

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 358 408

CS 011 205

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 TITLE Children's Out-of-School Activities.  
 PUB DATE Dec 92  
 NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Reading Conference (42nd, San Antonio, TX, December 2-5, 1992). Best available copy.  
 PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
 DESCRIPTORS Catholic Schools; Elementary School Students; Family Environment; Grade 5; Intermediate Grades; Locus of Control; \*Reading Attitudes; \*Reading Habits; Reading Research; \*Recreational Reading  
 IDENTIFIERS British Columbia (Vancouver)

ABSTRACT

A study investigated why children choose not to read. Subjects, 21 fifth-grade students attending a Catholic school in Vancouver, British Columbia, completed "clock-sheets" detailing their activities outside of school over a 5-day period, were administered a measure of locus of control, completed a reading attitude survey, and were interviewed. Parents and the children's teacher were also interviewed. Results indicated that: (1) students devoted an average of 190 minutes of their leisure time over the 5 days to reading; (2) female frequent readers were equally represented by internal and external loci of control; (3) high scores on the attitude scale did not necessarily match spending a lot of time reading; (4) 77% of the frequent readers came from bilingual homes as compared to 33% of the infrequent readers; (5) 100% of the frequent readers were taken to the library versus 70% of the infrequent readers; (6) 80% of the parents of infrequent readers use the library as compared to 55% of the parents of frequent readers; and (7) the infrequent reader spent less time reading than his/her parents. (One table of data and a "clock-chart" are included.) (RS)

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CHILDREN'S OUT-OF-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

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Paper given at the National Reading Conference, San Antonio, Texas,  
December 1992

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## CHILDREN'S OUT-OF-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

The purpose of this study is to investigate why children choose not to read. Frequent readers are defined as students who are able to read and choose reading as a possible activity during their leisure time; infrequent readers are students that are able to read but rarely choose reading as a possible activity during their leisure time. Reading is defined as any reading of books, magazines, newspapers, comic books and mail that one would read that was not intended for school. This report is limited to the pilot-study which involved one grade five class of 21 students and five days of their leisure time during the first week of March in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

### Subjects

The subjects for this study were 21 grade-five students attending a catholic school. The mean age for this population was 10.68. Based on teacher judgment, all participants could read at grade level--57% with ease. The group was made up of 8 males and 13 females. The ethnic origins of the sample consisted of 55% Caucasian, 42% Asian, and 3% Hispanic. The occupational classifications for the fathers included a nursing attendant, a teacher, a manager/admin., a bus driver, as well as two scientists, and occupations in service, construction, product fabrication, and sales. The mothers' occupational classifications included

a manager/admin., a dental hygienist, as well as nursing attendants, two nurses, and occupations in service, clerical, sales, and homemaking.

Educational degrees received by the fathers ranged from a master's to less than a high school degree, and the mothers ranges from a B.A. degree to less than a high school degree.

### Instruments

The following instruments were used:

**Clock-Sheets** - (Appendix) An 8 1/2" x 14" sheet depicting a clock face with each hour sector having four circles representing approximately 15 minute intervals, and designated codes for each activity. Clock-Sheets are available for after school days, weekend days and weekend nights.

### **Children's Nowicki-Strickland Internal-External Control Scale**

**(CNSIE)** (Nowicki & Strickland, 1973) - A scale used to measure locus of control for ages 9 to 18. The scale has 40 declarative statements that require a yes or no response circled by the subject. Highest scores reflect an external orientation and lowest scores reflect an internal orientation.

### **Elementary Reading Attitude Survey** (McKenna & Kear, 1990) - A 20

item survey intended for grades 1 to 6 consisting of two subscales, one for recreational reading and one for academic reading. Items include a brief statement about reading followed by four poses of Garfield designed

to depict different emotional states--very positive to very negative. Only the recreational reading subscale was used.

**Student Interview** - A 25 minute interview developed by the researcher to (1) clarify what reinforcements each student derives from the activities that they spend the most time participating in as well as leisure reading, and what values they attach to these rewards; (2) classroom practices around reading; and (3) home practices around reading.

**Parent Interview** - A 15 minute telephone interview developed by the researcher to account for any support or encouragement that students might receive in the home for the activities that they choose to do out-of-school. Questions center on the parent's leisure activities--ones that were similar to the student's, reading in the home and at school, as well as some questions about family background.

**Teacher Interview** - A 10 minute interview developed by the researcher to account for the possible impact of classroom practices around reading on the out-of-school activities of the students. Questions center on the reading programs, reading materials and reading activities within the classroom, as well as on the personal reading habits of the teacher.

### Results

Since the sample was selected for piloting the instruments,

procedures were limited to data entry into a SPSS Program for frequency and table runs.

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Insert Table 1 about here

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Over the five-day period, students devoted an average of 190 (SD=271.4) minutes of their leisure time to reading. Total reading included books, newspapers, comic books, magazines and mail. During this time frame, 67% of the sample read books, 29% read newspapers, 33% read comic books, 10% read magazines, and 10% read mail. Time devoted to leisure reading was greatest on Saturday.

