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DETERMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TWO NEW READING
PROGRAMS IN THE LOWER ALLOWAYS CREEK SCHOOL

by
Linda A. Levitsky

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
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Approved by
Professor

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ABSTRACT

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DETERMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TWO NEW READING
PROGRAMS IN THE LOWER ALLOWAYS
CREEK SCHOOL
2004/2005
Dr. Ted Johnson
Master of Arts in School Administration

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of the two new reading programs on the improvement of students' reading scores and the enhancement of instruction in the Lower Alloways Creek School District using an action research design. Teachers involved in using the new programs were surveyed. Student grades from the previous year in the first marking period and the current year during the first marking period were analyzed and compared. At the time of the study, the school enrollment was approximately 220 students. Grades first through eighth were included in the study. The research instruments were a survey to the teachers and a comparison of reading grades. The data analysis procedure for the surveys and grade comparison had three steps. First data was organized, coded, and then categorized by consistent patterns. The researcher concluded that the new reading programs (MacMillian/McGraw/Hill and Glencoe) implemented in the Lower Alloways Creek School were not as effective as the reading programs used in the 2003-2004 school year.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| CHAPTER 1 Introduction | 1 |
| Focus of the Study | 1 |
| Definitions | 1 |
| Limitations of the Study | 2 |
| Setting of the Study | 2 |
| Significance of the Study | 3 |
| Relationship of the Study to ISLLC Standards | 4 |
| Organization of the Study | 5 |
| CHAPTER 2 Review of the Literature | 7 |
| Phonemic Awareness and Phonics | 7 |
| Fluency | 9 |
| Text Comprehension | 10 |
| Teacher Education | 11 |
| Computer Technology | 11 |
| Characteristics of a Good Reading Program | 12 |
| CHAPTER 3 The Design of the Study | 14 |
| Description of Research Design | 14 |
| Research Instruments | 15 |
| Sampling Techniques | 15 |
| Data Collection Approach | 15 |
| Data Analysis Plan | 16 |
| Evidence of Project Impact | 17 |
| CHAPTER 4 Presentation of Research Findings | 18 |
| Results of the Survey | 18 |
| Results of First Marking Period Grade Comparison | 22 |
| Meaning of Survey Results | 30 |
| Meaning of Comparing First Marking Period Grades | 31 |
| Summary | 32 |
| CHAPTER 5 Conclusions, Implications, and Further Study | 33 |
| Conclusions and Their Implications | 33 |
| Leadership Growth Per Dictums of the ISLLC Standards | 33 |
| Change in Organization | 34 |
| Further Study Needed | 35 |
| Summary | 35 |
| REFERENCES | 36 |
| APPENDIX Reading Assessment Survey | 38 |

LIST OF TABLES

MacMillian/McGraw/Hill

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 1 Effectiveness in Improving Student Achievement | 18 |
| Table 2 How Easy was Program to Follow | 19 |
| Table 3 Helpfulness of Publishers | 19 |
| Table 4 Keep Students Interest | 19 |
| Table 5 Coverage of Different Skills | 20 |

Glencoe

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 6 Effectiveness in Improving Student Achievement | 20 |
| Table 7 How Easy was Program to Follow | 21 |
| Table 8 Helpfulness of Publishers | 21 |
| Table 9 Keep Students Interest | 22 |
| Table 10 Coverage of Different Skills | 22 |

Comparison of First Marking Period Grades

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 11 Grades 1-2 Reading Grades..... | 23 |
| Table 12 Grades 2-3 Reading Grades | 24 |
| Table 13 Grades 3-4 Reading Grades | 25 |
| Table 14 Grades 4-5 Reading Grades | 26 |
| Table 15 Grades 5-6 Reading Grades..... | 27 |
| Table 16 Grades 6-7 Reading Grades | 28 |
| Table 17 Grades 7-8 Reading Grades | 29 |

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Focus of the Study

The Lower Alloways Creek School started the 2004 – 2005 school year with two new reading programs. One new program was the MacMillian/McGraw/Hill Reading Series for grades first through fifth. The other program was the Glencoe Reading Series for grades sixth through eighth. The new reading programs were selected because the old reading program was more than ten-years-old.

A study to determine the effectiveness of the two new reading programs in the Lower Alloways Creek School was conducted. Teachers involved in using the new programs were surveyed. Student grades from the previous year in the first marking period and the current year during the first marking period were analyzed and compared.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of the two new reading programs on the improvement of students' reading scores and the enhancement of instruction in the Lower Alloways Creek School district using an action research design. The study resulted in a report to the superintendent of the school, the board of education, and the teachers in the Lower Alloways Creek School District.

Definitions

The two reading programs were a series of textbooks and related materials that were developed by publishers to aid teachers in reading instruction.

Limitations of the Study

The study did not include standardized test scores due to time limitations. Most students did not have the same teacher that taught them the previous year, so different teaching styles could have had an effect on grades that were analyzed for the study.

