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## The need for a teacher librarian to take a leadership role in the implementation of supplemental reading program initiatives to achieve desired student outcomes

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# The need for a teacher librarian to take a leadership role in the implementation of supplemental reading program initiatives to achieve desired student outcomes

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### Abstract

Education stakeholders recognize the importance of establishing a culture of reading within a school. Many schools are using supplemental reading programs, like Accelerated Reader (AR), to support reading instruction and to encourage independent reading opportunities with their students (What Works Clearinghouse, 2010). These programs offer schools a system to manage, monitor and measure students' independent reading. The high percentage of schools in the nation implementing supplemental reading programs necessitates that school librarians serve a leadership role in the implementation of such reading programs. Although these programs often entail controversy, proper implementation of these reading programs requires structure and support best served through the defined roles of a school librarian (AASL, 2009) as the school's literacy advocate and leader.

Ample research has shown that school librarians impact student achievement and play a major role in accomplishing a school's desired student outcomes (Hughes, 2014; Lance & Hofschire, 2011, Lance & Loertscher, 2005; Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005). This study documents one TL's contributions in the implementation of AR in one middle school where students have demonstrated success using a supplemental reading program. The study results showed this TL's leadership work and proper execution of her professional responsibilities contributed and assisted with the successful implementation of a supplemental reading program within a middle school community. Overall 96% of the middle school students who participated in AR, had a 93% success rate with their independent reading quizzes, and completed 4684 quizzes (an average 28.9 per person). Notably the school library circulation was 7925 (an average of 51.1 per person), indicating these students' library circulations far surpassed the number of books they needed to meet their AR reading goals. These circulations were also well distributed; 96% of the total middle school student body checked out 16 or more books. Additionally 47% of all circulations were award winning titles. This study documented the teacher librarian's contributions to the library program through ardent attention to developing a high quality collection, reader's advisory outreach, lessons, book talks, reading promotion programs, and communication efforts such as circulating lists of best books and popular titles to keep student and teacher interests high -- all of which were essential to the implementation of a supplemental reading program.

THE NEED FOR A TEACHER LIBRARIAN TO TAKE A LEADERSHIP ROLE IN  
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUPPLEMENTAL READING PROGRAM  
INITIATIVES TO ACHIEVE DESIRED STUDENT OUTCOMES.

A Graduate Research Paper  
Submitted to the  
Division of School Library Studies  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by  
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Titled: The need for a teacher librarian to take a leadership role in the implementation of supplemental reading program initiatives to achieve desired student outcomes.

has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts.

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## ABSTRACT

Education stakeholders recognize the importance of establishing a culture of reading within a school. Many schools are using supplemental reading programs, like Accelerated Reader (AR), to support reading instruction and to encourage independent reading opportunities with their students (What Works Clearinghouse, 2010). These programs offer schools a system to manage, monitor and measure students' independent reading. The high percentage of schools in the nation implementing supplemental reading programs necessitates that school librarians serve a leadership role in the implementation of such reading programs. Although these programs often entail controversy, proper implementation of these reading programs requires structure and support best served through the defined roles of a school librarian (AASL, 2009) as the school's literacy advocate and leader.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Alex H., a fifth grader at a rural Iowa middle school, is starting his first day of school. He is filled with excitement and anxiety about continuing his schooling at a whole new building. Alex realizes things will be much different at the middle school compared to his elementary experience. He will have his own locker, with a combination to use. Alex's daily schedule will consist of receiving instruction from multiple teachers. At times he will be in the hallways with much older eighth graders, which is very intimidating. In addition to the many changes, Alex understands he will be participating in a reading program called Accelerated Reader (AR). There have been a lot of conversations between his fifth grade classmates about the AR program. Alex has very mixed feelings and many uncertainties about this program because he does not see himself as a "reader." The AR program requires reading. Reading is a challenge for Alex. Often times he would rather be doing something other than reading. In addition, he has yet to develop essential skills to help him understand what he reads.

Alex is not an atypical student. In my experiences as a teacher librarian, I have observed that many students do not perceive themselves as "readers." Schools that foster a culture in which the importance of reading is valued and acknowledged, have a direct impact on a student's mindset in regards to reading (Dweck, 2007). Reading is a foundational skill for learning, personal growth, and enjoyment. According to the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), when students can read and understand text in all formats, it is a key indicator of success in school and in life (AASL, 2007, p. 2). Research shows that children who read frequently and read well in school

are more confident learners with a broader understanding of the world in which they live (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010; Topping, Samuels, & Paul, 2007; Krashen, 1995).

The National Governor's Association (NGA) provides a national focus on improving students' reading skills, as stated in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (Grossman, Reyna, Shipton, & National Governors Association, 2011). State academic expectations, especially in the area of reading, have been elevated. The Common Core State Standards require students to read stories and literature, as well as, encourage the use of complex texts for interpretation and information in all core subject matters. The reading focus of the CCSS has brought challenges to restructure the teaching of reading in these capacities so students are required to learn and use essential reading skills like: inquiry, problem-solving, critical thinking and analysis, which prepare them for college, career and the real-world (English Language Arts Standards, 2012).

Coupling the NGA's focus, school administrators and teachers recognize the importance of establishing a culture of reading within a school. Therefore some schools are using supplemental reading programs, like Accelerated Reader (AR), to supplement reading instruction and to encourage independent reading opportunities for their students. Supplemental reading programs offer schools a system to manage, monitor and measure students' independent reading.

According to a What Works Clearinghouse report, the Renaissance Learning company has 63,000 schools around the nation that are using Accelerated Reader in some capacity to supplement their reading instruction (What Works Clearinghouse, 2010). The National Center for Education Statistics (Institute of Education Sciences, 2012) reported

the number of private and public schools in the United States total 132,183. Based on these numbers, there are an abundance of schools across the nation implementing the AR program or some aspects of the program to supplement reading instruction.

The high percentage of schools implementing supplemental reading programs necessitates that school librarians assume a role of leadership and guidance. Although these programs often entail controversy, it is essential for the school librarian to take a leadership role to ensure proper implementation. Proper implementation of these reading programs requires structure and support which can be best served through two of the defined roles of a school librarian (AASL, 2009): the school's literacy advocate and leader. It is essential for school librarians to play an integral role in the implementation and execution of the reading program's services to support the overall intention of the school's implementation of the program as well as to ensure stakeholders have accurate measures of the program that provide effective feedback regarding its implementation.

