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AUTHOR Barrett, Katherine B.
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ABSTRACT

This applied dissertation was designed to encourage resource students to read more books for pleasure. Resource students in the writer's high school did not read many books for pleasure. Students had short attention spans and found it difficult to finish school assignments without encouragement. They also found reading difficult and often said they did not like to read. The writer developed creative reading activities, many of which included the use of technology. Students were shown a weekly video tape of community leaders modeling the importance of reading. Students typed their writing assignments using Word, created PowerPoint presentations describing a career, wrote to a favorite author, wrote book reviews, interpreted poetry, wrote poetry, and illustrated poetry. All projects created on the computer or digital pictures of students were linked to their Reading Web pages saved on their computer disks. Students also participated in a Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) Program, participated in a poetry reading, and read to a group of preschool children. Analysis of the data revealed that although not as many library books were checked out as predicted, resource students did read more and enjoyed using technology to complete reading activities. (Contains 91 references. Included in the appendices are a student reading questionnaire, a rubric for critiquing a career PowerPoint presentation, a letter to community leaders, a letter to the local poetry club, and a letter to a day care center.) (RS)

ED 454 507

Using Technology and Creative Reading Activities to Increase Pleasure Reading Among High School Students in Resource Classes

By
Katherine B. Barrett
ITDE Cluster 8

An Applied Dissertation Proposal Presented to the Ed.D. Program in Instructional Technology and Distance Education in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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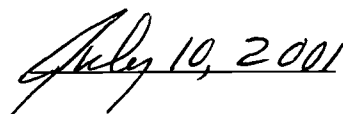
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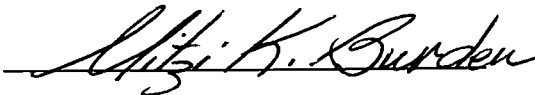
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This applied dissertation was submitted by Katherine B. Barrett under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Instructional Technology and Distance Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

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Date of Final Approval



Mitzi K. Burden, Ed.D.

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Abstract

Using Technology and Creative Reading Activities to Increase Pleasure Reading Among High School Students in Resource Classes. Barrett, Katherine B., 2001: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Ed. D. Program in Instructional Technology and Distance Education. High school students and pleasure reading/high school and resource students/high school and disadvantaged students/high school and low-achieving students/high school and high risk students/high school and learning disabled students/high school and learning disabilities/high school and high risk students and reading skills

This applied dissertation was designed to encourage resource students to read more books for pleasure. Resource students in the writer's high school did not read many books for pleasure. Students had short attention spans and found it difficult to finish school assignments without encouragement. They also found reading difficult and often said they did not like to read.

The writer developed creative reading activities, many of which included the use of technology. Students were shown a weekly video tape of community leaders modeling the importance of reading. Students typed their writing assignments using Word, created PowerPoint presentations describing a career, wrote to a favorite author, wrote book reviews, interpreted poetry, wrote poetry, and illustrated poetry. All projects created on the computer or digital pictures of students were linked to their Reading Web pages saved on their computer disks. Students also participated in a Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) Program, participated in a poetry reading, and read to a group of pre-school children.

Analysis of the data revealed that although not as many library books were checked out as predicted, resource students did read more and enjoyed using technology to complete reading activities. Included in the appendices are a student reading questionnaire, a rubric for critiquing a career PowerPoint presentation, a letter to community leaders, a letter to the local poetry club, and a letter to a day care center.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Description of Community

The writer's community is located in a city (population 45,000) in the central portion of a southeastern state. The economy of the area is dependent on a military base, industries, and agriculture. According to a local chamber of commerce report, the community has a moderate unemployment rate, an increasing standard of living and per-capita income, and may expect its population to increase moderately over the next decade.

The local school district consists of one high school, three middle schools, and seven elementary schools. There are five private schools in the attendance area. The community has a two-year college, a private four-year college, and a two-year technical school offering workforce improvement classes in addition to standard technical degrees. The public library has more than 100,000 volumes available to its patrons and has an annual circulation of more than 215,000 items. In addition to the main library downtown, there are three branches and a bookmobile.

Writer's Work Setting

The writer works in one of the largest high schools in the state. The school's mission is to insure that each one of its students has the necessary skills to compete successfully in today's global society through providing state-of-the-art learning experiences. The high school (grades nine through twelve) is staffed by a diverse population of 150 teachers, 7 guidance counselors, 6 administrators, and 25 support staff. There are approximately 2,500 students attending the school. The high school offers a wide variety of options for all students. There are advanced placement courses in

English, social studies, mathematics, science, computers, and music allow students to earn college credit. In addition to these classes, there are college preparatory courses for those students planning to pursue post-secondary education. Course work for students in need of more individualized attention is also provided. For those students who wish to enter the job market immediately after high school, a career center offers courses in computers, cosmetology, industrial sewing and cooking, auto mechanics, welding, carpentry, and others. The career center is run jointly by the county's two school districts and provides consistent, high quality technical preparatory courses for area students.

Two media specialists and five library clerks staff the school's media center. The two-story structure has an attractive skylight that brings in natural light to both floors. Downstairs there are 20 computers for students to use. The media center offers many online and CD-ROM electronic databases, Microsoft Office, Publisher, a scanner, a VCR and television unit, a color printer, Internet access, and 106 magazines and newspapers. The media center collection contains 37,175 books. There are also audio-visual kits, maps, professional materials, and 1,577 videotapes for teachers to check out. The reading area is a comfortable and inviting place to read, study, or relax. Fifty large, colorful state flags, which create much interest for students, decorate the media center stairwell. A brass plaque is inscribed with each state's name and the year of its admission into the Union.

Teachers may schedule classes in the media center computer lab, which is located upstairs and consists of 25 networked computers on each side of the stairwell. The left side of the computer lab is used for scheduled classes, and the right side is used for overflow from the classroom side (some teachers have more than 25 students in a class)

and for students on passes. The computer lab manager is available to assist scheduled classes or individual students.

Writer's Role

The writer is employed as one of the two media specialists in the high school. The writer is responsible for assisting students with technology, teaching reference skills, assisting students and teachers with individual requests, and offering students reading guidance.

This was the writer's first year in the school district. For the past 18 years she has been a media specialist in a neighboring district, where she served on many school and district committees.

Chapter II: Study of the Problem

Problem Statement

The problem to be solved in the applied dissertation is that resource students in the writer's high school do not read many books for pleasure.

Problem Description

Many resource students in the writer's high school did not take time to read for enjoyment. Resource students may be described as those students who

"... have an academic problem in one or more areas, and this problem is not primarily due to emotional disturbance, mental retardation, visual or auditory impairment, motor disability, or environmental disadvantage" (Haring, & McCormick, 1990, p. 110).

Because many resource students had short attention spans and various degrees of learning, they needed a great deal of encouragement and guidance with their schoolwork. Resource students also found reading difficult and often said they did not like to read.

In the spring of the previous school year, eighth-grade students were given state standardized tests. Students who scored in the bottom 20% of standardized testing were recommended by English teachers to take English I-Standard-Year. The pacing guide for this year-long English course covered grammar and composition, vocabulary, communications, and literature. Many resource students were scheduled for this remedial course and needed individual attention to encourage them to read the required literature.

Students in the writer's high school did not read much for pleasure. The focus of this applied research was on the resource students, but other students visiting the media center also needed encouragement to check out more books to read for pleasure.

Problem Documentation

The writer administered a questionnaire (see Appendix A) to 100 resource students in the high school during the first month of the 2000-2001 school year. Of the 100 students who responded, 37 indicated that they read books for pleasure, and 37 of 100 said that they had checked out books from the school media center since the end of school last year. Most of these books were checked out for an assignment or for a friend. Sixty-seven of 100 students indicated that they did not like to read for pleasure and did not want to check out books for that purpose.

Inspection of the media center circulation statistics report for the previous school year revealed that 20,979 books had been checked out during the nine-month school year. This figure represented the total number of books checked out by all students in grades 9-12. On average, 2,331 books were circulated each month.

Inspection of the 1998-1999 state standardized reading test results revealed that 58% of Title I students in the school were reading below the state average. Many Title I students are in resource classes.

Causative Analysis

The writer asked numerous students before school, during lunch, between classes, and after school, why they did not read for pleasure. Results of these queries revealed three possible causes of the problem. The first was that a majority of resource students had after-school jobs. The second reason given was that many participated in school sports. A third reason was that they did not like to read.

A fourth possible cause of the problem was that a majority of students' parents did not attend college and only expected their children to finish high school. In these homes

there may have been a lack of modeling of reading by parents. A fifth reason for resource students' lack of pleasure reading was that some students did not read well enough to enjoy reading for pleasure.

It was evident that many students were not motivated to read for pleasure. The majority of students to whom the writer talked about reading for pleasure said that they did not have time to read after school, for the first two possible causes listed above. Some students went to the media center only with their teacher to conduct research with a class. These students normally did not pay attention to book displays or look for a book to read.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

The writer researched the following topics: high school students and pleasure reading; high school and resource students; high school and disadvantaged students; high school and low-achieving students; high school and high risk students; high school and learning disabled students; high school and learning disabilities; and high school and high risk students and reading skills.

