

# Enhancing Individualized Daily Reading (IDR) by Setting Book Goals

By Kathy King-Dickman | Categories: Independent Reading

Last October I sat in a library crowded with middle school teachers on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota as they observed a reading conference with a rambunctious seventh-grader who had reluctantly been pulled from basketball practice to confer with me. After summing up what he had read so far and reading a few pages of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, I asked him to share his thinking about the characters and the plot. It was clear to all of us that this was a good fit book for him and that although he could practice inferring a bit more, he was able to work on this strategy in this fun but simple story.

When I first asked what he felt was a reasonable book goal, he stated that he could finish this book by Christmas. This goal led me to call on the “power of why.” The “power of why” is when I explain to a child the research and reasoning behind something I am asking them to do. (See my blog on this topic “Engaging the Disengaged, Number Two.”) When I went on to explain that I was quite old and had learned some valuable things teaching students his age, he nodded vehemently in agreement. I suppose his nod was more about my age than his respect for my knowledge. I went on to explain that students who read voraciously grow more in reading fluency, vocabulary acquisition, background knowledge, comprehension, etc. Seeming impressed with this he mumbled, “So ya think I need to read more than one book by Christmas, Miss?” I shared that I believed he needed to read at least five Wimpy Kid books by Christmas and then try something a bit more challenging after the break. He blurted, “So that will make me smarter?” I nodded vehemently. After much discussion about time for basketball and friends, he agreed to the goal of four Wimpy Kid books by Christmas.

This past month I conferred with a second-grader in Proctor, Minnesota, who was reading one of the Junie B. Jones novels. It was clear this child was an excellent reader who comprehended deeply and loved to read. When I asked her how many Junie Bs she felt she could read in the next five weeks, she shyly whispered, “One more?” Once again, I shared my spiel on why she could and should read more than that. I secretly wanted her to aim for one a week, but we agreed on three by Thanksgiving as her goal. This is the email that came to me the week after the conference:

I have Nikki sitting with me right now, and she wanted to share some exciting news with you! She finished her FOURTH Junie B. Jones book since you met with her last Wednesday. Her goal was to finish 3 by Thanksgiving. She is so proud of herself, and she said she will now try to finish 8 more Junie B. Jones books in the 4 weeks left until Thanksgiving. Thank You!

Book goals are an excellent way to motivate students to read. When setting them up with students, I always suggest what I think they could do but listen very carefully to what they feel comfortable with. In my middle school classroom, the students and I took this goal setting very seriously.

I add these goals under “Next steps” on the “IDR Conference Notes” record sheet from the *Making Meaning® Assessment Resource Book*. For some students, the goal can be a long-term goal and for others it can be a short-term goal: finish my present novel by the end of next week or read a new book from the green tub daily. A few sample book goals for students from first to eighth grade have

been read all of the Gary Paulson novels this year, read all of the Roald Dahl novels by the time I complete fourth grade (a third-grader), read in a new genre by Christmas, read a new book after rereading each of the Harry Potters (for the third time!), read in five genres this year, read all of the Frog and Toad books by the end of the week, read ten of the Nate the Greats in three weeks, etc.

Book goals are an excellent way to monitor and motivate all levels of readers. Establishing book goals with students not only helps them determine what to read but also provides the forum for them to achieve their strategy goal. Try a few out and let me know how it goes. Don't forget to use the "power of why" when you set these up.