Ample research has shown that school librarians impact student achievement and play a major role in accomplishing a school's desired student outcomes (Lance & Loertscher, 2005; Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005; Hughes, 2014). The presence of a quality school library program staffed with a certified school librarian may benefit a school implementing a supplemental reading program. School librarian, the professional title used by the AASL, and teacher librarian (TL), the professional title used by the Iowa Department of Education, will be used interchangeably in this paper.

Notably, these supplemental reading programs can have a polarizing effect on teacher librarians. In some cases, these supplemental reading programs are used in place of an acting teacher librarian in order to cut costs for a district. In addition, a teacher

librarian may accept a position where a supplemental reading program has been in place for some time, and as a result, be asked to maintain its implementation, regardless of whether or not one has negative feelings about the program. In other cases, the implementation of the reading program has been initiated and directed by school leaders without the consultation of the acting teacher librarian.

Nonetheless, teacher librarians support opportunities for independent reading (AASL, 2010). TLs support independent reading through providing access to quality literature in all text formats, through the positive promotion of reading, and through reading advisory services.

### **Summary of Problem**

Due to a large number of schools across the nation choosing supplemental reading programs, like AR, to promote independent reading, there is a need for teacher librarians to understand their role to serve and support supplemental reading programs within a school. School librarians would benefit from information on how their work offers patrons services that support successful independent reading experiences necessary to the implementation of supplemental reading programs. They could also use information about how to best offer positive reading experiences to students to help support their required reading goals set by classroom teachers.

### **Problem Statement**

Although the TL's role in supporting students' independent reading through reading promotion and advisory is well documented, the TL role in the implementation of supplemental reading programs is often unclear and controversial.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to document the TL contributions in the implementation of AR in one middle school in which students have demonstrated success using a supplemental reading program.

### **Research Questions**

My research explores teacher librarian support of student success by answering the following questions:

1. To what degree were middle school students successful in passing AR quizzes at the 85% proficiency level set by the AR program?
2. Do middle school student patrons use their school library resources to accomplish their Accelerated Reader requirements set by teachers?
3. In what ways does a teacher librarian support students' reading goals through access to a variety of book genres, exposure to award winning titles for middle grade students, and activities to promote reading of these books?

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

My research assumes there are schools, teachers, and teacher librarians who are asked to implement and support district mandated reading incentive program requirements. Some teachers and teacher librarians may have polarizing opinions about these incentivized reading programs. A limitation of this study is that it takes place in a school environment that has utilized AR since 2001.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to document TL contributions in the implementation of AR in one middle school in which students have demonstrated success using a supplemental reading program. Notably, the implementation of such supplemental reading programs can have a polarizing effect on teacher librarians but necessitates the need for a teacher librarian to ensure proper implementation. Previous research related to this study includes topics such as the importance of independent reading to student learning, the value of the TL in creating desired student outcomes in a learning community, and understanding the polarizing nature of Accelerated Reader within a learning community. These studies, summarized below, demonstrate the importance of independent reading and the potential value of the leadership role of teacher librarians in the implementation of supplemental reading programs.

#### **Importance of Independent Reading to Student Learning**

One of the most extensive studies conducted on the topic of independent reading was completed by Anderson, Fielding, and Wilson (1988). It was a landmark study that set out to see how much reading was being done by students outside the school day, as well as to examine the relationship between the amount of time spent reading and reading achievement. The subjects of the study were 155 fifth graders (85 boys and 75 girls) from different demographics in eastern Illinois. They were asked to complete a daily activity form comprised of a list of potential out-of-school activities appropriate for the age group of students. The activity logs were collected over a two to six month period. The researchers gave special attention to the amount of time students spent doing activities

related to independent reading. The study determined that the amount of time students spent on independent reading was the best predictor of reading achievement and vocabulary development.

In a similar classic study, Taylor, Frye and Maruyama (1990) found the amount of time children spent reading was significantly related to their gains in reading achievement. They asked 195 fifth and sixth-grade students to keep daily logs of their time spent reading at school and their time spent reading at home over a four-month period. Recorded reading times at school consisted of assigned silent reading from a class novel or a reading basal, as well as silent pleasure reading. The study found that the amount of time spent independently reading during school impacted gains in students' reading achievement as measured by reading comprehension scores on a summative assessment. The scores of the subjects were compared to reading comprehension scores given earlier in the school year prior to the study. In addition, their findings concluded students' reading at home was inconclusive to determine an impact on reading achievement gains, although the findings approached significance. It was predicted the self-report measure was unreliable data and determined more research was needed to determine a relation to reading achievement gains and independent reading at home.

A more recent study completed by Hall, Hedrick, and Williams (2014) demonstrated maximizing opportunities for students to choose reading materials and devote time in school to read independently each day increased their involvement in reading. The independent reading project involved 21 participants at the third grade level of instruction. The research was completed over a 4-week period in the spring. Subjects were provided the power of choice in what they read, access to tranquil music during in

school independent reading time (ISIR), and access to high-quality, appealing and age-appropriate books to read without interruption. Subjects were observed by the authors of the study along with three trained undergraduate students majoring in education. They collected field notes of their observations and cross checked their findings. It was determined students were highly involved readers with their independent reading opportunities. Student subjects were highly motivated for ISIR time, enthusiastic with the power of choice, and they were very engaged in conversations about the book selections. This research project exemplified the power of choice when students have opportunities to participate in independent reading activities in a learning environment. Providing students opportunities to make decisions during the school day empowered them as learners.

### **The Value of the Teacher Librarian in a Learning Community**

There is a need to establish reliable evidence to support school libraries and their positive impact with student learning; the following three studies demonstrate this impact. A study conducted by Todd and Kuhlthau (2005) illustrated how effective school librarians help students and their learning. The duration of the study took place October 2002 through December 2003. The study involved 39 highly effective school libraries across the state of Ohio. The participants encompassed 13,123 students in grades 3 through 12 and 879 faculty members in the 39 schools. The researchers set out to provide data other than the measure of standardized test scores to validate gains in student achievement. The intent was to examine all aspects of student learning. Data was collected through use of a 48-question survey. The 48 questions were statements of help organized in seven conceptual groups determined through a literature review. Data

collected was both qualitative and quantitative. The conclusions reported that almost all of the participants, 99.44%, claimed the school library had helped their learning in some way. It was determined that the school librarians played a comprehensive role with student learning and the services school library programs provided were invaluable to students.

