

Motivation in My Classroom

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I begin each academic year by sending out a welcome packet to parents and students at least three weeks prior to the first school day. The welcome packet consists of a newsletter/brochure explaining the structure and expectations of the classroom; a school supplies list, an emergency form and a student inventory form. The student inventory forms asks questions about the students family, his or her interests/hobbies, favorite subject, and what they enjoy reading.

The student inventory form is what I use to supply my classroom library with books over the school year. If I find a particular author, book or series that students are interested in, I try to purchase a set for students to have accessible in the classroom. On the first day of school we have a D.E.A.R (drop everything and read) session. This allows students to familiarize themselves with the classroom library and choose a book they are interested in. While the students are reading I walk around and “peek” at the books they have chosen, and take time to “conference” with each to see what books/topics they enjoy reading about.

“Motivation often makes the difference between learning that is superficial and shallow and learning that is deep and internalized” (Gambrell, 106, p.15). I use many tools and strategies to motivate my students to read. I provide a classroom library with a wide variety of genres from students to choose from and provide opportunities during the instructional school

day to “pleasure read” (generally when they finish other work early).

I read aloud to the students everyday to model my enthusiasm for reading and display “Mrs. Doerner’s Hot Read” on the classroom library counter for everyone to see. Mrs. Doerner’s Hot Read is a book that I have finished reading that I would highly recommend for others to read. The book is displayed on a small stand with a colorful poster to advertise. Throughout the year students have the chance to swap the book with one they have finished that they think others would enjoy as well. We also have a contest to read 100 hours outside of school to promote reading practice at home. We graph the hours for each student on a poster displayed in the classroom. The student who reaches 100 hours first picks lunch from a local restaurant of their choice.

After viewing the PowerPoint presentation and reflecting back on my teaching experiences I want to work on “stressing” the value of reading to my students. I want the motivation to read to become “intrinsic” where students will strive to read more through internal motivations and not necessarily to receive extrinsic rewards. Last year I had a couple of boys that refused to read! After brainstorming ideas and asking colleagues for advice, I decided to allow one of the students to listen to the stories with headphones while following along in his chapter book. The second student I found out was very interested in war books; I went to the library and checked every book out on a war!

Parent Response

This exact situation happened to me last year! Parents contacted me a few weeks before school to tell me their son was a horrible reader, the teacher last year was a “joke” he failed his MEAP (they expected him to receive a 1 on the MEAP, and how was I going to fix the problem. I thought, oh my! So, I took a breather, and scheduled a meeting with the parents, principal and myself right away. I didn’t have the student attend this meeting because honestly, I didn’t want the student to hear the things the parents were saying – it was heartbreaking. At the meeting we discussed the child’s DRA level (at the end of fourth) and I was informed that entering fifth grade the student was reading at a beginning of the third grade reading level.

Together as a group the parents and I decide we will keep in contact with one another weekly via email, telephone, etc. to discuss the student’s progress. So, September begins, as does the new school year. Within the first few weeks the students are given a DIBELS test as well as a DRA to help determine DRA level. I had to act quickly with the results to determine what was causing this student to have such a difficult time with reading. Is it struggles with comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, and word recognition? I knew I had to find answers in order to help this student.

After formal and informal assessments and observations, it became clear to me that the student struggled with comprehension and vocabulary/word recognition. Part of the problem was that he was “speed” reading (knew he was being timed) not paying any attention to the content he was reading. So, October comes around; he takes the MEAP, and struggles. Again, I met with the parent, went over the assessment results from DRA and DIBELS and together

we created a plan of action. The student was to be “progress monitored” weekly with grade level fluency passages assessing fluency and comprehension through retelling.

On top of the progress monitoring, he was also meeting with his small group (with me) everyday. During large group our *Literacy by Design* curriculum themes would focus on comprehension strategies. Each theme was two weeks long. In addition to the large group strategy practice this student received “guided” individual practice/implementation activities daily either with our classroom instructional aide or me. I also provided him with a variety of texts to read from; narrative, informational, etc. the student also practiced sight words/ word recognition activities and vocabulary instruction.