

## In This Issue

President's Message..... 1

Research Review..... 2  
*Engagement, A key to  
comprehension*

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## President's Message

By: Brian Dorman, FLCA President  
Sanford Middle School Reading Coach,  
Seminole County Public Schools

Thank you to those who were able to attend the most recent board meeting at the University of Central Florida.

The next board meetings are set for the following dates:

- January 25, 2008 @ UCF, Orlando
- April 2008 @ Secondary Reading Conference, Panama City Beach
- June 2008 @ Just Read, Florida Leadership Conference, Orlando

More specific dates will be coming soon. Please feel free to contact me or any of the board members if you would like to share ideas on how we can better serve you.

I sincerely hope that everyone enjoys the Thanksgiving holidays.

Respectfully,



Brian Dorman

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## Research Review

### *Engagement: A Key to Comprehension*

By: Patricia Fisher, Literacy Coach  
Umatilla High School  
Lake County Schools

“Older students can read with enthusiasm and understanding, especially when teachers avoid ineffective practices that promote disengagement” (Ivey & Fisher, 2005).

#### Engagement: A Key to Comprehension

All of us would love a quick fix that would insure our students are motivated to read and understand fully what they read. Guthrie and Wigfield (1997) state “that real engagement in reading is not the product of strategies alone but a fusion of self-efficacy, interest, and strategic knowledge” (as cited in Ivey & Fisher, 2005). Instead of giving us a laundry list of strategies, Fisher and Ivey focus on ineffective methods sometimes found in high school classrooms.

One ineffective strategy is to focus on “teaching to the test” and cutting out programs such as Sustained Silent Reading. Pilgreen (2000) discovered that giving students time to read during the school day provided students a chance to build their background knowledge, add to their vocabulary, and help sustain their motivation (as cited in Ivey & Fisher, 2005). Ivey and Broaddus (2001) found in their study that students stated they found having time to read during the

*Please see Research Review on page 3*

“Intervention must create more, not less, teacher involvement.”

Ivey &  
Fisher, 2005.

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## Research Review Continued

school day gave them the time to think and reflect (as cited in Ivey & Fisher, 2005).

Using teacher selected material without regard to students' interest and their abilities is another way to guarantee disengaged students. Marzano especially stresses the importance of building background knowledge in order to increase students' comprehension (as cited in Ivey & Fisher, 2005). Additionally, teachers who ignore what their students already know, especially the knowledge inherent in today's pop culture, miss an important opportunity to build on this while adding new information teachers deem essential (as cited in Ivey & Fisher, 2005).

Another ineffective method sometimes used in a classroom is to assign the same book to all, regardless of students' ability to understand the text. The classroom novel certainly has its place in today's classroom, but we know from Allington that students do not learn when they are faced with books that are too difficult for them (as cited in Ivey & Fisher, 2005). Perhaps, we can replace the class novel with several books, books that are leveled, on the same theme. Then all students can learn at the reading level with which they are most comfortable.

Another practice that can lead to student disengagement is to focus on the strategy rather than the use of the strategy as part of a process. We all see the countless workbooks that give example after example of passages showing students how to find the main idea. This is ineffective. Rather we need to show students how to use these strategies all throughout the reading process using texts. Then students realize that, as Duffy states, "...understanding texts

*Please see Research Review page 4*

More often than  
not, teacher  
engagement =  
student  
engagement.

## Research Review Continued



The FLCA newsletter would like to start a **BEST PRACTICES** column. If you have a great idea that seems to be working in your school, please share it with the rest of us. Please submit your ideas to Maxine Mangus, newsletter editor at [mangusm@lake.k12.fl.us](mailto:mangusm@lake.k12.fl.us)

is not such a mystery” (as cited in Ivey & Fisher, 2005).

Finally, teachers must be engaged in order to engage students. While recognizing the value of technology and its place in the classroom, we see it as one tool of many. Software cannot replace a teacher. As Ivey and Fisher have noted, intervention must create more, not less, teacher involvement (2005). While computers may be used as skill reinforcement, the teacher is the one who provides feedback and encouragement. More often than not, with teacher engagement comes student engagement.

### Reference

Ivey, G., & Fisher, D. (2005). Learning from what doesn't work. *Educational Leadership*, 63(2), 8-15.



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