

Implementation Report Lifelong Readers LiRe



Implementation Report from LiRe Partner:

Report Finalised on (dd/mm/yyyy):

Executive Summary (max. 400 words):

Executive summary should:

Consist of a concise summary of the larger implementation report, it should follow the structure of report, include recommendations, justifications and conclusions. It should be able to be read separately from the main report.

The present text is a report on the findings of a Lifelong Readers case study conducted in Cyprus, during the school year 2012-2013. Based on the *Lifelong Readers Framework*, CARDET and 3rd Makedonitissas Elementary School collaborated to develop and implement a whole-school reading promotion programme. The general aim was to improve children's reading habits and attitudes, through the development of a reading culture and the formation of reading communities.

The programme was initiated through school staff training, which managed to introduce staff members to the *LiRe* approach and effective reading promotion, identify needs, set objectives, and design a whole school reading promotion plan. Additionally, training convinced the school to keep and utilize the central school library as an important part of reading promotion. After a positive experience during workshop 2, CARDET proposed that *LiRe* training modules be revised to include demonstrations of *LiRe* activities, which are observed and discussed by school staff. A general conclusion about the school staff training is that teachers seemed to appreciate workshops that lead to concrete outcomes and had immediate results and meaning for their everyday practices.

The central school library proved pivotal in the formation of the school's reading culture. After the implementation of their reading promotion plan, teachers agreed on three specific elements that worked particularly well: (1) Increased library use, (2) The whole-school, whole-day event that was devoted exclusively to reading, and (3) Free Voluntary Reading (FVR). A comparison between pre- and post- Reading Habits Evaluations, as well as data from observations, interviews and a focus group discussion, point to improvement in students' reading habits and attitudes towards reading and books. This change may not be spectacular—or of the same degree in all areas—but it is still an indicator of important progress.

Teachers also completed Reading Promotion Evaluation questionnaires at the beginning and end of the programme, evaluating their school's reading promotion practices. Data from these evaluations and from other sources (observations, interviews, etc.) suggest that the following four areas have been improved the most after the implementation of the reading promotion plan:

- Whole-staff engagement
- Visibility of Reading
- Reading Events
- Involving Organizations and Adults from the Community

Teachers recognize that some of the targeted areas and planned activities could be more effectively and vigorously pursued. At the same time, they seem to think that some of the set objectives were not achieved because their plan was over-ambitious and excessive to begin with. Lack of time and curricular pressures were offered as factors that held some individual teachers, or the school as a whole, back from achieving more. In spite of time-pressure, teachers expressed passionate opinions about the need to continue reading promotion during next year. There are at least two important dimensions in this expressed need: 1. Teachers acknowledged that creating and sustaining a reading culture cannot be achieved in a one-off approach, but needs to be continually explored and developed throughout the years; 2. Teachers acknowledged that reading promotion is important and worthwhile, thus it should be part of the school's efforts year after year after year. The ultimate goal is for the school to become an independent, growing, and self-sustained reading community, but it seems that during the first 1-2 years external support is necessary. Extensive conclusions and suggestions are listed at the end of this document.

Introduction(max. 300 words):

Introduce the report and give rationale (objectives set by the school) for implementation of reading promotion programme.

The present text is a report on the findings of a Lifelong Readers case study conducted in Cyprus, during the school year 2012-2013. Based on the *Lifelong Readers Framework*, CARDET and the participating primary school collaborated to develop and implement a whole-school reading promotion programme. The general aim was to improve children's reading habits and attitudes, through the development of a reading culture and the formation of reading communities.

Context of Implementation (max. 400 words):

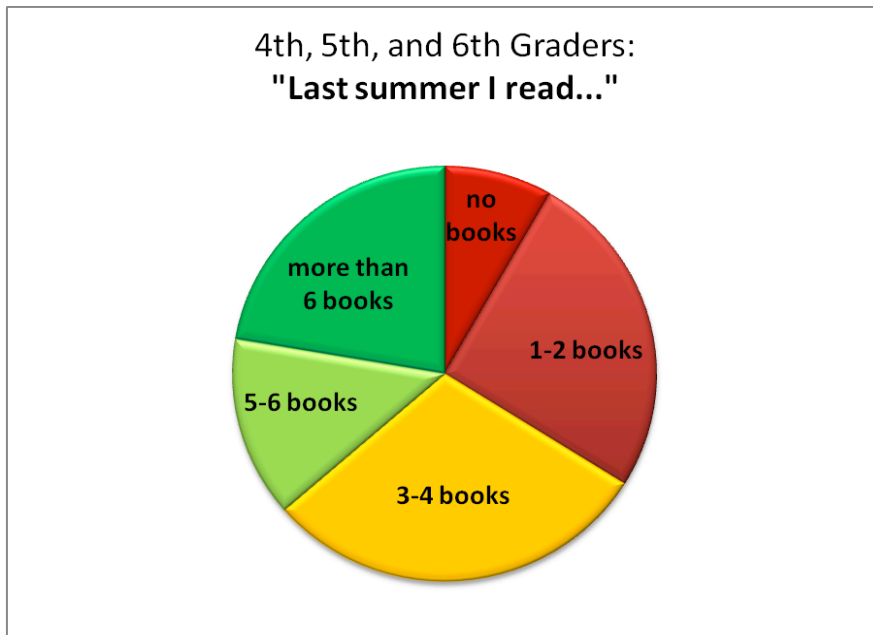
Context of implementation:

It is important to give a snap shot of the school at the time prior to implementation. Patronage/type of school, size of school, location of school and reading programmes currently and previously implemented in the school should all be included. Local conditions/historical/social information regarding the school would also be desirable.

The participating school was 3rd *Makedonitissas Elementary School*, which is a public school (ran by the Cyprus Ministry of Education) located near CARDET and the University of Nicosia. During the past few years, both CARDET and the University have worked with the school on other projects or educational areas.

The Makedonitissa area is a relatively new and wealthy suburb of Nicosia (biggest city and capital of Cyprus, located at the centre of the island) that developed dramatically between 1990 and 2010. Many new families invested in the highly priced plots and houses in the newly developed area, making this one of the fastest growing suburbs of Nicosia—hosting a constantly increasing number of school-aged children. About 95% of the students at 3rd Makedonitissas are Greek-Cypriot, while the remaining 5% includes students coming mainly from Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Russia and the Philipines; some are permanent and some temporary residents. Most families living here would be considered “middle to upper class”; it is indicative that the school's Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) has recently bought quite expensive equipment for the school, such as interactive whiteboards and sports gear. In spite of the relatively high socioeconomic level of the families, an initial reading habits evaluation indicated that children could be grouped into three equally numbered groups: low, medium, and high level of reading attitudes and habits. Figure 1 depicts this split into three distinct thirds (red, orange, and green), in relation to the number of books children read during the previous summer vacations.

Figure 1



This situation needed to be improved, but was better than the overall image of students in Cypriot schools, as two thirds of them (60%) never read for leisure (Papavasiliou et al, 2005).

