

Why Kids Stop Reading:

New Data Reveals What Schools Have Been Missing

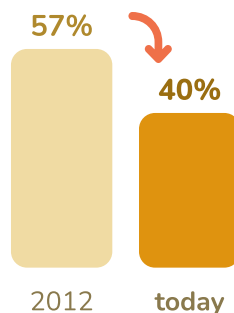
For decades, schools have measured whether students can read. Based on more than 1,500 student responses collected in its first months, the Reading Motivation Index™ (RMI) is building one of the first large-scale datasets on student reading motivation, revealing early insights that can help educators identify disengagement before it appears in traditional academic measures.

The national challenge

Reading enjoyment declines as kids get older.

40%
of 4th graders

40% of 4th graders report reading for pleasure daily, down from 57% in 2012.*



Independent reading drops sharply after elementary school.

Only **13%** of 9th graders read for pleasure daily.



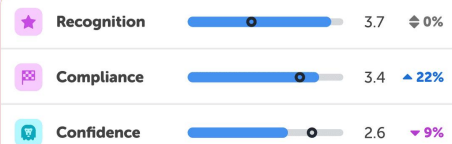
Schools assess reading **ability**, but rarely consider **reading motivation**. Reading is one of the strongest predictors of academic success. Unlocking students' motivation to read may be the key to helping more of them succeed.

Introducing the Reading Motivation Index

Based on research from the National Reading Research Center, the RMI measures the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence reading behavior. The results help educators identify opportunities to increase engagement and better target literacy support.



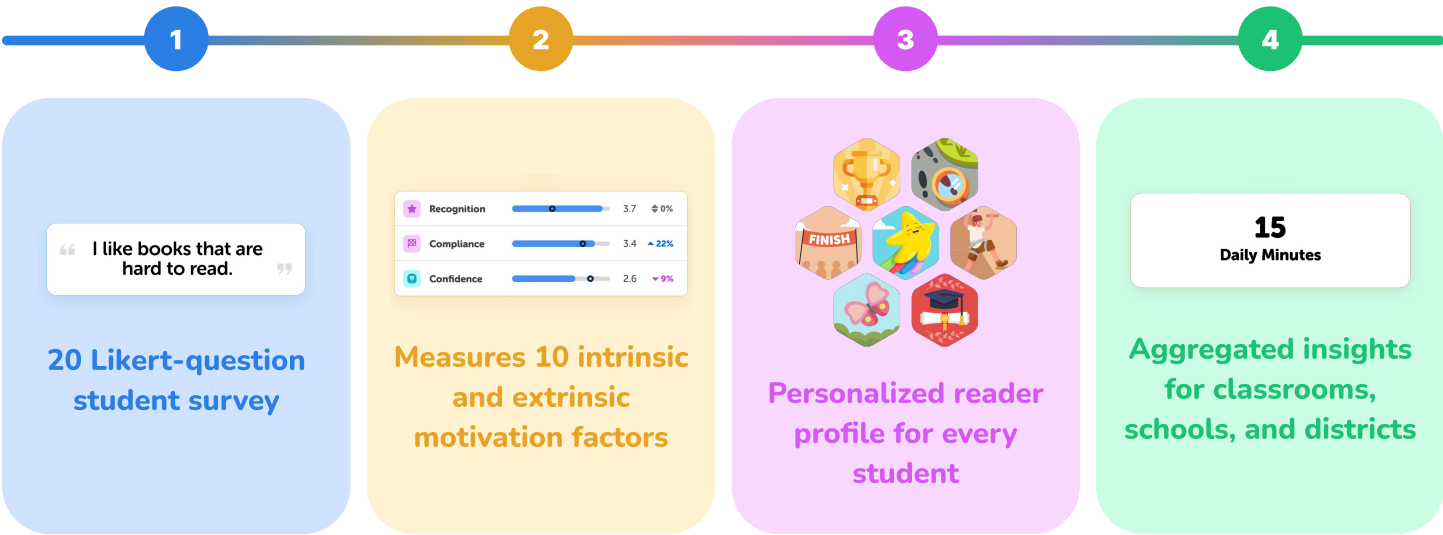
28.6/40 ▲9%
Avg Score



Current findings are based on data collected from **1,500+ students** in grades K–11 across eight participating U.S. schools. The dataset continues to expand as additional schools administer the RMI.

How the RMI works.

From student surveys to district-wide insights in four simple steps.



What does the RMI measure?

Ten intrinsic and extrinsic reading motivation factors that shape each student's unique reader profile.

INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

- Confidence**
A student's belief that they can be successful at reading.
- Curiosity**
The desire to learn new things through reading.
- Enjoyment**
Reading for entertainment or to be deeply engaged.
- Challenge**
The satisfaction of understanding complex or difficult texts.
- Importance**
The belief that reading is important.

EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION

- Compliance**
Reading because of an external goal or requirement.
- Recognition**
Reading to achieve social recognition.
- Grades**
The desire to earn good grades by reading more.
- Competition**
The desire to outperform others in reading.
- Social**
Reading to share insights or information with friends and family.

