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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program implemented to improve attitudes toward recreational reading. The targeted population consisted of kindergarten, first, third, and fifth grade students from one urban and two suburban school districts in a major metropolitan area in northern Illinois. Evidence for the existence of the problem included surveys of parents' and students' attitudes toward reading and teacher observation checklists of students' free-time choices. Analysis of probable cause data revealed that there were a variety of outside influences infringing upon students' motivation to read for recreational purposes. Included among these factors were: lack of modeling by parents and teachers, lack of reading ability, past failures in reading, other outside interests such as television, video games, and sports, inappropriateness and scarcity of reading materials in the home, and inappropriate instruction in the classroom. A non-reading home environment also contributed to the lack of value placed on reading. A review of the solution strategies suggested by the professional literature and an analysis of the problem resulted in the development of a read-aloud intervention process. Reading aloud to students helped them to develop background knowledge about a variety of subjects, build vocabulary, become familiar with rich language patterns, develop familiarity with story structure, develop understanding of the reading process, and identify reading as an enjoyable activity. This intervention also included creating a comfortable and print-rich reading environment and teacher modeling. Post-intervention data indicated that students' recreational reading habits improved, the students' desire for their teacher to read aloud to them on a daily basis increased, and students' reading habits at home were positively influenced. (Contains 26 references, 2 tables, and 6 figures of data. Appendixes contain parent surveys, student surveys, observation checklist, a 21-item recommended list of read-aloud books, and a consent form.) (Author/RS)

INCREASING RECREATIONAL READING THROUGH THE USE OF READ-ALOUDS

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & IRI/Skylight
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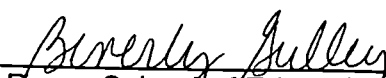
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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program implemented to improve attitudes toward recreational reading. The targeted population consisted of kindergarten, first, third, and fifth grade students from one urban and two suburban school districts in a major metropolitan area in northern Illinois. Evidence for the existence of the problem included surveys of parents' and students' attitudes toward reading and teacher observation checklists of students' free-time choices.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed that there were a variety of outside influences infringing upon students' motivation to read for recreational purposes. Included among these factors were: lack of modeling by parents and teachers, lack of reading ability, past failures in reading, other outside interests such as television, video games, and sports, inappropriateness and scarcity of reading materials in the home, and inappropriate instruction in the classroom. A non-reading home environment also contributed to the lack of value placed on reading.

A review of the solution strategies suggested by the professional literature and an analysis of the problem resulted in the development of a read-aloud intervention process. Reading aloud to students helped them to develop background knowledge about a variety of subjects, build vocabulary, become familiar with rich language patterns, develop familiarity with story structure, develop understanding of the reading process, and identify reading as an enjoyable activity. This intervention also included creating a comfortable and print-rich reading environment and teacher modeling.

Post-intervention data indicated that students' recreational reading habits improved, the students' desire for their teacher to read aloud to them on a daily basis increased, and students' reading habits at home were positively influenced.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

When by these gentle ways (a child) begins to be able to read, some easy pleasant book, suited to his capacity, should be put into his hands, wherein the entertainment that he finds, might draw him on, and reward his pains in reading. To this purpose I think Aesop's fables the best, which being stories apt to delight and entertain a child, may yet afford useful reflections to a grown man; and if his memory retain them all his life after, he will not repent to find them there, amongst his manly thoughts, and serious business.

John Locke from Some Thoughts on Education

General Statement of the Problem

The targeted students in this research project were kindergarten, first, third, and fifth grade students. These targeted students exhibited a lack of motivation in recreational reading. Evidence of the existence of the problem included teacher observations, student/parent attitudinal surveys/interviews, assessments of student reading achievement, and performance.

Local Setting

The three sites involved in this action research were elementary school buildings with enrollments that included grades pre-k-8. Site A was an urban school, while sites B and C were suburban schools. It is important to note that four diverse grade levels (kindergarten, first, third, and fifth) were represented in this research. Table 1 details a comparison of the schools' demographics.

Table 1

Project School Descriptions

General Information	Site A	Site B	Site C
Location	Urban	Suburban	Suburban
District	Public	Public	Public
Enrollment	900	384	596
Low-Income	71.7%	5.5%	35.9%
Limited-English Proficient	15.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Average Class Size	30.0	22.8	19.4
Attendance	92.6%	95.2%	94.2%
Mobility	16.1%	17.6%	40.0%
Racial-Ethnic Background			
Caucasian	55.2%	94.2%	57.4%
African-American	11.6%	0.8%	37.4%
Mexican-American	30.8%	4.1%	5.0%
Native American	1.0%	0.5%	0.0%
Asian-Pacific Islander	1.4%	0.5%	0.2%
Teaching Staff	47	35	44
Years of Experience	16	13.7	12.1
B.A or B.S.	18	25	27
M.A. or M.S.	28	10	17
Ph.D.	1	0	0
Special Services			
Special Education	Yes	Yes	Yes

Site A

Site A consisted of 95 faculty and staff members, 85 females and 10 males. The teaching faculty included 27 self-contained classroom teachers, 6 special education self-contained teachers, 6 special education resource teachers, 3 visually impaired resource teachers, 2 bilingual teachers, 2 physical education teachers, 1 library teacher, 2 reading resource teachers, 1 music teacher, 1 speech pathologist, 1 psychologist, 1 counselor, 1 social worker and 1 case manager. The remainder of the staff was compromised of 1 principal, 1 assistant principal, 1 computer

teacher, a nurse, 2 clerks, 5 lunch room workers, an engineer, 3 custodians, and 22 assistants (School Report Card, Site A, 1999).

Site A was a two-story, 74,000 square foot building built in 1955. Two modular units, containing four classrooms, were built in 1999. There were 38 classrooms, a gymnasium, a computer lab, and a lunchroom. It was situated in a residential neighborhood with an adjacent campus park, available for students' use. The school included pre-kindergarten through eighth grades (School Report Card, Site A, 1999).

The majority of the school day in half-day kindergarten was devoted to Language Arts (60 minutes) and Mathematics (30 minutes). The remainder of the day was divided between Science (20 minutes), and Social Studies (20 minutes). In third grade, Language Arts (144 minutes) and Mathematics (48 minutes) constituted the majority of the day. Science (40 minutes) and Social Studies (28 minutes) were taught daily. In addition, students received instruction in physical education, music, library, and computers one or two periods per week. There was support for students who qualified for special education, Title 1 reading, bilingual, and English as a second language services. In addition, there was an emotionally and behavior disorder resource teacher and learning disabled teachers. An after school program, Lighthouse, was offered to all students below grade level in reading and mathematics according to their Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

Site B

Site B consisted of 63 faculty and staff members, 58 females and 5 males. The teaching faculty included 16 self-contained classroom teachers, 3 special education self-contained teachers, 2 special education resource teachers, 1 Title 1 reading teacher, 4 Reading Recovery® teachers, 1 Language Arts enrichment teacher, 1 physical education teacher, 1 library teacher, 1 computer teacher, 3 music teachers, 1 French teacher, 1 band teacher, 1 speech pathologist, 1

psychologist, 1 social worker, 4 special education co-op teachers, and 26 instructional aides. The remainder of the staff included 1 principal, 1 nurse, 1 secretary, 1 office aide, and 4 custodians.

Site B was a one-story 50,000 square foot building built in 1954. The school underwent major renovation in 1999. There were 27 classrooms, a faculty lunchroom, a gymnasium, a computer lab, an art room, a music room, a Title 1 room, and a resource room.