3rd Makedonitissas is the newest school in the area (obviously 1st and 2nd Makedonitissas schools are older) and received its first students in 2009. That first year, the school admitted 2 classes of 1st graders and also welcomed transfers in grades 2 – 6 from the other, older and overpopulated, schools in the Makedonitissa area. This meant that special efforts were needed in order for students and staff to begin to form a unified and organized school community, with its own culture and traditions.

Even though the school was involved in European projects and other initiatives from the start (related to environmental education, healthy living, etc.) it had not implemented any whole-school reading promotion programmes prior to its involvement in *LiRe*. Reading for pleasure is not something that schools in Cyprus pay much attention to. Two teachers had been implementing activities to enhance their students' reading attitudes, during the previous year. One or two relevant school-wide events (such as author visits or book exhibitions) were organized per year; usually around the 30th of January, which is a Greek holiday devoted to "the letters" (meaning books, reading, writing, and education).

Between 2009 and 2013, the student population increased from about 200 to more than 300 students. With the exception of the first year, 3 classes of 1st graders are admitted each September, as the school's state-of-the-art facilities make it quite popular among parents. The irony here is that, as the student population grows, the facilities seem to shrink; this happens because rooms that were initially designed to facilitate specific subjects, such as Technology, Science, or Art are gradually being converted into regular classrooms, in order to accommodate the growing number of students. While the school was built to accommodate 2 classes per grade (1st-6th) it is getting to the point that it will host 3 classes of students in all grade levels. The school has asked for new classrooms to be built, but while the plans are there, construction has not started yet due to the economic crisis.

Description of Training Modules (max. 600 words):

Description of training module:

In this section you should include details of the training module. As partners may wish to facilitate modules in alternative ways, it would be important to outline the structure of the training modules. Give details of size of group, the classes/grades they teach, areas of strength and challenges faced. Give as much colour and variety as you can in this section.

This pressure for regular classrooms in the place of specialized ones has led to discussions and considerable friction among school staff. Teachers specialized in specific subjects did not want to lose their subject-devoted rooms, so they would argue for the need to keep the Science or Technology or Art room, competing about each subject's importance and needs. Other teachers would say that it is more important to have spacious and well-equipped general classrooms. As one of the school's "special rooms" was the central school library, at the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year some teachers suggested that it were turned into a general classroom. While the principal was willing to consider this option, a group of teachers opposed it, arguing for the value of a central library.

These discussions were quite relevant to the *Lifelong Readers* project, since CARDET researchers considered the revamped library pivotal to steering up student, teacher and parent interest in reading, and transforming the school into a reading community. In fact, during the previous year (2011-2012) CARDET had collaborated with the school to equip the library, initiate some use of it, and prepare the ground for the *LiRe* implementation to follow next year. Before that, the library room featured mainly empty shelves and was not really being used as a library. The PTA was involved, painting the library in bright colours and adding some furniture, while three teachers worked with CARDET to choose and purchase books (other teachers were asked for suggestions as well). One of the three teachers was working towards her PhD in Children's Literature, the second had done some action research in reading promotion as part of her Graduate work, and the third had worked at a bookstore in the past and had a special interest in books and libraries. The first two were teaching first grade, while the third one was a special-ed teacher, working with small groups of students and dividing her time between this school and another one. The first two frequently expressed their concerns to colleagues about keeping and further upgrading the library. They even asked a CARDET researcher to help them convince the principal and the rest of the staff about this need.

As CARDET researchers fully agreed with this view, the objective of convincing the school to keep and utilize the central library as the heart of its reading promotion efforts was added to the following initial objectives:

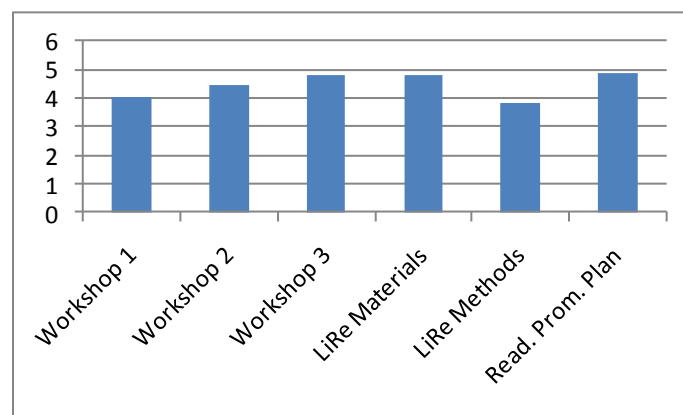
1. Introduce staff members to the *LiRe Framework* and its approach;
2. Help them explore effective reading promotion and become familiar with quality children's books;
3. Have them assess where they and their students stand in terms of reading promotion and reading habits;
4. Help them identify needs and set objectives;
5. Facilitate their collective effort to design and implement a whole school reading promotion plan.

So, it was decided that the first staff training module be adopted to accommodate a discussion and convince school staff about the central role the central library could have in their reading promotion programme. It was deliberately chosen that the workshop takes place in the actual library. Almost all teachers (26 out of 27) and the principal attended this training, which only lasted for an hour, due to the school's schedule. They preferred to have two of the training

workshops during regular school staff meetings, taking place on Wednesday noons, right after the children left school. Thus, an additional difficulty was that the participants seemed quite tired after having gone through an entire school day. While 5-6 teachers looked excited about our meeting, most were positive but not in the mood to actively participate in the training.

There was not much time for active participation anyway, except for discussions following two presentations delivered by the trainer. The first presentation introduced the LiRe project (concept, aims, philosophy). The second presentation focused on the importance of reading attitude in improving reading aptitude and the central role of school libraries in this process. Several research findings were offered as proof, such as McQuillan's finding (1998) about students' reading skills being analogous to the number of books in their school library. In the discussion that followed, while one teacher questioned the validity of such findings and another one wondered about the relevance of this data to the Cyprus context, in the end they all seemed to be convinced about the value of reading promotion and the importance of the library. This was reflected in their decision, later on, to not turn the library into a regular classroom, at least for a year or two. In this sense, one of the meeting's central goals was achieved; however, the teachers were probably overwhelmed by the body of research presented to them. As a couple of actual yawns had communicated to the trainer, this was too much theoretical talk at the end of an exhausting school day. The teachers' evaluation of the training seems to support this observation, as this first workshop received the lowest score (Figure 2).

Figure 2: TRAINING EVALUATION GRAPH



One does note, however, that all three workshops were generally evaluated in a positive manner by participants; with the maximum being 5.0, they all received a score of 4.0 or above.

The second workshop received a better score than the first one, most probably because it was more practice-oriented. Teachers were divided into two groups, depending on the grade level they taught. During regular school-time, teachers of younger ages observed a demonstration of *LiRe* reading promotion activities with first graders in the library. Similarly, the teachers of older students observed a demonstration of *LiRe* reading promotion activities with fifth graders, again in the library. Seeing their own students respond to these activities with joy and enthusiasm, was the best way to inspire teachers and give them a solid idea of how the *LiRe* approach is implemented. The trainer deliberately involved observing teachers in the activities, achieving the transfer of some of the students' enthusiasm to their teachers. It is also important that after this observation, teachers were convinced that they could easily bring their students to the library and do similar activities. It is indicative that at the end of the demonstration one teacher approached the trainer, stating in a mildly surprised tone: "We could organize similar activities with our students, with no need to devote much preparation time!" Another teacher commented that this is the kind of

activities that can drive “boredom” out of teaching and learning, because they are diverse and more playful, compared to the school’s daily routine. These results fully justify the trainer’s decision to divert from the suggested *LiRe Training Modules*. After this experience, CARDET proposed that the suggested modules be revised to include such demonstrations of LiRe activities.