Children who are read to at an early age learn to appreciate the written language, learn to love reading, and, because they read without difficulty, normally do well in school. A study by Burns and Collins (1987) revealed that children with better reading skills had mothers who provided reading instruction. The ability to read and write is one of the most important gifts any teacher or parent can give a child (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Slaughter, 1993). Children who are comfortable with books and are familiar with stories learn how to read much faster than those who have little or no experience with books. Children who have been read to by parents, siblings, or other

caregivers normally develop a love for books and reading. Good readers tend to do well in school and are interested in learning. An engaged reader is motivated, knowledgeable, socially interactive, and normally has little or no discipline problems in school (Gambrell, 1996). Motivation tends to be higher in students whose parents and families encourage and maintain high expectations (Lucking and Manning, 1996). Children who can not read face a major stumbling block in school as well as in life. Continued motivation, reading, and practice, not just instruction in reading, is what creates a reader and lifelong learner (Maehr, 1976).

A child's positive attitude toward reading is an important part of the reading process (Wallbrown, Vance, & Prichard, 1979). The more a child practices reading, the better reader he or she becomes. Watkins and Edwards (1992) conducted a study of 463 students' reading habits for one year and concluded that the more children read outside of class, the stronger their reading skills become. The lack of exposure to, and practice of, reading delays the development of word recognition and reading skills (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). Studies by educators and psychologists have shown that reading to students overwhelmingly improves their attitudes toward books and reading (Trelease, 1992). Consequently, parents who model literacy by example at home usually find that children follow their example. Voracious readers are made, not born.

Reading provides a window for learning in school and in later life. A key component of becoming a good reader is to have opportunities to read. Media specialists can help by providing students with a wide choice of literature and other reading materials. One major objective of educators should be to provide opportunities for students to read and discuss what they have read. Another objective is to assist with

instruction by using strategies that allow students to comprehend actively and think critically about what they are reading (Bos & Vaughn, 1994).

Educators have long documented the fact that many students do not read for pleasure. In 1988, Langer conducted a survey in which she compared the reading habits of students in the fourth, eighth, and twelfth grades and found that only about half of these students reported reading for fun. On the other hand, Cobb-Walgren (1990), Jones (2000), and Mitchell (1992) found that students read on a weekly basis. Unfortunately, the results of another survey demonstrated that students spent approximately 180 minutes per day watching television (Watkins & Edwards, 1992) and socializing with friends or participating in sports, which remain the favorite leisure pastimes of students (Moffitt & Wartella, 1992). These results are disturbing because, if students do not practice reading, they can not be expected to excel.

Students who are given reading assignments should, from time to time, be allowed to choose their own books. Lesesne (1996) conducted a study of at-risk students which revealed that students would read more if they were allowed to choose their own books. Another study by Cummings (1994) revealed that any student would read more if given the freedom to choose his or her own books to read. Some students feel alienated by school because they have no ownership in the educational process. This is especially true when they are not allowed to choose their own reading materials (Gilles, 1989; Hall & Coles, 1997; Ignoffo, 1998; Waples, 1932). When students are allowed to choose books to read, normally they will enjoy reading because they are reading something that interests them.

In general, resource students do not like to read because they find reading difficult. The problem may be a result of their learning disability. "While a large body of literature exists regarding the characteristics of students with learning disabilities (LD), there is still confusion and controversy regarding conceptual issues, even as to which variables are most important in defining LD" (Merrell, 1990, p. 296). Merrell's study of LD and low achieving, non-handicapped students found that skills, reading, and writing were the main differences between the two groups. A learning disability is difficult to identify at the preschool level. Learning disabilities are considered academic learning problems and are not usually detected until children receive formal academic instruction. In the majority of cases, the precise cause of a child's learning disability is unknown. Numerous causal factors have been proposed and can be grouped into four basic categories: acquired trauma, genetic/hereditary influences, biochemical abnormalities, and environmental influences (Haring & McCormick, 1990).

Today's television child is attuned to current knowledge and is bewildered when he or she enters a nineteenth-century type school environment. Students trapped in an obsolete school setting simply "tune out". Resource students, more than other students, are at a great disadvantage in a traditional classroom that is teacher-centered. The dominance of lecture-based courses in which minimal communication, projects, or activities are present causes students to become bored (Lee, 1999). This boredom causes resource students to skip class, become discipline problems, or give up trying to do the work required for the class. A different teaching style must be used with resource students in order to keep them motivated and for learning to take place. However, many

teachers are satisfied with their traditional methods of instruction and are not willing to change. On the other hand, trained resource teachers can create specialized instruction that will help troubled students overcome weak areas. The teacher "must select methods based on students' strengths and weaknesses and then assess progress with formal and informal measures" (Reetz & Hoover, 1992, p. 12).

Most students with severe learning and reading disabilities have a basic deficiency in phonological processing. This can interfere with their acquisition of decoding skills in the earliest stages of learning how to read (Snider & Tarver, 1989). When resource students do not receive effective remediation, they do not learn to read well enough to enjoy reading. Decoding is a slow and difficult skill for resource students, and, without individualized instruction, they usually fail to acquire vocabulary concepts and other knowledge that their peers learn through normal reading experiences. Additionally, many resource students do not have a rich base of prior knowledge that other students have through many hours of sharing pictures, looking at books, and reading. As a result, resource students may suffer negative effects of delayed learning (Snider & Tarver, 1989).

Shore (1995) found that efforts to personalize the school experience led to dramatic improvements in students who appeared to need extra attention. A master list was made of students who were failing classes, were discipline problems, or had other problems that interfered with their schoolwork. An "adopt-a student" program was created by matching staff members with one or two students. By listening to students' concerns or fears and giving them personalized guidance, staff members were able to help some students get through their troubled times.

Flesch (1981) suggested that many students who are identified as learning disabled can be helped by being taught phonics. It is easy to understand how a student who knows how to read, but is falling behind in his schoolwork, will become frustrated and may even give up. Leonhardt (1993) stated that there are pros and cons to using special education services for poor readers. Resource teachers normally try to help students with other class work but seem to do little reading in class. Students do not like being in a resource class and are often embarrassed if other students learn about their placement in such a class. But consider the case of Albert Einstein, the famous physicist of the first half of the twentieth century. One researcher suggested that "if Einstein were a child today, he would probably be placed in a [resource] class for slow learners. He did not speak a word until he was four years old" (Moore, 1981, p. 3).

Lewis (1992) conducted a study with resource students in an effort to build their self-esteem. Most resource students develop an "I can't do it" attitude as a convenient way to avoid work or to camouflage the frustration that they feel because they want to be the same as other students. They know that they are "different" and many times develop negative self-images about themselves as learners. Lewis used a writing workshop approach to help change students' self image by eliminating the fear of being ridiculed or devalued. Students were not allowed to make any negative or cutting comments about anyone else or anyone else's work. Praise was used to reinforce good writing. Lewis advised that the instructor must first help students gain the "I can" attitude about writing and then help students to achieve writing fluency. These two objectives can be reached by providing a caring, nurturing atmosphere that allows resource students to succeed.

As early as the 1950's, Flesch (1981) warned the American public that its schools would produce a generation of illiterates if they continued to rely on faddish techniques such as the "look-say" method of teaching reading. Rather, students should be taught to recognize letters and then how to sound out words (phonics). Flesch's prediction appears to have materialized. Today, almost 50 years later, we are witnessing a decline in scores on standardized reading tests. The lack of strong reading skills adversely affects many of America's public school students.

Ross (1977) stated that a learning disabled (resource) student is neither physically nor permanently impaired and should be given specialized instruction. Once the resource student is placed in a remedial class, the teacher must give that student encouragement and provide interesting activities to help the student achieve success. If a student needs help with reading, he or she should be taught reading skills that will hold the student's interest and keep him or her interested in learning. As with almost any activity, the more one practices, the more skilled one becomes. Without the right kind of encouragement and support, resource students stop believing in themselves and their ability to succeed (Smith & Strick, 1997).

Drake (1993) conducted a ten-week, cross-age tutoring program with two students. One was a high school student; the other was a second-grade resource student. Both were having difficulty with reading. Drake's tutoring program gave both students the opportunity to use various decoding strategies and to apply phonetic rules to decode unfamiliar words. The high school student's self-esteem and confidence increased from helping the second grade student. The younger student also benefited from the experience because he was able to receive individualized reading attention from the high

school student. In addition, both students were able to discuss the struggles and frustrations associated with their reading difficulties.

Resource students normally need extra attention and instruction to help them master reading and writing skills. "In recent years, increased emphasis has been placed on linking psychoeducational assessment data to instructional intervention" (Merrell, 1990, p. 304). If this is true, it seems appropriate for the resource teacher to develop instructional lessons designed to teach skills that students need to learn, practice, and master. Freeman's and McLaughlin's (1984) study found that resource students were able to improve their recognition of unfamiliar words after independently using a tape recorder to learn the words on sight. Such specialized instruction was found to help resource students hear the correct pronunciation of words on a tape recording as they read them. They could then independently correct their own mistakes. The use of a tape recorder to model correct word pronunciation generates a positive and immediate reinforcement that also increases the chance of success for the students.

