What are the Effects of Requiring Independent Reading and
Culminating Projects on Seventh Graders' Attitudes toward
Reading?

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine how requiring independent reading and culminating projects affects seventh graders' attitudes toward reading.

The study involved administering a survey to 96 seventh graders upon entry into the grade. They were then instructed to read a novel of their choice on their own time over a six-week period. When they finished reading, they completed a project of their choice from a list of 16 based on Gardner's first seven multiple intelligences to present to the class. This reading/project completion happened twice during the study. At the end of the second project presentation, students were given another survey and 7 students were then interviewed on a voluntary basis. This interview process furthered the researcher's understanding about the students' changes in reading attitudes (or lack of), whether or not the projects acted as external incentives to foster independent reading, and the impact the reading and project requirements made on seventh graders' motivation to read independently.

The findings demonstrated that activities based on Gardner's multiple intelligences are more motivating to seventh grade students than traditional activities are. Also, the amount of independent reading completed by seventh graders did not seem to increase simply because it was a class requirement.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER I
Statement of the Problem

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine how requiring

independent reading and culminating projects affects seventh graders'

attitudes toward reading.

Research Question

What are the effects of requiring independent reading and

culminating projects covering various learning styles on seventh

graders' attitudes toward reading?

Need for the Study

Across the globe, the number of aliterates is growing at an

alarming rate. "Voluntary reading is critical to a literate society"

(Lange, 1994). It is evident that as educators, we need to take action

to preserve the recreational readers that are out there and entice

reluctant readers to enjoy pleasure reading and further broaden their horizons. Research suggests numerous ways to meet these goals. Implementing a required independent reading program equipped with choices in reading material and assessment possibilities will explore a wide spectrum of the ideas discussed in the literature.

This study is a both qualitative and quantitative in nature. The researcher will be looking at the overall percentages of seventh graders who changed and maintained their reading habits. Also, she will be further investigating, through the use of interviewing, details regarding the types and causes of these reading habits and the readers' attitudes because of the culminating projects.

The students, parents, teachers, librarians, authors, and publishers could benefit from the implications of this study. The results could be effective in helping to determine how students choose their recreational reading books, what types of literature teachers should provide for students, which assessment tools are effective for students with a variety of learning styles, and what the greatest

motivators are for seventh graders when it comes to independent reading.

As the researcher and classroom English teacher of these seventh grade students, I wanted to develop a reading program that would increase students' recreational reading as well as help them build prior knowledge and meet New York State reading suggestions that students read 25 books a year. However, I found that I needed to have some sort of assessment strategy so that I could determine if students were completing the reading. Because so many seventh graders are turned off by reading, I wanted the form of assessment to be "fun" in their eyes. For this reason, I intentionally stayed away from traditional book reports and essays during the school year. As a result of this study, I discovered what motivates my students and yields the most significant improvements in reading attitudes. I am now implementing new teaching strategies based on my findings.

CHAPTER II
Review of Literature

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Review of the Literature

The Generation of Aliterates

Unfortunately, only a minority of seventh graders choose to

read for pleasure. As students progress through elementary school,

their attitudes toward recreational and academic reading steadily

decline (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995). Although the peak of reading interest may occur around age 12, this is the time when most readers stop reading (Johnston, 1990). According to Podl (1995), "So few teenagers read for pleasure; in fact, this phrase is oxymoronic to them" (p. 56). Our nation is becoming one of "aliterates"—those who can read, but choose not to (Lange, 1994). Why is this?

