

INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECT OF SUSTAINED INDEPENDENT READING ON READING ACHIEVEMENT AND APPRECIATION

By

Barbara Russell

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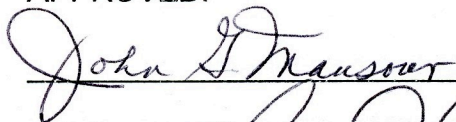
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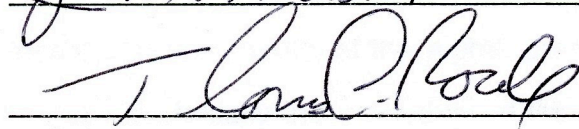
Barbara Russell

has been approved

June, 2002 final copy accepted

APPROVED:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "John D. Mansour", positioned above a horizontal line.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "T. Louis Boyd", positioned above a horizontal line.

ACCEPTED:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, positioned above a horizontal line.

Associate Dean for Graduate Studies

ABSTRACT

The Twenty First Century has witnessed a national call for educational reform as a result of the current literacy crisis. Educators are responding to the crisis by restructuring and initializing many types of new programs. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of Sustained silent reading (SIR) on reading comprehension and report the achievements of an eighth grade class of students. The fundamental all-inclusive goals of this reading program was to increase reading comprehension and improve reading appreciation.

A wide array of literature was researched in support of successful reading strategies that would increase reading comprehension as well as reading appreciation. Since it has become evident that adolescents can develop a negative attitude toward reading it was important to find a strategy that would improve reading comprehension and enjoyment among adolescents. The majority of the literature investigated revealed the success of an SIR strategy included in a balanced reading program.

The descriptive research design was used to gather and investigate the results of the eighth grade student population tested in this study. Initially the procedure of the SIR reading strategy was developed for the study over one semester which consisted of 18 weeks. The data utilized was a pretest, post test, and student and parent surveys. Lastly, the results were evaluated at the beginning and the completion of the reading program. Assumptions and limitations were carefully noted and the final analysis reported the effectiveness of the reading program.

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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

The Twenty First Century purports that there is a severe literacy crisis in America. Policy makers, business entrepreneurs, educational scholars, parents, and teachers agree that changes must be made within public education for our nation's youth to be literate. Although basic literacy has been on the increase for the last century, the demands for literacy have been rising faster. Many people clearly do not read well enough to handle the complex literacy demands of an increasingly competitive, technological world. This study will investigate one reading strategy called Sustained Independent Reading (SIR) and report on the effects it has on reading achievement and appreciation.

Sustained Independent Reading (SIR) is the term this researcher's middle school has chosen to title the reading strategy which has been incorporated into a balanced reading program. SIR is basically the same term as Free Voluntary Reading (FVR) and Sustained Silent Reading (SSR). SIR is one reading strategy that when used with a strong instructional reading program is able to improve reading comprehension, writing, vocabulary, spelling, grammar and enjoyment. A council of psychologists, neurobiologists and educators conclude that no single reading instruction method, used in isolation, works best for all

children (Snow, Burns & Griffen, 1998). The council (1998) further states that an important source of word knowledge is exposure to print and independent reading. Studies also show that students engaged in SIR did as well, or better, on reading comprehension tests as students given traditional skill based reading instruction in isolation (Krashen, 1993).

The amount of leisure reading and reading achievement are greatly correlated. Children who score at the 90th percentile on a reading test spent five times as many minutes per day reading books as children at the 50th percentile (Anderson, Fielding & Wilson, 1988). Books introduce children to more rare words than conversation or television does, so educational approaches that encourage children to read more both in school and out should increase their word knowledge and reading comprehension (Anderson, Fielding & Wilson, 1988). SIR would provide valuable time in school for leisure reading in the hope that it would increase reading achievement. This topic continues to be one of high interest in the educational community. Research on this topic investigates the effect of SIR on reading comprehension, writing, vocabulary, spelling, grammar skills and appreciation.

Development of the Problem

Literacy has always been an important focus of educational reform and currently dominates local, state, and federal initiatives. Educators, parents, and policy makers at all levels are trying to find direction in educational literacy. Unfortunately the reading methods have turned into a debate called the reading wars. An article in *The Arizona*

Republic (Valdez, 2002) points out, "There is too much at stake to continue a dispute that has whipsawed our children between methods of reading instruction that emphasize vastly different approaches, one called phonics and and one called whole language. The debate has to end, because learning to read is as important for survival in America as breathing" (p. V1). True literacy obviously requires that students be able to decode, comprehend, as well as appreciate the written word.

