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ABSTRACT

Dealing with student motivation in the reading curriculum, this paper begins by discussing why motivation is important. Next it explores reasons for lack of motivation and ways to remedy the problem, including teacher enthusiasm; appropriate reading materials; variety in teaching methods; balance among cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning objectives; and meaningful learning. Seven recommendations to improve the reading curriculum follow, such as: taking a holistic approach to reading; student participation in decision making; adequate teacher preparation; and promoting enjoyment and vicarious life experiences through reading. (SR)

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Motivation in the Reading Curriculum

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Motivation in the Reading Curriculum

Motivation is a rather persistent problem in guiding students to read well. If a student lacks motivation, a low energy level will be available in learning to read. Through motivation, a learner is encouraged to achieve definite goals in reading. Persistence is there to aid students in goal attainment with adequately motivated behavior.

Why Motivation is Important

Students who lack motivation do not pay adequate attention to ongoing learning opportunities. Chances to learn then are minimized. Later on, these students need to make up deficiencies from the lost opportunities to learn. If a student does not concentrate and focus upon new words in reading on the chalkboard introduced by the teacher, the chances are these words will not be identified while reading the related content. The learner must put forth effort and energy to view each word carefully. Attempts need to be made by involved students to retain the correct identification of the new words. Otherwise, new learnings will be forgotten before their implementation in reading required subject matter. It is the student that must do the learning and, in this case, learn to identify words correctly, as they are being introduced by the

teacher of reading. Adequate motivation on the part of the learner is necessary to attend to and retain identification of new words introduced by the teacher.

Attention and retention by the student is important in recognizing new words whether the approach is through phonics instruction, syllabication, structural analysis, configuration clues, use of picture clues, or identification of words through contextual situations.

#### Why Motivation is Lacking

Numerous reasons are given for students lacking motivation. Frequently, teachers are blamed for learners not being motivated due to poor teaching methods. This may be one reason. Teachers need to feel challenge covering the subject matter being taught. Enthusiasm of teachers might be reflected within learners. Thus, a teacher who enthusiastically tells learners what he/she has read and demonstrates interest in reading content, as well as in teaching reading to each student, may well encourage the latter to read proficiently. Certainly, a teacher showing motivation in teaching students to read critically and creatively should have these reading skills reflected within learners. Higher levels of cognition, such as critical and creative reading, must be emphasized in the reading curriculum.

There are numerous other reasons for students lacking motivation in reading. A variety of reading materials, including textbooks, library books, and other print materials must be available for learners to provide for individual differences. It certainly is not motivating for learners if the subject matter read is too complex or excessively easy. Each student needs to be ready for reading specific subject matter. Readiness factors include having ample opportunities to see new words in print, attach meaning to each new word, have adequate background information, as well as have a purpose (reason) to read, prior to reading the involved subject matter.

Subject matter to be read should be of interest students. A lack of interesting reading materials can make for inappropriate motivation. With interest in subject matter being read, students possess a high energy level for reading. Motivation is inherent when each student is interested in reading the involved subject matter.

Reading teachers must use a variety of methods in teaching students. To learn inductively on the part of students, the teacher needs to ask stimulating questions covering content read. Each question needs to be on the understanding level of students. Questions for students need to lead to higher levels of thinking, such as the levels of analysis (separating facts from opinions,

fantasy from reality, accurate from inaccurate content, as well as detecting bias, glittering generalities, and card stacking), synthesis (hypothesizing), and evaluation (appraising subject matter read in terms of quality criteria).

Deductive methods emphasize a teacher modeling behavior pertaining to analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Students then apply what has been learned pertaining to higher levels of cognition.

Problem solving methods should also be utilized. Here, students with teacher guidance identify a problem or broad question. Information is gathered through reading and the use of audiovisual materials. A hypothesis or answer to the problem or question should then be in evidence. The hypothesis is tested in action and revised if necessary. Problem solving methods are good to utilize when students elect real, life-like problems in reading pertaining to subject matter read. A variety of reading materials and nonreading activities assist in data gathering, as well as in checking hypotheses. Critical and creative thinking are emphasized in true problem solving experiences. Problems identified are new to involved students. Challenge is involved in choosing learning opportunities to solve the identified problems. If the same methods are utilized continuously, students will tend to dislike reading.

Balance among cognitive, affective, and psychomotor objectives should be emphasized in teaching reading. A single domain of objectives, such as cognitive is not adequate. The development of the intellect (cognition) is significant in the teaching of reading. Students then need to learn to achieve skills in reading to follow directions, skim, or scan, develop sequence in ideas, as well as achieve main ideas and generalization. Analyzing what has been read and achieving unique ideas covering subject matter ideas are further relevant cognitive goals.

The affective dimension of objectives is equally important as compared to the cognitive domain. With desirable affective objectives, students learn to select and enjoy quality literature. When ready, a learner then enjoys characterization, setting, plot, irony, and theme of literature read. An individualized reading program needs to be in evidence in which the student can select the title and achievement level of the library book. Hopefully, challenging library books will be selected by the learner. The teacher in a conference with the student needs to encourage, not force, increased interest in reading. Fascinating questions raised by the teacher and the student can be discussed within the conference setting. Evaluation of the success of each conference would emphasize students doing more reading and appreciating subject matter content.