In a similar study, Small, Shanahan, and Stasak (2010) set out to determine the impact New York school libraries have on student achievement and motivation. The study was a longitudinal study, reported in three different phases over a span of two years. The first phase of the study began with an online survey. The second phase of the study involved a representative sample of 47 schools chosen to participate in an extensive survey. The final phase of the longitudinal study involved interviews at 10 schools that also participated in the initial phases of the research study. Interviews were conducted with 53 students, 33 classroom teachers, 37 parents, seven school librarians and 10 principals of the selected 10 schools. The interviews explored ideas about how school librarians have impacted their school communities. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. Analyzed results were categorized in six domains of interest. The domains of interest included how school librarians impacted student achievement and motivation. The results were consistent with the findings in phases one and two of the research. The findings suggested school librarians performed a wide range of tasks and activities that had direct impact on student-learning outcomes in areas such as student use of technology as well as their influence on the reading interests.

Finally, the National Commission on Libraries and Information Sciences set out to organize position statements from various organizations and report findings from several

decades of studies that cited the measurable impact that school libraries and media specialists have had on student achievement. (Scholastic Library Publishing, 2008). The intent of their research was to aid teacher librarians, administrators and school teachers so they are able to better serve and improve their own school library programs. Illustrated within the report were concepts such as the importance of staffing with certified teacher librarians within learning communities, characteristics of effective school library programs, teacher librarians as literacy leaders, as well as numerous studies conducted in various states across the United States that have demonstrated the impact teacher librarians have had on student achievement in all areas of learning. The information and studies provided within the report establish an enriched understanding of the importance of resource-rich school library programs that are staffed with credentialed school librarians. Although this report illustrates the impact of the teacher librarian on students' reading achievement, the studies were not specific to the TL's impact in environments that implement incentive reading programs.

### **The Polarizing Nature of Accelerated Reader**

Reading incentive programs such as AR have been linked to increases in student reading achievement in a variety of independent studies, yet other studies showed negative implications of AR. Furthermore, some research about reading achievement and motivation produced mixed results. The following group of studies showed that while students using AR generally increased their time spent reading, this was more common among those who were already stronger readers. Likewise, although time spent reading increased, implementation of AR in school environments was inconsistent and students'

reading achievement and intrinsic reading motivation sometimes decreased, making the use of AR controversial and polarizing in some schools.

Renaissance Learning, the parent company of AR, published more than 170 studies on their website that claim AR positively impacted student reading achievement. A cited independent study completed by Johnson and Howard (2003) supported the implementation of AR. Researchers looked at how the implementation of the AR program positively impacted the reading achievement and vocabulary development of students in grades three, four and five. Researchers involved 755 student subjects from a low socio-economic environment who had participated with using an AR program for one year. Students were rated and placed into three groups based on their AR usage. The three groups consisted of a low AR participation group (0-20 AR points), an average participation group (21-74 AR points), and a high AR participation group (75 or more AR points). In addition to group placements, researchers looked at students' achievement scores using the Gates- McGinitie Test, which measures reading comprehension and reading vocabulary. All students were tested at the onset of the school year, and their scores were used as a data baseline. Researchers then tested students at the end of the school year, after participating in AR for the duration of the school year. Student test results on the Gates-McGinitie test determined participants in all three student groups improved their reading skills, and those students who had high participation using the AR program showed the most gains with their reading comprehension scores. The findings of the researchers determined AR can be effective if students were willing to use the program and actively participate in supplemental reading opportunities. Also, their findings concluded students who were reading below grade level would benefit the most,

but these students were identified in the study as the students with the least participation. The researchers' deductions supported their claim that supplemental reading programs would be ineffective if students do not participate in the work.

A focus group study, completed by Smith and Westberg (2011), examined the opinions of students about the use of AR in their schools. Student subjects in grades three through eight were selected from five different school sites and three different school districts. Student subjects were placed in small groups and met with researchers to participate in open-ended interview questions about the use of the AR program in their schools. The focus group sessions met five different times and the questions asked were designed to elicit honest opinions of the students about the AR program. Confidentiality agreements were made at the beginning of each focus group session. The findings concluded there were various levels of implementation at each school and there was no consistency in regards to how the program was delivered. Student opinions regarding AR were relatively negative, reporting that the program does not motivate students to read books or promote the love of reading. The study recommended that administrators and teachers should consider the voices of student participants and make changes to the implementation practices of AR.

Huang (2011) designed a mixed method study to investigate the effectiveness of the AR program on students' reading achievement and motivation. A total of 211 middle school students in grades six through eight participated and provided quantitative data through the use of a survey. In addition, a randomly selected group of 30 students were ask to participate in interviews and classroom observations over the course of a semester. These students participated in the completion of an AR pre and post test (STAR

Assessment). Results of the pre and post tests were examined to provide additional quantitative data related to the study. Huang's findings concluded the AR program had direct effect on independent reading time as each of the 30 students who participated increased their time spent reading each day. However, the results indicated no improvement in student reading achievement scores or increases in student intrinsic reading motivation. Together the results of these studies showed that AR implementation and findings have been inconsistent and that perhaps one important factor needing more research is the methods of implementation, including the specific role of the school library program and professional activities of the teacher librarian.

### **Summary**

Many studies have been conducted relating to the importance of independent reading in school, the role of the teacher librarian in supporting reading, and the effectiveness of using the AR reading program. The studies reported mixed reviews. Several studies indicated the positive impact of supplemental reading programs on student learning, while several studies indicated a negative impact of the reading program on reading motivation and the program's ineffectiveness with the improvement of student reading achievement. However, research has determined there is a need to build independent reading opportunities for students during the school day (Hall et al., 2014). Through research it has been verified the amount of time spent reading has impacted student reading achievement (Anderson et al., 1988). Certified teacher librarians are an authority in the area of reading, and advocates for the importance of independent reading (NCLIS, 2008). As research has demonstrated effective teacher librarians have direct impact on all areas of student learning and can be effective in serving students' and

teachers' needs (Lance & Loertscher, 2005; Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005; Hughes, 2014).

