


Master of Education Program Theses

4-2017

Revolutionizing Reading: Discovering the Power of a Reading Workshop Model in the High School English Classroom

Kaitlyn De Wild

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/med_theses

 Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

De Wild, Kaitlyn, "Revolutionizing Reading: Discovering the Power of a Reading Workshop Model in the High School English Classroom" (2017). *Master of Education Program Theses*. 113.
https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/med_theses/113

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Dordt Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master of Education Program Theses by an authorized administrator of Dordt Digital Collections. For more information, please contact ingrid.mulder@dordt.edu.

Revolutionizing Reading: Discovering the Power of a Reading Workshop Model in the High School English Classroom

Abstract

This action research study investigated the effects of a Reading Workshop model in a high school English classroom in a private school in the Midwest. The participants were sixty-six juniors in a general education classroom. Students in the study took a pre-survey at the beginning of the year and a post-survey at the end of February to determine any changes in independent reading habits. Throughout the course of the study, students had choice in independent reading, which they kept track of and reflected on. In addition to analyzing these reflections, the researcher also interviewed eight of the students on their experience with Reading Workshop. The results of this study suggested that incorporating a Reading Workshop model in a high school English classroom increases independent reading, and improves student attitudes towards reading, and students' perceptions of themselves as readers.

Document Type

Thesis

Degree Name

Master of Education (MEd)

Department

Graduate Education

First Advisor

Pat Kornelis

Keywords

Master of Education, thesis, reading, workshops, high school students, English language, private schools, Midwest

Subject Categories

Curriculum and Instruction | Education

Comments

Action Research Report Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Education

Revolutionizing Reading:
Discovering the Power of a Reading Workshop Model in the High School English Classroom

by
Kaitlyn De Wild
B. A. Dordt College, 2012

Action Research Report
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Education

Department of Education
Dordt College
Sioux Center, Iowa
April 2017

Revolutionizing Reading:
Discovering the Power of a Reading Workshop Model in the High School English Classroom

by
Kaitlyn De Wild

Approved:

Dr. Pat Kornelis

Faculty Advisor

04/18/2017

Date

Approved:

Dr. Steve Holtrop

Director of Graduate Education

04/18/2017

Date

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Tim Van Soelen and Pat Kornelis for assistance in planning and implementing this project. Pat also deserves my appreciation for her assistance in editing my thesis. Thanks also to my English department coworkers, Abby De Groot and Katie Nice, who encouraged me to pursue this topic and to my students who were willing to give independent reading a chance. Finally, a special thanks to my husband, Jon, for supporting and encouraging me throughout this process.

Table of Contents

Title Page	i
Approval	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Figures	v
List of Tables	vi
Abstract	vii
Introduction	1
Literature Review	7
Methodology	20
Results	23
Discussion	39
References	42
Appendices	
Appendix A – Reading Survey	45
Appendix B – Interview Questions	48

List of Figures

1.	Bar graph showing results for “How many books would you say you've read in the past year?”	24
2.	Bar graph showing results of how girls answered survey question "How many books would you say you've read in the past year?"	24
3.	Bar graph showing results of how boys answered survey question "How many books would you say you've read in the past year?"	25
4.	Bar graph showing results for “Outside of school, how often do you read for pleasure?”	27
5.	Bar graph showing results for girls’ answers for how often they read for pleasure.....	27
6.	Bar graph showing results for boys' answers for how often they read for pleasure.....	28
7.	Bar graph showing results for “Who are your favorite authors?”	30
8.	Bar graph showing results for “Does Choice Matter?”	33
9.	Bar graph showing results for “Do you consider yourself to be a reader?”	35
10.	Bar graph showing girls' responses as to whether or not they consider themselves to be readers.	35
11.	Bar graph showing boy's responses as to whether or not they consider themselves to be readers.	36
12.	Bar graph showing what students learned about themselves as readers.	38

List of Tables

1.	Books Read t-Test Results	25
2.	Reading for Pleasure t-Test Results	28
3.	Reading Rate t-Test Results.....	29
4.	Reading Perception t-Test Results	36

Abstract

This action research study investigated the effects of a Reading Workshop model in a high school English classroom in a private school in the Midwest. The participants were sixty-six juniors in a general education classroom. Students in the study took a pre-survey at the beginning of the year and a post-survey at the end of February to determine any changes in independent reading habits. Throughout the course of the study, students had choice in independent reading, which they kept track of and reflected on. In addition to analyzing these reflections, the researcher also interviewed eight of the students on their experience with Reading Workshop. The results of this study suggested that incorporating a Reading Workshop model in a high school English classroom increases independent reading, and improves student attitudes towards reading, and students' perceptions of themselves as readers.

It is a crisp, fall morning. Students and teachers are finally in a routine. There is a buzz in the teacher's lounge as last minute copies are made and teachers chat while waiting in line for the coffee pot. One teacher asks the English teacher, Mrs. Smith, "What is one of your biggest goals for your students?" Without hesitating, Mrs. Smith smiles and claims she would love nothing more than to create hordes of lifelong readers. She brushes past thinking of standards and complex literary concepts to focus instead on the importance of getting students to read.

A visit to Mrs. Smith's classroom reveals walls lined with shelves of books that range from the most popular young adult novels to more challenging classics. Students are actively engaged in reading a variety of books at their desks. Mrs. Smith spends some days modeling reading; students see her reading a young adult fiction book that is currently popular in their class, which leads to excited discussion between students and the teacher. On other days as students read, Mrs. Smith conferences with students. She listens as students describe their successes, challenges, and failures as readers; then, she helps guide them based on their individual needs. Besides the quiet conversation of Mrs. Smith and the student, no one else is talking. A quick sweep of the room reveals that most - if not all - of the students are caught up in story; there is little-to-no "pretend reading" here. This is the kind of classroom culture that creates lifelong readers.

Creating students who are readers is important; however, finding a classroom like Mrs. Smith's is difficult. Instead, many classrooms are stuffed with bookshelves filled only with tattered, unloved, required, classical novels. A glance over the titles quickly reveals that most of these books were written at least fifty years ago, and many were written by old, white men. The required works were likely written for adults, and the relevance of these stories to a modern teenager's life is unclear and uninteresting to teens (Kittle, 2013). Students likely moan when

asked to read and many only pretend to read. In fact, most teachers claim that they believe only approximately twenty percent of their students actually read the assigned whole class books (Kittle, 2013). In this environment, it is no wonder that students' love for reading is squelched and that lifelong readers are not created.

Problem

The goal to create lifelong readers is one that experts say is essential. Kittle (2013) claimed that creating lifelong readers is an educator's biggest goal. Similarly, Gallagher (2010) stated, "I doubt that any student I run into on the street 20 years from now will thank me for helping him or her recognize symbolism in *The Scarlet Letter*. In fact, I'd be happier if that student wanted to discuss the contemporary book he or she was carrying" (p. 40). Both educators asserted the necessity to inspire students to love reading; however, current classroom practices are not creating lifelong readers.

Students today are not reading as much they did in the past, and as students get older, they spend less time reading for pleasure (Rideout, 2014). The National Center for Education Statistics (2013) demonstrates the decline in reading. In 1984, 64% of 17-year-olds were reading for pleasure; in 2014, however, only 40% of 17-year-olds read for pleasure. The change between 1984 and 2014 is a 24% drop over the twenty years. Similarly, 45% of 17-year-olds say they read for pleasure no more than one or two times a year, and only one in five (19%) of 17-year-olds read for pleasure almost every day; this is compared to half (53%) of all 9-year-olds who claim to read for pleasure almost every day. The same survey from the National Center for Education Statistics (2013) showed that 27% of 17-year-olds in 2014 claim they "never" or "hardly ever" read. Students are not reading, and the number of students who do not read is growing rapidly. Carr (2010) cited a U.S. Bureau of Labor statistic demonstrating that "the time

that the average American over the age of fourteen devoted to reading printed works had fallen to 143 minutes a week, a drop of eleven percent since 2004” (p. 87).

The fact that today’s teenagers are reading less is evident. According to Broz (2011) and Kittle (2013), current teaching practices in English classes are contributing to the downward trend in reading. Gallagher (2010) asserted, “practices educators employ to raise reading scores... actually kill students’ love of reading” (p. 37). Broz (2011) noted that English classrooms are often set up in a way that sends the message that it is okay not to read, that students can pass without reading, without engaging, with a text. In these classrooms, students are able to pass the class without reading the text by simply listening in class discussions and occasionally reading text summaries on the internet. Broz (2011) asserted that many high school students enter English classes planning not to read, which he argued is unacceptable:

If students do not read the assigned texts, nothing important is happening in your literature classroom – nothing very important to develop your students’ reading and interpretive abilities is happening, no matter how many lectures you deliver, vocabulary words students ‘learn,’ elements of fiction students define, quizzes students take, essay test answers students write, or films you show (p. 15).

A change is needed in current teaching practices to help students develop the ability to read and interpret texts on their own.

Another difficulty for teaching high school English involves students’ self-perceptions. Many students develop negative perceptions of reading and of themselves as readers when they are young (Dickerson, 2015). When students are faced with challenging classic books they cannot understand, they get frustrated and associate negatively with reading, which keeps them from wanting to read in the future (Dickerson, 2015). If something does not change, the amount

of time spent reading will continue to drop as will important skills that are developed while reading.

One important skill that may be affected by the decrease of reading is the ability to think critically. Carr (2010) examined the effects of technology on the brain and argued that reading is important to develop many beneficial life skills. He claimed that deep reading, which is careful and thoughtful reading, develops critical thinking skills. Today's technology-filled world, on the other hand, teaches people to skim for information, not to think critically (Carr, 2010). Schools need to help students establish a love for reading that will help them develop the ability to think deeply about life.

Research Questions

Dickerson (2015), Gallagher (2010), and Gordon and Lu (2008) proposed that teachers adopt choice independent reading into their classrooms to help develop positive reading habits and attitudes towards reading in students. Fully supporting this view, Kittle (2013) claimed, "Teenagers want to read - if we let them. Students who I believe are determined nonreaders become committed, passionate readers given the right books, time to read, and regular responses to their thinking" (p. 1).

