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The problem of children learning to read in a fluent, continuous manner.

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THE PROBLEM OF CHILDREN LEARNING TO READ IN A
FLUENT, CONTINUOUS MANNER

A Dissertation Presented

By

PEGGY M. SCHWARZ

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

September 1975

Education, Elementary

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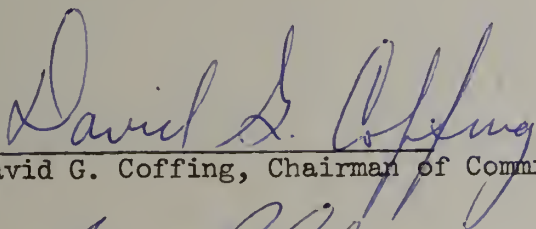
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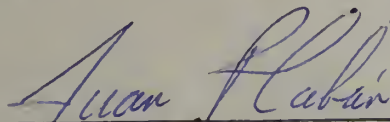
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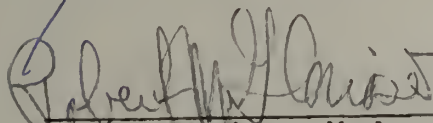
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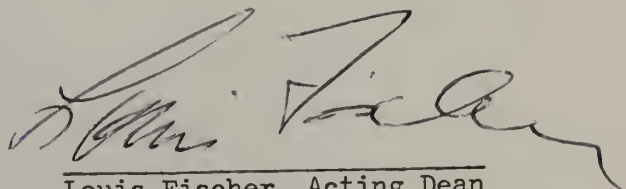
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Juan P. Cabán, Member



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September 1975

To DAN

To Allan, Gail, Eddie, Rick, Vinnie
and especially to my grandchildren

Kimi, Jeannie, Dana

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The Problem of Children Learning to Read in a
Fluent, Continuous Manner

(September 1975)

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ABSTRACT

The Problem of Children Learning to Read in a Fluent, Continuous Manner

The purpose of this project was to design and implement a different approach to learning to read in the middle grades which concentrated on reading for fluency rather than on phonic skills methodology. During the many years the investigator had been involved in the New York City Public School System as a reading consultant and program evaluator, it was observed that children were being taught phonics through the use of workbooks, xeroxed sheets and "hard" machinery. These children were being drilled but they were not reading books in a fluent, continuous manner. To many teachers, studying phonic skills this way was, in fact, reading.

This study attempted to introduce a program that eliminated the workbooks, xeroxed sheets, "hard" machinery, basal readers, etc., and instead gave children paperback books to read. It was felt that if the children were free to choose their own books, ask questions about their reading and get immediate feedback then they would become fluent, continuous readers. This was a reversal of the sequence of instructional skills practiced in a traditional approach.

Thirty-four fifth grade children in a New York City Public School situated in a lower middle class neighborhood participated in the project from November to June. The children were told that

they could select and read any book in the class library. They were never told a book was too hard or too easy. During an hour long period, the children read silently, but they were encouraged to ask about any word(s) they did not know and the teacher was expected to give them immediate feedback so that the children could continue their reading in a fluent, continuous manner.

Overall, the results were very positive. Reading achievement, as measured by a standardized test, improved significantly ($p < .01$) from pre- to posttesting; however, this improvement was not as great as was anticipated. Further it was found that children reading at or below grade level benefited more from the project than children reading above their grade level expectancy.

Children's self-perceived attitudes towards reading generally showed no change because they were basically extremely positive at the beginning of the year. The area in which change was facilitated was in terms of library use. Many of the children obtained library cards as a result of the program; more children reported going to the library and going more frequently.

Parents' perception of their children's attitudes towards reading did indicate a change. They felt their children liked to read more now and that they chose more difficult reading material as a result of the project.

Teacher ratings of children also reflected a change in a positive direction. Across the academic and cognitive characteristics, the majority of ratings (61 percent) were considered as having improved.

For the characteristics most critical and reflective of a reading program, almost three-fourths of the children (71 percent) were rated as having improved. Further, specifically considering the group of children most in need of a special type of program (those seen as average or below at the beginning of the year) more than four-fifths (81 percent) were seen as showing improvement.

Administrator and librarian opinions of the program were also positive. The administrator indicated many books were circulating within the class and the librarian noted that the children were curious, independent and mature in their attitude and behavior toward books. Both felt the program was worthy of continued support.

In conclusion, it is believed that through this program children had the opportunity to learn to read for fun and for information; that they were able to develop a love and a respect for books and that these attitudes would help them in their future educational achievements. The children learned to read in a fluent, continuous manner.

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C H A P T E R I
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

In our culture reading is a very important tool, not only for school and school related activities but also for daily life experiences. Those who do not read are considered illiterate, and those who have a reading problem are said to have a reading disability.

The reading process is complicated and it is difficult to find one simple solution that can be applied to all those children who are not yet mastering reading instruction. Reading is also a much researched area with numerous studies showing the merits of one method over another. But no one approach can suit all children since there is no one way of teaching reading.

The Reading Process

It is obvious that no one can define this term adequately because in almost every source one finds a different explanation of the reading process. According to Allen (1963), the children who express in writing their own experiences will have the ability to read. He says, "Children who write, read! They have to read!" Allen is concerned with language experience that is contrary to the use of workbook exercises, practice lessons which are not reading. On the other hand, Savage (1973) thinks that spelling patterns will help in the reading process. For example, if a child reads "Dan is a

man who can use a fan," would he be able to use this knowledge to further his reading? Yet, the latter example is not what is expected of a child. Holt (1967) feels that children can learn independently when they are interested and curious but not to please or appease anyone else in power; and if they are in control of their own learning, making their own decisions as to what to learn and how to learn it. Smith (1971) points out that the process of reading is not very well understood. Researchers do not yet know enough about the developed skills of the fluent reader, almost always the end product of the instruction process, let alone the process of acquiring those skills. It is questionable whether reading experts have been able to put all the necessary pieces together. However, some of the pieces are known. Piaget (1972), for example, has added knowledge concerning the individual child. From him we know that children go through cognitive developmental stages and it is necessary to understand those stages in order to follow the progress of a child.

Physical aspects, especially of the eye and the brain, are also better understood, even though for the ordinary teacher, this aspect might be too technical. Coffing (1971) and Cabán (1971) have attempted to show that eye movements have a marked influence on individual differences in learning. Coffing's (1971) study

demonstrated a significant relationship between eye movement preference and learning success where visual presentation mode options were available. Individuals differ in eye movement patterns and these differences provide unique predictors of learning with alternative stimulus materials. (p. 9)

Reading, however, is a visual process and in order to achieve

that end it is necessary to have reading material in front of the eyes but as Smith (1975) points out,

reading is far more than an exercise for the eyeballs. The art of becoming a fluent reader lies in learning to rely less and less on information from the eyes. Any reader who struggles to absorb more visual information than his brain can handle becomes a slow and hobbled reader, not a fluent one. The difference between a fluent reader and a poor one lies not in what his eyes do, but in the way his brain utilizes the information through the eyes. (p. 50)

There are also many known strategies for skills learning such as decoding (Chall, 1967), miscue analysis (Goodman, 1973) which enhances the ability of a teacher to identify patterns of reading miscues in order to assist the individual. Psycholinguists (Goodman, 1973; Smith, 1971) have asserted that meaning can be derived from a passage through contextual clues even though specific words may not be decoded correctly. For example, a child may see the sentence, "I can ride the horse" and read "I can ride the pony." He has derived the proper meaning although he has not read the sentence accurately.

Venezky (1968) feels that

patterns and strategies are involved in reading. A pattern simply is that the letter F which is pronounced a certain way would be a factor in how to use that letter F. Patterns and strategies allow intake of words and derive meaning from them. The higher level of cognition to phrases, sentences, punctuation and beyond to recognize the structure of paragraphs to jump to clues will give meaning to what is being searched for. (p. 165)

Children learn language through listening but they do not learn language through their reading. It is necessary for them to come to a reading situation with experiences in language. As Furth (1968) indicates, if a child has acquired some ability in language, he then

will be able to translate words and phrases into a visual process.

In addition to the cognitive and physical aspects of reading there is also the psychological phase to be considered. The goal is communication in learning to read; communication in ideas from what is read; communication of the author's ideas; the communication of the author's feelings plus that of the reader; and the communication of an understanding of what one is reading. These experiences are built up by the knowledge of language which is a means of communication. Piaget (Duckworth, 1964) said, "Learning is possible only when there is active assimilation" (p. 18). And Bruner (1960) adds that "any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development." If these hypotheses are kept in mind, it is conceivable that it might be understood how children learn and that what is taught to them, or better yet what is offered, has something to do with them.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to design and implement a special approach to learning to read in the middle grades which concentrated on reading for fluency rather than on phonic skills methodology. This is, therefore, an exploratory, descriptive study that does not attempt to answer any theoretical issues, but rather to determine the effects of a different approach to reading.

For too long, children have been taught phonics in an abstract manner and they have not been able to see the connection between what

they learned and what they were supposed to read. However, if they could learn the phonic and comprehension skills within the context of what they were currently reading, there might be a direct transference of knowledge and an understanding of the skills and the reasons for them. Yet, by the time a child gets to the middle grades, he/she no longer gets the concentrated reading instruction that was given in the early grades.

Children start kindergarten or first grade eager to learn. They carry their pencils and notebooks to school in hopeful anticipation but before long, they become unhappy, discouraged and stop learning. There are many factors responsible for this. Perhaps there is poor teaching, or a lack of individual attention to the problems of each child.

A plausible inference from the estimates of ineffective [or poor] instruction is that the deficiency lies in [the] normal instruction, not in the students it is supposed to serve. Accordingly, it is reasonable to work for changes in normal instruction itself with the goal of establishing schooling that assists all students in learning successfully. (Rohwer, 1973, p. 6)

Or perhaps there is deficient experiential background, poverty or the lack of motivation. These all may have a bearing on the reading disability of the child.

As early as 1946 Robinson reported that "educators have long been aware that large numbers of pupils slow down or even come to a halt in their reading progress in the intermediate grades with adverse effects on both academic and personal development." If the child were successful in his or her learning in the early grades, he or she

might continue up the success ladder. Often something happens along the way. Some children in the upper grades of the elementary school fall behind in their reading. In the middle grades the reading program is often considered a problem area. In some schools there is an observable relaxation in the effort to teach reading--a shift of emphasis sometimes rationalized by the familiar saying that in the primary grades children learn to read and in the middle grades they read to learn (Karlin, 1970). An effective reading program in the middle grades should be able to produce versatile, independent readers, able to do the reading required and enthusiastic about reading as a lifetime interest. Thus, the development of a strong effective middle-grade reading program is an important curriculum concern.

This study focuses on the development and implementation of such a program and attempts to determine the effects of the program participants.

Definition of Terms

Reading. According to Chall (1967), who used many definitions from various sources, basal reader authors, language-experience proponents, linguists and phonics authors, "reading is understanding printed language and reacting to it," or "reading is the meaningful interpretation of symbols," or it is "a process of communication between readers and writers and a means to an end." But in this study reading is defined as the meaningful communication between author and reader.

Comprehension. According to Roswell and Natchez (1971), this

term is an essential aspect of the nature of reading because it is applying thought processes to one's reading. In this study the child "comprehends" if he questions, makes decisions or problem solves in order to make his reading enjoyable.

Fluent and continuous reading. If a child reads smoothly, that is, in a meaningful connected manner, he is reading without unnecessary interruption.

Feedback. In this study feedback is defined as the immediate response given to the questioner.

Phonics. As Harris (1967) defines the term, it is the study of the speech equivalents of printed symbols and their use in pronouncing printed and written words. For the purposes of this study, phonics is the process by which one decodes, recodes and encodes a word.

Individualized Reading

In a study conducted by Austin and Morrison (1963) on reading instruction, it was reported that 86 percent of the schools did not favor "individualized reading" and 64 percent relied almost entirely upon a single basal reader. Within the basal reader approach "wide reading" is recommended but there is seldom time in the class provided for supplementary reading.

The basal reader authors controlled vocabulary although in some of the new series they have eliminated that concept. All the children in the class use the same basal reader series. There might

be several groups but all the groups concentrate on the one series. The basal reader manual is followed quite strictly as to instructions; it is easier this way for a teacher. On the other hand the individualized approach has been compared with a basal reader approach by Lazar (1957), Veatch (1969) and Stauffer (1969). In the individualized approach there is no reliance on basal readers but on the children's preferences in their selection of interesting and diversified books. The proponents of individualized reading keep in mind Olson's (1949) famous expressions, "seeking, self-selection and pacing" which he felt were the important elements in the individualized reading process. Individualized reading has long been approved but infrequently practiced.

However the basis of these comparisons has almost always been the standardized test which gives a quantitative result rather than a qualitative result, i.e., what are the children reading or how much are they reading. These latter questions would be important aspects in this present study. It is of utmost importance to determine whether the children in this class as a result of choosing their own reading materials, in asking questions about their reading and in getting immediate feedback, will develop into efficient, mature readers.

It can be argued that reading instruction, particularly in the intermediate grades, has been conducted in a "cart before the horse" procedure. In the very first grades, children are introduced to "reading" by sound-letter association. The child sounds out isolated letters, objects, names and other abstract words. The whole subject

of decoding is ingrained very early in a child's formal education. The practice of phonics learning is almost always in the curriculum. If a child has failed to learn to "break the code," he or she is given workbooks, practice lessons, xeroxed sheets, tapes, machinery, all designed to reinforce the phonic skills that were failed previously--to do all over again. If one asks a teacher the question when is the child allowed or ready to read, the answer is "why, he is reading!" In the teacher's mind, phonics learning and reading are synonymous. Often teachers lose sight of the fact that learning phonics is not reading but a building skill to be used to help and nurture continuous reading and children often have very little time to enjoy the feeling of reading in a connected, fluent manner.

Although the traditional procedure is to teach children phonic skills in order for them to go on to transfer this particular learning to continuous reading, this does not seem to be the case. Children learn the phonic skills in an isolated and abstract way, not having anything to do with a concrete idea, a central theme or a situation in which they could bring their experiences into play.

Certainly the teacher in the middle grades is eager for the child to learn to read; probably more so than the child. However, these phonic lessons which the child sat through during the early grades and did not understand are now repeated all over again. The same old stuff. The same workbooks, games and readers. Does not anything change?

In evaluating programs in reading, it has been found that a

great deal of money is spent on equipment. The children have gadgets and machinery which they can work themselves supposedly for motivation. All of the expensive hardware and a great deal of software, books, paper, crayons, pencils, games and workbooks, are used to help the child learn more phonics in order to read. But they do not seem to learn to read and when the experts come in to diagnose the children's reading, the prescription is more phonics, more workbooks, more readers. What a vicious cycle! In other cases, perhaps reading in the middle grades is taken for granted, or a teacher is discouraged by the child's failure to progress in his reading tasks that he gives up.

But what would happen if children were allowed to choose their own reading material? It is believed that they could learn the phonic skills within that framework and that these skills would be more meaningful to them so that they would be encouraged to read more. Thus in this study the major aim was to establish an environment in which the children choose their own books and read--just read--without interruption. In this environment the teacher would serve as a supplier of information, vis a vis, feedback; providing definitions or pronunciation of words. As noted by Smith (1971) feedback is the most important kind of information that a child can receive in any learning situation; it supplies him/her with just the right kind of information at the precise moment that he needs it. Some happy coincidence between the child's implicit "question" and the teacher's information must occur.

Although the learning of the phonic skills was relevant to whatever the children were reading, they also had the opportunity to read fluently and continuously without interruption. It is believed that when children choose materials of interest to them, opportunities for fluent reading will be enhanced. As Rohwer (1973) pointed out, reading instruction should be designed to foster the skills of gleaning relevant information from printed material as efficiently as possible. The provision for a wide choice of reading materials in this study follows a recommendation often made but seldom practiced.

Ecological Method

Snow (1973) defines ecology as "designating the natural or customary habitat of an individual or species, with its inherent complex of environmental characteristics and their interrelationships" (p. 10).

An ecological approach was used in this study whereby the behaviors of children were observed in their classroom. This was, of course, the most natural setting because it is here that the children spend most of their day. While this classroom was not set up as an "open classroom," by its very make-up and the teacher's philosophy of education, it fell in directly with the assumptions of the "open Classroom" concept made by Brearley (1970), Featherstone (1971), and Weber (1971).

So there is a need for ecological methodology in the classroom to further knowledge of what pupils are likely to do under certain conditions and devices for measuring what they are able or disposed

to do. The need can be met only by recording and analyzing field observations.

Although reading is a much researched area, there is a lack of information and research in the particular areas of fluency, feedback and learning behavior in this regard. Therefore, there is justification for an ecological study of this nature.

Assumptions

It is assumed that the children participating in the project will have acquired a degree of familiarity with phonic skills such as word analysis, structural analysis, syllabication and some comprehension skills such as literal meaning, interpretive meaning, in order for them to progress to more comprehensive and fluent reading.

It is further assumed that each child functions differently. It is also assumed that in this classroom, because it functioned using many of the Open Classroom concepts, that

1. there is a more naturalistic environment than in the traditional classroom;
2. there are more options for the learner of whether to read and what to read;
3. the programming is more flexible;
4. there is more of a guiding than a didactic role for the teacher;
5. reading is at least partially self-taught;
6. there is greater stress on language and that this would lead directly into the acquisition of more reading skills.

Oliver (1973), in summing up the "Open Classroom" philosophy,

concluded that "the child's learning is stressed rather than the teacher's teaching and therefore it is possible to observe a great variety of styles and approaches to reading taken by different children since they are free to explore and use all manner of learning contexts for reading," and that there "is a high degree of interaction, both teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil."

These assumptions lead to the following questions or hypotheses. This study was designed to obtain information concerning the effect on children's reading behavior when they were given free choice and immediate feedback. Since descriptive research is not usually geared to testing hypotheses, major questions were formulated instead. Information was sought to decide whether or not this approach to reading was feasible.

Major Questions

1. Will the pupils' reading achievement, as measured by the Metropolitan Achievement Test, show improvement?
2. Will the pupils demonstrate more fluent and continuous reading activity if they are given the opportunity of choosing their own materials and are left to read without interruption?
3. Will the pupils question words or sentences that are unclear if they are left to pursue their own interests?
4. Will the pupils show an increase in in-school and out-of-school reading activities and interests?
5. Will feedback aid in the mutual understanding between

pupil and teacher and will it contribute to the pupils' development in fluent and continuous reading?

There are many reasons to justify this study: To give each child the opportunity to enjoy reading; to have complete freedom of choice; to have the chance to develop more varied taste in selecting materials; to develop decision making processes; to develop the love of reading books in order to offset the passive capitulation to television and to develop the habit of questioning to satisfy one's curiosity.

C H A P T E R I I
R E V I E W O F T H E L I T E R A T U R E

Introduction

The major aspect of this study focuses upon a child's fluent and continuous reading without interruption except to ask questions. So that continuous reading is facilitated, the emphasis on continuity and instant feedback are therefore important considerations.

Reading, as has been stated, is a thoroughly researched area but most often only the traditional aspects of reading are studied: One approach to reading is compared with another approach; or one element of phonics is compared with another element; or some kind of reading gadget is studied in respect to children learning to read more quickly, more accurately or more productively. Reading traditionally is taught through sight words, phonics and comprehension skills. However, an additional aspect--reading books and developing appreciation for them--is often neglected for one reason or another. As a result, McCracken and McCracken (1972) point out, "we have developed a literate populace, but elementary and secondary students are overtaught, and underpracticed as readers. They can read, but they don't, and they won't" (p. 18).

