

A Study into the Effects of a Reading Intramurals Program on
Students' Attitudes Toward Reading

Thesis

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not an after school Reading Intramurals program positively affected students' interest and attitude toward reading. The subjects of this study consisted of an experimental group of third and fourth grade students who participated in the Reading Intramurals program and a control group of third and fourth grade students who did not participate in the program.

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey was used to determine the reading attitudes of the students in the experimental group and in the control group. An independent *t* test was first used to compare the mean pretest scores of both groups to verify that the reading attitudes of the students in the two groups were comparable at the onset of the study. A *t* test for related samples was used next to compare the control group's pretest and posttest scores on the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey with the experimental group's pretest and posttest scores on the same attitude survey, to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in reading interest and attitude between the two groups.

The results of the study found that although participation in the Reading Intramurals program did not necessarily increase reading attitudes, it did not decrease them either, whereas the group of students who did not participate in a Reading Intramurals program had a significant decrease in reading attitudes.

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CHAPTER I

Statement of the Problem

Reading is a fundamental part of life, just as teaching reading is a fundamental part of teaching. Despite teachers' efforts in teaching their students to read however, there is a growing number of children who are having difficulty learning to read. What then, can be done to help these children who are slipping through the cracks? The ability to read is highly dependent on the will to read. If a child does not enjoy reading, then reading will not be an activity of choice. Therefore, the first step in helping a struggling reader is to tap into that child's reading interest. Once this obstacle is overcome, the doors will be open for reading growth.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not an after school Reading Intramurals program affected students' interest and attitude toward reading.

Research Question

Is there a statistically significant difference in the mean score of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey between students exposed to 20 weeks of a Reading Intramurals program and the mean score of students in a control group who did not participate in the program?

Null Hypothesis

There will be no statistically significant difference on the mean score of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey between students who participated in a Reading Intramurals program and the mean score of a comparable group of students who did not participate in the program.

Need for the Study

The number of students qualifying for Title 1 reading services seems to be on the rise, as well as the number of students who are borderline in qualifying for extra help, and are subsequently not receiving it. Research suggests that reading achievement is directly related to student interest and attitude toward reading. Research also supports the impact of reading in that, the more one reads, the better reader he or she will become (Carver & Leibert, 1995; Gambrell, 1996; Leland & Fitzpatrick, 1994; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997; Worthy, Turner, & Moorman, 1998). Researchers have also found that when students do not read in their free time, there is a loss in academic growth (Carver & Leibert, 1995; Worthy, Turner, & Moorman, 1998). Teachers and parents alike need to find ways to increase children's interest and attitude toward reading, so that they can empower every child with the ability to read, and more importantly, so that they can help children develop an appreciation for reading, and hopefully, a love of reading.

As a result of this need, an after school Reading Intramurals program was developed in a rural, upstate New York school district. The primary goal of the program was to increase children's enjoyment of reading, and ultimately impact the amount of reading that the children chose to partake in during free time.

Limitations of the Study

The following are variables that could have impacted the results of the study:

1. The time factor involved in this study may be a limitation, as 20 weeks may not be a long enough period of time for the students' reading attitudes to change.
2. It is possible that the individual teaching style of the children's teachers was a factor that influenced the reading attitudes of the children in both the control group and in the experimental group of this study.
3. The letter written to the students in the experimental group that explained the purpose of the attitude survey is a possible limitation, as knowing that the effectiveness of the program was being looked at may have biased some of their responses.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not an after school Reading Intramurals program affected students' interest and attitude toward reading.

Reading is a critical life skill for obvious reasons, communication being the most predominant. Much of what one learns can be traced to being able to read. Although there are many other sources of learning, such as television, radio, movies, and so on, reading tends to be the most fundamental. One reason perhaps, is that reading is dependent on nothing but the text and the reader. This point is well noted in a quote by Oprah Winfrey, in which she states: "Absolutely the basis and the roof of me becoming a successful person is reading, because I had that when I had nothing else" (Ratliff, 1997). There is a great power that comes from reading, which evokes a sense of need and amplifies the importance of reading in our lives. When considering that an estimated one in three children experiences significant problems in learning to read, the sense of urgency in finding ways to empower every child with the ability to read is evident (Mathes & Fuchs, 1994).

One factor that seems to be the biggest barrier in children's reading achievement is their interest in reading. The law of common sense explains the

aversion that some children develop toward reading. People in general do not like to do things at which they do not excel, and therefore do not grow in these areas due to a lack of experience and practice. There are numerous studies that have been conducted on student interest and motivation in reading, and the findings in these studies are consistent in several areas, perhaps the most central being the more one reads, the better reader he or she will become (Carver & Leibert, 1995; Gambrell, 1996; Krueger & Townshend, 1998; Leland & Fitzpatrick, 1994; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997; Worthy, Turner, & Moorman, 1998). Due to this finding in particular, one can hypothesize that if students read more, they will become better readers. This will in turn lead to an increased desire to read more because students are finding more success in reading. This hypothesis is supported by research conducted by Carver and Leibert (1995), Worthy, Turner, and Moorman (1998), and many other researchers, as they have found that time spent reading leads to an increase in achievement. So the question is, how does one foster an appreciation for reading in children that do not like to read, so that interest and motivation to read increase?

