

# THE ROLE OF RECREATIONAL READING IN CLASSROOMS

by

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**CERTIFICATION OF THESIS WORK**

We the undersigned certify that this thesis by Amanda Spaulding candidate for the Degree of Master of Science in Education, is acceptable in form and content and demonstrates a satisfactory knowledge of the field covered by this thesis.



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## THE ROLE OF RECREATIONAL READING IN CLASSROOMS

### ABSTRACT

While reading for pleasure is its own reward, an issue for classroom teachers is whether leisure reading and recreational reading have a place in the classroom. The question for this research study is, what precisely is “recreational reading” and what is its role in an elementary classroom? The most appropriate way to answer this question is with an extensive literature review and synthesis. Results of the synthesis indicate that students from grade four to college age who enjoy and engage in recreational reading experience higher academic achievement than those who do not, while time spent by students reading outside of school is impacted by factors such as access to reading materials, reading enjoyment, and other ways available to occupy their time. Results also indicate that student positive attitude toward reading declines as a student progresses through elementary school, that attitudes appear to be gender related (with girls having a more positive attitude than boys), and by adolescence, students prefer the text format of magazines. Student enjoyment of reading appears to develop in part from support and encouragement from adults who discuss what students are reading, and the common classroom practice of Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) appears to be most effective when teachers include discussion of student self-selected reading material. In addition, results suggest that classroom teachers can further encourage recreational reading by making themselves more knowledgeable about children’s literature and by providing access to student-preferred reading materials in both the school and classroom library. These results are applicable to elementary teachers and therefore will be presented in the form of a professional development video.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Statement of the Problem**

Reading is a requirement of both the school (academic) culture and any career a student will choose. Reading does not end after a student is handed her high school diploma; however, the type of reading may change from academic-required to self-selected leisure reading. Is it only at graduation that leisure reading takes on significance in a student's life? While reading for pleasure is its own reward, and can be performed by a reader of any age, an issue for classroom teachers is whether leisure reading and recreational reading have a role in the classroom and a place in the curriculum. A second issue for teachers is whether teachers themselves have a role and responsibility in establishing positive leisure reading habits in their students. A question that addresses these issues is, what precisely is "recreational reading" and what is its role in an elementary classroom? The most appropriate way to answer this question is with an extensive literature review and synthesis.

### **Background**

I make two personal connections to recreational reading and its role in an elementary classroom: first as a student and second as a teacher. A reflection on my first connection leads me to a fifth grade Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) time that took place every day after lunch when I was in elementary school. While students scattered throughout the dark quiet room, chosen books in hand, very little reading was taking place in my space of the room. At that point in my life, I would have chosen some other activity besides reading, as I always did when not required to or when outside of school. My motivation to read recreationally changed in

my adolescent years thanks to an inspirational teacher. At that point in my life, I would have chosen reading over nearly any other activity. My second connection is tied to my experience as an elementary teacher. I have presided over many DEAR times, extending from first to fifth grade, and observed that, just like when I was an elementary student, many students do not use the given quiet time to read. In both my connections, I find that some students do not use the allocated reading time to actually read. Therefore, since what was true of me as a fifth grade student appears still true to me as a teacher almost twenty years later, I began to wonder about this issue. It peaks my curiosity as to what exactly the role of recreational reading means and looks like in an elementary classroom.

### **Terminology**

There are a few key terms that will require clarification for understanding how they are used in this thesis. First is “recreational reading” that can be defined as reading or listening to any text for which the reader has a choice in selection and the selection is for enjoyment (Moyer, 2007; Hughes-Hassel & Rodge, 2007; Ross, 2000; McKool, 2007). Terms that have been used interchangeable with recreational reading include *voluntary reading*, *spare time reading*, *leisure reading*, *independent reading*, *reading outside of school*, *self-selected reading*, and *hobby related reading*. Because each of these terms may have a slightly unique definition, for the purpose of this study, the term *recreational reading* will be used exclusively. A second term is “role.” For the purpose of this study, the phrase “role in a classroom” will refer to the function and purpose as an instructional practice and to place in the curriculum as part of curriculum design and content.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The purpose for recreational reading is enjoyment, which can be a very personal and individual act. Kucer (2009) explains how the concept of the “cognitive dimension” (p.101) of literacy relates to the way individuals “transact” (p.101) with text to make meaning. The cognitive dimension of literacy also focuses on the “mental process, strategies, or procedures the individual engages to construct meaning” (p.101). Yenika-Agbaw (1997) believes that “in transacting personal meanings, we gain ownership of the text and create our own texts from the reading experience” (p.446); readers creating their “texts” from a reading are adhering to Rosenblatt’s theory of transactive reading (Church, 1997). Rosenblatt’s Transactional theory proposes a reader contributes to the meaning of the text rather than the author trying to communicate a message. Based on Rosenblatt’s theory, each reader creates a personal, individualized and independent meaning of a text. Mohr (2006) believes “the more students read independently, the better their reading becomes” (p.82). Therefore, to strengthen the cognitive dimension of literacy, providing for recreational reading in the classroom may be a way of putting theory into practice.

## **Rationale**

While reading for pleasure can be performed by a reader of any age, the issue for classroom teachers is whether recreational reading has a role in the classroom and a place in the curriculum. Identifying a role of recreational reading in an elementary classroom has become the driving purpose behind this research study. According to a news article by Wilhelm and

Smith (2013), the format of reading that is discussed by policy makers is based on the fundamental “utilitarian” (p.1) value of reading and rarely, if ever, considers the recreational and pleasurable value of reading. Since policy and the resulting standards and standardized tests are premised by the pragmatic utilitarian concept of reading in schools, teachers, especially those who enjoy recreational reading themselves, may wonder about exactly how and when they may address the recreational concept of reading. Some school districts and their teachers see the value of recreational reading and through literacy initiatives encourage and help students build a habit of reading recreationally (Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007). Finding the role of recreational reading in a classroom may lead teachers to developing the habit of recreational reading in their students and perhaps strengthening it in their own lives.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

In order to address the research question of defining recreational reading and determining its role in the elementary classroom, a review of literature is a necessity. This literature review began with a search of the major databases for empirical research studies on recreational reading. Because of the many terms for this concept, most of them were used as keywords in the searches: *voluntary reading, spare time reading, leisure reading, independent reading, reading outside of school, self-selected reading*. The studies most relevant to this proposed research are grouped below and arranged as follows. The first group are those studies that examine time spent reading outside of school. The second group are those studies that examine preferences and attitudes toward reading across several different age groups. The third group are those studies that explore a possible link between recreational reading and academic achievement. The fourth group of studies examine what teachers and parents do or do not do in order to encourage students to read recreationally, and the fifth group of studies are those that explore the current practice of recreational reading in the classroom.