The school educated students in kindergarten through sixth grades. It also provided services for 3 district special education classrooms and 5 A.E.R.O. special education co-op classrooms. In addition to the core curriculum areas; students in grades 5 and 6 were provided French instruction; grades 2 through 5 were taught enrichment in Language Arts (WINGS program); grade six had an enrichment class in Social Studies for students who met the standards of the program, Reading Recovery® was available for students in grade one, and Title 1 reading instruction was given to students who qualify in grades K-4. Students in grades 5 and 6 were eligible for band instruction. The school also had an after school social center for students in grades 3-6. Bus service was provided for special education students only, all others either walked or were driven by their parents (School Improvement Plan, Site B, 1999-2000).

The majority of the school day in first grade was devoted to Language Arts (150 minutes) and Mathematics (45 minutes). The remainder of the day was divided between Science (30 minutes) and Social Studies (30 minutes). In addition, students received instruction in physical education (80 minutes), music, library, and computers (30 minutes each), and art (60 minutes) per week. Once a month the students traveled to the district's Science and Environmental Center for additional instruction in Science (120 minutes).

Site C

Site C consisted of 60 faculty and staff members, 49 females and 11 males. The teaching faculty included 24 self-contained classroom teachers, 9 special education teachers, 1 resource teacher, 2 physical education teachers, 1 library aide, 2 full-time and 1 part-time Reading Recovery®/ Title 1 reading teachers, 1 music teacher, 2 speech pathologists, 2 part-time social workers, 1 case manager, 1 band teacher, and 1 computer teacher. The remainder of the staff was comprised of 1 principal, 2 assistant principals, 2 secretaries, and 4 custodians.

Site C was a one-story 56,000 square foot building with a circular wing built in 1959. Four more additions were built between 1960 through 1971. There were 35 classrooms, 2 gymnasiums, 1 computer lab, and 1 faculty lunchroom. The school was situated in a residential neighborhood, and included kindergarten through eighth grades.

The majority of the school day in fifth grade was devoted to Language Arts (115 minutes) and Mathematics (50 minutes). The remainder of the day was divided between Science (45 minutes), Social Studies (45 minutes). In addition, students received instruction in physical education (35 minutes), library (20 minutes per week), art and music (35 minutes per week for two semesters), and health (80 minutes).

There was support for students who qualified for special education and Title 1 reading. In addition, after school tutoring was mandatory for students who were failing two or more subjects. A teacher-child assistance team (TCAT) was another service provided for students who needed help.

Table 2 shows a comparison of school district data.

Table 2

Three-Site Comparison

	Site A	Site B	Site C
District Number	299	123	143
Enrollment	420,839	2,699	1,802
Teaching Experience	14.8 years	12.7 years	14.9 years
Student-Teacher Ratio	22.1:1	18.2:1	19.9:1
Average Teacher Salary	\$48,879	\$38,700	\$42,043
Per Pupil Spending	\$7,325	\$6,069	\$5,216
% of Students Reading at Grade Level	56.3% (ITBS)	54.6% (ITBS)	46.8%(Terra Nova)

Community Setting

Site A

Site A was located in a large metropolitan area. The neighborhood surrounding the school consisted of a combination of residential and retail areas. The community was serviced by five parks, two libraries, eight elementary schools, two high schools, one junior college, and seven churches. There were also ten senior citizens groups and three neighborhood watch programs. There were 12,781 households within the immediate community, and the median income was \$51,843. The median sale price for a single family home was \$110,000.

There were approximately 30,899 people living in the community. The community was comprised of active residents as reflected by organizations which helped seniors and people with disabilities obtain free home repairs, provided after school programs at local schools, assured homes, lawns and alleys were maintained, and that the neighborhood had adequate police protection. At the time of this research, the community was experiencing a rapid influx of new families. The school was experiencing over-crowded conditions and gang activity.

Site B

Site B was located in a residential area of a southern suburb of a large city. The community had a land area of one-half square mile. It was founded in 1953 and was famous for its duplex homes. All but a handful were duplex homes. The community was developed to provide affordable housing for returning GI's. The majority of the residents were middle class or blue-collar workers.

Residents were aided in their pursuit of safety with a Neighborhood Watch Program. Besides watching its neighborhoods, the community was planning \$378,000 in park improvements. Streets and sidewalks were continually replaced and repaired at no cost to taxpayers. The business district within the community, which included a bank and roller rink was about 90% occupied (Community Profile, Internet edition, 1999).

There were 1,829 households and approximately 4,635 people living in the community. The median income was \$44,206. Of the households, 13.4% had an income below \$15,000. The unemployment rate was 2.9%. The sale price of a single family home was \$92,500. The average age was 39.7 years. Within the population, 46.1% were high school graduates, 22% had completed some college, 4% had a Bachelor's degree, and 0.7% had a graduate degree (Community Profile, Internet edition, 1999).

Site C

Site C was located in a southern suburb of a large city. The community had a land area of 5.5 square miles. The neighborhood surrounding the school was a residential area. The community was serviced by 4 parks, 1 library, 4 elementary schools, 1 high school, 1 parochial school, and 5 churches. There were 4,997 households within the community and the median income was

\$63,853. The unemployment rate was 3.2%. The community had a mixture of older homes and new construction. The median sale price for a single family home was \$115,000.

There were approximately 14,919 people in the community. The average age was 33.8 years. Within the population 39.3% were high school graduates, 20.8% had completed some college, 8.2% had a Bachelors degree, and 3.0% had a graduate degree (Community Profile, Internet edition, 1999).

National Context of the Problem

Currently, children's reading achievement is declining throughout the United States. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, less than 34% of elementary through high school students were "proficient" at reading, which means they can understand and draw inferences from it (American School Board Journal, April 1999).

Whether the students' purposes for reading are "efferent," resulting from a quest for scientific knowledge or "aesthetic", resulting from a quest for narrative experience, is not important. What is important is that the children develop habits and pleasures associated with reading. Encouraging a reading lifestyle and learning to articulate reactions to reading are goals themselves and will, incidentally, also lead to success on standardized tests (Menon and Mirabito, 1999).

Most teachers have encountered students who don't read or won't read. These are students who in spite of all previous schooling have not developed a habit of reading. They have not discovered the joys of reading nor have they any desire to do so. Although they come to school each day, reading finds little or no place in their daily lives. The challenge for teachers is to provide a reading experience that will offer satisfaction and a sense of achievement (McTeague, 1992).

In Becoming a Nation of Readers, a study cited in Hall and Moats (2000), reading to children was identified as “the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading.” Reading aloud to students motivates them to read (Butler, 1980). Guiding learners toward successful reading experiences may help them approach other academic activities with confidence. Teachers motivate their students by reading to them. Thus, reading aloud can successfully motivate students to read on their own (Ecroyd, 1991), an hypothesis which is the basis of this project.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

Student attitudinal surveys were distributed to 91 students in grades kindergarten, one, three, and five to document student attitudes toward reading in general. Additionally, 88 parents were surveyed to further document children's reading and recreational habits at home. Teacher observation checklists were also kept to record student choices during free time at school.

The student surveys showed that at the kindergarten level, 85% of the students reported that they liked having someone read to them. According to the parent surveys however, only 48% of the parents indicated that they read to their child three or more times a week.

The findings of the observation checklists further indicated that only 10 % of students chose reading as a recreational activity.

The results of the surveys and observation checklists are summarized in the following graphs.

