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AUTHOR   Kunes, Shirley; Gilman, David
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ABSTRACT
                A study examined whether allowing students to make choices
in their reading program significantly increased their self concepts as
readers and the value they place on reading. The Motivation to Read Profile
was administered to 20 fifth-grade students from a variety of socioeconomic
families. After allowing the students to make choices in their reading
programs, a posttest was given. Pretest and posttest scores were compared on
self concept as a reader, the value placed on reading, and combined self
concept and value scores. A significant positive difference was found between
the self-concept scores and between the combined scores, but no significant
difference was found between the value scores. (Contains 2 tables of data and
8 references. An appendix contains Motivation to Read Profile scores,
self-concept scores, value scores, and combined scores.) (Author/NKA)

DEVELOPING ENGAGED READERS

Indiana State University

Shirley Kunes and David Gilman

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ABSTRACT

This study was to show that allowing students to make choices in their reading program significantly increases their self-concept as readers and the value they place on reading. The Motivation to Read Profile was administered to twenty fifth-grade students. After allowing the students to make choices in their reading programs, a posttest was given. Pretest and posttest scores were compared on self-concept as a reader, the value placed on reading, and combined self-concept and value scores. A significant positive difference was found between the self-concept scores and between the combined scores, but no significant difference was found between the value scores.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Reading to children from a carefully chosen source can be the best part of a teacher's school day. An animated reader with a good book is able to incite laughter and awe. Magic spells can be cast upon the listeners. However, by the time students reach the upper elementary grades, creating that magic becomes increasingly difficult whether students are being read to or reading themselves. By that time, many students seem to have lost interest in reading.

In this era of television, computers, and video games, students spend more and more time in front of these gadgets and less and less time reading books. Reading can't seem to compete with the excitement and the powerful impact of modern technology. It is nearly impossible for today's children to escape that impact when television comes into 99% of homes and computers into 35% of homes and nearly all of the schools (Brinkley, 1997). According to Koolstra and Voort (1996), television viewing has led to less favorable attitudes toward reading and a reduction in leisure time reading. In addition, watching television frequently was found to result in a diminished ability of children to concentrate on reading. Thus, we must realize that the hypnotic aspects of television viewing and interactive computer games does not serve as an acceptable substitute for the rewards and benefits of reading.

Suitably, the National Reading Research Center has stated that "creating interest in reading" has been identified by teachers as the top priority in reading (O'Flahavan, Gambrell, Guthrie, Stahl, & Alvermann, 1992). Furthermore, Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, (1996) have found that highly motivated readers tend to have more positive concepts of themselves as readers than readers with low motivation to read. Their research, also, shows that

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students who perceive themselves as "capable and competent readers" are more likely to outperform those who do not; they tend to create their own literacy learning opportunities. They become engaged readers who want to read and read to discover. Correspondingly, Gambrell (1996) defines engaged readers as "motivated, knowledgeable, strategic, and socially interactive." They are students who choose reading over television, computers, and video games, and they read for a variety of reasons. Knowledge from previous experiences is used to gain new understandings from texts. Engaged readers interact with the book and the classroom community, and they learn to use strategies such as prediction and critical thinking in their reading. These are students who will become lifelong readers and learners. Thus, it is vital that teachers find a way to develop engaged readers.

According to Hornsby and Parry (1986), teachers must show children that they can choose to read. They need to be aware that reading is "a worthwhile choice." Hornsby and Parry believe that motivation-to-read problems are nearly eliminated when students are allowed to choose their own books. In a later study, Harste, Short, and Burke (1988) state that students who choose their own books have a feeling of ownership and a responsibility for their own learning. It is human nature that people will attend more willingly and carefully to things they have chosen themselves. When someone is involved in making a decision, they are likely to "be more enterprising, enthusiastic, industrious, and persevering (Hornsby & Parry, 1986)."

