1-1-2021

INCREASING READING ACHIEVEMENT: AN APPLIED RESEARCH STUDY ON THE EFFECTS OF IMPLEMENTING AN INDEPENDENT READING TIME AT LESTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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INCREASING READING ACHIEVEMENT: AN APPLIED RESEARCH STUDY ON THE
EFFECTS OF IMPLEMENTING AN INDEPENDENT READING TIME AT LESTER
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

A Dissertation
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Educational Doctorate
in the Department of Educational Leadership
The University of Mississippi

by

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May 2021

ABSTRACT

Reading proficiency is an important skill and demonstrated proficiency is required by the
Mississippi's Literacy Based Promotion Act of 2013 for third graders to be promoted to fourth
grade. Reading proficiency at third grade also has serious implications for lifelong outcomes.
The purpose of this applied research project was to increase reading achievement for the second
and third grade students of Lester Elementary, specifically by exploring the effects of increased
time spent reading, access and self-selection of books, and motivation to read on reading
proficiency. The analysis of pre- and post- STAR data was used to determine if proficiency rates
increased. Although we did not reach the goal of increasing the number of students scoring
proficient or higher, teachers reported positive changes in the number of students engaged in
reading, improved attitudes toward reading, and students' motivation to read. This study was
impacted greatly by COVID 19 and deserves continued implementation and further
investigation.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated in memory of my mother who was my first teacher, my greatest example

of a caring and responsive teacher, and who instilled in me a zest for knowledge.

To my husband for the constant and unwavering support.

To my children for being understanding about the many events I missed.

To my family for all the encouragement.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

American philosopher and psychologist William James once said, "So it is with children who learn to read fluently and well: They begin to take flight into whole new worlds as effortlessly as young birds take to the sky" (source unknown). Too many children leave elementary school without the reading skills necessary to do as young birds and take to the sky.

A child's ability to read is an important part of his or her development and education. Reading is the foundation for most, if not all, future academic endeavors, and it is one of the most important skills students acquire in elementary school. Unfortunately, too many students leave elementary school without the fluency and comprehension skills needed to be successful in middle school and beyond. Researchers have established, "Students who enter high school with poor literacy skills face odds against graduating and going on to postsecondary education" (Slavin, Cheung, Groff, & Lake, 2008, p. 290). Given the serious life implications for students who have not become proficient readers, all teachers must ask themselves the question, "How can I help struggling readers by using proven strategies to increase reading proficiency?"

Statement of the Problem

Students who struggle with reading in third grade face challenges for years to come. Third grade is considered a pivot point in education, where children shift from learning to read and begin reading to learn. Students who don't read proficiently by third grade are four times more likely to leave high school without a diploma than proficient readers. Students who are in poverty and who read poorly are six times more like to drop out or fail to graduate on time than

proficient readers. For black and Latino students, the combined effect of poverty and poor third grade reading skills makes the dropout rate eight times greater (Hernandez, 2011).

Students who enter high school with poor reading skills face higher odds against graduating and going on to post-secondary education or satisfying careers (Slavin et al., 2008). The effects, however, are not limited to academic outcomes. According to the HB 2722 Advisory Committee report (as cited by Williams, 2014), "Lower rates of high school graduation lead to less employment, higher rates of incarceration, ill health, substance abuse, and intergenerational poverty" (p. 233). A good education is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty, and reading skills are the foundation of a good education.

During its 2013 legislative session, Mississippi lawmakers passed the Literacy-Based Promotion Act (LBPA). Details of this act are found on the Mississippi Department of Education website. It places an emphasis on grade-level reading skills as students matriculate from kindergarten to third grade. At the end of the year, third graders are expected to demonstrate their readiness for fourth grade reading instruction. The LBPA requires all third grade students in Mississippi's public schools to pass the reading portion of the Mississippi Academic Assessment Program (MAAP) test in order to qualify for promotion to fourth grade. In the 2018-2019 school year (SY), only 48.3% of Mississippi's third graders were at or above proficient in reading on the MAAP and therefore eligible for promotion. In Mississippi, a state where less than 40% of all students scored proficient or advanced in reading, it is obvious more work must be done to prepare students for success in high school, college, career, and life.

Description of the Context

R. L. Lester Elementary School (pseudonym) is the only elementary school of the Akili School District (pseudonym). It is located in Lester, Mississippi (pseudonym) with a population

of 7,621 citizens (City-Data.com, 2017) with 78.8% of the residents identified as African-American and 19.1% identified as White. In recent years, Lester has seen most of its factories close and unemployment soar. The median household income is $28,886 and 25% of the city's population lives in poverty. Lester is home to a small, historically black, Liberal Arts college which has an enrollment of about 860 students.

R. L. Lester Elementary School (Lester Elementary) serves students in grades pre-kindergarten through third grade. The current enrollment is 17 pre-kindergarteners, 99 kindergarteners, 86 first graders, 92 second graders, and 98 third graders with a total of 392 students. African-Americans make up 90.95% of the student population, and 94% of our students qualify for free lunch. The staff consists of 19 certified teachers, seven non-certified staff in teaching positions, and 12 assistant teachers. The leadership team consists of an interventionist, instructional coach, and principal. The leadership team shares the responsibility of conducting classroom observations, coaching teachers on instructional practices, and checking lesson plans.

According to the Mississippi Department of Education's accountability rating, Lester Elementary is a D rated school based on assessment results from the 2017-2018 school year. For the previous year, the school received an F rating. This failing grade is attributable, in large part, to the low proficiency in the reading achievement of the students collectively. As reported on the Mississippi Department of Education website, of the 88 third graders who took the MAAP in the spring of 2018, only 32% of our third graders scored proficient or advanced in reading on the state assessment. On the initial MAAP, only 54.5% of our third graders reached the required score for promotion. After final retesting, 77.3% of Lester Elementary third graders had reached the mark.

Allington (2014) asserts, "Reading volume is actually central to the development of reading proficiencies, especially in the development of fluent reading proficiency" (p.13). Lester Elementary's issue of low reading proficiency may be rooted in the limited amount of time our students spend actually reading. Even in classrooms where 90 minutes are devoted to a reading and language arts block, only 18 minutes are spent with students experiencing a sustained engagement with text (Brenner, Hiebert, & Tompkins, 2009). As Lyon (2002) points out, successful reading development is predicated on practice in reading, and consequently, the less a child practices, the less developed the various reading skills will become.

Our English-Language Arts (ELA) classes are taught during 90 minute blocks with 60 minutes for focusing on reading standards and 30 minutes for language standards. Based on the class breakdown guidelines given to the ELA teachers, teachers are expected to 1) teach the concept of the standard with a PowerPoint, 2) complete an I Do, We Do, and You Do (a gradual release model) with questions formatted like state test items, and 3) deliver a closure to the lesson. Journeys is a comprehensive K-6 English language arts program published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt adopted for use at our school. The Journeys core reading program is rarely used and students miss the opportunity for valuable exposure to interesting engaging text. In my assessment, focus by the district is not placed on reading to gain understanding or make connections with the text, but instead, reading is done to answer state test formatted questions.

My position as principal of Lester Elementary affords me the distinct privilege of being able to affect and influence all aspects of the school experience. I am able to interact with students in the hallways, cafeteria, and classrooms on a daily basis. Whenever I have the opportunity, I like to share a book with students. I do this for several reasons, particularly-

1. I read aloud to pique students' interest in books and reading. This also allows me to demonstrate excitement for reading.

2. I read aloud to teach life lessons through the characters in stories. I try and choose books with characters who are relatable for the students. I hope the students will learn lessons by vicariously experiencing the character's situation.

3. I read aloud so students have the experience of hearing fluent reading. Research findings validate the instructional method of hearing fluent reading modeled for increasing reading fluency (Hasbrouk, Ihnot, & Rogers, 1999). It is important for students to hear proper phrasing, intonations, and pauses of text to increase comprehension and serve as a model for their own reading.

Justification of the Problem

For most of our students, reading is seen as a chore they must perform to complete a test or to fulfill a requirement. I often ask students, "What book are you reading now?" The most common reply is, "I'm finished with my books." Let me explain that response. There is a district-wide mandate for every student to read five books each nine weeks or 20 books over the course of the school year. To verify their reading, students take an Accelerated Reading test and are required to score at least 80% on the quiz in order for it to count toward their required 20 books. So, when they have logged 20 books, they consider themselves, "Done reading," even if it's only January.

Very few of our students read for pleasure or to explore a personal interest. To improve reading proficiency, there must be a change in our students' behaviors, habits, and way of thinking about reading. There must also be a shift in our expectations of students regarding reading. We must find a way to increase their interest in reading and their motivation to pick up a

book. It calls for a culture shift. Northouse (2016) defines culture as "the learned beliefs, values, rules, norms, symbols, and traditions that are common to a group of people" (p. 428). It is a group's way of living. For Lester Elementary, this is where the change must begin.

Why aren't our students reading? Cantrell, Rintamaa, Anderman, and Anderman (2018) define reading motivation as "the psychological forces (i.e., beliefs and values) that drive an individual to read" (p. 418). As Meece, Glienke, and Burg (2006) point out, during adolescence, cultural influences and norms heavily influence decision making. In order to get our students to read more, it must become part of our school and district-wide norms and culture. Reading outside of the textbook must simply be what we do. We cannot rely solely on parents, who may neither set an example of leisure reading at home nor regard it as important, to then require their child to read at home. With the distractions of televisions, phones, video games, and computers at home, the school must carve out time in the school day to make sure our students are reading. Reading is far too important a habit to leave to chance. Our students depend on us, and the community expects us to produce college and career ready high school graduates who are prepared to become our leaders of the future.

Given the serious life implications for students who do not become proficient readers, all teachers must help struggling readers by using proven strategies to increase reading proficiency. The National Reading Panel (as cited by Reutzal, Spichtig, & Petscher, 2012) asserted, there is little question the opportunity to read, whether silent or oral, has been shown to be strongly associated with gains in students' reading achievement. Block (2006) reports on the findings of a large scale experiment where students were provided an additional 20 minutes of independent silent reading of trade books. The researchers found the additional reading practice led to significant annual gains in students' vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency.

