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## A study of the relationship between time spent reading for pleasure and growth in reading attitudes and positive reading behaviors

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A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
TIME SPENT READING FOR PLEASURE  
AND  
GROWTH IN READING ATTITUDES AND POSITIVE READING BEHAVIORS

MASTER'S PROJECT

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

by

Lynn K. Matson  
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Dayton, Ohio .

July 1992

Approved by:



Official Advisor

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I wish to acknowledge with appreciation Dr. Anderson's helpfulness and encouragement as I completed this study. I also wish to thank my family for their patience and support during my pursuit of an advanced degree. I could not have done it alone.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### PROBLEM

Skilled readers do not necessarily become voluntary readers. Given options, many children do not choose to read, especially in light of today's numerous distractions. Children are taught to read in the belief that reading is necessary for their fullest participation in society. They are also taught, as Morrow (1986) has pointed out, with the intention that they will grow to be readers by choice, not coercion, so as to realize fully the benefits reading can bring to life. According to Morrow (1986), generally, schools gauge success by scores on tests that measure mastery of skills. The comprehension of the test is most often the ultimate goal, not the development of reading habits.

Estes and Johnstone (1979) and Heathington and Alexander (1984) have indicated a need for educators to study and promote the techniques of developing voluntary readers, at least to the same extent that they explore the process of training children to decipher the printed page. Schunk (1984), Morrow (1986), and Taylor, Frye and Maruyama (1990) all emphasize that elementary schools ought to devote energies to the development of students' positive attitudes toward reading. Further, in so doing, schools should seek the help of parents. Young

students' time in school is relatively short, and not all of this time is spent reading. Involving parents at home can enrich and extend learning experiences.

The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship that exists between the amount of time a group of second grade students spends reading for pleasure, both at school and at home, and the observed changes which occur in those students' reading attitudes and reading behaviors.

#### **HYPOTHESES**

There will be no significant relationship between the amount of time a group of second grade students spends engaged in leisure reading, and the growth in reading attitudes measured using a pretest-posttest comparison of scores on the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS).

There will be no significant relationship between the amount of time a group of second grade students spends engaged in leisure reading, and the number of positive reading behaviors recorded on an observation checklist.

#### **SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY TO EDUCATION**

The interest for this study is based on a personal belief that positive reading attitudes and behaviors are formed in the early elementary grades. The concern for finding sufficient time to devote to, both the development of reading skills and the development of positive reading attitudes and behaviors,

amidst growing numbers of curriculum mandates and scheduling constraints, is one this researcher shares with other elementary teachers.

In the situation to be observed, pupil performance objectives cover the teaching of reading skills, but do not cover the development of positive reading habits; yet for this researcher, there is value in providing students the opportunity to actually read for pleasure each day.

Huck (1987) has suggested the need for up to thirty minutes of silent reading daily in the primary grades. Taylor, Frye and Maruyama (1990) have made the point that personal growth and increased enjoyment of reading are important factors related to time spent reading, neither of which can be measured using standardized tests. They have suggested that further research should be done, to address the role of time spent reading on personal growth and increased enjoyment of reading. To what extent does using time for pleasure reading promote positive growth in reading attitudes and promote development of positive reading behaviors? The planned study will address this question.

#### DEFINITIONS

1. voluntary reader - one who reads of his/her own free will.
2. reading attitudes - one's feelings with regard to reading; example: How do you feel about



spending free time reading? ("Measuring Attitudes Toward Reading: A New Tool for Teachers" p. 663).

3. attitude scale - graduated series used to measure the students' feelings toward reading.
4. positive reading behaviors - one's observable actions which show a like for reading; examples: shares books with others, recommends books.

### ASSUMPTIONS

The study will be conducted with the following assumptions:

1. Most parents will encourage their children to read at home when requested.
2. Parents will send back completed time sheets as requested.

