

**The Effects of an Academic Incentive Program  
on Sixth Grade Students' Attitudes Toward Reading**

**Thesis**

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine if the academic incentive program, “Book-It,” which advocates the use of pizza as an extrinsic reward for reading, would improve the reading attitudes of sixth grade students. In addition, due to the fact that the “Book-It” program is voluntary, it was beneficial to note if a significant number of readers with poor attitudes participated, or were the majority of participants those students already possessing positive attitudes toward reading.

The subjects were one hundred thirty-seven urban, heterogeneously grouped sixth grade students from separate middle schools. The students’ ages ranged from 11-13. There were a total of eight classes involved in this study. Four of the classes participated in the “Book-It” program (the experimental group), and the other four classes were not given any extrinsic incentives for voluntary reading (the control group). As a pre- post-attitude assessment, the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey was given to each of the subjects. Each teacher administered the Survey; however, the researcher collected and tabulated the results.

Two separate  $t$  tests were used to analyze the data. The results of the first  $t$  test demonstrated no statistically significant differences on the posttest scores between the control group and the experimental group. The results of the second  $t$  test demonstrated no statistically significant differences on the pretest scores between those students who voluntarily participated and those who did not. The findings, consistent with previous research, support the claim that the use of extrinsic rewards do not improve students’ motivation to read.

# Table of Contents

	Page
<b>Chapter I</b>	
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Purpose.....	3
Questions.....	3
Need for Study.....	4
Definition of Terms.....	5
<b>Chapter II</b>	
Review of the Literature.....	6
Motivational Influences on Reading.....	6
Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation.....	7
The Behaviorist Perspective.....	8
The Cognitive Perspective.....	11
Home Influences on Motivation.....	16
School Influences on Motivation.....	18
<b>Chapter III</b>	
Design of the Study.....	19
Purpose.....	19
Questions.....	19
Null Hypothesis.....	20
Methodology.....	21
Analysis of the Data.....	24
<b>Chapter IV</b>	
Analysis of the Data.....	25
Purpose.....	25
Findings and Interpretations.....	26
Table 1.....	26
Table 2.....	27

## Table of Contents (Continued)

### Chapter V

Conclusions and Implications.....	28
Purpose.....	28
Conclusions.....	28
Implications for Education.....	30
Implications for Future Research.....	31
References	33
Appendices	36
Appendix A.....	37
Appendix B.....	39

## CHAPTER I

### Statement of the Problem

Many teachers continually find themselves faced with the challenge of creating a classroom environment that will encourage a love of reading. In developing this environment, teachers are confronted with the reality that there are many factors which influence students' ability and desire to read. The key component among these factors is motivation. It is generally acknowledged that motivation is essential in the development of substantial and lasting learning. Many studies have cited a connection between motivation and achievement (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996; Valencia, Pearson, Peters & Wixson, 1989). Findings of these studies suggest that children who have the desire and the will to read are better readers.

A common question asked by many teachers is, "How can I create an environment in which students will be motivated to read?" One popular solution to this question is the use of various reward systems. While these incentives may vary, they have one common goal; they strive to encourage, arouse, and move students to action (Seoane & Smink, 1991). Many businesses and schools have advocated the use of reading incentive programs as a method of motivating students to read. Candy, parties, stickers, and privileges are some of the most

commonly used incentives. Researchers such as Shanker (1990) and Pierce and Cameron (1996) assert that the use of incentives to stimulate students' behavior can make a significant difference in performance.

Other studies conducted have found that using incentives to change student behavior is not only unnecessary, but counterproductive (Kohn, 1996; McQuillan, 1997). Results suggest that the problem with using extrinsic rewards is that they are short-lived, and when the reward runs out, so do the desired behaviors.

