



Reading engagement: Connecting the skill and will

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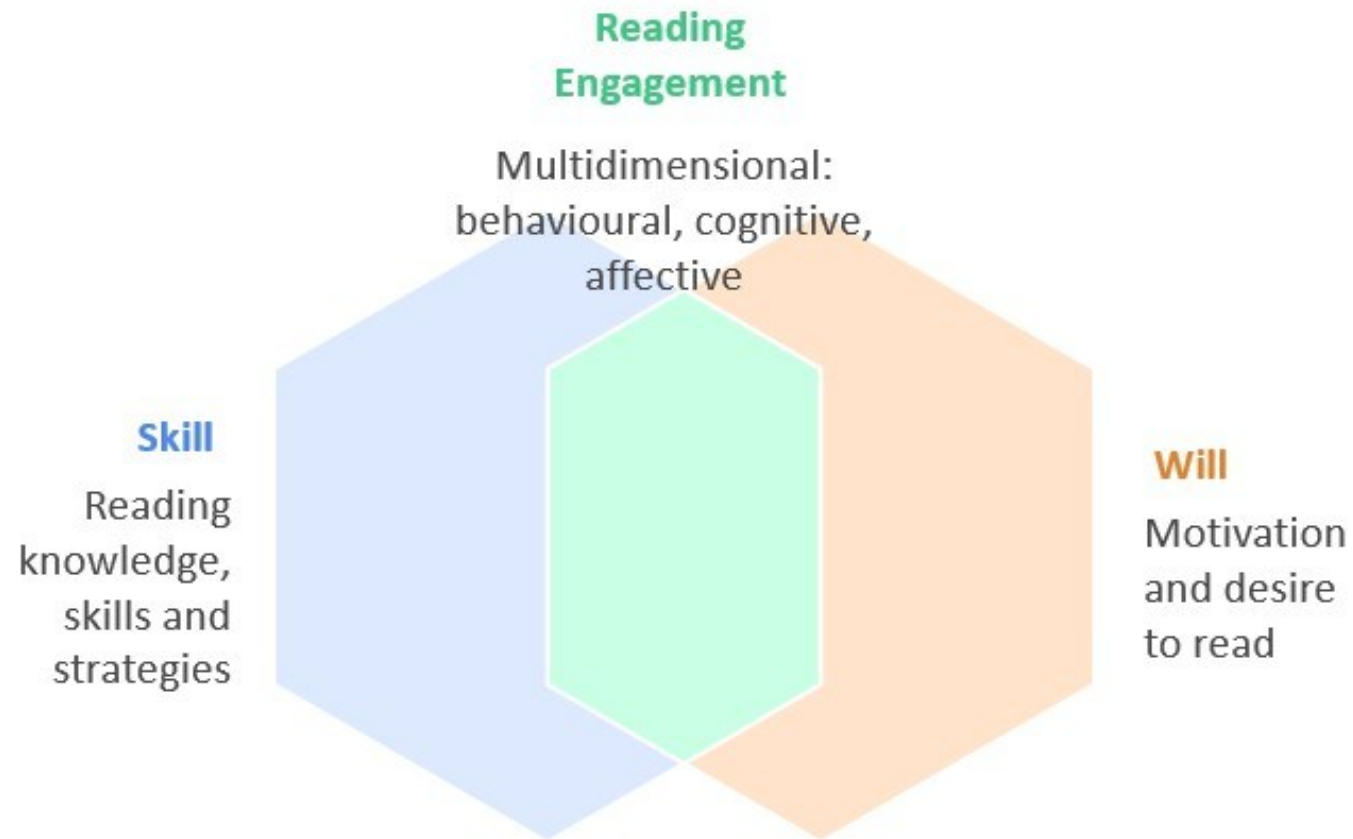
researchED Scotland, November 2025



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Overview

Interaction between skill and will in reading



Reading skill

Significant body of research highlighting the skills underpinning word reading development.