### DELIMITATIONS

The following limitations are associated with this study:

1. The research will be conducted over a six month period.
2. The reliability of the time measurement will be dependent on the honesty and accuracy of the parents and students.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many reports and articles have been written on the importance of developing students' reading attitudes and behaviors. In their report, Becoming a Nation of Readers, Anderson, Hiebert, Scott and Wilkinson (1984) urged that increasing the proportion of children who read widely and with pleasure ought to be as much a goal of reading instruction as increasing the number of competent readers. Morrow (1986) wrote, "Alliteracy is a new threat that involves children and adults who are able to read, but have little or no interest in reading and therefore do not choose to read (p.159)."

When Heathington and Alexander (1984) surveyed elementary teachers in the southeastern United States, their results indicated that while teachers saw attitudes as important, they spent little time specifically fostering good attitudes. Few teachers were found to be aware of instruments they could use for assessing children's attitudes toward reading. The researchers offered two probable reasons why teachers had indicated that attitudes were important, yet had spent little time fostering them. One, teachers felt pressured to use class time for skills development; and two, teachers felt that with the development of students' reading skills, their attitudes

toward reading would improve concurrently.

A lack of interest in reading on the part of her own students prompted a study by Burgess (1985). Burgess sought to increase her second through sixth grade students' leisure reading outside of school, while exposing them to the intrinsic pleasures of reading as a pass time. Although she needed to use tokens to motivate students in stage one of her project, results suggested that students did discover pleasure in reading, and that they continued to read in stage two of the project without reinforcers.

Casteel (1989) also wrote of the serious problem of reluctant readers. He emphasized the need for teachers to provide a positive environment for reading in the classroom; to provide relevant, meaningful, and stimulating materials; to develop reading programs that meet students' needs; and to encourage parents to express interest in, and to provide materials for, students' reading outside of school.

In an extensive research study done by Anderson, Wilson and Fielding (1988), results indicated that teachers have an important influence on how much time children spend reading books during after-school hours. It was also suggested that teachers could encourage reading during the school day by providing students access to interesting books at a suitable level of difficulty; by using incentives to increase motivation for reading; by reading aloud to students; and by providing time for reading during the school hours.

Results of a study done by Wiesendanger and Bader (1989) provided evidence that programs, such as sustained silent reading, can be used to develop, not only word recognition and comprehension (cognitive dimensions of reading), but also to promote positive attitudes toward reading (affective dimensions).

Parent involvement is a repeated theme found in the literature. According to recommendations made by Anderson, Hiebert, Scott and Wilkinson (1984), parents should support school-aged children's continued growth as readers. Among the methods suggested for parents was that of encouraging reading as a free time activity. Greaney (1986) examined the influence of parents on the reading skills and habits of their children. He concluded that, in the area of reading, home environment does tend to have a stronger impact on reading achievement than on reading habits. It was further suggested, that parents who are interested in reading can contribute both to a child's confidence and interest in reading, but that the influence of parental interest in reading appears to decline as children increase in age.

Koeller (1981) reviewed professional articles written on the use of literature in reading programs. Over a twenty-five year period, the articles written by educators for *The Reading Teacher* provided evidence that simply letting children choose their own books can promote habits for reading. When students' interests were met, there were found to be significant

Increases in the amount of reading done by students. Koeller's (1981) findings suggested that teachers need to work closely with parents, because the home has a great influence upon children's reading interests.

Based on these findings from the literature, one can make the following points which have relevance for this study. First, increasing the proportion of children who can read and choose to read must be as much a goal of reading instruction as is the development of reading skills and comprehension. Second, teachers have an important influence on how much time children spend reading at home as well as at school. And third, teachers need to seek a partnership with parents to encourage students to read.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### SETTING

This study took place in a second grade, public school classroom. The school is one of six elementary buildings in a small town, located in southwestern Ohio.

#### SUBJECTS

A convenience sample was used. Students were members of the researcher's own class, a heterogeneous group of second graders. The class was self-contained for all academic instruction. Students came from middle and low income homes, with two parent and single parent families represented. The composition of this group was approximately sixty percent boys and forty percent girls. There was approximately an eighty percent white, twenty percent black mix of students.

#### METHODS

For this action research study, a one group, pre-post test, pre-experimental design was used. Only the data for those students present for the pretest and the posttest was included in the study.

In September, both parents and students were introduced to a program to encourage students to read for pleasure at home.

