Department
for Education

Research evidence on reading for pleasure

Education standards research team

May 2012

2. The story so far

Education and reading are circular – the more a person has of one, the better the development of the other (Chall, 1996)

The benefits of reading for pleasure

Becoming a lifetime reader is predicated on developing a love of reading (Sanacore, 2002). Although reading for pleasure has not been a research priority, studies are accumulating that emphasise the importance of reading for pleasure for both educational as well as personal development[5]. These studies show that promoting reading can have a major impact on children/young people and adults and their future. For example, research with children[6] has shown that reading for pleasure is positively linked with the following literacy-related benefits:

- reading attainment and writing ability (OECD, 2000) for reading that is done both in school and out of school (Krashen, 1993; Anderson et al, 1988; but also see Taylor et al., 1990);
- text comprehension and grammar (Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992; Cox & Guthrie, 2001), even after a variety of health, wealth and school factors were statistically controlled for (Elley, 1994);
- breadth of vocabulary (Angelos & McGriff, 2002), even after other relevant abilities such as IQ or text-decoding skills are controlled for (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998);
- positive reading attitudes (Guthrie & Alvermann, 1999), which are linked to achievement in reading (McKenna & Kear, 1990);
- greater self-confidence as a reader (Guthrie & Alvermann, 1999);
- pleasure reading in later life (Aarnoutse & van Leeuwe, 1998).

The above relationships hold for first and second language acquisition, and for children and adults (Krashen, 2004). Correlational studies have also consistently shown that those who read more are better readers. Indeed, reading amount and reading achievement are thought to be reciprocally related to each other – as reading amount increases, reading achievement increases, which in turn increases reading amount (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). According to Pressley (2000, p.

---

[5] It should be noted that the majority of these studies are based on correlational research and would benefit from a more rigorous approach.
[6] The strong connection between reading for pleasure and literacy achievement has been established largely by research into *children's* reading. Direct research into the effect of reading for pleasure on *adult* literacy is scarce. This is perhaps because reading for pleasure is less quantifiable than other influences on a non-reading adult's quality of life.

56), "the frequent admonition for children to 'Read, read, read' makes sense in that extensive reading promotes fluency, vocabulary, and background knowledge."

There is also evidence that reading for pleasure not only impacts on reading achievement but also increases:

- general knowledge (e.g. Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998);
- a better understanding of other cultures (Meek, 1991);
- community participation (e.g. Bus, van Ijzendoorm & Pellegrini, 1995);
- a greater insight into human nature and decision-making (Bruner, 1996)

Events focusing on reading for pleasure can also promote or enhance social skills in children (e.g. Allan, Ellis & Pearson, 2005; The Reading Agency, 2006). It has also been shown to combat feelings of loneliness in adults (Rane-Szostak & Herth, 1995). Overall, when individuals read for pleasure frequently, "they experience the value of reading as efferent and aesthetic processes. Thus, they are more likely to read with a sense of purpose, which further supports their developing reading habit" (Sanacore, 2002, p. 68).

Reading for pleasure – some statistics

Given the benefits of reading for pleasure, what do we know about the extent of reading for pleasure in the UK? Reading for enjoyment, its frequency and scope has been investigated by a number of studies for a few decades now. This section briefly outlines some of the findings.

Whitehead and colleagues (1977) explored children's reading habits and found that children aged 10+ read an average of three books a month, with 13% not having read a book in the month preceding the survey. They also found that the amount of reading decreases with age. By age 14+ children read an average of 1.9 books per month, while the percentage of pupils who had not read a book in the preceding month had risen to 36%.

A survey of school children for **World Book Day** in 2002 found that 15 to 16 year old boys spent 2.3 hours a week reading for pleasure, compared to 9 hours a week playing computer games or 11 hours watching television. Girls spent considerably more time reading, namely 4.5 hours a week. However, when boys were reading they did so because they enjoyed it. Specifically, 81% of 11 to 12 year olds and 76% of 14 to 16 year olds reported reading for pleasure.

A **Nestle Family Monitor** (2003), which surveyed 914 11-18-year-olds attending state and public schools across England and Wales, reported that four in five (83%) of young people read books in their spare time, with 16% reading books everyday. Only one in ten (11%) said that they never read books outside school hours. Overall,

A decline in reading enjoyment?