Setting of the Study

The Lower Alloways Creek School District was located in a rural Southern New Jersey community. Lower Alloways Creek Township historically dated back to the times of English Colonies. The community was named after an Indian chief. He was known as Chief Alloways. Chief Alloways signed a treaty allowing English settlers to settle the area. Before 1760, Lower Alloways Creek Township was known as Alloways Creek Township, but then was divided into Upper Alloways Creek Township and Lower Alloways Creek Township. Small villages were spread out across the township. Each small village had a one room school house. Eventually, the small schools were combined to form the Lower Alloways Creek Township School (Bradway, 1937).

In the early 1970's, Lower Alloways Creek Township had a nuclear power plant built. Lower Alloways Creek Township was unique because of a nuclear power plant in the township. The township received enough revenue from the plant to sustain the school without having a school tax or local purpose tax.

At one time, Lower Alloways Creek Township was an agricultural community with a strong fur trade and fishing/crabbing industry. The agriculture, fur trade, and fishing/crabbing commerce slowly decreased. According to the United States Census in 2000, the total population for the community was 1,851. There were diverse occupations held by community members that included management, professional, service

occupations, office occupations, construction, and transportation. Educational attainment of the population 25 years and over consisted of 82.4 % with a high school diploma or higher and 11.7% with a bachelor's degree or higher. The majority of the community population was white English speaking with a median income of \$55,078. Only 4.2% of the population was below the poverty level.

At the time of the study, the school enrollment was approximately 220 students. The school encompassed grade levels ranging from preschool to eighth grade. The student population was white with two Asian students. The teachers who taught reading in the school were all female. The teachers ranged in age from 35 to 60 years old. All of the teachers who taught reading had over nine years of experience. Class sizes were small, ranging from 12 to 25 students in each class.

The school building had several additions over the years, but was modern with air conditioning throughout the school. The building was well maintained and clean. There was a cafeteria, gymnasium with a stage, art room, music room, industrial arts room, family and consumer science room, health room, multi-media center, and a computer lab. The school grounds had a bus garage, playground, two baseball fields, and a soccer field.

Significance of the Study

This study was conducted to assess the effectiveness of two new reading programs in the Lower Alloways Creek School District in order to ensure student achievement at a level congruent with NCLB (No Child Left Behind) goals. The study could be helpful to other schools of the same size and make-up of the Lower Alloways Creek Township School. The study could also be helpful to schools selecting the same reading textbooks as the Lower Alloways Creek Township School.

Relationship of the Study to ISLLC Standards

The ISLLC (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium) standards related to this project were the following six standards: Standard 1: A school administrator was an educational leader who promoted the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision that is shared and communicated by the school community. Under Standard 1 the following areas apply: (a) Knowledge: The administrator had knowledge and understanding of research methods, (b) Dispositions: The administrator believed in, valued and was committed to reflective practice, and (c) Performances: The administrator facilitated and engaged in activities ensuring that there was a shared vision that shaped the programs, plans and actions for the school. Standard 2: A school administrator was an educational leader who promoted the success of all students by advocating, nurturing and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth. Under Standard 2 the following areas apply: (a) Knowledge: The administrator had knowledge understanding of measurement, assessment, and evaluation strategies, (b) Dispositions: The administrator believed in, valued and was committed to student learning for all as fundamental purpose of learning, and (c) Performances: The administrator facilitated and engaged in activities ensuring that there were high expectations for student and staff performance. Standard 3: A school administrator was an educational leader who promoted the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment. Under standard 3, the following areas apply: Dispositions: The administrator believed in, valued and was committed to high expectations for all, (c)

Performances: The administrator facilitated and engaged in activities ensuring that there was knowledge of student development, teaching, and learning. The administrator facilitated and engaged in activities ensuring that there was a research base for decision making; stakeholders included in shared decision making. Standard 4: A school administrator was an educational leader who promoted the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources. Under standard 4, the following area applied: Knowledge: The administrator had knowledge of understanding of research on schooling. Standard 5: A school administrator was an educational leader who promoted the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness and in an ethical manner. Under standard 5, the following area applied: Knowledge: The administrator had knowledge understanding of school leadership in modern society. Standard 6: A school administrator was an educational leader who promoted the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context. Under standard 6, the following areas applied: (a) Knowledge: The administrator had knowledge understanding of the role public education, and (b) Performances: The administrator facilitated and engaged in activities ensuring that there was a school environment that focused on students and learning.

Organization of the Study

This study was organized by conducting a literature review, designing a study, and presentation of research findings. A review of literature from numerous sources were evaluated and synthesized to support information in this study. Peer reviewed journals,

books, Internet sites and information from the United States Government were included in the literature review.

The design of the study was an action research design. The research instruments were a survey to the teachers and a comparison of reading grades. A survey of teachers was conducted in grades first through eighth. Reading grades from the first marking period in the 2003-2004 school year and the first marking period for the 2004-2005 school year were compared.