Other research studies support using Reading Workshop as a model for teaching (Atwell, 1998; Dickerson, 2015; Gulla, 2012; Kittle, 2013; Lause, 2004; Thomas, 2012; Trowle, 2000). Some main aspects of the Reading Workshop model include allowing students the opportunity to pick choice independent reading novels. Students are given time to read those in class, to conference with their teacher about their independent reading, to journal in reflection to their reading, and to build text complexity over time. In addition, teachers still instruct on some whole class novels and use mentor texts to help students study the writer's craft.

Teachers need to make changes in order to develop lifelong readers who are able to think critically. A Reading Workshop model appears to offer teachers the opportunity to make this change. This study sought to address the overarching question: Does the Reading Workshop model increase independent reading in high school students? Examining that question more in-depth lead to further questions:

1. Does the Reading Workshop model impact students' attitudes towards independent reading?
2. Does the Reading Workshop model impact students' assessment of themselves as readers?

Definitions

To fully understand this topic, one should have knowledge of the following definitions. The definitions are ones the author has created, unless stated otherwise.

Conferences are meetings between a teacher and student. The teacher meets with the student independently to listen to the student, to discuss the student's progress/challenges/successes, to offer necessary instruction, and to make goals for the next steps. Generally, teachers keep records of these meetings.

Independent reading or choice reading (used interchangeably in this paper) allows students to pick their own books based on interest, reading ability, and personal goals.

Mentor texts are short works (such as a poem or short story) or brief excerpts of larger works that teachers use to instruct about the writer's craft and/or about annotation skills.

Reading journals are notebooks that students use to keep track of their reading, books they want to read in the future, reflections to their reading, and their reading rate.

A *reading rate* is the amount of pages students are expected to read in two hours over the course of one week.

Reading Workshop allows students to become lifelong readers by introducing a combination of classic literature with independent reading (Lause, 2004). In a Reading Workshop model, students read and write to create meaning. Students write and discuss what they are reading and listen to other students and the teacher talk about their reading. Through regular conferences, students are able to work on reading strategies, discuss their reading experiences, and evaluate their progress (Towle, 2000).

Self-efficacy is how students see themselves and their ability to complete activities, improve in those activities, and persevere through trouble they encounter in the activities (Wangsgard, 2014).

Young Adult Literature is literature written for an intended audience teenagers or those in their early twenties. The main character, or protagonist, also falls into this age bracket.

Summary

Many of today's high school students are not reading and are not fully experiencing the benefits and enjoyment reading offers them. Teachers claim they want to create lifelong readers, but research studies show reading is declining across the country. Incorporating Reading Workshop models into the classroom appears to be an option for fighting the decline; however, research needs to be done to determine the extent of the effects of a Reading Workshop model on high school students' reading lives, attitudes towards reading, and perceptions of self as a reader.

Literature Review

Research studies have shown that reading provides many benefits for students (Atwell, 1998; Dickerson, 2015; Gulla, 2012; Hodges, 2010; Hunt & Hampton, 2012; Lause, 2004; Thomas, 2012). Reading allows one to imagine other worlds and possibilities. Literature encourages people to see themselves more clearly and challenges people to become more than they currently are, and it does this by getting people to think and create their own opinions. Reading has the power to make a person reflect on one's life and decisions (Hodges, 2010). Miller and Anderson (2009) explained the power of reading as Miller shared it with her students:

Reading changes your life. Reading unlocks worlds unknown or forgotten, taking travelers around the world and through time. Reading helps you escape the confines of school and pursue your own education. Through characters - the saints and the sinners, real or imagined - reading shows you how to be a better human being. (p. 18).

Reading makes lasting impacts on people and influences how they see their lives.

One impact reading can have on people is how it affects a person's brain. Carr (2010) claimed that reading is not a passive activity. In fact, the brain often interprets reading as if the person was actually experiencing the events described in the book. Similarly, Miller and Anderson (2009) asserted that whenever students experience a new situation, they make new connections in their brains. This means that a unique relationship is created between readers and literature where the reader enters the world created within the book. Miller and Anderson (2009) declared that students reading books of their choice will help develop the students' worldviews.

Technology can also affect the brain. Many students claim that they do not read because they are busy and their time is consumed by things like the TV and the computer. The average young person watches 15,000-18,000 hours of TV by the time they are 17 (Hunt & Hampton,

2002). Hunt and Hampton (2002) asserted the difference with watching TV versus reading a book is that TV does all of the work, resulting in a passive experience; whereas, reading is an active process that requires students to be engaged. Participating in a passive process, like watching TV, is not teaching students to think the same way that engaging in an active process, like reading, would. Likewise, Carr (2010) examined how the use of the internet is shortening people's attention spans and teaching them to skim for needed information. The problem, he claimed, is that skimming for information is becoming the main method to get information, and people are losing the ability to think deeply. One of the best ways to combat shortening attention spans and to develop the ability to think critically is through reading.

In order for schools to help foster deep thinkers, they should provide students with the opportunity to become immersed in reading. Many teachers require students to read whole-class novels and focus on students being able to recall details and summarize the plotline (Broz, 2011). Kittle (2013), however, believed that reading needs to be taught differently. She asserted teachers have the responsibility to prepare students for life after high school, and she claimed that it does not matter if students can remember basic facts and discussions about a novel if they are unable to read homework assigned in college, have knowledgeable discussions, and write thoughtful papers about what they read. Students may be able to remember basic facts from a book read in high school, but they will be unprepared for college and life outside the classroom.

Broz (2011) presented a similar conclusion when he claimed that it is more important for students to be able to read and create meaning than to be able to summarize the plot of a book. Furthermore, he concluded the most successful college students in literature courses are ones who are able to read and interpret literature and who have read a lot – not students who are able to remember specific plot details. In order to help students become readers who are able to think

critically, many teachers and researchers like Atwell (1998), a pioneer in using the Reading Workshop method, have promoted a Reading Workshop model as a framework for learning.

A Reading Workshop model offers many benefits for students and teachers. This model is based on a balance of independent reading, mentor texts, and whole class novels, and a schedule that includes book talks, reading, conferencing, reader's notebook, and writing, including reflective writing (Kittle, 2013). Although the percentages can change based on classroom needs, Kittle (2013) recommended 50% independent reading, 25% whole class novels, and 25% mentor texts.

There is evidence that a Reading Workshop model has a positive impact on students. Lause (2004) concluded that a Reading Workshop model increased independent reading in her students. At the start of the school year, 65% of her students did not see themselves as readers, and only 10% of those students could explain what made reading a book enjoyable for them. By the end of the school year, 95% of her students saw themselves as readers and were able to articulate their reading interests. The next year, 76% of students still read for pleasure, even if their English class at the time did not use a Reading Workshop model. The implementation of a Reading Workshop model was able to increase independent reading in students.

A variety of independent reading, whole class novels, and mentor texts helps create a balance of easy and challenging books in the classroom. Hyde, Daniels, and Zemelman (2012) claimed in most classrooms without a Reading Workshop model students spend most of their school day reading books that they need teachers to help them interpret. The researchers continued to explain that it is essential for students to be able to practice reading with easier books that do not require a lot of comprehension skills but that are enjoyable and quick reads. Broz (2011) elaborated on the need for a balance of text complexity when he called for teachers

to select whole-class novels that all students in the class are able to access in addition to choice reading. Lause (2004) claimed teachers can use the Reading Workshop model and the mix of whole-class novels, independent reading, and mentor texts to help prepare students to reach for more challenging independent books over time. This prevents students from being overwhelmed in the reading process while also pushing them to grow as readers.

Choice within independent reading is a necessary element of the Reading Workshop. In this environment, students are able to pick any book they choose, and teachers do not censor their books, although the teacher may contact home if they are concerned about a student's reading choice (Hunt & Hampton, 2002). Kittle (2013), and Miller and Anderson (2009) asserted that students need to spend at least two hours a week reading their independent books.

Amicucci, Williamson, DeCapua, and Hrebik (2015) conducted a study on teaching literature to non-English majors in college and found that the best way to engage teachers and students is by providing students with some choice in the reading material and by asking them to connect that reading material with their lives. This study discovered that both teachers and students placed value on allowing students choice in reading and recognized a connection between allowing choice and students seeing value in their reading. In addition, students in this study found more value in reading if they could relate to what they read. Other students valued reading if they could learn lessons from the text.

In a different study, Gordon and Lu (2008) examined the reading habits of low-achieving students. The researchers found that low-achieving students liked reading if they were able to relate to the book because it was about something true or about real people or real life. Gordon and Lu explained, "Low achievers seem to acknowledge that realistic stories and believable characters contribute to their personal growth by helping them tackle life's challenges" (p. 10).

Students in the study saw reading as a healing experience and something personal. The study reported an increase in understanding of grammar, content, psychological components, social components, and life lessons.

Allowing choice in reading provides many benefits to students. Wilson and Casey (2007) argued that because students are picking their own books, they are more likely to struggle through frustrations and difficulties they encounter. It is nearly impossible for teachers to pick one text that meets the needs of all students, so independent reading offers needed differentiation. While some believe that reading a book as a whole class will help create stronger readers, research studies have shown that success in reading (not the frustration of a difficult whole class novel) helps students develop their comprehension and fluency skills in reading (Hyde, Daniels, & Zemelman, 2012). Gallagher (2010) argued that independent reading increases a student's ability to read a text closely, which develops critical thinking skills. Reading books independently clearly provides learning benefits to students.

A Reading Workshop model does not eliminate the use of whole class novels, though. As there are some skills that are easier to gain through reading a work as a class, the Reading Workshop includes whole class novels. The difference is that the emphasis on the whole class novels is reduced, and the focus on independent reading is increased (Hyde, Daniels, & Zemelman, 2012). When teachers select a whole-class novel that is approachable for the students in their class, they should make sure they present the text in an inviting manner (Broz, 2011). Reducing the emphasis on whole-class novels and picking novels with a purpose will help create a needed balance in the classroom. This balance will help remove the focus from reports, projects, and standardized tests. These more traditional forms of assessment can measure how

many books students read and their comprehension of those books, but they cannot measure if a student has learned life lessons or gained personal insight (Gordon & Lu, 2008).