There has been a frequent murmur in recent years that fewer pupils now read for enjoyment. So, are children spending less time reading than they used to? This is a surprisingly hard question to answer. Surveys, such as the ones described above,

them all down. They included "reinforce", "predict", "check", "discuss" … and
so on: 71 different verbs, by my count, for the activities that come under the
heading of "reading". And the word "enjoy" didn't appear once.

Sainsbury and Schagen (2004), who compared children's responses in 1998, which
were sampled before the NLS, to those in 2003, which had received five years of
teaching according to the NLS, also surmised that the drop in reading for pleasure
might be connected to the introduction of the strategy. However, she also concedes
that advances in technology and other cultural changes may have caused this
change in reading attitudes. For example, Livingstone & Bovill (1999) found that
young people's households have more televisions than books. To explore the link
between reading for pleasure and policy or technological advances further, a survey
will be repeated every few years to track changes in the future.

It should be noted, however, that in the absence of any consistent longitudinal data,
the above arguments remain speculative.

Reasons for reading

When children, young people and adults read, why do they read? According to
Benton & Fox (1985, p. 15):

stories provide the possibility of educating the feelings and can offer their readers
potential growth points for the development of a more subtle awareness of human
behaviour.

A handful of studies have explored this issue, which have yielded comparable
results. For example, the Nestle Family Monitor (2003) asked 11-18 year-olds why
they read. 55% of these young people stated that books help them understand
different people/cultures, 40% wanted to learn more about new subjects, and 33%
stated that books encouraged them to try new hobbies. When asked how they
would describe reading, half of the respondents described it as relaxing, while a
third described it as fun. Two in five also described reading as educational, while a
quarter believed it to be informative or for school/learning. Older pupils in
particular were more likely to mention the educational value of reading. However, a
quarter also described it as boring.

Dungworth and colleagues (2004) also asked pupils why they liked reading and
found that the most popular reason for reading was emotional and related to the
way reading made them feel. Pupils also stated that they read for enjoyment and
because it was relaxing. Others viewed reading as educational and informative.

Similar questions were also asked in a recent Reading Connects survey (Clark &
Foster, 2005), which showed that the majority of pupils emphasised skills-related

reasons. More specifically, half the pupils read because it is a skill for life and because it will help them find what they need/want to know. Reading as a fun activity was the third most frequently chosen reason. Fewer pupils read because it helps them understand the world, teaches them about other people and helps them understand about themselves. More boys than girls reported that they read because it will help them get a job or because they have to, while girls indicated reading because it is fun, it teaches them how other people live and because it gives them a break.

Reading preferences

Finally, what do children and young people read? This has been an area of interest to researchers, teachers, librarians and other interested parties for more than a century and many studies have attempted to answer it. Researchers have studied children's reading interests and preferences using a variety of methods, such as surveys and interviews. However, there still is no definitive understanding of what children prefer to read and when these preferences develop. Research findings are also likely to present only a temporal snapshot of children's and young people's reading preferences.

However, what studies show time and again is that children and young people read a diverse range of materials outside class, incorporating materials not traditionally regarded by schools as acceptable reading matter. For example, the Reading Connects survey (Clark & Foster, 2005) showed that when pupils were asked what types of materials they were reading outside class, magazines, websites, text messages, jokes and books/magazines about TV programmes emerged as the most popular reading choices. Over half the pupils also indicated reading emails, fiction, comics, while newspapers were also popular choices. When asked specifically about what type of fiction, if any, they preferred reading, adventure, comedy and horror/ghost stories were the most frequently chosen types. Only 5% of pupils did not read fiction.

Yet, an Ofsted report (2004) noted that too few schools have given sufficient thought to promoting pupils' independent reading or have built on pupils' reading interests. Although reluctant readers may need guidance in recognising their reading interests, pupils can be shown a number of selection criteria, including looking at the book cover, reading the reviews in the blurb or the back cover and reading sections of the book (Primeaux, 2000). Results from surveys such as the one described above show that schools and families need to ensure they tap into this richness in pupils' reading, which is not necessarily print-based, in order to hook children into reading.

3. Delving more deeply

To read is to fly: it is to soar to a point of vantage which gives a view over wide terrains of history, human variety, ideas, shared experience and the fruits of many inquiries.
(A. C. Grayling)

Introducing reading motivation

So, why do some people choose to read for pleasure while others do not? Researchers and practitioners have become increasingly aware of the importance of reading motivation in explaining literacy behaviour. Cramer & Castle (1994) even suggested that attention to the affective aspects of reading, such as motivation, may help combat the increasing disaffection from reading.

