

Motivation Strategies for Elementary Students

At the heart of every successful DreamBox Reading Plus implementation are dedicated educators who develop creative strategies to engage and motivate their students. Here are a few examples of the kinds of motivational strategies that elementary school teachers are using to ignite enthusiasm for Reading Plus.

Strategy: The Six-Week Challenge

Students set their own six-week goals in Reading Plus. Every student who meets his or her goal is rewarded at the end of the six-week period.

What do you need to do?

- ✓ Help your students establish realistic personal goals. For example, they can specify the number of Combos they will achieve, the number of words they will read, or the number of Reading lessons they will complete with 80% or higher comprehension.
- ✓ Use the [Class Leaderboard Report](#) to help track student progress each week.

Why do this?

Your students will work toward long-term goals, rather than focus only on specific weekly expectations. This strategy helps students maintain a high level of motivation from week to week.

Take it to the next level!

Your students can track their own progress using a tool such as the [Daily Record Sheet](#) or the Reading [Comprehension Score Tracker](#).



Take it to the next level!

Whenever a student earns a Level Award, give the student the opportunity to discuss a favorite Reading text selection from the level he or she just completed. Or, ask the student to share his or her Reading Plus experience so far.

Strategy: Deck the Walls

Students are celebrated when the Level Awards they have earned are posted on a classroom's Reading Plus Wall of Fame.

What do you need to do?

- ✓ Monitor the Alerts tile in your Management System and print out Level Awards as they are earned.
- ✓ Present awards in fun, inspiring ways. Consider playing music or leading a classroom cheer as the award is presented and added to the Wall of Fame.

Why do this?

An easily visible Wall of Fame reminds students of their own Reading Plus accomplishments as well as those of their classmates.

Strategy: The 80% and Higher Club

To keep struggling students engaged and feeling positive about the work they are doing each day, celebrate every comprehension score of 80% or higher.

What do you need to do?

- ✓ Create a chart for students to mark with a sticker for every Reading lesson completed with a score of 80% or higher. Students can track their own progress using the [Reading Comprehension Score Tracker](#).
- ✓ Celebrate scores of 100% with a special sticker or another form of recognition.

Why do this?

Struggling students may lack confidence and interest in reading. By celebrating incremental successes, you can build student confidence and motivation. When presenting this challenge, let your students know that 80% is an excellent score, 90% is superb, and 100% is outstanding! Encourage your students to achieve 80% or higher every Reading lesson.

Take it to the next level!

Try using a theme for the stickers you use. For example, stickers could be different types of sports equipment. When the class reaches a certain number of stickers, celebrate with a break to play a sport outside. You can have a countdown on the board to let students know many stickers they have earned collectively and how many more are needed to reach the goal.

Strategy: The Breakfast Club

Set a lesson completion goal for the end of the term (or year) for each of your students. For example, the goal could be 50 Reading lessons completed by mid-year, or 100 Reading lessons completed by the end of the school year. Students who reach the goal earn a special celebratory breakfast with the school principal, and can invite a parent or guardian to join the celebration.

What do you need to do?

- ✓ Set a realistic but challenging goal for your students.
- ✓ Coordinate with your principal, or another lead staff member, so they are aware of the challenge and can help build excitement.

Why do this?

Setting an end-of-semester or end-of-year goal helps keep students engaged for the long run. By including your principal or other lead staff in your motivation strategy, you are keeping administrators informed about the work you and your students are doing (and the success you are achieving) in Reading Plus.

Take it to the next level!

When students reach their goal, encourage them to prepare for their breakfast celebration by writing an essay about their reading experience over the course of the year. They can talk about their achievements with the principal and their parent or guardian.



Strategy: Friday Fun!

Students who have successfully completed all of their assigned Reading Plus lessons spend the last 30 minutes of the school week participating in fun activities such as board games, listening to music, or reading a book for pleasure. This is a delightful way to celebrate the end of a week of hard work, and the successful completion of all Reading Plus lessons.

What do you need to do?

- ✓ Build up the excitement for Friday Fun by previewing the activity of the week. Offer new activities every week.
- ✓ Coordinate with other Reading Plus teachers and have each of your classrooms set up as a different “Friday Fun Station.”

Take it to the next level!

If some students are struggling to complete their weekly Reading Plus assignments, set aside some classroom space during Friday Fun for those students to catch up. The students will have an incentive to do better during the next week so they can participate in Friday Fun rather than do catch-up lessons.



Why do this?

