

Using Digital Text and Tools to Engage and Motivate: Four Essential Features in Effective Student Reading Curricula Programs

Engaging students in reading is paramount to student success as they move through their school careers. While there are myriad methods to engage and motivate students to interact with content, digital media, together with online tools and resources, offers exciting possibilities to positively affect student behavior and create lifelong readers.

Digital media programs and resources allow educators to connect students with libraries of high-interest texts, all while engaging students in a variety of informal learning environments and social interactions with literacy and reading instruction. While intrinsic motivation can be influenced by educators and parents, using digital media helps drive extrinsic motivation through self-regulation, by offering a variety of options for engagement for different students. (Ryan & Deci, 2000)

Engaging through Digital Media

High-quality reading instruction, delivered through digital media, has the potential to enhance what is already a motivating reading experience for students. Combining elements of high-interest text, student choice, interactivity, and social interaction, among other features, digital resources work hard to maximize the experience for learners. The best programs contain these four features:

1. Interactive features found in many eBook platforms enrich the experience for students, and allow educators to encourage, guide, and respond to students as they work through different reading experiences. Highlighting, question prompts, and annotations provide cues encouraging students to engage with the text in front of them.
2. Discussion areas or message boards connect learners

- together within digital media, enabling collaboration even when they are participating in distance learning experiences.
3. Gamification built into practice and learning activities pulls many previously disengaged learners into the readings.
 4. Walled-garden social interactions provide students with a safe place to explore topics and become more thoughtful digital citizens.



Leveraging Social Interactions and Learner Types to Reach All Learners

Every learner has a slightly different learning profile, and that profile helps dictate which type of learning experiences will engage each learner. When thinking about learning and reading engagement in today's classroom, social interaction can be a powerful tool for bringing different learners into the learning experience. One way I like to think about social interaction, engagement, and motivation in reading instruction starts with Amy Jo Kim's [Social Action Matrix](#) and her action words that help categorize engagement opportunities around four different types of learners (Kim, 2014). While Amy Jo Kim relates this more to gaming and gamification in learning contexts, much of her thinking points to the great value across digital media for engagement in reading. To better understand how these action words might relate to online reading practice and motivation for learners, let's review each key term and how it ties to the interactive elements of one digital reading practice program designed for grades K-12 [SRA Reading Laboratory 2.0](#).

- **Explore:** As students work through the reading passages in the program, they can self-select content that fits their interest profile, while they collect stars and badges that encourage them to dig deeper into the content.
- **Compete:** For those learners motivated by competition, students collect points, badges, and scores so they can unlock achievements, create a poster to share with classmates and their parents/caregivers, and track how they compare to peers within the digital program.
- **Create:** Creators are engaged through writing activities and use badges to decorate a poster highlighting their achievements, all of which they can share with classmates and others within the program.
- **Collaborate:** Social interaction emphasizing collaboration is

reinforced by the ability to comment on contributions from other users, rate the readings learners complete, and other group-oriented actions.

Authored by : Brad Drewyor, Senior Product Manager, McGraw-Hill Education.

References

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