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Self-Identified Motivation for Avid Middle School Readers

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State University of New York

College at Brockport

Self-Identified Motivations for Avid Middle School Readers

By

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**A Thesis submitted to the
Department of Education and Human Development
in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
Master of Science in Education**

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Abstract

This study explored the motivation behind avid middle school readers. The purpose of this study was to investigate and determine the motivation behind avid middle school readers. The research question was: What motivations do avid readers possess?

The subjects of this study were 50 avid middle school readers aged 11-14. They all attended the same public suburban middle school. An anonymous survey was given to the students to complete in the fall of 2002. The results of this investigation substantiate much of the previous research in the area of what motivation is behind avid middle school readers. In addition, the information gathered from this study support and reassures us that the current surge in student-centered teaching is on the right track. The most important conclusion is that there is “no one size fits all” pattern, for which a student becomes an avid reader, rather there are as many ways as there are readers.

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CHAPTER I

Statement of the Problem

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine the motivation behind avid middle school readers.

Introduction

The Aliterate Middle School Student

The main goal of most reading programs is to develop students into life-long readers. This is a difficult task for classroom teachers especially when their middle school students come to them with a wide range of reading abilities as well as interests. Teachers need to help their middle school students develop an appreciation for reading. This is particularly so if their middle school students are reluctant readers.

Michelsen (2000) used a naturalistic case study approach to explore the reading attitudes and the motivation of middle school at-risk readers. After interviewing and observing the students she arrived at the conclusion that a child who is motivated to read and internally wants to read may achieve success in reading faster than a child who is unmotivated and has a poor attitude toward

reading. Similar findings have also been found in the research of Cordova and Lepper (1996) and McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995). According to both studies, in order for students to develop into mature, effective readers, they must possess both the skill and the will to read. Motivation plays a critical role in learning and in fostering a life-long love of reading. "Motivation serves to make the difference between learning that is superficial and shallow, and learning that is deep and internalized"(Donovan, 1999, p.3).

Several years ago a group of middle school students was surveyed about their most memorable school assignments. Wasserstein (1995) established from his research that, not surprisingly, students named hands-on science projects, independent research projects, and performance activities as their favorite school experiences. Ivey (1999) also reported similar results from her study on middle school students. Reading was a serious but not surprising omission. Other research has painted a similarly bleak picture, revealing that middle level students do not like to read (McKenna et al., 1995) and seldom choose to read on their own (Ley & Dismukes, 1995; Morrow, 1991). Middle school students asked to complete reading and writing attitude surveys often ranked reading for pleasure at the bottom of the list. Students have been often known to respond with such phrases as "reading is for someone with no life" and "I would rather take out the garbage." Our nation is becoming one of "aliterates"—those who can read, but choose not to (Lange, 1994).

Definitions

Middle school student—the sixth, seventh, or eighth grade level

Avid reader—an experienced reader, who read, not necessarily in enormous quantities, but who incorporate leisure reading consistently into his/her day to day living

Need for the Study

Research shows that around the world, the number of alliterates are growing by leaps and bounds. “Voluntary reading is critical to a literate society.” (Lange, 1994, p 58) As educators we need to continue to support the avid middle school readers that are out there and find ways to entice the reluctant readers into reading. Research suggests numerous ways to meet these goals. It is imperative to offer middle school students an environment that is effective, stimulating, and with learner-centered instructions. Middle school readers need purpose and direction to foster optimistic views of themselves and to motivate them to be life-long readers.

Teachers, librarians, parents, authors, and students could use the implications of this study. The results could be effective in helping to determine how middle school students choose their reading material, what types of literature to provide to students, and what are the greatest motivators for middle school readers.

