

Technology for Reading and Writing Motivation Using Social-Emotional Learning

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Framing the Issue

How can teachers provide an environment where students learn the class objectives and, more importantly, become lifelong learners? What are some key themes or areas that teachers can address to help create motivation for learning to read and write? Teachers want their students to be successful and gain language skills while learning the content they need to know. Incorporating technology into this journey can contribute to creating a more engaged audience. To work towards these objectives, teachers should consider essential factors like researching and evaluating students' academic and cultural backgrounds. Teachers also need to know their students' English proficiency levels in addition to their reading and writing capabilities. Furthermore, learning about their students' previous school experiences, ages, interests, and cultures can help teachers establish the big picture while helping with rapport.

Teachers can then begin to work on a plan that will address their specific students' needs, as opposed to using a generic program for everyone. In addition, if students are not receptive to certain types of instruction or technology because of their learning styles or abilities, teachers can reflect and revisit other strategies using a growth mindset. This process becomes a cycle where teachers assess, instruct, re-assess, instruct, and so forth, to continually build students' capacity for learning. Technology can be the extra support some students need to get to the next level. With the growing number of technologies, from iPads, to laptops, to online programs and organizers, to virtual tutors, teachers have a wealth of resources available to them that can help them teach their students reading and writing, while teaching students about these valuable resources that can help them in the future.

The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching.

Edited by Hossein Nassaji.

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DOI: 10.1002/9781118784235.eelt1077

Making the Case

Teachers working with multilingual learners from kindergarten through 12th grade in many schools across the United States are following the Common Core State Standards. The *Overview of the Common Core State Standards Initiatives for ELLs: A TESOL Issue Brief* (2013), delineates shifts that need to occur in instruction, such as the need to:

- work on reading and writing using fiction and non-fiction text, and
- provide frequent interactions with higher-level texts that include academic vocabulary.

This poses a challenge for teachers in that multilingual learners tend to struggle with academic vocabulary. Moreover, using complicated texts can be challenging for both monolingual and multilingual learners (TESOL International Association, 2013). Considering that following the Common Core Standards can potentially help with career readiness, teachers of adults can also consider these concepts. There are practical ways to make instruction accessible, for example, with peer discussions, adapting texts, writing in the content areas, or with classroom resources (Gonzalez, 2022). Fortunately, with the use of technology, students can become more absorbed in the instruction, even at higher levels of reading and writing. Moreover, by using the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Standards, teachers can ensure they are meeting the needs of their students when incorporating technology into their lessons. Through these standards, teachers also develop themselves as (a) learners, (b) leaders, (c) citizens, (d) collaborators, (e) designers, (f) facilitators, and (g) analysts.

A brief description of each of these areas follows. As learners, teachers strive to continue their own professional development and networks in order to stay abreast of the newest technologies. As leaders, they not only seek opportunities to model for other educators, but also advocate for their students to have digital tools and resources. As citizens, they teach students how to be responsible online. As collaborators, they work together with students and colleagues to problem solve, work toward goals, and share considerations. As designers, they consider their students' abilities when developing instruction. As facilitators, they ease learning through the use of various technologies to meet their objectives. Last, as analysts, they use assessment data to drive their instruction (International Standards for Technology in Education, 2023).

Furthermore, the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles can help teachers consider ways to meet students' needs by providing choices that include numerous modalities (i.e., multimodalities). Through UDL, teachers can critically examine the why, what, and how of instruction. Teachers show information in different ways (such as through books, articles, blogs, videos, etc.), and students can demonstrate what they learned in different ways as well (such as through writing, drawing, speeches, poetry, etc.). Through UDL, students can become inspired, educated, intentional, and focused on goals (CAST, 2018).

By integrating the ISTE Standards with the UDL principles for teaching reading and writing, teachers can elevate their current practices to a higher level and reap the benefits. This approach showcases teachers as up-to-date educators capable of guiding their students and peers, while delivering instruction that genuinely caters to student needs, including fostering self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, relationship skills, and social awareness—all vital aspects of social-emotional learning (SEL). This positive instructional strategy is advantageous for both teachers and students, especially when incorporating SEL, which plays a pivotal role in students' success within and beyond the educational setting, nurturing the essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for achievement (Pentón Herrera & Martínez-Alba, 2021). Through the integration of technology, teachers can harmonize reading and writing motivation with SEL, a concept that will be further exemplified in the subsequent section.