Their depth of knowledge can establish best practices to the implementation of a supplemental reading program like AR. Through their work, a teacher librarian, can provide a school community with ideas for promoting and implementing reading incentive programs (NCLIS, 2008) as well as support successful independent reading opportunities for students (NCLIS, 2008). There is a need for research examples that provide education stakeholders like school administrators, teachers, and teacher librarians with insight on how a teacher librarian can serve and support the implementation of supplemental reading programs to achieve desired student learning outcomes.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

Many schools across the nation are implementing reading incentive programs, like Accelerated Reader, to provide a structured method to implement independent reading opportunities for their students. Teacher librarians aim to serve and support students' independent reading efforts as well as ensure students have success with their independent reading choices. Teacher librarians are literacy advocates within the learning community and play a significant role in accomplishing desired learning outcomes (Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005; Small et al., 2010). Through the leadership of teacher librarians, supplemental reading programs can be implemented properly to accomplish the overall intention of the purchased reading program as well as accomplish the desired student learning outcomes initiated by the learning community.

This study investigated whether or not middle school students were successful in meeting their independent reading goals through the examination of Accelerated Reader diagnostic reports of students' reading quizzes. Second, this study investigated whether middle school students utilized their school library program's resources to accomplish their Accelerated Reader requirements set by teachers. Finally, this investigation examined how a school library program supported students' reading choices by offering a variety of book genres that included award winning titles for middle grade students and through the activities of the teacher librarian implementing a school-wide reading incentive program.

### **Research Design**

The single, small, rural middle school in Northeast Iowa was chosen purposively for this study. There are 561 students in the District and 157 students attending the middle school in grades five through eight. In this District students are not exposed to the AR program until the fifth grade. In all grade levels of this middle school, students decide upon calculated reading goals in collaboration with their language arts teachers. Reading goals are formulated and entered for each student using the AR points system, requiring students to achieve a determined amount of points. Often goals are calculated based on individuals' reading abilities, attainability, and experience. The reading goals progress is monitored and reported by the classroom teacher at the midterm and the end of each school quarter.

This study utilizes a quantitative content analysis method. Wildemuth (2009) states that quantitative content analysis is systematic and objective and is a deductive approach to research (p. 298). Quantitative content analysis was appropriate for this study because the researcher examined existing Accelerated Reader quiz reports, library circulation and patron statistics, as well as the documentation of the contributions of the teacher librarian through reader's advisory for middle school library patrons. This was used to determine if a school library program provided adequate opportunities for independent reading to support student success with meeting incentive reading program goals required by teachers. These existing documents were available for study and the use of these documents for this study was approved by the District and the University of Northern Iowa Institutional Research Board. In addition, serving as the teacher librarian within this small school district, the researcher has a rich understanding of the social

context in which the documentation has been created to interpret meaning and draw generalized conclusions beyond the generated reports.

### **Procedures**

As the researcher, I had administrative access to Renaissance Learning's Accelerated Reader Enterprise version at this school. This access provided essential documentation needed for this study. Accelerated Reader Enterprise administrative access allowed me numerous student diagnostic reports from the 2014-15 school year within the management program. AR diagnostic reports of reading practice tests offered information on reading quiz results of student patrons. The analysis of these reports allowed me to interpret whether students were successful in the comprehension quizzes they took over their independent reading choices, as determined through the 85% proficiency standard set within AR.

Another data source utilized in this study was library circulation reports generated from the school's Follett's Destiny Library Manager system from the school year 2014-2015. The school library's circulation statistics provided the data needed to determine whether or not students utilized the school library resources to meet their required reading goals and gave insight into whether or not students were exposed to award winning novels and a variety of book genres to enrich and enhance their independent reading choices and experiences. First, reports were generated to show the variety of genres and number of award winning titles circulated by grade levels. Second, patron circulation reports were created using Destiny to demonstrate the number of checkouts per patron. The average circulations were used to determine the percentage of middle

school students by grade level who used their school library resources to satisfy their required goals set by their classroom teachers.

Additional data sources included documentation of the teacher librarian's contributions and involvement in the implementation of Accelerated Reader. These contributions included the following: emails generated by library personnel to promote reading and suggest new books available in the middle school library, book lists created by the TL to assist with book selection and reading promotion, using Follett TitleWave resource for purchasing, and ongoing use of the Destiny system features for book holds, book reviews, as well as the summary feature for effective browsing. This study also analyzed scripts of book talks, library lessons, and documentation of student participation.

### **Assumptions**

There is reason to assume this middle school library program is the leading supporter and contributor of these middle school students' independent reading materials. This rural school district spans 200 square miles, including two small towns, with a combined population below 2500 people. There is a small public library in each town. However, the communities are rural and youth materials are not well funded in these environments. In addition approximately 50% of this rural district's student patrons live outside the city limits of each town. Thus, the school library provides primary access to youth materials and the most convenient point of access for these students.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

Due to the large number of schools across the nation using AR or similar reading incentive programs to promote independent reading, there is a need for teacher librarians to understand their role as a leader to support supplemental reading programs within a school. The purpose of this study was to document the TL contributions in the implementation of AR in one middle school in which students have demonstrated success using a supplemental reading program. In order to do so, I utilized quantitative content analysis of data through the examination of existing documents and artifacts.

#### **Student Success with the Implementation of a Supplemental Reading Program**

The first research question asked, “To what degree were middle school students successful in passing AR quizzes at the 85% proficiency level set by the AR program?” The data source for student participation with the Accelerated Reader program and levels of success were gathered from Accelerated Reader management portal Diagnostic Reading Reports feature. I generated a reading practice diagnostic report of the total number of middle school students, organized by grade level, who participated with the AR program during the school year. This report also included the total number of reading practice quizzes taken in a school year and the total number of quizzes passed at the proficiency rate of 85% correct. Using the reported number of students, and quizzes taken, I calculated the average number of quizzes per participating student during the school year (see Table 1).

