

Mentoring Minds' Research for Motivation Reading

Reports from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2003) indicate 38 percent of fourth graders cannot read well enough to grasp meaning from a basic children's book. With scientifically based approaches to reading, students with reading or language problems, attention or learning deficits, or those with a reading disability or with limited English speaking abilities risk their performances lagging behind those of their peers. Chall (2000) notes that research findings are not always widely accepted. Practitioners do not always readily transfer findings into classroom practices. It is imperative that educators and others appreciate, recognize, agree upon, and implement pertinent research findings that are scientifically based. Educators must seek to optimize learning opportunities for students validated by research. Students are expected to independently read some unfamiliar texts, relying on the print and drawing meaning from it. *Motivation Reading* seeks to provide a resource that supports the concept of "reading to learn."

Motivation Reading incorporates research-based strategies and pedagogically sound principles for teaching and learning. This product is designed to support and enhance best practices for incorporating the standards into student instruction. *Motivation Reading* is founded on the modeling of active teaching, which is teacher-directed instruction that proceeds in small steps. Active instruction includes a wide range of instructional approaches: small groups, class discussion, concrete objects, hands-on experiences, reading, and writing. In *Motivation Reading*, teachers can ask students to think aloud, consider different options for responses, show evidence for the response reached, and put their thoughts in writing. All of these ways help students to organize their thinking and assist teachers in determining the level of understanding of reading concepts. Studies indicate that instruction which emphasizes active student engagement in hands-on opportunities, improves attitudes toward learning and indicates a positive effect on achievement.

Research indicates that the active teaching approach is associated with higher levels of student achievement. Students are guided through the learning process and are afforded opportunities for success, which include:

- Reading Passage
- Assessment
- Critical Thinking
- Creative Thinking
- Homework with Parent Activities

The National Reading Panel (2000) identified comprehension of text as critical to reading successfully. This panel pointed out a series of strategies that influence the meaning of text. The Teacher Edition of *Motivation Reading* will delineate strategies that students can use independently as they read. Pressley & Afflerbach (1995) state that when students learn and apply such strategies, their comprehension improves. Without comprehension, teachers and students become frustrated when students can read words but only have a surface understanding of the printed word. With the absence of comprehension, reading for pleasure and knowledge appears to be virtually impossible (Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2004). The questions and instructional activities at the end of each unit accent specific skills and provide practice designed to challenge students and address elements of reading comprehension. Reading comprehension skills include applying one's prior knowledge and experiences to the text, understanding vocabulary and other concepts, linking ideas, recognizing the author's purpose, distinguishing between facts and opinions, and making

inferences or drawing reasonable conclusions. Poor readers cannot actively process text. Teaching students to use strategies that target the aforementioned skills or the individual difficulties they encounter, can increase comprehension (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1997; Swanson, 1999; Gersten, Fuch, Williams, & Baker, 2001; Swanson, 1999). Strategy instruction seems to consistently improve the abilities of students to see relationships in reading selections and to grasp meaning while actively engaging students. Explicit and systematic instruction is linked closely with improved outcomes in reading comprehension. Thus, learning experiences must entail participation from both students and teacher, determine what students need, and should adapt to meet the needs of each learner in order to progress in reading.

Motivation Reading is not a reading approach but a supplement to reading for grade levels two through five. This product provides students with practice in components essential to learning: practice, assessment, critical thinking, creative thinking, homework, and parent activities. This product contains reading passages that reflect a variety of genres incorporating fiction and non-fiction selections. Each selection will include questions that measure or assess the comprehension of students toward the passage. Critical thinking questions, based on Bloom's Taxonomy, are offered to allow students to derive meaning from the text using lower and higher thinking questions. A creative thinking activity is provided to stimulate the mind by connecting an element of the passage in a fun, productive manner. Homework is provided through a paragraph which follows each selection and parallels some aspect of each passage coupled with questions that assess the comprehension of that paragraph. All of these activities provide practice to extend the learning of each reading selection.

Adams (1990) advocated the need for practice in reading. Furthermore, the exposure to many reading materials could reinforce vocabulary learning and provide motivating reading materials that would interest students. Chall (2000) also noted the need to provide children with the practice in reading that would provide challenging reading material in addition to texts. These supplemental materials would enable students to practice skills they had acquired. A review of literature reveals a strong correlation between children's academic engaged time and growth in achievement.