Reading Motivation Scoring Key

Scoring Level	What it Measures	Scoring Range / Limit
Individual Motivation Factor	Single area (e.g., Curiosity, Challenge, Compliance)	1 to 4 points per factor
Intrinsic or Extrinsic Motivation Factors	Combined scores for a set of motivation factors	Max 20 points
Overall Motivation	Total cumulative score (All individual factors combined)	Max 40 points

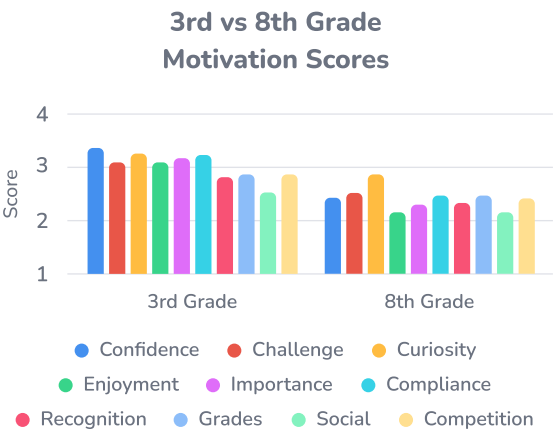
Reading motivation is a leading indicator.

Students who are motivated to read do so more often, build stamina, and become lifelong readers. The RMI helps educators understand what drives reading, and what may be standing in the way.



Curiosity is the strongest motivator

Across every participating school, curiosity ranked as the strongest or second-strongest motivation factor and became the leading motivator as other factors declined.

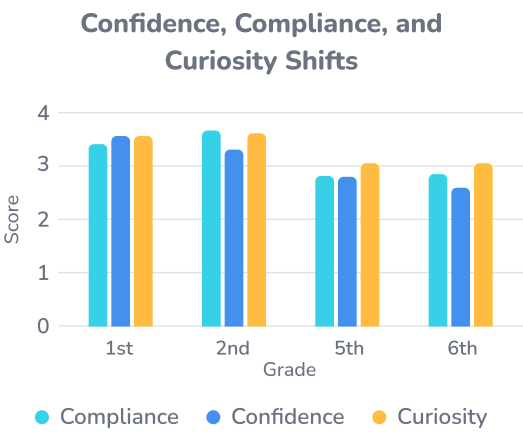


Key insight: Less motivated readers haven't lost their curiosity — they may simply be disengaged by the reading experiences available to them.



Early readers rely on confidence and compliance

Unlike older students, early elementary readers are motivated most by confidence and compliance before curiosity becomes the dominant driver.



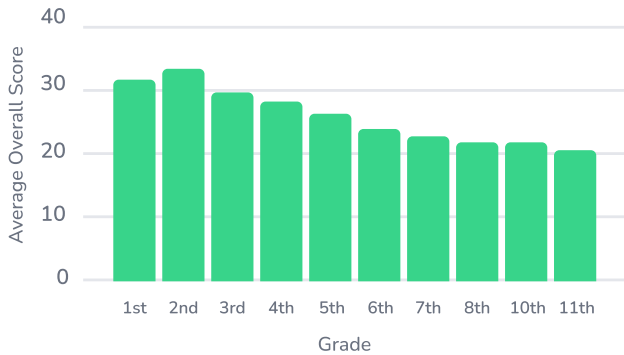
Key insight: Build confidence first. As students gain independence, curiosity becomes a stronger motivator to read.



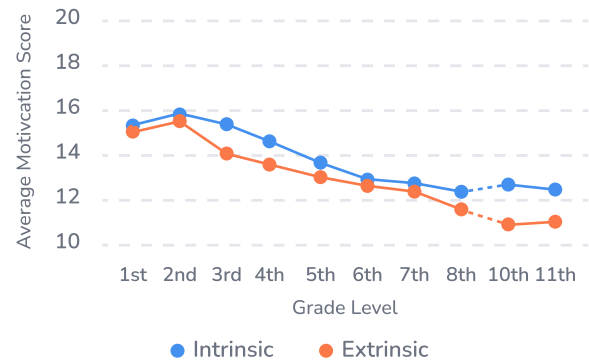
Motivation begins declining in 2nd grade

The steepest drop occurs between 2nd and 3rd grade, earlier than many educators expect.

Average Overall Score vs Grade



Average Intrinsic vs Extrinsic Motivation



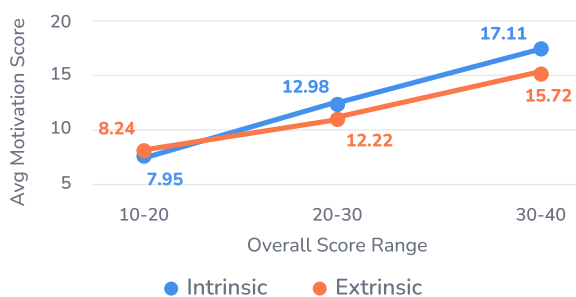
Key insight: With reading motivation declining at every grade level, schools have an opportunity to intervene early and evolve their reading experiences as students move into their adolescent years.



Disengaged readers rely on external motivation

Students with lower reading engagement rely more on external rewards and expectations than on intrinsic interest.

The Extrinsic “Flip”



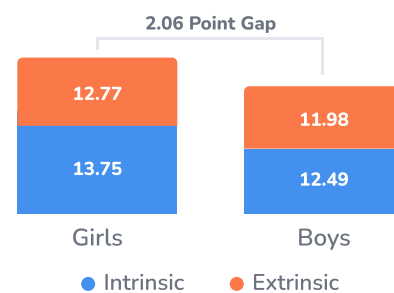
Key insight: Extrinsic motivation can help re-engage reluctant readers while intrinsic motivation develops.



Reading motivation differs by gender

Boys report lower reading motivation than girls, with the largest differences in intrinsic motivation.

Motivation Scores by Gender



Key insight: Boys may need more intentional support to build enjoyment, interest, and personal connection to reading.