Effective Instruction for Middle School Students with Reading Difficulties:

The Reading Teacher's Sourcebook

Authors: Carolyn Denton, Deanna Bryan, Jade Wexler, Deborah Reed, and Sharon Vaughn

Chapter 4: Components of Effective Instruction

www.texasreading.org

Part 2 | Effective Instruction for Struggling Readers

Chapter 4
Components of Effective Instruction

After conducting assessments, Miss Lopez should be aware of her students' needs in the following areas:

- Comprehension.

- Vocabulary.

- Fluency.

- Word recognition.

She has also designed a flexible grouping system that will allow her to work with homogenous, small groups when necessary. She feels that she has a grasp on what her students need to learn, but is overwhelmed by the challenge of giving them the help they need. She is not sure how to structure her lessons to meet her students' needs. The following chapter will discuss how to organize and plan effective instruction.

Researchers have identified key lesson components that make instruction more effective for struggling readers (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2002; Swanson & Deshler, 2003). The components are listed on the following page (and explained in more detail later in this chapter):

- Statement of objective or purpose.

- Daily review.

- Explicit modeling and teaching.

- Guided practice.

- Independent practice.

- Teaching for generalization.

- Monitoring student learning.

- Periodic review (multiple opportunities for practice).

TERMS TO KNOW

Corrective feedback   Specific clarification provided by the teacher in order to give students information about their errors

Generalization   The ability to apply a rule or pattern to a new context or setting (i.e., applying a strategy learned in reading class to a social studies assignment)

Objective   The aim or goal of the lesson; what the teacher wants students to learn

Overlearning   Learning to the point of mastery, or automaticity

Positive feedback   Specific praise provided by the teacher to reinforce students' correct responses and encourage student effort

Prior knowledge   Background knowledge or knowledge that students already have from previous experience; a key component of Schema Theory, or the belief that new knowledge must be integrated with previous knowledge in order to achieve comprehension

Scaffolding   Adjusting or extending instruction so that students are able to be successful with challenging tasks. This support is temporary and is removed when no longer needed.

Bos & Vaughn, 2006; Denton & Hocker, 2006; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2002; Harris & Hodges, 1995; The Encarta World English Dictionary

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVE OR PURPOSE

The **objective** of the lesson must be clear to the teacher before it can be clear to the students. Be aware of what you want your students to learn and teach with that goal in mind.

Provide students with a step-by-step presentation of information. Present only a few ideas at once and connect new material to **prior knowledge**. During this stage of the lesson, an effective teacher will provide a supportive framework illustrating how the new information being presented is related to information that students already know. Using this framework, students are able to access knowledge currently in their minds and then connect this prior knowledge to the new subject matter being introduced (Swanson & Deshler, 2003).

DAILY REVIEW

A daily review is more than just checking to see whether homework assignments are complete. A review of material covered the day before gives Miss Lopez the opportunity to see whether her students have mastered the material, and it gives students an opportunity to **overlearn**—to learn to the point of mastery, or automaticity. Overlearning leads to long-term retention and provides connections for future learning (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2002). In the daily review:

1. Review quickly the material taught in the previous lesson.

2. Review previous learning with specific consideration for whether students have retained key concepts.

3. Present information visually and explicitly. In other words, present information clearly enough that your students have no doubt about what it is you want them to recall. One method of presenting information in this way is to clearly post essential steps of previously taught strategies or concepts around the classroom. If students do not display adequate knowledge of the material already covered, adjust instruction or reteach material as needed.

EXPLICIT MODELING AND TEACHING

Model the strategy or demonstrate the skill by thinking aloud. This type of modeling allows the thinking process to become observable and gives students a clear picture of what the strategy being taught looks like. It is important that teachers not assume that a student understands the execution of a skill or the thinking process involved in applying a strategy. Therefore, careful modeling is essential. If you are teaching a simple skill, you may need only to demonstrate the skill or model the procedure.

Repeated questioning throughout the presentation of new information gives the teacher an opportunity to assess the students' levels of understanding and correct any misconceptions before moving on (Swanson & Deshler, 2003).

Finally, after teaching a skill or strategy, carefully monitor student understanding and adjust instruction accordingly. If students are not fully grasping a concept, it is important to adjust instruction to meet their needs.

In summary, when presenting new information, be sure to:

- Be mindful of what you want your students to learn.