Rose and Sherry (1984) also found that resource students increased their oral reading skills after using the previewing method of listening to the teacher read aloud. As the teacher read out loud the correct pronunciation of words, resource students were also able to follow the modeling and pronounce words as they read aloud.

The literature revealed that high school students are not reading much for pleasure (Cobb-Walgren, 1990; Jones, 2000; Mitchell, 1992). Parents, educators, and media specialists must all be book missionaries by promoting reading, and schools must offer opportunities during class time for students to read. Media specialists must work to rejuvenate interest in reading by providing creative reading programs and making

available more reading materials and activities that are of interest to students. English teachers must also be encouraged to allow students to have more choice in what they read.

In our society reading is essential. “[Students]who read are destined for success in school, and who succeed in school are more likely to become contributing, productive citizens” (Crouch, 1998, p. A7). Reading is the skill that opens the door to learning (Jones, 2000). Our world is growing and changing each day. Reading is the key to a successful career and life. Responsible citizens must read to keep updated and to reeducate themselves throughout their lives. Students need to assume patterns of reading so that they may develop into responsible adults. Students should be given opportunities or time to enjoy reading (Ley, 1979). “Lifetime readers are made, not born We must develop ways of making reading more attractive to our students if we are to develop a lifelong love of reading” (Lesesne, 1991, p. 61). Many helpful suggestions to increase reading for pleasure were found in the literature. The writer’s high school is typical of most schools, and solutions used in other school settings should prove to be successful at the writer’s school.

Chapter III: Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments

Goals and Expectations

Resource students in the writer's high school will read more books for pleasure.

Expected Outcomes

The following outcomes were projected for this applied dissertation:

1. By the end of the implementation period, at least 90 of the 100 resource students, or 90%, will report that they have read more books for pleasure, as indicated by results of a questionnaire.
2. During the implementation period, an average monthly total of 2,631 books will be checked out, as indicated on the computer generated monthly circulation statistics reports. This represents an average increase of 300 books checked out per month.
3. By the end of the implementation period, 90 of 100 resource students (90%) will indicate increased reading enjoyment by creating either graphic or written materials about books they have read.

This outcome will be measured by inspecting a log of written materials and a picture scrapbook (which will be maintained by the writer) of all reading activities.

Measurement of Outcomes

The first expected outcome was measured by re-administering the questionnaire (see Appendix A) near the end of the implementation period. The second expected outcome was measured by inspecting the computer-generated monthly circulation

statistics reports. The third expected outcome was measured by inspecting a log of written materials and a picture scrapbook that was kept by the writer.

Chapter IV: Solution Strategy

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The problem to be solved in the applied dissertation was that resource students in the writer's high school did not read many books for pleasure. Students did little reading except what was required for school assignments.

The writer researched these topics: high school students and pleasure reading; high school and resource students; high school and disadvantaged students; high school and low-achieving students; high school and high risk students; high school and learning disabled students; high school and learning disabilities; and high school and high risk students and reading skills.

It was the goal of this writer for resource students to read more for pleasure. The writer conducted a review of the literature and identified fourteen solutions to the stated problem.

The first solution was to provide good role models for reading (Edwards, 1993; Irvin, 1998; Richardson & Havlicek, 1975; Turner, 1992) in order to encourage students to read more for pleasure. Sometimes students accept advice from outsiders rather than from teachers or parents, who are always giving them advice and guidance. The writer planned to use this solution.

The second solution was to allow students to select their own reading materials that appealed to their interests, needs, and motivations as suggested by Berger, (1996); Cone, (1994); Diaz-Rubin, (1996); Elvove, (1973); Endicott, (1992) as a means of enticing students to become avid readers. Just like everyone else, including adults, students like to have a choice in what they do, and this includes a choice in reading

assignments. Freedom of choice also gives students a sense of ownership and allows them to make their own decisions. Teenagers like being independent. Rabban (1980), as well as Zientarski and Pottorff (1994), stated that a portion of the school day should be set aside for quiet reading time. Many students read only during the school day. The writer planned to use this solution.

The third solution was to implement reading activities to help students form positive attitudes toward reading (Brenman, 1990; Eiley, 1992; Emans, 1966; Krabbe, 1976; Ley, 1979; Mathison, 1989). Creative reading activities could help the writer's students obtain a sense of achievement or accomplishment by finishing the task and feeling good about themselves. The writer planned to use this solution.

The fourth solution was to include literature (children's and young adult) in the reading program as a means to help literacy performance through reading practice (Emery & Houshower, 1965; Marlow & Reece, 1992; Morrow, 1992; Sawyer, 1993). Students who are guided to a good selection of literature enjoy exploring other cultures, other time periods, mysteries, science fiction, or adventure stories. The writer planned to use this solution.

The fifth solution was to implement a reading program that includes creative reading activities using technology. This could help students become better writers and readers, and, as a result, could improve their performance in school and help them become lifelong learners (Anders, 1998; Conyers, Kappel, & Rooney, 1999; Courtney, Coldwell, Pinson, & Bundy, 1993; Cronin, Meadows, & Sinatra, 1990; Moore, 1998; Potter & Small, 1998; Rothman, 1990). Students are motivated to do reading assignments when allowed to use the computer to create reading projects. Often students

do better on assignments when they can use a computer to assist them with a task.

Students today seem to be fascinated with computers and prefer looking up research material on the computer rather than in a book. The writer planned to use this solution.

The sixth solution was to practice reading aloud to others (Barton, 1988; Fifield, 1996; Karlin, 1975). By practicing reading aloud, the resource students might improve their reading comprehension as well as increase their desire to read more for pleasure. Just like improving basketball skills, for example, students would need to practice those skills. Reading, just like sports, must be practiced before improvement can be realized. Resource students at the writer's school could practice reading aloud to improve their reading skills. The writer planned to use this solution.

The seventh solution was to allow students to work in small groups of their own choosing (with frequent shifts in group membership for variety) in order to stimulate interest in reading (Hoffman, 1992; Megyeri 1993). Many times students enjoy working with their peers on school projects. Being an active member of a group helps students feel more confident and believe in themselves. In addition, students enjoy the safety and security that they feel by belonging to a group. The writer planned to use this solution.

The eighth solution was to encourage students to read, write, discuss, and illustrate a topic that interested them (Ash, 1992; Hancock, 1993). Some students have difficulty reading and writing, but they could discuss or illustrate a story. When given these opportunities, students might discover that they have other strengths they could use. Many times students just enjoy talking or writing about themselves. The writer planned to use this solution.

The ninth solution was to invite students' families to take an active part in their schooling (Cotton, 1998; Epstein, 1985). This could help students gain in personal and academic development. Students need praise for their good work and efforts. The writer planned to use this solution.

The tenth possible solution was to use cross-age tutoring in order to help both the older and the younger students gain reading skills, be more self-assured talking to other students with similar reading problems, and build confidence and self-esteem (Drake, 1993). Research results revealed that the more students practiced reading, both silently and orally, the better they performed (Karlin, 1975; Fifield, 1996; Burns & Collins, 1987). This solution could have been a good activity for the writer's resource students, but it was not feasible due to transportation and time restrictions. The writer did not plan to use this solution.

The eleventh possible solution was to use a writing workshop approach to help build self-esteem (Lewis, 1992). The workshop approach involves teaching students how to be courteous toward others who are reading, writing, discussing, or illustrating their work. This friendly, warm, and comfortable atmosphere would have helped students improve their reading and writing skills. However, this approach is more suitable for a classroom activity rather than one in the media center. Therefore, the writer did not plan to use this solution.

The twelfth possible solution was to provide a reading instructional package for teaching outlining skills to resource students. This approach proved to be highly effective for Bianco and McCormick (1989). Students improved skills using title, main topics, and in subtopic categories. The researchers stated, "Outlining is a skill that must

be practiced before its effectiveness is seen" (p. 286). This solution was more suited for a classroom environment. Therefore, the writer did not plan to use this solution.

The thirteenth possible solution was to teach resource students how to decode words. Marani and Calder (1971) advised that if students are having trouble reading, it is probably because they can not decode the words. This type of activity should be done in the classroom environment. The writer did not plan to use this solution.

The fourteenth possible solution was to use a tape recorder to model reading. Freeman and McLaughlin (1984) found that the use of tape-recorded modeling was useful for students with reading problems. Students listened to the words being pronounced and then practiced saying the words correctly. This solution is more suitable in the classroom environment. The writer did not plan to use this solution.

