Motivating struggling readers

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Motivating struggling readers

Abstract
This literature review discusses the effects of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation with regard to struggling readers. Intrinsic motivation is the drive inside a student to do an activity on their own. Extrinsic motivation is to do something in order to receive some sort of reward or praise. Teachers need to move from using extrinsic motivators to creating more intrinsic motivation within students. It is essential for teachers to understand the five guiding principles behind motivating students: building self-efficacy, activating schema, interest and relevance, using extrinsic reinforcers to engage, and making facilitative attributions. Understanding these principles provides teachers with strategies to improve intrinsic motivation of students. Teachers are best able to provide a motivational learning environment when they encompass the six conditions that foster engagement: knowledge goals, real-world interactions, abundance of interesting texts, autonomy support, direct strategy instruction, and collaboration. These six conditions help support intrinsic motivation within students. Classroom strategies for fostering intrinsic motivation are curriculum integration, project-based learning, and concept-oriented reading instruction (CORI). These strategies utilize real-world interactions supporting intrinsic motivation.
MOTIVATING STRUGGLING READERS

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Tawnie Kerska

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Abstract

This literature review discusses the effects of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation with regard to struggling readers. Intrinsic motivation is the drive inside a student to do an activity on their own. Extrinsic motivation is to do something in order to receive some sort of reward or praise. Teachers need to move from using extrinsic motivators to creating more intrinsic motivation within students. It is essential for teachers to understand the five guiding principles behind motivating students: building self-efficacy, activating schema, interest and relevance, using extrinsic reinforcers to engage, and making facilitative attributions. Understanding these principles provides teachers with strategies to improve intrinsic motivation of students. Teachers are best able to provide a motivational learning environment when they encompass the six conditions that foster engagement: knowledge goals, real-world interactions, abundance of interesting texts, autonomy support, direct strategy instruction, and collaboration. These six conditions help support intrinsic motivation within students. Classroom strategies for fostering intrinsic motivation are curriculum integration, project-based learning, and concept-oriented reading instruction (CORI). These strategies utilize real-world interactions supporting intrinsic motivation.
Introduction

Motivating and engaging students in learning is one of the most challenging tasks that parents or classroom teachers have to deal with (Lee et al., 2010). Student motivation is a daunting task for any classroom teacher. Motivation is defined as “an internal state that arouses, directs, and maintains behavior” (Sternberg and Williams, 2010, p. 348). It drives people to act in certain ways. What can teachers do to get a child motivated to learn, especially if they struggle in school? Teachers know that “students who are motivated tend to achieve more in school; they stay in school longer, learn more, and perform better on tests” (Sternberg and Williams, 2010, p. 349). Motivation has long been viewed as a “key element of learning” (Frey and Fisher, 2010, p. 30). Academic researchers have spent decades researching motivation and have developed a clear definition. Motivation means “to be moved” to do something (Daniels, 2010, p. 25). Porter (2010) identifies two commonly acknowledged kinds of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic.

Definition of Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation refers to being motivated to do an activity for its own sake and out of interest and curiosity (Guthrie, et. al, 2000). Intrinsic motivation comes from within. Intrinsic motivation occurs when the goals and rewards of the learning are meaningful to the learner (Porter, 2010). Elements of intrinsic motivation include “enthusiastic task involvement, desire to experience adventure and novelty, striving for excellence in one’s work, trying to understand something and wishing to improve, and goal direction (that is, seeing a purpose in what one is doing)” (Lee et al, 2010, p. 265). Students who like to read will read for the sake of enjoyment rather than read because someone is coercing them. They get enjoyment from the act of reading simply because they desire to do so. When students have a vested interest in the learning they
are more engaged, and therefore motivated to read. "Students who are intrinsically motivated – that is who think a task is useful, interesting and important – are more likely to persist with it and be more willing to try different strategies to achieve their goals" (Lee et al, 2010, p. 265).

**Definition of Extrinsic Motivation**

Extrinsic motivation is doing an activity to receive a reward or other form of recognition (Guthrie, et al. 2000). Students that read for rewards such as stickers, books, and even to receive praise from the teacher are doing so as a result of these extrinsic motivators. Extrinsic motivators work especially well for young students. These are great ways to get students excited about learning. However, as students grow older, they need to develop intrinsic motivation so that they may experience the joys of learning (Sternberg and Williams, 2010). "Students who are extrinsically motivated – that is who do a task for the purpose of rewards and other external prompts – are more likely to engage in surface learning and less likely to persist with the activity once extrinsic rewards and prompts are removed" (Lee et al, 2010, p. 265).

