

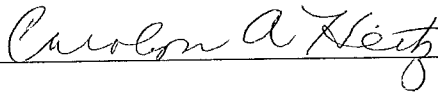
Fostering Reading Motivation
Among Second Grade
Students

by

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ABSTRACT

Some children are highly motivated to read, whereas others appear to be unmotivated. As reading educators, it is important to give all students the highest quality reading experiences possible within the classroom so that motivation increases and they develop skills necessary to become effective readers. Classroom experiences and teaching practices can enhance children's reading motivation.

The purpose of this study was to conduct research with second grade students to obtain a better understanding of what motivates them to read as well as the perceptions they have of reading. The research was conducted at Arcadia Elementary School, Arcadia, WI. The project took place in the spring of 2009 in a school district of approximately 1,000 students. Data was collected via a research survey of seven questions.

The overall goal of this paper was to provide a basis for teachers to start with and then build upon, and give specific ways to positively influence reading motivation. The first and second chapters provide an introduction to ways in which reading motivation can be fostered.

Results from the study indicated that, teachers, by the activities they do within their classrooms, have a strong impact on how a student feels about reading. The results also showed that teachers, and the classroom activities they do, have an impact on how the student perceives himself as a reader.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The enjoyment of reading can happen at a very early age. Some children have been immersed in literature since they were born. Alternatively, others have only had the opportunity to read at school. Children come to school with varying reading levels and attitudes toward reading. Some children may have acquired reading and language skills naturally and therefore enjoy reading. Some children may struggle with language and phonics, thus making reading a challenge and adversely affecting their motivation level. Morgan and Fuchs (2007) found that there was a direct relationship between the reading skills a child has and their motivation to read. If children are struggling to learn the basics of language, their outlook will be poor and their enthusiasm for reading will dwindle. Peebles (2007) states the following, “Motivation is particularly important for struggling readers because they often require repeated opportunities with effective instruction in order to begin demonstrating measurable improvement (p. 580).” Allen (1998) suggests that when reading becomes difficult, children’s attitudes become poor and they try to avoid further reading activities. Those students who struggle with reading are less likely to read at school and at home than non-struggling readers (Baker, 2003).

Sweet, Ng, and Guthrie (1998) described two types of motivation that students may possess. Intrinsic motivation refers to a student’s aspiration to connect with an activity and do well. Extrinsic motivation refers to the outside factors that may contribute to a student wanting to participate in an activity. An intrinsic student is someone who completely divulges themselves in literature at all times, at home and at school. An extrinsic student is someone who only does the minimal amount of work necessary in order to earn a good grade. Intrinsic students have more of a desire to read and share their books as opposed to

extrinsic students. Thus, intrinsic students tend to be more motivated to read than extrinsic students.

Although research does exist on student motivation, it is important to find out the correlation between student motivation and reading. Teachers are becoming increasingly interested in the correlation of academic achievement and student motivation (Gambrell, 1996). By finding out the factors that motivate children to read, other areas of academics will also increase. If teachers are interested in motivating their students more, they may need to change the way they approach reading in the classroom. Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, and Perencevich (2004) found that when teachers change their instructional practices on the part of the teacher, both student achievement and motivation increased. Given these findings, it is important that teachers be aware of the things that they can do within their own classroom to foster reading motivation among their students.

It is important to seek out new techniques that classroom teachers can use to keep reading motivation at a high level. By reading to their students, teachers are opening their eyes to different types of literature as well as encouraging them to continue reading. Cunningham (2005) states the following, "Reading to children motivates many of them to want to read-and particularly to want to read the book the teacher read aloud." Allington (1998) suggests that in order to foster reading motivation, teachers need to create book-rich environments, give choices, and provide opportunities to talk about what they have read. Teachers themselves need to serve as reading role models for their students.

