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ABSTRACT

Noting that the amount of reading students do is related to their reading achievement, this booklet presents an instrument designed to measure the amount and breadth of students' reading in and out of school. The first part of the booklet discusses the Reading Activity Inventory (RAI) and how it differs from other reading activity measures, uses of the RAI, and the reliability of the instrument. The second part of the booklet discusses administration and scoring of the RAI and presents the instrument itself. Contains five references. (RS)

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MEASURING READING ACTIVITY

AN INVENTORY

JOHN T. GUTHRIE

KAREN MCGOUGH

ALLAN WIGFIELD



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National Reading Research Center

Instructional Resource No. 4

Spring 1994

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Measuring Reading Activity **An Inventory**

John T. Guthrie

Karen McGough

Allan Wigfield

University of Maryland College Park

INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCE NO. 4

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318 Aderhold
University of Georgia
Athens, Georgia 30602-7125
(706) 542-3674 Fax: (706) 542-3678
INTERNET: NRRC@uga.cc.uga.edu

NRRC - University of Maryland College Park

2102 J. M. Patterson Building
University of Maryland
College Park, Maryland 20742
(301) 405-8035 Fax: (301) 314-9625
INTERNET: NRRC@umail.umd.edu

About the National Reading Research Center

The National Reading Research Center (NRRC) is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education to conduct research on reading and reading instruction. The NRRC is operated by a consortium of the University of Georgia and the University of Maryland College Park in collaboration with researchers at several institutions nationwide.

The NRRC's mission is to discover and document those conditions in homes, schools, and communities that encourage children to become skilled, enthusiastic, lifelong readers. NRRC researchers are committed to advancing the development of instructional programs sensitive to the cognitive, sociocultural, and motivational factors that affect children's success in reading. NRRC researchers from a variety of disciplines conduct studies with teachers and students from widely diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds in prekindergarten through grade 12 classrooms. Research projects deal with the influence of family and family-school interactions on the development of literacy; the interaction of sociocultural factors and motivation to read; the impact of literature-based reading programs on reading achievement; the effects of reading strategies instruction on comprehension and critical thinking in literature, science, and history; the influence of innovative group participation structures on motivation and learning; the potential of computer technology to enhance literacy; and the development of methods and standards for alternative literacy assessments.

The NRRC is further committed to the participation of teachers as full partners in its research. A better understanding of how teachers view the development of literacy, how they use knowledge from research, and how they approach change in the classroom is crucial to improving instruction. To further this understanding, the NRRC conducts school-based research in which teachers explore

their own philosophical and pedagogical orientations and trace their professional growth.

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For more information about the NRRC's research projects and other activities, or to have your name added to the mailing list, please contact:

Donna E. AVERMANN, Co-Director
National Reading Research Center
318 Aderhold Hall
University of Georgia
Athens, GA 30602-7125
(706) 542-3674

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National Reading Research Center
2102 J. M. Patterson Building
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Shelley Wong
University of Maryland College Park

About the Authors

John T. Guthrie is Co-Director of the National Reading Research Center and Professor of Human Development at the University of Maryland at College Park. He was formerly Research Director for the International Reading Association. He may be contacted at the following address: National Reading Research Center, 2102 J.M. Patterson Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742. Phone: (301) 405-8036

Karen McGough received a master's degree in the Department of Human Development, University of Maryland at College Park in June 1993.

Allan Wigfield is Associate Professor of Human Development at the University of Maryland at College Park. He is also a principal investigator with the National Reading Research Center. He may be contacted at: 3242 Benjamin Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742. Phone: (301) 405-2809

Measuring Reading Activity An Inventory

John T. Guthrie
Karen McGough
Allan Wigfield

University of Maryland College Park

National Reading Research Center
Universities of Georgia and Maryland
Instructional Resource No. 4
Spring 1994

The Reading Activity Inventory (RAI) is a measure of the amount and breadth of students' reading in and out of school. (See pp. 5-11 for the both the instrument and the administration and scoring information.) Studies have shown that the amount of reading students do is related to their reading achievement (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988). The RAI is designed to help teachers monitor their students' reading, both individually and in the class as a whole. By administering the RAI at the beginning of the school year, teachers can be alert to their students' interests, and can encourage their reading by suggesting books that they might find appealing. Teachers may also use the RAI to check students' growth in reading and other activities from the beginning of the year to the end. Planning a curriculum that coincides with students' interests may motivate students to learn by giving them a sense of control about what happens in the classroom.