### **Time Spent Reading Outside of School**

The following group of research studies examines how much time students spend reading outside of school. Anderson, Wilson and Fielding (1988) conduct a study that provides information on what activities 155 fifth grade students from central Illinois partake in after school. Students were asked to complete an “activity form” (p.288) each day in school detailing their out-of-school activities of the previous evening. The researchers considered reading as

happening with various texts including comics, mail, newspapers, magazines, and books. A result of this study finds a correlation between the amount of time a student spends reading outside of school and the “reading growth” (p.297) or how proficient a student becomes at reading due their reading level and time spent reading. On average, students read for 14.8 minutes per day outside of school. This study concludes that amount of time spent reading outside of school is indicative of students’ reading proficiency in school.

While the previous study examined how much time students spend reading outside of school, McQuillan and Au (2001) look at reading outside of school in terms of access to reading materials. McQuillan and Au (2001) focus their study on developing a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of access to print reading materials on frequency with which a student reads. Participants were 10 male and 14 female high school students from either a middle or working class neighborhood in southern California. Academically, in a junior English Language Arts class, the students neither struggled nor were top performers in their class. To collect data, students were asked to complete a biographical survey, a print access and reading habits survey, a reading comprehension subtest, an author recognition test, and a magazine recognition test. The results from the various data collections indicate that for print access, “the number of books at home that students thought were interesting enough for them to read, however, was considerably less than the total number available” (p.235). In terms of students accessing print within the school and community, 40% of students reported not using the public library in the past month and 28% reported not using the school library in the last month. Students appear to use the school library more frequently than the community public library. McQuillan and Au discuss the correlation of their findings and determine that students in lower income and working class homes have fewer books readily available in the home, and their

public or school library has relatively fewer book selections than a middle or upper class community. The researchers believe “the number of books owned by the students in this study was significantly correlated with both reading frequency and reading achievement” (p.243).

While the previous study looks at the access to reading materials and its impact on recreational reading, McKool (2007) examines the choice students make to read recreationally [ and factors that may influence that choice for students who read “out-of-school” (p.111), McKool’s phrase for recreational reading. The purpose of McKool’s study is to “investigate why some children choose to read out-of-school and others do not” (p.111). The participants in this study were 199 fifth grade students from two elementary schools in the southwestern United States, covering a range of gender, ethnicity and socio economic backgrounds. Data were collected by means of researcher reflection journals, student activity logs, reading surveys, reading achievement information, free or reduced lunch status of students in the school, and student interviews over a four month period. McKool finds that there “is no significant difference” (p.123) between students’ income classification and how much voluntary reading they do outside of school. An additional finding is that low income reluctant readers “watched significantly more television a day” (p.119) than avid readers. This study also serves to identify three “variables that were statistically significant in predicting out-of-school voluntary reading in intermediate grade students: self-concept as a reader, television, and organized [after school] activities” (p.120).

McKool’s (2007) study examines factors that may influence student choice to read recreationally outside of school; however, an earlier study by Aarnouste and Van Leeuwe (1998) examines how recreational reading may be one among other factors that may impact how much a student reads recreationally. A Reading Comprehension Test, Vocabulary Test, and a Reading

Attitude Scale were used to measure 562 students' comprehension skills, vocabulary skills, and how much students read and enjoyed reading in grades 1-6. Results indicate a positive correlation between reading comprehension and vocabulary development; a student's comprehension skills are more positive the better their vocabulary skills are, and vice versa. Relevant to this synthesis, the results of the measured items indicate a minor correlation between reading pleasure and reading frequency; in other words, results imply that student enjoyment of reading does not necessarily predict reading frequency. The researchers discuss the factor of reading frequency and how it can positively influence the evaluated factors, but the researchers include in their discussion results of past research that found reading frequency to decline as a student moves through elementary school.

### **Reading Preferences and Attitudes Across Ages**

This section of the review includes studies exploring the reading preferences and attitudes of students first at the elementary level followed by preferences and attitudes of students at the middle to high school level examine the reading preferences of students of all ages to determine what students may or may not enjoy reading and to better understand what may influence students to read recreationally is important to this research study's question.

#### **Elementary students.**

An early study in this group of studies examining student preferences in the selection of texts is conducted by Donovan, Smoklin and Lomax (2000). Their plan was to investigate self-

selection of reading material by students in classrooms that have extensive classroom library resources. Researchers examined the readability level of the books that students were selecting from the classroom libraries and whether or not there was a difference between boys' and girls' reading selections of story and informational books. The participants in this study were first grade students in two different schools in the southwestern United States; the study was conducted with the same teacher who moved from one school to another over a two-year period. The first school was on a military base and included a diverse ethnic and socioeconomic population; the second school was new and in an upper middle class neighborhood. Participant reading levels were determined using data from the district-mandated "Word Recognition Placement Inventory test" (p.314). Data were collected by comparing the book selections students were making with the students' assessed reading level. Researchers were surprised to find that only 15% of students were choosing books at their assessed reading level. For storybooks, 50% of the students were choosing books that were above their reading level, and for informational books, approximately 74% of students were choosing books that were above their reading level. Donovan, Smoklin and Lomax discuss that a possible reason for the mismatch in readability for reading selections made by students is because "perhaps they wanted to read what the "good readers" were reading" (p.326) or "it is possible that the selections were merely an artifact of the availability of books" (p.326). The factor of mismatching readability levels and student self-selected readings indicates that recreational reading in school may benefit from a teacher's influence. Donovan, Smoklin and Lomax believe that providing students in first grade with books in a variety genres, texts types and reading levels is important for the development of independent readers; even if the reading level is mismatched, "it provides children opportunities to build background knowledge and vocabulary by working in concert with more knowledgeable

peers” (p.330). Significant to this study’s purpose is the process and motivation behind teacher selecting of texts to make available to young students.

Hoffman, Boraks, and Bauer (2000) explore the relationship between recreational reading and the family factors that influence a student’s choice to read recreationally. The researchers use the term “hobby-related reading” to refer to student-selected reading, a term very similar to this study’s term of “recreational reading.” To collect data, researchers created a survey and conducted interviews that asked participants what and where they preferred to read. Data were analyzed in three areas: “children/parent hobby choice, types of child/parent hobby reading, and parent influence on hobby reading” (p.57). The researchers find three themes that emerge from their study: “children and parents do have many varied hobbies and interests, all children and parents do reading related to these interests, and parents and children are aware of each other’s activities and many have some influence on each other” (p.62). Reading was considered a hobby by 13 parents and five of the students.

Hoffman, Boraks and Bauer’s (2000) study demonstrates the importance of family influence on a student’s recreational reading; the study by McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth (1995) examines the impact of student attitude on a student’s recreational reading. The researchers define “attitude” as “a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object” (p.934), used this definition to create a survey to measure reading attitude for both recreational and academic reading. The large study consisted of 18,185 participants from across the United States in grades one through six; local presidents of the International Reading Association acted as liaisons for the study who then sought out local school districts resulting in a wide population for this study. One finding is that both academic and recreational reading attitudes “begin at a relatively positive point” (p.952) in

first grade and end with indifference towards both academic and recreational reading by sixth grade. Another finding is that students' negative attitudes, especially for less able readers, toward recreational reading appear to be based on their reading ability, or lack thereof. The third finding of the survey is that girls appear to possess a more positive attitude than boys toward both academic and recreational reading. The fourth finding shows that "a teacher's reliance on (the use) of basal readers does not appear to be meaningfully related to recreational or academic reading attitude" (p.952). McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth discuss their findings, that reinforce past research, that suggest reading attitude begins positive and grows progressively more negative as a student gets older. The researchers suggest this correlation as being "educationally significant and challenges reading educators to understand its etiology" (p.952). The researchers conclude reading ability is in part responsible for negative attitudes toward reading, which implies that there is potential for increasing attitude toward both academic and recreational reading by improving student reading ability.

