Independent reading and the 'Social Turn': How adolescent reading habits and motivation relate to cultivating social relationships

Matthew Knoester, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Abstract
Research suggests that independent reading outside of school is a strong indicator of school and reading success. However, studies also suggest that student recreational reading significantly decreases in the middle school years. This article explores some of the reasons adolescent students choose to read independently or are reluctant to do so. In this teacher research study the author interviewed his former students, their parents, and their current teachers about what motivates adolescents to read or not to read. Evidence from this study suggests that independent reading is intimately connected to various social practices, despite commonly held views that describe independent reading as a solitary activity. Teaching strategies to encourage student motivation are shared.

Author Biography
Matthew Knoester is a National Board Certified Teacher who is currently an Assistant Professor of Education at the University of Evansville.

Recommended Citation

Rights Statement
In Copyright. URI: http://rightsstatements.org/vocab/InC/1.0/
This Item is protected by copyright and/or related rights. You are free to use this item in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s).

Research suggests that independent reading outside of school is a strong indicator of school and reading success. However, studies also suggest that student recreational reading significantly decreases in the middle school years. This article explores some of the reasons adolescent students choose to read independently or are reluctant to do so. In this teacher research study the author interviewed his former students, their parents, and their current teachers about what motivates adolescents to read or not to read. Teaching strategies to encourage student motivation are shared. The appendix contains questions for the two teachers interviewed. Although independent reading cannot substitute for teaching decoding, it improves reading comprehension and the habit of reading. Independent reading is children's reading of text — such as books, magazines, and newspapers — on their own, with minimal to no assistance from adults. It can consist of reading done in or out of school, including purely voluntary reading for enjoyment or assigned reading for homework. Growth in reading and how children spend their time outside of school. Reading Research Quarterly, 23, 285-303. Cipielewski, J., & Stanovich, K. E. (1992).