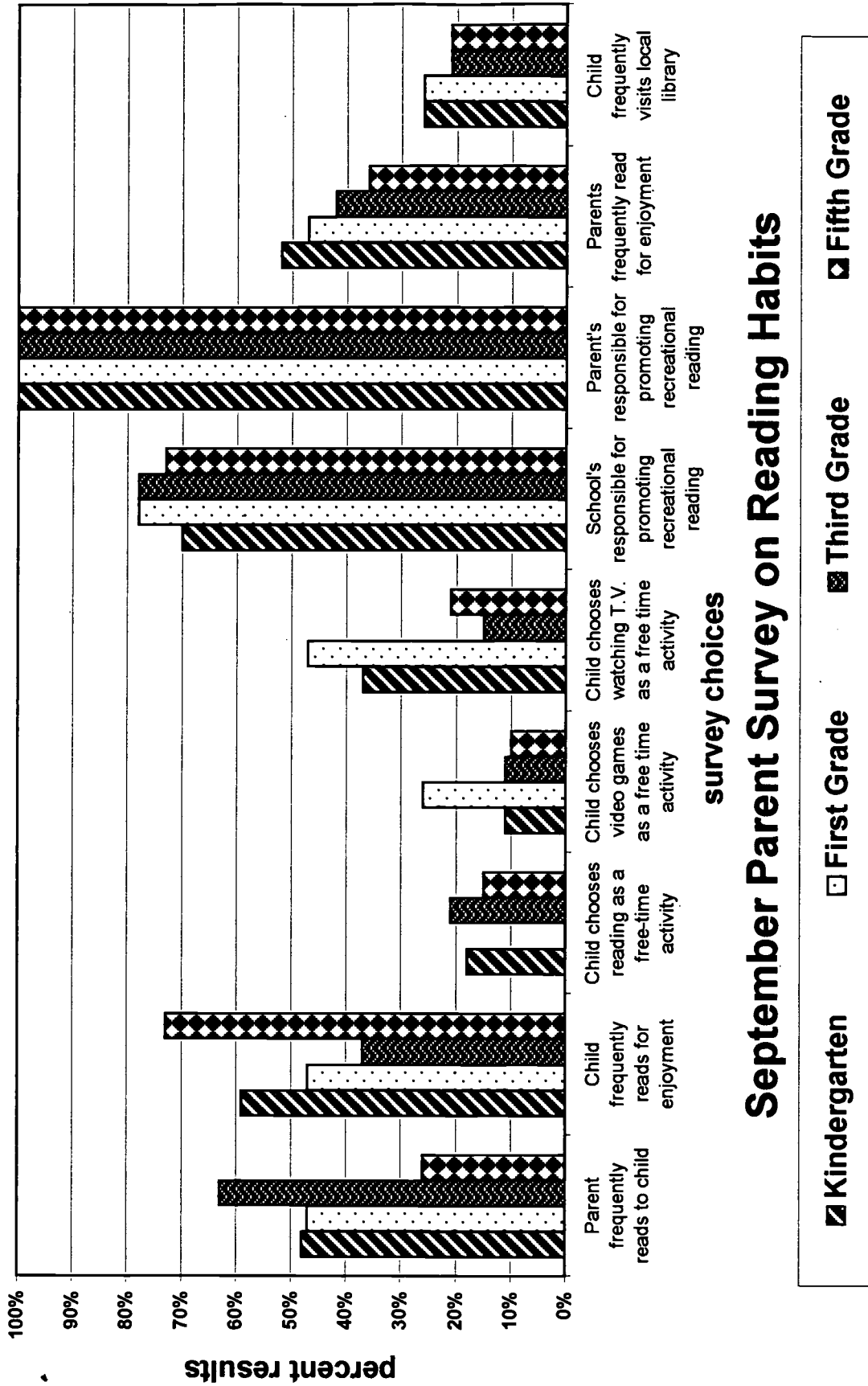


Figure 1. Results of parent survey on attitudes toward reading.

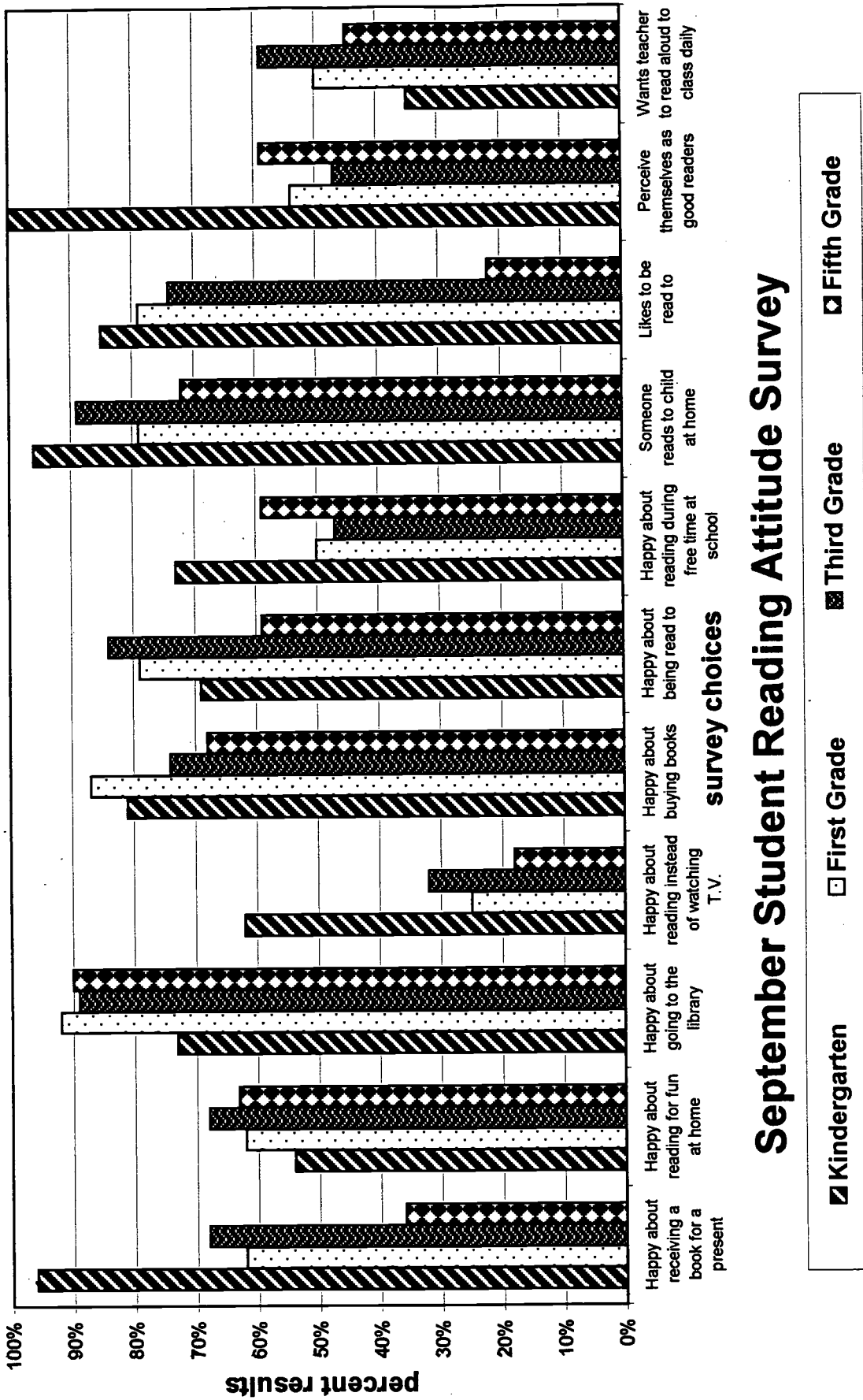


Figure 2. Results of student survey on attitudes toward reading.