Statement of the Problem

Research shows that with age, children's motivation to read seems to decline (Powell-Brown, 2006). It is important for children to have memorable reading experiences

as youngsters in order for their love of reading to continue. Therefore, teachers need to introduce different reading sources to their students in order to improve reading motivation. Teachers need to find creative ways to teach reading that will keep students excited about reading and learning through the use of book selection, electronic books, and family involvement. Understanding what motivates children to read may lead to better student performance in the classroom.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to find out how children perceived themselves as readers, what motivated them to read, and what types of reading strategies they used when they came to unfamiliar words. Data from this study was collected from second grade students in the spring semester of 2009.

Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. As readers, how do children perceive themselves?
2. What motivates children to read?
3. What kind of strategies do children use when they come to a word they do not know?

Definition of Terms

Motivation. Motivation is what drives a person to do certain activities.

Reading motivation. Reading motivation relates to a person's desire to read.

Struggling readers. For the purpose of this study, students who have a difficult time reading material at their appropriate grade level will be considered struggling readers.

Classroom teacher. The classroom teacher is the person who is with the students for the majority of the day. The classroom teacher is in charge of teaching multiple curricular areas in a self-contained classroom setting.

Assumptions and Limitations

It is assumed that reading motivation among student's increases when they have been given the tools to be successful and confident readers. It is also assumed that classroom teachers need to change the way they teach their lessons in order to motivate students to read. It is also assumed that parental consent forms will be returned back to the researcher so that students can be a part of this study.

Students who do not speak or read in English will also be a limiting factor. The Arcadia School District has a high population of Hispanic students. Most students are able to read and speak in English. Some, however, have limited English speaking skills which may play a role in this study. The researcher may need to utilize the assistance of interpreters when communicating with Hispanic students. Another limiting factor may be that the researcher is the teacher. Students may be more inclined to give biased information to the teacher, rather than if the researcher were unknown.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Cambourne (1995) created a model of literacy learning which suggests that reading motivation is fostered when children are immersed in a literacy-rich environment, exposed to many different demonstrations of how to use books, interactively engaged with others about books, responsible for the type of books and amount of time they read, given multiple opportunities to take part in literacy activities, and supported by adults through interaction. Arnold and Colburn (2004) say that if we want children to become motivated, they need to become readers first. Therefore, if we want children to become readers, we need to give our students the tools to do so. This chapter will discuss the variety of ways that educators can motivate their students to read.

Praise

One of the biggest obstacles facing unmotivated readers is their lack of self-confidence. A lack of self-confidence can be attributed to whether the child has been compared to a better reader or whether they have developed the attitude from classmates who had an unfavorable opinion of reading. Many young children come to the conclusion that they cannot read well or cannot read at all. Children may come to these conclusions themselves through their own experiences, or perhaps from someone else telling them that they are not a strong reader. Although reading specialists suggest a variety of approaches targeted at changing these attitudes (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000), one of the most influential ways is to tell students repeatedly, individually and as a group, that they are skillful readers and can accomplish their task (Mcpherson, 2007). Wlodkowski (1985) suggested that students need to be given praise that is heartfelt and detailed; otherwise they will ignore the

praise and take it as being controlling. Mcpherson (2007) suggests that students may only hear the positive reinforcements of their reading abilities at school, as they may have heard years of negative reinforcement from outside sources.

Book Selection

Edmunds and Bauserman (2006) conducted interviews with elementary students to determine what motivated them to read. Each interview consisted of 14 questions relating to reading narrative and expository text, and to reading in general. The study showed that when sharing the text they were reading, 84% of the children discussed books they had selected for themselves, while only 16% discussed books that were assigned by their teachers. The study also showed that students were more motivated to read when they were given the opportunity to choose the books themselves. Accordingly, teachers can help increase students' reading motivation by giving them access to a variety of texts. Libraries and classrooms need to be equipped with books that are at differing reading levels and are able to support both independent and instructional reading levels. Research shows that the matching of readers with interesting books encourages the students to read more, and therefore they will learn more content (Guthrie, 2001).

Access to books is very important to the amount of reading children do (Gambrell & Marinak, 1997). In their study, Edmunds and Bauserman (2006) found that there was a correlation between the school library, teachers, family members, and peers and the amount of reading they did. While interviewing students, they found that the children's responses showed that exposure to the school library, as well as other libraries, positively affected the children's motivation to read by introducing them to a variety of books. Students also

frequently identified their teacher as being the person who introduced books to them the most through classroom read-alouds.