The last workshop received an even higher score, in spite of the fact that, like the first one, it also took place during a Wednesday noon staff meeting. The workshop took place in the library and focused on the results of two self-evaluating tools that seemed to be of particular interest to school staff: the *Reading Promotion Evaluation Tool* and the *Reading Habits Evaluation Tool*. Their participation in data collection stimulated their interest and curiosity about the results. When asked during an interview, a vice-principal said that using these tools to collect data about the school’s current state “mobilized” her; it helped her realize that she was entering a specific process and she was motivated to organize her thoughts around the subject and to engage her students in a discussion about what and how often they read. The self-evaluation process, she continued, also helped students realize that reading books is important and that “we” (meaning the class) would start paying more attention to it (Transcribed Interview #1).

So, in spite of being tired after teaching for a whole day, most teachers were actively involved in an energetic discussion about their students’ reading habits and skills and what the school is doing or could be doing to help them. The visual presentation of results by the trainer facilitated the discussion. This was a practical and interactive session, which led to setting the objectives to be pursued by the school’s Reading Promotion Programme. The draft of the actual Reading Promotion Plan was left for the coordinating group (the two first-grade teachers mentioned before, a fifth-grade teacher and one of the two vice-principles who taught sixth grade). This may have been a mistake because if all staff had actively participated in drafting the plan, they might have been even more informed and engaged during its implementation. This is further discussed in a later section of the report.

In an interview, a first-grade teacher said: “This [the training] was a beginning; we internalized the need to pay attention to reading promotion; even persons that had never cared for it have started to think about it and implemented some activities” (Transcribed Interview #2). She then continued to say that, even though both the training and implementation had an impact, this impact would become more intense if the programme were to be continued during the following school year. She believed that one year was not enough and that continuation was important, in order for the school to really become a reading community.

It is important to note here that teachers assessed all statements but one on the training evaluation questionnaire with average scores of 4.0 and above (5.0 being the maximum). The lowest score was received by the statement “The methods suggested by LiRe are Realistic” (Figure 2). We acknowledge that the Cyprus educational system and the way schools and teaching/learning time are structured in Cyprus present obstacles in the implementation of *LiRe* reading promotion methods. Time and curricular pressures were recognized as inhibiting factors by interviewees at the end of the year. This is probably the reason behind the relatively low score received by the statement; however, the response is close to 4.0, which means that teachers still find the methods quite realistic. Besides, they did have a positive response to the teaching demonstrations they observed during the second workshop. In any case, teacher-trainers should take this result into account, proposing to teachers ways in which LiRe methods could be practically adopted to their school’s specific context and implemented in a realistic and feasible manner (e.g. ways to find the additional time or resources needed for *LiRe* reading promotion, or concrete examples of applied activities in similar settings). It should also be noted that *LiRe* materials were rated as original and innovative by most participants, which reflects their

enthusiasm about several proposed *LiRe* actions and activities.

A general conclusion about the school staff training is that teachers seemed to appreciate workshops that lead to concrete outcomes and had immediate results and meaning for their everyday practices. The relevant statement on the questionnaire (“The WS have helped the staff of my school to form a reading promotion plan”) received a high score (Figure 2). Additionally, the first-grade teacher quoted earlier suggested that if workshops were to be repeated next year, they should focus exclusively on specific reading promotion activities and practices, such as literary circles. She believed that teaching demonstrations and suggestions of specific books and activities are what teachers need. She proposed to divide teachers into three groups during training, depending on the grades they teach: 1st-2nd, 3rd-4th, and 5th-6th grades; it seems that teachers prefer training that provides them with material and ideas they can immediately apply with the students they currently teach.

According to the trainer’s estimation, all five objectives mentioned earlier (six when the library objective is included) were achieved to a high degree. The only exception is the objective about teachers becoming familiar with quality children’s books. Because of time limitations, this part was left to the school-staff to develop during other staff meetings and informal conversations; however, by the end of the programme only two booktalks by two members of the coordinating committee had taken place. This was an important weakness in the implementation process, since reading promotion is more effective when teachers are familiar with and enthusiastic about children’s books, forming themselves a reading community. Other than that, training:

1. managed to introduce staff members to the *LiRe Framework* and its approach;
2. helped them explore effective reading promotion—even though it could have done better if teachers devoted more time to explore the *LiRe* website or if they were given more time to do so during the workshops;
3. encouraged them to assess where they and their students stand in terms of reading promotion and reading habits;
4. helped them identify needs and set objectives;
5. facilitated their collective effort to design and implement a whole school reading promotion plan.

The preceding discussion, which was mainly based on school staff’s responses to training, attests to the achievement of these objectives.

Description of Reading Promotion Plans (max. 300 words):

Description of reading promotion plan:

Give details of the reading promotion plan that the school decided to implement. Reading promotion areas to be addressed, proposed action, the time frame for implementation, who was responsible for implementation, success criteria and review dates. You could simply attach the relevant table with the complete plan and comment on it.

As mentioned earlier, after reviewing the results of the self-evaluation tools, school staff agreed on the reading promotion objectives. These were 14 objectives, covering the following areas:

1. Whole-staff engagement
2. Visibility of reading
3. Peer-to-peer recommendation

4. Utilizing ICT
5. Reading events
6. School library accessibility and display
7. School library stock
8. Class libraries
9. Pupil involvement
10. Involving organisations and adults from the community
11. Reaching boys
12. Pupils and families from diverse cultures and backgrounds
13. Communication with families
14. Family events and activities

These were basically all the areas evaluated by the reading promotion self-evaluation tool. The results had shown that there was room for improvement in all areas, so the staff agreed to include all of them in the plan. The researcher encouraged this approach, but the results discussed later indicate that it may have been over-optimistic.

In order to address all the areas listed above, several actions and activities were incorporated in the plan. These were arranged to take place throughout the second semester of the school year, starting in January and ending in June. The plan included diverse action points, from everyday practices like Free Voluntary Reading (FVR) and dedicated pin-boards, to one-time events like author visits, talks to parents and book exhibitions. In addition to *Objectives* and relevant *Actions Needed*, the plan listed the *Time Scale* for each action and the *Member(s) of Staff Responsible*. While the *LiRe* template for the plan includes three extra columns: *Resources*, *Success Criteria*, and *Achieved (Date)*, these were not substantially used by the school. The trainer got the impression that the coordinating team considered such elements redundant. He also observed that the school did not have prior experience in putting together and administering this kind of action plans, and thus seemed to find this way of thinking and planning as “foreign” to school management in Cyprus.

Description of Data Collection Activities (max. 300 words):

Data Collection Activities:

How did you collect your data? What methods did you use? Quantitative/qualitative? How large of a sample did you take? It is important to justify use of each method used in collection of data (CARDET could assist you on this part).