The Impact of Reading Environment

When looking at the environment of a classroom, a common sense approach can again be used to figure out what type of environment is most conducive in fostering student growth. Would a warm, supportive, literature rich, student centered, “open” type of environment sound more appealing to a child, or a cold, unsupportive, literature depressed, teacher centered, “closed” type of environment?

It doesn't take much thought to see that the former would most likely be the choice environment for anyone, especially a child.

Gambrell (1996) found that classroom environment plays a significant role in reading motivation. Her study suggests that when children have a large number of books and a variety of literature to read, it results in an increase in the amount and in the quality of their literacy experiences. Coupled with this, when children were encouraged to bring books from the classroom library home to share with their family, an increase in literacy development was noted. While having a literature rich classroom environment is essential in supporting children's reading development, it can not produce highly motivated readers alone. There are many other factors besides a literature rich environment that contributes to reading interest and motivation.

The social realm is another aspect of the classroom environment that can boost student interest and motivation. A popular and effective classroom reading practice known as peer reading has had tremendous effects on student attitude and achievement. As cited in Vygotsky, 1986, the theory behind peer reading is "the belief that literacy develops best through social interaction and dialogue with others" (Dugan, 1997, p. 87).

A number of studies have indicated that a classroom environment which provides opportunities for reading, sharing, and discussing literature not only increases motivation, but also increases reading skills, social skills, and higher level thinking skills (Dixon-Krauss, 1995; Dugan, 1997; Ezell & Kohler, et. al., 1992; Guice, 1995; Leland & Fitzpatrick, 1994; Locke & Fuchs, 1995; Mathes & Fuchs, 1994; Turner & Paris, 1995; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). The increase in these

skills was found to be due in large part to the amount of interactions provided in this type of environment. Ezell and Kohler (1994) reported that the percentage of active engagement when students read, share, and discuss literature together is almost twice that observed during other classroom activities.

Allowing children to have meaningful interactions in reading, listening, and discussing is at the heart of peer reading's success in promoting interest levels in the classroom. Reading with peers allows for the vast and different experiences that each individual brings to the group to be utilized in helping to make more connections to the reading, as opposed to reading alone. The more connections that can be made to the reading, the stronger comprehension becomes. As Leal (1992) noted, the construction of meaning is influenced by more than just the reader and the text. Studies conducted by Bleich, Cazden, Fish, and Galda (as cited in Leal, 1992) established that when students discuss text with other students, personal construction of meaning is extended, modified, and restructured as a result of the social construction of meaning. Leal also noted how powerful the process of negotiating meaning is, as students talk with peers and discover meanings that might not otherwise be discovered alone.

Interestingly enough, Leland and Fitzpatrick (1994) mentioned a study conducted by Juel (1991), which found that at-risk elementary school children made marked improvements in their reading ability by being read to regularly by college athletes who were also at-risk in their early years. This finding suggests that peer reading is beneficial in multi-age situations as well.

Another positive aspect of a classroom environment that encourages peer reading and enhances student attitude and interest is its parallel to real life. In a

recent study conducted by Irvin (1997), it was noted that integrating the language areas helps to bridge the gap between reading and writing, which helps students to realize the connection and the importance of becoming competent readers and writers. This includes the provision of meaningful, authentic, literacy tasks. Irvin found that creating authentic contexts increased motivation as students interests were used as a way to tap into strengths. In the study conducted by Leland and Fitzpatrick noted above, the findings demonstrate this fundamental aspect of learning, which Irvin's study verified five years later.

We also learned that students who have already decided that reading is useless need more than instruction in skills and strategies; we need to connect the skills and strategies to real-life contexts so they become relevant and real to the students. (Leland & Fitzpatrick, 1994, p. 300)

Thomas and Oldfather (1995) further support the use of authentic contexts in learning as they conclude that the source of motivation comes from a child's natural curiosity. Learning is ultimately driven by the learner's engagement in the construction of meaning. Therefore, when learning is meaningful to the learner, learning is valued by the learner.

Additionally, Miller and Meece (1997) verify the aforementioned findings about the benefits of peer related activities and authentic contexts. They conclude that interest, motivation, and achievement are positively affected when the classroom environment enables students to develop an increased sense of competence and responsibility for their learning. Miller and Meece also noted that a classroom environment that enables students to collaborate with peers also contributes to an increase in interest, motivation, and achievement.

