 September, 4–5pm
- [Start and Spark: Action Plans](#) Wednesday 23 September, 4.30–5.30pm
- [Start and Spark: Action Plans](#) Thursday 24 September, 12.30–1.30pm
- [Burns, Ballads, Liz Lochhead and Ely Percy](#) Wednesday 30 September, 4.30–5.30pm
- [Register interest in our Developing and Sustaining Reading for Pleasure course here](#)
- Sign up to our [Schools newsletter here](#)
- Find all our [CLPL events here](#)

Any questions..?

Pop them in the chat or unmute and speak with us!



We appreciate your feedback

Please take two minutes to [complete our survey](#); it helps us improve our PL sessions, and you may win a bundle of books for your setting!



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