In this study the order of teaching reading was reversed so that the children could learn to appreciate books and reading by being able to choose their own selections from a wide variety of paperback books. They were to read continuously and interrupt themselves only

to ask questions for immediate feedback in order to continue their reading. The emphasis of this study is on free selection and reading of books as a primary step in learning to read in a fluent, continuous manner.

Since research in this area is so limited, the need for this type of exploratory project appears rather timely.

Many theorists view learning on a hierarchy of developmental levels. According to Bruner (1966), because of the developmental levels of children during the middle grades, instruction should be a relaxed process, where the focus is on the development of the child's concept of "self." Piaget (cited in Piers, 1972) favors an active methodology in teaching children, where they do their own experimenting and their own research. Teachers, of course, can guide them by providing appropriate materials but the most important emphasis is that, in order for a child to understand something, he or she must reinvent it. Every time a child is taught something, we are keeping that child from reinventing it. Learning and evaluation comes from the mastering of different developmental tasks. During the course of his work, Piaget elaborated the aspects of children's thinking. He arrived at some general principles which govern the development of thought. First of all, he proposes that there are four different stages of thought, each of which manifests a particular mental organization. There is first the sensory-motor stage (0-2 years) during which the infant's reasoning is expressed in actions. This is followed by the pre-operational period (2-7 years), during which the child's thinking

is intuitive rather than deductive. At the third stage (7-11 years), the child develops concrete operational reasoning which enables him or her to employ deductive logic with respect to things, classes and relations. Finally, in the fourth stage there is the attainment of formal operational logic when the child can deal with the abstract. The implication of this concept is that learning is a qualitatively different process at different age levels. Bright children will go through these stages more rapidly than a child of average ability. A retarded child, on the other hand, may never reach a formal operational stage.

Piaget (cited in Piers, 1972) believes that spontaneous mental growth is self-motivated and does not need to be stimulated from without. A new ability is enhanced by the child's situation. In Bruner's model (1974), there is a stress on some form of representation or identification rather than some mental operation as in the Piagetian model. This symbolic representation as well as the increased capacity to deal with several alternatives simultaneously, which is a characteristic of the child in the middle grades, allows the child to allocate the appropriate energies to each specific alternative. Determining how a child is functioning according to these theoretical levels or stages will help the teacher discern and account for the levels of awareness and understanding of each child's ideas and thoughts.

John Dewey advocated the consideration of the school and the life of the child. "Space or lack of it was made for listening,

not action." Simply studying lessons out of a book is another way of listening; it marks the dependency of one mind upon another. If the child learns through living, there would be an interest in conversation and communication. The desire for inquiry, finding things out, in creating, construction and in artistic expression are all present. The natural resources of a child are dependent on active growth. Given a wide variety of books to choose from, and some guidance, the child can develop what it means to read.

"Children learn language through listening while they do not learn language through reading" (Furth, 1968, p. 130). It is known, once a child has acquired language ability, he/she will be able to translate words and phrases into the visual process.

John Dewey's (cited in Dworkin, 1965) thoughts exemplify a philosophy which can be seen working in a classroom where children are using books, making choices and actively involved in the situation. School has the opportunity to be the backbone of a child's experiences throughout life. It is not only a place to learn lessons having abstract and remote reference to some possible living to be done in the future. When the school introduces and trains each child into membership within the community of the school, it provides the instruments of self-direction. From the standpoint of the child, it is a great waste of time and potential which comes from the inability to utilize activities inside as well as outside of the school environment. The child may also be unable to apply daily life to what is being learned from classroom experiences. School does not exist in isolation.

Dewey claimed

that in action is response--that it is the adaptation and adjustment. There is no such thing as self-activity because all activity takes place in a medium--in a situation with reference to its conditions. It depends upon the activity which the mind itself undergoes in responding to what is presented from without. (Dworkin, 1965, p. 110)

The bright student would not be classed as a teacher's pet but one who could help members of the group. The slowest person would not be regarded as dumb so much as someone who needed a little extra time. Learning to read in a cooperative setting may mean that students should be generous toward each other and that learning to read would become a collective activity.

If the behaviorist point of view is looked at, it would be assumed that the children would be given material "to practice"--to form the habit of reading but on the other hand, the cognitive theory is that learning to read involves the acquisition of knowledge which would motivate a subject to pursue his instincts and his curiosity in order to gather more learning.

With all the information, suggestions, studies, that the "experts" have contributed, the need for a specific study of middle grade children making their own choices of reading matter and just reading, asking questions, and getting immediate feedback might prove to be just the right mixture. The children then might achieve the necessary reading and pleasure skills through the course of their fluent, continuous reading.

Reading and Language Instruction

In studying reading and in the teaching of reading the experts point out that it is necessary to understand that reading is an extension of language development (Silberman, 1973). According to Ruddell (1974), there is an inseparable relationship between a child's reading and language development. For example, emphasis on concept development through experiences in the home and early childhood education curriculum will directly enhance the child's reading and listening comprehension ability. The control and understanding of language will help the child validate decoding through meaning in sentence and story contexts.

Language, which is rooted in personal experiences, as Silberman (1973) points out, makes it possible for human beings to organize experiences and clarify as well as extend the understanding of those experiences. Expressing life experiences through oral and written language communication forms will help develop an understanding of key components of story organization which in turn will be of value in interpretative aspects of reading. One story, for example, can give many impressions of the characters thus encouraging a child to look at a situation from several points of view (Silberman, 1973). In essence, reading, by making available the wisdom of others, puts the cumulative experiences of humanity at the disposal of each person.

As children meet a variety of reading materials, they find that reading satisfies many needs and purposes. The development of the

child's ability in story-type reading rather than word-type reading creates a desire to become involved. While becoming involved with plot, for example, the child can learn to appreciate humor, characterization and techniques of artistic expression (Harris, 1970). Most people would agree that reading without comprehension is meaningless. Reconstructing and understanding the thoughts of others is the end product in reading instruction.

Much has been said and written about the teaching of reading. To sort all of the literature in the ever growing body of materials is a formidable task. Each approach of teaching has its advocates and its critics.

Approaches to Reading

Fluent reading. Fluent reading, an end product of reading instruction, provides the individual with the ability to identify skillfully individual words. As Smith (1971) notes, fluent reading is more complex than is frequently believed. Researchers however have not yet discovered enough about the developed skills of the fluent reader. The fluent reader can identify individual words to obtain meaning of a passage or he can acquire knowledge about the meaning of the passage in order to identify individual words. The question is not that the fluent reader is unaware of any of the words in a passage, but only that he extracts meaning from the sequence of words before identifying any particular ones. Smith further believes comprehension normally precedes word identification. Experienced

readers usually read four or five words ahead of the voice when reading aloud.

Phonics. Phonics is the study of the speech equivalents of printed symbols and their use in pronouncing printed and written words. In this approach the emphasis is on a sequence of isolated steps including such elements as root recognition, initial consonants, consonant blends, vowels, and syllabication instruction. However, when an individual learns these isolated skills in phonics and begins to read a passage, the ability to concentrate on that passage is diminished (Smith, 1971). Implicit in this approach are various sets of rules. For example, the child learns that the rules of syntax are related to the written aspect of language together with the relationship to visual configurations and semantic interpretations. All of this is established when and if a child is given various examples and is shown the similarities and differences between situations. Given the raw materials, the child can develop the rules. If the child examines the regularities, given an adequate sample to draw experience from, that child will find the regularities which are the basis of cognitive activities (Smith, 1971).

On the other hand, Rudolph Flesch (1955) stated that there was an overemphasis on the whole word method of teaching reading, and advocated the teaching of phonics which in his view had as its goal the identification of written words through an analysis of the letters comprising them.

If the purposes of teaching reading are concerned with the

joy of reading, the social experience and the pursuit of children's interests, then there should be further investigation of the teaching of phonics which could result in a better balance and the transfer of phonics to continuous, fluent reading.

The experiential approach to reading. Louis J. Cooper (1968), who feels that reading is a process of reconstructing one's own experiences by using printed symbols, has a different view in relation to reading instruction. Cooper points out that unless a child's experiences and the content of a particular reading passage are correlated there would be a lack of understanding although the words may be pronounced correctly when read aloud. Emotional satisfaction is achieved because of the personal relevance to the child. This satisfaction is the foundation for a motivated learner.

The primary focus of Cooper's analysis deals with enriching the experiential backgrounds of children, while developing skills, imagination and interest. For children whose backgrounds are "experience deficient," Cooper recommends the use of visual aids and various enrichment activities as a daily course curriculum. These deficiencies are prevalent in the middle and upper grades.

The Development of an Interesting Program

An interesting, exciting, effective reading program in the middle grades can produce intelligent, independent readers who are able to do those readings required in the upper grade subject areas and would also be enthusiastic about reading as a lifetime interest

(Karlin, 1970). It is not essentially what method is used or which method is better, but rather what is best for that child and what methods can contribute to the program for that child (Gray, 1960).

It is the programs that are interesting, creative and which satisfy the needs of both the individuals and the group as a whole that produce people who are eager to explore and examine relevant information to solve or better understand a situation. These attitudes establish the framework for individuals who are curious about life and reality, desire to get in touch with it and eventually to become a part of it.

Although intelligence, reading ability and socioeconomic factors are primary factors in children's reading preferences, Norvell (1958) confirmed the results of earlier studies which identified sex differences in reading choices as the primary element in the middle grade child's choice of reading materials. Boys preferred adventure, action, courage, heroes, heroines, humor and animals as the central focus of the stories whereas girls preferred mystery, love, home and school life, pets, patriotism and sentiment as central themes. Reading programs should have the built-in opportunity for wide, independent reading and cater to diverse tastes and interests. Talbert and Merritt (1965) found when a class using basal readers was compared to another class using various types of reading materials with a procedure of self-selection, the children in the self-selection class read more books.

Too many children fail to become involved in reading; reading

is perceived as unrewarding and does not lead to a continuous and self-directed learning. In many classrooms there is minimal direct, effective teaching of how or why to enjoy reading. "Direct," in this context, referred to a concentrated, concerted effort to determine how one's program can be rewarding.

Peer Group, Familial Influences, Environment

All aspects of the physical environment where children learn affect learning processes. As pointed out when discussing the experiential approach to teaching reading, a child relates to the environment and identifies with his or her environment.

Kohl (1973) defines the classroom as a microcosm and he points out that it is crucial to see how students function with each other, what they know about each other's lives, what responsibility they take for each other's learning, what they consider private and what they are willing to share. In a collective situation students should naturally help each other; they could read stories to each other, ask each other for help and share insights. They would need to ask adults for help as a last resort.

Stone and Church (1957) point out in their analysis of children that in the middle years of childhood, children cluster in same-age and same-sex groups drawn from the pool of neighborhood and school acquaintances. At this age, the values of one's peers become considerably more important than those handed down by adults, although parental attitudes should not be underemphasized. The child spends

much of his or her time determining along with his or her peers, what the social structures are, about "in groups" and "out groups," about leadership, justice, loyalties and ideals. The questions of masculinity and femininity become prominent and sex related interests are established.

The home and family continue to become an important emotional refuge, source of learning, entertainment and companionship throughout these years. Sibling relationships and the like all contribute to a child's perception of the educational situation.

Language is reflective of the times and attitudes, and children learning to read are affected by the various types of jargon which exist in the social structure as well.

All of these factors influence teaching reading as well as any other subject matter and it is crucial for the teacher to incorporate these factors in order that they can become positive learning forces.

The Reading Gap

Reading in the middle grades is a continuation and extension of primary grade reading. In the primary grades, children learn the basic skills of reading; how to attack words and comprehend written language. In addition, attitudes toward reading and books are developed. It is said that during the middle grades, there is a shift from the process of learning to read to reading to learn but that is a fallacy since children are always reading to learn.

Often what occurs during this transition when the purpose of reading is mastering content fields and acquiring additional insights, is that there is a lapse in the sequence of reading instruction. During the fourth, fifth and sixth grades when this occurs in some reading programs, and reading instruction is less clearly focused, the students begin to experience what is known as "the reading gap." At this time, Karlin (1970) agrees that most children have acquired the basic skills necessary to comprehend materials presented to them and there is a tendency to concentrate only on the nature of the content. The teaching of reading skills is neglected only to be considered as a separate area. All aspects of teaching skills could be easily incorporated while examining the content but it is not done. Karlin also states that because reading materials change in the middle grades due to the specific nature of the subject matter, it is difficult to maintain an adequate standard of excellence without specific reading instruction.

Developing interest. In the lack of knowledge to pin down the factors that make children read, there has been concern for the last fifty years with studies of reading interests of children.

Another area concerning the development of an interest in reading is the school environment where children acquire the necessary tools for reading. An excellent way to saturate the environment with positive stimuli is to surround the room with newspapers, magazines and paperback books so that the children come to experience them as objects of pleasure. It is then the responsibility of the teacher

to create an attractive environment (Fader, 1968).

Is it the function of the school system to introduce the best literature that is available? Is not there this obligation? Should not the child be instilled with the value of good writing? If quality is taught at the price of assuring that the student will always regard reading as an activity which is performed at someone else's direction, then the student will separate the activity of reading from the world in which he or she finds pleasure and enjoyment. In too many classrooms, there is not enough direct, effective teaching of how to read to learn. It should involve children in enriching experiences with literature. It should help children to learn by reading.

Developing understanding. Reading is an extension of language development enabling a child to make use of his or her experiences, and extend those experiences to develop an understanding of objects, situations as well as relationships. Reading provides greater opportunities by making the cumulative thought of others available.

A child must see for him- or herself the purpose in reading and find that personal experience is illuminated or extended in such a manner that what is read must have meaning and can be read more easily and fluently. The mechanical skill of reading the words would have no effect on the child's intellectual and emotional future. Literature in general and the telling of stories aloud to the class as a whole in particular, can play an important role in the process of intellectual and emotional growth. Various stories can make important contributions in branching out by encouraging children to

role play the parts of the characters in the story, thereby elaborating the views of the people, the situations and the experiences. When a child hears a story, he or she pays attention to those facts which are meaningful to him or to her (Brearley, 1970). In the egocentric stage of development the children are apt to identify with the characters and the stories that resemble their own actions, situations or aspirations. As they move from egocentricity, children are able to imagine themselves in the position of a character in literature irrespective of their own situation. Children at this age, now in the middle grades, can particularly benefit from a wide range of reading materials.

Love of reading and the teacher. In order to teach children to read, it is important to discover the best way for each child, and at the same time one should not be overconcerned with the technique and method, for there is no one best technique or method for all children. If in addition to the necessary skills, the love of reading is passed on to a child, that child has the ability to make books a lasting pleasure. The attitude towards reading which develops into a love for books arises partly from the satisfaction and sense of achievement that comes as skills are mastered (Goddard, 1973).

Learning is a continuous path from birth. It is the teacher's task to provide an environment and opportunities which are sufficiently challenging for children and yet not so difficult as to be outside their reach. There must be the right mixture of the familiar and the novel, the right match to the stage of development the child

has reached. If the material is all too familiar, or the material too easy, the children will become inattentive and bored. Children can think and form concepts as long as they are allowed to work at their own level, and are not made to feel as if they are failures. Teachers must rely both on their general knowledge of child development and on detailed observation of each individual child to match their demands to their developmental stage (Silberman, 1973). Teachers are chiefly responsible for teaching children to read. The emphasis on creating an environment where children can learn at their own pace does not mean that teachers should sit back. Children should not learn to read automatically and there is no natural impulse or desire to read (Goddard, 1973).

The truly important factor in creating good or poor reading skills is the quality of the educator. The teacher's judgment is consistently of primary importance. The effect of a teacher's abilities can be seen over long periods of time. In a three year project by Fry (1967), it was determined that the effect of a first grade teacher can be reliably observed at the end of the third grade.

Free Reading

Recreational reading. Direct evidence on the effects of recreational or free reading, on the development of reading skills is scarce and inconclusive. However, the indirect evidence is mounting which justifies the hypothesis that increased fluent and continuous recreational or free reading has a positive effect on

the development and maintenance of reading skills. Perhaps the assumption that if children read, they will learn to read better, is so widely accepted that no one has tested that assumption under experimental conditions. Indirect evidence of the utility of recreational reading in the development of reading skills is available from two sources; from the studies of individual reading instruction and from the effectiveness of school libraries. It is yet to be determined if the amount of recreational or free reading will have a measurable effect on the gain in test scores of vocabulary development and reading comprehension (Bissett, 1968).

Reading resources. In many schools there is evidence of a very limited choice in the reading matter for children. For this to change and for children to develop the habits of reading, the teachers and librarians must continually be aware of the needs and desires of the school population. Link and Hopf (1946) found that a book which is recommended by someone and books which are easily accessible are two particularly significant factors in relation to actual reading. With the teacher and the librarian working together, both the class library and the school library can be fully utilized.

Paperback books. A second way to eliminate the limited choice of reading materials in a school is to invest in paperback books. Since it is known that paperback books are less expensive to place in a classroom, the issue is not whether paperbacks are worthwhile in school, but whether those paperbacks given to schools will allow the teachers to be willing to let the children read according to

their own choice with some guidelines. The question is asked of teachers and administrators whether or not they recognize the importance of books in education. The answer seems obvious, but it has taken schools a long time to recognize the value of using more paperbacks to supplement the children's readers. Those paperback books should not be regarded as supplementary; they should be accepted as part of the necessary materials for a well balanced classroom. Cohen (1964) pointed out that too many teachers are not willing to give children the choice to read at their own rate and read the books of their choosing. Too many teachers do not realize the power of literature in teaching all content areas.

The choice of books for the book library in the classroom should be guided by age, interests and abilities of the children. It is always the reading age of the children to consider rather than their age in years. There should be a supply of books that are the appropriate level for each stage in development. Children can also make and write their own books to be used in the classroom library. Some physical factors of a book such as size, shape, the style of the type, the illustrations, etc., should be considered. The pictures should relate well with the text and captions always add interest. Book corners and libraries can be equipped with a changing supply of materials which may help sustain and develop individual and group interests.

What is the purpose of education? Should it not help people make the right decisions? When we are helping children make choices,

we need to help them consider the basis for decisions. What kinds of questions do we ask? What factors need to be considered? What values do we use when we decide that one factor is more important than another? Teachers must make judgments about what constitutes a sound reading performance on the part of each pupil. He or she must make decisions about evaluative judgments. Children can help in these areas; they want the teacher to know what is helpful to them. If children are given the opportunity to choose their own reading material, they will determine which books are particularly interesting and which books will motivate them. They can establish which books are difficult and which books are easy. In honoring the choices made by children, the teacher and the children together can determine which choices are good ones. A child may choose a story for him- or herself because for some reason it is personally attractive. This can promote many questions about what is read and will strengthen the skillful development of book choice. Questions can promote further learning which can be geared toward recreational or free reading.

All ways of teaching reading attempt to seek the common goal of fluent, independent, flexible, habitual, critical, selective and creative reading behavior, but teacher effectiveness, which seems to be the common denominator, is the primary focus among all authors.

If the classroom could be flooded with paperback books, perhaps the children would have enough curiosity to look, to linger, to listen, to leaf, and to love.

Paperbacks, as pointed out by Cohen (1964) have had a bad

reputation, "having served its fifty years in education purgatory" is becoming an acceptable innovation. In the early 1960's, school personnel were just beginning to notice that "paperbacks had gone legitimate." Children were allowed to read them and now from all signs in the classes, libraries and bookstores, they have become most popular.

