

## Victoria Public School

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**Inquiry Question: How can the Blue Spruce Reading Program and its related activities be used to promote reading enjoyment in our grade two students?**

### Introduction

We wanted to explore effective teaching techniques and strategies within the library to promote the love of reading and books. We chose to implement the Blue Spruce Reading Program. The Blue Spruce Reading Program is intended for Grades K-2. Students read ten nominated picture books during the school year and vote for their favourite book. The winning author and illustrator receive the Blue Spruce Award. The OSLA goals of the Blue Spruce Program are:

- to promote reading for enjoyment and information
- to make children aware of quality Canadian books
- to develop the student's skill in evaluating a book
- to provide opportunities for students to discuss books

It is our belief that the teacher-librarian plays a critical role in promoting the love of reading in children. Studies have shown schools with teacher-librarians have reading enjoyment scores that are higher than average (People for Education, 2011).

### Vision

It was our goal to use the Blue Spruce Reading Program to promote an enthusiasm for reading for pleasure and for new information. To increase student motivation to read, reading should not just be an extension of school work (People for Education, 2011). We wanted to create experiences and activities that would allow the students to be fully engaged in the reading process in the library. It is our hope that these experiences will transfer to the classroom and home in which students read for pleasure and to learn new information and **not** just for school work. It is our belief that a love for reading for pleasure will help enhance students' learning in all areas of the curriculum. Studies have shown that students with a more positive attitude toward reading tend to be more successful in all subject areas (People for Education, 2011).

### Theory of Action

If we implement the Blue Spruce Reading Program students will be exposed to high-quality Canadian literature and reading enjoyment will increase and school performance will improve.

## **Justification for the Study**

This topic is important because the 2010/11 EQAO surveys have confirmed a disturbing trend: Since 1998/99 the percentage of students in grade 3 who report they like to read has declined by almost a third, from 76% in 98/99 to only 50% in 2010/11 (People for Education, 2011). While visiting the library we noticed our primary students were not interested in reading for pleasure or to learn new information. We also noticed a lot of movement in the library - students were switching books often and not becoming fully engaged in a book. They appeared to be more interested in socializing than reading. We had concerns about how to promote the love of reading and books. As teacher-librarians we felt it was our responsibility to promote high-quality literature and the love of reading for pleasure and new information.

## **Data Collection**

Two reading enjoyment surveys were developed to determine the reading interests of the students. The surveys were administered to a grade two class at Victoria Public School.

The first survey questions were as follows:

- 1) Do you enjoy reading?
- 2) Do you read at home?
- 3) Do you read at home for school work?
- 4) Do you read with someone at home?
- 5) Do you like to talk about what you have read?
- 6) How often do you read at home?
- 7) What topic do you most like to read about?
- 8) Do you think you are a good reader?
- 9) Do you like coming to the library?
- 10) Do you visit the public library?

The second survey questions were as follows:

- 1) Why do you enjoy coming to the library?
- 2) What would make you library visit more enjoyable?
- 3) Is it easy or hard for you to find a “Just Right” book in the library?
- 4) What could the library do to make you enjoy reading more?

## **Findings for First Survey**

We were surprised to see that 76% of the students enjoyed reading but only 50% were reading daily for pleasure. Only 40% said they read with someone at home. It is our desire to increase these percentages. We asked the question: *What topic do you most like to read about?* to make sure our library collection matched the interests of the students. New books were then purchased after the survey to ensure the collection matched the reading interests of

the students. We observed that purchasing the new books and placing them in a new books section significantly increased the level of interest in reading for pleasure.

### **Findings for Second Survey**

The responses indicated the students wanted more time on the computers and more time to read independently for pleasure. Only 5% of the students stated the Blue Spruce Program and activities would make their library visit more enjoyable. We were committed to meeting the students interests but did not want to deviate too much from our research question. We decided it was still best to continue the Blue Spruce Reading Program, however, our activities revolved around more computer time. For example, after reading the Blue Spruce book “Giraffe and Bird” the students used the computers to research giraffes. They loved the book and the activity! Students began asking if they could do more research after reading other Blue Spruce Books. We came to the conclusion that when the students were using the computers to do the research they were also engaged and reading for pleasure.

### **Other Findings**

- Students are always asking if we are going to read another Blue Spruce Book.
- Students and parents are purchasing Blue Spruce Books and other books from the Blue Spruce authors.
- Blue Spruce books from this year and previous years are **always** checked out.
- Teachers commented on how much their students enjoyed researching animals from the Blue Spruce Books.
- Students are recommending Blue Spruce books to their teachers.
- When students are in line you can hear them discussing their favourite Blue Spruce Book.
- Students are asking for other books written by the Blue Spruce authors.
- There is less movement and socializing - students are reading independently and quietly in the library.

Finally, Grade 2 students were asked to rate the Blue Spruce Reading Program on a scale of 1 to 3; 1 meaning they did not enjoy it, 2 it was okay and 3 they loved it. We were very pleased with the results, 72% of the students said they **loved** the Blue Spruce Reading Program and only 23% thought it was okay.

### **Recommendations**

In conclusion, we found the Blue Spruce Reading Program and related activities to be effective in promoting the love of reading for pleasure and new information. We noticed that the combination of Blue Spruce Books and activities revolving around technology was the most effective way to improve reading enjoyment in the grade two students at Victoria Public School. We recommend beginning the program as soon as the nominations are announced. We started the program in January and felt we didn't have enough time to spend on each book and the activities that followed. A more comprehensive approach to each book and activity would have been extremely successful.

## **References**

People for Education. (2011) Reading for Joy. Toronto

Ontario's Blue Spruce Reading Program Grades kindergarten - Grade 2 retrieved from <http://library.queensu.ca/webedu/pj/bluespruce.pdf>