

ENCOURAGING RELUCTANT READERS TO READ

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Abstract

One of the most difficult problems that face teachers at classroom is the presence of students who do not want to read. Yet encouragement is essential for academic success. While encouraging all students is one of the most difficult assignments of teaching, there are different steps that teachers and parents can employ to encourage reluctant readers. The current study will address previous literature on encouragement of reluctant readers and associate it with possible teachers and parents applications and roles for improving reading skills in the class and at home.

Keywords: Encouraging, reluctant, readers, reading, motivation, background

We have libraries filled with books, yet many students are alliterated; they have the ability to read but choose not to. One of the most important problems faced by teachers is the occurrence in their classes of students seem un encouraged to read or learn. Yet, encouragement is essential for academic success, and without motivation and encouragement, teachers cannot expect much educational accomplishment.

In a recent article Thein (1985) defines encouragement as the "process involved in arousing, directing, and sustaining behavior." Stone (1984) believed that the achievement of encouragement in the classroom is most effective if teachers set goals and obtain feedback from students.

A study by Helmstetter (1987) concluded that apathy among eighth grade reluctant readers can be cured with five encouraging phrases: first; discussing attitudes, second; a positive environment; third, sharing literature through oral reading ; fourth, reading for an

audience and fifth, active learning. To sum up, encouragement of reluctant readers is essential for academic success (Briggs, 1986; Heathington, 1979; Johns, 1987;Teale,1978).

Who is a reluctant reader?

There are several different types of reluctant readers. They include: children who are intelligent and interested in reading, but don't read well; children who seem to have no interest and, as a result of not reading regularly, are falling, or at risk of falling, behind; and children who are dealing with specific learning problems that impede their ability, and willingness, to read. Then, there is the most frustrating type of all: the child who reads well but has little interest in doing so.

Patrick Jones (2006) describes this kind of reluctant readers as the readers who *do want to* choose their own books from a narrowed choice, have teacher read aloud an entire book, compare movie to book, read illustrated books, do art activities based on books, and read nonfiction material (comics, handbooks on sports, drawing, cars, fashion, makeup, magazines) .However , they do not want to meet the author, buy books at a book fair, go to the library, read for a charity, keep a reading journal, and participate in panel debates, small group discussions or share books with friend

Why Reluctant Readers Aren't Reading

Beers .k, Samuels,B.,and Gordon,C.(1998) summarized the common factors observed among reluctant readers as follows:

- Students are not excited by ideas. They prefer to experience life directly rather than through reading.
- Many active adolescents are unable to sit still long enough to read for any prolonged period of time.
- By the time many students reach high school, they equate reading with ridicule, failure or exclusively school-related tasks.
- Teenagers are too self-absorbed and preoccupied with themselves, their problems, families, sexual roles, etc., to make connections between their world and books.
- Books are inadequate entertainment compared to other competing media such as television, video games and the Internet.
- Persistent stress from home and school to read constantly is counterproductive for some adolescents.

- Adolescents may grow up in non-reading homes void of reading material with no reading role models. There is no one to pass down the value of reading.

To conclude, some adolescents may consider reading solitary and anti-social. It is considered “uncool” and something adults do. In addition , some adolescents view reading as part of the adult world and reject it outright which is cool.

Qualities of Books for Reluctant Readers

Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA)'s Committee suggested a number of criteria in choosing books for reluctant readers. The committee cared about the physical appearance, style, and fiction. For instance; the physical appearance of the book cover ought to be a catchy, action-oriented, attractive, appealing, and good "blurb". More over, the book style should be an acceptable literary quality and effectiveness of presentation with clear writing without long sentences of sophisticated vocabulary-simple vocabulary but not noticeably controlled.

In addition, the fiction of the book must include a high interest "hook" in first 10 pages, well-defined characters and not too many of them, sufficient plot to sustain interest, plot lines developed through dialog and action rather than descriptive text, familiar themes with emotional appeal for teenagers, believable treatment, single point of view and not too many characters, touches of humor when appropriate and told in chronological order – not too many flashback.

The Role of Parents to Encourage A Reluctant Reader to Read

Since the only way most children can get to be good readers is to read regularly, it is important to encourage children to read from the beginning. Atwell, N. (2007) provides some helpful learning tips, including reading aloud to your child, setting up a home library, and being a good role model of reading.

The importance of reading aloud cannot be overemphasized. By reading aloud to children, parents are emphasizing the joy of reading, introducing them to new vocabulary words and ideas, expanding their knowledge, and learning more about their interests. Often, hearing a story can catch a child's interest in learning more by reading independently. At some point, parents might pick books at, not above, their child's reading level, and take turns reading portions aloud to one another.

The most important role a parent or other caring adult can play is as a good role model. It's hard for a child to believe in the importance of reading if there are few books in the home, they never see their parents reading, and they never go to the library. Reading for enjoyment is not enjoyable for children if they are forced to read. It's important to help their children find books at the appropriate reading level on subjects that interest them. Once parents find books, they can pique their children's interest by reading the first chapter to them. They might also want to take turns reading. If the book is sufficiently interesting, parents may find their children reading ahead on their own.

Some Ideas for parents to Encourage a Child to Read

Following are some ideas from Kajder, S. (2006) to encourage a child to read

1. Make a habit of reading to your child every day, whether she/he is a one-year-old or a 10-year-old.
2. When your child is able to, have her/him read to you. You can take turns reading chapters in a simple chapter book, for example.
3. Get a library card for your child. Go to the library every week and take out several books.
4. Be aware of your child's interests and direct your child to related books.
5. Try to find a series that she/he really likes and will want to continue reading.
6. Provide a comfortable reading area, with good lighting, in your home.
7. Discuss books with your child.
8. Buy books for your children that are related to her/his special interests.
9. If your child is a reluctant reader and not reading on grade level, buy her/him hi/lo books (books with a high interest level, low vocabulary).
10. Talk to your child's teacher and ask for suggestions.
11. If your child likes incentives and the computer, enroll in an online book group.
12. If your child really enjoys a particular author, check with your librarian about other authors or books she/he might enjoy.
13. Children also often enjoy the opportunity to read children's magazines.