Parents were urged to visit the library regularly with their children. Books and magazines from the school and classroom libraries were also made readily available for students' self-selection. A Home Reading Log was given to each child. (see appendix A 1-3). This provided written instructions for students and parents, along with a device for recording the amount of time spent reading for pleasure. Weekly, there was a small piece of candy given to each student who brought in his/her reading log, regardless of the amount of time recorded for reading. A running record was kept of the number of minutes of home reading done by each student. Phone calls and written inquiries were used when necessary to remind students to record and report their reading times.

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) was administered as a pretest during the second week of school. (see Appendix B 1-3). These were filed for later use.

During the course of this six month study, a minimum of twenty minutes daily was provided at school for students to read for pleasure from self-selected materials. Care was taken to provide a large selection of reading materials and to exchange room collections every few weeks. Students were also assisted in obtaining reading materials to suit their interests each time the class made its weekly visit to the school library. During daily reading time, students were allowed to read alone or in groups of two or three. A checklist, developed by Shella Valencia (1990) was used to record nine

positive reading behaviors. Students were observed for evidence of these positive reading behaviors during classtime spent engaged in pleasure reading. Observations were also made as the reseacher discussed home reading experiences with the students and parents.

After a six month period, the ERAS was used again as a posttest. Of the thirty-three students enrolled in this class, during the course of the school year, only twenty-one students took the pretest in September, used the Home Reading Log for six months, and the took the posttest in March. Only the data for these twenty-one students was evaluated.

The first hypothesis of this study states: There will be no significant relationship between the amount of time a group of second grade students spends engaged in leisure reading, and the growth in reading attitudes measured using a pretest-posttest comparison of scores on the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS).

The difference in the raw scores for the recreation reading portion of the pre and post ERAS was recorded for each student. For example, a student with a pretest score of 33 and a posttest score of 38 would have a difference of +5. A student with a pretest score of 34 and posttest score of 28 would have a difference of -6. The total number of minutes recorded in the Home Reading Log was also counted for each of the twenty-one students. A graph was constructed to plot the differences of the pre and post test scores on the ERAS and the



number of total minutes of reading recorded in the Home Reading Log.

The second hypothesis of this study states: There will be no significant relationship between the amount of time a group of second grade students spends engaged in leisure reading, and the number of positive reading behaviors recorded on an observation checklist.

For this part of the study a checklist, developed by Valencia (1990) was used, which lists nine positive reading behaviors. (see Appendix C). For example, the student reads outside of class; the student is developing preferences; the student recommends books to others. The total number of positive reading behaviors observed by the researcher was recorded for each of the twenty-one students being studied. Scores ranged from one positive reading behavior to a perfect score of nine positive reading behaviors. It happened that no students in the group were found to have five or six positive reading behaviors. Students' check lists were then grouped into categories according to the number of positive reading behaviors. An average number of minutes of home reading was determined for each of these categories. For example, four students were observed to have eight positive reading behaviors and their average number of minutes of home reading was found to be 1,835. A graph was then constructed to plot the average number of minutes of home reading and the number of positive reading behaviors (Valencia checklist).