Limitations of the Study

The respondents in this study were identified as avid readers either by themselves, the school librarian, colleagues or this researcher. The criterion used in determining an avid reader was largely subjective. The assumption is made that reading was considered an integral of their daily life.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Research

Research on Middle School Reading

Recent research at both the national and state levels indicates a declining interest and slowing development in reading through the junior high and senior high school grades. Excluding the common reading activity and oral turn taking from a common text, reading occupies only approximately 6% of class time in elementary school, 3% in junior high school and 2% in senior high school (Bintz, 1993). Anderson, Tollefson, and Gilbert (1985) also concluded that the reading diet of primary students far exceeds that of intermediate and secondary students. Primary students clearly demonstrate a much more voracious appetite for reading than do their older counterparts (Bintz, 1993). This finding can also be found in McFann's research. Elementary students are the easiest to motivate since they like to please, their teachers are encouraging and their books are thinner. Middle school students are more difficult to engage because, "Although some still hug and read, others succumb to peer pressure and find other ways to fill time" (McFann, 2000/2001, p.4). Much research shows that many elementary school students thrive on a steady diet of reading. Unfortunately by the time they reach middle school they lose their appetite for reading.

In 1984, Early reported the characteristics of the average middle school readers and their reading development. She found three main characteristics of average middle school readers. First, they can read fairly accurately and fluently in grade level texts. Second, they have mastered basic comprehension processes with texts that deal with concrete experiences, but they have problems dealing with abstracts. Third, middle school students do not read much. These findings in the study by Early just described have also been established in the research of McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995). They found that middle school students do not read much outside of school and that they develop a negative attitude toward reading as they approach the middle school years.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations have different influences on the middle school reader. Researchers have distinguished between intrinsic motivation, which refers to being motivated to do an activity for its own sake and out of interest and curiosity, and extrinsic motivation, or doing an activity to receive a reward or other form of recognition (Guthrie, Wigfield & VonSecker, 2000). Miller and Meece (cited in Guthrie et al., 2000) believe that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are moderately and positively correlated and Wigfield and Guthrie (cited in Guthrie et al., 2000) report both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation predict children's reading amount and frequency. However, in elementary students (Gottfried, 1990) and middle school students (Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala, & Cox, 1999), intrinsic motivation is a stronger predictor of reading than extrinsic

motivation (Guthrie et al., 2000). The conclusions from the study by Guthrie, Wigfield, and VonSecker (2000) have also been reported in the research of Baker and Wigfield (1999). Baker and Wigfield found from their research that students who believe they are capable of reading well and are intrinsically motivated to read, report they read more frequently. Intrinsic motivations appear to be imperative to life-long reading. Several researchers have determined that strategies such as finding books, maintaining a place for reading, and saving a large amount of time for reading activities are learned and sustained by intrinsic motivations (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Bintz, 1993; Donovan, 1999).

Extrinsic motivations for reading can be very powerful but they are short lived. They usually take on the role of a performance type goal. A performance type goal can be described as completing or performing an activity for someone else. Examples of performance type goals include recognition, the pleasure in receiving a tangible form of recognition for success in reading, reading for grades, the desire to be favorably evaluated by the teacher, competition, and the desire to outperform others in reading (Baker & Wigfield, 1999). Johnson (1999) concluded from his study that extrinsic motivation not only does not achieve long-term desired behaviors, but actually works against building those very habits and attitudes. This includes the willingness to read independently. Several researchers have found that extrinsic motivations do not regenerate themselves (Guthrie, Van Meter, McCann, Wigfield, Bennett, Poundstone, Rice, Faibisch, Hunt, & Mitchell, 1996; Sweet, Guthrie & Ng, 1998). The teacher must continually provide performance goals to entice readers.

It has been acknowledged that various classroom practices can enhance a student's intrinsic motivation. One program that was designed to influence intrinsic motivation and reading is Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI). CORI is a new approach to teaching reading, writing, and science. This program emphasizes real-world interaction (hands-on activities), learning goals, collaboration, instructional support, and self-directed learning. Researchers Guthrie, Wigfield, and VonSecker (2000) recently conducted a study with students in several CORI classrooms and students in traditional classrooms with the same content objectives. Children in the CORI classrooms scored statistically higher on reading motivation than did children in traditional classrooms. The results of the study show that classroom contexts can be constructed to influence reading motivational outcomes positively. The findings in the study by Guthrie, Wigfield, and VonSecker just described have also been reported in the research of Bintz (1993) and Guthrie et al. (1996). Pate, Homestead, and McGinnis (1994) suggest that schools should embrace integrated curriculum because students favor it. Anders and Pitchard (1993) have found that middle school students have a desire for increasing autonomy and CORI would provide opportunities for this autonomy in a middle school environment.

