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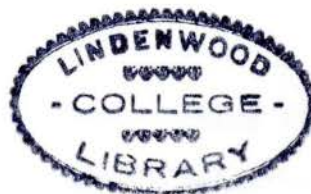


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A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF PARTICIPATION IN A  
PARENT-CHILD CONTRACTED READING PROGRAM

BY  
JEANNIE McCUTCHAN



Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Master of Arts in Education degree  
The Lindenwood Colleges

### ABSTRACT

An investigation was conducted to determine if scholastic achievement and grade level would affect participation in a parent-child reading contract program. Subjects were 108 students in grades 1-6 who were systematically sampled from 1,095 students who signed contracts to participate in the Wentzville Spring Into Reading Program.

A chi square was used to determine if there was a significant difference between high reading achievers and low reading achievers both for primary and intermediate grade levels and at all grade levels. This was done to evaluate whether reading achievement would affect participation in the reading program. Nominal data was tabulated showing the percentage of each grade level that participated and completed the reading program. Primary and intermediate percentages were then compared to find out if a difference in grade level was a factor in participating and completing the program.

The data showed that reading achievement level was a significant factor in determining who would sign a contract to participate in the Spring Into Reading

Program in grades 1-6. Reading achievement level was not a factor in determining who completed the program in grades 1-6. The level of reading achievement was not found to be significant for either signing the contract or completing the program in grades 1-3. In grades 4-6, reading achievement level was a determining factor in who signed the contract, but it was not a factor in who completed the program.

The greatest percentage of students participating in the program was recorded in the second grade. The greatest percentage of students completing the program was recorded in the first grade. In grades 1-3, a greater percentage of students signed and completed the program than in grades 4-6.

The Wentzville Spring Into Reading Program had broad appeal for grades 1-3, but it did not appeal as much to intermediate students in general, and low-reading achievement intermediate students in particular. It would appear that a contracted parent-child reading program is more successful in the lower elementary grades, and that another approach to encourage leisure time reading might be more successful for the upper grades.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The development of reading as a leisure time activity is an objective of the school reading goals for Missouri students as set forth in Basic Reading Skills for Missouri Students published by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.<sup>1</sup> Parental participation in helping the child to read is also an objective supported by both the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the United States Office of Education.<sup>2</sup>

There are five levels of parent involvement in school programs, which have been summarized by Gordon. The parent may play a role as 1) audience bystander-observer, 2) teacher of the child, 3) volunteer, 4) trained worker, and 5) participant in decision making, especially through advisory board membership.<sup>3</sup>

The parent as teacher of the child is receiving increased attention. Many parents realize that responsibility for sparking reading interest and achievement cannot be placed solely upon the schools. Duff and Adams have called for a partnership between parents and teachers in improving reading skills. They urge a realignment of family priorities that focuses on the student's interests and needs as a learner.

This can be accomplished by home-school support systems which are meaningful and productive.<sup>4</sup>

Rogers divides parental responsibilities for children's reading into two areas: what parents should know and what parents should do.

They should know:

1. what good reading is
2. how well their child reads
3. what a good reading program is and if their school has one

He suggests four things to encourage reading. A parent can:

1. set an example by reading himself
2. provide a quiet place and a time for reading
3. provide something for the child to read through personal ownership and/or use of the library
4. accept the child's reading ability and needs<sup>5</sup>

New York State Sen. James Donovan has organized a Parents as Reading Partners program which he has promoted in New York and elsewhere by making information available on the value of parents spending 15 minutes a day reading with their children with the TV turned off.<sup>6</sup>

Parent-child reading programs have also met with success in the Des Moines Family Learning Project and at Pershing Elementary School in University City, Missouri. In the Des Moines Family Learning Project, parents are taught methods of helping their children learn to read. This



project is operated by the Des Moines public schools.<sup>7</sup> At the Pershing Elementary School, the principal reads aloud to children for ten minutes per day over the school's public address system. Stories are sent home with the children, and the children receive rewards if they bring back slips stating that their parents have read these stories to their children. Thus, the children have at least two adult models reading to them. A pamphlet was sent home at Christmas advising parents on how to aid their children's reading during the winter months. "Summer Learning Packets" also went home to encourage reading skills over the vacation period. Tom Hoerr, the Principal, maintains that this practice has affected school reading test scores. For nine years the school's reading scores were below grade level. Now the pupils are scoring above grade level in reading.<sup>8</sup>

Because of its interest in the benefits of parents reading with their children and the promotion of children's leisure time reading, the Wentzville School District planned a parent-child home reading program, called Spring Into Reading, in the spring of 1981. A letter was sent to parents notifying them that a program to encourage home reading was soon to begin. Parents and children were asked to sign a contract stating that they would read together for at least 15 minutes a day, five days a week for eight weeks. This was to be a quiet time with the TV, stereo, and radio turned off. Planners of the program thought that contracting for a 15 minute parent-

child reading period would insure a greater commitment on both the parent's and student's part. Wagner<sup>9</sup> and Hofer<sup>10</sup> have both reported increased participation in library reading programs when children contract to read the books. Progress sheets were signed by parents at the end of each week and returned to the teacher on each Monday. Rewards were offered for signing the contract, at a mid-way point for continued participation, and at the end of the eight week period for those completing the Spring Into Reading program. Suggestions to parents on how to spend this reading time with their children were also sent home at the beginning, mid-point, and end of the program to encourage continued parent-child reading at home.