Further research examining the effectiveness of different instructional approaches.

Castles, A., (2018). Ending the Reading Wars: Reading Acquisition From Novice to Expert. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1529100618772271>

Shapiro, L., & Solity, J. (2016). Differing effects of two synthetic phonics programmes on early reading development.
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1529100618772271>

Read Writ (2012) 25:1365–1384
DOI 10.1007/s11145-011-9323-x

Long-term effects of synthetic versus analytic phonics teaching on the reading and spelling ability of 10 year old boys and girls

Rhona S. Johnston · Sarah McGeown ·
Joyce E. Watson



Learning and Individual Differences
Volume 28, December 2013, Pages 75–81



Individual differences in children's reading and spelling strategies and the skills supporting strategy use

Sarah P. McGeown ^a , Emma Medford ^b, Gerri Moxon ^b

Read Writ (2014) 27:591–608
DOI 10.1007/s11145-013-9460-5

Using method of instruction to predict the skills supporting initial reading development: insight from a synthetic phonics approach

Sarah P. McGeown · Emma Medford

Journal of Research in Reading

UKLA

Journal of Research in Reading, ISSN 0141-0423
Volume 37, Issue 1, 2014, pp 51–64

DOI:10.1111/jrri.12007

Towards an understanding of how children read and spell irregular words: the role of nonword and orthographic processing skills

Sarah P. McGeown
School of Education, University of Edinburgh, UK

Rhona S. Johnston and Gerri E. Moxon
Department of Psychology, University of Hull, UK



Learning and Individual Differences
Volume 22, Issue 3, June 2012, Pages 360–364



Reading instruction affects the cognitive skills supporting early reading development

Sarah P. McGeown , Rhona S. Johnston, Emma Medford

Reading will

Independent reading is driven by motivation (motivated cognition).

Motivation is a complex construct- research needs to draw upon a diverse range of methodological approaches and disciplinary perspectives.

McGeown, S. et al, (preprint). Supporting Children's Reading Motivation and Engagement: The Development and Initial Evaluation of a School-Based Program. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5195889

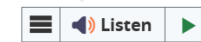
Toste, J. et al (2020) A Meta-Analytic Review of the Relations Between Motivation and Reading Achievement for K–12 Students. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654320919352>

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Supporting Children's Reading Motivation and Engagement: The Development and Initial Evaluation of a School-Based Program

37 Pages • Posted: 27 Mar 2025

Sarah McGeown
University of Edinburgh

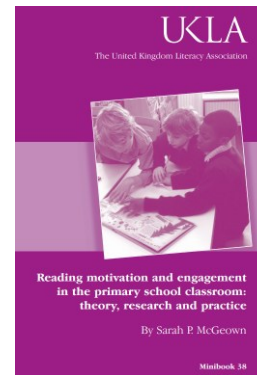


Research Article

Motivating book reading during adolescence: qualitative insights from adolescents

Charlotte Webber , Katherine Wilkinson , Lynne G. Duncan  & Sarah McGeown  

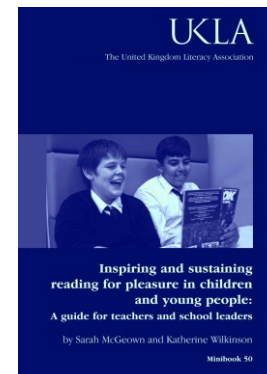
Pages 79-97 | Received 24 Jun 2024, Accepted 18 Dec 2024, Published online: 16 Jan 2025



Original Article |  Full Access

Understanding children's reading activities: Reading motivation, skill and child characteristics as predictors