"Extrinsic motivations lead to 'least effort' literacy styles whereas intrinsic motivations are more likely to inspire long-term literacy commitments" (Sweet & Guthrie, 1996, p. 661). Conrath (1988, cited in Seoane & Smink, 1991) stated:

...it is unforgivably patronizing to lavish external rewards on at-risk kids everytime they do something right. Supply-side economics may have led to this in education, but the only way we will successfully raise self-esteem and help kids feel good about themselves is by focusing on the internal reasons for why they do what they do. (p.5)

Despite their wide popularity, these incentive programs have not been critically examined as to their effectiveness in promoting more positive attitudes toward reading. There is little evidence to substantiate the use of rewards and an improvement in reading attitudes. Findings of these studies indicate the need to continue to increase our understanding of how children acquire the motivation to develop into active, engaged readers.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to determine if the academic incentive program “Book-It,” which advocates the use of pizza as an extrinsic reward for reading will improve the reading attitudes of sixth grade students. The findings may help teachers make educational decisions on whether to implement these programs into their classrooms.

Furthermore, due to the fact that the “Book-It” program is voluntary, it would be beneficial to note if a significant number of readers with poor attitudes participate, or are the majority of participants those students who already possess positive attitudes toward reading.

## **Research Questions:**

1. What are the effects of the academic incentive program, “Book-It” on sixth grade students’ attitudes toward reading?
2. When readers are given a choice, is there a significant difference in the level of participation in the “Book-It” program between initially high and low motivated readers?

### **Null Hypotheses:**

There will be no statistically significant difference on the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey between sixth graders who have participated in the “Book-It” reading incentive program and a comparable group of students who did not participate.

There will be no statistically significant difference between initially high motivated readers and initially low motivated readers who voluntarily participate in the “Book-It” reading incentive program.

### **Need for the Study**

It is essential for us as educators to increase our understanding of how and why children acquire the motivation to read so that we in turn can provide them with an optimal learning environment. Despite their gaining popularity, academic incentive programs have not been critically examined as to their effectiveness in promoting positive attitudes toward reading. Considering the millions of children participating in the Pizza Hut “Book-It” Program, knowing the value of this incentive program on students’ attitudes toward reading might prove beneficial to educators. In addition, due to the number of research studies indicating the

possibility of extrinsic rewards decreasing intrinsic motivation, more research is needed to determine what effects these programs have.

### **Definitions**

***Intrinsic Motivation:*** is when a person does an activity due to curiosity, involvement, social interaction, and challenge. Students who are intrinsically motivated have personal interests and private experiences that develop into reasons for participating in a particular program.

***Extrinsic Motivations:*** are those that come from outside the learner. Compliance, recognition, and getting good grades are examples of frequently stated extrinsic motivators.

## CHAPTER II

### Review of the Literature

#### Motivational Influences on Reading

Researchers support the claim that in order for students to develop into mature, effective readers, they must possess both the skill and the will to read (Carver & Leibert, 1995; Kohn, 1996; Miller & Meece, 1997). Motivation plays a critical role in learning and in fostering a life-long love of reading. According to Gambrell (1996), "Motivation serves to make the difference between learning that is superficial and shallow, and learning that is deep and internalized" (p.15). In a study conducted by Veenman (1984), teachers ranked motivating students as one of their primary and over-riding concerns. Creating interest in reading, promoting a desire to read, and understanding how teachers, peers, and parents can enhance such motivation were rated as the most important areas for future research.

Educators, politicians, and business leaders have all advocated the use of incentives to motivate children to read more. Fantuzzo, Rohrbeck, Hightower, and Work (1991, cited in McQuillan, 1997) report that 81% of the elementary

school teachers they surveyed use incentives in their classrooms to improve reading. Many schools implement reading incentive programs, and dozens of public libraries run their own summer reading reward programs.

For the past fourteen years, Pizza Hut and the U.S. Department of Education have teamed up to offer a nationwide incentive program called “Book It.” The program offers free pizza as the incentive for students who complete the reading requirements. Promotional literature from Pizza Hut states that there are nearly 22 million students currently enrolled in the “Book It” Program.

### **Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation**

Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations influence the learner in very different ways. Intrinsic motivations appear to be imperative to life-long, voluntary reading. Strategies such as finding books, maintaining a place for reading, and saving a large amount of time for reading activities are learned and sustained by intrinsic motivations. Extrinsic motivations for reading and writing can be powerful because they induce immediate effort and attention, but the effect is also short term. Extrinsic motivations do not regenerate themselves (Guthrie, Van Meter, McCann, Wigfield, Bennett, Poundstone, Rice, Faibisch, Hunt, &

Mitchell, 1996). The teacher must provide a new goal to induce new reading activities.

