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ABSTRACT

Seventy-four students from basic reading courses were surveyed to determine if the courses helped them with the reading and studying they had to do in other areas. In addition, 58 "regular" students were asked to assess their reading abilities and reading and study skills needs. Results indicated that most basic reading students were satisfied with their courses. In general, they found the courses to be helpful in the classes they later took, and found the courses to be more useful than labs. In terms of skills taught, students indicated that vocabulary, summarizing, reading for main idea, and dictionary work were the most valuable. Many students expressed the desire to take additional reading courses (advanced reading and speed reading) and workshops. Regular students expressed similar desires for opportunities to improve their reading skills and get help with their assignments--in spite of the fact that the majority of these students rated themselves as good or excellent in most reading and study skills. Skills in which more than 15% of the regular students rated themselves as fair or unsatisfactory were (1) taking lecture notes, (2) using Latin and Greek affixes, and (3) library research. (Copies of the survey instruments are appended.) (FL)

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STUDENTS WHO HAVE COMPLETED
BASIC SKILLS COURSES AT
LA GUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE:
A SURVEY

Joyce Zaritsky and Francine Brewer

October 18, 1984

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SURVEY OF BASIC READING STUDENTS

ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the survey was to find out students' evaluations of the Reading courses they took at the College. We wanted to find out if students thought our courses helped them with the reading and studying they had to do after they completed our Reading courses. The survey was expanded to include students who had not taken Reading courses but who were asked to evaluate their reading skills and reading/study skills needs.

Methodology

We surveyed students in two ways. We interviewed some students by telephone and surveyed others in their coop prep classes. During the fall and winter quarters (1983-1984), we interviewed 42 students by telephone using a Basic Reading Questionnaire which we designed. To supplement this group, we used a redesigned Basic Reading Questionnaire, which we administered to 32 students in their coop prep classes in the Spring of 1984. In all 74 Basic Reading students were surveyed. An additional 58 students whom we encountered in the same coop prep classes were given a Reading Questionnaire in which they were asked to assess their reading abilities and reading/study skills needs. One hundred thirty two students were surveyed overall.

Summary of Results

Almost all of the Basic Reading students we surveyed found the Communication Skills courses to be helpful to them. There was a very high rate of approval of the courses (90.5% in the telephone survey and 100% in the in-class survey). They found classes to be more helpful than labs. While most students found the labs to be helpful (80%), there was some dissatisfaction expressed.

As far as skills taught are concerned, students found vocabulary, summarizing, reading for the main idea and dictionary work to be most valuable. In their evaluation of the lab, some students thought the tutors, assignments and materials could be improved.

Basic Reading students want the opportunity to take additional reading courses (advanced reading and speed reading) and workshops. They would also like to drop in to the lab for tutoring when they need help with reading and homework assignments. Students who had not taken Basic Reading courses expressed the same desire for additional opportunities to improve their reading skills and to get help with their assignments.

Conclusions

Basic Reading students think that Communication Skills courses helped them with other courses. Although most students expressed the desire for additional help after they had completed their Basic Reading requirements, they were not aware that we do offer Advanced Reading and Study Skills and Speed Reading. Non-basic skills students showed the same inclination for additional help.

The lab got favorable ratings from over 80% of the students surveyed. There was dissatisfaction expressed with some aspects of the lab.

Recommendations

The survey we conducted has led us to make the following recommendations:

1. We must improve communication with students, counselors and the college at large so that they know we offer advanced reading courses and courses in speed reading.

2. We should explore other ways, besides courses of reaching out to all students at the college and providing them with support services, such as drop-in tutoring in small groups and reading/study skill workshops during intersessions and club hours. Ways of funding such additional tutoring help must of course be explored with the administration.

3. The survey indicated that our efforts to evaluate and improve the lab should continue. A lab committee should be formed to study the lab to explore ways of strengthening the program we now offer.

Additional Recommendations

Finally, we analyzed additional data (included as an Addendum) in which Basic Skills students and Regular students (students who had never taken any Basic Reading courses) were surveyed as to their reading attitudes and behaviors. This survey revealed that a good number of our students do not enjoy reading and do little recreational reading.

We therefore made the following additional recommendations:

1. A list of "Great Books" should be developed by interested faculty from different areas, distributed and made required reading for all students.

2. Additional quiet, but comfortable areas should be developed in the college where students would be encouraged to read and study.

3. The college should organize discussions and forums on new and relevant books. Students could be encouraged to participate on these forums. Authors could at times be invited to these discussions and forums.

Francine Brewer and Joyce Zaritsky

BACKGROUND

The primary objective of the Reading courses taught by the Communication Skills Department is to prepare students so that they can read college material, deal with it in a meaningful way and be able, ultimately, to succeed in college.