Several researchers have proposed that students who are curious and want to learn about a topic will gain a deeper understanding of the material than those who lack these attributes (Cordova & Lepper, 1996; Ivey, 1999; Sweet, Guthrie, and Ng, 1998). Blumenfeld (cited in Donovan, 1999) presented an overview of his study that shows students whose motivations are more extrinsic are likely to

engage in rote learning and gain verbatim knowledge rather than a fully integrated conceptual understanding. Students who possess intrinsic motivation, experience more conceptual learning than students who are only motivated extrinsically.

School Influence on Motivation

Motivating reluctant readers to read involves setting a sense of purpose. If a middle school student is given a passage to read and is convinced that it will not make a bit of difference if it is read or not, chances are the student will not bother to read it. Motivating a middle school student to read involves sparking his or her curiosity, giving him or her a reason to read. Baker and Wigfield (1999) established from their research that children who are engaged in open task classrooms where choice is given were more aware of the purpose of literacy activities. They reported thinking more about those purposes than those who were not in that setting. Turner (1995) also reported similar results from her study on students in basal classrooms and open task classrooms. She found that students in the open task classrooms seemed to have more of a conceptual notion of why they were learning the material and how it could be useful. These findings from Baker, Wigfield, and Turner just described have also been concluded in the research of Bintz (1993).

Teachers assign readings in literature to enhance their students' appreciation, and hope that they will enjoy reading it, but this is not always the case. The middle school student needs to be convinced that reading the literature will be interesting, and then the student will be more willing to read. But this

will only be effective as long as the student values his or her teacher's opinion.

To be able to motivate middle school students to read entails allowing them to set their own purpose for reading (Bintz, 1993). Using the skill of prediction can do this. Students who are able to make a prediction about material before it is read will be creating an atmosphere in which they will be reading to prove or disprove their prediction about the story. This will in turn formulate their own purpose for reading. Hunt (1987) conducted an experiment with twelve through fourteen year old students that was designed to measure the effect of prediction instruction on the comprehension abilities of at risk-readers. During the course of the study, marked increases in motivational levels of the prediction group were observed. Over a period of three weeks, the students in the prediction group went from groaning at the length of the first story to all out contests to see who could be the most accurate making predictions about the story.

Through a long-term study Worthy and McKool (1996) interviewed sixth-grade students who had average and above average reading skills but negative attitudes toward reading. Through interviews with students and teachers and classroom observations they concluded that there were three main issues that contributed to middle school students' negative attitudes toward reading. First, students were given limited opportunities to read independently and during these times they were not always engaged in reading. Second, students linked positive reading experiences with being able to select their own books. Unfortunately the opportunities for free choice of reading materials was limited. Third, students had reading preferences for their out of school reading, but their access to personally

interesting materials in school was limited. Worthy and McKool concluded that these sixth graders did not dislike reading, they just were not happy with the kinds of reading they had to do in school (Ivey, 1999). The results in the study by Worthy and McKool just described have also been determined in studies from Bintz, 1993, Bonacci, 1989; and Turner, 1995.

