TIPS FOR TEACHERS

GETTING STUDENTS TO READ!

SEVEN RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

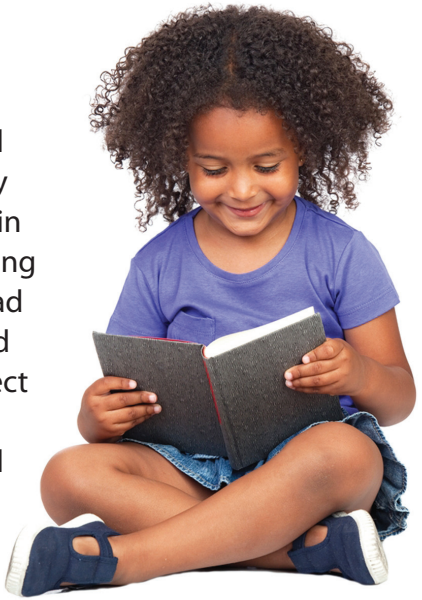
SC EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

REPORTING FACTS. MEASURING CHANGE. PROMOTING PROGRESS.

CLEMSON UNIVERSITY

EUGENE T. MOORE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

1 Make reading tasks relevant to students' lives.

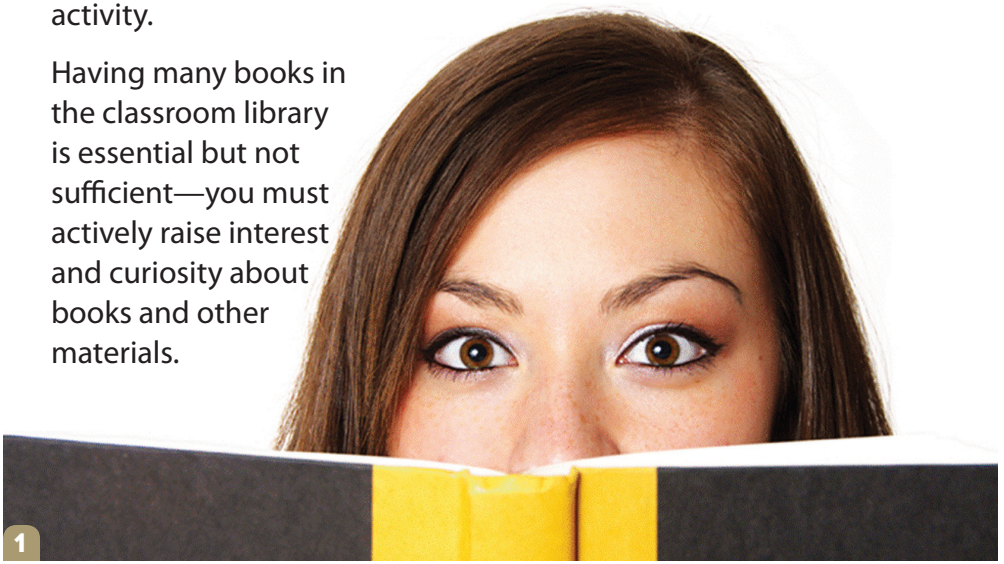


When students can relate the material they're reading to their own lives, they become more involved and engaged in understanding the text. Consider having students keep a diary of what they read during reading lessons or self-selected reading time. Encourage them to reflect on what they have read and write for three minutes about how the material connects to their own lives.

2 Give students access to a wide range of reading materials.

Make sure the classroom environment includes books from many genres and text types, magazines, the Internet, resource materials, and real-life documents. Providing a variety of reading materials tells students that reading is a worthwhile and valuable activity.

Having many books in the classroom library is essential but not sufficient—you must actively raise interest and curiosity about books and other materials.