Vaughn & Linan-Thompson (2004) indicate sometimes teachers pose questions to students and those students who respond in a reasonable manner achieve. Such students are regarded as those making adequate progress. Those who do not respond correctly or completely are then given answers or just provided cues leading these students to the specific answers sought. Students may or may not understand the text but both of these situations appear to satisfy some teachers. However, the best approach to ensuring comprehension of text is to directly and explicitly teach comprehension strategies. Studies during the late 70s by Durkin reveal a minimum amount of minutes dedicated toward the direct instruction of comprehension. Studies continue to show that comprehension is not being taught as often as it should be (Pressley & El-Dinary, 1997; Schumm, Moody, & Vaughn, 2000). *Motivation Reading* provides a supplement for the teacher to apply the taught comprehension strategies and an opportunity to check progress of students toward identified standards or skills.

With the emphasis on district and state level reading tests, the purpose for teaching comprehension strategies to students is of dire necessity. Every state is required by law to show evidence of student progress in reading. Vaughn & Linan-Thompson (2004) note that gains will surface in the assessments of students' progress if teachers will provide systematic and explicit comprehension instruction. Cunningham (1998) agrees with the

importance of teaching comprehension strategies. Although she notes that teachers may ask questions after the reading of a text, modeling how to answer the questions does not occur often enough. Teachers appear to confuse asking questions with teaching. Teachers also assign tasks with questions to be answered by the students yet they fail to demonstrate how to answer written questions which is also the teaching of comprehension strategies that skilled readers use.

The experiences, discussions, and review of the literature convinced the Mentoring Minds Product Development Team that quality supplemental resources for reading practice were needed. Thus, the format for a Student Edition was designed to help move reading practice and assessment forward so that teachers could incorporate standards-based teaching on a higher level and develop within students the confidence they need to succeed.

Developed by Texas educators, *Motivation Reading* provides extensive supplemental reading practice for all student expectations in grades two through five. The **Student Edition** for each level contains twenty-five reading passages, with paired selections as an integral component of the fourth- and fifth-grade levels. Each level reflects a diversity of fiction and nonfiction passages related to curricular content in science, social studies, music, and art.

Each unit includes a reading passage, assessment practice, critical thinking questions, creative thinking activities, and a homework/parent activity page. Effective teaching literature indicates that students need to be given both an opportunity to discover and invent new knowledge and an opportunity to practice what they have learned to improve student achievement.

Teachers must ensure that ample opportunities are provided for students to learn important skills in reading. Therefore, a specific focus must accentuate all targeted skills on a regular basis. Evidence from research demonstrates that a successful instructional program must include time for students to practice what they are learning and experiences to perform the tasks for which they are to demonstrate competence. A positive relationship between total time allocated to instruction and general student performance exists.

Assessment plays a critical role in all aspects of teaching and learning. The need for higher quality assessments is well established. Studies show teachers spend as much as one-third to one-half of their time involved in assessment-related activities (Stiggins and Conklin, 1992). For instruction to be effective, classroom assessments must reflect quality. Evaluative tools, which closely align with the objectives, are usually more beneficial for diagnosing and revising instructional needs. No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) stated, "Beginning no later than the 2005-2006 school year, each state must administer annual assessments in reading or language arts and mathematics in each of grades 3 through 8 and at least once in grades 10 through 12." Therefore, an Assessment page is included at the end of each student-tested expectation from whence the teacher can gather timely student information to readily and continuously maintain accountability for academic achievement standards.

The No Child Left Behind Act (2002), the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, challenges schools to offer assessments reflecting state and/or national standards. Furthermore, the challenge includes that students score favorably and continually reach adequate yearly progress on state assessments. Therefore, there exists a critical issue to improve reading instruction and meet the accountability outlined by the NCLB legislation. *Motivation Reading* provides supplemental reading passages that contain a

variety of multiple-choice, open-ended, and short-answer questions to provide practice and measure comprehension of fiction and nonfiction text.