Audience

This applied research project of a problem of practice serves to inform future practice at Lester Elementary. Teachers and students at Lester Elementary are the first benefactors of this study's results. Findings from the research, with graphs and visual aids, were shared with staff and students. The results of this study offer encouragement to continue working hard and to work even harder. This issue of low reading achievement is a problem plaguing the entire district and many schools and districts throughout the state. Teachers of any aged student could easily implement the components of this action research project that I call Ready, Set, Read! in their classrooms. Insights gained may be helpful in improving deficiencies in reading achievement for struggling readers of any age.

Research Method

Reading is perhaps the most important skill for children to learn. In an address to the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, President Barrack Obama (2009) said, "The relative decline of American education is untenable for our economy, unsustainable for our democracy, and unacceptable for our children, and we cannot afford to let it continue." Fiester and Smith (2010) consider reading proficiently by the end of third grade "a make-or-break benchmark in a child's educational development" (p 11). The problem of low reading proficiency is a pervasive one in the Akili School District and at Lester Elementary.

In July of 2019, I was hired by Akili School District to become principal of its only elementary school. The two previous principals stayed for three years each. As the new principal of Lester Elementary, I am acutely aware of and troubled by the low reading proficiency of the students in my school. This most unsettling predicament led me to research practices which could be implemented immediately, require minimal fiscal support, and lead to improved

outcomes. My research led me to three components I presented to the superintendent and school leadership team:

1. Increase the time students spend reading,

2. Improve students' access to books, and

3. Motivate students to read.

The team addressed each component. Hundreds of correlational studies have found the best readers read the most and poor readers read the least (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). We know students need to spend more time reading, and we realized we cannot trust them to do it at home consistently. When students are unwilling or unable to set aside time to read, we must do it for them. For this reason, we decided to allocate 30 minutes every day for independent reading after the reading block at 9:45.

To ensure students have access to books throughout the day, it was necessary for each classroom to have a library. We used books the librarian had to remove from her shelves, but were still in good condition. These books were distributed to each classroom teacher. Students were allowed to choose from these books as well as books they have checked out from the school library. Stairs and Stairs-Burgos (2010) found allowing students to decide what they want to read enhances their desire or motivation to read.

The team discussed ways to extrinsically motivate students to read. Lower elementary students are often motivated first by their excitement at getting rewards. The rewards help build the habit of reading. The team decided to implement the following:

1. An Accelerated Reader (AR) Wall of Fame where students' pictures will be posted,

2. Recognition of students during the Honor Roll program,

3. Pizza with the Principal during lunch, and

4. Announcements on the intercom of students' reading accomplishments.

At the end of the planning and implementation, an internal program evaluation with a combination of status and change designs was conducted to determine what, if anything, the program accomplished. We assessed whether reading proficiency increased for our second and third graders following implementation of Ready, Set, Read! We also sought to ascertain whether students' attitudes toward reading changed. Lastly, we hoped to determine if the program should continue, be modified, or discarded.

A pre- and post-inventory of attitudes toward reading was completed by students. Data was analyzed by a comparison of the means of the pre-test and post-test. Data from the Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading (STAR) was collected before and after implementation to compare measures in reading proficiency levels. A comparison of mean reading proficiency scores and frequency counts of the number of students proficient in reading before and after program implementation was conducted. More sophisticated statistical analyses were not warranted since our problem of practice is addressed by action research and our goal is to determine practical significance. Teachers completed open ended survey items, and this qualitative data was coded to discover themes.

Purpose Statement

The intent of this applied research project was to increase reading achievement for the second and third grade students of Lester Elementary, specifically by exploring the effects of increased time spent reading, access and self-selection of books, and motivation to read on reading proficiency. This convergent, mixed-methods, applied action research study called for collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data separately and then merging the findings to provide a deeper understanding of the issue of reading achievement influences at

Lester Elementary. In this study, a pre- and post- closed survey was used to measure students' self-reported attitudes toward reading to determine if there was a change in attitudes during the program. Data on second and third graders' proficiency levels before and after program implementation were also collected to document any change in academic performance. Open ended survey data from teachers explored the implementation of the program and examined ways the program might be improved. The rationale for using a convergent design in this action research was to gain a more complete understanding of the influences of reading achievement on students at Lester Elementary.

Research Questions

This applied research study was guided by the central question: Will implementation of Ready, Set, Read!, with its emphasis on increased time spent reading, access to books, and motivation to read, lead to increased reading proficiency as measured by performance on STAR assessments for second and third graders at Lester Elementary. This research study examined the implementation process to identify strengths and weaknesses of the program to guide implementation in the future. The following questions were used to evaluate program outcomes:

Quantitative

1. What are Lester Elementary second and third grade students' self-reported attitudes toward reading before and after participating in Ready, Set, Read!?

2. After implementing Ready, Set, Read!, did the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on STAR increase by five percentage points?

Qualitative

1. Were students provided 30 minutes daily to engage in independent reading, and to what extent were students actively engaged in reading during independent reading time?

2. To what extent did students have access in the classroom to at least 50 books of appropriate reading levels?

3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Ready, Set, Read!'s implementation, and how could it be improved?

Overview

Reading proficiency is an important skill and demonstrated proficiency is required by the LBPA of 2013 for third graders to be promoted to fourth grade. Reading proficiency at third grade also has serious implications for lifelong outcomes. It is important for teachers and school leaders to have simple, practical, and effective practices that will address this problem. This action research is intended to provide such insight. Chapter One explores the problem, context of the study, the justification and significance of this undertaking, and presents the research questions. Chapter Two presents relevant research on practices which have led to increased reading proficiency, which also informs the action plan for this study. Chapter Three describes the development of the action plan, data collection, and analysis methods. Information gained from this study was used to help stakeholders of Lester Elementary inform future practices.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of the literature provides an overview of the research related to the

development of a sustained silent reading (SSR) program to improve reading achievement of

elementary students. This review served as the basis for determining the components to include

in the action plan for a new SSR program to be developed and implemented in an elementary

school in North Mississippi. This literature review supported this applied research in several

ways as detailed in the three main sections of this review: (a) The Effects of Poor Reading, (b)

Evidence of the Effectiveness of SSR, and (c) Factors Contributing to Effective SSR Programs.

The Effects of Poor Reading

Because reading is the foundation for most future academic endeavors, it is one of the

most important skills students acquire in elementary school. Unfortunately, too many students

leave elementary school without the fluency and comprehension skills needed to be successful in

middle school and beyond. Data have shown, "Students who enter high school with poor literacy

skills face odds against graduating and going on to postsecondary education" (Slavin, Cheung,

Groff, & Lake, 2008, p. 290). Given the serious life implications for students who have not

become proficient readers, elementary and even high school teachers must help struggling

readers by using proven strategies to increase reading proficiency.

Students who struggle with reading in third grade face challenges for years to come.

Third grade is considered a pivot point in education, where children shift from learning to read

and begin reading to learn. Hernandez (2011) analyzed data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79) conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in the U.S. Department of Labor. According to Hernandez, "The NLSY79 is the only nationally representative study that has assessed student reading in third grade, and then subsequently has followed those same children into their young adult years" (p.18). Based on a sample of 3,975 children, Hernandez (2011) reports students who do not read proficiently by third grade are four times more likely to leave high school without a diploma than proficient readers. Students who are in poverty and who read poorly are six times more likely to drop out or fail to graduate on time than proficient readers. For black and Latino students, the combined effect of poverty and poor third grade reading skills makes the dropout rate eight times greater.

Slavin et al. (2008) found, students who enter high school with poor reading skills face higher odds against graduating and going on to post-secondary education or satisfying careers. The effects are not limited to academic outcomes. According to the HB 2722 Advisory Committee report (as cited by Williams, 2014), "Lower rates of high school graduation lead to less employment, higher rates of incarceration, ill health, substance abuse, and intergenerational poverty" (p. 233).

When students reach middle school and high school levels, most of their teachers are content experts. Teachers at these levels typically lack the skills and expertise in teaching foundational reading skills, usually acquired in elementary school, which students may be missing. Any plan to address improving reading achievement for students must be based on research, uncomplicated, and easy to implement. Given the lack of expertise in reading instruction, and the likely cost of professional development, a potential standard treatment for all

struggling readers is to build time into the school day for additional reading practice (Faggella-Luby & Wardell, 2011).

The Case for Sustained Silent Reading

Proficient silent reading is the way we access the vast stores of knowledge found within texts which are required for college and career. Silent reading processing speed is generally limited by speed of eye movements (Samuels, Hiebert, & Rasinski, 2010); however, oral reading rates are also constrained by the speed of speech production. Research on oral and silent reading shows silent reading rates exceed oral reading rates for students in the primary grades (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2006). Under the right conditions where students read texts at appropriate difficulty levels, students are able to process more words when engaged in silent reading than in oral reading. For students like those at Lester Elementary who depend on the schools to become literate citizens, quality silent reading should be a part of the school's daily routine. Strong silent reading habits require students to participate in structured silent reading experiences which model efficient reading (Hiebert, Samuels, & Rasinski, 2012).

Because of the serious life impacting consequences for students who do not become proficient readers, elementary, middle, and high school teachers must help struggling readers by using proven strategies to increase reading proficiency. The National Reading Panel (as cited by Reutzel, Spichtig, & Petscher, 2012) concludes there is little question the opportunity to read, whether silently or aloud, has been shown to be strongly associated with gains in students' reading achievement. In a large scale experiment by Block, Cleveland, and Reed (as cited by Reutzel et al., 2012), students were provided an additional 20 minutes of independent silent reading of trade books. The researchers found the additional reading practice led to significant annual gains in students' vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. Similarly, Krashen (1993)

affirms, providing time for independent reading in schools has a positive impact on many language skills including reading comprehension and vocabulary development.