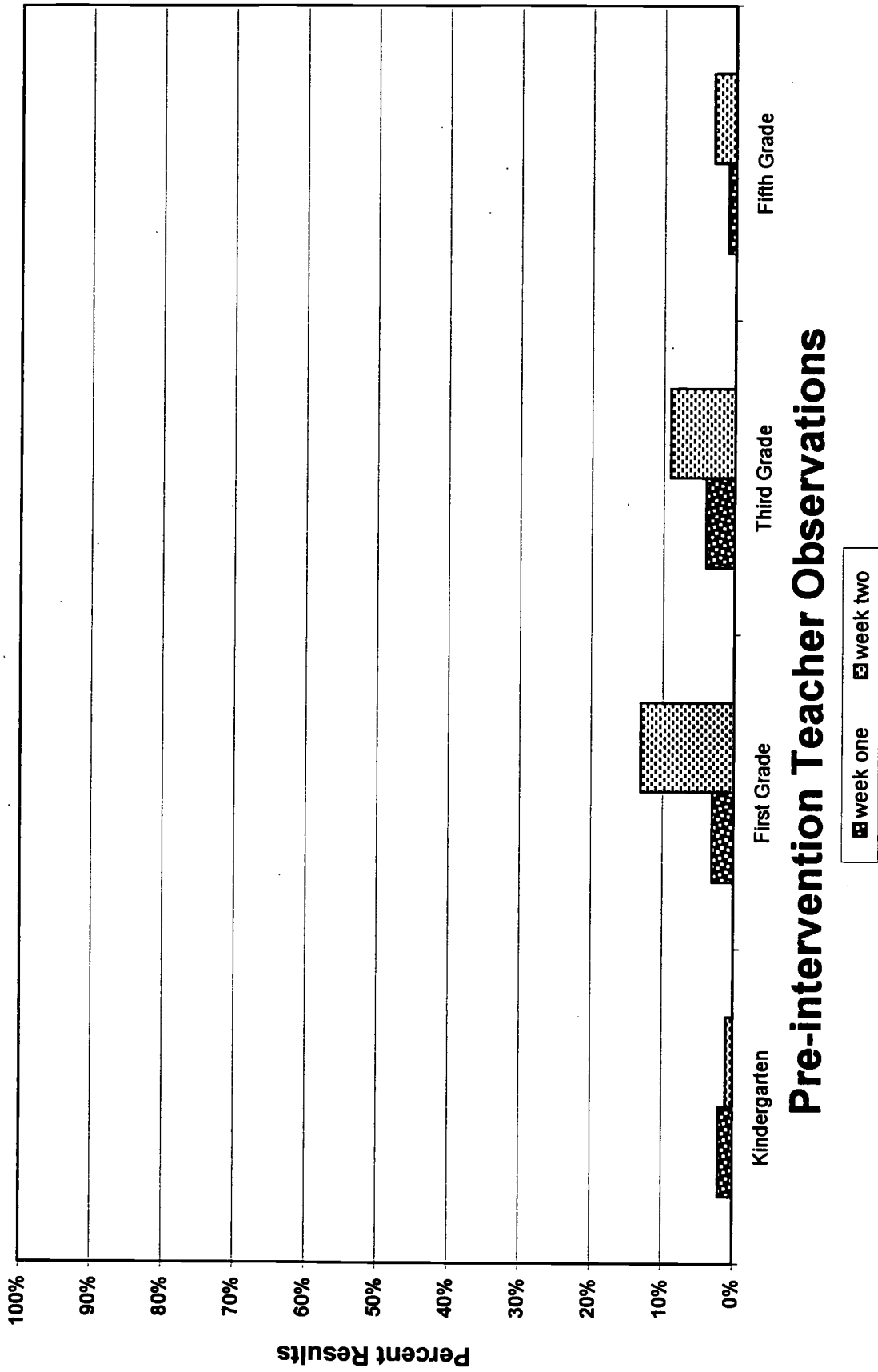


Figure 3. Percentage of students who chose reading as a free-time activity.

As illustrated in Figure 1, of the 88 parents surveyed, 100% of them agreed that it was their responsibility to promote recreational reading. However, only 46% reported reading to their child three or more times a week, and only 24% indicated that they visited the local library with their child on a weekly basis. Additionally, only 44% of the parents stated that they read for pleasure at least three hours a week.

Figure 2 indicated that 62% of the 91 students surveyed enjoyed reading for fun at home, yet only 34% reported that they would rather read than watch television. It was also noted that while 85% of the kindergarteners enjoyed being read to, only 22% of the fifth graders enjoyed being read to. This showed a dramatic decrease in students' desire to have someone read to them as they grew older.

As presented in Figure 3, students were given a variety of age-appropriate free-time activities. Only 10% percent selected reading as their first choice.

Probable Causes

According to the experts, aliteracy (i.e. having the ability to read, but lacking the motivation) is a widespread concern in the United States. Researchers expressed concerns about reading attitudes in our classrooms, where a general lack of interest in reading prevails. They point out that those considered hesitant readers are not just the poor readers, but also include many capable readers (Moser and Morrison, 1998). Whether you call them nonreaders, literate nonreaders, reluctant readers, or aliterates, the group of people who can read but do not, is large and growing. Children who cannot read at all are far outnumbered by people who can read but won't (Beers, 1996). According to Trelease, forty percent of U.S. households did not buy a single book in 1991. In 1967, seventy percent of adults classified themselves as daily newspaper readers, by 1989 that figure had dropped to 50 percent (1995).

In reviewing the literature, it was determined that lack of interest in recreational reading was influenced by the following major factors: parents, teachers, and other outside activities. These factors will be further explored in the following paragraphs.

Hall and Moats (2000) stated the following reasons for why students are not motivated to read: parents don't read to their child, homes contain few books, neither parent reads for pleasure, and reading isn't emphasized or modeled at home. Additionally, Sanacore (1996) suggests that the high divorce rate, the large number of single-parent homes, and the increase with families with two working parents contribute to the changing school culture. Parents often lack the time, patience, and sustenance necessary to give children the continued support that they deserve and need. Trelease (1995) further emphasizes that the problem is not time; rather it is a matter of priorities. Somehow they find the time to watch the nightly newscast or ball game, talk on the phone, or drive to the mall, but can't find time to read to their child.

Researchers agree that although instruction in reading strategies and skills is important, teachers often fail to provide time for students to enjoy good books and have positive reading experiences (Moser and Morrison, 1998). Additionally, Klesius and Laframboise (1998) state that teacher comments regarding deficient reading, having to read in front of peers, frequent teacher interruptions for correction, lack of success, and/or reading material that is not appealing, also inhibit the desire to read for enjoyment. Furthermore, when students are not permitted to exercise choice, they may avoid teacher selected books as a matter of principle. When students say they hate books they read in school, part of this opinion may be due to their perceived lack of voice in the school curriculum (Worthy, 1998).

Outside influences including television, video games, and other recreational activities also play a major role in students' lack of motivation to read for enjoyment. Specifically,

Trelease (1989) reported that over the last thirty years, television has become the main course in childrens' and families' intellectual lives. Both children and adults average nearly four hours a day passively letting someone else do all the thinking, speaking, imagining, and exploring. The result has been an unprecedented negative impact on American reading and thinking habits. For example:

- By the time a child is 3 years old, he/she has spent more time watching television than it takes to earn a bachelor's degree.
- The average kindergarten graduate has seen nearly 6,000 hours of television and videos before entering first grade.
- Fifty nine percent of teenagers own their own television sets and thirty three percent own a VCR (Trelease, 1995).