We, as faculty who teach these courses often wonder whether in fact what we teach, and what students learn fulfills this objective. The survey that is described in this report was designed to answer this question.

We reasoned that students who had completed Basic Reading courses and then taken content courses could be an excellent source of information regarding the value and usefulness of these courses. These students, having the perspective of having completed content courses in college might be able to inform us as to which aspects of their reading courses were most helpful to them and which aspects were least helpful. They could, we reasoned, describe to us which reading/study skills were most useful and which were least useful. In addition, they might be able to tell us what type of additional help in reading and/or study skills they could use or might find helpful.

Before beginning our survey, we understood that the information we would gather and its conclusions would have to be interpreted cautiously. Student feedback is in fact "colored" by personality, personal experiences, and individual backgrounds. Each student is unique and perceives the world from a different perspective. Course work that one student might consider worthwhile, might well be deemed superfluous and even detrimental to another. In addition, the number of students we could survey was limited.

However, it is obvious that the administration at LaGuardia, as well as that of many other colleges across the country, recognizes the value of student feedback as a means of improving instruction, judging from its frequent use of the SIR form (1.) (Student Instructional Report). There is research (2.3.4.) that supports this conclusion. In addition, the Office of Institutional Research at LaGuardia, from 1972 - 1980, published a number of Research Reports that dealt with Basic Skills courses (5).

METHOD

Our survey was divided into two parts - a telephone survey and an in-class survey. First we interviewed 42 students by telephone. Next, because we could not reach many students by telephone, we expanded our study and surveyed 90 students in five Coop Prep classes - our in-class survey.

TELEPHONE SURVEY RESULTS

Students interviewed by telephone were randomly selected from a list of students who had taken either Basic Reading II or Basic Reading III (CSE 098 or CSE 099) during the fall quarter of 1981. Telephone interviews were conducted during the fall and winter quarters of the academic year 1983-1984. We used a questionnaire that we designed (with advice from a professional at LaGuardia who had experience in this area) that included both open ended and objective questions. (The telephone survey is included with this report as Appendix A.)

Evaluation of Class

Forty two students participated in the telephone survey. They were asked to rate the class and lab. As far as their classes were concerned, 90.5% of the students found their Communication Skills classes to be helpful. 10.5% of the students did not find the classes helpful.

Skills Taught

Students were asked to rate each skill taught in their classes. They were asked the following question: "For the following questions, about the Communication Skills reading classes, please tell me whether you found the skills taught extremely helpful, helpful or not helpful in the courses you have taken."

TABLE A

EVALUATION OF SKILLS TAUGHT (telephone survey)

<u>No. of Students</u>	<u>Skill Taught</u>	<u>Extremely Helpful or Helpful</u>	<u>Not Helpful</u>
41	Reading for the Main Idea	90%	10%
37	Previewing	86.5%	13.5%
40	Summarizing	95%	5%
39	Dictionary	87%	13%
38	Parts of a Book	76%	24%
39	Vocabulary	97%	3%
26	Notetaking	84.6%	15.4%

Most students found Vocabulary, Summarizing and Reading for the Main Idea to be helpful. Previewing, Using the Dictionary, Learning the Parts of a Book and Notetaking were also helpful, but to fewer students.

Evaluation of the Lab

In their evaluation of the lab, 73.8% of the students surveyed said they found the lab helpful. 23.8% said they did not. We asked students to rate various aspects of the lab. A summary of these ratings follows:

TABLE E

EVALUATION OF LAB (telephone survey)

No. of Students	Lab Feature	Extremely Helpful or Helpful	Not Helpful
40	Tutors	82.5%	17.5%
37	Assignments	81.1%	18.9%
34	Materials	85%	15%

Although most students found the lab helpful, a considerable percentage of students expressed dissatisfaction with it. Between 15 and 19% of the students surveyed said the tutors, assignments and materials were not helpful. In conclusion, in our telephone survey the lab was found to be not as useful to our students as the classes.

Followup Activities

When we surveyed them, which was after they had completed their Basic Reading courses, most students were interested in getting help with the reading they had to complete for their course work.

Some comments that students made, follow:

"Yes, in class the teacher in a (content) course wouldn't explain everything. They're busy. You might go to the lab to get some help."

"I think it would be necessary. You need a brush-up, refresher. You forget things. Come in, do some work and have the tutor mark it."

"Yes, occupational therapy book is very hard. Come to lab afterwards."

"Yes, with other courses and books that are difficult."

"Yes, with other classes. If you don't understand the courses. If the tutors have taken the course, they could give you help with what to expect."

"Vocabulary Workshop for ESL students."

"Yes, a good thing. It would be helpful to me. You don't have anybody to ask now when you have problems reading."

Other Comments

Some of our students made general comments about their experiences in our Basic Reading courses, which we felt were instructive and therefore worth including:

"My reading level was low. It was raised to 12th grade level "

"Without it, I wouldn't be doing so well."

