

Assessing adolescents' motivation to read

Sharon M. Pitcher, Lettie K. Albright, Carol J. DeLaney, Nancy T. Walker, Krishna Seunarinesingh, Stephen Mogge, Kathy N. Headley, Victoria Gentry Ridgeway, Sharon Peck, Rebecca Hunt, Pamela J. Dunston

Using adolescents' preferred reading materials and modes of instruction will lead to increased motivation, and perhaps to improvements in reading outcomes.

Interviewer: How much time do you spend on the computer a day?

Adolescent: Two hours every day.

Interviewer: What do you usually do?

Adolescent: Search and play games on the Internet. I go to Ask Jeeves and ask questions. Draw things and write e-mails, print them out and hang them up. Shop for my mother so she can go to the store and buy things. Read about things that are going on around the world. I read magazines and music on the Internet and about getting into college and things.

(The adolescent was a sixth grader in an urban public school when interviewed.)

How to increase students' motivation to read has long been a priority in what teachers want to know. This inquiry usually starts with the question, "Do adolescents read?" Recent studies have suggested that few adolescents choose to read on

their own (Strommen & Mates, 2004). Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, and Mazzoni (1996) developed and standardized the Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) to aid elementary teachers in assessing the motivation of their students. In the study described in this article, 11 researchers worked as a team to revise the Motivation to Read Profile to be used with adolescents and then assess students using the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) at eight sites in the United States and Trinidad. Our work suggests that teachers need to ask different questions of adolescents than of younger children. Some of the questions that we found ourselves asking were the following: How do teachers define reading? What kinds of reading will motivate adolescents today? How can these types of reading be incorporated into secondary classrooms?

Pitcher and Mogge teach at Towson University in Maryland. Albright teaches at Texas Woman's University. She may be contacted there (Texas Woman's University Department of Reading, PO Box 425769, Denton, TX 76204-5769, USA); e-mail lalbright@mail.twu.edu. DeLaney teaches at Texas State University. Walker teaches at the University of La Verne in California. Seunarinesingh teaches at the University of the West Indies St. Augustine, Trinidad & Tobago. Headley, Ridgeway, and Dunston teach at Clemson University. Peck teaches at the State University of New York at Geneseo, and Hunt teaches at Marygrove College in Detroit, Michigan.

Motivation to read: The roles of engagement, self-efficacy, and purpose for reading

According to Guthrie and Wigfield (1997), motivation is defined in terms of "beliefs, values, needs and goals that individuals have" (p. 5). Thus, the closer that literacy activities and tasks match these values, needs, and goals, the greater the likelihood that students will expend effort

and sustain interest in them. When some students judge reading and literacy activities to be unrewarding, too difficult, or not worth the effort because they are peripheral to their interests and needs, they can become *nonreaders* (Strommen & Mates, 2004) or *aliterate adolescents* (Alvermann, 2003) who are capable of reading but choose not to do so.

Generally, the two strands of research on adolescent motivation to read focus on

- (a) adolescents as meaning-makers in out-of-school contexts that meet their competency needs (Alvermann, 2003; O'Brien, 2001; Strommen & Mates, 2004), and
- (b) adolescents as victims of positioning by schools that have devalued literacy activities at which they are literate and competent—such as media-text, electronic games, electronic messaging, and visual productions—and instead have valued primarily print-based, content-area texts (Alvermann, 2001b; O'Brien; Smith & Wilhelm, 2004) that students have difficulty comprehending.

In each case, school practices act as disincentives because they fail to take into account what motivates adolescents to read.

Although school reading is based on traditional textbooks (Alvermann & Moore, 1991), out-of-school reading involves a range of multimedia (Bean, Bean, & Bean, 1999). Traditional texts, according to the New London Group (1996), are “page-bound, official, standard forms of the national language” (p. 61) that limit the possibility for multiple discourses in the classroom. “An expanded concept of ‘text’ must transcend print-based texts to also include various electronic media and adolescents’ own cultural and social understandings” (Phelps, 2006, p. 4).

Thus, motivation to read is a complex construct that influences readers’ choices of reading

material, their willingness to engage in reading, and thus their ultimate competence in reading, especially related to academic reading tasks. Although much is known about adolescent motivation to read, the existing research can be supplemented by information that contributes to our understanding of motivation to read amongst a sample that is diverse in geography, ethnicity, school type, school system, and gender. This information is pertinent given the range of findings about adolescents’ motivation to read.