Data was collected from the surveys and the reading grades in the first marking periods of 2003-2004 school year and the 2004-2005 school year for grades first through eighth.

The data analysis procedure for the surveys had three steps. First data was organized from the survey. The data was coded. Then, data was separated and categorized by consistent patterns. Finally, data was interpreted and conclusions were drawn from the data.

The data analysis procedure for student grades had three components. First, data was organized from the grades. Next, the data from the grades was coded. Then, data from the grades was separated and categorized. Lastly, the data was interpreted and conclusions were drawn from the data.

Research findings were then presented to determine if the two reading programs in the Lower Alloways Creek School were effective. The research presented effective components in a reading series that teach children to read.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

In school, teachers were exposed to different reading series when it became time to select a new reading series for their school. Different publishing companies presented their series to the school or a book selection committee in the school and focused on the highlights of their publication. The group or committee selecting the new series had to be aware of what methods were proven to teach children to read before they selected a new reading series.

Reading was a major goal in education. There were students that had difficulty learning even basic reading skills. At least one in five students had significant difficulties with reading acquisition (Lyon & Moats, 1997).

The most effective way to teach reading according to the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) was to use a combination of the following components: (a) phonemic awareness, (b) phonics, (c) fluency, (d) vocabulary, (e) text comprehension, (f) teacher education, and (g) computer technology. The National Reading Panel reviewed more than 100,000 studies to identify key skills and methods critical to reading achievement.

Phonemic Awareness and Phonics

Phonemic awareness was the understanding that the sounds of spoken language worked together to make words. Effective phonemic awareness instruction taught

children to notice, think about, and work with (manipulate) sounds in spoken language (Armbruster et al, 2001).

Phonics was the relationships between the letters of written language and the individual sounds of spoken language. It taught children to use these relationships to read and write words (Armbruster et al, 2001).

Effective phonics programs offered instruction that: (a) helped teachers explicitly and systematically instruct students in how to relate letters and sounds, how to break spoken words into sounds, and how to blend sounds to form words; (b) helped students understand why they were learning the relationships between letters and sounds; (c) helped students apply their knowledge of phonics as they read words, sentences, and text; (d) helped students apply what they learned about sounds and letters to their own writing; (e) could be adapted to the needs of individual students, based on assessment; and (f) included alphabetic knowledge, phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, and the reading of text, as well as systematic phonics instruction.

There seemed to be a debate according to the research that phonics should have be taught in all grade levels or just in the lower levels of elementary school. Students became less motivated for reading during the middle school years. There was not much evidence to support that phonics instruction was valuable to middle school students (Ivey & Baker, 2004). A study conducted on children ages 6 to 9 with a reading disability concluded that intensive phonemic instruction would drastically improve student performance (Scarpa, 2004).

Fluency

Fluency was the ability to read a text accurately and quickly. Fluency closed the gap between word recognition and comprehension. Fluent readers do not have to concentrate on decoding the words, but they could focus their attention on what the text meant. There were two major instructional approaches to fluency. The first approach was repeated and monitored oral reading. In oral reading, the students read passages aloud several times and received guidance and feedback from the teacher. The second approach was independent silent reading. In silent reading students were encouraged to read on their own. Students who read and reread passages orally as they receive guidance and/or feedback become better readers. Repeated oral reading substantially improved word recognition, speed, and accuracy, as well as fluency. To a lesser, but still considerable extent, repeated oral reading also improved reading comprehension. Repeated oral reading improved the reading ability of all students throughout the elementary school years. It also helped struggling readers at higher grade levels. There were several effective techniques related to repeated oral reading: (a) Students read and reread a text a certain number of times or until a certain level of fluency was reached. Four re-readings were sufficient for most students; and (b) oral reading practice was increased through the use of audiotapes, tutors, peer guidance, or other means (Armbruster et al, 2001).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary referred to words we would know to communicate effectively. Oral vocabulary and reading vocabulary were the two types of vocabulary. Oral vocabulary

referred to words used in speaking or recognized in listening. Reading vocabulary referred to words recognized or used in print.

Vocabulary was learned in two ways. Most vocabulary was learned indirectly, and some vocabulary had to be taught directly. Engaging in daily oral language, listening to adults read to them, and reading extensively on their own were three ways children learned vocabulary indirectly. Direct vocabulary instruction helped students learn difficult words. Direct instruction included providing students with specific word instruction and teaching students word learning strategies. Teaching specific words before reading helped both vocabulary learning and reading comprehension. Extended instruction that promoted active engagement with vocabulary improved word learning. Repeated exposure to vocabulary in many contexts aided word learning. Effective word-learning strategies were using dictionaries, using information about word parts, and using context clues to determine word meaning (Armbrüster et al, 2001).