When compared to a traditional, teacher directed reading approach, where the interaction between teacher and student is greatly limited because of the large

numbers involved in whole class reading and discussion, it is easy to see how peer reading can foster reading growth on a much larger scale. Students are more actively involved in reading, discussing, and constructing meaning from the text, which makes it more meaningful.

While the classroom environment plays a critical role in developing student interest, attitude, and achievement, the home environment plays an equally powerful role. The connection between student ability and motivation to parental influence places the utmost importance on the home/school relationship. Parents and teachers need to make a joint effort to raise student interest and achievement in reading.

Walberg and Tsai (1985) support the influential role that parents play in their child's interest and achievement level. They found that children whose parents were highly educated had higher achievement and attitude scores in reading.

Purcell-Gates (1996) conducted a study that offers some insight into the results of Walberg and Tsai's study mentioned above, as to why children of highly educated parents would score higher on achievement and attitude in reading. Purcell-Gates found that interest and achievement levels are all relative to the degree to which the child experiences reading and writing in his or her life. Children who experience others reading and writing for different purposes to a high degree, and who are actively involved with reading and writing print to a high degree, come out with a richer foundation from which to build on.

Creating literacy rich environments within which the learning that goes on at home and at school includes the concepts of reading and writing needed for success in life is a necessary component in acquiring high interest, motivation, and achievement levels (Purcell-Gates, 1996).

The Power of Choice and S.S.R.

What types of classroom practices enhance student interest and motivation in reading? In a study conducted by Worthy, Turner, and Moorman (1998), 35 language arts teachers were interviewed to determine classroom practices that enhance reading interest and achievement. The findings conclude that the majority of the teachers involved in the study believe that students are better served when classroom practices foster an appreciation of reading. It is through this appreciation that growth in intellectual development and reading achievement are gained.

Choice can be a very powerful tool to use in the classroom. Numerous studies have found what a tremendous impact choice can have on student interest and motivation (Cordova & Lepper, 1996; Fresch, 1995; Gambrell, 1996; Guice, 1995; Irvin, 1997; Turner & Paris, 1995; Worthy, Turner, & Moorman, 1998).

A study conducted by Allington (as cited in Worthy, Turner, & Moorman, 1998), established that voluntary reading is an essential element in the development of reading processes. A reading practice used in many classrooms today, known as Sustained Silent Reading (S.S.R.) or Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R.), is one way to increase students voluntary reading. S.S.R. promotes students' voluntary reading by getting readers actively involved. Students are regularly given time to self select books to read in class. Often, this is the only time students read for pleasure, as many studies have indicated that as students get older, little or no time is spent on reading for leisure. Furthermore, teachers who utilize Sustained Silent Reading regularly as a part of their language arts program found an observed increase in student interest (Worthy, Turner, & Moorman, 1998).

Gambrell (1996) found that over 80% of the students involved in her study that had chosen their own books stated that these were the books that they most enjoyed reading. The studies conducted by Gambrell and Worthy, Turner, and Moorman mentioned above, as well as other recent studies, have also found reading books of choice to increase both positive feelings and interest in reading, as well as achievement. In a study conducted by Fresch (1995), it was found that when children were permitted to self select books, a pattern emerged in the students' choices, which demonstrates the potential for reading growth when choice is given. Repeatedly, the students would select a book that challenged new reading strategies being developed, and then return to a familiar book. The benefit found in this pattern is that while students were taking risks and integrating newly acquired skills with a challenging book, they were also building their confidence level by reading familiar books.

Along with allowing for student choice in the books that they read, the teacher also has a tremendous impact on reading interest. Worthy, Turner and Moorman (1998) found that an even greater effect on reading was observed when the teacher modeled reading for enjoyment by reading with the students during Sustained Silent Reading. These findings are consistent with Gambrell (1996), as she found that classrooms that devoted more time to S.S.R. fostered a greater appreciation for reading, and found that students chose to read more as a result. Gambrell also noted research showing the power teachers have on increasing student interest and motivation, and ultimately reading achievement. Lundberg and Linnakyla, 1993 state: "Research suggests that teachers who love reading and are

avid readers themselves have students who have higher reading achievement than do students of teachers who rarely read” (Gambrell, 1996, p. 20).

Similarly, Guice (1995) found that when students were encouraged to select books of interest to them and respond to the books they read by expressing personal thoughts and opinions, reading and responding to books was highly valued. As with Guice, Fresch (1995), Turner and Paris (1995), and Miller and Meece (1997) also support the findings in Irvin’s study mentioned earlier regarding motivation, in that literacy activities in the classroom that were found to be highly motivating involved activities that were authentic, challenging, student choice and interest were accounted for, and social collaboration was incorporated.

