

2021

## Examining the impact a teacher librarian has on students' self-selection strategies

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### Recommended Citation

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## Examining the impact a teacher librarian has on students' self-selection strategies

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### Abstract

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the impact a Teacher Librarian has on students' self-selection strategies and the broader impact on a culture of reading in a school building. Data was collected from 263 students in middle school (grades 5-8) resulting in 1322 responses over eight weeks. Research Question 1 asked, What appeal strategies do students use when selecting an independent reading book? "You liked the author or it is in a series" was the number one book selection approach used with 21.6% of the responses indicating this approach when selecting a book. The least helpful book selection approaches were "book trailers" (20.3%) and "AR points" (18.8%). Research Question 2 asked, What motivates students to read for pleasure? "AR points" was the biggest motivation to read on their own time with 38.1% of the responses indicating this. When asked if they enjoy reading free choice books, 31.4% of responses indicated "it is ok." Research Question 3 asked, What influences do teachers/librarians have over the process? The responses were open-ended but put into nine categories. The largest category was "Nothing" which meant they didn't know what could be done or they felt what was being done was good enough. The next category was "displays." Students wanted more displays to help promote books to students.

EXAMINING THE IMPACT A TEACHER LIBRARIAN HAS ON STUDENTS'  
SELF-SELECTION STRATEGIES

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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August 2021

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Titled: Examining the Impact a Teacher Librarian has on Students' Self-selection  
Strategies

has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the  
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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the impact a Teacher Librarian has on students' self-selection strategies and the broader impact on a culture of reading in a school building. Data was collected from 263 students in middle school (grades 5-8) resulting in 1322 responses over eight weeks. Research Question 1 asked, What appeal strategies do students use when selecting an independent reading book? "You liked the author or it is in a series" was the number one book selection approach used with 21.6% of the responses indicating this approach when selecting a book. The least helpful book selection approaches were "book trailers" (20.3%) and "AR points" (18.8%). Research Question 2 asked, What motivates students to read for pleasure? "AR points" was the biggest motivation to read on their own time with 38.1% of the responses indicating this. When asked if they enjoy reading free choice books, 31.4% of responses indicated "it is ok." Research Question 3 asked, What influences do teachers/librarians have over the process? The responses were open-ended but put into nine categories. The largest category was "Nothing" which meant they didn't know what could be done or they felt what was being done was good enough. The next category was "displays." Students wanted more displays to help promote books to students.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Scene one: Henry is searching for a library book in the middle school library. He reaches for a book and turns to the inside cover to see how many AR points the book is worth. If it is enough, he might keep the book even though it is too easy for him. Scene two: Charlotte comes into the library and does not know what to read. She knows she has to choose a book for class. She remembers her friend talking about a book and decides just to get it so she has a book. Scene three: Mike heads right to the books display of new books and grabs a book from the display to read. Scene four: Maria knows tomorrow is library time to check out a book and needs to check out a book to have for free reading time. She remembers the school library website has book trailers and book talks on it. She decided to watch a few to see if she likes any so she can find a book tomorrow. All these scenarios have happened (names have been changed) which led me to consider what motivates students when choosing a book.

#### **Justification of Problem**

According to Gander (2013), “by eighth grade there is a 50 percent drop in reading for pleasure” (p. 20). Smith and Day (2013) found Americans are spending less time reading for leisure even as it has been shown that leisure reading can enhance one's overall ability in the progression of becoming a good reader. McGeown et al. (2020) noted that reading habits are changing when dealing with adolescents and becoming more digital like reading text messages or reading what is on social media. The terms reading

for leisure or reading for pleasure or independent reading are used interchangeably in this paper. According to Cullinan (2000) independent reading is “done for information or for pleasure” and is “reading students choose to do on their own” (p. 1).

### **Standards**

According to the American Association of School Library [AASL] (2018) Common Beliefs, “Reading is the core of personal and academic competency” (p. 13). Given the strength of the mission statement from the AASL’s (2009) standards, the current 2018 version quotes from that mission, focusing on the essential skills all students need to know and how the teacher librarian (TL) can empower students to be “critical thinkers, enthusiastic readers, skillful researchers, and ethical users of information” (p. 18). AASL (2018) noted that the librarian needs to advocate for reading for pleasure. Getting students to read for pleasure and finding out what motivates them are goals of TLs. Studying what strategies students use when selecting an independent reading book will help librarians reach these goals. The AASL standard Explore A.1 for both learner and school librarian is met through this research. Both of these standards want learners to read widely and deeply to satisfy personal curiosity, and the school librarian will encourage students to do this.

### **Importance of Independent Reading and Motivation**

According to Sandra Huges-Hassell and Christina Lutz (2006), leisure reading is when people choose to read. Miller (2009) articulates that students in middle school have a self-perception of themselves if they are readers or nonreaders. This is two-fold. Readers that see themselves as readers will read more and become better readers. The

readers who see themselves as poor readers don't read and, therefore, don't increase their reading skills. Fisher and Frey (2018) commented that this is the Matthew effect. Mol and Bus (2011) found that getting students to read more independently and in their leisure time will help poor readers' basic reading skills. But at the same time, students need to be motivated to read to continue to read for pleasure.

### **Furthering Past Research Regarding Independent Reading**

Ivey and Boraddus (2001) were surprised that students wanted to independently read or listen to the teacher read-aloud over other reading activities offered. That same study raised some questions on student motivation to read. This study seeks to not only evaluate what makes students want to read, but to analyze and explore strategies students use when selecting a book for independent reading.

### **Rationale**

Gander (2013) articulates that success and enjoyment need to be present for students to continue to read for pleasure. Finding out what motivates students to choose the next book for independent reading could help students become better readers. Teachers and librarians need to assist students in ways to help increase that motivation whether it is through a book talk, first chapter Fridays, book displays, peer recommendations, or whatever that might be. Reading motivation can affect reading behavior. According to the *2019-20 Iowa School Library Study: Enrollment Category Results* (2020) many teacher librarians have very little time to devote to reading support of students which means in the best circumstances, TLs have 5.2 hours per week to devote to reading support of all their students. The less fortunate circumstances provide only .4 hour in a week.