Text Comprehension

Text comprehension was deriving meaning from typed or written work. If readers could read the words but did not understand what they were reading, they were not really reading. There were six strategies that could improve comprehension. The first strategy was to teach students to monitor their comprehension. Students who were good at monitoring their comprehension knew when they understood what they read and when they did not. The second strategy was to use graphic and semantic organizers. Graphic organizers illustrated ideas and interrelationships among concepts in a text. Semantic organizers were graphic organizers that looked somewhat like a spider web. The third strategy was answering questions. Teacher questioning strongly supported and advanced

students' learning from reading. The fourth strategy was having students generate their own questions. The fifth strategy was recognizing story structure. Story structure referred to the way the content and events of the story were organized into a plot. Finally, the sixth strategy was summarizing. Summarizing required students to determine what was important in what they were reading, to condense this information, and to put it into their own words (Armbruster et al, 2001).

Teacher Education

Educating teachers to teach reading was essential to reading achievement. According to a study conducted by McCutchen et al, relationships emerged between content knowledge and instruction, and between kindergarten teachers' phonological knowledge and their students' reading achievement. Teachers had knowledge of sounds within words. Being a skilled reader did not guarantee that a teacher had the depth of explicit knowledge necessary to navigate students through the complexities of English orthography and phonology. Knowledge of word sounds and knowledge of spelling patterns were so intertwined that they were difficult to separate, and adult confusions between sounds and spellings could result in needless student confusion during instruction (McCutchen et al, 2002). High-quality teacher instruction would determine the success of even the best reading programs (Shaywitz, 2003).

Computer Technology

The International Society for Technology Education (ISTE) specified in its Technology Standards that students should use technology tools to enhance learning, increase productivity, promote creativity, and practice responsible use of technology systems, information, and software (Levins, 2002). Distance learning was one method

that connected computer technology and education. Distance learners were self-learners traditionally taught via study books, collections of readings, and exercises to test understanding of learning packages. Despite advances in e-learning environments and computer-based teaching, distant learners still lacked opportunities to participate in exercises and debates available to classroom learners (Ross et al, 2003). More research needed to be conducted to connect reading and computer technology as part of a reading program.

Characteristics of a Good Reading Program

“ These are some characteristics to look for in a good reading program:

1. Was a reading program automatically successful when almost all of its pupils were reading at or above grade level no matter what the preconditions were? Since by definition everybody cannot read at grade level, what was an acceptable measure of a program's 'success'?
2. Was a reading program that was successful necessarily considered successful in perpetuity? When was it no longer successful, and who declared it so?
3. Could a successful reading program actually be transplanted, intact, to an entirely different setting, situation, and population? How?
4. What was the relationship between socioeconomic status and growth potential? Should this relate to the criteria established for successful programs? Why or why not?
5. Was it important to emphasize program elements in the affective domain since one was unlikely to get a cognitive read-out on a “better adjusted” child? How did one definitively measure an improved self-concept? Was the focus on the affective domain a

valid concern in structuring a successful reading program though most measures in these areas were imprecise and also would not translate into cognitive gains (Jackson, 1978)?”

CHAPTER 3

The Design of the Study

Description of Research Design

This study was based on a qualitative action research design. The action research design included the use of a comparative study and a reading assessment survey.

The comparative study included the examination and comparison of reading grades in the first marking period from the 2003 –2004 school year with reading grades in the first marking period from the 2004-2005 school year. The new reading series was implemented during the first marking period of the 2004-2005 school year in grades first through eighth in the Lower Alloways Creek School District. The students' grades were compared individually and then by grade level.

A reading assessment survey was sent to each teacher in the Lower Alloways Creek School District in grades first through eighth who teaches reading. The survey was anonymous.

The survey was constructed using a Likert scale. Teachers were required to circle the reading series that they were currently using and then answer five questions using the Likert scale. The Likert scale ranged from Very Interested to Not Interested, Very Well to Very Poor, Very Easy to Very Difficult, and Very Effective to Not Effective. The teacher had to select a number in a range from one to five. A comment section was provided on each question from one to five. The sixth question allowed teachers to make any additional comments about the new reading programs.

Research Instruments

The research instruments for this study included a comparison of reading record grades and a reading assessment survey.

The comparison of reading record grades included grades from the first marking period for both the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 school year. Grades were compared for all students in first through eighth grade. Students were compared individually and then by grade level. Comparing the reading grades helped determine the effectiveness of the new reading series.

A reading assessment survey was constructed using a Likert scale. Teachers were required to circle the reading series that they were currently using and then answer five questions using the Likert scale. A comment section was provided on each question from one to five. The sixth question allowed teachers to make any additional comments about the new reading programs. The survey was implemented to get feedback from teachers concerning the effectiveness of the new reading programs.

Sampling Techniques

The students in this study attended the Lower Alloways Creek School in the 2003-2004 and the 2004-2005 school year. The students were male and female in grades first through eighth. The students were all white, except for two Asian-American students. There were 128 students included in the study. There were 65 female students and 63 male students included in the study.