- Connect new material to students' prior knowledge.

- Model and/or demonstrate the new strategy or skill.

- Question the students' understanding of the new material.

- Monitor the students' understanding and adapt instruction as needed.

HELPFUL HABIT | During the modeling phase of instruction, try to assure that English language learners and others with limited oral vocabularies are observing the teacher—not trying to listen, write, copy, and watch at the same time. Because of their limited English skills, they benefit from having their full attention on the teacher.

GUIDED PRACTICE

Guided practice gives students the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned with guidance from the teacher. It is important that Miss Lopez provides guidance while students work on their assignments—not wait until they are finished to check for accuracy. This is the time to give students helpful hints and clarify any misconceptions they might have (UTCRLA, 2003d). Providing this type of guidance while students are working will ensure that students are practicing a skill or learning a concept correctly. Without guidance, some students will practice a skill incorrectly and, consequently, become confused. When students practice their mistakes, those mistakes become bad habits.

An effective teacher provides **scaffolding**, or support, to students in the initial stages of learning a new strategy or skill. Scaffolding allows students to apply a new strategy or skill in a safe environment by providing specific support directly where assistance is needed.

For example, if a student is having difficulty with the concept of asking questions during reading in order to monitor his or her own comprehension, a teacher may scaffold by starting a question for the student (or students) and then having the student finish the question. For example, while reading text about the Civil War, the teacher may start a question like the following:

> **Teacher:**
> Where did Abraham Lincoln …

> **Student or students:**
> … give his speech?

Through supported application of skills and strategies, a student will be able to reach the goal of mastery. Scaffolding will be discussed further in the following chapter, Delivering Effective Instruction.

Guided practice should directly reflect the objective of instruction. During this time, Miss Lopez's job is to ensure that students have a clear understanding of the strategy or skill that has just been presented. Students who have problems remembering new material often benefit from practicing in a variety of formats and contexts. Teachers should ensure that students are given ample time to understand new concepts before moving on to independent practice. Overall, students may need multiple opportunities to practice with guidance from the teacher.

The Reading Teacher's Sourcebook

This phase in the lesson is an excellent time to involve students in actively responding to questions. Student responses should guide the teacher in making decisions about how best to scaffold or support student learning. In addition to providing extra practice opportunities, questioning can help teachers assess student progress and knowledge of concepts.

Teachers can ask for the following kinds of responses:

- **Choral response:** All of the students answer together.

- **Partner response:** Students respond to a partner. Assign each student in a pair a number. "Ones tell twos why the character …"

- **Silent response:** Students raise thumbs up or down to indicate whether they agree or disagree, or engage in some other silent response.

- **Individual selection:** Pose a question to the whole class and then strategically select an individual student to answer the question. Remember to say the student's name after the question so that all students think they might be called on and will rehearse an answer in anticipation of being selected.

It is critical for students to practice correct responses. When a student gives a correct response, restate the correct response and have the class repeat the correct response as well. This will give the students an opportunity to practice correct reading and responding. For example:

Point to a word on the board.

> **Teacher:**
> What is this word, Justin?
>
> **Student:**
> *Island.* (individual selection)
>
> **Teacher:**
> That's right, *island*. Everyone, what is this word?
>
> **Class:**
> *Island.* (choral response)

Or:

> **Teacher:**
> What does it mean that he was *elated*, Sara?
>
> **Student:**
> It means he was very happy and excited.
>
> **Teacher:**
> That's right, *elated* means very happy and excited. Everyone, what does *elated* mean?
>
> **Class:**
> Very happy and excited.

During guided practice, it is essential to offer **positive** and **corrective feedback**, as appropriate. When students read a word incorrectly or give an incorrect response, they are essentially practicing and reinforcing that incorrect response (Denton & Hocker, 2006). Positive and corrective feedback will be discussed further in the next chapter. One example of providing corrective feedback is given on the following page.

Error-correction example (Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, & Tarver, 2004):

Student (reading orally):
She longed to see the is-land …

Teacher:
That word is *island*. Say the word.

Student:
Island.

Teacher:
Good. Please reread the sentence.