### **Summary of Problem Statement**

There is a need to better understand what motivates students to choose a book for independent reading, especially with middle school students.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact a Teacher Librarian has on students' self-selection strategies and the broader impact on a culture of reading in a school building.

### **Research Questions**

1. What appeal strategies do students use when selecting an independent reading book?
2. What motivates students to read for pleasure?
3. What influences do teachers/librarians have over the process?

### **Assumptions/Limitations**

This research study is limited to one school in a rural community in the state of Iowa. The survey data will be based on a variety of students in grades fifth through eighth grade, but the discussion forum will be limited to a small number of students from each grade level.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact a Teacher Librarian has on students' self-selection strategies and the broader impact on a culture of reading in a school building. The three areas of previous research that inform this study are reading motivation, book selection strategies/approaches, and reading culture.

#### **Reading Motivation**

Ivey and Broaddus (2001) determined the problem was that students were expected to be independent readers, but they were not provided with time to explore their interests, read at their own pace, and make their own decisions about what to read. Therefore, the authors studied what parts of school reading instruction would encourage and support students' engagement in reading. Ivey and Broaddus conducted a survey with 1,765 sixth grade students from 23 different schools. The survey included checklist items, short-answer questions, and open-ended questions. After the surveys were analyzed, they conducted follow-up interviews with 16 girls and 15 boys from three different classrooms. Ivey and Broaddus found students valued free reading time (63%) and teachers' read alouds (62%) in their reading and language arts classes. The researchers learned "students (42%) responded that they were motivated by finding good materials to read and having choice in the selection of these reading materials" (p. 361). Twenty-nine percent of the students felt a teacher was a factor in their motivation to read; whereas, 19% said other people, such as peers, motivate them to read. When it came to where students find books they like to read, 61% of the students said the public library, 55%

said the school library, and 28% said their classrooms. The data also showed that librarians (22%) and teachers (27%) were not students' top choices for being a source to find books to read, but friends (42%) more often were.

Ivey and Broaddus' (2001) study focused on what parts of school reading instruction would encourage and support students' engagement in reading, while Hughes-Hassell and Lutz (2006) focused their study on the leisure reading habits of middle school students. Hughes-Hassell and Lutz determined the problem was that the amount of reading middle school students were assigned increased, but it was unclear about the amount of time spent on leisure reading. The researchers used the Teen Read Week (TRW) survey but modified it. The survey was five pages long and had items such as: do they read in their leisure time; what topics do they like to read about; or if they don't read, why not? The researchers had 214 students complete the survey in a small, urban, low-income middle school with sixth through eighth grade that serves primarily an African-American population. Of the 214 students that completed the survey, 44.4% were male, 53.7% were female, and 1.9% did not identify their gender. The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Hughes-Hassell and Lutz findings showed that 73% of the students engaged in leisure reading. Six percent of the students said they did not read at all, and 22% of the students said they only read what was assigned to them in school. When asked if they enjoyed reading, 37% answered yes, 58% answered sometimes, and 4% answered no. These two studies provided data on students' motivation when it came to reading, and both studies showed that a majority of students do like to read independently (Hughes-Hassell & Lutz, 2006; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001)

and that some motivating factors include that students value independent reading time, teacher's read alouds, having choice, and peer and teacher recommendations, in that order (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Regarding topics students most liked to read about, Hughes-Hassell and Lutz found that several rose to the top of students' list: celebrities, people or characters like me, people my age who have done some cool or amazing things, sport figures, and sports figures.

### **Book Selection Strategies/Approaches**

Hooper (2005) studied what adolescents are choosing to read, if anything all. The study was on reading patterns of adolescents to inform English student teachers and how these reading patterns might improve their own teaching. There were 30 student teachers and 707 school aged children between the ages of 11 and 15. Thirty schools in south-west England took part in the study. The adolescents self-assessed their reading habits along with identifying areas for improvement through questionnaires. These school aged students were chosen due to the placement of the 30 student teachers. The student teachers learned about reading patterns identified in research studies and had discussions about their experiences and observations during their school-based experience. The questionnaire was given to the adolescents during a one week period. The findings of the study provide insight into adolescent reading habits. Sixty-one percent reported they read at home. The study showed that 93% of the sample group chose to read something other than a book in that one week of the study. When it comes to reasons for choosing a book, the five top reasons were: prior knowledge of the book or author, appearance of the book, recommendations, television or film, and genre.

Hooper (2005) focused on what students are reading; whereas, Swartz and Hendricks (2000) wanted to know factors that influenced middle school students who have special needs with their book selection process. The researchers determined the problem was not much research was done with students who have special needs and what process they use when selecting a book. There were 31 students who had an Individual Education Plan or 504 Plan that participated in this study. Nineteen of the students had a learning disability, 10 were developmentally delayed, one was multihandicapped, and one had a severe behavior disorder. Data was collected through informal recorded book chats between the researcher and one to six students. There was a set of ten questions that were asked during the book chats. The recordings were transcribed, and a coding system was devised. The findings showed special needs students used these factors when selecting a book: 23 out of the 31 students made reference to the topic/subject matter of the book; 11 of the 31 students referenced the characters in the book; 15 of the 31 students referenced the pictures on the front cover or illustrations in the book; 18 of the 31 students made reference to the summary on the back of the book; 14 of the 31 students referenced the title of the book; 21 of 31 students referenced the length of the book; 16 of 31 students made reference to friend's recommendation; and 11 of the 31 students selected a book if there was a motive or television show related to the book. Both studies had common factors when students selected a book, such as topic of the book, appearance of the book, peer recommendations, and if it related to a movie or television show (Hooper, 2005; Swartz & Hendricks, 2000).