The Reading Activity Inventory differs from other reading activity measures on several points. Stanovich and Cunningham (1993) reported that print exposure measures, such as the Author Recognition Test (ART), the Magazine Recognition Test (MRT), and the Newspaper Recognition Test (NRT) are pre-

dictors of reading vocabulary and knowledge. Although it appears that familiarity with an author's name does indicate greater knowledge, none of the print exposure measures can determine how much or what kind of reading people actually do.

The RAI also differs from the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) (McKenna and Kear, 1990), which is intended to describe students' attitudes toward reading in grades one through six. Although that survey does examine both recreational and academic reading, it does not explore reading frequency or the types of books that students read in school and at home.

The RAI covers three areas: social activities, school reading, and personal reading. Because it obtains information about students' activities, there is not likely to be a social desirability factor. The questions in the inventory are such that students tend to be honest in their responses.

Uses of the RAI

The RAI can be administered to a class in approximately 20 minutes at the beginning and the end of the school year to assess changes in classroom and

individual reading. Teachers can use it to learn what subjects their students are interested in, such as nature, sports, romance, and biography. This information may help them observe students' reading habits and direct students to find additional material that might be appealing.

Designed for upper elementary to middle school students, the RAI was initially administered to fifth-graders. It was revised (October 1992) after its first administration. In the original version, there were questions about various genres of books such as science fiction, mystery, and adventure. During interviews with children after the test, however, it was apparent that many children could not identify some types of literature, such as adventure or mystery stories, nor could they provide examples of books they had read in these genres. Consequently, the questions concerning genres were replaced by a single question asking whether students had read a book of fiction.

The RAI can be used to make instructional decisions about curriculum. Teachers can identify the amount and type of reading done both in school and out and select a variety of books for the classroom that will increase the

frequency of reading. Special projects may be implemented including home reading projects and book sharing in which students discuss a book they are reading with a sibling or friend and then trade books.

Reliability

Wigfield (1994) administered the RAI to 300 students from third, fourth and fifth grades. The data collected is being analyzed for reliability of the measures used. Results will be documented in a forthcoming National Reading Research Center (NRRC) report.

The RAI was also administered to a classroom of fifth-graders as part of a study investigating the outcomes of a curriculum of concept-oriented reading instruction (CORI) on motivation and strategies in reading (Guthrie, Bennett, & McGough, 1994). The RAI was administered to the CORI class both before the initiation of this curriculum and after its completion. During that time, the RAI was also administered to a classroom that was using a basal reader (BASAL). The amount and breadth of reading of students in the CORI classroom was significantly higher than that in the BASAL classroom. A

one-way analysis of covariance between the two groups was conducted. The total score for reading (combining school and personal reading) and the general activity measure on the RAI were covariates. The difference between groups was significant, $F(1,34) = 4.75, p < .036$.

Instruction probably influenced the students' motivation. In addition to having higher scores on the RAI, students from the CORI classroom displayed a greater motivation to read as assessed by the Motivations for Reading Scale (Guthrie et al., 1994). Children in CORI chose to read more often for more intrinsic reasons such as curiosity, aesthetic enjoyment, sociability, love of a challenge, and competitiveness. Students from the CORI class were likely to describe themselves by saying:

- I like to read about new things.
- I enjoy a long, involved story or fiction book.
- If my friend is reading a good book, I will read it.
- If a book is interesting, I don't care how hard it is to read.
- I like being the only one who knows an answer in something we read.

The BASAL class displayed more extrinsic reasons for reading such as recognition, compliance, and work avoidance. These students were likely to describe themselves by saying:

- I like to get lots of compliments for my reading.
- I always try to finish my reading on time.
- I am a good reader.

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READING ACTIVITY INVENTORY

Administration and Scoring

The Reading Activity Inventory (RAI) is a quick way to find out how frequently and how widely students read and about some of their other activities as well. It consists of 26 questions and can be administered to a class in 20 minutes or less.