There are many reasons for this turn-off from reading. Some students feel they can't read and therefore don't want to put themselves in a threatening position (Podl, 1995). McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) support this correlation, too, with evidence that there is an increasing number of poorer readers in the upper grades; therefore, these students who struggle with reading would not choose reading as a pastime. Also, the adults in a child's life have a great impact on how interested he is in reading. If a parent or teacher shows little to no interest or value in reading, then the child will follow in those footsteps (Lange, 1994). Third, the students of this age are often involved in a variety of other activities such as school clubs, church organizations, music, and sports. It is difficult for them

to make time for leisure reading. Nancie Atwell (1998) also

empathizes by saying, "Reading takes a backseat in anyone's life

when life becomes impossibly full" (p. 96). The work of McKenna,

Kear, and Ellsworth (1995); Lange (1994) and McEady-Gillead

(1989) all verify this statement. Yet another reason why students do

not pursue reading is that it is difficult for them by nature. Or

perhaps, the tool used to assess a child's level of reading is not a good

one. Different students learn in different ways, and therefore should

be assessed in different ways to fit their individual needs.

Incentives to Increase Independent Reading

"In assigning fifteen minutes of reading every night, the teacher
is encouraging recreational reading."

Pettingill, 1992, pg. 8

By making reading an "assignment", many teachers feel they

are truly raising levels of independent reading and improving attitudes

toward it. While it is true that for some students just the idea that "it

is an assignment" would increase the amount of reading they do, for

others, there are no external incentives necessary. These students read because they are naturally drawn toward it. External incentives in these cases would merely "replace a deep motivation with a temporary one" according to Wiesendanger and Bader (1989). However, extrinsic motivators are exactly what other students may need to make attitudes toward reading more positive.

A variety of motivational programs such as Pizza Hut's Book-It!™, Operation Just Read™ (Wolf, 1998), and Book Whiz!™ offer external incentives such as pizza, being part of a campaign and party, and the use of computers to "test-out" on books, respectively. These incentives appeal to some students enough to encourage them and motivate them to recreationally read whereas without this they would not be inclined.

Furthermore, there are many things teachers can do without commercial incentives, with the resources they have within their rooms, to motivate children and increase positive attitudes toward independent reading. Five are outlined below.

1.) Show interest in the students' reading. Roeder and Lee (1979); Clary (1991); Heathington and Alexander (1984); Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding (1988); Podl (1995) can all testify that when teachers interact with their students about the literature they are choosing to read, students will tend to read more if for nothing else than to build that connection with the teacher.

2.) Make reading materials accessible to all students. Clary (1991); Calkins (1996); Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding (1988); Pettingill (1992); Traw (1993); and Lange (1994) concur that teachers need to be sure that students have reading materials made available to them. In doing so, the number of recreational readers will increase. As Estes and Johnstone (1975) suggest, teachers should "Be as certain as [they] possibly can that anything [they] ask any student to read is something he or she can and will want to read." Traw (1993) adds that due to Middle Schoolers' intense emotions, the choice of book that a child makes is often a "try on" adult experience, enabling the child to look at how a variety of situations is handled by others.

3.) Build a positive environment, as a class. There is much research

that supports the idea that the classroom environment and the level

of comfort a child feels about himself as a reader in that

environment will partially influence the child's attitude and

amount of free reading.

> "Of central importance is creating an atmosphere where a
> student feels comfortable, safe, and able to share his/her reading
> interests, reactions, and insights with the teachers and other
> students."
>
> Barmore & Morse, 1979, pg. 75

This should be the teacher's primary role. Clary (1991) and

Calkins (1996) emphasize a positive, conducive environment as

one of the most important elements to increase students' attitudes

toward independent reading. Pettingill (1992) states it best, "If

students perceive themselves as readers, they are likely to have a

better attitude toward reading and more motivation to read."

4.) Allowing students freedom of choice. Although this idea is

sometimes hard for teachers to come to terms with, it is proven

that giving students the freedom of choice will yield great results.

Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding (1988) and Pettingill (1992) found

that students developed significantly more positive attitudes toward reading when given choices. They preferred to choose their books than to have one assigned. Lange (1994) adds that motivation also increases when including the students' choices of rewards they receive for reading independently.

