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Attitudes of sixth grade students toward reading textbooks and recreational reading

Karen H. DeSue
University of Dayton

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ATTITUDES OF SIXTH GRADE STUDENTS
TOWARD READING TEXTBOOKS
AND RECREATIONAL READING.

MASTER'S PROJECT

Submitted to the Department of Elementary Education
University of Dayton, in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Education

by

Karen H. DeSue
School of Education
UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON
Dayton, Ohio
June 1996

Approved by:

Signature of Advisor

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

Purpose for the Study

We have to demonstrate that reading is as much fun as talking, and almost as necessary. We have to create in children a deep *need* for books...

Mem Fox, 1993

For life-long learning to occur, students must be motivated to read. While this seems to be a “blanket” statement, it posed a dilemma to the writer. What is it that makes students--principally those early adolescents -- select reading as a pleasurable leisure activity? What is the best way to encourage these students to actively participate in the reading process?

Early adolescent attitudes toward reading are of special interest to the writer because there are a variety of physical, mental, and social changes that these students are experiencing which, as research acknowledges, affect the academic process. If we, as educators, are aware of the factors which foster positive attitudes toward different types of reading, perhaps we would find ourselves to be more effective in the process of motivating students to read different types of books. A thorough knowledge of the types of books enjoyed by students would aid in the writer’s knowledge of any classroom changes needed in order for learning to be enjoyable for students.

Because the subject of reading affects a person's abilities in society, it is important that students understand and enjoy what they read today--be it text-type materials or materials of their own choosing. It is the writer's conviction-- a conviction also held by researchers -- that students need to gain a positive personal experience in the reading classroom.

Studies by several researchers show that when students have a positive personal experience with reading, continued interest and positive attitudes are the results. (Atwell, 1987; Clary, 1991) Mem Fox (1993), in her book *Radical Reflections*, states: "...when books are read for their intended purposes of entertaining and informing, and when that entertainment and information bonds readers and listeners in mutual delight..." reading then becomes a "natural activity and an enormous pleasure." It is the writer's opinion that sixth grade students should be reading those types of texts that draw them into a lifelong enjoyment of the process of reading.

A factor which has a tendency to complicate the early adolescent's learning is the process of puberty. This onset of adolescence produces many changes that affects the learning process. (Huck, Hepler, Hickman, 1993; Heathington, 1979; Atwell, 1987; Olsen, St. Pierre, Ozias, 1994) Offering students a choice of reading materials might in fact work well during this particular time of their lives. (Fox, 1991; Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1994) It would provide them with an opportunity to choose for themselves-- instilling a responsibility -- while continuing to meet their educational needs. Allowing students to choose their texts not only gives them a "say" in their education, it also places the responsibility upon them in accomplishing the classroom objectives and requirements.

Being a teacher of early adolescents, the writer finds it increasingly more difficult to motivate students to read. Reading appears to be a low priority in their lives. Therefore, if we could determine what the attitudes of early adolescents are toward reading, perhaps we could influence the reading behavior of them.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the study was to determine attitudes of sixth grade students toward reading textbooks and recreational reading.

Assumptions

To carry out the study, a semantic differential was utilized to measure students' attitudes toward reading texts and recreational reading. The writer assumed that the students responded truthfully and that the instrument used was valid and reliable.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study was the time of year that the students were surveyed. The differential was completed in mid to late May, and this is a typical time when students concentrate less on their immediate work and more on the upcoming summer break.

Additionally, there were approximately 100 sixth grade students that participated in the study. Perhaps a bigger sample size may have shown a difference in the findings. Along with this, a more diverse sample might have been available if additional school systems were included.

Definition of Terms

Reading texts were considered as those texts utilized in academic coursework within the school system. Examples included Math texts, Reading basils, Social Studies texts, Science texts, etc..

Recreational reading was defined as materials that were of student choice. Examples might include: novels or chapter books, magazines, comic books, etc..

Early adolescent referred to as those students from ages 11-13, as found in the sixth grade for this study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section entitled literature review will deal with the following ideas: characteristics of early adolescents, factors that foster positive attitudes in early adolescents toward reading, and techniques for developing positive attitudes toward reading.