Description of Selected Solutions

After reviewing the literature and considering the feasibility of possible solutions, the writer selected the following strategies to increase pleasure reading:

Providing good role models for reading. Each week one short (less than 5 minutes) video clip of community members explaining why reading is important in their professions was to be shown in the first few minutes of class. The idea of providing good role models for reading (Edwards, 1993; Irvin, 1998; Richardson & Havlicek, 1975; Turner, 1992) was expanded upon by the writer to create this solution.

Students were to telephone or arrange to meet a community leader (or some other good role model) and, following their conversation, write a paragraph or two explaining why reading is an important skill for that person's profession. Often young adults will listen to peers or other people more readily than they will listen to teachers or parents.

Allowing students to choose their own reading material. Students were to visit the media center and to select career books of their choice and were to be given school time to begin reading the book. The literature contains many articles that suggest students should be allowed to select their own reading materials that appeal to their interests, needs, and motivations (Farrell & Squire, 1990; Gebhard, 1993; Lesesne, 1991; Scharf, 1973; Wollman-Bonnilla, 1989). Students are more likely to be interested in materials that they choose to read, will develop ownership of the topic, and will show an increased interest in reading.

Teachers were to implement and model a Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) Program in their classroom for 20 minutes once a day to encourage students to read. During this time period, students were to be allowed to read books, newspapers, magazines, or other types of print material. The writer's objective was to encourage students to read at school, learn to enjoy reading, and subsequently read more for pleasure after school.

Implementing reading activities to help students form positive attitudes toward reading. Students were to write a two-minute book review rough draft to be incorporated into a PowerPoint presentation. The writer's objective was to help students form positive attitudes toward reading (Pilgreen & Krashen, 1993; Reed, 1978; Taylor, Frye, & Maruyama, 1990; Tullock-Rhody & Alexander, 1980; Van Oteghen & Mahood, 1995; Welker, 1976) by encouraging students to participate in numerous and varied reading activities. Students were to write their rough draft; the writer was to instruct and assist students in creating their final PowerPoint presentations. Students enjoy working on the computer, and this strategy would allow the writer to use PowerPoint as an incentive to

encourage students to read a book of their choice. The activity would also help students form a positive attitude toward reading.

Including literature (children's and young adult) in a practice reading program.

Students were to check out and read a book from a list of young adult titles selected by media specialists throughout the state. These books are of interest to many young adults because they are usually about contemporary issues, in addition to being short and easy to read. They typically deal with such issues as divorce, teen love, drug abuse, teen pregnancy, and other realistic situations experienced by young people today. Including young adult literature in the reading program was expected to promote an interest in reading and to improve literacy performance through reading practice (Emery & Houshower, 1965; Marlow & Reece, 1992; Morrow, 1992; Sawyer, 1993). In the past, the state list books had not been displayed in the writer's high school media center, and, consequently, students had not been actively enticed to read them.

Creating reading activities that include technology. Students were to write a letter (e-mail or postal service) to a favorite author. A list of possible authors was to be provided. Students were to be allowed to choose an author from this list or choose their own favorite author. The media center staff was to attempt to find an e-mail or postal address for each of the authors chosen. Because students are allowed to use e-mail at the writer's high school, and because most students like working with computers, this activity was expected to be an incentive for students to write to an author. Authors' responses to students' letters would be an additional incentive for students to read books by their favorite authors and write to them.

Practicing reading aloud to others. Students were to be introduced to poetry and encouraged to read, write, and illustrate poetry. Including many types of literature in a reading program is a proven method of promoting an interest in reading (Emery & Houshower, 1965; Marlow & Reece, 1992; Morrow, 1992; Sawyer, 1993). Many times resource students become discouraged when they are required to read a book that is too long or too difficult for them. Poetry can serve as an alternative to "regular" books and is the type of literature that many students can understand, enjoy, and even illustrate.

Resource students were to choose a book from children's literature, practice reading it aloud, and then read it to pre-school children from the local community. This activity would help the resource students practice oral reading skills and give them more confidence in themselves, thus creating a more positive attitude toward reading. Resource students were to assist with the story time and other activities.

Allowing students to work in small cooperative learning groups. Allowing students to work in small groups of their own choosing (but which have frequent shifts in group membership for variety) will stimulate interest in reading (Hoffman, 1992; Megyeri 1993). Many times resource students enjoy working with their peers on school projects. Being active members of a group was expected to help develop self-confidence. Students were to read a short story, a magazine article, or a short book of their choice, and then summarize what they had read. Students were to work in cooperative learning groups to help each other read, edit, and post their work on their own Web pages which were to encourage other students to read the material. Students were to create individual reading Web pages that included all their reading and writing activities.

Encouraging students to read, write, discuss, and illustrate a topic that interests them. After reading a young adult book, from the state list, students were to write a narrative essay describing an alternative ending. Teenagers enjoy being asked to write about their feelings and opinions. While working on the writing activity, students were expected to form positive attitudes toward reading because they would be working on a reading activity that interested them (Eiley, 1992; Ley, 1979; Mathison, 1989; Pilgreen & Krashen, 1993; Van Oteghen & Mahood, 1995; Welker, 1976). While resource students say that they do not like to write or read, they do enjoy writing about topics that interest them. When given encouragement and guidance, students were expected to enjoy the writing and reading activities and increase their reading enjoyment as a result.

Inviting students' families to take an active part in their schooling. Teachers were to contact parents early in the school year to encourage their cooperation and involvement in their child's learning. Parents were to be invited to visit the school, sit in on classes, and view their child's work.

When students perform well on activities, good reports praising students for their success (Moles, 1987) should be sent home. Students gain in personal and academic growth if their parents stress the importance of school and receiving a good education. For many years research has documented the fact that parental participation, encouragement, and interest influence a child's [student's] achievement in spite of a child's [student's] lack of ability or poor socioeconomic status (Epstein, 1985). A child's [student's] positive attitude toward reading is an important part of the reading process (Wallbrown, Vance, & Prichard, 1979).

Report of Action Taken

Before the implementation of the proposal, the building principal and the special education department head reviewed the calendar plan and gave their approval. One pre-implementation activity was done in advance because it was very time consuming. The writer mailed 100 letters (see Appendix B) to local community leaders asking for their assistance with a reading video to explain why reading was important to their career. Thirty-seven community leaders responded and were video taped. Students recognized or even knew many of the participating community leaders and were be able to "see" that reading was an important skill for any career.

Scheduling of the 11 resource classes to visit the media center, use of the computer lab, setting up equipment, playing the reading video clips, and making arrangements for taping of the poetry club reading in the media center were done during the first week of implementation. The media center's policy for using the computer lab allows teachers to schedule their classes every 10 school days because there is only one lab in the school, but the school principal made an exception for the resource classes for the scheduling of implementation activities for the entire school year. Equipment forms were completed and submitted to request the use of the liquid crystal display (LCD) computer projector, the digital camera, and the scanner. Letters inviting members of the local poetry club (see Attachment D) to a poetry reading and a local day care (see Attachment E) to a reading activity were mailed during implementation.

During Month 1, Week 1, of the implementation period, the four resource teachers were invited to meet after school for a workshop to discuss the reading activities for the coming school year. The purpose of the workshop was to answer questions or

concerns, finalize computer lab times, and discuss activities. The resource teachers were excited to learn that their students would be using technology and would be involved in various reading and writing activities. However, one teacher made it clear to the writer that the students did not want any group pictures taken because they did not like being singled out or identified as resource students. The teachers and the writer worked collaboratively on all activities.

Also, during this first week of implementation, a library clerk placed an orange sticker on the spines of 634 young adult books on the state list for easy identification. The writer prepared a list of previous and current book titles on the state list and created a category for these books in the automated card catalog. The creation of this special category made it easier for students to locate books.

Beginning Month 1, Week 2 of the implementation period (and continuing on a weekly basis), one short video clip of community members explaining why reading was important to their careers was scheduled to be shown the first few minutes of class every Tuesday for 30 weeks. If school was not in session on a Tuesday, special arrangements were made to play the video clip on a different day.

During Month 1, Week 3, the resource teachers and their 11 classes met with the writer in the computer lab. The writer demonstrated to students how to create a Web page that focused on reading and writing and then created a sample Web page in front of the students. For the next week, students were assigned to read a short story, a magazine article, or a short book of their choice, and then summarize their readings so as to motivate other students to read the material.

During Month 1, Week 4, the resource teachers and their classes met with the writer in the computer lab. Through demonstrating how to use Microsoft Word to type a short paragraph, the writer discovered that the majority of the students were not familiar with the basics of Word. The writer gave step-by-step instructions for typing the double-spaced paragraph. At the end of the session, many of the students and two of the resource teachers commented that they had learned a great deal from this Word activity. One teacher was excited to learn how to use the spell check feature in Word. Each resource class had only one computer in the classroom, and most students had not taken a keyboarding or Word course. The writer and the teachers gave positive reinforcement to the students as they edited their writing activities and prepared their final projects for posting to their Web pages.