Revision of the Motivation to Read Profile for adolescents

Yearly, at the National Reading Conference, attendees have the opportunity to participate in a study group on adolescent reading research. During the 2002 conference, the participants in the study group decided that understanding what motivates teens to read could be the key to improving reading instruction at the secondary level. Many of us were familiar with the Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell et al., 1996) that was designed to look at motivation of elementary school readers from different perspectives using two different types of instruments. We decided to revise the MRP to provide a flexible instrument for secondary teachers to better understand their students’ motivations to read.

The MRP includes two instruments: the reading survey and the conversational interview. The reading survey, a group-administered instrument, consists of 20 items using a four-point scale assessing self-concept as a reader (10 items) and value of reading (10 items). The conversational interview is individually administered with 14 scripted items that are open-ended to encourage free response and assess narrative reading, informational reading, and general reading.

Working with the original MRP and using an e-mail listserv for in-depth conversations, we discussed and revised items for the AMRP using recommendations from adolescent research and

our own experience working with teens. We reviewed the research literature and revised the language of the instrument to appeal to teens. Using adolescent research as our guide, we included more questions on the AMRP about using electronic resources (Alvermann, 2001a), schoolwork and projects that students enjoyed (Wasserstein, 1995), and what students choose to read and write on their own (Roe, 1997).

We revised some language in the AMRP reading survey (see Figure 1) to be more adolescent friendly ("When I grow up" was changed to "As an adult"; "When I am in a group talking about stories" was changed to "When I am in a group talking about what we are reading"; and "I would like for my teacher to read books out loud in my class" was changed to "I would like my teachers to read out loud in my classes"). We changed the grades surveyed and added an item on race or ethnicity to help us better understand the differences and similarities of various populations.

Gambrell et al. (1996) developed and field tested a 14-item conversational interview to be used as a complement to the survey. The MRP authors indicated that the conversational interview flexibly probes for more in-depth understanding and authentic insights on students' reading experiences, attitudes, and motivations. Gambrell et al. further suggested that the instrument could be used by teachers for instructional decision making with individual students and groups of students. The AMRP conversational interview (see Figure 2) continues these emphases. Finally, the MRP authors encouraged teachers and researchers to extend, modify, and adapt the interview for particular needs and, indeed, that is what we did to create the AMRP. Understanding that school reading experiences expand and diversify in junior and senior high school, the group added the following questions:

- In what class do you most like to read?
- In what class do you feel the reading is the most difficult?

- Have any of your teachers done something with reading that you really enjoy?

As an open-ended, free response, semi-structured interview, these questions (as the authors of the original instrument also suggested) likely lead to additional questions such as the following:

- Why?
- What happens in that class?
- Can you give an example?
- How did that make you feel?
- How is that different from _____?

As noted above, recent research on adolescent literacy reveals that adolescents are using literacy for many purposes outside of school that may bear little resemblance to traditional academic literacy purposes. Therefore, the conversational interview was adapted to include questions and prompts to yield responses related to technological, family, and out-of-school literacies.

To learn more about technology uses, we added the following questions:

- Do you have a computer in your home?
- How much time do you spend on the computer each day?
- What do you usually do on the computer?
- What do you like to read on the Internet?

To learn more about literacy practices in home and family life, the following questions were added:

- Do you write letters or emails to friends or family?
- Do you share any of the following reading materials with members of your family: newspapers, magazines, religious materials, games?

Figure 1
Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile reading survey

Name: _____ Date: _____

Sample 1: I am in _____.

- Sixth grade
- Seventh grade
- Eighth grade
- Ninth grade
- Tenth grade
- Eleventh grade
- Twelfth grade

Sample 2: I am a _____.

- Female
- Male

Sample 3: My race/ethnicity is _____.