Other Interactions with Text

While it is important for educators to cultivate a student's ability to read, their passion for reading also needs to be encouraged. Yoon (2002) stated that Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) is "an in-classroom reading activity wherein students are given a fixed period of time for the silent reading of self-selected material either for pleasure or for information" (pp. 186-187). Gardiner (2001) said that important principles of SSR include that "students should read silently every day, choose their own books, have uninterrupted time to read, be able to choose not to finish a book, observe the teacher modeling good reading habits, and not be required to take tests or write book reports on what they read" (p. 32). Two reasons why teachers use SSR in the classroom are to raise reading achievement among students, and to foster a positive student perception of reading (Bylut, & Van Sluys, 2007). In a study of third grade students conducted by Bylut and Van Sluys (2007), the researchers found that students had a positive outlook on reading. They found that each day they had the opportunity to read silently, students became better readers. The study also determined that it would be beneficial for students to have time to share things they were reading about with their peers. While SSR is a valuable asset to many teachers and students, it has been regarded as being a questionable practice. The National Reading Panel (2000) reported that,

...even though encouraging students to read more is intuitively appealing, there is still not sufficient evidence obtained from studies of high methodological quality to support the idea that such efforts reliably increase how much students read or that

such programs result in improved reading skills. Given the extensive use of these techniques, it is important that such research be conducted (p.8).

Teacher read-alouds can be a powerful tool to use in the classroom. Although silent reading fosters language development, it is sometimes necessary to vocalize the text to aid comprehension (Buehl, 2001). Orally engaging students encourages the love of reading and spoken word. Allor & McCathern (2003) believe that by reading aloud to children, words and skills become more meaningful. Cunningham, Hall, and Sigman (1999) stated that, "Reading aloud from a variety of books . . . will help every child realize there are books out there they can't wait to read" (p. 23). Cunningham et al. went on to say that choosing a variety of books is particularly important when doing a read-aloud. While it is good to read fiction books, students also need to be exposed to informational texts that correlate with previously read fiction topics. Hoffman, Roser, and Battle (1993) conducted a survey of teacher read-aloud practices in 537 elementary schools. They found that, while there was a plethora of great fictional literature read, none of the most-read books at any grade level were non-fiction. Moss (2003) described non-fiction read-alouds to be beneficial because they expand upon the knowledge that children already possess, introduce them to the many organizational patterns found in non-fiction books, and provide a great complement to fictional stories. Press (2008) gave suggestions that can improve the quality of read-alouds within the classroom. They included: knowing the goals and objectives for each session, reading a variety of genres, teaching book-reading behaviors, building vocabulary skills, creating connections, and reading books that have rhyme and alliteration.

Moran (2006) said that, "Readers' theater is a staged reading of a play or dramatic piece of work designed to entertain, inform, or influence" (p. 317). Using readers' theater in

classrooms engages students, helps with comprehension, and makes the text come to life (Powell-Brown, 2006). No props are used, no scenes are played out, and no costumes are used. Student actors read aloud parts of a book or play for fellow students. Powell-Brown also says that readers' theater can be successful when used with difficult textbook material that is hard to understand. By giving students the chance to practice and reread readers' theater scripts, they are developing a confidence within themselves (Keehn, 2003).

Students are more tuned into technology than ever before. Many students will spend their time playing video and computer games. One way to motivate students to read is by using electronic books (or e-books). Shamir and Korat (2006) said that,

E-books aimed at young children generally replicate well-known storybooks and integrate different types of expression. They are a form of interactive digital narrative that generally combines multimedia effects such as written text, oral reading, oral discourse, music, sound, and animation. E-books include hidden buttons or hot spots relating to illustrations or text; these hot spots are meant to be activated by the user or reader (p. 532).