Mentor texts are the third type of texts used in a Reading Workshop classroom. Hyde, Daniels, & Zemelman (2012) noted that some teachers believe they need to teach the entire novel in order for students to learn from it. However, the researchers argued that the Common Core Standards do not require students to read a text in its entirety. Rather, teachers can use excerpts with students. This allows teachers to expose students to difficult texts, styles of writing, and concepts without needing to read the entirety of the text. The mentor texts, which are shorter works and excerpts, can help students to study the writer's craft and to develop a vision for their own writing (Hyde, Daniels, & Zemelman, 2012; Gallagher, 2010).

Within the Reading Workshop model, teachers use book talks to encourage student interest in reading. A book talk is a time for a person to promote a book. The teacher, a classroom visitor, author, parent, or student can give a book talk. Several elements are necessary in a book talk. The person needs to be holding the book, and it should be a book that the presenter is familiar with and excited about. Reading part of the book to students helps them to get a sense of the narrator. Book talk passages can also be used as mentor texts (Kittle, 2013). Broz (2011) stressed that teachers need to remember that how they talk about books is crucial. If a teacher is negative about a book or reading, it can confirm negative misconceptions students have about reading and themselves as readers. On the other hand, if a teacher is positive, it can fill a student with hope and completely transform a student's reading life. The power of a book talk in a Reading Workshop classroom is valuable and important.

Not only is it important that teachers are passionate when they talk about reading, but it is also important that teachers model reading for students. Teachers should be modeling the reading

process and the enjoyment that reading brings (Wangsgard, 2014). Independent reading time should not be a time for teachers to work on catching up on grading or e-mails; doing so sends students the message that independent reading time is not important (Lee, 2011). When a teacher shares their reading struggles as well as their successes, students gain skills of an authentic reader and learn how to handle those struggles (Miller & Anderson, 2009). Students benefit when they are able to see what it looks like to have an authentic reading life.

The Reading Workshop model also allows students to develop reading skills through conferencing. During conferences, a teacher meets with an individual student in order to focus on that particular student's needs as a reader. A teacher will start the discussion by asking the student questions such as "What are you reading? Tell me about your book. What is confusing you with your reading right now?" After an initial guiding question, the teacher develops further questions. During conferences, the teacher is not telling a student what to do; rather, the teacher talks with the student and listens to the student. It is important that teachers remember not to dominate the conversation, but instead let students do the majority of the talking. Conferences help students create goals, strategize, discover their own problems and create steps to reach their goals (Hyde, Daniels, & Zemelman, 2012).

Typically, reading conferences fall into one of three categories: monitoring a student's reading life, teaching reading skills, or helping students plan to challenge themselves. While conferencing, teachers should skim the room for non-readers and keep record of conferences. Knowing they cannot meet with every student even every week, teachers can find other times for informal discussions. For example, teachers should begin discussing books with students in the halls (Kittle, 2013). These conferences and informal conversations in the hall with students help create a culture of readers who have the necessary skills that lifelong readers need.

A final component of the Reading Workshop classroom is writing. Students in a Reading Workshop classroom have reader's notebooks and write reflectively. Students need the opportunity to respond to what they are reading. In their reader's notebook, students keep track of their reading, books they want to read, and their reflections on their reading. Teachers can use these journals to help students develop their ability to express their interpretations of what they are reading (Broz, 2011). Teachers provide students with journal questions that they answer in their notebooks. This also allows teachers to check if students comprehend their reading. Students should also write quarterly reflections on their reading (Kittle, 2013). Providing students opportunities in their notebooks and their quarterly reading reflections provides students and teachers another way to communicate about a student's reading and to determine if the students comprehend their books.

Reading journals are a part of incorporating reflective learning into the Reading Workshop model. Reflective learning allows readers the time to set goals, watch their progress, and to have responsibility within their learning. Reflection allows students the opportunity to see larger concepts and principles. Students can analyze difficulties they faced and how they handled them. They can note what they did well and what they need to improve upon (Hyde, Daniels, & Zemelman, 2012). When students engage in giving feedback on their own work, it helps them to become lifelong learners (Dean & Marzano, 2012).

However, teachers need to prepare their students to reflect. To do this, teachers need to explain what it looks like to be a successful reader, how to use a common vocabulary in communication about reading, and to consistently have students examine evidence of their learning. Asking students to reflect on their learning helps them achieve more and discover more about their strengths and weaknesses (Stiggins & Chappuis, 2012). The structure of the Reading

Workshop provides a framework by which teachers can help students become active in reflecting on their reading life, habits, and skills.

Current classroom practices are allowing a negative attitude towards reading to grow instead of helping students discover the power of reading. As students get older, their perception of reading becomes more negative (Wilson & Casey, 2007), and boys tend to see reading as an activity for girls (Harrison, 2012). Gordan and Lu (2011) argued that the books students generally read in English classes are often difficult. The low achieving students in their study saw book reading, as it is done in traditional classrooms, to be “‘boring,’ a ‘waste of time,’ ‘too wordy,’ and ‘a headache’” (Gordan & Lu, 2008, p. 11). Pairing this with the fact that most students have negative associations with reading (Dickerson, 2015) makes for a difficult situation that ends in student (and teacher) frustration. Students’ brains like to be challenged, but they need to be challenged the right amount. Giving students books that are too difficult or too easy makes them want to give up (Kittle, 2013).

Introducing students to appropriate books can change their attitudes. Students need to experience literature that deals with the same problems they encounter (Amicucci, Williamson, DeCapua, & Hrebik, 2015; Gordon & Lu, 2008). When students read stories they see as relevant to them, they encounter those experiences and make decisions of how they would act without ever having actually experienced a risky situation, and it helps them learn life lessons (Hunt & Hampton, 2002; Johnson, 2011; Miller & Anderson, 2009). Through reading, students can be challenged to change (Miller & Anderson, 2009).

Hunt and Hampton (2002) expounded on the ability of reading to change attitudes, noting that good books talk about the struggle between good and evil, which is a struggle in the real world. Students are introduced to new cultures they would never visit on their own, and they are

introduced to abstract concepts like bravery and truth that can be difficult for adolescents to understand. The researchers acknowledged that fantasy is a genre that students particularly enjoy because it puts their life in perspective, which can make their problems disappear for a while and give them the sense of adventure they desire. Developing positive student attitudes towards reading can have significant benefits even outside of creating lifelong readers. Students who have a positive attitude toward reading are more likely to be successful in all subjects as well as being more likely to look for a deeper understanding of the concepts they are learning (People for Education, 2011).

Dickerson (2015) introduced a Reading Workshop model in her classroom and found that students read more in her English class than any other in high school; she witnessed the change in attitudes as half of her students responded on a survey that they wanted independent reading time in class every day. In that same survey, 48% of Dickerson's students claimed to love independent reading, and only 2% claimed to hate it. The majority of students (77%) stated they read more in Dickerson's English class than any other English class they had taken. When asked if they liked reading more after the independent reading program, 41% of students claimed to like reading more, and only 4% of students claimed to like reading less.

In addition, Dickerson's research survey (2015) asked students to express skills they felt the independent reading program had helped them develop, and over 50% of students claimed to have gained skills such as a better vocabulary, the ability to focus, the skills of responsibility, the realization that their problems are not as big as they thought they were, and the ability to understand others' problems. One significant change Dickerson noted was the connections she built with students and the sense of community that was created. By developing closer relationships with her students, she observed a decline in her classroom management problems.

A Strommen and Mates (2004) study similarly recognized the importance of establishing a reading community. This study interviewed older children and teens to discover what made students love (or not love) reading. The researchers discovered that in order for students to become readers, they needed to see themselves as participants in a reading community. This means that students are able to discuss their books with others who love to read, students are encouraged to read for leisure, they have access to variety of reading material, they have good memories of reading, and they read a lot. As Dickerson (2015) found in her study, the Reading Workshop model can create this kind of reading community for students.

In addition to a better attitude towards reading, independent reading brings about other changes as well. Students who regularly read for pleasure have higher reading scores (Gallagher, 2010). When students are able to pick books that they can read with accuracy and fluency, they develop better comprehension skills (Kittle, 2013). Practicing reading - and practicing a lot - makes students better at reading (Wilson & Casey, 2007). When students like what they are doing and are working in an environment, a community, with others who have similar goals, learning happens (Atwell, 1998).

To help establish a strong reading community, it is crucial that teachers understand how students perceive themselves as readers. Many students resist reading because they struggle with self-efficacy. Wangsgard (2014) asserted that students will read if they feel they have the ability to read well. Implementing certain strategies can increase self-efficacy. Wangsgard (2014) suggested teachers decide what reading strategies are needed for the student, create a learning environment that helps students feel confident and comfortable reading, and then model the reading process and the enjoyment of reading.

Researchers also showed there is a link between a student's self-esteem and that student's reading frequency (Wilson & Casey, 2007). Wilson and Casey (2007) reasoned that if students like to read, they will read more. The student's perception of self as a reader influences the student's attitude and willingness to read. This, then, affects a student's ability to improve as a reader. If teachers allow students the option of choice in their reading and students feel safe (able to fail), they are more likely to take risks and take on more challenges. Students who believe they can be successful are more likely to be intrinsically motivated, and offering students choice in reading helps them take ownership of their learning (Johnson, 2011).

Unfortunately, many students today do not have positive self-esteem with reading. Students who have struggled with reading in the past tend to view themselves as poor readers and believe they will fail (Wilson & Casey, 2007). Students who do not see themselves as readers are difficult to persuade to read and to see the benefits of learning (Gulla, 2012). Gulla (2012) observed a Freshmen English classroom that employed a Reading Workshop model. This classroom had the lowest-scoring 9th grade students in an urban vocational high school. In her research, Gulla emphasized how independent reading changed the student's perceptions of both reading and themselves in the classroom she observed for her study: students began to see themselves as readers, not as being forced to read. The Reading Workshop model helped establish a community in the English classroom, and students turned into readers who saw themselves as readers. One student that was observed credited his Freshmen English class as a major reason for why he graduated high school.

It is important to create a classroom atmosphere where students can reflect on their perceptions of themselves as readers. To help students transform their perceptions, students need to feel supported and to feel like they can make mistakes (Wilson & Casey, 2007). Some

students have been reluctant readers and avoiding reading for years, so for some students, seeing progress within one year is difficult. It might take them several years in a program before any real growth is seen (Lee, 2011).