One can hear the argument that paperbacks, in the final analysis, are more expensive; they do not last as long; that hard covered books are better. Does anyone, however, question the fact that the expensive, unread, hard covered book is still staying on the shelf? Bogart (1965) was influential in spreading the use of paperback books. In his study, in the New Jersey public school system, he found that through the use of teacher logs, observations, questionnaires, interviews and test data, he was able to measure the effects of paperback books on children and their teachers when they were introduced into the daily curriculum. Bogart found that using paperbacks with slow learners and reluctant readers, there was an increased ability in reading and there was a generally positive result from the institution of the paperbacks into the curriculum. Bogart was able to influence the New Jersey Department of Education to accredit the use of paperback books and therefore validate the purchasing of large quantities of paperback literature which was instituted into the school curricula.

In conclusion, as Rakes (1973) points out, educators are often so busy trying to define what reading is and how to teach

it that they forget the most important aspect of the subject itself and that is reading. Rakes suggests that the failure of the child to be curious about learning may lie in the fact that reading is forced on him in a skills oriented instructional manner. Expertly prepared spiral bound curriculum guides, workbooks, visual aids, xeroxed sheets are used to contribute to the skills development.

He further points out that without the inclusion of generous amounts of fun reading by supplying the classroom with large numbers of books, the children lose out. "The idea is for the children to grab them and read them." As he so succinctly states, "Drill Me, Skill Me, But Please Let Me Read" (Rakes, 1973, pp. 451-453).

C H A P T E R I I I

PROCEDURE

This study as stated previously is a descriptive one designed to explore whether children would read in a continuous, fluent manner if they were given the opportunity to choose books that interested them. The only interruption in their reading would be when they asked a question about a word or sentence in a particular reading selection that they did not know in order to get immediate feedback. This feedback enabled the child to continue reading in a fluent, continuous manner.

This study differs from other forms of traditional research in that the major portion of the data are recorded on video tapes. In addition reading grade scores from the standardized Metropolitan Achievement Test, pre and post pupil questionnaires, parent questionnaires, and interviews with the classroom teacher, the school librarian and with the school administrator in charge of reading were used.

This approach to teaching children to read through the love of books, one's own motivation, and interests appeared in "Reading Is Only the Tiger's Tail" (McCracken & McCracken, 1972) but that approach differed from the present study in two ways. First, McCracken and McCracken worked with very young children, kindergartners or first and second graders. Secondly, it was called SSR which is sustained, silent reading. There are no interruptions allowed during this sustained reading period. In the present study, it is essential that

the children who are fifth graders be given instant feedback to any questions asked so that there is comprehension for the continuation of fluent reading.

Sample

The class selected for this study was one of six fifth grade classes. The children's reading ability ranged from third to sixth grade as measured by the April 1974 Metropolitan Achievement Test, and was designated as second from the top in reading level. There were thirty-four children in the class, all of whom already possessed some basic decoding skills. There were twenty girls and fourteen boys between the ages of ten and twelve.¹

The ethnic composition of the class was representative of the school's population. There were fourteen pupils who were born in the United States mainland but were of Hispanic or Greek origin. There were seven pupils who were born in Puerto Rico, Cuba, Dominican Republic and three children who were born in Greece and one who was born in Australia. There are no birth data available for the remaining white and black children.

The children's parents were typical of lower middle-class adults in that eighteen fathers and five mothers were employed as "Blue Collar" workers. The fathers were employed in such jobs as

¹The register of the class fluctuated all year. Some children moved away in the middle of the year and others were added to the class register. One child was suspended and one child came into the class only for the reading period. These children, therefore, were not subject to the pre-questionnaires.

custodian, restaurant worker, bus driver, truck driver, auto mechanic, factory workers, construction workers, elevator operator, butcher, iron worker, and those who work in the garment and fur districts in New York City. The mothers were mostly housewives; some of the mothers were employed as paraprofessionals, beautician, candy store clerks. Some children reported that their fathers did not live with them and one child did not have a mother. Most of the children had younger or older siblings.

Setting

The public school is in District 6 of upper Manhattan called the Inwood section of New York City. The neighborhood in which the school is situated is poor to lower middle class. There are many tenement houses close together which are badly in need of repair. The neighborhood has many small shops for food, clothing, repairs and laundries. Many of the parents work in these shops. The school itself is well kept although it is a very old building.

The total population of the public school is 1472 children in grades kindergarten through the sixth grade. The ethnic composition of the school consists of Hispanics, Blacks and Whites (primarily of Greek extraction). The class selected to participate in the program was representative of this ethnic distribution and was selected with this as a major contributing factor.

Design

Program. The project did not begin until November (there were some delays in obtaining administrative approval and materials) and continued through until the end of the school year, June. During this time the pupils spent one hour each morning reading for a total of 126 hours. The study was basically a "free-choice" project.² The children were told that they would be able to select and read any book from the class library that they wanted. Nothing was said to the pupils about their selection, i.e., that it might be too difficult or too easy. The choice was left totally to the children; they were simply encouraged to read.

During the hour-long reading period (11:00 A.M. to noon), the children were instructed to read their selected books silently, and if they came across any word or words whose meaning they did not know or that they could not pronounce, they would raise their hands and either the teacher, student teacher or investigator (and there were times when a stranger in the room would be questioned) would immediately help them. Also, if the teacher was free at the desk, the children were encouraged to go up and ask questions. Thus, each pupil was given immediate feedback and could therefore continue his/her reading. Mini-lessons, such as "you know what that word begins with," or "you can see the little word in the big one, can't

²Prior to the program, the children had been taught through a traditional basal reading program.

you?" or "what do you think it means?" were not injected into the feedback.

In addition, the children were encouraged to record the vocabulary words they did not know. They were also required to write a synopsis or short review of the books they had completed and the teacher would question them on various parts of their reading to assess their progress. Individual conferences were used as well to teach skills needed, and vocabulary words were incorporated into spelling lessons and composition writing.

The teacher kept a record of each child's growth which included the number and kinds of books the children read, the projects that stemmed from their reading, the scores from the Metropolitan Achievement Test given in April 1975.

No other formal reading lessons were conducted in this class at any time.

Classroom organization. The classroom library was situated in the back of the room in large bookcases (Figure 1). At first, 55 paperback books were donated to the class library; then 200 more were added. Those 255 books were removed and replaced with 250 more titles midway in the year. Every month thereafter more books were added from the school library so that a total of approximately 900 different books were available in the class library.

The children were also allowed to borrow reference books such as almanacs, encyclopedias, atlases from the school library which was closed to other classes.



Figure 1. Diagram of the Classroom

During the reading period the children were permitted to sit in either their regular seats or anywhere else in the room. There was a very large wooden box (3-1/2' x 6' x 4') (Figure 2) with a wide opening which was in the rear of the classroom. Often three or four children would be found reading inside the structure.

Techniques of measurement and instruments used. Evaluation of this project was based on various measures which included:

1. Pre-post reading scores on the Metropolitan Achievement Test--Intermediate Level--Form Cm to determine change in reading ability.
2. Pre-post pupil questionnaires to determine change in attitude toward reading.
3. Parent questionnaires to obtain their perceptions of the project's functioning and their child's progress.
4. Pupil's personal reading folder of vocabulary words and book reports.
5. Pupil's projects which were by-products of their reading.
6. Teacher's progress report.
7. Teacher rating scale of child's progress and change (Appendix V).
8. a. Video tapes which were an important component of the program were recorded bi-monthly in the classroom to observe the reading behavior of the children during their book selection, actual reading to show evidences of feedback.
 - b. 1) Video interview with classroom teacher to obtain perceptions of the program's functioning (questions in Appendix VI).
 - 2) Video interview with the school administrator to ascertain the merits of the reading program (questions in Appendix VII).
 - 3) Video-tape interview with the school librarian to obtain pre-post data on student's use of the school library (questions in Appendix VIII).

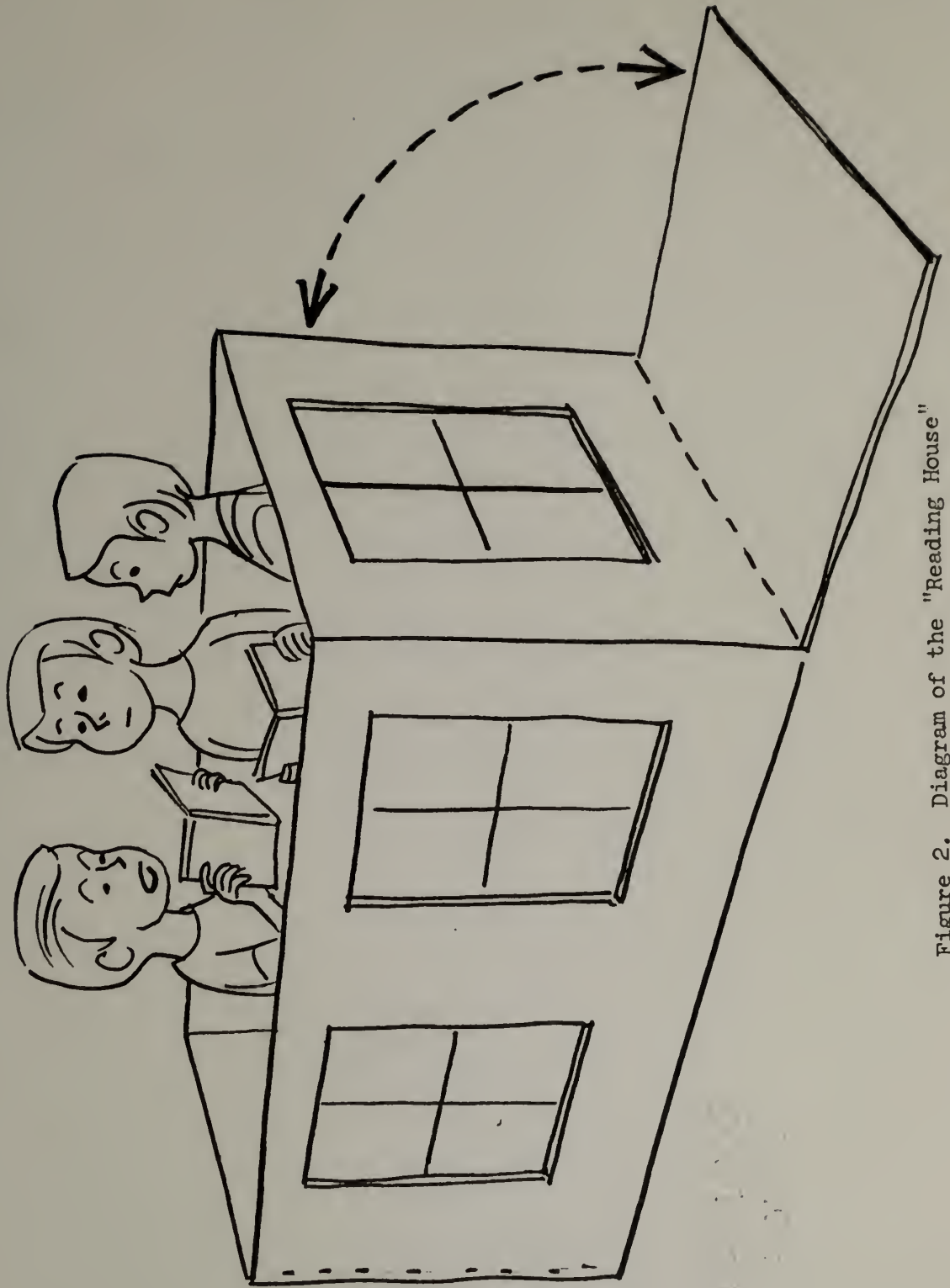


Figure 2. Diagram of the "Reading House"

Sample copies of all questionnaires can be found in Appendices I, II, III, and IV.

In summary, the major questions listed below in the first column were measured by those instruments stated in the second column.

<u>Major Questions</u>	<u>Were Measured by</u>
1. Will the pupils' reading achievement, measured by the Metropolitan Achievement Test, show improvement?	Pre-post reading scores on the Metropolitan Achievement Test
2. Will the pupils in a fifth grade class demonstrate more fluent and continuous reading activity if they are given the opportunity of choosing their own materials and are left to read without interruption?	Pupils' personal reading folder in terms of the number of books read Teacher Rating Scale Video taping
3. Will the pupils question words or sentences that are unclear if they are left to pursue their own interests?	Pre-post pupil questionnaires to determine change in attitude Teacher Rating Scale Parent questionnaires Video taping Pupils' projects
5. Will feedback aid in the mutual understanding between pupil and teacher and will it contribute to the pupils' development in fluent and continuous reading?	Teacher Rating Scale Video taping

Data Analysis

Quantitative measures. The only direct quantitative data available to measure the success of this project were the reading scores on the April 1974 and April 1975 standardized Metropolitan Achievement Test.

When analyzing these standardized reading scores, the Bond-Singer approach was used to provide a basis for concluding whether or not student gains in reading in 1974-75 were different than those which might have been expected on the basis of the pupil's previous growth in reading. The Bond-Singer (1972) approach, named after its developers, involves analysis of the individual's reading history to generate an average gain per year in school. This average is used as a baseline against which the pupil's gain during the current year is compared to see if there was any acceleration in rate of change. In this method the basic test of significance used in analysis was a t test for correlated means, comparing expected to actual gain using only children for whom pre and post data were available.

Qualitative measures. Video taping was employed to obtain a direct measure of pupil behavior. Specific behaviors were isolated as relevant to this study. They were:

- a. Does the child remain seated for the entire hour?
- b. Does the child ask questions of the teacher or peers?
- c. How long does the child's attention span appear to last?
- d. What else besides read does the child do?

- e. Does the child talk to neighbors?
- f. What prompts the child to communicate with neighbors?
- g. What kinds of activity accompany reading--finger pointing, lip movement, etc.?
- h. Does child display any anxious behavior--nail or pencil biting, head scratching or fidgeting?

Teacher records were also reviewed and change in pupil performance was noted. Student questionnaires were analyzed on a pre-post basis in an attempt to determine change in attitude toward reading, while parent questionnaires were tallied on a post basis only. Also, content of interviews with school personnel were summarized and student folders were reviewed to record the number of books read, the variety, the vocabulary words questioned, the kinds of information asked and the number and types of projects initiated by reading a particular selection.

Individualization. Each child in this program was judged on his/her own accomplishments. No formal controls were used. Instead each child was used as his or her own control. In reading achievement, current reading growth was compared to average growth in reading in previous years; on attitudinal dimensions current attitudes were compared to previous attitudes. Patterns of behavior were compared in a similar fashion. Thus the emphasis in this study was on the individual, his/her growth, her needs and her choices.

C H A P T E R I V

RESULTS

In this exploratory, observational reading project, thirty-four children in the fifth grade were given the opportunity of choosing for themselves regardless of grade level, difficulty or subject matter, any paperback book they wanted to read. They spent one hour in this activity asking questions of the teacher, student teacher or their peers and they received immediate feedback to their questions in order for them to continue their reading in a fluent, continuous manner.

In an attempt to answer the five major questions of this study, specific techniques of measurement were used to evaluate the progress of the children. First, reading data, measured by the Metropolitan Achievement Test, were analyzed to establish whether children's reading achievement showed significant improvement. Secondly, findings were presented for pre-post pupil questionnaires to determine whether or not there had been a change in attitude toward reading. Third, progress reports and teacher rating scales were analyzed, to determine if children's attitudes, behavior and academic characteristics as perceived by their classroom teacher, had in fact changed. Parents were also involved through a questionnaire to determine how they felt about their child's reading achievement as a direct result of their participation in the "free choice" program.

Video tapes, used periodically throughout the program, were

a major thrust of this project. Through repeated observations of the tapes, behaviors of the children were recorded as well as of the teacher, i.e., responding to children's questions through immediate feedback process. Children can be seen reading in various positions in the room: at their desks, on the floor, in the "reading house," on the closet ledge, in groups on the floor, in couples at their desks, as well as alone. Interviews were also conducted between children and investigator; teacher and investigator; administrator and investigator and librarian and investigator and can be heard on the tapes.

Quantitative Analysis

Metropolitan Achievement Tests. A total of 33 scores on the April 1974 Metropolitan Achievement Tests,¹ Form F, and 29 scores on the April 1975 tests, Form Cm, were available for analysis for the 34 children in the class. As can be seen from Table 1, the majority of the students, 55 percent, were reading above grade level (4.7) at the pre-administration of the test in 1974. This same majority continued to be above grade level (5.7) at the post-administration in 1975, so that during this year the median gain in reading was 1.0 years.

In further analyses, scores used were only for the 29 pupils for whom both pre- and posttest scores were available. In a comparison

¹Scores used in all analyses were from the reading comprehension portion of the MAT.

TABLE 1

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF THE PRE (APRIL 1974) AND POST
(APRIL 1975) METROPOLITAN READING TEST SCORES

Grade Level	Pre	Post
9.8+		1
9.3-9.7		2
8.8-9.2		
8.3-8.7		
7.8-8.2		1
7.3-7.7		2
6.8-7.2	3	1
6.3-6.7	2	6
5.8-6.2	2	3
5.3-5.7	6	3
4.8-5.2	6	3
4.3-4.7	6	3
3.8-4.2	5	4
3.3-3.7	2	
2.8-3.2	1	
2.7-		
Number of cases	33	29
Percent above grade level	55	55
Median	5.0	6.0

of mean scores of pre- to posttesting (Table 2), pupils grew one year as well. This gain was found to be statistically significant at the .01 level. In addition, students maintained their five month above grade level reading score from pre- to posttesting. That is, in 1974 the mean reading score was 5.2 five months above the grade level expectancy of 4.7. Similarly, in 1975 the mean reading score was 6.2, five months above the grade level expectancy of 5.7.

TABLE 2
PRE AND POST COMPARISON OF MEAN MAT SCORES
(N = 29)

Pretest Mean	Standard Deviation	Posttest Mean	Standard Deviation
5.2	.98	6.2	1.45

t value = 3.33; $p < .01$

Bond Singer method. Finally a direct statistical test of the program's ability to improve achievement in reading was computed. This test, called the Bond Singer Method, which was explained in the Procedure section, compares a student's expected gain, which is determined by using their average growth in previous years, to their actual gain. Thus the pupil acts as his or her own control. As can be seen in Table 3, there was no statistically significant difference between expected and actual growth. In fact, the actual posttest mean was lower (one month) than the predicted posttest mean,

so that it would seem that the program did achieve more than a normal growth but not as much as was expected.

TABLE 3

RESULTS OF THE BOND SINGER ANALYSIS OF THE METROPOLITAN
ACHIEVEMENT TEST, READING COMPREHENSION SCORES
(N = 29)

Pretest Mean	Predicted Posttest Mean	Actual Posttest Mean	\bar{t} Value	p
5.2	6.3	6.2	-.34	N.S.

Two distinct reading groups. However, since there appeared to be two groups of pupils participating in the program, those who were reading above grade level before the program began and those who were reading at or below grade level before the program, it was felt that the program might possibly be having different effects on these two groups. Therefore, a \bar{t} test of the differences between actual and expected gain for those reading above grade level before the program began and those reading at or below grade level before the program began was computed. This was found to be statistically significant at the .01 level; thus indicating that the program might be more beneficial to those pupils who are at or below grade level expectancy than those who are above grade level. However, it is important to consider also the regression to the mean phenomena which might be contributing to these results, so that in general

these data are somewhat spurious and should be considered in light of other measures, such as student attitude to reading and parent perception of children's attitude to reading.

Overall it appears that the pupils participating in this program maintained their above grade level reading scores, gaining 1.0 years for the year, but they did not appear to improve as much as would be expected.