Self Perception

Students’ self perceptions of how they read also play a vital role in determining their interest and motivation in reading. Henk and Melnick (1995) conclude that a student’s self perception is likely to either motivate or inhibit learning. This conclusion is further supported by the research of Bandura and Schunk, 1981; Schunk, 1982, 1983a, 1983b, 1984; and Zimmerman and Ringle, 1981. The following statement demonstrates how self perception affects the learning process. “Self-efficacy judgments are thought to affect achievement by influencing an individual’s choice of activities, task avoidance, effort expenditure, and goal persistence” (Henk & Melnick, 1995, p. 471).

Additionally, in a research study conducted by Cordova and Lepper (1996), it was found that students who exhibited high levels of aspiration and feelings of

perceived competence toward the task were those students in the experimental group. In the experimental group, tasks were presented in a meaningful and appealing learning context that allowed for choice. This group showed higher levels of learning than their counterparts who were exposed to the same tasks in a less appealing and less meaningful way.

Keeping in mind the common sense theory mentioned earlier, which helps to explain why people develop aversions to things that they are not good at, along with the conclusions drawn above, one can sense the power that a student's self perception has on reading achievement. It has already been noted that students who spend more time reading are better readers (Carver & Leibert, 1995; Gambrell, 1996; Krueger & Townshend, 1998, Leland & Fitzpatrick, 1994, Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997, Worthy, Turner & Moorman, 1998). One can assume that students who believe that they are good readers will be the students who read more, and consequently, become even better readers. So what happens to the students who do not believe in themselves, who do not read more, and consequently, do not become better readers?

Research conducted by Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, and Mazzoni (1996), supports that there are actually two components involved in a reader's self perception: self perceived competence and task value. These findings are further supported by the work of a renowned researcher, Brian Cambourne. Gambrell (1996) cites Cambourne's work which shows that motivation and reading development is closely tied to authentic contexts. Growth in reading flourishes when students are immersed in reading for real purposes. Making a connection to

students' real lives allows them to see and experience the value of reading. The question raised above then, places even more emphasis on the teacher.

Giving value to the task can be accomplished through several means, all of which have already been discussed. Creating meaningful literacy interactions that incorporate authentic tasks, accounting for student engagement and choice, as well as challenge and social collaboration are all ways in which teachers can account for task value, which have been found to increase interest and motivation.

Raising a student's self perception of reading is more difficult, as it can be influenced, but not directly changed by the teacher. Gambrell (1996) notes that the elementary school years are the most crucial in shaping a person's reading achievement and motivation to read. It is in these early years then, that positive self perceptions need to be made, and nurtured throughout their school career.

According to the Gestalt theory of change, an increase in positive experiences will result in an increase in attitude (Begy, 1998). Therefore, one must increase students' positive experiences with reading to see an increase in their attitude. According to Schunk (as cited in Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997), when children believe they are competent and effective readers, they will be more likely to engage in reading, and there will ultimately be an increase in achievement.

CHAPTER III

Design of the Study

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not an after school Reading Intramurals program affected students' interest and attitude toward reading.

Null Hypothesis

There will be no statistically significant difference on the mean score of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey between students who participated in a Reading Intramurals program and the mean score of a comparable group of students who did not participate in the program.

Methodology

Subjects

The subjects involved in this study were third and fourth grade students in a rural, upstate New York school district. The experimental group was made up of 37 students who attended all three sessions of the Reading Intramurals program. While the Reading Intramurals program was open to any third or fourth grader, teachers were asked to strongly encourage the students in their class who were having difficulty in reading. Therefore, there was a range in attitudes, interest, and ability. The control group was made up of 92 third and fourth grade students who were in the same school district, but attended a different elementary school. Reading Intramurals was not offered at this school.

There were also three teachers involved in the study. Two were resource room teachers, and one was a fourth grade teacher. Together, these teachers developed and ran the Reading Intramurals program.

Instruments

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey was administered two times to both the control group and the experimental group. The second administration took place approximately 20 weeks after the first. Scores from the two groups were compared to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in students' reading attitudes before and after 20 weeks.

The Elementary Reading Attitude survey consists of 20 questions that ask reading interest related questions. For each response, students are asked to circle the picture of the cartoon character Garfield that best describes their feelings about the question.

McKenna and Kear (1990) created the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey to give teachers an instrument to measure the reading attitude level of their students both efficiently and reliably. This survey has been determined to be both reliable and valid, based on a national sample of over 18,000 children (McKenna & Kear, 1990).

About the Reading Intramurals program....

The Reading Intramurals program ran in three 10 week sessions, with each session having a different theme. On Wednesdays, fourth grade students met from 3:15 to 4:10, and on Thursdays, third grade students met at this same time. Two teachers facilitated each day, and met with the same group of students each week.