## Reading Culture

Bleidt (2011) determined the problem was there was still more information needed on students' perspective of the library since the role of the library is constantly changing; whereas, the purpose was to investigate middle school students' perceptions of the school library in a predominately Hispanic population. Bleidt wanted to ascertain if middle school students were using the library, how they were using the library, and to identify factors that lead to students' success within the confines of the library. The study consisted of 1,509 students whose age ranged from 11 to 15 years old that were mainly Hispanic (77%) who were from ten high-need rural schools in South Texas. The students completed a survey called Student Interest, Motivation, and Library Use Survey that contained 21 questions or statements (used Likert response scale). The survey was created with the Esurveyspro program which allowed the user to provide descriptive statistical analysis. Beildt's findings were split into categories, but this review is focusing on two. The first one was school library utilization which showed 97.2% of the students surveyed used the library at least four times during the school year, and of those students, 81% went to the library without their class. Students were also asked how they used the library: 54% used the computer, 54% read books, 53% checked out fiction books, and 47% used the library for research. Of the students surveyed, 97.5% indicated that the school library helped them with their learning in one way or another. The top reasons included: information for research (83%), improved reading skills (79%), helped with classroom assignments (78%), and found fictional books to read (78%).

Bleidt (2011) focused on middle school students' perceptions of the school library; whereas, Kyaw and Tin (2020) are focused on the learning environment. The purpose of Kyaw and Tin study was to discover if learning environments can foster reading motivation of middle school students. Kyaw and Tin felt the problem was middle school students tended to focus more on grades, competition, and their own competence. The study had 600 eighth grade students from three different high schools, one branch high school, two middle schools, and three monastic schools. It was a descriptive research design and survey method for collecting data. The researcher used Reading Motivation Questionnaires (MRQ) along with a reading questionnaire made by the researcher to examine how the learning environment affects reading motivation. The findings from the analysis of the learning environment on students' reading motivation showed that the physical learning environment was better for reading than the social learning environment and pedagogical learning environment. The descriptive statistics for students' reading motivation showed that reading curiosity was the highest of the ten variables. The researchers concluded that the data "implied that learning environment were highly associated with students' reading" (p. 228). The researchers also concluded that "learning environments for reading had effects on students' reading motivation" (p. 228). Both these studies showed that reading can be affected by more than just reading motivation such as students' perspectives toward the library and the learning environment (Bleidt, 2011; Kyaw & Tin, 2020).

## Summary

A few studies above investigated students' motivation to read, and both studies showed that students do like to read independently (Hughes-Hassell & Lutz, 2006; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Other studies found these factors that influence students during the book selection process such as topic of the book, appearance of the book, peer recommendations, and if related to movie or television show for all students including students who have special needs (Hooper, 2005; Swartz & Hendricks, 2000). Finally, some studies focused on the learning environment; and identified students' perspectives toward the library, for example, if they found the library useful in their learning (Bleidt, 2011; Kyaw & Tin, 2020). To extend the work of the previous studies, this study examined the impact a Teacher Librarian has on students' self-selection strategies, and it's broader impact on a culture of reading in a school building.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact a Teacher Librarian has on students' self-selection strategies and the broader impact on a culture of reading in a school building. Countless studies, some of which are reviewed in the literature review, have focused on student reading motivation when it comes to leisure reading; whereas fewer studies have been conducted on what self-selection strategies students use when selecting a book. This study provided the researcher with further insight into students' self-selection strategies along with answering these questions:

1. What appeal strategies do students use when selecting an independent reading book?
2. What motivates students to read for pleasure?
3. What influences do teachers/librarians have over the process?

#### **Research Design**

A quantitative research design was used to conduct this study. Data was collected using a survey research method. Hank et al. (2009) explained the survey research method is a useful method but to be effective it does require considerable planning (p. 256). The survey research method is appropriate for this study due to the researcher planning the gathering of information on what strategies students use when selecting a book for leisure reading. The researcher collected data on students' behavior, and according to Hank et al. (2009) "survey research designs are appropriate to investigate many different information and library science research scenarios" (p. 256), which can include opinions and

behaviors. The survey research method enables “researchers to statistically ‘estimate the distribution of characteristics in a population,’ based on a sample that is only a fraction of the population” (p. 256).

### **Participants**

This study took place in a small, midwestern middle school in Iowa. Students in grades fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth participated in this study. As both the researcher and teacher librarian, I created a reading survey for middle school students, and I emailed the survey to all 263 students in middle school (grades 5-8) each week for eight weeks. There were 1322 anonymous responses over the course of eight weeks; data was collected from 263 individual students. Of the students who responded, 14.7% of them were in 5th grade, 22.4% of them were in 6th grade, 25.7% of them were in 7th grade, and 37.2% of them were in 8th grade.

### **Procedures**

#### **Data Collection**

I developed a survey consisting of open-ended and closed-ended questions (see Appendix A). These questions were adapted from Hopper (2005) and Fischer (2017). The questions were related to self-selection strategies middle school students use when selecting a leisure reading book. Hank et al. (2009) explained that “you need to design your survey instrument carefully, including both the individual items and how they are organized into the survey as a whole” (p. 267). The survey consisted of 11 questions. Of the 11 questions, two are open-ended. The survey was sent out every Friday through Google Forms. The literacy teachers had the students complete the survey in Google

Forms for the first five minutes of literacy class on the last day of the week for the students for a time period of eight weeks. Consistent with the institutional research board, all parents were notified about the class activity and the use of student data for this research.

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher used frequency distributions to analyze the data for this study. According to Wildemuth (2009) frequency distribution involves counting how many cases in a certain category there are, and once the count is completed, the data is organized into tables to display the results. Wildemuth (2009) suggests that in order to make sure data is not misleading, one should calculate the relative frequencies of each category if the sample size is large. Each survey entry was tabulated as a separate entry. Each student has ten separate entries, one for each survey question.

### **Limitations**

A limitation of survey research methods is that questions could be misinterpreted; therefore, it is possible that students may not understand what is being asked of them so their response might not be accurate. The survey was administered one day each week, so if a student was gone longer than one day, a student may not have eight entries. Additionally, although students were given class time to complete the survey 8 times, students were not monitored for survey completion in each sitting, so out of the potential 2104 completed surveys (for 263 students potentially completing the survey for 8 weeks), there were 1322 completed. The survey was administered to only one middle school in a

small, rural school in Iowa. Another limitation of the study is that it was completed during the last quarter of the school year. This only reflects that time frame.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact a Teacher Librarian has on students' self-selection strategies, and its broader impact on a culture of reading in a school building. Each week the survey was sent out to 263 students. Week to week, the number of students who responded ranged from 109 to 217. Following are the responses for each week: Week 1- 213 responses, Week 2- 197 responses, Week 3- 217 responses, Week 4- 131 responses, Week 5- 190 responses, Week 6-149 responses, Week 7- 109 responses, and Week 8- 116 responses. There were a total of 1322 responses over the 8 weeks. I organized the findings, using my three research questions:

1. What appeal strategies do students use when selecting an independent reading book?
2. What motivates students to read for pleasure?
3. What influences do teachers/librarians have over the process?