"It was good to have the tutors. Sometimes students need a little push."

"Students with some problems should have different assignments." (Suggested group activities in lab.)

"I enjoyed it. It got me involved. I began to read and pay attention and concentrate." (This student was referring to the courses.)

"The labs were not helpful. The books weren't good. Too easy. The stories weren't interesting, assignments were too long."

"I didn't speak English very well. It helped me very much."

"Reading helped me with vocabulary. Terms used in textbooks - Social Science and Topics in Biology."

"The lab was boring. I didn't learn anything. Going to the library was better - just reading."

"We worked alone, in pairs or groups. It was good. There was a more relaxed atmosphere. You could work at your own pace." (This comment refers to the lab.)

IN-CLASS SURVEY

Introduction

When we began telephoning students we quickly realized that a large number of LaGuardia students were unreachable for a variety of reasons. We then decided to supplement our telephone survey with a survey of students in classes so that we could enlarge the scope and therefore the reliability of our findings. Because we knew that there would be two types of students - students who had taken Basic Reading courses and those who had not - in any content class we used, we surveyed both of these groups to ensure that Basic Reading students would not feel "singled out" from others. We therefore re-designed our telephone questionnaire and designed an additional one for students who had never taken any Basic Reading courses. (The classroom questionnaire for those students who had taken Basic Reading courses is included as Appendix B. The classroom questionnaire given to those students who never took a Basic Reading course is included as Appendix C.)

These questionnaires were administered to students in five Coop Preparation classes during the 1984 Spring quarter.

Of the 90 students surveyed in Coop Preparation classes, 32 were classified as Basic Skills students because they had taken at least one Basic Reading course when they entered LaGuardia. These students were given a questionnaire labeled Basic Reading Questionnaire. They are referred to in this report as "basic" students. 58 students were classified as "regular" students because they had never taken a reading course at LaGuardia. These students were given a questionnaire labeled Reading Questionnaire. They are referred to in this report as "regular" students.

IN-CLASS SURVEY

Overall Ratings of Communication Skills/Reading Courses

Amongst the 32 students who had taken at least one Basic Reading course at LaGuardia ALL of them (100 %), rated them as either "Extremely Helpful" or "Helpful". None of them stated that these courses had not been helpful to them. 37.5% (12) stated that these courses were "Extremely Helpful", while 62.5% (20) rated them as "Helpful".

Table C contains all of our findings with respect to students' ratings of the skills they were taught.

TABLE C

STUDENTS' EVALUATION OF SKILLS TAUGHT (in class survey)

<u>SKILL</u>	<u>NO. OF STUDENTS</u>	<u>EXTREMELY HELPFUL</u>	<u>HELPFUL</u>	<u>NOT HELPFUL</u>	<u>NOT TAUGHT</u>
Main Idea	32	56% (18)	44% (14)	0	0
Previewing an article	31	23% (7)	77% (24)	0	0
Previewing a textbook	29	17% (5)	66% (19)	3% (1)	14% (4)
Summarizing a paragraph	31	52% (16)	48% (15)	0	0
Summarizing an article	30	57% (17)	40% (12)	0	3% (1)
Using the dictionary	30	37% (11)	60% (18)	0	3% (1)
Using a Table of Contents	30	10% (3)	77% (23)	7% (2)	7% (2)
Using an Index	31	10% (3)	71% (22)	6% (2)	13% (4)
Taking Notes when you read	29	31% (9)	55% (16)	0	14% (4)
Taking lecture notes	32	31% (10)	44% (14)	3% (1)	25% (8)
Using context to learn vocabulary	29	38% (11)	62% (18)	0	3% (1)
Using Latin & Greek affixes	29	14% (4)	59% (17)	7% (2)	28% (8)
Doing research in the library	31	23% (7)	43% (13)	3% (1)	33% (10)
Improving spd	31	30% (9)	53% (16)	0	17% (5)
Outlining	31	19% (6)	87% (22)	0	10% (3)

Skills Taught

Most students rated what was taught as "Extremely Helpful" or "Helpful". In fact, only small numbers (and therefore percentages) of students found any of the skills that we taught "Not Helpful". Skills that all students found either "Extremely Helpful" or "Helpful" with none of them stating that they were "Not Helpful" were: Reading for the Main Idea, Previewing an Article, Summarizing a Paragraph, Summarizing an Article, Using a Dictionary, Taking Reading Notes, Using Context to Learn Vocabulary, Improving Reading Speed and Outlining.

25% or more of our students responded that they had not been taught the following skills: Taking Lecture Notes (25%), Using Greek and Latin affixes (28%), and Doing Research in the Library (33%).