Data Collection Approach

The data for the comparative study was collected from the 2003-2004 school grades summary sheet for the first marking period and from the 2004-2005 school grades

summary sheet for the first marking period for each grade level first through eighth. In order to keep student identity anonymous, each student was coded with a number. The same number was used for each respective school year. The grade level was listed for each student. Comparing the grades provided insight into the effectiveness of the new reading programs.

The reading assessment survey was first divided into two categories: one category for the MacMillian/McGraw Hill reading program and the other category for the Glencoe reading program. Data from the survey was recorded by using a frequency chart to organize data. The frequency chart recorded all of the responses by using tally marks for each response. Any responses that were the same were recorded by tally marks in the same section.

Conduction of the reading assessment survey provided feedback from teachers as to the effectiveness of the new reading programs. The input from the teachers helped determine strengths and weaknesses of the new reading series.

Data Analysis Plan

The data for the comparative reading grade study was collected for the first marking period of the 2003-2004 school year and the first marking period of the 2004 – 2005 school year. The reading grades were compared individually for each student and then were compared with the grade level for the 2003-2004 school year and the 2004-2005 school year. Then the data was compared by the number of A's, B's, C's, D's and F's for each grade level for each respective school year. Charts were constructed to help compare the data.

The data for the reading assessment survey was collected and organized into a frequency chart. Charts were constructed to help compare the data.

Analysis of the data helped provide specific information as to the strengths and weaknesses of the new reading programs.

Evidence of Project Impact

The comparative reading grades study results provided evidence as to whether an impact on reading program effectiveness occurred if grades were higher in the first marking period of the 2004-2005 school year compared to the grades in the first marking period of the 2003-2004 school year.

The reading assessment survey results provided comments and responses by instructors as to the evidence of the effectiveness of the new reading programs.

The factors that could have determined effectiveness of the new reading programs were student interest in the stories, coverage of various reading skills, and teacher instruction.

The impact of this study was crucial in determining the successfulness of student achievement in reading in the Lower Alloways Creek School District. Also, this study was detrimental in assessing the effectiveness of two new reading programs in the Lower Alloways Creek School District in order to ensure student achievement at a level congruent with NCLB (No Child Left Behind) goals.

The results of this study would be valuable research information to other school districts interested in purchasing the MacMillian/McGraw/Hill and Glencoe Reading Programs. Research based programs were recommended by the National Reading Program.

CHAPTER 4

Presentation of Research Findings

A reading assessment survey (appendix A) was conducted in the Lower Alloways Creek School District. The survey assessed the MacMillian/McGraw/Hill reading program for grades first through fifth and the Glencoe reading program for grades sixth through eighth. Ten teachers were surveyed in the district. In grades first through fifth, six surveys were sent out and six were returned.

Results of Survey

The survey assessing the MacMillian/McGraw/Hill reading program had the following responses:

Question 1: How effective was the new reading program in the Lower Alloways Creek School District in improving student achievement?

Table 1

Effectiveness in Improving Student Achievement

| <u>Very Effective</u> | <u>Effective</u> | <u>Not sure</u> | <u>Somewhat Effective</u> | <u>Not Effective</u> |
|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 |

According to the assessment survey conducted in grades first through fifth effectiveness of the reading program on student achievement was inconclusive. One teacher felt that it was very effective, one other teacher felt that it was effective, and four other teachers were not sure. Table 1 shows their responses.

Question 2: How easy was the new reading program to follow?

Table 2

How Easy was Program to Follow

| <u>Very Easy</u> | <u>Easy</u> | <u>Not sure</u> | <u>Difficult</u> | <u>Very Difficult</u> |
|------------------|-------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 0 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 0 |

The majority of the teachers surveyed in grades first through fifth determined the reading program to be easy to follow. For specific result on determining if the new reading program was easy to follow refer to table 2.

Question 3: How helpful were the publishers when questions arose?

Table 3

Helpfulness of Publishers

| <u>Very Helpful</u> | <u>Helpful</u> | <u>Not sure</u> | <u>Somewhat Helpful</u> | <u>Not Helpful</u> |
|---------------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 |

Most of the teachers in grades first through fifth felt the publishers were helpful when questions were raised. For specific results on the helpfulness of the publishers refer to table 3.

Question 4: How well did the stories keep students interested?

Table 4

Keep Students Interest

| <u>Very Interested</u> | <u>Interested</u> | <u>Not Sure</u> | <u>Somewhat Interested</u> | <u>Not Interested</u> |
|------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

According to the survey most of the teachers in grades first through fifth determined that the stories kept the students very interested. For specific results on how well stories kept students interested refer to table 4.

Question 5: How well did the new program cover different reading skills?

