

How Administrators can Support Teachers in Motivating Students to Read

Ann C. Sharp

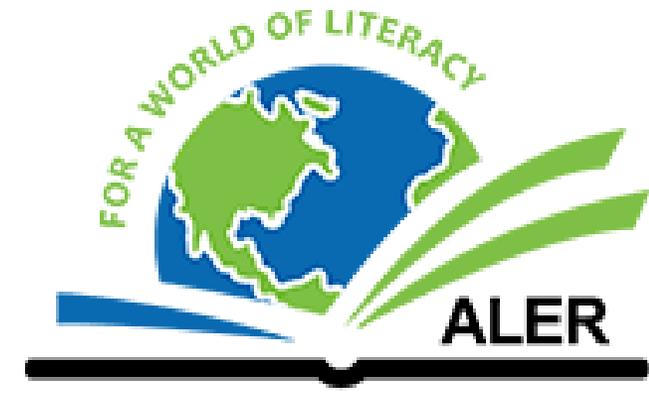
Douglas S. Gardner

Lorilynn Brandt

**READ-A-
DIFFERENCE**



UVU UTAH VALLEY
UNIVERSITY.



Research Question:

What does principal support for reading motivation look like from the perspective of the principal?

Starting Literature:

- School principals are concerned with how students achieve on standardized tests and use to determine effectiveness of teachers (Huang, 2012).
- School Principal influencing negative factor (Vansteelandt et al., 2020) where the principal showed no interest in a teacher's involvement in a “year-long program” (2020, p. 12).
- Addresses the role of the principal in supporting teachers with literacy education at the school level, no mention of importance of reading motivation (Booth & Rowsell, 2007).
- 95% of principals agree about need for rewards, no idea about effect (Fawson & Moore, 1999).

Methods:

- Read-A-Difference (RAD) (Context) Reading Motivation
- Basic Qualitative (Merriam, 2009)
- Interviews (Kvale, 2003)
- Analysis Five Step (Taylor, Powell & Renner, 2003)
 1. Get to know your data
 2. Independent categorize themes
 3. Categorize
 4. Compare notes
 5. Interpret what we found
- Participants:
 - Principals within RAD (Included)
 - Comparison Group of Non-RAD Principals (Future)

Interview Protocol Questions (Principals)

1. How would you describe your support of teachers and their efforts to provide literacy instruction?
2. What are some of the unique challenges you face in your efforts to be supportive of teachers and their role in providing literacy instruction
3. How are teachers who want to provide creative and unique ways to motivate students to want to read viewed?

Findings

1. Balancing Teacher Burn Out Is Greatest Concern
2. Essential Foundational Reading Skills Seen As Most Important
3. Reading Motivation: Seen as Art, Not Science
4. If Teachers Want It, Then Principals are Willing
5. Principals Report Long Lasting Effects from RAD Participation

1. Balancing Burnout Greatest Concern

- Balancing burnout and meeting expectations and mandates from district and state seen as greatest challenge
 - Concern about how to balance
 - See giving choice and control as important for teachers

1. Balancing Burn Out

- It was my job to support the district and that the teachers were **in line with the district requirements**. It was also my job to **make sure the teachers were happy**. It was a challenge to **keep these balanced**.
- Motivating students? We need to **talk about teachers too**. Teacher motivation is a **real concern**.
- **I don't want to burn my teachers out**. The pandemic hit, training in a new reading program mandated by the state, and a new program in math all are currently on my teachers' plate. They are **overwhelmed**. Teachers asked to cut out an afterschool program because of it. I supported cutting it out because I wanted to **avoid teacher burnout**.

2. Essential Foundational Reading Skills Seen As Most Important

- Requires huge time, money, and transformative commitment.
- Principles required to take the training too.
- Become invested philosophically and pedagogically.

2. Reading skills first!

- Our school is above the game when it comes to reading skills. **I am devoting a large amount of funds** so there will be money for what the teachers need.
- We are all **about building really effective readers**. We are working on reading skills. My teachers already know the value of becoming and learning how to teach literacy.
- Our **focus is narrowed to phonemic awareness and other essential reading skills**.
- I am most concerned with the **basic reading skills** for all.
- I am required to take the **new training for the reading program** the state is having us use. It is important so I know what needs to be taught and how I can support my teachers.
- I would **never agree to adding more** to what the teachers are being asked to do. Learning how to teach the **reading skills takes precedence**. It is requiring a huge time commitment which includes time for transformative change.