An informational letter was sent out in the beginning of the year, informing students, parents, and teachers of this new program. Attached was a form to fill out and return if a child was interested in participating. There were approximately 27 third graders and 30 fourth graders that expressed an interest in the first session of the program. When students signed up, they were made aware that it was a 10 week commitment, unlike the Sports Intramurals program, which is open for anyone to come whenever they want. Since there were only two teachers facilitating each day, there was a need to keep numbers down. Therefore, 24 third graders and 26 fourth

graders were accepted into the first session of the program on a first come first serve basis. The students who were closed out of the first session due to high enrollment were given first choice to attend the second session.

A typical session at Reading Intramurals involved reading aloud to the students a short story which tied in with the theme, followed by a discussion of the story. Different aspects of story structure were highlighted in the discussion, as well as personal responses. Students then pair read self selected stories related to the theme, keeping the same partner each week (this made up approximately 35 of the 55 minutes). While students were pair reading, the teachers circulated around to each pair to listen and to read with the students, capitalizing on good reading strategies that they were using, and encouraging them. Lastly, the whole group would meet back together for share time. Students were invited to share personal reactions to the story they read.

Throughout the Reading Intramurals program, students were involved in the creation of a "Mystery Mosaic." This was done to further enhance student interest and to help promote a sense of accomplishment in the students by showing them how much they were reading. After a story was read, students wrote the name of the story, along with the author on a small circle. Each circle was added to the mosaic, which in time began to show a picture of the earth (going along with the overall theme of discovering the world of literature). Students were encouraged to continue reading to discover what the Mystery Mosaic was.

Procedures

The classroom teachers of students in Reading Intramurals were given envelopes containing the Elementary Reading Attitude Surveys, along with a letter explaining the purpose. In the letter, teachers were asked to distribute the envelopes to the students in their class who participated in Reading Intramurals, and to emphasize that they would not see their responses. Along with the survey, each envelope also contained a letter to the student. The letter explained what the survey was and why they were being asked to fill it out. It also emphasized the importance of being honest, and explained that their responses would not be seen by their teacher, and had nothing to do with their reading grade at school. Once students completed the survey, they placed it back in the envelope and gave it to their teacher, who then returned all of the surveys to the researcher.

Teachers of the students in the control group were also be given a letter explaining the purpose of the survey and how to administer it to their students, which was very similar to the letters used with the experimental group. Again, answering the questions honestly was stressed, as well as the fact that the survey was in no way related to their reading grade at school. Once students completed the survey, they placed it back in the large manila envelope provided for the surveys. Teachers returned the surveys to a specified teacher in the building, who then returned all of the surveys to the researcher. The surveys were scored by the researcher.

At the end of 20 weeks, students who participated in at least two of the three sessions of the Reading Intramurals program and the students in the control group

were given the same reading attitude survey to complete. Administration of the surveys remained the same, and again, the researcher scored the surveys.

Analysis of Data

After completing the pretest (the initial Elementary Reading Attitude Survey), the researcher quantitatively compared the control group results with the experimental group to see if the two groups were comparable in reading attitudes at the onset of the study. An independent t test was run to verify this.

After completing the posttest (the second Elementary Reading Attitude Survey), the researcher quantitatively compared the control group results with the experimental group to see if there was a statistically significant difference in reading interest and attitude between the control group and the experimental group. A paired t test was run to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups.

Summary

This study examined whether an after school Reading Intramurals program positively affected the reading interest and attitude of the students who attended.

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey was used to compare the reading attitudes of the students in the experimental group (the students participating in the Reading Intramurals program), with the reading attitudes of the students in the control group (the students from another school in the same district who do not participate in the Reading Intramurals program).

CHAPTER IV

Analysis of Data

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not an after school Reading Intramurals program affected students' interest and attitude toward reading.

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

An independent *t* test was used first to quantitatively compare the mean pretest scores of the experimental group with the mean pretest scores of the control group to see whether the reading attitudes of the two groups were comparable at the onset of the study.

A *t* test for related samples was used to quantitatively compare the control group's pretest and posttest scores on the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey with the experimental group's pretest and posttest scores on the same attitude survey, to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in reading interest and attitude between the two groups.

Findings and Interpretations

The null hypothesis investigated in this study stated that there is no statistically significant difference between students who participated in a Reading Intramurals program (the experimental group) and a comparable group of students who did not participate in the program (the control group), as measured by the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey.