Recently, there has been some psychological research to indicate that there are "negative effects of extrinsic rewards on students' intrinsic motivation to learn" (Deci et. al, 2001, p. 1). If the student knows that they are going to receive a reward for accomplishing a task, their inner drive to complete the task is diminished (Deci et. al, 2001). Sternberg and Williams (2010) have identified three factors that determine whether an extrinsic reward undermines intrinsic motivation. First, the student must expect the reward in order to complete the task. Second, the reward must be valued by the student. Third, the reward must be tangible, i.e. money, grade, prize. According to research these tangible rewards "do significantly and substantially undermine intrinsic motivation." (Deci et. al, 2001, p. 2) According to Sternberg and Williams
"intangible rewards, such as praise or a smile, do not seem to undermine intrinsic motivation" (p. 356).

What can teachers do to motivate students who struggle in school, especially those that struggle with reading? What strategies, with regard to motivating students, can teachers utilize so that students build their competence and self-efficacy toward learning? This paper will focus on these important questions and will provide strategies that teachers can utilize to improve engagement and student motivation.

The scope of this review is to understand the basic principles of motivation, classroom conditions that promote engagement, and to look at different strategies teachers can use to motivate students to read that will not cause negative affects to their natural desire to learn. The results of this analysis will become useful tools that teachers can apply in their instruction.

**Methodology**

The methodology used was to locate different articles and research studies using educational databases such as EBSCO and ERIC through the University of Northern Iowa’s Rod Library. Key terms such as struggling reader, student motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and self-efficacy were used to search the databases. This generated several articles on the topic of motivation. After looking at titles and abstracts, articles were chosen based on relevance to the guiding questions above. From there an analysis of each study also lead to various authors referenced as experts in the field of motivation. Another method to obtain articles for review was to look at an article that was already researched and use the snowball method by looking up relevant references from that article.

The process of analyzing the sources was to read each of the articles carefully and summarize the results and conclusions on index cards. Also included on the cards were any
interesting quotations that were related to the guiding questions. After the articles were read, then the index cards were categorized by topic and laid out by relevance to the guiding questions in sequential order.

**Literature Review**

Teachers have long recognized that motivation is at the heart of many of the pervasive problems we face in educating today’s children (Gambrell, 1996). Using proven motivational techniques can help teachers motivate students to read. If students are not motivated to read, no amount of increased instructional time will make a difference. As Carnine et al. (1997) noted, Unmotivated students will not receive the full benefit of increased instructional time, careful teaching, and a well-designed program. Without motivation...the student will continue making the same errors and will perform poorly on new skills. (p. 42)

Increasing instructional time is not answer to helping struggling reader improve their reading comprehension skills. Students have to be motivated to read in order for improvement to occur. Motivation is the key to helping struggling readers.

**Principles of Motivation**

In order to motivate struggling students to read, it is first important to understand the principles of motivation in regards to reading instruction. Margolis and McCabe (2006) have identified five guiding principles of motivation. These are

1. Use materials and assignments that promote successful performance
2. Increase expectations of success by ensuring adequate background and vocabulary
3. Create value by linking instruction to readers’ interests and goals
4. Create value by temporarily using extrinsic reinforcers
5. Teach struggling readers to make facilitative attributions
Utilizing these principles can provide teachers with a repertoire of techniques to motivate students to read, no matter what age or grade level they teach. These principles can replace scripted programs and allows the teacher to be reflective and adapted to students. “Classroom situations can change quickly and dramatically, but research-based principles remain constant” (Margolis and McCabe, 2006, p. 437).

**Principle 1 – use materials and assignments that promote successful performance.**

Showing kids that they can succeed helps to increase motivation to read as it allows students to build up their self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is defined as “beliefs a person has about his or her capabilities to learn or perform behaviors at designated levels” (Guthrie et al., 2009, p. 322). Self-efficacy is “critical as it exerts strong influence on decisions to engage in activities, such as reading” (Margolis and McCabe, 2006, p. 439). Vacca (2006) suggests that self-efficacy and text comprehension are situational and that motivation plays a significant role in both elements. Students that are capable of succeeding on a task, such as reading and understanding text, and see success as valuable will likely be motivated to continue being successful at a task (Margolis and McCabe, 2006). The more success students achieve, thus increasing their self-efficacy, the more likely they will increase their efforts to continue reading.