- African-American
- Asian/Asian American
- Caucasian
- Hispanic
- Native American
- Multi-racial/Multi-ethnic
- Other: Please specify _____

1. My friends think I am _____.

- a very good reader
- a good reader
- an OK reader
- a poor reader

2. Reading a book is something I like to do.

- Never
- Not very often
- Sometimes
- Often

3. I read _____.

- not as well as my friends
- about the same as my friends
- a little better than my friends
- a lot better than my friends

4. My best friends think reading is _____.

- really fun
- fun
- OK to do
- no fun at all

5. When I come to a word I don't know, I can

- _____.
- almost always figure it out
 - sometimes figure it out
 - almost never figure it out
 - never figure it out

6. I tell my friends about good books I read.

- I never do this
- I almost never do this
- I do this some of the time
- I do this a lot

7. When I am reading by myself, I understand

- _____.
- almost everything I read
 - some of what I read
 - almost none of what I read
 - none of what I read

8. People who read a lot are _____.

- very interesting
- interesting
- not very interesting
- boring

9. I am _____.

- a poor reader
- an OK reader
- a good reader
- a very good reader

(continued)

Figure 1 (continued)
Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile reading survey

Name: _____ Date: _____

10. I think libraries are _____.
 a great place to spend time
 an interesting place to spend time
 an OK place to spend time
 a boring place to spend time
11. I worry about what other kids think about my reading _____.
 every day
 almost every day
 once in a while
 never
12. Knowing how to read well is _____.
 not very important
 sort of important
 important
 very important
13. When my teacher asks me a question about what I have read, I _____.
 can never think of an answer
 have trouble thinking of an answer
 sometimes think of an answer
 always think of an answer
14. I think reading is _____.
 a boring way to spend time
 an OK way to spend time
 an interesting way to spend time
 a great way to spend time
15. Reading is _____.
 very easy for me
 kind of easy for me
 kind of hard for me
 very hard for me
16. As an adult, I will spend _____.
 none of my time reading
 very little time reading
 some of my time reading
 a lot of my time reading
17. When I am in a group talking about what we are reading, I _____.
 almost never talk about my ideas
 sometimes talk about my ideas
 almost always talk about my ideas
 always talk about my ideas
18. I would like for my teachers to read out loud in my classes _____.
 every day
 almost every day
 once in a while
 never
19. When I read out loud I am a _____.
 poor reader
 OK reader
 good reader
 very good reader
20. When someone gives me a book for a present, I feel _____.
 very happy
 sort of happy
 sort of unhappy
 unhappy

Note. Adapted with permission from the Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996)

Figure 2
Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile
conversational interview

Name _____

A. Emphasis: Narrative text

Suggested prompt (designed to engage student in a natural conversation): I have been reading a good book. I was talking with...about it last night. I enjoy talking about what I am reading with my friends and family. Today, I would like to hear about what you have been reading and if you share it.

1. Tell me about the most interesting story or book you have read recently. Take a few minutes to think about it (wait time). Now, tell me about the book.

Probe: What else can you tell me? Is there anything else?

2. How did you know or find out about this book?

(Some possible responses: assigned, chosen, in school, out of school)

3. Why was this story interesting to you?

B. Emphasis: Informational text

Suggested prompt (designed to engage student in a natural conversation): Often we read to find out or learn about something that interests us. For example, a student I recently worked with enjoyed reading about his favorite sports teams on the Internet. I am going to ask you some questions about what you like to read to learn about.

1. Think about something important that you learned recently, not from your teacher and not from television, but from something you have read. What did you read about? (Wait time.) Tell me about what you learned.

Probe: What else could you tell me? Is there anything else?

2. How did you know or find out about reading material on this?

(Some possible responses: assigned, chosen, in school, out of school)

(continued)

Figure 2 (continued)
Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile
conversational interview

3. Why was reading this important to you?

C. Emphasis: General reading

1. Did you read anything at home yesterday? What?

2. Do you have anything at school (in your desk, locker, or book bag) today that you are reading?

Tell me about them.

3. Tell me about your favorite author.

4. What do you think you have to learn to be a better reader?

5. Do you know about any books right now that you'd like to read?

Tell me about them.

6. How did you find out about these books?

7. What are some things that get you really excited about reading?

Tell me about....

(continued)

Figure 2 (continued)
Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile
conversational interview

8. Who gets you really interested and excited about reading?

Tell me more about what they do.

9. Do you have a computer in your home?

If they answer yes, ask the following questions:

How much time do you spend on the computer a day?

What do you usually do?

What do you like to read when you are on the Internet?

If they answer no, ask the following questions:

If you did have a computer in your home, what would you like to do with it?

Is there anything on the Internet that you would like to be able to read?

D. Emphasis: School reading in comparison to home reading

1. In what class do you most like to read?

Why?

2. In what class do you feel the reading is the most difficult?

Why?

(continued)

Figure 2 (continued)
Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile
conversational interview

3. Have any of your teachers done something with reading that you really enjoyed?

Could you explain some of what was done?