Sarah P. McGeown , Cara Osborne, Amy Warhurst, Roger Norgate, Lynne G. Duncan



Articles

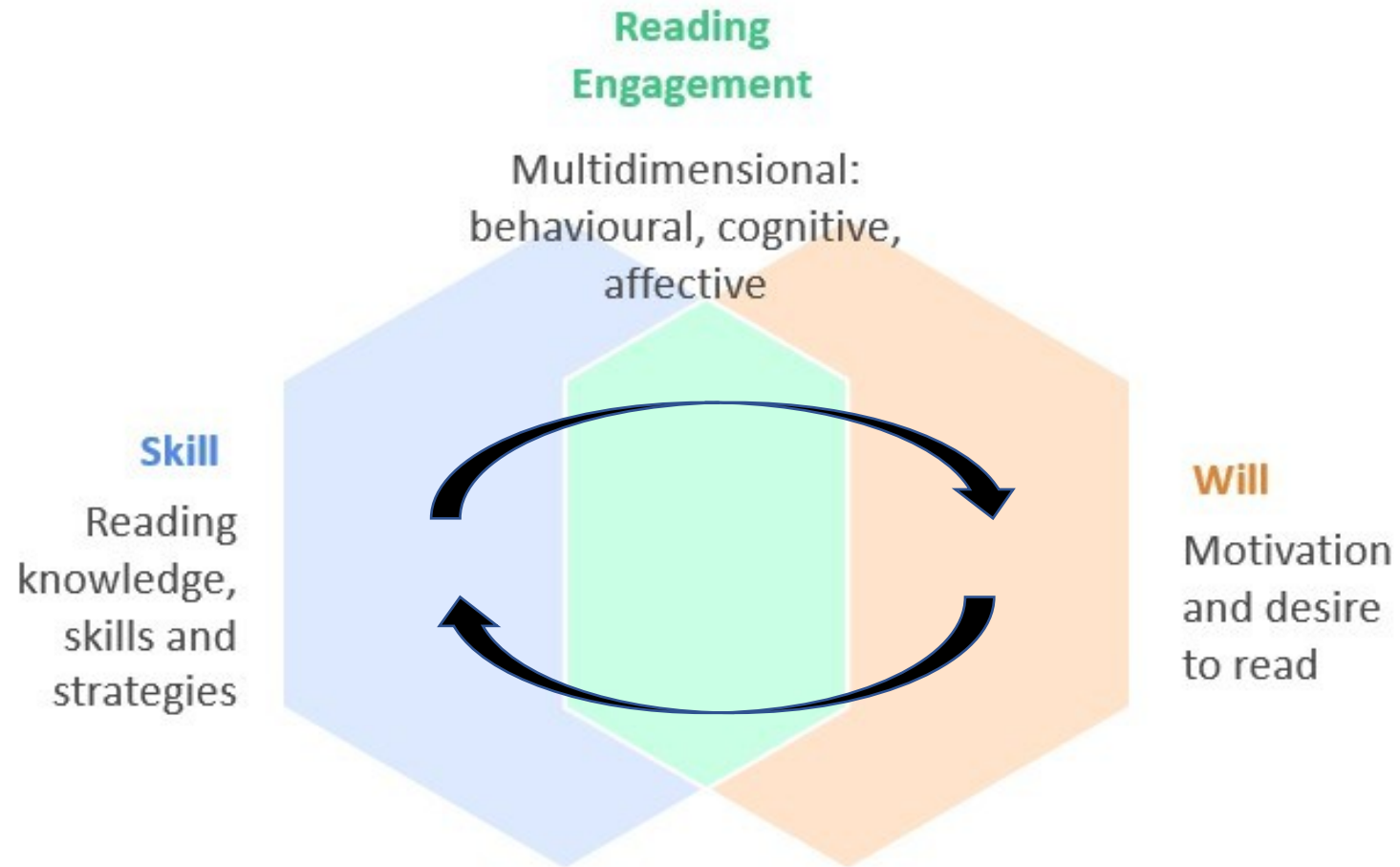
Exploring intrinsic and extrinsic reading motivation among very good and very poor readers