Comments

Following this question, students were asked to give reasons to support their answers. The following is a sampling of these comments:

"Helped me to be able to read for the main idea and how to know the meaning of vocabulary words by the sentence and how to summarize."

"I found them extremely helpful and excellent because the reading courses helped me to understand what I read more effectively without any problems. It also helped me to summarize what I read, which has helped me a lot throughout all of my courses at LaGuardia."

"Since I took these courses, I started to like reading very much. I really got myself into reading. Now, I read almost every day or any time that I have off."

"It was mandatory for you to read something everyday. We had to purchase the New York Times, so I was doing advanced reading. Sometimes I read the Times but any paper is also good. It improved my understanding of reading to some degree."

"It helped me a little. But personally I felt the reading was too easy. A lot of the stories were elementary reading and we're entering college...When I say it helped me it made me want to read more on my own to improve myself."

"Everything we did, the teacher went over it, explained and helped us. There was a lot of work but it was helpful."

LAB EVALUATION

In their evaluation of the Reading Lab, in general most students rated it as "Extremely Helpful" or "Helpful". Table D summarizes students' responses:

TABLE D
EVALUATION OF LAB (in-class survey)

<u>Category</u>	<u>No. of Students</u>	<u>Extremely Helpful</u>	<u>Helpful</u>	<u>Not Helpful</u>
Lab Tutors	28	11% (3)	71% (20)	18% (5)
Lab Assignments	29	17% (5)	76% (22)	7% (2)
Lab Materials	29	10% (3)	83% (24)	7% (2)

Table C when compared with Table D also reveals that in general, students were not as pleased with the lab as they were with their classes. Fewer students rated the Reading Lab as "Extremely Helpful" and larger numbers of students rated the Reading Lab as simply "Not Helpful". This is understandable given the nature and design of the lab, and the fact that classes are taught by instructors, while lab sessions are conducted by tutors. In addition, our lab procedures have changed somewhat since these students took Reading courses and tutors are now receiving more training. It is possible that students taking Basic Reading courses now might rate the Reading Lab more positively. The lab however, according to our survey, is clearly an area warranting further study and possibly a place for some change to take place.

Comments

When asked to comment on how the lab helped them or didn't help them many students wrote comments which are instructive. These comments again reveal that in general, students were not as pleased with the Reading Lab as they were with their classwork.

A sampling of students' comments follows:

(The lab helped) "By giving us the assignment left by our instructor and then going over it and explaining it."

"Yes, we worked practice skills similar to the ones we did in class and this gave us a better understanding of the work."

"I think that it (the lab) wasn't helpful because I used to do my reading assignments long before my lab."

"What I was quite able to understand in class, I reinforced in lab."

"The work we did in class was the same work assigned in the lab."

"All they did was go over the same thing or almost the same as the professor did." (from a student who responded that the lab was "Helpful".)

"It prepared me for vocabulary tests and our final CUNY test."

(From a student who responded that the lab was "Not Helpful".)
"The teacher's help was no help at all. The time that I spent there I feel was useless and a waste. I feel there is no need for a reading lab."

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES (See Appendix B)

Most students responded in a way that indicated that they could use more help in reading despite the fact that they had successfully completed their reading courses.

79% of the students felt that the Reading Department, should offer follow up courses or workshops to students who had completed Basic Reading courses. Most students checked the options: "Advanced Reading Course and/or Speed Reading Course". This suggests that students, for the most part, are not aware of the follow up courses that our department does offer, and that perhaps the department ought to devote more attention to informing the students (through the counselors) that it does offer these courses.

In addition, 89% of the students felt that the tutors in the Reading Lab should continue to offer help to students after they had completed their reading courses. 35% felt that the department should offer "Reading Improvement Workshops" during club hour. 65% responded that "drop-in" tutoring in reading should be available to students. These responses reinforce the previous one and strongly suggest that our department must find a way to offer students additional help in reading.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS OF READING QUESTIONNAIRE
("regular" students, in-class survey)

Since these students had not taken any Basic Reading courses when they entered LaGuardia the thrust of our questionnaire was on their reading ability and study skill needs.

Students' Self-Ratings of Reading/Study Skill Abilities

The majority of students (over 50%) rated themselves as Good or Excellent in most Reading/Study skills. Skills in which more than 15% of students rated themselves as "Fair" or "Unsatisfactory" were: Taking Lecture Notes (18%), Using Latin and Greek affixes (35%) and Doing Research in the Library (16%).

In addition, large numbers of students (a third or more) rated themselves as only "Average" in the following skills: Taking Reading Notes (33%), Taking Lecture notes (33%), Using Latin and Greek affixes (36%) and Reading Speed (38%).

Table E contains all of our findings with respect to these students' self ratings of their reading/study skill competencies.

