

RELUCTANT READERS: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHERS

Have a wide selection of genres of real literature readily available to students. If mostly basal readers or textbooks are used for instruction, students are not getting the opportunities needed to develop lifelong reading habits, tastes, and attitudes.

Encourage students to read high-interest, popular magazines, such as during free time, for writing-based assignments, and at home. “Sports Illustrated for Kids” and “Time for Kids” are high interest and available in class sets, along with teacher resources.

Have books available which can be easily read by students on all reading levels, but encourage students to make the choice to challenge themselves. Make sure that remedial readers get the opportunity to read real books, not just do isolated skill work. These are students who, based on research, do not read outside of school. They can’t be expected to want to read a book on their own if they never have had practice reading real books.

Where feasible, provide time each day for students to read self-selected material. Recognize that students are much more motivated to read if they are able to choose the material.

Show students that you are a reader by reading when they are, as well as by modeling discussion about the books you are reading or have read.

Allow students to occasionally reread a favorite book, like adults occasionally like to do.

If a student isn’t enjoying a book after reading several chapters, allow them to choose another one. For a student who is continually changing books without finishing them, interview him/her to determine his/her interests in order to offer guidance in book selection.

Encourage students to renew their reading interests regularly by finding new interests. This could involve reading books by new authors, reading new magazines, or reading from new formats, like the e-book or books on tape.

Because many adolescents are very computer savvy, maximize this interest in terms of reading instruction. Encourage use of reading websites for recommendations of new books especially for adolescents. Several sites are those created by the American Library Association, the International Reading Association, and the Young Adult Library Service Association. Utilize reading software to allow students to track their reading progress and understanding.

Develop an incentive program to motivate students to read inside and outside of school.

Develop an independent reading program, which encourages parental involvement in students' reading. This is not only important in the early grades, but also in the middle and upper grades. Communicate regularly with parents concerning requirements and responsibilities, as well as students' progress.

Provide regular opportunities for students to engage in real conversations about what they are reading, in formats such as Book Clubs, Literature Circles, or Reader Response Groups. Adolescents are social beings, so this allows them to talk to their peers in meaningful ways about books. This promotes an in-school experience that parallels the outside world, and does not just focus on literal comprehension of what was read.

Provide "book talks" on new or high-interest books. Tell just enough about the book to get students interested and to guide in their self-selection.

Students enjoy evaluating and rating books, which will also lead them to be more critical readers and writers. Have students think about what makes a good book to them, and evaluate each book as they finish it.

Allow students time in class to recommend books they enjoyed to others. Many students are more likely to read a book if it is recommended by a peer. "Critic's Corner" (formatted after the movie segment called this on "The Today Show") could be used, which allows one student each week to tell the class about a book, stressing why it is being recommended.

Your own attitude toward reading and the reading program you develop will greatly influence students' attitudes. Take a personal and sincere interest in what students are reading, but do not make the reading program a tedious chore so that students are turned off to it. Be careful to highly encourage reading, but not push it too hard.

Incorporate questions that are the type you would ask a friend during a discussion about a book or a movie. This will allow for connections to be made between the books read and the students' life events.

Read aloud to students, regardless of their age. You can initiate student interest in a particular author, topic, or genre this way, and it gives an opportunity for good reading strategies to be modeled and listening skills to be enhanced.

Encourage adolescents to read aloud to a younger brother or sister, or set up a "Reading Buddies" system with a neighboring elementary school.

Encourage students to set their own goals for reading and to work to make progress toward achieving them. Examples of student goals could be: increasing their reading speed, stimulating their imagination, gaining new knowledge, and any others students formulate.

Stress that time spent reading has a direct impact on performance in all other areas of learning. Based upon empirical data, students who read more inside, and especially outside, of school have higher achievement.

Incorporate books into all subject areas in every grade. This is especially easy to do in Social Studies and Science units of study. Showing how important reading is to school success and life success is critical, and this strategy removes the idea that reading is just one class in their schedules.

Additional Resources:

Ammon, B. (1999). *More rip-roaring reads for reluctant teen readers*. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.

Sullivan, E. (2002). *Reaching reluctant young adult readers*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.

www.ala.org/yalsa/booklists/quickpicks/: Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers.

www.glencoe.com/sec/teachingtoday/educationupclose.phtml/29: Helping Remedial and Reluctant Readers.

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