Perhaps, then, one way of developing students who are engaged readers would be to allow them to make choices in their reading program. Forming literature circles based on the students' selections of their own books allows students to exercise self-choice. Furthermore, students can determine their own reading goals and culminating activities through self-choice. If allowing choices in their reading program produces significant increases in their motivation to

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Teachers are continually asking how they can get students to read. What makes them want to read? How can a teacher subdue the power of today's modern technology? One answer to some of these questions may be to let students make their own choices in their reading program, thereby, causing them to become engaged readers who want to read and read to discover.

Can the self-concept of readers with low motivation to read be improved by allowing them to make choices in their reading program? Can the value students place on reading be improved by allowing those choices in their reading program? These questions can be addressed by testing the following hypotheses: Allowing students to make choices in their reading program causes them to increase their self-concept as readers. Allowing students to make choices in their reading program causes them to increase their value of reading. Allowing students to make choices in their reading program causes an increase in the combined scores of self-concept and value.

METHODOLOGY

Twenty fifth-grade students from a variety of socioeconomic families were used as the sample for this study. A normal range of reading levels, IQs, and interests were represented by this sample making them fairly representative of the total fifth-grade population.

Data was collected by giving the Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) Reading Survey (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996) as a pretest. After administering the MRP, a short summary of six different books was given. The students chose the book they wanted to read, thus, forming Literature Circles of all those selecting a particular book. Before beginning to read, the students met in their Literature Circles to make predictions about the book. Next, they set their own goal for the amount of reading they would do for the next day. Each subsequent day, the group met briefly to discuss what they had read the day before and to set a goal for the next day's reading. Most days they would be asked to do a response activity, such as a web of a character in the book or a response to an open-ended question about the story (Harste, Short, & Burke, 1988). Upon completion of a book, the students could choose a culminating activity. Drawing a picture of their favorite part of the book, making a triarama of scenes in the book, writing a response to the book in a literature log, doing mind mapping, and making an excitement map of the story were possible culminating activities. Then, each student could pick a new book from the classroom sets or go to the library to pick a book. Most of the students formed new groups based on their book choices, and occasionally, a student would choose to read alone. After selecting their own books for three weeks, the Motivation to Read Profile Reading Survey was readministered to collect posttest data.

Two basic aspects of reading motivation are measured by the MRP Reading Survey.

Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, and Mazzoni (1996) designed the instrument to measure the students' self-concept as readers and the value they place on reading. Reliability coefficients for the MRP are reported by the creators as .68 for the self-concept portion and .70 for the value portion, reflecting a moderately high reliability for the survey.

This difference study was analyzed using a paired t-test to compare the means of the pretest scores and the posttest scores of the self-concept component, the value component, and the combined self-concept and value components.

RESULTS

Several tables and graphs are used to illustrate the results of the study. Table I shows the mean scores and the standard deviations of the pretest and the posttest scores for the self-concept portion, the value portion, and the combined self-concept and value portion. In each portion of the MRP Reading Survey, the mean scores increased from the pretest to the posttest. However, only the self-concept and combined scores showed a significant difference.

Table I

Results of the Study

Self-Concept

	Mean	SD
Pretest	28.3	3.757
Posttest	30.3	4.131

Value

	Mean	SD
Pretest	30.6	4.639
Posttest	31.8	3.488

Combined Scores of Self-Concept and Value

|	Mean	SD
Pretest	58.9	6.851
Posttest	62.1	5.476

Table II shows the statistical analysis of the scores. The t-value of each portion of the MRP Reading Survey and the level of significance for a one tailed test is shown. Both the self-concept scores and the combined scores were significant at the .05 level.

Table II

Statistical Analysis of Hypotheses

Compare	t	Significance
Self-Concept	2.18	.021
Value	1.52	.073
Combined	2.3	.017

Using the mean scores for each portion of the MRP Reading Survey, graphs show a visual representation of the differences between the pretests and the posttest.