Students with low self-efficacy can easily become “discouraged with the task before they even start if their only motivation is to fulfill an assignment” (Vacca, 2006, p. 57). In other words, students that do not have success will not want to continue attempting the task, i.e. reading, as they already have it in their head that they will not be successful. If students believe that they are “incapable, or see success as meaningless, they might make only a superficial effort at the task or ignore it” (Margolis and McCabe, 2006, p. 439). In regards to reading, students
will appear to be reading or just read the words without really making an effort at understanding what they are reading.

Increasing self-efficacy is extremely important to the success of student learning. Therefore it is “critical for teachers to routinely provide opportunities for struggling students to experience success with moderate effort” (Margolis and McCabe, 2006, p. 439). Teachers need to breakdown assignments into smaller chunks where students can achieve success and then continue to increase the difficulty of assignments as students are more motivated to learn and be successful. Giving struggling readers tasks on which success is likely improves their success and influences their behaviors (Margolis and McCabe, 2006). The more success the struggling reader experiences the more likely they will want to continue reading to experience future success. An example of this might be to read a few sentences or paragraphs and then retell what they read rather than read a whole chapter or book and retell everything that happened.

**Principle 2 – increase expectations of success by ensuring adequate background and vocabulary.** In order for students to see continued success – “the critical ingredient for self-efficacy and sustained motivation - they need to understand what is said to them, what is read to them, and what they read on their own” (Margolis and McCabe, 2006, p. 442). As most teachers know, background knowledge, or schema, is critical to this principle. Schema is defined as “cognitive frameworks for organizing associated concepts” (Sternberg and Williams, 2010, p. 72). Basically, it is what students already know about a topic. Activating this schema allows students to be ready to learn new information. This background knowledge, or schema, is essential in the reading process. “Only when we have cognitive schemas adequate to what we are reading and only when these schemas are somehow activated will we have much understanding and recall of what we hear or read” (Weaver, 2009, p. 21). If students do not
understand the topic or relevant vocabulary, they are lost and unmotivated to learn. This leads to frustration and unwillingness to be engaged in the learning.

To help struggling readers, teachers need to support students before, during and after the reading or learning. Before reading because it prepares students to begin reading, during reading to ensure concepts are understood and success at comprehension, and after reading to solidify the learning and prepare students to succeed at the next lesson (Margolis and McCabe, 2006).

Teachers can have students look at the cover of the book or discuss the topic before reading occurs to get activate prior knowledge. This is also a good time to discuss any pertinent vocabulary that students will occur in the reading. During reading, students need to stop and discuss learning to ensure adequate acquisition of knowledge and to fix any misconceptions that may occur. When students are finished reading, teachers can discuss what was learned and connect to other topics, or prepare students for the next lesson.

**Principle 3 – create value by linking instruction to readers’ interests and goals.**

Margolis and McCabe (2006) state teachers know students are more engaged when the learning is about something captivates their interest. There is no factory formula for teaching students to read. It is important to tap into what students are interested in order to build upon this background knowledge to help them gain confidence in reading. “That is why it is extremely beneficial to become aware of children’s varied personal interests and learning styles as we ask why students struggle” (Parke and Meyer, 2010, p. 41). Knowing what students interests are is important to motivating them to read. When children are motivated to read, they are more likely to be engaged in reading and, therefore, comprehend better (Guthrie et al, 2007). To see what students’ interests are, teachers can have students complete interest inventories, listen to conversations with students, or ask students about their learning goals. Students with learning
goals seek to understand content, master skills, and gain competence. When students see that assignments can help them achieve their goals they are motivated to learn (Margolis and McCabe, 2006). By finding out the student’s interests and goals, teachers can help them to achieve these goals and see success thereby motivating them to read and learn.

If a student’s goal is to retell a story with an adequate beginning, middle, and end, teachers should help students see success by starting with a book that will appeal to their interest. The student may be very interested in race cars, so start with a book about a race car driver or about race cars so that they can work at achieving their goal of retelling.

