Linda Gambrell is the featured literacy scholars in this issue of the JRE. The JRE welcomes respectful, collegial discussions that focus on the teaching and learning of literacy. We hope you enjoy reading and reflecting on the views stated in this feature, and we invite you to write to us with your reactions so that we may publish your comments. Send a brief e-mail to Janet Richards at jrichard@usf.edu

Motivation in the School Reading Curriculum
Linda B. Gambrell

It is not enough to teach children to become readers and writers, we want children to leave our school with the continuing desire to read, write, and learn. Our task is to pursue this vision so that it becomes a reality.

—Carol Minnick Senta

In a perfect world, all our students would be highly motivated to read for pleasure and to acquire information; their motivation and excitement for learning to read as kindergartners and first graders would continue throughout their lives. Unfortunately, this is not the world we live in. Data from the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) report revealed that 65 percent of fourth graders did not have reading as a favorite activity, 73 percent did not read frequently for enjoyment, and 59 percent did not believe they learned very much when reading books (Perie, Grigg, & Donahue, 2003). Perhaps more important, the NAEP data revealed that students’ intrinsic motivation to read decreased from 2002 to 2005. According to Guthrie, McRae, and Klauda (2007), “these statistics indicate that a substantial majority of grade four students are not intrinsically motivated to read” (p. 237).

The Important of Motivation in the School Reading Curriculum
The construct of motivation has been widely researched by psychologists and educators. Although motivation in general has been studied extensively, only in recent decades has attention focused on the role of motivation in reading development. Motivating students to read is a practical concern and a demanding task for both classroom teachers and parents alike. Consequently, there are numerous theories and researchers who have focused on motivation as a general phenomenon.

Theories of Motivation: Implications for the School Reading Curriculum
Theories of motivation deal with the “why” of behavior: the choices individuals make about whether to engage in an activity or not, their persistence at the task, and the amount of effort they expend while engaging in the activity (Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998; Wigfield, 1997). This history of motivation theory demonstrates the complexity of the construct of motivation. Early theories suggested that an individual is motivated to act if consequences are expected to be pleasant and unmotivated if the expected consequences are unpleasant. While these early theories accounted for much human behavior, theorists and researchers recognized they failed to explain an individual’s response in a situation that was completely unfamiliar. For example, how would an individual be expected to react if the consequences are uncertain or unknown? Researchers then began to explore how factors of motivation in terms of an individual’s response to external stimuli (Phillips & Soltes, 1991). Learning in this view takes place as we become conditioned to certain stimuli—
in other words, individuals are motivated to act depending on how their actions have been rewarded or punished previously. The glaring flaw in behaviorist theory is that it fails to explain an individual’s response in a novel situation. Studying new information with reinforcement.

Newer theory soon emerged with an emphasi

Dankura, 1986; Thomas, 1985). Social theorists began to emphasize self-efficiency theories of goal setting. Students are increasingly challenge

Wigfield & Guthrie, 2007; Traci & Meyer, 2000). This theory articulates the differences between engaged and disengaged readers and focuses on the characteristics of the engaged reader. In keeping with this theory, engaged readers are intrinsically motivated to read for a variety of personal goals, strategic in their reading behaviors, knowledgeable in their construction of new understandings from text, and socially interactive about the reading text. Guthrie (2004) notes that data from the 1998 NAEP report revealed that the correlation between engaged read-

A number of studies have concluded that intrinsically motivated students have higher achievement and more positive classroom attitudes than extrinsically motivated students (Deci & Ryan, 1992; Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991; Guthrie et al., 2007). Researchers and theorists agree that motivation is a fundamental component of learning. Baker and Wigfield (1999) found that intrinsic motivation is positively associated with standardized reading comprehension test scores. Intrinsic goals for reading have also been shown to be associated with increased conceptual learning from text to a greater extent than extrinsic goals (Guthrie, Wigfield, & Ven Secker, 2000; Vansteenkiste, Si-