Therefore, the search continues for the best approach to literacy instruction, and teachers struggle daily with decisions about their reading instruction. If they immerse students in children's literature and instruct them in phonics, vocabulary, grammar and spelling, will students develop all of the reading skills that they need? This is a question that teachers across the U.S. are asking themselves as they strive to help their students learn to read more effectively.

Need for the Study

The inept reading ability of many U.S. children and adults has recently generated a public outcry loud enough for the nation's capital to demand educational reform. Several major points of a successful reading program will be addressed in this study. Included are the arguments of experts in support of SIR for reading comprehension and literacy development. Additionally, evidence is presented to show SIR is as beneficial as traditional language teaching in acquiring skills in vocabulary, grammar, writing, and oral language.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect sustained independent reading (SIR) has on the reading achievement of eighth grade students whose reading instruction includes SIR along with other reading strategies.

The fundamental all-inclusive goals of a SIR program are to increase reading comprehension. To read with joy and understanding, to learn and grow through reading, to read critically and thoughtfully should remain the goals of all reading programs. The way different programs approach these goals is what distinguishes one program from another. Sustained independent reading is a significant segment of any balanced reading program.

Research Question

What is the effect of sustained independent reading on the reading achievement and appreciation of adolescent students?

Significance of the Study

It is important to know what effects independent reading is having on reading achievement. If the research indicates that SIR is an important way to develop adequate levels of reading comprehension, the implications are clear. One of the major goals in language education should be to encourage independent reading as a reading strategy.

It is possible that if children are in classrooms where independent reading is part of the language arts program, good things will happen. Their reading comprehension will improve and they will

possibly find what was once difficult reading to be more comprehensible as well as enjoyable.

A logical assumption would be that due to increased reading comprehension, students may have a greater chance of meeting the literacy demands of today's world.

Definition of Terms

Balanced Reading Program: A combination or blend of whole language and phonics instruction (Cassidy & Wenrich, 1999).

Free Voluntary Reading: Sustained silent reading and self-selected reading.

1. Sustained silent reading: Both teachers and students simply engage in free reading for short periods each day.

2. Self selected reading: Free reading that is a large part of the language arts program, with teachers holding regular conferences with students to discuss what was read (Krashen, 1993).

Literacy: The ability to read and write on a basic level. Ability to think analytically and critically about what is read and hear, not only being able to read but to interpret what is read; not only to be able to write but to write for many different purposes (Krashen, 1993).

Literature Based Curriculum: Sharing story (typically trade books) with a group, reading on one's own and reading with a conscious contemplation of a work of literature (Krashen, 1993).

Phonics: The technique of teaching reading by showing students how to "decode" the sounds of letters (Snow, Burns & Griffen, 1998).

Read and Test: In this test, subjects read passages containing words whose meanings and spelling are unfamiliar to them. These tests probe incidental learning (Krashen, 1993).

Reading Fluency: The ability to read accurately, smoothly, quickly, and with the sound of language. This ability contributes to the understanding of text. (Rasinski & Padak, 1996).

Skill Based Reading: Composed of skill-building and error correction.

1. Skill-building: Typically skill and drill usually associated with basal readers. Involves learning a rule, word meaning, or spelling consciously and then making the rule automatic throughout practice.

2. Error correction: When error are corrected, students are expected to adjust their conscious knowledge of the rule, word, or spelling (Cassidy & Wenrich, 1999).

Sustained Independent Reading: Sustained silent reading and self-selected reading.

Whole Language: Literature, writing activities, and communication activities that can be used across the curriculum to teach reading (Cromwell, 1997).

CHAPTER 2

THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Many researchers suggest that the amount of Sustained independent reading (SIR) children do in school is significantly related to reading achievement gains. There is also evidence that the amount of reading students do outside of school consistently relates to reading achievement (Carbo, 1988). The relationship between reported SIR and literacy development is not always extensive, but it is consistent. Nearly every study that has examined this relationship has found a correlation, and it is present even when different tests, different methods of probing reading habits, and different definitions of sustained independent reading are used (Krashen, 1993).

This chapter will investigate the effects of SIR and how it leads not only to reading fluency, but also improved vocabulary, spelling, grammar, listening comprehension, writing style, and attitude. Various teacher models will be presented along with information investigating this approach. The essential elements of a successful SIR program will also be presented. Finally, other models competing with the SIR approach to reading achievement will be examined.