**Table 1***Accelerated Reader Statistics 2014-2015*

	Number of students	Number (and percent) of students who participated in AR	Total AR quizzes taken	Number (and percent) of quizzes passed - 85% or above	Average number of quizzes taken per participating student
Grade 5	39	37 (95%)	1303	1242 (95%)	35.2
Grade 6	40	37 (93%)	1562	1415 (91%)	42.2
Grade 7	39	38 (97%)	1086	1010 (93%)	28.6
Grade 8	39	39 (100%)	733	697 (95%)	18.8
Total:	157	151 (96%)	4684	4364 (93%)	28.9

Ninety-six percent of the middle school student body participated in the Accelerated Reader program, and the highest percent of student participation was eighth grade students with 100% participation. Eighth grade students had a 95% success rate in completing AR quizzes. The sixth grade students took the highest number of reading tests, but their pass rate of 91% was the lowest. Thus overall 96% of middle school students participated in AR; participants had a 93% success rate with their independent reading quizzes, and participating students completed an average of 28.9 quizzes during the school year.

### **School Library Program as a Resource**

The second research question explored the school library program's support of student reading success: "Do middle school student patrons use their school library

resources to accomplish their Accelerated Reader requirements set by teachers?”

Circulation statistics have been retained within this school library’s management system. I exported the library circulation statistics from the school library’s automation software, Follett Destiny Library Manager. I viewed the district and individual school library statistics for the 2014-2015 school year in the link indicated, *Follett School Solutions*. I also viewed student patron reports to determine the number of active middle school student library patrons. In the customizable reports, the student patrons were sorted and then totaled by grade. I determined library circulation statistics for the middle school student population overall and by grade level. From these numbers I calculated the average number of materials checkouts per patron. The highest circulation average per student was in grade 6 with 57.5 book checkouts. The grade level with the lowest number of books circulated was the eighth grade with an average of 35.9 books. Furthermore, in reviewing this middle school circulation statistics in a monthly format I also determined patrons in all grade levels used their school library program consistently throughout the school year.

In consideration of the overall AR participation rate of 96% of students (see Table 1), and the average circulations of 50 books per student (see Table 2), I determined many students in this school used the school library to pursue their independent reading AR requirements set by their classroom teachers.

**Table 2***Middle School Circulation Statistics 2014-2015*

	Number of students	Number and percentage of active library patrons who checked out books.	Number of books circulated by grade	Average circulations per active patron
Grade 5	39	39 (100%)	2200	56.4
Grade 6	40	38 (95%)	2298	60.4
Grade 7	39	39 (100%)	2026	52
Grade 8	39	39 (100%)	1401	35.9
Total:	157	155 (98.7%)	7925	51.1

Table 2 illustrates student population totals by grade level as well as the number of students in the same grade levels who have been active library patrons in the 2014-2015 school year. The table demonstrates 98.7% of the student population in grades 5-8 have been active with checking out materials and the materials the library program provides have assisted students with their AR requirements.

Additionally, the comparison of Table 2 to the data in Table 1 strongly suggests and supports these middle school students are using their school library to check out books to meet their AR reading goals. For example, the total AR quizzes taken in Table 1 is 4684. The total circulation from the school library for the same year in Table 2 is 7925. These numbers indicate these students' library circulations far surpass the number of books they need to meet their AR reading goals. Additionally the average number of

books circulated per student (51.1 books) is much higher than the average quizzes taken per student (28.9). This illustrates students' needs for the AR program are met and exceeded by the school library resources offered.

Additionally, Table 3 clearly demonstrates the number of middle school students who have circulated between 1-5, 6-10, 11-15, or 16+ school library materials throughout the 2014-2015 school year. .

**Table 3**

Middle School Circulation Statistics 2014-2015

	0-1 Book	1-5 Books	6-10 Books	11-15 Books	16+ Books
Grade 5			2	1	36 (92%)
Grade 6		1	1		38 (95%)
Grade 7					39 (100%)
Grade 8		2			37 (95%)
Total:		3	3	1	150 (96%)

As illustrated in Table 3, 96% of the student library patrons checked out 16 or more books to accomplish their independent reading goals. This data demonstrated the majority of this middle school's students regularly use school library resources, and they are able to find a number of books within the library stacks to accomplish their AR requirements. Notably, 100% of seventh grade students checked out 16 or more books from the school library, and only three students checked out five or fewer books.

### **The TL as a Leader in the Implementation of a Supplemental Reading Program**

The third research question asked: “In what ways did the teacher librarian support students’ reading goals through access to a variety of book genres, exposure to award winning titles for middle grade students, and activities to promote reading of these books?” Proper exposure to a variety of books and offering students a variety of award winning titles is critical in the enrichment of student learning (ALA, 2012). Table 4 shows this middle school library’s collection numbers by genre as well as by award winning titles. I completed a collection analysis using Follett Destiny library automation software in cooperation with Follett TitleWise Collection Analysis tool. The middle school library collection analysis provided, with 97% accuracy, a snapshot of the number of fiction titles in the middle school library collection, as well as the number of nonfiction books within the school library’s records. Circulation reports were then customized within Destiny Library Manager to determine the frequency of checkouts based on the call numbers of each of the book genres. The data analysis demonstrated this school library program offered students a variety of materials in various genres with 49.3% fiction and 45.4% nonfiction.

Additionally, I used the Follett library catalog search feature in combination with the resource lists feature within Destiny Library Manager to determine the number of award winning titles within this middle school library collection. Using the catalog advanced search feature by the limiter, “Literary Award,” I generated several book titles within the catalog records that have received literary recognition. Then, the “find all” feature within an individual title detail allowed me to generate resource lists by different

literary awards. I created specific literary award winning book lists found within the middle school library collection. Individual resource lists were created in Destiny based on the following literary awards: ALA Notable Children's Books, Iowa Book Award nominees and winners, Wilson's Children and Junior High Collection, Newbery nominees and winners, all Booklist reviewed, all School Library Journal reviewed, VOYA reviewed, Notable Children's Books and ALA Best Book for Young Adults. Once these individual resource lists were generated, I was able to create a large resource list to encompass all award winning titles found within the stacks of this middle school library. I compared this number with the total number of records in order to determine the percent of titles in this library collection that were award winning titles (see Table 4).