Student:
She longed to see the island her grandmother told stories about …

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

When students are consistently responding to questions and applying a skill or strategy correctly during guided practice, then they are ready to apply their new knowledge independently. Independent practice reinforces concepts taught and allows students to learn information on their own. Independent practice should parallel the goals of the lesson and be directly relevant to guided practice (Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, & Tarver, 2004). The goal of independent practice is for students to develop automaticity, or mastery of a strategy or skill. Once the strategy or skill becomes a habit, it will be easier for students to generalize their new knowledge. When students begin to generalize, they realize that this new strategy is not just for reading class, but also for any class and any reading. Teachers can tell students explicitly so that they are able to apply skills and strategies to a wide range of circumstances. For example, a teacher may ask questions such as, "Can you think of a time you might use this strategy outside of this class?"

When planning for independent practice, a teacher may reflect, "Am I giving the students an opportunity to apply the strategy or skill that was taught without support?" If, through direct instruction and guided practice, students were taught how to categorize words, they should have several opportunities to practice categorizing words independently. Sometimes teachers make the mistake of asking students to practice a related skill during independent practice instead of the exact strategy or skill that was taught. A multiple-choice worksheet asking students to choose the category that a word belongs to is related to categorization. However, this activity is not as effective as giving students a list of words and asking them to categorize them appropriately. Students will probably not be able to accomplish a task such as categorization independently unless they have had sufficient explicit instruction, modeling, and guided practice.

GENERALIZATION

Generalization occurs when students can apply their new strategies and skills in other contexts or settings outside the reading classroom. Struggling readers usually do not generalize automatically. Teachers should plan instruction so that students have ample practice applying their new skills and strategies in a variety of settings. Teachers can also lead discussions to make students aware of how they can use their new skills and strategies in other classes. If teachers are aware of the instructional expectations in other classes, they can remind their students to use the strategies they learn in reading class in their other classes.

MONITOR STUDENT LEARNING

Monitoring student learning refers to the process of gathering information regularly through student assessments. The information gathered should be directly connected to a student's instructional focus. For example, if diagnostic assessments established that a student needed to work on word recognition, a teacher may monitor student growth through repeated assessments of ORF with a retell or word list reading.

Once you establish a routine of regular progress monitoring, you can use the data collected as a guide to planning instruction. This data will help you know when you need to reteach concepts and when you need to adapt instruction.

Four main ways to adjust instruction are defined in the following table.

FIGURE 16. GUIDE TO ADAPTING INSTRUCTION.

Adaptation Category	Definition	Examples
Instructional Content	Skills and concepts that are the focus of teaching and learning	Determining main ideas Reading words with closed syllable patterns Summarization
Instructional Activity	The actual lessons used to teach and reinforce skills and concepts	Semantic mapping Main idea strategy Teaching the multisyllable word reading strategy
Delivery of Instruction	The procedures and routines used to teach instructional activities	Grouping—whole class, small group, or partners Modeling and thinking aloud Connecting to background knowledge Multiple opportunities for practice
Instructional Material	Supplemental aids that are used to teach and reinforce skills and concepts	Narrative or expository text Manipulatives Charts Flashcards Recorded text

Adapted with permission from University of Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts. (2003). Special education reading project secondary institute — Effective instruction for secondary struggling readers: Research-based practices. *Austin, TX: Author.*

For further discussion of progress monitoring and adapting instruction, please refer to the previous chapter on assessment.

PERIODIC REVIEW/MULTIPLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRACTICE

If Miss Lopez wants her students to have long-term retention of material learned, she must plan and provide for daily, weekly, and monthly review of strategies and skills.

Swanson and Deshler (2003) give a "big picture" look at what current research says about instructional practice. They found that students need to practice newly learned material thoroughly, but distributed practice is better for retention. Distributed practice means that concepts learned in one unit of study are carried over for review and connection to new information in another unit of study. Connections between related materials should be pointed out explicitly to students. In their book *Effective Teaching Strategies That Accommodate Diverse Learners,* Kame'enui and Carnine (1998) suggest that teachers space reviews over time. Therefore, they posit, it is essential for teachers to keep a cumulative list of strategies and skills covered and then space the review of this material over time through a variety of activities. Effective teachers understand that it is their job to find out what their students know, to teach them what they do not know, to guide them and support them as they learn, and to provide several opportunities for students to apply their newly learned skills or strategies.

