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Classroom Environment and Effects on Adolescents' Attitudes and Test Scores in Reading

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CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT AND THE EFFECTS ON ADOLESCENTS'

ATTITUDES AND TEST SCORES IN READING

by

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Looking back at my childhood, I truly loved school. I performed very well in the area of reading; however, I did not read for enjoyment often. It was not until I started teaching English that I began to analyze why that may have been.

When I began teaching at Eden Prairie Central Middle School in 1999, it was obvious to me that we, the teachers, were frustrated. Any time that reading was involved in class, whether assigned or choice, some of the students would suddenly have to go to the bathroom. When they returned, they suddenly had to get a drink. Some decided that it was the best time to tell the teacher their life stories and ask all kinds of questions. These students were the "avoiders."

Not only were there the "avoiders," but there were also the "daydreamers" and the "pretenders." These students attempted to look as though they were reading, and when redirected, they would often say, "I was reading."   The teacher would then have to explain that he or she saw them staring off into another world or that the student was holding his or her book upside down.

Experiencing these behaviors myself, as a teacher, I felt as though something needed to change. Why were the students avoiding anything that had to do with reading?

What could I, as an English teacher, do to try and change how my students seemed to feel about reading? It became apparent to me that both the students and the teachers would need to make some changes if we were going to get kids to read versus avoiding and/or pretending/daydreaming.

Mainstream English Experience

As a new middle school English teacher, I learned that the English classes had an independent reading program in which all students were required to participate. Students were assigned to read a set number of pages to earn a certain grade for the program. After students finished a book, they were to document their work on a form that proved a number of requirements. These requirements were as follows:

Fiction Book Sheet:

- Title, author, and number of pages
- Information about the plot (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution)
- Theme
- Recommendations
- Two vocabulary words: book sentence, context clues used, dictionary definition, student's own sentence, using words correctly
- Parent signature

Non-Fiction Book Sheet:

- Title, author, and number of pages

- Subject matter

- Ten pieces of new learning from the reading

- Future learning (what the student still wants to know about the subject)

- Why student chose the book

- Recommendations

- Two vocabulary words: book sentence, context clues used, dictionary definition, student's own sentence, using words correctly

- Parent Signature

Most of the work was done outside of the school day; however, each teacher dedicated the first ten minutes of every class to sustained silent reading. The program was consistent throughout the building.

At the English department meetings each month, many of the teachers seemed frustrated with the reading program. They attested that a number of students were not using their ten minutes the way the teachers had intended them to be used. Also, many of the students seemed to be forging parent signatures on the sheets. I was experiencing some of these same behaviors. We began asking and discussing, "What is going on? How can we do this better? Are we allowed to change what we are doing with our students? I really don't know much about teaching reading or independent reading programs."

Being a new teacher, and having less confidence, I did not speak my thoughts to the group. I had a licensure that none of the other middle school English teachers had at the time, Elementary and Middle School Language Arts. Because of the elementary part of my degree, I had quite a bit of reading training; however, I wished that I had more confidence to speak up during some of the discussions. Maybe I could have helped more,

but I went with what we had because I was unsure whether or not we were able to change the process and/or product. When I asked about this, my colleagues were not sure either, so we continued what we had always done.

After a few years of teaching, the English department went through curriculum re-evaluation. Through this process, we were given the freedom to experiment with different aspects of the curriculum that did not seem effective. My colleagues and I decided that we were going to try ways to implement the Independent Reading Program differently.   Some teachers chose to have the students continue reading for the ten minutes, get a stamp on their log card, and get a grade at the end of the quarter. Other teachers gave students a choice as to how they were going to show the class what they read, and there were many rubrics created for these classes. Still, other teachers continued to do the book sheets with their students, and most of us had our students focus on a particular genre each quarter. I gave students a choice of how they were going to show the class what they read. Some of the choices that I gave them included: creating a Power Point presentation to share with the class, writing a script and acting out the book, or scene of the book, videotaping their favorite scene in the book, writing a review, summary, or filling out the book sheet.

Even with different options, there were still many students who resisted participation. They refused to read, pretended to read, avoided the reading, daydreamed, or manipulated the system. We also had students and parents who wanted more consistency among the teachers. There was not an easy fix to our conundrum, and because of this, I thank God for the opportunity that I was given in my fifth year of

teaching, to teach English in the Alternative Learning Program that was to begin in our school.

Alternative Learning Program (ALP) English Experience

It began with an e-mail from our principal that asked all of the English teachers whether anyone would be interested in taking on a different position. He explained that the school was starting an Alternative Learning Program for those students who, for many different reasons, were not performing well in their mainstream classes. The school I thought about it and liked the idea; however, I felt that one of our more experienced teachers would probably want the position.   I did not want to step on any toes; therefore, I didn't vocalize my interest, nor did anyone else.

A month or so went by, and a visitor came into my room, my principal. He asked me whether or not I had given the new position any thought. I told him that I had an interest in it, but that I was still new compared to everyone else and wanted to make sure that nobody wanted the position before I expressed any interest in it. He told me that nobody had addressed him about wanting the position, but he had received many recommendations that I take on the ALP English position. I was extremely excited, and I accepted the challenge.

Because the program was new, I was starting from scratch. I knew that what I was going to do needed to be different from what occurred in the mainstream classes, mainly because my audience would have alternate needs. It was exciting because there was more freedom than anyone could imagine. The content could be structured any way that suited my students. I began to immerse myself into classes, workshops, and anything

that I could possibly find that would assist me with my new position. Through this work, I learned about the importance of building relationships with students. Building relationships was something I felt confident doing because it was a forte of mine within my mainstream classes. I gathered information on learning styles and multiple intelligences and made sure that this learning was incorporated into my curriculum. I knew that for the population that I would be working with, it was a necessity to incorporate technology into the curriculum. Changing my mode of teaching every so often during a class period was also going to be important. Finally, I learned that I needed to make the curriculum and activities personal and relevant to the students whom I would be teaching.

Going into the first year, I felt really good about what I had worked so diligently to develop. I followed what was mentioned above; however, these students were so different than the students I had taught in the past. None of the students I taught had strong academic pasts. Their confidence and motivation for education was close to non-existent. Somehow, I needed to figure out how I was going to relate to each of these twelve, thirteen, and fourteen-year-olds in a way that allowed them to trust me. I had anywhere between eight and twelve students with me each hour. It does not sound like a lot, but the students had low self- confidence, low motivation, a lack of focus, a need for a lot of attention, and they exerted less than desirable behaviors. This was a new experience for me. My journey began in an attempt to develop working relationships with each student.

After building relationships with my students, I learned that they were more apt to share information with me. Many of their stories were incredibly sad, and it was no

wonder that they were not performing well in school. It was time to work on building

self-confidence and showing them how to be successful. I seemed to be able to get these

students engaged in English class because it is really easy to teach content based on

students' interests. Still, when it came time to read, even about their interests, they

seemed to avoid, pretend, and daydream.

What was holding my students back? Why didn't they want to read? I began

reading a plethora of articles and books about ways I might be able to help my students

read more and hopefully improve their attitudes about reading. What I read lead me to

my capstone question and action research plan: *Does the classroom environment have a*

positive effect on adolescents' attitudes and test scores in reading? The following

chapter will focus on what the literature states about this particular question.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

…isn't it disconcerting to recognize that despite massive efforts, massive

amounts of money spent, and massive attention to the decline of reading, we

 are still losing large numbers of young readers? I have witnessed this pattern in

too many schools, in too many states, to draw any conclusion other than a

painful one: that the practices we, as educators, are employing to make

students better readers are often killing them. Intentions are not the problem; our

practices are the problem (Gallagher, 2009, p. 5).

There is definitely a decline in the number of students who are reading today (Gallagher, 2009). It is not that teachers and school leaders do not recognize the issue, but changes need to be made within classroom practices in order for things to improve. Chapter One's focus was the journey to my question: *Does the classroom environment have a positive effect on adolescents' attitudes and test scores in reading?* Chapter Two is a synthesis of what the research states about this question.

Classroom Environment

Classroom environment affects the motivation and attitudes of the students. Both the physical space and the dynamic of routines, activities, and people within the classroom, have an impact on performance and behavior.