Each student was given a computer disk on which to save his or her work. All disks were formatted and labeled with the student's name, teacher, and class period. Disks were organized in a box by eleven dividers labeled with teachers' names and periods. All computer disks were housed in the computer lab. Students were not allowed to take their disks out of the room. Teachers could make arrangements to borrow students' disks to be used in their classrooms if they preferred their students to finish working on a past assignment in their classroom. Samples of students' original drafts and typed work were placed in a large notebook for their teachers or parents to view.

During homecoming week, the principal scheduled an activity for the student body during first period on Tuesday, so the resource students from first period had to be rescheduled to the next week, which was the first date the computer lab was available.

Rescheduling some of the Tuesday classes to Wednesdays allowed all activities to be completed.

In Month 2, Week 1, the writer reviewed Web page basics. Students typed their written activity from the previous week, created their own Web page, located free clip art from the Internet, saved an image to their disks, inserted the image to their Web pages, and linked their Word documents. Students who did not bring their own work to type were given a paragraph to use for typing practice and were allowed to create their Web page but did not create a link. Students created a table on their own individual Web pages to list their reading and writing activities but did not have enough time to link their first writing assignments. Because of time constraints students completed the assignment the following week. Their next assignment was for students to select a community leader to interview.

During Month 2, Week 2, resource students telephoned or arranged to meet the person they had selected from the community. Following their conversations and (or) meetings, students wrote a paragraph or two explaining why reading was an important skill for that person's profession. The writer and the teachers worked collaboratively to assist students with this assignment. Students were given library passes to the media center or the computer lab to type their paragraphs.

To prepare for the students' visit the next week, a list of all 200 career books located in the media center was printed and given to the resource teachers to share with their students. Students had several days to review this list and were asked to choose three career titles. Only one book per student would be checked out, but second and third choices were needed in case the students' first choice was already checked out.

The writer invited the local poetry club members to read and speak to the students about writing poetry.

In Month 2, Week 3, resource students visited the media center to select the career book of their choice and were given time to begin reading. The media center had a wide selection of career books available for the students. Several resource students said that they did not know how to use the automated card catalog, so the writer gave a demonstration. The writer and teachers assisted students in finding books.

During Month 2, Week 4, after reading the career book of their choice, resource students wrote a book review rough draft for a two-minute PowerPoint presentation. The purpose of the review was to explain what a person had to do to train for his or her chosen career and describe some details about the career. The writer met with the resource teachers and their classes in the computer lab. The writer set up the LCD projector and screen and gave instructions for creating a PowerPoint presentation. The writer and the teachers assisted students with planning their presentations. Most students had never created a PowerPoint presentation and really enjoyed this activity. They were eager to learn new computer skills and especially liked creating sound effects and colorful backgrounds.

In Month 3, Week 1, the teachers brought their classes to the computer lab to continue the PowerPoint training. The writer and teachers assisted students as they worked on their presentations.

During Month 3, Week 2, the writer, the resource teachers, and students returned to the computer lab to finish work on their career PowerPoint presentations. The writer and the teachers assisted the students. Students linked their written activity to their

individual Web pages. Again, students who had completed their projects early served as mentors to assist other students who needed extra help completing the PowerPoint presentations. It was a joy to see the mentors smile as they walked around the computer lab assisting other students. The writer even learned from one of the mentors how to highlight words by using the shift and arrow keys. Students were asked to sign up if they were willing to volunteer to have their presentations shown during the next group meeting, but only around five students signed up from each class. The writer had anticipated more sign ups, but many times resource students feel insecure and do not want to show their work.

In Month 3, Week 3, the writer scheduled students' PowerPoint presentations to be shown downstairs in the media center. The resource teachers brought their classes to the media center. Students used a rubric (see Appendix C) to critique each other's work. They wrote at least one positive comment and one suggestion for improvement.

During Month 3, Week 4, the writer met with the resource students and teachers in the media center conference room to explain the DEAR Program and give the details for receiving \$50 reading gift certificates. To encourage the students to read more for pleasure, the writer suggested that she might give a \$50 check at the end of the school year to the top reader. The writer discussed this idea with the principal. However, the principal informed the writer that it was against district policy to issue a check to a student for such an activity. Since the principal was very supportive of the activity, he volunteered to donate three \$50 gift certificates, and the special education department chairperson agreed that his department would donate the fourth gift certificate.

During this week, resource teachers implemented and modeled reading using the DEAR Program in their classrooms for twenty minutes every day. Students were allowed to read a magazine or a book of their choice. The writer created many interesting reading displays to entice students to check out books for the DEAR Program. The writer and the teachers decided that it would be more beneficial if the students were told about the gift certificates during this week.

In Month 4, Week 1, teachers brought their classes to the media center to check out materials for the DEAR Program and to read for twenty minutes. Each week the writer created a new book display in the media center. Resource teachers also provided reading materials in the classrooms. During this week a community member donated five boxes of magazines to the media center. As a result, each resource teacher was given magazines to share with his or her students.

Each student kept a reading log and completed a book report form to document each book read. Each time a book was completed, the teacher initialed the log. Teachers used this documentation to determine which students had read the most books by the end of the implementation period. The writer periodically checked the progress of the reading documentation and talked with resource students who did not have any books written down on their reading logs. Several teachers explained to the writer that some of the resource students refused to read or do any assignments in their classes. The writer talked privately with these students and volunteered to help them find reading material on a subject that interested them. A few students asked the writer for reading guidance and checked out a book to read for pleasure.

During Month 4, Week 2, students continued reading their books or reading materials in their classrooms. The writer assisted teachers with the monitoring of students' reading logs. The writer observed an increase in the number of resource students checking out library books and reading magazines in the media center. The teachers were asked to send a list of their students' favorite authors to the writer so that she and the library staff could look up postal or e-mail addresses.

During Month 4, Week 3, students wrote a letter to a favorite author. The writer and the teachers worked collaboratively in assisting students with this writing activity. The writer and the media center staff located postal and e-mail addresses for most of the selected authors. Some students chose to write to deceased authors and used the activity to practice writing skills.

In Month 4, Week 4, students continued to read a book and edit the letter that they were writing to their favorite author. The writer and the teachers monitored and assisted students with the activity. Teachers collected the rough draft of the letters and placed them in an envelope for safekeeping.

During Month 5, Week 1, the writer, the resource teachers, and their classes met in the computer lab to type their letters. The writer offered to mail the postal letters and assist with e-mailing letters. Students who did not have a free Internet e-mail account were shown how to obtain one. None of the students wanted to mail or e-mail their letters, and the writer did not push the issue. The writer reviewed how to link a Word document to their Web pages. Students then linked their letters and saved the information to their disks.

In Month 5, Week 1, students were introduced to poetry and were encouraged to read, write, and illustrate their own poetry. The writer showed students where the poetry books were located in the media center and worked collaboratively with the teachers as students worked on the unit. The writer chose several poetry books for the resource teachers to keep in their rooms for students' use. Each student was encouraged to write and illustrate his or her own poem. Two resource teachers told the writer that they and the students enjoyed reading the poetry books that the writer had delivered to the classrooms. Resource students seemed to enjoy visiting the media center and checking out poetry books.

During Month 5, Week 3, resource teachers and interested resource students were invited to a poetry reading during fourth period. The president of a local poetry club volunteered to read his own work. After reading each selected poem, the author asked the students what they thought the poem meant or led a discussion about the poem. Students answered the author's questions and asked their own questions. During the poetry reading, the students were very well behaved and listened intently to the readings. The writer was pleased to hear the resource students ask the guest speaker questions. Often resource students are unsure of themselves and will not ask questions in front of their peers because they fear being embarrassed. The president of the poetry club told the students that it was not easy to get a poem published. One student asked what his advice would be to a person just getting started in writing poetry. He explained that he believed it was always a good idea to write about things that he or she was familiar with and enjoyed. The writer thanked the poet for coming to read and for sharing his ideas and experiences.

In Month 5, Week 4, students continued to organize the writing, illustrating, and typing of their own poems. The writer and the teachers worked collaboratively to assist students. One resource teacher told the writer that one of her students who had recently been moved from a self-contained class wrote a beautiful poem. This resource teacher was so touched by the poem that she made copies to give to all the student's teachers and his parents.

The writer, with the assistance of a vocational teacher, created and printed the cover page for the poetry book on heavy blue card stock paper. Also, one of the vocational teachers gave the writer a demonstration of how to use the school's new binding machine, which was housed in the vocational department.

During Month 6, Week 1, students read their poems aloud and voted on the best original poem from each class. The writer submitted the 11 winning poems to the school newspaper and gave each winner a "goodie" bag filled with candy.

All of the students' original poems were typed, the front and back book covers were laminated, and the book was bound. The group poetry book included a title page as well as an acknowledgement page and was catalogued, barcoded, and added to the media center's poetry collection.

In Month 6, Week 2, the teachers and their classes visited the media center. The students were to check out and start reading a young adult book on the state list. The writer showed the classes how they could quickly locate one of these books on the automated library catalog. The writer had hand entered each of the titles into a special category in the library card catalog but found that the students preferred to browse the shelves themselves.