A common mistake that many teachers make is to assume that their middle school students value reading as much as they do. Middle school readers need good reading materials. The same group of sixth graders interviewed by Worthy and McKool (1996) suggested that neither the school library nor their classroom collections contained books that were relevant to their personal interests. This is probably typical of most middle level schools (Ivey, 1999). Students reported they like magazines (for example, *Seventeen*, *Sports Illustrated*), popular series books (for example, *Stine's Goosebumps books*) and scary books (for example, *Scary Stories to Tell in The Dark*, Schwartz, 1981), but these were rarely available in school. The findings in the study by Worthy and McKool just described have also been established in the research of Hunt (1990) and Sweet, Guthrie and Ng, (1998). Haynes (1994) conducted a study on middle school readers and their view of reading. She also reports the same results. One of several questions she asked the students was how they liked the reading that they did for school. The results were "most of it", 6%, "some of it", 53%, "little of it", 41%. Blintz (1993) also concluded from his study of resistant middle school readers that many were reluctant to read in school, but read extensively at home, and they were also drawn to magazines, popular books, and information books specific to their

interests. Hubbell (1989) found similar findings. Middle school students prefer informational or technical text as opposed to literature.

Successful environments for motivating middle school students to read and become life-long readers involve interaction among students and interactions between students and teachers during literacy activities. Interaction with peers is also a powerful motivator for middle school students. Several researchers have found that it is prudent to capitalize on middle school students' natural inclination toward social interaction to help them become better readers (Bintz, 1993; Donovan, 1999; Ivey, 1999). Social interactions in particular are emphasized in recent school-based programs designed to enhance children's reading engagement (Guthrie, Van Meter, McCann, Wigfield, Bennett, Poundstone, Rice, Faibisch, Hunt & Mitchell, 1996). A recent study of middle school students that explored the different aspects of their reading motivation concluded social aspects as important to students' motivation (Wingfield & Guthrie, 1997). Students need to feel a sense of belonging within a classroom. Several researchers have found in their study of middle school students and reading motivation, that when teachers create the opportunity for students to discuss what they have read with peers and adults, students will acquire the disposition to read frequently and widely (Guthrie, Wigfield, & VonSecker, 2000; Michelsen, 2000; Sweet, Guthrie, & Ng, 1998). Bintz (1993) also concluded similar findings in his study of middle school reluctant readers. He reported that positive teacher-student relationships and positive student-student relationships within the classroom are pertinent to

engaging the unmotivated reader. Therefore middle school students can develop a desire to read when the classroom environment is inviting for sharing books.

Home Influence on Motivation

Factors in the environment can play a crucial role in a middle school student's motivation to read and become a life-long reader. It is widely known that parent-child interaction is the most important influence on a child's later achievement in school and this includes reading motivation. Blintz (1993) found in his study of resistant middle school readers that students who enjoyed reading had the presence of positive role models for reading, including parents, grandparents, and siblings. The findings in the study by Blintz (1993) have also been found in the research of Bell (1996) and Ivey (1999). Several researchers have found a pattern in what parents do with their children at home to provide a literacy rich environment and to promote reading readiness. These practices include availability and range of reading materials in the home environment, reading to the child, and parents who model the reading process (Bell, 1996; Donovan, 1999; Ivey, 1994). Davie, Butler, and Goldstein (1972); Douglas (1964); Durkin (1966); Lamme and Olmstead (1977); Sheldon and Carillo (1952); Smith (1971); Becher (1984) and Vanlaningham (1988) all completed research that indicated a significant positive relationship between the range of reading materials available in the home environment and children's attitudes and achievement in reading (Bell, 1996).

A study of middle readers revealed that although students had little interest in school reading, they did not necessarily lose interest in pleasure reading and informational reading outside of school (Ivey, 1999). The findings in the study by Ivey just mentioned have also been described in the research of Bintz (1993) and Bell (1996). It has been found that children in literacy rich homes possessed an average of 80 books, which were kept in various rooms throughout their homes. These children also visited the public library often and had library cards of their own (Bell, 1996).

Gottfried, Fleming and Gottfried (1994) studied the parent effect on students' intrinsic motivation for reading. They determined that parents who encourage their middle school children to find learning fun and pleasurable have children whose academic intrinsic motivation is higher. The findings in the study by Gottfried, Fleming, and Gottfried have also been reported in the research of Bintz (1993) and Donovan (1999). Parents who rely on extrinsic motivations may unfortunately decrease their middle school children's intrinsic motivation (Donovan, 1999; Sweet, Guthrie & Ng, 1998).