It is acknowledged that students who are interested and curious to understand the content of a unit are likely to get a deeper understanding of the material than students who possess different kinds of intentions. Students whose motivations are more extrinsic are likely to engage in rote learning and gain verbatim knowledge rather than a fully integrated conceptual understanding (Blumenfeld, 1992). Therefore intrinsic motivations tend to produce higher levels of conceptual learning than extrinsic motivations.

### **The Behaviorist Perspective**

Advocates of academic incentive programs suggest that incentives serve to give many students the extra motivation or “push” they need to establish lifelong reading habits. As Sax (1996) states, “Incentive programs benefit students by building self-esteem, with students earning while they learn” (p.6).

Behaviorists such as B.F. Skinner (1953) have argued that rewards are indispensable. In his operant conditioning model, he stated that the effort level of the participant could be controlled through the use of external rewards. The belief of many behaviorists is that by using reinforcers or external rewards, students will

increase their level of performance at a given task. According to Chance (1992), students will not do what is necessary to learn without some kind of reward, such as praise, grades, or recognition. He states that a teacher must supplement intrinsic rewards with extrinsic rewards. In addition, Shanker (1990) believes that incentives are essential to get people started. He contends that most adults go to work regularly and on time because of a system based on a system of incentives.

In a study conducted by The Institute for Academic Excellence (IAE) (1993), 10,124 first through ninth grade students were tested on each book they read and received points depending on the difficulty level of the book and their test score. In this computer testing program called "Accelerated Reader," the results were positive. There were increases, especially with young children of "low reading ability" improving a little more than two grade levels on standardized tests for every 100 points earned reading. The gains were less evident in the upper grades, with fifth graders gaining only .5 years per 100 points earned.

In a study conducted by Harrop and McCann (1983), fifth graders were continually promised a letter home to parents if they showed adequate progress in their English classes during the five-month treatment period. The control group received no letters or other rewards. The same teacher taught both groups. In determining if the incentives had an effect on reading scores, the researchers ran

two separate  $t$  tests on the reading comprehension scores from a standardized test; one for the experimental group, which showed significant gains, and one for the control group, which did not.

Harter (1981) found a need for both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Results indicate that when skill building and behavior control are necessary, extrinsic incentives are useful. When higher order skills and self-directed learning is desired, the importance of students' intrinsic motivation should increase. According to Guthrie, Van Meter, McCann, Wigfield, Bennett, Poundstone, Rice, Faibisch, Hunt, & Mitchell (1996), students have multiple goals for reading, some of which are intrinsic and some extrinsic. Further evidence supports that children's motivations may be related to a specific content area. For example, some students may be intrinsically motivated to read but not do math. Gottfried (1985) found that intrinsic motivations for reading predicted students' perceptions of their own competence in reading, but intrinsic motivation in reading did not predict perceptions of competence in math or science.

## The Cognitive Perspective

Despite the popularity of their use, there are many who do not support the use of incentives in academic settings. These educators believe that the use of extrinsic reinforcers may undermine rather than facilitate performance on and interest in activities that are intrinsically motivating (Kohn, 1996; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Sweet & Guthrie, 1996). Kohn (1998), asserts in his lecture that

There is an inverse relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Once extrinsic incentives are offered for engaging in intrinsically motivated behaviors, the probability of an individual continuing the behavior after the incentives are withdrawn are decreased.

Kohn (1993) notes that an incentive program that turns reading into something one has to do to obtain a reward is hardly likely to produce children who have “learned to love books.” Once the library runs out of baseball cards or the teacher stops giving the pizza certificates, children are not only unlikely to continue reading; they are less likely to read than they were before the program began.

Deci and Ryan (1985) found the negative effects of rewards to be particularly strong when the external motivator is anticipated before the activity and made salient, both conditions typical of reading incentive programs. Results of their research indicate that external rewards can affect perceived competence and

self determination, and therefore reduce intrinsic motivation. In a study conducted by Grolnick and Ryan (1989), it was found that giving students choice and positive feedback tended to increase intrinsic motivation, whereas rewards had controlling effects, and decreased intrinsic motivation.

