

## Using Interest Inventories with Struggling and Unmotivated Readers

By Arleen P. Mariotti

Many struggling readers do not like to read because classroom reading material is too difficult, they don't want to be embarrassed or the task is just not enjoyable. Other children have the reading skills, but choose not to read. Reading may not be as much fun as other activities, it might seem "whimpy" or they just don't derive any pleasure from it. We know that children, who read independently, are practicing their reading skills, and motivated readers become better readers.<sup>1</sup>

Whether the child is a struggling reader or an unmotivated reader, finding his/her independent, instructional, and frustration reading levels, is just the first step in motivating him/her to read. We must also find out his/her interests. Administering an interest inventory at the beginning of the school year can help you locate materials for each child, select books for your classroom library, and help you form literary circles, book clubs, and research groups.

One way to find children's interests is to interview them. Since this can be time consuming, you might consider a paper-and-pencil survey. Very young and/or struggling readers may need to have the survey questions read aloud to them. You might also conduct a survey of reading interests in small groups. Collect five or six titles from your library from a few different genres (folk tales, humor, fantasy, realistic fiction, etc.). Display the books in front of the group and tell them you're going to read the title and first page to see if they would be interested in reading the story. After you read the title and first page, simply ask them to raise their hands if the story interests them. You could also use the Fist to Five technique where a fist means "not interested" and five fingers raised means "very interested."

You can find many interest inventories on the Internet and a few forms follow. As interest inventories are not specific to a particular grade level, you can usually find one already developed that would be appropriate for your students. An excellent reading attitude survey for the primary student is the *Elementary Reading Attitude Survey* by McKenna and Kear (1990).<sup>2</sup>

Once students complete a survey, you should examine each inventory, collate the information and file each child's interests on an index card or data base. With their independent reading level and reading interests now known to you, you have a higher probability of putting a book into their hands that they *want* to read and *can* read without assistance.

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<sup>1</sup> Taylor, B. M., Frye, B. J., & Maruyama, G. M. (1990). Time spent reading and reading growth. *American Educational Research Journal*, 27 (2), 351-362.

<sup>2</sup> McKenna, M.D., & Kear, D. J. (1990). Measuring attitude toward reading: A new tool for teachers. *The Reading Teacher*, 43(9), 626-639. Retrieved July, 2009:  
<http://faculty.rcoe.appstate.edu/koppenhaverd/f06/3030/readings/mckenna&kear.pdf>

There are three basics to increasing student reading motivation:

1. Give students time to read. It doesn't matter if it's called *DEAR (Drop Everything and Read)*, *SSR (Sustained Silent Reading)*, or Quiet Reading Time. You should schedule a regular time each day when students can quietly read their chosen materials.
2. Give students access to a wide choice of reading material and allow them to choose what they want to read. Provide a classroom library which has books on many reading levels, as well as magazines, newspapers, graphic novels, and comic books. If you don't have an extensive classroom library, schedule a weekly trip to the school library for students to select and check out books.
3. Read aloud to your students daily. Be a good model of oral reading. Get your friends to tape record books and have students check out the book and the audio tape. Invite your administrators, counselors, and ancillary teachers (physical education, art, music, etc.) to read to your students. They need to see and hear good role models engaged in reading.

To get students to read, you need to put the right book in their hands. This may take a great deal of patience and effort on your part, but the rewards will be worth it.

## Reading Interest Inventory

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Please follow the directions and answer honestly.

### Titles

Directions: Please list three books you enjoyed reading last year.

### Reading Preferences

Directions: Rank the following genres in order from your favorite to least favorite. (1 = favorite, 8 = least favorite)

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| ___Mystery     | ___Science Fiction                         |
| ___Romance     | ___Biographies / Autobiographies / Memoirs |
| ___History     | ___Science                                 |
| ___Humorous    | ___Action/Adventure                        |
| ___Other _____ |  |

What magazines do you read?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you read a newspaper? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

Which parts? \_\_\_\_\_

How often do you go to the public library? Every week \_\_\_\_ 1-2 times a month \_\_\_\_

2-4 times a year \_\_\_\_ Never \_\_\_\_

## Interest Inventory

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is the name of your favorite book?
2. What do you like to do after school?
3. What do you like to do on Saturday?
4. Do you like to read for fun? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
5. What sports do you like to play?
6. What is your favorite subject in school?
7. Of the types of books listed below, which ones do you like to read for fun?

Sport stories \_\_\_\_\_

Adventure stories \_\_\_\_\_

Stories about people \_\_\_\_\_

Funny stories \_\_\_\_\_

Mystery stories \_\_\_\_\_

Stories about real events/people \_\_\_\_\_

Poetry \_\_\_\_\_

Other :

- 
8. If you could pick two books to have in your library, what would they be?

## Reading Interest Inventory

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**I like to read.**

**(circle)**

**YES**

**NO**

**SOMETIMES**

I like to read the following:

*fantasy*

*mysteries*

*science fiction*

*horror*

*plays*

*poetry*

*manga*

*comic books*

*myths*

*biographies*

*informational*

*series*

*graphic novels*

*humorous books*

*action stories*

*magazines*

*newspaper*

*true stories*

**My favorite author is** \_\_\_\_\_ **because** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

My favorite book is \_\_\_\_\_

because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

My favorite magazine is \_\_\_\_\_

because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

What gives you the most problems when you read? \_\_\_\_\_

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What book would you like to read this year? \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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What book have you read and disliked? \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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*Finish the sentences:*

I read best when I \_\_\_\_\_

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I believe reading is important because \_\_\_\_\_

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# My Feelings About Reading

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



YES



SOMETIMES



NO

- |  |       |       |       |
|--|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. I like to read                            | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 2. I read at home.                           | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 3. Reading is hard for me.                   | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 4. I like picture books.                     | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 5. Reading is fun.                           | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 6. I like to read long stories.              | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 7. I like someone to read to me.             | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 8. Reading is boring.                        | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 9. I am a good reader.                       | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 10. I like the stories we read in<br>school. | _____ | _____ | _____ |