A more recent study by Mohr (2006) examines reader process, rationale, and preferences when choosing a book to own and read recreationally. In her study, Mohr "sought to determine whether young readers preferred books that mirrored them in socially oriented ways or if other attributes predominated" (p.86). Participants were 190 first grade students, both male and female, with a variety of and ethnicities. To begin, Mohr chose "high-quality picture books with full color, representative of various genre, genders, ethnicities, and language appropriate for first graders" (p.86). Next, Mohr developed an interview designed to target student rationale when selecting a text. The results of this study indicate first grade students prefer nonfiction texts over the other eight text genres featured in the study. Second and third preferences were poetry and fanciful nonfiction; narratives were ranked as lowest preference. In terms of students' selection

rationales, the results demonstrate that students did not choose a text based on reading ability or because it reminded them of themselves. Instead, evidence indicates that these first grade student participants selected books that featured animals. Additional results of Mohr's study show that students' process in choosing a text involved relating to the book's topic, and not being influenced to choose a book that mirrors the student socially.

Martinez and Teale (1988) aimed to better understand elementary students' process and preferences for selection of books in order to help teachers make purposeful book selections for their classroom libraries. Researchers conducted systematic in classroom observations of kindergarten students at a classroom library center; they recorded "the title of each book selected, the ways in which the child used the book, and any social interaction around the book with other persons" (p.570) for each student. Results show that students mostly select books that are familiar, predictable (repetitive language), and oversized or "big books" (p.570). Martinez and Teale explain that literature specialists "have long recommended young children be introduced to many types of books including story books, alphabet and counting books, concept books and nonfiction" (p.571), but the findings of their research suggest kindergarten students select books with more predictable structures. Martinez and Teale posit, based on their observations, that a significant classroom practice should be to support classroom read aloud time with material from within the classroom library that is familiar to students.

Moving away from reading preferences and exploring attitude toward reading, McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth (1995) determine that students' attitude toward both academic and recreational reading becomes more negative as students progress through elementary school; in a similar study the next year, Kush and Watkins (1996) have similar results. Kush and Watkins administered an Elementary Reading Attitude Survey to 189 elementary students in grades 1 to

4. They found that students initially had a relatively positive attitude toward academic and recreational reading but “exhibited a consistent decline across the elementary school years” (p.317). Kush and Watkins also determined that girls have a more consistently positive attitude toward both academic and recreational reading than boys. Kush and Watkins suggest that reading educators consider employing classroom activities and instruction specifically aimed at improving reading attitudes of both girls and boys.

Cloer and Pearman (1992) also examine the attitudes towards reading by students but also by teachers; their focus is on differences between male and female attitudes. Participants were 280 students and 18 teachers in grades 1 to 3 as well as 315 students and 16 teachers in grades 4 to 6. All participants completed an Elementary Reading Attitude Survey. Results show that positive attitudes towards recreational reading by boys in grades 4 to 6 had “dropped significantly” (p.10) and were “significantly lower” than the boys in grades 1 to 3, while the positive attitude of girls was “significantly lower” (p.10) only toward academic reading. According to the results, for the teachers in this study, their “academic reading attitude is significantly lower than the teachers’ attitude toward recreational reading” (p.12). The negative attitude of teachers and students surrounding academic reading is, according to the researchers, based on the use of basal series and activities that the teachers of this study use. The researchers discuss teachers having a more negative attitude toward boys’ academic reading as opposed to girls due to the girl students having a more proficient reading level; therefore, perhaps girls read more recreationally because girls “may have discovered the magic of literature more so than boys” (p.13). The importance of these findings to this current study is their implication that students seem to have a decrease in positive attitude toward recreational and academic reading in the middle elementary grades of 4 to 6.

An additional study of elementary students' attitudes toward recreational reading is conducted by Logan and Johnston (2009) and examines the gender differences in attitude with a focus on reading ability and frequency of reading. Participants were primary students; 115 girls and 117 boys. The students' reading ability and reading frequency were measured and analyzed; analysis shows "no significance" (p.207) between male and female student reading frequency. The results do indicate that the more a student reads, the more positive his or her attitude is toward reading; however students' attitude toward reading does not appear indicative of their attitude toward school. The comparison between male and female students shows females as having a more positive attitude toward reading although not necessarily a higher reading ability; females appear to enjoy reading more than males even though they are not necessarily more proficient, according to this study. According to these results, researchers determine that attitude toward reading can impact the frequency with which a student reads recreationally.

### **Middle and high school students.**

This next group of studies examines the preferences and attitudes toward reading of middle to high school students. The most recent research on reading preferences of students is by Hussain and Munshi (2011). For their research, they worked with 387 secondary students in a single school district in the country of Pakistan. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected through a questionnaire and survey interviews conducted in a whole group format. The results from the study indicate that reading is "a moderately popular free-time activity for students in the 11 to 15 year age range" (p.98) even given the variety of ways students may choose to spend their free time. An additional result indicates that girls enjoy reading for pleasure more than

boys, and the most popular reading material among both genders are magazines, novels, and comics (in that order). Some difficulties students faced when “setting their reading preference” (p.429) were the availability of books, time management, academic workload, personal interest, lack of guidance or their group of friends. Hussain and Munshi (2011) conclude that for students “who spend little time reading for pleasure or for school assignments, steps should be taken to promote their interest in reading” (p.99). This study implicates teachers as having a role through guidance and resources in helping students create reading preferences.

Similar to the previous study that determined recreational reading is a relatively popular recreational activity, Moffitt and Wartell (1992) demonstrate the popularity of recreational reading compared to other recreation options for adolescents. To gather data, the researchers designed and administered a survey that identified what they label as “leisure readers and non-readers” (p.4) and how they define these. The survey was administered to 414 students in five high schools in central Illinois. The results of the survey indicate that in this particular study there were more females who read leisurely than male readers, academically successful students were more likely to be leisure readers, children of parents with both low or high socioeconomic status were more likely to be leisure readers than those of middle socioeconomic status, and children of parents with higher educations were more likely to be leisure readers. Female students who identified themselves as “liking to leisure read” (p.12) ranked “reading” as their preferred activity compared to males who ranked it fourth. The researchers present their belief that leisure reading is a popular activity among adolescents and suggest that future research explore information that explains what may influence students to read in their leisure time.