Physical Space

According to Dorell (as cited in The Access Center, 2007), the physical space of the room should be filled with print and resources on the walls. It was stressed that each classroom has a word wall where vocabulary terms are visually displayed. "The classroom has labels with words and pictures everywhere so that students constantly connect written language with the things they represent" (p. 3). Similar to Dorell, Gambrell, Morrow, and Pressley (2007) discussed that the walls of a literacy community be filled with student work, including stories, songs, poetry, and artwork.

According to Dyck (2004), who was searching for some innovative ways to motivate her students during reading time, the physical environment should be arranged in a way that is more enjoyable for students to read their books. As Dyck went to different bookstore cafes, she paid close attention to what was around her. There were no desks and hard chairs on which people sat. She noticed that the mood in the cafes was relaxing and comfortable, thus she moved a comfortable couch and chair into her classroom. Dyck also added some comfortable cushions that she set around her floor, and she brought candles, food, and drink into her classroom to create ambiance. She reported that she and her students really liked their reading café time together.

In their book, *Strategies That Work*, Harvey and Goudvis (2007) talked about the fact that the arrangement of the room does matter. When educators create their classrooms, there should be tables or desk arrangements made that are easy for students to work and discuss with one another. Like Dyck (2004), Harvey and Goudvis (2007) recommended that educators keep bookstores and libraries in mind when designing their classroom environments. "If it's within your district guidelines, seek out area rugs, pillows, lamps, perhaps a couch" (p. 37).

Finally, according to Goodman, Bird, & Goodman (as cited in The Access Center, 2007, p.4) the literacy community must incorporate many types of print and resources for students to use during reading time. It needs dictionaries and thesauri for looking up vocabulary words and synonyms. There must also be access to technology, whether computers; iPads; or other devices. Finally the literacy community must be filled with books of many levels and genres from which students can choose.

Classroom Dynamic

Gambrell, Morrow, and Pressley (2007) described a classroom where the students were extremely engaged and excited about what was happening within the four walls. There were many different ways that the students were learning, including situations where students had the authority and comfort level to share their ideas and information with one another. Students had times when they were working in groups, and they had times when they were working individually. The teacher gave the students chances to make predictions, to share what they already knew, to make connections to their experiences, and to build on their vocabularies.

Gambrell et al. (2007) shared, "Students like to work together and learn from one another. This aided in the involvement of the students with the text. Approaches that encourage shared exploration, study, and reflection by students deepen those students' interest and understanding" (p. 143). They went on to explain how being able to work with peers is a "powerful force in motivating adolescents and determining what and how they read" (2007).

In *The Pleasure Principle* (2007), Atwell discussed the Reading Workshop environment. "Teachers in a Reading Workshop are teaching readers for a lifetime. In brief lessons we introduce new books and old favorites, tell about authors and genres, read aloud, and talk with kids about their reading rituals and plans." (p. 45). She shared how it is important to stay away from book reports, tests, worksheets, and discussion questions at the end of the book, stating, "Teachers who help kids act as readers learn how to assess their growth in ways that match what readers do. In a nutshell, they talk with young readers and listen to them" (p. 46). In this model, Atwell explained that the classroom is open for book talks, reading aloud, and conversing with peers and teachers. This environment also includes large quantities of time, quiet, comfort, easy record keeping, and a growing classroom library. "When we teachers embrace our role as literate grown-ups who help children seek and find delight and enlargement of life in books, they have a good chance of growing into adults who enjoy and love reading" (p.45).

In *Strategies That Work*, Harvey and Goudvis (2007), discuss building a literate community within the classroom.

Teachers set a tone that values student curiosity and thinking and respects all voices and visions. We work hard to build a community of thinkers, expressers, listeners, and learners, a community where kids and teachers care and wonder about each other's interests and ideas and take time to talk about them, think about them, and explore them (p. 35).

According to Harvey and Goudvis (2007), there are many things that educators can do to set the tone in the classroom. They should nurture or encourage passion and curiosity by sharing theirs with students and giving students the same opportunities to share with them. They discussed that it is important to use collaborative learning and thinking through discussions, working with partners, and book groups (p. 35); thus, it is very important to give students large quantities of time for reading and writing. "Reading volume is a strong indicator of reading achievement (Cunningham and Stanovich, 2003). The more we read, the better we read. And the same goes for writing" (p. 36). Give students time to read the things that they can and want to read (Harvey and Goudvis, 2007). Students should be given time to respond authentically to their reading through talking, writing, and drawing. Finally, literacy communities should have instruction that is differentiated, meaning educators take the different needs and interests of their students into consideration and design instruction to meet those different needs (Harvey and Goudvis, 2007).

Gallagher (2009) also discussed the fact that in order to get students thinking positively about reading, educators need to give them good chunks of time to read in class and introductions to fabulous books. He focused on a study done by McQuillan in *Teaching Reading in High School English Classes* (2001). The study took place in

Anaheim, California, and the purpose of the study was to increase the amount of time that students spent reading. Many of the subjects in the study had limited access to books at home and spent little to no time reading for entertainment (Gallagher, 2009). The teachers started by giving students ten minutes per day to read for pleasure, in order to build a habit slowly. They found that at ten minutes, students were able to just sit there and do nothing; however, when they increased the time, they began to notice that students settled in and started reading. By the end of the study, many of the students were complaining that they didn't have enough time and wanted to keep reading (p. 74). It was reported that 90 to 95 percent of the students were truly reading their books (Gallagher, 2009).

> Though most students began the school year with a negative view of reading, by the end of the first semester, almost all of them had read several books on their own. In doing so, the students in the study showed statistically significant gains in writing fluency and writing complexity. McQuillan (as cited in Gallagher, 2009, p. 74) also found that the number of pages read was a significant predictor of student vocabulary gains, regardless of their previous vocabulary knowledge.

Gallagher also mentioned that students did not get any assignments that they needed to complete about their reading, nor did they earn grades. The students were given time and exposure to books, and that seemed to be motivation enough to get the adolescents reading.

There are always those students who, if not given that extrinsic motivator of a grade, will not perform. The one activity that Gallagher mentioned to hold students

accountable was that students were to read one book per month. After reading the book, the student filled out a sheet called a "One-Pager" (p. 82). If you would like to see examples of the "One-Pager," please see Gallagher's book *Readicide: How Schools Are Killing Reading and What You Can Do About It, pp. 127-134.* Copyright laws do not allow these to be included within the Appenix of this document.

> …while it is important to remember that these students showed significant gains in reading and writing, what is often overlooked is that this group exited the study liking reading. These students, most of whom expressed disdain for reading upon entering the study, discovered reading to be a worthwhile and rewarding pursuit. Sure, they made academic gains, but much more importantly, they began to see themselves as readers. They made this discovery without points being dangled in front of them. In fact, just the opposite seems to have occurred: it appears they came to this discover because points were not dangled in front of them (Gallagher, 2009, p. 75).

Matching Books to Readers

Not only is the classroom environment important in motivating adolescent readers, but there is also a good amount of research on the importance of matching books to readers. Some of the research focused on knowing the students. Other research focused on knowing and how to find the literature that is available.

In Lesesne's (2003) book *Making the Match*, young adult author Carolyn Meyer discussed her own experiences as a young adult reader. She narrated her teenage years growing up in a small town in Pennsylvania. When she was an adolescent, she was

curious and wanted to read about things deemed inappropriate for her age by the adults in her life. The librarian would not allow her to check out the materials that she wanted to read and continued to direct her to more "wholesome" topics. Meyers stated,

> I read constantly all through my teens, and yet I don't remember a single one of those 'wholesome' books thrust into my hands by the redoubtable Mrs. Stuckenrath. Not one! You could put it down to a poor memory; I'm more likely to believe it's because the books I read didn't grab my imagination (Lesesne, 2003, pp. 10-11).