Extensive Distributed Practice ⟶ **Generalization** ⟶ **Long-term Retention**

Effective Instruction for Middle School Students with Reading Difficulties:

The Reading Teacher's Sourcebook

Authors: Carolyn Denton, Deanna Bryan, Jade Wexler, Deborah Reed, and Sharon Vaughn

Chapter 5: Delivering Effective Instruction

www.texasreading.org

Chapter 5
Delivering Effective Instruction

Are there teacher behaviors that make a difference in student learning? Absolutely. Teachers who have a repertoire of certain teaching behaviors are more effective than teachers who are unaware of these teaching practices. The teaching skills and strategies proven to improve student learning have come to be known as "features of effective instruction." (For descriptions of the features and supporting research see: Bos & Vaughn, 2006; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2002.)

Most teachers know what good teaching looks like. You can peek inside a classroom and know whether students and teachers are engaged in learning. But many teachers do not know the specific teaching skills that research has shown to increase student learning. Through learning and practicing these skills, teachers can gain a new sense of empowerment and confidence in their craft.

Some important elements of effective instruction for students with reading difficulties (Bos & Vaughn, 2006; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2002) are:

- Explicit instruction.

- Targeted instruction.

- Time on task.

- Quick pacing of lessons.

- Positive feedback.

- Corrective feedback.

- Student motivation.

TERMS TO KNOW

Autonomy	Personal independence
Corrective feedback	Specific clarification provided by the teacher in order to give students information about their errors
Explicit instruction	Instruction that is clear and obvious so that students do not have to guess what they are expected to learn
Motivation	A feeling of interest or enthusiasm that makes a student want to complete a task or improve his or her skills

Positive feedback	Specific praise provided by the teacher to reinforce students' correct responses and encourage student effort
Quick pacing of lessons	Instruction that moves at a manageable pace for students while taking advantage of every minute. Quick pacing minimizes unnecessary teacher talk and transition time between activities.
Scaffolding	Adjusting and extending instruction so that students are able to be successful with challenging tasks. This support is temporary and is removed when no longer needed.
Scope and sequence	The content and objectives included in a curriculum and the order in which they are presented
Self-regulation	A student's ability to monitor his or her own progress and make adjustments to complete a task as necessary
Targeted instruction	Instruction that is based on assessments. This type of instruction targets student weaknesses, builds on strengths, and is designed to teach students exactly what they need to learn
Time on task	Time when students are actively engaged in learning and applying what they have learned

Bos & Vaughn, 2006; Denton & Hocker, 2006; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2002; The Encarta World English Dictionary

EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION

When instruction is explicit, students know exactly what they are expected to learn. To provide a clear objective to the student, the objective must first be clear to the teacher. That is why the instructional planning discussed in the previous chapter is so important. **Explicit instruction** is provided through:

- A clear statement of the objective.

- Modeling.

- Demonstration.

- Understandable explanation.

The following is an example of explicitly teaching the sight word *said*:

Point to the word said *on a flashcard or the board.*

> **Teacher:**
> This word is *said*. What's this word?

> **Students:**
> *Said.*

Teacher:
That's right, s*aid*.

Point to each letter.

Teacher:
Said is spelled S-A-I-D. Everyone, spell s*aid*.

Students:
S-A-I-D.

Still pointing to the word.

Teacher:
What word?

Students:
Said.

(Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, & Tarver, 2004)

The teacher may ask individual students to read the word, then ask students to read a list of previously learned words, including the word s*aid*. The students may now move on to reading sentences or text containing the word s*aid*.

The above scenario is a simple example of explicit instruction. The main idea is this: Teachers should not make students guess or infer what they are supposed to learn. Therefore, it is important to know the objectives of lessons and to express these objectives simply and clearly to your students.

TARGETED INSTRUCTION

Targeted instruction is based on the results of ongoing student assessments. Using information from assessments, teachers are able to teach students what they need to learn. At the beginning of the year, or when a student enters the reading class, the first order of business is assessment. Refer to Part I: Assessing Struggling Readers at the Secondary Level for an in-depth discussion. Assessment is essential to identify each student's strengths and needs. Following the initial assessment, it is important to regularly collect relevant data to define students' progress or lack of progress in areas such as fluency, comprehension, and word recognition. This regular observation of students' learning should guide the teacher's design of instructional objectives and adaptations, and indicate when reteaching is needed.

