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What this unit is about

This unit focuses on your role in developing your students’ enthusiasm for reading. The more students enjoy reading, the more they will want to read. The more opportunities they have to read, the better they will become at reading. It is a virtuous circle.

As a teacher who reads and a reader who teaches, you are an important role model and can inspire your students to delight in reading.

In this unit you will be introduced to classroom practices that will help your students to develop positive attitudes towards reading, so that they have ‘the will’ to read as well as ‘the skill’ to read.

What you can learn in this unit

- How to be a reading role model for your students.
- How to plan activities that develop your students’ enjoyment of reading.
- How to organise paired reading for student peer support and collaborative learning.

Why this approach is important

Being a reader has many benefits. Reading is mentally stimulating. It develops knowledge, awareness and understanding. It enhances listening and speaking skills, and it impacts on the ability to write well. Students who don’t learn to read fluently struggle to engage in the learning opportunities available to them and run the risk of being left behind.

If we enjoy a particularly activity, we will seek out opportunities to do it more often. The more we engage in the activity, the better we get at it. This is as true for reading as for any other skill. By giving your students frequent opportunities to experience reading in an enjoyable way, you can set them on the path of becoming confident, lifelong readers.

1 Being a reading role model

Students’ attitudes to reading are strongly influenced by their teachers. This unit suggests many ways in which you can explicitly model the enjoyment to be found in reading a wide range of texts.

You will start by reading a case study of a teacher who discovered a way of introducing her students to the pleasure of reading.

Case Study 1: Reading the newspaper

Ms Rabia teaches a large group of multigrade students from Classes III–V in Sagar. Here she describes how she used newspapers to demonstrate reading for pleasure to her class.
Unfortunately, the demands of family responsibilities and work mean that I don’t have as much time to read as I would like. It is nevertheless very important to me to make my students appreciate the value and pleasure of reading.

One morning earlier this year my students came into the classroom while I was reading a story in the daily newspaper [Times of India, 2014]. When they had sat down, I put the newspaper down and said, ‘I have just been reading the most interesting thing! It is about the “Delhi Eye” – the biggest ferris wheel in India!’

I showed them a photograph of the giant wheel and continued: ‘It says here that from the top one can see monuments like Qutub Minar, Red Fort, Akshardham temple, Lotus Temple and Humayun’s Tomb.’ My students were captivated by this news.

I explained how there are many interesting things to read in the newspaper. I asked my students how often they came across newspapers outside school. One or two students said they noticed the newspapers with their photos and large-print headings in their local shop. Another said his father went to the community centre every day to read one. I learnt a little more about my students through this discussion.

From then on I shared a piece of news from the paper with my students every morning. Each time I let them observe me turning the pages, before selecting something that I thought would interest them. This was enjoyable for me, as it gave me the opportunity to read the paper every day. My students also seemed to look forward to finding out about local or international news. Through a short discussion, I was able to connect the news item with my students’ knowledge and experience, while introducing them to any new language it contained.

Soon I had a pile of newspapers and magazines in my classroom, which I encouraged my students to browse as they waited for their classmates to arrive in the morning. After a while I decided to set aside the first 15 minutes of class time for all my students to browse and read from these publications every day. Some students did this alone. Some did it together. On a few occasions I heard those reading together use the same expressions as I used with them myself, such as ‘Isn’t this interesting!’ and ‘Let’s see what this says!’ Sometimes I asked the older students to read with the younger ones. Occasionally I heard them explain what particular words meant. Recently my students have started recommending articles to one another, using expressions like ‘Have you read this?’ In these short sessions I could make informal observations of my students’ reading interests and skills.