Pressure to improve test scores continues to increase. Headlines in newspapers or the breaking news on television are written or stated to grab the attention of the public. Nothing appears to capture public attention like the test scores of schools. As the critical issue of accountability continues to move across our nation, more students are being tested. The state assessment scores are used to measure adequate yearly progress (AYP) for all public schools. All students' scores are part of the AYP measure, including students with disabilities and limited English proficiency (NCLB, 2001). Schools continue to be compared. Test scores appear to be the barometer that measures the success of the educational environment of a campus or that of a district. More than ever before, Juel (1988) states that the ability to read well is necessary for academic success. The goal is for educators to use scientifically based practices to improve their knowledge and improve their effectiveness toward reading instruction. Novice and veteran teachers can enhance their instruction to lead students in becoming proficient lifelong readers. *Motivation Reading* can provide additional practice with comprehension skills.

Teachers have to assess the subject matter accurately so accurate information can be collected about student achievement. Assessment results help make sound decisions for the purpose of improving student achievement. Most teachers are unprepared to meet the assessment challenges they face today. Licensure does not say that teachers have to show assessment competence yet much of their time is spent in assessment-related activities (Stiggins & Conklin, 1992; Trevisan, 1999). Teachers must have help in accurate assessment. Mentoring Minds sought to develop a product to assist in the practice of reading skills and the assessment of teaching and learning. Assessment of incorrect and correct answers to questions for each reading unit will be charted by each student to maintain accurate and useful data. By using the chart, teachers and students can determine individual strengths and weaknesses. In the Teacher Edition, the chart listing the reading skills correlates to the *Motivation Reading* Student Edition stories and test questions. The teacher's chart could be used to identify the specific areas where students need additional practice in mastering skills before taking an actual state assessment. Reading data tells educators about their students as readers. Once data is retrieved, deciding how to organize the data is vital so that better instructional decisions can be made. A study of student data allows for individualization of instruction to meet the needs of students.

A **Chart Your Success** page is included in the back of each Student Edition for each student to visually record and see individual progress on an ongoing basis. The Teacher Edition has a checklist to chart classroom concept attainment. The Assessment page used in conjunction with other measures can provide crucial information for the teacher in improving performance. Studies support the use of a variety of measures to gauge student achievement. Due to the accountability issue, Mentoring Minds encourages teachers to maintain accurate and useful data as well as use a variety of assessment measures to form a more valid insight on where a campus, classroom, or student stands in the reading performance.

Following each reading passage are sections entitled **Critical Thinking and Creative Thinking**. Six critical thinking questions, one for each level of Bloom's Taxonomy are provided to stimulate students to think about the passage(s) read. The Creative Thinking page contains an inspirational message and a Study Tip. Interdisciplinary creative thinking activities are presented under the Motivation Station heading and range in variety from

word puzzles, art activities, map skills, to figurative language. A writing activity in the format of a journal entry always concludes the creative thinking section.

Research indicates that thinking skills instruction makes a positive difference in the achievement levels of students. Thinking skills involve two modes of thinking: critical and creative thinking. An essential goal in education is to assist students in learning how to think in a productive manner. Authorities in the field of thinking indicate both creative and critical thinking lead to a "well-rounded" thinker (Paul 1995; Hillis & Puccio, 1999; Cotton, 1991). Studies that reflect achievement over time show that learning gains can be accelerated. These results indicate that the teaching of thinking skills can enhance the academic achievement of participating students (Bass and Perkins, 1984; Bransford, 1986; Freseman, 1990; Kagan, 1988; Matthews, 1989; Nickerson, 1984). Critical thinking is a complex activity and we should not expect that one method of instruction would prove sufficient for developing each of its component parts. Carr (1990) acknowledges that we have learned that while it is possible to teach critical and creative thinking and its components as separate skills, they are developed and used best when learned in connection with content knowledge. To develop competency in critical thinking, students must use these skills across the disciplines or the skills could simply decline and disappear. Torrance (1972) examined the extent to which creative thinking could be taught. The culmination of his research showed that creative thinking could be enhanced. Torrance indicated that Creative Problem Solving (CPS) was a widely accepted model of teaching creative thinking. *Motivation Reading* allows students opportunities to apply their thinking using creative and critical thinking avenues. Teachers should expect students to use thinking skills in every class and evaluate their skills accordingly. Hummel and Huitt (1994) stated, "What you measure is what you get."