A pretest of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey was administered to both the control group and the experimental group to establish that the groups were equivalent. The results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
A *t* test for Independent Measures of Significant Difference on a Pretest

Group	d.f.	\bar{x}_1	s.d.	<i>t</i>
Control	126	59.50	12.55	1.59
Experimental	126	62.80	10.31	1.59

$t_{crit. (.05)} \leq 1.980$

The calculated *t* value between the pretest scores for the two groups was 1.59. For a *t* test of independent measures at the .05 level of significance, the critical value for 126 degrees of freedom is 1.980. Since the calculated *t* value (1.59) was less than the critical *t* value (1.980), it was found that there was no significant difference in the reading attitudes of the two groups.

Once the equivalence of the two groups was established, the researcher then investigated whether there was a statistically significant difference between the reading attitudes of the students in the control group as compared to those in the experimental group after a period of 20 weeks.

A *t* test for related samples was run to test the hypothesis at the .05 level of significance. Table 2 provides the data from the statistical analysis.

Table 2

A *t* test for Related Samples Measuring Significant Differences Between a Pretest and a Posttest

Group	d.f.	\bar{x}_1	\bar{x}_2	D	D^2	t
Control	60	60.10	56.19	- 302	91204	3.51
Experimental	30	63.28	63.38	4	1980	.086

$t_{crit. (.05)} \leq 2.000$

The following results were found for the control group:

Since the calculated *t* value for the control group (3.51) is larger than the critical *t* value (2.000) at 60 degrees of freedom, we reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores, and conclude that the two sets of scores are significantly different. Looking at the given data, we can further conclude that the posttest scores were significantly lower than the

pretest scores. There was a significant decrease in the reading attitudes of the students in the control group. See Appendix A for pretest and posttest scores for the control group.

The following results were found for the experimental group:

Since the calculated t value for the experimental group (.086) is not greater than the critical t value (2.042) at 30 degrees of freedom, we fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no significant difference between the pretest and posttest mean scores. Although a significant difference was not found in the reading attitudes of the students participating in the Reading Intramurals program, there was a slight increase in the mean posttest score as compared to the mean pretest score. This indicates that while there was no significant gain in reading attitudes, their attitudes about reading were at least maintained, which is better than a loss. See Appendix B for pretest and posttest scores for the experimental group.

Summary

The results of this analysis indicate that there was a statistically significant difference in the mean pretest and posttest scores of the control group. The reading attitudes of the students in this group were significantly lower on the posttest, indicating a significant decrease in their reading attitudes after a period of 20 weeks.

The results of this analysis further indicate that there was not a statistically significant difference in the mean pretest and posttest scores of the experimental

group. The reading attitudes of the students in this group were only slightly higher after a period of 20 weeks, which suggests that the Reading Intramurals program helped to maintain students' attitudes toward reading.

CHAPTER V

Conclusions and Implications

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not an after school Reading Intramurals program positively affected students' interest and attitude toward reading.

Conclusions

The results of this study indicate that there was a statistically significant difference in the mean pretest and posttest scores of the control group. The control group's mean scores decreased, going from 60.10 on the pretest, to 56.19 on the posttest. The significantly lower reading attitudes found on the posttest after a period of 20 weeks may be attributed to a number of factors, including home environment, the teacher's style in reading instruction, the amount of choice given, or even the student's mood on the given day.

The results of this study further indicate that there was not a statistically significant difference in the mean pretest and posttest scores of the experimental group. The experimental group's mean scores had a slight increase, going from 63.28 on the pretest, to 63.38 on the posttest. The slight increase in reading attitudes found on the posttest after a period of 20 weeks suggests that the Reading Intramurals program helped to maintain students attitudes toward reading. Other

factors that may have attributed to the slight increase in reading attitudes of the students in the experimental group are the same as the factors that may have influenced the control group, which include home environment, teacher style, choice, or the student's mood on that given day. It is quite possible that a significant decrease in the reading attitudes of the students who participated in the Reading Intramurals program would have been found if they had not been involved in the program.

In conclusion, the results of this study indicate that involvement in an after school Reading Intramurals program may help students to maintain their interest and attitudes toward reading.

Implications for the Classroom

This study supports the implementation of a Reading Intramurals program in schools to maintain and to promote positive attitudes toward reading. For some individual students, there was a gain of more than 10 points on the attitude survey. Since reading attitudes have a direct impact on achievement levels in reading, educators need to plan for instruction that will be both motivational and interesting. If educators are successful in promoting positive reading attitudes, there is a high probability that these students will improve or at least maintain their achievement levels in reading.

Although no significant difference was found in the reading attitudes of students who participated in the Reading Intramurals program, there was certainly not

a decrease in their attitudes. This suggests that there was also not a decrease in their reading achievement levels, and no gain is better than a loss.

On the contrary, a significant difference was found in the reading attitudes of the students in the control group who were not involved in a Reading Intramurals program. There was a significant decrease in the attitudes of these students. This is a possible indicator that a decrease may also be found in the reading achievement levels of these students, given the correlation that exists between reading attitudes and achievement in reading.