Indeed, motivation for learning is thought to be one of the most critical determinants of the success and quality of any learning outcome (Mitchell, 1992), and it is therefore likely "that motivational processes are the foundation for coordinating cognitive goals and strategies in reading" (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000, p. 408). According to Baumann & Duffy (1997, p. 6), "motivation to read and reading ability are synergistic, mutually reinforcing phenomena". Many teachers also acknowledge that a lack of motivation causes many of the problems they face in teaching (O'Flahavan, Gambrell, Guthrie, Stahl & Alvermann, 1992).

Motivation to read is also thought to mediate the so-called "Matthew effect" (Stanovich, 1986), which refers to the circular relationship between practice and achievement that was described earlier. Better readers tend to read more because they are motivated to read, which leads to improved vocabulary and better skills. As a result, the gap between good and poor readers grows over time. The same circular relationship holds for other areas in literacy, including writing and speaking/listening skills.

So, what is reading motivation? Reading motivation is defined as "the individual's personal goals, values and beliefs with regard to the topics, processes, and outcomes of reading (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000, p. 3). According to Guthrie and Wigfield (2000), reading motivation is a multifaceted construct that includes reading goals, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, self-efficacy[7] and social motivation for reading.

---

[7] Self-efficacy is the belief in one's capabilities. Self-efficacy beliefs influence the choices people make and the courses of action they pursue. Individuals tend to engage in tasks about which they feel competent and confident and avoid those in which they do not.

Two related aspects of reading motivation are reading attitude and reading interest. Although these three terms are frequently used interchangeably, the constructs that underlie each are different (Mazzoni, Gambrell & Korkeamaki, 1999):

- **Reading attitudes** refer to the feelings and beliefs an individual has with respect to reading
- **Reading interest** relates to people's preferences for genres, topics, tasks or contexts and
- **Reading motivation**, as outlined above, refers to the internal states that make people read.

Research has repeatedly shown that motivation to read decreases with age, especially if pupils' attitudes towards reading become less positive (McKenna, Ellsworth & Kear, 1995). Thus, if children do not enjoy reading when they are young, then they are unlikely to do so when they get older.

There is some tentative evidence that reading for pleasure at home and reading for school are predicted by different variables. For example, Cox & Guthrie (2001) found that motivation was affected by reading for enjoyment over and above other factors, such as past reading achievement and cognitive strategy use, such as questioning . By contrast, motivation did not predict amount of school reading in this study, which was only significantly related to the use of cognitive strategies when all other variables were controlled for statistically. Thus, amount and breadth of school reading in this study was primarily determined by the extent to which pupils used cognitive strategies in reading, while reading enjoyment was primarily determined by motivation.

According to Cox & Guthrie (2001), these results are in line with a socio-cognitive perspective, which suggests that different variables predict reading depending on the social context (e.g. Scribner & Coles, 1981). As a result, "the socially constructed practices in a particular setting (e.g. the classroom) are associated with forms of expertise that are relatively distinctive to that setting" (p. 128). The school context, with its emphasis on assignment and assessments places particular demands on cognitive competence and strategy use. With reading for enjoyment, however, individual interests prevail and reading amount is determined most strongly by motivation.

Reading motivation and its link with reading enjoyment – a closer look

As outlined briefly above, reading motivation is a complex construct (for a full outline of reading motivation, see Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Since the full complexity is beyond the scope of this brief review, this paper focuses more closely

on two aspects of reading motivation that are based on different reasons or goals that give rise to an action – namely intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

According to Ryan and Deci (2000), **intrinsic motivation** refers to engagement in an activity that is based on personal interest in the activity itself. Readers who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to find a variety of topics that interest them and to benefit from an accompanying sense of pleasure (Hidi, 2000). Studies have linked intrinsic reading motivation to:

- Greater reading frequency and greater breadth of reading (Hidi, 2000)
- Greater reading enjoyment (Cox & Guthrie, 2001; Wang & Guthrie, 2004)
- Greater retention of key information (Guthrie et al., 1998)
- Greater persistence in coping with difficulties, mastering the required skills and becoming self-determined in reading tasks (Deci, 1982).

Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) reported that several aspects of intrinsic motivation predict breadth of reading and reading comprehension: importance, curiosity, involvement and challenge. These can be described in more detail as follows:

- **Importance** of reading refers to the belief that reading is valuable
- **Curiosity** is the desire to learn about a particular topic of personal interest
- **Involvement** refers to the enjoyment of reading certain kinds of literary or information texts
- **Preference for challenging** reading is the satisfaction of mastering or assimilating complex ideas in text.

By contrast, **extrinsic motivation** involves engagement in an activity in response to external values and demands (Ryan & Deci, 2000). For example, when children read to avoid punishment or to meet teachers' or parents' expectations, they are extrinsically motivated because their desire to read is controlled externally (Hidi, 2000). Extrinsically motivated pupils may therefore not read because they are interested but because they want to attain certain outcomes (e.g. recognition from others or good grades; Deci et al., 1991). Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) reported that extrinsic motivation was made up of three aspects: recognition, grades and competition. According to Wigfield (1997, pp 22-23), these aspects can be defined as follows:

- **Reading for recognition** is the pleasure in receiving a tangible form of recognition for success
- **Reading for grades** refers to the desire to be favourably evaluated by the teacher
- **Competition** in reading is the desire to outperform others in reading.

Is there any evidence that intrinsic and extrinsic forms of motivation are differentially related to literacy outcomes? Several studies have shown that both

forms of motivation predict amount and breadth of reading, but that the relationship is stronger for intrinsic motivation (e.g. Wigfield & Guthrie, 2001). Research has also shown that intrinsic but not extrinsic motivation predicts reading for pleasure (e.g. Cox & Guthrie, 2001; Wang & Guthrie, 2004). For example, in Wang and Guthrie's (2004) study, children who were intrinsically motivated read fiction at least once a week, and in some case almost daily. By contrast, extrinsic motivation was negatively associated with reading for pleasure, suggesting that children who read for the outcomes of reading are less likely to get enjoyment from books.

The literature also indicates that the two forms of motivation have different relationships with text comprehension. Wang & Guthrie (2004) reported that intrinsic motivation was positively related to text comprehension after other variables, such as extrinsic motivation and reading amount, were controlled for. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, was negatively associated with text comprehension in this study. Indeed, there is some indication in the literature that pupils who are extrinsically motivated readers are more likely to use strategies at surface level, such as guessing and memorisation (e.g. Pintrich & Schrauben, 1992).

In general, the different forms of motivation have also been associated with different learning strategies and different qualities of learning. Intrinsic motivation has typically been related to learning that leads to conceptual understanding and higher level thinking skills (e.g. Kellaghan, Madaus & Raczek, 1996), while extrinsic motivation tends to lead to "surface" rather than "deep" learning (e.g. Crooks, 1988; for a detailed review of the association between motivation and learning styles see Coffield et al., 2004).

The importance of choice

In addition to motivation, another important factor in fostering lifelong readers is choice. Indeed, encouraging and respecting reading choices are important steps toward helping children, young people and adults develop a sense of ownership and self-determination (Sanacore, 1999). According to Krashen (1993), students who choose what they read and have an informal environment in which to read tend to be more motivated, read more and show greater language and literacy development. Similarly, teachers like to provide choice in the classroom because they believe that it increases motivation, effort and learning (Flowerday & Schraw, 2000).

Investigating the role of choice in reading, Schraw and colleagues (1998) found that there was a positive relationship between choice and affective aspects of reading, such as motivation. Gambrell (1996) also found that when pupils were asked which book they had enjoyed most, 80% of them said that the one they had enjoyed most was the one they had selected themselves.

Choice can also be linked to achievement. According to Hunt (1996/1997), a reader "who finds a really good book ... that has ideas he truly wants to learn about, frequently will outdo his own instructional level of performance." Indeed, "some books may be very difficult to read, but because they are so interesting students decide to read them anyway" (Tompkins & McGee, 1993, p. 278).

Moss and Hendershot (2002) investigated reading motivation in Year 6 students when choice and non-fiction texts were employed in their classroom. They found that choice was a key motivator to read. Furthermore, the provision of non-fiction texts enabled students to begin to view non-fictional texts as a source of reading for personal pleasure.