Lesense (2003) used the term *"young adult or adolescent"* to show readers ranging from ten to twenty years old (p. 13). She stated, "This rather broad definition allows me to talk about books for those readers in the fourth and fifth grades who are ready for more mature themes in their books" (p. 13). She discussed how young adult literature has transformed. It used to focus mostly on middle school and junior high school readers. As of 2003, when her book was written, Lesesne stated,

"Now the range of YA materials meets the needs of ten- to twenty-year-olds" (p. 13). Thus giving educators an idea of what should be taken into consideration when trying to motivate students to read more by matching the books to the individual reader (p. 13). Lesesne (2003) used her own daughter as an example and stated,

> Her emotions fluctuate from moment to moment. She can be incredibly mature at times. At other times she seems less mature than her age warrants. She enjoys reading those books, she herself selects, books in which she is vested. School reading, in her vernacular, 'bites' (p. 12).

Lesesne (2003) stressed the importance that adolescents need to be able to relate to what they are reading. She used Havighurst's *Theory of Developmental Tasks* (1972) as a way to consider books for them. These tasks follow:

- *Adolescents need to learn how to get along with peers.*

- *Adolescents undergo changing relationships with parents.*

- *Adolescents need to develop an easy relationship with the opposite sex.*

- *Adolescents must develop morals and values.*

- *Adolescents have to adapt to their physical bodies.*

- *Adolescents must define their appropriate sex roles.*

- *Adolescents need to work for pay.*

- *Adolescents should find a vocation* (pp.26-27*).*

Lesesne (2003) gives us many things to ponder when trying to match adolescents to books. The preceding information stated ideas that could be taken into consideration when getting to know the adolescent. At the end of chapter two in *Making the Match*, Lesesne (2003) stated:

We must ponder physical, mental, emotional, social, and psychological facets of

the reader in order to make more knowledgeable recommendations. If we are to

be successful in making the match, we need to know the readers thoroughly

(p. 28).

Surveys and Questionnaires

One of the best ways to get to understand students is to have conversations with them one-to-one; however, there is not always enough time to get to everyone in a timely manner. A more efficient way to gather information is by giving a survey. There are a number of surveys for students to take that have been created and included in many professional books. Some surveys are longer than others and include a combination of rating scales, checklists, and open-ended questions. Others are shorter and take little time to complete. Surveys can be used to gather any information that the teacher may be looking to collect.

It is important to ask for the students' basic information. For example, Lesesne talked about acquiring the students' age, gender, and grade level in school. She believes that at the beginning of the year, surveys/questionnaires should be anonymous because the teacher gathers information about the class as a whole first. She stated that each individual student's information would be gathered later in the year, during a "one-to-one interview" (Lesesne, 2003, p. 43).

The first section of the survey/questionnaire should be more specific to the reader, gathering more specifics such as a student's reflection on him or herself as a reader, likes/dislikes, needs, and habits (p. 43).

The second part of the survey/questionnaire should focus on adolescents' attitudes about books and reading (p. 45). Lesesne (2003) used the *Estes Scale to Measure Attitude Toward Reading* (1971). This scale has twenty positive and negative statements, which students rate on a scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." When a

student rates a positive statement with a "strongly agree", he or she earns five points. Likewise, when a student rates a negative statement with a "strongly disagree", he or she earns five points. The scores range from 20 to 100, and the higher the score, the more positive the reader's attitude is. The lower the score, the more negative the reader's attitude is. The more negative an attitude is about reading, the more assistance in finding good books is needed. Students with negative attitudes about books and reading find school reading a "chore" (p. 46). Lesesne (2003) recommended, "As teachers, we need to ensure that we find drop-dead good books for this population and that we take the books directly to them" (p. 46).

In their article *Motivation During an Excessively Challenging Reading Task: The Buffering Role of Relative Topic Interest*, Fulmer and Frijters (2011) discussed a related issue. Although reading is so important in middle school, many students have negative attitudes about it. Some students are not interested in reading, and they do not believe that they are good at it. There is a large variety of reading abilities amongst middle school students, and many students are reading well below grade level (Fulmer and Frijters, 2011). They found that a good number of texts used in middle schools are well above students' reading levels. According to the article, educators are choosing texts that are inappropriate for students' reading ability due to the lack of appropriate reading materials available to the educators. When something is too challenging for students, motivation seems to decline, and negative attitudes emerge (Fulmer and Frijters, 2011). "Supporting students' autonomy with the task through aligning the task with students' interests is one potential resource that can maintain students' motivation" (Fulmer and Frijters, 2011).

Another aspect of knowing the students was brought up in the book *Promoting the Lifetime Reading Habit in Middle School Students*, by Sanacore (2000). He talked about how schools should be teaching a "lifetime love of reading" (p. 157). This seems to be put on hold because teachers are so busy teaching the basic skills, due to a standards-based initiative in education. Sanacore reiterates the importance in educators knowing the different aspects of adolescents' lives and development. He stated, "Successful middle school teachers understand the dynamic and diverse nature of these early adolescents and connect curricular offerings to their lives" (p. 157).

Sanacore (2000) also talked about our ever changing world and how certain demographics make it more difficult for young children and adolescents to do things at home. He discussed that we live in a world where more families have both parents in the work force, a high divorce rate, and an increase of single parents who are entering the work force. This may mean that many students are unsupervised after school. Because of this, many students are not going home and reading or doing homework. There may be other activities at home in which students would rather engage. Some of these things include: watching TV, socializing with friends, or playing video games. Thus, Sanacore recommended giving students time to read their selections during the school day. He stated, "By building recreational reading time into the school day, we demonstrate sensitivity to demographic trends and send the message that developing a lifetime reading habit is an important instructional goal (p. 158).

Baker (2002) also discussed giving students time to read books that they choose during class time. In her article, "Reading Resistance in Middle School: What can be done?" Baker interviews her middle school son, Jackson. She found out that he thought

he would like reading more if he could choose what he wanted to read or was assigned a

book about something that he liked (Baker, 2002, p. 365). She reiterated that students

may begin reading less and having more negative attitudes in the middle school years.

Choice, time, and the classroom setup should be thought about when engaging

adolescents in the areas of reading and writing (p. 356).

Not only do we need to get to know the adolescent, but according to Lesesne (2003), we

also need to know the literature.

Finding Good Books

Lesesne (2003) talked about "Narrowing the Field"(p.54). In this section of her

book, she described many different ways that teachers could go about finding good

books. She recommended reading review journals such as "*Booklist, Horn Book, School

Library Journal (SLJ), and Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA)*" (p.54). Teachers look at

reviews of the books that earned the greatest ratings, either a 5Q [for quality] or a 5P [for

popularity]. Of the reviews read, the teachers then decide on which books might meet the

needs of the students as far as level and interests may go. One more review journal that

was mentioned was *Voices from the Middle (NCTE)*. What seems to make this beneficial

is that there is a column of young adult literature that is reviewed by middle school

students.

Another recommendation is to review the many different awards lists. The

American Library Association (ALA) releases one such list. Every year they bestow

awards for "distinguished achievement in literature for children and young adults" (p.

55). There are lists of these winners who are from 1922 through the current year on the

association's website. Another award that was mentioned was the Michael Printz Award, which is also given for achievement in young adult literature. The Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) is in charge of presenting this. YALSA also puts together a list of "Best Books for Young Adults (BBYA) and Quick Picks for Reluctant Readers" (p. 55) each year. Finally, Lesesne (2003) discussed The International Reading Association, Pura Belpre, and Coretta Scott King awards as options to explore.

Lesesne (2003) explained how and where to find good young adult literature. She discussed the importance of exposing young adult readers to as many genres in literature as possible and giving students the choice of what to read. Discussions occurred around all of the major genres of literature; however, less traditional genres such as the graphic novel, comic books, readers' theater, magazines, informational texts, and others were also deemed important to include within the classroom.

This chapter focused on the many different pieces that educators should take into consideration when attempting to improve young adult attitudes and test scores in the area of reading. Educators should take the classroom environment, both physical and the dynamic into consideration, as well as getting to know the adolescents and the literature that is available to the age group. Chapter Three will outline the plan for more action research on this topic.

CHAPTER THREE

Methods

Does the classroom environment have a positive affect on adolescents' attitudes and test scores in reading? What more could teachers do to help students see reading in a more positive light? I started to read about changes that could be made to the classroom that may help me find answers.

Reading is definitely a passion of mine, and when I started my career at Central Middle School in Eden Prairie, Minnesota, I noticed a decline in student attitudes about it. Many of the students who had negative attitudes about reading also had lower standardized test scores in this area.

