The effects of an individualized reading program on recreational reading

Kim Aneweer

University of Northern Iowa

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Abstract
We are creating a nation of alliterates. The vast majority of our population can read and write, but choose not to. The researcher intended to investigate this problem by creating an individualized reading program for a group of fifth grade students. The reading program was designed according to the students' reading levels and interests. The researcher monitored the amount of time the students spent reading for pleasure. The study consisted of three phases. During the first phase, the students chose their reading materials. A computer program assisted the students in choosing their books in phase two of the study. The researcher chose the reading materials for the students during phase three of the study. The researcher found no significant differences in pleasure reading time throughout the study.

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The Effects of an Individualized Reading Program on Recreational Reading

A Graduate Research Paper
Submitted to the
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Division of School
Library Science Media Studies
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Kim Aneweer
December 1998
This research paper by: Kim Aneweer

Titled: The Effects of an Individualized Reading Program on Leisure Reading has been approved as meeting the research paper requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

12/15/98
Date Approved

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12-17-98
Date Approved

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12-17-98
Date Approved

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Head, Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Abstract

We are creating a nation of alliterates. The vast majority of our population can read and write, but choose not to. The researcher intended to investigate this problem by creating an individualized reading program for a group of fifth grade students. The reading program was designed according to the students’ reading levels and interests. The researcher monitored the amount of time the students spent reading for pleasure. The study consisted of three phases. During the first phase, the students chose their reading materials. A computer program assisted the students in choosing their books in phase two of the study. The researcher chose the reading materials for the students during phase three of the study. The researcher found no significant differences in pleasure reading time throughout the study.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Experiencing books with pleasure promotes a child's desire to read. Documented studies indicate a direct correlation between success in school and recreational reading. Dorothy Cohen found that recreational reading correlates with higher scores in comprehension, vocabulary, and reading achievement (Cohen, 1968, p.209-11).

Given these facts, what are parents and educators doing to promote reading? Parents who read are role models and affect their children's future reading behavior more than any other factor; this not only includes reading to children but also modeling recreational reading (Greaney, 1980, p.354). All too often classroom instruction consists of using basal readers and drill for comprehension, vocabulary, and other reading skills. The goal of these classrooms is to create literate children. With this approach not only are the schools creating literate children (those who can read and write at a basic level), but also alliterate children (those who can read but choose not to).

Steven Krashen speaks of the distinction between illiteracy and literacy. He shows there are few complete illiterates; there is only a small number of people who have completed their education who cannot read or write at a basic level; the number of illiterates in the United States has actually fallen in the last one hundred years. He points out, however that people do not read and write well enough to meet the demands of modern society. Krashen suggests the answer to the problem of our inabilities to read and write adequately to survive in modern society is to increase the amount of time students spend
reading. He recommends one approach, free voluntary reading (FVR). This is the practice of reading because you want to. This approach should not include vocabulary, spelling or comprehension questions. It simply means the student reads for pleasure, and if the book he/she is reading does not grab his/her attention, the student should find another book. This type of reading is done by highly literate people. After reviewing a large amount of research done on free voluntary reading, Krashen wrote the following:

When free reading and direct or traditional, instruction are compared directly in method comparison studies, free reading nearly always proves to be superior on tests of reading comprehension, vocabulary, writing, and grammar. (p. 19)

Krashen is not suggesting that free voluntary reading should be a replacement for the traditional language program. He believes that a language arts program should consist primarily of good literature and a free voluntary reading program. Reading good literature will intellectually challenge the students and stimulate more recreational reading (Krashen, 1993).

Krashen's thoughts were supported in a study completed by Richard Anderson, Paul Wilson, and Linda Fielding. They believe that teachers have an important influence on how much time children spend reading books. Classes that did the most reading read over three times as much as the average class. The teachers of these classes were promoting reading by assuring access to interesting reading materials that are at the children's' reading level. The teachers were also using incentives to motivate the children, and providing time for reading during the school day. The researchers found that time spent reading books was the best predictor of a child's growth as a reader in elementary school (Anderson, Wilson, Fielding, 1988).