**Table 4**

Middle School Circulation Statistics 2014-2015

	Number	Percent of Collection
Titles in the Library Collection	10,699	
Copies in Library Collection	11,517	
Fiction Titles	5,284	49.3%
Non-Fiction Titles	4,864	45.4%
Award Winning Titles*	3,063	28.6%

\*Award-winning titles list includes winner and honor books limited to these awards: Iowa Teen Award, Iowa Children's Choice Award, Newbery Honor, Wilson's Children, Wilson's Junior High, Wilson's Fiction, all Booklist reviewed, all School Library Journal reviewed, VOYA, ALA Notable Children's Books (for older middle school readers) and ALA Best Books for Young Adults.

Table 4 indicates 49.3% of the titles in this middle school library collection are cataloged as fiction and 45.4% of the titles are non-fiction. In addition, 28.6% of the

library materials are considered to be award winning titles. Although the percent of award winning titles has room for growth, there is a major presence of high caliber book choices for circulation found through this middle school library collection. And furthermore, students checked out a disproportionately higher number of those award winning titles (see Table 5).

Table 5 is a summary of circulated award winning titles for the 2014-2015 school year. This table was helpful in determining if middle school students had selected high caliber literature to satisfy classroom requirements of accomplishing their reading goals. I used the collection statistics feature to determine how often these award winning titles were circulated in the given school year. These numbers offered me insight into whether students were being exposed to a variety of quality literature as well as whether or not students are taking opportunities to experience award winning works to pursue their independent reading goals set by classroom teachers. The illustrated circulation statistics found in Table 5 are solely award winning title statistics from the 2014-2015 school year.

### **Table 5**

*Award winning title circulation statistics for 2014-2015 school year*

Fiction award winning titles circulated	2918
Non-fiction award winning titles circulated	660
*Total award winning titles circulated	3721 <i>(46.9% of circulated books)</i>
Total books circulated this school year:	7925

\*Includes all circulation types: fiction, non-fiction, easy, story collection, video, and biography as reported in circulation statistic summary.

The circulation statistics totals indicate that out of the total books circulated, 46.9% of the titles were award winning titles. This demonstrates middle school students were exposed to numerous award winning titles and were taking advantage of the available opportunities to experience quality literature available within the school library stacks. I determined from this statistic that students at this middle school were accessing award winning literature in both fiction and nonfiction genres to help satisfy their independent reading goals.

Additionally, the teacher librarian's contributions through reader's advisory assisted with the implementation of a supplemental reading program. Table 6 shows a TL's organization, lesson plans, book talks and communication efforts promote and support reading. The TLs contributions to reading promotion are represented by, but are not limited to those activities listed in Table 6.

**Table 6**

Teacher Librarian's Contributions through Reader's Advisory for All School Patrons

Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sent out school library "welcome" letter to all grades (August 2014).</li> <li>● Updated MS student email contacts for ongoing communication efforts pertaining to library announcements or notices (August 2014).</li> <li>● Guided individuals and groups of students to the best books for their levels and interests.</li> <li>● Shared individual student credentials for utilizing Library Catalog and it's resources (August 2014).</li> <li>● Encouraged student book requests for purchase through email communication (Ongoing).</li> <li>● Coordinated resources for teachers and students to highlight the teen author Tim Green through email as well as video media.</li> <li>● Created public resource lists within Destiny to illustrate Iowa Book Awards (Iowa Children's Choice as well as Iowa</li> </ul>
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	<p>Teen) nominees for all students to access and refer (February 2015).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Announced winner of Newbery Medal and honor books to all patrons (February 2015).</li> <li>● Announced Iowa Book Award winners <i>Children's Choice and Teen</i> (April 2015).</li> <li>● Newsletter - published Scholastic Book Fair participation at the Middle School (April, 2015). Coordinated student activities and competitions to promote reading.</li> <li>● Established a Top Ten most circulated book list within Destiny Quest for middle school library (Ongoing).</li> <li>● Established Newly Added Titles list within Destiny Quest for middle school library (Ongoing).</li> <li>● Encourage student patrons to "star review" recently read books within the library catalog system to provide feedback to other patrons (Ongoing).</li> <li>● Meeting with Administration to go over School Library data as well as advocate for school library program. Discuss the importance of the role of teacher librarian as well as the roles of teacher associates (May, 2015).</li> <li>● Send out a daily schedule to administration, counselor, and library teacher associates (Ongoing).</li> </ul>
Book Talks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Created and distributed electronic book talk forms for non-fiction and fiction books. Forms are to be filled out by students to use with their classroom teachers. The information presented in these forms are to be used to drive discussion of their independent reading choices. This book talk form is intended to be used with a book they chose to fulfill their Accelerated Reader quarterly goal. Each student must complete a fiction and nonfiction reading choice (September 2014).</li> <li>● Developed a technology lesson for 5th grade students to create book trailers on their own favorite books. Does not have to be an Accelerated Reader book, but book trailer creations tend to be identified by students as Accelerated Reader books (September 2014).</li> <li>● Book talked Tim Green books available in our library to support author visit and encourage students reading (September, October 2014).</li> <li>● Book suggestions for two novel units for 6th grade benchmark readers. Collaboration with classroom teacher to find award winning books as well as Accelerated Reader</li> </ul>