Characteristics of Early Adolescence

One characteristic of early adolescence is that physical development varies widely among individuals. Research reveals that girls tend to be approximately two years ahead of boys in their development. This developmental difference lends itself to a differentiation in reading preferences between girls and boys. (Huck, Hepler, Hickman, 1993) Maccoby and Jacklin cite further evidence of this in their study, *The Psychology of Sex Differences*, when they find that both girls and boys are similar in verbal abilities until around age eleven. Regarding reading preferences, girls become increasingly superior in high-level verbal skills such as reading and creative writing. (Maccoby, Jacklin 1974)

While physical development in early adolescents does vary, these students also exhibit another characteristic: there seems to be an increased emphasis on wanting to be included in a peer group. Calkins (1994) states "...adolescence is the stage of life in which peer interaction matters more than anything." Students frequently influence each other in their book choices. For example, Huck, Hepler, and Hickman (1993) agree with Calkins. They state, "Peer recommendations are especially important to middle graders in choosing what to read." This importance of peers and the recommendations for books

provides the early adolescent with a sense of belonging. As Atwell (1987) puts it, “They’re trying to fit in...”.

Another characteristic of early adolescence is a challenge of parental authority and a change in family patterns. Huck, Hepler, and Hickman (1993) make an important point here. Adolescents are seeking greater independence and prefer to make choices based upon their desires rather than those of parents or authority figures. Coupled with their peers becoming more important to them, a parent’s or even a teacher’s suggestion of a particular book to be read may meet with some resistance. Calkins (1994) uses a quote from another educator that summing up this idea in this way, “It’s important to remember, when kids don’t take our suggestions or fall in line behind our examples, that their job as adolescents is to build an identity for themselves in separation from the parent figures, the authority figures, of their lives.”

Another characteristic of early adolescence is a tendency toward an intense sustained interest in specific individual activities. Huck, Hepler, and Hickman (1993) note that student attention spans generally increase with age as well as interest. For example, while early school experiences reveal that children have difficulty sitting quietly for even a 20 minute story, this time element tends to increase as age does. (Huck, Hepler, Hickman, 1993)

Students have interests, hobbies, and circles of friends formed around various activities including but not limited to sports, music, parties, telephones, dancing, and clubs. Calkins (1994) suggests that educators “will tap into an enormous energy source when we bring students’ interests into the classroom.” Books about interests and hobbies

can help capture the attention of the early adolescent. Suggesting different genres, or authors well-known by students might prove to increase and sustain the interests of the early adolescent. (Huck, Hepler, Hickman, 1993)

Another characteristic of early adolescence becomes evident when adolescents seek to test their own skills and abilities while searching ahead for independence. Elkind (1980) describes Piaget's model of cognitive development regarding early adolescence in this way. He states, "The last stage of cognitive development described by Piaget is formal operations, which begins with a transitional period that corresponds roughly to the middle school years." As children start to gain success in reasoning and problem solving, they somehow get the idea that they must be as able as adults-- even in their choices of books.. They enjoy challenging an older child, parent or teacher in attempts of besting them. Although their visions of superiority seldom occur in true life experiences, books for early adolescents often feature youngsters on their own who manage just as well, or even better than, their elders. (Huck, Helper, Hickman, 1993)

Another characteristic of early adolescents is that adolescents begin to search for values -- justice, concerns for others, and show an interest in the problems of the world. Studying this aspect of the early adolescent, Kohlberg (1964) indicates "as they grow in intellect and experience, children move away from ideas of morality based on authority and adult constraint toward morality based on the influence of group cooperation and independent thinking." Gilligan (1982) adds to this thought by suggesting that the self-identity of the early adolescent is influenced by interconnections with others. He states, "Consequently, their moral judgment develops along lines of an enhanced sense of

responsibility and caring for others.” (Gilligan, 1982) While younger children believe that bad behavior and punishment tend to go together, early adolescents are not so quick to agree. Researchers find, “They are more interested in finding a “fair” punishment, one that somehow fits the crime and will help bring the wrongdoers back within the rules of the group.” (Huck, Hepler, Hickman, 1993)

Concern for others and social relationships do matter to the early adolescent. Students have concerns that are just as real to them as adult concerns are to adults. Calkins (1994) relates to the educator that early adolescents need to be lured to express their concerns--be it the environment, cafeteria lunches, unfair policies at school, needing more spending money, or whatever their “case” may be. With guidance, they will show themselves capable and responsible in the task. Calkins states, “We need to remember that emotionally, we and our students are not all that different. The tragedies of their lives are as real as those in our lives. Their heartaches are every bit as deep and serious and real as are the heartaches we experience.” Early adolescent “students seek richer and more complex stories” that deal with similar concern for others and show social relationships. (Huck, Hepler, Hickman, 1993)

In this section the author discussed characteristics of early adolescents and how these characteristics affect reading preferences. In the next section the author discusses factors which foster positive attitudes in early adolescents toward reading.