Data Collection Activities should include:

- *reading promotion tool before and after implementation*
- *reading habits tool to be administered by school staff **before and after** (36-48 kids per school – boys and girls)*
- *At least 1 visit to a school to observe sample activities*
- *2 interviews with key school staff and 2 with parents if possible*
- *A debriefing focus group with school staff*

The questions that guided our inquiry were:

1. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the school-staff training process? How were

these perceived by the participants and the trainer?

2. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the planning process?
3. How were the students benefited by the implementation of the reading promotion plan?
4. What elements of the implemented reading promotion plan had the most positive effects?
5. What challenges occurred during the implementation?
6. After the implementation of the reading promotion plan, which areas improved and to what extent? Which did not improve and why?
7. What suggestions might be proposed to schools and policymakers that are interested in developing whole-school reading promotion?

The implementation and evaluation of LiRe at 3rd Makedonitissas Elementary School followed a case-study approach. The data collection procedures and tools are described below:

Reading promotion evaluation tool before and after implementation

At the beginning and end of the programme, teachers completed the LiRe Reading Promotion Evaluation questionnaire (attached under Annexes) where they had to rate their school's reading promotion practices in various fields, such as whole-staff involvement, library access, communication with families and reading promotion events. For each area, they were given four options and were asked to choose the one that best described the current situation at their school; for instance, these were the options presented to them regarding "whole-staff engagement":

Reading Promotion Area	Not yet initiated	At initial stage	At developed stage	At enhanced stage
Whole-staff engagement	Does not apply to our school.	Some school staff members promote reading for pleasure.	All staff members promote reading during class time.	All school staff actively promotes reading in and out of class time.

This tool was developed by revising and adopting a similar tool developed by the UK-based Literacy Trust organisation. Before administering the tool, we had a discussion with three teachers (members of the coordinating team) who reviewed the options and commented on areas that were not clear enough. The questionnaire was revised accordingly.

Fourteen teachers completed the pre-evaluation questionnaires; results were then discussed during workshop 3, where needs and objectives were identified. Post-evaluations were completed by nine teachers, in order for the results to be compared with pre-evaluations and draw conclusions.

Reading habits tool

Additionally, before and after the implementation of the reading promotion programme, students completed the LiRe Reading Habits Evaluation questionnaire (attached under Annexes). The questionnaire was developed after reviewing several other tools that have been used in other relevant research projects; these tools included questionnaires developed by Link (1984), McKenna & Kear (1990), Mullis et al (2001), Malafantis (2005) and Clark et al (2008). Questions and options were drafted mostly based on McKenna & Kear's questionnaire (1990) and the

relevant part of the international PIRLS research tool (Mullis et al, 2001). Five students (ages 9-12) were then asked to review the questioners and point to questions that need to become clearer. Questionnaires were revised accordingly. These questionnaires are addressed to students aged between 9 and 12. Younger students completed simplified questionnaires that were only used for the schools' initial self-evaluation.

All fourth-, fifth- and sixth-graders attending the school completed the LiRe Reading Habits Evaluation questionnaire at the beginning of the programme; the results were used to investigate the students' relationship with reading, diagnose needs and set objectives. At the end of the programme, two classes (a fourth and fifth grade) were randomly chosen to complete the questionnaire once more, so that their pre- and post- results could be compared and possible changes in habits and attitudes might be identified.

Observation of whole-day event

CARDET researchers observed the whole-school, whole-day event that took place at the school on April 2, 2013. Researchers observed diverse reading promotion activities that took place during that day and took observation notes. They later added interpretation comments on these notes. Additional, informal observation of activities and behaviours took place throughout the programme.

Two interviews with key school staff

Near the end of the school year, two separate interviews were conducted with two members of the school's coordinating team. The first interviewee was a vice-principal who taught sixth grade and represented the school's administration in the coordinating team. The second was a first grade teacher who was particularly active in the programme and had prior experience in reading promotion practice and research during her graduate work. Both interviews provided valuable insight both into the process and its results.

A debriefing focus group with school staff

A focus group discussion with three other school staff also provided valuable insights. Participants included: another first-grade teacher who was also a member of the coordinating team and is currently working towards her PhD in children's literature and reading; a second-grade and a fifth-grade teacher who participated actively in the whole programme.

Data Analysis (max. 200 words):

Data Analysis:

Briefly describe how you analysed data

For data analysis we followed the inductive and deductive stages of qualitative data analysis (Stake, 2011). Data were collected, transcribed and organized. We then calculated descriptive statistics for the quantitative data. After multiple readings of the data, assertions were generated. Assertions are statements that indicate some form of generalization in the data. We then looked for evidence that both supported and disconfirmed the assertions generated. Based on careful data analysis and weighing of all the evidence, only the assertions that were supported by enough evidence were adopted.

The validity of this account depends, among others, on the comprehensiveness of the study and description of the procedures followed. This study should be judged for coherence and not for correspondence of the findings with the "objective" world. By presenting a detailed, comprehensive, and coherent account the reader is allowed to act as a co-analyst of the study and

make judgments about the strength of the categories that will be presented. Generalizability begins within the case at hand. In this study, we attempted to find instances that illustrate recurring themes in the setting. The reader should compare the findings of this study with their contexts and others that they are familiar with, in order to see if the results of this study generalize to their cases.

Findings (max. 700 words):

Findings:

*It is important to make measured statements based on the analysis of data. What worked well? What were the challenges? What was surprising? Why did this occur? **It is important to provide evidence**, quotes, etc. for each claim and finding.*

When asked to mention what worked particularly well, teachers agreed on three specific elements: (1) Increased library use, (2) The whole-school, whole-day event that was devoted exclusively to reading, and (3) Free Voluntary Reading (FVR).

As mentioned in a previous section, both the researchers and several school staff considered the school library as central in the effort to promote reading and create a reading culture. This was proved to be true, as most teachers would frequently take their students to the central library to read or check out books. Researchers and teachers also witnessed individual use of the library by children, observing students visiting the library to check out books early in the morning, during recess time, or at the end of the school day. The second-grade teacher who participated in the focus group discussion emphasizes this fact:

And having a small library and checking out books... this way [the children] developed certain attitudes. The library, the librarian, checking out and returning a book... this way they acquire some attitudes and skills they will need in the future. They are not satisfied anymore when we tell them "pick a book from the classroom library and sit and read." I can see that we lose them a little bit there, while whenever I bring them here [to the central library] their mind-set is completely different. (Transcribed FG Discussion)

Inspired by the positive effect of the central school library, the teacher then observed that classroom libraries could also be useful, if they looked a bit more like the central library, featuring a more attractive space, renewed stock of books, etc.

