



The Wicor Ten

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Sue Leach on an innovative reading project.

No, not a campaign to overturn a miscarriage of justice, but the name of a reading initiative for school beginners that sprang out of a chance remark made by Hampshire Divisional Children's Librarian, **Sue Leach**, on a school visit. She explains?

When I was visiting Headteacher Mark Wildman's school, Wicor Primary, he mentioned that his Reception Year pupils often joined the school lacking the exposure to books that they needed to develop their imaginative and language skills. He had been amazed at the zeal shown by many parents of older children in getting hold of the recommended books for Key Stage 1 SATs, and felt that if we could tap into this enthusiasm with the parents of the new Reception intake children even before they started school in September, we might begin to address some of these concerns.

The local library in Portchester had not taken part in the past in the national summer reading game, so with the approval of the staff there, I worked with the school to devise a scheme that would involve the children in reading ten picture books over the summer holidays. For every book the children read, they received a stamp in a passport that the school had produced and given out at a new parents' evening at the end of the summer term. I attended this evening to speak about the scheme.

We started the scheme in July and ended it in September, giving parents plenty of time to visit the library. When the children had read their ten books, Portchester library staff gave them a folder with a certificate, pictures to colour in, a sticker and a bookmark. As an extra incentive, Mark bought each child who completed the scheme a book to keep. These were presented to the children at a school assembly during National Children's Book Week in October.

Evaluation

It was important for all concerned that we evaluate the scheme. Of 49 Reception children, 41 started and finished 'Wicor Ten'. 22 children (and one adult!) joined Portchester library to take part. There were, of course, other, less quantifiable results, some of which are alluded to in the comments from people directly involved in the scheme.

The library staff welcomed the chance to get to know the parents and children, and to talk informally to them. They had set aside a special area in the library with a low table to put the Wicor Ten books on, which made it more special for the children. I had bought in extra copies of the books so that there were at least five copies of each title available. When the scheme ended, these books were dispersed around the rest of the division's libraries.

The school bought a set of the books for each reception class, so that the children would see familiar titles in their classroom when they started school.

Would we do it again? A resounding yes from both the library and the school! By working so closely together, we hope that we have fostered an enjoyment that will last throughout those children's lives. It is a project that is certainly being

considered for implementing in libraries in other parts of Hampshire.

ALEC ? put in boxes:

?When the book was presented to the Reception children in October, I innocently asked the children if they recognised the books that I had put out on display (the Wicor Ten). ?It?s the Wicor Ten,? many said. ?What?s the Wicor Ten?? I challenged. This time a sea of confident hands shot up, and I selected one earnest looking boy who proceeded to name each of the books in turn. Amazing and unprecedented!?

Mark Wildman, Headteacher, Wicor Primary School

?The Wicor Ten was great fun to do over the summer holidays. Emma thoroughly enjoyed going to the library and choosing her books. The choice was excellent and it was a delight to read with her. Emma herself enjoyed the books that made her laugh ? even now we have a giggle over the books we read. Emma loved collecting the stamps in her book, and it made her very happy the day she received her tenth and final stamp. We all as a family enjoyed the Wicor Ten ? it was an excellent idea and a good way of introducing young children to the world of books.?

Carleen Warner, mother of Emma

?The Wicor Ten, for me as a class teacher, was a very positive experience. It was a good start to the children?s first year at Wicor, as they had a positive connection with the school before their first day. The ten books chosen for the children were also new additions to my classroom, and the children were pleased to see them when they came to school: it gave them a sense of familiarity and security. It also certainly assisted in developing some early reading skills. Those who participated couldn?t wait to give me their stamped passport book to show that they had completed the activity. The children were praised in class and congratulated in an assembly by being rewarded with a certificate and a book. The children still choose the books as old favourites and we enjoy sharing them as a class. I hope the scheme is able to run again because it was a huge success for all involved.?

Kelly Mansbridge, Reception Teacher and Early Years Manager, Wicor Primary School.

The Wicor Ten Picture Books:

Duck in the Truck, Jez Alborough, Picture Lions, 0 00 664717 0, £4.99

Little Robots, Mike Brownlow, Ragged Bears, 1 85714 194 6, £7.50 hbk

Fran?s Flower, Lisa Bruce, ill. Rosalind Beardshaw, Bloomsbury, 0 7475 4674 6, £4.99

I Love You, Blue Kangaroo, Emma Chichester Clark, Picture Lions, 0 00 664684 0, £4.99

Hairy Maclary and Zachary Quack, Lynley Dodd, Puffin, 0 14 056773 9, £4.99

Monkey Puzzle, Julia Donaldson, ill. Axel Scheffler, Macmillan, 0 333 72001 6, £4.99

Picnic, Mick Inkpen, Hodder, 0 340 78850 X, £3.99

Bears in my Bed, Michael Irwin, David Bennett, 1 85602 396 6, £4.99

Goal!, Colin McNaughton, Picture Lions, 0 00 714011 8, £4.99

Rocket Countdown!, Nick Sharratt, Walker, 0 7445 7802 7, £5.99

Selection criteria: a range of titles that would have some appeal for everyone; in paperback; published, preferably, in the last year, so they would be new to everyone. We *are* doing the scheme again this year, but with a different lot of titles.

Sue Leach is Divisional Children's Librarian, Hampshire County Library Service.

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