This evidence strongly suggests that recreational reading has become less valued in today's world. Television viewing, VCR's, and video games have taken precedence over reading as a form of entertainment.

In summary, the review of the literature sites three main probable causes for lack of recreational reading: parents, teachers, and other outside influences contribute to a child's negative attitude toward reading for pleasure.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Few children learn to love books by themselves. Someone has to lure them into the wonderful world of the written word; someone has to show them the way.

Prescott, 1965

Literature Review

The research shows that parents and teachers share the responsibility of nurturing a child's love of reading. The best way to raise a reader is to read to that child—in the home and in the classroom (Trelease, 1989). When children's natural curiosity about the world is nurtured, their questions are welcomed, exploration is encouraged, and they are given a sense of self-worth, then parents and teachers are sending the message that learning is worthwhile, fun and satisfying (Lumsden, 1994). Nearly all children can be successful in reading with early and continued intervention (Madden, Slavin, Karweit, Dolan, Wasik, 1993). One of the early and primary abilities of children is imitation. Each time a parent or teacher reads aloud to a child, they are offering themselves as a role model.

A review of the literature suggests a variety of approaches that parents can use to make reading an enjoyable experience. The lap method or look/listen approach supports a child's growing sense of love and belonging but it also lays the foundation for the beginnings of literacy. A small child is engaged in language while sitting quiet and relaxed on someone's lap (Collins and Shaeffer, 1997). Other things that parents can do to make reading enjoyable include:

- Choose a location that the child enjoys
- Choose a time to read for an uninterrupted period of time
- Get involved and be dramatic
- Allow children to enjoy reading
- Model that reading is pleasurable (Hall and Moats, 2000)

Teachers must create an environment that includes effective strategic reading instruction, activities to promote enjoyment of reading, opportunities for frequent reading, and collections of books that children will want to read and are on appropriate levels (Klesius, Laframboise, and Gaier, 1998). As stated by Moser and Morrison (1998), teachers can implement a program in the classroom which consists of four methods of encouraging students to read:

- Allowing time for silent reading
- Offering a choice of reading materials
- Sharing of literature read with and by children
- Providing appropriate adult modeling of reading

Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) provides students with a new perspective on reading as a form of recreation. SSR allows the child to read long enough and far enough so that the act of reading becomes automatic (Trelease, 1989). An optional reading program suggested by Casteel (1989) incorporates, participating in SSR, developing a “contract” to motivate students to read, encouraging children to get a library card, and scheduling guest speakers to spark interest in class activities.

Classroom conditions which foster student motivation to read include:

- A well stocked, attractive, and accessible classroom library (Hoffman, Roser, and Battle, 1993).
- A variety of reading materials (magazines, newspapers, “how-to” books,

reference books, directories, maps, craft books, song books, and joke books)

- Materials that have 3-4 grade level ranges
- Use technology to promote reading interests (Turner, 1998)

Additionally, teachers should build a choice of reading topics and materials into the reading instructional program in order to help children's individual interests and curiosity to develop (Greenhough and Hughes, 1998). Furthermore, Worthy (1996) proposes setting up multi-age partnerships in which older struggling readers read to a younger child, thus making repeated reading an authentic task and improving self-concepts and attitudes toward reading. Grimes (1991), recommends the use of shorter books that won't overwhelm students who are reluctant to read. Student choice and control in reading material and instruction also play an important role in involvement and enjoyment of reading, and in fostering voluntary reading (Worthy, 1998).

Finally, students perceive reading as important when they listen to a teacher read to them. Teachers can "practice what they preach" by reading books aloud that they have read and enjoyed themselves (Ecroyd, 1991).

Although the literature suggests many methods and interventions for promoting recreational reading, extensive research has proven that reading aloud to a child is the single most important factor in raising a reader (Trelease, 1995). Reading aloud to students helps them develop background knowledge about a variety of subjects, build vocabulary, become familiar with rich language patterns, develop familiarity with story structure, develop understanding of the reading process, and identify reading as an enjoyable activity (Hall and Moats, 2000). Trelease (1995) affirms that when we read aloud to children, we create background knowledge, provide a reading role model, and condition the child to associate

reading with pleasure. In addition, the child's imagination is stimulated, his attention span is stretched, and his emotional development is nurtured. Furthermore, nothing nurtures language skills as well as reading aloud to a child.

Project Objectives and Processes

The project objectives were:

1. As a result of reading aloud to the targeted kindergarten, first, third, and fifth grade students during the period of September 2000 to November 2000, the students will increase their recreational reading habits as measured by teacher observation checklists.
2. As a result of reading aloud to the targeted kindergarten, first, third, and fifth grade students during the period of September 2000 to November 2000, the students will increase their positive attitude toward reading as measured by the parent and student surveys.

In order to accomplish the project objectives, the following processes were used:

1. A reading corner was set up in each targeted classroom, providing a comfortable and appealing place to read.
2. A print-rich environment was maintained in each classroom.
3. The targeted students were given choices of recreational activities, one of which will include reading.
4. A teacher read-aloud time was allocated for each classroom's daily schedule.

Project Action Plan

The following action plan was implemented to increase recreational reading habits among the targeted students:

- I. Reading Corner

- A. An attractive area was set-up to appeal to the students.
 - 1. Carpet
 - 2. Comfortable chair
 - 3. Floor pillows
 - 4. Colorful motivational reading displays
 - B. A variety of reading materials were provided.
 - 1. Books
 - 2. Magazines
 - 3. Newspapers
 - 4. Dictionaries
 - 5. Encyclopedias
- II. Teacher Observation
- A. In September, October and November, the targeted students were given one fifteen minute period per day, three days a week to participate in an activity of their choice, one of which included reading.
 - B. Researchers observed and recorded students' choices on a checklist (Appendix C).
- III. Reading surveys were distributed to parents and students.
- A. Parents surveys
 - 1. September (Appendix A)
 - 2. November (Appendix D)
 - B. Student surveys
 - 1. September (Appendix B)
 - 2. November (Appendix B)
- IV. Read-Aloud
- A. Teachers read aloud to students for fifteen minutes per day, five days a week.
 - B. Guest readers were invited into the classroom (e.g., principal, janitor, parent, etc.).

Methods of Assessment

The following methods of assessment were used:

- 1. Teacher observation checklist on student choices during free-time - September through November (Appendix C)
- 2. Parent survey on reading attitudes and activities – September, November (Appendix A, D)

3. Student survey on reading attitudes and activities – September, November (Appendix B)

The assessments were given to measure the effects of the intervention on the growth of recreational reading habits among the targeted students. The data were compared and analyzed as part of the assessment process.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this action research project was to increase recreational reading habits through the use of read-alouds. In order to accomplish the project objective, the following interventions were implemented: reading corners were set-up to provide comfortable and appealing places to read; a print-rich environment was maintained in each classroom; targeted students were given choices of recreational activities, one of which included reading; and a teacher read-aloud time was allocated for each classroom's daily schedule.

The Action Plan was placed in effect beginning September, 2000. Parent and student surveys were developed and distributed to the targeted kindergarten, first, third, and fifth grade participants to reflect their attitudes toward reading. The results were compiled from the two surveys.

During the pre-intervention and post-intervention periods, the targeted students were given one fifteen minute period per day, three days a week during the months of September, October, and November to participate in an activity of their choice, one of which included reading. An attractive reading corner including colorful motivational reading displays, carpets, comfortable chairs, and floor pillows were provided to encourage students to read during an established free time. Additionally, books, magazines, newspapers, dictionaries, and encyclopedias were available for the students to read. The participating teachers observed and

recorded students' choices on a checklist (Appendix C). The purpose of the observation checklist was to determine the number of students who chose reading as a first choice activity.