Lamme and Olmsted, in a study of family reading habits of low-income, white, first grade children, found that children who perceived themselves as poor readers were read to less and had less involvement with books.<sup>11</sup>

In a survey of a small midwestern school, Heerman and Callison found that during the middle grade period (4-6), overall reading time at home increased, but so did time spent watching TV. There was a decline in parental satisfaction with their children's reading and a decline in the parent's belief that student reading levels were increasing. In grades one through three, 52% of the parents reported that their children had a regular reading time at home. In grades four through six, 29% of the parents reported that



their children had a regular reading time. Parents in this study were dissatisfied with their children's reading in the middle grades, but they were not setting aside a regular reading time for them.<sup>12</sup>

It is this researcher's purpose to study the Wentzville Spring Into Reading Program in order to answer two questions: would the program reach the low achieving reader, and would the children at the intermediate level be willing to enter and continue the contracted reading program with their parents?

The hypotheses in this study were: 1) more high reading achievement students would sign a contract and complete a reading program than low reading achievement students at all grade levels, and 2) more students in the primary grades would sign a contract and complete a reading program than students in the intermediate grades.

The information gained in the study could benefit the school in planning a similar reading program the following year. If the lower reading level children were not participating, perhaps an extra effort would be necessary to communicate the importance of the program in order to encourage participation. If the older children were not found to be participating in the Spring Into Reading Program, the school district might want to consider different rewards for this group.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Basic Reading Skills for Missouri Students, (Jefferson City, Missouri: 1973), pp. 14, 27.

<sup>2</sup>Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. 25 Ways Parents Can Help With Reading, (Jefferson City, Missouri: 1978), p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>I. J. Gordon, Parent Involvement in Compensatory Education, (Champaign-Urbana: University of Ill. Press, 1970), pp. 27-28.

<sup>4</sup>R. Eleanor Duff and Margaret E. Adams, "Parents and Teachers: Partners in Improving Reading Skills," The Clearing House, 54 (January 1981): 207-9.

<sup>5</sup>John R. Rogers, "Parent's Responsibilities for Children's Reading," paper presented at the 23rd annual meeting of the International Reading Association, Houston, Texas, 1-5 May 1978.

<sup>6</sup>Judith Ann Seamon, ed., SLMS Promotes Parents As Reading Partners, (Verona, N.Y.: Madison-Oneida Boces, 1980), p. 11.

<sup>7</sup>Office of Education, The Des Moines Family Learning Project, Washington, D.C., May 1977.

<sup>8</sup>"School Program Pushes Reading Aloud at Home," St. Louis Post Dispatch, 14 May 1981, p. 6N.

<sup>9</sup>Rita Wagner, "Contracting for Summer Reading," School Library Journal, 25 (November 1978) : 35.

<sup>10</sup>Beth Hofer, "Planning A Contract-Based Reading Program," School Library Journal, 26 (April 1980) : 40-1.

<sup>11</sup>Linda Lamme and Pat Olmsted, "Family Reading Habits and Children's Progress in Reading," paper presented at annual meeting of the International Reading Association, Miami, Fla., May 1976.

<sup>12</sup>Charles E. Heerman and Patricia R. Callison, "Reading Profile of a Small Midwestern School," Reading Improvement, 15 (Summer 1978) : 101-4.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Reading to Children and Early Language Development

The benefits of parents reading to children have been demonstrated in several studies. Irwin found that spontaneous vocalizations of 2½ year old children significantly increased when they were systematically read stories by their mothers over an eighteen-month period. Two groups of infants were selected from families whose fathers were engaged in skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled work. Mothers of 24 infants in the experimental group read to their children for 15 to 20 minutes each day from illustrated story books. Books were furnished to this group, but not to the control group of 10 children. The control group was not read to. The program was begun when the children were 13 months old. For each two month period throughout the experiment, home visits were made. During these home visits spontaneous vocalizations were recorded by paper and pencil in the international phonetic alphabet. From the thirteenth to the seventeenth month, there was little difference between the two groups, but from the seventeenth month on, the difference

increased with the experimental group having consistently higher scores in spontaneous vocalization.<sup>1</sup>

Cazden compared two methods of providing young children with adult language input. In one treatment group, the mother would expand her child's short sentences into complete sentences. In the other treatment group, the mother would focus on the idea of the child and extend it through discussion and reading stories. The latter group of nursery-school-age children gained the most on six measures of language development.<sup>2</sup>

One aspect of a study by Chomsky of thirty-six children between the ages of six and ten was the relationship between the children's exposure to the written language and the rate of linguistic development. Among the pre-readers, the results showed a strong correlation between listening to books read aloud and linguistic stage. Those pre-readers in higher linguistic stages were read to by more people and heard more books per week, at higher complexity levels than children at lower linguistic stages. She found that listening to books read aloud decreases sharply after first grade as the children begin to read independently. For the more able readers, this trend begins in first grade. At each age, reading or having books read was a strong factor in differentiating a child's linguistic stage.<sup>3</sup>

### Reading to Children and Children Who Are Early Readers

Delores Durkin studied characteristics of children who read before grade one. Her first study was a sample of 49 California children who had a median Stanford-Binet I.Q. of 121 and a mean reading achievement of 2.3 at the beginning of first grade. She found in interviewing the parents, that 100% of the parents had read to their children before they started to school. A second study done in New York, consisted of a sample of 30 children from 35 schools who could identify at least eighteen words from a list of thirty-seven words and could make a score on the Gates Primary Paragraph Reading Test or a higher level of the test. This sample was matched with 30 first graders who were not early readers. One hundred percent of the early readers were read to at home prior to entering school, compared to 73% of the first graders who were not early readers.<sup>4</sup>