Fisher (2004) conducted an action research program evaluation on the implementation of SSR time. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Students were given 20 minutes for SSR every day. Reading achievement tests were given in September and May to eight classes of ninth grade students. The population was divided into four classes whose teachers were "high implementers" of SSR and four who rarely or never allowed their students to read during SSR. The September interim test results showed no significant differences between the two groups. When the May data were compared, the students who utilized SSR time had statistically higher reading scores.

Rasinski, Samuels, Hiebert, Petscher, and Feller (2011) designed a retrospective study to examine the effects of a computer-based silent reading fluency program called Reading Plus on reading comprehension and achievement. A total of 16,143 students in grades four through 10 participated in the study; 5,758 students were in the treatment group and 10,385 made up the control group. Students in the treatment group were involved in online lessons for 90 minutes per week either over two or three days. The researchers found students who participated in the program for a minimum of 20 hours over approximately six months made significantly greater gains on both criterion-referenced and norm-referenced reading tests than the control group participants. Students participating in the program also demonstrated greater gains on the criterion-reference test than the mean gains for the state and district.

Daniels, Marcos, and Steres's (2011) case study examined a middle school where a new principal had made school-wide reading a top priority. The researchers wanted to find out how and why the culture shift to school-wide reading appeared to influence student engagement. All

of the sixth, seventh, and eighth graders attending the middle school experienced the school-wide reading culture. One hundred eight students and seventeen teachers participated in the study through individual interviews and/or group discussions. Researchers studied the transcribed interviews to find themes explaining why most people at school were reading more. They found three conditions contributing to an increased desire to read. The conditions were: (a) making reading a priority, (b) modeling and support from adults, and (c) creating motivating learning environments.

Factors Contributing to Effective Sustained Silent Reading Programs

       Time spent reading. In a Renaissance (2018) study of the reading practices of more than 9.9 million students over the 2015-2016 school year, researchers found more than half of the students read less than 15 minutes per day. This is important because students who read 15 minutes or more per day saw reading gains higher than the national average. In an analysis of more than 174,000 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) scores from 15-year-old students, researchers found a student's level of reading engagement was more highly correlated with their reading achievement than their socioeconomic status.

       Faggella-Luby and Wardwell (2011) conducted a study to investigate the effects of three treatment conditions of instruction on 86 at-risk fifth and sixth grade students in an urban middle school. Students were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: Story Structure (SS) instruction, Typical Practice (TP) delivered by a reading specialist, or Sustained Silent Reading (SSR). The researchers found the SSR means were inconsistent in relation to the TP means resulting in small to moderate effect sizes. For the sixth graders, mean scores were higher for students in the SS and TP conditions than for students in the SSR condition. Similarly, fifth graders in the SSR condition scored equal to or slightly below the means of the SS condition

students and above the means for the TP condition students. It is important to note this study raises some skepticism due to the small sample size which limited statistical comparisons.

Rodriguez and Lira (1998) designed a study focused on 41 eighth graders from a South Texas middle school, who read self-selected books for 30 minutes, five days per week to determine whether increased reading time and book self-selection would improve their reading achievement and/or the students' attitudes toward reading. The researchers used the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) reading scores for pre-test and post-test data. Although the researchers found no overall significant improvement in reading achievement, improved students' attitudes toward reading and the increase in the number of books read suggest the required reading should continue.

Samuels and Wu (2001) conducted a study to provide experimental evidence wherein more time spent reading produces higher achievement. The researchers studied the effects of allowing more versus less time for students to read independently. The control group consisted of 35 students who spent 15 minutes per day reading books. The experimental group included 37 students who spent 40 minutes per day reading books. Each group divided participants into two cells of students who were below grade and above or at grade level. All participants were students from one K- 6 elementary school in Minnesota. The researchers found more time spent reading had a significant effect on achievement compared to the control condition. They also found poor readers had greater gains in vocabulary with 15 minutes of reading, while good readers had greater gains on reading comprehension with 40 minutes.

Motivation to read. Why are students not reading? Cantrell, Rintamaa, Anderman, and Anderman (2018) define reading motivation as "the psychological forces (i.e., beliefs and values) that drive an individual to read" (p. 418). As Meece, Gleinke, and Burg (as cited by

Cantrell et al., 2018) point out, during adolescence, cultural influences and norms heavily influence decision making. As an aspiring researcher and observer of student behavior, I believe cultural influences and social norms influence students at the elementary level as well.

Encouraging children's intrinsic motivation can help achieve academic success (Adelman, 1978; Adelman & Taylor, 1983; Gottfried, 1985). Intrinsic motivation has been defined as the desire to engage in an activity purely for the sake of participating in and completing a task (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). Extrinsic motivators are the incentives adults give to entice the learner to participate in or complete an activity (Poonam, 1997). The incentives might be tangible or nontangible and include the avoidance of punishment. Extrinsic motivation can interfere with intrinsic motivation, especially in learning situations (Benninga et al., 1991). For this reason, it may be better to refrain from or consider carefully offering rewards for students' participation in or completion of an activity. Reynolds, Salend, and Beahan (1992) suggest educators could offer reinforcers related to academics or school activities to counter any negative effects of using extrinsic motivation. Academic intrinsic motivation has been found to be significantly correlated with academic achievement in students with (Gottfried, 1985) and without learning disabilities (Adelman, 1978; Adelman & Taylor, 1983).

Cantrell et al. (2018) examined reading motivation, behavior, and achievement across the transition from middle school to high school. The researchers also investigated how motivation predicts reading behavior and achievement across this transition. The study examined 1,781 rural, eighth grade students. A Likert-type survey was administered to students in the spring of their eighth grade year and again in the spring of their ninth grade year. The survey included an expectancy-related scale and a task value scale with three components: intrinsic value,

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attainment value, and utility value. The survey also included an out-of-school reading scale measuring the amount of time students spent reading for school and non-school purposes. The Group Reading and Diagnostic Evaluation, a nationally normed reading assessment, was also administered. The researchers found students reported increases in the extent to which they liked reading and the amount of time they spent reading, and received higher achievement scores for vocabulary after transitioning to high school. In the analysis of change in achievement, students' higher perceived intrinsic value and perceived utility value were strongly associated with increases in comprehension scores.

Anderman et al. (1996) conducted a study which examined the changes in students' valuing of reading during middle childhood and early adolescence. The researchers surveyed reading teachers for their instructional practices. Students were surveyed on their achievement motivation. Subjects included 140 third graders, 142 fifth graders, 248 sixth graders, and 54 teachers. Among other findings, the researchers found reading is valued less in middle school than in elementary. The researchers suggest certain instructional practices within the control of teachers, parents, and administrators relate to the changes in students' values.

Guthrie and Humenick (2004) reviewed the research evidence on the importance of motivation and classroom practices to foster motivation and engagement in reading. These researchers found several key motivations to reading, including (a) interest, (b) confidence, (c) dedication, (d) persistence, (e) value of knowledge, and (f) value for the future. The researchers also put forth specific practices to impact student motivation. Those practices include making reading relevant, providing choices, assuring the likelihood of success, allowing collaboration with peers, emphasizing the importance of reading, creating thematic units, and promoting positive teacher-student relationships.

Siah and Kwok (2010) explored the association between students' value of reading and their behavior during sustained silent reading (SSR). One question the researchers sought to answer was whether there was a significant association between students' value of reading and their level of engagement during SSR. Study participants included 362 students in Hong Kong roughly the equivalent of seventh grade. For 20 minutes each day students participated in a SSR period with self-selected books. A questionnaire was used to collect data. The researchers found more students in the high value of reading group than in the low value of reading group reported they were self-motivated to read leisure books during the SSR period. The researchers concluded SSR programs are more effective for students who have a high value of reading. Research suggests schools should encourage parents to join their children in reading activities at home.

Access to a variety of self-selected texts. Foertsch's (2003) study examined the characteristics of reading programs at schools where students have demonstrated consistently high achievement in reading in grades one through twelve. The researcher selected 10 schools to study including three elementary, four middle /junior highs, and three high schools. Data were collected from a teacher questionnaire, interviews, and test information. One of the four research questions guiding the research was: What are the critical features of successful reading programs? One key finding emerged consistently from interviews and teacher questionnaires. Exemplary programs provide students with many opportunities to read and write during the school day. These students read self-selected materials and have the opportunity to discuss their readings with peers.

Allington et al. (2010) conducted a longitudinal experimental study to test the hypothesis wherein providing elementary school students from low-income families with self-selected trade books could erase summer reading setback. The researchers randomly selected 852 students to

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receive the books on the last day of school before summer break for three years. A control group

of 478 students were randomly selected to receive no books. The researchers found a statistically

significant increase in Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT) performance for the

treatment students when compared to the control group. In this particular research, there were

also positive effects on the reading achievement of the students from the lowest income families

in the study.

Motivation to read and reading achievement are higher when the classroom environment

is rich in reading materials and includes books from an array of genres and text types (Guthrie,

Hoa, Wigfield, Tonks, Humenick, & Littles, 2007). We might expect increasing the number of

books and other reading materials available in the classroom will have a positive effect on the

amount and quality of reading experiences of students (Gambrell, 2011).

Conclusion

This review of literature has shown the need for improved reading achievement for

students' future successes both in school and beyond. Research studies by both Slavin et al.

(2008) and Hernandez (2011) highlight the dire consequences for students who remain poor

readers.

Research has also given us evidence of the effectiveness of SSR. The assertion increased

time spent reading leads to increased reading achievement is supported by the research of Fisher

(2004), Rasinski et al. (2001), Renaissance (2018), Reutzel et al. (2012), Rodriguez and Lira

(1998), and Samuels and Wu (2011). The need for students to find value in reading is revealed

in the work of Anderman et al. (1996), Cantrell et al. (2018), Guthrie and Humenick (2004), and

Siah and Kwok (2010). Additionally, the review has provided elements of effective SSR

programs which include (a) spending 15-30 minutes per day reading; (b) building motivation to

read; and (c) allowing students to self-select texts. A case study of an effective implementation is also presented. This information was used in the development of the action plan. Chapter Three, will discuss the development of the plan, as well as the methods and evaluation of the action plan.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND METHODS

Introduction

The goal of this mixed-methods, action research study was to increase reading achievement for second and third grade students of Lester Elementary. Specifically, I explored the effects of increased time spent reading, access to and self-selection of books, and motivation to read on reading proficiency. I wanted to find the answer to the following central question: Will the implementation of this action research plan increase the number of students reaching proficiency or higher in reading as measured by STAR.

