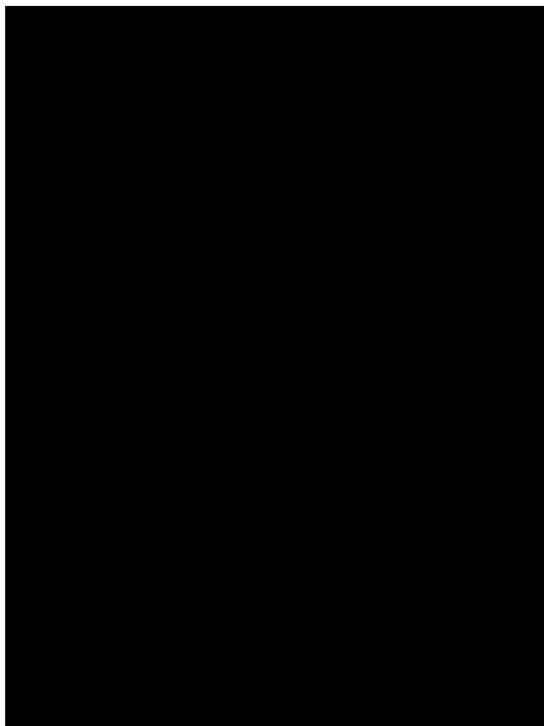## Linda B. Gambrell

Creating classroom cultures that foster reading motivation

Gambrell discusses what research and theory suggest about the role of motivation in literacy development. She describes six research-based factors that are related to increased motivation to read.

What can teachers do to motivate students to read? Here are some responses from elementary age children who were asked what teachers should do to get their students more interested and excited about reading:

- "Teachers should let us read more."
- "When we have 'Read and Respond Time' the teacher should let us read our own books and tell about them in a group."
- "Let us read more…about 10 more minutes every day."
- "Please make sure you do not interrupt us while we're reading."
- "Read to the class. I always get excited when I hear my favorite book…and my favorite book is *Frog and Toad*."
- "Do not let DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) time end so soon."
- "Make sure there are lots of books. There are not a lot of books in our classroom."
- "My teacher gets me interested in reading. She lets me read to her! She gave me a hug because I did so well…and she said, 'Good job!'"

The responses of these children highlight the critical role of the teacher in creating a classroom culture that fosters reading motivation. I have long been convinced that the central and most important goal of reading instruction is to foster the love of reading. My interest in the role of motivation in literacy de-

velopment is grounded in the belief that teachers play a critical role in helping children develop into readers who read for both pleasure and information.

How can we create classroom cultures that support and nurture children in becoming highly motivated readers? The results of a national survey conducted by the National Reading Research Center revealed that this is a question of great interest to teachers (O'Flahavan, Gambrell, Guthrie, Stahl, & Alvermann, 1992). Out of 84 reading topics, teachers identified "creating interest in reading" as the top priority for reading research. Three other topics related to motivation appeared in the top 10: increasing the amount and breadth of children's reading; developing intrinsic desire for reading; and exploring the roles teachers, peers, and parents play in increasing children's motivation to read.

It is generally acknowledged that motivation plays a critical role in learning. It often makes the difference between learning that is superficial and shallow and learning that is deep and internalized. Because of the powerful influence that motivation plays in literacy learning, teachers are more interested than ever before in understanding the relationships that exist between motivation and achievement and in learning how to help all students achieve the goal of becoming effective, lifelong readers.

In this article I discuss what research and theory suggest about the role of motivation in literacy development. First, I briefly review some of the research that has led to the current interest in motivation. I then describe some of the work my colleagues and I have been involved in for the past 4 years in the Literacy Motivation Project at the National Reading Research Center. This work has focused on identifying classroom factors associated with literacy motivation. Finally, I discuss six research-based factors that appear to be related to increased motivation to read and suggest some implications for practice.

A resurgence in interest in motivation

The current interest in reading motivation is an outgrowth of the research of the 1980s that emphasized cognitive aspects of reading such as prior knowledge and strategic behav-

iors (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Garner, 1987; Pressley, Borkowski, & Schneider, 1987). A number of these scholars have cautioned, however, that in order for students to develop into mature, effective readers they must possess both the *skill* and the *will* to read (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985; Borkowski, Carr, Rellinger, & Pressley, 1990; Paris & Oka, 1986; Winograd & Greelee, 1986). These researchers and theorists have emphasized the importance of balancing both affective and cognitive aspects of reading development. With this background, the reading research of the 1990s has begun to focus on a more comprehensive and balanced view of reading that includes an emphasis on motivation and social interaction, as well as cognition and knowledge acquisition (Brandt, 1990; Csikszentmihaly, 1991; McCombs, 1989; Turner & Paris, 1995). Thus, the current interest in creating classroom cultures that support and nurture the developing reader brings together the cognitive research of the 1980s and the research on motivation that has characterized much of the reading research of the 1990s.