Qualitative Analysis

Pupil attitudes. Pupils were given a questionnaire at the beginning and at the end of the reading program to obtain some insight into their reading behavior, their attitudes towards reading and their attitudes towards the program. Twenty-five pupils responded to the pre-questionnaire and 25 responded to the post-questionnaire, a response rate of 74 percent.

Many of the questions were asked on a pre-post basis so that comparisons could be made. Tables 4 through 6 present these data. Table 4 shows a summary of seven questions specified as aspects of behavior. Clearly, it can be seen that there was little change in reading behavior from pre- to posttesting since almost all of the children expressed positive behaviors and/or attitudes at the beginning of the school year. The only behavior in which there was any major shift was the increased number of students who now have library cards. Pupils were also asked to indicate the number of times they go to the public library. Table 5 summarizes these data. Here there were

TABLE 4
 COMPARISON OF PRE AND POST ASPECTS OF
 PUPILS' READING BEHAVIOR
 (N = 25)

Aspects of Behavior	Number of Pupils					
	Yes		No		Sometimes	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Borrows books from school library	24	23	1	2	0	0
Likes to read	23	24	0	0	2	1
Takes school library books home	23	24	1	0	1	1
Has newspapers at home	22	23	3	1	0	1
Has magazines at home	22	22	0	0	3	3
Spends time reading on weekends ^a	17	20	4	0	3	4
Has library card	12	21	13	4	--	--

^aOne student on the pretest did not respond.

TABLE 5
 FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF PRE AND POST
 VISITS TO THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Frequency of Visits	Number of Pupils	
	Pre	Post
1 time per month	7	11
2 or 3 times per month	1	4
4 or 5 times per month	2	1
6 or more times per month	0	2
Once in a while	1	1
Total N	11	19

some behavior changes. More pupils reported going to the library at the end of the year than at the beginning (19 compared to 11) and children reported going to the library more frequently at the end of the year compared to the beginning. Finally pupils were asked to indicate the activities they engaged in during their free time outside of school. Table 6 summarizes these findings. Here again some changes in behavior were evidenced. Most relevant was that more children indicated they spent free time "reading" at the end of the year than at the beginning both as an after school and after dinner activity. Behavior regarding watching television also changed, with more children indicating they watched television after school

TABLE 6
 FREE TIME ACTIVITIES REPORTED BY PUPILS^a
 (N = 25)

Activities	Number of Times Reported as Activity			
	After School		After Dinner	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Homework	12	12	1	0
Read	2	11	3	9
Play	2	7	5	6
Watch T.V.	1	7	18	11
Attend religious school	1	2	1	0
Attend after-school center	1	0	0	0
Listen to music	0	0	1	0
Rest	0	0	0	3

^aMultiple responses were reported

at the end of the school year than at the beginning and less children reporting they watched television after dinner at the end of the year than at the beginning. No other changes in free time activity patterns were apparent.

Thus the overall picture that emerges is one of "no change" since pupils were generally so positive in the beginning they had little chance to show improvement. In only number of library cards, number of library visits and reading as a free time activity did pupils show improvement or increase from pre- to posttesting.

Book preferences. At the end of the year, pupils were also asked to rank in order of preference ten types of books ranging from poetry and biographies to comics and sports.² This was based on a 10-point scale with "1" representing the most liked and "10" as the least liked. For purposes of analysis numbers 1 to 3 were considered as "most liked" and grouped together and numbers 8 to 10 were considered "least liked" and grouped together. Only these extremes have been reported (intermediary numbers [4 to 7] can be easily calculated by subtraction). Table 7 presents these data as well as responses obtained on the pre-questionnaire to a question asking pupils to indicate the kinds of books they liked to read.

As can be seen most pupils (13 or 72 percent) indicated they most liked adventure books as compared to any of the other books

²The types of books selected were based on responses offered by the children in an open ended question in the fall asking them to indicate books they like to read.

TABLE 7
STUDENT RANKINGS OF MOST LIKED AND LEAST LIKED BOOKS
(N = 25)

Type of Book	At End of School Year Children Selecting Book as				At Beginning of School Year Children Indicating Books Liked	
	Most Liked		Least Liked		N	Percent ^a
	N	Percent ^a	N	Percent ^a		
Adventure	18	72	0	0	2	8
Comics	9	36	7	28	9	36
Biographies	9	36	5	20	2	8
Sports	7	28	8	32	0	0
Love	6	24	10	40	3	12
History	6	24	8	32	1	4
Poetry	5	20	9	36	1	4
Science	3	12	7	28	2	8
Nature	3	12	3	12	1	4
Fairy tales	2	8	7	28	2	2
Ghost stories		b		b	2	8
All kinds of books		b		b	6	24

^aPercents add to more than 100 due to multiple responses.

^bThese categories were not offered at the end of the year.

listed. Comics and biographies were seen as second favorites but by half as many students (9). Sports, love stories, history and poetry were "most liked" by five to seven pupils, while nature and fairy tales were "most liked" by only two or three pupils. In contrast, "least liked" types of books were not as clearly defined. No type of book was isolated by a majority as a "least liked" one. However, love stories and poetry were selected as "least liked" by more children (10 and 9 respectively) than any of the other options.

In addition, at the beginning of the year, the pupils more often tended to report they most liked comic books than any other kind of book, with an unspecified "all kinds of books" as a second often noted response. From these data it would seem that there was a shift in reading preference from the beginning to the end of the year with pupils moving from citing "comics" most often as a favorite in the beginning to specifying "adventure books" most often at the end of the year.

In addition a t test of uncorrelated means was computed to determine if there were differences in reading preferences between girls and boys. Table 8 presents these data. For most types of books, adventure, biography, history, nature, fairy tales and science, no statistically significant differences were found. However, girls showed a significantly greater preference for love stories and poetry, while boys showed a significantly greater preference for comics and sports type books.

In an additional analysis, reading preference from the ten

TABLE 8
 MEAN RANKINGS FOR BOOK PREFERENCES^a BY GENDER

Type of Book	Mean Rank For		<u>t</u> Value	p
	Girls	Boys		
Adventure	2.8	2.8	b	N.S.
Biography	4.0	5.6	1.33	N.S.
Poetry	4.5	7.5	2.72	<.05
Comics	7.4	3.6	2.76	<.05
History	6.1	4.9	1.00	N.S.
Nature	5.4	6.0	.63	N.S.
Sports	7.7	3.6	3.42	<.01
Fairy tales	5.2	7.0	2.02	N.S.
Science	7.1	5.5	.58	N.S.
Love stories	4.2	8.4	3.81	<.01

^aChildren ranked types of books according to their preferences--number one, books they liked best, to number ten, books they liked least.

^bt value not computed since there was no difference between the means.

options offered, was tested with reading grade level. Using the t test of uncorrelated means children who were reading at or below grade level were compared to children above grade level in terms of preferences in reading material. As seen in Table 9, for all kinds of books, no statistically significant differences were found between the two groups. Thus, it would appear that reading level did not influence reading preference. All children tended to rank their favorite books in the same way regardless of their reading ability prior to the program.

Number of books read. At the end of the year pupils were also asked to indicate the number of books they had read each week (both completely and partially) as well as the total number of books they read during this year (1974-75) and during last year (1973-74). These findings are presented in Tables 10 and 11. As seen in Table 10, the modal response for number of books read completely per week was between two and three, while the modal response for the number of books read partially was between none and one. In Table 11 one gets a vivid picture of a change in reading behavior. From last year to this year the average number of books read doubled from an average of eight books in 1974 to an average of 16 books in 1975; thus indicating change in a positive direction during the time the project functioned.

Change in pupils. When pupils were asked to indicate how they felt the program had changed them, 15 responded. They said such things as "I like reading more" (27 percent); "I read better" (20 percent); "I read more" (13 percent); "I read with a friend now"

TABLE 9
 MEAN RANKINGS FOR BOOK PREFERENCES^a BY
 READING GRADE LEVEL

Type of Book	Mean Rank for Children		p
	Above Grade Level	On or Below Grade Level	
Adventure	2.5	3.3	N.S.
Biography	4.8	4.7	N.S.
Poetry	5.6	7.8	N.S.
Comics	5.6	5.3	N.S.
History	5.7	4.7	N.S.
Nature	5.7	5.5	N.S.
Sports	6.1	5.2	N.S.
Fairy tales	6.1	6.5	N.S.
Science	6.3	6.2	N.S.
Love stories	6.6	5.8	N.S.

^aChildren ranked types of books according to their preferences--number one, books they liked best, to number ten, books they liked least.

TABLE 10
 NUMBER OF PUPILS READING BOOKS PER WEEK
 (N = 25)

Number of Books	Number of Pupils Who	
	Read Book Completely	Read Book Partially
6+	1	2
4-5	4	5
2-3	17	4
0-1	1	13

TABLE 11
 FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF BOOKS READ IN 1975 AND 1974

Number of Books	Number of Pupils Who Read Books	
	1975	1974
51+	1	0
41-50	1	0
31-40	2	0
16-20	7	1
11-15	6	5
6-10	5	7
1- 5	0	8
N	25	23 ^a
Median	16.57	8.00

^aTwo students could not remember the number of books read last year.

(13 percent); "I read what I want and learn a lot" (13 percent) and "I know more things from reading books" (7 percent). Only one pupil said the program had not changed him. When asked if they enjoyed the reading program more this year than the reading they did last year, the pupils unanimously indicated they had, most often citing as a major reason the fact that last year they used only reading textbooks which were not as interesting as the books they had read during this year.

Continuation of the program. All of the children indicated they wanted to continue in the program next year and all wanted it to function just as it had during this year. As one pupil aptly said, "In this program I learned what reading is all about and [that is] you learn by reading books."

Pupils' reading folders. Reading folders for 20 of the 34 children in the class were available.³ These were examined to determine the number of book reports done, the type of books read and the number of vocabulary words recorded.

Table 12 gives a list of books read by the children which answers the major question 2 whether the pupils in a fifth grade class will demonstrate more fluent and continuous reading activity if they are given the opportunity of choosing their own materials and are left to read without interruption. At best this is a limited listing, as toward the end of the school year the teacher and children

³The remaining 14 were not turned in at the end of the school year.

TABLE 12
LISTING OF BOOKS READ DURING THE YEAR

Title of Book	Number of Children Who Read Book
A Boston Boy	1
A Child's Book of Poems	2
A Hat for the Queen	1
A Long Time Coming	1
A Present from Rosita	1
Abraham Lincoln	2
Abraham Lincoln Joke Book	1
Adventures of Sherlock Holmes	1
Aircraft, USA	1
Alice in Wonderland	3
Alive	1
Anderson's Fairy Tales	1
Art	1
Ben and Me	1
Ben Hur	1
Bible Stories for Children	2
Birth of an Island	1
Blackbeard's Ghost	1
Black Beauty	3
Bonnie	1
Boy Scouts	1

TABLE 12--continued

Title of Book	Number of Children Who Read Book
Buffalo Bill	1
Champ Gallant Collie	1
Charlotte's Web	4
Children's Literature	1
Christmas	1
Christopher Columbus	2
Cinderella	1
Clickety Cricket	1
Crazy Horse	1
Danger at Loud Lake	2
Danger in the Mist	2
Daniel Boone	1
Darkness	1
Detour for Meg	3
Dinosaurs and More Dinosaurs	3
Dinosaurs and Prehistoric Reptiles	1
Discovering Dinosaurs	1
Doctor John Dolittle	1
Dodos and Dinosaurs	1
Dog Stories	1
Don't Call Me Katie Rose	1
Drugs and You	2

TABLE 12--continued

Title of Book	Number of Children Who Read Book
Elephi	3
Ellen Tebbits	2
Emil and the Detectives	2
Encyclopedia Brown	1
Eskomo Family	1
Exotic Aquarium Fishes	1
Exploring the Moon	1
Famous American Spies	1
Father's Big Improvements	1
Fishes	1
Florence Nightingale	3
Galaxies	2
Gems and Rare Metals	1
George Eastman	1
George Washington Carver	3
Ghost Stories	1
Ghosts Who Went to School	1
Ginnie and the New Girl	1
Go Up for Glory	1
Great Monsters	1
Great Monsters of the Movies	1
Great Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe	1

TABLE 12--continued

Title of Book	Number of Children Who Read Book
Greek Gods and Heros	2
Hawaiian Treasure	5
Helen Keller	2
Henry and the Clubhouse	2
Henry and the Paper Route	1
Henry Huggins	1
High Flying Kites	1
In Search of Peace	1
Island in the Desert	1
Jim Brown	1
John James Audobun	1
Journey to the Center of the Earth	1
Judy's Journey	1
Just So Stories	1
Kid Sister	1
Kidnapped	2
Lazy Tinka	1
Leather Apron Days	1
Little Women	1
Long Night to Tokyo	1
Lucy	2
Martin Luther King Jr.	1

TABLE 12--continued

Title of Book	Number of Children Who Read Book
Mary Eliss, Student Nurse	2
Mary Poppins	2
Meet Benjamin Franklin	1
Member of the Gang	3
Miss Pickernell Goes to the Artic	1
Molly Picher	1
Monster of Today and Yesterday	1
Mr. Popper's Penguins	1
Mr. Willouby's Christmas Tree	1
My Side of the Mountain	1
Mystery at Indian Island	1
Mystery of the Grinning Idol	1
OTE	1
Our Planet Earth	1
Outer Space Stories	3
Patricia's Secret	1
Peter Pan	1
Plays for All Occasions	2
Playtime in Africa	1
Presents	1
Prince Caspian	1
Puss'n Boots	1

TABLE 12--continued

Title of Book	Number of Children Who Read Book
Ramona, the Pest	1
Raphael Sanzio	1
Remarkable Ramsey, the Talking Dog	2
Ride Like an Indian	1
Riding the Pony Express	2
Robin Hood of Sherwood Forest	4
Roosevelt Grady	1
Runaway Slave	2
Sailing	1
Sam Houston	1
Sailing on the Seven Seas	1
Secret on the Barn	1
Silver Dollar Mystery	5
Sing for Christmas	1
Sitting Bull	1
Sleeping Beauty	2
Snowbound in the Hidden Valley	1
Snow Treasure	1
Solar Energy	2
Spacecraft at Work	1
Stars and Constellations	1
STARTREK	1

TABLE 12--continued

Title of Book	Number of Children Who Read Book
Stories of Champions	1
Suspence Stories	2
Tales of Mr. Pencachoosa	1
Tarzan of the Apes	2
That Darn Cat	1
The Adventures of America	1
The Adventures of Nicholas	2
The American Revolution	1
The Beginning Knowledge Book of Sea Shells	1
The Best Loved Doll	5
The Biography of a Grizzly	2
The Blackstone Knife	1
The Case of the Marble Monster	3
The City Underground	1
The Copper Nail	1
The Costume Book	1
The Dawn Treder	1
The Devil's Shadow	1
The Enchanted Island	2
The Enchanter's Wheel	1
The F.B.I.	2
The Friendly Dolfins	1

TABLE 12--continued

Title of Book	Number of Children Who Read Book
The Ghost of Windy Hill	1
The Golden Goose	3
The Helen Keller Story	2
The Hidden Cave	1
The Hobbit	1
The House at 12 Rose Street	1
The Janitor's Girl	1
The Little Lame Prince	1
The Little's to the Rescue	2
The Longest Day	1
The Mad Scientist Club	1
The Marvelous Misadventures of Sebastian	1
The Mysterious Mr. Cobb	1
The Mystery Angel	1
The Old Man and the Sea	1
The Saturday Gang	1
The School Train	2
The Screaming Ghost	2
The Secret Language	1
The Secret Valley	1
The Spider Plant	2
The Stars and Planets	2

TABLE 12--continued

Title of Book	Number of Children Who Read Book
The Story of Ben Franklin	2
The Story of Dr. Dolittle	1
The Story of World War II	1
The Supermarket Mystery	1
The Three Conquistadors	1
The Three Dollar Mule	1
The Trial of Jack Ruby	1
The Weather	1
The Wednesday Witch	1
The Witch on the Corner	1
The Wizard of Menlo Park	1
The Wizard of Oz	2
The Wonderful Story of How You Were Born	1
Things to Do	1
Thomas Jefferson	2
Time of the Great Freeze	1
Tom Sawyer	5
Trouble After School	3
Who Do You Think You Are Charlie Brown	1
Who Took the Top Hat Trick	1
Wild Animals I Have Known	1
Wonderful Flight to the Mushroom Planet	2

TABLE 12--continued

Title of Book	Number of Children Who Read Book
Yea, Coach	1
Young Olympic Games	1
You're a Brave Man, Charlie Brown	1

were not keeping records as diligently as in the beginning. Nevertheless, 285 book reports were completed for 210 different books.

The books read included the classics such as, Black Beauty, Tom Sawyer, Alice in Wonderland, Little Women; biographies such as Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. and special interest books such as High Flying Kites, Stars and Constellations and The Book of Sea Shells. The mean number of book reports done by each child was 14; though they ranged in number from 2 to 32. The number of vocabulary words recorded also varied greatly from "None" to 44 with a mean of 10 words per child. However, it should be noted that the modal response for vocabulary words recorded was "none," with almost half of the children so stating, so that this aspect cannot be measured accurately.

By and large, the children appeared to be reading a wide range of books; they seemed to vary their individual selections and they were able to record vocabulary by getting feedback, and also recording summaries and opinions about these books. This then would satisfy the third question as to whether the pupils, if left to pursue their own interests, would in fact, question words and sentences that are unclear in order to read in a fluent, continuous manner.

Parent attitudes. Questionnaires to parents to obtain their perception of their children's attitude to reading were distributed at the end of the school year. Responses were received from 29 of the 34 parents, a response rate of 85 percent.

This response by the parents deals with question number 4 which asks whether the children and their parents would report greater

out-of-school and in-school reading interests and activities.

Overall, the parents were extremely enthusiastic about the reading project. They felt the program helped develop their children's interest in reading, expanded their vocabulary and aided in their comprehension skills. They saw the program as a real benefit to their children.

Almost all of the parents (25 out of 27) who responded to a question asking whether their children bring home books from school to read indicated that they did. Of these 21 (84 percent) said these books were obtained from the class library, 16 (64 percent) said they were from the school library, and one parent (4 percent) said the books were obtained from other pupils. Parents felt their children read on the average 1.4 hours per day during the week, 1.6 hours on Saturday and 1.1 hours on Sunday. Unanimously, they felt their children read more this year than last year; 20 (69 percent) believed their children read "a great deal more" while 9 (31 percent) felt it was "a little bit more."

When asked to indicate if they noticed any change in their children's attitude toward reading this year, 26 parents responded. Of these, 19 (73 percent) felt they had seen positive changes. Changes mentioned included such things as liking to read more, reading faster and better, reading more difficult books and getting a library card. Of the seven parents who indicated they had not noticed any change, two noted that their children had always liked to read, one reported that her child had just been transferred to the

class and four gave no response. Further, when asked if the reading program had any influence on their children's friendships this year, 22 parents responded. Of these eight (36 percent) felt that the program helped their children's friendships by giving them topics to discuss and companions to go with to the library; 11 (50 percent) felt that they could not see a relationship between the two, and three parents (14 percent) stated they "didn't know."

Finally, parents were asked to indicate which program they would prefer to have their children participate in next year. Of the 27 parents who responded, 21 (78 percent) specified they would want their children in a "free choice" program while the remaining six parents (22 percent) preferred a "reading textbook" program.

In general, the picture that emerges regarding parents' perceptions of the program is an extremely positive one. They feel proud of their children and see the program as having had a definite impact on their children's attitude and ability in reading. As one parent stated, "My daughter reads more this year than ever without my forcing her; she just likes it."