Self-Concept Scores

Pretest Mean   Posttest Mean

Value Scores

Pretest Mean   Posttest Mean
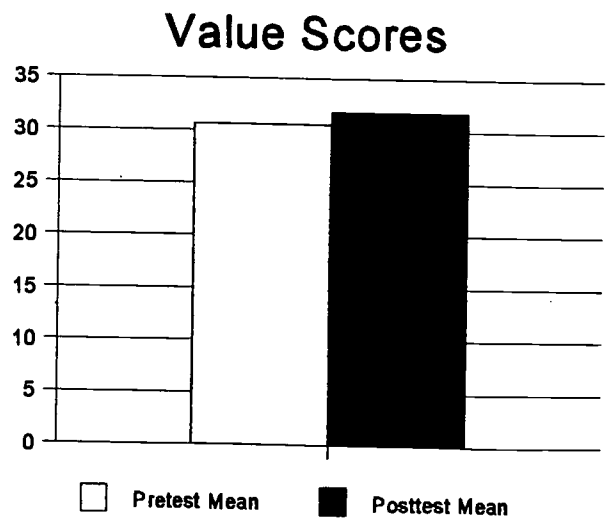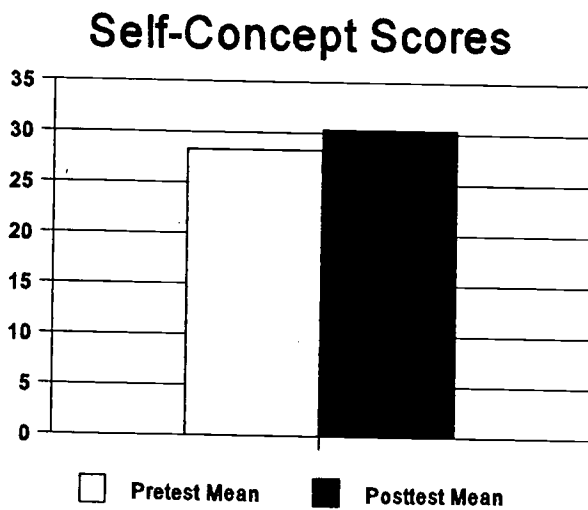
DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, & RECOMMENDATIONS

A significant positive difference was found between the pretest scores and the posttest scores on the self-concept portion of the MRP Reading Survey. Thus, the directional hypothesis, allowing students to make choices in their reading program causes them to increase their self-concept as readers, can be accepted. Pretest and posttest scores on the value portion of the MRP showed a difference but not a significant difference, and the directional hypothesis, allowing students to make choices in their reading program causes them to increase the value of reading, failed to be proven. Finally, a significant positive difference was found between the pretest scores and the posttest scores for the combined scores of self-concept and value. Thus, the directional hypothesis, allowing students to make choices in their reading program causes and increase in the combined scores of self-concept and value, can be accepted.

In retrospect, some problems were apparent in the study. The most significant problem was the time frame involved. Three weeks is not a sufficient amount of time to thoroughly develop a study of changes in reading attitudes. A longer time frame could have altered the results in either direction. Also, the MRP Reading Survey has a moderately high reliability factor, but it is a self reporting tool. It can only be reliable if students fill it out honestly and carefully. Even then, different results could be obtained on different days depending on the attitude of the student (Gambrell et al., 1996). Despite the problems, it is hopeful that this study will serve as a classroom tool to motivate students to read and to cause them to become engaged readers.

Future action plans would include continuing a study of choices in reading over a longer period of time. Administering the pretest at the beginning of the year, allowing the students to make choices in their reading program, and administering the posttest at the end of the year

would be more effective. Another interesting study would be a correlation study. In the individual tests, the self-concept scores were significant, but the value scores were not. However, the combined scores were more significant than either of the individual portions. Possibly, this indicates some relationship between the self-concept scores and the value scores.

Motivation to read continues to be a top concern for classroom teachers. Allowing students to make choices in their reading programs appears to be one way of increasing that motivation.