The elementary school years are of considerable consequence for shaping subsequent reading motivation and achievement (Allington, 1994; Purcell-Gates, McIntyre, & Freppon, 1995; Turner, 1992). During this critical period, children must be supported and nurtured in both affective and cognitive aspects of literacy development (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988; Lau & Cheung, 1988; Oldfather, 1993; Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, & Hemphill, 1991). Our Literacy Motivation Project has focused on the role of motivation in literacy development and on identifying classroom and home practices that encourage children to spend time reading.

We have focused on these aspects of motivation for several reasons. First, we know that children who are motivated and who spend more time reading are better readers (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988; Morrow, 1992; Taylor, Frye, & Maruyama, 1990). Second, some children arrive at school with far more experience with print, books, and book language and home support for reading than others (Allington, 1991). Third, supporting and nurturing reading motivation and achievement is crucial to improving educational prospects for children who find learning to read difficult

(Allington, 1986, 1991; Smith-Burke, 1989).

Much of the recent work conducted by the National Reading Research Center has been guided by the engagement perspective (Alvermann & Guthrie, 1993; Guthrie, 1996), which builds on theories of motivation, knowledge acquisition, cognition, and social development. This perspective suggests that an engaged reader is motivated, knowledgeable, strategic, and socially interactive. In the following section I describe the engaged reader and the role that motivation plays in this conceptualization of the idealized reader.

The engaged reader: Motivated, knowledgeable, strategic, and socially interactive. Teachers are guided in their decision making about the literacy curriculum by the view they hold of the idealized reader. One such conceptualization is that of the engaged reader who is motivated, knowledgeable, strategic, and socially interactive (see Figure). The engaged reader is *motivated*, choosing to read for a variety of purposes, such as gaining new knowledge, escaping into the literary world of the text, and learning how to perform a task. The engaged reader is *knowledgeable*, able to use information gained from previous experiences to construct new understandings from text; to acquire knowledge from text; and to apply knowledge gained from text reading in a variety of personal, intellectual, and social con-

texts. The engaged reader is also *strategic*, employing cognitive strategies to decode, interpret, comprehend, monitor, and regulate the reading process so that goals and purposes of reading are satisfied. Finally, the engaged reader is *socially interactive*, able to share and communicate with others in the process of constructing and extending the meaning of text.

Portrait of an engaged reader. In one of the interviews we conducted as a part of a study of fifth-grade students' motivation to read (Gambrell, Codling, & Palmer, in press; Palmer, Codling, & Gambrell, 1994), a student described reading about World War II in the encyclopedia and in the award-winning book *Number the Stars* (Lowry, 1990). Her response reveals a compelling picture of an engaged reader.

> Well, I became interested in the Jewish people and World War II and Hitler and all that…so I went and I took the "H" book and I started reading some stuff,…and I found out all kinds of different things. Then, I went and I read a book from my teacher called *Number the Stars*. And when I read that, I found out…more from a child's point of view…her best friend is Jewish and they're trying to get her away from all the soldiers…it was just tragic, you know. I like reading about characters, and how the authors take real-life things and make it into their own fiction.

This girl's comments reveal the depth of her emotional involvement in the book *Number the Stars* and her compassion for the young