The following quantitative and qualitative questions were used to guide data collection, analysis, and discussion. These questions helped determine if the program was effective at reaching the desired outcome and how we might improve the program in the future.

Quantitative

1. What are Lester Elementary second and third grade students' self-reported attitudes toward reading before and after participating in Ready, Set, Read!?

2. After implementing Ready, Set, Read!, did the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on STAR increase by five percentage points?

Qualitative

1. Were students provided 30 minutes daily to engage in independent reading, and to what extent were students actively engaged in reading during independent reading time?

2. To what extent did students have access in the classroom to at least 50 books of appropriate reading levels?

3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Ready, Set, Read!'s implementation, and how could it be improved?

This study took place at Lester Elementary (pseudonym) which is a kindergarten through third grade elementary school. It is the only elementary school in the Akili School District and has an enrollment of 392 students. For this study's sample, only the 190 second and third grade students and eight teachers were selected as participants.

Chapter Three presents the three parts of this applied research study's design and methods. First, I describe how the plan was developed and the data and research used to guide its development. Next, I present a description of the elements and goals of the plan, as well as a timeline and list of resources needed to implement the plan. Finally, Chapter Three provides details of the evaluation plan and include the formative and summative evaluation methods, the types of data collected, the subjects and sources of the data, and surveys and protocols used in this action research.

Development of the Action Plan

When I entered this doctoral program and started working on addressing a problem of practice, I was the interventionist at Lester Junior High (pseudonym) which is Akili District's only seventh and eighth grade campus. Before my placement here, there had never been an interventionist at Lester Junior High. I was a part of the leadership team which included a principal and instructional coach. During my first two years in that role, I had noticed students' strong aversion to reading in their free time. I was also very aware of the low reading proficiency levels of our students. Only 17% of our seventh graders and 16% of our eighth graders scored

proficient or advanced on the 2018 state assessment. In 2018, the school became an F rated school after being a D rated school the previous three years. I decided to address this problem of low reading proficiency and low motivation to read which plagued the students of Lester Junior High.

After a busy year of reviewing research studies concerning motivating middle school students to read and what raises proficiency levels for students in middle school as well as collaborating with the principal and instructional coach about a plan to implement, I was moved to the elementary school and became its fourth principal in seven years. I discovered Lester Elementary students were also reluctant readers who were similarly not performing well in reading proficiency on state assessments. Unfortunately, for me, it was now the time in this doctoral program to start implementing a collaborative plan of action on a problem of practice.

When I started work at Lester Elementary the first of July, I was literally the only person in the building. Everybody was on vacation and the building was a wreck. School was starting in one month, and I needed to hire five general education teachers, two inclusion teachers, and one interventionist. Needless to say, there was not much collaboration possible.

I began to delve into the school's data concerning reading. Lester Elementary was a D rated school according to Mississippi's accountability model. In 2018, 68% of the 88 third graders scored below proficient on the MAAP Reading assessment. Forty-six percent of the third graders did not make the score required by LBPA for promotion to fourth grade. Subsequent retests resulted in 23% of the students ultimately failing to reach the score; however, about half of these students met criteria for LBPA's good cause exemptions to move on to fourth grade. Good cause exemptions for promotion are limited to the following students: (a) Limited English proficient students who have had less than two years of instruction in an English Learner

program; (b) Students with disabilities whose Individualized Education Program (IEP) indicates participation in the statewide accountability assessment program is not appropriate, as authorized under state law; (c) Students with a disability who participate in the state annual accountability assessment and who have an IEP or a Section 504 Plan that reflects that the individual student has received intensive remediation in reading for more than two years but still demonstrates a deficiency in reading or previously was retained in kindergarten or first, second or third grade; (d) Students who demonstrate an acceptable level of reading proficiency on an alternative standardized assessment approved by the State Board of Education; and (e) Students who have received intensive intervention in reading for two or more years but still demonstrate a deficiency in reading and who previously were retained in kindergarten or first, second or third grade for a total of two years and have not met exceptional education criteria.

I enlisted the help of the instructional coach to examine the school's master schedule and to find out more about how reading instruction was being delivered at Lester Elementary. Even though there was a 60-minute reading block for every grade, teachers were not using the Journeys text purchased by the district. Teachers were using PowerPoints and text selections found from internet searches. The schedule also included 30 minutes for ALS (Advanced Learning Seminar). The ALS class was included at the direction of the superintendent and is found in every school's master schedule. This time was allotted to work on vocabulary acquisition, language arts, and writing skills with a lesson presented by the teacher, worksheets completed by the students, and weekly tests to determine mastery.

Once the school year began, I was able to analyze beginning of year (BOY) STAR data for second and third grade. Second grade BOY STAR data revealed only 21% of the 89 students were proficient in reading. Results were very similar for third grade with only 19% of the 93

students scoring proficient in reading. It became apparent low reading achievement was a systemic and pervasive problem for students at Lester Elementary.

Several studies indicate students who spend more time reading have higher reading achievement (Faggella-Luby & Wardwell, 2011; Fisher, 2004; Krashen, 1993; Rasinski, Samuels, Hiebert, Petscher, & Feller, 2011; Renaissance, 2018; Reutzel, Spichtig, & Petscher, 2012; Samuels & Wu, 2001). Given the teaching practices which provide little time for students to spend with quality text and our students' lack of motivation to read in their free time, we must find the means and opportunity for students to devote additional minutes each day engaged in reading.

This review revealed motivation to read as another important aspect of reading achievement. Many researchers have explored the effects of motivation to read on reading achievement and found associations (Anderman, Eccles, Roeser, Yoon, Blumenfeld, & Wigfield, 1996; Guthrie & Humenick, 2004). We must become intentional about motivating students to read.

Lastly, my research led me to a third discovery important to increasing reading achievement. Foertsch (2003) and Allington et al. (2010) pointed out the need for students to be able to choose the books they would read. The review of this body of research informed the selection of three elements of this plan to address my problem of practice: (a) provide 30 minutes of independent reading time; (b) increase motivation to read (c) allow students to self-select books to read.

The Logic Model provided in Table 1outlines the inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes from the program. It offers details of the measureable goals and objectives, and presents the desired outcomes of the program.

Table 1

Logic Model

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes Short term	Medium term	Long term
What we invest	What we do	Direct products from program activities	Changes in knowledge, opinions, skills, or attitude	Changes in behavior or action that result from new knowledge	Meaningful changes in condition or status in life
Time in the daily schedule	Students read independently or listen to their teacher read	Students spend at least 30 minutes reading daily	Fluency, word recognition, comprehension skills increase	Students will increase their reading proficiency	Students will increase their likelihood of graduating high school
Access to books	Ensure every classroom has a classroom library	Students are able to choose books to read throughout the day	Students develop a habit of reading	Students will choose to read in their free time	Students will be exposed to vocabulary and information they would not have been otherwise
Funds for rewards	Provide incentives and rewards for reading achievements	Students will receive extrinsic motivation to read	Students will begin to enjoy reading as they become more fluent readers	Students will see the value in reading	Students will make reading for enjoyment and information a habit

Description of the Action Plan

The action plan involves the attempt to increase reading proficiency by creating a positive culture for reading, setting high expectations for reading volume, providing access to self-selected books, and scheduling time at school to read. This description of the plan includes details of the three elements and the goals of each. It also includes a timeline for implementation and evaluation, as well as details regarding persons responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the elements.

Increase time spent reading. The first goal of this element is to provide students with 30 minutes each day for independent reading. The second goal is for students to be actively engaged in reading during the time provided. Because of the extreme importance of this element, we must

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not leave it up to parents to regulate and inforce. For this reason, the instructional coach and I met in July to discuss how we could allocate 30 minutes each day in the master schedule for independent reading. We decided to use the ALS time for our Ready, Set, Read! program. I met with the superintendent about this plan and was given the permission to do so. Starting in August, teachers guarded this time and ensured students were quietly engaged, and the leadership team monitored for effective implementation. No additional resources were needed for implementation and the scheduled time replaced a block of time already in the daily master schedule.

Provide access to and self-selection of books. The goal of this element was for all teachers to create and maintain space in their rooms for a classroom library with at least 50 books on levels within the zone of proximal development (ZPD) for the students in their class. Before school started, teachers worked to create inviting reading areas in their rooms. I gathered and analyzed classroom library inventory data to ensure students had access to an appropriate supply of books. Surplus books from the school library were added to the classroom libraries as needed to satisfy this goal. Teachers were also encouraged to check out books from the library to supplement and refresh their classroom selection to maintain student interest in their classroom libraries.

Increase motivation and attitude toward reading. The goal of this final element was to develop in our students a positive attitude toward reading by recognizing and celebrating accomplishments in reading volume and growth in reading achievement. Each month recognition was given and privileges were granted to students who reached established point goals in AR and growth of reading level in STAR. The leadership team was responsible for the recognitions and celebrations and funds from the activity budget were used to support this endeavor. In August I

met with the director of the Lester County Library System to discuss monthly visits to the library by our students. Students were encouraged to get personal library cards and check out books at the county library also.

Evaluation of the Action Plan

Every year schools and districts across the country spend millions of dollars on programs designed to improve the knowledge, skills, and performance of students in various areas both academic and behavioral. These dollars are spent expecting these programs will improve outcomes for children. Given such a huge investment, there must be a way to ensure the effectiveness of these programs. The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE) was formed to address the need for rigorous standards to guide the evaluation of programs (Yarbrough, Shulha, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2011). Yarborough, et al. (2011) point out the standards are voluntary consensus statements and are not intended to be used as exact procedures to be followed.