Unfortunately this approach is not being used in many schools. Vincent
Greaney surveyed a group of fifth graders and found reading is not the recreational activity of choice for many children. This group of fifth graders were surveyed by ranking their recreational activities. Of nine activities listed, leisure reading was seventh (Greaney, 1980, p.349). Many children today are able to read and write, but choose not to. They are alliterate.

Teachers and librarians must work together to combat the problem of alliteracy. They must provide reading materials that are of interest and at the appropriate reading level for our children. A motivational program could be established to increase the amount of reading done by the children. This incentive program would encourage the children to read by providing a reward. One such program is Book It. This program was established by Pizza Hut and provides the children with a coupon for a pizza if they meet a monthly goal. Another approach to providing reading materials to children that are of interest to them is book talks. The teacher, librarian, or even the children present to the audience a brief "commercial" about the book to encourage the audience members to read the book.

**Research Questions**

1. Will reading books that are of interest and at the appropriate reading level increase the amount of leisure reading time by a selected group of children?

2. How will the number of minutes read by at risk students compare to the number of minutes read by the students identified as Talented and Gifted?

3. Will the students' attitude about reading change?
Problem Statement

The purpose of this study was to investigate one aspect of the problem of alliteracy. Children of today may know how to read, but too few choose to read for pleasure. Does an individualized reading program increase the amount of recreational reading time reported by children? Many children are choosing materials that either are uninteresting or not within their reading ability.

Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

1. When the researcher assists the students in choosing reading material according to the students' interest and abilities, the amount of time spent leisure reading will significantly increase.

2. When a computer program assists the students in choosing reading material according to the students' interest and abilities the amount of time spent leisure reading will significantly increase.

Assumptions

The researcher is assuming that students can read and the students have recreational or leisure time. Some students may be unable or do not know how to choose appropriate materials. That students will be capable of monitoring their recreational reading will also be assumed.

Limitations

The reliability of the population keeping their own records is a limitation. The record keeping is subject to the human factor, therefore the records may not be accurate or complete.
The small size of the population is also a limitation. The small number of students in the tested fifth grade means the results cannot be generalized.

The ability of the researcher to design a relevant individual reading program for each student is also a limitation of this study. This researcher may have difficulties designing an experimental treatment, because the researcher is not trained to develop reading programs.

**Definitions**

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined as stated below:

- **Recreational Reading**: reading done for pleasure, not done as part of a school assignment. Leisure reading will be used interchangeably with recreational reading.

- **Individualized Reading Program**: a leisure reading program which matches student's interests and ability with reading materials.

- **Talented and Gifted (T.A.G.)**: students that have scored at least in the ninetieth percentile of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills in reading or math.

- **At Risk**: students that have difficulties in at least one subject area due to learning disability, behavior problems, or social difficulties.

- **Literate**: person who can read and write at a basic level.

- **Illiterate**: person who is completely unable to read and write.

- **Alliterate**: person who can read and write at a basic level, but chooses not to.

**Significance of Study**

Results of this study are intended for teachers, librarians, and parents. It is the intention of the researcher to suggest to these professionals and parents
the value of recreational reading. The importance of children choosing appropriate materials will also be stressed. Materials that are within a child's reading abilities and materials that interest a child are of absolute necessity if the goal of reading for pleasure is to be reached. Successful techniques used by the researcher may be adopted by others who choose to implement an individualized reading program.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

Many studies have been conducted in the area of reading. This literature review will consist of four areas: 1) The importance of recreational reading, 2) effect of parents and teachers, 3) recreational interests and attitudes, and 4) methods of reading.

The Importance of Recreational Reading

The importance of recreational reading has been studied frequently. It is widely known that there is a strong correlation between recreational reading and academic achievement. In 1966, Pfau completed a two year study of first and second grade students. In addition to their basal readers, forty minutes daily were allowed for free reading of materials and activities. The study revealed that better language performance, greater reading skills, and increased interest in reading resulted. Significant gains were found to have been made by the experimental group in vocabulary and in the mean length of written sentences (Pfau, 1966, p.171).