One way to support students' specific learning needs is through **scaffolding**. An effective teacher scaffolds to help the student move from what he or she already knows to new learning. With appropriate scaffolding, or support, a student will be able to accomplish tasks that would otherwise be impossible to accomplish independently. Teaching struggling readers requires that the teacher be constantly aware of "where students are" and "where they need to be." Instructional support, or scaffolding, is temporary and should be taken away as soon as a student is able to perform a task without help. Just as a father hanging onto the seat of his daughter's bike while she is learning to ride will eventually let go and watch her glide down the street on her own, an effective teacher must know when to support a student and when to encourage independence. Subsequently, once a task is mastered, an effective teacher will raise expectations and provide necessary support, thus repeating the cycle of scaffolding (Denton & Hocker, 2006).

Examples of scaffolding include but are not limited to (Denton & Hocker, 2006):

- Choosing text at the student's instructional level so that the text is challenging but capable of being read with support.

- Providing a partial response to a question and asking the student or students to complete it.

- Acknowledging a partially correct response and helping the student correct or refine it.

- Organizing tasks into smaller steps.

- Connecting the topic of instruction to students' prior knowledge and experience.

- Providing hints rather than telling a student an answer when he/she does not respond.

TIME ON TASK

Time on task refers to the time students are actively engaged in learning and applying what they have learned (Carroll, 1963). On-task behavior is usually observable. Student behaviors that would indicate time on task include:

- Making direct eye contact with the teacher.

- Giving answers to the teacher's questions that are directly relevant to instruction.

- Asking the teacher to clarify instructional information.

- Applying a strategy or skill appropriately.

- Performing a task appropriately.

Effective teachers constantly monitor their classrooms for active engagement in the lesson and know how to employ techniques designed to increase time on task. Some effective techniques Mastropieri and Scruggs (2002) suggest are:

- Plan activities that require students to be actively involved, with a minimum amount of time spent sitting and listening.

- Praise students who are on task.

- Question students frequently. To maximize student engagement, pause between asking the question and calling on a student to answer. This will help ensure that all students think actively about the question since they do not know who will be called on to answer it.

- Set a timer to ring at random intervals and award students who are on task when the timer rings.

- Provide ample visuals and materials to make learning concrete.

If struggling readers are to close the gap with their peers, they must make progress at a *faster rate* than average readers. This requires increased instructional time (Bos & Vaughn, 2006). Therefore, it is imperative that instruction be designed deliberately to decrease "downtime" and increase students' time on task.

QUICK PACING OF LESSONS

Quick pacing of lessons increases time on task and instructional time (Bos & Vaughn, 2006). Effective teachers are constantly aware of their instructional pacing in relation to the responsiveness of their students.

Planning is a prerequisite to quick pacing. In order to move at a pace that is manageable for students but also keeps them actively engaged, an effective teacher must adequately plan the content to be covered.

First of all, it is important that teachers use data from assessments to help plan their lessons. Effective teachers know their students' strengths and needs and set objectives based on student needs. Next, they must consider the **scope and sequence** of the curriculum. This refers to the amount of material to be covered and the order in which it will be presented. It is difficult to modify the pacing, or speed of instruction, if the scope and sequence are not clear. Some school districts have curriculum guides with a suggested scope and sequence for each grade level. This is an excellent resource. Remember, however, that struggling readers may need a modified curriculum that takes into account their areas of need. Teachers might want to think of themselves as emergency room doctors who treat the greatest needs of their students first. In other words, if a patient has a splinter and a broken leg, which will the doctor treat first? Perhaps a teacher has a student who is unable to write a multiparagraph essay and also unable to read more than 30 WCPM on grade level. Which is the emergency? Although there are important writing standards for middle school students, the greater need is fluent reading. Assessment and progress monitoring can lead a teacher to a "diagnosis," and strong instructional design can help the teacher provide the "treatment" effectively.

Besides quick pacing across lessons, pacing within lessons should be energetic with little "downtime." Pacing is improved when teachers are well organized and when students know and use routines for transitions and activities.

Furthermore, adequate planning for active student involvement reduces behavior difficulties. Behavior problems may increase if students are bored or when lessons are too easy or too difficult.