The engaged reader
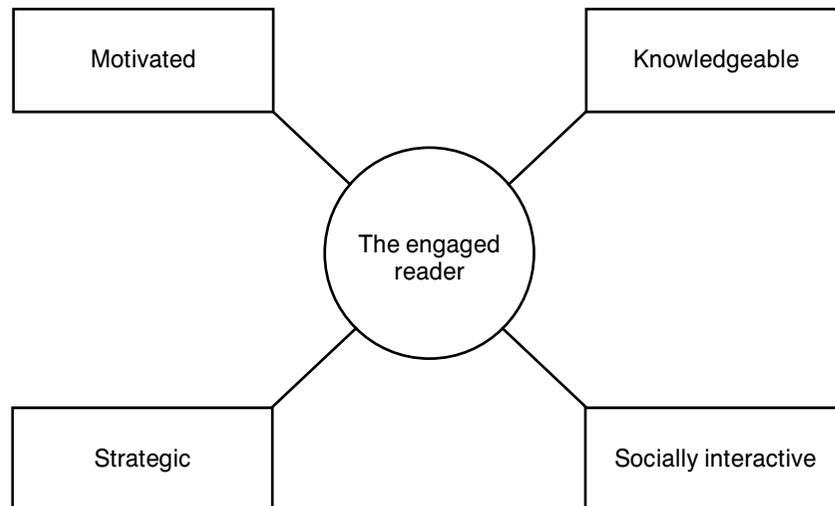
Jewish girl who tries to escape the Nazi soldiers. She also describes how reading informational text has contributed to her understanding of World War II. The power of intertextuality is revealed as she describes how her reading of information in the encyclopedia (the "H" book) about Hitler and World War II provided background information for her interpretation of *Number the Stars*. In addition, she describes how reading *Number the Stars* helped her understand, in a more personal way, the impact of the war on children. Her comment, "it was just tragic, you know," suggests that this is a reader who has also come to better understand her own feelings about war and discrimination through reading. The personal, intellectual, and social nature of engaged reading is revealed in this student's reflections on her reading. Her words paint a portrait of a reader who is motivated, knowledgeable, strategic, and socially interactive.

It is not by accident that motivation is mentioned first in the description of the engaged reader. Teachers have long recognized that motivation is at the heart of many of the pervasive problems we face in educating today's children. A question that teachers often ask about the children they are most concerned about is, "How can I motivate this student to read?" The research we have conducted in the Literacy Motivation Project, as well as research conducted by noted motivational theorists such as Deci and Ryan (1985) and Lepper (1988), suggests that a more appropriate question for us to ask is, "How do we create an environment in which this student will be motivated to read?"

For several years my colleagues and I have worked with classroom teachers on a series of studies designed to explore the literacy motivation of first-, third-, and fifth-grade students, with particular emphasis on classroom contexts that promote reading engagement. In the following section, several of the studies that focus on reading are briefly described.

The first-grade motivation studies

The first-grade studies involved the implementation of a classroom-based motivation program designed to increase reading motivation. The Running Start (RS) program, developed by Reading Is Fundamental, is grounded in Cambourne's (1988) model of literacy learning. It proposes that motivation and reading development are fostered when children are immersed in a book-rich environment; exposed to many demonstrations of how books are used; engaged in interactions with others about books; given the responsibility for making decisions about what, when, and how they read; provided with opportunities to approximate literacy activities; and supported by interactions with adults who have high expectations for their success.

Teachers have long recognized that motivation is at the heart of many of the pervasive problems we face in educating today's children.

The RS program was designed to support the literacy development of first graders by providing them with high-quality children's literature and increasing opportunities for reading both at school and at home. The motivational program brings the school, home, and community together in a 10-week celebration of reading that is designed to help children develop a love of reading. The RS program recognizes that the availability of books is a key factor in reading development; therefore, funds are provided for teachers to select and purchase high-quality fiction and informational children's books for their classroom libraries. This results in an infusion of approximately 50–60 new books for the typical first-grade classroom. Teacher book selection is an important aspect of the program because teachers know about the kinds of books that will be appropriate and appealing to their particular students.

The theme of the RS program is "Creating Readers for the 21st Century" and, in keeping with the theme, children are challenged to read, or have someone read to them, 21 books during the 10-week program. Both independent reading and being read to are valued equally in the program. Teachers support children in their ef-

forts to meet the challenge of reading 21 books by creating classroom opportunities for reading and book sharing. For example, in some classrooms first graders are paired with older students who either read to them or listen to them read. In other classrooms guest readers read to individual students and small groups. In addition, parents and other family members are encouraged to read to the first graders to assure that every child is successful.

Children are provided with a number of reading-related incentives during the program. Each child receives a personal Challenge chart and stickers for keeping track of individual progress toward the 21-book goal. In addition, bookmarks are given to the children as reminders to read and as incentives to read. Finally, when children meet the challenge of reading 21 books they get to choose books for their home libraries. The goal of the RS program is to increase the reading motivation and behaviors of first-grade children by increasing the number of books in the classroom library, allowing children to choose what they read, encouraging children to take books home to share with family members, supporting children in reaching the 21-book goal, and rewarding children for achieving the goal (for a more complete description of the RS program, see Gambrell, Almasi, Xie, & Heland, 1995).