The three teachers mentioned before, who had participated actively in the central library renovation and advocated its importance, played a pivotal role in the increased library use. The two first-grade teachers set the good example by frequently visiting and using the library with their students, while the special-ed teacher devoted all her free time to organizing and administering the library. It should be noted here that the researchers' suggestion to the school and to the PTA to hire a part-time librarian or enlist volunteers to run the library and also have it opened at least one afternoon per week was not followed; thus, the library was not used to the degree that it could have been and also remained off-limits to parents and families (in spite of the fact that it also carried books addressed to adult readers). Had it not been for the efforts of the special-ed teacher and the check-out system she had put in place, children would not even be able to take books and read at home. Another suggestion that was not followed by the school was the creation of a magazine and comic books section—perhaps they were not convinced about the value of these texts or the positive role they can play in reading promotion. Regardless of the above observations, there was noticeable increased library use. Additionally, informal discussions with stakeholders indicate that the revamped school library functioned as a focal point for the reading promotion effort.

Commenting on the whole-day event, the interviewed first-grade teacher asserted that “Our book day was the zenith, as children liked it very much, and I even heard comments by variedly aged kids saying that this was the best school day of the year and that they were very impressed” (Transcribed Interview #2). Teachers were also quite impressed by the originality of the event, as it was the first time that all normal school activities for the day were replaced by a completely different and more playful and creative schedule for all students. Even teachers that were not that actively involved in the reading-promotion effort said at the end of the day that this event should definitely be repeated next year. In the two interviews and focus group discussion, teachers marked this whole-day event as important because:

- It included a wide variety of activities: book games, author visits, theatre play, visual arts, Greek and English literature, musical narration, performances, etc.;
- Children interacted with diverse people: teachers, university students, actors, authors, etc.
- Children did not get bored or tired, as they would move from one activity to a completely different one and so on;
- It was very well organized;
- Children were actively involved and engaged;
- Parents were excited about the event and asked to be more intensely involved in a similar event next year. (Transcribed Interviews & FG Discussion)

Observation notes authored by CARDET researchers during that day verify students’ engagement and active involvement. Observing a 40-minutes session of second-graders interacting with the author Marina Michaelidou-Kade, for instance, one researcher noted at least nine different points during which children demonstrated their engagement and excitement. The following note, taken at the end of the session, is indicative: “It seems that the author has managed to steer up children’s interest in endangered species. Moreover, they enjoyed the teaching method (author, story, projector) and even asked the author if she could repeat the entire session all over with them” (Observation Notes #1). Similar observations were listed about several other sessions, where various other LiRe-suggested activities, like book dominos, reading competitions, playing with book illustrations, etc.

This whole-day event was pivotal in reinforcing the school’s reading culture; however, researchers believe that it might had been even more pivotal and motivating had it took place earlier in the school year (during the first semester) and perhaps repeated in the second semester with different content. This timescale would provide even more stimulation and motivation to teachers, students, and parents, early on in the reading promotion process.

During the FG discussion, the fifth-grade teacher said that he enjoyed the whole-day event but thought that one day is not as important as the daily 10 minutes he devoted to reading for pleasure with his students (Transcribed FG Discussion). He described a gradual passage to Free Voluntary Reading (FVR), starting with him reading aloud to his fifth-graders from the same book each day, then moving on to a student taking the book home and preparing a read-aloud to fellow-students the next day, and then reaching a point where everyone reads their own book silently. He attributed the success of this process to the book he chose to narrate and to the way in which he would narrate it; students would later try to imitate his way of reading the story. He admitted not really knowing at first if students would like the book (*Theseus* by Menelaos Loundemis); he rather chose it because *he* liked it. The students must have liked the book too—

perhaps because it was their teacher's favourite—to the extent that “every student [that took the book home to prepare a read-aloud] came back the next day having read 30-40 more pages than what s/he was supposed to read” (Transcribed FG Discussion). The teacher also mentioned that students kept asking him to read aloud to them even when the story was finished. This demonstrates the importance of reading aloud to older children, something that teachers usually do only for younger ages. The teacher concluded that the whole process made his students realize “that adventure can be found in books, that they can find interest, ideas, that [reading] is not entirely out-of-fashion now that we have the TV and the computer” (Transcribed FG Discussion).

Members of the coordinating team reported that not all teachers implemented FVR in the same manner or to the same extent. For instance, while only a small number of teachers had FVR in place throughout the year, all classes had it for at least one week. Some allowed time for FVR at the beginning of the day, some at the end, and yet others whenever they could spare some free time (Transcribed Interview #2). Members of the coordinating team seemed to think that if implemented in the following year, all teachers should commit to having FVR in place for long periods and in a more systematic way. They also mentioned that having better equipped classroom libraries would provide additional motivation for FVR.

In any case, all teachers participating in the interviews and FG reported positive effects in relation to FVR. The first-grade teacher that participated in the FG discussion reported that “When we had them read for 10-15 minutes every morning, they liked it so much that they would take out their books and read even during recess time; it was as if they were addicted to it. I believe that they enjoyed the 10-minute FVR a lot” (Transcribed FG Discussion). The same teacher said that her students enjoyed the whole reading promotion programme, and this showed in their writing and their responses to texts, the reading-recommendation newsletter they published, their drawings, and their overall engagement. She also attested that, in parallel to their reading attitudes, her students' reading attainment was also improved: “Personally, teaching first grade, I found [the reading promotion programme] extremely helpful for reading improvement, and we have reached a point where all children can read a full two-page text with ease and enjoyment” (Transcribed FG Discussion).

The second-grade teacher participating in the FG had a similar observation for her students: “And they did it [FVR] during recess as well. They would bring 3-4 books from home and share and read with their friends during recess; this was quite nice to watch and it showed that kids liked it” (Transcribed FG Discussion). This observation is even more important in its description of book-sharing as a social phenomenon; as part of a developing reading community and culture. The fifth-grade teacher participating in the FG observed that students would carry their books around with them wherever they would go. And the interviewed first-grade teacher said that many students (not just her first-graders) would read their book during recess, or have it with them and read whenever they had some free time (Transcribed Interview #2). As an example, she mentions that when the class teacher was absent and students were sent into other classrooms, they would take their book with them and read. Both this teacher and the fifth-grade teacher mentioned before have their own children attending the school; they both observed an enhanced relationship between their children and books at home during the current school year.

The students' improved attitudes towards reading and books are also supported by a comparison between pre- and post- Reading Habits Evaluations. As explained in the methodology section, all

children completed reading habits evaluation questionnaires at the beginning of the programme, which provided useful information to teachers and researchers while building the school’s reading promotion plan. At the end of the programme, two classes were randomly selected to complete the same questionnaire once more; this functioned as post-evaluation that gave us some indication about achieved progress. Figures 3 and 4 present a comparison between pre- and post-results in relation to four important, attitude-related questions. Comparing pre- and post-evaluation results, one observes a clear increase in the positive (green) end of the spectrum (“Quite a lot” and “Very much”). This change may not be spectacular—or of the same degree in all responses—but it is still an indicator of important progress in children’s attitudes towards reading.