Carolyn Wilson conducted a study of Iowa Tests of Basic Skills reading and vocabulary scores of students who read outside of school hours and those who did not. She examined 40 fourth grade students in Grandview, Missouri. Wilson collected data on time spent reading outside of school hours. She then compared this information with the sample's scores on the Iowa Tests. Using the ANOVA, Wilson found recreational reading positively correlated with reading achievement as measured by the test scores. She came to the following conclusions; a)
there was a statistical difference in mean reading and vocabulary scores on the Iowa Tests between students who engaged in recreational reading and those who did not, and b) in general, the greater the amount of recreational reading done, the greater the difference in mean scores between recreational readers and non-recreational readers (Wilson, 1987, p.37-45).

Dorothy Cohen investigated the problems of lack of motivation and lack of readiness to read. She believed that these problems led to reading retardation. In 1967, she set out to discover if reading quality books aloud to children would have an impact on reading retardation. The population of her study consisted of 580 second grade children in 20 classes in seven schools in New York City. Of these, 285 children yielded post-test data, 130 were in the experimental group, and 155 children were in the control group. Fifty books were placed in the experimental classrooms by the researcher. The teachers in these classrooms were also given a manual of accompanying activities and story reading techniques. They were asked to read a story every day of the school year from the books given to them by Cohen. They were urged to read the stories with attention to phrasing, dramatic quality of the voice, pace, and knowledge of the story before reading. The teachers in the control group proceeded as usual, with stories an occasional treat, if read at all, and not chosen according to the specific criteria indicated for the experimental group. Pretests and post-tests were given. Six scores for each of the 285 children were submitted. The six scores were Word Knowledge, Word Discrimination, and Reading Comprehension from the Metropolitan Reading Achievement Test, and Vocabulary, Numerical Count, and Vocabulary Count from the Free Association Vocabulary
Test. The experimental group showed a significant increase in all the tests except the Word Discrimination test. Ms. Cohen concluded that reading to children is vital to their success in reading (Cohen, 1968, p.209-13).

The vast majority of research suggests a positive correlation between recreational reading and academic achievement

**The Effects of Parents and Teachers on Recreational Reading**

A factor in the positive correlation between leisure reading and academic achievement is the parent's and teacher's role. When parents and teachers model leisure reading the tendency is that the child will follow that model and become a lifelong reader. The influence on recreational activities is of great importance.

A telephone survey was conducted with 1,450 randomly selected people. The researchers found that 6 percent of the adult population read no recreational materials on a daily basis. Of the 94 percent that did read, only 40 percent read books. Of the book readers only one-third of them read at least one book a month. The majority of these chose to read books to increase knowledge rather than for pleasure. The motivation for reading was to gain specific knowledge, rather than for pleasure (Yankelovich, Skelly, and White, 1978, p. 60). What are the children witnessing when they are at home? Their parents only read when it is necessary to gain information, not because it is something enjoyable to do.

Susan Neuman conducted a study to investigate the relationship of the home environment and leisure reading. She distributed 254 consent forms to twelve fifth grade classes in Boston. The parents of these fifth grade students took part in a telephone interview. The
interview consisted of 93 questions about work habits, parental academic guidance, leisure activities, parental expectations, and parental encouragement of reading. She found higher socioeconomic level parents tended to encourage their children to read more, and they themselves read more than parents in lower socioeconomic groups. The strongest correlation was between recreational reading and parental encouragement. Parental encouragement was correlated .53 with children and their recreational reading. These parents tended to promote reading through discussions, activities, and making books readily available to their child. These parents also had higher expectations for their child's academic achievement (Neuman 1986, p. 338).

If the question were asked “Who has the most knowledge of children's books?” one of the predictable answers would be teachers. Mangieri and Corboy completed a study that refutes that assumption. They conducted a questionnaire survey of 571 elementary teachers. The questionnaire asked the sample population to name three children's books written in the past five years, then to list children's books written about a certain subject and published within the past seven years, and three activities that promote literature and recreational reading. They found that only nine percent could name three books written in the last five years. Less than ten percent could name a book in certain subjects. Eighty-nine percent could not list three activities which would promote literature and recreational reading (Mangieri and Corboy, 1981, p. 923-25).

What are children experiencing at school? Teachers who can not be of any assistance in choosing appropriate reading materials.