POSITIVE FEEDBACK

Positive feedback is authentic and specific. For example, "Good job! Well done!" and "Way to go!" are less meaningful to students than, "I can see that you are previewing the chapter by looking at the charts and graphs. Good strategy." or, "You recognized the open syllable in that word. Nice work." If a teacher is continually giving out praise with no observation to back it up, older struggling readers will notice. They may assume that empty praise from a teacher is a sign that they are not doing anything worthy of sincere praise. It can be useful to praise an unsuccessful effort, provided you specifically praise the *attempt* but also correct the mistake. For example, if a student mispronounces a word you may say, "You read the first part of that word correctly, but the last part is incorrect." (Point to the letters *sh*). "What sound does this make? That's right, *sh* says /sh/. Now can you sound out the word?"

Appropriate statements for positive feedback include:

- You recognized the parts of that word. Good work.

- Very impressive that you remembered how to write that word.

- You are following the steps of the strategy so carefully! That should help you understand what you are reading.

- Nice job of making notes while you read. That should help you remember what you are reading.

- You read that passage with so much expression. Nice work.

CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK

Corrective feedback provides students with information about their mistakes. If a student continually performs a task, applies a strategy, or reads a word incorrectly, the student is essentially practicing the mistake, and the mistake will become habit (Denton & Hocker, 2006).

When giving corrective feedback, there are a few things to remember. Corrective feedback is simply providing information and, therefore, should be given in a neutral tone (Denton & Hocker, 2006). Your classroom needs to be a place where older struggling readers are not afraid to make mistakes—a place where students know that you understand their instructional needs and that you will support and challenge them appropriately. When giving corrective feedback, try not to provide the feedback too quickly. Give the student time to self-correct.

Appropriate statements for corrective feedback include:

- (*After pointing to the sound that was read incorrectly*): What sound does this make? Can you try to read the word again?

- The word you wrote is *signal*. Can you write *single*?

- That's not quite right. Can you take another look?

- Yes, that is partially correct. Can you give me more information?

- Very close. This word is *special*.

- Watch me. I'll show you how to use the strategy. (*Model again.*)

(Denton & Hocker, 2006)

HELPFUL HABIT | To give corrective feedback, simply provide a correct model and have students repeat the correct response two or three times.

ENGAGED READING PRACTICE

Even though it is very important to teach students strategies and skills to improve reading outcomes, it is absolutely essential that students are given ample time every day to be actively engaged in reading. To be engaged in reading, students need to have a purpose for reading and they need interesting text that is at an appropriate level, so that they can appreciate and understand what they are reading. Sustained silent reading (SSR) is popular, but it is not associated with improved reading outcomes—perhaps because students are not engaged appropriately in reading. If a student chooses a book to read during SSR that is not at an appropriate level, the student will most likely be looking at pictures instead of reading. The

student might be quiet, but will probably not be reading.

Students may engage in reading in a variety of formats. Individual silent reading is appropriate if text is on the students' instructional or independent reading levels. With difficult text, it may be more appropriate to have students read orally, but "round robin" reading, in which students take turns reading a paragraph or section while others "follow along," is not likely to actively engage students in reading. Other, more useful, grouping formats for engaged oral reading practice include peer partners and small groups that meet with the teacher. Partner reading is described in detail in Chapter 8: Fluency. When students read orally in a small group, the teacher is able to provide appropriate text, scaffold students when they struggle, and prompt students to apply reading skills and strategies they are learning.

The following sections describe reading strategies and instructional practices that are supported by research. We hope these tools will be part of the foundation of effective instruction in your classroom.

ADDRESS STUDENT MOTIVATION

When designing instruction for middle school readers, it is essential to think about **motivation**. One of the greatest challenges that teachers of older struggling readers face is motivating these students to persevere in their quest to improve their reading. Teachers can help increase student motivation by encouraging **autonomy**, or personal independence; making learning relevant; and teaching students how to self-regulate.

Generally speaking, adolescents are in search of control, autonomy, and independence. Adolescence is a time of exploring how to gain and handle this control. By creating a classroom environment that encourages autonomy, teachers can support the urge for independence in their students. First, teachers can be aware of this need and create opportunities for their students to make their own choices. For example, teachers may allow their students to choose their own reading material when appropriate (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Reed, Schallert, Beth, & Woodruff, 2004). Simply giving students a choice between two passages to read when practicing a new strategy or skill can encourage student engagement.