Observations for females indicated that being a frequent reader was equally represented by internals and externals. However, female students with an internal locus of control spent more time (2.5 X) reading out-of-school.

High scores on the attitude scale indicating a favorable attitude towards recreational reading did not necessarily match spending a lot of time reading.

With the responses reported in the interviews, observed differences between frequent and infrequent readers include:

1. 77% of the frequent readers come from bilingual homes as compared to

33% of the infrequent readers;

2. 75% of the infrequent readers live 3/4 to 1 1/2 miles from the library;

3. 38% of the infrequent readers received literacy gifts as compared to 29% of the frequent readers;

4. 100% of the frequent readers are taken to the library versus 70% of the infrequent readers;

5. 80% of the parents of infrequent readers use the library as compared to 55% of the parents of frequent readers;

6. slightly less notice of siblings and parents reading by the infrequent reader;

7. 71% of the frequent readers reported that they receive encouragement for leisure reading, and 57% of their parents agreed; whereas, 56% of the infrequent readers report receiving encouragement for leisure reading, and 44% of their parents admit giving encouragement to their child for leisure reading;

8. looking at the ratio for amount of time spent reading for leisure between parents and students revealed that the infrequent reader spends less time reading than his/her parents.

### References

McKenna, M. C., & Kear, D. J. (1990). Measuring attitude toward reading: A new tool for teachers. *The Reading Teacher*, 43 (9), 626-639.

Nowicki, S., & Strickland, B. (1973). A locus of control scale for children. *Journal of Consulting & Clinical Psychology*, 40 (1), 148-154.



Table 1  
Activities for Frequent & Infrequent Readers

|                          | Gender of student |               |                 |               | Total  |        |
|--------------------------|-------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|--------|--------|
|                          | Male              |               | Female          |               |        |        |
|                          | Frequent Reader   | Infreq Reader | Frequent Reader | Infreq Reader |        |        |
| Playing with friend/     |                   | .36           |                 | 5.10          | 12.38  | 4.99   |
| Talking on the phone     | 1.40              | 1.72          |                 | 3.02          | 2.44   | 2.35   |
| Sports                   | 9.80              | 22.49         |                 | 5.88          | 10.94  | 12.21  |
| Games                    | 14.46             | .36           |                 | 2.56          | 1.84   | 2.89   |
| Video Games              | 8.43              | 6.88          |                 | .93           | 2.19   | 3.64   |
| Homework                 | 2.78              | 4.76          |                 | 4.12          | 5.14   | 4.42   |
| Help around House        | 2.53              | 4.33          |                 | 5.83          | 4.86   | 4.86   |
| Hobbies                  |                   | 3.31          |                 | 1.16          |        | 1.39   |
| Practice/lesson          |                   | 1.90          |                 | 2.28          | 3.27   | 2.19   |
| Watched movie video      | 2.53              | 4.03          |                 | .61           | 4.30   | 2.65   |
| Watched TV               | 28.42             | 29.65         |                 | 20.24         | 25.42  | 24.94  |
| Listened to radio, music | 1.40              | 4.31          |                 | 7.15          | 6.76   | 5.70   |
| rec reading              | 8.67              | 1.17          |                 | 15.71         | 1.51   | 7.50   |
| writing                  | .56               | .19           |                 | .97           | 2.72   | 1.12   |
| Other                    | 14.60             | 10.14         |                 | 20.81         | 14.27  | 19.63  |
| Library                  | .84               | .19           |                 | .86           | .70    | .63    |
| Went to store            | 3.37              | 4.21          |                 | 2.76          | 1.49   | 2.93   |
| Total Time               | 100.00            | 100.00        |                 | 100.00        | 100.00 | 100.00 |

# AFTER SCHOOL DAY

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Check off the boxes indicating what you did yesterday out-of-school.
2. Think about the time you did them and place the code which is next to that activity into the circles of the clock at the appropriate time. Each circle equals about 15 minutes.
3. Some activities need to be completed with information.
4. Here are some special codes:  
 B (bathing) D (dressing) E (eating)  
 S (sleeping) T (transportation).

