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## What Current Research Tells Us ...

### Characteristics of Reluctant Readers

- Readers who tend to be unmotivated often lack self-esteem regarding their ability to read.
- They often attribute their difficulties to the difficulty of the task, interference, too much noise, vision problems, or unfairness.
- Seldom do they acknowledge that their own lack of skill is at the heart of the problem.
- Often they have a sense of hopelessness. When the reluctance of these students to participate in activities is interpreted as defiance or laziness, their underlying reading problem may not be identified or addressed.
- Reluctant readers who have had many years of frustration often become skilled evaders who try either to “hide out or act out” so they can avoid reading.

Research reveals that unrehearsed oral reading is the single most upsetting activity reported by adolescents about their entire school experience.

### Teacher's Role

Teachers working with perceived as high achievers:

- talked less and encouraged more interactions among students;
- allowed for more creative and generative approaches to learning;
- offered opportunities for independent work;
- had warmer and more personal relationships with students;
- spent little time on behaviour or classroom management issues.

Teachers working with perceived low achievers:

- prepared more structured lessons;
- allowed fewer opportunities for student creativity;
- covered less content;
- rewarded students for trying hard rather than for good thinking;
- spent a significant amount of time on behaviour and management issues;
- had less congenial relationships with students.

### Motivating Reluctant Readers

#### Reinforcement

Continuous reinforcement of success is motivating. It is important to make the distinction between effort and achievement. Effort can be encouraged but achievement is the critical element.

#### Goal Setting

An environment in which students set reachable goals for themselves can have a profound positive effect on their achievement.

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## Relevance

Reluctant readers improve when they consider reading as an effective way to learn more about things that matter to them.

Motivation is affected by two variables - the expectation of success and the value placed on that success.

Student engagement and content relevance are motivators but unfortunately content is sometimes outside students' areas of personal interest or prior experience.

## Selection of Reading Materials

- Permitting students to choose at least some of what they read in class can improve motivation.
- Interest inventories can help teachers learn about what interests their students so they can recommend reading materials accordingly.
- A simple rule is that if there are more than 7 unknown words among the first 100, the material is probably beyond the student's proficiency.
- Students tend to read more when the texts are short, relevant, and captivating. For readers several years below grade level, there are many high interest, low vocabulary books and books on tape. Magazines and the Internet are also good resources.
- Some websites with lists of suitable books for preteens and teens, together with reviews and information on authors include:

<http://www.carolhurst.com>

<http://www.bookspot.com/features/teenreadinglists.htm>

[http://www.the2rs.com/books\\_for\\_reluctant\\_readers](http://www.the2rs.com/books_for_reluctant_readers)

<http://www.teenreads.com>

<http://www.ala.org/yalsa/booklists/quickpicks>

## Reading Groups

Some teachers find that reading groups work better when each group member has a particular role.

### Example Roles

Wizard: finds interesting, puzzling, or important sections in the text.

Connector: helps the group make connections between the text and experiences in students' own lives.

Captain: organises the group, ensuring that all members participate.

Character builder: keeps track of observations about main characters and the adjectives that describe them;

Artist: illustrates meaningful elements of the story, exciting scenes, and creates charts of information in non-fictional text.

Vocabulary builder: collects interesting words, suggests definitions based on the context.

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### Discussion Groups

- Some teachers use discussion groups weekly and assign reading to be completed outside of class. Students read the material in preparation for the discussion and flag the interesting things they find in the text as well as parts they do not understand.
- Teachers might use a read-aloud strategy accompanied by discussion to support students who were unable to complete the assigned reading.
- As teachers visit each group and help direct the discussion, it may be necessary to remind groups to use examples from the text to support the point of view they expressed during the discussion.
- At the end of the discussion, students can be asked to assess how well they performed as individuals and as a group.

### Highlights from:

Tankersley, Karen, *Literacy Strategies for Grades 4 to 12: Reinforcing the Threads of Reading*, ASCD, 2005.