Young Adult Literature (YAL) can also help change students' perceptions of themselves as readers. YAL helps create students who are lifelong readers. Therefore, a teacher's perception of YAL and a teacher's recommendations - or lack thereof - plays a big part in if a teacher is encouraging readers or losing readers. YAL pulls readers into the story as students are often able to relate to the stories and learn from this; this often does not happen in traditional classrooms, though, as readers are seeking information for another time, like a test, which limits their ability to engage with the assigned reading (Johnson, 2011).

It is important that teachers help students to develop positive perceptions of themselves as readers. Because books can make people feel things, they help teach important lessons about what is valuable in life, such as why selfishness is wrong or why friendships are important (Hunt & Hampton, 2002). Johnson (2011) claimed, "Adolescence is a pivotal time in a person's development. The changes teens experience determine much about who they are - their work ethic, interests, self-esteem, morality - and who they become. This, in turn, shapes our society" (p. 173). Miller and Anderson (2009) stressed that all teachers need to believe that all students can become readers. Developing positive perceptions of students as readers begins with a teacher believing it is possible.

Reading is important and offers benefits for students not only academically, but it can also benefit them on a personal level for a lifetime, helping to challenge them to think deeply about the world around them. Many teachers advocate for the success they have experienced

from Reading Workshops in their classrooms; however, much of their research is based on limited evidence.

Methods

Previous researchers asserted that independent reading has numerous benefits for students that can last a lifetime; one of those benefits is the possibility of creating lifelong readers. This study sought to determine the effect that a Reading Workshop program can have on independent reading of high school students. While previous studies offered limited evidence on the success of Reading Workshop, this study sought to provide insight into the extent of how a Reading Workshop can affect high school students' relationships with reading. It specifically focused on examining if there was an increase in reading, if students' attitudes towards reading changed, and if students' perceptions of themselves as readers changed throughout the course of the program.

Participants

The research participants were 66 students in grade 11 in a private Christian high school in the Midwest. These students were all enrolled in an English 11 class. This is a class that all Juniors must take; it is a requirement for graduation. Fifty-two percent of the participants were female, and forty-eight percent of the participants were male.

The school was located in a rural, farming community, and students came from surrounding towns. The school had 274 students total, and 99% of the students were white.

Materials

The 11th grade English teacher provided students with a pre-survey and a post-survey about their reading habits through Google forms (Appendix A). The survey contains multiple choice and short answer questions that were used to determine things such as a student's independent reading habits, attitudes towards reading, and understanding of not only the

importance of reading but also what makes one a good reader. The survey was created by another individual not involved in the study and was a modification of a study which Atwell (1998) gave to her students at the beginning of the year to learn more about their reading habits, interests, and perceptions.

Data on the effectiveness of the reading program was also collected by analyzing scores of students' weekly reading pages and reading rates of students. This data showed if there was an increase of reading throughout the course of the program. Additionally, conducting individual semi-structured interviews of students picked at random through a random number generator elaborated on the data from the surveys and student scores. The interviews provide a richer understanding of the effect of the reading program on students (Thomas, 2012). Finally, analysis of quarterly reading reflections from first and second quarter provided additional qualitative insight into the possible correlation between the Reading Workshop model and students' independent reading.

Design

Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to help determine if there was a correlation between an increase in independent reading and Reading Workshop. As a way to determine the impact of a Reading Workshop model on independent reading, the pre-survey and post-survey results were compared to discover if there was a significant shift in attitudes towards reading and/or reading habits of students. The data the teacher collected over the course of the year was also analyzed to see if there were any significant changes in reading rates. Conducting interviews with eight students chosen at random and analyzing quarterly reading reflections chosen at random provided further insight into students' attitudes and perceptions of reading.

Procedure

The Reading Workshop model was implemented at the beginning of the year, starting with the pre-survey. Students read for ten minutes at the start of every class period, kept reading journals, wrote quarterly reading reflections, conferenced with their teacher, and recorded their reading. Eight students, chosen at random, were interviewed. The interview contained open-ended, semi-structured questions inquiring about students' perceptions of how the Reading Workshop program had affected their independent reading, including their attitude towards reading and changes in their perception of selves as readers. Interviews lasted around ten minutes. The interviews were recorded and transcribed to allow for coding. A sampling of quarterly reading reflections for students, chosen at random, provided further data as to affect the program had on students. In these reflections, students discussed possible growth, attitude changes, and changes in reading habits. Coding of these responses was analyzed for possible trends. The post-survey was administered in late February.

Data Analysis

After the post-survey was taken, results were analyzed to discover the extent that the Reading Workshop model had influenced independent reading in high school students. A paired sample t-Test was used to determine if student attitudes toward independent reading changed. In addition, the interviewees' responses were analyzed for any trends regarding changes in attitudes towards reading. Quarterly reading reflections were also analyzed for trends. The analysis focused on two main areas. First, analysis focused on a section of the quarterly reading reflection where students reflected on the amount of pages they read throughout the quarter. This analysis revealed if the program had increased student reading. Second, analysis looked at the

short essays where students discuss if being able to make a choice in their reading had impacted them and what they had learned about themselves as readers.

Finally, to discover if students' perceptions of themselves as readers had changed throughout the program, interview answers were analyzed to find any trends or themes. Similarly, quarterly reading reflections were analyzed to discover additional insight into trends or themes concerning this research question.

Results

Research Question One

The first research question asked the following: Did the Reading Workshop model increase independent reading in high school students? In order to answer this question, the researcher conducted a pre- and post-survey to determine if there was an increase in reading. The pre-survey question asked, "How many books would you say you've read in the past year?" The post-survey question asked, "How many books would you say you've read so far this year?" The overall results are displayed in Figure 1. Results for answers from girls can be found in Figure 2, and the results for answers from boys can be found in Figure 3.

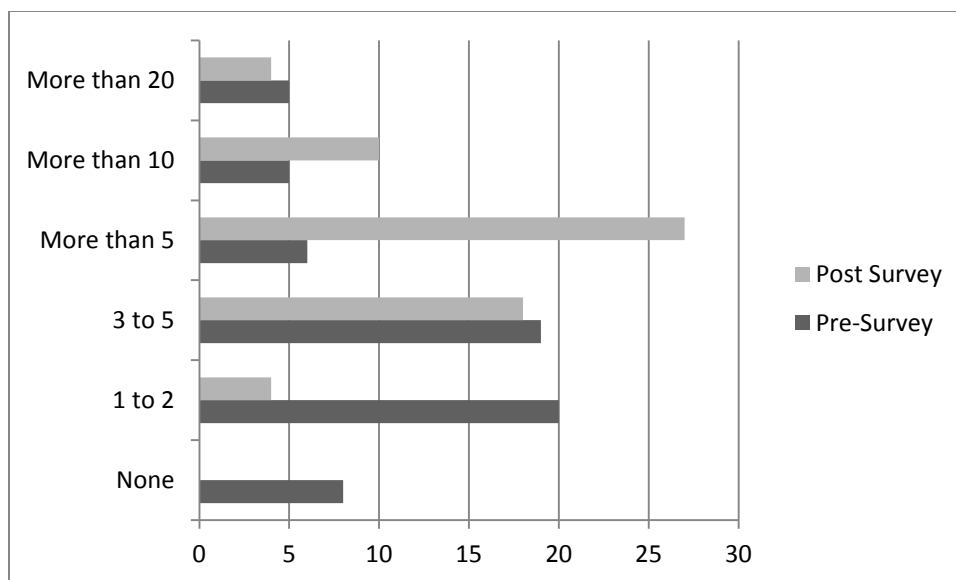


Figure 1. Bar graph showing results for “How many books would you say you've read in the past year?”

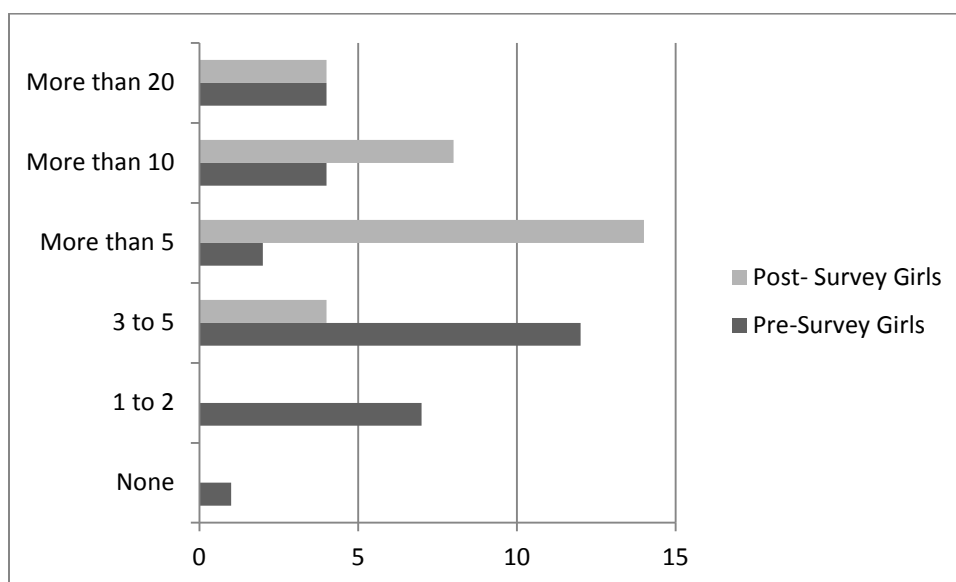


Figure 2. Bar graph showing results of how girls answered survey question, "How many books would you say you've read in the past year?"

