

PREP: PRIMARY READING ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

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Primary students who struggle to read need incentive to redirect their mindset back onto the productive path of daily reading. Reading is daunting to the youngest readers who experience difficulties because the act of reading is difficult and tiresome. Effective reading engagement programs motivate these readers to read on a daily basis and accomplish grade level achievement. Previous studies on reading engagement programs focus on motivation related to middle and high school students. Various studies have discussed reward related to middle school students' reading but few are specific to reward related to readers who experience reading difficulties in kindergarten through second grade. This article presents a model for incentivizing reading in kindergarten through second grades when motivation is of paramount importance. This incentive program will support teachers in primary intervention environments who work with young readers who experience difficulty with word recognition as well as reading comprehension.

How do teachers motivate primary students who experience difficulty when reading? Strategies to encourage reading motivation are complex and command a structured and ongoing approach. It is imperative to build this motivation when students are young so they enjoy reading for the act of reading itself. Gambrell (2011) writes, if students are not motivated to read, they will never reach their full literacy potential. Students who consistently read for their own interest are often very competent and are typically high achieving readers (Guthrie, 2013).

Reading incentive programs are effective in building motivation for young readers, particularly with those with reading difficulties. More engagement with reading means higher achievement (Cambria and Guthrie, 2010). The goal of these programs are to increase time spent reading which increases reading comprehension and hopefully leads to a lifetime love of reading. McElveny and

Kortenbruck (2010) wrote of the importance of enabling early experiences of reading competence, highlighting that students lack motivation because they do not experience progress and competence. My professional experience of teaching young children to read for over 15 years has proven that reading engagement programs motivate young readers who experience difficulty in reading and set them on a successful road of intrinsically motivated reading.

My first year as a reading specialist serving students experiencing reading difficulties in grades kindergarten through third grade was extremely challenging. I quickly found out that many of my students were not reading at home! This was incredibly concerning because my responsibility as a reading specialist was to support these students in reaching grade level reading. How was I going to be an effective teacher if these children left reading at school each day? I scoured the internet

trying to find ideas for a consistent, reading engagement program that teachers were using with students in grades kindergarten through third but found very little helpful information. Many studies and programs I found were geared for middle school or high school students. I found the complexities of these programs difficult to adapt to my young students' developmental levels.

As a Mom, I thought about what motivated my own young children at home to read: choice and reward. When students are given a choice in their learning, they are more likely to be engaged and sustain that activity. Bauserman and Edmunds state "Teachers can increase student motivation by allowing self-selection, giving attention to characteristics of books, identifying the personal interests of students, providing access to a variety of books and actively involving others in sharing books with children." With student motivation in mind, I developed a reading

incentive program, PREP-Primary Reading Engagement Program, that has proven to be successful with my primary students that experience difficulties in reading. Most of my former students have developed a daily reading habit due to the consistency of this program. Many of my current students achieve grade level reading quickly when they follow the program with fidelity. What follows is an articulation of the six evidence-based core constructs of PREP for direct application in the classroom.

PREP-Primary Reading Engagement Program

Step 1. Classroom Library

Research shows:

McNinch, Steel & Davidson(1995) investigated how the earning by learning (EBL) program motivated at-risk second and third grade children, to become active and

Create color coded bookshelves made from rain gutters for the classroom wall. The green shelf is filled with kindergarten and first grade level books, the red shelf is filled with second grade books and the blue shelf is filled with third grade books. The shelves contain books from many different genres including fiction, nonfiction and magazines.



engaged readers. On the basis of the number of books completed, the EBL program was successful in getting at-risk children to read and read continuously during the summer program. McNinch et al state “In at-risk populations, the keys to encouraging an optimal student response to literature and reading are self-selection and the use of extrinsic motivators.

Leveled books are successful processing systems. Students select books not primarily for their level but because the topic, the author, or the series interests them. (Scharer, Pinnell, Lyons, & Fountas, 2005)

Step 2- Motivation

Research Shows:

Marinak and Gambrell’s (2008) hallmark mixed-methods study utilizing qualitative questionnaires explored the effects of rewards on third graders’ intrinsic motivation. They wanted to see whether the type of reward affected the student’s intrinsic motivation. The findings revealed that students who were given a book as a reward and students who received no reward were more motivated to engage in subsequent reading than students who received a token reward.

Small Arnone and Bennett (2017) found through participant interviews and parent

“Read every day” is displayed on the wall as a constant reminder to students. Place a sticker chart on the wall with each child’s name. Each night a student reads that student receives a sticker. A student is eligible to receive a bonus sticker if they bring in a book from the local library. Once a student reaches five stickers they earn a contingent reward such as reading in a cozy chair or corner, 10 minutes extra reading time, an eBook on the iPad, a small physical book to keep or a bookmark.



surveys related to public library reading programs that contingent rewards given to students with low intrinsic motivation can have long-term positive impact.

Akin-Little, Eckert, Lovett & Little (2004) examined the debate over the effects of the use of extrinsic motivation in classrooms through qualitative research and found, "More teacher training is needed in behavioral methods. It is the practice, not the principle that is suspect and open to misapplication and abuse" (p. 359).