Figure 3

Class D2: Pre- & Post-implementation Results

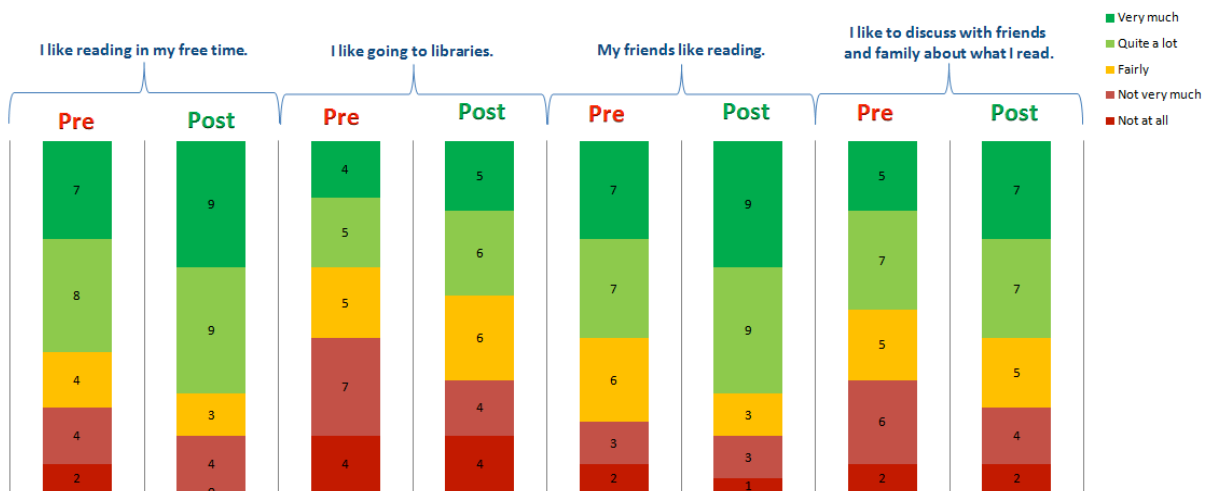
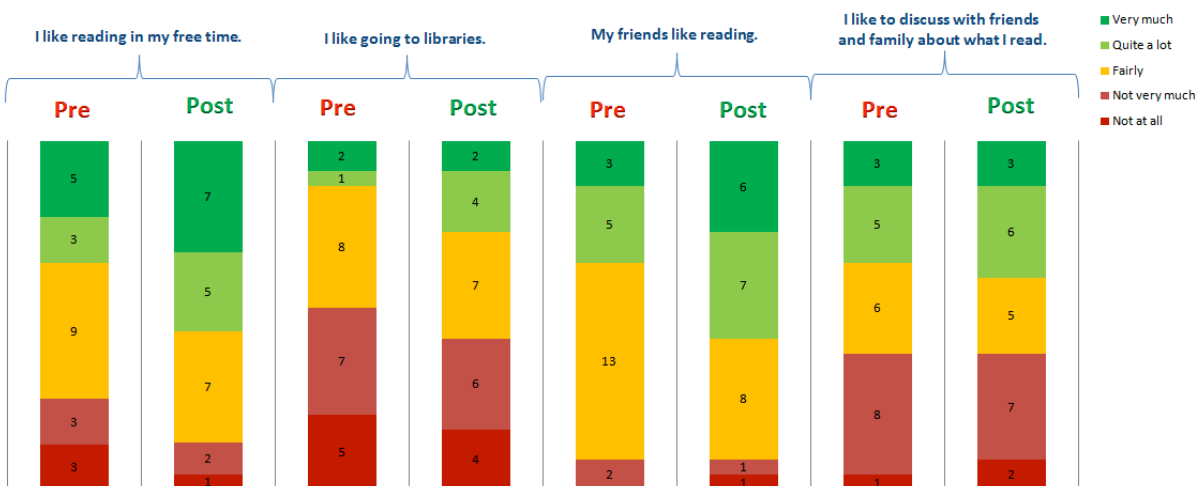


Figure 4

Class E: Pre- & Post-implementation Results

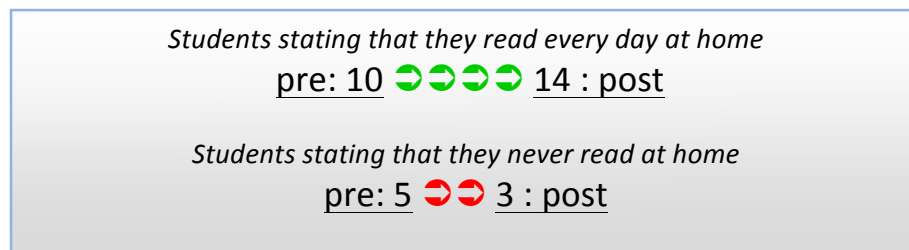


While we do recognize that other factors may have played a role in this change, undoubtedly the school’s systematic emphasis on reading promotion and the children’s participation in reading promotion activities played an important role. The last statement (“I like discussing with friends or family about what I read”) is the one with the least intense positive change; the objective of

intensifying peer-to-peer discussions and recommendations was not systematically pursued by the school.

Furthermore, a comparative look at these fourth- and fifth- graders' responses to reading habits questions shows that indeed the frequency of their discussions about reading with friends and relatives did not improve. On the other hand, their home reading habits did improve. In the two groups combined, the number of students reporting that they read every day at home increased from 10 to 14, while those stating that they never read at home decreased from 5 to 3 (Figure 5).

Figure 5
Comparing Responses to Reading Habits Questions
(D2 and E students combined)



This shift is not dramatic, but it is significant if we take into account that reading habits and reading communities need long periods to evolve.

As described in the methodology section, teachers also completed Reading Promotion Evaluation questionnaires at the beginning and end of the programme, evaluating their school's reading promotion practices. In their responses, they recognize that peer-to-peer discussions and recommendations were not substantially encouraged. The "Peer-to-Peer Recommendation" field shows only a slight improvement: the percentage of teachers saying that this has not yet been initiated decreased from 35.7% to 11.1% and those saying that it is at an initial stage increased from 64.3% to 88.9%. In both pre- and post- evaluations, no teachers rate "Peer-to-Peer Recommendation" as having reached a *developed* or *enhanced stage*. This means that there has been a small improvement, but not to a satisfactory degree. Figure 6 presents the results from the reading promotion self-evaluations in a comparative manner:

Figure 6
Pre- and Post- Reading Promotion Evaluation Results

Reading Promotion Area	Not yet initiated		At initial stage		At developed stage		At enhanced stage	
Whole-staff engagement	7.1%	0.0%	50.0%	22.2%	42.9%	77.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Visibility of Reading	35.7%	0.0%	64.3%	55.6%	0.0%	44.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Peer-to-Peer Recommendation	35.7%	11.1%	64.3%	88.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
ICT for Reading Promotion	50.0%	55.6%	42.9%	44.4%	7.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Reading Events	7.1%	0.0%	7.1%	0.0%	78.6%	88.9%	7.1%	11.1%
School Library Accessibility and Display	0.0%	0.0%	35.7%	33.3%	64.3%	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%
School Library Stock	0.0%	0.0%	64.3%	33.3%	14.3%	55.6%	21.4%	11.1%
Class Libraries	0.0%	0.0%	57.1%	88.9%	42.9%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Pupil Involvement	71.4%	55.6%	21.4%	44.4%	7.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Involving Organizations and Adults from the Community	7.1%	22.2%	28.6%	11.1%	50.0%	22.2%	14.3%	44.4%
Reading Promotion to Boys	64.3%	33.3%	35.7%	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
To Pupils and Families with Diverse Cultures and Backgrounds	85.7%	88.9%	14.3%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Communication with Families	57.1%	22.2%	42.9%	55.6%	0.0%	22.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Family Events and Activities	57.1%	0.0%	42.9%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