While the Moffitt and Wartell (1992) study examines students’ preferences for use of out of school time, the study by Nippold, Duthie and Larsen (2005) examines a similar question but

adds the dimension of students' reading material preferences when they do choose to read recreationally. The researchers conducted a study to better understand the reading preferences and time spent during leisure time activities of older children and young adolescents. The participants were 100 sixth grade students and 100 ninth grade students with an equal number of boys and girls in each group; they attended a public school in the state of Oregon. Each participant completed a survey regarding his/her preferred "free-time activities" (p.93) and his/her reading selections. Analysis reveals the "most enjoyable" (p.93) activities to be (in no set order) listening to music, watching television, playing sports, playing computer games or video games; and the "least enjoyable" (p.93) to be cooking, running or walking, writing and arts and crafts. Results show that reading is neither most nor least enjoyable, but rather is "moderately popular" (p.93). The reading materials that students most prefer are magazines, novels and comics; those least popular are plays, technical books and newspapers. Based on these results, Nippold, Duthie and Larsen conclude that students participate in a number of activities during their leisure time, and reading recreationally is an activity that they believe to be "moderately popular" but not "high" as an important leisure activity.

The studies thus far have demonstrated recreational reading as a moderately popular leisure time activity, another study validates these findings. Hughes-Hassell and Rodge (2007) conduct a study into the recreational reading preferences of adolescent readers in an urban middle school in the northeast United States, where the principal and school librarian encourage leisure reading by students. The participants included 715 middle school students who completed a questionnaire asking about their reading choices. The results from the questionnaire indicate that 71% of students enjoy recreational reading, 22% of students "only read for school" (p.24) and 6% "do not read" (p.24). Further results show 74% of females read leisurely but only

48% of the males, yet both genders preferred to read magazines over other forms of text.

Hughes-Hassell and Rodge report that, “the adolescents who read to gain knowledge were interested in satisfying their curiosity about special topics, improving their grades in school, or learning how to cope with obstacles in life” (p.24). Based on the results of their study, Hughes-Hassell and Rodge suggest a number of items that teachers and librarians might keep in mind when approaching leisure reading: “providing students with the types of reading materials students prefer” (p.28), “respect students’ culture and heritage” (p.29), “talk to students” (p.29) to gain insight to their interests, “give students time during the school day to read” (p.30), and “be passionate about your love of reading” (p.31).

Moving from reading preferences to reading attitude of adolescent students, the research study by of Teran-Strommen and Fowles-Mates (2004) designed a questionnaire to identify “readers and not-readers” (p.189), the sixth and ninth grade student participants who enjoyed reading or did not enjoy reading. Students whose questionnaire responses indicated them as “readers” (p.189) were then informally interviewed in person by the researchers. The results from the interviews indicate students who enjoy reading also “regularly interact around books with other members of their social circle who love to read” (p.193). In this study, “readers” viewed sharing reading experiences as an important and enjoyable part of reading; “not-readers” on the other hand did not have a continued support for their reading experiences. An additional finding of this study indicates “readers see being an active member of a community of readers as an important part of their identity” (p.194). This finding also reveals that not-readers believe their families do not value reading, as evidenced by a lack of family time and interest toward recreational reading over engagement with other activities.

## **Recreational Reading and Links to Academic Achievement**

Better understanding of recreational reading's link to academic achievement is important to this study's quest to better understanding of what recreational reading is and its role in an elementary classroom. This group of studies examines the correlation between recreational reading and academic achievement. Galik (1999) examines the recreational reading habits of college students in order to determine any correlation between recreational reading and academic achievement as measured by Cumulative Grade point Average (GPA). Galik created a survey completed by 151 college students enrolled in an English composition course at a private university in central Texas. The results indicate that there appears to be "an insignificant" (p.484) relationship between pleasure reading and cumulative grade point average throughout the semester. There was, however, a significant correlation between reading for pleasure during vacations and cumulative GPA. An implication from this study is that "students who spend more time reading have, in general, superior academic skills and these skills help them achieve academic success" (p.488). The results of this study begin to demonstrate the correlation between recreational reading and academic success.

While Galik (1999) explores recreational reading and its link to academic achievement among college students, four years earlier Arthur (1995) explored the impact of recreational reading on the reading achievement of elementary students. Participants were 55 students in grades 4, 5, and 6. Five students who identified reading as a hobby and five students who did not choose reading as a hobby were chosen at random to have their reading achievement scores compared. The results of the study indicate that the students in grade 4 who read recreationally had "higher reading achievement scores than students who have not identified recreational

reading as a hobby” (p.10). Arthur suggests a reason students choose not to read recreationally may be that students have “limited opportunities to practice reading skills with self-selected reading materials” (p.11). If reading recreationally has such a positive impact on reading achievement, it appears important for students to be encouraged to read recreationally.

### **Adults’ Role In Encouraging Student Recreational Reading**

Because research demonstrates recreational reading as a positive impact on student reading achievement, the next step is to determine what may positively impact students’ recreational reading. The studies in this section explore a possible impact from the adults (primarily parents and educators) in a student’s life. Burgess, Sargen, Smith, Hill and Morrison (2011) explore the “relationship between elementary school teachers’ reading habits, knowledge of children’s literature, and their use of literacy best practices in the classroom” (p.88). The participants of this study were 161 teachers in grades kindergarten through fifth grade. The teachers were given a survey designed to gain information on their leisure reading habits and literacy instruction strategies. The results from this study indicate that teachers who had a better knowledge of authors of children’s books were more likely to use literacy best practices as defined by the National Reading Panel (NRP) (2000). The researchers determine that reading in leisure time and having a high author knowledge impacts the literacy best practices used by teachers in their classrooms. A reason for this may be “teachers with greater children’s literacy knowledge are also better readers and subsequently more comfortable with the more basic literacy skills” (p.98). The researchers surmise that teachers can become more knowledgeable about children’s literature to better employ literacy best practices, and to feel more comfortable

in encouraging students to enjoy reading.

Looking further at impact of adult reading, Moyer (2007) designs a study that explores the relationship of educational and recreational outcomes of leisure reading. The study also focuses on the role of learning when a person partakes in “leisure reading,” a term synonymous with this thesis’s term “recreational reading.” Participants were 62 adult library patrons at two “medium-sized public libraries” (p.69). All participants completed a survey; seven then agreed to an in-person interview. Most interviewees mentioned the influence of their childhood reading habits on their adult reading habits, all interviewees believed leisure reading has educational value and has been an important role in their life. When asked what they learned about most often from their reading, interviewees replied, “about other times, places, or cultures” (p.73). Other areas of learning mentioned included “people and relationships, personal problems, news and perspectives and challenges” (p.73). Results of this research build the case for the benefits of recreational reading in adulthood.