5.) *Hold them accountable in non-traditional ways.* Again, this idea involves choice. Students in the study conducted by Wiesendanger and Bader (1989) were "more likely to read for pleasure if they weren't held accountable for specific bits of information" (p. 347). In fact, Paine (1975) adds that "alternatives to standard book-reporting . . . might provide a needed spark for many recreational reading programs." Using book presentation ideas based on Gardner's multiple intelligences enables students freedom of choice while still allowing the teacher to evaluate to what extent the children have read. "Intelligence," according to Gardner (1999), is "the potential [for one] to solve problems or create products that are valued in one or more cultural settings" (p. 33-34). The eight multiple intelligences Gardner endorses are not the

concluding result of psychometric testing of various subjects, but

the conglomeration of years of scientific research. Gardner sifted

through numerous studies to determine which "intelligences" have

sufficient evidence showing they exist as intelligences. He started

with topics closely related to sensory modalities (such as tactile,

auditory, visual, etc.). Howard Gardner also believes,

> ". . . that we should get away altogether from tests and
> correlations among tests, and look instead at more naturalistic
> sources of information about how peoples around the world
> develop skills important to their ways of life"
>   (as cited in Armstrong, 1994).

These types of activities can be "costuming, advertisements, art

projects, drama, booktalks, and oral readings," according to Clary

(1991). In a study by Smith, Tracy, and Weber (1998), selection of

response activities was called a "vital feature." The study also

proved to increase positive attitudes toward reading, to expand the

amount of independent reading being completed, and to further

develop the multiple intelligences used by the participating

subjects.

CHAPTER III
Design of the Study

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine how requiring independent reading and culminating projects affects seventh graders' attitudes toward reading.

Research Question

What are the effects of requiring independent reading and culminating projects covering various learning styles on seventh graders' attitudes toward reading?

Methodology

Subjects

The subjects consist of 96 seventh grade students from a heterogeneously mixed, public rural middle school with low socio-economic status. The grade equivalencies of the subjects' total

reading scores from the California Achievement Test (CAT),

administered in April 1999, are outlined below. The students were at

the grade level equivalency of 6.8 at the time the CAT was

administered.

Total Reading Score (Grade Level Equivalency)	# of Subjects in this G. E.	% of Subjects in this G. E.
12.1-12.9	8 out of 96	8%
11.1-11.9	12 out of 96	12.5%
10.1-10.9	4 out of 96	4%
9.1-9.9	14 out of 96	14.5%
8.1-8.9	13 out of 96	13.5%
7.1-7.9	11 out of 96	11%
6.8 (at grade equivalency)	1 out of 96	1%
6.0-6.7	19 out of 96	20%
5.0-5.9	11 out of 96	11%
4.0-4.9	3 out of 96	3%

Table 1: Results of CAT Testing from April 1999

The subjects all have the same English teacher. They were

required to participate in a summer reading program where they chose

one novel to read from a list of 15. They were required to fill in a

notes sheet over the summer about the novel read, and then they were

asked to write an essay in school in September 2000 using that notes

sheet. After the completion of the essay, surveys were filled out by

the subjects regarding their summer reading experience. (See Appendix A.)

Materials

The surveys completed by the subjects in September 2000 about reading over the summer of 2000 were used as a baseline measure of the subjects' attitudes toward and the subjects' amount of independent reading. (See Appendix A.) At the end of the study in January 2001, subjects again were asked to complete surveys regarding their experiences. (See Appendix C.) Certain students who volunteered to further discuss their reading experiences were interviewed at this time for the purpose of furthering the researcher's understanding.

Procedure

Students were required throughout the regular school year (September 2000 through January 2001) to independently read two different novels of their choice and to complete two different assessment book projects of their choice from a list provided them based on the Gardner's learning styles. (See Appendix B.)

Qualitatively, 7 of those 85 subjects were further interviewed by the researcher. Participation was on a voluntary basis. The subjects interviewed had a variety of attitudes toward independent reading and culminating projects. In this way, the researcher was able to determine with more detail the effects of requiring reading and culminating projects on seventh graders.

In a sense, the reading program being analyzed by the researcher is like a qualitative case study about the program with quantitative data from the group of subjects. The researcher is also the teacher. Therefore, this study is action research.

