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# The Importance of Recreational Reading, and its Impact on Children's Motivation, Attitude Towards Reading, as Well as Reading Achievement

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THE IMPORTANCE OF RECREATIONAL  
READING, AND ITS IMPACT ON  
CHILDREN'S MOTIVATION,  
ATTITUDE TOWARDS READING,  
AS WELL AS READING ACHIEVEMENT

Lisa Marie DiGiovanna

Summer 1994

MASTERS THESIS

Submitted to the graduate faculty at

Grand Valley State University

in partial fulfillment of the Masters of Education

Upon completion of this thesis, I would like to acknowledge and thank some very special people. First, I am very grateful to my parents without whose unconditional love and guidance I probably would not have come this far. I thank my husband, Bryan, who has always been by my side with loving support. Finally, my friend, Sharon Grant, has earned my gratitude for her never ending willingness to lend a helping hand. I appreciate and love these people more than they'll ever know, and I thank God for them every day!

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether children's voluntary/recreational reading and their attitudes toward reading would affect their overall, reading achievement. Third, fifth and seventh grade students were the subjects for this study. Student surveys, parent questionnaires, teacher observations and standardized test scores were used to assess students' attitudes, time spent on recreational reading and overall achievement. Students were placed in an "above average", "average", or "below average" achievement group according to overall achievement. Significant differences were found among the three achievement groups. The "above average" and "average" achievers, from all three grade levels, showed greater amounts of time spent on recreational reading, more positive attitudes toward literary activities and a more sophisticated choice of literature genre. There was not a significant difference among the achievement levels or grade levels in the literary environments at home. The vast majority came from homes which provided literacy rich environments where children were read to and encouraged to read on their own as well.

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## CHAPTER 1

### The Problem

It seems apparent that some children do not associate reading with pleasure. Studies have indicated that interest in reading tends to correlate with high achievement in school, however, early, skilled and successful readers do not always become voluntary readers. Given choices, many good readers elect not to read (Morrow, 1986). Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading, a report published by the National Academy of Education (1985) reports that almost 50% of the students surveyed said they spent less than four minutes per day in recreational reading.

Is voluntary reading a forgotten goal in American schools? According to Lesley Morrow, "...Very little programmatic attention is paid to developing voluntary readers, that is, youngsters who will choose to read on their own" (1986, p. 160).

### Importance of the Study

Many educators who teach young children emphasize the need for early exposure and pleasurable experiences with literature (Morrow, 1986). Reading habits form early in life, and by sixth grade, a person's

characteristics as a reader have been basically formed for life (Bloom, 1964). Historians believe that literacy has had a tremendous impact on society and civilization. The implication is very clear that a productive, democratic society depends mainly on citizens who can read. It is believed that the main reason for teaching children to read is that their own voluntary reading will help benefit them when they have to function in society. In our society, the most intelligible person is the one who can and does read. We want to teach youngsters that reading is an absolute must in today's society. Youngsters need to realize the social, cultural, political, moral and educational benefits that come with the ability to read (Morrow, 1986).

Many schools tend to teach youngsters how to read, but not why and what to read. This is where the emphasis must lie. Research says that teachers continue to depend on skills-oriented programs for reading because they are most easily measured on formal standardized tests (Morrow, 1986). Voluntary reading, on the other hand, is something that requires personal evaluation and time. Schools must realize that the benefits of healthy reading attitudes are not an immediate pay-off, but rather a long-range development.

The recognition and acceptance that systematic programs are the key to developing voluntary reading amongst our children is of the utmost importance. An attitude of mutual support among teachers, administrators and parents is necessary to remedy this problem. They

all play a major part in influencing young people and stimulating voluntary reading. In elementary reading programs, the development of continuing interest and favorable attitude toward reading is of prime importance (Morrow, 1986).

### Background

It is true that an alarming number of young people today are choosing not to read. The Book Industry Study Group reported that in 1984 voluntary reading among people under the age of 21 years had declined 12% in the last 8 years since 1976. An additional study presented similar results with a 1980 study of fifth graders (Greaney, 1980). This study found that given options for leisure time activity, very few chose reading. Twenty-two percent said they spend no time at all reading.

Children do not profit from learning reading skills if they are not motivated to use them (Spiegel, 1981). Sadly enough, there are still many schools that are not systematically promoting voluntary reading (Morrow, 1986). Many teachers, parents and school administrators individually believe it is important, yet it seems they seldom reinforce one another. Despite needs and documented proof of the benefits, it seems that our schools' reading programs are limited or lack all



together the use of literature and programs for the development of voluntary reading habits.

According to Holdaway (1979), schools spend precious amounts of time teaching literary skills and leave little time for children to practice those skills. The ultimate goal of many reading programs is the comprehension of specific text, rather than personal use. The children are taught how to read, but not how to develop reading habits. Yet there is sufficient evidence to support the fact that systematic use of literary activities in the classroom, early in a child's instructional years, correlates with success in reading (Morrow, 1986).

#### Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to document the importance of recreational reading and its impact on children's motivation, attitudes toward reading, as well as reading achievement. The results will be used in the K-8 curriculum at Holy Spirit School to develop ways to encourage recreational reading which will promote literacy and good reading habits. The emphasis will be on encouraging recreational reading and emergent literacy development among K-8 aged children.

More specifically, the study will:

1. determine if a relationship between recreational reading and student achievement exists.

2. identify factors which may promote and/or inhibit recreational reading.
3. identify teacher, parent and peer roles in promoting recreational reading.
4. identify effective participation techniques in voluntary reading.
5. illustrate the importance of recreational reading.

This study is designed to provide a useful resource for teachers and parents.

#### Definition of Terms

To help the reader better understand the study, the following terms are defined:

Recreational/Voluntary Reading - Reading for enjoyment

Student Achievement - May be measured by standardized tests

Standardized Tests - Test used to obtain information on the achievement levels of pupils

Emergent Literacy - The process of learning about language

#### Limitations of the Study

This study is designed to develop effective participation

techniques which promote recreational reading as well as literacy skills and good reading habits. The effectiveness of these techniques will not be evaluated until the following 1994 - 1995 school year.

Another limitation of this project is that it is designed to meet the needs of a middle-class, predominantly white, K-8 aged, homogeneous population. The program may not be fully applicable or appropriate in areas with more diverse populations.

## CHAPTER 2

For the past several decades, much time has been devoted to the study of reading. The focus of this chapter will be concerned with an examination of reading research on recreational reading and reading attitudes. First, the research data of educational researchers, current reading instructional practices of teachers and students' motivation and attitudes toward reading will be discussed. Second, the research regarding recreational reading and its impact on student achievement will be introduced. Finally, factors which may promote and/or inhibit recreational reading and effective participation techniques to promote voluntary reading will be identified.

### Reading Instruction Research

According to Hayes (1991) teachers, for a long time, viewed reading as the process of decoding graphic symbols. Hittleman (1988) will argue that for equally as long, educators have viewed reading as the process of acquiring the skills of comprehension, that is, getting meaning from what is read.

Reading experts Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson (1985), Cecil (1987), and Fenwick (1987) have expressed that many schools place too much emphasis on the mastery of skills and that skill mastery

should be de-emphasized, while greater emphasis is placed on involving learners in the process of becoming readers. In general, schools need to use programs designed to encourage students to become readers. Davidson and McNinch (1992) believe that schools should promote instruction that will help students grow both in their reading skills and in the overall process of becoming lifelong readers as well.

But how do we encourage this involvement? Regardless of what we believe is the best approach to reading instruction, learning cannot and will not take place if the student is not a willing participant. One teacher's experience with remedial reading students is a perfect example (Moniuszko, 1992). These students would rather do anything than pick up a book. Other subject areas are affected by this aversion, not to mention students' self-esteem. They are frustrated and embarrassed by the inability to read fluently and by the resulting academic failure. The primary obstacle in reading instruction is the students' lack of motivation to attempt the task of reading itself. Changing students' negative feelings and attitudes toward reading is essential.

Much of the literature reviewed showed similar results in regard to students choosing not to read. In a study of fifth grade students, Greaney, (1980) found that only 5.4% of students' leisure time was used for reading; and 22% of the students did not read at all. Morrow and

Weinstein (1982) observed that few kindergarten children chose to look at books during free-choice time; however, art projects and playing house were first choice among most students.

According to the Book Industry Study Group (1984) the number of readers, under the age of 21, had decreased 12% within an eight year period. Morrow and Weinstein's (1986) on-going program of research on voluntary reading included a study of classrooms which did not consistently and effectively promote recreational reading. They found literature use to be very limited. About 10% of the children, from one particular study group, chose the library center at free choice time. Of all the centers, the library was the least popular. The most popular was the art center. Morrow and Weinstein discovered their findings to be consistent with other research which also indicated that when other options are available, children rarely choose to read in school.

In some cases, the same seems to be true of voluntary reading at home. Morrow and Weinstein also found in this study, through parent questionnaires, that children's after-school lives were filled with piano and dance lessons, swimming, soccer practice and television. Searls, Mead, and Ward (1985) conducted a study on the relationship of students' reading skills to TV watching, leisure time reading and homework. They concluded that as the time spent watching TV increased and reading time decreased, so did reading achievement levels. Reading a book was often competing with too many other free

time activities. Perhaps more children would choose to read if adults would limit the number of other choices available.