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APPENDIX

MOTIVATION TO READ PROFILE SCORES

	Pretest Scores			Posttest Scores		
	Self-Concept	Value	Combined	Self-Concept	Value	Combined
Student 1	23	35	58	26	35	61
Student 2	31	25	56	30	25	55
Student 3	31	34	65	36	33	69
Student 4	29	31	60	31	33	64
Student 5	29	31	60	35	34	69
Student 6	28	30	58	30	32	62
Student 7	26	21	47	28	27	55
Student 8	31	31	62	38	36	74
Student 9	23	35	58	24	37	61
Student 10	30	30	60	28	33	61
Student 11	22	26	48	28	27	55
Student 12	23	25	48	24	29	53
Student 13	27	31	58	34	32	66
Student 14	34	36	70	33	29	62
Student 15	36	36	72	32	30	62
Student 16	26	32	58	36	33	69
Student 17	32	33	65	25	34	59
Student 18	29	31	60	30	29	59
Student 19	28	22	50	31	30	61
Student 20	28	37	65	27	38	65

Motivation to Read Profile

Reading survey

Name_____ Date_____

Sample 1: I am in _____.
- ☐ Second grade ☐ Fifth grade
- ☐ Third grade ☐ Sixth grade
- ☐ Fourth grade

Sample 2: I am a _____.
- ☐ boy
- ☐ girl

1. My friends think I am _____.
- ☐ a very good reader
- ☐ a good reader
- ☐ an OK reader
- ☐ a poor reader

2. Reading a book is something I like to do.
- ☐ Never
- ☐ Not very often
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often

3. I read _____.
- ☐ not as well as my friends
- ☐ about the same as my friends
- ☐ a little better than my friends
- ☐ a lot better than my friends

4. My best friends think reading is _____.
- ☐ really fun
- ☐ fun
- ☐ OK to do
- ☐ no fun at all

5. When I come to a word I don't know, I can _____.
- ☐ almost always figure it out
- ☐ sometimes figure it out
- ☐ almost never figure it out
- ☐ never figure it out

6. I tell my friends about good books I read.
- ☐ I never do this.
- ☐ I almost never do this.
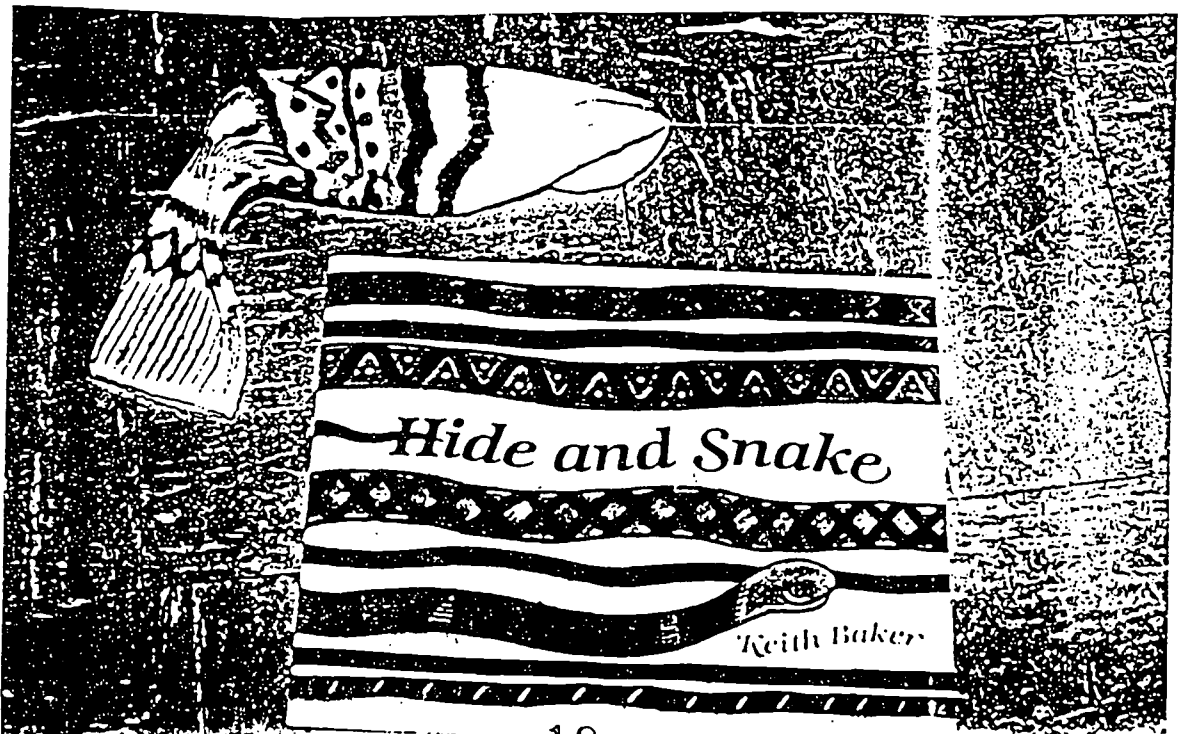- ☐ I do this some of the time.
- ☐ I do this a lot.

