

Increasing Students' Reading Engagement

Promising Practices 32

Suggestions for Program Improvement for Ohio Aspire Practitioners

Curriculum and Instruction

Program Puzzler

Reading instruction in Program X centers mostly on short pieces of text from the GED preparation materials. The teachers are aware of the research that states students should have access to a substantial number of readable, interesting books and exposure to informational texts. The more opportunities to read means more opportunities to increase vocabulary and background knowledge. The program has a collection of materials for students to read, but there isn't much interest in reading them.

How can the program entice students to read what's available to them?



Timely Tips

Color-code and group the books once you have determined reading levels. Students can then select the books based on topic and interest.

Create a student book area in your program or classroom. This can be thematic, by level or both.

Support outside reading through an incentive or achievement program (could be based on books, pages or time read).

Peer Perspective

- Conduct reading interest inventories. Determining what your students are interested in reading is a good place to start. Is there a particular topic or genre? How much time do they dedicate to reading? Several reading inventories are available online. Here is a sample: <http://workforce.cup.edu/peterson/teaching%20reading%20home/reading%20interest%20inventory.doc>
- Take a critical look at the materials you have on hand. Do they match the interests of your students? Having a variety of topic and genres available will help engage students. If you find through the interest inventories that you are missing certain topics/genres, try to seek those out from donations and other book sources.
- Determine readability of materials. The materials may not be appropriate for students' reading levels; if the materials are too difficult or too easy, students will not be motivated to read them. Using readability programs or formulas is an important step in making that match between reader and book. A good match will help increase fluency and comprehension.
- Teach helpful strategies. Using explicit instruction, teach students about skimming and previewing. Have them read the title, front and back covers, and table of contents (if available). What interests them? Randomly open the book and read a small section. Was it understandable? Was the vocabulary too easy/hard? Actually getting their hands on the books can help engage students.

Added Insights

There are many tools which can help teachers quickly determine readability. The following tools can be used on text passages, books and websites:

www.lexile.com: under the Tools menu you can search for leveled book suggestions or enter a title to see if appropriate match to reading level

www.amazon.com: includes readability information on many materials (scroll to bottom of listing)

www.scholastic.com: under the Book Wizard tool you can determine reading level or search for books by a desired level

<http://readability.info>: provides the reading level of entered websites

While readability is an important first step, programs also need to consider these factors:

Background knowledge (will students have any knowledge of the topic to aid in comprehension?)

Visual features of the text (some materials are “too busy” or even printed too small while others have rich visual supports via maps, photos and color)

Microsoft Word Readability Statistics: available as option under the Spelling feature (type or copy into Word)

Programs can consult the available resources in Ohio Aspire which support using additional reading materials. These include:

- “Eureka!” on the Ohio Literacy Resource Center (OLRC) website (<http://literacy.kent.edu/eureka/lessons/index.html>) which offers lists of thematic books
- Southwest Aspire Resource Center’s lending library which houses leveled classroom sets and other reading materials.

Programs can also access library offerings if they do not have a ready supply of reading materials. Many local branches have published lists of materials by reading levels and/or interest areas. These can be a good handout to encourage students visiting and using the library system. Additionally, most libraries will allow teachers to have extended check-out periods for materials. This can be helpful when offering book clubs or study circles as instructional components.

ABLELink Accompaniments

- ◆ Students Who are Being Tracked in Reading
- ◆ Students Who Do Not Pass Reading on the GED Test
- ◆ Students Whose Goal is to Enter Post Secondary Education

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