Several resource teachers asked to meet with the writer to discuss some concerns about the schedule for the next activities. The teachers explained that the state exit exam was in four weeks, and that their students wanted to concentrate on studying and practicing for the exit exam. The calendar plan was adjusted to reflect reading and writing activities for the next four weeks using the young adult book that each student had checked out. These reading and writing activities were helpful to students as they prepared for the exit exam.

The writer completed and submitted a school form for the use of the high school environmental center during Month 8, Week 3 of implementation. The entrance of the environmental center had an ideal grassy meadow for the reading activities.

During Month 6, Week 3, of the implementation period, students thought about what they had read so far in their young adult book and then wrote a narrative essay. This narrative essay described what they thought would happen in the next chapter of their book. This assignment helped students practice writing and reading skills that would be tested on the exit exam. Some students were given passes to the media center to type their assignment, while others typed their essays on the classroom computers. Students linked their Word documents to their Web pages.

In Month 6, Week 4, students wrote a descriptive essay of a favorite character in their young adult book. The writer and the teacher worked collaboratively to assist students with the writing process. Some students were given passes to the media center to type their assignments and other students typed the assignment using the classroom computer. Students also linked this assignment to their Web pages.

The writer invited local day care children (see Attachment E) and a group of children from the campus-based Head Start program for a special Reading Day. School district field trip forms were given to the director of the Head Start Program. The local day care brought their own field trip permission forms when they arrived for Reading Day.

During Month 7, Week 1, students chose 10 new vocabulary words from their books and defined the words. This was good practice for the exit exam and increased the students' comprehension of their books. During this week, some students were given passes to the media center to type their assignments, and other students typed the assignments using the classroom computers. Later, during Month 7, Week 3, students would link this assignment to their Web pages.

The writer compiled a list of the students interested in reading to the day care and Head Start children. A memo to teachers, approved and signed by the principal, enabled the release of students during the Reading Day activities.

In Month 7, Week 2, students wrote a book review of their young adult state book. The writer and the teachers assisted students with this process. In addition to the writing activity, the writer showed the students how to use a digital camera and took pictures of students who wanted their pictures taken and saved them to a computer disk. The group poetry book was shown to each resource class and passed around the room. The writer explained how proud she was of the quality of poetry submitted for the poetry book. Several of the resource teachers and the principal wanted a copy of the book.

The writer made arrangements for the cafeteria staff to supply milk and napkins as well as bake cupcakes for the pre-school children during the Reading Day activities.

The cafeteria manager borrowed cupcake pans from an elementary school cafeteria and the school principal paid for all of the materials needed for the refreshments.

During Month 7, Week 3, the writer, the teachers, and students met in the computer lab so that students could type their book reviews and link them to their Web pages. Students inserted their digital pictures on their Web pages. The writer discussed other uses for their digital picture such as inserting it into a resume, e-mailing it as an attachment to a friend or family member, printing it, or inserting it in a special Word document. Students were pleased with their digital pictures.

In Month 7, Week 4, students completed all unfinished computer assignments. The writer assisted students with linking their work to their Web pages.

The writer called the public library director to make special arrangements to check out a large number of children's books for Reading Day and also checked the public library's card catalog for title availability through their Web site. The writer then called the cafeteria manager to make sure that refreshments would be provided for Reading Day. The director of the Head Start Program talked to the writer and said that the children were looking forward to the activities.

During Month 8, Week 1, students checked out children's literature books from the writer. These books would be read during the Reading Day activities in two weeks. All volunteer readers took home a book to practice reading aloud. The writer emphasized to the students that the more they practiced reading their book, the more comfortable they would feel when they read in front of the pre-school children. Name tags were made for all participants in the Reading Day activities.

In Month 8, Week 2, students organized activities, a reading schedule, a clean up committee, and a refreshment committee for Reading Day. The writer helped with the organization and scheduling of all activities. Students were reminded to meet in a designated resource classroom where book bags could be left and name tags distributed. Students received copies of the memo sent to their teachers to release them from second period. The copy of the memo also served as students' passes to the environmental center.

During Month 8, Week 3, students read short stories, assisted with the pre-school children during a nature walk, and served refreshments. Two adults from the day care center, three adults from the Head Start center, two resource teachers, and the writer monitored and assisted throughout all of the events.

During the last 30 minutes of first period, supplies, food, sheets to sit on, and cameras were transported by the writer and a student assistant to the grassy picnic area at the entrance of the environmental center. The writer checked the restrooms and found that they were clean and well stocked with paper products.

The writer realized that it would have been better for high school students to be excused from first and second period classes because it took 20 minutes to get the high school students to the meeting place outside the environmental center.

When the high school students arrived at the environmental center, the adults had arranged the pre-school children in groups of two or three on the grassy meadow outside of the environmental center. Each high school student sat with a small group of pre-school children, read a story, and then switched to another group so that the children could hear several stories from different readers. Resource students also felt more

confident reading to small groups of children. The writer took pictures as the students read.

After the reading activities were completed, two high school students placed all of the library books and sheets in the writer's car. Then the pre-school children were taken on a short tour of the school's environmental center where they saw ducks, birds, bugs, butterflies, fish, blooming pond lilies, walking paths, and many varieties of trees and plant life. Refreshments were served afterwards. All of the pre-school children, high school students, and the adults said they enjoyed the morning. Enthusiasm for this activity was so high that several of the high school students and resource teachers reported that they wanted to sponsor the Reading Day again next school year. The high school students and resource teachers returned to the school building for third period class, the Head Start children returned to their portable on campus, and the day care children loaded into their vans. The children said their "thank yous," and several hugged the writer. No reading video was shown this week.

In Month 8, Week 4, the writer went to the 11 classes and handed out end-of-the-year reading questionnaires (see Appendix A) and distributed "goodie bags." Eighty-six questionnaires were returned. By the end of the school year, 14 resources students had moved, had quit school, or had been placed in general education classes.

The top four readers received \$50 gift certificates. The writer gave students their computer disks to take home and shared pictures of the Reading Day events with the classes. No reading video was shown this week. The writer collected reading logs and analyzed data.

Chapter V: Results

Results

The problem to be solved in the applied dissertation was that resource students in the writer's high school did not read many books for pleasure. Because some resource students had short attention spans and various degrees of learning disabilities, these students needed a great deal of encouragement and guidance. Students did little reading except when it was required for school assignments. Resource students also found reading difficult and often said that they did not like to read.

It was the goal of this writer for resource students to read more for pleasure. The writer researched the literature and found 14 solution strategies. The following nine strategies were used in this applied dissertation:

1. Providing positive role models for reading
2. Allowing students to choose their own reading material
3. Implementing reading activities to help form positive attitudes toward reading
4. Including literature in the reading program
5. Creating reading activities that include technology
6. Practicing reading aloud to others
7. Allowing students to work in small cooperative learning groups
8. Encouraging students to read, write, discuss, and illustrate a topic that interested them
9. Inviting students' families to take an active part in their child's schooling

The writer organized, implemented, and evaluated the solution strategies. The writer worked closely with the resource students and teachers on all activities.

The following outcomes were projected for this applied dissertation:

1. By the end of the implementation period, at least 90 of the 100 resource students, or 90%, will report that they have read more books for pleasure, as indicated by results of a questionnaire.

This outcome was met.

Success was measured by re-administering the questionnaire at the end of the implementation period. Through implementing various reading activities, this writer shared the importance of reading and helped students understand why they needed to practice this important skill. The technology activities were used to encourage students to read and were completed after the students had read and summarized each of their reading assignments. Of the eighty-six surveys that were returned, eighty students stated that they had read books for pleasure. At the end of the school year, fourteen students were no longer in resource classes because they had moved, had dropped out of school, or had been rescheduled into other classes.

All resource teachers were favorably impressed with the DEAR Program and reported to the writer that they planned on continuing the activity next school year. The 20 minutes of reading every school day had helped their students realize that reading could be fun and helped improve their reading skills.

2. During the implementation period, an average monthly total of 2,631 books will be checked out, as indicated on the computer generated monthly circulation statistics reports. This represents an average increase of 300 books checked out per month.

This outcome was not met.

Only 14,010 books were checked out during the eight months of implementation. The 1,501 monthly total did not come close to the expected outcome. This shortage may have been partially due to the fact that the first three months of implementation mainly dealt with teaching students how to use technology. Students were not expected to read a book until the 11th week of the applied dissertation. During the 12th week of implementation, students were informed that there would be mall gift certificates given to the four highest readers. Also, because resource students have varying reading ability levels, more assistance was needed with word identification and comprehension, and therefore more time was required for a student to complete a book. Because resource students had such different reading levels, this resulted in fewer books read.

The writer asked the other media specialist if she knew why the book circulation had dropped drastically. The latter speculated that students were not checking out as many books because they were using computers more, both at school and at home.