**Recreational Interests and Attitudes**

If elementary teachers are not promoting recreational reading, how
are the children using their recreational time? Children of today have many choices for recreational activities. A number of studies have been completed on the topic of recreational activities. Greaney completed a study of 920 fifth grade students. The study required the sample to complete a diary for three days. The diary documented how the students used their out-of-school time. Greaney found the students spent a large amount of their leisure time in activities such as play, outings, hobbies, television viewing and helping at home. The students spent 5.4 percent of their leisure time reading. Greaney found a positive correlation with amount of time reading and reading achievement (Greaney, 1980, p. 345-52).

A similar study was completed by Walberg and Tsai. They analyzed data from a sample of thirteen year old students who participated in the 1979-1980 National Assessment of Educational Progress. Two multiple choice questionnaires about frequency and amount of leisure reading were given to 2,890 students. Their findings agreed with the earlier study done by Greaney. They found that children spent a large portion of their time in play, outings with friends, and television viewing. The students spent an average of 7.2 minutes a day leisure reading. The researchers found positive relationships between answers to the questions and the student's reading achievement (Walberg and Tsai, 1984, p. 442-51).

Susan B. Neuman studied the home environment and fifth grade student's recreational reading. She sampled fifth grade class rooms in Boston. Two hundred fifty-four forms were given to parents of the fifth grade students. The questionnaire was administered by Neuman or a member of her team. Of those 254 parents, 122 were unable to complete the form. The questionnaire covered five aspects of leisure reading: a) the
number of books the child had read over the past month, b) the child's favorite books and authors, c) the reading environment (including the room where the child normally reads, the number of distractions such as television and general commotion where reading takes place, and sleeping arrangements), d) the average amount of time spent reading per day, and e) discussions initiated by the child regarding the materials he or she has read. Neuman found that an average of 2.33 books were read a month. An average of 15 minutes per day was spent reading recreationally. Reading before bedtime seemed to be the common time for reading, apart from the rest of the family. Children spent 3.63 hours a day, 25.44 hours per week watching television. These children spent more time watching television than any other recreational activity (Neuman, 1986, p. 335-43).

Andersen, Wilson, and Fielding completed a study of 155 fifth graders, 52 from two classrooms in a village school and 103 from five classrooms in a middle-class neighborhood in central Illinois. The sample consisted of 85 boys and 70 girls. The sample had an average mean score on the Metropolitan Achievement test. The fifth graders were asked to complete a survey daily. This survey consisted of questions about how the population spent their recreational time. Forms were completed for a period of time ranging from eight weeks to 26 weeks. The students spent the most leisure time watching television. The researchers found the fifth graders spent an average of 131.1 minutes per day watching television. An average of 14.8 minutes per day was spent reading. This study revealed some significant relationships. Reading books outside the school day and reading achievement was significantly related. Time spent reading was one of the strongest factors relating to
reading ability (Andersen, Wilson, and Fielding, 1988, p. 286-301).

Long and Henderson completed a study of 150 fifth grade students. They were interested in the time children spent reading. Time records were kept over a two week period. Mental ability, self concept, and reading attitude tests were given. The researchers found television viewing was the most popular activity. During the two week period, the children spent an average of 30.3 hours watching television. Free play was the next highest category; the students spent an average of 10 hours a week in free play. Four hours a week was spent in organized activity and homework. About one-third of the students reported that they did not read during the two week period. Boys reported spending significantly less time on chores and significantly more time watching television and free play. The researchers found a positive relationship between time spent reading and socioeconomic status and intelligence (Long and Henderson, 1972, p. 194-99).

**Methods of Reading**

Research shows a direct relationship between leisure reading and reading scores. Research has also been completed about which reading methods encourage leisure reading. Holt and O'Tuel studied the value of a silent sustained reading and silent sustained writing program. During a ten week study of 201 seventh and eighth grade students, they evaluated the effects of SSR (silent sustained reading) and SSW (silent sustained writing) on student's academic achievements and attitudes toward reading. One of the stipulations of the study was that the reading materials must be chosen by the student. Not only did this study find an improvement in academic achievement, but it also changed
the students' attitudes toward reading (Holt and O'Tuel, 1989, p. 209-13).