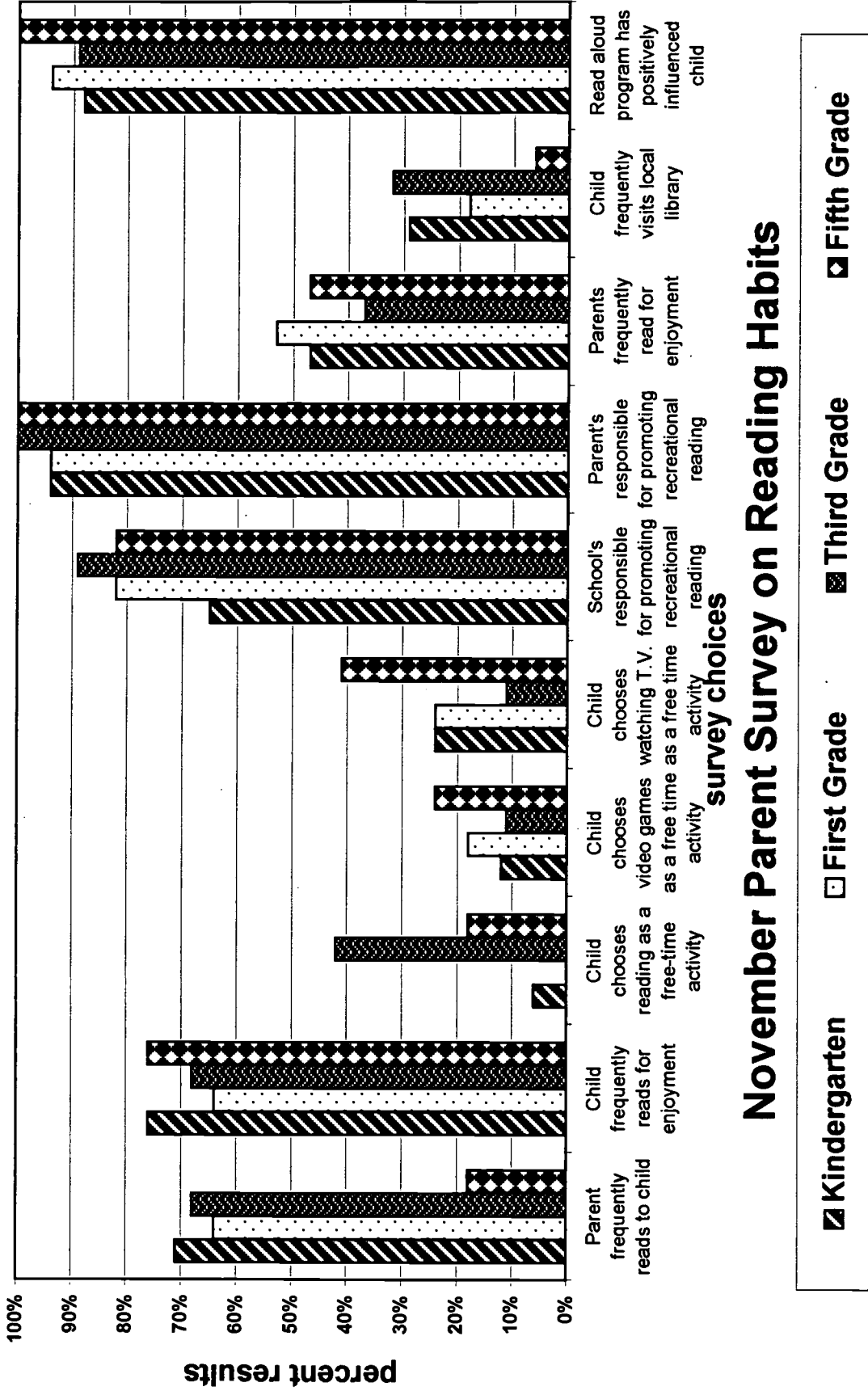
During the intervention period of the Action Plan, the researchers read aloud to their students for fifteen minutes daily. This intervention was implemented for four weeks throughout the months of October and November.

At the conclusion of the Action Plan, both parents and students from the targeted kindergarten, first, third, and fifth grades were asked to complete post-intervention attitudinal surveys. These surveys were developed to reflect their views toward reading and to note any changes in their attitudes following the intervention. Finally, the researchers recorded student choices during free time activity periods. These results were noted on the observation checklist (Appendix C).

Presentation and Analysis of Results

To collect and compare data before and after the intervention, some of the same instruments that were used to establish an initial baseline guide were re-administered to the parents and students upon completion of the intervention. In order to determine the baseline prior to the intervention, the researchers used the following data collection methods: surveys of parent and student attitudes toward reading and observation checklists of student choices during free time activities.

Figure 4 represents the results of the post-intervention parent survey on reading habits.



November Parent Survey on Reading Habits

Figure 4. Results of parent survey on attitudes toward reading.

In comparing the pre-intervention and post-intervention data, there was a significant increase in the amount of time parents reported reading to their children. At the kindergarten level there was a 23% increase, in first grade there was a 17% increase, while third grade showed a 5% increase. In contrast, the fifth grade showed a decrease of 8%.

Following the intervention, the students at all the grade levels showed an increase in the amount of time spent reading for enjoyment. Conversely, the amount of time spent watching T.V. decreased at all grade levels except fifth.

In September, 100% of the parents reported that it was primarily their responsibility to promote recreational reading, while the November surveys indicated that the responsibility had shifted to the school.

Figure 5 reflects the results of the post-intervention student survey on reading habits.