We were interested in a number of questions about how an intervention program like Running Start might affect young children's motivation to read and how such a program might affect family literacy practices. We conducted four studies that provided some interesting insights about the value of programs designed to increase the reading motivation of young children.

Can a motivational reading program make a difference in young children's motivation to read? In our first RS study, more than 7,000 children, 4,000 parents and 320 teachers from 49 schools in 9 U.S. states participated in the program and responded to pre- and posttest survey instruments designed to assess program effects (Gambrell et al., 1995). Schools included urban, suburban, and rural settings, as well as diverse populations and economic levels. The results revealed statistically significant increases in the reading motivation and behaviors of the first graders and parents who participated in RS. Although findings must be interpreted with caution, the results suggest that a classroom-based, 10-week motivational program can enhance the reading motivation and behaviors of children as well as the number and quality of literacy experiences in the home.

Can a reading motivation program make a difference with children from low-literacy-achieving schools? We were especially interested in whether this motivational reading program would benefit children from schools with depressed reading achievement scores. Therefore, study 2 explored the effectiveness of the RS program with first-grade children from an economically depressed urban area who attended low-literacy-achieving schools (Gambrell et al., 1995; Gambrell & Morrow, 1995). The study also included similar matched schools. The control schools completed all assessments but did not participate in the motivational program. Approximately 550 first graders and their parents participated in the study. Both children and their parents responded to survey instruments designed to assess reading motivation and behaviors, as well as the number and quality of family literacy practices. In addition, approximately 200 students were randomly selected from RS and matched schools to participate in individual interviews. The results of this study revealed that the children who participated in the RS program were more motivated to read, spent more time reading independently, engaged more frequently in discussions about books and stories with family and friends, took more books home to read, and spent more time reading with family members. The results of the family literacy practices survey revealed that parents who had children in RS spent more time reading to their children, discussed books and stories more often, and purchased more books for their children. In comparison to the matched school parents, parents of RS children reported that their children enjoyed reading to a greater extent and spent more time reading independently.

The results of this study provided compelling evidence that a motivational reading program can enhance the reading motivation and behavior of children from low-literacy-achieving schools and can increase both the quantity and quality of family literacy practices. There was consistent and converging evidence from children and their parents, across

all assessments, that participation in the program promoted engagement in reading in the classroom and in the home.

Is a motivational reading program worth the time and effort? One concern about motivational programs is that any positive effects that accrue may be limited to the duration of the program; therefore, we conducted study 3 to determine possible long-term effects of the RS program. This follow-up study was conducted with the children and parents who participated in study 2. In the fall of the following year, when the children were in the second grade, children and parents in both RS and matched schools responded to the survey instruments used in study 2. Statistically significant differences were again found in favor of the children and parents who had participated in the 10-week RS program during first grade. Six months after the conclusion of the program, children who had participated in RS reported spending more time talking about books with friends, reading out loud to family members, and perhaps of most significance, perceiving of themselves as more competent readers than students in the control group. Perhaps the RS emphasis on sharing books with family members resulted in home literacy practices that nurtured and supported children's literacy development or that helped children and their parents establish the habit of reading on a consistent basis. Clearly, the results suggest that a book-rich classroom environment and parental support appear to be linked to the long-term positive effects of this program.

How did the motivational reading program affect the classroom culture? In study 4, observations were conducted in RS classrooms and in matched classrooms to determine whether the increase in the number of books available to children and the emphasis on increasing reading opportunities at school and at home made a difference in the classroom culture. Classrooms were observed for one full day on the first visit, and the reading and language arts period was observed during a second visit. These observations revealed interesting differences across classrooms. The RS classrooms had specific areas designated as reading corners or reading centers. We were not surprised that the RS classrooms had more books than the control classrooms, but they also had more elaborate reading corners (pillows, rocking chairs, pup-

pets, etc.) and more visual displays (posters, bulletin boards, etc.) that related to the celebration and value of reading than did the control classrooms. Of particular interest was the finding that more time was devoted to sustained silent reading in the RS classrooms. In addition, more verbal interactions about books and reading were observed between teachers and children and between children and their peers in the RS classrooms. In the matched classrooms no verbal interactions about books or reading were observed between individual children and the teachers other than those that occurred during reading instruction. The results of this observational study suggest that a motivational reading program can foster a physical environment and social interactions that encourage and support children in their reading development.