Step 3- Reading Folder

Research Shows:

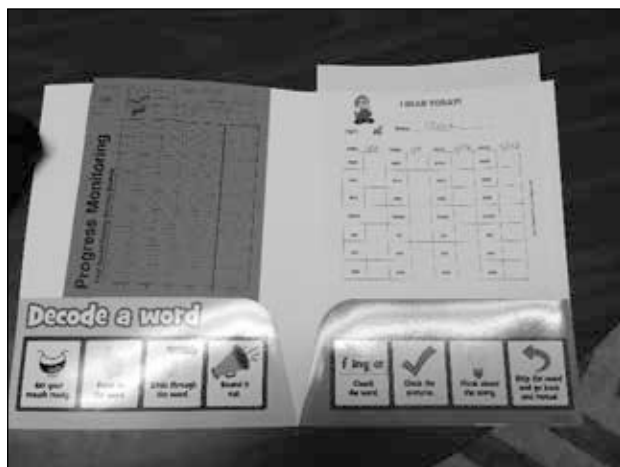
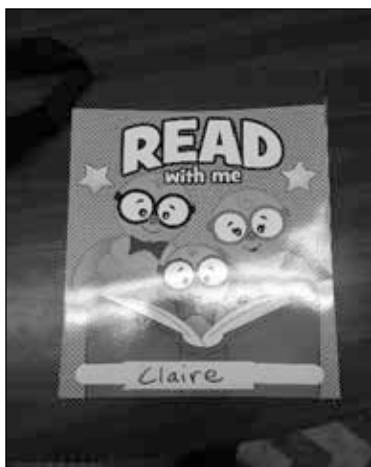
McNaughton, Parr, Timperly, and Robinson (1992) reported that teachers in New Zealand routinely ask parents to listen to their children read to them. However, a majority of teachers who asked parents to listen to their children read to them did not follow up with parents. Most teachers thought they had provided specific guidance, but most parents thought they had not. McNaughton et al. concluded that parents are not likely to be able

to help struggling readers effectively without focused instruction.

Gambrell's (1996) first grade motivation study, Running Start, was a reading incentive program where students were challenged to read or have someone read to them 21 books in a 10-week period. The prize for meeting the challenge was a book for the student to own. In an evaluation of the program's effectiveness, Gambrell (1996) compared Running Start participants (inner-city first graders) with a comparable group of students and parents on several measures of motivation and participation in literacy activities. Running Start students spent more time on independent reading, discussed books more with family members, took more books home from school, participated in more family reading activities, and had higher levels of motivation for reading. These advantages were still apparent six months later.

Lyons (2003), found no matter how a child reacts to the learning situation, adults' responses affect the child's emotional, social, and cognitive development.

Nightly reading is recorded by a parental signature on a reading log kept inside the student's reading folder. The folder also contains a progress monitoring chart that serves as communication with the student's parents on their child's monthly reading progress.



Step 4-Library Card Display

Research Shows:

From a theoretical perspective, this is supported by the self-determination theory of motivation advanced by Deci and Ryan (1985, 2001, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2009, 2013). This theory states that if students can be supported in meeting their basic needs for competency, autonomy and relatedness in learning situations, they are more likely to develop into independent, self-directed and

lifelong learners. Deci and Ryan's theory has shown that under specific conditions, autonomy-supportive settings in the classroom have positive effects on self-regulated learning and motivation. Autonomy supportive classrooms are those in which students see their perspectives valued, have opportunities to share their thoughts and feelings, and are encouraged to make choices and exercise self-initiative in learning activities.

Students check out a book of their choosing from the class library each Monday and borrow it for one week. Students are required to write the date and title on an index card that is attached to their name card. This process creates a sense of ownership and involvement for the student.



Step 5-Reading Bag

Research Shows:

Baumann, Hoffman, Duffy-Hester, and Ro (2000) found through survey research that 93% of pre-K to 5 teachers indicated that they encouraged parents to read to their children at home regularly, and 91% reported encouraging parents to listen to their children read at home regularly. However, only 55% said they regularly send home books for their students to practice reading with their parents.

Paired reading (MacDonald, 2010) extends home literacy, as children share books with family members, building on school experiences, with the potential to

improve overall literacy behavior in easy, enjoyable ways.

Children may feel they are in control of this literacy experience as they lead family members (Galbraith, & Alexander, 2005).

Step 6-Happy Bookworms!

Once you have implemented this reading engagement program, you will find that most of your young students will be reading consistently each night. Your students will remind their parents each night to read. This is where the magic happens; you have transformed your students who did not read at home into nightly readers! Your students

Each student receives a reading practice bag to take home with them nightly. The reading practice bag contains the chosen book as well as the reading folder that holds the nightly reading log and progress monitoring chart. The student chooses the color of their bag as well as stickers for decoration.



will be motivated to read because they have experienced progress and success in reading. This act of reading nightly improves students' word recognition skills as well as their overall comprehension and creates a lifelong love of reading.

Research Shows:

Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) explored the different aspects of children's reading motivation and how that motivation related

to the amount and breadth of their reading questionnaires and diaries were used to identify why children are motivated to read. The findings suggest that reading motivation is multidimensional. Wigfield and Guthrie state "Their motivation predicted reading amount and breadth" (p. 420).

Becker, McElveny and Kortenbruck (2010) state, "Students lack motivation because they do not experience progress and competence." (p. 780).



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