## CHAPTER IV

## FINDINGS

## FINDINGS RELATED TO THE FIRST HYPOTHESIS

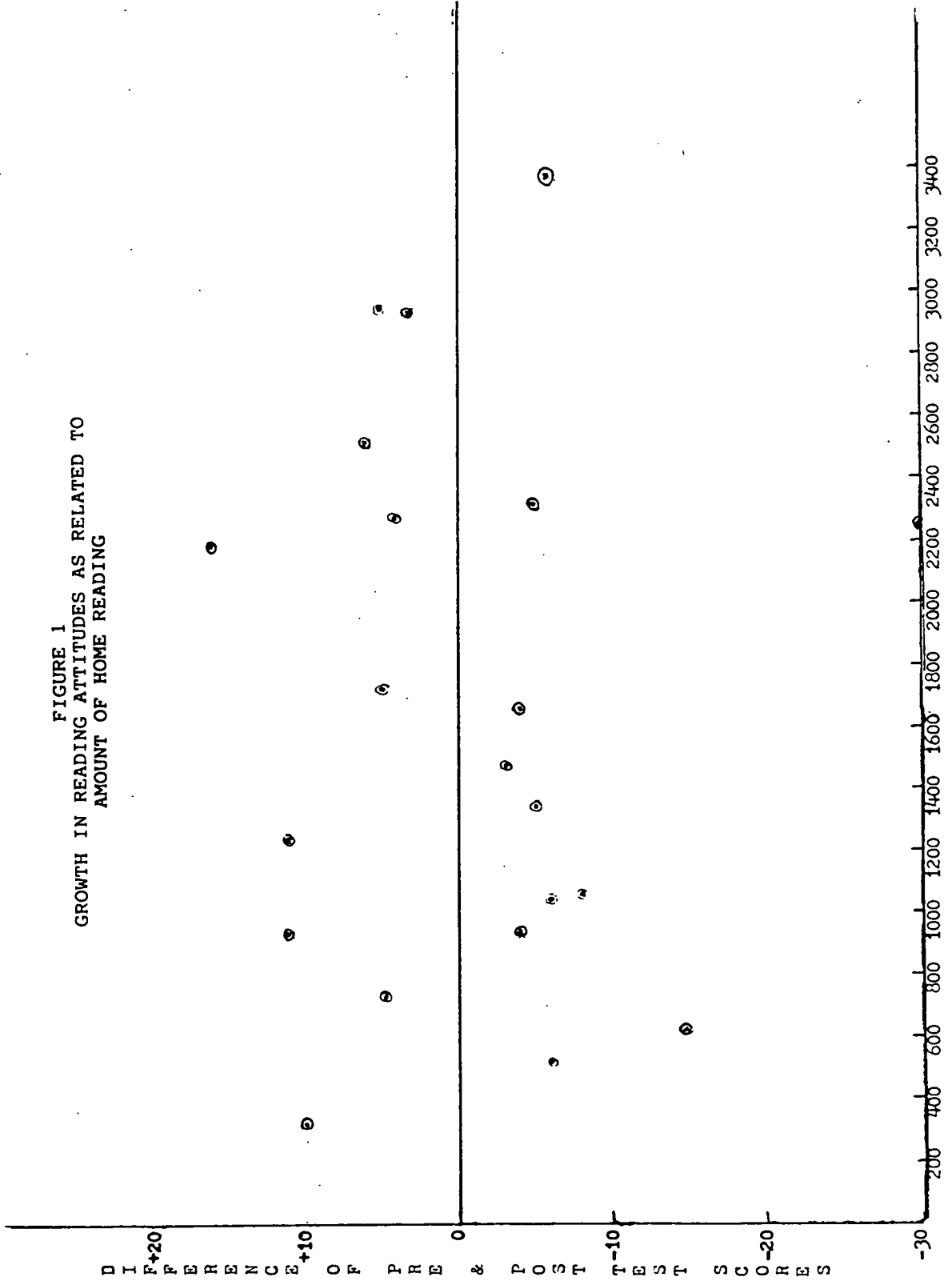
The differences in the raw scores on the recreational reading portion of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) were calculated for twenty-one students. These differences, ranging from +16 to -30, were graphed with the total number of minutes of reading recorded for each student in his/her Home Reading Log. It is worth noting, that only three raw scores on the pre and post ERAS were below 20. The great majority of scores were within the "positive" range of 20 to 40. This is to say, that this group generally recorded positive feelings toward reading, even when post test scores were lower than those on the pretest.

The results (Figure 1) support the first hypothesis of this study. No significant relationship was shown between the amount of time students engaged in leisure reading, and the growth in reading attitudes measured by the pretest and posttest (ERAS).

Further inspection of the data revealed this partial relationship: The majority of students who reported their home reading to be between 0 and 1,700 minutes also showed a negative growth in reading attitudes on the (ERAS). The majority of the students who reported their home reading to be

In the 1,700 to 3,400 minute range (Home Reading Log) also demonstrate positive growth in attitudes toward reading (ERAS).