**Principle 4 – create value by temporarily using extrinsic reinforcers.** Although some students may have an interest in the topic of study, they still may need other forms of motivation in order to start reading. This is where extrinsic motivation can help. Extrinsic reinforcers need to be seen as valuable to the student. In order for reinforcers to work properly, students need to see these as reinforcers as something they value, want, and will work for to get (Margolis and McCabe, 2006). Students should also be told explicitly how to achieve the reinforcer. Margolis and McCabe (2006) suggest ways for teachers to maximize the effectiveness of extrinsic reinforcers shown in Table 1 in the Appendix.

The use of extrinsic reinforcers can be helpful if used appropriately (Margolis and McCabe, 2006). Every student is different and knowing what motivates students is critical to engaging them in reading. “Expert teachers recognize that motivating students requires the use of both extrinsic and intrinsic motivators” (Sternberg and Williams, 2010, p. 351). Extrinsic motivators should be used to help students see success in their learning and to strengthen their self-efficacy at reading (Margolis, 2006). Once struggling readers have built up their self-
efficacy, these extrinsic motivators will no longer be needed and teachers should focus the student on reading that revolves around their interests.

Teachers may need to use some sort of reward system to get students motivated to read, such as an incentive chart. A student may be given a sticker for every book or chapter read, then as they get involved in reading books of interest to them, teachers may switch the incentive to praise for reading until the student develops habits of reading on their own.

**Principle 5 – teach struggling readers to make facilitative attributions.** Sternberg and Williams (2010) define attributions as “how the students explain their own successes and failures, as well as those of their peers” (p. 376). Reading motivation is often affected by these attributions. Some students directly see their success as a result of their effort and persistence, while others, typically the struggling reader, will shrug it off to luck. “When struggling readers experience ongoing success with independent or instructional level tasks and materials, it sets the stage for strengthened self-efficacy, which in turn, can enhance motivation” (Margolis and McCabe, 2006, p. 448). Students need to see that this is a direct reflection of their efforts and not just luck. Parker and Meyer (2010) state that a “readers’ self-efficacy plays a crucial role in motivation as it predisposes their belief in whether or not they will be successful” (p. 35). This belief about one's ability can determine how a student approached difficult tasks, such as reading. “When students believe they are able to do something, they are more likely to expend the effort and resources to do it, thus eventually to achieve their objective” (Sternberg and Williams, 2010, p. 382).

Most struggling students do not see themselves as successful and often have dysfunctional behaviors such as negative self-talk. Teachers need to replace these behaviors with more functional ones that help students see themselves as successful and contributing
students that are capable of learning. “To help students see these attributions, teachers need to stress a student’s effort and persistence, the correct selection and application of a strategy, and make facilitative statements” (Margolis, 2006, p. 448). Teachers can best help struggling readers replace dysfunctional attributions with functional ones throughout the day through explicit instruction when teachable moments occur. The teacher can redirect student’s negative self-talk by making a facilitative statement such as, “Ryan, you’re not dumb. To succeed, you just need to use the TELLS strategy we’ve been working on. Let’s try it out!” (Margolis, 2006, p. 450).

All teachers need to create an environment where learning and success are prevalent. By applying these principles of motivation, teachers can help students by creating an environment that allows students to succeed and increase self-efficacy which in turn engages and intrinsically motivates students to read.

Classroom Conditions Fostering Reading Engagement and Motivation

As stated earlier, it is important to understand the principles of motivation to help motivate students to read. However, it is not enough just to understand these principles, but to apply them in a classroom setting. Guthrie and Davis (2003) identified six characteristics of a classroom environment that foster engagement and aid in the achievement of reading competence: knowledge goals, real-world interactions, abundance of interesting texts, autonomy support, direct strategy instruction, and collaborative support.

Knowledge goals. Knowledge goals refer “to constructing teaching objectives that emphasize understanding and communication about a specific topic with a knowledge domain” (Guthrie and Davis, 2003, p. 72). Students with learning goals seek to understand content, master skills, and gain competence in a given subject area. In contrast, students with performance goals seek to maximize their grade, test scores, or public recognition for
Motivation achievement (Ames, 1992). Most classrooms that utilize learning and knowledge goals focus their instruction around a conceptual theme. Teachers often integrate reading instruction with a theme that is based around science or social studies concepts. Focusing on the learning goals ensures that students are utilizing strategies for comprehension. According to Guthrie and Davis (2003) a substantial amount of research on engagement shows that learning or knowledge goals that emphasize students' understanding of meaningful materials are essential to motivation and cognitive strategy learning.