Setting

The study took place in my 7th and 8th grade classroom at Central Middle School in Eden Prairie, Minnesota, a southern suburb of Minneapolis and St. Paul. This is where I teach Keystone Language Arts for the Alternative Learning Program.

The school has 1,409 students enrolled for the 2015-2016 school year. The demographics of this school are as follows:

- 988 White, not Hispanic students.

- 187 Black, not Hispanic students.

- 168 Asian/Pacific Islander students.

- 7 American Indian/ Alaskan Native students.

- 52 English Language Learners.

- 154 Special Education students.

- 277 students on free/reduced priced lunch.

Participants

Students are in the Alternative Learning Program for different reasons, but there was a pattern of the following:

- Their academic and standardized test scores have been consistently low.

- Many exhibit low motivation in, and poor attitudes toward, school.

- Students have very low self-confidence, which we work diligently to increase throughout the year.

All of the ALP students in this study showed a deficit in the area of reading. This deficit was recognized by below average test scores on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment and the observations of students' previous teachers.

Of 16 students involved in this study, six were female, and ten were male. There were nine 7th grade students and seven 8th grade students. Their ages ranged between 12 and 14. Of these 16 students, seven identify as White/Not Hispanic; two identify as Hispanic/Latino; four identify as Black/African American; two identify as Asian/Pacific Islander; and one identifies as Asian/Black or African American.

Procedure

I began with a modified version of the *Estes Scale to Measure Attitudes Toward Reading* (Estes, 1971). I compared student attitudes from November to student attitudes in January, which was the end of second quarter. I included a question about using the beginning of the year data in a permission letter that I wrote to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of my subjects (Appendix A).

Students' initial scores on an assessment, InSight, were taken for a program called *Reading Plus*. InSight is an electronic assessment with questions about students' interests, how they see themselves as readers, and motivation. Students are also given reading passages and questions to obtain a reading level. Based on the students' scores, they are placed into the program at their independent reading levels. For the purpose of this study, I used students' initial assessment scores and compared them to the scores they earned on the second InSight , which was given at the end of January.

This study began in November and concluded in late January. Through the research that was completed in Chapter Two, there were many interesting ideas to test in the language arts classroom.

The first step was changing the physical space of the classroom. I set up my desks in a formation that resembled tables. This made my room more conducive to collaborative work and discussions. I wanted students to talk about what they were reading. Who knows teens better than teens? This had the potential to create more motivation for students to read because they heard what others were reading and enjoying, or not. I also incorporated comfortable camping and ball chairs for students to

sit on during reading time and added student work and vocabulary words to the walls and

cupboards.   The bookshelf was created into a "Readbox," and books were arranged on

the shelves by their Lexile levels.

Figure 1. Classroom Prior to Changes.

Figure 2. Comfortable Camping Chairs and Word Wall.
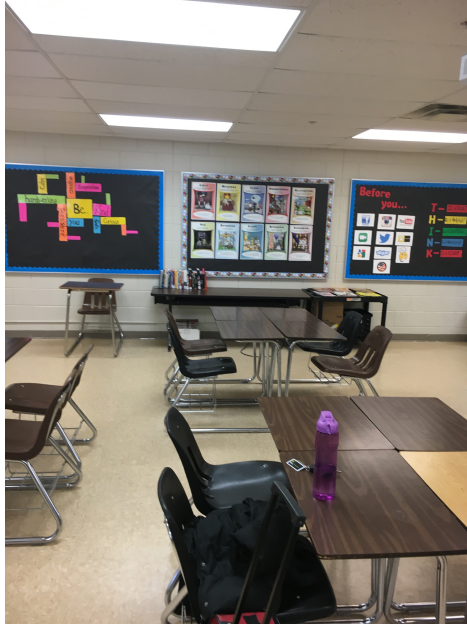
Figure 3. Desks in Table Formation and Text on Walls.

Secondly, I was more diligent about was reading aloud to the students each day. My vision and thought in doing this was to pick high-interest books at a comfortable level for my students. I learned that reading aloud not only gives students a model of good reading, but it can be used to capture students' attention and motivate them to want to read the books that they are exposed to.

When I searched for high-interest and leveled books, I used a number of resources. Scholastic.com allows teachers and parents to search books within Lexile ranges, a scientific, standardized measurement that is used to match readers with text (MetaMetrics, 2014). In addition to Scholastic.com, I used Lexile.com to determine appropriate books. The media center at Central Middle School has a system called

Destiny Quest that we can use. On that system, students and staff can search by interest and Lexile ranges, as well.

During the ten-week research period, I took the initial interest inventory results and reading levels to match books to students. I continued to have conversations with them, taught them how to find books within our library, and also brought books from home and public libraries to have students choose which one to read.

Not only did I need to work on matching the books to students, but I also needed to give the students more time in class to read the books that they chose. After reading Lesesne's book *Making the Match* (2003), I realized how important this really was. In McQuillan's study (2001), teachers didn't start to see changes in the motivation to read until students were given 20-30 minute blocks of time to do just that. Because of my students' difficulty with focus, I started them with 15 minutes of reading and increased to 30.

Toward the end of January, students were given the modified version of the *Estes Scale to Measure Attitude Toward Reading* a second time. The hope was that students' attitudes about reading had improved since the beginning of the study. I have attached a copy of the inventory (see appendix xx). I also gave the InSight assessment for the Reading Plus Program again. By doing so, I was able to see whether or not the changes improved students' reading abilities.

Data Collection and Analysis

The process of collecting data for this study involved four different procedures. First, after all permissions were given, I determined students' attitudes in reading based

on the standardized survey that was given at the beginning of the study. This included

closed-response questions (Appendix B). Once identified, and the plan implemented, I

distributed a second standardized survey, which included closed-response questions and

one open-response question (Appendix C). In addition to the surveys, I collected the

scores achieved on the standardized, electronic, and multiple-choice InSight assessment

that was given a second time. Using a standardized form for data collection allowed me

to collect the same information from each student and maintain focus for the study

(Santos &Alfred, 2011, p.144). Second, I analyzed the data collected from the survey,

which helped to inform me whether or not my methods had an impact on the attitudes and

test scores of my students.

In order to present an accurate portrayal of the information I collected, it was of

great importance for me to be as "objective as possible in describing and interpreting (the

data that I collected)" (Johnson, 2012, p.91). I analyzed the open-ended question by

looking for major themes and similarities and differences based on students' responses. I

analyzed the closed-response questions using basic statistical methods in order to create

quantifiable data from the students. All data was kept in a locked file cabinet in my home

and/or in my classroom. This data was not shared until it was published anonymously

within my paper. Pseudonyms were used for all participants.

Chapter Three described the methodology for action research. Does the

classroom environment have a positive effect on adolescents' attitudes and test scores in

reading? This study focused on my language arts students participating in the Alternative

Learning Program. They are 12-15 years old and have struggled in school and in reading.

It took place in my classroom at Central Middle School in Eden Prairie, Minnesota from

November 2015 through the end of end of January 2016. After making some changes

within the classroom, I gave students another reading attitude survey and assessment to

see whether or not attitudes and scores made a positive shift. Chapter Four will focus on

the results of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

In Chapter Three my plan for action research was introduced. The setting for the study was my language arts classroom at Central Middle School in Eden Prairie, MN. The subjects included 16 of my 39 students (7th and 8th graders) who participate in the Alternative Learning Program at our school. The methods that were used in the study included changes within the classroom environment, student surveys, and standardized assessment scores. All of these methods were incorporated in order to find out whether or not a classroom environment has a positive affect on adolescents' attitudes and test scores in reading. This chapter will focus on the results of these methods.

Reading Attitude Surveys

After receiving permission to continue with the study, the first method used was the Reading Attitude Survey. During the course of the study, students took two similar surveys for comparison. Both were based on the *Estes Scale to Measure Attitude Toward Reading* (1971). The first survey was given to students in November. It consisted of twenty positive and negative statements about reading with the following response choices:

A= strongly agree

B= agree

C= undecided

D= disagree

E= strongly disagree.