In the past, the media center computers were not functioning properly. Many of the computer programs and the Internet would only work periodically, thus causing students to become frustrated. Often students would not use the computers for research, preferring instead to check out a library book. At the beginning of the 2000-2001 school year, the writer's high school computer network was updated and improved, which made the computers and the programs work more efficiently. Also, during the past school year, both media specialists at the writer's high school trained students and teachers throughout the entire school year on how to use the state's electronic databases. These databases were offered to all state public or private schools, universities, and public libraries.

The writer and the other media specialist created flyers which explained how to use each of the databases and provided the passwords that were necessary to access each of the databases from home 24 hours a day. Because of this ease of use and instant access to computer research information, students did not check out as many library books as the previous year. The writer informally talked with many students and also found that a large majority of them had Internet capability at home and preferred to access information from computers rather than from books. Students also spent time surfing the Internet and e-mailing their friends and family members.

3. By the end of the implementation period, 90 of 100 resource students (90%) will indicate increased reading enjoyment by creating either graphic or written materials about books they have read.

This outcome was met.

A log of written materials and a picture scrapbook (which were maintained by the writer) of all reading activities were used to measure this outcome. The weekly log and a picture scrapbook were used to document graphic or written materials about books students had read. Seventy-eight of the remaining 86 resource students created written materials or pictures to illustrate a reading assignment.

The writer noted an increase in the number of resource students who came into the media center on passes to read magazines or newspapers and to check out books to read for pleasure. Many resource students seemed comfortable in the media center and often gave the writer a warm "hello." The writer believed that the resource students appreciated the writer's confidence in their abilities, high expectations, and fair treatment.

The writer portrayed a positive, helpful, and caring attitude that helped students achieve the writer's high levels of expectation.

Discussion

The video clips of why reading was important to community leaders as well as to the students and teachers participating in the weekly DEAR Program provided good role models for reading. These community leaders included a state senator, a carpenter, a military pilot, a college dean, a parent, a nurse, a doctor, a principal, a police officer, a newspaper editor, and many others. The particular solution strategy of providing good role models for reading (Edwards, 1993; Irvin, 1998; Richardson & Havlicek, 1975; Turner, 1992) in order to encourage students to read more for pleasure helped the writer's students develop and maintain an enjoyable reading routine during the school day. Resource students observed modeling as community leaders discussed the reasons why reading was an important skill in their career or to them personally.

Many of the writer's resource students read only during the school day because they did not have the needed modeling and structure in their home environment. This writer agreed with Rabban (1980) as well as Zientarski and Pottorff (1994) that some school time should be set aside for quiet reading. Once the students developed a reading routine, they began to enjoy having time to read and often complained when they were not allowed this special time. Evidence in the literature stressed the fact that when resource students were given extra attention and encouraged to read, when they were motivated to read, and when they believed that reading was relevant to them, they would experience success in reading (as well as in other subjects). The school media center offered students a large variety of magazines and books on every conceivable subject. If

resource teachers and the school media specialists made an effort to find out about individual students' passions and interests, then students could be steered to reading materials that appealed to them.

This writer also found that students enjoyed selecting reading materials which appealed to their interests, needs, and motivations, as suggested by Berger, (1996); Cone, (1994); Diaz-Rubin, (1996); Endicott, (1992); Gebhard, (1993); Lesesne, (1991); and Wollman-Bonnilla, (1989). As some of the resource students discovered authors and book series, they checked out more library books. At this point in their adolescent lives, it is often difficult to persuade teenagers that reading is important and can be entertaining. Resource students with poor reading skills often experience difficulty with reading.

The writer began the reading and technology project by demonstrating to the students how easy it is to create a simple Web page in Netscape Composer and save it to a disk. When asked if they had ever created a Web page before, only one student out of 100 raised his hand. The writer's objective was to interest students in reading through the use of technology to complete various reading activities. Most students in general do not read for pleasure (Langer, 1988), and the writer found this to be true with her students. After talking with numerous resource students, this writer found this to be true. However, almost all of the resource students were excited when they were told that they would be developing their own reading Web pages. As an incentive, only the students' original reading and writing activities were linked to their Web pages and saved on their disks. This writer also found that implementing creative reading activities to help students form positive attitudes toward reading (Eiley, 1992; Emans, 1966; Ley, 1979; Mathison, 1989; Pilgreen & Krashen, 1993; Taylor, Frye, & Maruyama, 1990; Tullock-

Rhody & Alexander, 1980; Van Oteghen & Mahood, 1995) was the key to the entire applied dissertation process. The use of exciting reading activities that incorporated technology helped students obtain a sense of achievement or accomplishment by finishing a task and feeling good about themselves. These new technological abilities or skills encouraged more students to produce materials about specific books, and, as a result, encouraged them to read more. The writer was pleased that students read each of the assignments and quickly learned how to use the new technology.

Through her leadership, the writer showed that reading was exciting, that resource students could learn to use software that was new to them, and, as a practical application, that they could create special reading projects using technology. Many resource students initially lacked the self-confidence to try these new projects. Only a few students already knew how to use some of the computer software. After these students completed their technology activity, the writer asked them to serve as mentors and assist other students who needed additional help. One teacher commented that this activity was good for her students because resource students had rarely had the opportunity to serve in a mentoring position. Resource students are usually the ones who need extra help. Students especially enjoyed having the mentors assist them with inserting sound effects and animation features in their presentation. In addition, retention increases when demonstrations are made. Usually resource students do not assume leadership roles or volunteer to assist other students. The writer found that this activity helped students feel good about themselves and encouraged teamwork, thus proving to be successful.

The first unexpected outcome was that several teachers made positive comments to the writer about the reading and technology projects. One English teacher said, "Oh, I

wish you were working with my classes.” Other teachers had also observed the writer working with students on various projects. A science teacher said, “Resource students are doing all that (working with Word, creating PowerPoint presentations and a Web page)!” Another English teacher, who was taking a district Web page class, explained that she had heard that the writer was teaching students how to develop Web pages. She asked the writer for assistance in fixing a problem with her Web page assignment and the writer gladly assisted the teacher. A fourth teacher, who also taught English, asked the writer to teach her classes next school year how to use PowerPoint and create a Web page for displaying their reading and writing assignments. By exhibiting her leadership skills during the applied dissertation implementation process, the writer believes that teachers are now willing to ask her to work with their classes on future technology projects.

A second unexpected outcome was that the district Director of Special Education had heard about and seen the writer working with resource students during the school year. She asked the writer to assist her during the 2001-2002 school year with a technology grant for resource and self-contained students. The writer agreed to assist with these activities. The applied dissertation reading and technology activities helped the school media program in general. Many teachers realized that the writer was willing to collaborate with them and help implement meaningful media center experiences for their students. Students other than resource also discovered that the writer was willing to assist students with technology and often asked for assistance.

A third unexpected outcome was that the day after the writer taught the resource students how to create a Web page, one student came to the media center and asked for his computer disk. The writer asked him why, and he said that his mother was really

excited about his learning how to create a Web page. He wanted to create a Web page for his support group. When asked about this, he said that he has a rare disease and that his support group needed a Web page to help share information. (This disease had caused the student to be physically handicapped.) During the seventh month of implementation, this student showed the writer the support group's Web page that he had created with the help of an adult friend. This student could use this skill in the future.

A fourth unexpected outcome occurred while the writer was showing the students' PowerPoint presentations in the media center. After students chose a career, read a book, and created a PowerPoint presentation, they were asked to voluntarily sign up for the writer to show their presentations to the entire group. A sign up sheet was used so that the writer could pull the students' disks and be ready for the sharing activity the next week. On the average, each period only about five students volunteered to have the writer show their PowerPoint presentations on a LCD projector. The next week, however, as the writer was showing presentations, other students, who had not signed up, wanted the writer to show their work. Eventually almost all students got over their reluctance and asked the writer to show their creations. So, at the last minute, the writer pulled the additional disks and showed the students' work. This activity appeared to have boosted the resource students' self-concept. Students clapped and really enjoyed their peers' creations.

After each class period, teachers and staff members who were in the media center at the time of the activity commented that the PowerPoint presentations were very good. One of the resource teachers shared with the writer that her students showed their parents

their PowerPoint presentations on the classroom computer during the school's open house.

A fifth unexpected outcome occurred when a parent of one of the resource students was leaving a meeting in a conference room in the media center and saw the PowerPoint presentations being shown. This parent commented to one of the resource teachers that she was shocked that her daughter could do a PowerPoint presentation and stayed to watch several of the presentations. Several staff members, who were passing through the media center, also commented to the writer that they were impressed with the students' presentations.

A sixth unexpected outcome came when two of the resource teachers commented to the writer that all their students wanted to do when they came into their class was read! It was rewarding to see students reading during the school day.

Another resource teacher told the writer that the DEAR program was a great classroom management tool. Their students would come into the room, sit down, and begin reading. Even though the students were reading for extrinsic rewards at least they were excited about reading and were reading. Several students told their teachers and the writer that they were going to win one of the gift certificates. It was an accomplishment to get resource students to read anything other than their schoolwork. Wallbrown, Vance, and Prichard, 1979 stated that a child's positive attitude toward reading is an important part of the reading process. As students practiced reading and writing, they began to form better attitudes toward reading. Several students mentioned to the writer that they really enjoyed the DEAR Program because it allowed them time to read in class. This

writer agreed with Lesene (1996) and Cummings (1994) that at-risk students would read more if they were allowed to choose their own books.