Gallop found in studying 1,045 mothers that 70 percent of the high achieving first graders were read to regularly from an early age. He concluded that children who are read to regularly in their early years do better in reading than those who are not read to regularly.<sup>5</sup>

Lamme and Olmsted examined family reading habits and children's progress in reading as part of the Florida Parent Education Follow Through research and evaluation effort for the 1975-76 school year. Data concerning reading was



gathered from 38 low-income white first graders and their parents by use of both interview and direct observation procedures, including videotaping of the parent and child reading a book together. They found that the total scores of children's attitudes, perceptions, and reading habits were not significantly related to their reading achievement scores. However, they did find that children who had been read to more frequently made greater use of the public library, had more children's books at home, and saw adults read more in the home.<sup>6</sup>

#### Leisure Reading and Improved Reading Ability

Although there is general agreement that practice, in the form of leisure time reading, reinforces or improves reading ability, little research is available on this subject. In research at the University of Minnesota, Samuels developed a theory of automatic information processing in reading which provides a theoretical basis for the role of practice in instructional programs which could also apply to leisure reading. He found that proficiency develops as readers become more automatic in decoding skills, thus enabling them to focus more attention on text meaning and higher order comprehension skills. Factors which are associated with the development of automaticity include higher accuracy levels and an increased rate of processing.<sup>7</sup>

Yap found in studying 202 second-graders in the Hawaii English Project that both IQ (as measured by the California



Test of Mental Maturity) and the amount of reading activity (as measured by the number of books read) had significant influence on reading ability (as measured by a standardized test). Approximately 60 to 70% of the variance in reading achievement was accountable by the amount of reading activity, while only 22 to 25% was accountable by IQ difference.<sup>8</sup>

Hogenson compared two groups of twenty-five students from sixth grade in Owatonna Elementary Schools in Minnesota. Both groups were matched as to background, intelligence, reading ability, and school experience. The experimental group was made up of students who had expressed a desire to improve their reading. This group was helped in selecting books that best suited each child's ability and interest. During a sixteen week period, each child in the experimental group was asked to read as many books as possible. Informal checks were made to see if the books were actually read. This reading program was the only significant difference in the instructional program for the two groups. During the sixteen weeks, the control group gained an average of four-tenths of one year in reading comprehension, speed, and vocabulary as determined by the Gates Reading Survey Form II. The experimental group gained eight-tenths of one year. It averaged twice the gain of the control group. A positive correlation of .70 was found between the relative number of books read by individual members of the experimental

group, and their gains in the above-mentioned reading skills.<sup>9</sup>

Heyns found that the amount of reading done over the summer influenced reading achievement. The average child in Heyns' study read approximately five books during the summer. She reported 18% of the children read no books at all. Children who read six or more books during the summer gained an average of .2 grade equivalent over the summer while children who read fewer than six books did not change in reading grade equivalent.<sup>10</sup>

#### Ages of Peak Reading Interests

Children appear to be more interested in leisure time reading at certain ages, but the literature shows that these ages have varied in different studies. Terman and Lima studied the qualitative aspects of children's reading in 1922. The reading records of 808 unselected school children, ages six to sixteen, in three small California cities, were studied to ascertain the average amount of reading done. Children 6 to 8 years read an average of less than one book per month. Children 8 to 10 years read an average of two books per month. Terman and Lima found the attitude of the student who never read was that he had too many other things to do. Gifted children read more books than average children.<sup>11</sup>

Ashley conducted a survey of a representative sample of 900 elementary children in grades 4 through 7 in which they were asked to indicate their likes and dislikes for forty reading topics. He found that the peak in the amount of



reading comes in the 10 to 11 years range. Interest in almost every field of literature fell away sharply in the latter part of grade 6.<sup>12</sup>

Lamme studied 65 upper elementary students in a mixed rural/suburban school by comparing their reading records over a three year period (fourth, fifth, and sixth grades) with their scores on A Look at Literature (a test of critical reading) and the comprehension section of Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. There was an appearance of significance between the number of books read and children's reading test scores for all three years, indicating that reading level does play a small role in children's pleasure in reading. It was estimated that roughly 10 percent of children's tendency to read in quantity might be due to having good reading skills. In fourth grade the children reported reading a mean of 23.5 books. This decreased to a mean of 19.5 books in both fifth and sixth grades, but this difference was not found to be statistically significant.<sup>13</sup>

#### Children's Use of Time Outside of School

Many activities compete at home with reading activities. Mauck and Swenson investigated children's voluntary reading in a midwestern school in 1949 for grades four through eight. They found that in grade four, students ranked reading fourth as a preferred spare time activity. It was overshadowed by sports, games, and radio. In grades five through eight, it ranked fifth and followed movies which was now fourth.<sup>14</sup>

In 1957, McCullough studied the out-of-school activities of 391 fifth grade children in nine schools in three geographical areas of the San Francisco area. She found that reading ranked fourteenth in one geographical area, fifth in another area, and thirteenth in a third area. Television was the number one activity in all geographical areas. Other activities mentioned were active sports, games, pets, doing homework, straightening room, visits to friends and preparing meals.<sup>15</sup>

