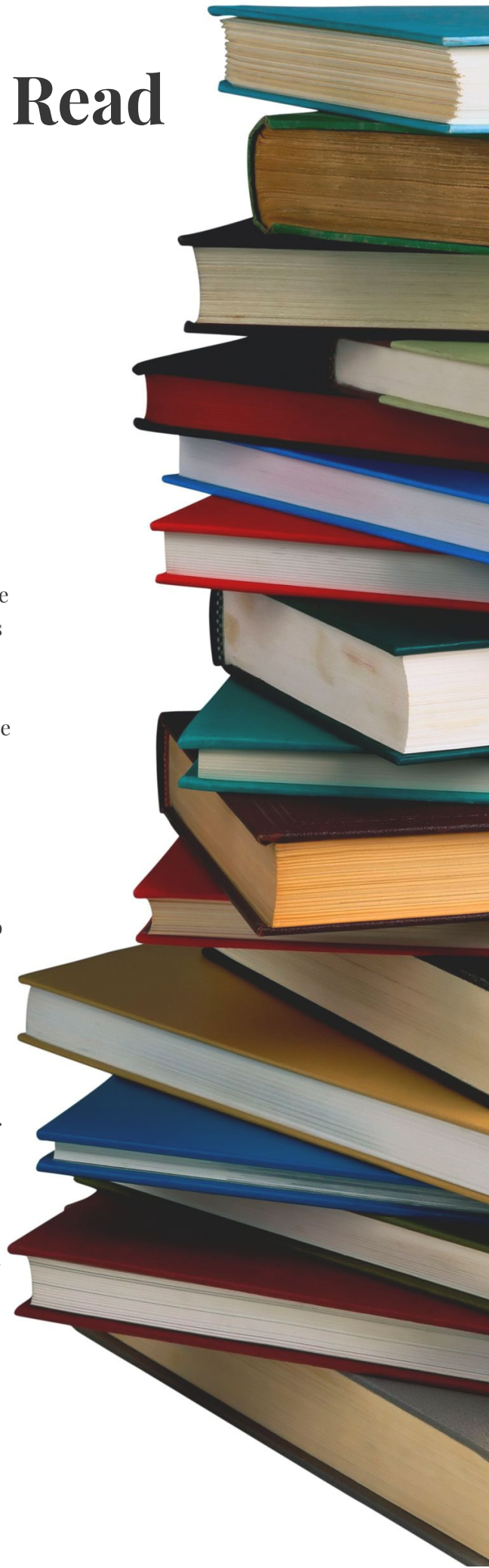


# Motivating Students to Read Required Texts

Reading is a lifelong skill. A person's strengths or weaknesses in other areas can often be explained by their reading abilities. By reading quality literature, children can learn a sense of self awareness about future decisions, how to develop healthy relationships, and a good book can shift a student's opinion about reading as a whole (Stairs & Burgos, 2010). Starting at an early age, children need to be engaged in reading. It is the responsibility of teachers to foster a love of reading in their students.

Current suggested methods for motivating students to read focus on ideal situations. A common thread among techniques is the mention of "interest." When children are intrigued by the materials and have some level of interest in reading the content, they are more likely to be motivated to read (Davila & Patrick, 2010; Gambrell, 2011; & Guthrie, 2010). In a perfect world, this sounds like a great solution to motivating students to read. However, it is not practical. Teachers are not always going to be able to provide their students with the ability to choose the materials they read. There are times when certain texts are considered required readings and the relevance of the content to the lesson is more important than student choice (Guthrie, 2013, p 5). This is where educators run into a problem; how can teachers get their students to read mandatory materials with the same excitement as free choice literature?

This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the top three methods for motivating students to read required literature pieces. Motivation to read increases when students are aware of the importance of reading, are dedicated, and have the support of their teacher. I argue the most successful method is emphasizing to the students that everything they read is important and is chosen for their educational benefit. Providing the children with consistent support and encouragement is the second most effective way to get students to read required texts. The third method of motivation is teaching the students to be dedicated to reading. Motivating students to read mandatory texts can be a difficult task for educators, but these techniques are designed to help increase engagement.