Rhodes and Milby (2007) go on to say that, while e-books and audio taped books are similar in that they offer repeated readings of books, e-books are more interactive and children have the opportunity to be immersed in technology. Researchers have found a link between electronic books and comprehension levels in students. Matthew (1996) found that comprehension levels were significantly higher among pairs of third grade children who used e-books than those children who used the print version of the same story. Pearman (2008) also sought to find whether there was a correlation between electronic storybooks and an increase in comprehension levels among second grade students. Evidence from the

study indicated that e-books may aid comprehension levels in struggling readers. While the first two studies showed a correlation between reading comprehension and electronic storybooks, Doty, Popplewell, and Byers (2001) found that there was no evidence of an increase in comprehension levels in e-books versus the traditional printed book. Further research is needed to support or discredit these theories.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Given previous empirical research, it is evident that students come to school with differing attitudes regarding reading. Accordingly, it is important to recognize these attitudes in order to tailor instructional methods and create meaningful and enjoyable reading experiences for students. This study is designed to better understand the thoughts of students and how they perceive reading, as well as how teachers can improve student reading attitudes through a variety of teaching methods.

Subject Selection and Description

A total of 14 second grade students from Arcadia Elementary School participated in this study. Their ages ranged from seven years old to nine years old. Eight of the participants were boys and six were girls. The children who participated in this study were students in the researcher's second grade classroom. Thirty six percent of the participants received some type of additional help, such as Title I Reading or ELL (English Language Learners).

Description of Setting

Arcadia is located in southern Trempealeau County in the west-central part of the state of Wisconsin. The School District of Arcadia is made up of students from neighboring communities including Arcadia, Waumandee, Pine Creek, and Dodge. According to Wisconsin's Information Network for Successful Schools (WINNS), the School District of Arcadia serves over 1,000 students. Of those students, over 700 are students in grades pre-kindergarten-8th grade. Of the students within the elementary school, 82.5% are Caucasian, 16.1 % are Hispanic, .8% are African American, and .6% are Asian. Among these students, approximately 40% are entitled to free and reduced lunches (WINNS, 2008). The School

District of Arcadia is a part of the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) program. SAGE was designed to improve academic achievement in grades kindergarten through third grade by reducing classroom sizes to a 15:1 ratio (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2008).

Instrumentation

Data for this project was collected through an open-ended survey that was given to second grade students (see Appendix A) in February, 2009. These questions attempted to gauge student's perceptions of themselves as readers, the literature they enjoy, as well as what motivates them to read. Given the results from the pre-survey, the researcher conducted several mini-lessons and created new literacy systems that were intended to improve student's reading motivation. The post-survey was administered in April, 2009 following the instructional adjustments. With the recommended changes, student's reading motivation may increase.

Data Collection

Surveys were administered by the researcher to second grade students. Students were read seven questions that related to reading interest. The researcher then calculated their responses and looked for patterns among the answers.

Data Analysis

Data was compiled from the pre-survey as well as the post-survey. The surveys were compared to see if reading attitudes among students had changed.

Limitations

This study required students to be open and honest about how they perceived themselves as readers. Only a small sample of students participated in the study, therefore, the results may be distorted when compared to other students and classrooms.

Chapter IV: Results

The participants in the study were 14 second grade students. The purpose of this study was to find out how children perceived themselves as readers, what motivated them to read, and what types of reading strategies they used when they came to unfamiliar words.

Research Question One

Research question one asked children how they perceive themselves as readers. A pre-survey was given, as well as a post-survey. In between the two surveys, the researcher implemented new strategies and techniques into the daily classroom routine in order to change children's perceptions. The researcher read several books, such as *Thank You, Mr. Falker* by Patricia Polacco, *Hooray for Reading Day!* by Jessica Worries, and *Souperchicken* by Mary Jane and Herm Auch. These books were chosen because they depicted characters that had struggled with reading, but after practice and reassurance, ended up being successful readers. The researcher attempted to read trade books that struggling readers could relate to, hopefully building self-esteem in the students as readers. The teacher continued to praise students during whole group reading, as well as during SSR.

Survey question four asked children if they viewed themselves as good readers. The results indicated that, following motivational instruction, student's confidence as readers increased, as shown in Figure 1. Students who, at the time of the pre-survey, did not think of themselves as good readers, now did at the time of the post-survey.