Are we expecting children to possess positive attitudes about reading and make reading their first priority when we are not supplying ample motivation? Teachers, principals and parents need to model positive attitudes toward reading and good reading habits. Are we doing this? Well, according to some experts, not always. In a study presented by Lesley Morrow (1992) teachers reported they were skeptical at first about the amount of time that might be taken away from reading the basal if voluntary reading time were given. This seems to be the consensus of principals and parents as well as teachers. According to a recent survey teachers, principals and parents consistently rated development of voluntary reading as less important than teaching word recognition, comprehension and study skills, despite evidence that the literary activities that promote voluntary reading also help develop and increase reading skills (Morrow, in press).

Similar were the results in another study presented by Joseph Sanacore (1990) on an overall ranking of statements of reading practices by middle level teachers, grades four to eight. The statements were ranked from 1 (the practice receiving the greatest emphasis) to 10 (the practice receiving the least emphasis) based on their perceptions of what received the greatest amount of emphasis in reading instruction

in their schools. Consistently, statements like, "Setting aside a daily time for children to read independently in materials of their own choice", "Providing a well stocked classroom library" and "Setting aside at least one reading period a week for children to share books they've read through creative and/or language arts" were ranked 8th, 9th and 10th while statements like, "Children receiving acceptable standardized test scores", "Covering all the skills in your reading level" and "Practicing specific skills of how to read" were ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd, being those practices most emphasized.

A field-based research project on voluntary reading discovered that the attitudes of principals and teachers, and their ideas concerning reading instruction, were influenced by the constraints of time put on them by the schools, lack of space and money, the external pressures of turning out increased standardized test scores and the mandated use of selected instructional materials (Morrow, 1985).

Motivating students to read should not be restricted solely to reading instruction, but rather should be practiced across the curriculum. Is this being done? According to Joseph Sanacore (1990), "...students commenting on their long term love of historical books is a rarity. Social Studies teachers and their colleagues must share the blame for this negative outcome because many of them still believe that using class time to encourage reading for pleasure is not their responsibility" (p. 414). Pfau (1967) simply concludes that "...a teacher



cannot teach children to be interested in reading, but s/he can offer a program of recreational reading that is so enticing children find it difficult not to want to read" (p. 35).

In conclusion, we must all be aware of the new form of illiteracy which involves children and adults who are able to read, but choose not to because they have little or no interest to do so. Perhaps indicative of choosing not to read, those considered to be functionally illiterate include about 25% of the American population (Morrow, 1986). There are, as I have presented here, a significant number of studies which account for the fact that regular use of literary activities and promotion of voluntary reading correlate with success in reading. We need to begin, or continue, to promote this kind of reading instruction in all our schools.

### Recreational Reading and Student Achievement

Reading researchers have found positive relationships to exist between the amount of independent reading children do and their achievement in school (Anderson, Wilson & Fielding, 1988; Greaney, 1980; Maxwell, 1977; Taylor, Frye & Marugama, 1990). Morrow (1983) reports that children who demonstrate voluntary interest in books are observed by teachers to be significantly higher on school performance than are children with little or no interest in books. They also score

significantly higher on standardized tests and in the areas of social and emotional maturity, work habits and language arts skills.

Results of a study by Shannon (1980) indicate a positive attitude among better readers and that a negative attitude is reinforced by low test scores. Greenshields (1979) study suggests similar findings. It seems as though interest has a greater influence than readability on comprehension, particularly among lower ability readers. Epstein (1980) promotes the idea that often found at the root of many reading difficulties is a negative attitude. The results of these studies indicate that the degree of interest expressed in reading does show some relationship to reading comprehension.

The benefits of early exposure to literature and the continued support of recreational reading have been well documented. Morrow and Weinstein (1982) write that young children, when read to frequently, develop more sophisticated language, acquire more background information, have more of an interest in learning to read and generally do learn faster and easier than their peers. Mason (1984) and Tovey and Kerver (1986) suggest that daily read-aloud sessions have been found to stimulate language development and promote awareness about how to approach the task of reading .

The results of a study done on the impact of a literature-based program on literacy achievement indicate that literature-based instruction, with heavy emphasis on recreational reading, does not

diminish reading achievement test scores. Rather, there seems to be an advantage in combining a literature program with basal instruction (Morrow, O'Connor, & Smith, 1990; Walmsley & Walp, 1990). Felsenthal (1989) indicates that the incorporation of children's literature into any reading instruction program will provide an ideal opportunity to develop critical thinking.

In conclusion, Morrow (1992) found that the implementation of regularly scheduled literature activities and the existence of appealing literacy centers, which engage the students in independent reading and writing, led to a substantial increase in children's literacy performance.

There is a growing body of evidence that supports early exposure to literature, literature activities and the promotion of voluntary reading. Many of the early childhood researchers and educators referred to in this review of literature, will agree that these kinds of early childhood experiences with literature will promote voluntary reading as well as aid in the development of other reading skills.