A more recent study was reported by Long and Henderson in 1973. They conducted a study of the amount of independent reading done during a two week period by fifth-graders in two schools in a suburban community outside an industrial city. Seventy-five boys and seventy-five girls who could read at or above grade level kept complete time records over a fourteen-day period. Records of spare-time activities were tabulated into fifteen-minute units for seven categories of activity: sleep, reading, television, homework, chores, organized activities, and free play. These time scores were related to scores from the Otis Quick-Scoring Mental Ability Tests, Gates-McGinitie Reading Tests, Survey D, Self Social Symbols Tasks, and a test of reading attitude. The most popular activity was watching television which accounted for about fifteen hours a week. Free play was the next most popular activity and accounted for ten hours a week. This was followed by organized activity and homework, each of which



consumed four hours per week. Reading and chores each took less than two hours per week of the student's time. About a third of the students reported no reading during the two-week period. Time spent reading was positively related to socioeconomic status, to intelligence, and to all four scores from the Gates-McGinitie test. Time spent reading was also related to self-concept scores, but not to family patterns of birth order or number of siblings. Boys who perceived themselves as closer to their father spent less time reading. For girls, time spent reading was positively associated with inclusiveness and identification with a friend, but it was negatively associated with esteem.<sup>16</sup>

In describing the results of a summer reading program for grades K-3, Gambrell and Jarrell reported that 85% of the parents felt their children would want to participate again. An exception to this feeling came from parents of third grade children, who reported that their children preferred other summer activities such as swimming and going to local playgrounds.<sup>17</sup>

#### Television's Effect on Leisure Reading

A great deal of research has been done on television's impact on children's reading. Gallup conducted a survey to measure the attitude of American citizens toward their public schools. As part of this survey, he sought to find out how much time children spend on reading, homework, and TV. The sample used was a modified probability sample. A total of 1,506 adults (18 years and older) made up the national

cross-section. The survey was conducted using personal, in-home interviews in all areas of the United States and in all types of communities. Parents who now have children attending public or parochial and private schools were asked to give an estimate of the time spent on a typical school day by their eldest child on television, homework, and reading. For children 12 years and younger, the typical child spends approximately:

- 2 hours viewing television on a typical day
- 30 minutes reading (not schoolwork)
- 45 minutes doing homework

Forty-nine percent of the parents who had children this age placed a definite time limit on the amount of time the child spent watching television during the school week. Fifty percent of the parents did not.<sup>18</sup>

Postman reports that between the ages of 5 and 18, the average child watches approximately 16,000 hours of TV as compared to spending 12,000 hours in school.<sup>19</sup> Moldenhauer and Miller found seventh graders watching TV four hours a day.<sup>20</sup>

Busch found that second and third graders who were avid readers were also avid TV watchers. In grades 4, 5, and 6, low ability readers began to watch more TV than before, and regardless of ability group, these were the grades when students had periods of greatest TV consumption. TV viewing began to peak for middle and high ability students in seventh grade, and from this point on, it began to have a negative



effect on reading.<sup>21</sup>

Lamme and Olmsted reported that families who owned more televisions tended to have children who expressed negative feelings about reading. Children who reported that someone often read to them at home also watched less television.<sup>22</sup>

Perney, Freund, and Berman conducted a study of the relationship between home television viewing and early school achievement. The sample was comprised of 202 kindergarten children from two middle class suburban school districts north of Chicago. The major findings were that 1) time spent watching "The Electric Company" was positively related to achievement, and 2) time spent watching "comedy-variety drama" shows were negatively related to achievement as measured by the Kindergarten Task Inventory (KTI) and the Stanford Early School Achievement Test (SESAT).<sup>23</sup>

In a survey done in Norwich, England comparing the effect of television in the lives of viewing and non-viewing children, Himmelweit, Oppenheim, and Vince distributed questionnaires to all the 10-11 and 13-14 year olds in every Norwich school at a time when few families had a TV set. The researchers returned a year later and compared the results of the previous study with those of children who had since acquired TV sets. Out of the original 2,200 children tested, they later obtained 370 cases, consisting of children who had television and their controls who did not. Comic book reading decreased in television viewers. As the novelty of television

wore off, television viewers who had at first decreased their reading, once again read as many books as their controls. Television tended to stimulate interest in books because of its serial dramatization of books. Duller children who were television viewers read even more than their controls. Bright children were little affected in their reading habits by television.<sup>24</sup>

Schramm, Lyle and Parker studied two communities, of about 5,000 population each, in western Canada in 1959. One community had television reception, and the other did not. In Radiotown (the name given the town without TV reception) all first, sixth and tenth grade students, who were in attendance on the day the study was conducted, were included in the sample. In Teletown, all tenth grade children were included in the sample. First and sixth grade children in about half the elementary schools were in the sample. It was found that in the sixth grade, daily newspaper reading was slightly higher in Teletown (45%) than in Radiotown (34%). There was no significant difference in the amount of book reading in Teletown (2.9 books per month) and in Radiotown (3.1 books per month). There was a small difference in magazine reading, (Teletown 3.7 magazines per month; Radiotown 4 magazines per month). Television appeared to be cutting into the time previously allocated for radio, movies, and comic books, but not the time for newspapers, books and magazines.<sup>25</sup>

Loughlin and Loughlin studied how the time spent viewing



television in one week relates to the reading achievement of pupils at grades three and five. They compared the mean scores on the California Tests of Mental Maturity and Achievement with the mean scores on the Anticipated Reading Achievement Chart. Good readers and poor readers were compared. The researchers found that good readers in the third grade viewed television more hours than good readers in grade five, male good readers viewed significantly more hours in third than fifth grades, and female good readers viewed more hours than male good readers in fifth grade.<sup>26</sup>