Bearing in mind to stay on the side of encouraging rather than nagging if you want your child to read. Also, be aware that nothing puts a child off faster than feeling forced to do something, so be careful. Be consistent with reading aloud, trips to the library and other encouragement.

Suggested Activities For Parents to Encourage Reluctant Readers to Read

Many reluctant readers avoid reading and do not get the practice they need to improve their skills. Atwell 2007 suggested some great ways to improve basic reading skills and reading comprehension. Increase their reading time with activities that they will actually enjoy!

First, try a variety of reading materials - pair books with unabridged audio books. Parents can encourage reading by pairing books with unabridged audio books. Often, they can find both at their library. Following are the steps:

- Follow the book as the audio book plays. This helps with word recognition and awareness of phrasing;
- Listen to a chapter, and then read it. This helps readers understand main ideas before they are read, which can improve fluency; or
- Read a chapter and then listen to it to self-check for understanding.

Second; Watch More Television. Watching television is a fun way to increase sight word vocabulary and develop a sense of the flow of written and spoken language, turn on the closed captioning feature on television. Also use the closed captioning feature on your child's favorite DVDs. Encourage your child to note the captions and read along. Invite a friend, make some popcorn, and they may even forget they're working!

Third; create your child's own books on tape. Make your child the star of his own audio book! Have him read into a tape recorder. During playback, help him follow along in the book. Help him identify errors. Use your own judgment on whether to stop the tape and demonstrate correct words and phrases. Some research has indicated that as your child listens to himself and hears his own reading becoming better, his skills will likely improve. Reward your child for the errors he finds and corrects as well as for his successes.

Fourth; have a family reading night. Reserve thirty minutes each evening for family reading time. Each family member can read different material and then share out information about it. Alternately, everyone can take turns reading aloud from the same book. Make it a friendly competition by charting each person's reading minutes. At the end of the week, the person with the most minutes wins a special recognition, their favorite meal, or choice of family activity.

Teachers' Role in Encouraging Reluctant Readers to Read

Reading is important in every academic (and life) situation. But, as a teacher, what do you do when the student can't read (or can't comprehend what he or she is reading). Teachers should know how to reach those reluctant readers, and help them to come to an understanding and appreciation of books and literature. Many readers may not know that they are supposed to be thinking as they read. Teachers should focus on the thinking strategies that all proficient readers use as they read. Sullivan (2002) documented that there are different thinking strategies that all proficient readers use as they read. First, determining what is important - identifying themes and diminishing focus on less important ideas or pieces of information. Second, drawing inferences - combining background knowledge and textual information to draw conclusions and interpret facts .Third, using prior knowledge - Building on previous knowledge and experiences to aid in comprehension of the text .Fourth, asking questions - Wondering and inquiring about the book before, during, and after reading. Fifth, monitoring comprehension and meaning - using an inner voice to think about if the text makes sense or not .Finally, creating mental images - implementing the five senses to build images in the mind that enhance the experience of reading. To sum up, by helping readers to think while reading ,teachers encourage reluctant readers to read ,comprehend, internalize and enjoy what they read.

A Sample of A Reading Session

Here is a sample schedule for an hour long session:

15-20 minutes - Present a mini-lesson that models how to use the given strategy for a certain book. Try to pick a book that really lends itself to this strategy. Think aloud and you demonstrate how good readers think as they read. At the end of the mini-lesson, give the readers an assignment for the day that they will do as they read the books of their own choosing. For example, "Today you will use sticky notes to mark the places where you could really visualize what was going on in your book."

15 minutes - Meet with small readers' groups to meet the needs of students who need extra guidance and practice in this comprehension area. You can also build in time here to meet with 1-2 small guided reading groups, as you may be doing in your classroom now.

20 minutes - Use this time for one-on-one conferring with your students. Try to get to 4-5 students per day, if you can. As you meet, delve deep with each student and have him or her demonstrate to you exactly how they are using this strategy as they read.

5-10 minutes - Meet again as a whole group to review what every one accomplished and learned for the day, in relation to the strategy.

Of course, as with any instructional technique that you encounter, you can adapt this concept and this suggested schedule to fit your needs and your classroom situation.

These strategies are to be used in the regular classroom to support reluctant readers. This is not a Language Arts program. This is a supplemental reading program to assist reluctant readers. The goal is to have your reluctant readers become confident and independent readers. The supplemental reading program needs to include opportunities for phonemic awareness, comprehension, oral spelling and sounding of words, sight word vocabulary development ,connections between reading, writing, and oral communication, and good literature that encourages readers to read material that's within their comfort range.

In fact, parents should be encouraged to play a role in their child's supplemental reading program. Merely asking parents to read to their children and listen to their children read isn't enough. You will want to provide a workshop or two for parents/volunteers to support your supplemental program. Provide parents with concrete examples of how they can follow up at home with at least 15 minutes a night.

Summary

Many reluctant readers are the cause of problems to parents and teachers. Most of them can read but prefer not to. In order to solve some of these problems, encouragement as an extrinsic motivation is essential.

Parents and teachers may employ strategies and techniques that will bring about positive attitudes. Teachers and parents who exhibit positive attitudes and expectations will see their kids and students develop and grow!

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