### Motivating Children to Read

Perhaps the most difficult part to reading instruction, or any instruction, is motivating the students. More specifically, little else may be as difficult as motivating children to read voluntarily. Affecting change in teachers' attitudes and classroom practices concerning the

promotion of voluntary reading is a difficult task as well. This section of the study will identify those factors which may promote and/or inhibit voluntary reading as well as suggest some effective techniques to promote voluntary reading.

First, Moniuszko (1992) makes it clear that the key to teaching and promoting reading is meaning. When given the opportunity to read about relevant subjects that they value, students will choose to read. Their ability will develop, which in turn will build self-esteem, and create the desire to become independent, lifelong readers. Bruneau (1983) suggests that we can promote reading interest if we can help students see the relationship between reading skills and vocational success, enjoyment of leisure time and even daily survival skills.

Sanacore's (1990) suggestions for the teacher's role in promoting voluntary reading include encouraging the use of literature, using a variety of materials, reading aloud, and avoiding conditions that discourage reading. Sanacore also suggests, with regard to the above suggestions, that teachers give students the opportunities to select their own materials, that teachers model silent reading and that teachers avoid conditions that dissuade students from reading, like requiring book reports. According to their findings concerning lifetime readers, Carlsen & Sherrill (1988) report that book reports were disliked by almost all of the respondents. They discovered that book reports did more to destroy the young people's interest in reading than to promote

it. Instead, Bartlett (1932) recommends that teachers allow students to construct meaning from a book based on their feelings, personal awareness, and experiences.

According to Rivlin and Weinstein (1984) physical environment plays a critical role in the classroom learning experiences of children. A classroom which provides an environment for optimum literacy development might include a library corner and writing center with an abundant supply of materials for reading, writing and oral language (Strickland & Morrow, 1988). Literacy centers within classrooms should be inviting, relaxing and attractive with immediate access to a wide variety of books and literacy materials. Powell (1966) concluded that the easier the access to library materials, the greater the amount of recreational reading. The appropriate arrangement of furniture and selection of materials can also significantly improve teaching and learning (Strickland & Morrow, 1988).

Literary centers can discourage recreational reading when not utilized properly. An example of this would be when the centers are used for the storage of non-literature related materials, small group or individualized instruction, or as a place to send children when separating them from the group for discipline reasons. Morrow (1982) found this to be the case in 12% of the classrooms she observed as part of a larger study on literature programs. In the same study, Morrow (1982) also found that in 85% of the classrooms the only time that

children had the opportunity to use the literacy center was during free-play time. Because it was "play time", many children chose options other than the literacy center. In these classrooms, recreational reading was not a part of the regular reading instruction period.

It must be realized that although "teacher practice" is a powerful factor in determining the success of a recreational reading program, it is not the only factor. It is necessary for all school personnel and parents to work together to promote and maintain a high level of enthusiasm for reading. The findings from a study conducted by Morrow (1983) suggest that the home contributes a strong influence upon children's interest in literature. Morrow found that the high-interest children all came from homes which heavily supported interest in literature. These families made use of the public library, had rules regarding television viewing, reported reading some types of materials, especially novels and magazines, and showed placement of books in many rooms of the house, specifically in the child's bedroom.

In similar studies Morrow (1986) found that although most research tends to show that many voluntary readers are those who can read well, a supportive literary program can attract even poor readers to literature. We can only hope that the participation in literary activities would eventually improve reading skills. Our schools and homes need to work together to systematically implement reading programs that include, as a major purpose, the development of

voluntary reading.

Sufficient research has been presented to support the fact that regular use of literary activities, within the classroom, correlates with success in reading. Evidence has also been presented to show that a strong association exists between voluntary reading and general achievement in reading ability.

Perhaps additional studies need to be done on schools which already incorporate recreational reading and literary activities into their instructional programs. Further studies may help all schools incorporate this type of instruction.

It is my hope, that through this study, more teachers, administrators and parents will come to realize the importance of nurturing youngsters who will choose to read throughout their lives. Teachers need to believe personally in the value and importance of developing voluntary readers. Administrators and parents need to share and support this same belief and encourage teachers to act on this belief in their classroom. Teachers need to be supplied with the techniques, materials and as much relevant information as possible to help our schools with the goal of teaching children to read.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology

Through my review of the literature for this study, I have found there to be much research to support the claim that recreational reading can have a positive effect on student achievement. Student surveys and parent questionnaires were used to gather information about attitudes toward reading, the amount of time spent on recreational reading and the type and availability of reading material. Student standardized test scores, as well as teacher observations on classroom achievement were also used as the basis of this study. The study to be described was carried out for the purpose of determining whether recreational reading had a positive effect on student achievement.

The participants of this study consisted of 53 seventh graders, 48 fifth graders, 55 third graders, their parents and teachers. To begin, each student was given a student survey (Appendices A,B & C) and a parent questionnaire (Appendix D). The students were asked to complete the surveys as accurately and honestly as possible, then turn them in to their teachers. They were then asked to take the parent questionnaire home, have it completed by a parent or guardian and return it to school.



