

*Reading Don't Fix  
no Chevys: Lessons  
on Motivating  
Boys to Read*



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**ARCTalks**  
ideas worth sharing



Going with the Flow:  
Lessons for boys' engagement,  
literacy and learning

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**From the research reported in  
“Reading Don't Fix No Chevys”, and Going  
with the Flow, Heinemann Publishers;  
Engaging Readers and Writers with Inquiry,  
and Reading Unbound: the power of  
pleasure reading, Scholastic**

## Introduction

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- ▶ Nikolai's story: the importance of competence to risk-taking and learning
- ▶ Drake's story: the importance of immediate functionality



## Responding to a vignette about a highly engaged reader

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Michael: What advice would you give Andre?

Bam: At least get some friends. Books can't be your only friends for the rest of your life. It would drive you crazy in the end. And branch out – join the chess club or something!

Michael: But you admire him?

Bam: Yeah. Yeah, I do.



## Complexity of attitudes about literacy

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- ▶ Literacy is good, but not as literacy
  - ▶ Literacy is good if you are good at it or it helps you develop functional expertise, if you are going to use it in specific situations now and the future
  - ▶ Literacy is good if it stakes your identity
  - ▶ Literacy is good as part of a network of other activities and interests, but not on its own or as a decontextualized pursuit
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## FLOW: the conditions of situated motivation

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Defined as that state of mind where you are totally immersed to the degree that nothing else matters or intrudes

Fits conventional understandings of engaged reading and writing

The conditions of flow explained every case of motivation in our study, and the lack of them explained all disengagement – inside or outside of school, with literacy and all other activities

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## Conditions of “FLOW” experience

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- ▶ A clear Purpose, Goals, and immediate Feedback
  - ▶ What could be: Make your teaching matter through Inquiry/Problem-Orientations, Essential Questions
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## Conditions of Flow

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- ▶ A Challenge that requires an appropriate level of Skill and Assistance to meet the Challenge (as needed to be successful)
  - ▶ What could be: Frontload, Sequence into-through and beyond (topical research to critical inquiry), assist kids through their zones of proximal development, cf. Tharp and Gallimore
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## Conditions of Flow

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- ▶ A sense of Control and Developing Competence: Voice, opinion, choice, naming growing competence
  - ▶ What could be: Think-alouds, Drama/Action Strategies; use children's and young adult literature, popular culture materials; track how students are smart and how they improve
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## Conditions of Flow

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- ▶ A focus on Immediate Experience: current relevance, make things, do things, immediate function, fun, humor, edginess and debatability and exportability
  - ▶ John Dewey: Democracy in Education
  - ▶ What could be if we focused on: Fun, Choices, student-chosen critical inquiries based on topical research into enduring understandings
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## Conditions of Flow

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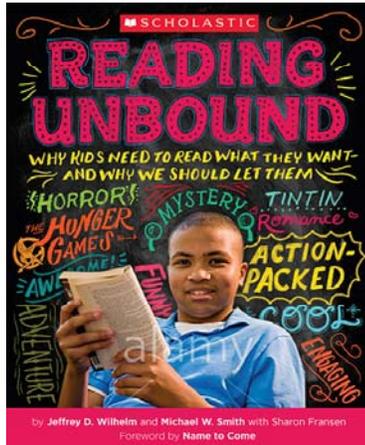
- ▶ The Importance of the Social: collaborative group work, peer assistance, social purpose, negotiating and sharing what is learned
  - ▶ What could be: Collaborative learning, Fulfill the Contract to Care in Schools
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## Implied Social Contract: A teacher should

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- ▶ try to get to know me personally
  - ▶ care about me and recognize me as an individual
  - ▶ attend to my interests in some way (in or outside of class)
  - ▶ help me learn, and work to make sure I have learned
  - ▶ be passionate, committed, work hard, and know your stuff
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- ▶

What are the pleasures of reading and how can we promote these?



Pleasure in reading leads to psychological growth, reflectivity, mindfulness, containment, human and moral development



Two major sets of findings from Reading Unbound

- ▶ Around motivation and engagement and MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS OF PLEASURE
- ▶ Around depth psychology, “inner work” and archetypal energies that are addressed while reading specific genres that help readers rehearse who they want to be and become and that actually help them in this process
- ▶ AND TO MAKE THIS ALL MATTER: how can we leverage these findings in our teaching?



## The Five Pleasures

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- ▶ Immersive Play Pleasure
  - ▶ Intellectual Pleasure (figuring things out)
  - ▶ Work Pleasure (getting something functional done, concrete application)
  - ▶ Inner Work Pleasure (learning/rehearsing/becoming who you could be/want to be)
  - ▶ Social Pleasure (Identifying, Relating to authors, characters, other readers, Group affiliation)
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## The Five Pleasures and the Conditions of Flow

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- ▶ Immersive Play Pleasure: Immersion in the Immediate
  - ▶ Intellectual Pleasure: Competence and Control and assistance to become more competent
  - ▶ Work Pleasure: Purpose, continual feedback, functionality
  - ▶ Inner Work Pleasure: Assistance to meet your goals, become transformed; Social – relating to self;
  - ▶ Social Pleasure: The social identity work - relating to authors, characters, self, other readers
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### The Power of Pleasure: the British Cohort Study, 2013

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- ▶ Following the lives of more than 17,000 people born in England, Scotland and Wales in a single week of 1970
  - ▶ Analysis establishes that reading for pleasure in youth outside school has a **highly significant** impact on people's educational attainment and social mobility, in part because pleasure reading actually "increased cognitive progress over time." MUCH more significant than parents' education or socio-economic status
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### So What Follows?

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- ▶ To cultivate engaged and lifelong readers – and learners, we must make the cultivation of all the conditions of low and all of these pleasures central to our teaching.
  - ▶ Remember that immersive play pleasure is pre-requisite to and supports all the other pleasures (So HAVE FUN)
  - ▶ Stories and our response to them can be transitional objects – THIS IS THE GREAT OPPORTUNITY OF LITERATURE – that it can transform our perspective, action, capacities and very being.
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