Each letter was assigned a score of 1-5, depending upon how the statement was worded. Scores ranged from 20-100. The higher a student scored, the more positive his or her attitude was in reading.   Similarly, lower scores represented a less positive attitude in reading.

The second survey was given to students at the end of January. The survey consisted of the same twenty statements and response choices as the first, but two items were added to the second survey. The added items did not count in students' scores but were included for additional information. One of these items was labeled "Item 21," and it followed the same format as questions 1-20.   This addition informed on whether or not the subjects felt their attitudes in reading had improved over the course of the study. The second item was a checklist to inform of what changes may have impacted student attitudes in a positive way.
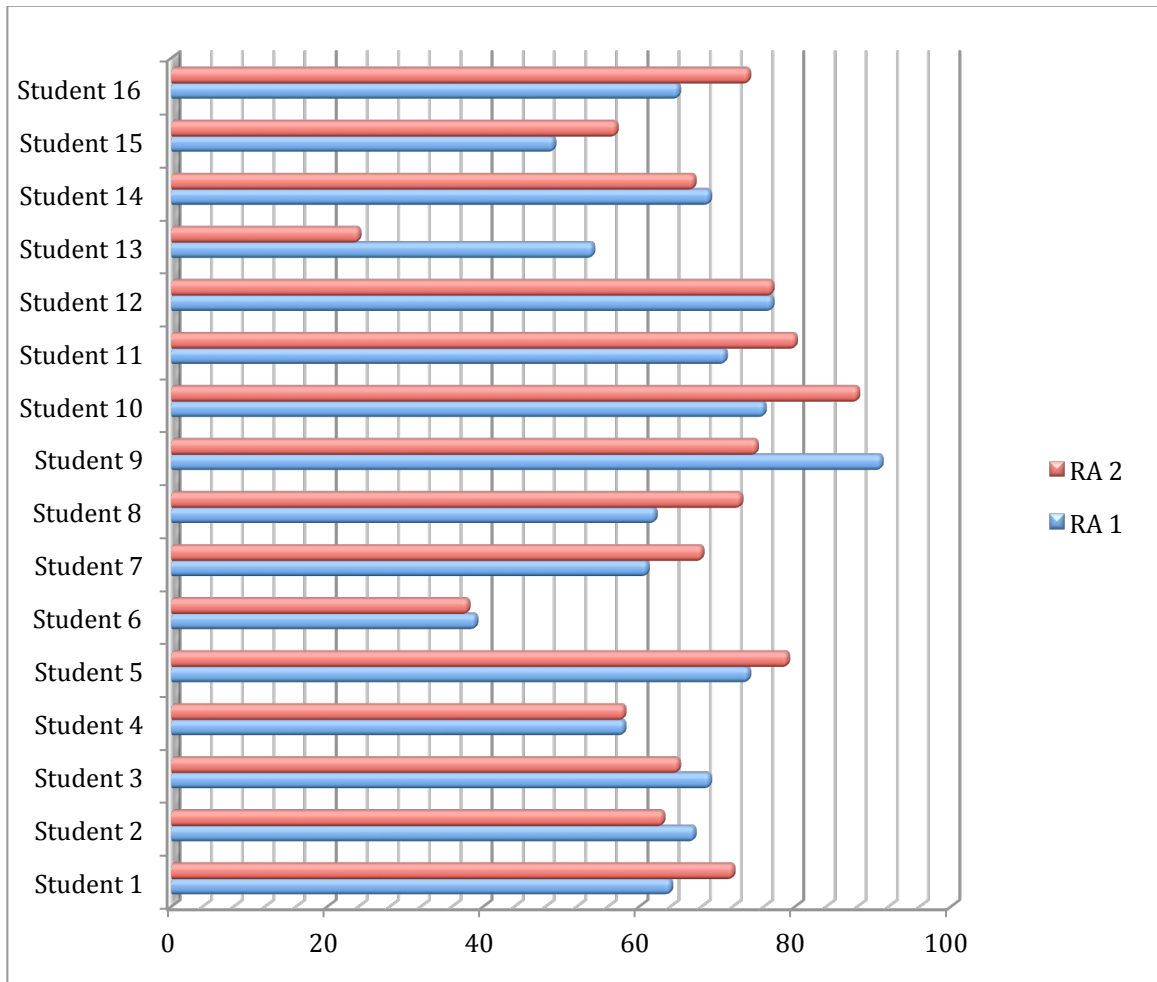
Figure 4. Reading Attitude Survey Results

There were a total of 16 students who participated in this study. Data from items 1-20 showed that eight students' scores increased, anywhere from 5-12 points, which also means that their attitudes in reading improved. Six students' scores decreased anywhere from 2-30 points, meaning their attitudes in reading became more negative. There were two students' scores and attitudes that stayed exactly the same throughout the entire study. Student #4 remained at a score of 58, which may mean that the student is pretty

indifferent about reading, while Student #12 remained at a score of 77, which may equate to a more positive outlook on reading.

Seventh Grade Vs. Eighth Grade Responses

Out of 16 students, nine were seventh graders. Four had an improved attitude in reading by the end of the study.   Their scores improved between 5-11 points. Three of the nine students' attitudes became more negative. Their scores decreased between 4-30 points. Finally, two of the seventh grade students' attitudes had no change at all. As stated in the previous section, one student remained consistent at a score of 58. The other student's score remained at a 77.

Seven students in this study were eighth graders. Three students showed an improved attitude in reading. The scores improved anywhere from 8-12 points. The remaining four eighth graders' attitudes became more negative with a decrease between 1-16 points.

Male vs. Female Responses

Ten of the students who participated in the study were male. Six students increased their scores and improved their attitudes about reading. Four of the ten males decreased their scores and had a more negative attitude about reading. There were also six females who participated in the study. Of these six, three increased their scores and improved their attitudes about reading. Two females decreased their scores and had a more negative attitude about reading. There was also one female student whose scores and attitude remained the same.

Figure 5. Reading Attitude Survey Comparison Chart

Item 21 Responses

This item was similar to items 1-20. There was a statement, "My attitude about reading has changed since the beginning of the year." Students responded with one of the following:

A= strongly agree

B= agree

C= undecided

D= disagree

E= strongly disagree.

Of the 16 students, two of them responded that they strongly agreed, and six responded that they agreed their attitudes had changed. Four students were undecided whether or not a change in attitude was made. Two students responded that they disagreed, and two more students responded that they strongly disagreed their attitudes had changed.

My attitude about reading has changed since the beginning of the year.

	Strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	strongly disagree
▪ Answer	2	6	4	2	2
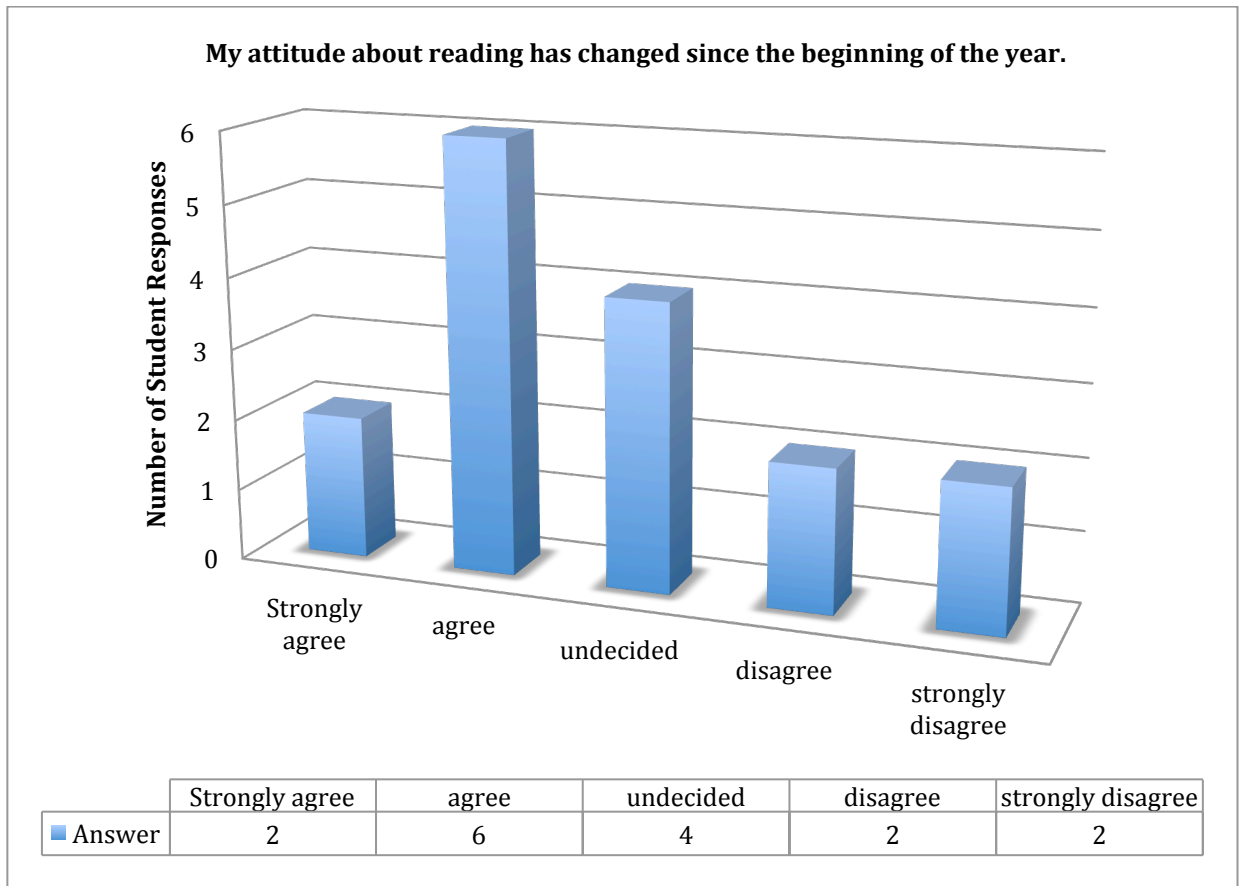
Figure 6. Item 21 Responses

Classroom Environment Checklist

This was the second item added to the second Reading Attitude Survey. It is a checklist of items that related to the classroom environment changes that were made during the study. The question posed was "Did anything make your attitude about reading more positive this year?" Students were to place a checkmark next to each item that applied. The options included the following:

- Comfortable classroom set-up.

- Time to read during class.

- Reading books that I got to choose.

- Mrs. Bailey's help in choosing books

- Mrs. Bailey's reading aloud to the class.

- Other.

The results showed that reading books that they chose was most important to making student attitudes about reading more positive. Time to read during class was the next most important change that was made in the classroom. There was a tie between the comfortable classroom set-up and Mrs. Bailey's help in choosing books. Mrs. Bailey's reading aloud to the class earned five responses. "Other" was chosen by one student; however, the response on the line had nothing to do with reading; therefore, it does not apply.

InSight Assessment and Results

The InSight assessment is electronic and includes multiple-choice items that ask questions about students' interests and motivation in reading. It also provides reading passages and comprehension and vocabulary questions that correlate with the passages. The score that is generated is called the Proficiency Index, and it calculates a grade level equivalent based on comprehension, vocabulary, and reading rate (wpm). This score represents what level students will work on within a web-based program called Reading Plus. This is given at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. For the study's purpose, I asked permission within the parent letter to use students' results from the initial InSight, which was given in September and result from the assessment given at the end of January to compare the two scores.

Of the 16 students who participated in the study, thirteen improved their scores between September and the end of January. Two improved by a small margin, while eleven students made more significant gains. Three students' scores decreased from September to January. Student #4 and Student #9's scores decreased by a very small margin, while student #10's score decreased significantly.

Based on the data from the Reading Attitude Surveys, students' attitudes were not significantly impacted by the changes made to the classroom environment. Seven students' attitudes improved, two were not impacted at all, and seven were impacted more negatively. When reflecting on whether or not students felt as though their attitude about reading had changed since the beginning of the year, half of them felt it had, while half of them were undecided or felt that it had not.

When looking at the checklist of changes that may have a positive impact on student attitude in reading, providing students with a choice of what to read was the most important. Giving students time to read during class was a close second. Providing students with help in choosing books and a comfortable class set-up were the third in rank of importance to students.

The biggest impact was seen in students' InSight assessment scores. Thirteen of the 16 students who participated in the study increased their reading levels between September and the end of January while three students' scores decreased during the course of the study (Graph on p. 39). The next chapter will be a synthesis of my project and what I have learned throughout the process.
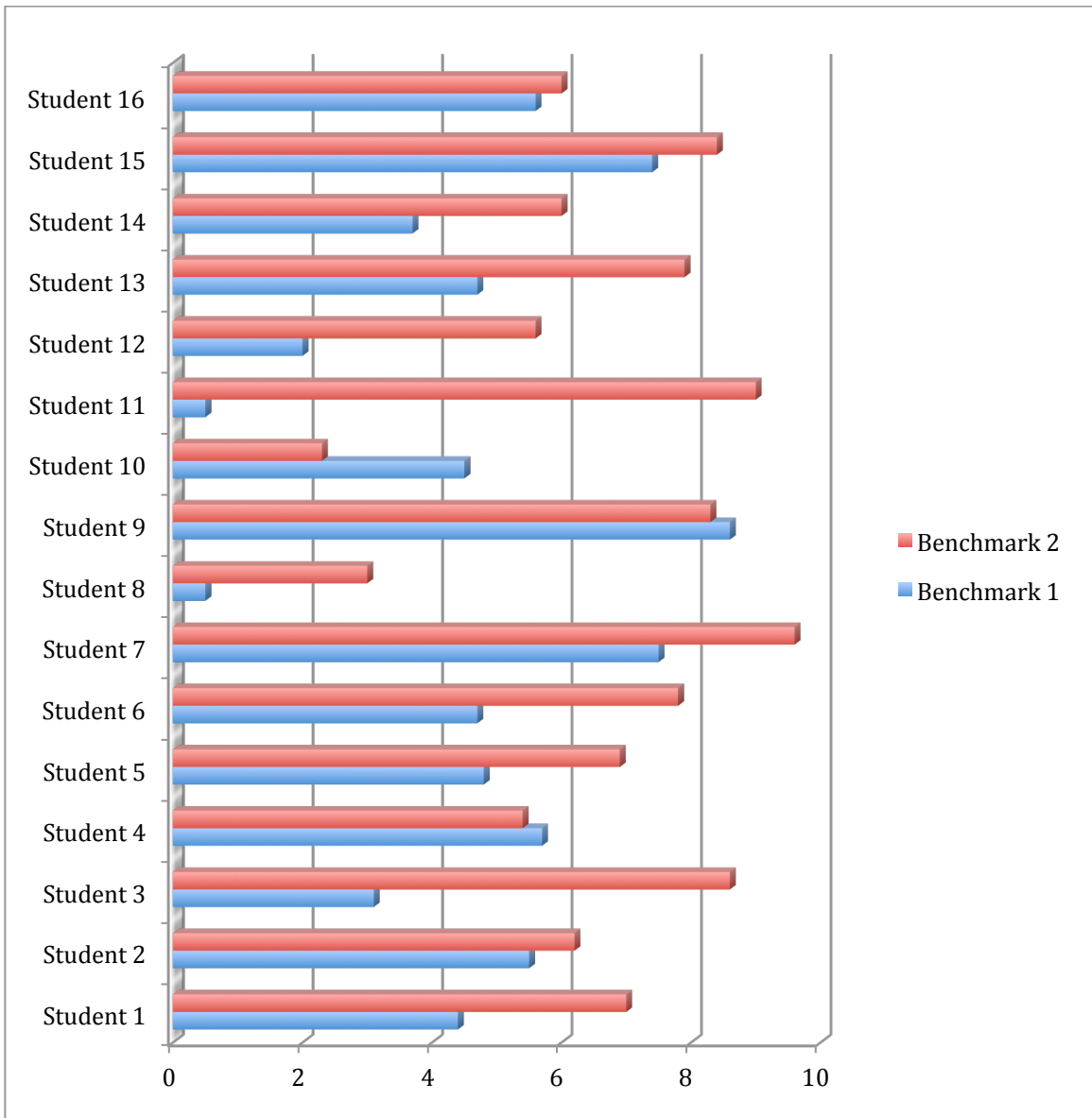
Figure 7. InSight Assessment and Results

Although the results of the reading attitude survey were close, it was pleasing to see a positive shift in students' attitudes during the study.

