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ABSTRACT

This study describes a program designed to increase reading practice at home and at school. The targeted population consisted of elementary students from separate river communities located in the Midwest. Evidence for the existence of the problem included teacher observation of apathy to reading practice, student attitude surveys to gauge students' interest in reading practice, and parental observations to measure students' reading practice. The parental observation will also reflect family value toward literacy activities. Analysis of probable causes was evidenced by teachers' observation of apathy towards reading practice. Teachers noted students did not demonstrate positive attitudes toward reading and that families were not involved in their children's academic learning. A review of solution strategies suggested by cited authors, combined with the analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of three categories of intervention: motivational activities for reading practice; communication for families about literacy; and a TV/media awareness plan. Post intervention data indicated an increase in motivation to practice reading at home and at school. Communication with families about literacy and the TV/media awareness plan heightened the awareness of the importance of reading practice at home. Family supported activities that bolster independent reading in the home also increased. (Contains 19 references and 8 tables of data. Appendixes contain a family newsletter, and a television "tune out" form.) (Author/RS)

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INCREASING INDEPENDENT READING PRACTICE THROUGH FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AND MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES

Angela W. Clark
Karen L. McDonnell

An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University

Field-Based Master's Program

Chicago, Illinois

May 2001

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Increasing Reading Practice at Home and at School Through Family Involvement and Motivational Strategies

Angela W. Clark and Karen L. McDonnell

May 2001

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This study describes a program designed to increase reading practice at home and at school. The targeted population consisted of elementary students from separate river communities located in the Midwest. Evidence for the existence of the problem included teacher observation of apathy to reading practice, student attitude surveys to gauge students' interest in reading practice, and parental observations to measure students' reading practice. The parental observation will also reflect family value toward literacy activities.

Analysis of probable causes was evidenced by teachers' observation of apathy towards reading practice. Teachers noted students did not demonstrate positive attitudes toward reading and that families were not involved in their children's academic learning.

A review of solution strategies suggested by cited authors, combined with the analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of three categories of intervention: motivational activities for reading practice; communication for families about literacy; and a TV/media awareness plan.

Post intervention data indicated an increase in motivation to practice reading at home and at school. Communication with families about literacy and the TV/media awareness plan heightened the awareness of the importance of reading practice at home. Family supported activities that bolster independent reading in the home also increased.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

Do today's students, who live in the technological world of the twenty-first century, understand the benefit and gratification of independent reading? Students in the targeted kindergarten and sixth grade classes displayed apathy towards the value of independent reading that interfered with their reading performance. Evidence for the existence of the problem included teacher anecdotal records, parent observation checklists, and student attitude surveys.

Local Context of the Problem

The targeted schools, School A and School B, were located in separate towns and states, but both were located on the banks of the Mississippi River and were approximately 40 miles from a large metropolitan center. The economics of both communities was influenced by river commerce.

The student enrollment for School A was 430 students with student ethnicity showing 92% Caucasian, 2% Hispanic, 1% Native American, 4% African American, and 1% Asian American. The average daily attendance for School A was 96%, with 31% of students receiving free breakfast/lunch and less than 1% receiving reduced breakfast/ lunch rates. Busing was provided for 185 students on a daily basis.

School A had 33 certified staff members with 25 of those staff members holding a Bachelor of Arts or a Bachelor of Science degree. Eight teachers held advanced degrees. Teaching experience at School A ranged from one year to 34 years, with the average number years of teaching experience being 15 years. Non-certified staff accounted for 34 employees and included custodians, school nurse, food service, personnel secretaries, and classroom assistants.

School A's facility was built in 1957 as a 25,000 square foot one story brick building. An addition was completed in 1999 with an additional 25,000 square feet. The building housed 18 regular education classrooms, seven special education classrooms, two supportive reading/math strategist classrooms, a computer lab connected to the Learning Resource Center, one gymnasium and a commons/lunch room. Additionally, School A housed a music room and two practice rooms that served the district, three conference rooms for special education support staff, and an office area that included a nurse's station, guidance room, conference room, the principal's office, and secretarial work space.