The Reading Intramurals program used in this study was found to be one way to help maintain and promote positive attitudes toward reading. There are numerous other strategies that educators can utilize and implement into their classroom to help promote positive attitudes toward reading, including: allowing for student choice in book selection, providing time for S.S.R. (Sustained Silent Reading), making reading meaningful to students by making connections to their lives, use of peer reading, and by providing a supportive environment.

Implications for Future Research

Although this study compliments previous research in the area of reading attitudes, one can only speculate that the reading attitudes of the students in the experimental group was a factor in maintaining their reading achievement, since reading achievement was not a variable in the study. It would be interesting to do a similar study and take into account both reading attitudes and reading achievement.

Other variables that could be analyzed in a comparable study to determine the extent of impact each has on students' reading attitudes include: teacher's use of S.S.R. in the classroom, the amount of student choice allowed in reading selections, or the regular use of read alouds.

Summary

The goal of this study was to determine if an after school Reading Intramurals program increased students' attitudes toward reading. The data indicated that although participation in the Reading Intramurals program did not necessarily increase reading attitudes, it did not decrease them either. The data also indicated that the group of students who did not participate in a Reading Intramurals program had a significant decrease in reading attitudes. Therefore, it can be surmised that it is better to maintain reading attitudes than to have a significant decrease, so anything that can be done to promote and maintain reading attitudes would be extremely beneficial.

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Appendix A

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey Scores: Control Group

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey Scores: Control Group

<u>Student</u>	<u>Pretest</u>	<u>Posttest</u>
1	57	64
2	63	48
3	59	59
4	63	55
5	68	68
6	64	43
7	68	64
8	66	57
9	67	59
10	61	72
11	37	45
12	48	61
13	63	60
14	28	34
15	53	40
16	78	71
17	37	47
18	32	32
19	46	37
20	44	44
21	44	53
22	66	68
23	50	57
24	38	48
25	53	48
26	39	38
27	30	20
28	67	68
29	62	67
30	66	63
31	54	57
32	63	47
33	41	28
34	67	54
35	66	63
36	78	78
37	60	56
38	64	69
39	32	39
40	65	62

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey Scores: Control Group

<u>Student</u>	<u>Pretest</u>	<u>Posttest</u>
41	63	45
42	75	75
43	56	59
44	68	51
45	60	65
46	71	46
47	68	75
48	76	61
49	74	52
50	75	54
51	52	45
52	76	73
53	80	73
54	80	68
55	61	52
56	54	49
57	58	75
58	68	60
59	62	60
60	62	34
61	70	67
62	72	60
63	71	62
64	60	69
65	78	63
66	45	51
67	65	56
68	64	71
69	56	29
70	73	74
71	67	60
72	52	56
73	50	42
74	69	70
75	64	64
76	62	62
77	64	56

Appendix B

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey Scores: Experimental Group

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey Scores: Experimental Group

<u>Student</u>	<u>Pretest</u>	<u>Posttest</u>
1	64	72
2	70	75
3	50	66
4	69	61
5	80	73
6	58	54
7	57	59
8	76	74
9	59	55
10	65	49
11	65	65
12	73	80
13	65	55
14	51	63
15	45	46
16	56	52
17	74	73
18	62	69
19	65	65
20	75	76
21	58	58
22	79	80
23	58	69
24	62	69
25	60	41
26	69	71
27	73	66
28	68	61
29	66	67
30	67	69
31	65	68
32	66	68
33	71	69
34	69	67
35	29	37
36	40	49
37	68	69
38	70	63
39	50	49

Appendix C

Letter to Students in Experimental Group

and

Letter to Teachers of Students in Experimental Group

11/4/98

Dear _____,

Hello! I am writing you this note to ask you to fill out this survey about your reading interest. Please BE HONEST!! Your teacher will not see your survey, and it has nothing to do with your reading grade at school.

I am doing a study on reading interest for college, and I need your help. I am going to compare your interest in reading before you start Reading Intramurals, with your interest in reading after you participate in Reading Intramurals. I will ask you to fill out another reading interest survey when this session of Reading Intramurals is over.

Thank you for your help!

Mrs. Goodwin

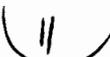
Mrs. Goodwin

11/4/98

Dear _____,

Hello! Would you please give these envelopes to your students (they should be the people in your class that participate in reading intramurals). It is a reading interest survey that I am asking them to fill out. Once they fill it out, they can put it back in the envelope and give it to you. Once everyone has completed their survey, please put the envelopes back in my mailbox. I am doing a study on reading interest for college, and I am going to compare student interest in reading before starting reading intramurals, with their interest in reading after participating in reading intramurals. I will ask them to fill out another reading interest survey after reading intramurals are over. I told the students in my letter that you would not see their survey, so please respect their privacy. I need their answers to be honest.