This was a surprise because so many students expressed their dislike for reading and stated that nothing would make it more positive for them. It was encouraging to see that there are strategies teachers can use that truly do make a difference. In this study, students felt that being provided a choice of what to read was the most important strategy a teacher could use, followed by providing time in class for students to read. A comfortable classroom set-up and the teacher's advice in choosing appropriate and interesting books were also important to the students according to the results.

In addition to the positive shift in attitudes about reading, thirteen out of sixteen students also improved their assessment scores. Two students improved by a small margin, while eleven students made more significant gains. There were three students whose scores decreased; however, two students' scores decreased by only a mall margin. The third students' score decreased significantly.

Does the classroom environment have a positive effect on adolescents' attitudes and test scores in reading? Chapter four explained the results to this question. A positive shift in attitudes about reading and an increase in standardized test scores were discovered within the data. Chapter five will reflect upon and analyze the process and results of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions

The question researched was whether or not the classroom environment had a positive effect on adolescents' attitudes and test scores in reading. Chapter five will be a reflection on the following:

- How the results relate to research in the literature review.

- Implications of what was found within the study.

- Limitations of the findings.

- Changes that could be made if the study was to be implemented again.

Findings in Relationship to Literature

In Lesesne's (2003) book *Making the Match*, getting to know the students and the literature were the most important ways to motivate adolescent readers. One way to get to know the students was by giving a student survey. The survey model that I implemented was the *Estes Scale to Measure Attitude Toward Reading* (1971). I gave students the twenty-item survey at the beginning of November, which gave me an idea of students' attitudes about reading, early in the year. This was before I implemented any of the changes learned through my literature review.

After receiving permission to proceed with the study, I made changes within the classroom environment using information from The Access Center (2007) and Gambrell et al. (2007). Both discussed the importance of the physical space within the classroom. More specifically, the researchers spoke of filling the walls with print and other resources. I displayed student work that included text as well as artwork. I had

numerous resource posters on my walls and bulletin boards for students to read. I also

added a vocabulary word wall for my seventh graders and another one for my eighth

graders to reference.

Not only did I make changes to the walls in my classroom, but I also implemented

the ideas of Brenda Dyck (2004), Harvey and Goudvis (2007), and Gambrell et al.

(2007). These researchers found that the arrangement of a classroom matters when

attempting to motivate students to learn. They recommended that teachers keep

bookstores, libraries, and cafes in mind when designing the classroom space. I followed

district guidelines, so the only comfortable furniture that I was allowed to add into my

classroom were four camping chairs and four ball chairs. My students and I tried to add a

little more ambiance, so we created a fireplace that we added to one of the blank walls.

We discussed how we loved sitting near the fireplace at one of our local coffee shops, so

we decided to bring that to our classroom. Finally, the students and I moved my desks

out of straight rows and into a formation that resembled tables. Gambrell et al. (2007)

discussed the importance of a classroom where the students were extremely engaged and

excited about what was happening within the room. They explained that being able to

work with peers is a "powerful force in motivating adolescents and in determining what

and how they read" (p.144). The new desk arrangement made this easier to implement

collaborative work. When students were given the second survey in January, eleven out

of sixteen participants felt that the comfortable classroom set-up made their attitude about

reading more positive during the study.

In addition to physical changes in the classroom, I incorporated additional ideas

from Sanacore (2000), McQuillan (2001), Cunningham and Stanovich (2003), Harvey

and Goudvis (2007), and Kelley Gallagher (2009). I gave students 20-30 minutes to read text they chose during class. Some students chose something text on their own, while other students used my help in choosing. Students could read any text they wanted to read. It was not required that they read a book. I observed students reading articles from the website Newsela.com, *Choices Magazine*, *Scope Magazine*, and other sources. Still, there were many students who chose to read novels, including graphic novels.

The results showed that thirteen out of sixteen students felt that reading what they got to choose was most important to a positive attitude toward reading. This was followed by twelve out of sixteen students who said that being given the time to read during class was important. Eleven out of sixteen students felt that my help in choosing books for them was important.

One implementation that I made in my classroom came from Atwell in *The Pleasure Principle* (2007). She discussed the importance of reading aloud to students. I have always read aloud, but I did this more consistently during my study. Books were chosen from YALSA, which stands for Young Adult Library Services Association and is a subdivision of The American Library Association. Their website includes a myriad of different book lists for young adult readers. Because many of my students dislike reading, books were chosen from the *Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers* lists. I also chose books from my classroom library that had attention grabbing first chapters. Although five students out of sixteen found this strategy beneficial, it was measured one of the lowest motivators on the checklist that was given to students in January.

Implications of the Study

If my findings are correct, changes may need to be made to both curriculum and classrooms. Based on the results of the study, students felt the ability to choose what they read was most influential to a more positive attitude about reading. They also felt it important to be given time during class to do that reading. Finally, student responses were equal about the comfortable classroom set-up and my help in finding enjoyable texts to read. I believe it also important to remember that 75% of my participants improved assessment scores between September and January, especially when there is such a large focus on standardized assessment scores in the area of reading.

The curriculum at Central Middle School in Eden Prairie, MN is currently designed around specific teacher-assigned novels with a small attempt at choice reading. A large amount of the reading in a mainstream language arts class is completed outside of class. Most of the language arts teachers designate the first ten minutes of every class for choice or independent reading. It is understandable why educators focus on assigned novels. The concern comes from the difficulty in assessing students on novels that the teachers may not be familiar with and that each student may be reading something different. This is a real concern, and it is something that I would have to research further.

In response to the time element, language arts classes do not focus strictly on the area of reading. There is not a separate focus on reading at the secondary level in Eden Prairie. Language arts teachers also have the responsibility for teaching students to write. There are so many benchmarks that need to be covered within the state standards that it may be difficult for teachers to dedicate 20-30 minutes to reading each day, especially

when classes are only 53 minutes long. Discussions need to be had about restructuring the school day and courses that are offered to secondary students.

I understand that budgets in education are tight. Based on the results of my study, it is necessary for districts to look into spending some of the budget on different district-approved furniture for the classrooms. Right now the furniture in our classrooms are not conducive to any comfort, focus, or group work. Our desks are small, individual desks, with attached chairs. These desks are particularly distracting to students who are tall and/or stocky in build. Students seem to perform better when they feel comfortable and have the ability to collaborate in their learning.

Finally students expressed that my help in finding interesting texts impacted their attitudes positively in reading. As a teacher it is important to make sure the text is relevant to the student. The teacher must know the students' interests as well as the approximate level at which each student is reading. This is a lot easier for me to do than for some of my colleagues. I teach a total of 39 students. My mainstream colleagues have as many as 150 students per day, so we would need to figure out how to make information more easily accessible for all teachers in the building.

Limitations.

This study was impacted by the sample size and population of my participants, as well as when different phases of the study were conducted.

Only 16 of my 39 students participated in the study. All of the participants were part of our Alternative Learning Program. Students in the program have not shown consistent success in school and have little to no motivation and/or self-confidence. All of them have difficulty focusing, get distracted easily, and are forgetful about turning things in to the teacher. Participants also performed poorly on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment in the area of reading. Results may have been different had the sample size been larger, had more parents been easier to get into contact with, and had I opened the study up to students who participate in our mainstream language arts classes.

The timing of student surveys and InSight assessments may have also affected the study. I gave the first InSight assessment in September. The students had not been given a lot of time to get to know me and may have been uncomfortable and/or nervous about taking this first assessment. My seventh graders were still trying to get used to the transition from elementary to middle school. The second assessment was given at the end of January when students may have felt more comfortable and confident in their skills.

The first student survey was given in November. It was still early in the year, so I feel that some of the student responses could have been based on what they thought I wanted to hear. Also, because my students have a hard time focusing, they may have missed when I went over the instructions with them. In the instructions it stated that they

would not be graded on their responses; however, if they missed that, results may have been affected. The second survey was administered at the end of January. As with the InSight assessment, participants may have felt more comfortable responding to the items with their own feelings vs. with what they thought I would want to hear, dependent upon their feelings that day.