This program evaluation assessed the effectiveness and impact of Ready, Set, Read! on second and third graders at Lester Elementary. Specifically, the goal was to find out what, if any, impact Ready, Set, Read! had on the students' attitudes toward reading and their reading proficiency. Because the intent was to determine the impact of the program, pre- and post-surveys were used in what Janet Wall (n.d.) calls a change design for evaluation.

The purpose of this evaluation plan was to provide an overview of the purposeful, systematic, and careful collection and analysis of data for the purpose of documenting the effectiveness and impact of Ready, Set, Read! It was also used to establish accountability and identify areas needing change and improvement.

Table 2

Evaluation Chart

Question	Data Collected	Collection Method	Source/ Subject	When Collected	Analysis	Purpose Type
Were students provided 30 minutes daily to engage in independent reading, and to what extent were students actively engaged in reading during Ready, Set, Read!?	Class schedules Documentation of student behaviors	Document review Observa-tional checklist of behaviors Open-ended survey	Teachers 2nd and 3rd grade classes All 2nd and 3rd grade teachers	August December April 1 October	Frequency count of schedules with reading time; Frequency count of active versus unengaged reading behaviors	Process
To what extent did students have access in the classroom to at least 50 books of appropriate reading levels?	Classroom library inventory record	Document review	Classroom libraries	October	Frequency count of books on appropriate levels	Process
What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Ready, Set, Read!'s implementation, and how could it be improved?	Perceptions of program's implementation strengths, and weaknesses	Focus groups Open-ended survey	Stratified sampling of 2nd and 3rd grade boys and girls; All 2nd and 3rd grade teachers	May May	Document review of notes and surveys for themes	Sum-mative
What are Lester Elementary 2nd and 3rd grade students' self-reported attitudes toward reading before and after participating in Ready, Set, Read!?	Survey of attitudes toward reading	Pre and Post Reading Attitude Survey	2nd and 3rd grade students	September May	Comparison of means from pre-and post-tests	Outcome
After implementing Ready, Set, Read!, did the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on STAR increase by five percentage points?	Students' reading proficiency levels	STAR test	2nd and 3rd grade students	August May 15 August February	Comparison of percentage of students scoring proficient or above	Outcome

This action plan involved the attempt to increase reading proficiency by creating a positive culture for reading, providing access to self-selected books, and scheduling time at school to read. Table 2 provides details of how each research question was answered from the

data collected and its analysis. It also contains a timeline for implementation and evaluation, as well as details regarding the sources of the data collected.

To evaluate the goal to increase time spent reading, the leadership team reviewed classroom schedules and observed classrooms during walk-throughs. This was done throughout the program to determine if any change or improvement is needed. The team discussed during regular leadership team meetings, what was observed and if additional supports were needed.

The goal of the second element was for all teachers to create and maintain space in their rooms for a classroom library with at least 50 books on levels within the zone of proximal development (ZPD) for the students in their class. This element was evaluated through a document review of the classroom library inventories by the researcher. Analysis was by frequency count of books on appropriate reading levels for the students in the classroom. This was done so teachers could add to their classroom libraries to ensure books of appropriate levels were available in their classrooms.

The goal of the final element was to develop positive attitudes and increase motivation in our students toward reading by recognizing and celebrating accomplishments in reading volume and growth in reading achievement. To determine whether attitudes toward reading have improved, a pre- and post- Reading Attitude Survey was planned. This outcome data would have helped us determine the need for improvement of our motivation efforts in future implementation years. Because of COVID-19, we were only able to administer the pre- assessment.

This program evaluation sought to answer: Did we reach the desired outcome of improved reading proficiency? How can we improve the program for future implementation? The analysis of pre- and post- STAR data helped us determine if proficiency rates increased. The pre- and post- Reading Attitude Survey would have told us if our motivation strategies helped

improve attitudes toward reading and whether we would need to do more in years to come to motivate our students. I was not able to complete the student focus groups, but they would have helped determine if implementation was done effectively, whether reading attitudes improved, whether the program should continue, and whether changes should be made. The open-ended teacher surveys did provide insight into aforementioned areas.

Stakeholders are the people who have a vested interest in the organization. It is important for stakeholders to be a part of the evaluation of programs of an organization, because involvement leads to stakeholder buy-in and acceptance of results. Often when stakeholders in the school context are listed, we find parents, teachers, administrators, and sometimes students. Often missing from the list is the municipality where the school is located. Towns and cities have a direct interest in the success of their schools. Schools and school districts can have a tremendous impact on the attractiveness of the community to businesses and families contemplating a move to the city. Schools can serve as an enticement to choose a community to move into or as a deterrent.

Table 3 names stakeholders, their interest, their role in the program, and their role in the evaluation.

Table 3

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder	Interest(s) or Perspective(s)	What will the benefit(s) be for this stakeholder?	What will be this individual's role(s) in the *program*?	What will be this individual's role(s) in the *evaluation*?
2nd and 3rd grade students	self	• increased reading achievement • improved life outcomes • increased success in school	• participant	• complete surveys (pre/post) • interview/focus group participation • complete pre/post STAR assessments
Teachers	self altruistic	• better assessment data • increased perceived effectiveness • improved student outcomes	• implementer- provide access to books, celebrate student successes, and establish a reading culture • evaluator- ongoing program development feedback (formative)	• answer interview questions • participate in focus groups (summative) • answer open-ended survey
Leadership team members	self altruistic	• improved accountability rating for the school • improved student outcomes	• decision makers • allocate time in schedule for independent reading • monitor implementation • plan implementation improvements	• gather data (STAR, survey, interview) • analyze data (STAR, survey, interview) • evaluate effectiveness • report outcomes
Community Readers	altruistic	• personal satisfaction • participation in effort to improve student outcomes	• partners • reading aloud to students • reading one-on-one with students	• report outcomes in community
Parents	self	• improved student achievement for child	• encourage their child to read • provide incentives for reading accomplishments • make reading a family activity • speak positively about reading • show interest in what their child is reading	• report outcomes in community

Conclusion

  The goal of this action research design study was to improve reading proficiency for students at Lester Elementary, specifically by providing time to read, access to books, and motivation to read. This plan was developed following a thorough review of the research and literature on best practices for increasing reading achievement. The evaluation of the plan was focused on determining not only whether reading proficiency improved but also how we could improve the program in the future. Chapter Four will describe the results and findings of the research.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter will present the results of this applied research with a program evaluation. I will present findings for each research question and include charts and tables to deepen the understanding of the results. After reading this chapter, the connections between the elements of the action plan and the results of the research should be clear. This chapter will also answer whether the improvement goals were met, if there were changes in the behaviors or attitudes of stakeholders, and what improvements need to be implemented going forward.

Teaching students to read is an important function of the primary school grades, and if not done well, students are at risk for many adverse life outcomes. The second and third graders at Lester Elementary are experiencing considerable deficits in reading achievement, do not engage in reading for enjoyment, and spend little if any time reading at home.

The intended effect of this applied research was to increase reading achievement for our second and third grade students. The action plan in this study included the elements of increasing students' time spent reading, providing access to books, and cultivating motivation to read. To guide the research and analysis, two quantitative questions were articulated to determine if we met our stated achievement and motivation goals, as well as three qualitative research questions developed to evaluate our program's effectiveness and gain insight on needed improvements. The research quantitative questions are:

1. What are Lester Elementary second and third grade students' self-reported attitudes toward reading before and after participating in Ready, Set, Read!?

2. After implementing Ready, Set, Read!, did the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on STAR increase by five percentage points?

The qualitative questions are:

1. Were students provided 30 minutes daily to engage in independent reading, and to what extent were students actively engaged in reading during independent reading time?

2. To what extent did students have access in the classroom to at least 50 books of appropriate reading levels?

3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Ready, Set, Read!'s implementation, and how could it be improved?

It has been documented through research if students enter high school without adequate literacy skills, they are less likely to graduate or receive postsecondary education (Slavin, Cheung, Groff, & Lake, 2008, p. 290). If our students do not gain competency in reading by third grade, they are four times more likely not to graduate from high school than proficient readers (Hernandez, 2011). For these reasons educators must create an intense focus toward making sure students leave third grade reading proficiently. I hoped this research would provide a simple yet effective way for school leaders and classroom teachers to support positive gains in students' reading achievement.

Quantitative Research Question 1

The first research question asked, "What are Lester Elementary second and third grade students' self-reported attitudes toward reading before and after participating in Ready, Set,

Read!?" The results for attitudes before program implementation are presented on the following pages.

Second and third grade students were given a Reading Attitude Survey (RAS) at the beginning of the 2019/2020 school year. There were 10 questions on the inventory soliciting their sentiments on a range of ideas including how students felt about reading in various situations, receiving a book, and visiting the library. Students responded to each question by selecting a facial expression which indicated how they felt about the situation presented in the question. Each response was characterized with the rating system found in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Reading Attitude Survey Scale

Student Selection	Points Assigned	Label Given
	0	Very Unhappy
	1	Somewhat Unhappy
	2	Somewhat Happy
	3	Very Happy

Before implementing the Ready, Set, Read! Program, third grade students reported having somewhat happy feelings overall toward reading with an average of 2.06 on a zero to three scale. Second grade students also reported somewhat happy feelings toward reading, but with a slightly higher average of 2.29. Both boys and girls in the third grade reported feeling somewhat happy about reading with averages of 2.01 and 2.13 respectively. Second grade boys

and girls also reported somewhat happy feelings about reading with slightly higher averages of 2.26 and 2.32 respectively. These averages are represented in the Survey Results by Gender for Fall 2019 RAS as illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4

Survey Results of Fall 2019 RAS

	Girls Average	Boys Average	Overall
2nd Grade	2.32	2.26	2.29
3rd Grade	2.13	2.01	2.06
Difference	0.19	0.25	0.23

Note: N count for 2nd grade is 81 and for 3rd graded is 86.

As shown below in Table 5, there were a variety of responses from students across both grades. Third graders answered with a three 48% of the time, a two 25%, a one 13%, and a zero 14% of the time. For second graders, 59% of the responses were a three, 22% were a two, eight % were a one, and 11% were a zero.