#### **Research Question 1: Appeal Strategies**

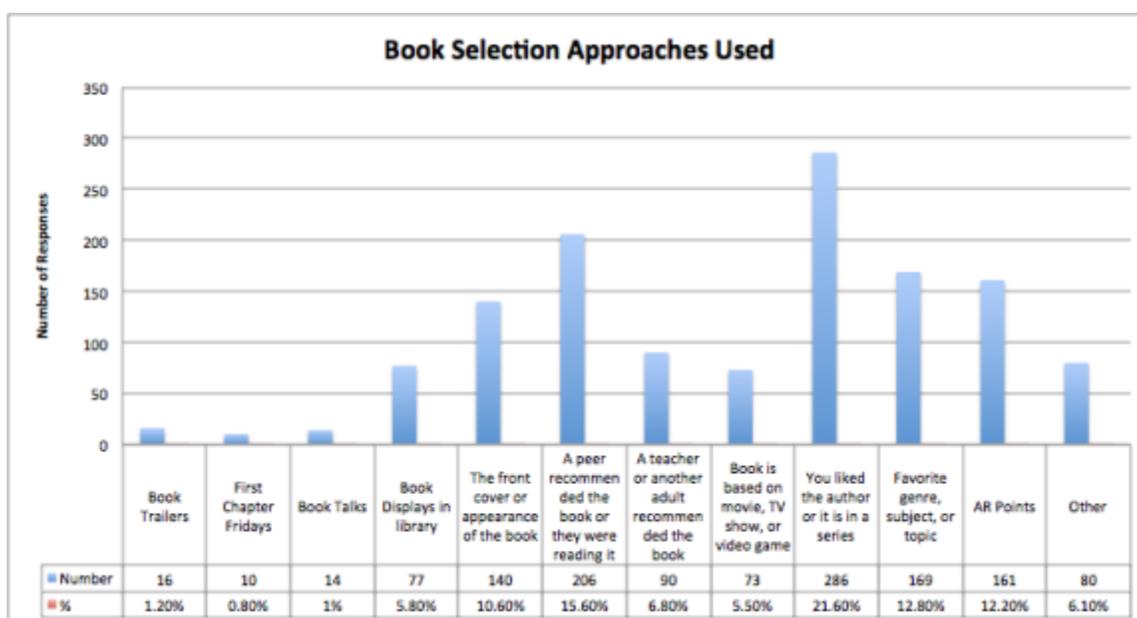
Research Question 1 asked, What appeal strategies do students use when selecting an independent reading book? The survey first asked students to share the books they are currently reading or just finished. The next questions asked if they finished the book, why or why not, and how much they enjoyed it. Of the 1322 responses over the course of eight weeks, 1042 student responses (78.8%) indicated they did not finish the book that week. Of those 1042 responses, 1009 (96.8%) student responses stated they finished their book over the 8 weeks. There were 33 (2%) student responses indicating they did

not finish their book over the 8 weeks. Responses that indicated they did not finish the book over the course of 8 weeks. Some of the reasons students commented for not finishing the book were, “didn’t finish it,” “I didn’t read a book,” “no because I don’t like it,” or “I just didn’t.”

The next two questions of the survey (questions 5 and 6) asked the appeal strategies of middle school students when selecting an independent reading book. There were eleven options for students to choose regarding what helped them decide to get their current independent reading book. The twelfth option was Other which means the approach they used did not fit into one of the other options. Figure 1 shows the responses for all book selection approaches used.