Study Changes

If I conducted this study again, I would make some changes. Once I analyzed the data, I noticed that there were items on the second survey that I wished I had worded and/or formatted differently. The first was item #21. Originally, the statement read, "My attitude about reading has changed since the beginning of the year." I feel as though I may not have received the answer I was seeking from this item. My question for the study focused on improvement in attitude about reading; therefore, I would change the wording to "My attitude about reading has improved/become more positive since the beginning of the year."

Because item #21 was not scored in the same way the first twenty items on the survey were, I felt that the format of the responses should be changed. Instead of having five options, I would change it to three. They would be as follows:

    a. agree

    b. undecided

    c. disagree

The way the item was originally formatted made things more complicated than they needed to be. The purpose of the item was to have students reflect on whether or not they felt their attitudes had changed since the beginning of the year.

Another change that I would make has to do with the checklist item that was incorporated in the survey that was given to participants at the end of January. There were a couple of statements that used the word "books" in them. I would change that word to "texts" because there are many different types of texts that students could choose to read. They do not always need to be reading books. On that same checklist, I would omit the option for "other." Students do not know what they do not know. I had one student choose "other;" however, when the student wrote in what made his or her attitude more positive in reading, it had nothing to do with reading.

As stated in the limitations, I would attempt to have a larger sample of participants by incorporating at least one class of mainstream language arts from seventh grade and one from eighth grade. I feel that a more accurate picture may be obtained with a larger, more diverse group.

Summary

When looking back through this entire Capstone process, I feel that I have learned so much professionally and personally. Professionally I feel that I have gained insight that can be shared with my colleagues about different ways to motivate and improve test scores in the area of reading, especially with those students who are not motivated and struggle in school. Giving students choice and time to read during class were the two most important factors that I learned from the literature and my students. Having a

comfortable classroom set-up and helping students find text based on students' abilities and interests were also important factors.

My next step is to research effective ways to implement what I learned. I will share my finding with my colleagues eventually; however, I feel that I need to have solid data for implementation prior to this discussion. Some colleagues have a difficult time with change and benefit from having things laid out for them. As soon as I feel I have a solid plan for implementation, I will share all that I learned with my language arts colleagues.

Personally, this has been such an eye-opening experience. I started this process about seven years ago, and gained so much through my coursework at Hamline. It provided me with more confidence and helped me to see things within my own life that needed changing. Because of these new insights, I put my Capstone on hold. I went through some big changes within my life.

I am not one to abandon my personal goals, so I did what I had to do in order to continue this process. Even though it has been complicated, trying to balance everything in my life, I continued working to reach my goal. With the encouragement of my family, friends, and my wonderful committee, here I am practicing what I preach to my students each and every day, "With hard work and the willingness to accept help, one can do anything he or she sets out to accomplish."

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Appendix A: Parent Consent Example

October 30, 2015

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

As you know, I am your child's 7th or 8th grade language arts teacher. I am also a graduate student working on my MaED through Hamline University. An important part of my degree is a research project. The purpose of this letter is to obtain your permission for your child to participate.

The following is information for you to review about my research:

- I have received approval from the School of Education at Hamline University and from our district office at Eden Prairie Schools to conduct this study. My research is public scholarship and will be described in my final Capstone paper. This will be catalogued in Hamline's Bush Library Digital Commons, a searchable electronic repository, and it may be published or used in other ways.

- Participation is voluntary. You may choose to remove your child from the study at any point in time.

- There is little to no risk if your child participates in this study. Data used will be anonymous. Pseudonyms or codes will be used to identify student data. All data will be locked up in a file cabinet to ensure anonymity.

- The study will run from the middle of October through the middle of November 2015, and it will be conducted during class time. No extra time will be required of your child if he or she participates.

- I will be using research-based strategies within your child's language arts classroom in an attempt to improve students' attitudes and test scores in reading.

- Students were given an initial reading attitude survey to fill out in September, and I would like to use data from that, as well as the first InSight assessment that placed them into the Reading Plus program.

- Students will take another reading inventory survey and InSight assessment during November, in order for me to compare data.

Please return the attached form indicating permission for your child to participate in this study. If you should have any questions, please feel free to call me at (952) 975-7300, either before 7:50 a.m. or between 2:15 and 3:30 p.m. You may also send me an email if that works better for you. My email address is listed below. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Kirstin Bailey

(952) 975-7300

kirstin_bailey@edenpr.k12.mn.us

Dear Mrs. Bailey:

  The purpose of this letter is to confirm that I have received and read your recent request and that I give permission for my child _____ to participate in a research project, which you are conducting as part of your master's program at Hamline University.

  I understand that the purpose of this research is to test research-based strategies, such as the physical space of the classroom and giving students a good amount of time to read books in class. These will be books that my child chooses based on his or her interests and reading levels.

  I also understand that by participating in this study, my child's identity will remain anonymous, and I have the right to pull my child from the study at any time without penalty. This study will give us an idea of whether or not the strategies have a positive impact on my child's attitude and achievement in the area of reading.

Signed,

_____

Parent/Guardian

_____

Date

Appendix B: Reading Attitude Survey #1

NAME: _____

This survey is based on the *Estes Scale to Measure Attitude Toward Reading* (1971).

Directions: This is a scale to measure attitudes toward reading. Below you will see a number of statements about reading. Please circle your feeling toward each statement. Please answer all items as **honestly** as possible. Your first reaction is most likely the best. Any and all information that you provide will be held in confidence. Your responses **will not** affect your grade.

1. Reading is for learning, not enjoyment.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

2. Money spent on books is well spent.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

3. There is nothing to be gained from reading books.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

4. Books are boring.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

5. Reading is a good way to use my free time.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

6. Sharing books in class is a waste of class time.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

7. Reading excites me.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

8. Reading is only for smart students.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

9. Books are not usually good enough to finish.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

10. Reading is rewarding to me.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

11. Reading becomes boring after about an hour.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

12. Most books are too long and boring.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

13. Free reading does not teach anything.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

14. There should be more time for free reading during the school day.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

15. There are many books that I want to read.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

16. Books should not be read except when required for class.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

17. Reading is something I can do without.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

18. Students should read for a certain amount of time during summer vacation.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

19. Books make good presents.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

20. Reading is boring.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

21. My attitude about reading has changed since the beginning of the year.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

Appendix C: Reading Attitude Survey #2

NAME: _____

This survey is based on the *Estes Scale to Measure Attitude Toward Reading* (1971).

Directions: This is a scale to measure attitudes toward reading. Below you will see a number of statements about reading. Please circle your feeling toward each statement. Please answer all items as **honestly** as possible. Your first reaction is most likely the best. Any and all information that you provide will be held in confidence. Your responses **will not** affect your grade.

1. Reading is for learning, not enjoyment.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

2. Money spent on books is well spent.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

3. There is nothing to be gained from reading books.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

4. Books are boring.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

5. Reading is a good way to use my free time.
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. undecided
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

6. Sharing books in class is a waste of class time.
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. undecided
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

7. Reading excites me.
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. undecided
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

8. Reading is only for smart students.
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. undecided
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

9. Books are not usually good enough to finish.
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. undecided
   d. disagree
   e. strongly disagree

10. Reading is rewarding to me.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

11. Reading becomes boring after about an hour.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

12. Most books are too long and boring.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

13. Free reading does not teach anything.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
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    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

14. There should be more time for free reading during the school day.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

15. There are many books that I want to read.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
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16. Books should not be read except when required for class.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
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    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

17. Reading is something I can do without.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

18. Students should read for a certain amount of time during summer vacation.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

19. Books make good presents.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

20. Reading is boring.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

21. My attitude about reading has changed since the beginning of the year.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. undecided
    d. disagree
    e. strongly disagree

(More on next page)

Please place a check mark next to any of the following that have made your attitude about reading a little, or a lot, more positive this year.

_____ comfortable classroom set up.

_____ time to read **DURING** class.

_____ reading books that I got to choose.

_____ Mrs. Bailey's help in choosing books.

_____ Mrs. Bailey's reading aloud to the class.

_____ Other. What? _____

_____