Sarah P. McGeown , Roger Norgate & Amy Warhurst

Pages 309-322 | Received 11 Oct 2011, Accepted 07 Mar 2012, Published online: 27 Jul 2012

 Cite this article  <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2012.710089>

Interaction between skill and will in reading



Science of reading

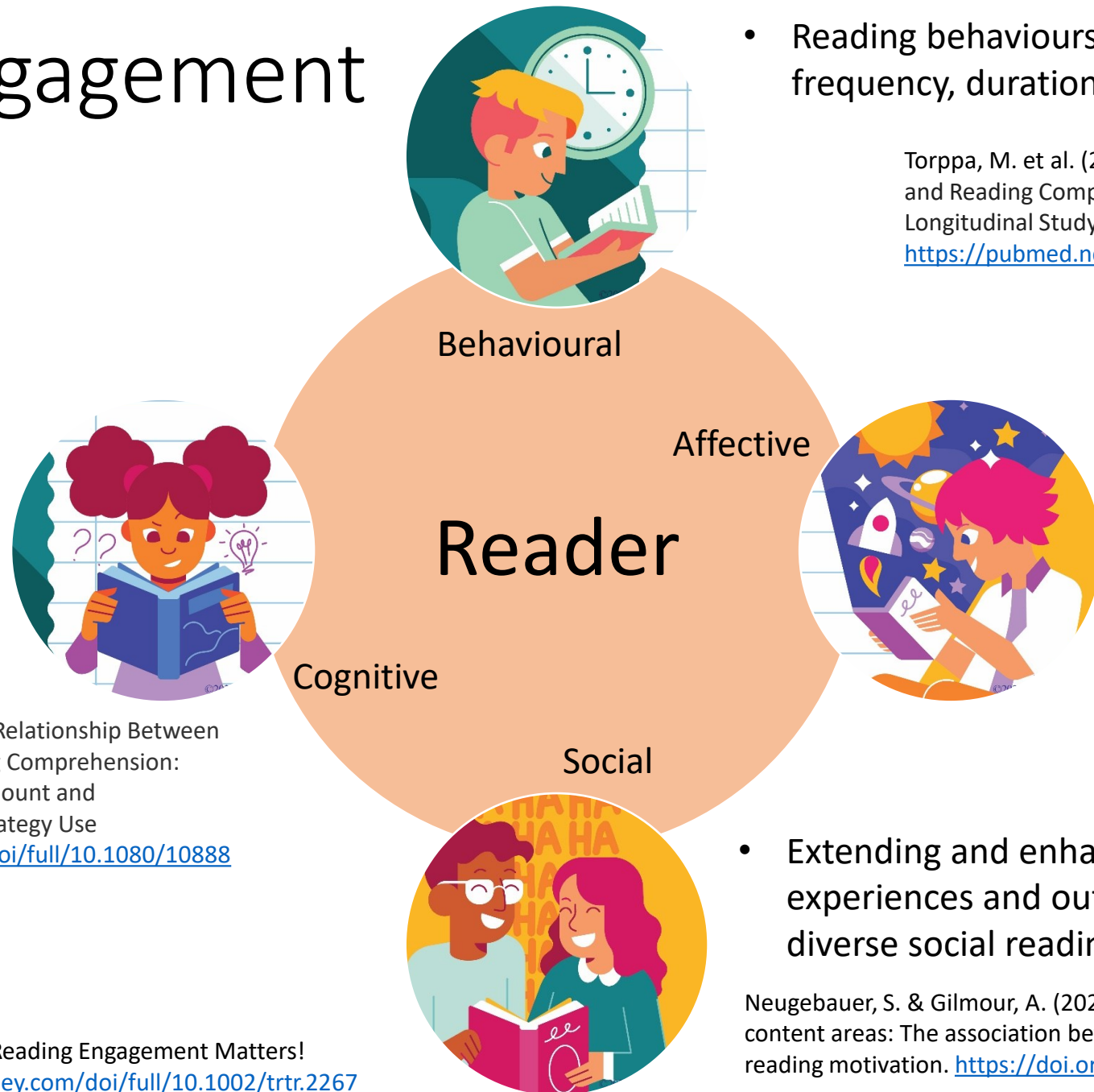
Reading for pleasure

Reading engagement

- Cognitive effort
- Implementation of cognitive strategies (e.g., to support comprehension)