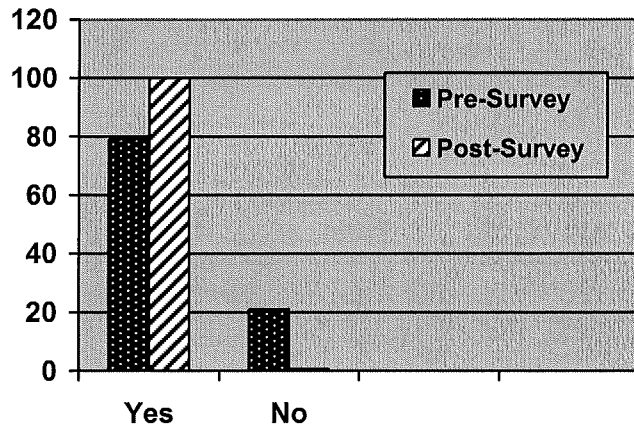


Figure 1: Do you think you are a good reader?

Survey question five asked students to think of someone they consider to be a good reader and why (see Figure 2). More students at the end of the research period viewed family members as being good readers, rather than friends, as reported in the pre-survey. Respondents in the post-survey revealed they chose those people because they practiced a lot, they read together with that person frequently, and because that person never gave up even though words might have become more difficult.

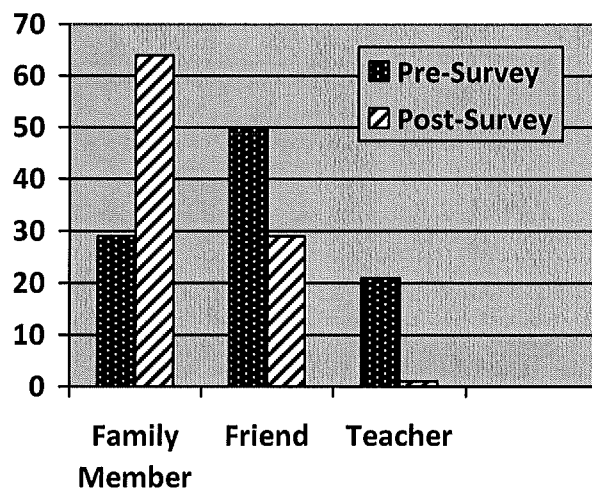


Figure 2: Who is a good reader you know?

Survey question six asked students what they would like to be able to do better in reading (see Figure 3). The researcher focused on using the Skip Word and Think (SWAT) bookmark and strategies with the students during this time (see Appendix B). Both surveys found that most students wanted to learn new ways to figure out words. The post-survey also found that more students wanted to help younger siblings and friends learn how to read. Students who had previously said they wanted to be better at asking for help now want to help others, due to the implementation of SWAT strategies in the classroom, and the student's feeling more confident in themselves.