(continued)

7. When I am reading by myself, I understand _____.
  - ☐ almost everything I read
  - ☐ some of what I read
  - ☐ almost none of what I read
  - ☐ none of what I read

8. People who read a lot are _____.
  - ☐ very interesting
  - ☐ interesting
  - ☐ not very interesting
  - ☐ boring

9. I am _____.
  - ☐ a poor reader
  - ☐ an OK reader
  - ☐ a good reader
  - ☐ a very good reader

10. I think libraries are _____.
  - ☐ a great place to spend time
  - ☐ an interesting place to spend time
  - ☐ an OK place to spend time
  - ☐ a boring place to spend time

11. I worry about what other kids think about my reading _____.
  - ☐ every day
  - ☐ almost every day
  - ☐ once in a while
  - ☐ never

12. Knowing how to read well is _____.
  - ☐ not very important
  - ☐ sort of important
  - ☐ important
  - ☐ very important

13. When my teacher asks me a question about what I have read, I _____.
  - ☐ can never think of an answer
  - ☐ have trouble thinking of an answer
  - ☐ sometimes think of an answer
  - ☐ always think of an answer

14. I think reading is _____.
  - ☐ a boring way to spend time
  - ☐ an OK way to spend time
  - ☐ an interesting way to spend time
  - ☐ a great way to spend time

Assessing motivation to read

15. Reading is _____.
- ☐ very easy for me
- ☐ kind of easy for me
- ☐ kind of hard for me
- ☐ very hard for me

16. When I grow up I will spend _____.
- ☐ none of my time reading
- ☐ very little of my time reading
- ☐ some of my time reading
- ☐ a lot of my time reading

17. When I am in a group talking about stories, I _____.
- ☐ almost never talk about my ideas
- ☐ sometimes talk about my ideas
- ☐ almost always talk about my ideas
- ☐ always talk about my ideas

18. I would like for my teacher to read books out loud to the class _____.
- ☐ every day
- ☐ almost every day
- ☐ once in a while
- ☐ never

19. When I read out loud I am a _____.
- ☐ poor reader
- ☐ OK reader
- ☐ good reader
- ☐ very good reader

20. When someone gives me a book for a present, I feel _____.
- ☐ very happy
- ☐ sort of happy
- ☐ sort of unhappy
- ☐ unhappy

Hide and Snake

Keith Baker

Self-Concept Scores

t-tests for Paired Samples

Variable	Number of pairs	Corr	2-tail Sig	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
POSTTEST				30.3000	4.131	.924
	20	.462	.040			
PRETEST				28.3000	3.757	.840

Paired Differences Mean	SD	SE of Mean	t-value	df	2-tail Sig
2.0000	4.104	.918	2.18	19	.042
95% CI (.079, 3.921)					

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Value Scores

t-tests for Paired Samples

Variable	Number of pairs	Corr	2-tail Sig	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
POSTTEST				31.8000	3.488	.780
	20	.655	.002			
PRETEST				30.6000	4.639	1.037

Paired Differences						
Mean	SD	SE of Mean		t-value	df	2-tail Sig
1.2000	3.533	.790		1.52	19	.145
95% CI (-.454, 2.854)						

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Combined Scores

t-tests for Paired Samples

Variable	Number of pairs	Corr	2-tail Sig	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
POSTTEST				62.1000	5.476	1.225
	20	.511	.021			
PRETEST				58.9000	6.851	1.532

Paired Differences						
Mean	SD	SE of Mean	t-value	df	2-tail Sig
3.2000	6.212	1.389	2.30	19	.033
95% CI (.293, 6.107)					

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Position: PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION

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