The third- and fifth-grade motivational studies

In our work with third- and fifth-grade students we developed and used the Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) to explore elementary students' motivation to read. The MRP consists of a survey instrument and a conversational interview. The survey instrument is designed to assess self-concept as a reader and the value placed on reading, and the semistructured conversational interview is designed to assess personal, social, and text factors related to reading motivation (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996). The results of the Self-Concept as a Reader subscale revealed that while many elementary students reported that they were "very good readers" (47%), significant numbers of students do not view themselves as competent readers. For example, 45% of the students reported that they worry about what other kids think about their reading, and 17% reported that when they read out loud they feel embarrassed or sad. We also found, as have other researchers (Henk & Melnick, 1995; McKenna & Kear, 1990) that students' self-concepts as readers are linked to reading achievement, with less proficient readers having significantly lower self-concepts than their more proficient counterparts (Gambrell et al., 1996).

The Value of Reading subscale revealed that, in general, elementary students value reading, but many children do not view reading as a positive activity or as an activity of high priority. For example, 17% of the students

reported that they would rather clean their room than read a book, 14% predicted that they would spend very little or no time reading when they grow up, and 10% reported that people who read are boring. These are the types of responses about literacy motivation that most concern teachers. One finding of particular interest in our study was that the younger third-grade students reported that they valued reading more highly than did the older fifth-grade students. This was somewhat surprising in that we hypothesized that older students would be more aware of the value of reading than would younger students.

In addition to the information we collected on the survey, conversational interviews were conducted to gain insights about what motivated third- and fifth-grade children to read (Palmer et al., 1994). The interviews were con-

[F]our key features...appear to be associated with motivation to read: access to books in the classroom, opportunities to self-select books, familiarity with books, and social interactions with others about books.

ducted with children from across three levels of reading achievement (above grade level, on grade level, and below grade level) and across levels of reading motivation (highly motivated, less motivated). The results of the analysis of the interviews revealed four key features that appear to be associated with motivation to read: access to books in the classroom, opportunities to self-select books, familiarity with books, and social interactions with others about books.

Fostering reading motivation

The insights revealed by the first-, third-, and fifth-grade students who participated in our studies have heightened our awareness of the importance of supporting students in their reading development by creating classroom

cultures that foster reading motivation. The research conducted in our Literacy Motivation Project and the work of other researchers (Oldfather, 1993; Ruddell, 1995: Turner, 1995; Turner & Paris, 1995) suggest that classroom cultures that foster reading motivation are characterized by a teacher who is a reading model, a book-rich classroom environment, opportunities for choice, familiarity with books, social interactions about books, and literacy-related incentives that reflect the value of reading.

The teacher as an explicit reading model. One of the key factors in motivating students to read is a teacher who values reading and is enthusiastic about sharing a love of reading with students. I believe that it is within the power of every teacher to inspire and motivate children to find a lifetime of pleasure and information in the reading of good books. Throughout our interviews with children we were constantly reminded of the important role of the teacher because children made so many spontaneous comments about teachers being a motivating influence. At the conclusion of one interview we asked third- and fifth-grade students, "Who gets you really excited and interested in reading things?" Not surprisingly, teachers, parents, and peers were frequently mentioned. In some classrooms the teacher was mentioned by almost every student, while in other classrooms the teacher was rarely mentioned.

One very important way in which teachers motivate students to read is by being an *explicit* reading model. Research suggests that teachers who love reading and are avid readers themselves have students who have higher reading achievement than do students of teachers who rarely read (Lundberg & Linnakyla, 1993). One possible explanation for this is that teachers who read are more likely to be explicit models for their students.

Many teachers "model" reading during sustained silent reading in their classrooms, and although this is an admirable practice, I believe it presents a passive, rather than an explicit, model of what it means to be a reader. Teachers become explicit reading models when they share their own reading experiences with students and emphasize how reading enhances and enriches their lives. There is usually something worth sharing in most of the books and materials we read—an exciting or

informative paragraph, a description of a character, or an interesting turn of a phrase.