Factors that Foster Positive Attitudes in Early Adolescents toward Reading

One factor that fosters positive attitudes in early adolescents toward reading is a positive personal experience with reading. Children’s personal experiences influence their

interests; one of the most important is prior experiences with literature. (Huck, Hepler, and Hickman, 1993) These researchers additionally note, “Children in classrooms where books are regularly discussed, enjoyed, and given high value tend to show livelier interest in a wider range of literature than children from situations where books are given less attention.” Books mentioned by teachers as favorites are often mentioned by children as their own favorites, perhaps because of positive associations. (Huck, Hepler, Hickman, 1993) According to Clary (1991) after capitalizing on the reading interests of adolescents, reading tends to become a positive and continued endeavor.

Peers and peer recommendations are factors that foster positive attitudes in early adolescents toward reading. Children often influence each other in their choice of books. According to researchers, “In the culture of the classroom, a title or an author or a topic may rise to celebrity status for a time.” (Huck, Hepler, Hickman, 1993) Atwell (1987) relates an incident where she recommended that one of her students collaborate with a peer on finding interesting books. At the start of the year, this student was quoted as saying, “I don’t like to read because I think reading is boring.” By December, this same student stated that she “loved to read” simply because of the peer recommendations and influence given. Adolescence is a time in life where peer interaction and recommendation matters more than anything. (Calkins, 1994)

Another factor that fosters positive attitudes in early adolescents toward reading is the use of a variety of genres. This is viewed as a high priority to early adolescents. To heighten the potential for satisfaction in the classroom, Johns (1978) found that the usage of a wide variety of reading materials would be helpful. Paperback books, magazines, and

newspapers are a few of the suggestions. A study by Heathington (1979) concludes similar results. Heathington (1979) reveals, "Respondents stated that they were unable to find "good books", "more books on a certain topic", or "an interesting book." They wanted more sports books or magazines; more funny books; more "tender" books; more books about teenage problems. Another researcher states, "The usage of various meaningful material, such as books and magazines and positive communication by teachers will certainly improve motivation among students." (Casteel, 1989)

Another factor that fosters positive attitudes in early adolescent students toward reading is allowing students to choose books they would like to read. A survey conducted by Heathington (1979) shows that a key element in a reading program should include the student's freedom to choose their reading materials. Atwell (1987) agrees by stating, "If we want our adolescent students to grow to appreciate literature, another first step is allowing them to exert ownership and choose the literature they will read." Calkins (1994) offers the following suggestion. She states, "We need to remember that emotionally, we and our students are not all that different. The tragedies of their lives are as real as those in our lives. Their heartaches are every bit as deep and serious and real as are the heartaches we experience." Just as adults turn to fiction for explanations of world problems, "students can find their perspectives reflected and explored in a body of fiction of their own, books that can help them grow up, books that can help them love books." (Atwell, 1987) Calkins (1994) offers this reminder "We will tap into an enormous energy source when we bring student's interests into the classroom."

In this section the author discussed factors which foster positive attitudes in early adolescents toward reading. In the next section the author discusses techniques for

developing positive attitudes toward reading.

Techniques for Developing Positive Attitudes Toward Reading

One technique for developing positive attitudes toward reading would include the need to generate a positive environment within the classroom. Casteel (1989) states that motivation tends to be the key to creating a positive reading environment. The most successful approaches to motivating students comes in the construction of a positive reading environment for learning. Fox (1993) concurs and even suggests that teachers “demonstrate a love of reading” by modeling what their students should be engaging in. Fox (1993) states, “We need to be seen laughing over books, begin unable to put books down, sobbing over sob stories, gasping over horror stories, and sighing over love stories -- anything, in fact, that helps our students to realize that there is some reward, that there are *many* rewards, to be had from the act of reading.” Additionally, Clary (1991) suggests that teachers who desire to motivate adolescents in the area of reading “determine whether they are themselves currently using literature in a way that will get students reading.”

