

If they dont read
much



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

" If they don't read much" In her article, " If they don't read much, how they ever gonna get good", Pat Cunningham, the of the article has quoted Dick Arlington as saying that children can never get good at reading unless they practice regularly, much as a good sports-person does, in order to excel on the playing field. It is not enough to teach children to read - they must also enjoy reading voluntarily. As the author puts it, " If you teach children to read, then you know [that] the amount of reading children do is important." Most schools have a wide range of incentive programs like the 'Pizza Hut Book It!' and the 'Accelerated Reader' program in place, However, these incentive programs have not had the desired effect of turning children into avid and motivated readers. They are on the contrary according to the author, quite 'de-motivating', as also borne out by research on the same subject by Fawson and Moore (1999). Keeping this in mind, the author has offered some suggestions, which teachers could implement should they feel that their struggling readers are not motivated enough by whatever their respective schools are currently doing to motivate the children to read.

Some of the suggestions put forth by the author are as follows: -

Revisit teacher read aloud practices. The best way of motivating children to read is to read aloud to the class. When elementary grade students were asked what motivated them to read particular texts, the response in most cases was, " My teacher read it in the class". The same response was equally forthcoming when the same question was put to college students. This is very important when one considers that motivation to read declines as students make the transition from elementary to middle school since " students are more oriented to grades, competition, and their own competence than elementary education" (Guthrie and Davis). However,

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teachers need to choose their reading material judiciously, choosing a mix of informational texts and fiction to keep interest alive in the read-aloud sessions. In addition to this all teachers must also have an 'everyone' book that all the students can relate to. The reason behind using a combination of texts is that whereas boys go in more for informational texts, girls seem to prefer fiction. This could well be the reason why boys find reading 'dumb and silly', perhaps because the texts read aloud to them may have been too fanciful for their liking.

Revisit independent reading practices. Special time has to be allotted by teachers for independent reading. While students are encouraged to read texts of their choice during this time, teachers may utilize this time to confer with individual students. During these conferences a child could be encouraged to share what he or she has read. "Sharing the books you read" with someone who oohs and aahs about our reading choices could be a sure fire motivator" says the author.

Revisit the materials available. It is important to review the classroom library to see whether the right combination of reading material that will appeal to all students is available. A budget friendly option could be to subscribe to a few popular magazines as well as newsmagazines for children. Teachers can then choose their read aloud texts from these periodicals. These resources could also be pooled and shared between classes. "An abundance of texts within the classroom and ... community resources outside the classroom are known to directly facilitate motivation and reading achievement" (Guthrie and Davis). Struggling readers could also be made 'big-buddy readers' with the kindergarten classes. The 'big-buddy' could be allowed to choose and practice before hand, the book he or she intends to read to the 'little buddy'.

In this article, Pat Cunningham rightly focuses on developing an intrinsic motivation in the child for reading. Reading and academic achievement go hand in hand. However, an elementary school student must also find reading an enjoyable activity. 'Student choice' becomes important in this context. Another way of motivating children is to involve parents in this process. It is for the teachers to educate parents on the importance of reading to their children. A family that reads for enjoyment will seldom have to struggle with low academic scores.

Bibliography

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