According to the results listed above, the following four areas have been improved the most after the implementation of the reading promotion plan (highlighted in yellow in Figure 6):

- Whole-staff engagement
- Visibility of Reading
- Reading Events
- Involving Organizations and Adults from the Community

Indeed, CARDET researchers also observed that these were the immediate and most noticeable effects brought about by the implementation of the plan. School staff did become more engaged in reading promotion. The whole process of going through training, putting together the plan, and implementing the agreed actions (from increased library use, to FVR, to the whole-day event) all contributed to enhancing the school staff's involvement. It should be noted, however, that some

teachers were noticeably more engaged than others, and this is probably why the majority of teachers say that staff engagement is at a “developed stage” (77.8%) rather than an “enhanced” one (0%). A similar message is communicated by the rating of “reading visibility” (“developed”: 88.9% and “enhanced”: 11.1%); both areas were judged as substantially improved, but with further room for improvement.

Reading became visible through such activities such as a competition for the best reading-promotion slogan; participation was massive, the selection committee included both students and teachers, the results were announced at a school assembly, and all slogans and posters were displayed around school premises. Reading events increased substantially in quantity and quality compared to previous years; such events such as an afternoon that featured workshops for children and parents conducted by authors and illustrators, a morning “discussion over coffee about reading” between a CARDET researcher and parents, and the whole-day event had a noticeable impact, while they also brought organizations and adults from the community closer to the school. These were the four areas in which the school placed the most emphasis through the programme, even though the plan attempted to address other areas as well.

Further study of the results (Figure 6) indicates that teachers view the following areas (highlighted in blue) as having been improved, but to a lesser extent:

- Peer-to-Peer Recommendation
- Pupil Involvement
- Communication with Families
- Family Events and Activities

The rest of the areas are basically evaluated in a similar manner by the pre- and post- evaluation; no progress indicated. To be more precise, utilizing ICT and reaching students and families with diverse cultures and backgrounds received a slightly more negative post-evaluation, perhaps because of the relevant objectives and actions that were included in that plan but were not materialized. School library stock and class libraries also received a slightly lower post-evaluation, perhaps because they were both upgraded during the previous year but not further enriched during the programme’s implementation. Moreover, as was also mentioned by interviewees, increased library use reinforced the feeling that more books were needed and also led to more books being lost or damaged.

Through their comments about what they would do differently if they were to implement a reading promotion plan next year, teachers recognize that some of the targeted areas and planned activities could be more effectively and vigorously pursued. One area mentioned by all, for instance, is parents’ active involvement. They estimate that some implemented actions sensitized parents, grandparents and guardians, but did not actively engage them in whole-family activities. Another weak area they identified was that of reading promotion to students and families from diverse cultures and backgrounds.

At the same time, they seem to think that some of the set objectives were not achieved because their plan was over-ambitious and excessive to begin with. This is how the vice-principal participating in the coordinating team described the possible content of a follow-up reading promotion plan: “Practical things that help; perhaps few but good, so that everything is achieved.

We noticed that this [reading promotion] with the boys didn't work much this year; we could place emphasis on it from the beginning, targeting fathers as well" (Transcribed Interview #1). Besides having more focused activities, she would also prefer to have more organized and systematic activities that take place on a more regular basis. CARDET researchers would add that planning should also be more detailed, adding to the plan detailed information regarding what will take place, who will participate and at what time, as well as the three omitted columns (*Resources, Success Criteria, and Achieved Date*). Other interviewees also suggest that next year's activities should be more focused and systematic; for instance, a month devoted to traditional stories, another month focused on humorous texts, and so on (Transcribed FG Discussion). Another suggestion was for a different class to present reading-related content at school assemblies; teachers disagreed about the timeframe: once a month, once every two months, etc. (Transcribed FG Discussion).

The fifth-grade teacher proposed that a revised version of the current plan is implemented next year. He said that continuation is important in this sense as well, so the school should keep on the new plan the activities that seemed to work the most, discard or revise those that were not as effective, add other activities, and have another look at areas that were not successfully developed the previous year (Transcribed FG Discussion).

Lack of time and curricular pressures were offered as factors that held some individual teachers, or the school as a whole, back from achieving more: "Engaging many colleagues is finally the most important thing, Petros; it's just that there is too much in the curriculum, which does not let us progress in some areas and this is also a problem in our system because they keep adding content and reducing teaching time" (Transcribed Interview #1).

It is important to note that, in spite of time-pressure, all interviewees stated that reading promotion should definitely be continued next year. In addition to the two interviewed teachers, the three teachers that participated in the FG discussion also expressed similar, passionate opinions about this need for continuation. There are at least two important dimensions in this expressed need: 1. Teachers acknowledged that creating and sustaining a reading culture cannot be achieved in a one-off approach, but needs to be continually explored and developed throughout the years; 2. Teachers acknowledged that reading promotion is important and worthwhile, thus it should be part of the school's efforts year after year after year.

When asked what would assist the school in its effort to continue reading promotion in the following year, teachers recognized three factors:

1. That the new principal be convinced about the importance of reading promotion;
2. That teachers, including the ones who are about to replace 4-5 current members of the staff, are convinced that reading promotion is worthwhile and achievable, within the limits of school time and the newly implemented national curricula;
3. That the school continues to be supported by reading promotion experts from CARDET and the University of Nicosia. (Transcribed FG Discussion)

This last factor was surprisingly overemphasized in the FG and interviews. From the beginning of the programme, CARDET researchers were being careful not to cross "jurisdiction" boundaries and were constantly encouraging school staff to take ownership of their school's reading promotion efforts; however, they state that having a close collaboration with experts helped them on multiple levels (academic, practical, and psychological). Here is what the fifth-grade teacher stated about this:

We definitely liked that we had a mentor, a critical friend... now, I don't know if we could have this relationship with the new programme as well. Because you came several times to the school to exchange views, to present activities, to resolve difficulties and it was important to have this feedback from someone who knows much more than we do, an expert. (Transcribed FG Discussion)

The ultimate goal is for the school to become an independent, growing, and self-sustained reading community, but it seems that during the first 1-2 years external support is necessary. If a new reading promotion plan is designed and implemented during the coming year, this support should continue but leave more space for staff initiatives, encouraging them to build their self-confidence and independence in the reading-promotion area. We conclude the findings section with what the same fifth-grade teacher said about the completed and future reading promotion efforts at the school:

The idea and the programme as a whole have created a culture where we have planted a seed and it has grown into a small tree. If it gets more water, it will grow into a school culture and a culture for all children leaving in this area that will last forever; because the hardest part has been achieved: we now have a small tree. [...] This culture was cultivated and must definitely be continued because it is extremely beneficial to kids; now, in what ways this may be achieved... others should also let their imagination work. They could add things, leave out some others, what's important is that it is continued and not abandoned, because in this country, whenever there is a successful effort, we pursue it for 3 – 4 – 5 months and then we go back to the old ways. (Transcribed FG Discussion)

Conclusions (max. 500 words):

Conclusion:

Summarise the main ideas and finding of your project. Make reasoned conclusions based on the evidence collected during the implementation of the programme.