Another technique for developing positive attitudes toward reading is in the use of meaningful materials in the classroom. Fox (1990) purports that “children should be allowed to read whatever they want to read.” Research has suggested that educators can allow for choice in the selection of reading materials if the goal is to develop lifetime readers. Capitalizing upon materials that are meaningful to the student “can encourage students to develop lifelong habits of reading.” (Lesesne, 1991) Correspondingly, Casteel (1989) relates that the use of various meaningful materials including books, magazines and

positive communication from the teacher “will certainly improve motivation among students.”

Another technique for developing positive attitudes toward reading includes the need to provide sufficient time during class for reading. In a survey conducted by Heathington (1979), a sample of 254 students were questioned about the middle school reading program and asked about their concerns. One major concern listed was, “There is not enough time for reading.” Students continued to repeat that they would read “if they had more time.” If time is provided for students to read in class, they develop positive associations with reading. Furthermore, students who find reading pleasurable “are those who are most likely to develop lifetime habits of reading.” (Lesesne, 1991) Researchers such as Fox (1993) and Atwell (1987) agree with the idea of providing students with time to read in class, but an additional investigator takes this idea a step further. Clary (1991) suggests a daily or weekly period be provided across the school, as in such programs known as USSR (Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading) or just SSR or DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) or SQUIRT (Sustained Quiet Reading Time). This idea is substantiated by the statement “Devoting prime class time this way for students to read without excessive constraints and demands becomes a very strong motivator”.

Another technique for developing positive attitudes toward reading is in learning student interests and incorporating these areas of interest into the classroom. According to Heathington (1979) accessing students’ interests insures that reading material appeals to adolescents and allows for the inclusion of topics they are interested in. Capitalizing on student interests can be accomplished in two ways -- knowing what most students like as

well as knowing what individual students enjoy. (Clary, 1991) Researchers agree that the use of interest inventories for students along with a variety of reading materials in the classroom may prove helpful for the educator. (Fox, 1993; Clary, 1991; Atwell, 1987; Heathington, 1979) Lesesne states, "If students are provided...reading guidance which remains focused on interests, they develop positive associations with reading."

Reading aloud to students is another technique for developing positive attitudes toward reading. Research suggests that youngsters of all ages should experience the pleasure of oral reading and that teachers should make an effort to include reading aloud in the classroom. Casteel (1989) states, "Reading orally motivates students to embark on other areas of interests." Concurring with this idea, Atwell (1987) relates that the adolescent students she polled responded positively to being read aloud to. She reports, "Hearing good literature brings it to life, fills the classroom with an author's words, and provides kids one more avenue for loving books."

Another technique for developing positive attitudes toward reading is showing a love of reading. Adolescents need role models to emulate and simply stating that reading is important is not sufficient. (Lesesne, 1991) Research revealed this note "the more an enthusiastic teacher imparts enthusiasm and acceptance of reading interests," the more likely adolescents are to develop the habits of lifetime readers. (Grambs, 1959) Students need to hear about books--the books we read and the books they read. According to one investigator, an excellent model is provided for students when a teacher reports, "I'm a little tired this morning because I had to finish reading this book. I just could not put it down!" (Atwell, 1987) Additional confirmation of this idea is supplied through an

educator who shared her positive reading experiences with her adolescent students. Not knowing the type of impact she was having, she was approached by a parent. Instead of a negative incident coming to light, the parent personally thanked the teacher for the positive impact she had had on her daughter in reading. What was the lesson learned? This particular teacher loved reading so much "...that your students learn to love it too-- sometimes without your even realizing it's happening." (Chantland, 1979)

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

Subjects

The subjects for this study consisted of approximately 100 sixth grade students, comprised of a variety of backgrounds, experiences, race and ethnic groups. These students are housed in a “middle school” setting where sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students attend. This particular class, as a whole, represents the largest group within the building -- over one-third of the building population. The subjects for the study consisted of less than half of the current sixth grade students in attendance within the building. Sixth graders are split into nine homeroom sections. Four of these sections were utilized for the purpose of this study.