The school and classroom libraries are a possible area of impact when discussing the role of adults in developing a student’s recreational reading habits. Worthy (1996) examines the impact of school and classroom libraries, the adults that control the environment, and their impact on “reluctant readers” (p.483). Participants were 11 diverse students who scored “relatively low”(p.484) in attitude toward reading on a survey about their reading habits. One interesting finding is that although the 11 students did not regularly read in their free time, all expressed strong reading preferences in varying genres as well as varying formats of reading (magazines, comics, drawing books and specialized series) in spite of not have regular access to the texts they prefer. When asked about how frequently they attended the public library, most had not attended in over a year and some had never been. The researcher concludes that if

students do not have access to a public library than “the school and classroom play a vital role in book acquisition because school may be the only means of access for students who are unable to buy their own reading materials” (p.487). The results of the student case studies along with interviews with school librarians indicate that school personnel can do things to promote student voluntary reading and positive attitudes, including teacher read-alouds, guided reading instruction, choice during reading instruction, opportunities to read for enjoyment, and access to high-interest materials. Worthy suggests building stronger communication between school librarians and teachers to “pool their resources and expertise” (p.491) to best encourage students to enjoy voluntary reading.

To explore an educator’s role in a child’s recreational reading, Mangieri and Riedell Corby (1981) conducted a study to determine whether educators were cognizant of both current and classic children’s literature. A survey on knowledge of children’s literature was distributed to 571 teachers and administrators in the states of Ohio, Pennsylvania and South Carolina. Mangieri and Riedell Corby claim the results from the survey are “shocking” (p. 924): “11% (of participants) could name three or more activities which promote recreational reading on the part of the children; the remaining 89% could not” (p. 924). According to the results of this study, teachers are not demonstrating knowledge of children’s literature and have a lack of understanding about how to promote recreational reading of students. The concern is “if teachers are not aware of such practices (recreational reading), recreational reading must have a low priority in classroom practice” (p. 925).

Twenty years later, a study by Collins Block and Mangieri (2002) duplicated the Mangieri and Riedell Corby (1981) study in order to explore whether any changes have been made in the area of recreational reading and teacher knowledge. The survey from the original

study was replicated and distributed to 549 elementary school teachers in the states of Georgia, Missouri, New York and Texas; the schools were chosen based on the similar school district profiles as the 1981 study. The results indicate an increase in teachers' knowledge of activities that promote children's recreational reading: from 11% of teachers having knowledge of at least three strategies to promote children's recreational reading to 20% of teachers. The researchers identified a trend in the data: teachers were either very knowledgeable about children's literature and diverse activities or were not knowledgeable regarding children's literature and activities. There appeared to be no middle ground. According to the researchers, this study highlights "the lack of attention that recreational reading is receiving in schools today" (p. 579). The researchers suggest that due to the positive impact of recreational reading on a student's achievement, educators should "reconsider"(p.925) the amount of time they spend promoting it in their classrooms.

A study conducted near the time of the first Mangieri study in 1981 explored whether there was an identifiable strategy that could be used by teachers to promote recreational reading. Manning and Manning (1984) studied 24 teachers and 415 fourth grade students that were assigned to three different groups: two to focus on a strategy designed to promote recreational reading among students and one control group. One strategy was the Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) time where students read self-selected materials and were not asked to report on what they read. The second strategy was a "peer-interaction model" (p.377) in which students read self-selected materials and engaged in various peer related activities (small and group paired discussions, oral reading in pairs, book sharing, and activities such as dramatization). The "peer-interaction model" (p.377) was used as the control group and followed the individual teacher-student conference model where students self-selected their reading material then met with their

teacher for individual conferences to discuss that reading material. According to the researchers, “the results of this study clearly indicate that organized recreational reading programs make a difference in the reading achievement and attitudes of students” (p. 378). The students involved in the individual teacher-student conference model and especially the peer-interaction model made significantly higher gains in reading achievement and attitude. According to this study, it appears teachers may have a direct role in promoting recreational reading among students.

Pertaining to the role of a classroom teacher in encouraging recreational reading in the classroom, Fractor, Woodruff, Martinez and Teale (1993) conduct a research study examining the physical setting of the classroom. The purpose of the study was to research whether “elementary school children have access to well-designed classroom libraries” (p.478). Participants included students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade over 183 classrooms. Participants were surveyed, and data collected by means of observation of physical classroom characteristics such as focal area, partitioned and private reading areas, comfortable seating, number of books per student, books that provide a variety for both genders and reading levels, size of reading spacer, types of shelving and literature-oriented displays and props, and book organization. The observational instrument aimed at answering three questions, “are trade books available in K-5 classrooms? Are available books contained in a classroom library center? Is the classroom library well designed?” (p.478). Results show that 88.5% of the classroom had trade books available, and 72% of Kindergarten classrooms had library centers of some type however by grade five only 25.8% of classrooms had libraries. Another finding shows that in grades K-2, only 3.8% of libraries are classified as having an “excellent” setup and only 3.4% in grades 3-5. The researchers suggest, based on their findings, that “teachers should start constructing libraries

by including books and open-faced displays of books; these are the two most important features to incorporate” (p.482). This Fractor, Woodruff, Martinez and Teale study suggests that classroom libraries have a direct impact on a student’s recreational reading habits.

In addition to a teacher’s role in promoting recreational reading, a parent’s role may also have an impact. These next studies explore a parent’s role in encouraging recreational reading in a student’s life. Senchal (2006) examines the impact of the “home literacy model” (p. 61) in which “storybook exposure and parent teaching about literacy are distinct type of activities” (p.61). One goal of the study was to measure whether the early home literacy model has an impact on individual student’s motivation to read for pleasure in grade four. The participants included 90 children who were observed by researchers from kindergarten to grade four. The students were Canadian residents from the Provinces of Quebec and Ontario; for 87% of students, their primary language at home was French, while all students were instructed in French at school. To measure students’ reading for pleasure, the researchers asked students the frequency with which they read for pleasure during a typical week. The results indicate students, on average, read four times a week at bedtime and five times a week at other times, and tended to have “good reading comprehension skills” (p. 79). According to the results, the home literacy model does have a positive impact on frequency of students reading for pleasure. The results of this study indicate that parents do have role in promoting students’ recreational reading.

Klauda (2008) investigates the view that parent support is important to student education by examining students’ perceived support from their family and friends specifically for their recreational reading habits. The participants for this doctoral dissertation research study included 130 fourth grade students and 172 fifth grade students. A Reading Support Survey (RSS) was developed and used to measure student reading motivation and reading habits; the

researcher also gathered data from three reading achievement indicators. Results indicate that students “perceived more support from their mothers than their fathers” (p 186) and “also rated their mothers higher than their friends” (p.186) when it came to reading. Klauda also finds “possible evidence that girls enjoyed social interactions around reading with their mothers and friends more than boys did” (p.190). Klauda suggests a possible reasons for parent and friend support to be significant is because students’ “interactions in reading with both parents and with friends, particularly if the friends are better readers, help students to improve their reading skills” (p.212) and may lead them to enjoy recreational reading more.