In 1971, Hoyle Lawson studied four methods of teaching reading. The purpose of this study was to determine the effect free reading has on reading achievement. Students in twelve sixth grade classrooms were studied. Four methods of reading instruction were used. An individualized method required the instructor to interview and plan instruction for each student. The conventional method required the teacher to follow the teacher's guide and use only the basal reader. Two experimental reading methods were used. Experimental method A involved thirty minutes of teacher instruction and fifteen minutes of leisure reading. Experimental method B involved fifteen minutes of teacher instruction and thirty minutes of leisure reading. This study was conducted for three months; at the end of that time the Metropolitan Achievement Test was given. The researcher found experimental method B showed the greatest gain in word knowledge, followed by experimental method A, conventional, and individualized. The highest gain in reading comprehension was found in the conventional method. The experimental method A showed the most overall gain (Lawson, 1972, p. 301-04).

A similar study was conducted by Yap. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether increased reading contributes to reading achievement. Yap collected IQ scores and reading scores from the California Test of Mental Maturity and the California Reading Test, respectively. Yap then correlated these scores with the number of books read by 202 second grade students. The data showed a strong correlation between reading activity and reading achievement. Yap believes the
results should be noteworthy to educators and parents in that the amount of reading activity is the factor that is more readily manipulable (Yap, 1977, p. 23-29).

Morrow and Weinstein completed a study to determine whether children's voluntary use of media centers and their attitudes toward reading could be affected by the use of a literature program. The population consisted of 142 second graders in a suburban neighborhood. Of the six classes in the study, two were assigned to a control group and the remaining four classes were the experimental group. Questionnaires were given to the students before, during, and after the study to evaluate the student's attitudes toward reading. The experimental group participated in literature based activities, the control group did not. The researchers found that voluntary use of the media center increased significantly in the experimental groups. Girls were more responsive to the literature program than the boys. The study showed no effect on the attitude of the students toward reading (Morrow and Weinstein, 1986, p. 330-46).

In conclusion, studies support the assumption that an increased amount of reading time leads to increased reading achievement. Children need to be given time for recreational reading in the classroom and need to be encouraged to read outside the classroom. If children are allowed to read material that is of interest to them, their attitude toward reading is improved. Recreational reading not only has a positive effect on reading achievement, but also on a person's well-being (Morrow, 1985, p.36).
Chapter Three

Methodology

Literacy is a problem that is often mentioned when education is the topic of the discussion. The researcher agrees with Stephen Krashen that the real problem is alliteracy. Many children can read and write, but choose not to. The researcher set out to investigate this problem. Action research was done to answer some questions.

1. If the children can read, then why are they apathetic about reading?
2. Is the children's apathy due to the children being unable to find reading materials that are at their reading level or of interest to them?

The researcher chose to use action research to investigate this problem for two reasons. Due to ease of access, the researcher's homeroom was used in this study. The researcher wished to control how the population of this study chose their reading materials. Knowing that the population was small and that the group's normal method of choosing reading materials would be modified, action research was used to investigate the problem of alliteracy.

This study compared the amount of time spent leisure reading using an individualized reading program to the amount of time spent leisure reading without an individualized reading program. The population recorded the amount of time spent leisure reading by completing a weekly reading log.

Population

The population of this study was a fifth grade class at Tri-Center
Elementary, in Neola, Iowa. Tri-Center Elementary has an enrollment of 376 students, in grades preschool through fifth. Neola is a rural community in western Iowa. Ease of access was the contributing factor in choosing this group of students.

The population consisted of one of the three fifth grade homerooms. The number of students in the sample was twenty-one. There were twelve boys and nine girls. The ages of the students ranged from ten years, one month to eleven years, three months. Based on the students' scores on the Gates McGinitie Reading Test and the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills the students' reading abilities ranged from one student reading at a second grade level to another student that is reading at a twelfth grade level. The population included students at both ends of the spectrum of academic achievement and students that were functioning at grade level. According to Tri-Center's academic standards, of the twenty-one subjects in this study, five students were classified as Talented and Gifted and four were identified as At Risk.

**Design and Procedure**

In preparing for this study, the researcher sought permission from the building administrator and the parents of the population.