Miyamoto, A. et al. (2019). The Relationship Between Intrinsic Motivation and Reading Comprehension: Mediating Effects of Reading Amount and Metacognitive Knowledge of Strategy Use
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10888438.2019.1602836>

McGeown, S., & Conradi-Smith, K. (2023). Reading Engagement Matters! *Reading Teacher*, <https://ila.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/trtr.2267>



- Reading behaviours (time spent reading - frequency, duration)

Torppa, M. et al. (2019) Leisure Reading (But Not Any Kind) and Reading Comprehension Support Each Other-A Longitudinal Study Across Grades 1 and 9.
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30927457/>

- Diverse affective experiences
- Reading personally enjoyable/engaging content

Currie, N. et al., (2025). How Does Reading Fiction Support Adolescents' Wellbeing? A Qualitative Study Examining Positive Affect, Connection and Personal Growth.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02702711.2025.2504974>

- Extending and enhancing reading experiences and outcomes through diverse social reading activities

Neugebauer, S. & Gilmour, A. (2020). The ups and downs of reading across content areas: The association between instruction and fluctuations in reading motivation. <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000373>

Reading engagement: Current thinking



Independent reading



Social reading

Behavioural Engagement

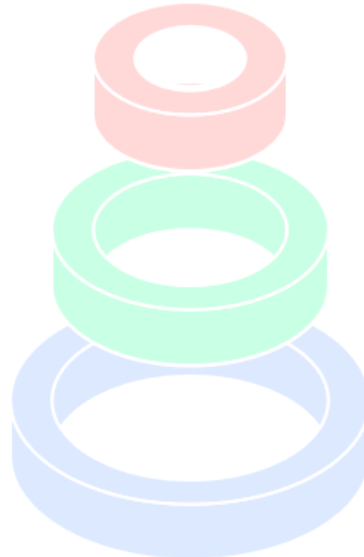
Time spent reading
Reading habits and practices

Cognitive Engagement

Cognitive effort
Implementation of cognitive strategies

Affective Engagement

Rich and diverse emotional experiences
Enjoyable, engaging, empowering and enriching



Behavioural Engagement

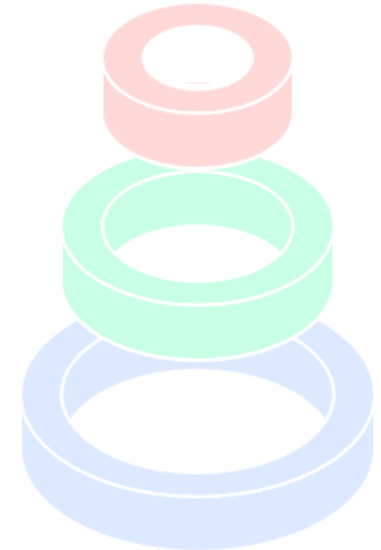
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Affective Engagement

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What does this mean for practice?

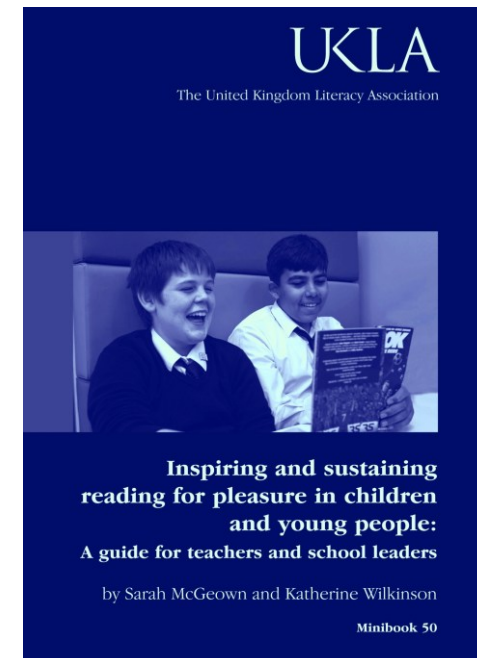
Research-informed principles to support children's reading motivation and engagement