TABLE E

"REGULAR" STUDENTS SELF RATINGS OF READING/STUDY SKILLS

<u>SKILL</u>	<u>EXCELLENT</u>	<u>GOOD</u>	<u>AVERAGE</u>	<u>FAIR</u>	<u>UNSATIS- FACTORY</u>
Main Idea	43% (25)	47% (27)	10% (6)	0	0
Previewing an article	29% (17)	50% (29)	19% (11)	2% (1)	0
Previewing a textbook	12% (7)	53% (31)	29% (17)	4% (2)	0
Summarizing a paragraph	31% (18)	52% (30)	17% (10)	0	0
Summarizing an article	33% (19)	40% (23)	24% (14)	0	2% (1)
Using the dictionary	53% (31)	36% (21)	9% (5)	2% (1)	0
Using a Table of Contents	55% (32)	38% (22)	9% (5)	0	0
Using an Index	52% (30)	34% (20)	12% (7)	2% (1)	0
Taking notes when you read	24% (13)	29% (17)	33% (19)	7% (4)	4% (2)
Taking lecture notes	17% (10)	33% (19)	33% (19)	16% (9)	2% (1)
Using context to learn vocabulary	19% (11)	43% (25)	28% (16)	7% (4)	2% (1)
Using Latin & Greek affixes	5% (3)	23% (13)	36% (21)	25% (14)	10% (6)
Doing research in the library	12% (7)	40% (23)	31% (18)	12% (7)	2% (4)
Reading speed	17% (10)	33% (19)	38% (22)	10% (6)	2% (1)
Outlining	16% (9)	48% (28)	26% (15)	9% (5)	0

Reading Dept. Offerings to "Regular" Students

Despite the fact that these students for the most part rated themselves highly on their reading and study skills, 75% of them responded "Yes" to the question: "Should the Reading Department offer students who do not need Basic Reading courses any help?" In fact, most students who responded "Yes" to this question, checked all of the options we suggested. The options we offered students in the questionnaire are listed below (in caps), followed by a sampling of comments that students wrote (in quotes):

Comments

DROP-IN TUTORING IN READING SHOULD BE AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS REQUESTING IT:

"because everyone needs to expand their reading capabilities."

"that way if they have any questions, they don't have to take a full quarter, they can just drop-in."

"In case a student has a question about how to preview an article or book or some other problem."

READING IMPROVEMENT WORKSHOPS SHOULD BE GIVEN DURING CLUB HOURS:

"to understand the reading material an individual is reading."

"for people who would like to learn how to read and comprehend at a faster rate."

Even though they didn't need a basic course, they still might need help in another area."

A SPEED READING COURSE SHOULD BE OFFERED:

"Yes, I would like to take a speed reading course to become faster in my reading."

"in order for students to read quicker and understand what they read."

AN ADVANCED READING/STUDY SKILLS COURSE SHOULD BE OFFERED:

"maybe students want more reading courses and if they only offer them to the students in Basic Courses, then those (other) students are ruled out."

"Yes, to help the student read better."

"so that student can be able to further their reading abilities."

"This would increase students skills for further use in their lives."

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our two surveys (telephone and in-class) were most instructive. They confirmed our belief that students can provide valuable input to a department as well as to the college.

1. Student Satisfaction

Students surveyed expressed a high degree of satisfaction with their Communication Skills courses. In general, they found what we taught them to be both useful and helpful in the content courses they took later. They responded for the most part with ratings of "Extremely Helpful" or "Helpful" when queried.

2. Support Services

A large majority of students surveyed, stated that they thought that our department should continue providing them with additional support services after they had completed the Basic Reading sequence. Many of them seemed to be unaware of the advanced credit bearing courses in Reading and Study Skills that we do offer. (Advanced Reading and Study CSE 103 and Speed Reading CSE 200)

"Regular" students surveyed, also, were for the most part unaware of these advanced courses. It is therefore strongly recommended that as a department we do the following:

a. Make greater efforts to inform all LaGuardia students - "basic" and "regular" that we do offer credit bearing courses in advanced reading and speed reading.

b. Explore other ways, besides courses, of reaching out to all students at the college and providing them with support services, such as drop-in tutoring in small groups and reading/study skill workshops during intersessions and during club hours. Ways of funding such additional tutorial help must of course be explored with the administration.

3. Curriculum Revision

The curriculae of our various Basic Reading courses should be studied and perhaps revised. Skills these courses teach might be somewhat revised to reflect students perceived needs as revealed by our study. We therefore recommend that the department form a committee that would study the curriculae of all of our Basic Reading Courses (CSE 096, 097, 098, and 099) in conjunction with each other and in light of comments made by our students.