Extrinsic motivations for reading and writing can be powerful because they induce immediate effort and attention, but the effect is also short term. Extrinsic motivations do not regenerate themselves (Guthrie, Van Meter, McCann, Wigfield, Bennett, Poundstone, Rice, Faibisch, Hunt, & Mitchell, 1996). The teacher must provide a new goal to induce new reading activities.

As Deci and Ryan (1985) state:

The desire to explore, discover, understand, and know is intrinsic to people's nature and is a potentially central motivator of the educational process. Yet all too frequently, educators, parents, and policymakers have ignored intrinsic motivation and viewed education as an extrinsic process, one that must be pushed and prodded from without. (p.245)

Studies conducted on the use of various rewards (food, prizes, awards, avoidance of punishment, etc.) have found that external incentives lead to lower intrinsic motivation to perform the task once the reward is removed, whether it is initially appealing to the subject or not (Cordova & Lepper, 1996). Rewards can also negatively affect the performance of the task and can have long-term consequences. Students whose motivations are more extrinsic are likely to engage

in rote learning and gain verbatim knowledge rather than a fully integrated conceptual understanding (Blumenfeld, 1992). According to Blumenfeld, intrinsic motivations tend to produce higher levels of conceptual learning than extrinsic motivations. McQuillan (1997) concluded that the effects of the decreased intrinsic motivation caused by the rewards carried over into later settings when the rewards were no longer present.

Another negative aspect of using incentives to increase motivation in reading lies in the assumption of reward programs that reading is inherently an unattractive or uninteresting activity for most children. Voorhees (1993) designed a study to address middle school students' lack of motivation for recreational reading. A combination of read alouds, sustained silent reading time, an after school book club, and certificates, ribbons, and prizes were used for a group of 75 sixth and seventh graders over a twelve week period. Outcomes were measured by comparison of student pre- and post-attitude surveys, teacher observation of books read and recorded, and participation in the reading club. Findings indicate that students view reading as less important than other activities such as watching television, listening to music, or participating in sports and hobbies.

In a study conducted by Carver and Leibert (1995), the effects of incentives were examined after a six-week, in library summer program. Rewards

were generously used to motivate students to read (60 Pizza Hut pizzas, free tacos, free ice cream cones, and over 300 other fast food coupons). Results found that students made no gains in a 100 word, standardized test of vocabulary, even when measured two months after the program. In addition, it was observed that children were not actually reading all the time. They were selecting shorter books in order to receive more pizzas, and were not able to answer comprehension questions based on the story they had just read. This study demonstrates that the inclusion of rewards altered the students approach to reading and negatively affected the results.

In his study of motivational strategies employed by first-year teachers, Newby (1991) determined that teachers were most likely to use “satisfaction” strategies such as rewards or punishments. However, these proved to be the least effective in promoting desired on-task behaviors.

In a five month experimental study established by Adler (1989), similar results were found. Sixth graders from separate elementary schools were divided into two groups. The experimental group used sustained silent reading for a total of 40 minutes per week and the Pizza Hut “Book It” program in which students received one free pizza for every 250 pages they read. The control group used

only the SSR program. The study found no differences on a standardized reading test between the rewards and no rewards group at the end of the treatment.

Lobel and Levanon (1988) conducted an experiment that focused on situations that foster cheating in 10 to 12 year old boys and girls. Their findings demonstrated that all children cheated most when they expected a tangible prize. These results suggest that encouraging children to rely more on internal reinforcement and to believe in their positive characteristics may aid in reducing the incidence of cheating in the classroom.

The results of these studies, therefore support the claim that rewarding children to read may lead to less reading in the long run, not more. The reward system also had other effects. For instance, it changed the pattern of book selection in which short books with large print became ideal, and it decreased the amount of reading children did outside of school (Carver & Leibert, 1995). According to Schwartz (1982, cited in McQuillan, 1997), "The rewards also seemed to change the way the children read. They were often unable to answer straightforward questions about a book, even one they had just finished reading." (p.53)

Gambrell (1996) provides evidence to support the claim that extrinsic rewards that are strongly related to reading and reading behavior such as (books,

bookmarks, teacher praise etc.) can be used effectively to increase intrinsic motivation. For example, when students read 21 books (the goal) they were rewarded with a book of their choice, or other related rewards (bookmarks) thereby reinforcing the importance of reading. These types of rewards proved to be particularly beneficial for children who did not have a literature-rich background. It is the belief of McQuillan (1997) and Gambrell (1996), that devoting money to books rather than rewards might prove more beneficial in promoting reading among children.