As mentioned earlier, struggling readers may need help when selecting appropriate materials. "Helping students locate materials of interest and at desired levels of difficulty is a key aspect to improving their level of immersion in available printed materials" (Johns & VanLeirsburg, 1994, p. 96).
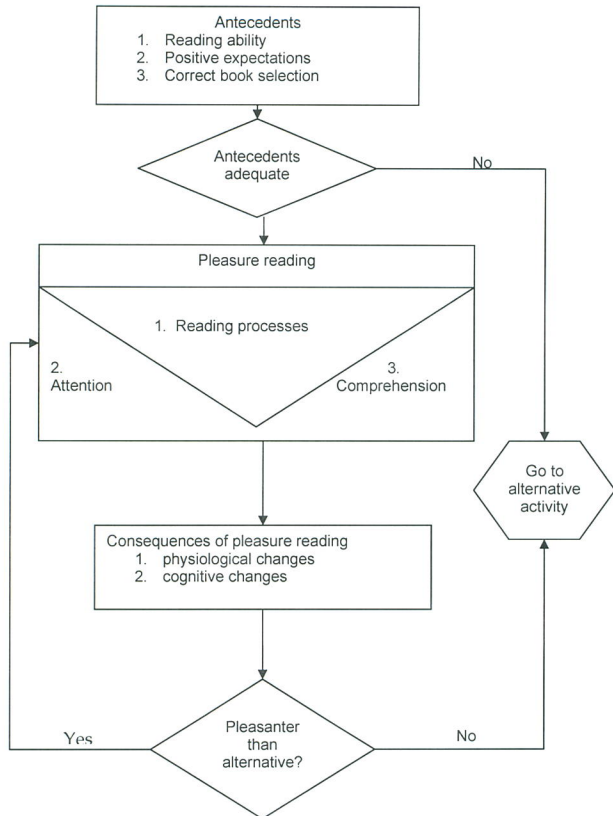
Reading for pleasure – a motivational chart

In his work on pleasure reading, Nell (1988, p. 8) drew up the following flow chart (see Figure 1), which exemplifies the points made above. It is based on the basic premise that unless individuals experience reading as a pleasurable activity, they will stop reading and choose more enjoyable alternatives. It charts the motivational forces that determine whether an individual reads for pleasure, finds it rewarding and will continue reading.

The first part of the chart outlines the antecedents of pleasure reading, such as reading ability and book choice. The second part relates to the actual reading process, which includes comprehensional aspects. Finally, the third part contains the consequences of reading for pleasure, such as the cognitive outcomes. It further shows that there are "reinforcement comparators" that pitch the continuation of pleasure reading against other available alternatives (Nell, 1988, p. 8-9).

While this model highlights the individual components that lead to reading for pleasure, recent models recognise the need to consider the role of social interaction and, to a lesser extent, the role of the immediate social context (e.g. Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). However, little work in the area of reading motivation and engagement has examined motivational issues from all three relevant dimensions: the individual (cognitive), social–interactional, and cultural–historical level. The next section will outline some of the social factors that impact on reading for enjoyment levels.

Figure 1: Motivational flow chart of the antecedents and consequences of reading for pleasure

Based on Nell (1988, p. 8)

4. The way forward

This paper has shown that reading for pleasure offers numerous benefits and that encouraging a love of reading and intrinsic motivation to read is a desirable goal. This section highlights the fact that if reading is to become a lifelong habit then people must see themselves as participants in a community that views reading as a significant and enjoyable activity (Strommen and Mates, 2004). Indeed, the gift of reading can best be given by another reader who models what it is like to get pleasure from reading (Sheldrick-Ross, McKechnie & Rothbauer, 2005). It is therefore important that parents, teachers and literacy consultants examine the factors that may influence children's literacy lives at home or at school (Chen, 2005).

Parents and the home environment are essential to the early teaching of reading and the fostering of a love of reading. 84% of pupils in a survey for Reading Connects indicated that it had been their mother who had 'taught them to read'. Parental involvement in their child's literacy practices is a more powerful force than other family background variables, such as social class, family size and level of parental education (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004). Surveys repeatedly show that parents are aware how important it is to read to/with their children. However, the Reading Connects survey also showed that a fifth of pupils felt that their mother did not encourage them to read at all, while a third also felt that their father failed to encourage them to read.

A survey by YouGov (2005) similarly showed that only 40% of parents of 0-12-year-olds read to their child every day/night. More specifically, 53% of parents of 0 to 4-year-olds, 37% of 5 to 8-year-olds and 21% of 9 to 12-year-olds respectively stated that they read to their children every day/night. What is quite clearly needed is some information for parents to help translate knowledge into actual behaviour most effectively. What is also needed is some recognition that the importance of parental involvement in their children's reading habits does not decrease just because they enter school.