CHAPTER III

Design of the Study

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine the motivation behind avid middle school readers

Research Question

What motivations do avid middle school readers possess?

Methodology

Subjects

The subjects consisted of 50 middle school students from a heterogeneously mixed, public suburban school district in Monroe County, New York. Their age ranged from eleven through fourteen. All students varied in their reading ability and academic standing. The subjects were either selected by their teacher as being an avid reader or they volunteered themselves as an avid reader. They attended a middle school, which housed grades six, seven and eight with a total enrollment of approximately 1200 students. Their socioeconomic background varied.

Materials

A survey (see appendix A) was developed by the researcher to identify what motivates avid middle school readers. The students completed the survey during the fall of 2002 and the results were tallied and categorized according to the responses given.

Procedure

Students were required to complete in the fall of 2002 an anonymous survey that focused on what motivates or motivated them to be avid readers.

Analysis of Data

The responses from the survey were reviewed and inferences were made. Conclusions were drawn and the research question answered.

CHAPTER IV

Results of the Study

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine the motivation behind avid middle school middle school readers.

Findings and interpretation

This study explored the perceptions of avid middle school readers through a survey developed by the researcher and the written responses to this survey provided by 50 avid middle school readers. The survey consisted of five open-ended questions designed to guide the student's thinking about reading (see appendix A). The responses themselves were varied, not only in what was said, but in length as well. They ranged from a single statement to several paragraphs. Many of the responses overlapped and/or woven together two questions. The preceding section lists each of the survey questions followed by sample quotes from the responses.

Question One

Reading could be exciting if only...

“The book is exciting with cliff hangers to make you want to read more” was the most frequently expressed response. Nineteen (38%) of the 50 reading autobiographies listed this as what makes reading exciting for them. “All books were packed with adventure and cliff hangers.” Not being forced to read, was the next most frequently mentioned response in making reading exciting. “ We were not forced to read, but could read at our own chosen time.” Ten (20%) of the students felt this helps to make reading exciting.

Eight (16%) students felt that being able to chose their own book to read allows reading to be exciting to them. “Reading can always be exciting when you are allowed to read what you want. When you don’t have a choice sometimes like in school and the genre does not interest you, then you are more likely to not enjoy the book as much as when you pick it out yourself.”

Finding the right book was mentioned by seven (14%) students as a way for reading to be exciting. “ Reading is always exciting if you can find the right book. Sometimes the covers of the books aren’t colorful and don’t have a very good picture.”

Six (12%) students felt that having more time to read would make reading exciting. “I wish I had more time to read. My schedule is so busy, that when I’m home I have to fit in time to read. I love to read and I make sure I leave myself time to read.”

Question Two

What are three things people generally say about people who like to read?

A total of 39 (78%) responses listed both smart and bookworm as things that people generally say about people who like to read. “My sister calls me a bookworm and says that I like to hide in my cave, which is my bedroom. One of my friends said that people who like to read are very smart.”

Twenty-three (52%) responses mentioned that one thing that people say about people who like to read is that they spend too much time reading. “That’s all you do is read. She’s always got her nose stuck in a book.” “When I come to school with about 200 pages per week on my reading log others ask: How do I have time for all that reading?”

They must be boring if they like to read was the response of 16 (32%) of the students. “They must not have a life and no cable.”

Eight (16%) responses wrote that people generally say that those who like to read have a large vocabulary. “My friends say sometimes that my vocabulary has words in it that they never heard of. Sometimes in lunch I make a comment and I have to explain what I mean.”

Two (4%) responses mentioned that people generally say that those who like to read have great imaginations. “My mom has told me that I have a wonderful imagination.”

Question Three

If you want a good friend to read a book you have just finished, what would you say to him or her?