Inception of Silent Reading Programs

The first reading program with the idea of reading for pleasure as

a tool to increase comprehension and vocabulary was designed by Dr. L. C. Hunt, Jr. (1970) of the University of Vermont. He developed a program where students were to read silently without interruption for a relatively long period of time. He introduced the program as Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading with the acronym USSR (McCracken, 1971). This acronym which held negative attention because it shared letters with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic, was cause for the U to be dropped, leaving SSR. Later, Krashen (1993) developed the term Free Voluntary Reading.

Sustained silent reading (SSR) was defined as a drill of silent reading; the drill or practice that is needed in learning to read, not a total reading program. Hunt (1960) later indicated that students were not only learning to read but also learning attitudes and skills. Students not only discover the joy of reading but the self-realization, the sense of learning, the thinking and the changes in behavior that come with mature reading (McCracken, 1971). also the study determined that there was a 20 to 30 percent increase in the amount of time spent reading when a teacher also read during SSR. The study considered whether it was the teacher's reading or the minimum distractions during the free reading period that promoted reading by students. In order to evaluate this, the teacher either wrote silently or engaged in normal activities and kept distractions to a minimum. the students read more when the teacher was also reading. when the teacher eased reading and began writing silently, the students continued to read but became easily distracted (McCracken, 1978).

Reading Aloud

The research of Trelease (1995) reveals that one of the factors that produced higher reading results were the teachers who routinely read aloud to the class, provided a wide assortment of books, and the frequency of sustained silent reading. When teachers read stories to children and discussed the stories, children read more (Morrow and Weinstein, 1986). Research on the effects of in-school reading aloud to children and increasing interest in reading has been done at the kindergarten level (Morrow and Weinstein, 1982) and grade 2 (Morrow and Weinstein, 1986). The research then jumps to the college level: In Pitts (1986), *basic skills* university students were read to one hour per week for 13 weeks. Selections included Twain, Salinger, Poe, and Thurber, and the reading was discussed afterwards. Pitts reported that the class that was read to checked out more books than did students in other basic skills classes.

Effectiveness of Sustained Silent Reading Programs

The positive effects on standardized tests of reading achievement of students who read more independently show success. More free reading consistently results in better literacy development, whether done as a part of an in school program or done informally outside of school (Krashen, 1991). In-school reading programs such as sustained silent reading are successful if the programs are carried out long enough (Krashen, 1991). The students in these programs out perform comparable students in traditional skill-building programs on

standardized tests of reading comprehension and vocabulary (Krashen, 1991).

The California Assessment Program (CAP) (1986), reported a positive relationship between the amount eighth graders said they read per day and their scores on the CAP test of English and Language Arts. These tests covered reading comprehension, both basic skills and critical thinking, as well as writing which assessed punctuation, word choice, sentence style, and paragraph development. Similar research was done by Foertsch (1992) on fourth, eighth, and twelfth graders who reported more reading outside of school and as a result performed better on reading comprehension tests.

California educators observed that middle school students were being segregated according to reading levels. Children spent time with remedial instruction and drill kits and were provided no time for actual reading. These educators decided to change that and brought their students together in groups of 25 to 30 that were as diverse as possible in terms of abilities and interests. Students were free to read what they wanted to read and lots of alternatives were provided to keep them interested and learning. School counselors were soon reporting that students wanted to be transferred *into* the reading program rather than out of it. A citywide evaluation showed that during an eight month period, 90 percent of the students categorized as *remedial* made growth on standardized tests ranging from 1.6 to 1.8 years (Smith, 1986).

In another study, an Associate Professor at Brigham Young University, 63 children in the first grade at Sage Creek Elementary had a

classroom library of 2,000 books. The literary elements and skills of reading within the meaningful context were taught using trade books. No basal was used, nor was the state program of worksheets and drill activities called the Utah Benchmark Skills. The goal enforced by the state is to have the students pass the test at an 80 percent level in May. These students scored 93 percent in January, 13 points higher than district expectations and four months earlier than the normal testing time. When the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) was given in March, group percentiles in all reading categories--word study skills, comprehension, and total reading were in the 99th percentile for the 63 students. Individual scores were all above grade level (2.0) with the exception of four children who scored 1.6 grade reading level (Tunnell, 1989).