Student achievement was measured by standardized test scores, teacher observations and individual classroom performance. The standardized tests are apart of the school's achievement testing program. They indicate at what percentage a student is ranked in total reading, language, mathematics, spelling, study skills, science and social studies with all equal grade level students in the nation. Each student's achievement level was then compared to his or her survey and parent questionnaire to determine if any relationship existed between recreational reading and student reading achievement.

### Data and Results

Through this study, I found that a relationship exists between recreational reading and student reading achievement. Students ranking at the high end of the "average" group and the "above average" group reported longer amounts of time spent on recreational reading. According to teacher observations and student classroom practices, classroom achievement appeared to correlate with test scores.

### Seventh Grade Results

Out of the 53 seventh grade students surveyed, 47% of them ranked in the "above average" percentile, on a standardized test, for

total reading, which includes reading vocabulary and comprehension. 84% of this "above average" group said they spent 3 hours or more, per week, on recreational reading. One student who reported reading leisurely for about 10 hours per week, scored in the 98th percentile for total reading; 92% total battery(Appendix E). Another student who reported reading leisurely for 5-6 hours per week and reading always being her first choice during free time, scored in the 99th percentile for total reading; 99% total battery(Appendix F). Sixty-eight percent of the "average" achievement group reported to read leisurely about 1-2 hours per week.

Fifty-eight percent of all the seventh graders surveyed said they will choose to read during free time if there are no better options. Twenty-six percent said reading during free time is sometimes their first choice, while 11% never choose to read and 5% said reading is always their first choice; majority of that 5% being from the "above average" group.

Every student reported that they were read to by a parent or older sibling as a child, and 96% reported that they visit their public library on a semi-regular basis. The average number of magazines subscribed to or purchased over the counter in each household is 3.

### Fifth Grade Results

Out of the 48 fifth grade students surveyed, 21 or 44% of them

ranked in the "above average" achievement group. Out of this 44%, 57% said they spent 1 hour or more, per week, on recreational reading. 43% spent less than 1 hour. Half of the 48 fifth grade students surveyed, or 50%, ranked in the "average" achievement group. Out of this 50%, 38% reported that they read recreationally for 1 hour or more, per week. 62% said they read recreationally less than 1 hour per week. The 3 remaining students, which make up 6% of the total group, reported that 33% of them read recreationally for more than 1 hour per week, while 67% of them read less than 1 hour per week.

Every fifth grade student reported being read to as a child, and 88% reported being taken to the library on a semi-regular basis, 95% being from the "above average" achievement group. The average number of magazines/newspapers being subscribed to or purchased over the counter is 3-4.

When it comes to choosing to read during free time, 56% of the fifth grade students surveyed said they would choose to read if there were no better options available. 33% of the students said they sometimes choose reading as their first choice, while 4% reported always choosing to read and 7% never choosing to read. (These numbers are not specific to any one group). All fifth grade students were given opportunities, during the school day, to participate in recreational reading. There was however, no specific reading incentive program in place for the year.

### Third Grade Results

At the third grade level, students were involved in a year long reading incentive program. Each student was required to read 15 minutes every day at home. The students kept track of their own time spent reading and earned points which were later used for rewards.

The third grade teachers reported that many students read above the required 15 minutes per day, particularly the self-motivated, higher achievers. Out of the top 24 students considered to be "above average" achievers, 42% were reported as always choosing reading as their first choice of things to do during free time. Another 42% were reported as choosing reading sometimes as their first choice if nothing else appealed to them. The remaining 16% never chose to read. The students who were considered to be "average" achievers all mainly fell into the same range, with majority making reading their first choice only if there were no better options available. The "below average" achievers never chose reading as a free time activity.

The third grade surveys also indicate what genre of literature appealed most to the students. The "below average" achievers chose funny stories as their favorite. Books containing a lot of pictures came in second, while books about animals, science and the outdoors tied for third.

The "average" achievers also selected funny stories as their favorite.

Stories about finding clues and solving mysteries was second in the running. Third choice was fantasy stories.

The top selection for the "above average" achievers was the fantasy stories. Their second choice was stories about finding clues and solving mysteries, while funny stories came in as their third choice.

An overall positive attitude about reading in general was much more prevalent in the "average" and "above average" achievement groups in grade three. When asked how they felt about reading a book in school during free time, 67% of the students in the "above average" achievement group responded that they liked it a lot, and 33% responded that they liked it a little. The "average" achievement group responded with 44% liking it a lot and 56% liking it a little. 75% of the "below average" achievement group liked reading a book in school during free time, while 25% did not like it at all.