Summarizing the book for a friend was the most frequently expressed response when wanting a good friend to read the book you just finished. Twenty-eight (56%) of the 50 responders listed this as the best way to entice a friend to read their book. “I would tell them all about the book except for the ending. I would leave them wanting to know what happens next.” Twenty-two (44%) respondents simply stated that they would be enthusiastic when talking to their friend about the book they just finished. They would use descriptive words to “sell” the book. “Hey friend, I just finished an amazing book, that I would really recommend. You’re going to love it. Let me tell you a little about it.”

Question Four

Some people (old, young, smart, not so smart, tall, short, boy, girl, and so on.) absolutely love to read. Why do you suppose that is?

Twenty-five (50%) of the respondents wrote that some people love to read because they have a wonderful imagination and are able to be drawn into the book. “I think it may be because they have a great imagination. They can picture the characters and setting while reading the book.” “No matter who you are, sometimes you just need to get away from the world and reading can do that for you.”

Thirteen (26%) respondents simple stated that some people absolutely love to read because they enjoy learning new things. “They just find reading fun because they love to learn new things. Reading is a way to enrich you life.”

A total of twelve (24%) respondents believe that some people love to read because they were read to a lot when they were young which helped to foster a love for reading. “They were probably read to a lot when they were small and this encouraged them to read. They found out that reading is something that they like to do.” Maybe whoever read to them as children put a lot of expression into the books they read. Then they wanted to learn to read.”

Question Five

You are considered an “avid reader” (an experienced reader, those who read-not necessarily in enormous quantities-but incorporate leisure reading consistently into their day to day living) How did you become one? What can you remember from your past that helped instill the love of reading in you?

A total of twenty-nine (58%) responses attributed their love of reading to one or both parents. Sixteen (32%) of the reading autobiographies stated that their mothers read to them when they were young, and this was how they became really interested in reading. Both mom and dad were reported to have read to nine (18%) of the respondents. “I take after my mother because she is an avid reader too.” “My mom read to me every night, and I really liked looking at the pictures and the words in the books.” “My parents read to me since the day I was born. I would always love to listen and watch their lips move. Then when I learned to read, I started reading to my parents and they would always complement me on my reading skills.”

Ten (20%) responses identified a teacher as having influence on their reading at some point during their elementary schooling. “In fifth grade I had a wonderful teacher and that is where I fell in love with reading. My teacher inspired me to read by reading to the class and encouraging me to select books that I wanted to read. She was able to make reading fun!”

Librarians influenced six (12%) of the respondents. “The librarian at my elementary school read to us with so much enthusiasm that you couldn’t help but

want to know how a story was going to end. She was able to capture us and draw us into the story. I have fond memories of story time in school.”

Five (10%) of the respondents felt that there was no particular person who influenced their love of reading. “No one in my family really spends much time reading. I guess I just picked up the love of reading on my own.”

CHAPTER V

Conclusions and Implications

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine the motivation behind avid middle school readers.

Conclusion

The results of this investigation substantiate much of the previous research in the area of what motivation is behind avid middle school readers. In addition, the information gathered from this study support and reassures us that the current surge in student-centered teaching is on the right track. Furthermore, additional research in reading education is indicated so that we may at once fine-tune our methodologies for motivating our middle school students to become avid readers.

The most important conclusion is that there is “no one size fits all ” pattern, for which a student becomes an avid reader, rather there are as many ways as there are readers. Children are unique in their development as readers. Although, some generalizations can be made about the characteristics and conditions common to avid middle school readers. A combination of two or more of the following conditions were present, to varying degrees, in each of the reading subjects explored in this study:

- 1) being read to as small children
- 2) being influenced by and receiving direct encouragement to read from parents family, teachers, librarians
- 3) observing reading behavior in the home
- 4) enjoying positive experiences with reading materials—especially books
- 5) having the opportunity to have a borrowing card and visit the local library as well as the school library
- 6) having books and other printed material present in the home and/or access to books in other environments

The respondents were affected by these main conditions. These results are by no means absolute and conclusive, rather, it is an overview of the general characteristics common to the subjects of this study.