Starkey and Swinford conducted a study of two hundred twenty-six fifth and sixth graders to correlate the amount of television viewing and reading scores. A slight, but distinct relationship was reported between reading ability and the amount of leisure time spent watching television. Poor readers watched more television than the better readers. Students reported little parental supervision of television, as indicated by the fact that only 38 percent of the students stated that they were not allowed to watch some shows. However, only 28% said that they were allowed to watch TV as long or as late as they wished. The average viewing time per week for girls was twenty-eight hours; for boys, it was thirty hours. A child's access to a private TV did not affect his viewing time or reading ability.<sup>27</sup>

### Summary

Studies such as those of Irwin,<sup>28</sup> Cazden,<sup>29</sup> and Chomsky<sup>30</sup> have demonstrated that parents reading to children is a strong factor in children's language development. Early reading was also shown to benefit from parental reading to children as shown in the study by Durkin,<sup>31</sup> and the survey by Gallop.<sup>32</sup>

Practice, in the form of leisure time reading, benefited reading achievement in the studies of Yap<sup>33</sup> and Hogenson.<sup>34</sup> The research in this area, however, is not extensive.

The age of peak reading interest falls between 8 and 11 years, but the studies vary as to when the age of peak reading occurs. There is a need for a current survey in this area.

Television appears to be the number one activity of children outside of school. This was found repeatedly in studies such as those of Mauck and Swenson,<sup>35</sup> McCullough,<sup>36</sup> and Long and Henderson.<sup>37</sup> Reading was not ranked very high as an outside activity in any of the studies. TV viewing appears to peak in grades 4, 5, and 6.<sup>38</sup> There was little evidence, however, that it interfered with time that would have been spent on reading.

### Rationale For Studying the Wentzville Spring Into Reading Program

The Wentzville Spring Into Reading Program required parents to read with their children, an activity which has been shown to be beneficial to children's reading progress

in studies of children's language development and early reading. The daily practice would be especially beneficial to low reading ability students. Since TV viewing was found to be the number one leisure time activity for children, and since this activity peaks for low ability students in grades 4, 5, and 6,<sup>39</sup> it was of interest to see if low ability students would participate in the Spring Into Reading Program at different grade levels. Studies vary as to children's peak age of reading interest, so a study was also done to find which grades would show the most participation in the Spring Into Reading Program.

Two questions were studied in the Wentzville Spring Into Reading Project. Would the program attract lower reading achievement level children; and would intermediate age children be attracted to this program?

<sup>39</sup> S. J. Samuels, "The Method of Repetited Readings," *Reading Teacher*, 32 (January 1979), 403-6.

<sup>40</sup> Kiu Onn Yap, "Relationships Between Amount of Reading Activity and Reading Achievement," *Reading World*, 17 (October 1977), 71-9.

<sup>41</sup> Dennis L. Hogeboom, "The Role of Interest in Improving Reading Skills," *Elementary English*, 38 (April 1960), 244-6.

<sup>42</sup> B. Heyns, *Summer Learning and the Effect of School*, (New York: Academic Press, 1976), cited by Linda B. Gambrell and Mary E. Berrell, "Summer Reading: Description and Evaluation of a Program for Children and Parents," *Reading World*, 20 (October 1980), 1-7.

<sup>43</sup> Lewis H. Terman and Margaret Lise, *Children's Reading*, (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1916), pp. 25-27.



# FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>O. C. Irwin, "Infant Speech: Effect of Systematic Reading of Stories," Journal of Speech and Hearing Research, 3 (June 1960) : 187-90.

<sup>2</sup>Courtney B. Cazden, "Environmental Assistance to the Child's Acquisition of Grammar," (Ph. D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1965), cited by Charlotte S. Huck, Children's Literature in the Elementary School, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976) p. 25.

<sup>3</sup>Carol Chomsky, "Stages in Language Development and Reading Exposure," Harvard Educational Review, 42 (February 1972) : 1-33.

<sup>4</sup>Dolores Durkin, Children Who Read Early, (New York: Teachers College Press, 1966) pp. 14-163.

<sup>5</sup>George Gallup, Report on Education Research, Capitol Publications Inc., 5 (Nov. 12, 1969) : 5.

<sup>6</sup>Linda Lamme and Pat Olmsted, "Family Reading Habits and Children's Progress in Reading," paper presented at annual meeting of the International Reading Association, Miami, Fla., May 1976.

<sup>7</sup>S. J. Samuels, "The Method of Repeated Readings," Reading Teacher, 32 (January 1979) : 403-8.

<sup>8</sup>Kim Omn Yap, "Relationships Between Amount of Reading Activity and Reading Achievement," Reading World, 17 (October 1977) : 23-9.

<sup>9</sup>Dennis L. Hogenson, "The Role of Interest in Improving Reading Skills," Elementary English, 38 (April 1960) : 244-6.

<sup>10</sup>B. Heyns, Summer Learning and the Effect of School, (New York: Academic Press, 1979), cited by Linda B. Gambrell and Mary E. Jarrell, "Summer Reading Description and Evaluation of a Program for Children and Parents," Reading World, 20 (October 1980) : 1-9.

