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ABSTRACT

A study examined the attitudes of participants of the Indiana University Southeast's Reading Clinic in New Albany, Indiana. Subjects, who ranged in age level from first through ninth grades (although few were past the sixth grade in school) were asked to complete a questionnaire. Data were gathered over 4 years and 214 (98%) of the clinic participants returned completed surveys. Results indicated that: (1) the subjects believed their reading problems were not severe, although their parents' evaluations of their reading problems reflected lower ratings; (2) the subjects were enthusiastic about coming to the reading clinic; (3) about 70% of the subjects had library cards, enjoyed reading to themselves and to others, and had received books as gifts; (4) only about 75% of the subjects enjoyed listening to someone else read. Findings suggest that reading clinic supervisors should look at this information with hope. (Two tables of data are included.) (RS)

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A PROFILE OF CHILDREN WHO ATTEND THE
INDIANA UNIVERSITY SOUTHEAST
READING CLINIC

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A PROFILE OF CHILDREN WHO ATTEND THE INDIANA UNIVERSITY SOUTHEAST READING CLINIC

It is four o'clock on Monday afternoon and something special is happening on the local college campus: children are filing into the reading clinic where, for the next hour and a half, they will work on specific skills and strategies to help them overcome previously identified reading weaknesses.

Across the nation similar programs exist at various times and places. But who are these children who attend clinics? What characteristics do they have?

Subjects and Design Format

The specific clinic being examined is at Indiana University Southeast, in New Albany, Indiana. The clinic is a free service to the community, with invitations sent to previous clients and several local school principals. Students are referred by their teachers and are selected on a first come first served bases.

To find out attitudes of all clinic participants at the Indiana University Southeast Reading Center, a questionnaire was designed and administered. Data were gathered for eight semesters (four years) and subjects ranged in age from

first grade through ninth grade, although very few children were past the sixth grade in school. A total of 214 surveys were completed, a 98% return rate.

Here is what was found to be true about the I.U.S. Reading Clinic clients. The largest percent (37.1%) of clients were the eight and nine year olds with the 10-12 year olds being the second largest (31.0%) group. The smallest group (4.3%) was that of the 13 year olds and older, partially because during the last three semesters the clinic was limited to first through sixth grade children.

First, the children were asked whether these children liked to read to themselves.

Insert Table 1

It was found that a majority (68.2%) of the respondents said they did like to read to themselves. When cross-tabulations were used, it became clear that as the children got older, a higher percentage of them responded positively to this question.

The children were then asked if they liked to read to someone else.

Insert Table 2

The youngest children were the most positive group and the older children were by far the most negative: only one of the nine children in the thirteen and older group liked to read others.

When asked if they liked someone to read to them, about three fourths (77.6%) said they did; the older the group of respondents, the more negative the response to this item became.

Almost seventy percent (69.8%) of the respondents had library cards and sixty nine percent (69%) said they had received a book as a gift.

When asked about their feelings toward attending the clinic, most (71.4%) were enthusiastic (denoted by a big smile or little smile on the questionnaire) toward coming while some (16.7%) were neutral about it, and only a few (3.8%) were not pleased about attending the Reading Clinic (denoted by a small frown.) Over one third of the children had attended the clinic before. Of those, the attitudes toward coming seem to be about equal with new arrivals in the clinic: both groups eagerly anticipated participation.

One questionnaire item asked the children to classify their reading problem. They were given these choices: no

real problem, mild, medium, severe. Of the respondents, fifty four (26.9%) felt they had no real problem, sixty one (30.3%) said they had a mild problem, sixty nine (34.3%) said they had a medium problem and seventeen (8.5%) said they had a severe problem.

Discussion

The children who attend the Indiana University Southeast Reading Clinic appear to think their reading problems are not severe, although their parents' evaluations of their reading problems reflected lower ratings.

These students are enthusiastic toward coming to the Reading Clinic. Their enthusiasm may be in part due to the creative nature of the lessons that previous participants have enjoyed and perhaps to some carry-over from their parents' enthusiasm toward the clinic; since the competition to get accepted is fierce and the waiting list is long, the parents of those who are invited to attend are thrilled.

Particularly interesting are the nearly identical percentages of students who have library cards, enjoy reading to themselves and to others, and have received books as gifts.

Only about three fourths of the participants said they enjoyed listening to someone read. This is a sad comment for

educators as some of this attitude, most probably, is a learned behavior. In this age of Jim Trelease, it is difficult to believe that parents and teachers still often-times treat reading aloud as a juvenile thing to do. Therefore, in many instances, children past the fourth or fifth grade have had very little exposure to reading aloud. Because of their lack of exposure to it, it appears they think of reading aloud as a negative experience.

What Does This Mean?

Reading clinic supervisors should look at this information with hope. Most children who attend our clinic are receiving some positive cues about reading, as evidenced by books in the home, library cards, and receiving books as gifts. Evenso, there is still plenty of work to be done. Children need to hear good literature read to them and be encouraged to use the local library more. When nearly one third of the children who attend a reading clinic do not have library cards or receive books as gifts, they are being sent mixed messages about the importance and impact of reading. Additionally, most children should enjoy good literature being read to them; when done well, reading aloud should be a pleasurable form of entertainment.

But how can we as supervisors prompt necessary changes? One way is by getting the message across to children via teachers and parents. Both can promote reading by making it a positive, revered experience for the child and by being readers themselves. Future teachers (i.e the clinicians) can get the message in clinical situations from supervisors who strive to encourage them to creatively teach reading and to have a zeal for reading. Supervisors must also urge future teachers to become involved in parent education once they get a job in a school system; supervisors can demonstrate their true belief in parent education by delivering a parenting workshop to parents of children in the reading clinic.

Indeed, to shape the desired reading profile of children who attend reading clinics, parent education must be available in all educational communities, and it must cross all socio economic strata. Supervisors in clinics are in a good spot to start such programs. The college students in these clinical situations will one day be in an ever better spot to engage parents in active roles in the reading process.

RidoutE2: Student.Profile

TABLE 1

Question: Do you like to read by yourself?

Student age

	6-7	8-9	10-12	13 or older	
Age	1	2	3	4	Row Total
Yes	35	63	41	7	146 68.2
No	23	17	26	2	68 31.8
Column Total	58 27.1	80 37.4	67 31.3	9 4.2	214 100.0

RidoutE2: Student.Profile

TABLE 2

Question: Do you like to read to someone else?

Age	Student Age				Row Total
	6-7	8-9	10-12	13 or older	
Yes	49	57	41	1	148 69.8
No	9	22	25	8	64 30.2
Column Total	58 27.4	79 37.3	66 31.1	9 4.2	212 100.0

Statistic	Symmetric	With RD2SOME1 Dependent	With AGE Dependent
Somers' D	.24588	.19830	.32348

RidoutE2: Student.Profile