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Behaviorist theorists then turned to cognitively based theories to more fully explain motivation to learn. Cognitive theorists are concerned with issues that are difficult to observe, such as perception, memory, and attention (Bruner, 1965; Piaget & Inhelder, 1969). In contrast to behaviorists, cognitive theorists believe observable behaviors are not simply responses to external stimuli. Rather, these behaviors are not simply responses to external stimuli. Rather, these behaviors represent the active structuring and organization of knowledge in the mind. Cognitive theories do not view motivation solely in terms of how past reinforcement affects behavior or how an action might be rewarded. Instead, they view it as a process of thought decision making. Cognitive theorists believe people do not passively respond to the environment. Instead, they actively make choices, attend to salient factors, and organize information in an effort to understand or to seek a goal. However, cognitive models of reading do not adequately account for all behavior. For example, a purely cognitive theory or reading would not explain why some students do not choose to read. A new theory that combines expectancy-value and self-efficacy theories is the social cognitive theory. In this theory, student motivation is multidimensional. This theory suggests students need to experience success with increasingly challenging texts so that they view themselves as competent and successful readers. This theory has clear implications for the classroom, as it suggests that students need to see and hear their teachers reading aloud with enjoyment and appreciation.

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Reading, opportunities to make choices and guidance in how to therefore, it seems important to provide students with academic grades in reading. Like ting to make choices in reading is associated with higher to Sweet et al. (1998), perceived autonomy in the form of to choose what they want to read and believe that they ownership and control over their own learning (Deci et al., 1991; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). According to Sweet et al. (1998),acknowledged the importance of a middle ground in reading is associated with higher academic grades in reading.

Guthrie et al. (2007) explored fourth-grade students’ motivation and reading comprehension growth and reported that allowing students to select their own books supports their autonomy, as compared to teachers or other adults choosing books for them. Students’ autonomy was further supported when they acquired strategies for choosing books to read.

Many students, especially struggling readers, often choose books that are far too easy or too difficult; therefore, it seems important to provide students with opportunities to make choices and guidance in how to make appropriate choices about texts and literacy activities (Carver & Liebert, 1995; Kim & White, 2008). Antonio and Paris, 2000) noted that “real and purposeful reading” is the foundation for students consider the following guidelines for scaffolding student choice: a pet.

1. Offer simple choices at first.
2. Help students practice making good choices.
3. Provide feedback about student choices.
4. Help students make choices that are appropriate.
5. Offer feedback that clarifies good choices.
6. Provide choice within a task. (For example, allow students to choose the sequence of text materials to read or the questions they answer after reading a text).

Studies have found that the books students find most interesting and enjoyable to read are those they have selected for their own reasons and purposes (Gambrell, 1998; Paris & Oka, 1986; Schon, 1989). It appears that students who are allowed to choose their own reading materials are more motivated to read, expend more effort, and gain better understanding of the text.

Adequate Time for Students to Engage in Sustained Reading

Hebert (2009) argues that time to read, or opportunity to read, is a critical but neglected area in the school reading curriculum. Classroom cultures that support motivation to read and provide sufficient amounts of time to read create the necessary foundation that is essential for successful reading. Hebert (2003) states that “time spent reading is associated with reading achievement and the development of the reading approach.” Other research has demonstrated that time spent reading is associated with increased motivation to read.

Reading practice, or time spent reading, is vital to becoming not only a proficient reader, but a motivated and engaged reader who chooses to read for pleasure and information.

A study by Foorman et al. (2006) examined time allocation during reading instruction. Observations of first and second graders and their 107 teachers revealed that the amount of time allocated to text reading was positively associated with growth in reading proficiency. Only time devoted to text reading significantly explained gains on posttest measures, including word reading, passage comprehension, and passage comprehension. No other time-allocation factors, including time spent on word, oral, phonemic or phonetic awareness instruction, contributed to growth.

Studies have also investigated the effects of student motivation and the role of motivation in reading achievement. In a study by Taylor, Frye, and Mistry (1990), time spent reading in school was highly correlated with reading achievement, while the correlation between reading outside of school and reading proficiency was much lower. More important, when differences in students’ prior knowledge, reading ability, and time allowed for reading at school were controlled, in-school reading time was a significant factor in reading growth. In a subsequence study, Guthrie, Wiegfield, Matala, and Cox (1999) reported that the amount of time spent reading in and outside of school predicted reading comprehension. Given the evidence that time spent reading is strongly associated with reading proficiency, it is surprising that the times students spend in sustained reading of text in the classroom has not increased over the years (Hebert, 2009).