Analysis of Data

There were data available about each of the subjects' experiences with the summer reading program. In January, the researcher also compiled the data retrieved from the surveys the subjects completed regarding their school year independent reading experiences. The data were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The positive and negative responses of the whole

group were looked at in a quantitative manner by sorting responses into specific categories. Qualitatively, students representing four possible groups of students (those who went from negative to positive experiences, those whose perceptions of reading did not change (whether positive or negative), and those who went from positive to negative experiences). The discoveries made shed light on the effects of requiring independent reading and culminating projects on seventh graders as well as its impact on their attitudes toward recreational reading. Insights into students' attitudes toward culminating projects were also attained.

CHAPTER IV
Results of the Study

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine how requiring

independent reading and culminating projects affects seventh graders'

attitudes toward reading.

Findings and Analysis of Data

In this action research study, the data were analyzed both

qualitatively and quantitatively. The researcher was also the subjects'

seventh grade English teacher.

The positive and negative responses of the whole group were

looked at in a quantitative manner by sorting responses into specific

categories. From September, there were data available from the

surveys the subjects completed regarding their experiences with the

summer reading program (see Table 2). Of the 85 surveyed, 75 of the

subjects read a book over the summer, and of those 75, 11 read more

than one book. When the subjects were asked to describe their

summer reading (in as many ways as apply), 68% had a positive

experience and 58% felt the experience "wasn't too bad." Yet, at the

same time, 35% had negative emotions toward the experience.

Question or Topic: Subjects (out of 85) who . . .	# of Subjects	% of Subjects
Met the requirement . . .	75	88%
. . . by reading more than 1 book	*11*	*13%*
. . . by reading 1 book	*64*	*75%*
Did not meet the requirement (read 0 books)	10	12%
Had an overall positive experience . . .	58	68%
. . . including being inspired to read more	*14*	*16%*
. . . including feeling it was terrific	*15*	*18%*
. . . including feeling it was fun	*17*	*20%*
. . . including learning something new	*12*	*14%*
Had an experience that was "not too bad"	51	·60%
Had an overall negative experience . . .	30	35%
. . . it was awful	*9*	*11%*
. . . it cut into TV watching, computer, etc.	*10*	*12%*
. . . it cut into outside time (i.e. sports)	*20*	*24%*
. . . it interrupted work schedule	*4*	*5%*
. . . it interrupted responsibilities at home	*12*	*14%*
Would choose assignments include . . .	79	93%
. . . create a diorama, picture, mobile, etc.	*54*	*64%*
. . . take a test in September	*6*	*7%*
. . . write an essay in class	*4*	*5%*
. . . write an essay at home	*9*	*11%*
. . . write a book report	*6*	*7%*

Table 2: Results of September 2000 Survey Regarding Summer Reading

The researcher then retrieved and compiled data from surveys

the subjects completed in January regarding their school year

independent reading experiences (see Tables 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3).

Question or Topic: Subjects (out of 91) who . . .	# of Subjects	% of Subjects
Met the <u>reading</u> requirement . . .	75	82%
. . . *by reading more than 2 books*	*30*	*33%*
. . . *by reading exactly 2 books*	*45*	*49%*
Did not meet the <u>reading</u> requirement . . .	15	16%
. . . *by reading 1 book*	*14*	*15%*
. . . *by reading 0 books*	*1*	*1%*
Met the <u>project presentation</u> requirement . . .	67	74%
. . . *by completing more than 2 projects*	*3*	*3%*
. . . *by completing exactly 2 projects*	*64*	*70%*
Did not meet the <u>project</u> requirement . . .	23	25%
. . . *by completing 1 project*	*17*	*19%*
. . . *by completing 0 projects*	*6*	*7%*

Table 3.1: Results of January 2001 Survey Regarding Independent Reading and
Projects: Those Who Met and Did Not Meet Reading and Project Requirements

It is evident in Table 3.1 that the majority of the subjects

completed the reading of one novel per marking period (84%) and the

presentation of one project per marking period (74%). However, not

every subject who completed the reading completed a project

presentation.