During the first six week period, (phase one), the students were asked to monitor the amount of time spent leisure reading. The students used a log, [see Appendix A] provided by the researcher, to document the length of time spent reading. The log included information on what the student was reading and the amount of time that student read. The researcher supplied the students with bookmarks that were printed with a reminder to record the number of minutes the students read. Also, a
reminder was attached to each of the students' desks by the researcher. The students documented the time they read during school and outside school hours. Each week the researcher collected the logs and scheduled a meeting with each of the students to discuss the reading material the student read.

To prepare for the second six-week phase of this project, the researcher surveyed the students' reading interests. This was done informally. Each of the students scheduled a lunch date with the researcher. During lunch, the student and the researcher discussed books that he/she had read and why the student enjoyed reading certain types of reading materials. The information provided by this meeting aided the researcher in selecting appropriate materials, materials that interested the students.

A computer program was used to assist the researcher in choosing reading materials. ARTitle Finder (1997) was used to find materials that were of interest to the students and at the students' reading level.

During the second six week period, (phase two), the researcher implemented an individualized reading program. The researcher used the interest survey, ARTitle Finder and the student's score on the Gates McGinitie Reading Test and the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills to determine the appropriate reading material. The student's score on the test indicated the student's approximate reading level. During the second six week period the students read materials chosen by the researcher. Using the log provided by the researcher, the students continued to record the amount of time spent leisure reading. Again, the researcher collected the logs weekly and scheduled appointments with the each of the students to discuss what the student read.
During the third six week period, (phase three), the researcher implemented the students’ use of *Titlewave 6.1 (1998)*, a reading computer program. This program recommended titles that matched interests and reading levels of the students. The researcher collected logs weekly and scheduled appointments with the students to discuss what the student read.

Collecting the logs weekly was done to increase the likelihood of the students completing the logs. Scheduling appointments with the students to discuss what they have read, gave some assurance to the researcher that the logs were accurate. The appointments also helped the researcher in the selection of materials. A discussion of the materials the researcher selected gave the researcher information on the student's preferences and comprehension of material.

Each week the researcher collected the students' logs and a mean was found using the number of minutes the students read. The number of minutes the students read was totaled and divided by the number of students involved in the study. When this study concluded the researcher then examined the data for any significant increases or decreases in the amount of time spent leisure reading by the students. The researcher used a *t* Test for Mean. The *t* Test the researcher used was the *t* Test for Correlated Mean. The researcher wished to compare the scores for the same group before and after a treatment.
Leisure reading log sheets were obtained from 21 fifth grade students who were enrolled in Tri-Center Elementary during the 1997-1998 school year. This population consisted of the researcher's homeroom. The 21 students were asked to participate in three phases of this project.

During the first phase, the students were asked to record the amount of time spent leisure reading books of their choice. Each participant was given a weekly reading log to record the amount of time spent reading. Phase one lasted six weeks from September 15 through the week of October 20, 1997.

The results of phase one:

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</table>

| TOTAL     | 965   | 453   | 684   | 735   | 366   | 771   | 3974  |
Phase two was much like phase one with the exception of how the students chose their books. During this phase the students were assisted by the researcher. Books were chosen after the researcher met with each student to survey each student's interests. The researcher also used the scores of the Gates McGinitie Reading Test and ARTitle, a computer program, to choose books that were at the students' reading level. The students' reading was documented with a weekly reading log. Phase two, like phase one, lasted six weeks, from February 23 through the week of March 30, 1998.

The results of phase two:

Table 2: Phase Two Assisted by the Researcher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student #</th>
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TOTAL 1362 709 667 833 361 369 4301

The hypothesis "When the researcher assists the students in choosing reading material according the students' interests and abilities, the amount of
time spent leisure reading will significantly increase” is rejected. After examining the data, this researcher has found an increase in the total number of minutes read by the population, but not a significant increase.

Phase three of this research varied from the first two phases only by the way the students' reading material was chosen. During this phase, the students used a computer program, Titlewave 6.1, to assist them in choosing books at their reading level and of interest to them. Again, a weekly reading log was used to monitor the students' reading progress. This phase lasted six weeks from the week of April 6 through the week of May 11, 1998.