This is particularly important in the light of research that has shown that differences in the degree to which parents endorse the view that reading is pleasurable is related to differences in children's literacy activities at home, their motivation and reading achievement (e.g. Sonnenschein, Baker, Serpell & Schmidt, 2000). For example, Sonnenschein and colleagues (2000) found that children brought up in a home that viewed reading as a source of entertainment had greater reading-related competencies than children raised in homes that placed greater emphasis on the skills-related aspects of reading. Furthermore, these researchers found that parents who believed that reading is a source of entertainment also tended to provide more opportunities in the home for children to acquire this perspective themselves than parents who believed that reading is a skill. It has also been shown that children and young people who choose to read in their leisure time see themselves as members of a reading community that interacts socially around books and shares a

love of reading with at least one family member (Strommen & Mates, 2004). Taken together, such studies show that a critical mechanism in the intergenerational transmission of literacy is enjoyment and engagement (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998).

Overall, research has shown that:

- Children who know adults who read for pleasure take it for granted that reading is a valuable and worthwhile activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991)
- Children whose home experiences promote the view that reading is a source of entertainment are likely to become intrinsically motivated to read (Baker, Serpell & Sonnenschein, 1995)
- The home environment exerts a significant effect on academic motivation, which is over and above that predicted by socio-economic status (Gottfried, Fleming & Gottfried, 1998). Thus, children whose home environment is more cognitively stimulating have higher academic motivation than children whose home is lacking such stimulation
- The beliefs held by children's parents about the purposes of reading and how children learn to read relate to children's motivations for reading. More specifically, parents who believe that reading is a source of entertainment have children with more positive views about reading than parents who only emphasise the skills aspect of reading (e.g. Sonnenschein et al., 2000)
- Children of parents who believed that reading is a source of pleasure had greater reading motivation scores in primary school (Baker & Scher, 2002) and
- Children are more likely to continue to be readers in homes where books and reading are valued (Baker & Scher, 2002).

Baumann and Duffy (1997, p. 22), highlighted the following five factors that help children become readers:

1. A print-rich environment, where they are read to and given opportunities to read, where they see their caregivers read, have opportunities to engage in pretend play, are encouraged to interact with environmental print and visit the public library
2. A language-rich environment, where they are encouraged to have discussions with their caregivers
3. A knowledge-rich environment, where they learn about the world through such media as television and computers, and where they interact with the outside world by taking trips and talking with people about topics of interest to them
4. A nurturing environment, where they interact with a variety of people who believe that one purpose of literacy is to entertain
5. A home environment, where they make connections with their schools.

Provision through various media therefore needs to be made to help guide parents to provide a literacy-rich and stimulating environment. Since not all parents realise the importance of their role in supporting their children's literacy, or have the

resources or capabilities to do so, it is important that the agencies in contact with them are able to offer them appropriate support. This may well help such agencies meet their own targets, because of the positive effect that increased parental involvement can have on child outcomes. The Family Reading Campaign (http://www.familyreading.org.uk) is a partnership campaign working to ensure that the importance of encouraging reading in the home is integrated into the planning and activity of all the key organisations concerned with education, health, libraries and parenting.

The national school curriculum includes a focus on the reading of a range of texts to encourage reading and discussion. This not only leads to engagement in reading but also facilitates drawing on the interests that pupils bring to reading. We know that certain elements promote a love of reading, which include freedom to choose reading materials; a print-rich environment; access to a variety of texts; time for reading in school; encouragement to readers; and quiet, comfortable places to read. Other relevant factors have been succinctly summed up by Sanacore (2002, p. 83),

> *Determining students' attitudes toward reading, giving them experiences with different texts, providing them with opportunities to select resources and to read them in school, and helping them to connect skills and strategies to interesting and meaningful contexts, are only a few of the ways that support the lifetime reading habit... Other important considerations include building resilience in literacy learners, finding time to engage children in pleasurable reading across the curriculum, making picture books acceptable and respectable for older students, guiding students to solve authentic problems through reading, conducting book talks, encouraging different interpretations of text, supporting a variety of projects and outcomes, and promoting leisure reading at home.*