The school reading curriculum should include ample opportunities for reading at home and during reading at school. Encouraging students to take books home to read for pleasure is a simple but effective way to encourage reading practice. Students who are critical of time spent during the school day be devoted to the sustained reading of books and other reading materials of interest to the student. In addition to reading instruction time in the classroom, devoting time to self-selected reading, or independent reading, during the school day demands motivated students who are allowed for the practice necessary for the development of proficient reading.

Opportunities for Success With Challenging Texts

According to Turner (1995), a hallmark of good reading instruction is offering reading tasks and activities that advance, rather than overwhelm, the reader. If activities are too complex or confusing, the reader is more likely to choose not to continue engaging in the reading task. On the other hand, if the reading tasks and activities are too easy, the reader is more likely to become bored with the task. Turner notes that motivating reading tasks and activities are moderately challenging, where the student must put forth some effort. Success with challenging tasks provides the students with a sense of accomplishment, resulting in an increase in self-concept and self-efficacy (Schunk, 1989; Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997). Accomplishing a challenging task has been shown to enhance students’ intrinsic motivation (Guthrie et al., 2007; Weiner, 1992).

Motivation to read is constantly extending their skills to meet new challenges. As Turner (1995) notes these elements are cyclical: individuals improve skills to meet challenges, and then, equipped with greater skills, they seek new challenges. The result is the development of the activity and the individual’s ability to respond. When challenges and skills are out of balance, students may feel either frustration or boredom (Keller, 1982). Accomplishing a challenging task has been shown to enhance students’ intrinsic motivation (Guthrie et al., 2007; Weiner, 1992).

Mastery motivation is extended and effective instruction combined reading for real-world purposes, interesting texts, and student choice.

A number of studies provide evidence that involving students in authentic reading tasks and activities accelerates reading motivation and achievement (Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2002; Gambrell et al., 2009; Knapp, 1995, Purcell-Gates et al., 2007). Gambrell and her colleagues conducted a study of authentic literacy tasks in which students engaged in reading books, exchanging letters with an adult pen pal, and participating in peer-led discussions about the books and pen pal letters. The results revealed statistically significant increases in literacy motivation on a pre- and post-assessment and provided evidence that the discussions about the books and pen pal letters engaged students in critical thinking. Purcell-Gates et al. (2007) explored student growth in reading motivation and reading achievement while communicating with other individuals or groups, through writing and discussion, about what has been read (Applebee, Langer, Nyswander, & Perini, 1984; Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2002; Gambrell et al., 2009; Knapp, 1995, Purcell-Gates et al., 2007). Social interaction included talking about books with others, reading together with others, borrowing and sharing books with others, talking about books with peers in class, and sharing writing about books with others. Instruction that incorporates social interaction found to have increased social support for reading as well as their reading comprehension and achievement. Sweet et al. (2007) concluded that instruction that incorporates social interaction increases intrinsic motivation.

Turner and Paris (1995) suggest several ways in which social interaction supports motivation to read. First, peer comments can pique students’ curiosity. Second, students’ observations of their peers’ progress may increase their confidence in their own ability to succeed. Third, working with others promotes student engagement in literacy tasks and activities. Collaborative and social interaction provide opportunities for students to develop competence and efficacy as readers and writers. Intrinsic motivation to learn is enhanced in classrooms where students can join groups of students with the same reading interests.

Opportunities to Engage in Relevant Reading Tasks

Students who perceive reading as valuable and important and who have personally relevant reasons for reading will engage in reading in a more planned and effortless manner (Ames & Archer, 1988; Guthrie et al., 2007). Relevant or authentic reading tasks are integrated into students’ reading experiences in tasks in which the goal of reading is to comprehend the text well enough to use the acquired information for real-world purposes, such as putting together a toy airplane, or finding out what to feed a pet gerbil. Instructional practices that focus on connections between school reading and authentic, real-life reading enhance student motivation. In a study of authentic instruction, Purcell-Gates, Duke, and the authors (2007) found that the most effective instruction combined reading for real-world purposes, interesting texts, and student choice.
It is worth noting, however, that researchers and edu-
cators who advocate for a book-access model argue that books are not sufficient for effective instruction in proving reading motivation or achievement (Byrnes, 2000; Kim & White, 2008). While access to books sets the stage, there are a number of factors that need to be coupled with book access to promote reading motivation and achieve-
ment, including time to read and teacher-directed reading strategies (Cooter et al., 2008).

