

# Engaged Reading

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The concept of engaged reading requires careful consideration of the characteristics of individuals who are highly engaged in any activity. To be engaged means to be fully immersed physically, mentally, and emotionally in an activity. Csíkszentmihályi's concept of *flow* is helpful here. Wikipedia defines "flow" as the "mental state of operation in which a person in an activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and success in the process of the activity. Proposed by Mihály Csíkszentmihályi, the positive psychology concept has been widely referenced across a variety of fields," including reading engagement. Csíkszentmihályi (1991) describes engaged reading as a state of total absorption and completely focused motivation. It is a single-minded immersion and represents perhaps the ultimate in harnessing the emotions in the service of performing and learning. In flow, the emotions are not just contained and channeled, but positive, energized, and aligned with the task at hand.

## **Operationalizing the Research: A Description of Engaged Reading in High Progress Literacy Classrooms**

In the research on high progress literacy classrooms (see for example, Allington & Johnston, 2000, 2002; Duffy-Hester, 1999; Langer, 2001; Pressley et al., 2001; Pressley, Rankin, Yokoi, 1996; Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Allington, Block, & Morrow, 1998; Taylor & Pearson, 2004; Taylor, Peterson, Pearson, & Rodrigues, 2002; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 1999; Wharton-McDonald, Pressley, & Hampston, 1998), all students are fully engaged in sustained reading and writing of interesting, connected text at least 75% of the time devoted to reading instruction. Teachers in high-progress classrooms

- teach students how to select books and other materials to read that are both readable and interesting
- teach students how to engage and sustain attention
- help students learn how to deeply engage in reading and writing for a variety of purposes including reading for enjoyment and reading to expand content knowledge
- look for books and help their students find books and materials that match their interests and inquiries
- provide encouragement and show genuine interest in developing students' interests and taste as readers
- demonstrate for students how to develop their interests, how to find books, how to keep lists of books read and books they might want to read
- provide much instruction in the processes and skills of reading
- provide much small group and individuated instruction appropriate to the strengths and needs of readers and writers
- arrange for massive amounts of guided and independent practice.

## Observing for Engagement—Look for:

### Readers and writers who

- are fully engrossed in their work for sustained periods of time,
- talk about their interests as readers and researchers,
- keep lists of questions, ideas, words, and phrases to use in their writing
- respond in writing to their reading
- keep a list of books they have read and want to read
- always have interesting, manageable books at their fingertips
- who appreciate and look forward to time to read and work independently

### Teachers who

- routinely demonstrate how to engage, how to sustain attention, how to select books, how to manage time and materials
- talk with their students as co-readers (not interrogators)
- show genuine enthusiasm for reading and writing
- show genuine interest in their students and in helping them to develop their own interests as readers
- are positive and encouraging
- routinely monitor and collect information about engagement of individual readers, and use this data to adjust instruction, materials, environment, and expectations. This might include using the engagement inventory with the whole class or with a targeted group of students, longer observations of particular students, regularly looking through students' reading logs, responding to students' reading journals, and challenging and helping students to set goals for sustained engagement, as well as problem-solve their needs in order to increase engagement. Teachers who regularly use these tools will have ready access to this information when asked.

### A classroom environment organized for engaged reading and writing

- lots and lots of books
- organized and attractively displayed
- readily accessible to students
- lots of easy books
- lots of informational text, including magazines, short articles, and reference materials
- spaces for students to read and to work
- spaces for students to gather to talk about books
- anchor charts
- book boxes/bags, etc. for students to keep the books they are working on and with
- space for small group instruction
- materials accessible for journaling, writing, researching, editing, publishing

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