

# 5 REASONS CLASSROOM LIBRARIES ARE VALUABLE AT EVERY GRADE

## 1. KIDS WILL SPEND MORE TIME WITH BOOKS.

Giving your students access to more choice and purposefully including titles that interest them has an impact. **Studies have shown that children more frequently interact with books, spend additional time reading, and even have a more positive attitude toward it if they are surrounded by classroom libraries.** Don't have the time to organize an effective classroom library? If you let your students organize the library for the class at the beginning of the year, it can give them the opportunity to preview the books and see the quality titles that live in your library. It also gives students ownership of the classroom library, which has been linked to motivation in reading.<sup>1</sup> So give your kids access to good books, and let them create a library for each other.

## 2. STUDENTS NEED WINDOWS AND MIRRORS IN THE CLASSROOM.

**Providing students with a diverse collection that contains multiple narratives and different perspectives allows them to have "windows" into other worlds in order to gain knowledge they might never learn otherwise.** It also gives them "mirrors," or the opportunity to see themselves in their books. As Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop states, "When children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative, or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part."<sup>2</sup> Fill your classroom with books that tell important, diverse stories, and make sure that everyone in your classroom is represented.

## 3. READING INDEPENDENTLY HELPS READERS LEARN TO READ.

You probably already know that the amount of time students spend reading is correlated to their reading achievement.<sup>3</sup> However, there seem to be "word callers" in the classroom: students who go through the motions of reading, but do not think critically about it.<sup>4</sup> So, how do we get rid of the word callers, and create a culture of readers who examine and ask questions about their books? **Book choice is one of the most important tools in fostering a classroom of independent and engaged reading.**<sup>5</sup> When teachers give students options and access to quality texts, attitudes toward reading improve. They are even more likely to read for pleasure.<sup>6</sup> Give students a high-quality classroom library and the time to read, and they will grow.

## 4. HAVING A CLASSROOM LIBRARY CAN PRODUCE LIFELONG READERS (AND ISN'T THAT THE GOAL?).

Giving students more choice through a classroom library can significantly increase motivation and attitudes toward reading.<sup>7</sup> In fact, a 2010 study found that student choice leads to the development of intrinsic motivation.<sup>8</sup> In the article, "What Makes Intermediate-Grade Students Want to Read?" author Jo Worthy cited giving students choice was one of the most important factors.<sup>9</sup> **Once students' motivation increases, they are more likely to develop lifelong reading habits.**

## 5. READING CAN LEAD TO SUCCESS.

According to Donalyn Miller, author of the book *Reading in the Wild: The Book Whisperer's Keys to Cultivating Lifelong Reading Habits*, "Children who love reading and see themselves as readers are the most successful in school and have the greatest opportunities in life."<sup>10</sup> **Becoming a strong reader has a powerful impact on students, and studies show reading achievement can be tied to having access to books in the classroom.**<sup>11</sup> Creating a community of readers and maintaining a classroom library will help set students up for future success.

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> Jo Worthy, "Removing Barriers to Voluntary Reading for Reluctant Readers: The Role of School and Classroom Libraries," *Language Arts* 73, no. 7 (1996) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41482811>: 487.
- <sup>2</sup> Rudine Sims Bishop, "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors," *Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom* 6, no. 3 (1990): <https://scenicregional.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Mirrors-Windows-and-Sliding-Glass-Doors.pdf>.
- <sup>3</sup> Andrea J. Stairs and Sara Stairs Burgos, "The Power of Independent, Self-Selected Reading in the Middle Grades," *Middle School Journal* 41, no. 3 (2010) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23047571>: 42.
- <sup>4</sup> Holly L. Diehl, "Snapshots of Our Journey to Thoughtful Literacy," *The Reading Teacher* 59, no. 1 (2005) <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.stthomas.edu/stable/20204319>: 56.
- <sup>5</sup> Sherry Sanden, "Independent Reading: Perspectives and Practices of Highly Effective Teachers," *The Reading Teacher* 66, no. 3 (2021) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23321283>: 225.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> Jo Worthy, "Removing Barriers to Voluntary Reading for Reluctant Readers: The Role of School and Classroom Libraries," *Language Arts* 73, no. 7 (1996) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41482811>: 490.
- <sup>8</sup> Linda B. Gambrell, "Seven Rules of Engagement: What's Most Important to Know About Motivation to Read," *The Reading Teacher*, 65, no. 3 (2011) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41331594>: 175.
- <sup>9</sup> Jo Worthy, "The Intermediate Grades: What Makes Intermediate-Grade Students Want to Read?" *The Reading Teacher* 55, no. 6 (2002) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20205098>: 568.
- <sup>10</sup> Donalyn Miller and Susan Kelley, *Reading in the Wild: The Book Whisperer's Keys to Cultivating Lifelong Reading Habits* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2013), xix.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid., 80.

## WANT TO FURTHER THE CONVERSATION?

Contact Dr. Jennifer McCarty Plucker, Director of Professional Learning, or a Classroom Specialist at 1-800-245-9540.