4. Reading Lab

Our survey revealed that the Reading Lab warrants some attention. While in general students did rate the Reading Lab as "Helpful", they rated their work in class as more helpful. While it is to be expected that students would rate their courses higher than the labs, as a department we should explore ways to improve the tutoring students receive in lab. Students dissatisfaction with the lab has been addressed since 1981 when many of the students surveyed took Basic Reading courses. However we should continue to evaluate lab assignments carefully. Problems mentioned such as too much noise and overcrowding will hopefully be addressed and solved when the lab is moved to larger quarters.

Again, as with the curriculae, we recommend that a lab committee be formed to study the lab and its procedures. We suggest that this committee read over the comments made by students about the lab and develop suggestions as to how our department can continue to improve the quality of the tutoring we provide in the lab.

ADDENDUM

ADDENDUM

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS SURVEYED (in-class)

Table 1 summarizes certain demographic information that we compiled on both groups of these students.

TABLE 1
CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS SURVEYED (in-class)

(n=58)	<u>Basic</u>	<u>Skills</u>	<u>Ss</u>	(n=32)	<u>"Regular"</u>	<u>Students</u>
Reported Eng. as 2nd language	63%	(20)			38%	(22)
Reported Span. as 1st language	59%	(19)			31%	(18)
Other languages reported: # of Ss reporting		Creole: 1				Hebrew: 1 Polish: 1 Arabic: 1 Italian: 1
Average # of credits completed	33.5				30.02	
Average G.P.A.	2.72				3.02	

With regard to language, our students in general parallel the characteristics of LaGuardia students. 63% of our "Basic" students reported English as their second language as compared to 38% of our "Regular" students. It is to be expected that entering students who had English as their second language would more likely be required to take Basic Reading courses.

In other ways - average credits completed, average grade point average both groups were remarkably similar.

Comparison Of Basic Students With Regular Students: students' self-ratings of their general reading ability and behaviors

Table 2 summarizes this information. It reveals that in general there is not much difference between these two groups with regard to self-assessment of reading ability and feelings about reading.

TABLE 2

STUDENTS' SELF-RATINGS OF THEIR GENERAL READING BEHAVIORS

		<u>Basic Skills Ss</u>	<u>"Regular" Ss</u>
		n= 32	n= 45
Question #1: How much do you like to read?	very much/ a lot	59% (19)	69% (40)
	not very much	40% (13)	33% (15)
	not at all	0	0
		n= 32	n= 58
Question #2: How would you rate yourself as a reader? (comprehension)	excellent	9% (3)	19% (11)
	very good	38% (12)	57% (33)
	average	47% (15)	21% (12)
	fair	6% (2)	3% (2)
	unsatis.	0	0
		n= 22	n= 56
Question #3: How would you rate yourself as a reader? (speed)	excellent	9% (3)	19% (11)
	very good	38% (12)	57% (33)
	average	45% (10)	38% (21)
	fair	6% (2)	3% (2)
	unsatis.	0	0
Average amt. of time spent on hmwrk. daily		3.16 hrs. (32 responses)	2.79 (33)
# of books read per year		8.68 (25 responses)	7.3 (26)

Those differences worth noting are:

1. A larger percentage of "Basic" students answered "Not very much" to question no. 1 "How much do you like to read?", than "regular" students. (40% versus 33%).

2. When asked to rate themselves as "readers," "Basic" students tended to rate themselves lower than "Regular" students. (question #2.) A large percentage of "Basic" students reported themselves as "average" in reading comprehension (47%) as compared with only 21% of "Regular" students.

3. Large percentages of both groups considered themselves as "average" or "fair" in reading speed.

4. In terms of amount of time spent doing homework and number of books read per year, the differences between these two groups were small.

One can conclude from these figures in TABLE 2 that a considerable proportion of "Basic" students still do not consider themselves above average in reading. Large percentages of both groups of students rated themselves as "average" or "fair" when it comes to their speed of reading. The issue of speed of reading is clearly one that concerns our students- an understandable concern of college students who are generally required to do alot of reading.

These findings support and in fact underline the recommendations we made in the main body of this study. Both "Basic" and "Regular" students feel the need for further help in reading despite the fact that they have either completed their Basic Reading courses or were exempted from them.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is apparent that a good number of our students, both "Basic" and "Regular" do not like reading very much and therefore do not read much. Because they do not read much, they do not develop confidence in themselves as readers and do not develop facility as readers. It is therefore likely that they will never become the well read individuals we would like them to become.

We, as reading instructors, feel strongly that students who graduate from LaGuardia should be well read individuals who enjoy reading and therefore will continue reading throughout their lives. As much as reading is already encouraged, it is our feeling that more should be done so that students leave our college with both the facility and the desire to continue reading and learning throughout their lives.

We suggest the following:

1. A list of "Great Books" might be developed by interested faculty from different areas, distributed and made required reading for all students.

2. Additional quiet, but comfortable areas, should be developed within the college where students are encouraged to read and study.