School A provided many educational opportunities for students. They included Study Connection, Talented and Gifted program, Supportive Reading and Math, Drug and Alcohol Resistance Education (DARE), Human Growth and Development, School Resource Officer, Humanities Enrichment Program (HEP), Peer Reading Buddies, and science enrichment of the Nature Barn and Prairie Awareness. School A was enhanced by the activities of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), a yearly talent show, and a three-year rotation schedule of Fine Arts Day, Science Fair, and Prime-Time Read In.

Issues unique to School A included the passage of a bond referendum in the fall of 1997 for a 25,000 square foot addition. This resulted in the joining of two schools, students, faculties, and families. The blending of two schools presented challenges in scheduling, combining

faculties, and compromising on school improvement goals and philosophies. The larger building resulted in a more impersonal climate for families and staff. School A did not qualify for Title I services that left the school at a disadvantage for serving at risk students.

The student population of School B attended a rural, middle socioeconomic class, middle school located in western Illinois. The school's population consisted of grades 6 through 8 with an enrollment of 205 students. The racial and ethnic background consisted of 98% White non-Hispanic, .4% Black-non Hispanic, .9% Hispanic, and .4% Asian/Pacific Islander.

Twenty-four percent of the middle school's population was reported as low income. Forty-six students received free or reduced lunches. The student daily attendance rate for the school was 96%, with no chronic truants. The student mobility rate was 10%, which was lower than the state average of 18%. The average class size was 23 per class, using heterogeneous grouping.

The middle school's staff consisted of 15 certified full time teachers and one full time guidance counselor. The school shared another five certified teachers with the connected elementary building. Of the 15 full time teachers in the building, only one had a master's degree, and three in the building were working toward their advanced degrees. The full time teachers' experience ranged from one year to twenty-five years. There were four teachers with more than ten years experience. The school also employed 14 classified staff under the positions of teacher assistant, custodian, cook, lunchroom monitor, secretary, and librarian assistant.

The single level structure was built in 1961. Two additions, a covered walkway that joined it to the neighboring elementary building, and a multipurpose room, were added to the building in 1995. The facility consisted of 15 regular classrooms. In addition to the classrooms, the building also housed a kitchen, gymnasium with a stage, two locker rooms, a large Learning

Resource Center, a 30-station computer lab, and an office section for administration and secretarial staff.

The school adopted a middle school philosophy in 1993. This philosophy dictated the schedule and many of the programs that were offered. The school ran on an eight period day with exploratories of art, health, and physical education, and these classes were offered in the morning to allow the core teachers common planning time. Four of the periods were blocked in the morning for flexibility in implementing multidisciplinary unit activities. During the eighth period all of the students watched Channel One News for 10 minutes. Each quarter the students who made the honor roll were given a special privilege such as gift certificate or catered lunch. Additionally, each quarter students who did not earn detentions were taken on a field trip while the remaining students were left behind to attend regular classes.

Many special programs were offered at the middle school with a variety of activities to choose. The students could elect to participate in basketball, track, wrestling, pep club, and volleyball. They were also offered chorus, quiz bowl, band, and student council sponsored dances. The students could also participate in some counseling programs that included study skills, anger management, friendship, and a grief/loss group.

The Surrounding Community

The community of School A was founded at the turn of the century by the lumber industry. The community became a boomtown in the 1920's with the influence of the lumber mills and the railroad. The community was supported by industries that evolved from the mills until the late 1970's when many industries either scaled back or closed their doors. From the 1970's to the 1990's the community's population decreased from approximately 40,000 to 30,000. In the 1990's an influx of retail stores and service industries occurred which contributed

to the economic survival of the community. Commerce that supported the community included manufacturing, construction, wholesale and retail sales, finance, insurance and real estate sales, service jobs, and government jobs. The average hourly rate for selected occupations in this community was \$9.00 an hour.