Table 5

Coverage of Different Skills

| <u>Very Well</u> | <u>Well</u> | <u>Not Sure</u> | <u>Poor</u> | <u>Very Poor</u> |
|------------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|------------------|
| 0 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |

The survey results were inconclusive in reference to covering different reading skills. For specific results refer to table 5.

Question 6: List any additional comments about the new reading program

Comments:

1. Students enjoy weekly reading groups
2. The handwriting CD had 2 fonts and nothing else
3. Spelling section does not provide enough drill and practice
4. Vowel sounds- Too many are introduced at one time
5. More time is needed to assess the program
6. The publishing company made false promises

The survey assessing the Glencoe reading program had the following responses:

Question 1: How effective was the new reading program in the Lower Alloways Creek School District in improving student achievement?

Table 6

Effectiveness in Improving Student Achievement

| <u>Very Effective</u> | <u>Effective</u> | <u>Not sure</u> | <u>Somewhat Effective</u> | <u>Not Effective</u> |
|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 |

According to survey results in grades sixth through eighth, the effectiveness of the new reading program on student achievement was inconclusive. For specific results refer to table 6.

Question 2: How easy was the new reading program to follow?

Table 7

How Easy was Program to Follow

| <u>Very Easy</u> | <u>Easy</u> | <u>Not sure</u> | <u>Difficult</u> | <u>Very Difficult</u> |
|------------------|-------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 |

The teachers surveyed in grades sixth through eighth, provided inconclusive information on how easy the new reading program was to follow. Only two teachers felt the reading program was difficult to follow. For specific results refer to table 7.

Question 3: How helpful were the publishers when questions arose?

Table 8

Helpfulness of Publishers

| <u>Very Helpful</u> | <u>Helpful</u> | <u>Not sure</u> | <u>Somewhat Helpful</u> | <u>Not Helpful</u> |
|---------------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 |

Two of the teachers in grades sixth through eighth felt that the publishers were somewhat helpful when questions arose. For specific results refer to table 8.

Question 4: How well did the stories keep students interested?

Table 9

Keep Students Interest

| <u>Very Interested</u> | <u>Interested</u> | <u>Not Sure</u> | <u>Somewhat Interested</u> | <u>Not Interested</u> |
|------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 |

Half of the teachers in grades sixth through eighth felt that the stories kept the students interested. For specific results refer to table 9.

Question 5: How well did the new program cover different reading skills?

Table 10

Coverage of Different Skills

| <u>Very Well</u> | <u>Well</u> | <u>Not Sure</u> | <u>Poor</u> | <u>Very Poor</u> |
|------------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |

Question 6: List any additional comments about the new reading program

Comments:

1. There were not enough activities to extend understanding
2. Students were not relating to the stories
3. Short stories require too much preview and developing background
4. Two of the teachers responded – did not like the new series

Results of First Marking Period Grade Comparison

The following tables show students' reading grades for the first marking period of 2003-2004 and students' reading grades for the first marking period of the 2004-2005 school year.

Table 11

Grades 1-2 Comparison of First Marking Period Grades

| <u>Student</u> | <u>Grades 2003-2004</u> | <u>Grades 2004-2005</u> |
|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | A | B |
| 2 | A | A |
| 3 | A | A |
| 5 | A | B |
| 6 | A | A |
| 7 | A | A |
| 8 | A | A |
| 9 | B | A |
| 10 | A | A |
| 12 | B | C |
| 13 | A | B |
| 14 | A | B |
| 15 | B | B |
| 16 | A | B |
| 19 | C | B |
| 22 | A | B |
| 23 | A | A |
| 24 | A | A |
| 25 | A | A |

Overall, the students had a higher academic grade in the first marking period of the 2003-2004 school year. More of the students received “A’s” in the 2003-2004 school year. The students in grades first and second had better academic performance using the previous reading series.

Table 12

Grades 2-3 Comparison of First Marking Period Grades

| <u>Student</u> | <u>Grades 2003-2004</u> | <u>Grades2004-2005</u> |
|----------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 27 | B | B |
| 28 | C | C |
| 29 | A | B |
| 30 | A | A |
| 31 | A | A |
| 32 | A | B |
| 33 | A | B |
| 34 | A | A |
| 35 | A | B |
| 36 | B | B |
| 38 | A | B |
| 41 | A | B |
| 42 | A | B |
| 43 | B | B |
| 44 | A | B |
| 47 | A | A |

In grades second and third student achievement was better in the first marking period of the 2003-2004 school year.

Table 13

Grades 3-4 Comparison of First Marking Period Grades

| <u>Student</u> | <u>Grades 2003-2004</u> | <u>Grades 2004-2005</u> |
|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 49 | B | A |
| 50 | B | C |
| 51 | A | B |
| 52 | A | A |
| 55 | A | A |
| 56 | B | B |
| 57 | B | C |
| 60 | A | A |
| 61 | A | A |
| 62 | C | C |
| 63 | A | B |
| 64 | A | A |
| 65 | B | A |

Overall, academic achievement was very close when comparing the first marking period reading grades for grade levels three and four. In the first marking period of both years, seven students received "A's". More students received "B's" in the first marking period of the 2003-2004 than in the first marking period of the 2004-2005 school year.

