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## **Motivating Young Readers: Creating and Implementing a Classroom Library That is Responsive to Students and Their Diverse Reading Interests**

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# Motivating Young Readers: Engaging Students in a Classroom Library that is Responsive to Students' Diverse Reading Needs and Interests

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## Primary Focus of Inquiry

- The major functions of a classroom library
- The organization and layout of an effective classroom library
- The inclusion of materials (print and non-print) in a classroom library
- Engaging young readers and supporting voluntary reading by children

## Methodology

Throughout my inquiry I implemented a plan that integrated specific activities and interactive lesson plans and media into the already existing reading curriculum spotlighting the classroom library. I relied heavily on field notes and written observations that I took after teaching a lesson or quickly as a student mentioned noteworthy for my study. My study was conducted and highlighted through students' organization of the classroom library, the inclusion of additional media into the already substantial classroom library, novel studies and book talks, and examined the impact of these activities on student motivation by conducting student interviews and inquiries. Other data collected includes lesson plans, a literature unit plan, along with additional activities implement throughout my time in the classroom.

## Supporting Literature

### Benefits of a Classroom Library

- Students in classrooms containing literature collections (classroom libraries) read 50% more books than children in classrooms without such collections
- With books in close proximity to students, time spent reading increased 60% compared to a control group, literacy-related activities more than doubled, from an average of 4 interactions per hour to 8.5 interactions per hour
- Informal conversations about books, such as books talks or book chats enhance children's motivation to read

### Classroom Library Organization and Materials

- Classroom libraries should be organized and sorted by either genre, subject, reading level, or a combination of these, stored with spines out or with the face of the book shown
- If students are involved in the organization of the classroom library they will use it more
- Students become avid readers when they find personal meaning in literature
- Including selections at, above, and below grade level is important

### Motivating Young Readers

- Be an explicit reading model, have a book-rich classroom environment, incorporate opportunities for choice as well as opportunities to interact socially with others and become familiar with lots of books
- Allow time for silent independent reading

## Implementation

### Genre Lesson:

During the first week of school, I presented students with an interactive Smart Board lesson about the genres of literature. Informational slides coupled with interactive review slides served as a review for many students, but also as a springboard of thought for my fourth-grade students and the book-sorting lesson that would follow.

### Book Sort:

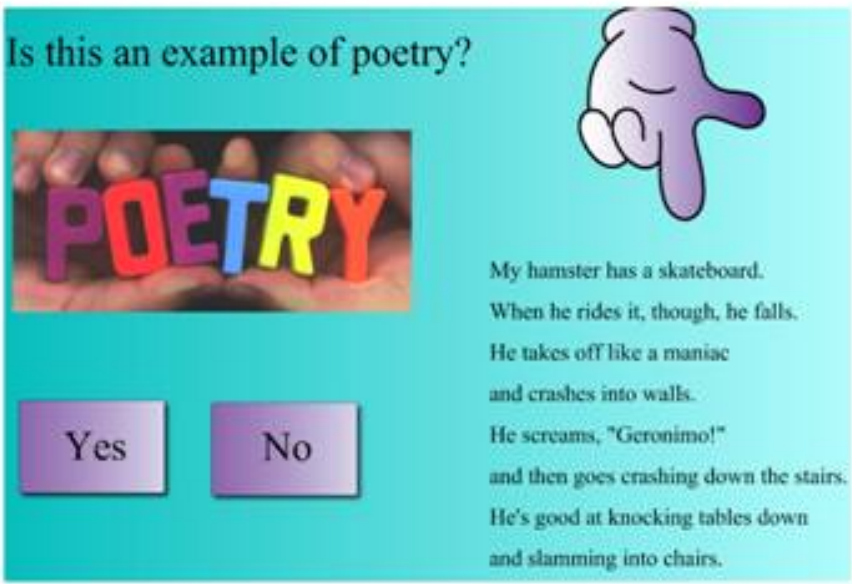
When students help create the classroom library, they will use it more. Students used the genre bookmarks to classify books into genre categories. This activity created a mode of organization for the classroom library, and helped familiarize students with the materials housed in the library. Evidence of engagement in this activity can be seen in my field notes. "Miss Alford, can we take these books home to read?" "I found my favorite book, I can't wait to read it again."

### Library Growth:

As the semester continued, my classroom library collection continued to grow. Magazines were added along with additional fiction and nonfiction books at various reading levels and catered to various reading interests. I led book talks with students about why we were adding this media and asked students to help me determine where each book should be located in the classroom library.

### Student Involvement:

Allowing students time to explore and interact with the materials in the classroom library is necessary to increase motivation to read. Student were able to choose what they would read (no limit by level), were able to sit comfortably in the library space, and were able to give their opinions about books found in the classroom library as well as books that were read aloud during classroom instruction. Students would walk into the classroom excited for independent reading time. "Can we just skip bathroom break and have more time to read?"



## Findings

### Proximity to Literature

- Allowing students time to be engaged in their classroom library can be beneficial when it comes to motivating young, growing readers. Most important is the readily available access to books and the integration of student choice that fosters voluntary reading within a classroom.

### Explicit Reading Model

- Students were motivated to read because:
  - I was excited about reading, value reading, and was enthusiastic about sharing a love of reading with my students as their student teacher and was an explicit reading model.
  - When I asked my students the question "who gets you really excited and interested in reading things" 17/19 students mentioned my cooperating teacher or myself.
    - Other answers included peers, parents, or the school's librarian

### Reading Outside of the Classroom

- After a student reading inquiry, I found that only 5/19 students had a public library card, and even fewer visited on a regular basis.
- I provided students with access to the public library by facilitating a library card application. I cannot say if this had a direct effect on students reading outside of the classroom but I encouraged students and provided opportunities for access to books outside the classroom.

## Conclusion

Libraries are not small projects and cannot be conceptualized, completed, nor organized in one weekend by one teacher; useful and engaging classroom libraries are an ongoing, living, working reflection of your students' interests, abilities, and potential. With school library time limited to weekly or even bi-weekly visits, students ought to have immediate and constant access to, and interaction with literature in order to be motivated to keep reading.

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