**Figure 1**

*Book Selection Approaches Used (N=1322)*

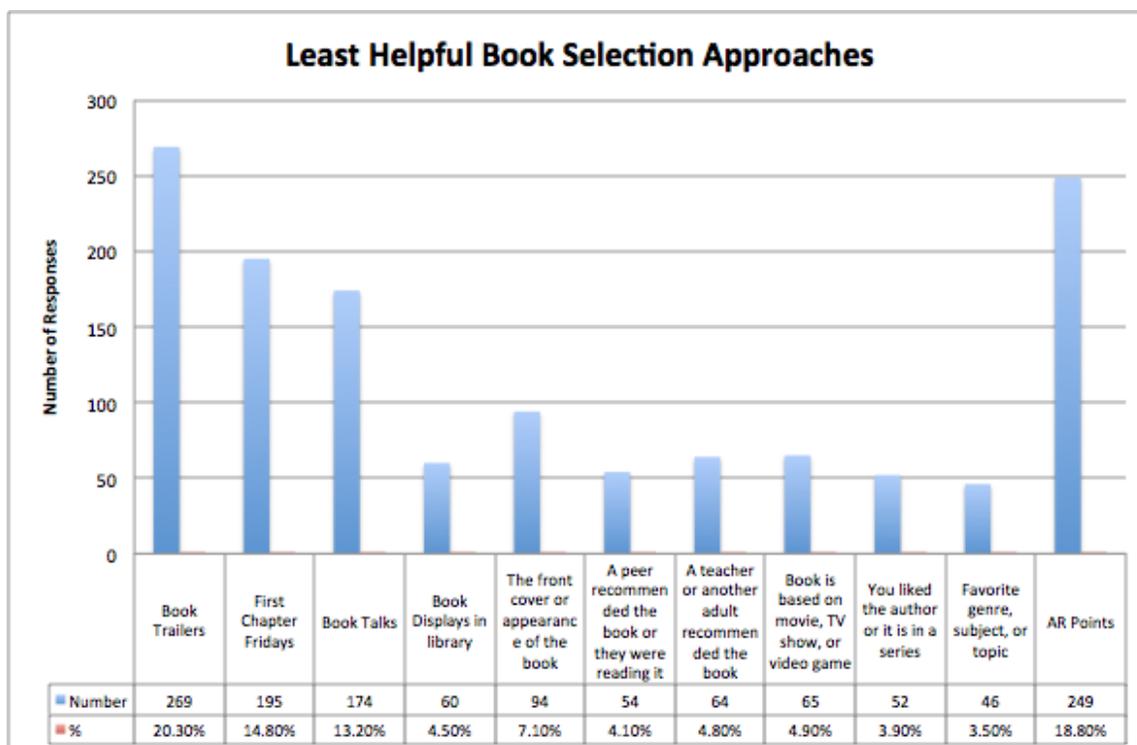


“You liked the author or it is in a series” was the number one book selection approach used with 21.6% of the responses that indicated this approach when selecting a book. The second most common approach used was “a peer recommended the book or they were reading it” with 15.6% of the responses that indicated using this approach. “Favorite genre, subject, or topic” was third with 12.8% of the responses that indicated using this approach, and “AR points” was fourth with 12.2% of the responses indicated using this approach for book selection. After “AR points” was the “the front cover or appearance of the book” with 10.6% of the responses indicating utilizing this method. The next four approaches selected included “a teacher or another adult recommended the book” with 6.8%; “Other” with 6.1%; “book displays in library” with 5.8%; and “book is based on a movie, TV show, or video game” with 5.5%. Less frequently used approaches were “book trailers” (1.2%), “book talks” (1%), and “First Chapter Fridays” (0.8%).

Next, students were asked to indicate which of the book selection approaches used were least helpful when choosing a book. Figure 2 shows the responses.

**Figure 2**

*Least Helpful Book Selection Approaches (N=1322)*



Two book selection approaches were least helpful in selecting a book: “book trailers” (20.3%) and “AR points” (18.8%). Both of these approaches had over 200 responses indicating these approaches were least helpful. “Book trailers” had 269 responses and “AR points” had 249 responses. “First Chapter Fridays” and “book talks” were also reported as not being helpful. “First Chapter Fridays” had 195 responses (14.8%) and “book talks” had 174 responses (13.2%). The rest of the approaches had less than 10% stating that those approaches were least helpful. As such, the following approaches were relatively potentially more helpful than those with higher response rates. These approaches were “the front cover or appearance of the book” (7.1%); “book is based on movie, TV show, or video game” (4.9%); “a teacher or another adult

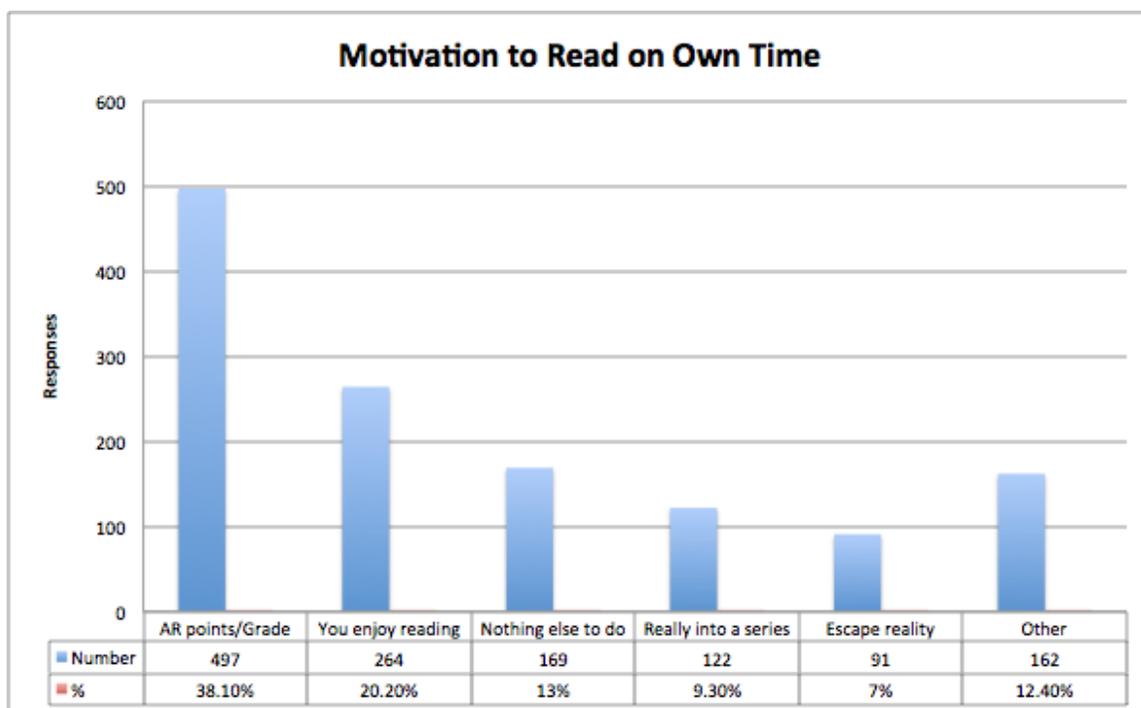
recommended the book” (4.8%); “book displays in library” (4.5%); “a peer recommended the book or they were reading it” (4.1%); “you liked the author or it is in a series” (3.9%); and “favorite genre, subject, or topic” (3.5%).

### Research Question 2: Independent Reading Motivation

Research Question 2 asked, What motivates students to read for pleasure? In the survey there were three questions that looked at this question. The survey question 8 asked what motivates you to read on your own time? Students had to choose from a selection of five answers. Figure 3 shows the responses.