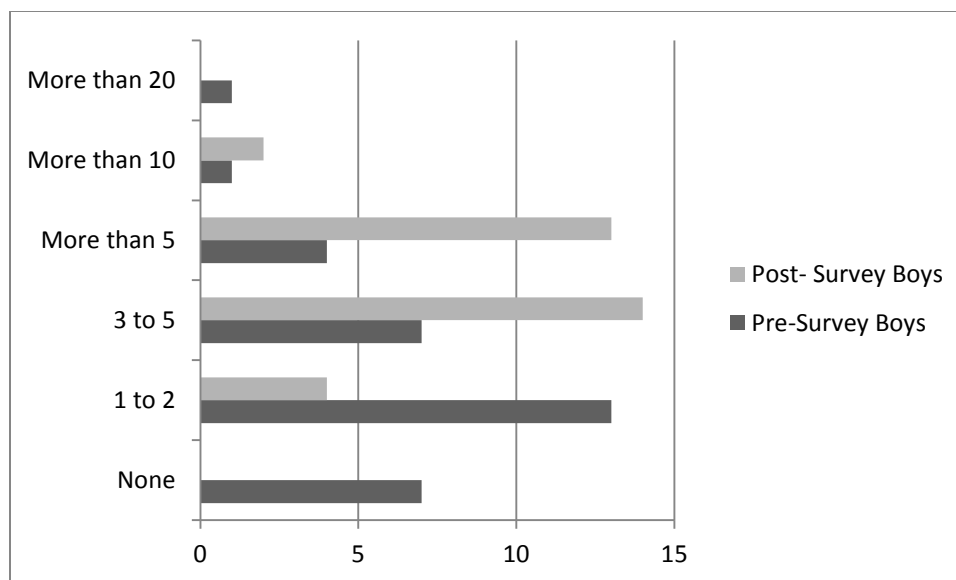


Figure 3. Bar graph showing results of how boys answered survey question, "How many books would you say you've read in the past year?"

Figure 1 shows that while eight students had read no books the year before the program started, all students claimed to have read at least one book after the implementation of the reading program; in fact, twenty-seven students claimed to have read more than five books in the five full months the reading program was in place. The researcher conducted a T-test; the results can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Books Read t-Test Results

	Mean (M)	Variance (V)	Number of Observations	t	df	Sif. (2-tailed) (p)
Before Reading Workshop	1.9206	2.8730	63	-11.9385	62	1.9989
After Reading Workshop	2.8730	0.9514	63			

The results (see Table 1) suggested there was a statistically significant difference in results of the pre-survey for how many books students have read in the last year ($M = 1.92$, $V = 2.87$) and the results of the post-survey ($M = 2.87$, $V = .95$); $t(62) = -11.94$, $p = 1.999$. M is the mean (or average) of answers, and V is the variance, which shows how widely the answers varied. Each answer on the survey was given a number 0-5 to represent the answer. The means between the two groups increased by about one level. The t-test results found the increase of the books read to be statistically significant because the p value, which is the t Critical two-tailed results (1.9989), was larger than the t value (-11.9385). The increase in the amount of reading students had done was found to be statistically significant, suggesting that participating in a Reading Workshop program affects the number of books read, specifically indicating that more books are read when students are involved in a Reading Workshop program.

Similarly, another question on the pre- and post-survey asked, “Outside of school, how often do you read for pleasure?” The overall results are shown in Figure 4. Results showing responses from girls can be found in Figure 5, and results showing responses from boys can be found in Figure 6.

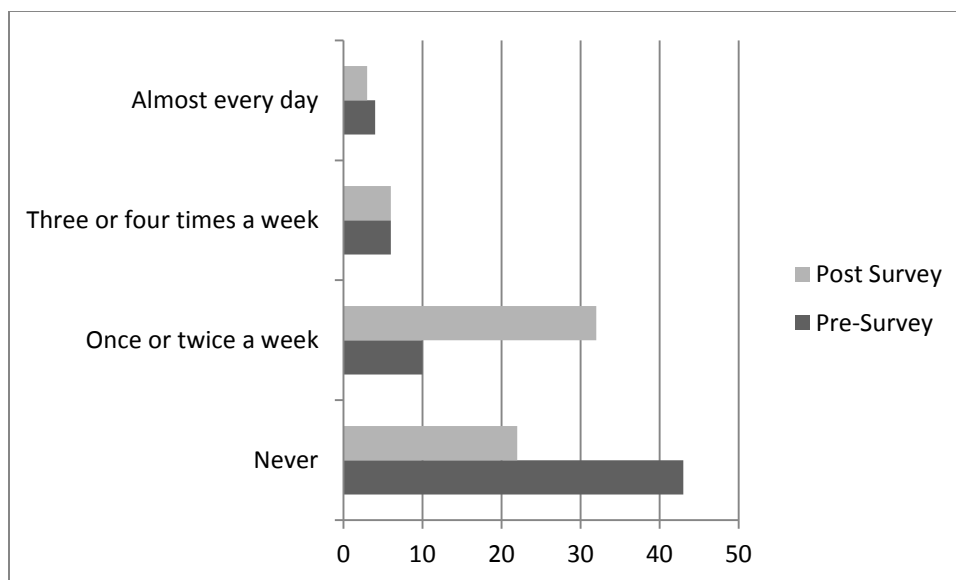


Figure 4: Bar graph showing results for “Outside of school, how often do you read for pleasure?”

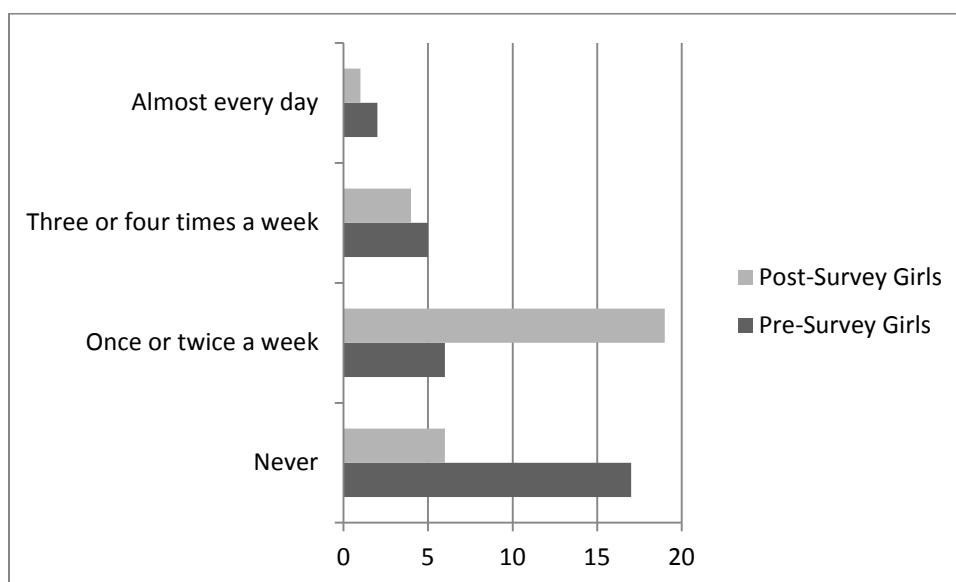


Figure 5. Bar graph showing results for girls’ answers for how often they read for pleasure.

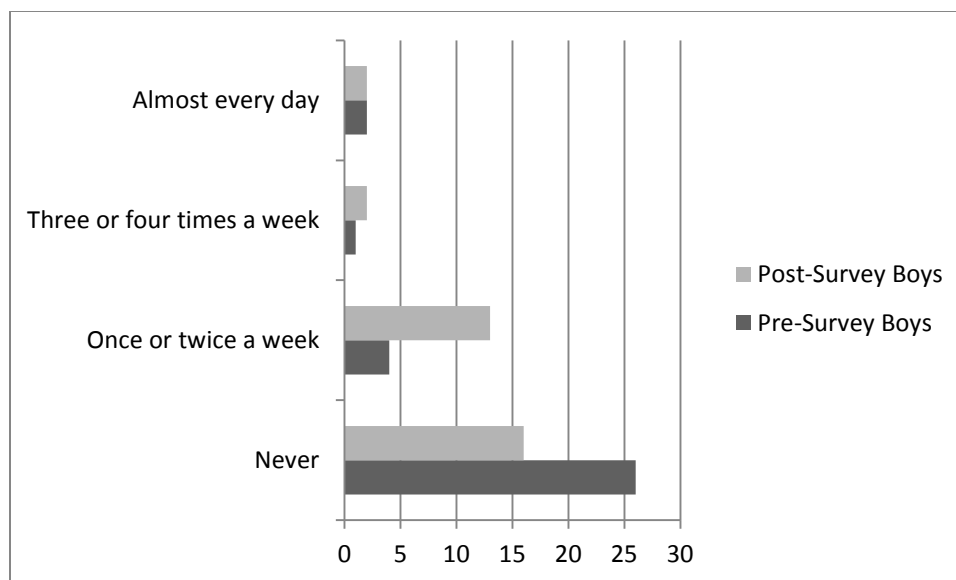


Figure 6. Bar graph showing results for boys' answers for how often they read for pleasure.

While the pre-survey results in Figure 4 shows that over forty students never read outside for pleasure, only twenty-two answered the same on the post-survey with the majority of students answering they read once or twice a week for pleasure. The researcher conducted a t-test; the results can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

Reading for Pleasure t-Test Results

	Mean (M)	Variance (V)	Number of Observations	t	df	Sif. (2-tailed) (p)
Before Reading Workshop	0.5397	0.8331	63	-4.5456	62	1.9990
After Reading Workshop	0.8413	0.6196	63			

The results (see Table 2) indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in results of the pre-survey for how often students read for pleasure ($M = .54$, $V = .83$) and the post-survey ($M = .84$, $V = .62$); $t(62) = -4.55$, $p = 1.999$. The responses were given a number 0-3 to

match each possible answer. The mean increased by 0.3. The t-test results were found to be significant because the p value (1.9990) was larger than the t value (-4.5456). These results suggested a Reading Workshop program affected time spent reading for pleasure. The results specifically showed that students involved in Reading Workshop spend more time reading for pleasure.