4. Do you share and discuss books, magazines, or other reading materials with your friends outside of school?

What?

How often?

Where?

5. Do you write letters or email to friends or family?

How often?

6. Do you share any of the following reading materials with members of your family:
newspapers, magazines, religious materials, games?

With whom?

How often?

7. Do you belong to any clubs or organizations for which you read and write?

Could you explain what kind of reading it is?

Note. Adapted with permission from the Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996)

To further explore nonacademic adolescent literacy, we added the following questions:

- Do you share and discuss books, magazines, or other reading material (with friends or others)?
- Do you belong to any clubs or organizations for which you use reading and writing?

These questions lend themselves to alteration and follow-up, enabling the interviewer to probe

more deeply and broadly in light of adolescents' responses. The interviewer decides whether individual or small-group interviews are appropriate. Individual interviews may yield more open and free responses while group interviews may lead to discussion of popular or emerging literacy practices. The interviewer could also conduct the interview over a few sessions covering some topics in groups and others individually.

We revised the teacher directions for the reading survey (see Figure 3) to reflect the changes

Figure 3
Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile
Teacher directions: Reading survey

Distribute copies of the Adolescent Motivation to Read Survey. Ask students to write their names on the space provided.

Directions: Say: I am going to read some sentences to you. I want to know how you feel about your reading. There are no right or wrong answers. I really want to know how you honestly feel about reading. I will read each sentence twice. Do not mark your answer until I tell you to. The first time I read the sentence I want you to think about the best answer for you. The second time I read the sentence I want you to fill in the space beside your best answer. Mark only one answer. If you have any questions during the survey, raise your hand. Are there any questions before we begin? Remember: Do not mark your answer until I tell you to. OK, let's begin.

Read the first sample item: Say:

Sample 1: I am in (pause) sixth grade, (pause) seventh grade, (pause) eighth grade, (pause) ninth grade, (pause) tenth grade, (pause) eleventh grade, (pause) twelfth grade.

Read the first sample again. Say:

This time as I read the sentence, mark the answer that is right for you. I am in (pause) sixth grade, (pause) seventh grade, (pause) eighth grade, (pause) ninth grade, (pause) tenth grade, (pause) eleventh grade, (pause) twelfth grade.

Read the second sample item. Say:

Sample 2: I am a (pause) female, (pause) male.

Say:

Now, get ready to mark your answer.

I am a (pause) female, (pause) male.

Read the remaining items in the same way (e.g., number _____, sentence stem followed by a pause, each option followed by a pause, and then give specific directions for students to mark their answers while you repeat the entire item).

Note. Adapted with permission from the Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996)

we made and used the original teacher directions for the conversational interview (see Figure 4). The original MRP reading survey scoring directions (see Figure 5) and scoring sheet (see Figure 6) are used to score the AMRP. Also see the original article by Gambrell et al. (1996) for more guidelines for scoring and interpretation.

The study

Eleven researchers at eight sites administered the AMRP reading survey and conversational interview to teens from many different school settings including public, charter, alternative, and government-sponsored schools and in a variety of geographic areas of the United States (West, Southwest, Northeast, Midatlantic, and Southeast) and the Caribbean. Surveys were administered to 384 adolescents and approximately 100 were interviewed. Of the 384 students who responded to the survey, approximately 22% identified themselves as African American, 37% were Caucasian, 30% were Afro/Indo-Trini (from Trinidad and Tobago), 10% were classified as

“other,” and 1% of the respondents did not specify an ethnicity. Additionally, some of the students interviewed identified themselves as Hispanic. Early adolescents (grades 6–8) accounted for 43.8% of the sample, middle adolescents (grades 9–10) comprised 35.2%, and late adolescents (grades 11–12) comprised 21% of the sample. Fifty-four percent were female; 46% were male.

In sharing the results of this study, often the students' own words are used. In all cases the names are pseudonyms. In some instances the students chose their own aliases.