### **Home Influences on Motivation**

Factors in the home environment play a critical role in determining children's achievement motivation and performance in school. It is acknowledged that parent-child interaction is the most important home influence on children's later achievement behavior in school. Therefore how parents facilitate the development of reading skills and motivation to read by structuring the home environment and interact with their children is of particular importance. Research conducted by Grolnick and Ryan (1989); and Gottfried (1985) indicates that parental attitudes, control styles, expectations, and beliefs regarding their children's abilities are strongly related to children's academic achievement.

Grolnick & Ryan (1989) suggest that by fostering autonomy in children, parents better prepare their children for an educational environment that requires independence and self-regulation. Kurdek and Sinclair (1988) found that adolescents' grades were positively related to parenting styles that encouraged independence and individuality. Results of their study involving middle class eighth graders suggests that extrinsic motivations that serve to regulate and control a child's behavior often result in diminishing a child's independence.

Gottfried, Fleming and Gottfried (1994) also studied parents' effect on students' intrinsic motivation. More specifically, their study concentrated on determining the effect of motivational techniques employed by parents. They discerned that parents who encourage their children to find learning fun and pleasurable have children whose academic intrinsic motivation is higher. However, parents who rely on external motivators, such as rewards or punishments, may actually decrease their children's academic intrinsic motivation.

Parents can influence their children's motivation to read by the ways in which they become involved in their children's activities. One way this can be accomplished is by providing appropriate reading materials in the home. Research indicates a positive relationship between the number of books in the home and

children's reading ability (Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman, & Ryan, 1981); (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989).

### **School Influences on Motivation**

One of the key factors in motivating students to read is a teacher who values reading and is enthusiastic about sharing a love of reading with students. There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that when children are given access to positive models of literacy and have a good supply of books available, they read more and find it more enjoyable when such conditions are absent (Blumenfeld, 1992). Teachers create the learning environment by the ways in which they select and model activities, carry out evaluations, and exercise authority.

Classroom learning environments that enable students to develop an increased sense of competence and to assume increased responsibility for their learning are likely to promote an intrinsic motivational orientation. Learning activities that enable students to collaborate with peers, and to make decisions and choices also increase student's intrinsic motivation. In contrast, evaluation procedures that emphasize competition among students for grades, recognition, and rewards can decrease intrinsic motivation and heighten students' concerns about failure (Miller, 1986; Covington & Omelich, 1985).

## **CHAPTER III**

### **Design of the Study**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to determine if the academic incentive program, “Book-It,” which advocates the use of pizza as an extrinsic reward for reading, would improve the reading attitudes of sixth grade students. The findings may help teachers make educational decisions on whether to implement these programs into their classrooms.

Furthermore, due to the fact that the “Book-It” program is voluntary, it was beneficial to note if a significant number of readers with poor attitudes participated, or were the majority of participants those students already possessing positive attitudes toward reading.

#### **Research Questions**

1. What are the effects of the academic incentive program, “Book-It” on sixth grade students’ attitudes toward reading?
2. When readers are given a choice, is there a significant difference in the level of participation in the “Book-It” program between initially high and low motivated readers?

## Null Hypotheses

1. There will be no statistically significant difference on the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey between sixth graders who have participated in the “Book-It” reading incentive program and a comparable group of students who did not participate.
2. There will be no statistically significant difference between initially high motivated students and initially low motivated students who voluntarily participate in the “Book-It” reading incentive program.

## Definitions

**Intrinsic Motivation:** is when a person does an activity due to curiosity, involvement, social interaction, and challenge. Students who are intrinsically motivated have personal interests and private experiences that develop into reasons for participating in a particular activity.

**Extrinsic Motivations:** are those that come from outside the learner.

Compliance, recognition, and getting good grades are examples of frequently stated extrinsic motivators.