For several years we have encouraged teachers in our Summer Reading Program at the University of Maryland to share their personal reading with students and to be more explicit in illustrating to children the value of reading in their own lives. For example, one teacher told her class that the book she was reading, *The Prince of Tides* by Pat Conroy, was extremely well written. She read aloud an interesting description of the main character's family and the class then discussed what the character meant by that description. Another teacher read *The Right Stuff* by Thomas Wolfe, a book about the U.S. space program. Across a 2-week period she shared sections of this book with her students, particularly parts of the book that dealt with historical facts about the space program.

When we, as teachers, share our own reading with students, we show how reading enhances our lives. In this way, we demonstrate to our students that reading helps us learn more about the world in which we live, gives us pleasure and enjoyment, develops our vocabulary, and helps us become better speakers and more effective writers. Most importantly, when we share appropriate selections from our own personal reading, students begin to see us as real readers. If we serve as explicit reading models for our students and specifically associate reading with enjoyment, pleasure, and learning, our students will be encouraged to become voluntary lifelong readers.

A book-rich classroom environment. A number of studies during the past decade have provided support for the notion that when children have environments that are book-rich, the motivation to read is high (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1993; Elley, 1992; Gambrell, 1993; Lundberg & Linnakyla, 1993; Morrow, 1992; Purcell-Gates et al., 1995). When asked to tell about the most interesting book they had read recently, the overwhelming majority of children in our studies reported that they had selected the book from the classroom library rather than from school, community, or home libraries (Gambrell et al., 1996). The first-grade motivational studies clearly suggest that increasing the number of books available to children in the classroom can have a positive effect on the amount and quality of the literacy experiences in the classroom as well as the home environment. The first-grade studies also suggest that there are positive benefits to encouraging children to take books home from the classroom to share with family members. These findings suggest that book access is a significant factor in literacy development and that greater attention should be devoted to assuring that high-quality classroom libraries are a priority in schools.

A book-rich classroom environment is essential to nurturing and supporting young readers, but it is not sufficient for the development of highly motivated readers. The Bradford Book-Flood experiment (Ingham, 1981), a large-scale study conducted in England, investigated the effects of increased book access on students' reading motivation and achievement. No significant increase was found for either reading motivation or achievement, despite the substantial increase in books available to children. One of the major findings of this study was that it is what is done with books that makes a difference. Just as having a piano in the home will not necessarily make a child a pianist, having books available is not sufficient for the development of highly motivated readers. On the other hand, a pianist must have a piano to perform, and children must have high-quality books and other reading materials available to support them in becoming motivated, engaged readers.

Opportunities for choice. The role of choice, in motivation in general and reading motivation in particular, is well recognized (Spaulding, 1992). One of the most consistent findings across our studies with first-, third-, and fifth-grade children was the power of choice. When children told us about both narrative and information books they "most enjoyed" reading, over 80% responded that they had self-selected the books from the classroom libraries. The research related to self-selection of reading material supports the notion that the books and stories that children find "most interesting" are those they have selected for their own reasons and purposes. In a study conducted by Schiefele (1991), students who were allowed and encouraged to choose their own reading material expended more effort in learning and understanding the material. It appears that opportunities for choice promote students' independence and versatility as read-

ers (Turner, 1995).

Only 10% of the children in our study talked about books or stories that had been "assigned" by the teacher. Other researchers (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Turner, 1995) have documented that task engagement increases when students are provided with opportunities to make choices about their learning. In addition, findings from a number of studies suggest a strong correlation between choice and the development of intrinsic motivation (Paris & Oka, 1986; Rodin, Rennert, & Solomon, 1980; Turner, 1992).

Opportunities to interact socially with others. Across all three grade levels, children talked enthusiastically about interacting with others about the books and stories they were reading. Children frequently commented that they chose a book because someone had told them about it. Children reported that friends had most often told them about the book, but teachers and parents were also frequently mentioned. For example, one student said, "My friend Kristin was reading it and told me about it and I said, 'Hmmm, that sounds pretty interesting'…so I read it." Another child reported that "I hear about good books from my teachers…they read good books to us…." Our findings support the current emphasis on student book sharing opportunities, book clubs, and discussion groups, as well as the importance of teacher read-aloud sessions. The more books that children are exposed to, and know about, the more books they are likely to read.