Question or Topic: Subjects (out of 91) who . . .	# of Subjects	% of Subjects
<u>Met both</u> requirements & did so because . . .	69	76%
. . . *they wanted to earn a good grade*	63	69%
. . . *it was required (they had to)*	43	47%
. . . *if they didn't, they'd be in trouble*	28	31%
. . . *they didn't want to disappoint parents*	26	29%
. . . *they didn't want to disappoint teacher*	21	23%
Had a <u>positive experience</u> because. . .	53	58%
. . . *subjects like to read*	29	32%
. . . *subjects like doing projects*	22	24%
Had an experience that was <u>"not too bad"</u>. . .	63	69%
. . . *because like projects, not reading*	23	25%
. . . *because like reading, not projects*	24	26%
. . . *because "didn't mind either way"*	16	18%
Didn't meet <u>both</u> requirements because. . .	22	24%
. . . *subjects don't like to read*	13	14%
. . . *subjects don't like doing projects*	7	8%

Table 3.2: Results of January 2001 Survey Regarding
Independent Reading and Projects: Reactions to the Assignment

Table 3.2 indicates that most subjects feel that the requirement

of reading and presenting a project was an ordinary or positive

experience for them. Many of the subjects were motivated to

complete the requirement because of their desire to earn a good grade.

13% of those who did not achieve the requirements did not do so

because they struggle with reading.

Question or Topic: Subjects (out of 91) who . . .	# of Subjects	% of Subjects
Were <u>motivated</u> by project presentations . . .	30	33%
Were <u>not affected</u> by project presentations...	47	52%
Were <u>discouraged</u> by project presentations...	14	15%
Feel making reading and projects required ...		
. . . motivated them to read much more	*16*	*18%*
. . . motivated them to read a little more	*24*	*35%*
. . . didn't change the amount read	*35*	*38%*
. . . discouraged reading a little bit	*4*	*4%*
. . . discouraged reading a lot	*12*	*13%*
Enjoy reading in 1/01 compared to 9/00 . . .		
. . . much more	*10*	*11%*
. . . a little bit more	*16*	*18%*
. . . about the same	*42*	*46%*
. . . a little bit less	*8*	*9%*
. . . much less	*13*	*14%*

Table 3.3: Results of January 2001 Survey Regarding
Independent Reading and Projects: Effects of the Assignment

For the majority of the subjects, the experience of completing a

required reading and presentation activity did not influence or affect

the amount of reading they would normally choose to complete

independently. Nor did the subjects feel that the required reading and

possibility of creating various projects turned them on to reading as a

future pastime. Because 88% met the requirements for the summer

reading project and 82% met the requirements during the school year, it can be hypothesized that 12% to 18% of the subjects simply are not readers by nature. Perhaps at the middle school level, students' reading habits are fairly well established and hard to change.

After analyzing the data collected from the surveys from September 2000 and January 2001, some central tendencies can be determined. 29% of the subjects increased their enjoyment from a perspective that they did not used to enjoy independent reading, but now they do (at least somewhat). 46% of the subjects have enjoyed reading in the past and continue to do so or have disliked reading in the past and maintain that perception. Another 23% feel the experience of being required to read novels over a six-week period and prepare and present projects based on Gardner's multiple intelligences actually caused them to enjoy independent reading less.

Qualitatively, seven students were interviewed to determine with more detail the effects of requiring independent reading and culminating projects on seventh graders. Table 4 outlines the

circumstances regarding each interviewee. Each interviewee has been assigned a number and will henceforth be referred to as that number. These subjects were interviewed on a voluntary basis and because of their diverse answers to the surveys aforementioned.

#	Description of the Subject's Circumstances
1	Reader who still enjoys reading and enjoyed completing projects
2	Reader who still enjoys reading but disliked completing projects
3	Non-reader who now likes reading because of doing projects
4	Non-reader who now likes reading simply because it was a requirement
5	Non-reader who does not have any change in opinion toward reading but enjoyed doing the projects
6	Reader who does not have any change in opinion toward reading but was discouraged by the assignment of the projects
7	Non-reader who still dislikes reading but was motivated to complete the assignment because she enjoyed doing the projects

Table 4: Description of Subjects Interviewed

Through interviewing subject 1, it was discovered that she valued her grade on the assessment most, followed by the approval of her parents and then that of her teacher. She also volunteered that reading is her favorite activity in which she partakes whenever she has a free moment. Subject 1 began reading avidly because she likes to engage her imagination with fantasy books and also since she joined

the public school from the local parochial school she attended through fifth grade.