Setting

School. The school utilized in the study currently houses three grades consisting of sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. The total enrollment for these grades is approximately 650 students. Students are provided with a well-rounded education consisting of the following subject areas: english, reading, mathematics, science, social studies, computers, art, physical education, health (grades 6 and 8), general music/choir/band options, home economics, industrial arts, classes for academically talented students, introduction to foreign language, and study skills.

Community. The community is one of constant change and evolution. While just a “village” a few short years ago, it is now a bustling city that has a unique appeal for people

in all age categories. It was originally platted by Jonathan Wright, a Quaker pioneer, in 1815. A short walk down Main Street helps one “Take a walk through history”.

In visiting this city, one can find information about its early history, shopping in unique home-type settings, golfing, and even a regional dinner theatre. Its location is north of Cincinnati and just a short distance south of Dayton.

Data Collection

Construction of the Instrument. Two semantic differential instruments were constructed for the purpose of collecting data for this study. One differential consisted of ten bi-polar adjectives with at least five undefined scaled positions for the concept of reading texts while another differential of the same type was used for the concept of recreational reading. (Isaac, 1995) Please refer to the appendix to view the instruments utilized. The semantic differentials were field tested with approximately 25 sixth grade students not involved with the actual study.

Administration of the instrument. Upon the receipt of administrative approval, the instrument was field tested with approximately 25 sixth grade students not involved with the actual study. The field test was conducted on two separated dates due to the separate instruments. These dates were as follows: semantic differential for reading textbooks was completed May 10, 1996 and the semantic differential for recreational reading was completed May 17, 1996. The return rate for the pilot group was 100 percent for those surveyed.

Upon this testing, the writer noted a repetition of bi-polar adjectives within the instrument. Therefore, prior to the testing of the specified participants, the instrument was adjusted to correct the flaws.

The instrument was then administered to approximately 100 sixth grade students from mid to late May. The actual instruments for the study were given to the test group on the following dates: the semantic differential for reading textbooks was completed May 21, 1996 and the semantic differential for recreational reading was completed May 28, 1996. The return rate for the study was 100 percent for those surveyed.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Presentation of Results

Tables are used to present the results of the study in a systematic and presentable order as shown below:

ATTITUDES OF SIXTH GRADERS TOWARD READING TEXTS

TABLE I - READING TEXTS

Group	N	\bar{X}	S
ALL	99	24.5	21.65
GIRLS	52	25	17.5
BOYS	47	24	17.85

ATTITUDES OF SIXTH GRADERS TOWARD RECREATIONAL READING

TABLE II - RECREATIONAL READING

Group	N	\bar{X}	S
ALL	96	37	9.20
GIRLS	50	38	3.78
BOYS	46	36	5.83

Discussion of the Results

In viewing the tables, the following information can be noted. Table 1 reveals that 99 students participated in the semantic differential survey which measured attitudes of early adolescents toward reading textbooks. Of those participating, 52 students were girls and 47 students were boys. While the mean, or average, score for the girls was found to be slightly higher than that of the boys --girls scored at 25 and boys scored at 24 -- the scores were very close. The average score for all students participating in this survey was approximately 24.5.

The highest possible score for this type of survey with ten bi-polar adjectives was at 50. Scores for the girls ranged from 15 - 44 while scores for the boys ranged from 10-44. With the mean scores showing at one half of the highest possible score, the scores for this particular survey show themselves to be somewhat low -- especially when compared to the results of TABLE 2.

In viewing Table 2, the resulting numbers show that 96 students participated in the survey. Of those, 50 were girls and 46 were boys. A closer look at the mean scores shows somewhat higher scores when compared to those in TABLE 1.

The average score for girls was approximately 38 and the average for boys was approximately 36. These results made the overall average approximately 37. Again, the highest possible score for this survey was a total of 50. The individual scores for the girls ranged from 25-50 and the individual scores for the boys ranged from 10-50.

It is interesting to note that the results of the survey reveal the same attitudes as witnessed by the writer from current students toward reading textbooks and recreational reading. Overall, the results of the survey show a tendency of students to prefer recreational reading over textbook reading. The research continues to provide documentation regarding this. Mary Livaudais' (1986) study concurs by finding that adolescents -- upon being given a choice -- prefer a freedom of choice in reading materials (recreational reading) as opposed to textbook reading. Purves and Beach (1972) note that "when students are given free choice of reading materials, the number of reading interests and the amount of pleasure reading increase."