	<p>books. Suggestions selected were, <i>Hunger Games</i> by Suzanne Collins and <i>Long Walk to Water</i> by Linda Sue Park.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduced books available at this year's Scholastic Book Fair. Communicated with students and teachers some highlights and books available for purchase. I chose to book talk books that are available Accelerated Reader books as well as award winning novels (ie. <i>Zane and the Hurricane; a True Story of Katrina</i> by Rodman Philbrick and <i>Loot</i> by Jude Watson).</li> </ul>
Lessons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provided staff professional development to reintroduce Destiny Library Manager and it's included resources to compliment teachers' curriculums as well support students' independent reading efforts to support implementation of Accelerated Reader program (August 2014).</li> <li>● Completed Positive Behavior Intervention Supports lessons for all students in grades 5-8 to demonstrate policies and expectations of utilizing the school library program. Showcased Library Catalog Manager and highlighted functions within the program to assist students with selecting books to accomplish their AR goals as well as provided navigation skills to maximize Destiny Library Manager's functionality to benefit student achievement. (August 2014) and (January 2015).</li> <li>● Co-taught 5th and 6th grade classes on utilizing AEA1 eBook resources and how to search for Accelerated Reading material available to them in an electronic book format as well as a "read to me" function for struggling readers (September 2015).</li> <li>● Co-taught a literature circle unit, <i>The Misfits</i> by James Howe and <i>Freak the Mighty</i> by Rodman Philbrick with 7th grade students. Helped with eNotes template as well as literature circle roles after each reading assignment. Students can utilize their participation to satisfy their reading goals in Accelerated Reader set by classroom teachers. Discussion on if you like this book? then you will love....(September 2014).</li> <li>● Collaborated with 8th grade language arts teacher regarding the novel unit by Mark Twain. Discussed classic literature and coordinated a Venn Diagram activity to compare their reading experience to more contemporary literature. Students can use this reading experience to acquire Accelerated Reading points needed for their quarterly</li> </ul>

	reading goal (February 2015).
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Established a “<i>New Books</i>” shelf within the library stacks so students can conveniently browse new additions (Ongoing).</li> <li>● Cataloged new book inventory with Accelerated Reader details, point value, book level as well as interest level for students to conveniently browse the catalog for a good fit book to accomplish their AR requirements (Ongoing).</li> <li>● Utilized Follett’s Titlewave Library Resource to research as well as purchase media for the school library program. Used reviews as well as determined if it was an Accelerated Reader book to assist with student selection to assist their quarterly Accelerated Reader goals (Ongoing).</li> <li>● Coordinated an author visit to the District from Tim Green (August -October 2015).</li> <li>● Added 263 titles to the middle school library collection through District Library budget and fundraising efforts (August-May 2015).</li> <li>● Advocate to staff the school library with a full time teacher associate to assist and provide patron access as well as manage and maintain day to day library tasks and patron circulation (Ongoing).</li> <li>● Manage and maintain the administration portal of Renaissance Learning through teacher and administration requests and guidance. Set marking periods, establish passwords, enter and maintain student patrons as well as teacher accounts (Ongoing).</li> </ul>

The teacher librarian’s contributions and efforts to support reading within this school environment demonstrate how TL leadership and abilities to serve the education community support the successful implementation of a supplemental reading program. Their communication efforts, organization, ability to motivate readers through lessons and book talks contribute to the ongoing success of implementation. It is important for education stakeholders to understand the leadership role the teacher librarian can play in a school’s implementation of a supplemental reading program.

## **CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Education stakeholders recognize the importance of establishing a culture of reading within a school. Therefore there is evidence many schools are using supplemental reading programs, like Accelerated Reader (AR), to support reading instruction and to encourage independent reading opportunities with their students (What Works Clearinghouse, 2010). Supplemental reading programs offer schools a system to manage, monitor and measure students' independent reading. The high percentage of schools in the nation implementing supplemental reading programs necessitates that school librarians serve a leadership role in the implementation of such reading programs. Although these programs often entail controversy, proper implementation of these reading programs require structure and support which may be best served through the defined roles of a school librarian (AASL, 2009) - as the school's literacy advocate and leader.

Ample research has shown that school librarians impact student achievement and play a major role in accomplishing a school's desired student outcomes (Hughes, 2014; Lance & Hofschire, 2011, Lance & Loertscher, 2005; Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005). The purpose of this study is to document one TL's contributions in the implementation of AR in one middle school in which students have demonstrated success using a supplemental reading program. This TL's leadership work and proper execution of their professional responsibilities contributed and assisted with the successful implementation of a supplemental reading program within a middle school community.

## Conclusions

Library circulation data, Accelerated Reader diagnostic data, and the documentation of the work of one teacher librarian through reader's advisory from this study indicate two themes regarding the need for a teacher librarian to understand and assume a role of leadership when implementing a supplemental reading program. The first theme acknowledged is the importance of providing students access to materials to satisfy their independent reading goals. A certified teacher librarian serving as a leader and learning partner in the school is equipped to maintain and develop a library collection that exposes students to variety of reading materials to satisfy and accomplish goals behind a school's implementation of a supplemental reading program. Providing adequate materials to students is essential to proper implementation of a supplemental reading program. Access to a variety of book genres, different levels of readability for the different grades and individual patrons, as well as exposure to quality literature are critical to assist with overall supplemental reading program success. Ultimately, through access, students and teachers will utilize their school library resources and these resources will support positive program implementation as well as enhance student success at achieving their independent reading requirements.

The second theme uncovered was the need for the teacher librarian to be the leader with program implementation to better serve a school's intended program. State mandated reading requirements have forced schools to look for resources to supplement reading instruction within a school for improved reading scores. This middle school's learning community stakeholders have used Accelerated Reader to supplement instruction, and the teacher librarian has served and supported implementation through

selection of high quality materials, organization, communication, book talking and lesson planning efforts. It is probable the efforts of the teacher librarian have contributed to a favorable 96% student participation with AR, 7925 books circulated in the 2014-2015 school year with an average of 51 books per student, as well as a high rate of 47% of circulations representing award winning literature. These statistics indicate to stakeholders that the TL's leadership plays an essential role in successful implementation of a reading incentive program.

The quantitative analysis of one middle school library's circulation statistics determined this middle school's student patrons heavily relied on their school library program's resources to accomplish their independent reading goals set by classroom teachers. Ninety-six percent of this middle school's student body participated in AR during the 2014-2015 school year and completed 4684 AR quizzes, an average of 28.9 per person with an overall AR quiz pass rate of 93%. And yet, most notable were the school library circulation statistics that far surpassed the total AR quiz numbers with a yearly total of 7925 circulations, an average of 51 books per patron. This figure indicated students read far more books than were required to meet their AR goals. Additionally, the data showed nearly all students shared in the high circulation totals with 96% of the total middle school student body checking out 16 or more books in the 2014-15 school year. Furthermore, due to the ardent attention of the teacher librarian to collection development for a variety of student interest and levels using professional reviews to select award winning books, students read a variety of genres and nearly 47% of books read during the school year were award winning titles.