Subject 2 shared that the reason he disliked doing the projects is that he does not think he does a good job on them. He feels turning them in to his teacher without presenting them would build his self-confidence, but sharing it with his peers makes him feel badly about himself. Part of the reason why Subject 2 feels he can't complete a project well is that he feels the project choices are too limiting.

Subject 3 seemed to make a real turn around in her attitude toward reading. She went from a person who reads an average of one magazine per week to whole novels per six-week period. She attributes this to the requirement of completing a project. Also, Subject 3 shared that she would be more inclined to read if there were other extrinsic motivators like extra credit.

Subject 4 responded well to just having the assignment to read. In his past, he has infrequently been expected to complete such tasks and now that he sees he is able to do it, he enjoys taking on and meeting the challenge to read novels. Also, Subject 4 feels the project

requirement is good in that it "makes you try different things like hands-on and verbal projects. I liked doing the diorama the best because I like working with my hands." Subject 4 went so far as to say he would read without the incentive of completing a project, but he enjoyed the projects so much he would even complete one if it weren't to be graded.

Subject 5 is a non-reader who enjoys "standing up in front of the class." Her complaints about the activity of reading were that she "doesn't remember what was read and she gets headaches from [reading]." Although after the study she doesn't feel any stronger toward reading, she was motivated and able to complete the reading during the study because she was looking forward to presenting the projects in front of the class.

Subject 6 did not enjoy completing and presenting the projects and actually felt that having to present them dissuaded her from completing the reading assignment even though she enjoys reading.

Subject 7 felt that the reading assignment wasn't bad because there was lots of time to complete it, however she only completed the

assignment because it was required of her. Normally, Subject 7 reads about ten books per year on her own time, yet she feels that her whole experience of reading is bad now because she "doesn't like that [she] has to do it."

These discoveries shed light on the effects of requiring independent reading and culminating projects on seventh graders as well as its impact on their attitudes toward recreational reading. Insights into students' attitudes toward culminating projects were also attained.

CHAPTER V
Conclusions and Implications

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine how requiring

independent reading and culminating projects affects seventh graders'

attitudes toward reading.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and data retrieved from the interviews,

several conclusions can be drawn.

The majority of the subjects had an overall positive experience

or didn't mind the experience of being asked to read novels on their

own time and prepare for an in-class essay or complete projects for

presentation in front of the class. Initially, students were asked to fill

in a notes sheet to prepare for an in-class essay, but 87% of the

subjects expressed that they would choose alternate forms of

assessment including many of the choices available to them in

Appendix B. This finding supports the use of authentic assessments geared toward the multiple intelligences.

When the assessment was changed from an in-class essay to a project involving multiple intelligences, there was still a high number of subjects who completed the reading and project assignment. However, when the subjects reflected on their experiences, only a third of them attributed their completion of both requirements to the choices of projects. More than half felt that the project presentation options did not motivate them to read or discourage them from reading any more than they normally would.

It is evident that by requiring independent reading as an assignment, many seventh graders who do not normally read for pleasure are not enticed to begin. For some students, this extrinsic motivator works, but it deters an equal amount of others from wanting to read when they have free time. This means that the students feel they would have been more interested in reading if the assignment had not been made. These students seem to miss the purpose of reading. Generally, the assignment of required independent reading and

presentation of projects or writing of essays maintains or increases the amount of independent reading completed by seventh graders as well as their attitudes toward it.

Perhaps in this study, the dynamic of the group of subjects had a negative impact on the results. These seventh graders as a group seemed more reluctant to actively participate in their learning and therefore, were more difficult to motivate and entice to partake in this reading program.