The community of School A had an average household income of \$38,000, with 98% of the population Caucasian. Households with children made up approximately 50% of the population, and the medium home value was \$41,589. The educational attainment showed 76% of the population held a high school diploma, 13% held a bachelor's degree, and less than 4% held graduate degrees.

Community A offered a symphony orchestra, a 1,000-passenger paddle-wheel riverboat, nationally recognized architecture, and was home to 12 "Fortune 500" companies. This community also offered air service transportation as well as barge and rail service for industries. Three hospitals were available within a one-hour drive with a major university hospital within a two-hour drive of Community A. The number of religious congregations in the community totaled 48 with 46 of the institutions being Protestant, one Catholic congregation, and one denomination classified as other.

Higher education available in Community A included a four-year college and a community college. The public school system had a high school, an alternative high school, two junior high schools, and six elementary buildings. Private parochial education was available for pre-school through high school. There were six preschools in town that were all privately owned institutions.

Issues unique to the community of School A included the subject of declining enrollment. Enrollment decreased due to population reduction that was a direct result of local industries

closing or scaling back. Open enrollment for families who petitioned to send their children to school districts outside of Community A was another factor in decreased enrollment. Funding from state programs and state mandated programs affected how this school community set their district goals and improvement plans.

The middle school in Community B was a predominately rural city located adjacent to the Mississippi River, approximately 25 miles from a large metropolitan area.

The city began as a small, Dutch settlement. The community still celebrated its strong Dutch heritage each May 1 with a large festival. The town had recently erected an authentic, working windmill made partially in the Netherlands and finished in the community. A committee of volunteers, from the town, ran the windmill. There were two homes that were known to be on the path of the Underground Railroad and several more outside the city limits.

Residents in Community B were employed in a variety of occupations; the major ones were farming-related occupations, industry, skilled labor, and private and public service occupations. The major employers in Community B were link chain manufacturing with 400 employees, animal feed supplement with 95 employees, metal stamping with 85 employees, grain handling with 27 employees, and metal fabricators with 25 employees.

Community B has an abundance of religious congregations. There were ten places of worship located within the city limits. Five of these churches were Dutch Reformed with two of them being daughter churches and one a sister church. The remaining five were Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, and an Assembly of God. One K-12 Christian school also represented this community. The large, conservative church community had a heavy influence on the policies and procedures on the schools.

The crime rate for Community B was very low for a community of 4,000. The crime index for 1998 was 76 and 170 for 1997. The index tracked crimes of Class I versus other communities with comparable populations. This index indicated that there were two crimes per 100,000 citizens in a year. The county sheriff stated that the community suffered from a rash of car thefts in 1997, and that year was the highest crime rate the community had ever experienced.

Community B relied on its neighbor across the river for scholastic and medical facilities. The neighboring community possessed two, small medical facilities. Those facilities offered Air Vac service to a university hospital approximately 90 miles away for more serious incidents. Citizens of Community B also had access to a community college and a private, four-year institution of higher learning.

The school district of Community B was a consolidated, community unit district. Two communities made up this district; one community lay seven miles to the south, with a population of 850, and the other was a small, unincorporated community of 300. The district included two elementary buildings: one K-5 building was located in Community B, and the other K-8 grade school was located in the town seven miles to the south. The middle and high schools were located inside the city limits. The district enrollment for 1999-2000 was 1,280 students.

Several programs were in place to support the education of the students in Community B. A foundation to support excellence in education offered mini-grants to any of the schools in the district and supported many non-athletic endeavors. D.A.R.E., Young Authors, music boosters, athletic boosters, artists in residence, and PTO were other district programs of Community B.

Decreasing enrollment and a heavy dependence on state funding was an issue facing the school district. Another issue of concern was a new, maximum-security prison being constructed

in the school district directly to the north. The administrators were concerned that the district would be receiving many transient students as a result of the new prison.