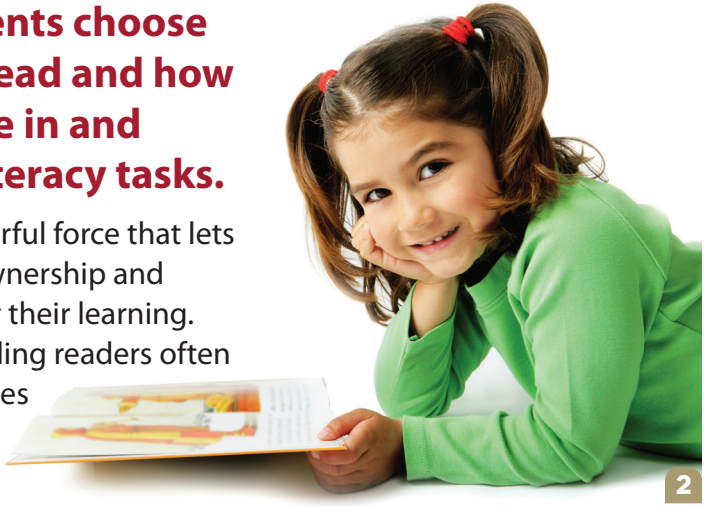
In addition to frequently reading aloud to students, consider doing a weekly "teacher book-selling session" during which you quickly describe 10 to 12 books. This will significantly increase the number of books that students know about, making it more likely that they will choose to read them.

3 Give students more opportunities to read.

Reading practice helps students become better readers. Because students who lack motivation to read don't read over the summer, try to help these students develop the habit of engaging with text for a sustained period. At the start of the school year, have short periods of self-selected reading—10 minutes, for example. Gradually increase reading time over several weeks until students are able to remain engaged in reading for longer stretches.

4 Let students choose what they read and how they engage in and complete literacy tasks.

Choice is a powerful force that lets students take ownership and responsibility for their learning. However, struggling readers often make poor choices about what to



read for pleasure, most often selecting books that are too difficult. Help these students learn to choose suitable reading materials by selecting four or five books related to their interests that are at the appropriate level, and let the students choose which of these books they want to read.

5 Let students interact with others about what they're reading.

Interaction with others—talking about books, reading together, and sharing writing about books—can help motivate students to read. Peer comments can pique a student's curiosity, seeing their peers' progress may increase students' confidence in their own ability to succeed, and working with others promotes student interest and engagement.

After self-selected reading time, ask students to do a "quick share" (3 or 4 minutes) with a partner about what they have just read. Set a timer so that each partner gets a minute and a half to talk, and then let the other partner have a turn.

6 Give students opportunities to succeed with challenging texts.

Offer reading activities that advance but don't overwhelm students. If the text is too difficult, the reader may give up; if the text is too easy, the reader may become bored. Struggling readers may be motivated but still fail because they don't experience progress and competence.

All students want to be viewed as reading challenging text; that's why struggling readers select texts that are too difficult for their pleasure reading. Instead of labeling classroom bookshelves as "Easy," "Average," and "Difficult," designate the bookshelves as "Hard," "Harder," and "Hardest"—students don't mind selecting a book designated as "hard," whereas they are more likely to avoid books labeled "easy."

7 Provide support that reflects the value and importance of reading.

Constructive and supportive teacher feedback is a powerful incentive to learn. Teacher praise can motivate students more than tangible

incentives such as prizes, as long as the praise is perceived by students to reflect true achievement and not be undeserved. If a tangible incentive is used, use a reward related to reading, such as books, bookmarks, extra time for pleasure reading, and extra teacher read-aloud time.

Students, like adults, like to read books and materials that are new and up-to-date. Although there is a place for the classics in any classroom library, consider asking your school librarian to help you weed old and outdated books from your shelves.

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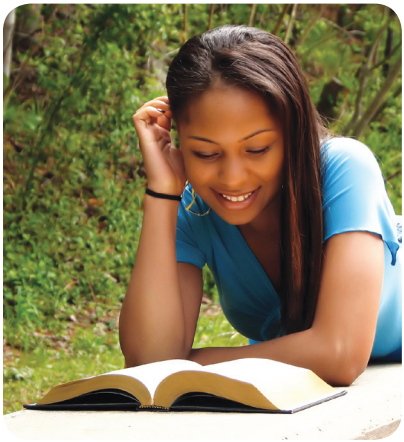

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