Pedagogical Implications

There are numerous technologies available to help students build their reading and writing skills.

This section provides many potential options in order for teachers to find ideas that work for their teaching styles as well as for their student populations, while keeping in mind Gambrell's (2011) seven rules of engagement, which include the importance of providing

1. readings applicable to students,
2. a large range of books/texts,
3. time to read,
4. choices,
5. discussions about readings,
6. challenging readings, and
7. positive feedback/rewards related to reading (such as a new book as a reward).

Using a teleprompter app, such as PromptSmart Pro, teachers can address all of these reading rules of engagement. To start, students can select texts that greatly interest them, aiding in the development of self-awareness regarding their personal preferences. They can easily search online through news articles or other stories to copy and paste the text into the app. Teachers can make the text easier for students by shortening the sentences or using more commonly used vocabulary (this is especially helpful if the goal of the activity is reading fluency). After selecting a text, students require ample time to read and re-read the content multiple times, enabling them to enhance their expression, phrasing, fluidity, and speed as they practice (Raskinski, 2004). Collaborative efforts can be beneficial, with students partnering up to take turns reading—akin to newscasters presenting distinct stories. This approach not only encourages discussions but also prompts them to pose questions to each other about the material. Through this collaborative

reading practice, students have the opportunity to cultivate their SEL in the realm of relationship skills. The PromptSmart Pro app allows students and teachers to collect a library of stories, thus many students can use the app to practice and save their stories to come back to it during the next period. They can also

- set the text and background color,
- choose fonts and font sizes,
- speed up or slow down the text,
- mirror the text (if using a teleprompter mirror connected to a larger camera),
- use a timer, and
- record themselves while reading using audio and/or video through an iPad among a few other features the app provides.

The Pro version (<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/promptsmart-pro-teleprompter/id894811756?mt=8>) provides all the above selections for a one-time fee. However, if a teacher or student wants to test a few of the features, they can start with the PromptSmart Lite Teleprompter (<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/promptsmart-lite-teleprompter/id922921003?mt=8>) for free. There are also teleprompter options online, such as the Autocue (<http://www.freeteleprompter.org/>), which is free.

Recognizing the importance of exposing students to demanding texts, teachers might opt for tools such as Screencast-O-Matic (<https://screencast-o-matic.com/>) or Zoom (<https://zoom.us>) to supply voiceovers for challenging content. This strategy aids students in autonomously grasping and interpreting intricate texts. Engaging in this process can contribute to the cultivation of their self-management skills, as they navigate challenges with the aid of technology. Screencast-O-Matic and Zoom allow users to create an instructional video of what is shown, such as a presentation slide or an article. Teachers can also explain key vocabulary, summarize the text, and write notes or illustrate concepts to help with comprehension (with an upgrade, recording time is not limited). Furthermore, royalty-free music can be added to make the recording even more engaging before uploading the video to their Web site, YouTube, or saving it on the computer. Moreover, students can create Screencast or Zoom videos themselves to help their peers understand concepts that might be of interest to them, which might be difficult material, yet they can explain it with enthusiasm. Anyone can sign up to use it for free, which makes getting started easy. Using these tools for a reading workshop where small groups of students work together to create the videos can be beneficial as well (Pentón Herrera & Martínez-Alba, 2021).

To work on reading motivation by making personal connections, a teacher can provide background information about authors. For example, they can show videos of the authors themselves, such as Pat Mora, before they read her books. Students can also read about authors' autobiographies online on Web sites such as Colorín Colorado (in English and Spanish) in order for them to be able to have more in-depth information about authors before reading their various types of work (WETA Public Broadcasting, 2023). Another interesting idea to add to the personal and social component of reading is the one of a virtual tutor. When students have a virtual

tutor, which could be another student to talk to about the text online, they are more likely to comprehend the text and be truly engaged (Park & Kim, 2016).