Table 14

Grades 4-5 Comparison of First Marking Period Grades

| <u>Student</u> | <u>Grades 2003-2004</u> | <u>Grades 2004-2005</u> |
|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 67 | B | B |
| 68 | B | B |
| 69 | C | B |
| 70 | A | A |
| 71 | B | B |
| 72 | B | B |
| 73 | B | C |
| 74 | A | B |
| 75 | B | A |
| 76 | A | A |
| 77 | C | B |
| 78 | A | B |
| 79 | B | B |
| 81 | B | C |
| 82 | A | A |
| 83 | C | C |
| 85 | A | A |
| 86 | A | A |
| 87 | B | B |

Students in grades fourth and fifth had academic reading levels that were very

close in the first marking period of the 2003-2004 school year when compared to the first marking period of the 2004-2005 school year.

Table 15

Grades 5-6 Comparison of First Marking Period Grades

| <u>Student</u> | <u>Grades 2003-2004</u> | <u>Grades 2004-2005</u> |
|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 89 | A | B |
| 91 | A | B |
| 92 | A | A |
| 93 | B | B |
| 94 | C | D |
| 95 | C | D |
| 96 | C | C |
| 98 | A | B |
| 99 | A | A |
| 101 | B | A |
| 102 | B | B |
| 103 | A | B |
| 104 | B | B |
| 105 | B | B |

The reading achievement for the first marking period in grades levels fifth and sixth for the 2003-2004 school year were slightly elevated compared to the reading achievement for the first marking period in the 2004-2005 school year.

Table 16

Grades 6-7 Comparison of First Marking Period Grades

| <u>Student</u> | <u>Grades 2003-2004</u> | <u>Grades 2004-2005</u> |
|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 106 | A | A |
| 107 | B | F |
| 108 | A | B |
| 109 | A | A |
| 110 | A | B |
| 111 | A | A |
| 112 | A | A |
| 113 | A | B |
| 114 | A | B |
| 115 | A | B |
| 116 | C | D |
| 117 | A | B |
| 119 | A | B |
| 120 | A | A |
| 121 | B | B |
| 123 | A | B |
| 125 | B | B |
| 126 | A | A |
| 127 | A | A |
| 128 | A | B |

Table 16 Continued

Grades 6-7 Comparison of First Marking Period Grades

| <u>Student</u> | <u>Grades 2003-2004</u> | <u>Grades 2004-2005</u> |
|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 129 | A | A |
| 130 | A | A |

Overall students in grades sixth and seventh had significantly better reading grades in the first marking period of the 2003-2004 school year compared to the first marking period reading grades of the 2004-2005 school year.

Table 17

Grades 7-8 Comparison of First Marking Period Grades

| <u>Student</u> | <u>Grades 2003-2004</u> | <u>Grades 2004-2005</u> |
|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 131 | A | A |
| 132 | C | C |
| 133 | A | A |
| 134 | B | B |
| 135 | B | A |
| 136 | B | B |
| 137 | B | A |
| 138 | B | C |
| 139 | A | B |
| 140 | C | C |
| 141 | C | C |
| 142 | D | B |

Table 17 Continued

Grades 7-8 Comparison of First Marking Period Grades

| <u>Student</u> | <u>Grades 2003-2004</u> | <u>Grades 2004-2005</u> |
|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 143 | A | A |
| 144 | B | C |
| 145 | A | A |
| 146 | A | A |
| 147 | B | B |
| 149 | B | C |
| 150 | B | A |
| 151 | A | A |
| 152 | B | B |
| 153 | A | A |
| 154 | B | C |
| 155 | A | B |
| 156 | A | B |

Student achievement in reading for grade levels seventh and eighth did not have a significant change between the 2003-2004 and the 2004-2005 school year. However, students did receive more A's during the first marking period of the 2004-2005 school year. None of the students received a grade lower than a "C" in the first marking period of the 2004-2005 school year.

Meaning of Survey Results

In grades first through fifth, teachers that were surveyed were not sure how

effective MacMillian/McGraw/Hill reading program was on academic achievement. Most of the teachers in grades first through fifth thought the MacMillian/McGraw/Hill reading program was easy to follow. The teachers in grades first through fifth felt the publishers were helpful when they had questions. The teachers in grades first through fifth also thought that the stories were very interesting for the students. The teachers in grades first through fifth had mixed results when asked about the MacMillian/McGraw/Hill reading program covering reading skills. Some teachers thought the reading skills were well covered and some teachers were not sure. Based on survey evidence the teachers seemed to like the MacMillian/McGraw/Hill reading program.