The AMRP reading survey

The reading survey provides scores for both “Self-concept as a reader” and “Value of reading” and takes approximately 10 minutes to administer to a whole class. The multiple-choice format and easy to follow scoring sheet provide a practical instrument that can be used with large groups of students. With only a small time investment, teachers can assess at the beginning of the year how their students feel about reading. This can

Figure 4 Teacher directions: MRP conversational interview

1. Duplicate the conversational interview so that you have a form for each child.
2. Choose in advance the section(s) or specific questions you want to ask from the conversational interview. Reviewing the information on students' reading surveys may provide information about additional questions that could be added to the interview.
3. Familiarize yourself with the basic questions provided in the interview prior to the interview session in order to establish a more conversational setting.
4. Select a quiet corner of the room and a calm period of the day for the interview.
5. Allow ample time for conducting the conversational interview.
6. Follow up on interesting comments and responses to gain a fuller understanding of students' reading experiences.
7. Record students' responses in as much detail as possible. If time and resources permit you may want to audiotape answers to A1 and B1 to be transcribed after the interview for more in-depth analysis.
8. Enjoy this special time with each student!

Note. Reprinted with permission from the Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996)

Figure 5

Scoring directions: MRP reading survey

The survey has 20 items based on a 4-point scale. The highest total score possible is 80 points. On some items the response options are ordered least positive to most positive (see item 2 below) with the least positive response option having a value of 1 point and the most positive option having a point value of 4. On other items, however, the response options are reversed (see item 1 below). In those cases it will be necessary to recode the response options. Items where recoding is required are starred on the scoring sheet.

Example: Here is how Maria completed items 1 and 2 on the Reading Survey.

1. My friends think I am _____.
- a very good reader
 - a good reader
 - an OK reader
 - a poor reader
2. Reading a book is something I like to do.
- Never
 - Not very often
 - Sometimes
 - Often

To score item 1 it is first necessary to recode the response options so that

- a poor reader equals 1 point,
- an OK reader equals 2 points,
- a good reader equals 3 points, and
- a very good reader equals 4 points.

Because Maria answered that she is a good reader the point value for that item, 3, is entered on the first line of the Self-Concept column on the scoring sheet. See below. The response options for item 2 are ordered least positive (1 point) to most positive (4 points), so scoring item 2 is easy. Simply enter the point value associated with Maria's response. Because Maria selected the fourth option, a 4 is entered for item 2 under the Value of reading column on the scoring sheet. See below.

Scoring sheet

Self-concept as a Reader	Value of reading
*recode 1. <u>3</u>	2. <u>4</u>

To calculate the Self-concept raw score and Value raw score add all student responses in the respective column. The full survey raw score is obtained by combining the column raw scores. To convert the raw scores to percentage scores, divide student raw scores by the total possible score (40 for each subscale, 80 for the full survey).

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Figure 6
MRP reading survey scoring sheet

Student name _____

Grade _____ Teacher _____

Administration date _____

Recoding scale

1=4

2=3

3=2

4=1

Self-concept as a reader

Value of reading

*recode 1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

*recode 4. _____

*recode 5. _____

6. _____

*recode 7. _____

*recode 8. _____

9. _____

*recode 10. _____

11. _____

12. _____

13. _____

14. _____

*recode 15. _____

16. _____

17. _____

*recode 18. _____

19. _____

*recode 20. _____

SC raw score: _____/40

V raw score: _____/40

Full survey raw score (Self-concept & Value): _____/80

Percentage scores

Self-concept _____

Value _____

Full survey _____

Comments: _____

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lead to different choices for different groups. Using the instrument again at intervals can also assess how different instructional approaches (literature circles, choice reading, projects) affect how students value reading and see themselves as readers.

Through this study's surveys, we found some interesting data with implications for how these teens see themselves as readers. Females had significantly ($p = .000$) higher scores on the surveys than males ($p = .012$). Males scored higher on the survey in their early teens but their scores decreased in their later teens. Females across all groups valued reading more than males ($p = .000$). We also found that females' value of reading increased with grade level but males' decreased. African American ($n = 84$) and Afro/Indo-Trini ($n = 115$) adolescents valued reading significantly ($p = .000$) more than Caucasians ($n = 141$) or students from other ethnicities ($n = 39$). There were no significant differences on self-concept between grade level, gender, or ethnic groups.

These interesting trends often seemed puzzling when we considered the data from the interviews. In comparing answers from the surveys and the interviews, we were better able to understand the reasons behind the data above and to ponder more implications for instruction.

The AMRP conversational interview

The interviews provided a view of instructional methods that were used in the classrooms and of how teens spent their free time. The main themes that emerged from the interviews were the discrepancies between students' views of themselves as readers in school and out of school, students' use of multiliteracies, the influence of family and friends on reading, the role of teachers and instructional methods, and the importance of choice. These themes are described below and illustrated with comments from students. The grade levels of these students ranged from 6 to 11.