Integrating reading with writing provides a natural way to work on developing writing skills, and there are numerous apps that can work well with a teacher's writing lesson. The apps can help students to persevere in writing through their motivating effects and potential for using them in cooperative groups (Sessions et al., 2016). To begin the writing process, there are technology tools that help create graphic organizers online or on a device, which can help students organize their thoughts. For example, Popplet (<http://popplet.com/>) can help students create notes, in addition to adding images and shaping the notes into categories with flowcharts or word maps. Popplet is both on the iPad and the Web, which gives students the flexibility to work on a project on their computer or iPad depending on what they have access to in school or at home.

If teachers want to provide their students with the option of using multiple visuals in their final products, there are many apps for creating comic strips. This enables students to write stories or share news with an audience in mind, such as their peers, while providing visuals to help with comprehension. Strip Designer (<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/strip-designer/id314780738>) allows users to insert pictures and add balloons with text and stickers that use words, such as *boom* or *zzzz*. Meme makers such as Comic Caption Meme Maker (<https://apple.com/gb/app/comic-caption-meme-maker/id641361892>) can also be used for shorter text. If a teacher is interested in having her students create sketches quickly instead of using photos in the comic strip or meme, My Sketch (<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/my-sketch/id448162988?mt=8>) can easily change pictures into sketches. There are also Web sites that can be used, such as Comic Life (<http://plasq.com/apps/comiclif/macwin/>), which has fonts, templates, balloons, captions, and other options to make professional-looking comics come to life. Also, teachers can ask students to provide an explanatory paragraph about their comic if they would like the writing exercise extended, or can provide a follow-up reading to continue the conversation about the selected topic (Sockman et al., 2016).

To continue with writing options using visuals, teachers can help students create online posters or newsletters. Smore (<https://www.smores.com/>) is simple and has different style templates, pictures, fonts, and colors. Personal or downloaded pictures are easily incorporated, and the amount of text can be minimal, as in a poster, or have more in-depth information, as in a newsletter. For students who might not be able to write at length, Adobe Express (<https://www.adobe.com/express/>) allows students to create professional-looking videos by providing easy-to-follow instructions on setting up the text with visuals (and music for videos). Another dynamic option is Powtoon (<https://www.powtoon.com/home/>), where students can create presentation videos with very engaging animations and text. Teachers have the flexibility to gauge their students' needs or present them with options, allowing them to work at their appropriate levels.

Questions to consider and reflect on when selecting technologies for reading and writing may include:

- How can technology increase student participation?
- What types of collaboration can result from using technology?
- How can teachers take reading and writing projects to the next level using technology?
- What types of technological resources can teachers provide to help students succeed?
- How can teachers integrate social-emotional learning naturally?

Through these pedagogical reflections, teachers can build on what they know, and continue to grow along with their students (Woodward & Kline, 2016). With these questions, they can also think through the research covered above, which included the Common Core, UDL, ISTE Standards, SEL, and Gambrell’s (2011) Seven Rules of Engagement (see Table 1).

Table 1 Technology for reading and writing motivation using social-emotional learning: Quick guide for planning instruction.

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|---|--|
| <i>Common Core</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide reading and writing using fiction and non-fiction text |
| <i>UDL</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use higher-level texts with academic vocabulary• Examine the why, what, and how of instruction• Provide students with choice and various modalities to learn with and show their work |
| <i>ISTE Standards</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn along with students• Lead and advocate for students and teachers• Teach about being responsible online• Work together toward goals• Consider students’ abilities when designing instruction• Use various technologies to meet objectives |
| <i>Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-awareness• Self-management• Responsible decision making• Relationship skills• Social awareness |
| <i>Gambrell’s Seven Rules of Engagement</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Select readings applicable to students• Provide a large range of books• Give time to read• Provide choices in reading• Offer time for discussions about readings• Supply challenging readings• Give positive feedback/rewards related to reading |

SEE ALSO: Building a Culture of Reading; Corpus Tools for Writing Students; Motivation and Reading; Reading and Writing Connections; Social Media in the Writing Classroom and Beyond

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Suggested Readings

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