**Real-World interactions.** Once students know the learning goals, teachers can maintain engagement with learning activities that involve real-world interactions. This refers to "providing opportunities for students to have sensory interactions (e.g., seeing, hearing, feeling, or smelling) with tangible objects or events as they appear or could appear in a natural environment" (Guthrie and Davis, 2003, p. 73). Students are more engaged when they can act out or have hands-on activities rather than participate in text-booked based, large-group, teacher-controlled instruction (Guthrie and Davis, 2003). As stated above, intrinsic motivation comes out of interest or curiosity. Guthrie and Davis state that "Real-world interaction is a desirable starting point because it is intrinsically motivating" (2003, p. 74). When students are able to see, feel, and touch an object of study, such as hermit crabs, they are naturally curious and will be engaged in the learning by asking questions and discussing what they observe. Guthrie and Cox state that "these intrinsically motivating behaviors create the occasion for active learning and the acquisition of relevant knowledge" (2001, p. 291).

**Abundance of interesting text.** Once students have acquired the knowledge goals and are engaged through real-world interactions, they are now primed for text-based learning. This requires access to an abundance of interesting texts. Teachers need to have "an ample supply of
Motivation

books, materials, and technology that are relevant to the learning and knowledge goals” (Guthrie and Davis, 2003, p. 74). This is essential to motivating and activating student interest in reading. Students also need to have a variety of interesting texts that are matched to the varying cognitive competencies of the learners. In elementary classrooms, trade books with diverse levels of difficulty and numbers of illustrations serve this function (Guthrie and Cox, 2001). Information books can motivate reading because they can help teachers tap students’ interest. This is extremely important as considerable evidence documents a strong relationship between interest and motivation to read (Dreher, 2003).

Autonomy support. Autonomy support refers to “enabling students to experience an authentic sense of control and decision making regarding their reading activities” (Guthrie and Davis, 2003, p. 75). As stated earlier, giving students’ choice allows them to feel a sense of control and this has been shown to increase reading achievement. Allowing students to choose what topics to explore, what texts to read, and the particular skills to focus on during instruction is very empowering. Teachers reported that giving student’s choice is a strong motivational technique. As Guthrie & Davis (2003) found, “Struggling inner-city African-American middle school students showed significant increases in engagement in school learning when they were provided with responsibility and choice in their learning activities” (p. 76).

Autonomy support is closely related to previously stated conditions for engagement: knowledge goals, real-world interactions, and abundance of texts. Students are allowed to choose a subtopic of study for their learning goal through the use of real-world interactions. Further study is supported through the abundance of texts that are self-selected. Gambrell (1996) suggests findings from a number of studies that there is a strong correlation between choice and the development of intrinsic motivation. Autonomy support is intrinsically motivating because
the learning is perceived as meaningful to the student, therefore it makes the act of reading an activity something choose to do, not something they have to do.

It is important to consider the student’s perspective in allowing choice of reading. According to Vansteenkiste, Lens, and Deci (2006),

Considerable previous research had confirmed the importance of understanding the student’s perspective, encouraging them to solve the problems they encounter, supporting their self-initiation and experimentation, and providing as much choice as possible about what to do and how to do it. (p. 28)

Giving students’ autonomy support allows them to explore many real-world problems that are meaningful to their learning goals.

**Direct strategy instruction.** For struggling readers, the most beneficial intervention would be the use of direct strategy instruction within the context of learning. As students are engaged in the previously stated conditions, i.e. knowledge goals, real-world interactions, abundance of interesting text, and autonomy support, students should receive direct strategy instruction as a guide for intervention. “Direct strategy instruction typically includes the processes of modeling, scaffolding, guided practice with feedback, and independent reading to gain fluency” (Guthrie and Davis, 2003, p. 76). Teachers model the reading strategy for students through the use of think-alouds to demonstrate to students the use of the strategy. Modeling can also be demonstrated by other students that are proficient with the reading strategy. Scaffolding is the process of teacher coaching as students practice using the modeled reading strategy. Students then practice the strategy with guidance and feedback from the teacher or other students. Finally, independence comes as students are able to be proficient with the reading strategy independently throughout their reading. “As students learn the strategies, they gain the confidence in their own capabilities” (Guthrie and Davis, 2003, p. 77). This new gained confidence helps to build their self-efficacy in their learning capabilities, helping to build on
their intrinsic motivation. Strategy instruction helps to build the motivational need for self-perceived competence (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

