

Time and a Variety of Instructional Practices Lead to Increased Reading

ARTICLE

Tegmark, M., Vinterek, M., Alatalo, T., & Winberg, M. (2025). The complex relationship between teachers' instructional practices and students' reading amount. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 60(1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.561>

What did they do?

Tegmark and colleagues conducted a mixed-methods study to understand the relationship between teachers' instructional practices and the amount of students' in-class reading of connected text. The study took place in 14 classrooms in grade 6 and grade 9 at Swedish compulsory schools. They gathered data from student surveys and audio-recorded classroom observations over the course of 59 lessons in Swedish, English, chemistry, and history classes. They analyzed the data using the framework of Self Determination Theory, which asserts that students need three basic psychological needs – competence, relatedness, and autonomy – to be met in order to develop autonomous motivation.

What did they find?

Over half of the instructional practices were oriented towards giving instructions or managing the classroom, which limited opportunities for in-class reading or instructional support in reading. In most of the lessons that had high reading amounts, teachers exhibited a "restrained" instructional practice in which teachers played a more withdrawn role and students had uninterrupted time to read. The qualitative data, however, revealed that teachers' instructional practices must also meet students' needs for competence, relatedness and autonomy in order for students to have the self-determination to use that reading time well. The two classes with the highest reading amounts demonstrated a greater variation of instructional practices than the other lessons, revealing that a combination of practices is more effective than one particular practice. In those classes, some lessons featured texts within the students' zone of competence, while other lessons involved more scaffolding or explicit instruction in reading strategies to support students with more challenging texts. Lessons with high reading measures were also characterized by opportunities for social interaction during or after reading, as well as the teacher's sincere efforts at building professional relationships with students and setting high expectations for their reading.

What could this mean?

In order for students to read more during class, there must be times when the teacher takes a more restrained role and allows uninterrupted time for reading; this must be a regular routine that is integrated across the school day and all content areas. However, the teacher must also use a variety of instructional practices to support students' autonomy and build their reading competence, including more direct teaching of reading strategies and opportunities for reading-related social interaction. Finally, teachers must demonstrate authentic engagement in students' reading and build professional relationships with students built on high expectations and regular feedback. In conjunction, school leaders can support this work by making sure students have access to texts in all content areas and that teachers receive pedagogical training in disciplinary literacy.