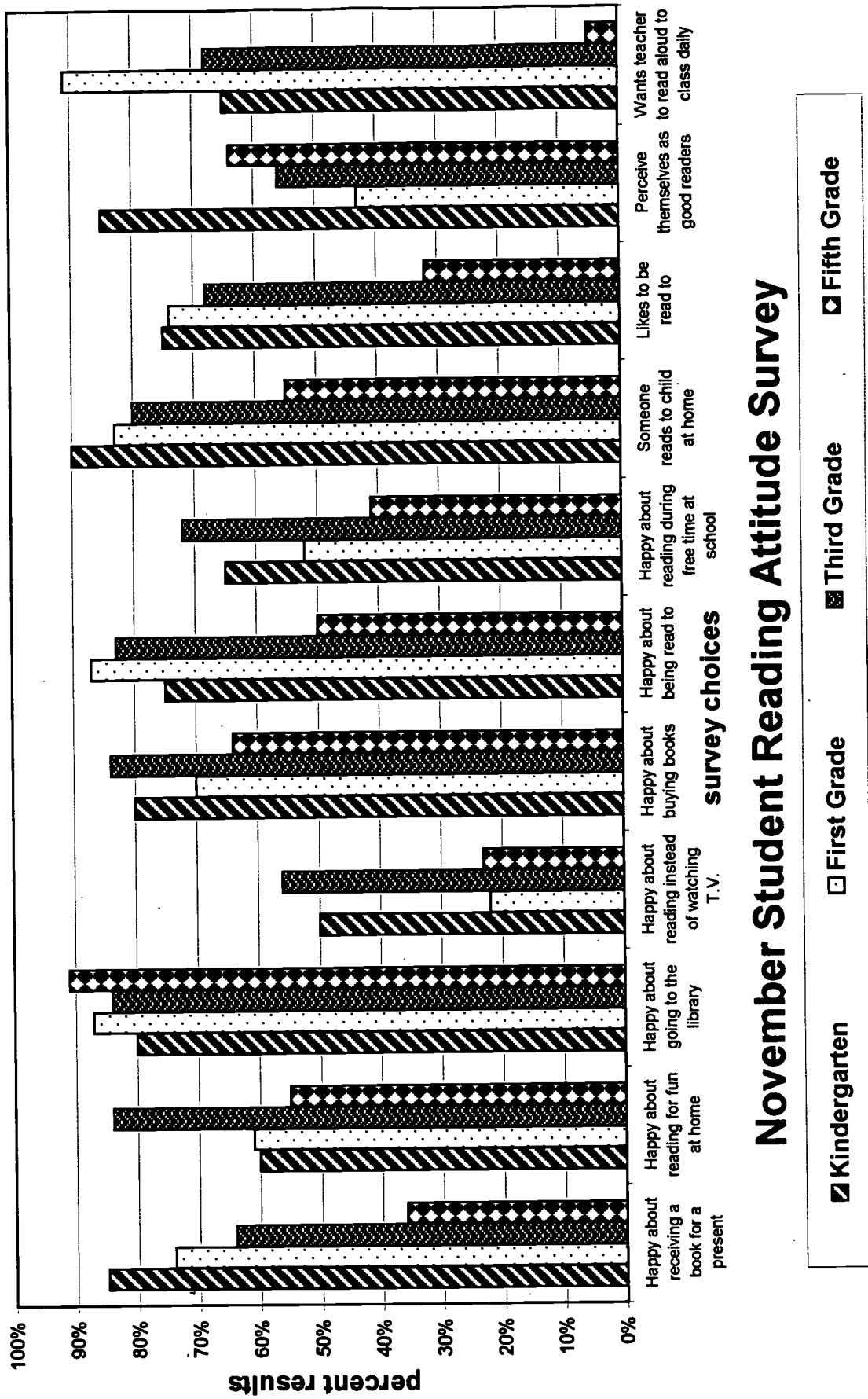


Figure 5. Results of student survey on attitudes toward reading.

According to the post-intervention data, all of the students showed an increase in feeling happy about someone reading to them, with the exception of fifth grade. According to the fifth grade researcher's log, students reported not wanting someone to read to them because, "Reading takes up too much time;" "I would rather be a kid and have fun like play sports, go outside, and play Nintendo;" "It makes me feel like a baby;" "Sometimes people pick boring stories." Additionally, fifth graders exhibited a decrease in wanting their teacher to read to them daily, while the kindergarten, first, and third graders displayed a significant increase. Primary researchers logs revealed the following student attitudes: "I like when someone reads to me because some of the stories are funny;" "I like listening to words that I could start reading;" "I like to be read to because I can understand more."

A comparison of the pre-intervention and post-intervention teacher observations are presented in Figure 6.

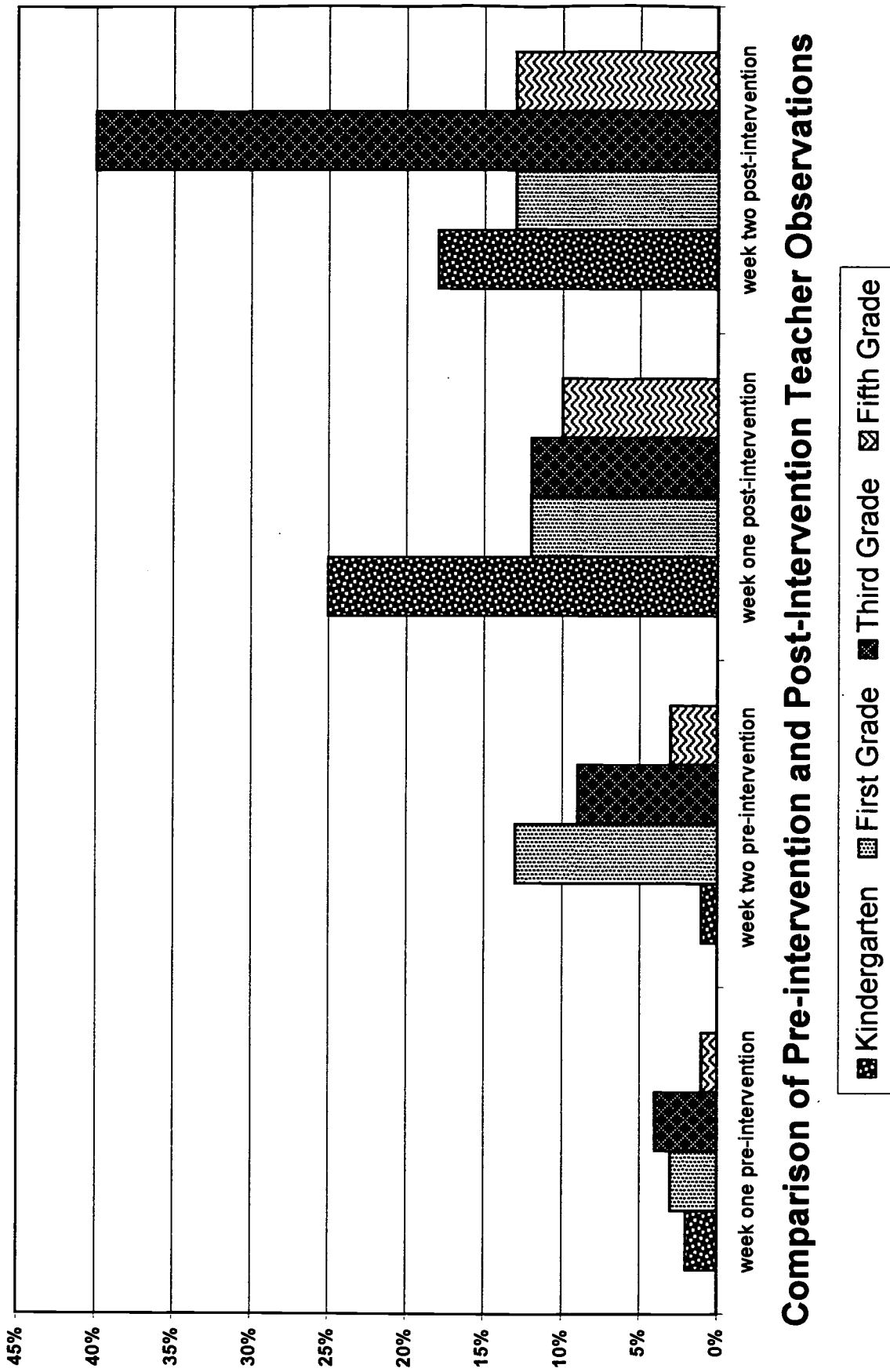


Figure 6. Percentage of students who chose reading as a free-time activity.

According to the teacher observation checklists, the intervention appears to have had a positive effect on all targeted grades. At the kindergarten and third grade levels, the researchers noted a 20% increase in the number of students who chose reading as a free-time activity. In first grade, there was a 5% increase, and in fifth grade there was a 10% increase. The researchers noted that these increases could have been the result of teacher modeling and availability of the familiar read-aloud books.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The presentation and analysis of the data on recreational reading suggested that the students' recreational reading habits changed as a result of the intervention. Additionally, the students expressed an increased desire for their teacher to read aloud to them on a daily basis. Finally, the parents reported that the read-aloud program had also positively influenced their child's reading habits at home. The researchers concluded from the results of the observation checklists that despite the short duration of the intervention, the number of students who chose reading as a free-time activity improved significantly. The researchers theorized that had their been a longer period of time devoted to the intervention, the students would have continued to exhibit an increased interest in recreational reading.