**Collaborative support.** Collaborative support is referred to as student’s interaction with one another to obtain a common learning goal (Guthrie and Davis, 2003). This may occur in pairs, small groups, or teams. Current theories of motivation recognize that learning is facilitated by social interaction with others (Gambrell, 1996). When students work together with their peers they are more motivated to read and learn. Students are able to engage in discussions and ask questions about the learning. A number of recent reading studies indicate that social collaboration promotes achievement, higher level cognition, and intrinsic desire to read (Gambrell, 1996). Collaboration has also been shown to help students with varying cognitive abilities. Specifically,

Researchers suggest that pupils who need help can benefit from interaction in a working team, because their peers can provide them with explanations in terms that can be easily understood and focus on the relevant feature of the problem, since they are often more aware than their teachers of what some students do not understand. (Filippatou & Kaldi, 2010, p. 18)

As a final piece to the engagement model stated above, collaboration is key in helping to build intrinsic motivation to read. By working collaboratively with others, students are able to focus on the learning goals that surround real-world interactions, while maintaining their autonomy within the group.

**Strategies for Teachers**

So, how can teachers utilize the principles of motivation and create a classroom that will engage readers? There are several instructional models that will incorporate these ideals: integration of curriculum, project-based learning, and the concept-oriented reading instruction model.
Curricular integration. There is more demand than ever placed on teachers to educate students. Teachers are asked to do more with less. One way to alleviate this stress on teachers is to integrate curriculum. Combining several topics, for example reading instruction with a focus on social studies content, allows teachers to incorporate many concepts across disciplines, thereby alleviating stress on teachers to accomplish all curricular expectations during limited instructional hours. “At the basic level, curriculum integration involves the combining or linking of different disciplines and/or subject areas” (MacBeth et al., 2010, p. 87). This integration of curriculum is most effectively accomplished within the disciplines of science and social studies. These subject areas naturally allow for the flow of curricular integration as they focus on real-world problems.

Curricular integration benefits students as well as teachers. It allows students to focus learning on their needs and interests rather than state mandated curriculum. “Curriculum integration is most often associated with student-centered learning and focusing on the application of knowledge and skills in relation to real-life problems or tasks” (MacBeth et al., 2010, p. 88).

Researchers have articulated three important reasons for implementing curriculum integration: (1) connections to previous learning, (2) preparing students for real-world experiences, and (3) providing students with practice to solve complex problems (Zhbanova et al., 2010). Making connections to previous learning supports “the transfer of learning to new situations” (Zhbanova et al., 2010, p. 252). This allows students to build upon their knowledge and contextualize the new learning. The real world utilizes not just one discipline when experiencing problems. Students need to have experience with utilizing different disciplines in problem solving so they can apply these to real world situations.
"Integrated curriculum supports meaningful learning" (Zhbanova et al., 2010, p. 256). As previously discussed, meaningful learning is essential to motivating students to read. Integrating the curriculum across disciplines fosters the classroom conditions of engagement through real-world interactions with learning goals that are contextualized. It also allows students to work collaboratively through the use of a real-world problem that builds their autonomy and self-efficacy supporting intrinsic motivation.

**Project-Based learning.** Project-based learning (PBL) is defined as “students work in small groups on academic tasks that can be in the form of investigation and research on a particular topic” (Lam et al., 2008, p. 566). The topic is studied across several disciplines. PBL differs from curriculum integration in that students choose the topic based on their interests and questions about a subject, and it is typically guided by the teacher to cover a variety of curricular topics at once.

Not only does PBL enhance student comprehension of a topic, it also allows students to build their collaboration skills by working in teams or groups and engages those students that are unmotivated. It has been shown that project-based learning “increases team working and cooperative learning skills prompting reluctant and disengaged students to become motivated and engaged learners” (Filippatou & Kaldi, 2010, p. 18). Students gain knowledge about skills and strategies used from other students in the group. Students often feel more comfortable asking for help from their peers.

PBL has been shown to enhance intrinsic motivation as it is student-centered. This motivates students to read as it is based on topics that students have chosen to explore and research. Studies have suggested that PBL is a powerful teaching strategy (Lam et al., 2008). As stated earlier, when students are able to connect their learning across several disciplines,
interest in learning and motivation to read are increased. PBL "enables students to connect knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes and to construct knowledge through a variety of learning experiences" (Lam et al., 2008, p. 566). Through these learning experiences students are motivated to read and learn more about their project that they are exploring.

