

**Read, Write,
Count:
Gifting Party
Case Study**

**Susannah
Jeffries -
Carnegie
Primary School**



Read Write Count Launch at Carnegie Primary School

At the end of last session, the wonderful people at the Scottish Book Trust asked me if we would like to hold an early gifting party to celebrate the release of the new *Read, Write, Count* bags for P2 and P3 children. Our children would have the privilege of being the first to receive their bags!

The Opportunity

The ethos of Read Write Count is all about encouraging families to read, write and count together every day to support learning and development. Raising awareness of the campaign felt like it fitted very naturally with our school improvement plan for the 2016-17 session which included a focus on increased provision for Family Learning.

The Aim

Family learning is a key quality indicator in How Good Is Our School 4, the document emphasises the importance of using creative approaches to engage families and I felt that the Read Write Count campaign could provide a fantastic hook for the development of such approaches.

The idea of holding a gifting party to celebrate distribution of the bags was, in the first instance simply to ensure that the provision of these lovely, rich, resources did not go unnoticed by parents, carers, teachers and children. It is so easy, in the tidal wave of letters, information, P.E. kits, requests for junk modelling materials etc. etc. for an additional thing in the school bag at the end of the week to end up forgotten on a child's bedroom floor. We wanted to ensure that the bags were the start of an ongoing conversation rather than a one off gift.

So we started to think about how we could most effectively capitalise on this opportunity.

The Party

We planned the party so that it was not just an event at which the children received their bags. It had a real sense of occasion with significant build-up. Our party was at the beginning of September – three weeks into the new term and was 'trailed' from the first day back at school. All P2 and P3 parents were invited to the event (in our case this is a large number of people – we have three P2 classes, a P2/3 composite and three P3 classes!).

We used each of the picture books from the bags as a Book of the Week and each class chose a book or an element of the bag and created an interactive exhibit in their class based around it.

We consulted the children as to what they would like to say / make / write / do for the party and this provided both the plan for each class exhibit and also for the party itself. The children were all VERY clear that a party wasn't a party without cake so we bought and iced 250 cupcakes for the event with specially ordered Read Write Count edible rice paper toppers!



The level of excitement among the children for those first 3 weeks of term, leading up to the party, made it a not-to-be missed event and on the day we had parents queuing from the door of our gym hall, out through the car park and out on to the street. The attendance was amazing and the children were thrilled that so many parents came along to see them and share in their learning.

Family learning started immediately. The children took parents, carers, grandparents and siblings to their classes and showed them all the work they had done, told them all about what they would be getting in their bags and all the things they could do with the materials once they had them. The content of those bags had gained a sort of 'celebrity' status, the children could not wait to get access to them!

At the end of the party we all gathered back in the hall and tore open the giant gift-wrapped boxes that contained the bags.

The children were delighted and many spent their 'choosing time' in the afternoon that day poring over the contents of their new special bag.



The Follow-Up

I felt very strongly that, in order for momentum to be maintained, and for this to be the beginning rather than the end of the story, we needed to announce our next steps at the party.

Our first step was to rename homework. Homework is now 'Read Write Count Activities' and each week the children have some reading, writing and counting to do with their families. This is not significantly different from what we would send as homework in previous years but it tends to be more active and often designed to encourage parents and children to work together rather than being focussed on

children completing an activity independently. It is early days but feedback has been really positive and even just talking about Read Write Count each week is helping us keep the campaign alive in our school.

Our next step has been to set up a series of Read Write Count family learning sessions in school. I deliver these sessions once a month, for an hour after school and children from P1, P2 and P3 can attend with parents and carers. Other family members are welcome to come too – siblings, babies, grannies, grandads, all invited. The first of these was in October and it was a pleasure to plan and deliver. I am endeavouring to show families that Read Write Count is not designed to make you do something new or different or to try and have you engaged in home schooling activity every night. I have focussed on questioning as a key tool for family



learning – you are not trying to ‘teach’ each other but rather you are encouraging learning and enquiry by asking questions. The format of the session begins with me sharing one of my favourite picture books with the children and pausing frequently to ask questions about the illustrations or the content of the story. In the first session I asked so many questions and the children had so many brilliant answers that we only got through a few pages of the story but many of the parents were excited to see all the information and detail that the children had spotted in the book that might have passed a grown-up by.

After the story I provided a read activity, a write activity and a count activity for parents and children to explore together. Each activity was designed to focus on instances that might arise in every day life and which would not require any special materials or resources.

For the first session our read activity was to look at the wonderful picture book *Room on the Broom* with the children. They read the story together and I provided a set of questions and ideas to support discussion. I am planning to build up a bank of questions which could be applied to any book you might have in the house or get from the library.

Our write activity was about cutting out the right letters, from a selection of alphabet print-outs and magazine pages, to spell your name. Some children did just their first name, some did their surname, some spelled their whole family!

Our count activity was about looking at a selection of recipes – what numbers can you see? If you spot a 2 or 3-digit number can you say how many 100s, 10s and units it has?

Feedback from the session was a real joy. Parents had really valued the opportunity to take time out from the rush of every day life with young children and spend a little time interacting with their children in this new context. A few of them also said that having the opportunity to do these activities 'in school' provided an easy first step into family learning as children were more receptive to trying new learning activities in a school context.

I am really looking forward to the next session. I am already noting down new opportunities for reading writing and counting which I spot in every day life. Next session we will be adding up the judges scores from various episodes of Strictly!



For more information and resources, please visit our website:
www.scottishbooktrust.com/readwritecount

Read, Write, Count is a campaign delivered in partnership by the Scottish Government, Scottish Book Trust and Education Scotland.