Positive Results of Read and Test Studies

Results from several studies labeled *Read and Test* have been reported by Krashen (1993). A definition of read and test studies follows,

Subjects read passages containing words whose meaning and spellings are unfamiliar to them. Readers are not alerted to the presence of these words in the text, nor are they told that a vocabulary or spelling test will be given after they read the text. Rather, readers are encouraged to read the passage for its meaning. After they finish reading the passage, they are tested to see if they have acquired some or all of the meaning of the unfamiliar words or if their spelling of these words has improved. Read and test studies thus probe *incidental* learning. (p. 8)

The University of Illinois (Nagy, Anderson & Herman, 1987) conducted some of the most valuable studies of read and test. The Illinois researchers used elementary school students as subjects and

passages from school textbooks as tests. Their measures of vocabulary knowledge were sensitive to whether subjects had acquired just part of the meaning of a target word. The researchers concluded from their data that when an unfamiliar word was seen in print, a small but reliable increase of word knowledge occurred (Nagy, Anderson & Herman, 1987). They found that the chance of a reader acquiring a word from one exposure was between five and 20 percent, depending on the testing method used. "This may not appear like much, but the team argues that when we consider the amount of reading children do, even this small effect results in a great deal of vocabulary growth" (1987, p.262).

Therefore the Illinois team estimates if children read one million words in a year, at least 1,000 words will be added to their vocabulary. Reading one million words in a year is easily attainable by children if interesting reading material is available. Comic books, for example, contain at least 2,000 words, while teen romances, such as the Sweet Valley High series, contain 40,000 to 50,000 words.

In another related read and test study called *Clockwork Orange*, (Saragi, Meister & Nation, 1978) readers were asked to read *A Clockwork Orange* by Burgess, a novel that contains 241 words from a slang called nadsat. Each nadsat word was repeated an average of 15 times. Few readers knew these words before reading the book. In this study, subjects were simply asked to read the book and were told they would be given a test of comprehension and literary criticism. The subjects were not told to try and learn or remember the nadsat words.

They were given copies of the book without the dictionary in the back. The book was read on the subjects' own time and the subjects reported finishing it in three days or less. A few days later subjects were given a multiple-choice test covering 90 of the nadsat words. Scores ranged from 50 percent to 96 percent correct, with an average of 76 percent, resulting in the subjects learned at least 45 words by reading the novel (Saragi, Meister & Nation, 1978).

Positive Results of a Case History

A profound and popular case history is that of Malcolm X (Haley & X, 1964) where he credits nonfiction with his literacy development. As he describes in his autobiography, Malcolm X had early success in school, in fact, he was president of his seventh grade class. However his life in the streets, "erased everything I'd ever learned in school" (Haley & X, 1964, p. 154). Malcolm recalls that as a prisoner, in his early twenties, his literacy level was low, he practically couldn't even read his own writing. Yet during his incarceration he began reading the dictionary and continued on to a variety of genres: "In every free moment I had, if I was not reading in the library, I was reading on my bunk. You couldn't have gotten me out of books with a wedge When asked my alma mater I replied, 'Books'" (1964, p.179).

Skill Based Direct Instruction

Skill based direct instruction is composed of skill building and error correction. Skill building is learning a rule, word meaning, or spelling of a given word, consciously, and then making the rule

automatic throughout practice. Error correction is a process wherein students are expected to adjust their conscious knowledge of the rule, word, or spelling. The impact of direct instruction used as the main strategy is small or nonexistent. When studies do show an effect on instruction, the effect sometimes disappears with time.

Smith (1986) points out in his book that the problem in language education is that it is confused with cause and effect. It is assumed that first language skills are learned and then these skills are applied to reading and writing. "But that is not the way the human brain works. Rather, reading for meaning, reading about things that matter to us, is the cause of literate language development" (p. 85).

Summary

This chapter investigated the research of various models of learning skills and their effect on reading achievement and appreciation. SIR is one component developed to meet the needs of adolescent students to assist in literacy development. Research has shown that language is too complex to be acquired through merely the study of rules and grammar alone and that intensive methods to teach knowledge of words are not as effective as reading, since these methods give only part of the meaning of the word, and none of its social meanings which can only be obtained by reading in context. The bulk of this literature strongly suggests that SIR can increase reading comprehension and appreciation equal to or greater than skill based instruction. This

researcher anticipates growth in adolescent reading achievement and appreciation because of the utilization of an SIR strategy included in a balanced reading program.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect sustained independent reading (SIR) has on the reading achievement and appreciation of eighth grade students whose reading instruction combines the SIR strategy with a balanced reading program.

