Artifact #4: Motivating Reluctant Readers

Artifact Description:
This artifact consists of a power point presentation that is designed to explain how teachers can motivate reluctant readers. It includes key concepts, strategies, implementation tips, and references that can all be used by educators. There is also an example of how the strategies can be implemented in the classroom. The presentation specifically discusses peer tutoring, guided reading, listening while reading, and teacher motivation as strategies that will motivate reluctant readers.

It is important to remember that the area of reading is always a focal point in the curriculum. Reading education has always been one of my passions. My goal as a first grade teacher is to start from letter sounds, to chunking, to blending, to fluency, and to comprehension, in order to create life-long readers. It is a rewarding experience to teach a child how to read! The process of teaching reading can be a daunting task and quite challenging depending on the motivation and interests of the students. There are some students that blossom as the year goes on and others that leave teachers thinking if we have done everything possible for this child to learn.

Artifact Background:
There is not one correct way to teach a child how to read. Many different strategies can prove successful in teaching reading. Several extraneous issues go in to effect in reading education. A student’s self esteem and motivation can be huge factors. For this particular artifact I thought about the reluctant readers in my class. “How can I motivate my lower readers to enjoy reading? Are there particular reading strategies that will benefit these students and have an impact in their learning?”
In order to have successful readers, the groundwork needs to be set. Teachers need to provide opportunities for students that meet the area of reading that is lacking for them (Cleary & Wright, 2006). There are some elementary students across the nation who demonstrate reading deficits serious enough to interfere with learning. Students with reading delays in the primary grades must first attain basic fluency in the decoding of text before they can efficiently comprehend the meaning of reading passages. Fluent reading is an essential foundation skill to higher level comprehension. When decoding has become largely automatic, students are no longer forced to unlock meaning at the word level but instead can devote crucial cognitive resources to understanding larger ideas conveyed through text (DiVeta & Speece, 1990).

Phonemic skills are a necessary prerequisite to beginning reading. Students need to build intrinsic motivation for learning by having a feeling of success in learning (Wimtead, 2004).

In this artifact, I explored several strategies that can motivate students to love reading. One strategy is a peer tutoring program. Peer tutors can serve as a vehicle to deliver a reading-rehearsal intervention to low level readers when there is insufficient time for the school staff to take responsibility for a new strategy. The teacher can train the peer tutoring students. The program works across grade levels and gives students an opportunity to help one another. The peer tutor program highlights the cognitive approach to teaching. The cognitive approach to teaching is a learner-centered approach that takes into consideration the environment in which the learner learns, the learner's knowledge base, and the learner’s intrinsic motivation (Moni & Morgan, 2005). In this type of system, the teacher’s role is one of facilitator, guide, or model, modeling the types of approaches or strategies that are essential to learning. Teaching is based on tapping prior knowledge, providing students with strategies and scaffolding, and opportunities for peer interaction (Wimtead, 2004).
Guided reading is another strategy that promotes motivation in reading. Guided reading is a time for the teacher to provide immediate feedback for the struggling reader, but it may be difficult for the teacher to provide this type of support. Guided reading provides a time for the teacher to work in a small group setting with students of similar reading levels. The teacher may model lessons on the focus of the guided reading session.

It is important to involve students in their learning and make strategies meaningful to them. Reading strategies should come to life and help readers turn from decoders to strategy seekers (Marcell, 2005). A teacher’s attempts to motivate must consider the personal goals and interests of the students, the value of the content, and the desired outcomes of instruction (Godt, 2005). The environment the learner is exposed to influences the success of the learner. Social interaction not only with the curriculum, but with peers, other teachers, and home surroundings, provide students with practice, feedback, and opportunities to apply what they have learned.

Teaching reading, like any other form of teaching is a partnership between the family members and the teacher (Wimtead, 2004).

Artifact Impact:

Through my research for this presentation I found out the important role that the teacher takes in creating a classroom that embraces the love of reading. Teachers’ attitudes greatly affect the stance that the child reader will take. In establishing literacy programs, teachers must first gain a thorough knowledge of the abilities, interests, and needs of their learners and then use this in program planning to motivate learning. (Ford & Optiz, 2002). Teachers can also adjust the classroom environment and provide frequent feedback that is meaningful. These instructional procedures along with relevant reading stimuli, may prove to be powerful techniques for children with extreme reading difficulties. (Godt, P.T., 2005)
The use of the strategies in the presentation highlighted the importance of having a cognitive approach to teaching reading and also the great benefit of social interaction in reading. All of the strategies had an emphasis on getting to know the reader and establishing a reading program that fits his/her personal needs. I was able to see the strong push for social interaction in reading education, and how valuable it is to use people resources. The teacher truly does not need to be the only person with the sole responsibility of teaching the child. “It takes a village to raise a child.” It is true that more learning can take place through experiences and sharing with others. Peer tutors can be a beneficial form of teaching the lower students and provide a great way for all students to increase their self-esteem and realize that they are valuable members of the classroom community. Students must be engaged in reading through thinking about, and discussing interesting texts from the beginning of their reading education. Effective readers think beyond the text; they draw on their own knowledge and experience to make sense of what they are reading. They make connections to their own lives. I was able to use peer tutors with my classes’ fifth grade reading buddies. Having the fifth graders help my first graders with their reading boosted both the tutor and tutees self esteem. The students looked forward to the time when their buddies were going to come work with them. In fact, throughout the week, my students would practice their reading with one another because they wanted to impress their fifth grade buddy. There was a growth in reading skills just by the implementation of this social learning strategy.

Using the strategies with my students proved to increase motivation and change their attitude towards reading. In the peer tutoring program, the students enjoyed working in the social interaction atmosphere and the results proved that reading skills can improve when working with other students. This is a feasible and affordable system that a school can
implement. In fact, the result was that both tutors and tutees showed increases in reading fluency during the program (Cleary & Wright, 2006).

While implementing guided reading, the students were very involved in the lessons and were eager to use their favorite strategies. There was a palpable excitement in the room and a shared feeling of success (Schwartz, 2005). Students that were not directly working in the reading group were involved in meaningful center activities that increased their reading desire. Therefore, all students were able to participate in the learning goal of the reading lesson.

Through the careful and methodical use of the outlined strategies, my low level reluctant readers began to change their attitude towards reading. I was also able to better meet the needs of my very academically diverse class. In reflecting I was able to be sure that I was meeting the needs of all of my students. My students enjoyed working together and making reading lessons social, as well as interactive. Even my lower level readers were motivated when they saw that they had an important role to play in the community of learners. Teachers must use strategies that help students become engaged in the learning process. Examples of these strategies include cooperative learning, jigsaws, problem-solving, and mnemonic devices (Fountas, I., Lyons, et. al, 2005). Most importantly, teachers need to have an understanding of the learner's knowledge base either through assessment, evaluation, prior teacher recommendations, and interaction with other teachers. Without knowing the knowledge base, teachers will be at a disadvantage for helping students tap prior knowledge and develop strategies that can be applied to future situations.