Website: <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/lovetoread/>

McGeown, S. et al. (preprint).

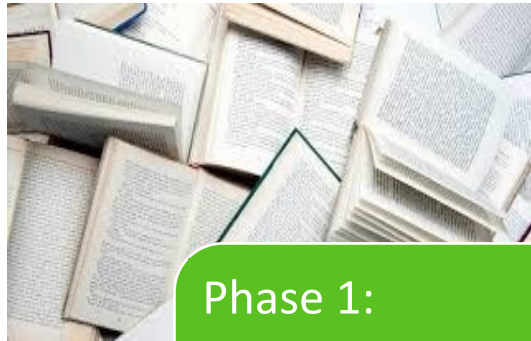
https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5195889



Love to Read: Development and Evaluation

Development

Evaluation



Phase 1:
Research input

Literature review:

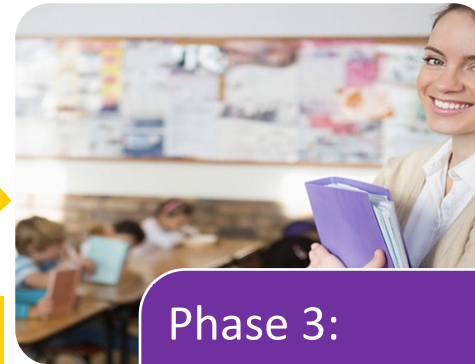
- Relevant theory/research
- Links with curricula

SIX PRINCIPLES



Phase 2:
Child input

Individual and group interviews (n = 59, 4 UK schools) to seek children's perspectives and experiences.



Phase 3:
Teacher input

- Six teachers
- Co-design online
- Practice partner input
- PROGRAMME DEVELOPED



Phase 4:
Evaluation

- 6 week feasibility study, 4 schools, 425 pupils
- Mixed methods
- Implementation and effectiveness

Preregistration: <https://osf.io/5ztjk>

Preregistration: <https://osf.io/xsjhc>

Preregistration: <https://osf.io/qvuka>

The Future of Books and Reading

Positive narrative to frame future thinking, discussion and action in relation to the decline in reading engagement.

Shares research insights, and diverse perspectives within the context of five themes:

- Enjoy
- Engage
- Empower
- Enrich
- Expand

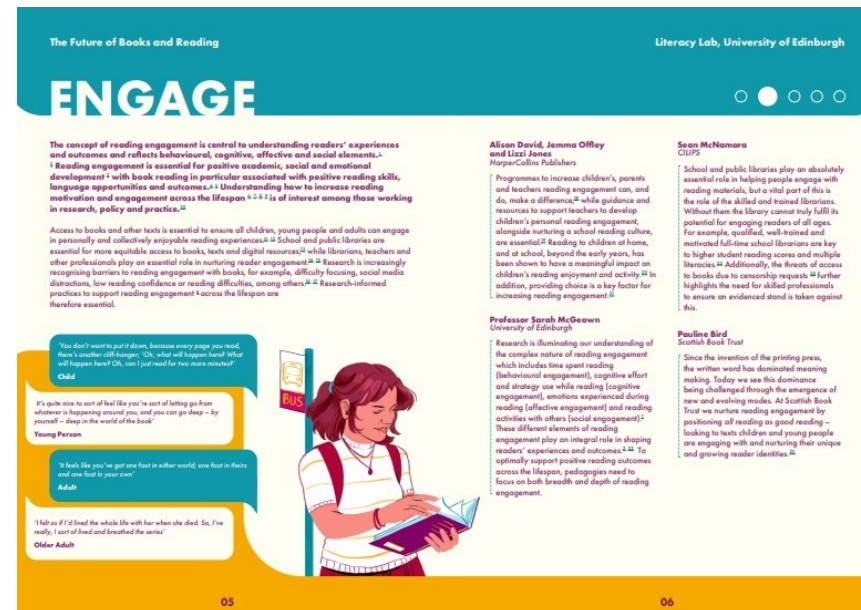


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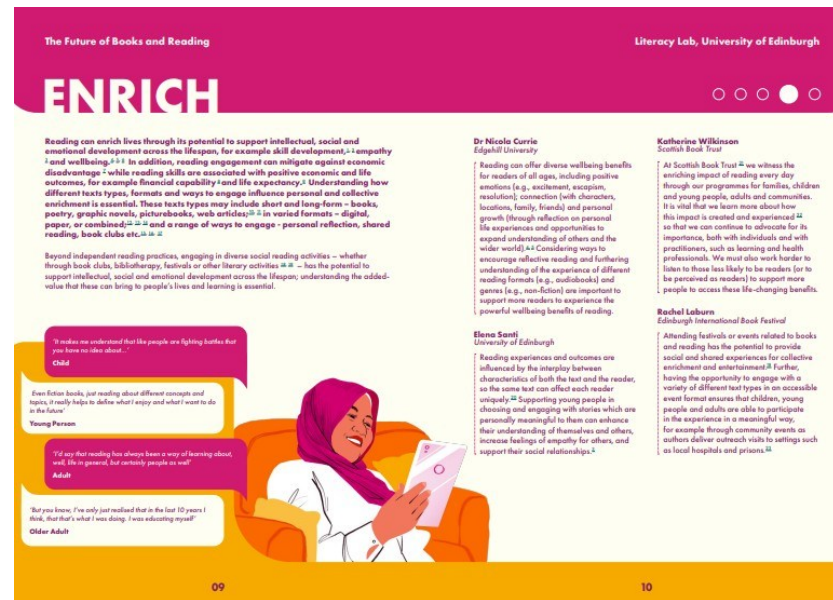


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Upcoming Professional Learning

Improving children's reading and writing: Connecting research and practice

- Session 1: Learning to read
- Session 2: Reading motivation and engagement
- Session 3: Learning to write
- Session 4: Writing motivation and engagement

<https://education-sport.ed.ac.uk/improving-childrens-reading-and-writing-connecting-research-and-practice>



NOV
20-11
2025 2025
16.00 17.00

Improving children's
reading and writing:
Connecting research and
practice

This series of short professional learning sessions are designed to provide research insights to support children's reading and writing acquisition and development. With a focus on supporting both reading and writing skill, all those attending will have greater access and insight into contemporary research to inform their classroom practice.

Summary

- Reading acquisition and development relies on both the skill and the will.
- The concept of reading engagement should be more centrally situated in our understanding of children's reading experiences and outcomes.
- Breadth and depth of reading engagement is important, as is considering behavioural, cognitive, affective dimensions, in both individual and social reading practices.

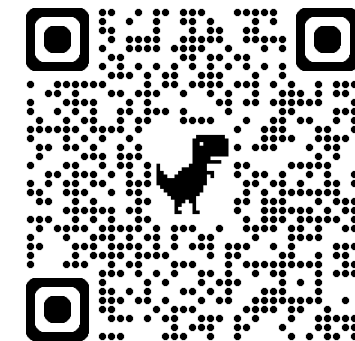


Literacy Lab: <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/literacylab/>

Love to Read: <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/lovetoread/>

Thank you for listening
Opportunity for questions....

Contact details: s.mcgeown@ed.ac.uk



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