3. The college should organize discussions and forums on new and relevant books. Students could be encouraged to participate on these forums. Authors could, at times, be invited to these discussions and/or forums.

END-NOTES

1. Educational Testing Service, SIR, Student Instructional Report, Princeton, New Jersey, 1981.

2. Centra, John A., "Faculty Development in Higher Education," Teachers College Record, 80, September, 1978, 188-201.

3. Cent a, John A. and Linn, Robert L., "Student Points of View in Rating of College Instruction," ETS Research Bulletin, 60-73.

4. SIR Report 2 - Two Studies on the Utility of Student Ratings for Improving Teaching, #275601. Available from ETS, Princeton, New Jersey.

5. 80101 Ehrlich, D., Annotated bibliography of Reports by the Office of Institutional Research on Basic Skills at LaGuardia Community College.

APPENDIX "A"

TELEPHONE SURVEY

COMMUNICATION SKILLS STUDENT INTERVIEW FORM

Name _____ Comm. Skills Courses Completed _____
 Address _____ Telephone _____
 Soc. Sec. # _____ Number of credits completed _____ G.P.A. _____
 Expected graduation date _____

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

Hello, my name is _____. I am calling from LaGuardia Community College. We are trying to find out from students who have completed their Communication Skills courses how these courses have helped them and how the courses could have helped them but did not. You can help by answering a few questions.

Please think about the Communication Skills courses you had. That would be CSE 098 and CSE 099. I am going to ask you questions about these courses, Basic Reading II and III.

QUESTIONS RELATED TO CLASS:

Did you find the Communication Skills reading classes helpful?

What feature(s) have been the most helpful?

For the following questions about the Communication Skills reading classes, please tell me whether you found the skills taught extremely helpful, helpful or not helpful in the courses you have taken.

	EXTREMELY HELPFUL	HELPFUL	NOT HELPFUL
Reading for the main idea			
Previewing			
Summarizing			
Dictionary			
Parts of a book			
Vocabulary			
Notetaking	27		
Other			

Was there anything else you learned in the Communication Skills courses that you found to be helpful?

Were there any reading/studying activities that weren't covered that would have helped you?

Is there anything you have to do in your courses that we didn't prepare you for?

Should there be any kind of follow-up reading activities?

QUESTIONS RELATED TO LAB:

What features of the reading lab did you find to be helpful?

Was there anything about the reading lab that you did not find helpful?

For the following questions about the Communication Skills lab, please tell us whether you found the lab to be extremely helpful, helpful or not helpful.

	EXTREMELY HELPFUL	HELPFUL	NOT HELPFUL
Tutors			
Assignments			
Materials			

How did the lab help you practice the things you learned in reading class?

What helped you most?

What helped you least?

Is there any way the lab could have been more helpful?

Should the reading lab continue to provide you with service after you've finished your reading courses?

APPENDIX "B"

BASIC READING QUESTIONNAIRE

(A)

BASIC READING QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help the Communication Skills Department improve its services to students. We would like you to help us by answering the following questions.

Name _____

Tele. No. _____

Address _____

Soc. Sec. No. _____

No. of Credits Completed (not counting this quarter) _____

Expected Graduation Date _____

G.P.A. _____

Language Spoken at Home (if not English) _____

Please read each question carefully. Most of the questions ask you to choose an answer. Put an X next to the answer that best describes you...

- 1. How much do you like to read?
 - very much _____
 - a lot _____
 - not very much _____
 - not at all _____

- | | COMPREHENSION | SPEED |
|---|---------------|-------|
| 2. How would you rate yourself as a reader? | _____ | _____ |
| | _____ | _____ |
| | _____ | _____ |
| | _____ | _____ |
| | _____ | _____ |
| | _____ | _____ |

Explain: _____

- 3. On the average, how much time do you spend each day doing homework for your courses at LaGuardia?

_____ hours
31

4. Which Basic Reading courses did you take at LaGuardia and when?

	Grade Received (A, B, C, D, F, R)	Quarter You Took This Course
CSE 096 (Basic Reading Workshop)	_____	_____
CSE 097 (Basic Reading I)	_____	_____
CSE 098 (Basic Reading II)	_____	_____
CSE 099 (Basic Reading III)	_____	_____

5. How did you find the Reading (Communication Skills) courses you took at LaGuardia?

- Extremely helpful _____
- helpful _____
- Not helpful _____

Give reasons to explain your answer: _____

6. The following Reading/Study Skills are taught in our Reading courses. For each of these skills, check whether you found these skills extremely helpful, helpful, or not helpful in helping you read and understand better in content (Non-Basic Skills) courses you have taken or are taking now:

If the skill was not taught, put an X in the last column.