Current theories of motivation recognize that learning is facilitated by social interactions with others (McCombs, 1989; Oldfather, 1993). A number of recent reading studies have indicated that social collaboration promotes achievement, higher level cognition, and intrinsic desire to read (Almasi, 1995; Slavin, 1990; Wood, 1990). A recent study by Guthrie, Schafer, Wang, and Afflerbach (1993) revealed the important role of social interactions in reading development. In addition, the results of the 1992 National Assessment of Educational Progress (Mullis, Campbell, & Farstrup, 1993) indicated that students who engaged in frequent discussions about their reading with friends and family were more motivated and had higher reading achievement scores than did students who did not have such interactions. Both the Guthrie et al. study and

the NAEP results suggest that social interactions with others about books and stories foster wide, frequent reading. Taken together, this body of research suggests that opportunities for sharing and talking with others about books is an important factor in developing engaged, motivated readers and supports the contention that social interactions have a positive influence on reading achievement.

Opportunities to become familiar with lots of books. Two underlying assumptions in our studies were that interest is a key factor in reading motivation, and consequently, that children's interests would be reflected in the books and stories they chose to talk about. Numerous recent studies have documented that interest fosters depth of processing and enhances learning (Alexander, Kulikowich, & Hetton, 1994; Hidi, 1990). A related factor that has not been as extensively researched is curiosity. In our conversations with children we found an interesting link between book familiarity and curiosity. It appears that young children want to read and are curious about books that are somewhat familiar. Children like to read books they know something about. When children in our study talked about books they "most enjoyed" reading, they frequently mentioned that they got interested in the book because they had "heard about it from a friend," "read other books about the character," "knew the author," or had "read other books in the series." This same pattern of responses occurred when we asked children to tell us about books they wanted to read. Curiosity is acknowledged to be a driving force in motivation. The children in our study were curious about and more motivated to read books that were familiar.

Appropriate reading-related incentives. In a recent analysis of the research on rewards and incentives Cameron and Pierce (1994) found that rewards do not negatively impact intrinsic motivation with respect to attitude, time on task, and performance. This finding runs counter to views expressed by many educators and psychologists and points to the complex nature of the relationship between incentives and motivation. Clearly, we need to know more about the role of incentives in promoting literacy development, particularly with respect to the development of intrinsic motivation.

Our research in first-grade classrooms taught us that children tend to view the "re-

ward" as desirable. Our findings suggest that when a book is the reward for reading, as was the case in the first-grade Running Start program, children learn to value books and reading. In our exit interviews with children who participated in the RS program we asked what they liked best about the program. We fully expected that children would mention the incentives such as the stickers, bookmarks, or book. But only a few children mentioned the incentives. The most frequently occurring comments focused on social interactions related to books and reading. For example, children mentioned "reading to my partner," "reading with my parents," and "reading lots of good books."

The findings of our study suggest that if we are interested in developing an intrinsic desire to read, books are indeed the best reward. We believe that extrinsic rewards that are strongly related to reading and reading behaviors (books, bookmarks, teacher praise, etc.) can be used effectively to increase intrinsic motivation, particularly for children who do not have a literacy-rich background (Cameron & Pierce, 1994). Our studies with first-grade children provide some evidence that reading-related rewards increase children's motivation to read and the frequency of reading activities. As a result of these studies we have put forth the *reward proximity hypothesis*: the closer the reward to the desired behavior (e.g., books to reading), the greater the likelihood that intrinsic motivation will increase. It may well be that rewards that are strongly linked to the desired behaviors may help to shape and direct the development of intrinsic motivation.

One teacher in a school where we have worked created a classroom climate where books and reading were viewed as valuable and rewarding. She collected old books at flea markets, garage sales, and library sales. (She often received free books by offering to pick up any books that were not sold.) Her goal was to collect enough books to be able to present every child in her classroom with a book on his or her birthday. She decorated a large box and attached a poster that read, "Mrs. Brown's Beloved Birthday Books." She also duplicated a fancy bookplate that read: "Happy Birthday and Happy Reading! This special book was given to ___(child's name)___ by Mrs. Brown on __(date)__ ." Parent volunteers pasted the blank bookplates in the front of each book before they were placed in the book box. On a child's birthday, he or she got to choose a book from the box, and the teacher signed the book plate. I think this is a wonderful example of how a teacher can show that books and reading are valued.

The motivational research of the last decade supports what good classroom teachers have known for a long time. Supporting children in their literacy learning is not an exact science, nor is it a simple matter. We can, however, make a real difference in the literacy lives of young children when we serve as reading models and motivators and create classroom cultures that are book-rich, provide opportunities for choice, encourage social interactions about books, build on the familiar, and reflect the view that books are the best reward.

Author notes

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