**Concept-Oriented reading instruction.** Concept-oriented reading instruction (CORI) is "an instructional program that merges reading strategy instruction, conceptual knowledge in science, and support for student motivation" (Guthrie, 2005, website). Enhancing students’ reading engagement for increased reading comprehension is the focus behind the creation of CORI (Guthrie et al., 2007). CORI embeds the classroom conditions for engagement that were previously discussed. The knowledge goals and subtopics are selected by students in the CORI design. Students choose topics of study that are relevant to their questions about real-world interactions. These topics are the basis of study over a six to ten week period. Throughout the thematic unit of study, students have access to a variety of text at varying reading levels. In CORI, student autonomy is supported by the very nature of the program design. Students self-direct their instruction by the nature of their curiosity and interest in a topic. As students’ curiosity leads them to learn about their topic, direct strategy instruction is provided by the teacher to enhance student comprehension. Finally, the learning is centered on collaboration with other students having the same interests with the topic.

In contrast to curricular integration and project-based learning, CORI is centered on a concept of learning, not a problem or a project.

Although CORI contains skill teaching, literature, problems, and projects, the leading edge is the concept students are learning about. This is motivational for reading development because it is a reading context that is purposeful, long-term, and capable of connecting intrinsically motivating "hands-on" activities to reading. (Guthrie & Cox, 2001, p. 295)
CORI researchers believe that long-term engagement comes from creating an environment around the six classroom conditions described above: knowledge goals, real-world interactions, abundance of text, autonomy support, direct strategy instruction, and collaboration. Within the CORI model, “teachers can reliably increase the long-term reading motivation and engagement of their students” (Guthrie and Cox, 2001, p. 300). Creating an environment conducive to motivating and engaging students is what CORI is all about. This enables students to read about and learn in an environment based on their needs and interests.

All of these strategies are useful in building intrinsic motivation in students by engaging them in reading activities that are meaningful. Curriculum integration fuses instruction of reading across different disciplines, project-based learning focuses on a problem or project in which reading instruction occurs out of interest from subtopics, and CORI teaches reading strategies based around student conceptual interests. Teachers need to utilize a strategy that is most effective for their students and teaching style.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Teachers cannot make a student read or learn, but they can create an environment where engagement and the motivation to read are prevalent. When students are engaged in learning that is meaningful, they are motivated intrinsically to continue the learning. By understanding the five guiding principles of motivation, teachers can apply these in their classrooms to create environments where student want to read and learn. As the literature stated earlier, teachers should make note of the key guiding principles and the recommendations that each suggest as they seek to motivate struggling readers.

1. Use materials and assignments that promote successful performance - students need to see success in their reading if they are to continue putting forth the effort to read.
This involves building on a student’s self-efficacy. Teachers should break down assignments so that students can feel successful before going on to harder texts.

2. Increase expectations of success by ensuring adequate background and vocabulary – struggling readers need to activate their background knowledge in order to acquire new knowledge. Teachers need to support students before, during, and after reading to ensure that students have the adequate background knowledge to gain understanding of new knowledge.

3. Create value by linking instruction to readers’ interest and goals – teachers need to understand what is interesting to the reader. Only when teachers tap into what students find interesting will they be able to motivate students to read. Therefore, teachers should take interest inventories as well as listen to students to find what topics students find motivating to read about.

4. Create value through the use of extrinsic motivators – Teachers may find that they need to temporarily use extrinsic motivators to get struggling readers to engage in reading. This strategy should be employed as a temporary measure as it may harm a students’ intrinsic motivation to read. Teachers who decide to use this method of engagement should remember to slowly replace these extrinsic motivators with more intrinsic motivators as student build up their self-efficacy in reading.

5. Teach struggling readers to make facilitative attributions – students need to see that their effort and persistence is what has caused them to see success in reading. Teachers need to point out the effective strategy that students use to help them become successful in their reading efforts. Teachers can help students make
facilitative attributions in reading by replacing negative self-talk with positive
statements that show their effective strategy use.

In addition to understanding the five guiding principles of motivation, it is also important
to create a classroom environment that encourages engagement in reading. Gambrell (1996)
states that “the critical role of the teacher is to create a classroom culture that fosters reading
motivation” (p. 14). As discussed in the research, teachers are best able to provide a
motivational reading environment when they encompass the six conditions that foster
engagement: knowledge goals, real-world interactions, abundance of interesting texts, autonomy
support, direct strategy instruction, and collaboration. Listed below are recommendations for
teachers to increase reading motivation for each classroom condition.