FIGURE 1  
GROWTH IN READING ATTITUDES AS RELATED TO  
AMOUNT OF HOME READING



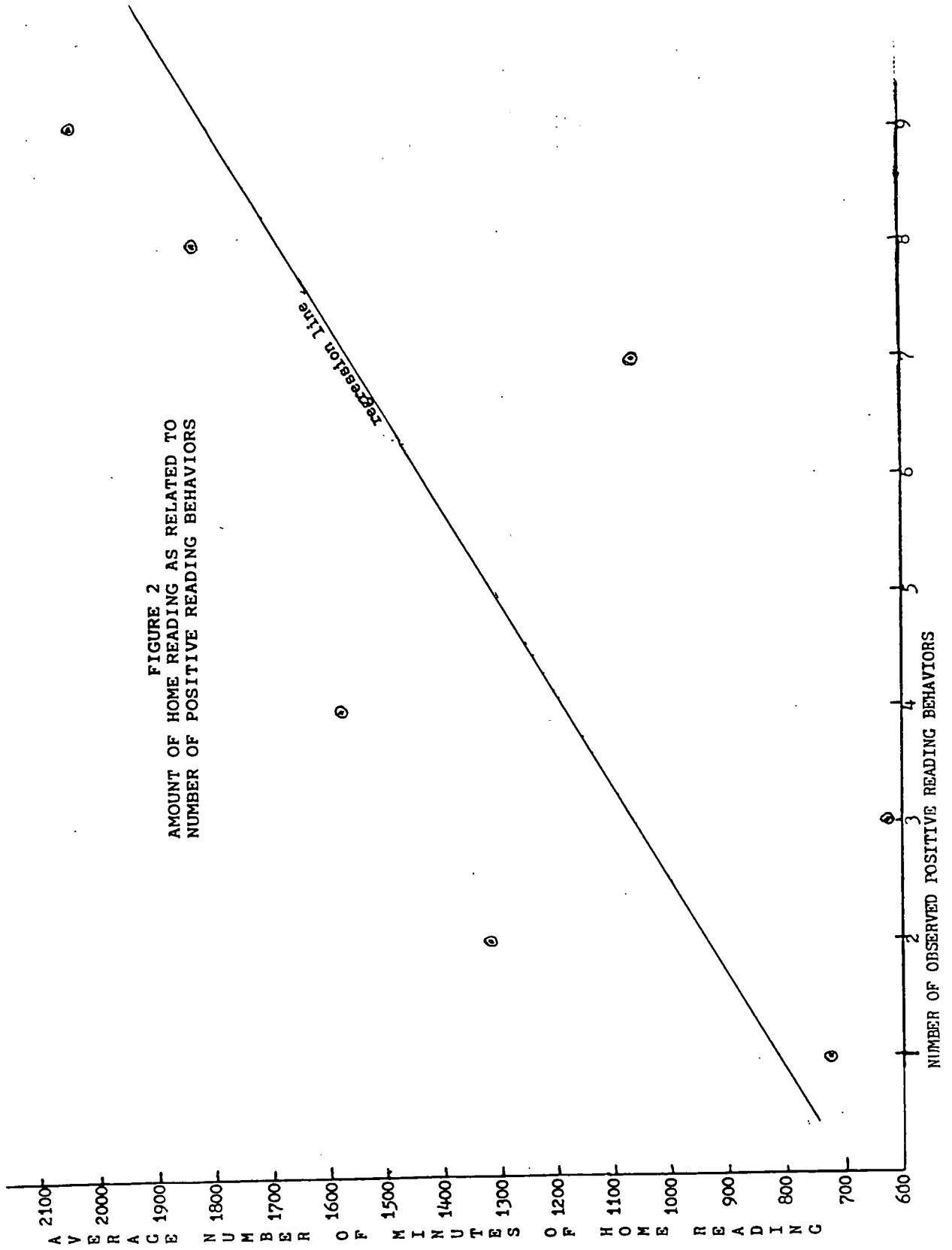
RECORDED NUMBER OF MINUTES OF HOME READING

D I F F E R E N C E O F P R E & P O S T T E S T S C O R E S

## FINDINGS RELATED TO THE SECOND HYPOTHESIS

The total number of positive reading behaviors which this researcher had observed during the six month study were recorded on a checklist developed by Shella Valencia (1990). Twenty-one student checklists were then categorized according to the number of positive reading behaviors. An average number of minutes of home reading (Home Reading Log) was then calculated for each category. A graph was constructed to show the average number of minutes of reading recorded for each of the nine categories. It is interesting to note that the categories of five and six positive reading behaviors were empty.