Pupils' projects. As an outgrowth of the program children developed a desire to do additional research type activities. At the beginning of the year, while the children concentrated only on the books they were reading, as time went on, one or two and then groups of four or five requested that they do some "research" on the topics of interest. The children slid into the extension of their reading through their own feelings of motivation and curiosity.

They were encouraged by their teacher and were given extra help by the school librarian. The pupils were introduced to atlases, encyclopedia and almanacs which they used extensively in their reports. The reference books were borrowed from the library for these children which was not allowed for other children in the school.

As shown in Table 13, the children did numerous and varied projects totaling 55. Many of the projects were in the social studies, language arts and science areas. Even an original play was written for an assembly program based on Greek myths about which one child was reading at the time. A group of children started a classroom newspaper, another child wrote poetry, another set up a hotplate for cooking, another created his own model of the moon as well as projects on most of the countries of Europe and the provinces of Canada. The children not only did their research on the particular topic in which they were interested but they were very proud of their original art work which illustrated their folders.

Progress report. The teacher was asked to record daily the progress of the class as a whole and specific children in particular if the case so warranted. Unfortunately, this was done only intermittently. However, what was noted was that children's degree and quality of questions increased from the beginning to the end of the school year. Information oriented questions emerged such as, "Do sea horses jump out of the water?" or "How do volcanoes happen?" and "What is a homo sapien?" Such things as footnotes were noticed in the encyclopedia and questions were asked in reference to the term.

TABLE 13
CHILDREN'S PROJECTS^a

Areas of Research Activity	Number of Children Participating
<u>Social Studies</u>	
Austria	1
British Columbia	2
Canada	3
England	1
Finland	1
France	1
Greece	1
Italy	2
Luxembourg	1
New Foundland	2
Nova Scotia	2
Ontario	2
Portugal	1
Prince Edward Island	2
Quebec	2
Scotland	1
Story of St. Lawrence Seaway	1
Toronto	2
Turkey	1

TABLE 13--continued

Areas of Research Activity	Number of Children Participating
<u>Social Studies</u> --continued	
Yugoslavia	3
Yukon	2
<u>Language Arts</u>	
Class Newspaper	5
Famous People	6
Original Play--Greek Mythology	Class
Original Play--Sherlock Holmes	1
Poetry	1
<u>Science</u>	
Fish	1
Moon	2
Our Earth	5

^aThe total adds to more than the number of children in the class because some children prepared more than one project.

The children were encouraged to read more to find the answers.

Teacher ratings. A teacher rating scale⁴ (Appendix V) listing ten academic and cognitive characteristics was given to the classroom teacher at the end of the year. In this scale the teacher was asked to indicate each child's status at the beginning of the school year as well as their change in status to the end of the year. Ratings were received for 33 children.

For the most part, the teacher considered these children equally distributed among "average," "above average" and "below average" in these characteristics, i.e., of the 330 ratings, 33 percent were "above average," 27 percent were "average," and 40 percent were "below average" at the beginning of the school year (Table 14). However it is interesting to note that in three characteristics, Reading Comprehension, Interest in Reading and Interest in School, more children were seen as "above average" than "average" or "below average" at the beginning of the year, while for the remaining seven characteristics more children were considered "below average" than "average" or "above average."

In terms of change in status since the beginning of the year, the response pattern was clearly one of improvement. As seen in Table 15, the majority of the ratings (61 percent) were considered as having "improved," while some (33 percent) were seen as showing

⁴Questionnaire for Teacher Rating Scale adapted from Teacher Rating Scale of Academic, Cognitive, Personality and Behavior Characteristics, the City College Office of Research and Evaluation Services.

TABLE 14
 TEACHER RATINGS OF PUPIL ACADEMIC AND COGNITIVE
 CHARACTERISTICS, IN PERCENT
 (N = 33)

Criterion	Percent at Beginning of Year Rated as		
	Above Average	Average	Below Average
Achievement (overall)	18	34	48
Achievement in Reading	30	31	39
Reading Comprehension	39	34	27
Interest in Reading	43	21	36
Interest in School Work	39	27	34
Understands Lessons and Can Transfer Ideas	33	33	34
Class Participation	43	9	48
Frequency and Relevance of Personal Experiences to Class Discussion	21	34	45
Extent and Type of Questioning	34	24	42
Aspiration for Success as a Student	36	21	43

TABLE 15

TEACHER RATINGS OF CHANGE IN PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND COGNITIVE
CHARACTERISTICS, FOR ALL PUPILS
(N = 33)

Criterion	Direction of Change Since Beginning of Year, Percent Who		
	Improved	Got Worse	Did Not Change
Achievement (overall)	61	12	27
Achievement in Reading	76	6	18
Reading Comprehension	70	9	21
Interest in Reading	67	6	27
Interest in School Work	54	12	33
Understands Lessons and Can Transfer Ideas	61	6	33
Class Participation	36	3	61
Frequency and Relevance of Personal Experiences to Class Discussion	58	0	42
Extent and Type of Questioning	70	0	30
Aspiration for Success as a Student	55	6	39

"no change" and few (6 percent) as having gotten "worse." In only one characteristic, Class Participation, was the majority of children seen as having shown "no change." For all the other characteristics the majority of children were rated as "improved."

Table 16 shows change in status since the beginning of the year also, but only for children who were initially rated by the teacher as "average or below." Here too, the response pattern is clearly one of improvement. Across all characteristics, 67 percent of the ratings improved, 27 percent showed "no change" and 6 percent of the ratings were worse at the end of the year.

For the three characteristics most critical and reflective of a reading program, i.e., Achievement in Reading, Reading Comprehension and Interest in Reading, almost three fourths of the children (71 percent), regardless of the status at the beginning of the year, were rated as having showed "improvement," while 22 percent were rated as showing "no change" and 7 percent as "worse" at the end of the school year. Considering the group probably most in need of this project, that is, the more than half of the children (63 percent) who were rated "average or below" at the beginning of the school, 81 percent were rated as "improved," 11 percent were rated as showing "no change" and 8 percent were rated as "worse" at the end of the year.

Video tapes. The video tape, a supplementary aspect of this project, is entitled, "Don't Bother Me, I'm Reading," and was prepared to illustrate and analyze the reading behaviors of the children in the class. This tape is an added dimension and an important part

TABLE 16

TEACHER RATINGS OF CHANGE IN PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND COGNITIVE
CHARACTERISTICS FOR PUPILS INITIALLY AVERAGE OR BELOW

Criterion	N	Percentage of Those Initially Average or Below Percent That		
		Improved	Got Worse	Did Not Change
Achievement (overall)	27	63	4	33
Achievement in Reading	23	82	9	9
Reading Comprehension	20	85	5	10
Interest in Reading	19	74	10	16
Interest in School Work	20	55	15	30
Understands Lessons and Can Transfer Ideas	22	59	9	32
Class Participation	19	58	0	42
Frequency and Relevance of Personal Experiences to Class Discussion	26	58	0	42
Extent and Type of Questioning	22	77	0	23
Aspiration for Success as a Student	21	67	4	29

of the reading program as it usually records the project. Anyone observing the children on these tapes can form many different opinions simply by focusing on specific behavior. This is a very subjective means of evaluation but one which is so important that it cannot be discounted. In this project certain behaviors were deemed important and so were isolated for comment. Through these videos a direct qualitative measure of pupil behavior was obtained of these specific behaviors. Those behaviors isolated were:

- a. Does the child remain seated for the entire hour?

When one views the video tape, it is apparent that no one remains seated for the entire hour. Children are constantly getting up for one reason or another.

- b. Does the child ask questions of the teacher or peers?

Yes. The children were encouraged to ask questions as to vocabulary and comprehension. At the beginning of the project, they did not ask many questions but at the end of the project, numerous questions were directed to the teacher, student teacher, the observer and anyone else who came into the room.

- c. How long does the child's attention span appear to last?

Each child observed was different. One could observe many children interested in what they were reading for the entire period while others would get out of their seats, change their seats, leave the room or even annoy a neighbor.

- d. What else besides read does the child do?

Child may get up to go to the library for a book, or roam around the room, or work on a particular project.

- e. Does the child talk to neighbors?

Children developed the habit of looking up words and even consulting their neighbors for information as well as the teacher.

- f. What prompts the child to communicate with neighbors?

In many instances one could observe one child discussing a book with another and many times a group of children could be observed working on a project together.

Children did not always sit still or patiently read their books; some children were observed biting a pencil or moving lips while reading. At the beginning of the project, some children were seen finger-pointing but toward the end of the term, this behavior had disappeared. These latter observations respond to questions

- g. What kinds of activity accompany reading--finger pointing, lip movement, etc.?
h. Does the child display any anxious behavior such as nail or pencil biting, head-scratching or fidgeting?

In addition to using the video tapes to observe the children's behaviors, it was used to interview the classroom teacher to obtain perceptions of the program's functioning; to interview the school administrator to ascertain the merits of the program; and also to interview the school librarian to obtain pre-post data on pupils' use of the school library.

Interviews

At the end of the reading project, interviews were conducted with the classroom teacher, the school librarian and the school administrator and were recorded on videotape to evaluate the merits

of the program. In addition there was a session recorded with the whole class obtaining their reactions as to their involvement in this reading approach.

In all instances the comments were very positive although there was some skepticism on the part of the school administrator and school librarian at the beginning of the term as to how this new approach would affect the children's reading scores.

Interview with teacher (Appendix VI). In answer to the question as to how he felt about being involved in a different kind of reading program, the classroom teacher said that at first he was very apprehensive about using something so different from what he had previously used (basal reader program). However, he also felt the previous approach was not very good and he welcomed a new program. He described the basal reader program as skill texts which drilled children only in the reading skills but did not satisfy the children's needs. He indicated the school was test score oriented and the basal reader satisfied that end. He felt that there was little demanded of the children in the traditional program as contrasted with what he termed a "revolutionary idea." In this new approach the children were asked to make their own decisions and he felt he would not have to teach to the test using such a program. He remarked that the children's positive attitude toward this new reading approach gave him encouragement because heretofore he was not satisfied with any reading program in the six years he had been teaching.

He said the program was easier because the motivation was not forced; it came naturally. The program also catered to the

short-term interests of the children. He also felt that time was not wasted; that children used their time in positive ways such as in writing, research skills were developed and in the various projects in which they became interested because of their reading.

At the beginning of the project he felt the children were shy and skeptical about asking questions but reported they soon learned that they received immediate feedback and so, as a result, they asked more questions toward the middle and end of the program. The teacher said that he was completely aware of each child, his/her abilities and interests. He felt that under a more traditional curriculum the children's interests would have been stifled and he said, "I'd never teach without this program again."

Interview with school administrator (Appendix VII). The administrator in charge of reading was the assistant principal who said that at the beginning of this project, he was very skeptical about another different approach to reading. There had been many approaches tried before this and subsequently dropped.

He felt that the choice of the class was a good one because it was typical of the ethnic population of the school. He remarked, too, that the choice of teacher was a good one since this teacher was one who could express enthusiasm, be cooperative, be open to a change in policy and would do his utmost to help the children succeed.

In answer to the question of what evidence there was that the project was succeeding, the administrator replied that if the number of books going in and out of the classroom and school library

was any indication of success, then the project was a success. Also, he reported that other children from other classes were curious about the program and expressed interest in becoming involved in a program that would give them access to so many books. In addition, the administrator said that at a conference of teachers, many questions were directed at him and the project teacher to find out what was going on and how they, too, could become involved.

One negative aspect, he expressed however, was the fact that objective tests were not a major thrust of this program and, therefore, he felt it would be difficult to assess results without these test scores.

In conclusion he indicated he would allow another class or grade to replicate the program, but he would want to find out the source of success of the program, i.e., was success due to the initial enthusiasm of the teacher or to the children in the class, or would this project work with any other standard class and achieve the same results as this class. He felt that there were implications here for further study.

Interview with school librarian (Appendix VIII). At the beginning of the term, the librarian recalled that this class was treated just as the other classes in the school. The children were scheduled for one period of library time a week and it was only during that period that the children were permitted to use the facilities. As the term went on, the pattern of library visits changed because the children were given more latitude. Not only did the library supply the classroom

with books but the children were permitted to use the library when they wished and take out anything they needed or were interested in.

The librarian gave credit to the class teacher, who, she said, was responsible for the success of the program because time was spent in the library with the children helping them when they had questions concerning their projects.

Three factors--maturity, independence and curiosity--were the characteristics used to describe most of the children when they were observed working in the library. When there were not enough books to satisfy the children, it was suggested that the children try the public library.

The librarian said she and her staff were very impressed with the program. They thought it was "terrific." Since the children were so interested in reading, she taught them to use the reference books and "broke the rules" by letting the children borrow the atlases, encyclopedia and almanacs; she even let them take the books out of the library. She was doubtful, though, whether the project would work with children who were not yet reading.

Finally, the librarian admitted that there was much more work for her and her staff in connection with this project but she concluded the interview by saying, "After all, isn't that why we are here in the library to encourage children to read?"

Interview with children (Appendix IX). The children recalled at the beginning of the year they all had to read in a basal reader

series. When they were questioned about whether or not they liked that program, three quarters of the children commented about the fact that they did not like it because they were all reading the same thing. One child said that it was boring; another commented that there was no variety; another said the book could not be taken out of the classroom. When they were asked to compare the basal reader with the program they are now involved in, there were many positive comments.

Almost all the children appreciated the fact that they could choose their own books. They did say, however, that at the beginning of the year the books were too easy but when those books were taken away and others were substituted, the books were much more interesting. They said that they felt very "grown up" because they were allowed to make their own decisions about what they wanted to read.

When they were asked what they did when they came across word(s) or paragraphs that they did not understand, they said that they asked the teacher, another child or whoever was around at that moment. (Sometimes the videotape operator was asked questions and he became involved.) When the children were asked whether this was a good system, they responded that they liked it because it enabled them to go right on with their reading. The children, when asked how they learned the words they questioned, said that they recorded them in their folders.

When their folders were examined to see the kinds of vocabulary they did record and the summaries of their books, it was found that

they were not too conscientious about listing the words. The teacher did not keep a strict count on the children doing this so that the vocabulary was kept by only a few children in the class.

Nevertheless, the children were very enthusiastic about the numbers of books they had read this year. Some of the children said that they never read books last year but this year they read many books. It was a good program, they said, because they were able to take the books home if they were not finished at school.

Another part of the program the children responded to was the number of books that they were able to take out of the school library. If they were reading a book in class and they wanted more information in order to write reports, they were allowed to go to the library and the librarian allowed them to take any books out of the library that they wanted, including the reference books.

The fact that they were so free in the library enabled them to write reports, do some original project work either as individuals or in groups. When there were no relevant books in the school library, the librarian suggested that they go to the public library. The children were very proud of the fact that at the end of the year everyone in the class owned a library card and they used it.

The children said that they were very happy with reading this year because they were able to read what they wanted to read and that they learned so much from their reading. They wanted to know if they could continue the program in the next grade, the sixth. Since that question could not be answered by anyone except the new

sixth grade teacher, the children went to him to ask if they could read in his class the way they did this past year. The teacher did not know the details about the program and so he investigated and he assured the children that he would find out more and would let them know.

The very fact that the children wanted to continue to read in a fluent, continuous manner speaks well for them and for the merits of the program.

Since this interview was recorded on the videotape, it was unfortunate that the machinery broke down and that the brilliant, poignant and revealing evaluation by the children of the reading project did not come across.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The present study, which was exploratory in design, sought answers to five major questions regarding the ability of the fifth grade children to read in a fluent, continuous manner.

Effectiveness of the Program

Major Question 1. Will the children's reading achievement as measured by the Metropolitan Achievement Test show improvement?

Metropolitan Achievement Test. The analysis of the reading data showed that the children maintained their median gain of reading 1.0 years for the year; however they did not improve significantly greater than expected. An additional finding was that children reading below grade level seemed to benefit significantly greater than the children reading above grade level. Perhaps this was because for the first time these children were not labeled remedial readers and so they were motivated to read.

It may well be that the Metropolitan Achievement Test is not a satisfactory test to measure the success of a program of this nature as it does not measure exactly what a pupil has learned but rather what he is supposed to learn. In this study since the children were given the opportunity of choosing their own books, their instruction deviated from the standard curriculum and so it is possible that this test did not measure what the children had learned. In addition, it is important to note that the Metropolitan Achievement

Test is no longer given on a citywide basis in the New York City school system. In the Spring of 1975, the Metropolitan Achievement Test was replaced by the New York City Reading Test. For the purposes of this study, in order to get a reliable and valid measure of pupil growth, the children in the project took both the Metropolitan and the New York City test in the Spring. According to the New York City test the children gained from one to four years in reading; however these data are not included in the results since there were no pre-tests available for comparison.

Many educators in New York City have felt that the Metropolitan Achievement Test no longer is a valid evaluative measure for the current school population. Perhaps the New York City test, which is the official reading test now used, is geared more to the children's experiences, background and ability than the Metropolitan Achievement Test.

Major Question 2. Will pupils in a fifth grade class demonstrate more fluent and continuous reading activity if they are given the opportunity to choose their own materials and are left to read without interruption?

Selecting books. Since the children had the opportunity to choose from a wide variety of books during their reading period, they chose easy books at the beginning of the year but complained along the way that they wanted more difficult books. The books were changed about once a month so that the children had a wide variety of titles from which to choose.¹ The children soon settled into

¹In addition, the children were part of a Reading Is Fundamental Project and they received three free books during the year.

reading all types of material. They were very enthusiastic about their reading and asked many questions of the teacher, observer, student teacher and even the video-tape operator who, himself, became quite involved in the program.

Personal folders. From the personal reading folders, it seems apparent that the children were definitely reading more books. These folders were a record of the numbers of books the children read, the vocabulary they questioned and a short summary of each book. At the beginning of the year the children were quite conscientious about keeping these records but unfortunately as the year went on, they became lax about recording their progress. The teacher, who was quite busy with all kinds of classroom responsibilities, did not keep a constant check on the children to see that they consistently recorded their material. As Fader (1968) states, if children are surrounded by paperback books, they experience them as objects of pleasure, and it is an excellent way to saturate their environment with positive stimuli. This also confirms Karlin's (1970) theory that a reading program offered in the middle grades that is interesting, exciting and effective will produce intelligent, independent readers who will be enthusiastic about reading as a lifetime interest.

Also, it seemed that as the children in this class read more and more books, they became more selective, supporting Harris' (1970) finding that as children meet a variety of reading materials, they discover that reading satisfies many needs and purposes. In this class, it is interesting to note that adventure books were

preferred by most of the children. In terms of preferences by sex no significant differences were found for books on adventure, biography, history, nature, fairy tales and science. However, girls did show a preference for love stories and poetry and boys for comics and sports. This study, then, concurs with Norvell's (1958) study which identified sex differences in reading choices as an element in the middle grade child's choice of reading materials. Boys in that study also preferred adventure-type stories.

In this class there were three levels of reading ability, those children who were reading above grade level, on grade and below grade level. Because the children were reading so many books, an analysis of the reading preference was done by reading grade level. It was found that there was no statistically significant difference between those children reading at or below grade level and those children reading above grade level. What is concluded from this is that the reading level of the children did not influence their reading preference. All children tended to rank their favorite books in the same way.

The children here were given free choice and according to Bruner (1966) because of the developmental levels of children during the middle grades, their instruction should be a relaxed process. The children in this class were quite relaxed as seen on the video tapes. They seemed to enjoy their period of reading and appreciated the fact that they were "free" to make their own decisions, to ask any questions in order to get immediate feedback and to develop

additional interests in the form of projects.

