Increase student motivation and engagement in literacy learning

Reading

Instructional methods should interest students in reading and encourage them to learn. Teachers need to support students in developing reading comprehension skills, thereby increasing student confidence levels and learning abilities. The classroom environment should encourage students to embrace a growth mindset, independent learning, and a transfer of knowledge between assignments and contents. Literacy experiences should be focused on real-world applications and high-interest topics.

How to carry out the recommendation

1. Establish meaningful and engaging content learning goals around the essential ideas of a discipline as well as the specific learning processes students use to access those ideas.

2. Provide a positive learning environment that promotes students' autonomy in learning.

3. Make literacy experiences more relevant to students' interests, everyday life, or important current events.

4. Build in certain instructional conditions, such as student goal setting, self-directed learning, and collaborative learning, to increase reading engagement and conceptual learning for students.

Potential roadblocks

1. Activities developed to engage students may prioritize entertainment over learning.

2. Students may not be interested in textbooks or may feel that they cannot understand the text.

3. Content-area teachers may not realize the importance of teaching reading and thinking strategies or realize the benefits of using these strategies.

4. Struggling readers may not believe that they will perform well in any class.

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Reference: Kamil, M. L., Borman, G. D., Dole, J., Kral, C. C., Salinger, T., & Torgesen, J. (2008). *Improving adolescent literacy: Effective classroom and intervention practices* (NCEE 2008-4027). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. Retrieved from https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/8

Moderate

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How to carry out the recommendation

1. ***Establish meaningful and engaging content learning goals around the essential ideas of a discipline as well as the specific learning processes students use to access those ideas.***

   Learning goals should be specific and meaningful to students and provide a pathway to achievement. Teachers, students, or a combination of both can set learning goals. Allowing students to set at least a few of their own learning goals may result in increased engagement. It is important to closely monitor student progress toward learning goals, maintain high expectations for all students, and provide students with timely and specific feedback to ensure growth toward their goals.

2. ***Provide a positive learning environment that promotes students' autonomy in learning.***

   By increasing student choice in the classroom and providing students with opportunities to make decisions, student engagement may increase. Opportunities for this might include allowing choice around reading selections or writing topics.

3. ***Make literacy experiences more relevant to students' interests, everyday life, or important current events.***

   Connect what is happening inside the classroom to what is happening outside of the classroom. Make learning relevant to students by connecting concepts to what is currently happening in students' lives and the world around them.

4. ***Build in certain instructional conditions, such as student goal setting, self-directed learning, and collaborative learning, to increase reading engagement and conceptual learning for students.***

   These instructional conditions are supported by purposefully building connections for students, connecting ideas between content areas, connecting reading comprehension strategies, and connecting exercises that are intended to increase student engagement as well as their social and emotional advancement.

Summary of Recommendation 4 from the WWC practice guide *Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices*. Full reference at the bottom of first page.

2

Potential roadblocks and how to address them

Roadblock	Suggested Approach
Activities developed to engage students may prioritize entertainment over learning.	Activities such as having students compete toward a goal and rewarding points might motivate students to complete tasks, but that does not mean they benefit from learning. Instead of externally motivating students to engage in work, think of ways that might internally motivate them. Actions might include linking instruction with learning goals, having high expectations and providing constructive feedback, and boosting student self-reflection about their learning.
Students may not be interested in textbooks or may feel that they cannot understand the text.	Some texts fail to explain connections between themes, resulting in students struggling to understand the textbooks. When students cannot understand a text, they may start to believe they will inevitably fail. Teachers should provide additional information on difficult topics so students can learn more about the content, make connections, and increase their level of understanding.
Content-area teachers may not realize the importance of teaching reading and thinking strategies or realize the benefits of using these strategies.	Content-area teachers may not have experience in highlighting the authentic application of literacy processes in their content. Literacy coaches can encourage these teachers to focus on literacy skills to enable students to be good readers and writers in all content areas. Providing professional development and utilizing publicly available resources on the web will support teacher growth around this topic. Content-area teachers should develop formative assessments that allow students to demonstrate thinking processes, including problem-solving and critical thinking strategies, and they should use the results from these assessments to inform future instruction and tools.
Struggling readers may not believe that they will perform well in any class.	Based on past performance, teachers and students may have low expectations for struggling readers. Additionally, many struggling readers also have low self-confidence in their learning and thinking capabilities. Improved learning and confidence levels are supported through identifying and focusing on student strengths, reviewing data to identify skill growth opportunities, and providing students with multiple opportunities for success in learning. Additionally, studies show that when students build connections with school staff, they have developed a better perception of themselves and the school.

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For more information on the research evidence and references to support this recommendation, or for more detailed explanation from the What Works Clearinghouse committee who developed this recommendation, please refer to the practice guide cited at the bottom of the first page of this document.

Summary of Recommendation 4 from the WWC practice guide *Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices*. Full reference at the bottom of first page.

3