3. Seen as Art, Not Science

- Principals see reading motivation as the art of teaching
- Principals want aspects of reading instruction to be fun
- Not aware that reading motivation is scientifically studied

3. Art or Science?

I want learning to be fun. You can teach the standards, but if you are not **having fun** then the students are not either. The **art and science of reading** needs to be balanced. It needs to be about love.

I look for ways to help my teachers **make it fun**. I dressed up like Dumble Dorf one year and helped pay for Brandon Mull to come another year. I think it is important to use authentic books. In other words, I look for ways to help my teachers **make reading fun**.

There is a **science of reading and an art to reading**. We can't focus on either too much. We need **authentic tasks**. Students need to learn how to write and **produce their own thinking**. Help them mediate the understanding of the purpose of reading.

4. If Teachers Want, Principals are Willing

- Who brings the innovation to the schools makes a difference.
 - Yes, Teachers
 - No, Literacy Coach or outsider
- Principals stated they have the money for what teachers REALLY want
- Recognition that teachers are more excited about their jobs when they are doing things they want to do. Leads to...
 - Want to see authentic desire from teachers
 - Desire for happy teachers who love their jobs
 - Aspire for wellbeing of the teachers.

4. What teachers want....

- My teachers found Read-A-Difference. They **came to me**. They went after it. This was exciting to me, because I knew this was something **they wanted**.
- My first-grade teachers **came to me**. They were on fire! They wanted a reading program they had learned about. They were so **grateful** that **tears** actually came to their eyes when I said they could have it.
- The teachers **came to me**. They were the ones that **wanted** the program. So, I said yes, but when the same program came from the Literacy Coach [a few years later], then the teachers were reluctant, and I said no. I would not mandate it.
- I would have NEVER pushed it, but my **teachers requested it**.

4. Money Follows Will

- I want teachers to be **happy**. When they are excited about something, I **support it**, because I know it will **energize them**.
- Teachers need to **know the how and know they can**. We have been working on collective efficacy. We learn together. Do it together. The **teachers make the goals**.
- I encourage getting **grants**. If they want to go to a **conference**, I support it. If they need **resources**, I want them to **ask for it**.
- If someone comes to me with a good idea, I **support them financially**, and look for opportunities to support them and **help with challenges**. I try to encourage them. I encourage them because it **invigorates teachers** and allows them to **love what they are doing**. It is what **keeps teachers in education** when they can explore and innovate.

5. Principals Report Long Lasting Effects

1. Seeing student effects increases enthusiasm of principals
2. Spreading to other teachers and throughout school
3. Once training was over then the real influence began
4. Teachers still doing it four years later.
5. Credit given to certain teachers leading the way
6. Principals of new fellowship awardee's noticing that teachers are happy and excited. Love to support them when they see that.
7. Effective in terms of student development and growth
8. positive side of learning, not negative side of learning.

5. Long Term Effects

- **“It has not stopped. When the fellowship ended, that is when it really began.”**
- They got our media specialist.... Others... committee... reading program... to motivate kids.
- Reading logs to book lists to letting kids choose books. This went school wide.
- Committee decided what they wanted reading programs to look like.
- “Kids are just reading; I mean they are reading a lot more books.”
- We read 20,000 books last year, because kids wanted to read

Conclusions

- Reading motivation is scientifically examined; we know a lot about how to foster the value of reading within a child.
- Need for principals to understand scientific basis for reading motivational practices in reading instruction. It is more than making reading fun—fostering the love of reading.
- Teachers are the initiators of motivation strategies that succeed.
- We need give the teachers the control and support them. Let them drive.
- Motivation, interest and engagement of teachers ignites principals. They are energized by teacher creativity and teachers pursuing what they are passionate about in their work.
- There are lots of "things" or "stuff" principals have or must address. It is the light bulb sparking and affective engagement, authentic engagement of teachers that ignites the principals and helps them to feel that they are doing something worthwhile.

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Thank You

Ann C. Sharp ann.sharp@uvu.edu

Douglas S. Gardner dgardner@uvu.edu

Lorilynn Brandt Lorilynn.brandt@uvu.edu