The fundamental all-inclusive goals of an SIR program are to increase reading comprehension. To read with joy and understanding, to learn and grow through reading, to read critically and thoughtfully should remain the goals of all reading programs. The way different programs approach these goals is what distinguishes one program from another. Sustained Independent reading is a significant segment of any balanced reading program.

Research Design

The methodology design used for this research project is the descriptive research design. According to Merriam & Simpson (1995), "the purpose is to systematically describe the facts and characteristics of a given area of interest" (p. 61). "One obvious advantage or strength of the descriptive method is its ease of use. It produces data that are accurate and representative. It describes *what is*" (p. 71). The focus of

this study is to investigate one strategy in reading instruction which allows for reading achievement and appreciation. The researcher will examine current teaching practices and evaluate student achievement using a pretest, a post test, and surveys of reading habits, in order to assess the reading habits and success of the students.

Population and Sample

This study has as its sample one class of 32 eighth grade students at a Southwest suburban middle school containing grades seven and eight. This sample class was selected randomly by their willingness to participate in the research anonymously, and clearly represent the population of the middle school. Landmark Middle School is located at 5847 West Myrtle Avenue, in downtown Glendale, a suburb of Phoenix, Arizona. The school has an enrollment of 946 students. Although the location of the student population is suburbia it should be noted that the students have a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds and ethnicities, and the number of students that qualify for the subsidized lunch program is approximately 71 percent.

Assumptions and Limitations

The evaluation of investigating a reading component such as SIR as it relates to reading comprehension must consider other factors that can contribute to reading comprehension. The researcher is a reading teacher and must consider potential causes for error in the final results. First, the researcher relies on how much reading people say they do and this information may or may not be accurate. Secondly, one can only

imagine other factors that could have been responsible for literacy development. Perhaps those who read more also did vocabulary exercises, or more drills and exercises in school, became better readers and thus read more. Thirdly, the length of the study and small sample size may effect the results giving a false impression. Lastly, what the researcher *expects to see*, and the way the researcher interacts with subjects, can alter the researcher's expectations and motivational states, and influence the results to fit preconceptions.

Procedure

The SIR reading program used in this study began with a reading comprehension pretest (SRA, 1996). This test was used to assess the students' approximate reading grade level. Next, the teacher provided the guidelines for the program and gave an explanation of its value in the overall reading program. A regular, routine quiet time for SIR reading was established weekly for one class period of 40 minutes, and continued every week for one semester which consisted of eighteen weeks.

Each week the SIR time began with the teacher reading aloud to the class for approximately ten minutes. This brief introduction modeled for the students a form of leisure reading and was an important element in the SIR program. After the teacher read aloud, the students selected a book, magazine or newspaper from the classroom library which included: novels in a wide array of genres, newspapers, magazines, such as *U.S. News*, *Time*, *Teen Time*, *BMX*, *Seventeen* and other current

teen issues, non fiction, reference, and comic books. These materials were carefully selected to be written at a variety of reading levels.

Motivation is one of the greatest challenges for every instructor. Early in the semester the researcher gets to know his or her students in order to connect the right student to the right reading materials. Further motivation is derived by offering the simple display of covers to be displayed on book racks throughout the classroom rather than shelved and revealing only the title on the spine. Moreover, it is important to provide the class library with new materials on a regular basis as well as giving a synopsis of what is contained in the materials. These new materials can be introduced during the read aloud at the beginning of the class period. Motivation is further sparked when students give oral presentations of their reading to the class.

Finally, at the end of the weekly (SIR) reading period, student wrote a brief summary of what they read, as well as a personal response of what they thought of the reading material. Students may also may have volunteered to participate in whole class discussions. These discussions further promoted the students' attitudes toward reading for pleasure. In fact as a result of class discussions, students were encouraged to try other types of reading materials that they had never tried in the past. At the end of the semester, the students were given the student survey form, a parent survey form to take home and return to school, and the same reading test that they completed at the inception of the program.

Instrumentation

The data utilized in this study were a Pretest/Posttest (Appendix A), a Parent Survey form (Appendix B), and a Student Survey form (Appendix C). The Pretest/Posttest (Appendix A), is a test that determines the approximate reading grade level. The same test was given at the end of the semester for evaluation of students' progress. The questions asked within the parent and survey forms were regarding the personal frequency and enjoyment of reading in school and reading at home.