Students are not likely to develop these complex skills or to improve their critical thinking abilities if educators fail to establish definite expectations and measure those expectations with some type of assessment. Assessments (e.g., tests, demonstrations, exercises, panel discussions) that target higher-level thinking skills could more than likely lead teachers to teach content at those levels, and students, according to Redfield and Rousseau (1981), to perform at those levels. Students not only need to know an enormous amount of facts, concepts, and principles, they also must be able to effectively think about this knowledge in a variety of increasingly complex ways. If test items are used that only require lower-level thinking skills such as knowledge and comprehension, students will not develop and use their higher-order skills even if instructional methods that employ these skills are implemented. Individuals do not do what is expected, only what is inspected.

Solving problems in the real world and making worthwhile decisions is valued in our rapidly changing environment today. Paul (1985) points out "thinking is not driven by answers but by questions." The driving forces in the thinking process are the questions. When a student needs to think through an idea or issue or to rethink anything, questions must be asked to stimulate thought. When answers are given, sometimes thinking stops completely. When an answer generates another question then thought continues. Paul ascertains that students who ask quality questions are really thinking and learning.

"Multiple forms of student engagement exist when high-level thinking is fostered. Examples of engagement include collaborative group activities, problem-solving experiences, open-ended questions that encourage divergent thinking, activities that promote the multiple intelligences and recognize learning styles, and activities in which both genders participate freely. Brain researchers suggest that teachers use a variety of higher-order questions in a supportive environment to strengthen the brain" (Cardellicchio and Field, 1997). "Meaningful

learning requires teachers change their role from sage to guide, from giver to collaborator, from instructor to instigator" (Ó Murchú, 2003). "Since students learn from thinking about what they are doing, the teacher's role becomes one of stimulating and supporting activities that engage learners in critical thinking" (Bhattacharya, 2002).

Homework/Parent Activity Page

Parents can be significant contributors to the learning process. Opportunities for parents to be involved in their students' learning allow parents to show an interest in the students' work. Parent involvement helps parents become familiar with the content and the way students are learning. When parents take time to provide home encouragement, students have another opportunity to apply and practice the concepts previously learned.

Research indicates that the more parents are involved and excited in the learning of their children, the more successful a child can be academically. West (1985) and Weller (1999) indicate there are parent behaviors that can lead to effective schools. When parents show support, interest, and become involved the success rate of students can rise. Students in at-risk situations show an increase in grades, test scores, and academics when their parents become involved in instructional programs (Dolan, 1996).

Bagin and Gallagher (2001) note that communicating on a regular basis with parents can promote student learning and reduce attendance problems. Weller (1999) advocates that when schools and teachers treat parents with genuine concern and make them feel important, welcome, and needed, parents are more apt to take an active role in supporting their children in academic achievement. Thus, a letter is offered at the back of each *Motivation Reading* Teacher Edition inviting parents to join in the education of their children. The one-page Homework page contains a paragraph accompanied by three or four questions to address various tested student expectations. Each Homework paragraph connects to and extends information presented within the reading passage. The questions contain at least one open-ended question requiring students to think critically. Vocabulary development is addressed with one or more questions. The remaining questions address some aspect of reading comprehension. At the bottom of each homework exercise, Parent Activities are provided to help parents support their children with meaningful and relevant applications to the previously taught concepts. The information given helps the parent and child build oral language through informal conversation. Simply written, the text invites parents to support the learning by asking questions, making relevant comments, or setting up other home learning activities to reinforce the concept.

Assignments, intended to be completed in class or at home, enhance students' understanding, skills, and proficiency in reading. *Motivation Reading* reflects the careful planning taken by the Mentoring Minds' Product Development Team so that the homework and parent activities are a meaningful extension of the concepts taught in class.

Each **Teacher Edition** lists all tested objectives and student expectations for each unit of the Student Edition. Suggested teaching activities are offered in the Teacher Edition, based on tested student expectations for the units. Answer keys for each unit and a grade appropriate glossary for each level are also provided.

Suggested literature that can be used for integrating lessons across the curriculum is noted in the Teacher Edition. Recommended books may relate to the content of the story, selected reading skills, or both. Children's literature offers excellent resources for connecting literature to skills instruction for students. Literature makes skills in reading relevant, strengthens student motivation, and presents meaningful contexts for stimulating a variety

of responses to critical and creative thinking. Higher levels of engagement are increased when discussions are held to build conceptual understanding. *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading* (Anderson, 1985) stresses the importance of the integration of reading. Reading is a communication tool that helps students become successful learners.