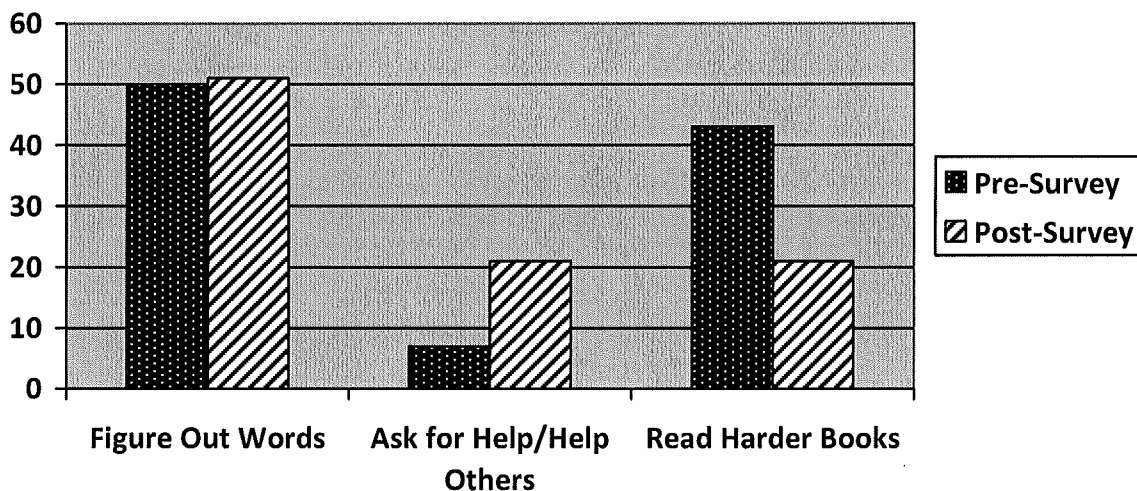


Figure 3: What would you like to do better in reading?

Research Question Two

Research question two wanted to find out what motivated children to read. In the pre-survey, many students responded that reading different types of texts, specifically non-fiction books, motivated them to read. A classroom library was in place during the pre-survey containing fiction and non-fiction books. Following the pre-survey results, the researcher created a separate non-fiction library that was accessible to the children in

addition to the standard classroom library housing fiction books. The new non-fiction classroom library included books and topics the students said they were interested in (see Appendix C). New non-fiction books were purchased and placed in the library by the students, who came up with the categorizing system. Many things have been done all year in the classroom. For example, students chose their own books for their book boxes; they buddy read with other students and stuffed animals; and class books were made. The teacher conducted read-alouds several times each day. Read-alouds consisted of the teacher reading books and think-alouds to demonstrate use of strategies and some of the books were read by both the teacher and the students. These practices continued while research was being conducted.

Survey question one looked at whether students liked to read and why or why not. In both sets of surveys, 100% of students said that they liked to read. Some of their rationale included being able to learn new things, it made them smarter, and they were able to teach their parents new things.

Survey question two asked students to report what they liked to read about. Both sets of surveys found that students enjoy reading fiction books, specifically series of books. These series included Dr. Seuss, Berenstain Bears, Goosebumps, and Captain Underpants. The students also said they enjoyed reading non-fiction books, especially those about animals. The post-survey also showed that students enjoyed reading the non-fiction books that were placed into the newly implemented non-fiction library in between surveys, such as cookbooks, biographies, animal habitats, and how to be environmentally friendly.

Survey question seven asked students what kind of classroom activities got them excited about reading books. In both surveys, students reported various activities, such as

sustained silent reading, the listening center, choosing books for their book boxes, making class books, and guided reading. Teacher read-alouds were also a common answer among students.

Research Question Three

The third research question asked what strategies children used when reading and came to a word they did not recognize. In between the surveys, students were given a Skip Word and Think (SWAT) bookmark. The teacher modeled how to use the techniques and frequently referred to the bookmark when doing reading lessons with the students. A poster of the SWAT bookmark was displayed in front of the classroom for all students to see. Students also demonstrated the strategies by doing role-play activities. Students became very familiar with the strategies and helped other students when they couldn't pronounce a word.

The third survey question asked what students did when they were reading and came to an unfamiliar word. There was significant change in student answers from pre-survey to post-survey, as shown in Figure 4. Students who initially said they first sounded out the word subsequently said they skipped over the word and read to the end of the sentence. Students also reported that they used a variety of strategies, like picture clues, dictionaries, and saying the word in chunks to help them decipher unfamiliar words.

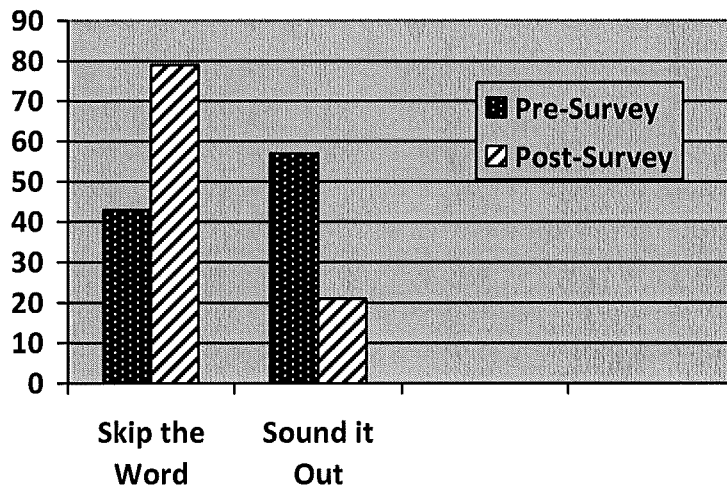


Figure 4: When you are reading and you come to a word you don't know, what do you do?

