Principles for Motivating Struggling Readers

Margolis and McCabe (2006)


*When working with struggling readers...*

- Use materials and assignments that promote successful performance
- Increase expectations of success by ensuring adequate background and vocabulary
- Teach students to make facilitative attributions
- Make sure that reading material is within the optimal range for the student (should recognize at least 95% of the words and answer at least 75% of questions about the content)

*To help students get ready for reading...*

- Read critical portions of the material to them and then have them retell it in their own words
- Pair them with more advanced readers to read to one another prior to group lessons
- Have them preview materials and generate a list of words with which they want help
- Give brief summaries of material written at lower reading levels and review the summaries with them
- Send home materials that parents can use to help them learn key words or develop background knowledge related to upcoming reading

*When students are successful, help them attribute this success to...*

- their own effort and persistence
- correct selection and application of a strategy
- growth in modifiable abilities

*When students struggle, help them attribute their failures to...*

- inadequate effort and persistence
- incorrect selection or application of a strategy
- the need to learn modifiable abilities

*Also help struggling readers by...*

- Identifying what they are doing right and complement them with specific feedback
- Supplementing difficult text materials with graphic organizers
- Making it easy for them to request and get help when they need it
- Scaffolding their reading by teaching them specific coping strategies and providing outlines, study guides, or other resources