The Swanton (1984) study examines the role of a public library in the lives of gifted elementary students and students in non-gifted elementary programs. The purpose of this study was to examine whether there is a correlation between “early childhood use of public libraries and academic achievement in later school years” (p. 99). The participants included 140 students in accelerated classes ranging from grades three through six, and 117 students in non-accelerated programs. The students resided in Monroe County in New York State and were asked to complete a questionnaire. The results of the questionnaire indicate the use of a public library does have a positive impact on students’ recreational reading habits and academic achievement. Swanton concludes with suggestions for a number of ways school districts and public libraries could be cooperating to promote reading among all students.

## **Classroom Practice of Recreational Reading**

While some students appear to know what interests them, some students, especially struggling readers, may require something to spark their interests. Reinking and Watkins (2000) explore using student-created multimedia book reviews to increase the amount and diversity of elementary students' recreational reading. Reinking and Watkins base their study on factors that impact an intervention's success and how the intervention can be adapted based on student response. Their rationale for using multimedia book reviews to increase independent reading stems from previous research studies and their belief that creating a book review using a computer rather than writing a book report would be more interesting and engaging for students. The participants of this study were four fourth-grade classes and five fifth-grade classes and their teachers. The participating teachers were trained to implement the intervention over the course of a year. The intervention included "multimedia book reviews [which] are completed by students after they read a book they have selected to read independently" (p.389). The multimedia book reviews are created using HyperCard (Version 2.1) and can be "compiled into a searchable database available to students, teachers, parents, and others" (p.389). The researchers trained students in the basic elements of how to create a multimedia book review using the HyperCard technology. The findings of the study reveal that "working with the technology led to incidental sharing of information about books and, for some students, to more reading" (p.400). In contrast to the researchers' original hypothesis that "students who read below grade level would be less inclined to enter books into the database" (p.401), the findings reveal that there "was an increase in the number of book reviews entered by poor readers" (p.401). Reinking and Watkins determine that the overall findings of their study indicate "that the

multimedia book review activity contributed to advancing the pedagogical goal of increasing independent reading” (p.411). This study indicates that there are strategies that can be used to improve amount of recreational reading even among struggling or “poor” readers.

Angeletti, Hall, and Warmac (1996) examine a reading program that was developed as a classroom intervention by the researchers to determine whether their program would improve first through third grade students’ attitudes toward recreational reading. The program included developing an “inviting area” (p. 22) such as a classroom library where students can read quietly, daily read aloud time in which students are read to, Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) time, and activities incorporated into weekly reading program that promote recreational reading. The results from the various study measures indicate that students’ attitude toward recreational reading did improve. This study suggests a number of components in a reading program that may positively impact students’ attitude toward recreational reading which may in turn increase their reading achievement.

Bryan, Fawson and Reutzel (2003) conduct a study into the classroom practice of discussion after students read independently. Researchers refer to Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) as a time for students to choose text and read independently during a given quiet time throughout the school day. The study investigated the impact on three fourth grade students of discussing books read during SSR time. These public school participants are nominated by teachers as “non-engaged readers” (p.53) those of which are readers who “are passive, inactive, and seldom see reading as pleasurable” (p.53). During the SSR time within their fourth grade classroom, there was no accountability or “follow-up” (p.53) activities, and there were often disruptions during the SSR time. The procedure of the study is individually based and involves three different phases: baseline conditions, intervention conditions and transfer conditions.

During intervention conditions, a researcher observed a student for the first ten minutes of an SSR time, and then had a literary discussion with the individual student for the second ten minutes of the SSR time. The third phase, transfer conditions, involved allowing the student to return to the baseline conditions to see if the intervention conditions had an impact on the student. Researchers continued to observe students during SSR time. Findings show that the students who received the intervention had “dramatically reduced” (p.67) off task behaviors and increased engagement in reading during SSR time after working with the researchers. The findings of this study suggest “teachers might wish to be aware that non-engaged readers may benefit significantly from the opportunity to participate in discussion” (p.68-69) of books that they read independently. Based on this study by Bryan, Fawson and Ruetzlel, a classroom discussion of what students read recreationally may encourage students to become more engaged and enjoy what they are reading.

### **Summary of Review**

To address the question of what precisely recreational reading is and its role in an elementary classroom an exhaustive literature review was conducted. The research studies found are grouped into five different categories to best determine an answer to the research question. The five categories are time spent reading outside of school, reading preferences and attitudes across ages, recreational reading and its link to academic achievement, adult role in encouraging recreational reading, and what recreational reading looks like in classrooms. The synthesis of each category’s findings produce results is presented in the next chapter.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### Data Collection

Data collection for the question of what precisely recreational reading is and what role it has in an elementary classroom began with a basic Google Scholar search of the term *recreational reading*. This search yielded synonymous terms that became other keywords for searching, and then the search moved to the leading educational databases. Key words and related terms included *voluntary reading*, *spare time reading*, *leisure reading*, *independent reading*, *reading outside of school*, *self-selected reading*, and *hobby related reading*. The studies found through this searching became the data for this research synthesis. Initial analysis occurred when the studies were categorized and grouped into five recreational reading related areas of reading time, reading preferences, links to academic achievement, adult roles, and classroom practice. Further analysis is explained in the next section.

### Data Analysis

Analysis of each of the five initial categories of studies yields findings for that category; then a synthesis of those findings produces results for this study. The category of time spent reading outside of school contains four studies covering a range of almost 20 years (1988 to 2007). The earliest study (Anderson, Wilson & Fielding, 1988) is with fifth grade students. Findings show students spend 14.8 minutes per day reading outside of school; more lastingly significant is the study's finding of a direct correlation between length of reading time and measureable reading growth. The next study is ten years later (Aarnouste & VanLeeuwe, 1998) with elementary students in grades 1 to 6. While this study does not provide a length of time in

minutes, it does show that reading pleasure (enjoyment of reading) does not have a direct correlation with reading frequency. The study (Aarnouste & VanLeeuwe, 1998) also contributes the knowledge gleaned from past research that reading frequency appears to decline as a student moves through elementary school. The other two studies in this group identify factors that may influence the amount of recreational reading time outside of school: for adolescents, a factor is access to reading materials, especially in libraries (McQuillan & Au, 2001); for grade 5 students, a non-factor is students' income classification (McKool, 2007). These few studies indicate that time spent reading recreationally outside of school is less about how much time students spend reading and more about the factors that influence that time (including access to materials and grade level in school).