When third grade students were asked how they felt about reading for fun at home, 54% of the "above average" students liked it a lot, 42% said they liked it a little, and 4% reported not liking it at all. The "average" group reported similarly with 52% liking it a lot, 44% liking it a little and 4% not liking it at all. Half of the "below average" students liked reading for fun at home, while a fourth liked it a little, and another fourth did not like it at all.

The majority of "above average" students liked going to a bookstore a lot, 17% liked it a little, and 4% did not like it at all. The

majority of "average" achievement students liked going to a bookstore a lot, while 32% liked it a little. "Below average" students were evenly split. Half liked it a lot, while the other half liked it a little.

The "above average" achievers responded to the question of, "How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?" in the following manner: the majority liked it a lot, 29% liked it a little, and 4% did not like it at all. The "average" achievers responded to this same question as: the majority liked it a lot, 28% liked it a little and 4% not at all. The "below average" responded with a fourth liked it a lot, half a little and another fourth not at all.

The most negative reply, from all three groups, came from asking, "How do you feel when the teacher asks you questions about what you read?" From the "above average" group, 17% said a lot, the majority said a little, while 20% said not at all. The "average" group reported 20% liking it a lot, the majority liking it a little and 8% not liking it at all. The "below average" group was the most negative with three-fourths not liking it at all and a fourth liking it a little.

The majority of the "above average" achievers reported liking, a lot, the idea of learning from a book, 13% liked it a little, and 4% did not like it at all. The majority of the "average" achievers liked learning from a book a lot, while 20% liked it a little. The "below average" achievers reported half liking it a lot, a fourth liking it a little, while another fourth said not at all.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the amount of recreational reading a student did had a positive effect on student achievement. The data in this study show some relationship between high achievement and great amounts of recreational reading. That is, the "above average" achievement group tended to show greater percentages of students who read recreationally, for longer periods of time, than the "average" and "below average" groups. The "average" achievement group also showed higher percentages over that of the "below average" group.

Of course, in order for students to participate in recreational reading, they need to have a positive attitude and be motivated to do so. The data in this study also show the range of attitudes from the "above average" achievement group to the "below average" achievement group. Again we find higher percentages in the higher achievement groups, thus indicating more students with positive attitudes. The students in the "above average" and "average" achievement groups showed higher interests and more positive attitudes about reading in school, and at home, for fun, going to a bookstore, reading different kinds of books, being asked questions about what was read and learning from a book.

A difference in the preference of literature genre is included in

this study as well. One of the top three choices of a "below average", third grade group was books with a lot of pictures. This may be indicative of a need for "easy reading" with these particular students. The top choice for literature genre of the "above average" group was fantasy stories. This preference may be in lieu of their ability and need to think more abstractly and imaginatively.

There was not a significant difference, among the various grade levels and achievement levels, in the amount of reading material per household, the number of students read to as children, or the regularity of trips to the local library.

### Recommendations

This study has raised questions that may warrant further research. In this study, only three grade levels were surveyed. More could be learned with a wider variety of age groups. Would another study, over a longer period of time, with more than one survey being conducted, produce similar or dissimilar results? How does, if at all, gender and socioeconomic status effect student attitudes and achievement? Does the attitude effect the achievement or does the achievement effect the attitude?

Teachers know that students who read more are more advanced in language skills. The amount of reading a student does can also indicate



gains in vocabulary and comprehension skills. This is why teachers must give all students opportunities to read in school. There are so many distractions outside of school that, realistically, teachers cannot expect students to read outside the classroom.

I want to use what I have learned, through this study, to work with my colleagues, administrators and parents on programs that will get students interested in reading and make them lifelong readers. We all need to work together to show children the long term benefits that can come from finding pleasure in reading.

**Appendix A**  
(Grades 5 & 7)  
**Survey Questions**

1. How much time did you spend reading, outside of school, this past week? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Circle all types of reading material you find interesting:
 

adventure	autobiographies	biographies
fantasy	fiction	historical fiction
humor	informational text	legends/tall tales
mysteries	poetry	romance
science fiction	scripts for plays	sports stories
3. Circle your top two choices of reading formats:
 

books	magazines
newspapers	Weekly Reader/Scholastic News
4. Have you seen your mom, dad, brothers, or sisters read this week? \_\_\_\_\_  
When did they read, and what did they read? \_\_\_\_\_  
-----
5. Does anyone in your home read to you? \_\_\_\_\_  
If so, who? \_\_\_\_\_
6. When and where do you read the most? (i.e. vacation, weekends, before going to sleep, etc. ) \_\_\_\_\_  
-----
7. During your free time (outside of school) when do you choose to read? Circle one:
  - a. Reading is always my first choice.
  - b. Reading is sometimes one of my top choices.
  - c. I'll choose to read if there is nothing else to do.
  - d. I never choose to read during my free time.