The psychomotor level of objectives should receive adequate attention in the reading curriculum. With psychomotor goals, students, develop proficiency in using the gross and finer muscles, as well as skill in eye-hand coordination. Numerous quality learning opportunities can be stressed by the teacher in the psychomotor domain. Thus, after reading content from basal textbooks or through an individualized reading program, learners may complete specific projects to reveal comprehension. These projects include

1. developing a mural or pencil sketching.
2. making a diorama.
3. creating a pantomime or creative dramatics presentation.
4. completing a movie set, showing illustrated scenes of subject matter read.
5. writing a different beginning or ending for the story with accompanying illustrations.
6. constructing a model relating directly to ideas contained in a story or reading selection.

Teachers of reading then need to have students attain balance among cognitive, affective, and psychomotor objectives.

A further reason why students may lack motivation in reading is that meaningful learning is not present. The reader needs to relate the self to the selection being read. The reading teacher must make



certain that students understand subject matter. Students who do not read well enough to benefit from the reading of the textbook need assistance. A good reader could orally read the contents to the disabled reader as the latter follows along in his/her book. He/she can then learn to identify words in the process as well as listen to the ideas read. Attaching meaning to the subject matter listened to is then possible. Gifted/talented readers need to read challenging materials, otherwise a lack of meaning is not possible when subject matter is boring and lacks maturity. These learners must also be assisted to achieve to their optimal which will be well above the grade level they are presently in. If a student with eighth or ninth grade reading abilities is asked to utilize textbooks written for fifth graders, it is no wonder that meaning cannot be attached to subject matter read. Or a fifth grader, reading on the second grade level, will not become an independent reader in understanding the content being read written for average achievers in grade five.

The key to successful reading achievement of students is to match their present level of attainment with materials of instruction that are meaningful and understandable.

#### Recommendations to Improve the Reading Curriculum

Numerous recommendations have been made by experts to improve reading skills on the part of students. The writer would like to recommend definite quality criteria to assist students to achieve more optimally in reading.

First of all, with the accountability movement in vogue, basic essential skills for students have been identified on the state or local school level. These skills are generally listed as behaviorally stated objectives. The reading curriculum then becomes fragmented. Each student needs to attain the sequential precise ends. Too much time by the reading teacher needs to be spent on having learners achieve each behaviorally stated objective. Little time may be available to have students read subject matter in a wholistic approach. Learning of isolated skill becomes relevant, rather than reading sequential ideas in order to learn. Certainly, comprehension of quality literature must be the end result, rather than acquiring isolated reading skills.

Secondly, the writer recommends that students have a greater voice in determining which sources to read from and which problem areas to solve, involving the processes of reading. Student-teacher planning of goals, experiences, and appraisal procedures emphasizes a sound philosophy of education.

Thirdly, well educated and trained teachers should be able to make good decisions in terms of providing for individual differences in reading. With state mandated objectives or local district instructional management systems (IMS), decision making by the reading teacher is minimized. Certainly, a quality teacher should be able to determine scope and sequence better than can be done on the state or district wide level. Each teacher, regardless of age level of students taught or academic area taught, must be a teacher of reading.

Fourthly, state certification departments need to require in teacher preparation programs that all prospective teachers have adequate course work in the teaching of reading. Schools of education preparing teachers need to be certain that all have demonstrated proficiency in the teaching of reading. Teachers need to possess adequate knowledge and skill in teaching word recognition techniques and diverse kinds of comprehension skills to develop within students.

Fifthly, teachers need to stimulate students to enjoy and appreciate reading. It is a blessing to be a good reader. Nonreaders or those limited in the ability to read suffer grave consequences in society. The level of job attainment is lowered if an adult can not read at a required proficient level. Enjoyment of life is minimized due to not possessing needed skills in reading.

Too frequently, the student and parents do not appreciate the opportunities to learn. Opportunities to learn involve the skill of reading. One of the greatest assets possessed by the writer is to be a good reader and to enjoy the skills of reading. The knowledge, facts, concepts, generalizations, and theories acquired are useful, as well as enjoyable.

Sixthly, teachers need to guide students to move to higher cognition levels, as compared to rote learning and drill experiences. Students should experience needed drill and practice in reading subject matter. However, life itself demands that learners be skillful in problem solving situations. Reading of content provides opportunities to students with teacher assistance to identify vital problems, gather related data, and achieve answers to each problem.

Seventhly, students should experience life vicariously. It is impossible to experience, in many situations, desirable situations in life. Through reading or vicariously, learners may experience what is good, true, and beautiful. Undesirable situations in life are costly to experience directly. With vicarious experiences in reading, what is undesirable can be experienced in a relatively harmless manner.

In closing, a quality reading curriculum needs much planning. Careful attention to vital objectives, relevant learning opportunities to read, and important evaluation procedures can truly make for a quality reading curriculum.