Implications for the Classroom

The key to motivating middle school students to become avid readers is to offer them an environment that is effective, stimulating, and with learner-centered instruction. Middle school students need purpose and direction to foster optimistic views of themselves and motivate them to be avid readers. Teachers and the library staff must share the responsibility for providing commitment in their role in setting the conditions for students to be successful readers.

The use of extrinsic rewards does not guarantee that a middle school student will be motivated to read. It appears that often the use of extrinsic rewards lowers the motivational level of a student to read instead of raising it. By

offering extrinsic rewards to motivate middle school students to read, educators place the emphasis on the reward and not on the pleasure of reading. If middle school students are to become avid readers then reading needs to be portrayed as a positive, joyful experience and not something that has to be done to receive a reward.

Research on motivating middle school students to read also indicates the suggestion to allow students to have self-governance over instruction. This appears to be especially helpful for at-risk readers. The first step toward self-governance in their reading environment involves allowing students to become part of the decision making process of the classroom. Students should be allowed to choose reading materials, make classroom rules, and create schedules. Although this decision-making process is highly structured by the teacher, the students feel they are in control.

In dealing with the problem of motivating middle school students to read and be avid readers, it is imperative that teachers have knowledge of their students' interests. Teachers can use interest inventories with their students to discover particular interests of the students in the classroom. Reluctant readers usually have little to say concerning reading so the inventory should include interests such as life dreams, hobbies, sports, movies, and world concerns. Using student interest to motivate readers can have a powerful effect. Not only are middle school students motivated to read in their area of interest but also they will probably be more successful in their reading because of their background experience about the topic.

Teachers themselves should possess an active and lively interest in books. He or she should talk about and bring in books he or she is reading and share interesting articles, stories, and jokes from newspapers, magazines, and other sources with the class. Students should be encouraged to do the same. When the school library purchases new books or other materials, the librarian or teacher should discuss them with the students. During free reading time everyone should read, including the teacher.

The research on motivating middle school students to read indicates the importance of reading aloud popular novels to them. Students of all ages love having someone read to them. Often, they will become interested in reading a particular book because one by the same author has been read to them. They also can gain vocabulary knowledge by having others read to them. Teachers should also be encouraged to read picture books aloud to adolescent students, making sure to show the illustrations. Although some picture books may not be appropriate for middle school students, most can and should be shared in the classroom. Reading picture books to middle school students can demonstrate a teacher's enthusiasm for reading, an attitude that can be contagious.

Implications for Further Research

Teachers are aware that students do not spend much time reading or show sustained commitment to their learning. Intrinsic motivations for reading decline during the middle school years. Students are motivated in some contexts but not in others. Classrooms that connect middle school readers to real-world learning,

collaborative work, and self-directed activities appear to keep the middle school students actively engaged in reading then those classrooms who do not.

Researchers must continue to investigate programs that can create classrooms that embody these principles. Along with this implication, it would seem appropriate to make interest assessments more practical for the classroom teacher as well as to add research findings about middle school students' reading interests.

Cultural, socioeconomic and ethnic factors could be important influences in middle school students' motivation to read and become avid readers.

Researchers need to investigate what role these factors play in a student's desire to read.

It might be an advantage to examine parental motivational practices. It is a fact that the provision of external rewards is a common practice for parents. Often parents believe it is favorable for their child's motivation and parents need to be aware of the possible negative outcomes.

Further research on motivating middle school students to become avid readers might include a longitudinal study on children's motivation for reading when they are in elementary school. It would be interesting to see if their interests and attitudes have any effect on their motivation for reading, as they grow older.

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Appendix A

Reading Survey

1. Reading could be exciting if only...
2. What are three things people generally say about people who like to read?
3. If you want a good friend to read a book you have just finished, what would you say to him or her?

4. Some people (old, young, smart, not so smart, tall, short, boy, girl, and so on) absolutely love to read. Why do you suppose that is?

5. You are considered an “avid reader”(an experienced reader, those who read-not necessarily in enormous quantities-but who incorporate leisure reading consistently into their day to day living). How did you become one? What can you remember from your past that helped instill the love of reading in you?