Another way to encourage student autonomy is to develop a classroom library. The presence of diverse and abundant reading material in the classroom is invaluable (Guthrie, Schafer, Von Secker, & Alban, 2000). As teachers get to know their students, they become aware of their students' interests and can keep these interests in mind while ordering books for the classroom or walking the aisles of a discount bookstore. Students are appreciative when they know teachers have added a book to the classroom library "for them." It may take some time to collect and/or purchase reading material that is of high interest to students. A classroom library is a work in progress, growing each year with the needs and interests of different students. This type of library may consist of books from several different genres such as fiction, nonfiction, action/adventure, mystery, poetry, joke books, classics, childhood favorites, autobiography/biography, short stories, sports, and historical fiction. A classroom library may also include baskets of comic books, magazines, newspapers, books by popular authors such as Gary Paulsen or Louis Sachar, and children's picture books. Picture books are an excellent tool for introducing new units of study. Teachers must focus on the high demands of the curriculum, and, as noted earlier, sustained silent reading programs cannot replace effective instruction. However, even 10 to 15 minutes of independent reading time each week gives students the opportunity to select their own reading material and to feel a sense of empowerment. Teachers have observed that students can get "hooked" quickly when reading books of their own choosing and then want to check out the books to finish reading at home. Middle school students will often check out picture books to read to a younger sibling at home.

Another aspect of motivation is relevance. If you can show students how the content of the lesson is truly relevant, or important to them, they will be more likely to tune in and engage in the lesson. To successfully show students this relevance, teachers must first determine students' needs and try to understand what is relevant to them. In her article "Motivating Adolescent Readers Through Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction," Emily Swan (2004) gives several examples of how teachers can help their students make concrete connections to what they are learning. As an introduction to the concept of revolution, a social studies teacher shows his class a 10-minute video clip from an episode of the cartoon *The Simpsons* in which the character Bart and his friends take over a summer camp run by abusive camp counselors. An English teacher introduces her students to the concept of civil rights through an activity in class in which certain students are purposefully discriminated against. The more we listen to our students and understand what is important to them, the better we will be at adapting our teaching to be clearly relevant to our students (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004).

A primary goal of our efforts to motivate our students is to enable them to develop **self-regulation**—to be able to redirect the focus of completing a task when they realize that their current approach is not productive (Reed et al., 2004). For example, imagine a group of students working together to complete an assignment. They are sitting by the window and are able to see several of their friends running around the track for gym class. The conversation drifts from the assignment to social conversation about their friends. A self-regulatory student might suggest that the group find somewhere to sit away from the window so that they can concentrate and complete their task. It is important to instill in students this ability to self-regulate so that they will not only self-regulate in reading class, but also in other classes, at home, and one day at college or work. One activity that may promote self-regulation is to have a class discussion to identify and list the smaller goals or substeps necessary to complete a particular assignment. Then, as students are working on the assignment, the teacher periodically directs them to stop and ask themselves whether they are being productive. Is their current approach helping them accomplish the substeps? Do they need to change how they are working in any way? By talking through this process with students, teachers give them guided practice on self-regulation (Reed et al., 2004).

Biancarosa and Snow (2004) note that students must be competent in order to improve their reading performance but that competence alone is not enough. Competence must be accompanied by engagement in order to make reading performance gains, and neither is sufficient without the other. Fostering an environment that encourages autonomy supports student engagement in learning, but this autonomy must be coupled with instructional support and guided practice designed to build reading competence (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). It is not enough to provide instruction to struggling middle school readers, but neither is it enough to attend to student motivation without providing effective instruction. The next section includes a description of instructional principles that are particularly important in teaching struggling readers. Miss Lopez has a tough job ahead of her. Motivating older students is a daily, sometimes hourly, endeavor, but it is a joy to get to know these young people and encourage their motivation.

The Reading Teacher's Sourcebook

Guide to Adapting Instruction

Adaptation Category	Definition	Examples
Instructional Content	Skills and concepts that are the focus of teaching and learning	Determining main ideas Reading words with closed syllable patterns Summarization
Instructional Activity	The actual lessons used to teach and reinforce skills and concepts	Semantic mapping Main idea strategy Teaching the Multisyllable Word Reading Strategy
Delivery of Instruction	The procedures and routines used to teach instructional activities	Grouping—whole class, small group, or partners Modeling and thinking aloud Connecting to background knowledge Multiple opportunities for practice
Instructional Material	Supplemental aids that are used to teach and reinforce skills and concepts	Narrative or expository text Manipulatives Charts Flashcards Recorded text