Table 5

Percentage of Selected Responses on RAS

	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	Difference
Very Unhappy	11%	14%	3%
Somewhat Unhappy	8%	13%	5%
Somewhat Happy	22%	25%	3%
Very Happy	59%	48%	11%

For survey question nine, which asked, "How do you feel about going to the library?" both grades recorded the highest average response generating a 2.70 for second grade with 62 of the 81 students choosing three and an average of 2.71 for third grade with 68 of the 86 students selecting three. Students felt happiest about the prospect of going to the library.

Survey question eight asked students, "How do you feel about reading instead of playing?" Students in both grades agreed on the undesirableness of reading instead of playing and gave it the most zeroes. Second graders responded with 29 zeroes for an average of 1.46, and third graders responded with 46 zeroes for an average of 0.90.

As shown in the Table 6, students in both grades also felt very happy about question six which asked, "How do you feel about starting a new book?" and question 10 which asked, "How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?" indicating positive attitudes toward having a variety of books from which to choose. For question six, 63 of 81 second graders and 49 of 86 third graders selected three which is the highest mark. For Question 10, 57 of 81 second graders and 60 of 86 third graders chose three indicating they were very happy about reading different kinds of books.

Table 6

Average Response by Question on RAS

	2nd Grade	3rd Grade
Q1	2.30	2.47
Q2	2.37	2.40
Q3	2.43	1.90
Q4	2.24	1.86
Q5	2.24	1.90
Q6	2.64	2.50
Q7	1.99	1.41
Q8	1.46	0.90
Q9	2.70	2.71
Q10	2.58	2.61

We attempted to influence students' attitudes and motivation toward reading by celebrating their accomplishments. We gave "shout outs" during morning announcements, posted students' photographs on a bulletin board in the hallway, and had pizza with the principal. The students seemed to enjoy the attention for their achievements and others were encouraged to strive harder.

Because of Lester Elementary closing in response to COVID 19 in the spring semester of 2020, I was not able to collect end-of-year survey results. While this prevented a comparison of pre- and post- results, the data collected from the beginning of the year was valuable and will help inform implementation plans going forward. More discussion of this aspect will be provided in Chapter 5 of this document.

Quantitative Research Question 2

Research question two asked, "After implementing Ready, Set, Read!, did the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on STAR increase by five percentage points?"

We completed STAR assessments twice during the 2019/2020 school year. However, because of school closures due to COVID-19, end-of-year STAR assessments could not be administered as planned. The beginning of year test was administered in August and a mid-year assessment was administered in February. Because of the school closing, this February assessment became the final STAR assessment given for the school year. Results were used from these two testing points for the data presented in this research, even though the timespan was only six months instead of the normal nine months of a school year. In August and February, 100 students were tested from second as well as third grade. From the second graders, 23% of students scored proficient or above in August. A slight drop in scores occurred, with only 22% of second graders scoring proficient in February. Of the 100 third graders who completed the assessment in August of 2019, 20% of the students scored proficient or above. In February, 18% of the 100 third graders scored proficient or above. As illustrated in Table 7, girls in third grade averaged an increase of four percentage points by going from 17% proficient or above in August to 21% proficient or above in February.

Table 7

2nd and 3rd Grade Proficiency

Second Grade	August 2019	February 2020	Percent Change
Overall Proficiency	23%	22%	-4.40%
Girls Proficiency	31%	24%	-22.60%
Boys Proficiency	16%	20%	25%
Third Grade	August 2019	February 2020	Percent Change
Overall Proficiency	20%	18%	-10%
Girls Proficiency	17%	21%	23.50%
Boys Proficiency	23%	15%	-34.80%

Note: N count is 100 for 2nd grade and 100 for 3rd grade.

After analyzing the STAR data from August of 2019 and February of 2020, it is noted we did not meet our goal of increasing the number of students scoring proficient or above in reading by five percentage points. There was actually regression of one percentage point in second grade and two percentage points in third grade. However, after only six months of school, both second grade boys and third grade girls grew four percentage points. A frequency count of students scoring proficient is shown below in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Frequency Count of Students Scoring Proficient
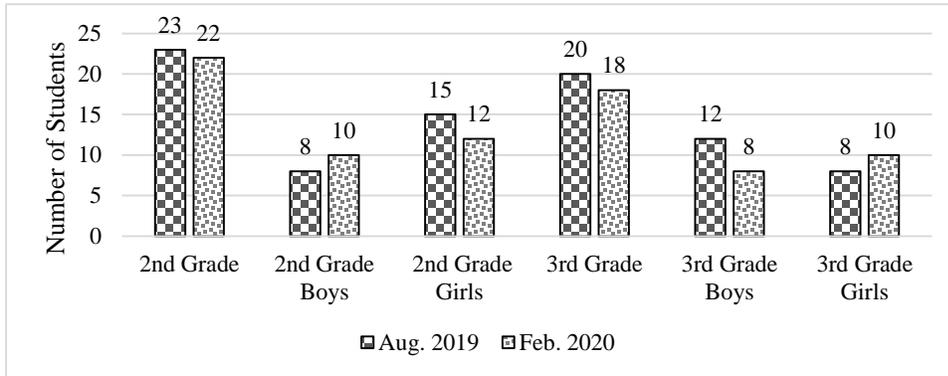
Although we did not find the increase in the number of students scoring proficient, we did find 23 second graders and 17 third graders experienced between one year and one year and four months of growth in just six months. In total, 10 second and third graders combined realized growth of one and a half years or more in the six months between STAR test administrations. Table 8 depicts the growth made by the second and third graders.

Table 8

Growth in Years and Months

	2.0 +	1.5-1.9	1.0-1.4	Totals
2nd Grade	2	5	23	30
3rd Grade	0	3	17	20
Totals	2	8	40	50

Qualitative Research Question 1

The first qualitative research question asks, "Were students provided 30 minutes daily to engage in independent reading, and to what extent were students actively engaged in reading during independent reading time?"

We rearranged the Lester Elementary daily schedule to include a 30-minute block of time for independent reading for all students in each grade. Advanced Learning Seminar (ALS) was replaced with Ready, Set, Read!. This time was guarded with limited interruptions from the office. When teachers were asked on their survey to, "Describe what your students are doing during Ready, Set, Read!" four of the five, or 80%, of respondents said their students were reading. The remaining teacher said choosing a book from the classroom library. School closures due to COVID 19 limited my ability to get the evidence needed to more thoroughly answer the aspect of engagement.

Qualitative Research Question 2

This question asked, "To what extent did students have access in the classroom to at least 50 books of appropriate reading levels?"

To answer this question a frequency count of classroom library books was completed. As shown in Figure 3 below, every class had access to more than 50 books of appropriate reading levels based on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) range for the students in each class, and all but two classrooms had more than twice the targeted for number of books. Analysis of the Classroom Library Inventory form revealed second grade classrooms had access to an average of 141 books and third graders had access to an average of 136 books.

Figure 3

Frequency Count of Books Per Classroom

Qualitative Research Question 3

The final research question asked, "What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Ready, Set, Read!'s implementation, and how could it be improved?"

The Teacher Survey Protocol was given to seven teachers. Of the seven administered, five (71%) of them were returned. Teacher survey responses were transcribed and analyzed for themes among the responses. Because schools were closed abruptly in March of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I was not able to administer the survey until we were back in school in the late fall of 2020. I do believe this time span may have generated data that may not be as robust as if it had been gathered closer to the time of program implementation. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5. Despite this less than ideal situation, I was pleased with the overall positive sentiments and recollections expressed by the teachers.

There were 10 questions presented on the Teacher Survey Protocol, and question three asked whether attitudes toward independent reading had changed since the implementation of

Ready, Set, Read!, and if so, how. A response was received from four of the five respondents and two of them indicated a positive change in the attitudes of students toward reading independently. Teachers reported "bolstered confidence" and having "more students who wanted to read." The two remaining respondents did not address the question asked.

Question eight of the Teacher Survey Protocol asked, "Has Ready, Set, Read! impacted student attitudes toward reading? If so, in what way?" Of the five respondents of the survey, four of them answered this question. All four of those responding, said attitudes of students were impacted in a positive way as a result of Ready, Set, Read!. One teacher said for her students, this time to read was "giving them the confidence and practice needed to become successful readers." Another teacher reported her students enjoyed listening to her read and this caused them to want to read what she was reading. Being able to read anywhere in the room was motivation for students in another responding teacher's classroom.

Question nine asked, "Has Ready, Set, Read! affected how much students are reading at school? If so, in what way?" Again, only four of the five teachers responded to this question, and all four indicated positive changes in students' volume of reading. One teacher surmised students in her room were encouraged to read when they saw their friend reading a particular book and then they wanted to read it also. Another teacher said, "The program has given my students more time to focus solely on reading. More importantly, reading something they enjoy." Self-selection of books is an important research-supported element of Ready, Set, Read! A third teacher reported seeing, "more students with a book and reading."

When examining question 10, we found only two of the five teachers responded to the question, "How can Ready, Set, Read! be improved?" One teacher said there was no

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improvement needed. The only other respondent suggested adding reading aloud to students "to create a culture of reading."

Conclusion

After presenting the results of the research, I can draw some conclusions regarding the implementation and effectiveness of Lester Elementary's action plan. The action plan contained three elements with goals for each of them. The first element was time spent reading and the goal was to increase the time spent reading by providing students with 30 minutes each day for independent reading. We met this goal by allocating 30 minutes in our school-wide daily schedule for students to read independently. Teachers reported students read alone or with partners and gained valuable time to practice reading.

The second element to the action plan was students' access to books in their classroom. The goal of the element was for every classroom to have at least 50 books in their classroom library. After completing a document review of the libraries, it was found every classroom had more than the expected 50 books in their libraries. Consistent access to a variety books is an important component of this program. Students reported in the attitudes survey they felt very happy about starting a new book and about reading different kinds of books.