Students' perceptions of reading and readers.

We entered the study under the assumption that interviews would add descriptive data to the survey results, and in most cases, our expectations were met. Yet in other instances, discrepancies did exist between survey answers and interview answers. For example, Jason answered on the survey that he "never" likes to read, but when asked in the interview about the most interesting story he had recently read, he talked about a survival story in a hunting magazine. He went on to say that his grandfather was going to help him pay for a subscription to the magazine, because Jason loved to hunt. Similarly, Jared checked that he liked to read "not very often" on the survey, but when asked about something important he'd learned recently outside of school, he mentioned how he'd learned new fishing tactics from *Field and Stream* magazine.

One of the most extreme examples of survey and interview discrepancies arose with Paul, who shared on the survey that he found reading "a boring way to spend time." The interview told a different story when he mentioned spending about 20 hours a week on the Internet reading e-mails, articles, games, and "stuff." Michael, another student from the same school, checked on the survey that he never reads a book, but his conversation during the interview included his reading of magazines, hobby books, and stories written by friends. He and his friends write and share stories on e-mail often. The definition that these boys assigned to the word, "reading," may not have included the reading of magazines, e-mail, games, or other leisure reading for pleasure or information. Additionally, their reading interests did not seem to include any forms of academic reading.

Generally, students' self-concepts as readers and their value of reading coincided with their reading choices and overall enjoyment of reading. Jesse was one of several exceptions. On the survey he selected "poor reader" in the self-concept section, and he checked that he read "not very often" in the value portion. Conversely, when asked

about the most interesting book he had read recently, he explained, "The most interesting book I have read was by Michael Crichton. It was about alternate universes, time travel. I first saw this book at a store, read the review, and decided to buy it. I liked it because it involved history, technology, a different perspective on the universe." This student's choice of books, along with his speaking vocabulary, would not have led us to view him as a "poor reader," but he was one of the students enrolled in a summer class after failing English 11. Obviously, in English 11 he was considered a poor reader, a fact that suggests a strong disconnect between academic forms of reading and pleasure reading.

Adolescents' need for connection to a topic was well expressed by Tommy. In answering the survey question of how often he likes to read, Tommy marked "sometimes." When asked during the interview to tell about the most interesting story he had read recently, Tommy replied that it was a book about the U.S. Civil War in which the South won. He added that it was mostly historically correct. In answer to why this story was interesting, Tommy replied that he had Confederate ancestors.

Use of multiliteracies. Students' use of multiliteracies was overwhelmingly apparent in the interview data. Students talked about reading magazines and, to a lesser extent, newspapers. Favorite topics of magazines chosen by students were teens, cars, sports, fashion, and people.

Electronic literacies were very frequently mentioned as a form of communication and information gathering, and most students discussed using computers in their homes. They regularly sent e-mail and instant messages (IM) to friends and family members. Jenna even made a distinction between e-mail and instant messages. "Friends, I don't really e-mail because I talk to them almost every night on IM, but I do e-mail them sometimes. When asked whether they read informational text, students often talked about Internet sites, and when asked about the computer, they commonly talked about reading informa-

tional resources on the Internet. For example, adolescents used it as a "newspaper" (e.g., several talked about reading America Online's front page for the latest news). They also used it for personal purposes to locate information about a topic in which they were interested. Nikki said, "I read, uh, about kittens of course and about other animals and how to take care of things. Like a while back I was looking up about a dog for my sister." Students also used the Internet to find song lyrics, converse in chat rooms, role play, play games on gaming sites, and find game codes. Heidi shared that she gets on the Internet to e-mail family in Hawaii, read and write fanfiction about Harry Potter, and fix up her own website.

Family and friends. Students' multiliteracies often involved friends and family members, who exerted considerable influence on what these adolescents read and write. These influences occur both through direct recommendations and through informal talk and sharing about books. Friends are recipients and senders of e-mail and IMs, and they recommend and share books with one another. They talk about magazine articles they have read and sometimes about school-assigned readings. According to Carrie, she and her friends discuss magazine articles "at lunch, and like during class when they give us, like, five minutes before class ends to talk or whatever." Jimmy and his friends share magazine and newspaper articles about "sports or stuff we're talking about."