The researcher also analyzed the quarterly reading reflections of eight students first quarter and eight different students second quarter. Each quarter, four of the reflections came from boys, and four of the reflections came from girls. The average reading rate was 89 pages a week; on average, students read 91 pages a week that quarter. In quarter 2, the average of eight different students' reading rates was 103 pages a week, and students read 107 pages a week on average. Not only did students, on average, meet their reading rate goals, but there was an increase in reading between quarter one and quarter two. The researcher performed a t-Test assuming unequal variances to see if the increase of average pages read each week was statistically significant; the results can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

Reading Rate t-Test Results

	Mean (M)	Variance (V)	Number of Observations	t	df	Sif. (2-tailed) (p)
Before Reading Workshop	90.5	426.29	8	-1.0262	10	2.2281
After Reading Workshop	107	1642	8			

The results (see Table 3) suggested there was a statistically significant difference in the pages students read in quarter one (M = 90.5, V = 426.29) and the pages read in quarter two (M

= 107, $V = 1642$); $t(10) = -1.03$, $p = 2.23$. The average pages read a week between the quarters increased 16.5 pages a week. Because the p value result in the t -Test (2.2281) was greater than the t value (-1.0262), the results were considered to be statistically significant, suggesting that students in a reading workshop program increase the amount of pages they read each week.

In addition, the survey asked students about their knowledge of authors. The results can be found in Figure 7.

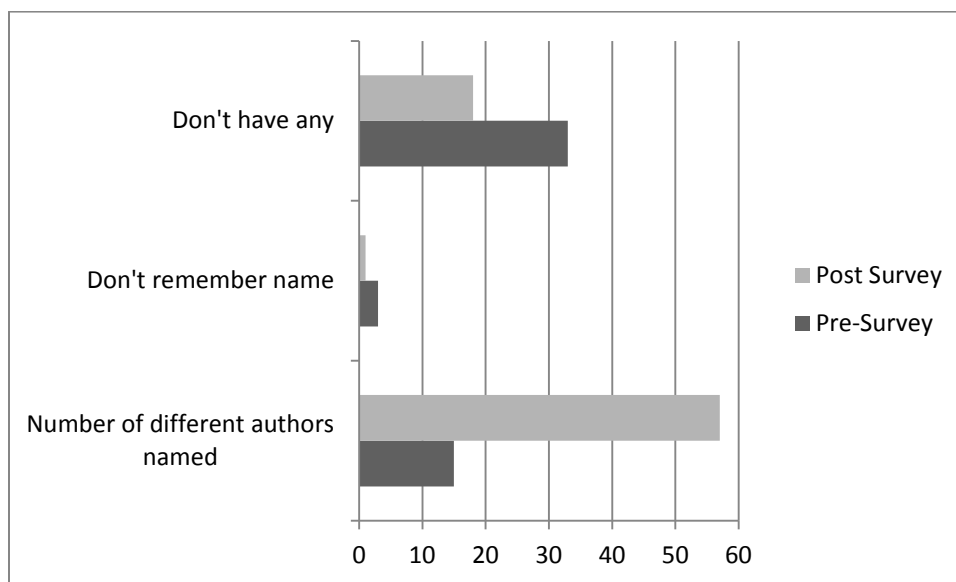


Figure 7. Bar graph showing results for “Who are your favorite authors?”

In the pre-survey, 33 students answered that they did not have a favorite author, and fifteen different authors were named. In the post-survey, only eighteen students claimed to not have a favorite author, and fifty-seven different authors were named. While participating in the Reading Workshop, students’ abilities to name favorite authors increased.

Research Question Two

The second research question addressed the following question: Did the Reading Workshop model impact students’ attitudes towards independent reading? The researcher interviewed eight students to answer this question. All of the eight students who were

interviewed claimed to like the Reading Workshop model. Student A claimed, “I really like [the Reading Workshop model]. I mean it gets kids into books, which is always a good thing. I mean if we didn’t have it, I don’t think anybody would really be reading books other than those who really enjoy it.” Similarly, Student B stated, “I like it. It’s a lot nicer than reading books that you might not like.” Finally, Student C remarked, “I kind of like reading the ten minutes right before class; it’s kind of nice to sit down for a little bit and like relax.” Each of these students, and the other five students interviewed, shared positive feelings towards the program. The most common reasons students mentioned for why they enjoyed the Reading Workshop model included that it allowed students to read more, helped students learn to like reading, got students involved in books when they would otherwise not be, provided students a way to relax without technology, and was based on an individual’s choices and goals. Each of these reasons was mentioned by two students.

When asked about the requirement of reading two hours a week, five of the students said they thought two hours was a good amount; two of the five students also voiced concern about meeting their reading goals during especially busy weeks. Student A expressed, “I think it is good. It is definitely a challenge sometimes, but it is definitely a good goal for us to try to reach each week.” Student D shared a similar sentiment explaining, “I think it is a fair goal because, yeah, if you just read like five minutes a week, you probably won’t be interested at all [in reading].”

On the other hand, a main concern that was voiced by five students – with two students having noted the benefit of the goal – was the fact that two hours can be hard to meet during a particularly busy week. Student E expressed this concern by saying, “It’s usually fine. Sometimes it gets busy if you’re in a lot of, like, sports or other extracurricular activities, but

usually I can finish it in a weekend or something.” Although the students expressed some concern about the reading requirement when busy, most acknowledged that the expectation was reasonable and doable.

When students discussed how their perceptions of English class had changed, only two students claimed that their perception had not changed; while the majority of interviewed students claimed to like class more, stating it was more fun, while also acknowledging that they had learned more in this English class about literature than in past English classes. These sentiments are summed up by a response given by Student E: “It makes it more fun, I think, because you get to spend more time reading books you like and just discussing them and writing about them.”

All of the students claimed that they believed it was important to be a reader because reading helps build important skills and increases knowledge of the world. Student E noted, “I think you use reading in every part of life. No matter what job you go into, you’re going to need to have good reading skills.” Student A claimed, “You can gain valuable knowledge from books rather than sitting on your phone all day and just going mindlessly through apps.” Similarly, Student B discussed, “It uses, like, more of your brain to think about it and comprehend it instead of just, you know, being told it.” Finally, Student D elaborated on how visualization skills are improved. Although each student expressed the importance of reading for different reasons, they were unanimous in their decision that being a reader is important.

Each student shared lessons learned from independent reading books read during the program. Student F stated, “All the books I’ve read are about, like, people who have a hard life, and so then it helps me realize that not everything comes so easily like it seems to in northwest Iowa.” Similarly, Student G discussed how “there are always going to be hard times that you

have to get through.” Student H reflected, “You shouldn’t trust everybody around you because some people lie.” A common theme students discussed focused on how everyone has struggles and how to deal with the hard times and stand up for what you believe in.

The researcher also analyzed eight reading reflection essays from quarter one that discussed if choice in reading matters to students. The researcher discovered several themes, which can be seen in Figure 8.

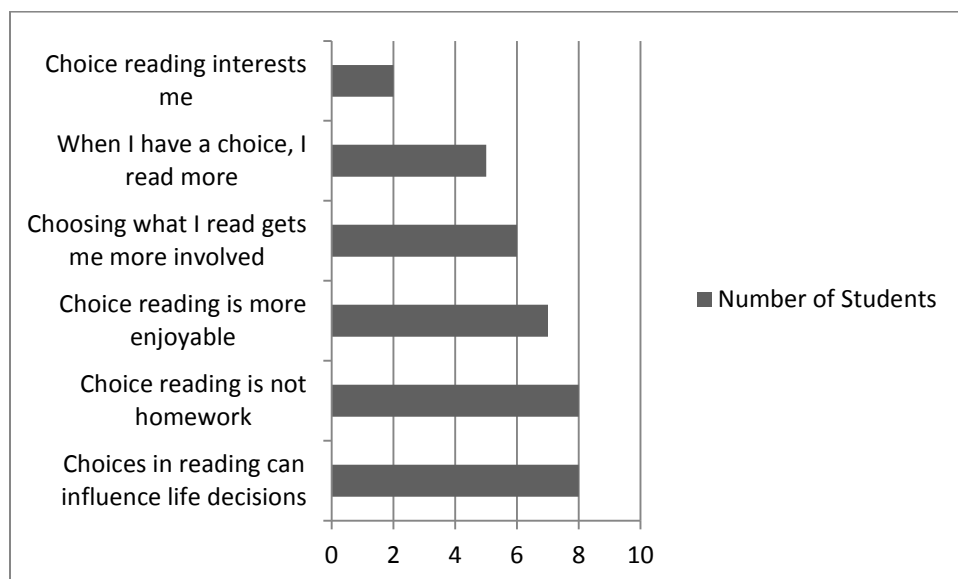


Figure 8. Bar graph showing results for “Does Choice Matter?”

In their reading reflections, all eight students claimed that choice in reading mattered to them, noting that choosing their own books created more interest and led them to read more. Student I argued, “The books you read affects your entire experience with reading. When we get to choose the book we read, we are choosing what we are getting ourselves involved in.” Student J further expressed this idea:

Picking a book that perks your interest gives you more motivation to read that book. It makes the reader not want to put the book down when it’s getting intense or really

relatable in some way. If I can relate my life to a book, I think that I would want to keep on reading it and pick books that draw me and my interests in.

Answers like these support the conclusion that it is important for students to have choice in what they read.

Additionally, the majority of the students claimed one of the biggest benefits of choice was that it got them more involved in the reading process. Students also found reading was more enjoyable when they had some choice, noting that when the teacher picks books for the whole class it becomes homework and unenjoyable. Student K touched on this by asserting, “When it’s assigned by the teacher, it feels like homework... [If we can pick our own books] it becomes enjoyable and we will get lost in the book.” Student L elaborated saying, “When I am forced to read something that I do not like it, it often does not have a lasting effect. I have not been a big fan of reading, but now that I get to choose the books I am reading, I can choose something I can enjoy.” A common theme in the reading reflection was that choice created more opportunity for engagement in reading.

The final theme the researcher found in student answers was that students believed that picking their own book was important because reading can influence life decisions. Student M discussed this idea by recognizing, “Books not only relate to a reader’s life but can teach life lessons.” Student I, pondered the importance of reading choices, noting that a student’s current choice in reading will impact what and if a student will read in the future.

Research Question Three

The third and final research question that the researcher asked was as follows: Did the Reading Workshop model change students’ perceptions of themselves as readers? To answer this question, the researcher looked at the pre- and post-survey results on the question, “Do you

consider yourself to be a reader?” The overall results of the survey are found in Figure 9. The results showing girls’ responses can be found in Figure 10, and the results showing boys’ responses can be found in Figure 11.

