

## *The Keys to Reading Motivation*

**Summary:** Every teacher hates to hear a student say that they “hate reading.” In an article for *The Reading Teacher*, Clemson University professor Linda Gambrell summarizes seven key research findings and provides classroom tips for maximizing students’ motivation in reading.

### **Practical Applications**

Gambrell’s “Seven Rules of Engagement” (and ideas to consider using in the classroom, though the ideas are by no means comprehensive) are that students are more motivated to read when:

- **The reading tasks and activities are relevant to their lives.** Have students keep a ‘reading diary’ and reflect for a few minutes each day on how what they read connects to their own lives.
- **They have access to a wide range of reading materials.** However, research shows that just having a wide array of text in the classroom isn’t enough without teacher guidance; consider hosting a “weekly ‘teacher book-selling session’ in which you do a quick sharing of about 10-12 books – piquing children’s interest and curiosity about the books.”
- **They have ample opportunity to engage in sustained reading.** Build students’ independent reading endurance gradually by starting with, say, 10 minutes per day of sustained reading and building it throughout the year to 20 minutes or 30 minutes.
- **They have opportunities to make choices about what they read and how they engage in and complete literacy tasks.** For struggling readers who often have trouble selecting appropriate books, choose 4-5 books for them and provide them with this “bounded choice” during a student-teacher mini-conference.
- **They have opportunities to socially interact with others about text they are reading.** Give 3-4 minutes for partner “quick shares” about what they just read at the end of reading time, using a timer to ensure both students speak.
- **They have opportunities to be successful with challenging texts.** Instead of labeling books as “easy,” “average” and “difficult,” label books as “hard,” “harder,” and “hardest.” This gives students a sense that they are successful and capable even with difficult text, and encourages them to push their efforts further.
- **They have classroom incentives that reflect the value and importance of reading.** Use books and reading time as rewards; one way to do this might be to separate out the older books which tend to be of less interest to students and making a special shelf for them, then letting students take one book from that shelf home permanently over holidays, etc.

### **Conclusion and Citation**

Motivation is directly related to students’ reading achievement.

Employing these strategies (or variations on them) will help make your classroom one where all students are excited to read.

Gambrell, L. “Seven Rules of Engagement: What’s Most Important to Know about Motivation to Read.” *The Reading Teacher*, 65.3 (2011), pp. 172-178.  
<http://bit.ly/tsBoda> (subscription only).