As the subjects' teacher as well as the researcher, I have seen engagement throughout the school year that was not necessarily represented here. Perhaps the survey approach did not lend itself well because seventh graders are not strong at self-reflection.

Implications for the Classroom

For teachers who are trying to increase the amount of independent reading that their students do, requiring an assignment such as this one will definitely get them reading. However, in terms

of developing a love for reading in these students, this assignment approach may not be an effective tool.

Offering projects (including some writing options) as a form of assessment of the reading students complete does appeal to more students than a straightforward essay approach. This allows the assessments to appeal to students with various strengths.

The idea of presenting the projects, although some students might disagree, does allow them to practice public speaking in some form which will prepare them for their futures.

Implications for Further Research

The surveys used in this study did not elicit the most appropriate information. Many times, the subjects indicated many responses to questions and as a result, their true feelings and experiences seemed ambiguous or even contradictory.

Also, some sort of code system should be devised so that the subjects are anonymous yet their questionnaire results from the initial and culminating surveys can be compared. Or perhaps, surveys

should not remain anonymous as to provoke the normally disengaged readers to participate in the study.

When giving the culminating survey in January, the students completed it immediately following the last project presentation. The researcher's intention was that the experience would be fresh in the subjects' minds however, for those who chose not to participate, their bitterness was also fresh in their minds when completing the survey. Perhaps a day or two should have been allowed to pass before completing the culminating survey.

Third, when including the phrase, "If you are willing to be further interviewed, please put your name on this" on the back of the January 2001 survey (Appendix C), the researcher should have explained that the sole purpose of "interviewing" would merely be an opportunity for the researcher to clarify any responses the subject may have written. If the directions had been phrased that way, conceivably more students would have volunteered to share.

In future studies, it would be interesting to determine how students choose their recreational reading books and also if there are

any other extrinsic incentives that seem to foster children's desires to read. A related study maybe to investigate how to increase intrinsic motivation at the middle school level. Perhaps the depth in which students read and the depth of their feelings toward it can also be explored.

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APPENDICES

Student Feedback
Grade 7
Summer 2000 Reading Assignment

   This past summer you were required to read one book and complete an assignment. This feedback sheet provides a means for you to share your opinion. Please complete this form by putting a checkmark by your answers. Some of the questions require a short answer.

1. Did you really read a book? ___ yes ___ no

2. Did you read more than one book? ___ yes ___no

3. If yes, how many did you read? _____

4. What kind of books (mystery, sci fi, historical fiction, biography, sports, romance, etc.) or what specific book titles would you like to see on the list?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

5. Reading one book this summer... (you can mark more than one choice)

   ___ was terrific

   ___ was fun

   ___ was not too bad

   ___ made me want to read other books

   ___ helped me learn something new

   ___ was awful

   ___ cut into my TV watching, computer time, or video game time

   ___ cut into my being outside time (sports, hanging out)

   ___ was difficult because I work

   ___ was difficult because I have at-home responsibilities

6. If you had a choice, what assignment would you prefer to complete for a grade?
   ___ complete a project (picture, diorama, mobile, etc.) & present it in class
   ___ take a test after you return to school
   ___ write an essay in class
   ___ write an essay at home
   ___ write a book report (describe characters, setting, plot, climax, falling action)

Positive suggestions for next summer's assignment:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your input.

The English Department

Quarterly Outside Reading Project

> This year you will be asked to read novels outside of class. You will need to complete the majority of the reading on your own time. When you have finished reading each novel, you will share a book project with the class. Here's how to do it!

Q Can I read any book?

A No. You need to choose a novel that is more than 100 pages in length. It needs to be teacher-approved, parent-approved, and something that you have not read in the past.

Q Where can I get a book?

A Look in the school library during study hall. Check the public library, at home, a book store, etc. You may even want to borrow one from a teacher in the building—ask politely!

Q How long do I have to read each book?

A You will have approximately six weeks to read each book. I will give you deadline dates and some time to read in class throughout the year.