Opportunities for Students to Choose What They Read

Choice is a powerful force that allows students to take ownership and responsibility for their learning (Ret-
ning, 2000). Research indicates that intrinsic motivation is increased when students have opportunities to choose what they read and believe that they have some autonomy or control over their own learning (Deci et al., 1991; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). According to Sweet et al. (1998), perceived autonomy in the form of having choices in reading is associated with higher academic grades in reading.

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ment. In a study by Taylor, Frye, and Miyamura (1990), time spent reading in school was highly correlated with reading achievement, while the correlation between reading outside of school and reading proficiency was much lower. More important, when differences in stu-
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sequent study by Guthrie, Wigfield, Metcalfe, and Cox (1997) research studies have documented that time spent reading is associated with reading achievement and the development of intrinsic motivation to read. Observations of reading practice during small group instruction conducted by Heathington (1997), Midgley, and Kusel (1995) concluded that increased amounts of time for free reading in the classroom was associated with increased motivation to read.

As a result, reading practice or time spent reading is vital to becoming not only a proficient reader, but a motivated and engaged reader who chooses to read for pleasure and information.
They defined authentic literacy activities as those serving a genuine, not merely a surface or superficial purpose. While the National Reading Panel (1998) advocated the use of a learning-to-read-and-write context and purpose (for example, reading to complete a task and writing a thank-you letter). The results of the study indicated that classrooms with more authentic reading and writing tasks increased in reading and writing proficiency at a faster rate than those with extensive use of less authentic literacy tasks. Literacy tasks that are authentic and have relevance to real-life are supportive of classroom instruction because they enable students to see the connections between school reading and real-life, out-of-school reading.

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### Incentives That Reflect the Value of Reading and Learning

Research has established that teacher praise and teacher feedback, which are tangibles, can motivate students to read and learn. Teacher praise and teacher feedback, which are tangibles, can motivate students to read and learn. Teacher praise and teacher feedback have been shown to positively influence students’ intrinsic motivation and achievement (Cameron & Pierce, 1994, Deci, 1971). Lepper and Cordova (1992) conducted a study with upper elementary students on the effects of teacher praise and feedback on student performance. The results revealed that teacher praise provides verbal scaffolding, support, and direction to the student and leads to increased student motivation to learn. In addition, the study revealed that elaborated or embellished teacher praise is more motivational than tangible incentives or prizes.

According to Brophy (1981), effective teacher praise is given con-tingent on the student’s effort and achievement. The teacher’s feedback, the teacher’s accomplishments, attributes success to the student’s effort, and offers the student a higher appreciation than has or has not worked, and fosters a sense of task attentiveness. However, teacher praise is not always effective. If students perceive teacher praise to be disingenuous, the student’s motivation may decline because the student may feel that they are being manipulated (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

Tangible incentives. Research is less clear about the effects of tangible incentives on student motivation and performance. Giving tangible incentives such as gold stars, points, candy, or other prizes is paradoxical: tangible rewards can increase short-term attention on specific activities, but in general they have been found to undermine the development of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1992). The main reason they are used is because an incentive program was to develop students’ intrinsic motivation to read.

Theories of extrinsic motivation maintain that behaviors, such as reading, are performed for external incentives or consequences. Numerous studies have investigated the use of tangible (verbal praise and feedback) and tangible incentives on learning. These studies suggest that not all extrinsic incentives have the same effect on motivation and achievement. Some external incentives appear to support motivation and learning, while others are said to undermine learning.

**Nontangible incentives.** Nontangible extrinsic incentives such as teacher praise and feedback have been shown to positively influence students’ intrinsic motivation and achievement (Cameron & Pierce, 1994, Deci, 1971). Lepper and Cordova (1992) conducted a study with upper elementary students on the effects of teacher praise and feedback on student performance. The results revealed that teacher praise provides verbal scaffolding, support, and direction to the student and leads to increased student motivation to learn. In addition, the study revealed that elaborated or embellished teacher praise is more motivational than tangible incentives or prizes.