## Emphasizing Importance

Too many students, “avoid reading because they believe it is not important to them now or in the future” (Guthrie, 2013, p 18). In fact, the value of reading often comes as a surprise to the students. Teachers do not clearly teach their students the benefits of reading. Students need to be taught there is a connection between their actions and the outcomes (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010, p 25). When a student says, “why do we have to do this?” the appropriate response from the teacher is not, “because I said so.” Students need to be told the objective of the lesson and why the assigned reading materials were chosen. Teachers often mistakenly focus on making sure the content of the text is memorized instead of comprehended. In order for the students to understand the material being taught, they need to know why it is relevant and necessary. If educators clearly state to the students the purpose and importance of reading, then the students will be more likely to be motivated to read.

This is the most successful method of motivation because it is something an educator can actually teach their students. Teachers can create lessons that teach the students the global implications of the knowledge they have learned.

The value of reading does not have to be implied information. If teachers emphasize the importance of reading, the students will, “soon discover that it was the text that enabled them to gain knowledge most effectively on this topic on this day” (Guthrie, 2013, p 18).

### Questions to Ask to the Students to Emphasize the Importance of Reading

1. What part of the text helped you identify the answer to the question?
2. Why do you think this piece of literature was chosen in coordination with the lesson topic?
3. With a partner, identify the part of the text that led to you being able to explain the concept. Describe the characteristic of that section of the text.
4. Compare what you learned from reading, writing, and discussing during this lesson.
5. How can what you learned today help you in an out-of-school situation? (Guthrie, 2013, p 19)



## Teacher Support

Every teacher should aim to create individualized relationships with each of the students that walks into their classroom. Children have a lot to offer. They each have their own unique background, prior knowledge, interests, and experiences. The relationship between the student and the teacher is important in many different aspects. Students with a quality relationship with their teacher are more likely to participate in class, share personal problems they need help resolving, and do better in school. The qualities students typically look for in a teacher include, actively involved, warm, knowledgeable, and dependable (Guthrie, 2013, p 21). If there is respect between the student and the teacher, then the student will want to perform well and please their teacher. Therefore, they will be motivated to do undesirable tasks such as reading mandatory texts. A teacher who supports their students, and is energetic about reading, can motivate the students to get excited about reading as well (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006, p. 420).

While this can be a successful method for

motivating students to read, there are some issues with this technique. Teacher support cannot be taught, so the responsibility falls solely on the teacher. The students cannot be held accountable in this motivation method, instead they are depending on someone else to get them engaged in the text. It is the job of the teacher to talk to the students, get to know them personally, and use this insight to motivate them to read the required texts. This process can be time consuming and requires a lot of effort on the teacher's part.

## Dedication

Dedication to education is an intrinsic motivation technique that can help students be engaged in reading mandatory texts (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010, p 18). A dedicated student will read undesirable texts because they value their grade and learning. They are able to see the relationship between hard work and success. When a student is

committed, they understand, “reading is a tool for gaining valuable information in any desired content area” (Guthrie, 2013, p 5). While every text assigned might not appeal to the interests of the student, they will still read mandatory texts with the same level of attention as a free choice piece because they are devoted to attaining new knowledge. Lack of commitment is often the reason students retreat from reading. If a student does not have confidence in their abilities, then they will avoid the work and shut down, causing all learning to stop abruptly.

Since dedication is not related to will, all students have the potential to be dedicated (Guthrie, 2013, p 5). However, dedication is hard to teach in a timely manner. It is a habit that is developed over the course of years, therefore, it is not the most efficient method of motivating students. Since it is an intrinsic motivation, it is difficult for a teacher to enforce and monitor the success of this method. The student is in full control of their level of commitment to their education. A teacher can attempt to educate the students on the long term benefits of devoting adequate time and effort to all assignments, but ultimately it is the student’s decision.

## Conclusion

Motivating students to read can be a difficult task. It becomes even more difficult when the students have no interest in reading the text they are given. Teachers should clearly state to the students the importance of reading required texts. The only way children can learn the value of reading is if they are told the implications of the new knowledge gained. Students also need support from and a quality relationship with the teacher. Mutual respect between the teacher and the students motivates the students to please the teacher by thoroughly reading what is assigned to them. The flaw of this method is that the responsibility of providing support falls solely on the teacher. A dedicated student is able to motivate themselves to read the required pieces of literature because they value furthering their education. Although, it is challenging to teach the students and monitor the effects of this method. Teachers can motivate their students to read mandatory texts by implementing these techniques in their classrooms.



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