	<u>Extremely Helpful</u>	<u>Helpful</u>	<u>Not Helpful</u>	<u>Not Taught</u>
A. Reading for the Main Idea				
B. Previewing an article				
C. Previewing a textbook				
D. Summarizing a paragraph				
E. Summarizing an article				
F. Using the Dictionary				
G. Using a Table of Contents				
H. Using an Index				
I. Taking notes when you read				
J. Taking lecture notes				
K. Using the context to learn new vocabulary				
L. Using Latin and Greek prefixes, suffixes and roots to learn new vocabulary				
M. Doing research in the library				
N. Improving your reading speed				
O. Outlining				

7. Are there any reading/study activities that were not taught in your Basic Reading courses that you need now for your college work?

YES

NO

If you answered yes, list these needed activities.

<u>TYPE OF READING/STUDY ACTIVITY</u>	<u>REASON YOU NEED IT</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

8. Should the Reading department offer any followup courses or workshops to students who have completed Basic Reading courses but who still feel they need more help?

YES _____

NO _____

NOT SURE _____

9. Tell us what kinds of Reading help we should offer.

Advanced reading course _____
Speed reading course _____
Speed reading workshop _____
Other _____

10. How would you describe your reading ability right now?

	<u>COMPREHENSION</u>	<u>SPEED</u>
Excellent	_____	_____
Very Good	_____	_____
Average	_____	_____
Fair	_____	_____
Unsatisfactory	_____	_____

As you remember, the Basic Reading courses also had a reading lab that you were required to attend. Please answer the following questions about this reading lab:

11. Tell us, how did you find the following aspects of the Reading Lab?

	<u>EXTREMELY HELPFUL</u>	<u>HELPFUL</u>	<u>NOT HELPFUL</u>
Lab Tutors	_____	_____	_____
Lab Assignments	_____	_____	_____
Lab Materials	_____	_____	_____

12. Did the Reading Lab help you practice skills you learned in class?

YES

NO

If you answered yes, please tell us how. _____

If you answered no, tell us why not. _____

13. Should the tutors in the Reading Lab continue to give students help in reading after students have completed their reading courses?

YES

NO

If you answered yes, tell us how by answering below:

Reading improvement workshops should be given during club hour

Drop-in tutoring in reading should be available to students

Other _____

14. On the average how many books a year, do you read? _____

15. Name the last book you read for fun.

_____ (Title)

_____ (Author)

16. When did you finish reading it?

17. Do you read a newspaper?

Yes

No

18. If yes, which one?

and how often?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP IN THIS PROJECT.

APPENDIX "C"

READING QUESTIONNAIRE

(B)

READING QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help the Communication Skills Department improve its services to students. We would like you to help us by answering the following questions.

Name _____ Tele. No. _____

Address _____ Soc. Sec. No. _____

No. of Credits Completed (not counting this quarter) _____

Expected Graduation Date _____ G.P.A. _____

Language Spoken at Home (if not English) _____

Please read each question carefully. Most of the questions ask you to choose an answer. Put an X next to the answer that best describes you...

1. How much do you like to read?

very much	_____
a lot	_____
not very much	_____
not at all	_____

2. How would you rate yourself as a reader?

	COMPREHENSION	SPEED
excellent	_____	_____
very good	_____	_____
average	_____	_____
fair	_____	_____
unsatisfactory	_____	_____
other	_____	_____

Explain: _____

3. On the average, how much time do you spend each day doing homework for your courses at LaGuardia?

_____ hours
38

4. Grade yourself on the following Reading/Study Skills:

	<u>EXCELLENT</u>	<u>GOOD</u>	<u>AVERAGE</u>	<u>FAIR</u>	<u>UNSATISFACTORY</u>
A. Reading for the Main Idea					
B. Previewing an article					
C. Previewing a textbook					
D. Summarizing a paragraph					
E. Summarizing an article					
F. Using the Dictionary					
G. Using a Table of Contents					
H. Using an Index					
I. Taking notes when you read					
J. Taking lecture notes					
K. Using the context to learn new vocabulary					
L. Using Latin and Greek prefixes, suffixes and roots to learn new vocabulary					
M. Doing research in the library					
N. Improving your reading speed					
O. Outlining					
P. Other					

5. Should the Reading Department offer students who do not need Basic Reading courses any help?

YES

NO

If you answered yes, tell us how by answering below: (Check the suggestion(s) you think would be suitable.)

Reading improvement workshops should be given during club hours

Drop-in tutoring in reading should be available to students requesting it

A speed reading course should be offered

An advanced reading study skills course should be offered

Other

6. On the average how many books a year do you read? _____

7. Name the last book you read for fun.

_____ (Title) _____ (Author)

8. When did you finish reading it? _____

9. Do you read a newspaper? Yes No

10. If yes, which one? _____
and how often? _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP IN THIS PROJECT.