

Motivating Middle School Students to Read

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What is Our Goal?



“The man who does not read great books is no better than the man who can’t.”

- Mark Twain

Do You Agree With This Statement?

- “If students are taught to read and write well, they will do fine on the mandated reading tests. But if they are only taught to be test-takers, they will never learn to read and write well.”

The Downward Spiral in Reading



- “Until I feared I would lose it, I never loved to read...
- One does not love breathing.”

● Harper Lee

To Read or Not to Read

- There was a “universal falling off of reading” that usually occurs around age 13 and carries forward throughout the rest of their lives.

Factors

- Poverty
- Poor parenting
- Second-language issues
- Choices of electronic equipment
- Our schools?

What Are We Doing Now?



- Is it working?



**Valuing the
development of
test-takers more than
the development of
readers**


Does Our Testing Promote?

- Creativity
- Common sense
- Wisdom
- Ethics
- Dedication
- Honesty
- Teamwork
- Fair play
- Life-long learning

These are the skills they need to make them “expert citizens.”

We may get higher test scores, but are we getting lower thinkers?

(Sternberg 2007/2008)

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- Limiting authentic reading experiences
 - Overteaching books
 - Underteaching books



Dormant readers might become engaged readers if someone showed them that reading is *engaging*.

Donalyn Miller



**Dormant readers
constitute the
largest segment of
your school
population.**

How We Can Reverse



We shouldn't teach great books; we should teach a love of reading.

B.F. Skinner

3 Keys

- High expectations and modeling from teachers (and librarians)
- Access to books and the freedom to choose
- The time to read them

Role Models

- What kind of reader are YOU?
- How can we expect to inspire our students to engage in an activity that we ourselves do not enjoy?
- One of the key factors in motivating students to read is a teacher who values reading and is enthusiastic about having a love of reading with students.

Books, Books, Books

- Ready access to a wide range of interesting material
- “A Book Flood” (Gallagher)
“Immersion” (Miller)
- Classroom libraries
- Choice – providing students with the opportunity to choose their own books to read empowers and encourages them


Opportunity to Read Every Day

- Daily reading is what transforms reading into a lifelong habit and build reading ability
- Giving them big chunks in the school day to become real readers
- Silent Sustained Reading

Turning the Corner

When I look back, I am so impressed again with the life-giving power of literature. If I were a young person today, trying to gain a sense of myself in the world, I could do that again by reading, just as I did when I was young.

Maya Angelou

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- Teachers are calling for a national initiative to connect students with books instead of focusing on testing.
 - We must fight the culture of teacher-centered instruction and standardized testing hysteria.
 - We should strive to have students read because they want to, not because we MAKE them.
 - All teachers and administrators must be on-board.
 - We need to help parents.
 - Steal reading moments!



“You don’t have to burn books to destroy culture. Just get people to stop reading them.”

Ray Bradbury

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