The results of phase three:

Table 3: **Phase Three Assisted by Computer**

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</table>

The hypothesis "When a computer program assists the students in
choosing reading material according to the students' interests and abilities the amount of time spent leisure reading will significantly increase" is rejected. The data indicates an increase of total time spent leisure reading in phase three when compared to the number of minutes read in phase one, but not a significant increase.

After collecting this data, the researcher took the total minutes read by the whole class during each phase and found the mean. This was done by dividing the total minutes read by the class per six week period by the number of students participating in this project. The data below shows the results of this process:

Table 4: Comparison of Three Phases

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student #</th>
<th>Phase One 9/15-10/20</th>
<th>Phase Two 2/23-3/30</th>
<th>Phase Three 4/6-5/11</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>338</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>8)</td>
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</table>

TOTAL 3974 4301 4231
MEAN 189.2 204.8 201.4

Looking at the above information, the mean did increase when an individualized reading program was put into place. During phase one of the project, the mean time spent leisure reading during the six week period was
189.2 minutes or 31.5 minutes per week. Phase two had the largest mean time of 204.8 minutes per six week period or 34.1 minutes per week. Phase three showed an increase over phase one, but the mean score was not as large as phase two. The mean time for a six week period during phase three was 201.4 minutes or 33.6 minutes per week.

One of the questions the researcher posed before beginning this project was “How will the number of minutes read by at risk students compare to the number of minutes read by the talented and gifted students?” can be answered by looking at the following table. To compare the differences in the students, the researcher randomly chose three students. Student one is considered the “typical” fifth grade student. This student was reading at the fifth grade level according to her scores on the Gates McGinitie Reading Test and the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. Student eleven was classified as a Talented and Gifted student. His reading score on the Gates Test showed he was reading at the twelfth grade level. Student eighteen was identified as an At Risk student. She was having difficulties in most of her subjects and was reading at a second grade level according the her scores on the Gates Test and the Iowa Tests.

Table 5: Comparison of Individual Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student #</th>
<th>Phase One</th>
<th>Phase Two</th>
<th>Phase Three</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Knowing how the students scored on standardized tests, it is interesting to make comparisons on the number of minutes read by each of the students. Student number one, the “typical” fifth grader, increased the number of minutes read by over 100 percent during the third phase of this project. Student eleven, the talented and gifted student, was consistent in reading a
large number of minutes throughout the study but seemed to read more during phase two of this project. The at risk student, number eighteen, went from reading no minutes during the first phase to reading 94 minutes during the third phase.

The researcher went one step further and made some comparisons between the groups of students. The At-Risk and Talented and Gifted groups consisted of six students. The "Typical" fifth grade students consisted of nine students. As expected, the group of Talented and Gifted students read the largest number of minutes throughout the study. As stated earlier, this group of children did not look at reading as a chore, reading is one of their favorite activities. Phase three seemed to motivate the At-Risk students, this group more than doubled the amount of time spent reading.

Table 6: Comparison of Number of Minutes Read by Three Groups of Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Phase One Average</th>
<th>Phase Two Average</th>
<th>Phase Three Average</th>
<th>Average of the Three Phases</th>
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</thead>
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<td>191</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Typical&quot; Fifth Grade Students</td>
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<td>215</td>
<td>272</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talented and Gifted Students</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

The data produced from this research project were both expected and unexpected. The individualized reading program did increase the amount of time the participants of this project spent leisure reading, but did not significantly increase the amount of time.

Although the data of this research did not allow the hypotheses to be accepted, it did show some strong relationships between time spent leisure reading and achievement. Some of the lowest numbers were produced by at risk students, even though the reading material was chosen at their level. When questioned by the researcher, the special education students “hated” to read. They felt it was a punishment to have to read. At the other level of the spectrum, most of the T.A.G. (talented and gifted) students enjoyed reading. They stated it was one of their favorite recreational activities.

During the first phase of this research, the at risk students turned in weekly logs showing no minutes read. The T.A.G. students’ logs were just the opposite, their logs showed they read almost every night. When comparing an at risk student and a T.A.G. student, the at risk student read zero minutes for the six week period, and the T.A.G. student read 424 minutes. The T.A.G. students were motivated to read on their own without any assistance from the researcher or the computer program. As stated before, reading was regarded as a punishment for the at risk students.