The RAI is shown on pp. 7-11 of this resource and can easily be photocopied for use in the classroom.

Administration

As you distribute the RAI forms, tell students that you want to find out what they read in school and what they do when they are on their own. Explain that the RAI is not a test and that there are no "right" answers. Encourage them to be honest.

The RAI can be administered in two ways: (a) teachers may read the questionnaire aloud to the students; or (b) they may permit students to read and answer the questions silently. We recommend that teachers read a few of the questions aloud and allow the students, some of whom may not be sure of the definitions of words like fiction, mystery, and biography, to ask

questions if they need to. Teachers can model answering the questions by thinking aloud about what they read in their spare time. This procedure might add a few minutes to the administration time, but would probably improve the accuracy of the students' answers.

For those questions that request an author, title, or topic, explain that students only have to give one answer, but encourage them to give all three if they can remember.

Scoring

Activities. The Activities questions are coded according to frequency (How often do you...?) on a scale of 1 to 4. They are scored as follows: 1 = Almost never; 2 = About once a month; 3 = About once a week; 4 = Almost every day. The minimum score a student can receive is 5. The maximum score is 20.

School Reading. The School Reading questions are coded according to whether students' reading is consistent with what is being taught in the classroom. This section was developed to see how aware the student was of what he was studying in school as well as how well he understood the format of the questionnaire.

If an answer is consistent, it receives 1 point. For example, assuming that

science is being taught in the classroom at the time this survey is administered, the student should circle "Yes" to the question "Did you read a science book or a science textbook for school last week?" This answer would receive 1 point. If the student wrote in the title, author, or topic of the science book, that answer would receive 1 point. A "No" answer would receive 0. If the student failed to write in a title, author, or topic, the answer would receive a 0.

Consistency is also examined by questions about frequency, such as "How often do you read a science book or science textbook for school?" Assuming again that science is being taught in the classroom, the student would receive a 1 for circling "About once a week" or "Almost every day." A student with the same instruction who circles "Almost never" or "About once a month" would receive 0.

The minimum score a student can receive is 0. The maximum score is 9.

Reading for Personal Interest. Questions about books read for personal interest in the past week are scored: 0 = No; 1 = Yes without a title given; 2 = Yes with a title.

Questions about frequency are scored: 0 = circled 1 or 2 and wrote title; 0 = circled 3 or 4 and failed to

write title; 1 = circled 1 or 2 and failed to write title; 2 = circled 3 or 4 and wrote title.

The minimum score a student can receive is 0. The maximum score is 30.

Interpretation

The results of the Reading Activity Inventory can be used to plan instruction for individual students and for whole classes.

For example, a student who does not read outside of school but does go to the movies a lot might be motivated to read by books that retell the plots of his or her favorite movies.

If, on the other hand, the RAI results show that students have little experience following written directions, a teacher might plan a project in which students do something like build a model town or record a videotape, for which they would follow printed instructions. They could then have a companion project in which they themselves write directions to be used by other students.

READING ACTIVITY INVENTORY

Directions: We are interested in knowing about your activities and in finding out how often you do them. Circle the answers to some of the questions, and write the answers to the others.

Practice Questions

1. Do you have a first name?
(Circle only one.)

No..... 1
Yes..... 2

If yes, write your first name.

First name:

2. How often do you tell another person your first name?
(Circle only one.)

Almost never..... 1
About once a month.... 2
About once a week..... 3
Almost every day..... 4

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR ACTIVITIES

1. How often do you listen to music?

Almost never..... 1
About once a month.... 2
About once a week..... 3
Almost every day..... 4

2. How often do you watch television?

Almost never..... 1
About once a month.... 2
About once a week..... 3
Almost every day..... 4

3. How often do you play outside?

Almost never..... 1
About once a month.... 2
About once a week..... 3
Almost every day..... 4

4. How often do you go to the movies?

Almost never..... 1
About once a month.... 2
About once a week..... 3
Almost every day..... 4

5. How often do you do chores at home?

Almost never..... 1
About once a month.... 2
About once a week..... 3
Almost every day..... 4

QUESTIONS ABOUT SCHOOL READING

Directions: In this section, think about reading you do for school and for homework. Include textbooks and other books in your answers.