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- <sup>12</sup>L. F. Ashley, "Children's Reading Interests and Individualized Reading," Elementary English, XLVII (December 1970) : 1088-96.
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- <sup>14</sup>Inez L. Mauck and Esther J. Swenson, "A Study of Children's Recreational Reading," Elementary School Journal, 50 (November 1959) : 144-50.
- <sup>15</sup>Constance M. McCullough, "A Log of Children's Out-of-School Activities," Elementary School Journal, 58 (December 1957) : 157-65.
- <sup>16</sup>Barbara H. Long and Edmund H. Henderson, "Children's Use of Time: Some Personal and Social Correlates," Elementary School Journal, 74 (January 1973) : 193-99.
- <sup>17</sup>Linda B. Gambrell and Mary E. Jarrell, "Summer Reading Description and Evaluation of a Program for Children and Parents," Reading World, 20 (October 1980) : 1-9.
- <sup>18</sup>George H. Gallup, "Ninth Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public School," Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (September 1977) : 33-48.
- <sup>19</sup>Neil Postman, "TV the First Curriculum: School the Second," paper presented at the Ill. State Reading Council annual convention, Peoria, Illinois, March 1979, cited by Deborah L. Moldenhauer and Wilma H. Miller, "Television and Reading Achievement," Journal of Reading, 23 (April 1980) : 615-19.
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- <sup>28</sup>Irwin, "Infant Speech: Effect of Systematic Reading of Stories," pp. 187-90.
- <sup>29</sup>Cazden, "Environmental Assistance to the Child's Acquisition of Grammar."
- <sup>30</sup>Chomsky, "Stages of Language Development and Reading Exposure," pp. 1-33.
- <sup>31</sup>Durkin, Children Who Read Early, pp. 14-163.
- <sup>32</sup>Gallop, Report on Education Research, p. 5.
- <sup>33</sup>Yap, "Relationships Between Amount of Reading Activity and Reading Achievement," pp. 23-9.
- <sup>34</sup>Hogenson, "The Role of Interest in Improving Reading Skills," pp. 244-6.
- <sup>35</sup>Mauck and Swenson, "A Study of Children's Recreational Reading," pp. 144-50.
- <sup>36</sup>McCullough, "A Log of Children's Out-of-School Activities," pp. 157-65.
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- <sup>38</sup>Busch, "TV's Effect of Reading: A Case Study: Grades 2-12 in Stafford and King George's Counties, Va," pp. 668-71.
- <sup>39</sup>Ibid.



### CHAPTER III

#### METHOD

The Spring Into Reading program, an eight-week parent-child home reading program at the Wentzville Elementary School in Wentzville, Missouri, was initiated to encourage home reading. It was viewed as particularly beneficial to poor readers. Poor readers, however, might be less likely to participate in an activity in which they were not usually successful. Because of student's increased outside interests in the intermediate grades (4-6), the program could also have difficulty attracting this group of students. A study to evaluate the participation of both these population groups was begun shortly after the initial announcement of the program was sent home to parents (see Appendix, pg. 40).

The problem in this investigation was to find if scholastic achievement and grade level had affected student and parental involvement in a reading contract program. This led to the following hypotheses:

1. More high reading achievement students will sign a contract and complete a reading program than low reading achievement students at all grade levels.

(6th stanine or above), average achievers (5th stanine), or low reading achievers (4th stanine or below). The average students were included for comparative purposes, but there was no hypothesis regarding this group.

The percentage of each grade who initially signed up to participate in the program was tallied, as was the percentage at each grade level who completed the program. This information on completing the program was considered important because some students might have signed up for the first reward and then lost interest as the actual work was required.

### Analysis

A chi square was used to determine if there was a significant difference between high reading achievers and low reading achievers both for primary and intermediate grades and at all grade levels. This was done to evaluate whether reading achievement would affect participation in the reading program, as stated in the first hypothesis.

Nominal data was tabulated showing the percentage of students at each grade level that signed the contract and completed the reading program. Primary and intermediate percentages were then compared to find out if a difference in grade level, as stated in the second hypothesis, was a factor in participating and completing the program.

## RESULTS

The first hypothesis, that more high reading achievement students will sign a contract and complete a reading program than low reading achievement students at all grade levels, was supported by the data as significant in regard to signing the contract.

TABLE 1

SIGNIFICANCE OF READING ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS  
FOR THOSE STARTING THE SPRING INTO  
READING PROGRAM IN GRADES 1-6

Reading Achievement Levels	Expected Frequency	Observed Frequency
Low	36	24
Average	36	28
High	36	56
Total	108	108

$$\chi^2 = 16.89$$

$$df = 2$$

Table 1 shows the data for a sample of 108 students in grades 1-6 who participated in the reading program. There would be an expected frequency of 36 students signing the contract at each level of reading achievement: low, average, and high. The observed frequency for signing the reading contract, however, was: 24 students of low reading achievement,



28 students of average reading achievement, and 56 students of high reading achievement. The chi square for this data was 16.89. A table chi square shows that anything greater than 5.99 is statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ). Therefore, in this sample, the data showed that reading achievement level was a factor determining who started the Spring Into Reading Program.

Reading achievement for all grade levels was not found to be a significant factor in determining who completed the program. These data are summarized in Table 2.

TABLE 2

SIGNIFICANCE OF READING ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS  
FOR THOSE COMPLETING THE SPRING INTO  
READING PROGRAM IN GRADES 1-6

Reading Achievement Levels	Yes	No	Total
Low	11	13	24
High	33	23	56
Total	44	36	80

$$\chi^2 = .70$$

$$df = 1$$

Of the 24 low achievement students who signed the contract, Table 2 shows that 11 students completed the program, and 13 did not. Of the 56 high achievement students, 33 completed the program, and 23 did not complete it. The chi square for this data was .70. The table chi square shows that anything less than 3.84 is not statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ). Therefore, in this

sample, the data did not support reading achievement as a factor in determining which students completed the Spring Into Reading Program.

The level of reading achievement was not found to be significant for either signing the contract or completing the program in grades 1-3. These data are summarized in Tables 3 and 4.