Last but not least the activities of the teacher librarian at this school contributed to students' reading success. The teacher librarian was highly engaged with students, teachers, administrators and parents through advising individuals and groups of readers about recommended books and in ongoing communications about school library resources. The teacher librarian promoted reading through newsletter announcements of new materials and awards books, through organizing programs and activities such as an author visit and book fair, through ardent attention to developing a high quality collection and promoting award winning titles through book talks and creating and circulating lists of best books and popular titles to keep student and teacher interests high, through providing teachers professional development about matching library materials to curricular units and collaboratively teaching a novel unit, and through co-teaching a literature circle unit with language arts teachers. Although these examples are not an exhaustive list of the teacher librarian's contributions, an extensive list of activities and the ways TLs support reading are provided in this study.

The middle school library circulation numbers suggest students found a majority of their AR reading materials at their school library. This is a favorable statistic indicating student patrons needed and used school library resources to achieve reading goals set by classroom teachers. Patron participation and access to resources is an indication of the importance of the role the school library program played in providing patrons consistent access to materials to support the school's implementation and success of a supplemental reading program.

Additionally, 4684 reading practice quizzes were taken throughout the school year, and 93% of students who took AR tests achieved 85% correct or higher on reading

practice quizzes. This data allowed me to generalize these middle school students are reading their book selections and having success with their independent reading choices on the reading practice quizzes associated with their book selections. The favorable percentage of students (93%) who have taken reading quizzes and had a passing rate of 85% or higher indicated student participants have had consistent success accomplishing reading goals set by teachers. Test success was determined by proficiency standards set by teachers within the management portal of Renaissance Learning.

The leadership of the teacher librarian is essential when implementing a supplemental reading program. The teacher librarian's expertise in building a collection of high quality literature that meets students' various reading levels and interests is vital to any reading program. Furthermore, the TL has expertise in reader's advisory and strategies to promote books and help readers connect with books for their interests and reading levels.

This is meaningful to stakeholders because if students are not having consistent success with their independent reading selections, costly supplemental reading program implementation would need to be restructured to align better with school reading goals and desired student outcomes to maximize the benefits of implementation. Also, this data assists a TL with determining if student patrons are able to find a variety of suitable books to fit their interests and needs to accomplish reading goals set by classroom teachers. The favorable success rate indicates the teacher librarian's reader advisory work has served and supported middle school patrons and their book selection.

These middle school reading program participants are empowered to select books to fit their needs and their interests. It is important for the school library program to offer

a variety of book genres to suit the needs of the student and support the teachers' expectations for each individual as they set reading goals. Classroom libraries are often limited, so having a developed school library collection is essential in this middle school where student patrons rely heavily on access to achieve their individual goals. Students need to be able to find books that suit their needs and interests, so the data analysis of this school library's collection was important in determining if the school library program appropriately serves its patrons. It was determined there is a balance between available fiction and nonfiction titles. Also the collection analysis identified there were over 3000 award winning titles available for checkout within this library's collection. Also, 46% of the books circulated for the school year were award winning titles. As the teacher librarian, I can speculate these middle school students are not only able to access quality literature, but they are choosing high quality literature to read and experience to help them accomplish their reading goals. In turn, students are challenged and exposed to literature identified for its positive contributions to our world, which opens student minds to possibilities or ideas they may not have identified on their own or had through their individual experiences.

Finally, the role of teacher librarians in the implementation of supplemental reading programs has been unclear and often times unidentified. The leadership role they can provide through their work and practice, as advocates for reading and as supporters of independent reading, provides a platform to ensure appropriate supplemental reading program implementation that aligns with state standards, desired student outcomes, and a school's vision. In an effort to identify what elements contribute to identifying the teacher librarian's role with supplemental reading program implementation, it would seem that a

teacher librarian's proactive participation with reader's advisory is essential for successful implementation. A teacher librarian's reader's advisory efforts through communication, organization, book talking and lesson delivery can impact supplemental reading program implementation, support student achievement and school initiatives wanting to achieve desired student outcomes.

### **Recommendations**

It is well documented that the presence of a teacher librarian within a school impacts student achievement. A teacher librarian's taking on a leadership role to proactively support supplemental reading programs can have impact on the success of implementation. To that end, reviewing previous research, data collection, and results of this study move me to make the following suggestions for future research. I feel the quantitative data analysis was effective, but combining that work with a qualitative method of research would lend more insight into the overall impact of the teacher librarian and how one's work serves and supports supplemental reading program initiatives. Asking students whether they are reading because they have to or reading because they want to, would be a qualitative approach to consider. Another possibility to further this study would be to analyze patron circulation data in regards to student choices of genres of fiction as well as genres of nonfiction. This would offer a teacher librarian more insight to one's reader's advisory work to understand the current needs of the middle school reader.

Another recommendation would be for a researcher to analyze individual student patron circulation records and cross-reference those records with the same individual student's AR reading practice quiz record of reading tests taken. This data reference

would allow insight for a teacher librarian to see which individuals were struggling to meet their reading goals as well as provide an indication to the teacher librarian if students were utilizing their school library resources to satisfy their reading program goals and whether or not they were utilizing the reading program with integrity. If an individual student's circulation recorded indicated a check out of material, and it was determined in their AR reading practice results that a reading test was taken on the checked out material, this could be very informative for a teacher librarian. It would be a data point to assist with the effectiveness of the school library resources in support of the implementation of the supplemental reading program. Also, it could assist a school with determining if the reading tests are taken with integrity. In my work, I have found very limited studies where a teacher librarian takes on a leadership role with the implementation of supplemental reading programs. Although this study captured the role of the teacher librarian in contributing to the success of the supplemental reading program, another interesting study would be to contrast this type of implementation with a school district that satisfies minimal hours of a teacher librarian or a district that has a complete lack of teacher librarian services due to budget shortfalls. Although it would be interesting to compare an analysis from this type of environment, the access to data would be a challenge if there is not a librarian to compile library collection and circulation data needed for the study, and compiling teacher librarian decisions about collection development and reader's advisory would be impossible. Similar studies or replications of this study can provide further evidence of the importance of the leadership of the teacher librarian within a school as well as provide other ideas of how teacher librarians can proactively support supplemental reading programs.

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