The final element to this action plan was motivation and the goal was to increase students' positive attitudes toward reading. The desired outcome of increased motivation was students reading more and, consequently becoming better readers in the process. We were not able to report directly from student pre- and post- data because students were not able to complete the post-survey. However, from the Teacher Survey Protocol we found 100% of the respondents said students' attitudes about reading had improved.

The overall aim of this program was to increase reading proficiency in second and third graders by five percentage points. We did not meet this goal and actually saw regression in both grades. Despite not reaching this target, teachers reported positive changes in the number of students engaged in reading, improved attitudes toward reading, and students' motivation to read. There was even evidence of a culture shift emerging around reading. Teachers reported students now wanted to read what they saw their friends read or what they heard the teacher read aloud. At our school, this shift alone is worthy of note.

The final chapter presents discussion and conclusions regarding the program's effectiveness and needed improvements based on the data gathered. It also includes plans for my own future implementation and suggestions for others who may want to replicate this study or implement this program in their setting.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Introduction

In this applied research approach, the researcher has dual roles as a participant and evaluator in their own research. Osterman, Furman, and Sernak (2014) assert this research is conducted by practitioners in their own educational setting and aims at generating, implementing, and assessing an action plan to address a problem of practice. This, according to Osterman et al. (2014), "not only supports educational change but also contributes to the development of important leadership competencies" (p. 86). This researcher-as-participant model gives the researcher a unique and intimate perspective of the study. Researcher involvement in the research allows for prompt adjustments to be made in the program if needed for improvement.

The purpose of this applied research study was to increase the reading achievement of the second and third graders at Lester Elementary by exploring the effects of increased time spent reading, access and self-selection of books, and motivation to read on reading proficiency. One measure utilized for this study was the STAR reading assessment. The researcher chose this area for study because the ability to read is critical to the success in all future learning. Children who fail to gain necessary foundational skills for reading by the end of the first grade will likely fall further behind in school. Students who do not reach proficiency in reading by third grade quadruple their likelihood of leaving high school without a diploma (Hernandez, 2011). The

personal and economic costs of reading failure are enormous both while the student remains in school and long afterward.

I established in Chapter One the academic and cultural challenges facing Lester Elementary students and the dire need for deep-rooted change. The research base as well as my intuitive understanding of students needing to spend time reading to improve at reading, led to the focus of the current research on independent reading time. I outlined in Chapter Two the appropriate research related to independent reading time and the components of effective programs which informed the design of the plan. Because of my situation of starting as a new school principal during the summer, there was less stakeholder involvement in developing the plan than desired. In Chapter Three, I presented the elements and goals of the action plan, as well as, evaluation methods and data sources to be used. Chapter Four provided details of the results gathered from the evaluation of the program. This final chapter offers conclusions drawn from the findings, implications, limitations, and recommendations for future researchers and practitioners.

Discussion of Findings

The first research question asked about the self-reported student attitudes about reading. This study was designed to have pre- and post- survey data of students' attitudes. Our school physically closed in March of 2020 due to COVID 19, and we abruptly transitioned to online learning. For this reason, post- survey data was not gathered. I was surprised to find from the pre-survey data, students reported feeling somewhat happy about reading. This suggests to me even though our students struggle with reading proficiently, they still recognize its inherent value and realize its importance. These positive attitudes can indicate willingness to put forth the effort needed for improvement.

Going forward in future implementation, we should work to capitalize on these positive attitudes with more celebrations and activities focused on reading. Because boys indicated slightly less positive feelings than girls in both grades, we should spend time developing strategies to encourage boys to read. One thing I would like to do is invite athletes from our high school, Rust College, and the University of Mississippi to visit classrooms and read a book to the class. Having young men reading to our students may also encourage further development of the positive culture shift toward reading.

My observations during this research did reveal some difficulty engaging and motivating our boys to read. For this particular problem, Husband (2014) offers suggestions for increasing reading engagement in African-American boys specifically. He suggests having books that foster real world connections with readers and appeal to their personal interests. For African-American boys, he urges us to include in our book selection a variety of themes including: action, sports, super heroes, and non-fiction. I have found this preference to be true with my own third grade son, who rarely chooses a fiction book without my prompting. However, he is very engaged in books about athletes, cars, and sports.

When this study began, the ultimate goal was to improve reading achievement of the second and third grade students at Lester Elementary. The second research question asks if the number of students who scored proficient on the STAR assessment in reading increase by five percentage points. This, unfortunately, did not happen. For both second and third grade students, there was a regression in the percentage of students scoring proficient. Second graders regressed by one percentage point and third graders by two points. When considering what might have contributed to students not attaining this goal, the shortened school year experienced by our students in the spring of 2020 due to COVID 19 deserves attention as a major factor. The two

data points taken for this study were in August of 2019 and February of 2020, which effectively gave us a six-month long school year. This left us with less time to implement the important practices for motivation and culture change.

When I initially uncovered these proficiency results, I was very disappointed the students had not done better than they did and even seemed to have done worse after program implementation. As I analyzed the data, I discovered the proficiency goal is a moving target. As the year progresses and students take the STAR assessment at various times, the score required for proficiency status changes to reflect the point in the school year the test is taken. In August, the score for proficiency was 251 for second grade and 393 for third, compared to 348 for second grade and 470 for third grade in February. In order to remain proficient, second graders would need a gain of 97 points and third graders would need to gain 77 points. I observed, of the 23 students who started as proficient in second grade, 15 of them did grow enough between the two testing dates to maintain proficiency. For third grade, 15 out of the 20 who started as proficient in August maintained proficiency on the February assessment.

Further analysis of the STAR data revealed 30 second graders and 20 third graders managed one year or more of growth in the six short months we were in school. I was extremely pleased with this discovery. This illuminates a very promising potential for growth. I realized because our students are entering second and third grade with severe deficits in reading with many of them being two or more grade levels behind, it may be an unrealistic goal to expect grade-level proficiency in one school year. Going forward, I will focus more attention on growth goals in addition to grade-level proficiency levels.

The third and fourth research questions address an allotted time in the school day for reading and access to books in the classroom. We met the goal on each of these areas with little

difficulty. There was a little concern from the district level regarding replacing the ALS time with our Ready, Set, Read! time. However, we were able to point out the importance of time spent reading based on the Renaissance study (2018) where students who read 15 or more minutes per day had reading gains higher than the national average. This notion is supported by Samuels and Wu (2001) who reported, from their experimental design study, more time spent reading by students in the experimental group, resulted in a significant effect on achievement.

Reliable access to books in the classroom was helped tremendously by the librarian supplying the books, which had to be moved from the library, to classroom teachers. This was completed the year before I became principal. Since the books were already provided, I only needed to ask teachers to organize them by reading level and create an inviting space in their room for children to select books and read.

The fifth and final research question delves into the strengths and weaknesses of the program and its implementation. There was 100% agreement from teachers, the program had impacted in a positive way how much the students were reading and had increased positive attitudes toward reading. This to me is a tremendous encouragement to continue the program. We want children to develop a joy for reading which will hopefully last a lifetime. We accept there are pros and cons to various forms of extrinsic motivation; however, encouraging a child's intrinsic motivation can help increase academic success (Adelman, 1978; Adelman & Taylor, 1983; Gottfried, 1985).

The only weakness noted from one teacher was the need to read aloud to students also. This shows a breakdown in communication of the expectations and allowances of the program. I often told teachers to also use their Ready, Set, Read! time to read aloud to students in addition to providing students with sustained silent reading time. Teachers could choose one day a week

to read from a longer literary work. Some teachers also used this time to read with one student at a time. I expressed to the faculty on many occasions the need for students to hear fluent reading as they practice becoming fluent readers and this was an appropriate time to do so. In the future, I will need to more effectively communicate the purpose, goals, and vision of the Ready, Set, Read! program with our stakeholders.

Because of COVID 19, the Teacher Survey Protocol was not administered in May of 2020 as planned. The survey was administered in October of 2020 which was a full year after initiating the Ready, Set, Read! program and seven months removed from the last occasion of teachers implementing the program. We did not collect the richness of data for which we had hoped. For example, only two respondents chose to answer question 10 which asked how the program could be improved. This question is extremely important to any program evaluation and only one respondent offered a suggestion for improvement. If asked when they were still in the midst of implementation, more information may have been elicited.

Another possible consequence of the delayed administration of the Teacher Survey Protocol is a reduction in the number of respondents. Instead of responses from the eight teachers who implemented the program, we were only able to survey the seven teachers who returned the following school year. Of the seven teachers who were given the survey, only five of them returned it. This could be the result of not being able to recall enough about the experience to offer answers.

Implications

Considering the fact our percentage of students scoring proficient did not increase by five percentage points, what usefulness can be found in this research study? Although we didn't experience the proficiency gains, we did have 30% of the second graders and 20% of the third

graders showing one year or more of growth in just six months. The results of this research, if based solely on the question of whether we increased proficiency by five percent, would indicate we failed. However, based on the findings of growth and improved attitudes, I believe the students benefitted from its implementation for the six short months we had.

For practical purposes, this action research lays out three important research based elements to include in a program to increase reading achievement. Because the elements are easy to implement and do not require a large financial commitment, they could be implemented at various levels by almost anyone. Not only could this intervention be replicated by an entire school district or school, but also in a single classroom, at a community center, or even at home by one family.

According to Yarbrough et al. (2011), "At its simplest, judgements about an evaluation's utility are made based on the extent to which program stakeholders find evaluation processes and products valuable to meeting their needs" (p. 4). The products of this research, which include the elements outlined, gains in achievement, and improved attitudes, are valuable to my context and could be to others as well. The program has great usability and could be used to inform decisions for those who value promoting a positive culture for reading. What we value is at the root of the decisions and judgments we make within our various leadership roles. Values shape the way we perceive and communicate information and can affect how we carry out any initiative.

Limitations

A major obstacle to this research was COVID 19 which emerged in the spring semester of the 2019/2020 school year. It was my objective to gather and analyze pre- and post- student attitude survey data as well as pre- and post- reading proficiency data following a full school

year of program implementation. That did not happen. Due to a lack of student post-survey data, the researchers cannot confirm an improvement in self-reported attitudes toward reading. I was, however, able to report teachers' perception of improved student attitudes toward reading based on the Teacher Survey Protocol.