According to the classroom teacher who claimed that up to 1,000 books were circulated and the librarian, who said that rules were abrogated to favor those children who came in for numerous books, and the school administrator who felt the success of the program was shown by the number of books that went in and out of the classroom, it can be seen that the children were highly motivated to read.

At the beginning of the project, when the children were just getting used to the fact that they could be free to choose whatever they wanted to read, one boy asked whether he could take his book home because he wanted to finish it. The answer, of course, was yes, and from then on, the children were allowed to take the books home. They were quite responsible in returning books to the classroom when they were finished so that others could read them as well.

Nevertheless, the numbers of books read, the many questions the children asked the teacher, observer, and student teacher indicate that the children did demonstrate more fluent and continuous reading activity after they were given the opportunity of choosing their own materials and were left to read without interruption.

Major Question 3. Will the pupils question words or sentences that are unclear if they are left to pursue their own interests?

Personal reading folders. Again, from the pupil's personal reading folders, there is evidence that children recorded vocabulary words that they did not know.

Video tapes. From the video tape further evidence is indicated as children were viewed getting up out of their seats to question the teacher about words or sentences that were not clear to them.

Progress report. In addition the teacher was expected to keep a progress report of each child's daily reading activity. This, however, was not a successful procedure. Perhaps this was too much to ask of a teacher who has so much to do during a day or perhaps it had something to do with the teacher's personality. This teacher found it difficult to do routine chores and this was seen as a chore. Therefore the behaviors of the children were not noted on a regular basis as had been planned. However, what did come out of the report was that at the beginning of the term the children were quite shy. They had not quite trusted "the authorities" who said that they could ask any question whatsoever at any time during their reading. They were not accustomed to doing that and at the beginning, they did not feel free to follow this routine. As time went on, however, and one child saw another getting immediate feedback without any reprimands or mini-lessons, others were encouraged to ask many questions. It was important to note that questions developed into more reading and more projects. Perhaps, then, it was unfair to expect the teacher to keep such a detailed record of what developed each day in the classroom. What was far more important, the children developed enough confidence in themselves to pursue more and more questions and more and more reading.

On the other hand, the questions that the children asked were

also to be recorded so that at another time during the day, specific skills relevant to those questions could be taught. This was not always done. Again, perhaps the time factor and pressures on the teacher prevented this but it was a limitation that in future studies could be prevented.

In order to facilitate the recording of the children's questions, a tape recorder was used. This turned out to be useless because during the reading period the noise level in the classroom was quite high and the tape recorder was not sensitive enough to pick up the speakers without the interfering background noises. Thus, the tape recording had to be abandoned.

Major Question 4. Will the pupils show an increase in in-school and out-of-school reading activities and interests?

Several measures were used to determine if this was, in fact, achieved.

Pupil attitudes. It is clear from the children's self-perceptions that they are reading more books, asking more questions, using the library more often and extending their reading in various areas to develop original projects.

The children in this class had very positive attitudes toward being involved in a different reading approach. When it was suggested to them, they all agreed that it was a good idea and they were eager to participate. They were equally as eager to give up the basal reader they had been using.

Furthermore, more children currently have library cards now

than when the project began and children also more often indicated that they spent their free time reading. This was confirmed by the children who were interviewed on the video tapes who said that they liked to read more now, that they had more access to the library and there were more books at home to read at the end of the year than in the beginning. As Harris (1970) states, children who are given the opportunity to read stories rather than workbook exercises in phonics become more involved in reading and are therefore better readers.

Although there was an increase in reading as a free time activity, television watching after school also increased. The reason for this is open to speculation. Many of the children in this school are "latchkey" children which means that their parents work and are not home when the children get home from school. In some instances parents do not want their children on the streets and insist that they stay at home. It would be easier for the children to entertain themselves by turning on the television. On the other hand, the data show that less children reported that they watched television after dinner at the end of the year than at the beginning. This would seem to indicate that they did their homework or that they read. The pupils in this class were not only positive in their attitudes toward the reading but they were also very motivated. As the librarian stated in the interview, these children were mature, curious and independent, all factors which would assist them in their pursuit of knowledge.

Parent attitudes. Parents were also very positive about the project and about their children's progress as a result of participation in the program. Stone and Church (1968) point out the importance of the family and the home. They feel it is a source of learning and an important emotional refuge so that what the parents perceived about their children's progress in reading was extremely vital.

When one mother was asked how she felt about the reading program she stated:

The reading program improved my son's reading a great deal. He always wanted to read my papers when I was reading them which was something he never did before. Also, at night when I thought he was asleep, I would find that he was reading. When I asked whether what he was doing was homework, he said, no, it was a book he brought home because he wanted to finish it.

The mother ended her statement by saying, "I am proud of his improvement in reading this year."

Another commented about the reading program, "It was very nice because last year he did not read at all."

And another mother felt that her daughter's interest in books had improved quite a lot. She added that she enjoyed reading about different people and places. "And as I said before, her comprehension has improved. Thank you for the help you have given her."

In answer to the question "Have you noticed any change in your child's attitude toward reading this year?" another mother commented, "Yes, she has been reading more this year because as soon as she gets home from school she does her homework and she is always telling me about a new book that she has had from school, and I think

this is better because you don't have to force her; she just does it; she picks any book she wants." This mother goes on to say that she feels that the reading program is better than the "textbook one" that ordinary (sic) classes do, because she is happy that her child has had a choice in books and she thinks that reading her own (what she likes) (sic) would encourage her more in reading.

Another comment was, "This a very good program and it is good for my child because with this he learns a great deal of interesting things and doesn't waste time watching T.V."

One parent, however, commented that he did not know too much about the reading program used this year which obviously shows that the child did not comment on it, nor did he bring home many books.

For the most part, the parents' comments were very positive. They were enthusiastic about their children reading more. These parents, as judged by their own writing and comments, probably had very little education themselves but they do understand and appreciate the importance of their children knowing how to read and, what is more vital, that they do read.

Pupil's projects. The children extended their reading into numerous projects which came about through their own curiosity about what they were reading and the encouragement of their teacher. Some of the projects were in the areas of language arts, science and social studies. The children, sometimes as individuals and sometimes in groups, pursued their interests by using the library facilities more than at any other time. The librarian reported that the children came

in at any time they pleased looking for particular books on special projects. The librarian's staff at first objected to this influx but they were overruled. The librarian also reported that the teacher and student teacher helped the children in the library to find books and also aided them in locating specific information. The fact that the children had more access to the library facilities speaks well of the library staff. The children learned in their pursuit of knowledge what reference books were and contrary to all the rules of the library, they were allowed to borrow the atlases, encyclopedia and almanacs or whatever other resource books they needed for their projects. There were many times, the librarian noted, that the school library did not have the necessary books the children needed. When that happened, she suggested that the children go to the public library which they did, as their own teacher reported.

There was another positive aspect in that the children worked in teams on their projects. Not only did the children learn to work together but they also, in this way, were able to make new friends. According to the teacher, at the beginning of the term, some of the children were quiet, isolated and seemed not to have a friend. At the end of the term, the friendships made were quite numerous. Stone and Church (1968) as pointed out in their analysis of children in the middle grades found that they cluster in same-age, same-sex ground. Also, at this age, children spend time determining with peers what the social structures are, about the "in-groups" and "out groups," about leadership, justice, loyalties and ideals. This is just about

what happened to the children in this class. One could determine the leaders, the children who worked together and the few who were still the isolates.

One important project to note that developed from this program was the class play that was presented to the entire school for an assembly program. The idea started when one child was reading a book of Greek myths. The child conferred with his neighbor about what he was reading and it captured the imagination of a small group. The idea to write a play came about in this way. The class was divided into writers, producers, singers, dancers, costume makers, scenery designers, etc. The parents cooperated also by helping the youngsters create their costumes. The play was excellent; everyone enjoyed it and the fact that it belonged to the class, that it was original, made everyone feel very proud. The children learned how important reading was and what could be done with it.

Teacher rating scale. For the three characteristics included in the teacher rating scale that were most critical and reflective of a reading program, i.e., achievement in reading, reading comprehension and interest in reading, almost three-fourths of the children, regardless of their status at the beginning of the year, showed improvement. Considering the group probably most in need of this project, that is, the children who were rated average or below in these areas at the beginning of the year, more than four-fifths were rated as improved. It would seem that since the children could read better, there was greater interest in reading.

Video tapes. These tapes were a supplement to the evaluation of the project. They were extremely important because they visually capture the children in the classroom reading--getting up to change their books--talking to another child, in most cases about the books they were reading, asking questions of the teacher or whoever was near them. The behaviors of the children can be observed at close range. The children can be seen reading in the closet, on the floor, on a desk, in the "reading house" (Figure 2), at one's desk, etc. The children were told they could pick any place to read they pleased, and they did. The children, on the tapes, can be seen diligently working on their varied projects.

In summary, it would seem that from these five diverse aspects children did increase their in-school and out-of-school interests and activities.

Major Question 5. Will feedback aid in the mutual understanding between pupil and teacher and will it contribute to the pupil's development in fluent and continuous reading?

Teacher rating scale. In almost every project one is interested in the fact that there might be change after children have been exposed to a specific program. In this program in terms of the children's ability to ask questions, the teacher rated the majority of the children "average or below" in their ability to ask questions at the beginning of the year. However, by the end of the term, almost four-fifths of these children had improved in this ability. Because questioning by the children and instant feedback by the teacher were so vital to this program, the fact that there was movement in a

positive direction was evidence that the children were being helped.

Video tape. On the video tape it was possible to visually capture the interaction between pupil and teacher. The teacher was seen moving around the room helping individual children as well as groups of children on their various projects and books. The children also felt confident enough to approach the teacher at all times and he was openly receptive and willing to respond to their needs.

This concludes the discussion of the major questions set forth in this study. There are, however, additional aspects related to the project that are important and are presented below.

Additional Aspects

Teacher. "Teaching is an art," William James (1892) pointed out. Whatever method is used, whatever materials are provided, the teacher's own knowledge and sensitivity count heavily.

The project was carried throughout the year because of the teacher's cooperation, enthusiasm and a total feeling for the children in his class. There is no way of knowing what a teacher will be like before a project begins. In this case, the selection of teacher was most appropriate. For a project to be successful there has to be rapport between teacher and children and in this project there was. As the teacher stated in an interview, at first he was skeptical, apprehensive and leery of another approach to reading. However, he was dissatisfied with his lack of success with basal readers and therefore he felt that this was an opportune time to begin another

program. One could see as time went on that a bias was being built into the program for its success. The teacher was so attuned to the new approach that he was going to make it succeed. As he said, when he saw the children responding so well to all the books placed in the room, all the books obtained from the school library, all the library cards obtained, the many questions asked, he was grateful for the opportunity to be a part of the project. In the interview he said, "he would never teach reading again in any other way but this one." In addition, his personality was such that this "open classroom" atmosphere suited him well. He was always there to help the children prepare their work or to make suggestions or to get the most out of questioning them. The children never felt any competition, never felt they were not doing well. Each one was working at his/her own pace and the teacher encouraged this at all times. One could see when entering this classroom that the teacher was easygoing, patient, bright, "tuned in" to the pupils' needs and very proud of them and of their accomplishments.

The children were well organized under his tutelage. For example, when he was absent and a substitute teacher called for mathematics at 11 o'clock in the morning, all the children shouted, "No, it is our reading time." There was nothing that teacher could do. The children took out their books and read.

One of the problems--and this did not seem to be a problem for the teacher or for the children--was the high noise level in the classroom. Since the children were free to ask questions, consult

their neighbors, or work on projects, the room was always bustling with activity. In some instances this might be a detriment; in this class no one seemed to mind.

Audio visual director. The person in charge of the district video equipment observed that the teacher had developed tremendously during the past few years. He felt that this class was self-sustaining, independent, self-motivated, alive, responsible and responsive to what was going on. He continued that "this project reclaimed the children," and he saw the children pursuing their own interests. "In this room," he said, "there is a good spirit; there is understanding and respect for one another, no sabotaging." This person also said that he was happy to work in a classroom that was so child-oriented; that the project as he saw it was meaningful. If it had not been so, he never would have volunteered his time.

Administrator. At the beginning of the year when this approach was suggested, the administration was not too sure of the merits of the program because it was not going to have more than one standardized reading evaluation built in. The administration is concerned with scores, "hard data," as was pointed out in the two interviews by the teacher and the administrator.

Interviews. The interviews with the teacher, school administrator and the librarian as well as group discussion with the children are on tape. The children voted to entitle the videotape "Don't Bother Me--I'm Reading." There were some salient points made by everyone concerned with the program. Some of the quotations appear in the

previous chapter and they are also in Appendixes VI, VII, VIII and IX. Overall the interviews were extremely positive.

In the discussion with the children they indicated they were very excited at the beginning of the term when they were told that they were going to be able to read anything they chose and that they could read as many books as they wanted. They all agreed that it was great to be free to choose their books. They said that they kept track of their vocabulary words that they did not know in their folders. However, when their folders were reviewed, it was found that they had neglected to do this on a regular basis; in fact it was done only intermittently. Furthermore, the teacher did not keep after them and so maybe they too were "free" in this respect.

The children said they had changed a great deal because they had read more books. In questioning them, one little girl answered, "When, at the beginning of the term, I want to say something was O.K., I'd say it was all right, or it was fine--but now I say it was ACCURATE." And she added that was "grown-up" talk. And they were now grown up.

The children wanted to continue their "free reading" program in the sixth grade. The teacher they have been assigned to for the next year teaches reading and phonics traditionally through a Basal Reader series. On their own initiative, the children have gone to their new teacher and have requested that they be allowed to continue "their program."

The new teacher appears to be somewhat interested in the project

and has questioned the current teacher about the program. If the teacher and the children can convince one more person of the value of an approach to reading in a fluent and continuous manner, children will be readers because they really want to be.

C H A P T E R V I

CONCLUSIONS

This study developed because so often, when evaluating reading programs, including the national Right to Read program, it was observed that children were "learning to read" by using workbooks, basal readers, games, and rexographed sheets. With these materials they were learning phonics and they were being drilled and skilled but they were not reading. It was felt that the problem with this method was that the children did not have the opportunity to read in a fluent, continuous manner. Reading, in this case, could be interpreted as understanding material in books that have an interesting, connected story line. It was thought that children must learn basic phonics before they could go on to fluent reading (Chall, 1967). Children can read material that they write or can dictate and learn vocabulary in that interesting way rather than in the abstract phonic method. Smith (1971) says that a child has to know the meaning of a sentence before he can understand an individual word. Because there was so much emphasis on phonics teaching, the children never had the opportunity of just reading--reading for fun, for the pleasure of finding out something exciting or just plain enjoying reading. This was particularly true in the middle grades since children were still being drilled and skilled and teachers openly admitted there was no time for reading for appreciation. Besides, some commented, the children cannot analyze words or understand the meaning of a word. Again, this concept has been criticized by Smith

(1971), Robinson (personal communication, 1975) and Goodman (personal communication, 1975).

This study was aimed at finding another way of reaching children, of finding an approach suitable to children's needs. For too long reading has been a nemesis for children. There were always remedial classes formed, remedial teachers hired for reluctant readers. There were so many names given to children who were not reading that it was obvious something was wrong with the system.

Reading, traditionally, is taught by drilling children into recognizing "whole" words; next the words are analyzed, broken down, built up, understood by themselves. After all the techniques for learning these skills have been mastered, then the child goes on to read a book--if there is time. This last step is also a skill, a very important one but one which is not considered in that context.

This study was concerned with the last step; developing a love of books. It was the hope that this study achieved that goal; that the children did develop a love of books. This did not mean that the skills which a child needs to read were neglected. Those skills were taught within the framework of what the child was reading so that there was a direct transference from what he understood in his reading to the skills that he needed to learn. Those skills were no longer abstract; they were meaningful and they had a place.

There were not many studies that followed this line of thinking. As mentioned previously, McCracken and McCracken (1972) developed a system for younger children and that study differs from the present

one in that in this study questioning and immediate feedback are essential variables for the children to develop fluent and continuous reading.

It seems obvious, based on the data analysis of this study, that allowing the children to choose their own books, ask questions and receive immediate feedback, that this is the right direction. If they feel good about reading; if they develop an interest; if they realize that they can learn from reading; if they know they can make their own decisions and ask innumerable questions, then the project would be a success.

Since our present methods of teaching reading have not generally produced children who read efficiently or who want to read, then it is time to find out why. One of the answers obtained from this study is that the children were happy to read because it was theirs; they were free of the drills and the abstract skills. What they were doing was meaningful to them.

Implications

There are certainly implications here for further study. This study concentrated on a fifth grade class of children. The fact that the study used an ecological methodology turned out to be right. The classroom environment was the place which provided the instruments of self-direction. Dewey advocated the use of activities in and out of the school environment. The children were curious, self-motivated and they were able to make decisions as to their

reading and other by-products of their reading.

Perhaps the reverse way of teaching reading should be practiced. Children should first develop a love of books and then the skills should be taught to them. This practice could be stated in the early grades and go right through higher education. In this way children would understand that reading is pleasurable because of their freedom to make decisions about their choices, the fact that they would be free to question would be educational in itself; the children would be in pursuit of their own knowledge. If this were the case, they would not balk at the stagnant lessons they have to learn; the lessons which have no meaning for them. Skinner's theory of practice, reinforcement of behavior would not work in this study. The children's own curiosity, own motivation, own needs would direct them on to further study.

This class which was somewhat modeled on an Open Classroom had the characteristics which, based on what is known of Piaget, lent themselves to learning. The fact that there was a large variety of paperback books in the classroom from which to choose and in addition unlimited access to the school library, the children could certainly extend their reading. The results of the data show that the children had a positive attitude toward school, toward learning. The fact that there was excellent rapport between the teacher and the pupils also added to the success of the program. The social interaction that occurred as a result of the by-products of reading, the numerous projects designed, were also a plus in the direction

of continuing the study. It was Kohl (1973) who defined the classroom as a microcosm and he said it was important for students to function with each other, that they take responsibility for one another's learning and that they would be willing to share, that they would ask the teacher's help as a last resort.

This happened in the classroom. Obviously, if children are left to choose, to make decisions about themselves, they do come out all right.

Limitations

This was an exploratory study which attempted to discover and implement another approach to teach reading in the middle grades which would be enjoyable.

Because the study was an exploratory one, the sample chosen was limited to one class only. This very small sample, of course, is not ample to prove that all children would progress in reading with this type of program. But it is a start.

The teacher was a good choice for the project but because he was so involved with the children and he wanted the program to succeed, a bias was built in.

There was only one investigator and that investigator, too, was eager for the project to work and again a bias was built in.

There are no controls in an ecological method; therefore the conditions were reported as they were seen by the observer.

The video taping was used in a very unstructured fashion which

permitted the observer to make subjective statements concerning the reading behavior of the children. There were no controls.

During the reading period, and when the class was being video taped, the noise level was very high. The children got out of their seats more in this class probably than in others because they were given the liberty of getting books, talking with a neighbor, etc. Whether this movement is more typical in this reading situation than in a more traditional one is open to further study.

The noise level also interfered with the audio input of the video tapes. Sometimes it was very difficult to hear what the children and the teacher were saying.

The idea for the project developed from the investigator's experience in the field evaluating other reading programs. This approach was perceived to be different from the other reading methods seen. Unfortunately the review of the literature was limited in this field. The only way to support the rationale for the study was to review what psychologists, theorists and reading people had to say "around" the topic of free choice, questioning, and feedback variables. The studies that the "individualized reading" proponents developed did not fit into this study. This study is a complete reversal of the sequence of instruction as it is now practiced.