We all need to find some time to put aside work and focus on fun activities. By offering enjoyable, educational activities during Friday Fun, you can help students end their school week on a high note. Consider expanding Friday Fun to include other Reading Plus classrooms so your students can interact with a wider circle of friends.

Strategy: Share the Love of Reading!

Recognize your students’ Reading Plus achievements in a way that builds confidence and the love of reading. Whenever a student earns a Level Award in Reading, he or she earns a certificate to host one reading session as a reading mentor with a young reader in the K-2 age range.



What do you need to do?

- ✓ Coordinate with K-2 teachers to determine appropriate reading buddy match-ups.
- ✓ Help your students understand their important role as mentors.

Why do this?

By mentoring younger readers, your students can build confidence in their own reading ability and develop an appreciation for reading. This mentoring strategy also fosters a sense of community within a school.

Take it to the next level!

Coordinate with other teachers to make it possible for reading buddies to meet regularly. The younger readers can select what the older ones will read. Have the reading buddy duo present a book report to both of their classes.

Strategy: Reading Plus Rock Stars

This reading motivation plan is centered on positive reinforcement for academic achievement. When a student earns a Combo, he or she is recognized publicly in class and awarded a physical badge for this achievement. Each subsequent Combo earns the student a check mark on the badge, which is displayed in the front of the room (see photo). For each Combo, the student receives a treat from a prize bucket in the classroom that is filled with snacks, school supplies, bookmarks, toys, etc. Additionally, during the announcements at the end of each week, the school recognizes the top achieving students in categories such as Combos, words read, and level achievements.

What do you need to do?

- ✓ Design and print Combo badges.
- ✓ Create and fill a prize bucket.
- ✓ Use the [Class Leaderboard Report](#) to choose which categories to celebrate.

Why do this?

It is important to recognize students for good work, just as athletes are recognized for winning games or making plays. Students can see that academic achievement matters as much as athletic achievement.

Take it to the next level!

Organize friendly competitions in Leaderboard categories between classes or grades. Take the celebratory aspect one step further and organize an academic pep rally, similar to a sports pep rally.

Strategy: Reward Wheel

Students spin the wheel whenever they earn a Combo or a place on the Leaderboard to win low- or no-cost motivational prizes.

What do you need to do?

- ✓ Teachers create a prize wheel.
- ✓ Complete the wheel with low- or no-cost motivational prizes and privileges.

Why do this?

Create an exciting way to celebrate an individual student achievement. Students will be eager to earn Combos of their own to join in on the fun!

Take it to the next level!

Ask students to brainstorm bigger prizes, like a party theme or class privilege. Then set a class wide goal (500,000 words read, everyone levels up, etc.). When the goal is reached, spin the wheel for the class prize!



Strategy: Where Will Reading Take You?

Students work towards a goal of 100 lessons and a comprehension average of +80% in order to earn a field trip.

What do you need to do?

- ✓ Students are asked to sign an agreement to work toward 100+ Reading lessons to be completed at an average of 80% or higher during the school year. Providing the end date gives the student a goal in mind and something to work toward for the entire school year.
- ✓ Each class has a chart (see photo) that provides 150 spaces for each student on which to place a sticker for every Reading lesson completed. Students earn a sticker for any score, since they are working toward the goal of 100 Reading lessons for the school year. The charts serve as a bragging point or a motivation tool as students keep track of their progress and their classmates' progress.
- ✓ As the end of the school year approaches, the destination for the field trip is announced to the students as an additional incentive to complete the 100+ lessons.



Why do this?

Working toward a group goal fosters cooperation and teaches students that everyone's growth matters.

Take it to the next level!

Talk to your principal about having the school pick up all or part of the cost of the field trip. This shows students that the school values their reading growth.

Strategy: Reading Plus Derby

Different classes compete in a simulated horse race. At the beginning of each semester, the classes all start in the gate. Each week the class with the greatest number of Reading lessons completed with 80% or higher comprehension on the [Class Leaderboard Report](#) will move their horse forward.

- The class in the lead after nine weeks wins the race and receives a class pizza party. The class in second place wins a chips-and-dip party, and the class in third place wins a snack or treat.
- Each class' individual top three students in Reading Lessons at 80%+ each week are also recognized as the weekly top trainers, grooms, and hot walkers for each class. Considering giving these students special privileges or small prizes.

What do you need to do?

- ✓ Create a horse race themed poster to track student and class progress.



Why do this?