It had been hypothesized that there would be no significant relationship between the amount of time a group of second grade students spent engaged in leisure reading, and the number of positive reading behaviors recorded on an observation checklist. The results of this study do not support the second hypothesis. A definite trend was shown (Figure 2). The more minutes students read on the average, the higher the number of positive behaviors they were found to demonstrate. This significant positive relationship can be seen by the upward trend of the regression line.



## CHAPTER V

## SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

## SUMMARY

Skilled readers do not necessarily choose to read. There is a need, especially at the primary level, for educators to study and promote techniques of developing voluntary readers who possess positive attitudes toward reading. Young students' time in school is relatively short and not all of that time is available for promoting positive reading experiences.

Involving parents at home can enrich and extend children's experiences with reading, and hopefully, nurture their desires to read on their own. In this study the researcher attempted to discover the relationship which exists between time used for pleasure reading and the growth in both reading attitudes and positive reading behaviors. A one group, pre-post test, pre-experimental design was used. The researcher used a convenience sample, her own heterogeneously grouped class of second graders.

During a meeting with the teacher (researcher), parents were encouraged to have their children read at least ten minutes daily. They were given written instructions to assist them in making these experiences rewarding for the children. Home Reading Logs were used to record actual reading time. A reading attitude survey (ERAS) was used as a pre and post test

for this six month study. The researcher also monitored students' pleasure reading during twenty minute (minimum) periods daily and documented the positive reading behaviors students demonstrated with the use of an observation checklist (Valencia, 1990).

Results showed no significant relationship between the amount of time spent reading for pleasure, and the growth of positive attitudes on the pre/post ERAS. A partial relationship was shown, however, in that the majority of students reading less than 1,700 minutes at home scored lower on the posttest for their recreational reading than on the pretest. The majority of students reading more than 1,700 minutes at home had higher scores on the post attitude survey for their recreational reading. This researcher believes there is some connection between time spent reading at home and growth in positive attitudes toward reading.

Results of this study did show a positive relationship between the amount of time spent reading at home (Home Reading Log) and the number of observed positive reading behaviors demonstrated by students (Valencia checklist).

## CONCLUSIONS

This researcher believes that there is some connection between reading done at home and the development of positive reading attitudes. However, for this group of second grade students the evidence was inconclusive, as to the relationship



between the amount of time the children spent reading self-selected materials for pleasure, and the attitudes they developed toward reading as a leisure activity (ERAS). It is also believed that there was strong evidence to support a relationship between the time this group spent reading at home and in class, and the positive reading behaviors they demonstrated in class during the time devoted to pleasure reading (observation checklist).

There were thirty-three students enrolled in this class for all or part of the 1991-1992 school year. Only twenty-one students were present for the entire six month period studied. The results of this study could have been quite different if data had been available for all students of this class.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

It may be assumed that an increase in the number of subjects tested and/or including other grade levels could produce more significant results.

As suggested by Taylor, Frye, and Maruyama (1990), further research should be done to address the role time spent reading has on the personal growth and increased enjoyment of reading. Shunk (1984) and Morrow (1996) have also encouraged that schools seek the help of parents in developing students' positive attitudes toward reading. Further research is indicated in this area.

## APPENDIX A-1

## HOME READING PROGRAM INSTRUCTIONS

## STUDENTS:

Try to read each night.

You may read a library book, magazine or newspaper.

Write the number of minutes you have read on the correct date.

Get your mom or dad to sign your "Home Reading Log".

Bring In your "Home Reading Log" once a week.

## Parents:

Make sure that your child is reading a book at his/her independent reading level. (A child is reading at his/her independent level when s/he can comfortably pronounce at least 99% of the words.)

Encourage your child to get a book on a subject of his /her interest.

Help your child make a decision about the time s/he would like to do leisure reading.