Marinak and Gambrell (2008) examined the reward procedures used by teachers to encourage intrinsic motivation in students under which rewards influenced reading motivation. They assessed intrinsic motivation using a series of task-persistence measures: choosing to read, time spent reading, and number of words read. The major finding was that students who were given a book as a reward (proximal reward) and students who received no reward were more motivated to engage in subsequent reading than students who received prizes other than books as rewards. This finding is in keeping with Deci’s (1971, 1972, 1993) work indicating that tangible rewards undermine intrinsic motivation.

When teachers give praise and students interpret it as recognition of achievement, it can increase students’ feelings of competence and motivation (Fink, Boggiano, Main, Barrett, & Katz, 1998; Marinak & Gambrell, 1997; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

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Theories of extrinsic motivation maintain that behaviors, such as reading, are performed for external incentives or consequences. Numerous studies have investigated the use of tangible (verbal praise and feedback) and tangible incentives on learning. These studies suggest that not all extrinsic incentives have the same effect on motivation and achievement. Some external incentives appear to support motivation and learning, while others are said to undermine learning.

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They defined authentic literacy activities as those serving a dual purpose, such as a learning-to-read-and-write context and purpose (for example, reading to complete a task and writing a thank-you letter). The results of the study indicated that classrooms with more authentic reading and writing tasks increased in reading and writing proficiency at a faster rate than those with exposure to less authentic literacy activities. Literacy tasks that are authentic and have relevance to real-life are supportive of intrinsic motivation because they enable students to see the connections between school reading and real-life, out-of-school reading.

**Incentives That Reflect the Value of Reading and Learning**

Both teacher praise and teacher feedback are important in school reading programs. It is critical that teachers believe that extrinsic rewards or incentives spark students’ reading motivation (Marinak & Gambrell, 2009). Moore and Fawson (1992) surveyed five diverse public school districts and found that 95 percent of elementary teachers used some form of incentive program to encourage students to read. These teachers reported that the main reason they used an incentive program was to develop students’ intrinsic motivation to read.

Intrinsic motivation maintains that behaviors, such as reading, are performed for internal incentives or consequences. Numerous studies have investigated the effects of tangible (verbal praise and feedback) and tangible incentives on learning. These studies suggest that not all extrinsic incentives have the same effect on motivation and achievement. Some external incentives appear to support motivation and learning, while other inappropriate incentives can undermine motivation.

**Nontangible incentives.** Nontangible extrinsic incentives such as teacher praise and feedback have been shown to positively influence students’ intrinsic motivation and achievement (Cameron & Pierce, 1994, Deci, 1971). Lepper and Cordova (1992) conducted a study with upper elementary students on the effects of teacher praise and feedback on student performance. The results revealed that teacher praise provides verbal scaffolding, support, and direction to the students and leads to increased student motivation to learn. In addition, the study revealed that elaborated or embellished teacher praise is more motivating than tangible incentives such as stickers and tokens.

According to Brophy (1981), effective teacher praise is given contingent on the student’s effort and achievement. Providing the student with specific feedback about the student’s accomplishments, attributes success to the student’s effort, and10 expresses a belief that the student has or her own work is more important than the task at hand. However, teacher praise is not always effective. If students perceive teacher praise to be dishonest, students’ motivation may decline because the students may feel that they are being manipulated (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

**Tangible incentives.** Research is less clear about the effects of tangible incentives on student motivation and performance. Giving tangible incentives such as gold stars, points, candy, or other prizes is paradoxical: tangible rewards can increase short-term attention on specific activities, but in general they have been found to undermine the development of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1992). Clear and replicable research findings on the effects of rewards reveal that offering students tangible rewards for performing an intrinsically motivating activity leads to a decrease in intrinsic motivation for engaging in the activity (Deci, 1971, 1972, 1975; Lepper & Green, 1978).