The friendly competition and visuals will help keep students focused on the dual goals of completing assignments and earning Combos.

Take it to the next level!

Throw a Derby-themed party with silly hats.

Strategy: Paper Chain Race

A simple idea: students add a link to their chain for every Combo they earn. Pick a finish line across your classroom and get some great decorations in the process!!

What do you need to do?

- ✓ Create strips of construction paper and keep them handy to distribute as students earn their Combos.
- ✓ Create a list of no-cost prizes that students can earn at various increments. Some ideas include: homework pass, sit in teacher's chair, move to the head of the line, make morning announcements, 15 minutes free computer time, design a bulletin board for the teacher of your choice, etc.
- ✓ Create higher value prizes for students whose chains reach the other side of the room. Possibilities include: work in the front office or library for an hour, hall pass to leave class early, announce the players at a sporting event, wear a hat all day, etc.

Why do this?

The visual nature of the paper chain is a terrific motivator for students and can remain in the classroom as a festive reminder of their success.

Take it to the next level!

Make the "link" to learning! Before hanging each link, ask students to write one thing they learned from the Reading selections they read to earn each Combo. At the end of the contest, create a beautiful bulletin board highlighting everything your students have learned.

Strategy: Look Whooo's Leveling Up!

Every time a student levels up, he or she is rewarded with a different color bracelet. Photos of the students wearing their bracelets are displayed on a "tree" in the classroom.

What do you need to do?

- ✓ Purchase colorful rubber bracelets from a party supply store.
- ✓ Create colorful tree bulletin board.
- ✓ Have your camera handy!

Why do this?

Positive recognition not only rewards the student who leveled up, but inspires other students to strive to see themselves on the tree as well!

Take it to the next level!

Once everyone has leveled up, plan a celebratory walk outside. Add a "sky" level for students who exceed their grade level.



Strategy: Reading Plus Superheroes

Use this contest to help encourage students who are struggling to achieve 80% or higher on two Reading lessons in a row. Students earn a “superhero chip” for every score of 80%+. They can cash these chips in for different prizes.

What do you need to do?

- ✓ Use the [Class Assignments Report](#) and its time filter features to track lessons completed at 80% or above. Students can also see their comprehension scores on the Lessons page of their dashboards, in the Your Assignment Completion section. Just remind students to click the green SR bar to see all of their Reading data. They can personally track their comprehension scores on this [Comprehension Score Tracker](#).

Take it to the next level!

Consider a friendly multi-classroom monthly competition with a fun award or prize going to the class with the highest number of earned “superhero chips.”



Why do this?

As students work to collect their superhero chips, they establish solid routines of dedicated reading practice and increase their confidence as readers and learners.

Strategy: Watch Them Grow!

Brighten your classroom and recognize Reading Plus success with colorful bulletin board displays. Use a flower to represent each student in the class. Whenever a student earns a Combo, add to his or her flower stem. Every Level Award adds a leaf to the stem.



What do you need to do?

- ✓ Gather materials needed (construction paper, scissors) to decorate your bulletin board.

Why do this?

This motivation strategy brightly decorates your classroom environment while giving students an opportunity to see how their own hard work and the hard work of their classmates contributes to an artistic classroom display.

Take it to the next level!

Encourage the class to work toward collective goals that add visual interest to the display. For example, add



Strategy: Yummy Combos

Try this sweet way to motivate students to earn Combos and stay engaged as they approach the end of the school year. Every student sets an individualized goal to earn between 5 and 20 Combos by a certain date. Every time students earn a Combo (two Reading lessons in a row with 80% or higher comprehension), they add one scoop of ice cream to their own paper cones. Once a student meets his or her designated Combo goal, a “topping” sticker is added to the class’s giant ice cream scoop. Once all students have contributed at least one topping to the class scoop, the class can celebrate with an ice cream sundae party.

What do you need to do?

- ✓ Use the [Class Reading Progress Report](#) to determine goals and use the appropriate time period filters to track Combo accomplishments.
- ✓ Students can also see their Combo progress on their dashboard and Reading lesson selection screen and can personally track their comprehension scores and Combos on this [Comprehension Score Tracker](#).

Why do this?

Students tend to lose steam toward the end of the school year, but this fun individual and class strategy will be sure to give students a bit more incentive to do

Take it to the next level!

Coordinate with other teachers of Reading Plus classes in some friendly competition. The first class to win an ice cream party gets a congratulatory visit from the principal or an announcement to the entire school.



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