The little-tree metaphor mentioned above is quite successful in capturing what has been achieved. This first implementation of a whole-school reading promotion plan in Cyprus, has managed to plant the seed of a reading culture, and this culture has grown roots in the school, as well as a small trunk and branches. Students have had positive reading-related experiences and their reading habits and attitudes improved substantially. Additionally, there is now a central core of teachers who are affectively invested in reading promotion and reading has become visible to all stakeholders in the school; however, if the reading-culture tree is left without water and nurturing, it will die.

Teachers recognize that some of the targeted areas and planned activities could be more effectively and vigorously pursued. At the same time, they seem to think that some of the set objectives were not achieved because their plan was over-ambitious and excessive to begin with. Lack of time and curricular pressures were offered as factors that held some individual teachers, or the school as a whole, back from achieving more.

In spite of time-pressure, teachers expressed passionate opinions about the need to continue reading promotion during next year. There are at least two important dimensions in this expressed need: 1. Teachers acknowledged that creating and sustaining a reading culture cannot be achieved in a one-off approach, but needs to be continually explored and developed throughout the years; 2. Teachers acknowledged that reading promotion is important and worthwhile, thus it should be part of the school's efforts year after year after year.

Ten major conclusions may be drawn from the preceding data analysis:

1. Staff training was most effective when it included demonstrations of activities and led to concrete outcomes and had immediate results and meaning for their everyday practices.
2. Teachers' involvement in the initial evaluation and identification of needs and objectives, mobilized them and stimulated their interest in and thinking about reading for pleasure.
3. Had all teachers participated more actively in the formation of the actual plan, results would have been even better.
4. The central school library proved pivotal in the formation of the school's reading culture.
5. Three elements of the reading promotion plan worked particularly well: (i) Increased library use; (ii) The whole-school, whole-day event that was devoted exclusively to reading; and (iii) Free Voluntary Reading (FVR).
6. Four areas were most noticeably improved after the implementation of the reading promotion plan: (i) Whole-staff engagement; (ii) Visibility of Reading; (iii) Reading Events; and (iv) Involving Organizations and Adults from the Community.
7. Reading promotion is important and worthwhile, thus it should be part of the school's efforts year after year after year. Creating and sustaining a reading culture cannot be achieved in a one-off approach, but needs to be continually explored and developed throughout the years.
8. The initial plan could have been more detailed, listing full information about what exactly would take place, who would participate and at what time, as well as the three omitted columns (Resources, Success Criteria, and Achieved Date).
9. A revised reading promotion plan would be more focused (targeting specific areas and groups), have fewer targeted areas and include more organized and systematic activities (that take place regularly); it would also preserve the elements that worked well in the previous plan.
10. While the ultimate goal is for the school to become an independent, growing, and self-sustained reading community, it seems that during the first 1-2 years external support is necessary.

Recommendations (max. 600 words):

Recommendations for Practitioners: make recommendations as practical as possible. Step by step recommendation may be used here on how to facilitate the reading promotion activities.

Based on the conclusions listed above, the CARDET team has the following recommendations for coordinating teams at schools that are planning to follow the LiRe approach and implement whole-school reading promotion:

1. Begin with involving as many stakeholders possible in an effort to revamp and restock your central library and strive to increase the quality and frequency of its use; it is bound to play a pivotal role in forming a reading culture. If possible, employ a school librarian or enlist volunteers to ensure the smooth operation of the library. Enhanced classroom libraries could also play an important role.
2. Involve all school staff in the initial evaluations and identification of needs and objectives, as this will mobilize them and stimulate their interest in and thinking about reading promotion.
3. Have all teachers participate actively in the formation of the actual plan, as this will enhance staff's feeling of empowerment, agency, ownership of the reading promotion process and engagement in implementing the plan.
4. Encourage as much as possible students' and parents' involvement from the beginning.
5. Make sure that all stakeholders are convinced that reading promotion is important and

worthwhile, and it should thus be part of the school's efforts year after year after year. Creating and sustaining a reading culture cannot be achieved in a one-off approach, but needs to be continually explored and developed.

6. Engage school staff and leaders from the beginning in collective efforts to alleviate time-related and curricular pressures that may hinder the plan's implementation.
7. Set realistic objectives and agree on a reading promotion plan that takes into account the availability of resources (staff, time, materials). The plan should feature a limited number of targeted areas and include organized and systematic activities (that take place regularly) as well as one-off events. The plan should be detailed, listing meticulous information about what exactly will take place, who will participate and at what time, as well as resources, success criteria and achieved dates.
8. If the school is new at this, then it might be better to focus during the first year on four essential areas that are bound to improve: (i) Whole-staff engagement; (ii) Visibility of Reading; (iii) Reading Events; and (iv) Involving Organizations and Adults from the Community. A follow-up reading promotion plan would be more focused (targeting specific areas and groups), while preserving the elements that worked well in the previous plan.
9. Include in the plan the following three elements that seem to work particularly well: (i) Increased library use; (ii) Whole-school, whole-day events that are devoted exclusively to reading; and (iii) Free Voluntary Reading (FVR).
10. Ensure that during the first couple of years your efforts are supported by reading promotion experts, who function as trainers at the beginning and advisors or critical friends as the programme evolves.

Recommendations for Policymakers: make recommendations on how to implement a school-wide reading promotion programme. How to implement an effective reading promotion programme and how to involve/empower stakeholders.

Based on the conclusions listed above, the CARDET team has the following recommendations for policymakers who wish to encourage and assist schools in their efforts implement whole-school reading promotion:

1. Make sure that all stakeholders are convinced that reading promotion is important and worthwhile, and it should thus be part of the school's efforts year after year after year. Creating and sustaining a reading culture cannot be achieved in a one-off approach, but needs to be continually explored and developed.
2. Encourage and support on-site staff training that includes demonstrations of good practice and leads to concrete outcomes with immediate results and meaning for the teachers' everyday practices.
3. Encourage teacher-trainers to help teachers find ways in which LiRe methods could be practically adopted to their school's specific context and implemented in a realistic and feasible manner (e.g. ways to find the additional time or resources needed for LiRe reading promotion, or concrete examples of applied activities in similar settings).
4. Work with schools in order to alleviate time-related and curricular pressures that may hinder the implementation of whole-school reading promotion plans.
5. Support financially and technically the formation or renovation of the central school library and classroom libraries, as these are proved pivotal in the formation of a school's reading culture. Librarians should be employed in central school libraries.
6. Facilitate the collaboration between schools and reading promotion experts. While the ultimate goal is for schools to become independent, growing, and self-sustained reading communities, it seems that during the first 1-2 years external support is necessary.

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ANNEXES

Reading Habits Evaluation Tool

Reading Promotion Evaluation Tool

Implemented Reading Promotion Plan