## **Methodology**

### **Subjects**

The subjects were one hundred thirty seven urban, heterogeneously grouped sixth grade students from separate middle schools. The students' ages ranged from 11-13. These students were Title 1 funded and 85% received free or reduced lunch.

There were a total of eight classes involved in this study. Four of the classes participated in the "Book It" incentive program (the experimental group), and the other four classes did not receive any extrinsic incentives for voluntary reading (the control group).

### **Instruments**

As a pre- post-attitude assessment, the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) was used. The survey consists of 20 questions with a pictorial rating scale. Students respond by circling the Garfield, a familiar cartoon character, which best represents their feelings about the question. The survey relates to students' attitudes toward recreational reading as well as academic aspects of reading.

This survey was created after revising questions from a variety of previously developed attitude surveys. Thirty-nine questions were reworded and administered to 499 students. These students ranged from first through sixth grade in a mid-sized school district in the Midwest. After the correlational coefficients among the items were determined, the 10 items for each subscale of the ERAS were chosen. The reliability of this survey was calculated at each grade level, and the reliability coefficients range from .74 to .89. In addition 16 out of the 18 coefficients calculated were at least .80 (McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth, 1995).

## **Procedures**

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey was administered in September as a pretest measure for all students in the control and experimental groups. The teachers involved were provided with the Elementary Reading Attitude Surveys. They explained to the students that this survey would be used to help determine how they feel about both academic and recreational reading. The teacher explained that it is very important for the students to be honest and sincere. They emphasized that this is not a test and reassured students that there are no “right” answers. Additionally, teachers informed the students that they would not be

scoring the surveys, and that their responses would have no effect on their reading grade.

The survey was explained, and the teachers checked for understanding before distributing the surveys. The procedure took approximately ten minutes to complete. When students finished, their papers were collected and placed in a manila envelope with the corresponding teacher's name on it. All surveys were collected and scored by the researcher.

Students in the experimental group participated in the Pizza Hut "Book-It" program beginning the first week of October. To earn a certificate for a free pizza, the student was required to read 100 pages in an undetermined amount of books. After each book, the student was to fill out a short summary of the book. At the completion of the month's reading requirements, the student received one free pizza certificate redeemable at a local Pizza Hut restaurant. This program covered a five month period.

In April, two months after the program had ended, both the experimental and control groups were asked to complete the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey for a second time. Once again the same directions and conditions were reviewed. Pre- and posttest scores for the experimental and control groups were compared to determine if any significant attitude change had occurred.

## **Analysis of Data**

A  $t$  test was used to determine statistically significant differences in the mean posttest scores for the experimental group and for the control group.

A second  $t$  test was used to determine statistically significant differences on the ERAS pretest between readers who chose to participate in the program and those who did not.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **Analysis of Data**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to determine if the academic incentive program, “Book-It,” which advocates the use of pizza as an extrinsic reward for reading, would improve the reading attitudes of sixth grade students. The findings may help teachers make educational decisions on whether to implement these programs into their classrooms.

Furthermore, due to the fact that the “Book-It” program is voluntary, it was beneficial to note if a significant number of readers with poor attitudes participated, or were the majority of participants those students already possessing positive attitudes toward reading.

#### **Research Questions**

1. What are the effects of the academic incentive program, “Book-It” on sixth grade students’ attitudes toward reading?
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## Null Hypotheses

1. There will be no statistically significant difference on the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey between sixth graders who have participated in the “Book-It” reading incentive program and a comparable group of students who did not participate.
  
2. There will be no statistically significant difference between initially high motivated students and initially low motivated students who voluntarily participate in the “Book-It” reading incentive program.

## Findings and Interpretations

Tables 1 and 2 summarize the statistical findings of the analysis.

**Table 1**  
**Reading Attitude Scores of Experimental Group versus Control Group**

	Experimental Group	Control Group
<b>Mean</b>	53.433	55.484
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	10.325	10.794
<b>Number of Students</b>	30	62

The calculated  $t$  value was -0.866. For a two-tailed test at the .05 level of significance the critical values with 90 degrees of freedom are  $\pm 1.987$ . Since the

calculated  $t$  value did not fall in the critical region, the null hypothesis could not be rejected. Therefore it was determined that there is no statistically significant difference between the posttest scores of the experimental group versus the control group.