A number of studies by Deci (1971, 1972, 1975, 1992) investigated the effects of incentives on student reading motivation. Findings were mixed, but many indicated that money and other tangible incentives for engaging in a task that was already intrinsically interesting. Students who were engaged in a task in one session and who were paid during a second session tended to show less intrinsic motivation toward the task than did the comparison group that was not paid. These studies suggest that offering students prizes, money, or other tangible rewards results in a decrease in their intrinsic interest and a decrease in their reading proficiency. Thus, Deci (1992) concluded that tangible rewards undermine intrinsic motivation.

The reward proximity hypothesis. One notable feature of both teacher praise and teacher feedback is that they are always closely linked to the desired student behavior, while tangible incentives (such as gold stars and stickers) are usually unrelated to the desired behavior. Drawing on this discrepancy, the reward proximity hypothesis (Gambrell, 1996) posits that intrinsic motivation is enhanced when the incentive or reward is linked to the desired behavior. Teachers foster students’ intrinsic motivation in an activity when they provide teacher feedback and intrinsic reward. However, teacher praise, while nontangible, can increase student motivation. When teachers give frequent, positive, and honest feedback about student reading performance, it supports students’ belief that they can read well and increase their motivation to read. With respect to tangible incentives offered for reading, research suggests that the incentives should be a natural extension of the desired reading behavior, such as books and extra time for reading.

Marinak and Gambrell (2008) examined the reward proximity hypothesis in the classroom by identifying several factors under which rewards influenced reading motivation. They assessed intrinsic motivation using a series of task-persistence measures: choosing to read, time spent reading, and number of words read. The major finding was that students who were given a book as a reward (proximal reward) and students who received no reward were more motivated to engage in subsequent reading than students who received prides other than books as rewards. This finding is in keeping with Deci’s (1971, 1972, 1975) work indicating that tangible rewards undermine motivation.

When teachers give praise and tangible rewards like gold stars and stickers to students, the students may perceive teacher praise to be dishonest and motivate students to read. When students receive tangible rewards, the extrinsic motivation becomes more powerful than the intrinsic motivation. When teachers combine teacher praise and teacher feedback, students may perceive teacher praise to be lacking honesty or integrity. Because this finding is in keeping with Deci’s (1971, 1972, 1975) work indicating that tangible rewards undermine motivation.

Throughout the 20th century, some external incentives (prizes, money, and other tangible incentives for engaging in a task) were related to students’ intrinsic motivation to read. Intrinsic motivation is enhanced when the incentive or reward is linked to the desired behavior. Teachers foster students’ intrinsic motivation in an activity when they provide teacher feedback and intrinsic rewards. When teachers give frequent, positive, and honest feedback about student reading performance, it supports students’ belief that they can read well and increase their motivation to read. With respect to tangible incentives offered for reading, research suggests that the incentives should be a natural extension of the desired reading behavior, such as books and extra time for reading. If we want our students to read outside the classroom reading and learning are the best reward.

We should carefully consider the use of rewards and incentives to promote reading motivation in the classroom. Our students know that rewards and incentives, by definition, are motivated by extrinsic factors. They are perceived as having high value, whether it is teacher praise or a prize. If we want our students to value reading and academics, we have to be clever in creating classrooms where the message is clear that reading and learning are the best reward.

Some examples of reading incentives that are related to reading and learning include identifying a portion of the reward that involves regular reading (for example, either page 9 or page 10 from the textbook). Research suggests that nontangible incentives, such as teacher praise, teacher feedback, and intrinsic reward, can increase student motivation. When teachers give frequent, positive, and honest feedback about student reading performance, it supports students’ belief that they can read well and increase their motivation to read. With respect to tangible incentives offered for reading, research suggests that the incentives should be a natural extension of the desired reading behavior, such as books and extra time for reading.

A Critical and Necessary Foundation

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2000) encourages schools to focus on quality instruction in the five research-based instructional areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. It is also incumbent upon principals, teachers, and other educational leaders to promote a school reading culture that encourages and nurtures motivation to read.

Incentives appear to support motivation and learning, while nontangible incentives, such as teacher praise and teacher feedback, can increase student motivation when teachers give frequent, positive, and honest feedback about student reading performance, it supports students’ belief that they can read well and increase their motivation to read. With respect to tangible incentives offered for reading, research suggests that the incentives should be a natural extension of the desired reading behavior, such as books and extra time for reading.