The researchers hypothesized that the decrease in the amount of time parents spent reading to their children at the fifth grade level may have been due to the following factors: outside interests including sports, social activities, computers and video games; peer pressure (being read to may be considered "uncool"), and limited amount of free-time due to increased amount of homework at this level. In addition, the researchers speculated that at the fifth grade level, the decrease in the amount of time spent reading for enjoyment could have been the result of poor reading ability, lack of interest in recreational reading, or lack of parental modeling.

The post-intervention parent surveys indicated that the parents felt less of a responsibility to read to their child than they had reported in the pre-intervention surveys. The researchers concluded that this change in parental attitude may have suggested that parents felt less of a responsibility to read aloud to their child due to the fact that they were being read to at school.

The post-intervention student surveys indicated that the students at the primary level reported both an increase in wanting their teacher to read aloud to them daily and feeling happy about someone reading to them. The researchers theorized that unlike the fifth grade students, the primary level students were more dependent upon their teachers to provide knowledge and enjoyment during the read-aloud time. Kindergarteners, first graders, and third graders could not have obtained this information independently due to their limited reading abilities.

The researchers are confident that they were successful in meeting the project goal. However, the following changes are recommended to ensure a greater degree of success:

- Implementation of the action plan throughout the school year to promote interest and enjoyment in recreational reading
- School wide adoption of the action plan to provide continuity of the read-aloud program
- The purchase of additional reading materials at each grade level
- Provide a list of Jim Trelease's treasury of read-alouds for parents and teachers
- The utilization of reading incentives (e.g. "600 minute reading club," "Book It!")
- Modify curriculum to include time for recreational reading (e.g. "Silent Sustained Reading" and "Drop Everything And Read")

The processes utilized in the action plan in conjunction with the read-aloud strategy were successful in promoting recreational reading. These included an attractive reading corner, a print-rich environment, and an allocated read aloud time.

As the researchers, our goal was to improve recreational reading habits through the use of read-alouds. Our intent was to help make reading an enjoyable activity and to encourage a life-long love of reading. In order to realize this effort, parents and teachers alike must work cooperatively to ensure the development of reading for enjoyment.

We are pleased with this project and its results. We know that our students greatly benefited from this intervention. We plan to continue to use the intervention strategies in our classrooms. As stated by Jim Trelease, "What we teach children to love and desire, will always outweigh what we teach them to just do (1995)."

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Parent Survey on Reading Habits (September)

Directions: Read each statement carefully and circle your response

1. How many times a week do you read to or with your child?

0 1-2 3-5 6 or more

**2. How many times a week does your child choose to read for enjoyment?
(This may include picture books, magazines, comic, or newspapers, etc.)**

0 1-2 3-5 6 or more

3. In his/her free time would your child (choose one)

- a. read a book b. play video games
c. watch television d. choose other activities

4. It is the school's responsibility to promote recreational reading.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree

5. It is the parent's responsibility to promote recreational reading.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree

**6. How often do you read for enjoyment on a weekly basis?
(Newspapers, magazines, books, etc.)**

0 hours 1-2 hours 3-5 hours 6 or more hours

7. How often does your child visit the local library for recreational reading?

once a week every week once a month never

Student Reading Attitude Survey

1. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?



Happy



Okay



Unhappy

2. How do you feel about reading for fun at home?



Happy



Okay



Unhappy

3. How do you feel about going to the library to check out books, magazines, comics, etc....?



Happy



Okay



Unhappy

4. How do you feel about reading instead of watching television?



Happy



Okay

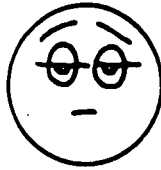


Unhappy

5. How do you feel about buying books to read for fun?



Happy



Okay



Unhappy

6. How do you feel when someone reads to you?



Happy



Okay



Unhappy

7. How do you feel about reading during free time at school?



Happy



Okay



Unhappy

8. Who reads to you at home?

9. How many times a week do you read with someone at home?

10. How many times a week do you read at home just for fun?

11. Do you like to be read to? Yes Sometimes No

12. Are you a good reader? Yes Sometimes No

13. I would like for my teacher to read out-loud to the class...

everyday

3-4 times a week

1-2 times a week

APPENDIX D

Parent Survey on Reading Habits (November)

Directions: Read each statement carefully and circle your response

1. **How many times a week do you read to or with your child?**

0	1-2	3-5	6 or more
---	-----	-----	-----------

2. **How many times a week does your child choose to read for enjoyment?
(This may include picture books, magazines, comic, or newspapers, etc.)**

0	1-2	3-5	6 or more
---	-----	-----	-----------

3. **In his/her free time would your child (choose one)**

a. read a book	b. play video games
c. watch television	d. choose other activities

4. **It is the school's responsibility to promote recreational reading.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree
----------------	-------	----------

5. **It is the parent's responsibility to promote recreational reading.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree
----------------	-------	----------

6. **How often do you read for enjoyment on a weekly basis?
(Newspapers, magazines, books, etc.)**

0 hours	1-2 hours	3-5 hours	6 or more hours
---------	-----------	-----------	-----------------

7. **How often does your child visit the local library for recreational reading?**

once a week	every other week	once a month	never
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8. **The reading aloud program at school has positively encouraged your child to read for "fun".**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree
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APPENDIX E

RECOMMENDED READ-ALOUD BOOKS

<u>Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day</u> by Judith Viorst	K and up
<u>Amelia Bedelia</u> by Peggy Parish	K-4
<u>Brave Irene</u> by William Steig	K-5
<u>Charlotte's Web</u> by Garth Williams	K-4
<u>The Chocolate Touch</u> by Patrick Skene Catling	Gr. 1-4
<u>Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs</u> by Judith Barrett	Pre-S.-5
<u>Corduroy</u> by Don Freeman	Tod.-2
<u>Curious George</u> by H. A. Rey	Pre-S.-1
<u>Dear Mr. Henshaw</u> by Beverly Cleary	Gr. 3-6
<u>Frog and Toad Are Friends</u> by Arnold Lobel	Pre-S.-2
<u>The Hundred Dresses</u> by Eleanor Estes	Gr. 3-6
<u>If You Give a Mouse a Cookie</u> by Laura Joffe	Pre-S.-K
<u>Ira Sleeps Over</u> by Bernard Waber	K-6
<u>James and the Giant Peach</u> by Roald Dahl	K-6
<u>Miss Nelson Is Missing</u> by Harry Allard	Pre-S-4
<u>Ramona the Pest</u> by Beverly Cleary	K-4
<u>Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark</u> collected by Alvin Schwartz	Gr. 5 and up
<u>Stellaluna</u> by Janell Cannon	K-5
<u>The True Story of the Three Little Pigs</u> by John Scieszka	K and up
<u>Where the Sidewalk Ends</u> by Shel Silverstein	K-8
<u>Where the Wild Things Are</u> by Maurice Sendak	K-3

St. Xavier University
 Consent to Participate in a Research Study
 "Increasing Recreational Reading Through the Use of Read Alouds"

September, 2000

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am currently working towards my Master of Arts degree in Teaching and Leadership through St. Xavier University. I am presently collecting data for my Action Research Project. The purpose of this study is to increase children's love of reading. It would help me if you could take a few minutes to complete the attached survey. Participation is voluntary and all information will be kept confidential. Your response is valuable and appreciated. Please return the completed survey to school by September , 2000.

Additionally, please sign the form below giving your child permission to participate in my study. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call.

Thank you for your support and cooperation.

Sincerely,

I freely and voluntarily give my child, _____
 permission to participate in activities related to _____ Action Research
 Project. I understand that all data collected will be strictly confidential and used only for
 research purposes.

Parent's Signature



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