In the category of reading attitudes and preferences across ages, eight studies were found to address that topic with elementary students and five with adolescent students. For elementary students, attitudes towards reading (recreational and reading generally) appear to change from positive to progressively less positive as a student progresses through grades to the intermediate and middle grades (McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth, 1995; Kush & Watkins 1996; McKool, 2007). Findings also show that reading attitude appears to be gender-related: girls in general have a more positive outlook than boys toward both academic and recreational reading (McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth, 1995; Kush & Watkins 1996; Cloer & Pearman, 1992; Logan & Johnston, 2009). Reading preferences of elementary students (both boys and girls) appear to be for nonfiction books with animals and topics that pertain to their hobbies (Donovan, Smoklin & Lomax, 2000; Mohr, 2006). Twenty years ago, the preference was for "familiar" texts, ones the teacher may have read aloud to the class or with repetitive and predictable language (Martinez & Teale, 1988). For adolescent students, reading preferences appear less related to topic and more to text

format, such as magazines, and genre, such as novels and comic books (Hussain & Munshi, 2011; Nippold, Duthie & Larsen, 2005; Hughes-Hassel & Rodge, 2007). Adolescents' reading attitudes mirror elementary students' attitudes in that they too appear to be gender-related, with female adolescents have a more positive attitude toward recreational reading than male adolescents (Hussain & Munshi, 2011; Moffit & Wartell, 1992; Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007). Another finding about adolescents' reading attitudes is that appear to be influenced by peer social groups, with like-minded students residing in the same social sphere which may include family (Teran-Strommen, & Fowels-Mates, 2004; Moffit & Wartell, 1992).

The category of recreational reading and its link to academic achievement has two studies that address this topic. The earliest study (Arthur, 1995) is with students in grades 4 to 6. Findings show that students who read recreationally in grade 4 have higher academic achievement than their classmates who do not. A study conducted four years later (Galick, 1999) uses college students as participants. The findings indicate that students who spend time reading recreationally over vacations have higher grade point averages than students who do not read recreationally over vacations; more lastingly significant is the finding that students who recreationally read appear more likely to experience academic success. The findings deepen the concept that recreational reading increases a student's potential for academic success.

In the category of adult roles in encouraging recreational reading, eleven studies were found to address that topic. Based on the findings of varying studies, students appear to benefit more academically and take pleasure from reading more often when they are able to discuss and interact with peers and adults regarding their selected reading (Klauda, 2008; Senchal, 2006; Bryan, Fawson & Reutzel, 2003; Manning & Manning, 1984). Findings also indicate the more knowledge a teacher has of children's literature, specifically authors of said literature, the more

likely a teacher is to incorporate children's literature into his or her classroom, thus having of a positive impact it has on the attitude and action of recreational reading of students (Moyer, 2007; Burgess, Sargen, Smith, Hill & Morrison, 2011; Mangieri & Riedell Corby, 1981; Collins Block & Mangieri, 2002). Teachers who indicate a higher knowledge of activities that help promote recreational reading positively impact the attitudes of their students toward reading recreationally (Mangieri & Riedell Corby, 1981; Collins Block & Mangieri, 2002). The school and classroom library can impact how encouraged a student feels to read recreationally based on how accessible preferable reading materials are (Worthy, 1996; Fractor, Woodruff, Martines & Teale, 1993; Swanton, 1984). Classroom libraries that have impacted even reluctant readers, particularly elementary students, recreational reading in a positive way have been easily accessible to students, have enticing and preferable reading material, leveled texts and various genres (Donovin, Smoklin & Lomax, 2000; Worthy, 1996; Fractor, Woodruff, Martines & Teale, 1993). School libraries that employ a knowledgeable librarian can have a positive impact in encouraging students, particular but not exclusive to high school students, to read recreationally, and understands what students prefer to read rather than what adults prefer students to read (Swanton, 1984).

The category of what recreational reading looks like in classrooms contains three studies pertaining to the topic. A study (Angeletti, Hall & Warmac, 1996) with grade 1 to 3 participants finds that students who are encouraged and supported during the classroom practice Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) time improve students' attitudes toward reading. A case study (Bryan, Fawson & Reutzel, 2003) examining three fourth grade students finds that SSR time is used as classroom practice and is successful in improving student attitude toward recreational reading during this time with student discussion of what they are reading. Based on the studies, SSR time

appears to be the commonplace practice when trying to incorporate recreational reading time in the classroom, it is the structure of the SSR time that varies.

The synthesis of these findings produces a possible answer to the questions of what precisely recreational reading is and its role in an elementary classroom. Regarding how much time is spent reading outside of school by students, the synthesis indicates that time spent is impacted by factors such as access to reading materials, reading enjoyment, and other ways to occupy students' time outside of school (including sports and other extra-curricular activities). Regarding student attitude toward recreational reading across ages, the synthesis shows that students' positive attitudes toward reading (recreational and reading generally) decline as a student progresses through elementary school, and attitudes appear to be gender related, with girls having a more positive attitude than boys toward recreational reading. In general, findings indicate the reading preferences of elementary students appears to be for non-fiction texts related to animals and hobbies, and for adolescents appears to be for the text format of magazines.

In looking at links between recreational reading and academic performance, the synthesis shows that students from grade four to college age who enjoy and engage in recreational reading experience higher academic achievement than those who do not. Student enjoyment of reading appears to develop in part from support and encouragement from adults to discuss what students are reading. The common classroom practice of Sustained Silent Reading appears to be most effective when teachers include discussion of student self-selected reading material. In turn, adults, especially the classroom teacher, can further encourage recreational reading by making themselves more knowledgeable on the topic of children's literature and strategies that encourage recreational reading, and by providing access to student-preferred reading materials in the school and classroom library and at home.

## Chapter 4: Results and Application

### Results of the Review

This literature review examined research studies relating to the research question of what precisely recreational reading is and its role in an elementary classroom. From preliminary analysis of the studies emerged five categories: time spent reading outside of school, reading preferences and attitudes across ages, recreational reading and its link to academic achievement, adult role in encouraging recreational reading, and what recreational reading looks like in classrooms. The synthesis indicates that students' access to reading materials impacts their reading enjoyment, elementary students begin with a positive attitude toward reading in first grade which gets progressively more negative throughout elementary school, female students have a more positive attitude toward recreational reading than male students, and elementary students prefer texts that are nonfiction involving animals, hobby related, with familiar or repetitive language, whereas adolescent students prefer to read magazines. The synthesis also shows that students from grade four to college age who enjoy and engage in recreational reading experience higher academic achievement than those who do not. Student enjoyment of reading appears to develop in part from support and encouragement from adults to discuss what students are reading. The common classroom practice of Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) appears to be most effective when teachers include discussion of student self-selected reading material. Teachers can further encourage recreational reading by making themselves more knowledgeable on the topic of children's literature and strategies that encourage recreational reading, and by providing access to student-preferred reading materials in both the school and classroom library.

## **Application of Results to a Professional Development Project**

The results of this study are relevant and carry implications for the practice of classroom teachers. The results of this study indicate that students benefit academically from recreational reading done both in and out of school. Results also offer a better understand what precisely recreational reading is and the role it can have in an elementary classroom. Therefore these findings are significant to classroom teachers, and teachers would likely benefit from professional development that informs them of these findings and their application to the classroom.

## **Design of Professional Development Project**

The most appropriate design for this professional development is a TeacherTube video which both presents the findings of this research synthesis and their implication for elementary classroom practice as well as models resulting types of classroom practice. A video is an appropriate choice because it is an efficient way to reach a large audience of professionals interested in professional development related to recreational reading. The TeacherTube video will be accessible by any classroom teacher who would like to learn more about recreational reading; any reading specialists, librarians, administrators, or parents interested in this topic would also have free access to this one hour video.