Suggestions for Further Research

In this study there were many factors introduced. There was the teacher, the class of 34 children, one observer, a "new kind of

classroom"--Open Classroom--one approach to reading, the elimination of the basal reader approach, the introduction of video tapes. Each one of these factors could be studied further in relation to the classroom.

It was said that not all children are alike and that they should be treated as individuals. This was attempted but according to the data 6 or 8 percent of the children who were perceived by the teacher as worse than when the program began, obviously could not cope with the free wheeling atmosphere of the classroom. That aspect could provide the basis for a separate study.

Too often studies are researched, data collected, and then the study is dropped.

1. In this case, it might be suggested to follow the children in the sixth grade and, if they continue this program, then compare it with another, or if they do not continue it, then study them and compare them with their fifth grade success.

2. There could be a large random sampling of children in urban centers in the United States to test the approach investigated in this study.

3. The effect of the importance of the teacher on the learning to read in this manner could be developed further.

4. This approach could be compared with another approach in an experimental design.

5. This study could be extended by incorporating Coffing's and Caban's study on eye movements and learning to read to further the knowledge of technology in reading.

6. It would be feasible to follow Smith's theory in more detail stating that comprehension must precede the identification of individual words.

7. The study of fluent, continuous reading could be investigated in the lower primary grades.

Summary

The title of the study is "The Problem of Children Learning to Read in a Fluent, Continuous Manner." The purpose of this study was to design and implement a special approach to learning to read in the middle grades which concentrated on reading for fluency rather than on phonic skills methodology. Therefore, this was an exploratory study.

The rationale for the study came about because in evaluating reading programs the investigator discovered that children were being taught phonics by way of workbooks, xeroxed sheets, machinery; they were being drilled and skilled but they did not read books in a fluent, continuous manner. Studying the phonic skills, in the minds of many, was synonymous with reading.

If the children were free to choose their own books from a wide assortment in their classroom, and if they were free to ask questions about their reading as to vocabulary and comprehension, and if they were given immediate feedback by the teacher, would they, then, become readers? Based on that rationale, five major questions were formulated.

1. Will the children's reading achievement, measured by the Metropolitan Achievement Test, show improvement?
2. Will the pupils demonstrate more fluent and continuous reading activity if they are given the opportunity of choosing their own material and are left to read without interruption?
3. Will the pupils question words or sentences that are unclear if they are left to pursue their own interests?
4. Will the pupils show an increase in in-school and out-of-school reading activities and interests?
5. Will feedback aid in the mutual understanding between pupil and teacher and will it contribute to the pupil's development in fluent and continuous reading?

The design of the study consisted of thirty-four children in the fifth grade using an ecological methodology because the classroom environment was the center of the project. The children participated in this study from November to June. They were told that they could select and read any book from the class library that they chose. No one told them a book was too easy or too difficult. During the hour-long period, the children would read silently but if they came across words they did not know or a sentence that they could not comprehend, they were free to ask the teacher. The immediate feedback that they received from the teacher in answer to their questions enabled them to continue with their reading in a fluent, continuous manner. The children were also encouraged to read anywhere in the room they pleased.

In evaluating the project there were various techniques of measurements and instruments used:

1. Pre-post reading scores on the Metropolitan Achievement Test to determine change in reading ability.
2. Pre-post pupil questionnaires to determine change in attitude toward reading.
3. Parent questionnaires to obtain their perceptions of the project's functioning and their child's progress.
4. Pupil's personal reading folder of vocabulary words and book reports.
5. Pupil's projects which were by-products of their reading.
6. Teacher rating scale of child's progress and change.
7. Video tapes, an important component of the program, recorded bi-monthly the reading behavior of the children during their book selection and showed evidence of feedback.
 - a. Videotape interview with classroom teacher to obtain perceptions of the program's functioning.
 - b. Videotape interview with the school administrator to ascertain the merits of the reading project.
 - c. Videotape interview with the school librarian to obtain data on student's use of the school library.
 - d. Videotape interview with the children to obtain their attitudes of the program.

The data analysis consisted of the quantitative measure which was the pre-post scores of the Metropolitan Achievement Test. In this instance the data showed that the children had gained one year. The qualitative measures were the videotapes, the teacher's progress report, the pupil's pre-post questionnaires, parent questionnaire, student folders, content of interviews with the school personnel and the pupil's projects.

The results of this study were positive, in terms of achievement,

attitudes and behaviors. The children now have library cards which they use; they did not have them at the beginning of this program. The children also use reading as a free-time activity now, whereas at the beginning of the year they did not. At the beginning of the year, the children preferred comics but toward the end of the year, there was a shift in book preference to adventure stories.

The teacher reported that about 900 books were circulated throughout the project. The parents also liked the program; they were proud of their children's improvement in reading and preferred this "free choice" reading to the traditional approach. The children reported that they were happy reading (in this fluent and continuous manner) and wanted to continue the program in the sixth grade. They did not want to go back to the Basal Readers. They felt the program had changed them because they liked reading more now. They felt they had learned more because of their opportunity to ask questions and the opportunity to "research" a topic more fully when doing a project.

The teacher's rating of the children was also positive. Sixty-one percent had improved in overall achievement; 76 percent improved in reading; 70 percent improved in questioning; 70 percent improved in comprehension and 67 percent improved in their interest in reading. This, of course, was the teacher's direct observation from working closely with the children throughout the year.

Perhaps this study proved what George Bernard Shaw meant when he said, "What we want is to see the child in pursuit of knowledge, And not knowledge in pursuit of the child."

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A P P E N D I X I

PUPIL'S PRE-QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: Female () Male ()

Birthdate: Place of birth:

If you have brothers or sisters, please fill in how many of each:

	Older	Younger
Brothers	_____	_____
Sisters	_____	_____

What kind of work does your father do?

What kind of work does your mother do?

Do you like to read?

What do you like to read?

Where do you get the materials you like to read?

Do you have a public library card?

If you have a public library card, how often do you go to the public library?

Where is your public library?

Do you borrow books from the school library?

Do you take school library books home?

Do you have books at home?

Do you have magazines at home?

Do you have newspapers at home?

What do you do after you leave school at 3 o'clock?

What time do you eat dinner?

What do you do after dinner?

What time do you go to bed when you have school on the next day?

Do you read books, magazines or newspapers at home on Saturday or Sunday? _____

If you read at home on weekends, about how much time do you spend reading on

Saturdays

Sundays

A P P E N D I X I I
PUPIL'S POST-QUESTIONNAIRE

- | Name | Female () | Male () |
|--|------------|----------|
| 1. Do you like to read? | | |
| 2. Do you have a Public Library card? | | |
| 3. How often do you go to the Public Library? | | |
| 4. Where is your Public Library? | | |
| 5. Do you borrow books from the school library? | | |
| 6. Do you take class library books home to read? | | |
| 7. Do you have magazines at home? | | |
| 8. Do you have newspapers at home? | | |
| 9. About how many books do you read completely each week? | | |
| 10. About how many books do you read part of each week? | | |
| 11. Where else do you get books to read besides the public, school and class libraries? | | |
| 12. Have you enjoyed reading more or less than you did in fourth grade? Please explain your answer and give reasons. | | |
| 13. How has the reading program changed you this year? | | |
| 14. What kind of reading program would you like in your class in sixth grade? | | |

15. What do you do after you leave school at 3 o'clock?
16. What time do you eat dinner?
17. What do you do after dinner?
18. What time do you go to bed when you have school on the next day?
19. Do you read books, magazines or newspapers at home on Saturday or Sunday? _____
20. If you read at home on weekends, about how much time do you spend reading on
Saturdays
Sundays
21. Have you enjoyed reading this year? _____
22. More, less or the same as last year? _____
23. Tell why on the other side of this page.

A P P E N D I X I I I
PUPIL'S THIRD QUESTIONNAIRE

Name _____

1. What do you think would be a good title for your reading program?

2. What kinds of books did you like to read?

Put number 1 next to book you liked best.

Put number 2 next to book you liked second best,

and on down 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 which you liked least.

Comics _____

Fairy tales _____

Adventures _____

Nature stories _____

Sports _____

Science _____

Biographies _____

Love stories _____

Poetry _____

History _____

3. How many books did you read this year?

4. Can you recall how many books you read last year?

5. Would you like to continue this special reading program next year?

6. Why?

A P P E N D I X I V
 QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS

Student's name:

1. Has your child brought books home from school to read this year (other than textbooks)?
2. If yes to number 1, how often?
3. Where did your child get these books from?
 - class library _____
 - school library _____
 - other students _____
4. How many hours per day has your child read at home each day?
 - during the week _____
 - Saturday _____
 - Sunday _____
5. Have you noticed any change in your child's attitude toward reading this year? Please explain.
6. Has your child read more this year than in fourth grade?
7. If yes to number 6, how much?
 - a little bit more _____
 - a great deal more _____
8. Do you think that reading has had any influence on your child's friendships this year? Please explain.
9. Which would you prefer your child to have in the sixth grade?
 1. use of reading textbooks _____
 2. choice of their own books _____
10. Please use this space to make any comments about how you felt about the reading program we used this year. Thank you.

A P P E N D I X V
TEACHER RATING SCALE FOR PUPIL
Special Reading Program

Name of pupil _____			
<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Status at Beginning of Program</u> (circle one)	<u>Change Since Program Began</u> (circle one)	
1. Achievement (overall school performance)	1. Excellent 2. Average 3. Poor 4. Don't know	1. Has not changed in this aspect 2. Has improved in this aspect 3. Has gotten worse in this aspect	
2. Achievement in reading	1. Excellent 2. Average 3. Poor 4. Don't know	1. Has not changed in this aspect 2. Has improved in this aspect 3. Has gotten worse in this aspect	
3. Reading comprehension	1. Consistently understands what is read 2. Understands what is read about half the time 3. Seldom understands what is read 4. Don't know	1. Has not changed in this aspect 2. Has improved in this aspect 3. Has gotten worse in this aspect	

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Status at Beginning of Program</u> (circle one)	<u>Change Since Program Began</u> (circle one)
4. Interest in reading	1. Enjoys reading; reads more books than those required for class 2. Reads only assigned readings 3. Does not read, except under pressure 4. Don't know 5. Consistent interest 6. Interest about half the time 7. Seldom interested 8. Don't know	1. Has not changed in this aspect 2. Has improved in this aspect 3. Has gotten worse in this aspect
5. Interest in school work	1. Consistent interest 2. Interest about half the time 3. Seldom interested 4. Don't know	1. Has not changed in this aspect 2. Has improved in this aspect 3. Has gotten worse in this aspect
6. Understands lessons and transfers ideas from one lesson to another	1. Always understands main idea and can generalize ideas to other lessons 2. Usually understands main idea and at times can generalize ideas from one lesson to another 3. Never understands main idea and can't generalize ideas from one lesson to another 4. Don't know	1. Has not changed in this aspect 2. Has improved in this aspect 3. Has gotten worse in this aspect

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Status at Beginning of Program</u> (circle one)	<u>Change Since Program Began</u> (circle one)
7. Class participation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Always raises hand when teacher asks for volunteers to answer questions 2. Does not volunteer but answers when called on 3. Reluctant to answer when called on in class 4. Don't know 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has not changed in this aspect 2. Has improved in this aspect 3. Has gotten worse in this aspect
8. Frequency and relevance of personal experiences to class discussion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contributes frequently and contributions are relevant 2. Contributes but contributions are often irrelevant 3. Contributes personal experiences infrequently 4. Don't know 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has not changed in this aspect 2. Has improved in this aspect 3. Has gotten worse in this aspect
9. Extent and type of questioning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Often asks relevant questions to clarify or seek information 2. Asks questions, but questions are often irrelevant 3. Never asks questions 4. Don't know 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has not changed in this aspect 2. Has improved in this aspect 3. Has gotten worse in this aspect

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Status at Beginning of Program</u> (circle one)	<u>Change Since Program Began</u> (circle one)
10. Aspiration for success as a student	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong desire for school success 2. 3. Some desire for school success 4. 5. No desire for school success 6. Don't know 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has not changed in this aspect 2. Has improved in this aspect 3. Has gotten worse in this aspect

A P P E N D I X V I

TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH THE TEACHER

I should like to ask you some questions since this seems to be a new venture for you.

1. At the beginning of the year you were working with a Basal Reader. Did you like it?
2. How would you describe this class? Average, above average or below average?
3. Was this the right class to undertake a new reading approach?
4. Would you consider this class to be the best, worst or average class you have ever had?
5. How did you feel about conducting a different reading program? Good, did not care, apprehensive, enthusiastic?
6. Why would you want to go to all the extra work, problems, reports involved in a new program?
7. Before this program was initiated, what kinds of programs did you have in your classes?
8. Do you think that this program is different?
9. Why do you say this program is revolutionary?
10. When you started this program, did you expect that the program might succeed, that the children would have positive attitudes toward it, or did you feel that this was just another program?
11. Would you state that you are satisfied with this reading approach?
12. What exactly have you gained from this reading program?
13. What have the children, besides scores, gained from the program?

14. Were the children asking less or more questions at the end of the term as compared with the beginning of the program?
15. Was there evidence that the vocabulary given to the children in immediate feedback was later used in other areas?
16. Can you assess whether the children chose easy books or difficult books at the beginning of the project or did they change during the year?
17. Would you say that because the children were motivated, they were reading more and making more use of the library facilities?
18. You have learned a great deal from this program; would you undertake this reading approach again?
19. Besides the children keeping folders, what other assessments do you have?
20. Do you think because of this program the children have become more social?

Thank you very much.

Investigator: I'd like to ask you a few questions since this seems to be a new venture in reading for you. At the very beginning you were working with a basal reader, were you not?

Teacher: Yes.

Investigator: How far did you get with that basal reader? How far in the program did you get with the basal reader?

Teacher: Not very far.

Investigator: Did you like it?

Teacher: Not at all.

Investigator: Why didn't you like it?

Teacher: There was very little to stimulate the children's interest in order to do the written assignments that I would give them.

Investigator: Okay. So that this new program in reading was quite a different venture for you.

Teacher: Yes it was.

Investigator: Let's talk about the class now. At the very beginning of this term how would you describe this class? Would they be above average, average, or below average?

Teacher: The class would be above average for this school in that there are six classes on the grade and this was the second best class on the grade. According to last year's MAT reading test the class was up close to grade level according to the MAT test which would make the class about average for any test population of that test. The class is slightly above average for New York City since New York City schools are below grade on average reading.

Investigator: Then if in this classroom we undertook to do a reading program such as this one, do you think this was the right class to undertake it?

Teacher: I believe it would be a good class to do a program with.

Investigator: Why do you say that.

Teacher: The reason would be that the children are receptive and cooperative and they would give a good effort to whatever we tried with them.

Investigator: Would you consider this class to be the best class then, or only an average class that you ever had. Certainly it's not the worst.

Teacher: This is the best class I've had in six years of teaching. All my other classes have been considerably below grade level in reading.

Investigator: How did you feel at the very beginning about conducting a new reading program? Did you feel that it was good, that you didn't care really, that you were apprehensive about it or that you really are very enthusiastic about it?

Teacher: I was a bit apprehensive about it in that I was doing something that I'd never worked in before, but I was willing to try it because what I had wasn't satisfactory in any way. There was nothing to be lost at all.

Investigator: Why would you want to go to all this extra work-- problems and reports and all the things that go with this kind of program?

Teacher: As long as I'm going to be a teacher I will not be satisfied unless I know that I'm doing my best and I was willing to try this as a new technique in reading. If I can find a technique that will make children more interested in reading--in the skills of reading I will certainly be very happy.

Investigator: Before this program was initiated, what kinds of programs did you conduct with your classes in the last six years?

Teacher: My reading program consists of the following: basal reader, not used perhaps as much as a supervisor would care for it to be used. I've used a lot of skilled texts which would tend to have the children drill in using reading skills and I would find that since the--it seemed that the school administration was test score oriented and I felt that drilling children and teaching them the skills that would be on a Metropolitan Achievement Test satisfied my supervisor's needs, but not necessarily the children's needs.

Investigator: Do you think that this program then is different?

Teacher: In no way is it the same. It's completely revolutionary.

Investigator: Would you go so far as to say that it's revolutionary, and if so, why?

Teacher: Yes, because there's no one else doing anything like it, or if there is, they're doing it on their own and no one knows about it. The closest I can liken this program to is an Open Classroom and Open Classroom teachers do tend to use workbook material and do not tend to use the books. It's revolutionary in the fact that very little is demanded from the children in a traditional way and no regard was ever made or in any way was standardized tests considered. We're not teaching to the test in this class.

Investigator: Yes. That's a very important aspect. When you started this program did you have any feelings of the program succeeding? Did you think that the children would have positive accomplishments or did you think, well, it's another program and you had a negative attitude toward it?

Teacher: I was completely neutral. I've never seen a reading program or even a remedial program in this school that I was satisfied with so there was really nothing to encourage me. But as soon as I realized the children's response was positive to the program, it only took a short time for me to become very enthusiastic about what I was doing.

Investigator: Would you say that you're satisfied with the progress of the children?

Teacher: Very.

Investigator: Why is that?

Teacher: The children here are able to take almost any written material and read it with the assistance that we give and understand it; and not only do they understand it, but they're very stimulated by it. They're reading the things that they care to read and the things that they have a short-term interest in. It's something that people in this field have to realize that if you ask a child what he wants to read about, today he may want to read about stamp collecting, tomorrow he may want to read about rocket ships, the third day he might want to read about birds. The children have very short-term interests and in this we were catering to it. They were able to look into what they were interested in immediately and not have to wait until they forget about it. And since they were interested and the material gave them the insights that they needed they were able to develop projects on their own. As a matter of fact they didn't want to do anything until they had done some type of activity which they themselves thought of, that would satisfy their need to learn about what they were doing.

Investigator: Those are very positive aspects of what the children have gained from the program. What exactly have you gained from the program?

Teacher: First of all, I've gained a lot of satisfaction from seeing the progress the children have made. I've also found it much easier to teach because I have no trouble motivating the children. I've been able to pick up what they're interested in and work on those things and eliminate the usual irrelevant materials that we should be working with. I have covered very, very little of the Board of Education curriculum. I've tried to provide some of it--whatever they'll need for sixth grade and so on--written skills and language art skills. In a sense I've created my own curriculum and I've rarely had a moment where the children wouldn't give me their attention. Time isn't wasted in the classroom while the children are progressing tremendously.

Investigator: To go back at the very beginning, we said that the children could ask any question they pleased and they did come up certainly and they asked many questions. Were the children asking less or more questions of you at the end of the program than they did at the beginning?

Teacher: Well, definitely at the end because they were encouraged to. At the beginning they hardly asked anything that was of their own interest. Their questions were limited to what we were discussing on the blackboard or in discussion. This was a completely individualized program and I know where each child is up to in reading and I have a very accurate knowledge of their abilities and I know exactly what they're working on at all times. I'm able to combine different subjects. If a child is interested in something that can be related to social studies I do them that way. If they're interested in something that can take them into a science lesson that's appropriate, it goes that way. And everything here is really tailored to the children's own individual needs.

Investigator: Is there evidence now that the vocabulary that's given to the children when they ask the questions in reading, that that vocabulary is later used in other areas, and if so, what areas?

Teacher: Partially. I don't think it's an extremely significant feature. I would say that the most gain from the children asking the meaning of a word that they've come across is that the children at that point know what the word means and use the word in reading successfully. The words have appeared in written work but I've never pursued nor tried to make the children use words that they've had difficulty with. We treat

it very nonchalantly and just merely express the fact that if they now just understand the word that was very good.