TABLE 3

SIGNIFICANCE OF READING ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS  
FOR THOSE STARTING THE SPRING INTO  
READING PROGRAM IN GRADES 1-3

Reading Achievement Levels	Expected Frequency	Observed Frequency
Low	18	17
Average	18	15
High	18	22
Total	54	54

$$\chi^2 = 1.01$$

$$df = 2$$

Table 3 shows that there were 54 students in the sample who signed the reading contract in grades 1-3. There would be an expected frequency of 18 students signing the contract at each achievement level: low, average, and high. The observed frequency was: 17 students of low reading achievement, 15 students of average reading achievement, and 22 students of high reading achievement. The chi square for this data was 1.01. A table chi square shows that anything less than 5.99

is not significant ( $p < .05$ ). Therefore, in this sample, in grades 1-3, the level of reading achievement was not a factor in determining who would sign a contract to participate in the Spring Into Reading Program.

TABLE 4

SIGNIFICANCE OF READING ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS  
FOR THOSE COMPLETING THE SPRING INTO  
READING PROGRAM IN GRADES 1-3

Reading Achievement Levels	Yes	No	Total
Low	7	10	17
High	15	7	22
Total	22	17	39

$$\chi^2 = 1.85$$

$$df = 1$$

Table 4 shows that of the 17 low achieving students, 7 completed the program and 10 did not. Of the 22 high achieving students, 15 students completed the program, and 7 students did not. The chi square for this data was 1.85. The table chi square shows that anything less than 3.84 is not statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ). Therefore, in this sample, in grades 1-3, the level of reading achievement was not a factor in determining who would complete the program.

In grades 4-6, a difference in reading achievement levels was found to be significant for starting the program. These data are summarized in Table 5.



TABLE 5

SIGNIFICANCE OF READING ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS  
FOR THOSE STARTING THE SPRING INTO  
READING PROGRAM IN GRADES 1-3

Reading Achievement Levels	Expected Frequency	Observed Frequency
Low	18	7
Average	18	13
High	18	34
Total	54	54

$$\chi^2 = 22.33$$

$$df = 2$$

Table 5 shows that of the 54 students in the sample who started the reading program, there would be an expected frequency of 18 students in each category: low, average, and high. The observed frequency for those signing the contract was 7 students in the low achievement level, 13 students in the average achievement level, and 34 students in the high achievement level. The chi square for this data was 22.33. The table chi square shows that anything greater than 5.99 is statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ). Therefore, in grades 4-6 of this sample, the level of reading achievement was shown to be a determining factor in who signed a reading contract.

A difference in reading achievement was not a significant factor in determining which students in grades 4-6 completed the reading contract program. These data are presented in Table 6.

TABLE 7

TOTAL SCHOOL PERCENTAGES OF STUDENTS INITIALLY PARTICIPATING AND PERCENTAGES OF THESE STUDENTS WHO COMPLETED THE SPRING INTO READING PROGRAM

Grade Level	Percent Initially Participating	Percent of Those Participating Who Completed
First	83	62
Second	84	51
Third	80	47
Fourth	81	35
Fifth	72	26
Sixth	55	29

In the lower grades (1-3), 82% of the students signed the reading contract. In the upper grades (4-6), 69% of the students signed the reading contract. In the lower grades (1-3), 53% of the students completed the program. In the upper grades (4-6), only 30% of the students completed the program. These summary data are presented in Table 8.

TABLE 8

PERCENTAGES OF LOWER AND UPPER GRADES INITIALLY PARTICIPATING AND PERCENTAGES COMPLETING THE SPRING INTO READING PROGRAM

	Sign Up	Complete
Lower Grades (1-3)	82%	53%
Upper Grades (4-6)	69%	30%

On the basis of these comparisons, the data shows that reading achievement level was a significant factor in determining who would sign a contract to participate in the Spring Into Reading Program in grades 1-6. Reading achievement level was not a factor in determining who completed the program in grades 1-6. The level of reading achievement was not found to be significant for either signing the contract or completing the program in grades 1-3. In grades 4-6, reading achievement level was a determining factor in who signed the contract, but it was not a factor in who completed the program.

The greatest percentage of students participating in the program was recorded in the second grade. The greatest percentage of students completing the program was recorded in the first grade. In grades 1-3, a greater percentage of students signed and completed the program than in grades 4-6.

reading as a leisure time activity. The findings on TV's possible displacement of reading time have been mixed. A without comprehensive study of how older elementary children spend their leisure time could help in finding out how parents and teachers can encourage leisure reading.

Another question which warrants further research is the question of the benefits of practice. Does reading practice increase increased leisure time reading actually increase reading skills? This study did not attempt to address this



question, but the reading program presumed that the leisure time reading practice would be beneficial. Further research is necessary.

#### DISCUSSION

Although this study suggests that reading achievement is a factor in determining participation in leisure time reading, it must be pointed out that in grades 1-3, it was not a significant factor. It was a strongly significant factor in grades 4-6 which may have weighted the total school results. The findings also suggest that contrary to the findings of Terman and Lima,<sup>1</sup> the ten to twelve year old children in this sample were less interested in leisure reading as indicated by the results in Table 7. They were, at least, less interested in participating in a formal commitment to leisure time reading. Studies done since Terman's 1931 study of student's reading interest have pointed out how other activities have higher priority than reading as a leisure time activity. The findings on TV's possible displacement of reading time have been mixed. A current comprehensive study of how older elementary children spend their leisure time would help in finding out how parents and teachers can encourage leisure reading.

Another question which warrants further research is the question of the benefits of practice. Does reading practice through increased leisure time reading actually increase reading skills? This study did not attempt to address this

question, but the reading program presumed that the leisure time reading practice would be beneficial. Further research is necessary.