The differences in the mean scores, as witnessed in the tables, shows a tendency of sixth graders to prefer having a choice in reading materials. The Purves and Beach (1972) study proves that research conducted during that time continues to hold true for today's adolescent students. Students continue to prefer their own choice of books to those that are utilized in academic coursework within the school system.

The writer's overall goal of this research held within it a desire to develop lifetime readers. Because the research suggests that students should be given a choice in the books they are reading, this information needs to be applied to the classroom. Lesesne (1991) and Fox (1993) both agree that free reading, or recreational reading, can be used to develop lifetime readers. The emphasis must be placed upon "reading for pleasure". (Lesesne, 1991) This, then, provides information and a further basis of referral for the writer to incorporate within the classroom.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The intent of this project was to determine attitudes of sixth grade students toward reading textbooks and recreational reading. After a review of the related literature, two attitude surveys composed of ten bi-polar adjectives each was constructed. One survey was given to measure attitudes toward reading textbooks, while the other survey was given to measure attitudes toward recreational reading. Approximately one-hundred sixth grade students from the researcher's reading classes answered the survey.

The results of the survey showed that students hold a more positive attitude toward recreational reading, as opposed to reading textbooks. Mean scores for all students regarding reading textbooks fell at approximately 24.5 while mean scores for all students regarding recreational reading were higher at approximately 37. Overall, there seems to be a more positive attitude of sixth grade students toward reading when they are given a choice in the reading materials.

Conclusions

The results of this study seem to indicate that the attitudes of sixth grade students are more positive in reading when they are permitted a choice in the books they are reading. Additionally, the results seem to indicate that the attitudes of sixth grade students are less positive when they are given a textbook to read. The writer can attest that these

results seem to hold true, especially for those sixth grade students she has come into contact with for the past five years in teaching.

Recommendations

As educators, we must strive to improve our students attitudes toward reading, for reading plays a key role in the lifelong learning of each individual student. A possible first step in this process might include allowing the students to have a choice in the books that they read within the classroom. Research has indicated that by allowing students to have a voice or choice in the books they read, attitudes toward learning, overall, move toward the positive.

APPENDIX

Appendix A

boy _____

girl _____

Reading Recreational Books

good _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ **bad**

pleasurable _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ **painful**

approach _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ **avoid**

boring _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ **interesting**

work _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ **fun**

easy _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ **difficult**

complicated _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ **simple**

structured _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ **unstructured**

fresh _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ **stale**

unpredictable _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ **predictable**

Appendix B

boy _____

girl _____

Reading Textbooks

good _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ bad

pleasurable _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ painful

approach _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ avoid

boring _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ interesting

work _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ fun

easy _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ difficult

complicated _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ simple

structured _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ unstructured

fresh _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ stale

unpredictable _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ predictable

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ABSTRACT

DESUE, KAREN H.

**ATTITUDES OF SIXTH GRADE STUDENTS TOWARD READING TEXTBOOKS
AND RECREATIONAL READING.**

(31pp.), June, 1996

Faculty Advisor: Gordon E. Fuchs, Ph.D.

PROBLEM. The intent of this project was to determine attitudes of sixth grade students toward reading textbooks and recreational reading.

PROCEDURE. After a review of the related literature, two attitude surveys composed of ten bi-polar adjectives each was constructed. One survey was given to measure attitudes toward reading textbooks, while the other survey was given to measure attitudes toward recreational reading. Approximately one-hundred sixth grade students from the researcher's reading classes answered the survey.

FINDINGS. The results of the survey showed that students hold a more positive attitude toward recreational reading, as opposed to reading textbooks. Mean scores for all students regarding reading textbooks fell at approximately 24.5 while mean scores for all students regarding recreational reading fell at approximately 37. Overall, there seems to be a more positive attitude of students when they are given a choice in the reading materials.

CONCLUSIONS. The results of this study seem to indicate that the attitudes of sixth grade students is more positive in reading when they are permitted a choice in the books they are reading. Additionally, the results seem to indicate that the attitudes of sixth grade students is less positive when they are given a textbook to read. Teachers must strive to improve students attitudes toward reading, for reading plays a key role in the lifelong learning of each individual student.