**Table 2**  
**Pretest Scores of Participating Students versus Non-Participating Students**

	<b>Participating Students</b>	<b>Non-Participating</b>
<b>Mean</b>	58.966	56.377
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	10.159	9.444
<b>Number of Students</b>	30	45

The calculated  $t$  value was 1.128. For a two-tailed test at the .05 level of significance the critical values with 73 degrees of freedom are  $\pm 1.993$ . Since the calculated  $t$  value did not fall in the critical region, the null hypothesis could not be rejected. Therefore it was determined that there is no statistically significant difference between the mean pretest scores of students who voluntarily participated in the "Book-It" program and those who did not.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **Conclusions and Implications**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to determine if the academic incentive program, “Book-It,” which advocates the use of pizza as an extrinsic reward for reading, would improve the reading attitudes of sixth grade students. The findings may help teachers make educational decisions on whether to implement these programs into their classrooms.

Furthermore, due to the fact that the “Book-It” program is voluntary, it was beneficial to note if a significant number of readers with poor attitudes participated, or were the majority of participants those students already possessing positive attitudes toward reading.

#### **Conclusions**

The results of this study indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in reading attitudes between sixth grade students who participated in the “Book-It” program and those who did not. These findings suggest that the use of pizza as an extrinsic reward was ineffective at improving sixth grade students’ motivation to read. One interesting observation noted during analysis of the data

was the decline of students attitude scores from their pretests to their posttests. These findings suggest that not only was the program ineffective at motivating students to read, but it also appears to have negatively effected their attitude toward reading.

In addition, out of the 75 students who took both the pre- and posttests, only 30 students participated in the voluntary “Book-It” program. It may be that since pizza is offered once a week as an option for lunch for these students, that it was not enough of a motivator. Perhaps a different extrinsic incentive might have produced better results. It may also be that the effect of the program might be different for primary students than it was for middle school students.

However it is the belief of this researcher that offering a reward that depicts reading as an unpleasurable activity, one only worth doing to obtain what is being offered, will negatively effect students’ attitudes toward reading. Books and the joy of reading have to be presented as the greatest reward. The findings of this study serve to further support the cognitive perspective that external incentives may lead to lower intrinsic motivation once the incentive is removed.

Another finding of this study suggests that there is no statistically significant difference between initially high motivated and initially low motivated students who voluntarily participate in the “Book-It” program. The mean pretest

scores indicate that both groups were equally represented in their participation in the program. Therefore it is acknowledged that the “Book-It” program did not lend itself to just those students who were initially high motivated readers.

### **Implications for Education**

Based on the findings of this study, there are some very relevant conclusions which can be drawn. First, the use of an extrinsic reward does not guarantee that a student will be motivated to read. Second, the use of an extrinsic reward may often lower rather than improve a student’s attitude toward reading. For example, more than 2/3rds of the reading attitude scores of students participating in the “Book-It” program decreased after the incentive of pizza had been removed. Finally, by offering an extrinsic reward to motivate students to read, educators are placing emphasis on the reward and not on the joy of reading, saying to them, “Do this and you’ll get that.” If children are to read more, to read carefully, and most importantly to care about reading, then reading has to be portrayed as a pleasurable experience, and not merely as a means for obtaining a prize.

One of the most important things teachers can do to motivate their students to read is to provide them with a large quantity of quality reading materials that are

accessible to them, as well as a comfortable, non-threatening environment to read them. It is also vital that children see others actively engaged in reading, and that reading is modeled and shared daily. Unfortunately, the problem that many schools face is the finances to keep their book shelves full of new and up-to-date books. It is the opinion of this researcher that devoting money to books rather than rewards might prove beneficial in motivating reading among students.

The research on motivation in the classroom also indicates the importance of the classroom teacher to be conscious of the impact he or she has on the development of intrinsic and extrinsic orientations within the students. It is suggested by Newby (1991), that a student's competitive, individualistic, or cooperative task motivations are strongly influenced by the goals and values instilled within the classroom environment by the teacher. It is indicated that student motivational orientations are created on the basis of the specific strategies used by the teacher.