**Appendix B**  
(Grade 3)  
**Reading Survey**

	I like it:	A lot	A little	Not at all
1. How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?	3	2	1	
2. How do you feel about reading for fun at home?	3	2	1	
3. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?	3	2	1	
4. How do you feel about starting a new book?	3	2	1	
5. How do you feel about reading during summer vacation?	3	2	1	
6. How do you feel about reading instead of playing?	3	2	1	
7. How do you feel about going to a bookstore?	3	2	1	
8. How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?	3	2	1	
9. How do you feel when the teacher asks you questions about what you read?	3	2	1	
10. How do you feel about doing reading workbook pages and worksheets?	3	2	1	
11. How do you feel about reading in school?	3	2	1	
12. How do you feel about reading from your school books?	3	2	1	
13. How do you feel about learning from a book?	3	2	1	

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**Appendix C**  
(Grade 3)  
**Reading Survey**

	<b>A lot</b>	<b>A little</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
1. I like to read about people that have real problems.	3	2	1
2. I like stories about finding clues and solving a mystery.	3	2	1
3. I like to read books of poems.	3	2	1
4. I like books with lots of pictures.	3	2	1
5. I like stories about people in love.	3	2	1
6. I like legends and tall tales.	3	2	1
7. I like funny stories.	3	2	1
8. I like books about animals.	3	2	1
9. I like make-believe stories about traveling in space.	3	2	1
10. I like books about important people.	3	2	1
11. I like sports stories.	3	2	1
12. I like to read plays.	3	2	1
13. I like science books.	3	2	1
14. I like stories about people long ago.	3	2	1
15. I like adventure stories that take place outdoors.	3	2	1
16. I like fantasy stories about imaginary creatures and things that couldn't possibly happen.	3	2	1

Reference: May, Frank, Reading as Communication an Interactive Approach,  
Merrill Publishing Company, Columbus, Ohio, 1986, p. 436.

## Appendix D

### Parent Questionnaire

1. Does the family subscribe to a newspaper? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Does the family have subscriptions to magazines? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Name magazines you currently are receiving or purchase at the counter.  
 -----  
 -----  
 -----
4. Did you read to your child when s/he was a preschooler?  
 Hardly ever \_\_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_\_\_ Every day \_\_\_\_
5. Do you presently have your child read to you? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Is anyone in the family, other than the student, currently reading a book? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Do you take your child to the public library? \_\_\_\_\_
8. If yes, how often?      Less than once a month \_\_\_\_\_  
    Every two weeks \_\_\_\_\_  
    Weekly or more \_\_\_\_\_
9. Is your child involved in any summer reading programs? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Is your child involved in any kind of reading group or program?  
 -----



**STUDENT PROFILE REPORT**

STUDENT: [REDACTED] GRADE: 7.1

# Appendix F

BIRTH DATE: 8/ 8/81 AGE: 12- 2 CODES: 004.....44...

NORMED SCORES	GE	AAGE	DIFF	LP	NCR	NP	--- ACTUAL NATIONAL PERCENTILE															
							1	2	5	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	95	98	99	
READ VOCABULARY	12.4	8.3	ABOVE	93	36	97																
READ COMPREHENSION	12.4	8.3	ABOVE	99	47	99																
• TOTAL READING	12.4	8.3	ABOVE	97	83	99																
LANGUAGE MECHANICS	12.4	9.3	ABOVE	96	33	97																
LANGUAGE EXPRESSION	12.4	8.2	ABOVE	99	46	99																
• TOTAL LANGUAGE	12.4	8.5	ABOVE	99	79	99																
MATH COMPUTATION	8.9	7.9		83	28	88																
MATH CONCEPTS & APPL	11.0	8.7		75	38	89																
• TOTAL MATHEMATICS	9.8	8.1		80	66	90																
• TOTAL BATTERY	12.4	8.3	ABOVE	98	228	99																
SPELLING	12.5	8.0	ABOVE	92	25	96																
STUDY SKILLS	12.4	8.5	ABOVE	99	30	99																
SCIENCE	12.4	8.5	ABOVE	89	34	95																
SOCIAL STUDIES	12.4	8.1	ABOVE	80	32	93																

GE: GRADE EQUIVALENT  
 AAGE: ANTICIPATED GRADE EQUIVALENT  
 DIFF: SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BELOW ANTICIPATED GRADE EQUIVALENT  
 LP: LOCAL PERCENTILE  
 NCR: NUMBER CORRECT  
 NP: NATIONAL PERCENTILE  
 CSI: COGNITIVE SKILLS INDEX