**Figure 3**

*Motivation to Read on Own Time (N=1305)*



As shown in Figure 3, the biggest motivation to read on their own time was “AR points/grade.” This had 497 responses, which was 38.1% of the 1305 total responses for

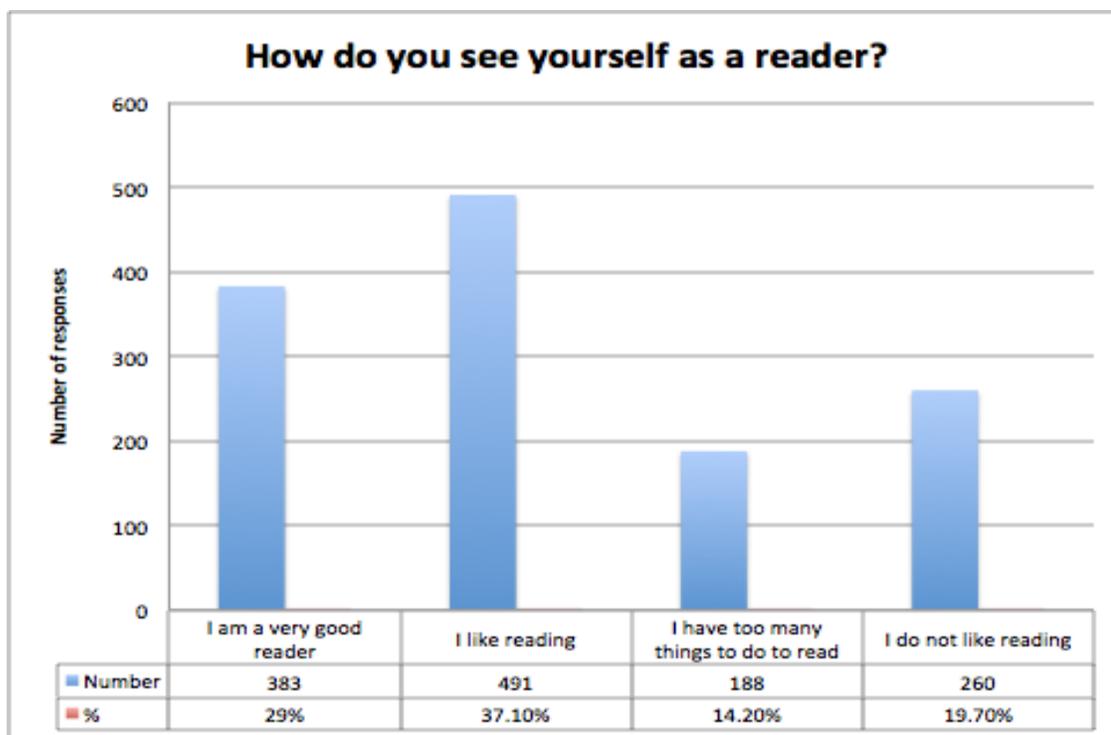
this question. The second highest motivation to read on their own time was “you enjoy reading” with 264 responses (20.2%). “Nothing else to do” (13%) and “Other” (12.4%) were the third and fourth reason to read on their own time. “Really into a series” (9.3%) and “escape reality” (7%) were each less than 10% of the total responses.

The next question on the survey (question 9) that dealt with motivation was how do you see yourself as a reader. There were a total of 1322 responses for this question.

Figure 4 shows the responses.

#### Figure 4

*How Do You See Yourself as a Reader? (N=1322)*



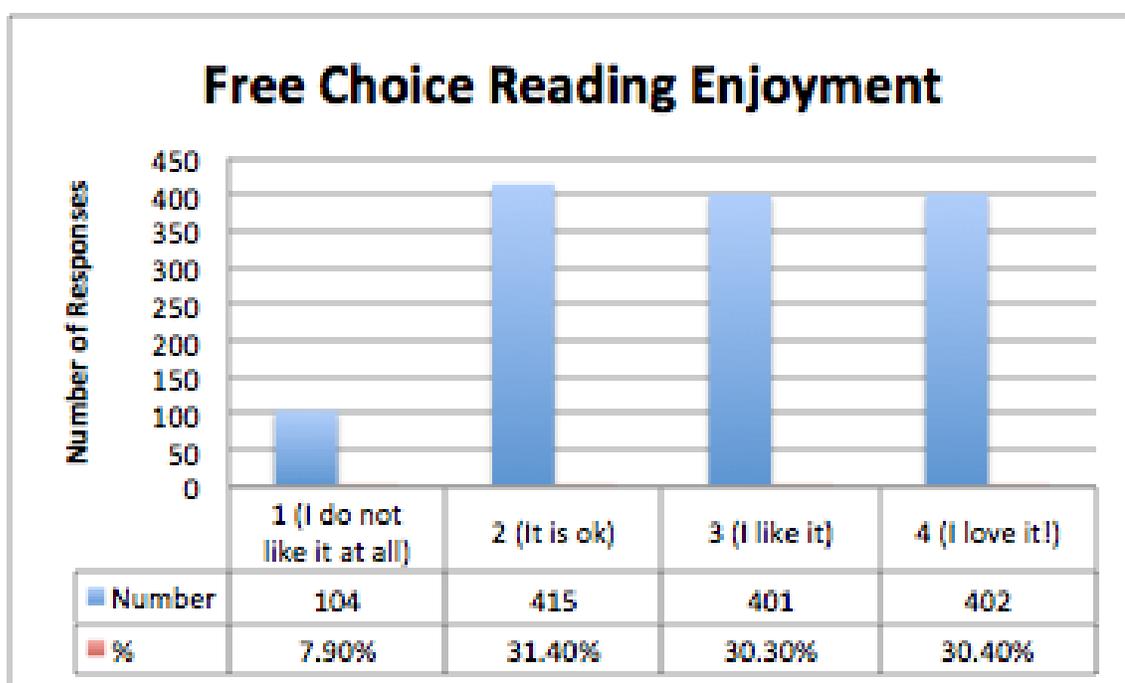
Of the 1322 responses to this question, 491 responses (37.1%) indicated that “I like reading.” This was the highest percentage. The lowest percentage was at 14.2%, which

was “I have too many things to do to read.” “I am a very good reader” had 383 responses (29%), and “I do not like reading” had 260 responses (19.7%).

The last question on the survey (item 10) that dealt with reading motivation was do you enjoy reading free choice books? There were a total of 1322 responses for this question. Figure 5 shows the responses.