Chapter V: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to find out how children perceived themselves as readers, what motivated them to read, and what types of reading strategies they used when they came to unfamiliar words.

Conclusions

Reading motivation is something that can be cultivated within the classroom setting. Teachers can do a variety of activities to encourage reading. According to this study, students do become more motivated to read when teachers engage them in meaningful literacy activities. This study clearly shows that those students who were surveyed enjoy reading, and it is important for teachers and parents to work together to find ways to continue to foster that love of reading.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the surveys, the researcher recommends that strategies such as Skip Word and Think need to be implemented at the beginning of the school year in order to achieve reading success. Students did use the SWAT techniques and became more confident readers within the one month time frame of this study and, if given more time, it is presumed that students will be even more successful. Student respondents said in both surveys that they wanted to be better at solving difficult words. Students need to be taught reading strategies that are repeated and reinforced throughout the year.

Give students time during the day to read on their own and paired with other students. Several students responded that they want to help other children with reading. Pairing students with younger children is a very valuable tool that builds confidence, motivation, and fluency. The survey results also showed that a large number of students

enjoyed read-alouds done by the teacher. Read-aloud books need to make connections with the children. Teacher read-alouds need to be done numerous times during the day in order for the teacher to model effective reading strategies.

Students should be given choices. Reading motivation increases when students are allowed to choose their own books for Sustained Silent Reading (SSR). It is important to teach the students how to choose appropriate books tailored to fit their reading and interest levels. Teachers can model how to choose appropriate books.

Classroom libraries should be created which include books, topics, and genres that are of interest to students. Ask students what topics they would like to read more about or have included in the classroom library and find books that suit those interests. It would also be beneficial to create a list of student's favorite books or genres to send to the next year's teacher, so that they can assess their own classroom library before students arrive.

Collaborate with other teachers to find new and useful ways to engage young readers and make them more motivated to read. Create units that compliment what is being taught in the classroom and in music, art, and library. For example, if students are learning about percussion instruments in music, the classroom teacher can read non-fiction books about the instruments as well as fiction books about children using those instruments. Share these tips with parents and other educators through workshops and newsletters.

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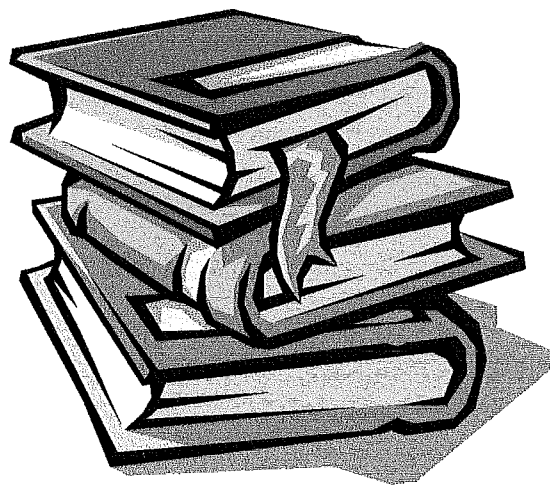
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Appendix A: Student Survey Questions

Reading Interest Survey

1. Do you like to read? Why or why not?
2. What do you like to read about?
3. When you are reading and you come to a word you don't know, what do you do?
4. Do you think you are a good reader? Why or why not?
5. Who is a good reader you know? What makes them a good reader?
6. What would you like to be able to do better in reading?
7. What type of classroom activities get you excited about reading books?

Appendix B: SWAT Bookmark

**SWAT**

Skip **W**ord and Think

When you come to a word
you don't know:

1. Skip it and read to the end of the sentence.
2. Reread and think about the meaning. Look at the pictures.

Appendix C: Non-Fiction Classroom Library