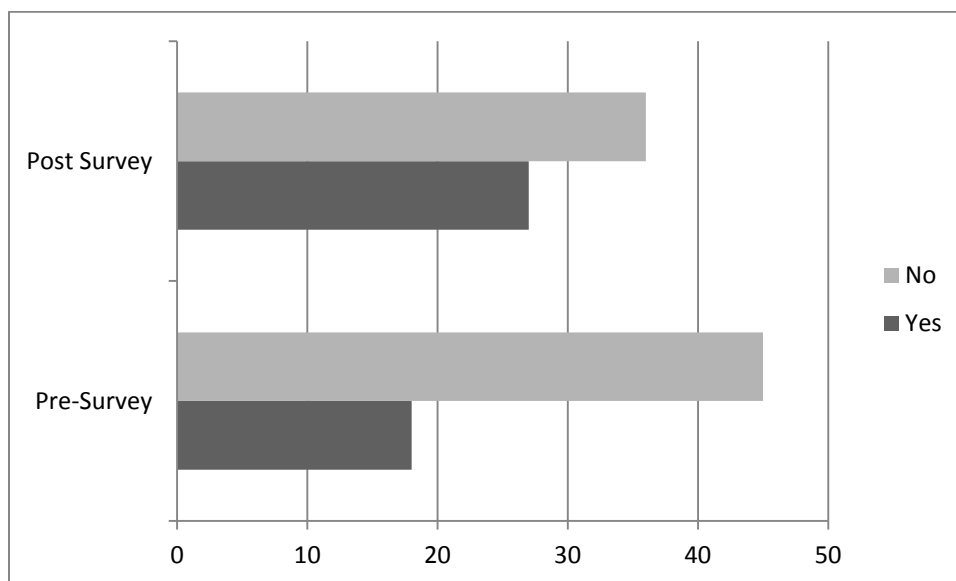


Figure 9: Bar graph showing results for “Do you consider yourself to be a reader?”

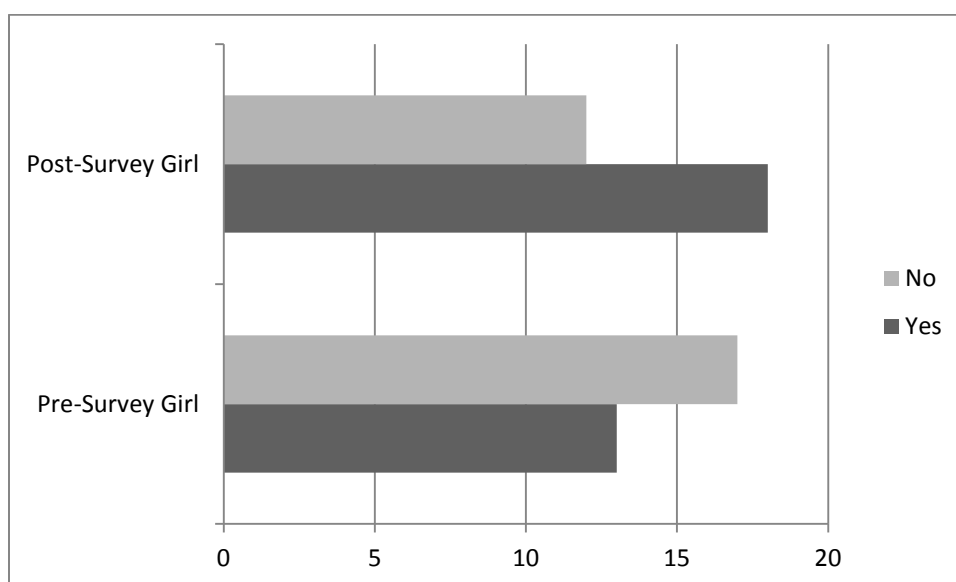


Figure 10. Bar graph showing girls' responses as to whether or not they consider themselves to be readers.

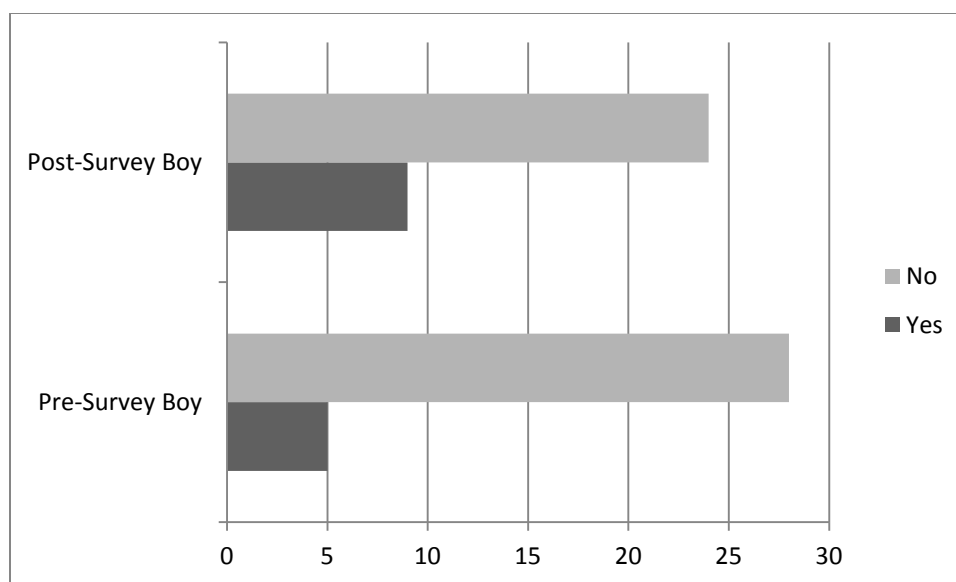


Figure 11. Bar graph showing boy's responses as to whether or not they consider themselves to be readers.

In the pre-survey (see Figure 9), eighteen students considered themselves to be readers. In the post survey, twenty-eight students considered themselves to be readers. Five girls switched their answer to a yes, and four boys changed their answer to a yes. The researcher conducted a paired sample t-Test to determine if the increase of students who considered themselves to be readers was significant. The results can be found in Table 4.

Table 4

Reading Perception t-Test Results

	Mean (M)	Variance (V)	Number of Observations	t	df	Sif. (2-tailed) (p)
Before Reading Workshop	0.2856	0.2073	63	-3.2146	62	1.999
After Reading Workshop	0.4286	0.2488	63			

The results (see Table 4) of the t-test showed there was a statistically significant difference in the responses for the pre-survey question asking if students consider themselves to be readers ($M = .28$, $V = .21$) and the responses for the post-survey ($M = .44$, $V = .25$); $t(63) = -4.41$, $p = .001$. *Yes* answers were given the number 1, and *no* answers were given the number 0. The mean increased by almost 0.2. The p value (.001) was smaller than the t value (-3.2146), suggesting that the increase of students who considered themselves to be readers was statistically significant. These results suggested that when students participate in a Reading Workshop program, there is an increase in students who claim to be readers.

In the interviews with students, the researcher discovered that all the students reported that their perceptions of themselves had changed throughout the course of the Reading Workshop. While some students noted that they did not consider themselves to be readers, they felt they were now “in the middle” between being a reader and a non-reader, with one student claiming he was starting to become a reader. Student D explained, “Yeah, [my perception of myself as a reader] has changed a lot because, like I said before, I didn’t read any books, and now I’ve probably read six or seven this year.... I’ve never read that much in my life before.” Likewise, Student A stated that he considered himself to be “in-between” a reader and non-reader. He claimed, “I definitely like reading more. I mean I would never, like, sit down and read a book, but now it is, like, another option for me to do if I get bored.” Over half of the students who were interviewed claimed they were reading more books now than they ever had before.

In their second quarter reading reflection, students discussed what they had learned about themselves as readers. The researcher analyzed eight of the student responses that were chosen randomly. The most common themes are listed in Figure 12.

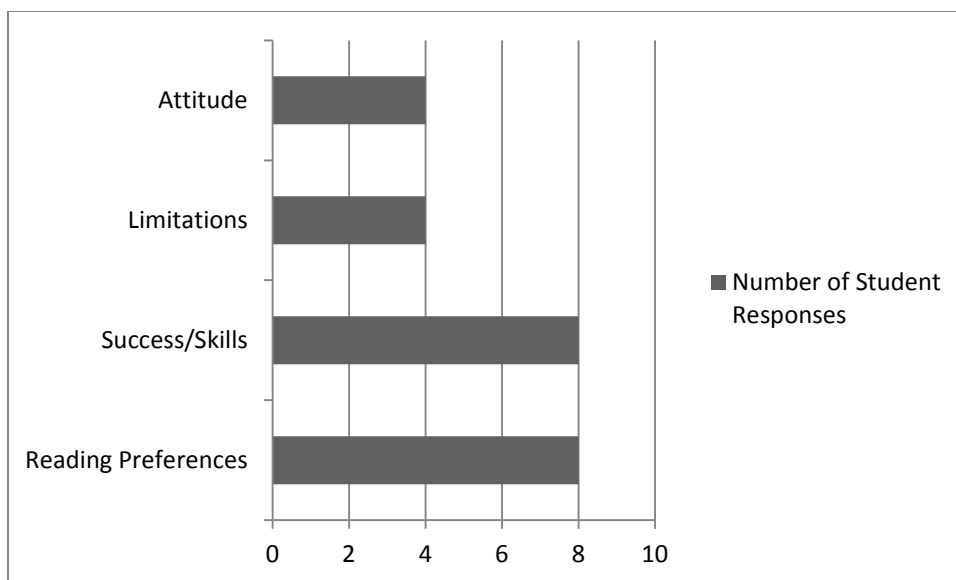


Figure 12: Bar graph showing what students learned about themselves as readers.

Several themes emerged from their responses. Student N admitted, “I have learned that I actually do like to read. Not all the time, but if I can find a book that I enjoy, I will want to read it... not just because I had to, but because I wanted to.” Student O emphasized the benefit of reading within the English classroom: “I feel like if I read sometimes before I do my homework it kind of ‘warms up my brain’.... I usually like reading before class because it gives me time to kind of switch gears before we get into English class.” Students reported enjoying reading more in the Reading Workshop program than they ever had before.