Family members, including mothers, grandmothers, aunts, uncles, and siblings, are influential forces. Students mentioned mothers and grandmothers recommending and buying books and magazines for them. Carrie explained her mother's strategy, "She knows what kind of books I like so she...buys me a bunch of books and she just puts them on my shelves and I just end up reading them anyway." They discuss and share newspaper articles with their mothers and fathers. When asked if he shared any reading materials with family members, John replied, "Yes, I would say my stepfather because we both really

like sports, and we look at the...sports section of the newspaper a lot." These adolescents e-mail relatives who live away from them, and some read to their younger siblings.

Teachers and instructional methods. Some interesting replies resulted from the question, Have any of your teachers done something with reading that you really enjoyed? There were students who answered, "No." For example, out of 21 summer school students at one site, 19 said no. Of the 2 that said yes, they added that the teacher read aloud.

Surveys and interviews from a small, experimental middle school in an urban setting produced very different findings. Here, students enthusiastically talked about literature circles, sustained silent reading time, and choosing books in literacy centers that were part of a new reading intervention program. Most of the 10 students interviewed at this site shared that they either borrowed from the teachers or went to the library to get books that other students in their class talked about. Across all sites, adolescents' discussion of teacher instruction revealed that the modeling of strategies for comprehending text and finding information has a strong influence on students' views toward academic forms of reading.

In addition to instructional methods, we noted the powerful influence of teacher talk and modeling about books and authors. From interviews, it became clear that teachers' enthusiasm can have a tremendous impact on students' reading habits and attitudes. The interview participants discussed how teachers' excitement about reading, knowledge of various authors, and enjoyment of certain books affected their own reading. Teachers were often sources for book recommendations. Some students reported that they discovered their "most interesting story or book read recently" from a teacher, as in the experimental middle school.

The teens talked a lot about books that were assigned in class. They mentioned reading books such as *Holes*, the Harry Potter series, *The Dark Is Rising*, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*, *Scorpions*,

Pinball, and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, in language arts classes. Enjoying these texts helped make their classes the ones in which they "most like to read." Two dislikers of reading said that the most interesting story or book they had read was in English class—*Lord of the Flies* and *The Great Gatsby*. At one survey site the students talked a lot about reading books in classroom literature circles. Whether the students really enjoyed these books or most recalled them because they were "done" in school, was not clear. The data did show that these assigned readings could also "turn them off" from reading if the book was "too hard" or "boring." Nevertheless, assigned school reading also influenced what was read at home and kept in the school locker. We did not obtain as vivid descriptions about nonfiction books as we did of the traditional novels.

Nick enthusiastically captured the influence of teachers.

I think that my sixth grade teacher, her name was Miss Sawyer, she was, uh, she was like one of my favorite reading teachers, and I used to go to her classroom everyday to see what books, like, she would be reading...so she could, like, tell me about them so I could check them out to read them, and...we always would read books in her class and she always, she had like a great voice and...she taught reading like more some of the skills I have in reading like very, like, very enthusiastic and stuff like that.

Choice. The final theme was related to both the role of teachers and the discrepancies among teens' views of what counts as reading. Adolescents clearly identified the importance of choice in their literacy lives, an issue long documented in the literature (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Oldfather, 1993). When asked if teachers had ever done something with reading that they really enjoyed, several in this study mentioned teachers allowing them to choose a book to read. Students also valued choice in topics and formats for assigned projects. They recognized the need for teachers to assign some readings, but they wanted them to take into account student preferences in these assignments.

Nick explained,

Yeah, I think that, um, one thing I think that teachers could do with the reading to make things more interesting is teachers could vote on, like, books that interest kids, cause sometimes teachers, they pick, to me they pick the dumbest books. Like, one of the books we're reading right now is called *The Secret Garden*. It's like, really, really boring. It's like the most boring book I think I've ever read in my life.... I think that if teachers could, like, like, take a poll or something, like, on books that kids think that would be better for them to read, that are like school-appropriate kind of books, I think that kids would do better in reading, and, I think that we would make better grades.