TCS CSI: 114 RANGE: 110-117 LEVEL: 4

STANINE

**NARRATIVE REPORT**

THIS STUDENT'S TEST PERFORMANCE MAY BE COMPARED WITH THAT OF THE NATIONAL NORM GROUP AT THE SAME GRADE LEVEL BY REFERRING TO THE NATIONAL PERCENTILE SCORES ABOVE. ACHIEVEMENT IN BASIC SKILLS IS BEST SUMMARIZED BY THE "TOTAL" SCORES. THE STUDENT'S TOTAL SCORE IS ABOVE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE (THE 50TH PERCENTILE). IN TOTAL READING, THE STUDENT'S ACHIEVEMENT IS BETTER THAN APPROXIMATELY 99 PERCENT OF THE NATIONAL NORM GROUP; IN TOTAL LANGUAGE, THE STUDENT'S ACHIEVEMENT IS BETTER THAN APPROXIMATELY 99 PERCENT OF THE NATIONAL NORM GROUP; IN TOTAL MATHEMATICS, THE STUDENT'S ACHIEVEMENT IS BETTER THAN APPROXIMATELY 90 PERCENT OF THE NATIONAL NORM GROUP.

**SPECIAL SCORES**

NO SPECIAL SCORES HAVE BEEN REQUESTED

CONTENT SCORES			N P M			N P M			N P M			N P M		
18 WORD MEANING		✓	38 NOUNS, PRONOUNS		✓	55 NUMERATION		✓	67 PLANT BIOLOGY					
19 MULTIMEANING WORDS		✓	39 VERBS		✓	56 NUMBER THEORY		✓	68 ANIMAL BIOLOGY					
22 WORDS IN CONTEXT		✓	40 ADJECTIVES, ADVERBS		✓	57 DATA INTERPRETATION		✓	69 ECOLOGY					
25 STATED INFORMATION		✓	41 SENTENCE FORMATION		✓	58 PRE-ALGEBRA		✓	70 MATTER AND ENERGY					
27 PASSAGE ANALYSIS		✓	42 SENTENCE COMBINING		✓	59 MEASUREMENT		✓	71 EARTH AND SPACE					
28 CENTRAL THOUGHT		✓	43 PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE		✓	60 GEOMETRY		✓	72 PROCESS SKILLS					
29 WRITTEN FORMS, TECHNIQUE		✓	44 PARAGRAPH COHERENCE		✓	SPELLING			SOCIAL STUDIES					
30 CRITICAL ASSESSMENT		✓	MATH COMPUTATION			31 VOWELS			73 GEOGRAPHY					
34 SENTENCE, PHRASE, CLAUSE		✓	49 DECIMALS		✓	32 CONSONANTS		✓	74 ECONOMICS					
35 QUOTATIONS, DIALOGUE		✓	50 FRACTIONS		✓	33 STRUCTURAL UNITS		✓	75 HISTORY					
36 WRITING CONVENTIONS		✓	51 INTEGERS		✓	STUDY SKILLS			76 POLITICAL SCIENCE					
37 EDITING SKILLS		✓	52 PERCENTS		✓	63 REFERENCE SOURCES		✓	77 SOCIOLOGY, ANTHROPOLOGY					
			53 ORDER OF OPERATIONS		✓	64 INTERPRETING GRAPHICS		✓	78 INTERRELATED DISCIPLINES					
						65 ORGANIZING INFORMATION		✓	79 APPLIED SOCIAL STUDIES					
						66 ANALYZING INFORMATION		✓						

N - Not Mastered P - Partially Mastered M - Mastered

FORM-LEVEL: A-17/18  
 NORMS FROM: 1988  
 TEST DATE: 10/13/93  
 SCORING PATTERN: (IRT)  
 QUARTER MONTH: 05  
 CITY: GRAND RAPIDS  
 STATE: MI

MAXIMUM OR MINIMUM SCORE

34

CTBID: 93316M002597004-03-00211



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GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

ED 695 DATA FORM

NAME: Lisa M. DiGiovanna

MAJOR: (Choose only 1)

Ed Tech  
 Elem Ed  
 Elem LD

Ed Leadership  
 G/T Ed  
 Sec LD  
 Read/Lang Arts

Sec/Adult  
 Early Child  
 SpEd PPI

TITLE: The Importance of Recreational Reading And Its Impact On Children's Motivation, Attitudes Toward Reading, As Well As Reading Achievement.

PAPER TYPE: (Choose only 1)

SEM/YR COMPLETED: Summer 1994

Project  
 Thesis

SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE OF APPROVAL Caryn M. King 8-8-94

Using the ERIC thesaurus, choose as many descriptors (5 - 7 minimum) to describe the contents of your paper.

1. Reading
2. Recreational Reading
3. Reading Attitudes
4. Reading Achievement
5. Literature Appreciation
6. Reading Interests
7. Standardized Tests
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

ABSTRACT: Two to three sentences that describe the contents of your paper.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether children's voluntary/recreational reading and their attitudes toward reading would affect their overall reading achievement. Student surveys, parent questionnaires, teacher observations and standardized test scores were used to assess students' attitudes, time spent on recreational reading and overall achievement.

\*\* Note: This page must be included as the last page in your master's paper.