**Figure 5**

*Free Choice Reading Enjoyment (N=1322)*



There were 1322 responses to this question. The highest percentage, which was 31.4%, indicated that free choice reading for enjoyment was ok, while 30.4% of the responses indicated that “I love” free choice for reading enjoyment. “I like it” had 30.3% of the responses, and 7.9% of the responses indicated that “I do not like it at all.”

### Research Question 3: Teachers/Librarians Influences

Research Question 3 asked, What influences do teachers/librarians have over the process? The survey question 7 asked what suggestions can you give to the librarian to help promote books to students? This was an open-ended question. There were a total of 1322 responses to this question. Due to the large number of responses and that the question was open-ended, the responses were grouped together and put into categories. Table 1 shows the responses.

**Table 1**

*How can librarians promote books to students? (N=1322)*

Category	Example of responses	Number of responses/ Percentage
Nothing	None, Nothing, Don't have any, I don't have any suggestions, I don't know, I don't really know, IDK, I'm not sure, NA, No clue, Not sure, You're doing great, She does fine, Nothing keep doing what you are doing, Nothing everything is already very helpful	671 50.8%
Displays	Posters, book displays, but it on top shelf, cooler displays, display more, have a book that's most popular from that month displayed, maybe put up more posters, more books displays of good books, posters in the bathroom, put books on each table, signs, show them, advertising, put posters of	204 15.4%

	the most recommended books so people know which ones are good	
Book Talks/ Recommendations in Person	Book recommendations, book talks, do more book talks, come to classes to talk about books, give a brief explanation on what the book is about, good book recommendations, have books suggested, help students who don't like reading find a genre they might like, have teachers talk about books, help students that seem like they can't find a book	173 13.1%
More books	More action books, better books, better ones students want, buy more books, buy popular books, buy Diary of Wimpy Kid for the middle/high school library, get more books, get new books, get more Harry Potter books, get more horror books, more graphic novels, have more books that are nonfiction, just continue to expanding the amount of books the library has, more comic books, more action books	100 7.6%
Book Trailers	Book trailers, book trailers in library, have more book trailers, more book trailers	32 2.4%
Peers	A peer recommending books, have kids talk about it, it's mostly just students recommending other students, student favorites,	29 2.2%

	what do they like to read	
Technology	Email them the website link, email, find what they like survey them, Put more books in New Hampton webpage, Recommend more books and put it on the library's page, Send out top 10 favorites in email	25 1.9%
AR Points	AR points, have the AR points on the book or a section of books with the same AR, put the AR point on it, say how many AR points it's worth	16 1.2%
Other	Founding father Friday, I found the books that I liked, awesome, anything, it's a good book, make it interesting, movies, read, swimming pool, start reading now because it will pay off later	72 5.4%

The category that had the most responses is "Nothing" with 671 of the responses or 50.8%. Examples of the responses include: "none," "nothing," "don't have any," "I don't have any suggestions," "I don't really know," "IDK," "I'm not sure," "NA," "no clue," "not sure," "you're doing great," "she does fine," "nothing keep doing what you are doing," and "nothing everything is already very helpful." This category was grouped together due to no suggestions given to help librarians promote books to students.

The second category created was "Displays" with 204 of the responses or 15.4%. Examples of the responses include: "posters," "book displays," "cooler displays,"

“posters in the bathroom,” “more books displays of good books,” “signs,” and “put posters of the most recommended books so people know which ones are good.” This category deals with displays or displaying books. It does not include any technology.

The third category created was “Book Talks/Recommendations in Person” with 173 of the responses or 13.1%. Examples of the responses include: “book recommendations,” “book talks,” “do more book talks,” “come to classes to talk about books,” “give a brief explanation on what the book is about,” and “good book recommendations.” This category deals with any response that refers to recommending books to students or book talks.

The fourth category created was “More Books” with 100 of the responses or 7.6%. Examples of the responses include: “more action books,” “better books,” “better ones students want,” “buy more books,” “have more books that are nonfiction,” “just continue expanding the amount of books the library has,” and “more comic books.” This category deals with getting more books for the library.

The fifth category created was “Book Trailers” with 32 of the responses or 2.4%. Examples of the responses include: “book trailers,” “book trailers in library,” “have more book trailers,” and “more book trailers.” This category deals with any response that refers to book trailers.

The sixth category created was “Peers” with 29 of the responses or 2.2%. Examples of the responses include: “a peer recommending books,” “have kids talk about it,” “it’s mostly just students recommending other students,” and “student favorites.” This category deals with any response referred to students or kids sharing the books they like.

The seventh category created was “Technology” with 25 of the responses or 1.9%. Examples of the responses include: “find what they like survey them,” “put more books in New Hampton webpage,” “recommend more books and put it on the library’s page,” and “send out top 10 favorites in email.” This category deals with any response that involves technology such as email or website.

The eighth category created was “AR points” with 16 of the responses or 1.2%. Examples of the responses include: “AR points,” “have the AR points on the book or a section of books with the same,” and “put the AR point on it.” This category deals with any response that refers to AR points.

The ninth category created was “Other” with 72 of the responses or 5.4%. Examples of the responses include: “ I found the books that I liked,” “awesome,” “anything,” “it’s a good book,” “make it interesting,” “movies,” and “read.” This category deals with any response that did not fit into the other categories.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the impact a Teacher Librarian has on students' self-selection strategies and the broader impact on a culture of reading in a school building. Data was collected from 263 students in middle school (grades 5-8) resulting in 1322 responses over eight weeks. Research Question 1 asked, What appeal strategies do students use when selecting an independent reading book? "You liked the author or it is in a series" was the number one book selection approach used with 21.6% of the responses indicating this approach when selecting a book. The least helpful book selection approaches were "book trailers" (20.3%) and "AR points" (18.8%). Research Question 2 asked, What motivates students to read for pleasure? "AR points" was the biggest motivation to read on their own time with 38.1% of the responses indicating this. When asked if they enjoy reading free choice books, 31.4% of responses indicated "it is ok." Research Question 3 asked, What influences do teachers/librarians have over the process? The responses were open-ended but put into nine categories. The largest category was "Nothing" which meant they didn't know what could be done or they felt what was being done was good enough. The next category was "displays." Students wanted more displays to help promote books to students.