Discussion and implications

A graduate student in literacy made the following connection about teens' multiple literacies:

In *Princess in Waiting* (Cabot, 2003), the fourth novel in the Princess Diaries series, 14-year-old Princess Mia Thermopolis writes the following in her journal about discovering her secret talent: "And even though I had never really thought about it before, I realized Michael was right. I mean, I *am* always writing in this journal. And I do compose a lot of poetry, and write a lot of notes and e-mails and stuff. I mean, I feel like I am *always* writing. I do it so much, I never even thought about it as being a *talent*. It's just something I do all the time, like breathing" (p. 258–9). Mia is also adept at instant messaging, and she and her friends often send text messages through their cell phones in school. Mia considers herself a writer not because she gets A's in English class, but because she is always writing, usually in out-of-school contexts. This fictional character is similar to real adolescents in the amount of reading and writing they actually do outside of school; however, most teachers wouldn't consider these forms as literacy (R. Brushingham, personal communication, March 20, 2005).

Like Princess Mia, the adolescents in this study are reading and writing many hours daily in multiple, flexible, and varied ways and formats. They are also talking about what they read and are often enthusiastic about what they are reading and writing, as well. Unfortunately, however, many of these students still do not see themselves

as readers and writers. When comparing the interview results with the survey results, it became apparent to us that students often define "reading" as a school-based activity. When asked indirectly about their reading and writing outside of school (by asking about their use of computers or sharing with friends and family), students revealed that they have many literacy-related competencies and motivations. Yet, when asked in a general way on the survey if they consider themselves to be readers and writers, many responded negatively. They revealed a discrepancy between their stated views of themselves as readers and writers and their actual daily practices.

Students may be defining reading and readers only in an academic context, and this context is often not inclusive of the types of reading and writing they are engaging in outside of the classroom; therefore, they may not be viewing their out-of-school literacies as valid reading and writing. This possibility has strong implications for classroom teaching, yet it also brought our attention to a limitation of the study. Not all participants in the survey portion were interviewed, and we do not know how the other students defined reading. Because of this limitation, we wholeheartedly believe that this research needs to be expanded to other populations.

We further recommend, in accordance with suggestions by Gambrell et al. (1996), that researchers and teachers modify the instrument to allow for differing interpretations of the survey.

These findings show us that we need to do the following:

- recognize the multiple literacies in which students are engaging in outside of the classroom and find ways to incorporate them into classroom instruction;
- model our own reading enjoyment;
- embrace engaging activities, such as literature circles and book clubs, into regular instruction in secondary schools;

- include reading materials of varied formats, levels, and topics in the classroom; and
- incorporate elements of choice in readings and projects.

Like Gambrell et al. (1996), we believe that information from the results of the AMRP should be used in planning developmentally appropriate instruction. Adolescents, in particular, could benefit from more “meaningful, motivational contexts for reading instruction” (Gambrell et al., p. 530), because of their tendency to read less frequently as they enter the teen years (Moje, Young, Readence, & Moore, 2000). From the survey results, males in particular seemed to lose interest in reading by late adolescence. Smith and Wilhelm (2004) attributed this decline to feelings of incompetence with school literacy tasks. Yet, as past research indicates, positive attitudes are essential for mastery of a text but are often given less attention than decoding skills and comprehension strategies (Wilson & Hall, 1972). The students themselves, may have been suggested part of the answer to this dilemma during the interviews. While they placed different meanings on reading for pleasure than on reading for academic purposes, each student expressed literacy preferences that closely aligned with interests and specific purposes. A responsive teacher could draw from the preferences of Jason who had enjoyed a survival story in a hunting magazine, or Jared who learned fishing tactics from *Field and Stream*. Having a wide variety of reading materials including electronic resources available on these topics might make school reading a more pleasurable and purposeful experience for these students.

Strommen and Mates (2004) reminded us that if literacy competence can be attained through reading for pleasure, then, “encouraging a child’s love of reading is a desirable goal” (p. 199). By acknowledging students’ reading interests and building on them, teachers can help students expand those interests to related topics over

time. Furthermore, Partin and Hendricks (2002) suggested that teachers broaden their scope of what they consider acceptable reading material. Expanding the notion of text to include popular culture and music, the Internet, magazines, and other alternatives could invite opportunities for adolescents to become critical consumers of texts.

A decline in reading motivation as students progress through middle and secondary school has been blamed on the mismatch between typical reading assignments and student preferences (Ivey, 1998). Because we know that young people reject literacy tasks that are lacking in purpose and interest, we need to become more aware of students’ personal uses of literacy and what is important to them. When reading is limited to textbooks and whole-class literature, we limit ourselves as teachers, and our students as readers. Adolescents are, after all, the major stakeholders in their education, and we, the adults, need to listen to what they have to say.

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