Not only was the prison an issue, but the community also was quite concerned with the school district's low math scores on the recent ISAT tests. The local newspaper reported extensively on the district's low math scores that caused quite a bit of parental concern.

Finally, the school board had recently passed a resolution to allow a baseball program. They were then faced with the task of finding the means to fund a facility, purchase uniforms and equipment, and hire coaches for boys' and girls' teams.

National Context

Low reading scores and a lack of motivation for independent reading has consistently concerned educators at every grade level. Students have an abundance of alternative activities available instead of reading. As a result, many parents rely heavily on television and other electronic media to entertain their children. Many children are left without the adult interaction that supports the development of the necessary literacy skills. Teachers across the nation strive to develop students who read independently for enjoyment. Students who read for pleasure consistently score higher on reading assessments (National Council of Family Literacy, 1999).

The socioeconomic level of the families appears to have an impact on whether students choose to read independently. Mikulecky (1996, b) interviewed several low-income families on literacy in the home. Typical comments from the interviews reflected frustration on the part of the parents understanding how to read to their children. He wrote:

I don't know what to do when I open the book. I mean I don't know what to do first, second, third, and so on. I wish someone would tell me what to do because I'm fed up with teachers saying: "Read to your child." (pg. 4).

Professionals in the field of reading are in agreement that families from low-income may not have the knowledge or experience to read with their children. This in turn puts the children from economically deprived families at a disadvantage among their peers from middle or upper income families, who seem to have a better understanding of the importance of family supported reading habits. A strong, positive relation between educational success and a family's economic status is apparent (National Council of Family Literacy, 1999).

Another factor that influences independent reading is the vast amount of time children spend watching television and participating in other electronic media activities. A warning was issued by the Advisory Panel on the decline of the Scholastic Aptitude Test on the alarming amount of time children spend in front of the television. Children have spent more time watching television than they have spent in school by the time they are 16. "Children ages 9 to 14 spend more than 20% of their waking hours watching TV, but only 1% of that time reading" (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1993, as cited in *The National Children's Book and Literacy Alliance*, 1998, pg.1). Students who noted watching fewer than four hours of television each day exhibited a higher average reading proficiency than those who watched more television. A negative relationship was noted between the amount of television viewing and reading proficiency (National Council of Family Literacy, 1999).

Parental involvement is critical for creating successful, independent readers. Children's brain development can be accelerated by reading aloud to them; however, only 50% of the nation's children are read to regularly by their parents (*The National Children's Book and Literacy Alliance*, 1998). Parent involvement can demonstrate that reading is enjoyable. Having adults and children, who care about each other, read together can create a pleasurable experience for children (*The National Children's Book and Literacy Alliance*, 1998). Parents should begin

reading aloud to their children from infancy on and they should not stop even when their children become independent readers. At this point, it is important that parents read books at and above their children's independent reading level because children's listening skills often exceed their reading levels. Listening to books above age level can strengthen children's vocabulary and improve their writing skills.

Along with parental involvement, motivation and attitude toward reading are essential to reading achievement. Teachers have long realized that motivation is at the center of many of the difficulties they have in teaching reading (Gambrell, 1996). Creating an interest in reading is key to children's reading success. Teachers strive hard to create a motivation to read in their classrooms and provide positive reading experiences, but students who have difficulties reading will suffer from low self-esteem. This low self-esteem will in turn diminish their motivation to read. It can become disheartening for students who have difficulty with reading to watch their peers successfully attain reading skills. "About 10 million children have difficulties learning to read" (National Council of Family Literacy, 1998, pg. 13).