6. Did you read a science book or science textbook for school last week? (Circle only one.)

No..... 1

Yes..... 2

If yes, write in the title, author, or specific topic that you read about.

Science book title/author/topic:

7. How often do you read a science book or science textbook for school?

Almost never..... 1

About once a month..... 2

About once a week..... 3

Almost every day..... 4

8. Did you read a book of literature or fiction last week for school? (Circle only one.)

No..... 1

Yes..... 2

If yes, write in the title, author, or the specific topic that you read about.

Fiction book title/author/topic:

9. How often do you read a book of literature or fiction for school?

Almost never..... 1

About once a month..... 2

About once a week..... 3

Almost every day..... 4

10. Did you read a book about history or a history textbook last week for school? (Circle only one.)

No..... 1

Yes..... 2

If yes, write in the title, author, or the specific topic that you read about.

History book title/author/topic:

11. How often do you read a book about history or a history textbook for school?

Almost never..... 1

About once a month..... 2

About once a week..... 3

Almost every day..... 4

QUESTIONS ABOUT READING FOR YOUR OWN ENJOYMENT

Directions: In this section, think about books that you read for your own interest that are not assigned for school or homework.

12. Did you read a fiction book like a mystery or an adventure last week for your own interest? (Circle only one.)

- No..... 1
- Yes..... 2

If yes, write in the title, author, or specific topic you read about.

Book title/author/topic:

13. How often do you read a fiction book like a mystery or an adventure for your own interest? (Circle only one.)

- Almost never..... 1
- About once a month..... 2
- About once a week..... 3
- Almost every day.....4

14. Did you read a sports book last week for your own interest? (Circle only one.)

- No..... 1
- Yes..... 2

If yes, write in title, author, or specific topic you read about.

Book title/author/topic:

15. How often do you read sports books for your own interest? (Circle only one.)

- Almost never..... 1
- About once a month..... 2
- About once a week..... 3
- Almost every day..... 4

16. Did you read a nature book last week for your own interest? (Circle only one.)

- No..... 1
- Yes..... 2

If yes, write in the title, author, or specific topic you read about.

Book title/author/topic:

17. How often do you read a nature book for your own interest? (Circle only one.)

- Almost never..... 1
- About once a month..... 2
- About once a week..... 3
- Almost every day..... 4

18. Did you read a romance book last week for your own interest? (Circle only one.)

No..... 1
Yes..... 2

If yes, write title, author, or specific topic you read about.

Book title/author/topic:

19. How often do you read a romance book for your own interest? (Circle only one.)

Almost never..... 1
About once a month..... 2
About once a week..... 3
Almost every day..... 4

20. Did you read a biography last week for your own interest? (Circle only one.)

No..... 1
Yes..... 2

If yes, write in the title, author, or specific topic you read about.

Book title/author/topic:

21. How often do you read biographies for your own interest? (Circle only one.)

Almost never..... 1
About one a month..... 2
About once a week..... 3
Almost every day..... 4

22. Did you read a comic book or magazine last week for your own interest? (Circle only one.)

No..... 1
Yes..... 2

If yes, write in the title, author, or specific topic that you read about.

Book title/author/topic:

23. How often do you read comic books and magazines for your own interest? (Circle only one.)

Almost never..... 1
About once a month..... 2
About once a week..... 3
Almost every day..... 4

24. Did you read any other kind of book last week for your own interest that was not mentioned? (Circle only one.)

No..... 1
Yes..... 2

If yes, write in the title, author, or specific topic that you read about.

Book title/author/topic:

25. How often do you read this kind of book?
(Circle only one.)

Almost never..... 1
About once a month..... 2
About once a week..... 3
Almost every day..... 4

26. How often do you read written directions
or instructions that tell you how to do
something you enjoy, like a putting a
model airplane together, or baking a cake,
or some similar activity? (Circle only one.)

Almost never..... 1
About one a month..... 2
About once a week..... 3
Almost never..... 4

NRRC National
Reading Research
Center

318 Aderhold, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30602-7125
2102 J. M. Patterson Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742