When your child has completed his/her reading, please check and sign his/her reading log right away.

Ask your child about what s/he has read.

Remind your child to bring his/her reading log to school. S/he will be reward for bringing in the "Home Reading Log" once each week.

## APPENDIX A-2



# SEPTEMBER



## 1991

SUN

MON

TUE

WED

THU

FRI

SAT

1 MINUTES:	2 MIN:	3 MIN:	4 MIN:	5 MIN:	6 MIN:	7 MIN:
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

## APPENDIX A-3



# FEBRUARY



## 1992

SUN

MON

TUE

WED

THU

FRI

SAT

 1  
MINUTES:

2 MIN:	3 MIN:	4 MIN:	5 MIN:	6 MIN:	7 MIN:	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

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**APPENDIX B-1****Elementary Reading Attitude Survey  
Directions for use**

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey provides a quick indication of student attitudes toward reading. It consists of 20 items and can be administered to an entire classroom in about 10 minutes. Each item presents a brief, simply-worded statement about reading, followed by four pictures of Garfield. Each pose is designed to depict a different emotional state, ranging from very positive to very negative.

**Administration**

Begin by telling students that you wish to find out how they feel about reading. Emphasize that this is *not* a test and that there are no "right" answers. Encourage sincerity.

Distribute the survey forms and, if you wish to monitor the attitudes of specific students, ask them to write their names in the space at the top. Hold up a copy of the survey so that the students can see the first page. Point to the picture of Garfield at the far left of the first item. Ask the students to look at this same picture on their own survey form. Discuss with them the mood Garfield seems to be in (very happy). Then move to the next picture and again discuss Garfield's mood (this time, a *little* happy). In the same way, move to the third and fourth pictures and talk about Garfield's moods—a little upset and very upset. It is helpful to point out the position of Garfield's *mouth*, especially in the middle two figures.

Explain that together you will read some statements about reading and that the students should think about how they feel about each statement. They should then circle the picture of Garfield that is closest to their own feelings. (Emphasize that the students should respond according to their own feelings, not as Garfield might respond!) Read each item aloud slowly and distinctly; then read it a second time while students are thinking. Be sure to read the item *number* and to remind students of page numbers when new pages are reached.

**Scoring**

To score the survey, count four points for each leftmost (happiest) Garfield circled, three for each slightly smiling Garfield, two for each mildly upset Garfield, and one point for each very upset (rightmost) Garfield. Three scores for each student can be obtained: the total for the first 10 items, the total for the second 10, and a composite total. The first half of the survey relates to attitude toward recreational reading; the second half relates to attitude toward academic aspects of reading.

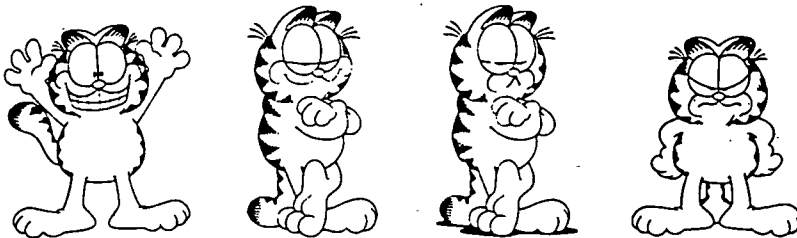
**Interpretation**

You can interpret scores in two ways. One is to note informally where the score falls in regard to the four nodes of the scale. A total score of 50, for example, would fall about mid-way on the scale, between the slightly happy and slightly upset figures, therefore indicating a relatively indifferent overall attitude toward reading. The other approach is more formal. It involves converting the raw scores into percentile ranks by means of Table 1. Be sure to use the norms for the right grade level and to note the column headings (Rec = recreational reading, Aca = academic reading, Tot = total score). If you wish to determine the average percentile rank for your class, average the raw scores first; then use the table to locate the percentile rank corresponding to the raw score mean. Percentile ranks cannot be averaged directly.