Suggestions are provided to classroom teachers on how to address **critical thinking** using Bloom's Taxonomy to stimulate and develop students' higher order thinking skills. Bloom (Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill, and Krathwohl, 1956) developed a classification of levels of intellectual behavior in learning. This taxonomy contained three domains: the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective. Within the cognitive domain, Bloom identified six levels: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. This domain and all levels are still useful today in developing the critical thinking skills of students.

Critical thinking is cited as an important issue in education today. Attention is focused on good thinking as an important element of life success (Huitt, 1998; Thomas and Smoot, 1994). "Perhaps most importantly in today's information age, thinking skills are viewed as crucial for educated persons to cope with a rapidly changing world. Many educators believe that specific knowledge will not be as important to tomorrow's workers and citizens as the ability to learn and make sense of new information" (Gough, 1991).

The ability to engage in careful, reflective thought is viewed in education as paramount. Teaching students to become skilled thinkers is a goal of education. Students must be able to acquire and process information since the world is changing so quickly. Some studies purport that students exhibit an insufficient level of skill in critical or creative thinking. In his review of research on critical thinking, Norris (1985) surmised that students' critical thinking abilities are not widespread. Most students do not score well on tests that measure ability to recognize assumptions, evaluate controversy, and scrutinize inferences.

Thus, students' performances on measures of higher-order thinking ability reveal a critical need for students to develop the skills and attitudes of effective thinking. Furthermore, another reason that supports the need for thinking skills instruction is the fact that educators appear to be in general agreement that it is possible to increase students' creative and critical thinking capacities through instruction and practice. Presseisen (1986) asserts that the basic premise is students can learn to think better if schools teach them how to think. Adu-Febiri (2002) agrees that thinking can be learned. According to Sousa (2006), students are not actually taught to think because children are born with the brain organizational structure that originates thinking. As educators, students can be assisted in organizing the content of their thinking to facilitate complex reasoning. Sousa supports Bloom's Taxonomy as an organizational structure that is compatible with the manner in which the brain processes information to promote comprehension.

Strategies to develop vocabulary and promote meaningful connections are also included in the Teacher Edition. Students have to understand vocabulary to understand the academic content they encounter in school. Stahl and Fairbanks (1986) revealed when specific vocabulary from academic subject areas is selected as the focus of instruction, the result was a 33 percent increase. Therefore, it appears when students are taught specific content vocabulary in each subject area at each grade level, students have an excellent opportunity to acquire the academic background knowledge they need to understand the subject area content. Teaching content vocabulary using a systematic approach appears to be a powerful tool for student success (Marzano & Pickering, 2005). Furthermore, research firmly documents that academic background knowledge has an effect on academic

achievement. Any intervention for the achievement of students should identify increasing students' content vocabulary knowledge through direct instruction as a leading priority (Marzano, 2004).

The **Reading Skill Builder CD** features PDF pages for providing additional opportunities for practice and skill mastery. Enrichment or practice activities to fit the needs of a particular student, a small group of students, or the entire class can be selected and printed on an as-needed basis. Teacher Tools are included on the CD with reading templates that correspond to skills within *Motivation Reading*. These available templates can be used by teachers to foster active learning, to provide additional practice, and/or to provide the means to assess students beyond traditional classroom methods.

Evidence from research demonstrates that successful instruction must include time for students to practice what they are learning. Time must be built into the schedule for instructional opportunities where students can perform the tasks for which they are to demonstrate competence.

Mentoring Minds seeks to understand the issues involved in teaching and learning reading. The National Research Council (2001) asserted that the performance of students in both reading and math at the conclusion of elementary school is an important predictor of their educational success. Students who have not mastered a quality foundation in reading skills can expect to encounter problems across the disciplines throughout their schooling and later. Summary statements such as these, other research findings, and a review of literature combined with recommendations from studies and observations from classroom experiences have yielded much knowledge about what works. With this wealth of information, *Motivation Reading* was developed as a supplement to complement reading instruction for any campus. The Mentoring Minds' Product Development Team embraces the goal that all students receive quality-based opportunities to develop the essential reading skills so that they can read to learn for the remainder of their lives.

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