1. Are students supported in learning how to choose appropriate-leveled books for independent reading?
2. Is adequate time allotted during the school day for independent reading?
3. Is time devoted to student book sharing and discussion?
4. To what extent do reading tasks and activities reflect real-life reading?
5. If incentives are given, do they reflect the value of reading and learning?

These questions address the essentials of classrooms that reflect a high value of reading and the expectation that all students can become independent, proficient readers. Answers to these questions can provide information that is needed to motivate students to read. Reading motivation is not undermined. This study suggests that if incentives are used in the classroom, the proximity of the reward to the desired behavior of reading is a particularly salient factor in supporting motivation to read.

We all want students to be eager to read and who read for pleasure and information. We all want students who are eager to read and who read for pleasure and information. We all want students who are eager to learn to read. We all want students who enjoy sharing book experiences and want to read in increasingly challenging materials. Simply put, we want our students to want to read.

The most basic goal of any school reading curriculum is the development of readers who can read and who choose to read. Instruction in the five research-based instructional areas is necessary, but not sufficient, to reach this goal. If our students are not motivated to read, they will never reach their full literacy potential.
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“Read the Passage and Answer the Questions”: Discourse Principles for Revising Curriculum Questions

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ABSTRACT

In this article I examined the traditional series of questions that follow a passage of reading text in published curriculum materials. I looked for failures to observe the discourse requirements imposed by the fact that one question follows another. Examples show how the failure to observe discourse coherence and cohesion between questions can motivate students to produce incorrect answers that are based on overly complex and variable language structures and wording rather than on any lack of skill or knowledge.

“Read the passage and answer the questions at the end.” These are familiar instructions to most school students from early grades through college. A series of questions is a traditional form of assessing students’ understanding of reading tasks of all types: fiction and non-fiction; short passages, chapters, and books; charts, tables, and maps. Answering a series of comprehension questions can be a daunting task for any student, but it is especially difficult for English learners. A critical source of this difficulty is the sampling or scatter-shot nature of the set of questions—jumping from one topic and kind of information to another. Even though question sets are related to a single presentation of text, they are not governed by the conventions of connected discourse. The result is all too often a randomness in the language used throughout the series of questions.

With practice and experience, we all learn to predict, to some extent, the range of information that is selected through a series of questions following a text. But unless sets of questions are carefully edited for coherent and cohesive language from one question to the next, the random variation of language adds an additional and unfair burden to English learners and to struggling readers. The point I wish to make is one of metalinguistic awareness: we can expect and accept the focus of information to jump from one question to another. Even though question sets are related to a single presentation of text, they are not governed by the conventions of connected discourse. The result is all too often a randomness in the language used throughout the series of questions.

An Example

Here is an example of a series of questions taken from a published workbook page based on an historical map of Florida. I have added the underlining to make it easier to see some of the variation in structure and wording in the page.

1. Circle the lake where the Jaega nation lived.
2. Write the names of two nations that lived near Alachua.
3. Were most of the first people living in the northern or southern part of Florida?

4. Name two nations that lived south of Tampa Bay.
5. What three bodies of water surrounded the Calusa nation?
6. Three of the questions are presented as directives: “circle,” “write,” and “name.” The writers have no reason to vary the language of each directive. This is unnecessary complexity when the target knowledge can be elicited with one form of directive: “Write the name of.” Of the two items that are presented as syntactic questions (they have question marks), one begins with yes-no question syntax (#3), and the other is structured as a wh-question (#5).

…unless sets of questions are carefully edited for coherent and cohesive language from one question to the next, the random variation of language adds an additional and unfair burden to English learners and to struggling readers.

The student has been given different answering instructions in each question. The student must interpret the structure of each different question before thinking about the target information. The additional language processing load of shifting question types in a single series serves no purpose in assessing knowledge gained from reading. Unnecessary language complexity of “false” metalinguistic “scoring” of a student’s performance. Incorrect answers may reflect skill or knowledge not yet attained in either English language proficiency or content knowledge—no separation of the two is possible.

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