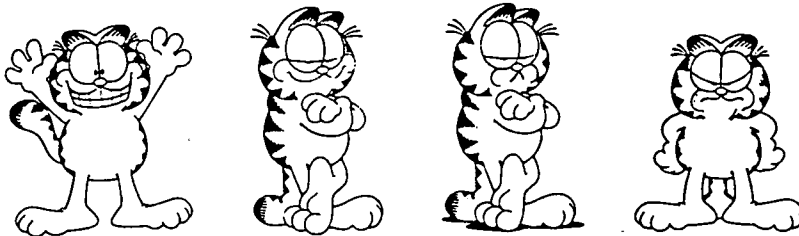
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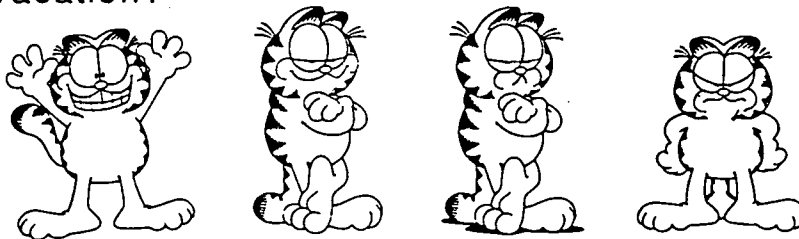
5. How do you feel about spending free time reading?



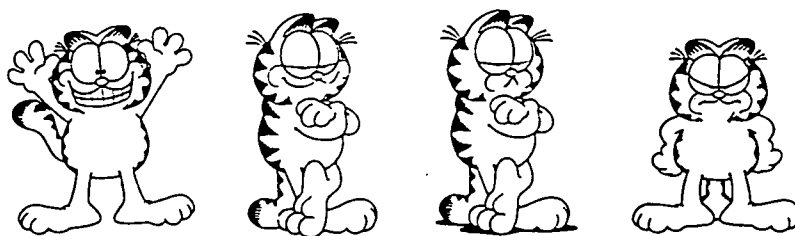
6. How do you feel about starting a new book?



7. How do you feel about reading during summer vacation?



8. How do you feel about reading instead of playing?



## APPENDIX B-3

**Elementary Reading Attitude Survey  
Scoring sheet**

Student name \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Administration date \_\_\_\_\_

Scoring guide	
4 points	Happiest Garfield
3 points	Slightly smiling Garfield
2 points	Mildly upset Garfield
1 point	Very upset Garfield

## Recreational reading

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

## Academic reading

11. \_\_\_\_\_
12. \_\_\_\_\_
13. \_\_\_\_\_
14. \_\_\_\_\_
15. \_\_\_\_\_
16. \_\_\_\_\_
17. \_\_\_\_\_
18. \_\_\_\_\_
19. \_\_\_\_\_
20. \_\_\_\_\_

Raw score: \_\_\_\_\_

Raw score: \_\_\_\_\_

Full scale raw score (Recreational + Academic): \_\_\_\_\_

Percentile ranks

Recreational

Academic

Full scale


APPENDIX C

CHECKLIST OF READING BEHAVIORS											
Teacher: _____						Grade: _____					
Names	Date	Enjoys reading	Shows confidence, pride	Shares books with others	Is developing preferences	Reads outside school	Reads for own purposes	Recommends books	Learns from reading	Obtains books (nonclassroom)	
Comments											
Comments											
Comments											

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The Reading Teacher. 44.2 (Oct. 1990): 154-56.



## APPENDIX D

**STUDENTS' READING DATA**

STUDENT NUMBER	PRETEST SCORE	POSTEST SCORE	TOTAL MINUTES READ	# OF OBSERVED BEHAVIORS
1	40	10	2,258	9
2	33	38	2,955	9
3	26	21	1,375	3
4	14	19	725	1
5	34	19	627	3
6	20	26	2,510	8
7	28	38	310	2
8	30	34	2,280	9
9	34	28	516	9
10	29	40	1,145	3
11	22	25	2,918	8
12	35	40	1,718	9
13	39	31	1,068	8
14	21	37	2,198	3
15	35	32	1,585	9
16	35	31	1,668	9
17	21	32	845	8
18	37	31	1,053	7
19	39	33	3,370	9
20	28	23	2,335	2
21	40	36	955	7

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