Thank you for your help!

Shelly Goodwin 

Appendix D

Letter to Teachers of Students in Control Group

12/1/98

Dear Teacher,

Thank you so much for helping me out! Let me give you a little background on what I am doing and why I need your help. I am in the process of writing my thesis for my Masters degree in Reading. The title of my thesis is "The Effects of a Reading Intramurals Program in Interests and Attitudes Toward Reading".

Here at O.E., we have started an after school Reading Intramurals program. Our number one goal is to increase students' enjoyment of reading, which will hopefully increase the amount that they read. I gave this same survey to the students participating in Reading Intramurals. The reason that I need your class to fill it out as well, is because I need a control group. I am hoping to find that both your students and the students in Reading Intramurals have similar interest levels in reading at the onset (before participating in the program). I will then compare the reading interest of students after participating in 30 weeks of Reading Intramurals with your students. Therefore, I will send you another set of the same survey in about 30 weeks for your students to fill out again, so I can compare their original interest levels with their interest level after 30 weeks, which I will then compare with the Reading Intramurals students! Yes, I have my work cut out for me!!

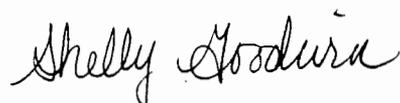
What I need you to do is give each of your students a survey to fill out. You can explain to them that it is an interest survey, and that they need to be HONEST in their answers. The only directions are to read each

question and circle the Garfield cartoon that best shows how they feel about the question. Please stress that you will not see their survey (they can put it right back in the big manila envelope when they finish), and that it has nothing to do with their reading grade at school. I highlighted school in purple so that I could identify quickly the surveys from your school. Also, make sure that they realize that there is a front and a back to each page.

Thank you again for your help, I truly appreciate it. Once your class has completed the surveys, please give the manila envelopes with the surveys inside to Beth Uetz, she'll get them back to me. As I mentioned before, I will be sending you another set of the same survey in approximately 30 weeks for your students to fill out again. The directions and administration will remain the same.

Thank you again!!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shelly Goodwin".

Shelly Goodwin

Appendix E**Elementary Reading Attitude Survey**

How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?



How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?



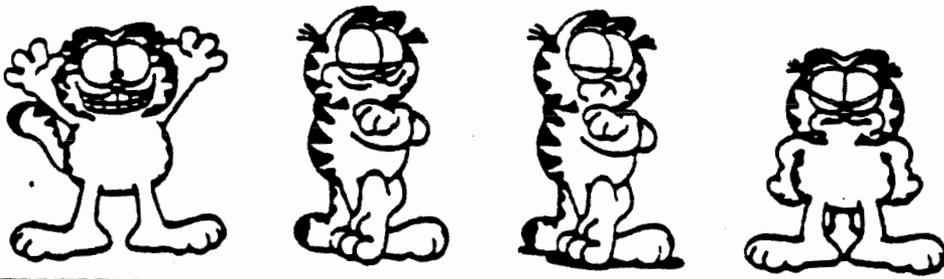
How do you feel about reading a book for fun at home?



How do you feel about getting a book for a present?



5. How do you feel about spending free time reading?



How do you feel about starting a new book?



How do you feel about reading during summer vacation?



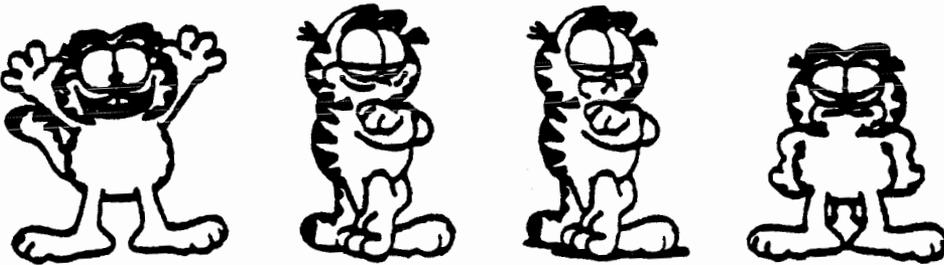
How do you feel about reading instead of playing?



How do you feel about going to a bookstore?



How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?



How do you feel when the teacher asks you questions about what you read?



How do you feel about doing reading workbook pages and worksheets?



3. How do you feel about reading in school?



How do you feel about reading your school books?



How do you feel about learning from a book?



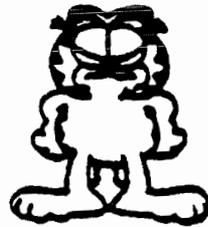
How do you feel when it's time for reading class?



7. How do you feel about the stories you read in reading class?



How do you feel when you read out loud in class?



How do you feel about using a dictionary?



How do you feel about taking a reading test?