This writer found that including literature (children's and young adult) in the reading program as a means to help literacy performance through reading practice (Emery & Houshower, 1965; Marlow & Reece, 1992; Morrow, 1992; Sawyer, 1993) was successful. Resource students often returned to the media center to ask the writer what other books had been written by the author of a book they had just finished reading. Students who are guided to a good selection of literature often enjoy exploring other cultures, other time periods, mysteries, science fiction, or adventure stories.

In the beginning of the implementation period, one unexpected roadblock occurred when many of the students did not want to be seen in the media center with other resource students and teachers. The four resource classes were scheduled to meet at the same time each period in the computer lab located upstairs in the media center. A few of the students went to the tardy room rather than meet in the computer lab with a group of other resource students. As a solution, the writer told students that they could enter the computer lab through an upstairs back hallway door that leads directly into the lab. This arrangement worked well because general education students working downstairs in the media center could not see who was upstairs.

The writer had only one scheduling problem with using the school's computer lab, but the resource teachers were flexible and rescheduled for an alternative day. All of the resource teachers were extremely cooperative and took the activities seriously. They told their students that they would be graded on each of the assignments and encouraged them to work hard on the activities.

The applied dissertation project helped promote the writer's media program as more teachers realized that the writer was willing to promote reading, collaborate with them, and teach technology skills. Many of the book displays have also drawn the attention of other students and teachers. One English teacher told the writer that she wanted her to visit her English classes next school year to introduce the new young adult books on the state list to her students.

The applied dissertation experience of working with resource students was rewarding to the writer. Students enjoyed going to the computer lab and the media center to work on activities. One insight gained from the implementation activities was that resource students sought to be accepted and treated fairly. They appeared to be pleased about the fact that this writer treated them with respect, taught them to value reading, and taught them new technology skills. During the school year, any time a resource student saw the writer in the school, she was always warmly greeted. A second insight gained was that students were eager to do any type of activity that involved the use of technology. Students enjoyed using Word, PowerPoint, Netscape Communicator, and the digital camera. A third insight gained was that discipline problems were practically eliminated when students were working on activities that they enjoyed, such as reading self-selected books. A fourth insight gained was that the teachers realized the importance of the DEAR Program, and they reported to the writer that they would continue it next school year. Before the implementation of the DEAR Program, resource students were spending very little time reading in class. By the end of the implementation period, their classroom reading time had increased 100 per cent. A fifth insight gained was that computer

technology facilitates reading and increases the desire to read when paired with students' self-selected reading materials.

All of the resource teachers told the writer that the reading and technology activities had motivated their students. Eighty-six resource students had read a total of 220 books during the implementation period. One resource teacher told the writer that one of her students was especially proud because the two books that he had read were the first books that he had started and actually finished. The same resource teacher said that her 25 students had read a total of 94 books!

The teachers were pleased with their students' reading efforts and asked the writer to work with them again the next school year. In addition, the writer was asked by other teachers to develop reading and technology activities that will correlate with their curriculum.

Recommendations

As a result of completing the applied dissertation experience, the writer recommended the following suggestions:

1. Plan activities to minimize bringing attention to the resource students. They are sensitive to the fact that they are identified as resource students. Treat them with respect.
2. Listen to the resource teachers' comments and suggestions about activities that involve their students. They are trained to deal with students with learning disabilities and know what type of activities their students will respond to and enjoy.

3. Model the use of technology and plan with other teachers. This will encourage other teachers to “see” that you are willing to work with them and their classes.
4. Plan more time for resource students in the computer lab for hands-on training. Additional time and practice were needed for learning new skills to complete Web page activities.
5. Arrange for students’ poems to be typed on a computer disk (one per teacher) and given to the writer. Because the printed copies of the poems were given to the writer, page numbers were not on the pages in the group poetry book. Students suggested that it would have been better if page numbers had been included in the poetry book. This could have been done very easily if all of the poems had been typed and saved on class disks.
6. Use a bright spot light and a light colored backdrop when taking digital pictures of students with dark complexions.
7. Plan two class periods instead of one for the Reading Day activities. It took more time than expected to gather the day care children, the Head Start toddlers, and the high school students. The high school students were required to check in with their second period teacher before assembling in one of the resource teacher’s rooms to store their book bags, put on name tags, and walk across campus to the environmental center. If high school students had reported directly to the environmental center, more time could have been spent reading to the children.

Dissemination

The writer plans to distribute the results of this applied dissertation experience in the following ways: first, the writer will share the results with the other media specialist, the

school principal, and the district director of Special Education. Second, the writer will share the results of the applied dissertation with the faculty at her high school during an in-service day at the beginning of the next (2001-2002) school year and will assist teachers with integrating technology into the reading curriculum. The writer will collaborate with teachers to develop technology activities that will supplement their assignments. Third, the writer will offer to conduct an in-service workshop for special education teachers in the school district.

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Appendix A
Questionnaire

STUDENT READING QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Your Age ____ Sex ____ Grade _____
2. Did you check out any books from your school's Media Center **last semester?** (Circle one.) Yes or No If you answered no, go to question 6.
3. If yes, approximately how many? _____
4. Were the books for pleasure reading, for an assignment, or both? _____
5. What do you most often use your media center for? (Circle one.)
 Check out books for a class Study Research Read
 Socialize Use the computers Do not use
6. Do you **ever** read just for the fun of it? (Circle one.) Yes No
 If you answered no, and do not read for pleasure, do not finish this questionnaire.
 Stop here.
7. Did you read any books for **pleasure** last semester from other sources? (Circle those answers that apply to you.)
 Purchased a book Borrowed a book from a friend or family member
 Checked out a book from the Public or Base Library

8. What types of materials do you prefer to read? (Circle as many as you want.)
 Newspapers Magazines Books All of these Other _____
9. Approximately how many books do you read for **pleasure** in an average month?

10. Which type of book do you prefer? (Circle one.) Fiction Nonfiction
 Biography Short Stories Other _____

All information will be kept confidential.

Thank you for your time and your honest answers.

Appendix B

Letter to Community Leaders

(Date)

(Name)
 (Address)
 (Address)
 (City, State Zip Code)

Dear,

I would like to invite you to visit (name of school) to participate in a video project that involves community leaders. This project will feature various people explaining why reading is important. I plan on airing the short reading clips over the school TV system once a week starting in August. Reading is an important skill that must be practiced. Today we find that many high school students do not read for pleasure. They find time to be involved in sports, to hold after-school jobs, to play video games and computer games, and to participate in other recreational activities, but few students engage in leisure reading.

This short video clip (approximately 1-2 minutes) can be made at school or if it is more convenient, I will come to your home or office. If you choose to participate in this reading project, I would like for you to talk about the following questions:

1. Why is reading important to you?
2. What are some of your favorite books? _____
3. Why should students read?
4. How is reading important to your career?

If you are interested in helping with this reading video project, please call me at (phone number) between 8:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday or call me at home at (phone number) after 4:30 p.m. to work out the details.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

(Name)
 Media Specialist

Appendix C

Rubric For Critique Of Career PowerPoint Presentation

Rubric for Critique of Career PowerPoint Presentation

Person's Name: _____

One Positive Comment: _____

One Suggestion for Improvement: _____

Appendix D
Letter to the Poetry Club

(Date)

Poetry Club
(Address)
(City, State Zip Code)

Name of the President of the Poetry Club,

I would like to invite members of your club to come to (name of school) media center to read poetry and talk to interested students during third block (11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.). We are trying to instill the love of reading through poetry and other activities throughout the entire school year.

Please call me at school (phone number) between 7:45 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. to confirm your attendance. We look forward to seeing you.

Sincerely,

(Name)

Media Specialist

Appendix E
Letter To Day Care Center

(Date)

Name of Local Day Care Center
(Address)
(City, State Zip Code)

Dear (Director's name),

I would like to invite your pre-school children to a reading day on (date) starting at 9:45 a.m. at (name of school). The events will last approximately one and a half hours. There will be a story time and other activities for children. Refreshments will be served.

Please call me at school (phone number) between 7:45 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. to confirm your students' attendance. We look forward to seeing your children on (date).

Sincerely,

(Name)
Media Specialist



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<p>Signature: <i>Katherine B. Barrett</i></p>	<p>Printed Name/Position/Title: <i>Katherine B. Barrett / School Library media Specialist</i></p>	
<p>Organization/Address: <i>Sumter High School 2580 McCray's Mill Road</i></p>	<p>Telephone: <i>803-469-8143</i></p>	<p>Fax: <i>803-481-4021</i></p>
<p><i>Sumter, SC 29154-6098</i></p>	<p>E-mail Address: <i>kabarrette@ftc-i.net</i></p>	<p>Date: <i>July 28, 2001</i></p>

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