

Book clubs for people with intellectual disabilities: The evidence and impact on wellbeing and community participation of reading wordless books

Book clubs for people with intellectual disabilities: the evidence and impact on wellbeing and community participation of reading wordless books

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Abstract

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to introduce the social and scientific rationale for book clubs, whose members read wordless books together, and give examples of storytelling with picture books in libraries and other community settings for people with intellectual disabilities and autism.

Design/methodology/approach

The authors consider the impact of book clubs reading picture books without words, alongside an understanding of the underlying neuroscience (see Table I for search strategy). The authors compare differences in the neuroscience of information and emotion processing between pictures and words. Accounts from book club facilitators illustrate these differences in practice.

Findings

Many readers who struggle with reading and comprehending words, find pictures much easier to understand. Book clubs support community inclusion, as for other people in society. A focus on visual rather than word literacy encourages successful shared reading.

Research limitations/implications

No research has been published about the feasibility and effectiveness of wordless books in community book clubs or shared reading groups. There is very little research on the impact of accessible materials, despite a legal requirement for services to provide reasonable adjustments and the investment of time and resources in developing storylines in pictures, or "translating" information into easy read formats.

Practical implications

Book clubs whose members read picture books without words are growing in number, especially in public libraries in the UK. Expansion is dependent on funding to pay for training for librarians and volunteer facilitators.

Social implications

There is a shortage of fully accessible activities for adults with intellectual disabilities in mainstream community settings with a primarily social purpose.

Originality/value

To the authors' knowledge, this is the first paper describing the theory and impact of wordless book clubs for people who find pictures easier to understand than words.

Keywords

Visual literacy

Book clubs

Books Beyond Words

Information and emotion processing

Shared reading

Wordless books

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Professional and community organizations serving and advocating for people with disabilities. The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) is a convener, connector, and catalyst for change, increasing the political and economic power of people with disabilities. American Council of the Blind. The American Council of the Blind (ACB) is comprised of approximately 70 state chapters and special-interest affiliates representing a diverse range of groups within the blind community, including students, families, teachers, attorneys, governmental employees, entrepreneurs, vending stand operators and the LGBTQ community. The Arc. Book clubs for people with intellectual disabilities: the evidence and impact on wellbeing and community participation of reading wordless books. Article. Full-text available. Design/methodology/approach: The authors consider the impact of book clubs reading picture books without words, alongside an understanding of the underlying neuroscience (see Table I for search strategy). The authors compare differences in the neuroscience of information and emotion processing between pictures and words. Practical implications: Book clubs whose members read picture books without words are growing in number, especially in public libraries in the UK. Expansion is dependent on funding to pay for training for librarians and volunteer facilitators. Telerehabilitation 118. Expanding research and evidence-based practice. 119. Information and good practice guidelines. Educational participation and children with disability. 206. Understanding education and disability. Reading the World report on disability, I find much of relevance to my own experience. I have benefitted from access to first class medical care. I rely on a team of personal assistants who make it possible for me to live and work in comfort and dignity. This is partly because people with disabilities experience barriers in accessing services that many of us have long taken for granted, including health, education, employment, and transport as well as information. These difficulties are exacerbated in less advantaged communities.