1. Knowledge goals – help students set learning goals that emphasize student
understanding of meaningful content. Teachers need to show students that they can
achieve their goals through effective reading strategies that focus on understanding
content rather than performance.

2. Real-world interactions – utilize as many real-world interactions as possible when
learning to read or reading instruction. Teachers can help struggling readers by
linking texts and reading skills to the acquisition of content knowledge.

3. Abundance of interesting text – teachers can support the struggling reader by having
access to a variety of books in their classroom.

4. Autonomy support – providing students with choice allows the development of
autonomy support. Teachers need to offer choices to struggling readers whenever
possible to build autonomy and increase intrinsic motivation to read.
5. Direct strategy instruction – teachers need to provide explicit instruction in reading comprehension skills to struggling readers. By following the explicit model of instruction, teachers can support students in their reading and scaffold instruction so that students can experience success. As discussed earlier, the more students can experience success, the more their self-efficacy is increased. This is extremely important to building intrinsic motivation to read.

6. Collaborative support – provide opportunities for students to work collaboratively with other students. When students have the opportunity to discuss what they are reading or studying, they can not only learn from one another, but they are excited to read books that other students are reading as well.

Once teachers understand the principles of motivation and have created a classroom conditions that foster reading engagement, they can structure instruction that is meaningful to students. Students want to relate what they are learning to the real world. They want to see the relevance of the learning within their own lives. As students crave to learn more about the topic they are studying, they are vested in the learning and use strategies in their reading to comprehend the content. Teachers believed that experiences of real-world interactions were correlated with motivation to read (Guthrie et al, 2000).

There are several curricular strategies that teachers can utilize in their classrooms to engage students to read by focusing on read-world interactions: curriculum integration, project-based learning, and concept-oriented reading instruction.

2. Project-based learning – reading instruction comes out of a real-world problem that is studied across several disciplines.

3. Concept-oriented reading instruction – reading instruction is combined with student choice as their interest in a real-world topic guides the curriculum.

All three of these curricular strategies utilize the six conditions that foster engagement in the classroom and thereby increase motivation to learn by reading. By focusing on reading that is meaningful, struggling readers can become more successful. “We must always be looking for ways to create those meaningful experiences that add relevance to students’ reading” (Porter, 2010, p. 13). These curricular strategies provide that meaningful experience through real-world interactions that foster a curiosity and interest in reading. As research as shown, when students have a vested interest or curiosity for a topic they are intrinsically motivated to read (Guthrie et. al., 2000).

In the end it is ultimately up to the student to whether or not they want to read, however teachers can influence a student’s motivation to read. Teachers can create environments where student can learn and thrive to seek knowledge about a variety of topics. Understanding how motivation affects students is an important step in helping struggling readers become proficient in reading. Utilizing various teaching strategies helps to incorporate these motivational techniques that help struggling readers succeed in school.
References


To maximize the effectiveness of extrinsic reinforcers, teachers need to:

- Identify reinforcers that struggling readers want and that they are willing to work to get.
- Announce how struggling readers can earn reinforcers: “During and after the lesson, I will reward you for effort and for correct use of the TELLS strategy.”
- Identify several socially acceptable reinforcers (e.g., snacks, games, free time, computer time) that struggling readers can earn for displaying targeted behaviors (e.g., effort) or meeting pre-announced academic criteria (e.g., 12 of 15 correct responses).
- Use reinforcers that readers want and are willing to work for. If they are not willing to make the effort needed to earn the reinforcers, for them, it is not a reinforcer, not a powerful enough reward.
- Initially, provide reinforcement frequently (e.g., an average of once every 5 minutes). Once progress is fairly consistent, gradually thin out reinforcement schedules (e.g., increase the time between reinforcement to an average of once every 10 minutes).
- Pair reinforcement with a consistent pattern of praise, task-specific feedback, and facilitative attributions.
- Vary reinforcers so struggling readers do not tire of them. Have readers choose from several reinforcers.
- Gradually substitute more natural reinforcers (e.g., smiles, positive comments) for more artificial ones, as long as progress is satisfactory.
- Continue to gradually lengthen the time between reinforcement for effort, on-task behavior, successfully completed assignments, and the like. If progress decelerates, shorten the time.

Margolis and McCabe, 2006, p. 447