Method of Analysis

In order to measure the effectiveness of the SIR component; an assessment was administered prior to implementation and upon completion of the program (Appendix A). This assessment consisted of two short stories and 12 multiple-choice sentence comprehension questions. The results were evaluated at the beginning of the semester. Upon completion of the semester students were retested using the same instrument. The scores were again noted and percentages of gain/loss were recorded to measure the effects of sustained silent reading on reading achievement.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Findings reveal the effects the sustained independent reading program had on reading achievement and appreciation. Results indicate that the SIR reading program did have an effect on the reading achievement and appreciation of the eighth grade class.

Demographics

The subjects of this study were a class of 32 eighth graders who participated in a reading program using SIR. The class is one of six eighth grades at Landmark Middle School in Glendale, Arizona. This class included 13 students who came from homes where the primary language is a language other than English. The following chart presents other class demographics.

Figure 1. Respondent Demographics

Survey Respondents n = 32	Percentage of Total Sample	Number of Participants
Grade level: Eighth Grade	100	32
Gender: Female Male	40 60	13 19
Ethnic Group: African-American Asian-American Caucasian Hispanic-American Native-American	9 3 28 53 3	3 1 9 17 1

Findings and Results

Findings of this study are presented in three formats: pretest and post test reading comprehension scores, parent surveys, and student surveys. The test scores were gathered from the pretest and post test assessments indicating the reading comprehension and vocabulary development of the eighth grade students. The parent and student surveys provided the results of reading attitudes after the completion of the SIR reading program.

Pretest/Post Test Reading Results

Figure 2 presents the test scores from the reading assessments of the 32 eighth grade students. The scores were noted and percentages of gain/loss are recorded in the following chart. Notice that there is a small positive change in the 80th to 100th percentile scores. However, there was greater improvement in the 60th to 79th percentile scores. The last percentage scores remained the same. It should also be noted that absences may have skewed the results of the assessments.

Figure 2. Respondent Percentage Scores

Percentage Scores	Pre test Percentage of Survey Respondents n = 32	Post test Percentage of Survey Respondents n = 32
90 - 100	25 percent	26 percent
80 - 89	28 percent	28 percent
70 - 79	22 percent	33 percent
60 - 69	19 percent	7 percent
50 - 59	6 percent	6 percent

Parental Survey Results

The results of the survey given to the parents of the 32 eighth grade students are reported in Figure 3 below. Twenty-three out of 32 parents responded to the two survey questions. Overall a majority of the parents surveyed felt that their children were spending more time reading at home. In addition, a significant percentage of the parents also indicated that their children enjoyed reading at home more this year than compared to last year. Therefore, it appears that the parental responses support the effectiveness of the SIR reading program on the students' appreciation of reading. It should be noted that the literature review did show that parental involvement in their childrens education is a key factor in the success of the educational system.

Figure 3: Parental Survey

Parent Survey	
1. Compared to last year, how much time did your child spend reading at home?	
A. Same --	30 percent
B. More --	70 percent
2. How does your child seem to enjoy reading this year compared to last year?	
A. Same --	9 percent
B. More --	91 percent

Student Survey Results

The results of the the eighth grade students' survey indicate that all of the students have a greater appreciation of reading and have enjoyed reading more. This may or may not have an effect on reading success.

Figure 4: Student Surveys

<p>1. How would you rate reading as an activity that brings you enjoyment?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Not enjoyable -- None B. Sometimes enjoyable -- 38 percent C. Usually enjoyable -- 21 percent D. Often enjoyable -- 24 percent E. Always enjoyable -- 17 percent
<p>2. Describe your home reading practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. I'm a reading fanatic. I read all the time -- 13 percent B. I chose to read at home at least once a day --31 percent C. I choose to read at home often, but not everyday -- 23 percent D. When I have free time, I sometimes choose to read at -- 13 percent E. I don't usually choose to read in my free time, but I read when I am supposed to -- 13 percent F. I don't like to read at home, but I do it because my teacher or parents expect me to -- 7 percent G. I hate to read. Reading is not fun. I don't do it unless I have to-- <p>None</p>
<p>3. When finished with a book. I like to . . . {Note: Students were asked to check whichever statements applied; some students checked more than one choice.}</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Do a book report -- None B. Do a book talk -- 21 percent C. Discuss the book with others -- 21 percent D. Write in my journal about the book -- None E. Start another book -- 55 percent F. Other -- 3 percent
<p>4. Having to write or create something after reading for fun makes reading . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Come alive -- 11 percent B. More fun -- 25 percent C. Less fun -- 46 percent D. Dreadful -- 18 percent

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The Twenty First Century has witnessed a national call for educational reform as a result of the current literacy crisis. Educators are responding to the crisis by restructuring and initializing many types of new programs. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of Sustained silent reading (SIR) on reading comprehension and report the achievements of an eighth grade class of students. The fundamental all-inclusive goals of this reading program was to increase reading comprehension and improve reading appreciation.

