

From Learning to Read to Loving to Read

The benefits of reading are well-known: expanded vocabulary, improved literacy skills, developed critical thinking skills, and boosted academic success. Teaching students how to read is essential. Teaching kids to love reading is another matter entirely. Schools invest in students learning to read, so now it's time to invest in helping them love reading.

Reading for fun is what we do. We've found that competition, recognition, and gamification are ways to motivate students to read and help them become lifelong readers. Here are four approaches to help students love reading.

Give Students Autonomy

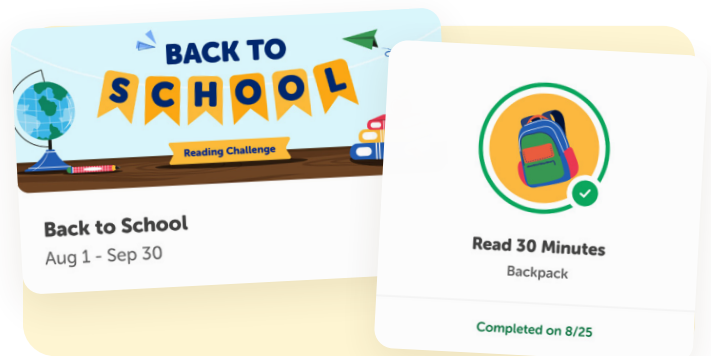
Research shows that kids who self-select their reading materials—whether fiction, nonfiction, graphic novels, or online articles—perform better in literacy skills assessments than those who only read for information and coursework. Encouraging independent reading helps students—whether struggling readers, English language learners, or those reading far above their grade level—become students who read for pleasure.

Half of elementary students scoring at or above the 75th percentile in reading comprehension on a national assessment reported reading for fun almost daily.

Giving students a choice in what they read is one of the first steps to develop their love of reading. Beanstack reading challenges are an equitable and flexible way to uplift readers with diverse backgrounds and reading abilities. Reading challenges promote reading for fun, allowing students to follow their interests and make their own reading choices.

Build Confidence With Attainable Goals

Motivating students to read can be challenging for parents and teachers, especially today. Ubiquitous digital media, from TV to social media to video games, can diminish the desire to pick up a book. Even adults can relate to that! Plus, when students encounter repeated failures or negative experiences with reading, they may develop learned helplessness and stop trying to succeed. Many reluctant readers experience this type of demotivation in quiz-based reading tools like Accelerated Reader after failing reading comprehension skills tests. And who can blame them? It's demotivating to feel like you're continually missing the mark. To reverse this, offering students achievable goals allows them to experience success, build confidence, and self-motivate continued reading.

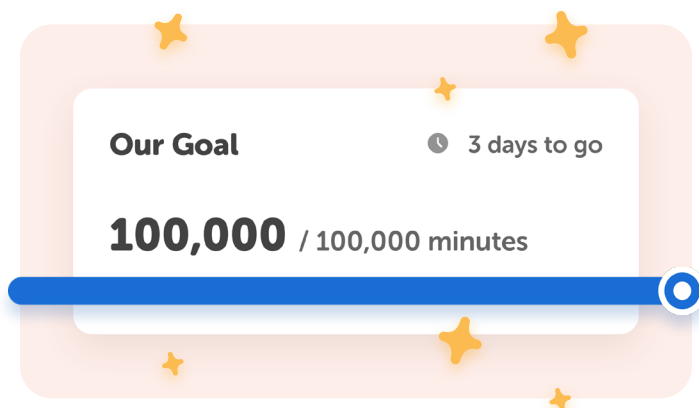


In reading challenges, students are motivated to participate by logging their reading and earning digital badges. Badges set at small, attainable amounts of reading, like 10 or 20 minutes, help students find

success and fuel their confidence. Promoting reading time instead of pages read or book points earned is another step to reshaping students' self-view and creating a lifelong love of reading. Plus, providing small rewards and recognition as they build up to larger goals will keep them on track when it comes to reading achievement.

Our research shows that reading challenges with rewards have double the participation rate of those without.