Investigator: Can you assess whether the children chose easy books or difficult books or did they change a lot during the term? How did you see if there was any change that did take place or did take place?

Teacher: Most of the children started with fairly easy books and immediately became quite annoyed with it and wanted more challenging material which we then provided.

Investigator: How did you provide those?

Teacher: We selected books by the hundreds from the school library and with the cooperation of the librarian we were able to keep the books in the classroom for long periods of time. I rotated the books frequently to keep presenting new material to the class. The children tended to prefer the more difficult material and I would say that the books read in class ranged from the fifth to a twelfth grade level. Very few books have been handled recently by the children below fifth grade level. There are some weaker readers who will tend to stay on a fourth or fifth grade level in reading in their material level but most of the children have progressed to material that would be appropriate for junior high schools. They're reading the most difficult material that we have in the school. And just to make an addition, the fact that they were so free in looking into things in research-- I introduced them to the Encyclopedia and I made use of the encyclopedia in the library that I thought was best, the World Book Encyclopedia which is written on an eighth to tenth grade level. And we've done individual projects where the children have made tremendous use of these encyclopedias with very little difficulty in understanding the material.

Investigator: In other words they made great use of the library. The library was cooperative and they were able to get books whenever they wanted to.

Teacher: To an incredible degree. I would say that the children from this class have been into the library for books not only more than any other class, but you could probably combine every class on this grade and my children have been into the library for more material than every other class in the grade put together.

Investigator: You would consider this class an above average class. Do you think it would happen if you were just working on a basal reader?

Teacher: No, because procedurally it would never have been possible. They would have never made these allowances. The children have been going in and out of the library six hours a day at any time they pleased. Their interest would have been stifled.

Investigator: Obviously you've learned a great deal from this program and from what you say, so have the children. From what I observed, so have the children. Would you undertake this program again?

Teacher: I'd never teach without it. If I had to teach traditionally again I'd have to consider an alternative, perhaps teaching a separate and individual subject. I could never run a classroom where I had to teach all subjects in the traditional way. I would never be pleased with the results.

Investigator: I see that the children are keeping folders on what they're reading. What other materials are they recording? And obviously, this is going to be part of the assessment. How is that going to take place?

Teacher: I have been reviewing the folders on an intermittent basis. And as the children prepare materials they bring it to me to look at and suggestions and corrections. And basically these folders merely stand to be a collection of data that we can review, if need be, to get our own assessment. The children's work has come to a finish when they terminate a project. At that point they're done with it. Perhaps if they want to review what they've done or show it to a classmate they can use that folder. Basically the folder is for our own review purposes.

Investigator: Do you think that the children, because of this program, have become more social. For instance, when I was talking to a couple of the children about their reading, they said, well, if the teacher is busy, then I ask a friend. They ask each other and they help each other. Now, that may have been only the two children that I spoke to at that point, but is that typical of the class?

Teacher: It goes even deeper than that. Not only more social in that they'll work with each other and try to assist each other, but the children, when they want to work on a particular subject, they will invite a friend or a neighbor to work with them. They tend to work in groups. And most children are flexible and work with anybody--anybody who has a similar interest. And I've had a tremendous rotation of groups and the children have learned to get along with each other and get involved

personally with each other to a great degree.

Investigator: So that you feel that it was educationally sound as well as socially and emotionally sound?

Teacher: Definitely. It has provided for a tremendous amount of emotional growth.

Investigator: Thank you very much

A P P E N D I X V I I

TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH THE ADMINISTRATOR

I want now to express my deepest thanks to you and your staff for allowing me to carry out the reading project I so believe in. I'm sure it wasn't easy for you to let me have carte blanche in a classroom for which you are responsible for the education of the children. But you are truly an educator and obviously you believed that there might be some merit in my theory that if children are just given books, time, feedback and encouragement they would succeed, but succeed they did! If we could measure their success by their positive attitudes toward reading, and that of their parents, added to the enthusiastic reaction of their teacher, we could say the program was a good one. Of course, since I am so involved I cannot be too objective. Only the data can tell for sure. I'd like to ask you a few questions about the reading program to get your reaction to it now that the year has ended.

1. What was your reaction to the proposal that I initiate another approach to motivate the children to read?
2. The children in 5-413 are composed of many ethnic groups. Was this class, then, a good choice? Are the children typical of the school population?
3. Since there was more work involved in a new reading approach, was the choice of teacher for the project a good one?
4. Could you observe any evidence that the children were responding positively to the different reading approach? Negatively?

5. Did the reading program produce any administrative "headaches"?
6. What is your reaction to this program?
7. Would you replicate the program in another class or full grade, or would you eliminate it altogether?

Thank you so very much for your enthusiasm, cooperation and encouragement. It is really a joy to be a part of this school.

Investigator: I want now to express my deepest thanks to you and your staff for allowing me to carry out the reading project I so believe in. I'm sure it wasn't easy for you to let me have carte blanche in a classroom for which you are responsible for the education of the children. But you are truly an educator, and obviously you believe that there might be some merit in my theory that if children are just given books, feedback and encouragement they would succeed. And succeed they did. If we could measure this success by their positive attitudes toward reading and that of their parents, added to this the enthusiastic reaction of their teacher, we could say the program was a good one. Of course, since I am so involved I cannot be too objective. Only the data can tell for sure. I'd like to ask you at this point a few questions about the reading program to get your reaction to it, now that the year has ended. And speaking of that reaction, what really was your reaction at the very beginning of the program about starting a new approach to reading?

Administrator: Well, frankly, we were a little skeptical about a new approach. We have had experience with a number of different approaches to reading, ranging from a basal reading approach, audio-visual approach, an aesthetic approach, approaches which dealt with phonics, which dealt with decoding skills exclusively, and approaches which dealt with individualized reading. This to us seemed like another individualized reading approach. We have no reason to assume that the result would be materially different from that of the other approaches that we had already tried.

Investigator: The children in class 5-413 are composed of many ethnic groups. Was this class, then, a good choice? Are the children typical of the school population?

Administrator: They seem to be fairly representative of the school population. There are thirty-four children in the class. We have five children with Greek background, fourteen who are of Hispanic background, two Haitian children, one Turkish child, two Jewish children, one Irish child, and five of indeterminate ethnic background. This is fairly representative of the population makeup of the school as a whole.

Investigator: Since there was more work involved in the new reading approach, was the choice of the teacher in this class for the program a good one?

Administrator: Well, if you will recall, we had considered a number of choices--possible choices--for the program. It was our joint feeling that this particular teacher was one who would

show the necessary enthusiasm and the willingness to cooperate to change his approaches to reading and to do his utmost to make the program a success. We think that the choice for the program was a good one. The teacher did seem to measure up to our expectations of him.

Investigator: Could you observe any evidence that the children that the children were responding positively to this different reading approach?

Administrator: Well, I think that the best evidence we have is the total number of books that seem to be going in and out of the classroom from the school library, the public library and from their own homes and the books that they interchange with each other. This is one measure we feel that's important to note. The second measure is the fact that other children in other classes have seemed to become curious about this and want to get involved in this. Their teachers have even asked about getting more involved in the program. At one point we had, at the teacher's request, a conference with the teachers of two of the grades where Mr. P. explained what he was doing with the children in his class and there was a great deal of very positive feedback and a great deal of really worthwhile probing questions on the part of the other teachers on the grade, which indicated to me that they were quite interested in what they were doing.

Investigator: I'm certainly very glad to hear that. I hadn't heard that before. That's marvelous. That's very good. Do you-- can you think about any negative aspects of the program?

Administrator: Well, as an administrator, we are responsible for showing overall objective results. It's very difficult to pinpoint objectively the degree of success in this kind of program since programs tend, in the city system, to fall or become uplifted on the basis of objective test results. Since this was not the major thrust of the program, it is sort of hard to measure apples by counting oranges. This is part of the administrative difficulties.

Investigator: Did the reading program produce any other administrative headaches?

Administrator: Well, we had a number. We planned to have committees of parents to assist in such items as selection of books for the children. The parents weren't always available. We also wanted to have the books at a certain--when we did make a selection to give out for children or when children evidenced interest in certain books from the library or from books that

we gave them, the books that they selected weren't always available at the time they wanted them. Sometimes they had to settle for second choices. I think those were about the two most serious administrative problems. They weren't really that overwhelming.

Investigator: And they didn't seem to bother the children any.

Administrator: No.

Investigator: They certainly can learn a lesson in that, too, in that they must take second best if they can't possibly get the first.

Administrator: Well, I will say that sometimes, for example, when one particular child had a book that was very interesting to them, others would have liked to have gotten the same thing. They were able to wait until the first one had finished since it wasn't always possible to get more copies of the same book for them.

Investigator: Well, it was evident in this program that the children were reading the same books. One child would say, "Well, this is a great book." The other kid would say, "Oh, I'd like to read that" and do it. And that really was fine. Would you replicate the program in another class, on a full grade, or would you eliminate the approach?

Administrator: No, I don't think we'd want to eliminate the approach at all. Certainly we'd want to have this program replicated. I think it's important to note, for our own purposes, whether or not the success we had in this program, the changes in attitude toward reading on the part of the children, were due to such factors as the initial enthusiasm of the teacher, the class itself, some intrinsic factors in the class that perhaps we're not aware of, and whether this approach would work with any standard class and any teacher. I think it would be important to replicate so that we would be more certain as to why we achieved the results we did. Hopefully, other teachers and classes would become stimulated as this class and this teacher were stimulated. But it's important to know whether or not this was an isolated phenomenon, whether it would be repeated in another such situation.

Investigator: It certainly has implications for further study, no question about it. This was a pilot project and I would like to see it replicated in other classes so that we get an idea simply and results that it can work no matter where it's put in. Thank you very much for your enthusiasm, your cooperation and your encouragement. It is really a joy to be part of this school. Thank you again.

A P P E N D I X V I I I

TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH THE LIBRARIAN

This year the children in grade 5-413 were engaged in a reading program that was different from that used in other grades.

Could you reflect on the performance of the children this past year?

1. What was your impression of class 5-413 at the beginning of the year?
2. At the beginning of the year, were the children coming into the library to take out books?
3. How often?
4. What kinds of books did they borrow?
5. Toward the middle of the year, was there a change in the procedure of borrowing books?
6. How often do the children come to the library now?
7. What kinds of books do they borrow at this time?
8. Do they use or read any books that you did not expect them to?
9. Could you comment on the children's attitudes during the school year?
10. What is your impression of class 5-413 at this year's end?

Investigator: I want to thank you with heartfelt appreciation for all the things you have done this year for the program we tried to institute for class 5-413. The children, as you know, were in a special reading program. They just told me that it was very special for reasons that they gave me. And I'd like you, if you can, to reflect upon their performance in the library this past year. At the beginning of the term were the children in class 5-413 coming to the library to take out books?

Librarian: First, just let me say one thing. I appreciate what you say but I also want to share this with my co-workers because it wasn't only myself. It was Mrs. H. and Mrs. S. and Mrs. E. who really did a great amount of the work to see that the children got the books that they needed. Now in relation to your question, the children had the regularly assigned one period a week of library and they came at their regular time, which I think was on a Tuesday. I think it was Tuesday--I'm not sure. They came one day a week.

Investigator: So at the beginning of the term it really was no different in their class from any other class in the school.

Librarian: No.

Investigator: They came once a week, you say. What kinds of books did they take out, do you remember that?

Librarian: Well, children are inclined, I guess, to take out--sometimes if the teachers talk about something in class or if myself as the leader of the class was talking about a certain subject, then everybody would want those kind of books. But one week we would try to have, maybe, biography; another week I'd try to angle them into fiction or into some kind of a non-fiction book. But by and large they were taking, I'd say, just the regular books that any class their age would.

Investigator: As the term went on, toward the middle of the year, did you see the pattern changing at all?

Librarian: Well, that changed very radically. In the first place we allowed the children we allowed the children a great deal more latitude. They came very, very frequently and they were very interested in what they were doing, and by and large, very little complaint about them. The most would be the traffic and this couldn't be helped because they had to come in in order to get the books.

Investigator: It was a great deal of trouble, though, to get books together.

Librarian: Yes.

Investigator: We're talking about the children in the middle of the term and whether there was a change in the procedure and their attitude and motivation--actually the motivation.

Librarian: Well, yes, there was. They became very much more interested, and as I said, one would sort of direct the others into work that would be of interest to them. I think that a lot of it also has to do with Mr. P. because he really stimulated them and they were interested themselves. But I guess they kind of got it from him, because they really used to come in here in droves. He would spend a lot of his own time with them, helping them in his prep period and things like that.

Investigator: There's no question that the success of a program depends on the teacher, and I certainly appreciate his work in this. He's really so interested and motivated himself that he said he'd never teach reading any other way, so that's really something. Could you comment on the overall behavior of the children at the end of this year? What kinds of questions did they ask? What kinds of books did they take out? What projects did they get from all of this reading?

Librarian: Well, the behavior, by and large, with a very, very small exception, was excellent. The children came in very frequently, independently, not individually--usually one or two at a time, and they very frequently went and helped themselves with no help from us. I think there was a great deal in their growth and maturity as well as the desire for the books. And they asked many questions, it's true, and some questions--not that we couldn't answer them--sometimes we didn't have the material that they needed because it was material that we don't have that much of in the library. We may have a few things like in the reference books here, such as I mentioned about hypnosis, and a couple were very much into Australia. And we have a few books on these areas, not enough to cover in depth what they wanted.

Investigator: Did you suggest in that case that they go to the public library?

Librarian: Yes, I did. I told them that in some cases they would have to go to maybe more than one public library, but if they went to the Adult Section of the public library they'd be more apt to get what they needed. And, as a matter of fact, I even brought in some things that I got out of the newspaper, particularly when they were doing about Europe.

The New York Times travel section had a thing on events in Europe and Mr. P. said that this would be very useful, too. So they had a lot of material. I don't think we ever got to work with the vertical file with them. I'm sorry I didn't really think about it. We have one. It's not very up to date. We haven't had time to keep it up to date. These are very good things for the kids to know about and there's an awful lot of material in there that you can't put out on the shelves.

Investigator: What's your impression, then, of the special reading program as a whole compared to what the other children are doing?

Librarian: I think that a class like this is terrific. I don't know how it would be with some of the others. We have a great many children who have very severe reading difficulties. They use the library as a period for acting out more than anything else. This was not true of Mr. P.'s class. It wasn't true even at the beginning of the term. However, as the term went on they really--I do think the program was very good. But you have to give thanks to the other people in the library because they were most cooperative because it interfered a lot of times with what they were doing. Because when children come in to do their own thing, even while they're very good children, they do interrupt the program.

Investigator: Let me say here that I thank everybody.

Librarian: They didn't interrupt, but you know they're a source of distraction more than anything else.

Investigator: But it's really remarkable that they should come in and want all these books.

Librarian: Yes. Yes.

Investigator: The projects that they got through the reading.

Librarian: Yes. I think this is true. I'm hesitating about something. I just don't want to say it right now.

Investigator: I was just thinking. Suppose this program were instituted through the whole school. What would you do?

Librarian: Well, that would be a problem, I'm afraid. If we had a different set-up as far as the library--if we had--which, I don't know what they're going to do, but if they just had a librarian who didn't teach--we're teachers and librarians

second, so it's our job to teach a lesson when the children come into the library. But a librarian is just here to help them get books and work in the library. It might work that way if you had a librarian here.

Investigator: Yes. Well, that's probably what they need--this class especially since they were so interested in these books. And then they just said--we were having a little discussion--they learned about encyclopedias and atlases and almanacs which they didn't use before.

Librarian: You know, reference books, encyclopedias, are not supposed to be taken out of the library. In this class we made an exception. I trust they're all here. Mr. P. has really been very diligent about having the children return the books and I think that a lot of books that haven't been used very much have been used this term. We had a number of lessons here in the library. We used the library period--for how to use--to show them how to use the encyclopedias. And as a matter of fact, Mr. P. stayed and gave up his prep period to assist so that everybody had some kind of individual attention. So I think they really used--they did use these books.

Investigator: That's wonderful. Well, they looked thumbed through and I'm glad of that. Thank you very much. I really appreciate your staff and your diligence.

Librarian: Well, I think we thank you too because isn't this--when we first started I said, isn't this what we're all here for. Even when some of my co-workers got a little miffed.

A P P E N D I X I X

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS WITH CHILDREN¹

1. What was different about the reading program as compared with what you were reading at the beginning of the term?
2. If you say the program was special, then, what was special about it?
3. Did you read more books this year?
4. Where did you get your books?
5. How many books did you read this year? Last year?
6. How did you choose your books? Were they thin, or thick, or did someone suggest a book? Did you think it was easy or difficult? Did it look interesting?
7. At the beginning of the term, did you tend to take out easy books only?
8. How did you go about finding out what the word(s) or paragraphs meant when you came across those you were not familiar with?
9. What other things (projects, research, etc.) developed from your reading?
10. Where did you find the information for these projects?
11. Did the inspiration for writing your reports come about from your reading or from another source?
12. What other kinds of books were you using to write your reports?
13. Did this program help you to develop friendships?
14. We need to find a good title for our video tape. What do you think a good title would be?
15. Would you like to continue this reading program? Why?

¹Unfortunately, the tape was not intelligible because of equipment failure.

A P P E N D I X X

TITLES CHILDREN SUGGESTED FOR VIDEO TAPE

Best of Books

Don't Judge a Book by Its Cover

Don't Bother Me, I'm Reading¹

Extra Learning

Harder Reading

Opinions on Books

Own Choice

Pick Your Own Books

Special Reading Program

¹"Don't Bother Me, I'm Reading" received the most votes and therefore it is the title of the videotape.

A P P E N D I X X I

INTRODUCTION TO THE VIDEO TAPE "DON'T BOTHER ME, I'M READING"

This video tape depicts children in a classroom reading whatever they choose to read because they are motivated to do so instead of being forced to read.

The program of children learning to read in a fluent, continuous manner is one in which children are given the opportunity of selecting any material of their choice from a wide variety of paperback books set up in a classroom library. This "free reading" is done by Class 5-413 in P.S. 189 Manhattan in New York City. The program began in November of 1974 and continued through June of 1975. The children read their books for one hour sitting anywhere they pleased every school day.

The program differs from the traditional skills oriented reading program in that continuous reading comes first, immediate feedback is given if necessary and the skills follow so that there is a direct relationship and transference from what children are reading to what they have to learn.

Frank Smith points out in his book Psycholinguistics and Reading, that it is necessary for a child to understand first what he is reading before he can understand individual words.

Not only did the children read many more books but because of the content, they learned to do research. Projects were developed entirely through their own motivation and curiosity.

"Just let the child read," is a good philosophy. It seemed to work in this class. It is so simple, one wonders why the fuss. But we are reversing a long-practiced procedure and we see that with an interested teacher, with motivated children, with a variety of paperback books, this approach works. Why cannot we reach more children in this way?

This reading program is an exploratory study of children being given the opportunity of just reading books for fun, for more knowledge, even for a specific purpose. There are ramifications here for more intensive, in-depth studies of children reading in this fluent, continuous manner.

It was found in this study that it was not necessary to give specific "phonic" lessons. When a child asked a question, immediate feedback was given the child was able to continue with the reading. In this way the children developed confidence in their ability to question for they knew that they would get the answers they needed. It was not always the teacher who would give a response; it was sometimes another child or anyone else in the room. The give and take in this classroom, the cooperation among the children, the motivation and the socialization that developed were extremely important in addition to the positive attitudes the children had for reading.

The fact that the children read so many books this year speaks well for this reading approach.