A wide array of literature was researched in support of successful reading strategies that would increase reading comprehension as well as reading appreciation. Since it has become increasingly evident that adolescents can develop a negative attitude toward reading it was also important to find a strategy that would likely improve reading comprehension and enjoyment among adolescents. The majority of the literature investigated revealed the success of including an SIR strategy to a complete balanced reading program.

The descriptive research design was used to gather and investigate the results of the eighth grade student population tested in this study. Initially the procedure of the SIR reading strategy was developed for the study over one semester which consisted of 18 weeks.

The data utilized was a pretest, post test, student surveys and parental surveys. Lastly, the results were evaluated at the beginning and the completion of the reading program. Assumptions and limitations were carefully noted and the final analysis reported the effectiveness of the reading program.

The general findings were determined from the tests and surveys given to the students during the school semester. Pretests and post tests reveal the effect SIR had on reading comprehension. These tests indicate that some students' reading comprehension improved during the study. The results of the surveys attest to the reading appreciation of the student population. The student surveys in addition to the parental surveys reveal that the majority of students enjoy reading more and are experiencing a better attitude toward reading.

CONCLUSIONS

Numerous studies have documented the effectiveness of an SIR program. The outcome of this researcher's investigation appear to support the theories reviewed in this literature. The results further indicate that some reading gain was made while some reading remained the same. However, the data suggests that the best results with SIR occurred in the 60th to 79th percentile. Any failure in these results may have been due to a low socioeconomic group and/or a high rate of absenteeism. The age of adolescence can cause a child to develop an independence that can be negative or positive. The research of Trelease (1995) noted that children must exhibit a desire to read in order to improve reading skills. Specifically the change in students attitudes

toward more reading show a greater appreciation of reading. This researcher observed the growth of an eighth grade class in reading achievement and appreciation because of the utilization of an SIR strategy included in a balanced reading program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Reading in any form is the focus of this study, and children must exhibit a desire to read in order to improve reading skills. Educators need to consider that the desire to read is an important component of any reading program and should be considered as a skill that needs to be implemented. The bulk of this literature strongly suggests that SIR can increase reading comprehension and appreciation when it is combined with a balanced reading program.

This researcher recommends the implementation of Sustained independent reading (SIR) as one key to the design of an effective reading program that will help adolescent students improve reading comprehension and appreciation. Some adolescents can become better readers by simply giving them more time for reading, more encouragement, and more stimulating materials to read. SIR appears to help students get into the habit of reading, so that their reading skills will not begin to deteriorate from lack of use. Ensuring that students view their teachers as active and involved readers, making time for teachers to read aloud and conduct book talks in class, and providing opportunities for SIR are the ways to create an environment that will be conducive to literacy.

The main problem with a program of this kind is its simplicity. Some educators may wrongly interpret the simplistic method as just silent reading. A positive way to overcome this approach would be to inform the instructors of the research and the significance of the SIR component enhancing the success of a whole reading program.

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APPENDIX A

PRETEST/POST TEST

Story A

Bees talk to each other by dancing. Instead of words, they use dance steps. When a bee finds a good supply of nectar for making honey, it comes back to tell the other bees. It tells them by dancing.

If the nectar is close to the beehive, the bee dances in a circle. If it is farther away, the bee dances in a figure eight. The other bees know how far away the nectar is by the way the bee dances.

They know where the nectar is by the way the bee points when it wags its tail. The bee talks with its wings, too. They make buzzing sounds.

People have put dummy bees into hives to dance and make sounds like real bees. The real bees understood and flew to the sugar feeder that had been put out for them. By using these dummies, people have actually talked to bees.