The decision to measure success of the program by students reaching proficiency following one year of program implementation, may have been an unrealistic goal and a mistake on the part of the researchers. Much of the research reviewed reported reading gains and increased achievement instead of reaching proficiency (Fisher, 2004; Rasinski et al., 2011; Renaissance, 2018; Reutzel et al., 2012; Rodriguez & Lira, 1998; Samuels & Wu, 2001). Despite the limitations of this study, we gained valuable knowledge regarding student growth potential, perceptions, and attitudes which can help inform decisions for the future.

Another possible limitation of this study was the appeal of the selection of books available to the students in their classroom libraries. Because the books were those being discarded from our school library, they were mostly old and heavily used books. Although still very useable, they were not very enticing for already reluctant readers. Along this same vein, not all teachers gave equal attention to creating an inviting classroom library. In the future, I need to explore funding sources for new books for classroom libraries and incentives for teachers to creating reading areas that will encourage students to spend time with a book.

Recommendations

Extensive research has been conducted regarding students and reading achievement. One suggested change in the methodology used here would be to focus on student growth as a measure of success instead of proficiency. This will account for the varying levels students are

on at the beginning of the intervention program. This will likely provide a more accurate reflection of the effectiveness and impact of the program.

For fellow practitioners in the school setting who desire to implement a similar program, it is important to include all three of the elements presented in this research. Collectively, the three elements - time, access, and motivation - are integral to the success of the program. Imagine implementing any two elements without the third one, it amounts to a stool with just two of its legs. Elimination of either component will likely be counterproductive to the desired outcomes.

In addition to setting aside the time in the school's daily schedule, I would also recommend practitioners actively involve parents in the program by encouraging the adults to set aside time at home to read with or to their child and provide incentives for their children to do so. School leaders should also celebrate reading accomplishments often at the school when students reach goals and make gains. As suggested by Reynolds et al. (1992), leaders should offer academic related incentives like books or participation in special school activities to offset any adverse effects of extrinsic motivation.

Based on what I learned, I also recommend starting Ready, Set, Read! in first grade. Results from the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey show third graders had slightly less positive attitudes toward reading than their second grade counterparts. I suggest we should start earlier with systematic efforts aimed at motivating students to read, in hopes the enthusiasm for reading will grow over the years instead of decline as was indicated in this study.

Conclusion

The undertaking to improve reading achievement at Lester Elementary was, in my evaluation, an extremely worthwhile endeavor. Even though we did not reach the desired

outcome of more students reaching proficiency, our students definitely showed remarkable growth over the six short months we were together at school. I began to see a shift in the culture around reading with students expressing more positive attitudes about reading, students reading more books, and students showing an organic interest in reading. In the upcoming year it will be important for me to increase the motivation strategies, particularly for our boys. We should also involve parents more strategically, educate them of the importance of this work, and encourage them to implement the elements at home.

One very promising strategy for parental involvement in reading was our Weekend Reading Fun assignment. Each Friday students were given this assignment on pink paper to be easily recognized. The directions were for parents to share a book with their child and ask them the four simple questions provided: 1. What is the title of the book? 2. Who or what was the book mostly about? 3. Did the book tell a story or give you information? 4. What happened in the story or what three facts did you learn? The parent could write the child's responses so the joy gained from the experience would not be lost by having to struggle to write answers. The child could then draw a picture related to the book. This was well received by our parents.

This initiative, if done well, could really create significant change in the lives of our students. That is, after all, our greatest call as social justice leaders. Social justice leadership requires an effort to fully understand the context in which our school is situated and the external forces which influence what happens inside our schools. Once an understanding is gained, social justice leadership calls for working to overcome those issues. Public schools serving children in poverty have become very effective at maintaining and perpetuating the educational outcomes and social positions of the students they serve. A social justice leader, on the other hand, seeks to show students a way out of the social and class position they find themselves in and improve

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their life outcomes. Giving students a strong academic foundation and cultivating a love for reading, could go a long way toward improving their chances of a positive life outcome.

I am reminded of <u>Gifted Hands</u> (1990), the autobiography of Dr. Ben Carson. It details the life of neurosurgeon, Carson, who grew up in poverty and was raised along with his brother by their mother after being abandoned by their father when he was eight. Ben Carson was failing in school so his mother began limiting her sons' television time and requiring both boys to read two books each week and write a report on what they had read. Carson realized when he was older his mother likely could not even read the reports they had written, because she only had a third grade education. Even with her limited education, their mother instinctively knew reading more could change her sons' lives, and it did. I share this belief, and it is the reason this work is so very important.

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List of Appendices

Appendix A

Classroom Library Inventory	
Teacher	Grade
# of students	ZPD range for class
	–

AR Book Level	# of books in each AR range	
	F	NF
0.1-0.5		
0.6-0.9		
1.0-1.5		
1.6-1.9		
2.0-2.5		
2.6-2.9		
3.0-3.5		
3.6-3.9		
4.0-4.5		
4.6-4.9		
5.0-6.0		
>6.1		
# of Books		
Total # of Books		

Appendix B

Student Focus Group Protocol

Research Topic

Lester Elementary second and third grade Students' attitude toward reading

Research Question(s)

How do students at Lester Elementary describe their attitude toward reading?

How was Ready, Set, Read! implemented at Lester Elementary?

Statement of Consent

Thank you for agreeing to talk to me about your feelings about reading and Ready, Set, Read! at Lester Elementary. The information you share with me will be used to help me understand students' attitudes toward reading and the Ready, Set, Read! program at Lester Elementary. Your participation is completely voluntary and there are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions. No one will know what answers you gave. While the interviews will be tape-recorded, the typed interviews will NOT contain any mention of your name. Your name or other identifiable information will not be attached to any reports that we write. I want you to feel comfortable sharing your experiences with me. Is it ok with you to continue?

Icebreaker Questions

What's your favorite game to play with your friends?

What do you like to do on the weekends?

Attitude toward Reading

1. How do you feel about reading a book in your free time?
2. Can you tell me about a time you talked to a friend about a book you were reading?
3. Have you ever gotten a book for a gift? How did you feel about getting it?
4. What's your favorite kind of book to read?
5. How does reading a book make you feel?
6. What is the best thing about reading?
7. What is the worst thing about reading?

Ready, Set, Read!

8. What do you do during Ready, Set, Read!?
9. How did you feel about your school having Ready, Set, Read!?
10. Is there a way we could make Ready, Set, Read! better?
11. Has Ready, Set, Read! been helpful to you? If so, in what way?
12. Is there anything you like about Ready, Set, Read!? If so, what?
13. Is there anything you don't like about Ready, Set, Read!? If so, what?
14. Do you think we should continue or end the Ready, Set, Read!? Why?

Appendix C

Teacher Survey Protocol

Statement of Consent

Thank you for agreeing to answer some questions about Lester Elementary students' feelings about reading and the Ready, Set, Read! program. The information you me share with me will be used to help me understand students' attitudes toward reading and the implementation of Ready, Set, Read! at Lester Elementary. Your participation is completely voluntary and there are no anticipated risks related to this research. Several steps will be taken to protect your identity. Your name or other identifiable information will not be attached to any reporting of findings gathered. I want you to feel comfortable sharing your experiences with me. You may stop at any time. Are you willing to continue?

Attitude toward Reading

1. Describe the attitude of students at Lester Elementary toward reading.

2. How do students usually respond when given a reading assignment?

3. Have attitudes toward independent reading changed over this school year? If so, in what way?

Ready, Set, Read!

4. What directions did you receive about Ready, Set, Read!?

5. How does Ready, Set, Read! work?

_____

_____

_____

6. Describe what your students do during Ready, Set, Read!

_____

_____

_____

7. What do you do during Ready, Set, Read!?

_____

_____

_____

8. Has Ready, Set, Read! impacted student attitudes toward reading? If so, in what way?

_____

_____

_____

9. Has Ready, Set, Read! affected how much students are reading at school? If so, in what way?

_____

_____

_____

10. How can Ready, Set, Read! be improved?

_____

_____

_____

Reading Attitude Survey

Circle one: I am a boy.   I am a girl.

Grade_____Teacher_____ Date_____

Please circle the picture that describes how you feel about reading.

1. How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?

2. How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?

3. How do you feel about reading for fun at home?

4. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?

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

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

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

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

9. How do you feel about going to the library?

10. How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?

Appendix E

Classroom Observation for Reading Engagement			
Teacher		Grade　　　　　　　　Date	
Visually divide the class in half and observe one half at a time for 1-2 minutes.			
Examples of engaged behaviors: 　• seated 　• quiet 　• eyes on text 　• lips moving as reading 　• reading with teacher 　• completing AR quiz 　• tracking text with finger		Examples of unengaged behaviors 　• choosing a book 　• walking around 　• talking with classmates 　• flipping pages 　• head on desk 　• daydreaming/gazing 　• not having a book	
1st Half of class　　　# of students		2nd Half of class　　　# of students	
Tally marks for students showing engaged behaviors	Tally marks for students showing unengaged behaviors	Tally marks for students showing engaged behaviors	Tally marks for students showing unengaged behaviors
# Engaged	# Unengaged	# Engaged	# Unengaged

Total # of students

Total # Engaged	Percent Engaged	Total # Unengaged	Percent Unengaged

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EDUCATION

Ed.D. in Educational Leadership, University of Mississippi, May 2021

Dissertation: *Increasing Reading Achievement: An Applied Research Study on the Effects of Implementing an Independent Reading Time at Lester Elementary School*

M.Ed. in Educational Leadership, University of Mississippi, December 2003

BS in Elementary Education, Jackson State University, May 1996

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Principal, Holly Springs Primary, Holly Springs, MS, July 2019 – Present

Academic and Behavioral Interventionist, Holly Springs Junior High, Holly Springs, MS, August 2016 – May 2019

Licensed Childcare Owner and Director, Akili Academy, Holly Springs, MS, July 2003 – June 2013