Q How much time do I have to do a project? Can I do a group project?

A You will be given 1½ weeks to work on a project. Again, deadlines and perhaps some class time will be given. You need to do the project independently unless you and a friend read the same book. In that case, you need to see the teacher with your project idea.

Q What information do I need to include in my book projects?

A Make sure that for each book project you share the following information:
- Title and author
- Setting (where and when your novel takes place)
- Names and descriptions of the main characters
- Plot (order of events, what happened, etc.)
- Theme (author's hidden message or lesson to the reader)
- Your likes and dislikes about the novel

Name: _____   Date: _____

Book Project Choices

This year you must complete four projects: one per quarter from one of the four blocks.
For example, if you choose "Create a rap . . ." from the first block for your first quarter,
you cannot do another choice from the first block for the rest of the year.

A   Kinesthetic/Musical

Create a rap about your novel. Be sure to include the answers to the 6 bullets.

Act out a scene from the novel. You may use your book and you **must** use props.

Create a Jack Garner or Mike Cidoni review of the novel and act it out.

Dress up as the main character and give the information from his point of view.
characters from your novel.

B   Verbal/Linguistic

Write a poem telling about your book and share it. Be sure to include all info.

Conduct an "Oprah" interview with a main character.

Create a front-page newspaper article about a character or event from your novel.

Keep a 5-entry diary of one of the main

C   Visual/Spatial

Create a game board game using the information from the novel.

Recreate the story into cartoon frames and simpler wording so that a child could read it and understand.

Make a diorama of your favorite part of the novel and be ready to tell about it.

Create a collage from old magazine pictures that shows the novel's theme and plot (the 6 bullet information).

D   Logical/Intrapersonal

Write a journal about how your life would be different if you were the main character.

Create a map leading the main character through the major incidents in the book.

Create a timeline of the events and from your novel and be ready to share it.

Watch the movie version and create a poster that shows at least six similarities and six differences between the novel and the film.

<u>Appendix C</u>

Student Feedback for Independent Reading and Novel Project
Grade 7
January 2001

Based on the 1ˢᵗ and 2ⁿᵈ marking periods of this school year, please answer the following questions. Please complete the form by putting a checkmark by your answers. Some short answer responses may be required.

1. How many **books did you read** for the last 2 marking periods?
   _____ more than 2   _____ 2   _____ 1   _____ 0

2. How many **book projects did you complete** for the last 2 marking periods?
   _____ more than 2   _____ 2   _____ 1   _____ 0

3. How did you feel about the assignment of reading one novel independently and completing a book project each quarter? (you can mark more than one choice)

   _____ I enjoyed it because. . .
   _____ I like to read.
   _____ I like doing projects.
   _____ other reason _____
   _____
   _____

   _____ I liked doing the projects, even though I don't like to read.

   _____ I liked the reading, but I didn't enjoy doing the projects.

   _____ I didn't mind either way.

_____ The **main** reason I did it was. . .
      _____ so I wouldn't disappoint my parents.
      _____ so I wouldn't disappoint Mrs. Judge.
      _____ it was required (I had to).
      _____ if I didn't, I'd be in trouble.
      _____ I wanted a good grade.
      _____ other reason _____

_____
_____

_____ I didn't do it **even though it was an assignment** because. . .
      _____ I don't like to read.
      _____ I don't like to do projects.
      _____ other reason: _____

_____
_____

4. Did the projects **motivate** you to do the reading? _____ yes _____ no

5. Did the projects **discourage** you from doing the reading? ___ yes ___ no

6. Overall, making independent reading an **assignment**. . .
      _____ motivated me to read **much more** than I normally would.
      _____ motivated me to read **a little bit more** than I normally would.
      _____ **didn't change the amount** I would normally read on my own.
      _____ made me want to read **a little bit less** than I normally would.
      _____ made me want to read **much less** than I normally would.

7. Do you like reading now more or less than you did in September?
      _____ much more   _____ a little bit more   _____ about the same
          _____ a little bit less   _____ much less

If you are willing to be further interviewed, please put your name on this.