### **Literacy coaching project goals and objectives.**

The goal of this professional development video is to increase the knowledge of

elementary classroom teachers in the area of recreational reading and how it can be applied positively to classroom practice in order to create positive recreational reading attitudes and habits among students. The objective of the created professional development is that classroom teachers will be able to successfully incorporate allotted recreational reading time in their classroom that will benefit and encourage even reluctant readers to enjoy recreational reading. Teachers will know and understand the significance of this study's findings.

**Proposed audience and location.**

The audiences intended for this professional development video are elementary classroom teachers who are seeking more knowledge about recreational reading's impact on student achievement and about classroom practice that supports or encourages recreational reading. The location of this professional development is on TeacherTube so it is free and available 24 hours a day to anyone interested in learning more about recreational reading.

**Proposed video format and activities.**

The proposed workshop format is a one hour video to be uploaded to TeacherTube so it may be watched at the leisure of the viewer. The video will consist of three sections (see Appendix): presentation of the findings from the research synthesis, discussion of the significance of the findings and their impact on the classroom, and strategies modeled to help teachers incorporate recreational reading into their classroom. At the beginning of the video, viewers will be asked to consider their answers to three questions: what is your definition of recreational reading? do you know what students prefer to read? and do you think recreational

reading should be allowed in the classroom? At the end of the video, viewers will be asked to consider the same three questions and consider any changes in their responses as a result of watching this video.

### **Proposed resources for video.**

The resources necessary for the production of this professional development video are a suitable location for filming, a video camera, and editing software. The preparation of the video will take some time as the script is written, appropriate visual are selected to enhance the content of each section, and a teacher and classroom are used for the modeling of the practices. Viewers will need internet access and an electronic device for viewing the TeacherTube.

### **Proposed evaluation of video.**

Viewers on TeacherTube have the ability submit public comments directly to the TeacherTube website. In addition, the video will end with an invitation for viewers to contact the video creator directly, and an email address will be shown in the video.

### **Workshop Ties to Professional Development**

The workshop for this professional development takes the form of a video. Teachers who watch this video will be meeting some of the *Standards for Reading Professionals* by the International Reading Association (IRA) (2010).

Standard 1 of Foundational Knowledge  
Candidates understand the theoretical and evidence-based foundations of reading and writing processes and instruction.

Participating teachers will meet this Standard when they view the video and learn what research shows about recreational reading, particularly the impact of several factors that may determine a student's attitude of and enjoyment toward recreational reading. The participating teachers may demonstrate this foundational knowledge and their perceptions of it by incorporating research-based strategies into their instruction.

**Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction**

Candidates use instructional approaches, materials, and an integrated, comprehensive, balanced curriculum to support student learning in reading and writing.

Participating teachers will meet this Standard when they take the information they learn and incorporate the instructional factors into their existing classroom curriculum, especially providing opportunity for discussion of a student's recreational reading material at some point through out the school day.

**Standard 6: Professional Learning and Leadership**

Candidates recognize the importance of, demonstrate, and facilitate professional learning and leadership as a career-long effort and responsibility.

Participating teachers will meet this Standard when they make the personal choice to view this professional development video.

## Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

### Overview of Study and Findings

While reading for pleasure is its own reward, an issue for classroom teachers is whether leisure reading and recreational reading have a place in the classroom. The question for this research study is, what precisely is “recreational reading” and what is its role in an elementary classroom? The most appropriate way to answer this question is with an extensive literature review and synthesis. Results of the synthesis indicate that students from grade four to college age who enjoy and engage in recreational reading experience higher academic achievement than those who do not, while time spent by students reading outside of school is impacted by factors such as access to reading materials, reading enjoyment, and other ways available to occupy their time. Results also indicate that student positive attitude toward reading (recreational and reading generally) declines as a student progresses through elementary school, that attitudes appear to be gender related (with girls having a more positive attitude than boys), and by adolescence, students prefer the text format of magazines. Student enjoyment of reading appears to develop in part from support and encouragement from adults who discuss what students are reading, and the common classroom practice of Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) appears to be most effective when teachers include discussion of student self-selected reading material. In addition, results suggest that classroom teachers can further encourage recreational reading by making themselves more knowledgeable about children’s literature and by providing access to student-preferred reading materials in both the school and classroom library. These results are applicable to elementary teachers and therefore will be presented in the form of a professional development video free and easily accessible to all.

### **Significance of the Findings**

The various findings of the study that investigated what precisely recreational reading is and its role in an elementary classroom are significant to the classroom practice of recreational reading but particularly practice in an elementary classroom. The findings indicate that it is beneficial for a teacher to have more knowledge of children's literature, to have an understanding of what his or her students prefer to read and provide access to those preferable reading materials, and to have a discussion for students to talk about their self-selected reading material. These findings are also significant to the field of literacy itself because they offer some insight into the role and practice of recreational reading in students' lives.

### **Limitations of the Findings**

Although this study identified five different categories of the research on recreational reading, the findings do have some limitations. The synthesis reveals a gap in the research; few studies examine specifically what elementary teachers do in their classrooms to support and encourage student recreational reading. Research that has been conducted regarding recreational reading reveals that encouraging recreational reading for students is important, particularly as an activity by teachers, but few research studies offer successful strategies that teachers could use in the classroom consistently (not just as a part of research or an intervention) to encourage student recreational reading. Another gap in the research appears to be that there is limited research on how recreational reading can specifically impact academic achievement. The available research does show that students who enjoy recreational reading are typically higher achieving students

academically, but that cannot be attributed to recreational reading specifically.

### **Conclusion: Answer to the Research Question**

The research question for this research synthesis is what precisely is recreational reading, and what is its role in an elementary classroom? To answer this question, an extensive review of the relevant literature was conducted. Findings of the synthesis indicate that recreational reading is reading of preferred self-selected reading material by an individual at a time selected or designated for such reading. The findings also indicate that recreational reading in an elementary classroom can be supported with the help of a teacher who has knowledge of children's literature, knows and understands what his or her students prefer to read and provides access to those reading materials and supplements the students' individual reading time with discussion and positive encouragement.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Although the extensive review of the literature produced five different categories related to recreational reading, there is limited research related to the area of recreational reading and its link to academic achievement. Future more detailed research on possible links between recreational reading and academic achievement may help educators and parents understand the role of recreational in a classroom. The limitations of the findings of this thesis also reveal a gap in the research, that few studies examine specifically what elementary teachers do in their classrooms to support and encourage student recreational reading; future research could be conducted into successful strategies that teachers use to encourage student recreational reading.

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## **APPENDIX : Contents of Professional Development Video**

### **Recreational Reading And Its Role In An Elementary Classroom**

#### **TeacherTube Video**

Introduction, video contents overview (5 minutes)

Presentation of findings from the research synthesis (10 minutes)

Discussion of significance of findings and their impact on the classroom (15 minutes)

Modeling of strategies for incorporate recreational reading into classroom (30 minutes)