

5 Keys for Motivating Students to Read, Write, Dream

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I've had many opportunities to work with students over the years, and I know it can be challenging trying to come up with original ideas for keeping students excited about reading. Nowadays, if it has more than three lines or 140 characters, kids won't read it! So how do we challenge students to spend time in a book? I've developed five keys that I think will help motivate students to read, write, and dream:

1. I believe there should be an eleventh commandment that says "Thou shalt never, ever assign your students a book by James Fenimore Cooper." What?? Not make students read *Last of the Mohicans*? It's a classic! Really? Have you actually READ *Last of the Mohicans*? Now, I am NOT suggesting you toss out the classics and replace them with things like *Twilight* or *The Hunger Games*, but you can learn what draws your students and add it to what you are already offering. **Key #1 to motivating your students? Find out what draws your students and make it available to them as an alternative.**
2. Why aren't students reading? Most likely, it's because they're on the internet, right? And don't we, as teachers, parents, and educators, spend a lot of OUR time battling for our students' time and attention? Why? Why not use the internet as a tool? Your students are on Facebook. So have them create a **professional** page dedicated to their reading assignment. For Pinterest, make part of their reading assignment creating a Pinterest account and set a minimum number of boards and pins related to the book in some way, and guess what? Not only are they reading, they're researching! **Key #2 to motivating your students? Do like Facebook and encourage your students to "share."**
3. Do any of you remember writing book reports? How many of you ever enjoyed doing it? Summarizing a 300 page novel down to one page can be difficult but bottom line, it taught me to see the big story picture. So how do we keep that educational experience, but make it relevant to today's internet addicted students? Here's a great YouTube example: <http://tinyurl.com/EdgeofFreedom>
Key #3 to motivating your students? Find new ways for students to report what they know.
4. I was very blessed to have many good teachers over the years, but there are 3 that stand out in my memory. You know what these three teachers had in common? They took the time to *know* their students interests! There are many valuable things you can give to the people who will come through your classroom, but the one thing that will make them remember you, that will cause them to give thanks for having had you as a teacher, will be that you took the time to get to know them. **Key #4 to motivating your students? Find out who they are and what they love, then encourage them to read about that**
5. Between work and my writing, I've been very fortunate to have attended several conferences and workshops over the years. Always, there have been interesting people who were either teaching or delivering the keynote. After the seminar concluded, you know what? That speaker's work had become personal to me. Now, when I held their book in my hands, it was like "I *know* this person." I still do that when I go into a bookstore. I look along the shelf to see how many of those names I recognize. You know what? Your students will do the same! **Key #5 to motivating your students? Bring authors, speakers, and teachers into your classroom. Make reading personal to them, and you will not only inspire them to read, you will inspire them to write...and dream.**

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