#### Conclusions

AR points is one area that has contradicting data. Three survey questions (the most used approach, least helpful approach, and most motivating reason to read) students responded to included AR points, but each one approached it differently. First is

regarding the survey question, What motivates you to read on your own time? AR is the top reason given (38.1%) for reading on their own time. This may not be surprising given that AR points are required for their language arts grade. Another survey question asked, When you chose this book, what helped you decide to get this book. Again “AR points” (12.2%) was in the top half (4 out of 11) most used book selection approach.

Interestingly, a third question on the survey asked what book selection approach was the least helpful. “Book trailers” (20.3%) and “AR points” (18.8%) were the top two of the same 11 responses. This data shows that even though students reported using AR points as a book selection approach, it was one of the two least helpful approaches. Many students might have used this approach since AR points are required for their grade. Even though it is a free reading book, they still had to take a test on it. This data suggests that students are motivated to read for a grade, but that using AR points to select books is one of the least helpful techniques for students.

Book talks is another area with contradicting data. Book talks was the second least used book selection approach, and 13.2% of the responses indicated that it was not helpful in selecting a book. This would lead a researcher to believe it is a book selection approach not worth pursuing, but interestingly the contradiction is that it was also one of the top choices among students for ways the teacher librarian could promote books. In an open ended survey question where students wrote in responses to suggest ways the teacher librarian could help to promote books, it was the third top way they thought librarians could promote books to students. It was apparent as well that students want book talks/recommendations from the teacher librarian to be done in person. Several

examples of what students wrote were “Come to classes to talk about books,” “Give suggestions to students while in the library,” and “Maybe you could promote the books more by just talking about them.” It should be noted that the year the survey was given, COVID restrictions were present and many things were done online. Students were in school all year in person but coming to the library was not possible until second semester. Many things such as book talks and book trailers were done online through the school library website. These two book selection approaches would require time for students to explore these approaches since these approaches were on the library website. This data suggests that students want teacher librarians to be there when they check out books to give recommendations and create displays in the library that promote books, yet at the same time they also want them to come to their classroom to promote books. Thus book promotion needs to be school wide with displays and recommendations throughout the school; teachers and librarians need to give recommendations in the library and classrooms.

A third conclusion shows that the overall majority of students in this school have positive associations with reading and generally see themselves as a good reader. Student motivation to read has been an on-going research question. Through the data presented in this research, responses indicated that after AR points, the second top choice for a motivation to read on their own time was “you enjoy reading” (20.2%). This shows students do like to read. Students were also asked how do they see themselves as a reader. The majority of the responses indicated that “I like reading” (37.1%) and “I am a very good reader” (29%). The combined responses of students who indicated a positive reason

were over 66%. This data suggests that students do see themselves as good readers. Students were asked if they enjoy reading free choice books. The responses indicated that they do. With 30.4% selecting “I love it” and 30.3% selecting “I like it.” Even though 31.4% shows “it is ok,” students still enjoy reading. Overall most students enjoy reading and see themselves as a good reader. Hopefully the school reading culture has impacted this.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

This research provides 1322 responses from 263 students yielding many useful pieces of information for teacher librarians and teachers. Students need time to explore books. They need class time and time in the library. As the world is going more digital, students will need to become more digital. Allowing students time to access the digital information about books in class will increase expansion of book selection approaches. AR points make reading grade related. Even though students used AR points to help find books they found it least helpful, and yet at the same time it was a top motivation to read. Educators need to find a way to motivate students to read for enjoyment. Teacher librarians promoting books to students either through displays or book talks/recommendations in person is important to students. Students want to hear and see books. They need ideas and suggestions given to them.

### **Recommendation for Future Research**

Analyzing this data revealed some changes that need to be made for future research. Having the students complete the survey online was easy, but not monitored. Students were given time to fill out the survey every Thursday or Friday, but it was not

enforced due to the high number of students in the classroom. In the future, I suggest that as a researcher, I would go to each classroom and proctor the survey. Splitting up the time frame such as giving the survey to one grade band at a time may also have provided better results because the data could have been analysed by grade level. I continue to wonder how the data may differ if AR points were no longer being used at this school. For example, Would more students select what they like to read on their own time because they enjoy reading? Future research on online book promotion in contrast with in person book promotion may be studied, giving students time to explore books online and in person during classroom time, to see if it would increase free reading time and motivation to free read. Finally this research suggests continued study to find ways to better understand school librarian promotion and facilitation of a student reading culture through book selection approaches.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**SURVEY QUESTIONS**

Questions adapted from Hopper (2005) and Fischer (2017).

1. What is the title of the book you read this week?

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2. Did you finish the book?

Yes

No

3. If you answered no, why did you not finish the book?

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4. If you answered yes, how much did you enjoy the book?

1 (I really didn't like this book.)

2 (It was ok.)

3 (It was good.)

4 (I really loved this book!)

5. When you chose this book, what helped you decide to get this book?

Book trailers

First chapter Fridays

Book talks

Book displays in library

The front cover or appearance of the book

A peer recommended the book or they were reading it

- A teacher or another adult recommended the book
- Book is based on movie, TV show, or video game
- You liked the author or it is in a series
- Favorite genre, subject, or topic
- AR points
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Which of these options is the least helpful to you when choosing a book?

- Book trailers
- First chapter Fridays
- Book Talks
- Book Displays in library
- The front cover or appearance of the book
- A peer recommended the book or they were reading it
- A teacher or another adult recommended the book
- Book is based on movie, TV show, or video game
- You liked the author or it is in a series
- Favorite genre, subject, or topic
- AR points

7. What suggestions can you give to the librarian to help promote books to students?

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8. What motivates you to read on your own time?

- AR points/Grade
- You enjoy reading
- Nothing else to do
- Really into a series
- Escape reality
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

9. How do you see yourself as a reader?

- I am a very good reader
- I like reading
- I have too many things to do to read
- I do not like reading

10. Do you enjoy reading free choice books?

- 1 (I do not like it at all!)
- 2 (It is ok.)
- 3 (I like it.)
- 4 (I love it!)

11. What grade are you in?

- 5th
- 6th
- 7th
- 8th