

Reading for pleasure: promoting intrinsic motivation

A resource designed to empower students to read for pleasure by
fostering intrinsic motivation

Introduction

On her website, Growing up a Reader, Dr Sarah McGeown (University of Edinburgh), shares some of the findings from a recent interdisciplinary research project. The project set out to explore what it means to be a young reader in the 21st Century. Dr McGeown writes, “New literacies are shaping children’s and adolescents’ reading experiences; however, we lack a current understanding of what attracts young people to different text types or what it means to be a reader from young people’s perspectives.’

In the context of reading for pleasure, McGeown defines intrinsic motivation as choosing to read to learn about a topic, as escapism or immersion in storyline. Intrinsic motivation results in better cognitive engagement and is associated with more positive reading behaviours such as choosing to read independently away from school. Conversely, extrinsic motivation is understood to include reading rewards, positive marks, teacher feedback, test outcomes or parental approval.

So how can we successfully promote intrinsic reading motivation?

One example might be a weekly tutor group 'Book Talk' session where you share an article, website, or book that you've read that week and explain why you wanted to read it, how it made you feel and why it particularly resonated with you.

It may be helpful to reference some of the key outcomes from McGeown's research on motivation and engagement when deciding which new initiatives to trial in school:

- **Access and choice** - Finding texts that resonate with students' interests and are at an accessible reading level.
- **Relevance** - Supporting students to achieve a particular goal with their reading (reading to learn) or enabling students to achieve a particular experience from a text.
- **Success** - A crucially important element so reading isn't only experienced as something that is very challenging.
- **Collaboration** - Creating opportunities for high quality book talk and discussion, ensuring all opinions are valued and heard.

Here are a few ideas and suggestions for promoting intrinsic motivation at school and at home:

- **Display the book you're currently reading** but explain why you chose it, how you found out about it and how it connects with other books you've read and loved.
- **Display photos of your favourite authors, titles or book covers** of their works and share some favourite/inspirational extracts.
- **Share your top 3 books** for each decade of your life. What were you motivated to read and why?
- **Each term, read 1 recently published YA book and share your opinion of it** with your students. What did you like/dislike about it? Would you recommend it? Would you read another book by this author?
- **Once a week, share the opening lines of 2 or 3 different books with students.** Are any intriguing/peculiar/funny/shocking? Challenge students to find out

the authors/titles of the books. Ask students to share their own favourite opening lines.

- At the start of the academic year, **survey your students to find out about their hobbies and passions** and use these passions to help them reconnect with reading. Enlist your school librarian to help create some relevant and personalised reading lists and recommendations.
- **Create a river of reading.** A river of reading is simply all the reading that has been engaged with over a period of time. It includes everything – fiction, non-fiction, magazines, comics, digital reading. This activity helps teachers find out what students read when out of school and helps students to consider the variety of what they read and their motivation for reading it.
- Finally, have a look at the **Zone In** section of our website with students and explore a rich range of author videos, reading lists and ideas around using audiobooks. Students can learn about the role reading plays in the lives of video game professionals. The CEO of Playtra Games, Dan Bernardo, discusses the importance of reading for his career [here](#).



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