In grades sixth through eighth teachers that were surveyed showed inconclusive results on the effectiveness of the Glencoe reading program on student academic achievement. In grades sixth through eighth, teachers indicated mixed results on how easy the Glencoe reading program was to follow. Overall, the teachers in grades sixth through eighth felt the reading program publishers were helpful when they had questions. Some of the teachers in grades sixth through eighth felt the stories keep students interested and some did not. Some of the teachers in grades sixth through eighth felt reading skills were covered and some were not sure. The results were very mixed in determining if the teachers in grades sixth through eighth liked the Glencoe reading program.

Meaning of Comparing First Marking Period Grades

Reading grades were compared for the first marking period of the 2003-2004 school year with grades in the first marking period of the 2004-2005 school year.

Overall, the students had better grades using the previous reading program. Only eighth grade showed better reading grades in the 2004-2005 school year. The eighth grade students did not received any grades of a “D” or “F” during the first marking period of the 2004-2005 school year. This meant that overall, academic achievement in reading was better with the previous reading series during the first marking period.

Summary

The survey and comparison of reading grades for the first marking period in 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 school year revealed information to conclude that the previous reading series was more effective on student achievement.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions, Implications, and Further Study

Conclusions and Their Implications

Conclusions and implications were drawn from the teachers surveyed in grades first through eighth and by comparing first marking period reading grades in grades first through eighth during the 2003-2004 school year and the 2004-2005 school year. The researcher concluded that the new reading programs (MacMillian/McGraw/Hill and Glencoe) implemented in the Lower Alloways Creek School District were not as effective as the reading programs used in the 2003-2004 school year. The teachers in grades first through fifth seemed to like the new reading series overall, but were not sure how effective it was on student achievement. Comparing grades in the first marking period of the 2003-2004 school year and the 2004-2005 school year clearly showed a difference in student achievement.

Of course, it was taken into consideration by the researcher that many factors can effect students' grades. Most students had different teachers for reading each year. The teachers were more familiar teaching the previous reading series and already knew instructional strategies to use with the previous reading series. Based on students' grades, the previous reading series was more effective on academic achievement in reading.

Leadership Growth Per Dictums of the ISLLC Standards

The researcher obtained leadership growth per the dictums of the ISLLC (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium) standards. Standard 1 referred to a

school administrator that is an educational leader who promoted the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision that is shared and communicated by the school community. Under standard 1, the knowledge section referred to research methods. The researcher grew in the area of research methods to conduct this study. Standard 2 referred to a school administrator that is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth. Under standard 2, the knowledge section referred to measurement, assessment and evaluation strategies. The researcher grew in the area of measurement, assessment and evaluation while conducting this study. Standard 4 referred to a school administrator that is an educational leader who promoted the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responded to diverse community interest and needs, mobilized community resources. Under standard 4, the knowledge section referred to current research on schooling. The researcher conducted research and researched schooling as applied to reading for this study.

Change in Organization

The study provided valuable insight into the Lower Alloways Creek School District's reading programs, but a final decision to change reading programs will take place in June of 2005. As a consequence of the study, the teachers and administration will make a determination to continue using the new reading programs or revert to the old reading programs. The challenges faced by teachers and administrators are that the new reading programs have all ready been purchased at a price of approximately \$10,000.

Further Study Needed

Further study that needs to be conducted in order to evaluate the new reading programs in the Lower Alloways Creek School District is a combination of several different measures. The students' standardized test scores can be compared from the 2003-2004 school year to the 2004-2005 school year. The New Jersey State test scores can be compared from the 2003-2004 school year to the 2004-2005 school year. Instead of just comparing the first marking period grades for each school year, all four marking period grades in reading can be compared. Students and parents can be surveyed to get input on the reading programs. Conducting further study would give a more defined assessment of the reading programs in the Lower Alloways Creek School District.

Summary

In conclusion, the Lower Alloways Creek School District students were achieving with the previous reading series and the two new reading series in the district. The study showed that the previous reading series was slightly more effective in the area of student achievement.

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APPENDIX
READING ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Reading Assessment Survey

Please read the survey. Circle one response for each question. Writing a comment is optional.

Circle the reading program you are using:

MacMillian/McGraw/Hill or Glencoe

1. How effective is the new reading program in the Lower Alloways Creek School District in improving student achievement?

Very Effective Effective Not sure Somewhat Effective Not Effective
1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

2. How easy is the new reading program to follow?

Very Easy Easy Not sure Difficult Very Difficult
1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

3. How helpful are the publishers when questions arise?

Very Helpful Helpful Not Sure Somewhat Helpful Not Helpful
1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

4. How well do the stories keep students interested?

Very Interested Interested Not Sure Somewhat Interested Not Interested
1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

5. How well does the new program cover different reading skills?

Very Well Well Not Sure Poor Very Poor
1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

6. Please list any additional comments you may have about the new reading program.

Please place the completed survey in the mailbox of Linda Levitsky.