### **Implications for Research**

The research conducted up to this point in time has not looked at the long-term effects incentives have on intrinsic motivation. Longitudinal studies that

last longer than five months and that focus on motivational results after the incentives have been removed, might prove valuable. Another study might also want to examine the effects of the “Book-It” program on primary students, grades kindergarten through third grade. Perhaps the use of pizza as an incentive might be more of a motivator to them. It might be advantageous to examine other popular incentive programs such as Accelerated Reader to note if the results would be the same. However if subsequent studies confirm the general findings of the current research cited, we as educators will need to be extremely cautious about promoting the use of external rewards to encourage reading.

Further examination of parental motivational practices would also be beneficial. Due to the fact that provision of external consequences is a common practice, and is believed by parents to be favorable for children’s motivation, parents need to be informed about potential negative effects.

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## **APPENDICES**

# pendix A

Experimental Group

Control Group

Student	Pretest	Posttest	Student	Pretest	Posttest
	56	59	1	67	71
	58	51	2	64	57
	50	43	3	71	71
	73	55	4	62	54
	40	31	5	57	51
	40	41	6	58	64
	75	58	7	49	51
	58	49	8	66	61
	61	51	9	53	44
	64	53	10	70	71
	79	64	11	64	58
	62	65	12	68	67
	59	41	13	67	58
	74	57	14	58	51
	63	78	15	57	58
	50	46	16	56	44
	62	61	17	68	72
	71	59	18	51	44
	46	42	19	33	41
	56	59	20	49	44
	43	48	21	36	33
	59	53	22	49	51
	54	45	23	62	47
	53	53	24	72	66
	76	67	25	46	44
	58	46	26	67	54
	57	41	27	61	68
	59	64	28	32	38
	59	71	29	70	66
	54	52	30	61	58
			31	44	31
			32	41	36
			33	70	68
			34	80	70
			35	65	56
			36	62	66
			37	63	58
			38	61	51
			39	62	63
			40	51	44
			41	39	43
			42	64	70
			43	64	66
			44	68	49
			45	74	66
			46	57	49
			47	65	67
			48	55	46
			49	57	53
			50	60	49
			51	40	38
			52	43	50
			53	42	46
			54	65	68
			55	71	68
			56	49	51
			57	63	58
			58	52	56
			59	61	65
			60	49	58
			61	70	68
			62	51	56

t: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	53.43333	55.48387
Standard Deviation	106.5989	116.5161
Sample Variance	30	62
Standard Error of the Difference	113.3206	
Observed Mean Difference	0	
t Stat	90	
t Critical one-tail	-0.866116	
t Critical two-tail	0.194365	
Observed Power	1.661961	
Power one-tail	0.38873	
Power two-tail	1.986673	

**endix B**

Participatory Group

Nonparticipatory Group

Student	Pretest	Posttest	Student	Pretest	Posttest
	56	59	1	70	80
	58	51	2	44	36
	50	43	3	74	67
	73	55	4	58	55
	40	31	5	59	60
	40	41	6	50	51
	75	58	7	49	51
	58	49	8	53	44
	61	51	9	55	39
	64	53	10	49	60
	79	64	11	37	63
	62	65	12	64	61
	59	41	13	51	47
	74	57	14	71	62
	63	78	15	62	53
	50	46	16	57	57
	62	61	17	71	47
	71	59	18	57	49
	46	42	19	55	38
	56	59	20	52	39
	43	48	21	62	65
	59	53	22	54	47
	54	45	23	64	49
	53	53	24	69	64
	76	67	25	49	29
	58	46	26	54	52
	57	41	27	64	54
	59	64	28	48	60
	59	71	29	68	62
	54	52	30	67	53
			31	62	58
			32	63	63
			33	66	59
			34	48	59
			35	49	50
			36	41	36
			37	69	67
			38	60	56
			39	43	33
			40	44	42
			41	42	46
			42	48	42
			43	65	48
			44	51	24
			45	49	48

## t: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	58.96667	56.37778
Standard Deviation	103.2057	89.19495
Observations	30	45
Estimated Variance	94.76088	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
t Stat	0.73	
t Critical one-tail	1.128327	
t Critical two-tail	0.131438	
P one-tail	1.665996	
P two-tail	0.262876	
t Critical one-tail	1.992998	
t Critical two-tail		