## I PLAYED

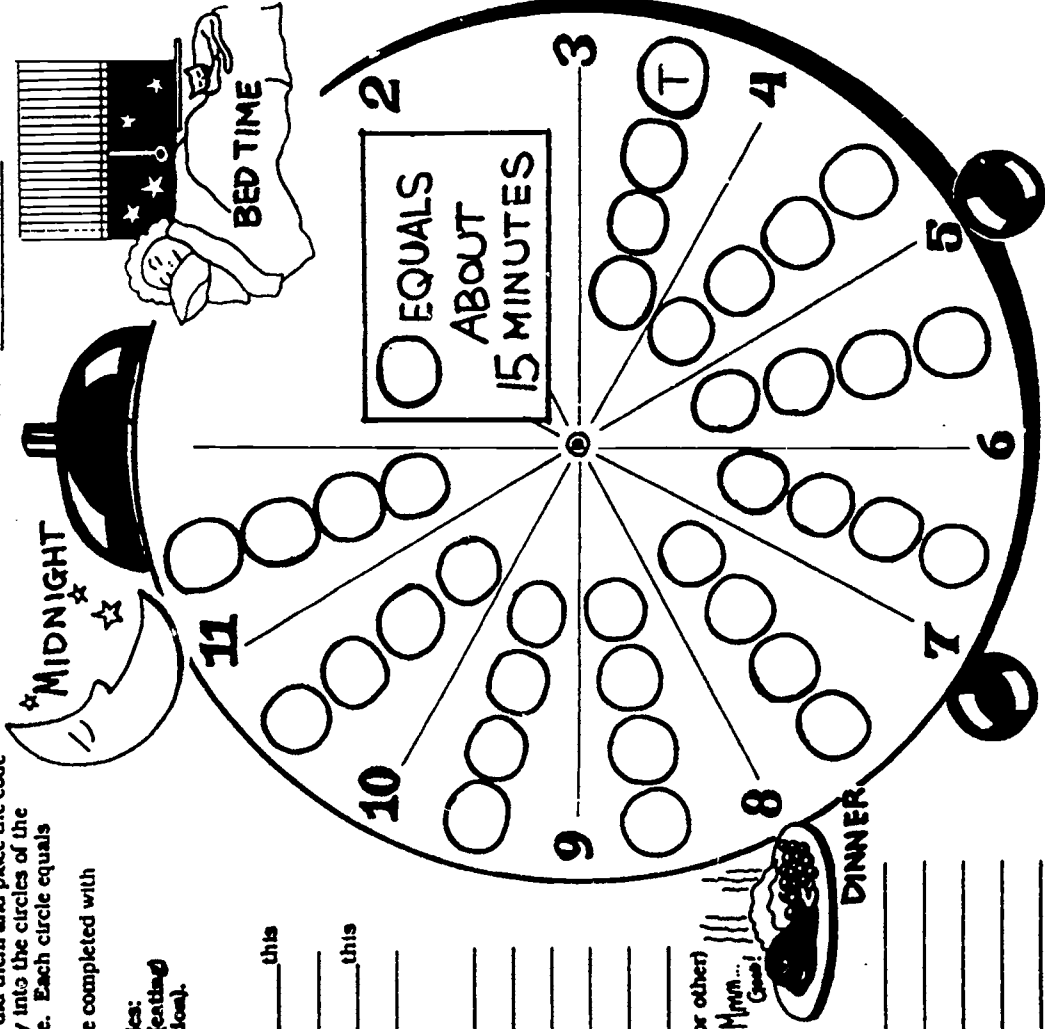
- A1  with my friends at \_\_\_\_\_ this is what we did \_\_\_\_\_
- A1  with my friends at \_\_\_\_\_ this is what we did \_\_\_\_\_
- A2  /talked on the phone \_\_\_\_\_
- A3  a sport called \_\_\_\_\_
- A3  a sport called \_\_\_\_\_
- A3  a sport called \_\_\_\_\_
- A4  a game called \_\_\_\_\_
- A4  a game called \_\_\_\_\_
- A4  a game called \_\_\_\_\_
- A5  a video game (Nintendo or other) \_\_\_\_\_

## I DID

- B1  my homework \_\_\_\_\_
- B2  help around the house \_\_\_\_\_
- B3  work on a hobby called \_\_\_\_\_
- B3  work on a hobby called \_\_\_\_\_
- B4  a (practice/lesson) for \_\_\_\_\_
- B4  a (practice/lesson) for \_\_\_\_\_

This is what I did out-of-school on \_\_\_\_\_

Code # \_\_\_\_\_



## I WATCHED/LISTENED

- C1  to a movie video \_\_\_\_\_
- C2  to television \_\_\_\_\_
- C3  to (radio, records, tapes, CD's) \_\_\_\_\_
- I... \_\_\_\_\_

- D1  read mail from \_\_\_\_\_
- D2  wrote a letter NOT for school to \_\_\_\_\_

- D3  read a newspaper NOT for school about \_\_\_\_\_

- D3  read a newspaper NOT for school about \_\_\_\_\_

- D4  read a magazine NOT for school called \_\_\_\_\_

- D5  read a book NOT for school called \_\_\_\_\_

- D5  read a book NOT for school called \_\_\_\_\_

- D6  wrote something NOT for school \_\_\_\_\_  
 (diary, journal, story, poetry)

- D7  read comic books called \_\_\_\_\_

## WHAT ELSE DID I DO?

- E1  \_\_\_\_\_
- E2  \_\_\_\_\_
- E3  \_\_\_\_\_
- E4  \_\_\_\_\_

## I WENT TO

- F1  the library \_\_\_\_\_
- F2  the store \_\_\_\_\_