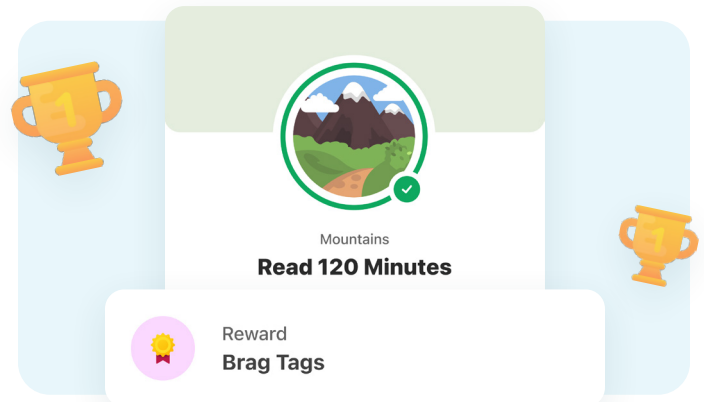
In addition to personal milestones, larger goals, like a community goal, give students a real-time target to aim toward and rally around together as they read. For instance, a district-wide community reading goal, such as reading one million minutes by the end of the year, encourages all schools to join in. Our research shows that schools with a community goal boast more active readers than those without goals. For instance, schools with a community goal log 105% more minutes than those on sites without a goal. We also see that three out of every four students read seven consecutive days or more, suggesting that community goals lead to more sustained reading habits. So, take note: achievable goals matter!



Incentivize With Rewards and Friendly Competition

Rewards are a common motivational tool in education and the wider world. Whether racking up gas points

while shopping or doing an extra credit assignment, the promise of a reward can help stop, shift, or spur on specific behaviors. Pair a reward with a bit of friendly competition, and you have a recipe for developing a positive association with reading.



For example, educators at Pasadena Independent School District in Texas turned to short six-week challenge contests to “keep reading fresh,” says Anne Farley, a library and instructional media specialist. They even recruited Chick-fil-A as a sponsor so that top readers and schools could win prizes like gift cards and a school-wide “chicken nugget party.” With challenge competitions and rewards throughout the year, Pasadena ISD has kept its students’ reading habits and reading scores on the rise.

At the individual school level, Mitchell County Middle School in Camilla, Georgia, implemented monthly reading goals for the whole school. To promote self-competition and motivation, they offered fun school-wide experiences as a reward, including a hayride and a tailgate party. Other schools get creative with their challenge contest themes, like the “Reading Super Bowl” at St. John’s Lutheran School in Corcoran, Minnesota, and rewards, such as offering lunch in the library or free screen time to watch animal cams at Frey Elementary School in Acworth, Georgia.

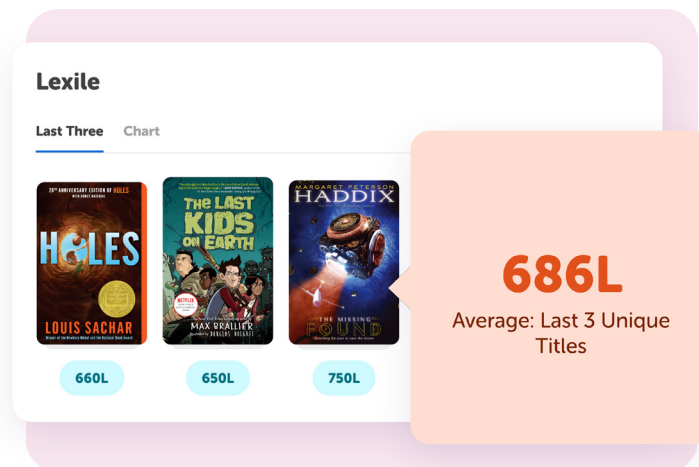
The possibilities with competitions and rewards are endless, and they don’t have to be pricey or involve significant planning. Small rewards, like buttons, bookmarks, or pencils, can impact students’ reading motivation. They can be an excellent way to nurture relationships with students and help them form positive associations with reading. Rewards like unanticipated

treats or recognition in class increase students' feelings of competence and relatedness. Initiatives like Atlanta Public Schools' "Prize Patrol," where school or district leaders visit classrooms to surprise top readers with prize packs, give kids a big reading boost. Public recognition can reinforce a student's motivation and increase their confidence when the student doesn't see them as controlling. Something as simple as mentioning top readers during all-school announcements or in newsletter blurbs can be a great place to start.

Watch Academic Progress in Real Time

Reading touches every subject and national assessment area. Encouraging a love of reading can boost student outcomes and educational progress in more than just reading achievement and comprehension skills. Kids who read for fun consistently score higher in math and logical problem-solving tests. For instance, at Joy James Elementary School in Texas, students increased reading scores by an average of 62% and math scores by 47%. School leaders feel that Beanstack is one of several factors that contributed to their success.

Educators and administrators can monitor reading progress and leaderboards with a comprehensive insights dashboard and report on the individual reader, class, grade, school, or district in real time. Plus, the addition of Lexile Insights provides another powerful tool for educators to demonstrate how free-choice reading impacts student reading.



Many schools and school districts choose Beanstack to motivate their readers



Helping your students transition from learning to read to loving to read can be challenging. Let Beanstack equip you and your staff and make strides to help your students develop a lifelong love of reading.