In addition, students were able to clearly name their reading preferences, such as genres they enjoy. Student P stated, “I found out I love realistic fiction/mystery books! I like realistic because you can relate to most of the plot lines. I like mysteries because they keep me on my toes and leave me waiting to see what is going to happen next!”

Students also named specific skills they had gained or successes they had during the Reading Workshop as well as limitations they had discovered about their reading. Student Q admitted, “I have learned that when there is other noise going on, I have a hard time staying

focused.... I need a completely quiet room in order to be able to comprehend what is going on in my book.” Each student could name specific things they had discovered about themselves as readers that they had not known before.

Lastly, several students discussed the importance of their attitude, noting that a positive attitude impacts their ability to be a better reader. Student R responded, “When I apply myself, reading is easier. My reading rate reflects this. Last quarter, I didn’t try as hard.... This quarter, I put forth more effort, and it showed the reading rate.” Student O, on the other hand, claimed, “Complaining about this reading thing just makes it worse than it really is and makes the reading not as fun. If you at least attempt to make it interesting, it is a lot better.” Students were able to express a positive change in attitude and how that has positively affected their reading.

Discussion

Summary

The purpose of this study was to answer the following questions: Did the Reading Workshop model increase independent reading in high school students? Did the Reading Workshop model impact students’ attitudes towards independent reading? Did the Reading Workshop model impact how students’ viewed themselves as readers? To answer these questions, the researcher implemented a Reading Workshop model into her classroom at the beginning of the school year. Before introducing the Reading Workshop model, students completed a pre-survey. At the end of each quarter, students completed a reading reflection that the researcher randomly selected eight of each quarter to analyze for common themes. At the end of February, students completed a post-survey to provide evidence for the researcher to examine for changes using a paired sample t-Test. Finally, the researcher interviewed eight

students at random at the end of February about their experience with the Reading Workshop model; the interviews were analyzed for themes.

Summary of Findings

The survey results demonstrated that there was a significant increase in reading when the Reading Workshop was implemented. Before the reading workshop program, the majority of students claimed to never read outside of school. After the Reading Workshop was implemented, however, students began to read more. At the conclusion of the study, all students claimed to have read at least one or two books independently, and the number of students who claimed to never read for pleasure had dropped significantly.

In addition, students reported to enjoy reading more than they had in the past. Because students were able to make a choice in what they read, they had a more positive attitude towards reading. While many had seen reading as a source of homework in the past, they now reported seeing reading as something that could be enjoyable and as a way to use their imagination. Some students claimed to find reading to be something that they found relaxing.

Not only did students develop a better attitude towards reading, but many also experienced a change in how they viewed themselves. While the majority of students before the study identified themselves as non-readers, at the conclusion of the study, the research results demonstrated that many students had experienced a shift in their perceptions. More students identified as readers at the conclusion of the study, and some students who still did not identify as a reader claimed to be somewhere in the middle. While there were still more students who identified with being non-readers than readers, the shift in perspective was significant, and it is possible that further time in a Reading Workshop model would make a bigger impact on students.

Recommendations

Based on the given data, the researcher would recommend the use of a Reading Workshop model in high school English classrooms as well as further research into the use of this model. It would be beneficial for future research to examine ways to provide possible flexibility in the reading goals to accommodate busy schedules of high school students while also challenging them. In addition, future research should be done to see the effects of a Reading Workshop model implemented throughout a student's four years in high school. Another possible research study could examine students who had a Reading Workshop model in high school and their reading habits after graduation to see if students would continue to read of their own volition. A final suggestion for future research would be to consider how gender affected the results of a Reading Workshop model.

Limitations of the Study

While the researcher strove to create an accurate study, there were some factors that could have influenced the outcome of the study. The data used in this study came from three classes under one teacher whose students have a fairly homogenous population. The researcher was also the instructor of the course, which could have resulted in bias or impacted student responses in the interview. To ensure the accuracy of the findings, more research should be done in the same school in other grades and in other high schools to determine if students from various backgrounds or with different teachers respond differently to the Reading Workshop model. Future research should also work to reduce bias separating the role of instructor and researcher.

Another limitation is that the pre-survey asked students to consider the past year; whereas, the post-survey only looked at half a year. Giving the survey after a full year had passed might have shown a more accurate and detailed picture of progress students had made.

References

- Amicucci, A. N., Williamson, M. M., DeCapua, S. E., & Hrebik, J. R. (2015). "You are asking me to do more than just read a book": Student reading in a general literature course. *CEA Forum*, 44(1), 1-29.
- Atwell, N. (1998). *In the middle: New understanding about writing, reading, and learning*. Portsmouth (NH): Boynton/Cook Heinemann.
- Broz, W. J. (2011). Not reading: The 800-pound mockingbird in the classroom. *English Journal*, 100(2), 15-20.
- Carr, N. G. (2010). *The shallows: What the internet is doing to our brains*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Dean, C. B., & Marzano, R. J. (2012). *Classroom instruction that works : Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, Va.: ASCD.
- Dickerson, K. (2015). Reimagining reading: Creating a classroom culture that embraces independent choice reading. *Penn GSE Perspectives On Urban Education*, 12(1).
- Gallagher, K. (2010). Reversing readicide. *Educational Leadership*, 67(6), 36-41.
- Gordon, C., & Lu, Y. (2008). "I hate to read - or do I?": Low achievers and their reading. *Research Journal of the American Association of School Libraries*, 11, 1-15.
- Gulla, A. N. (2012). Putting the "shop" in Reading Workshop: Building reading stamina in a ninth-grade literacy class in a Bronx vocational high school. *English Journal*, 101(5), 57-62.
- Harrison, B. (2012). Reading for pleasure among year 13 boys: What are the possibilities and problems?. *Kairaranga*, 13(2), 41-48.
- Hodges, G. (2010). Reasons for reading: Why literature matters. *Literacy*, 44(2), 60-68.

- Hunt, G. M., & Hampton, B. (2002). *Honey for a teen's heart: Using books to communicate with teens*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Hyde, A. A., Daniels, H., & Zemelman, S. (2012). *Best practice: Bringing standards to life in America's classrooms*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Johnson, A. B. (2011). Multiple selves and multiple sites of influence: Perceptions of young adult literature in the classroom. *Theory Into Practice*, 50(3), 215-222.
- Kittle, P. (2013). *Book love: Developing depth, stamina, and passion in adolescent readers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Lause, J. (2004). Using reading workshop to inspire lifelong readers. *English Journal*, 93(5), 24.
- Lee, V. (2011). Becoming the reading mentors our adolescents deserve: Developing a successful sustained silent reading program. *Journal Of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 55(3), 209-218.
- Miller, D., & Anderson, J. (2009). *The book whisperer: Awakening the inner reader in every child* (1st ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2013). The Nation's Report Card: Trends in Academic Progress 2012 (NCES 2013-456). *National Center for Education Statistics*, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C.
- People for Education. (2011). Reading for joy. Retrieved from <https://www.accessola.org/web/Documents/OLA/issues/Reading-for-Joy.pdf>.
- Rideout, V. (2014). Children, teens, and reading: A common sense media research brief. Retrieved from <https://www.common sense media.org/research/children-teens-and-reading>.

Stiggins, R. J., & Chappuis, J. (2012). *An introduction to student-involved assessment for learning*. Boston: Pearson.

Strommen, L. T., & Mates, B. F. (2004). Learning to love reading: Interviews with older children and teens. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 48(3), 188-200.

Thomas, A. F. (2012). The effects of implementing a reading workshop in middle school language arts classrooms. *Journal of Instructional Pedagogies*, 9.

Towle, W. (2000). The art of the reading workshop. *Educational Leadership*, 58(1), 38-41.

Wangsgard, N. (2014). "Am I a good reader?" A friendly way to evaluate students' perceptions of themselves as a reader. *Reading Improvement*, 51(1), 4-10.

Wilson, J. D., & Casey, L. H. (2007). Understanding the recreational reading patterns of secondary students. *Reading Improvement*, 44(1), 40-49.

Appendix A

Survey

WCHS Reading Survey

Please help us find out a little bit more about your reading habits! Please be honest--these are for informational purposes only (no grades!!).

Your email address [REDACTED] will be recorded when you submit this form. Not [REDACTED]? [Sign out](#)

* Required

1. What grade are you currently in? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 9th
- ☐ 10th
- ☐ 11th
- ☐ 12th

2. Do you consider yourself to be a reader? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

3. How many books would you say you've read this year? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1-2
- ☐ 3-5
- ☐ more than 5
- ☐ more than 10
- ☐ more than 20

4. Outside of school, how often do you read for pleasure? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Once or twice a week
- ☐ Three or four times a week
- ☐ Almost every day

5. Why do people read? List as many reasons as you can think of. *

6. What does someone have to do in order to be a "good" reader? *

7. What kinds of books do you like to read? *

8. What, besides books, do you like to read? *

9. How do you decide what you will read? *

10. Who are your favorite authors/writers? *

A copy of your responses will be emailed to



Appendix B

Interview Questions

The questions are ones the author has created, unless stated otherwise.

1. How many books have you read independently so far this year (Dickerson, 2015)?
2. Before this year, did you consider yourself a reader?
3. Has your perception of yourself as a reader changed throughout the school year? Explain.
4. Readers: What is it about reading that makes you want to spend time reading?
Non-readers: What is it about reading that makes you want to not read (Strommen & Mates, 2004)?
5. Do you think it is important to be a reader? Why or why not (Strommen & Mates, 2004)?
6. What is your opinion of the Reading Workshop (Dickerson, 2015)?
7. What is your opinion of the 2 hour a week requirement for independent reading (Dickerson, 2015)?
8. How (if at all) has independent reading changed your perception of English class (Dickerson, 2015)?
9. What have been your major accomplishments so far this year as a reader (Atwell, 1998)?
10. What are your strengths as a reader (Atwell, 1998)?
11. What are the areas in which you can improve (Atwell, 1998)?
12. Do you regularly use any reading skills? If so, what are they?
13. What lesson(s) have you learned from the books you have read this year (Dickerson, 2015)?
14. Have you seen any benefits from your increased reading (Dickerson, 2015)?
15. What have you learned about yourself as a reader?