To explore what activities could be set up in the classroom to promote reading for pleasure, pupils in the Reading Connects survey (Clark & Foster, 2005) were asked which activities they would like to do to help themselves and others read more. We found that designing websites/magazines, meeting authors/celebrities and reading games were the most frequently chosen reading promotion activities from a list of 12 possible choices. For the sample as a whole, rating books and writing book reviews were the least frequently chosen activities. Girls were generally more enthusiastic about reading promotions than boys. More girls than boys indicated that the following might motivate them to read more: designing websites /magazines, helping younger children read, meeting authors/celebrity readers, reading for prizes, reading groups with friends, reading for charity and talking about their favourite reads. Primary pupils were generally also keener on reading activities than secondary pupils. In particular, primary pupils were more likely than their secondary counterparts to state that reading groups with friends, talking about their favourite reads, reading games, helping choose stock for the library, helping younger children with their reading, reading for charity, reading for prizes, and meeting authors/celebrity readers would make them want to read more.

It should by now be clear that we need to create a culture in which all pupils are encouraged to be enthusiastic readers. This is not an easy goal. Teachers need to catch and sustain engagement with reading in students with different interests and ability levels within the same class. Indeed, an Ofsted report (2004) showed that schools do not adequately connect to the pupils' reading interests and that schools seldom use the broader range of material pupils read at home as a starting point to further their reading in school and improve their motivation. The report also stressed the importance of giving pupils the freedom to choose their own books with the appropriate level. Recent research by Hurd and colleagues (2006) also showed that schools should spend more money on books. They found that higher book spending at primary schools, which can be used to support independent reading and learning, translates into higher pupil performance at age 11, even when other key factors have been taken into account. Yet, they also found that expenditure on books has declined in primary schools.

In order to reap the benefits that reading for pleasure can bring schools need to implement a reading promotion programme that will make reading an experience that is actively sought out by students. Schools therefore need broad-ranging approaches to consult with students in order to learn of their interests and to ensure that the range of reading materials available in school reflects those interests. They need to recognise that a diverse range of reading materials will encourage students to read, and they will need to engage children in the planning and delivery of reading and library activities, offering them the opportunity to select and purchase reading materials for their use. Promoting positive reading habits and the modeling of reading by parents, teachers, and friends can further encourage reading enjoyment in reluctant readers (see also Krashen, 1999). Guidance and hints can be found on the Reading Connects website (http://www.readingconnects.org.uk), which is a DfES-funded National Reading Campaign initiative that seeks to support schools in building their own reading culture.

It is encouraging that the importance of reading for pleasure has been recognised by the government and that a number of policy initiatives have been launched to promote wider reading and reading enjoyment in the UK. The DfES published a strategy for primary schools "Excellence and Enjoyment" (2003), which stresses the importance of raising standards in primary schools while also making learning enjoyable. According to this strategy, primary schools should combine excellence in teaching with enjoyment of learning. In addition to placing reading in the context of a language-rich environment, the Rose Review (2006) stressed the importance of teaching pupils a love of reading, and of schools promoting the view of reading as fun, by including play-based approaches to reading. It is encouraging that such recommendations were considered in the DfES's recent consultations on the literacy and numeracy strategy reforms.

This is clearly needed. An Ofsted report (2005) on the national literacy and numeracy strategies indicated that although many teachers have started considering more creative and flexible ways of managing the curriculum, such as more cross-

curricular work, schools' focus on the literacy hour and numeracy lessons had been unaffected. Research consistently also shows that one of the most effective strategies for fostering reading is the creation of a classroom library (e.g. Neuman & Celano, 2001). Findings show that classroom books from a variety of genres and covering a multitude of potential areas of interest increase pupils' literacy-related activities, and promote phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension and writing.
A lot more needs to be done for all children to reap the benefits that reading can bring, but together we can do it.

- **Parents are one of the most important literacy teachers. Indeed, the DfES encourages parents to read to/with their children. Reading together is also a central element of early years' programmes, such as Sure Start. We would therefore urge schools to capitalise on and encourage reading that is done at home, by providing guidance on how to build on materials used at school while also engaging their children with reading for fun.**
- **Pupils can become reluctant readers for a variety of reasons, including boredom, low self-esteem, or an inability to keep up with their peers. We must therefore address the possible issues that make an individual a reluctant reader and use creative solutions to combat this disengagement.**
- **But most importantly, we must see reading for pleasure as an activity that has real educational and social consequences.**