- 1 Bees talk to each other by ☐
 a singing b dancing c flying
- 2 Nectar is used for ☐
 a making honey b building beehives c dancing
- 3 A dancing bee wags its tail when it ☐
 a goes in a circle b goes in a figure eight c points in the direction of the nectar
- 4 People put dummy bees into hives to ☐
 a talk to the real bees b scare the real bees c play a joke
- 5 The best name for this story would be ☐
 a Bees Use Nectar for Making Honey b Bees Talk by Dancing c Bees Are Dummies

STOP HERE

Name _____ Total right, Story A _____

Total right, Story B _____

Total SLG score _____

Story B

To have a happy life, everybody needs friends. Do you know why? Do you know what makes a friendship work? Do you know why some friendships last and others don't?

Experts who study the way people behave have asked these questions and have come up with some answers. One such expert says that there are two things that a good friendship must have: *mutuality* and *equality*.

The first word, *mutuality*, means treating each other alike. To be a friend, you must "give as good as you get." Friends must be able to trust each other. They must be fair with each other. A friendship will not last if you keep your friend's secrets but he or she doesn't keep yours. Friends grant rights to each other, and each one must live within the bounds of those rights. To have a friend, you must *be* a friend.

Equality means that neither friend is superior to the other. In a circle of friends, each one has

something to give, though it may not be the same thing in each case. One friend may be valued for his or her talent in music or sports. Another may have a cheerful personality that helps others feel happy. Another may be a good listener, someone people can tell their troubles to. But no one is seen as superior or inferior. It is hard for people to remain friends if one person seems to offer much more or much less than the others.

There are many reasons why friendships end. As we grow older, our interests may change. The people who were our childhood friends may not be as much like us as they once were. People who move to new cities may lose touch with the friends they leave behind. Also, as we grow and change our reasons for wanting friends may change.

But one thing is true throughout our lives. People need friends. The person with no friends is almost certain to be unhappy.

- 1 The story says that everyone needs friends in order to have ☐
 - a people to go out with
 - b a happy life
 - c people to talk to
 - d admirers
- 2 A good friendship involves *mutuality*. That word means ☐
 - a sharing possessions
 - b sharing ideas
 - c treating each other alike
 - d going to the same school
- 3 The author says that to have a friend you must ☐
 - a be a friend
 - b make a friend
 - c find a friend
 - d lose a friend
- 4 The experts believe that a friendship works best when ☐
 - a it is new
 - b it is old
 - c one person is far superior to the other
 - d neither person is superior to the other
- 5 The author mentions this as one reason why friendships end. ☐
 - a Friends argue about who should pay for things.
 - b Boys argue over girls.
 - c People change and want different things from a friendship.
 - d People believe false rumors about their friends.

NOW GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

6 Another reason why friendships end is this



- a People may lose touch when one of them moves away.
- b No friendship can last more than seven years.
- c When young people begin to date, they often drop their old friends.
- d Differing tastes in music and clothes can end a friendship.

7 A person with no friends is almost certain to be



- a unattractive b unconcerned
- c unhappy d very young

STOP HERE

APPENDIX B

PARENT SURVEY

PARENT SURVEY

Determining Reading Appreciation

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your child's reading teacher would like you to take the time to answer the following questions. Please check the most appropriate answer regarding your child's reading habits when he or she **is not in school**.

1. Compared to last year, how much time did your child spend reading at home?

A. Same _____

B. More _____

2. How does your child seem to enjoy reading this year compared to last year?

A. Same _____

B. More _____

APPENDIX C

STUDENT SURVEY

STUDENT SURVEY**Determining Reading Appreciation**

Directions: Place an X beside the statements that are true.

1. How would you rate reading as an activity that brings you enjoyment?

- a. Not enjoyable _____
- b. Sometimes enjoyable _____
- c. Usually enjoyable _____
- d. Often enjoyable _____
- e. Always enjoyable _____

2. Describe your home reading practice:

- a. I'm a reading fanatic. I read all the time _____
- b. I choose to read at home at least once a day because I want to _____
- c. I choose to read at home often, but maybe not everyday _____
- d. When I have free time, I sometimes choose to read at home _____
- e. I don't usually choose to read in my free time, but I read when I am supposed to _____
- f. I don't like to read at home, but I do it because my teacher or parents expect me to _____
- g. I hate to read. Reading is not fun. I don't do it unless I have to _____

3. When finished with a book, I like to . . . (Check whichever statements apply)

- a. Do a book report _____
- b. Do a book talk _____
- c. Discuss the book with others _____
- d. Write in my journal about the book _____
- e. Start another book _____
- f. Other _____

4. Having to write or create something after reading for fun makes reading . . .

- a. Come alive _____
- b. More fun _____
- c. Less fun _____
- d. Dreadful _____

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