During the second and third phase, the researcher found an increase in
the number of minutes read by the T.A.G. students, and more importantly an increase in the number of minutes read by the at risk students. One of the at risk students went from zero minutes read to 43 minutes read per six week period. This is only an increase of 7 minutes per week, but at least this student made an effort to pick up a book.

The researcher believes the increase in the number of minutes read during the second and third phases is due to two reasons. The first reason is the students' desire to please the researcher. The participants of this research were ten and eleven years old. Children at this age are motivated by individualized attention. The researcher believes a large part of the participants' motivation to read was due to the one-on-one attention from the researcher. The students' enjoyed scheduling meetings with the researcher to discuss and choose books.

The second reason for the increase in the number of minutes read may be the appropriateness of the reading material. The researcher believes this is especially true for the at risk students. These students were reading at least two grade levels below their peers. The researcher believes the at risk students were embarrassed to read books at their reading level. The researcher was able to find books at the at risk students' level which looked like "fifth grade books".

Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to investigate one aspect of the problem of alliteracy. The researcher intended to discover the impact of an individualized reading program on the amount of time spent leisure reading.

The researcher is aware of the inaccuracies of the reading logs. When the researcher questioned the students about their reading material, it became obvious that the students were reading the materials provided by the
researcher, but the logs did not reflect this. The researcher believes the inaccuracies of the reading logs caused the hypothesis to be rejected. If the logs were more accurately kept, the researcher believes an individualized reading program would significantly increase the amount of time spent leisure reading. The students informed the researcher they often forgot to record the time spent reading on their weekly logs and that they enjoyed reading the books that were chosen for them.

The researcher tried to prevent the problem of the inexact reading logs by the use of bookmarks and attaching a reminder to the students' desks. These attempts to avoid the inaccuracies failed. The researcher does not have a recommendation to prevent these inaccuracies, other than to remember to take into consideration when working with a population which consists of ten and eleven year old subjects the "human" factor is a bona fide limitation.

Finally, the researcher has found after examining the data from this research that no matter what the ability of the student, each participant of this study enjoyed the individualized attention. Both phase two and phase three required one-on-one time with the students. This led to an increase in time spent leisure reading. The researcher recommends that when ever possible, adults should help a child choose a book that is at the child's level and is of interest to him or her. Children appreciate being thought of as an individual, not as a part of a group.

**Recommendations**

If the study were to be repeated, the researcher would recommend modifying this study. One of the limitations of this study was the reliability of the population keeping their own records. In many cases, the students expressed they has forgotten to record the number of minutes they had read. A
possible solution to this problem could be monitoring the number of pages read by the students rather than the length of time the students read.

The researcher would also monitor the students' attitudes toward reading throughout the study with a survey. The researcher believes the students' attitudes toward reading changed and would like to have documentation of this.

The researcher would recommend implementing the Free Voluntary Reading program (F.V.R.) in the classroom and monitor the students' attitudes about reading. This program should promote reading every day, and the teacher, with the assistance of the media specialist, should suggest reading materials that are of interest and are at each student's reading level. The benefits of F.V.R. are documented in *The Power of Reading*. Steven Krashen wrote:

> When children read for pleasure, when they get 'hooked on books,' they acquire, involuntarily and without conscious effort nearly all of the so-called "language skills" many people are so concerned about: They will become adequate readers, acquire a large vocabulary, develop the ability to understand and use complex grammatical constructions, develop good writing style, and become good (not necessarily perfect) spellers. Although free voluntary reading alone will not ensure attainment of the highest levels of literacy, it will at least ensure an acceptable level. Without it, I suspect that children simply do not have a chance. (p. 84)
Bibliography


ARTitle Finder (August 1997), [CD-ROM]. Wisconsin Rapids, WI: Advantage Learning Center [1997].


Lawson, Hoyle D. "Effects of Reading on Reading Achievement of Sixth Grade Pupils." Reading Teacher 24 (1972): 501-03.


Week of September 7, 1998

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