One of the factors which may have affected the results regarding completion of the program was that homeroom teachers in grades 1-3 were quite lenient about when the students returned the parental report forms each week. Homeroom teachers in grades 4-6 felt that it was the student's responsibility to return the forms promptly each Monday. If they did not, the students were dropped from the program. In further research, stricter controls would be needed so that differential standards would not be applied.

It is apparent from the data that this reading program did not appeal to low achieving intermediate students, and that intermediate students showed less interest in participating in the program than primary students. This would suggest that a different type of program or a different reward system might be needed if older students are to be motivated to participate.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Lewis M. Terman and Margaret Lima, Children's Reading, (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1931), pp. 25-30.



WENTZVILLE

R-4 SCHOOL DISTRICT

CLINTON MARSH  
SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

FRANK ZENTZ

MEMBER OF ALTERNATE BOARD

WENDY

CHIEF OF STUDENT COUNCIL

PRINCIPAL

CHARLES JAMES, JR.

YACEL GOTT, PRINCIPAL

ELEMENTARY CAMPUS

February 26, 1981

Dear Parents:

S.I.R. is coming!! Yes, plans are being made to "Spring Into Reading." We have decided to bring on Spring by reading more.

The purpose of this letter is to invite you, the parent, to become a key person in our S.I.R. Program. Let us explain how you can help:

- I. Your child will bring home a reading contract on March 2, 1981, for you to sign and return on or before March 5, 1981.
- II. We are asking for you to provide a quiet time each day to be used for reading activities. **APPENDIX** Some suggestions:
  - A. Read with your child for 15 minutes a day. Short, regular sessions encourage the reading habit.
  - B. Use these 15 minutes in a variety of ways.
    1. Have your child read aloud to you.
    2. Read aloud to your child.
    3. Read the same page silently and then discuss it.
    4. Share the reading time by sitting together and reading different books (or magazines).
    5. Have your child record his oral reading on a tape recorder and have fun listening to it together.
  - C. Either parent, or both, can read with your child. Another adult in the family or even a substitute adult reading partner can also participate. Be sure this adult substitute signs the time sheet.
  - D. At the end of the 15 minute session, if your child wishes to continue reading, by all means encourage him or her to do so. However, you need only be involved for 15 minutes.
- III. This will be a daily 15 minute period, 5 days a week.
- IV. A progress sheet will be sent to you each week. It has the picture of a flower on the **39** with five petals. Color in a petal each day as your child completes his daily reading activity.

# WENTZVILLE

# R-4 SCHOOL DISTRICT

"AT THE CROSSROADS OF THE NATION"

CLINTON MANESS,  
SUPERINTENDENT

FRANK ZEITZ,  
DIRECTOR OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

WENTZVILLE  
ST. CHARLES COUNTY  
MISSOURI 63385

CHARLES JAMES, PRINCIPAL

VIRGIL CHOTT, PRINCIPAL

ELEMENTARY CAMPUS

February 26, 1981

Dear Parents:

S.I.R. is coming!! Yes, plans are being made to "Spring Into Reading." We have decided to bring on Spring by reading more.

The purpose of this letter is to invite you, the parent, to become a key person in our S.I.R. Program. Let us explain how you can help:

- I. Your child will bring home a reading contract on March 2, 1981, for you to sign and return on or before March 9, 1981.
- II. We are asking for you to provide a quiet time each day to be used for reading activities. Here are some suggestions:
  - A. Read with your child for 15 minutes a day. Short, regular sessions encourage the reading habit.
  - B. Use these 15 minutes in a variety of ways.
    1. Have your child read aloud to you.
    2. Read aloud to your child.
    3. Read the same page silently and then discuss it.
    4. Share the reading time by sitting together and reading different books (or magazines).
    5. Have your child record his oral reading on a tape recorder and have fun listening to it together.
  - C. Either parent, or both, can read with your child. Another adult in the family or even a substitute adult reading partner can also participate. Be sure this adult substitute signs the time sheet.
  - D. At the end of the 15 minute session, if your child wishes to continue reading, by all means encourage him or her to do so. However, you need only be involved for 15 minutes.
- III. This will be a daily 15 minute period, 5 days a week.
- IV. A progress sheet will be sent to you each week. It has the picture of a flower on the front with five petals. Color in a petal each day as your child completes his daily reading activity.

February 26, 1981

Page 2

Week Week Week Week Week Week Week Week Completed All  
Weeks

- V. The flower should be returned every Monday with your signature to verify the completed task.
- VI. The T.V., radio, stereo, etc. must be OFF during the designated reading time at home. It is to be a quiet time of reading activities-- "turn off and read on".
- VII. Each child who returns a signed contract will receive a coupon for a free coke (with any purchase) at Burger Chef Restaurant. To carry through with our theme "Spring Into Reading", a 12-18 inch Jack Pine seedling will be given to each participating child midway through the program. We hope this will serve as an incentive to keep your home reading activities going. At the conclusion of the program, each child who completes eight full weeks of reading activities will receive a certificate of achievement and a coupon for a free order of french fries at McDonald's Restaurant. Please watch for the contract to be brought home. Remember, you must sign the contract and return it before your child can participate.

We feel this is a wonderful opportunity for you to get involved in a positive way with your child. May we count on you to help?

Sincerely,

*Barbara Langston*  
Barbara Langston, Reading Coordinator*Cyndy Fels*  
Cyndy Fels, Reading Specialist

BL;CF:ls



CLASS RECORD SHEET FOR  
"SPRING INTO READING"

[illegible]

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