Student achievement in reading is affected by many influences. One of these influences is the economic status of the family, which can impact reading interest and success. Parental support, in terms of modeling and encouraging independent reading, is another influence vital to reading mastery and motivation. Finally, television and other technological distractions can affect literacy development. Families and educators need to promote reading for leisure as a pleasurable experience. By instilling a positive reading attitude, a student is more likely to develop a life long love of learning.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

Do today's students, who live in the technological world of the Twenty-First Century, understand the benefit and gratification of reading practice? Students today are not engaging in sufficient reading practice. For the purposes of this research paper reading practice will be defined as reading independently, reading with a parent, partner or peer, or being read to by a parent, teacher or peer. Reading practice may occur both at home and at school. Students in the targeted kindergarten and sixth grade classes displayed apathy toward the value of reading that interfered with their reading performance.

In order to document the extent of lack of reading practice, checklists, surveys, and teacher observations were recorded. Parent checklists were administered to note the amount of reading practice attained outside of the school setting. Parents were asked to observe student reading practice and report on their values concerning literacy. Students filled out surveys indicating how they view their reading ability, the value of reading and the amount of time they spent practicing reading. Anecdotal records included information on student attitude and reading practice within the classroom setting. The student attitude survey and parental checklist were administered on the first week of a 14-week intervention period and again at the end of the period to document growth. Teacher observations were recorded throughout the intervention

period. A summary of the baseline data, collected through parental observation checklists and student attitude surveys, is presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1 depicts the results of the parental observation survey for kindergarten. Survey questions were grouped to reflect two central themes: how much value families place on reading, and how families perceive their children's reading skills. The first three survey responses in Table 1 address family value toward reading. Less than half of families reported reading with their children at least 20 minutes every day. Twenty-nine percent of families reported their children asked to receive a book as a gift or to purchase a book for leisure reading. An additional 23% of families responded that they often engaged in reading together as a family. The last three questions on the parental survey addressed the parents' perception of their children's reading abilities. Twenty-nine percent of parents responded that their children often chose reading over other leisure activities. In addition, 70% of parents responded that their children often displayed confidence in their reading or listening abilities. Finally, 70% responded that their children displayed a positive attitude toward reading or listening to a story.

Table 1

Kindergarten Parent Survey Pretest Data for Attitudes Toward Reading at Home

	Everyday	Once or Twice a Week	Once or Twice a Month	Never
Read for 20 Min	41%	52%	5%	0%
Books as Gifts	29%	58%	11%	0%
Leisure as Family	23%	58%	17%	0%
Leisure Reading	29%	52%	11%	5%
Confidence	70%	17%	11%	0%
Positive Attitude	70%	23%	5%	0%

Table 2 depicts the results of the parent observation survey for sixth grade parents. Survey questions were again grouped to reflect two central themes: how much value families place on reading; and how families perceive their children's reading skills. The first four survey responses in Table 2 addressed family value toward reading. Less than 20% of families reported reading with their children at least 30 minutes per day. Sixteen percent of families reported their children often asked to receive a book as a gift or to purchase a book for leisure reading. Ninety-one percent of families surveyed responded that they viewed reading as important to their children's future. Only 11% of families responded that their children engaged in reading for pleasure over other leisure time activities. The last three questions on the parental survey addressed the parent's perception of their children's reading abilities. Twenty-two percent of families reported having discussions about what their child was reading. A positive attitude toward reading was reported 33% of the time. Furthermore, 47% of parents responded positively to the survey question regarding their perception of their children's confidence in their ability to read.

Table 2

Parental Observation Checklist Responses for Sixth Grade Pretest Data for Reading at Home

	Everyday	Once or Twice a Week	Once or Twice a Month	Never
Reads for 30 Min.	18%	22%	39%	20%
Asks for books	16%	40%	28%	11%
Reading Value	91%	8%	1%	0%
Leisure Reading	11%	28%	42%	20%
Discusses Books	22%	59%	13%	5%
Positive Attitude	33%	44%	20%	1%
Confidence	47%	42%	8%	1%

Table 3 depicts the results of the student reading survey for grade six. Survey questions were grouped to reflect two central themes: how much students value reading and how students perceive their competency in reading. The first five survey responses in figure three address students' value toward reading. Fifty-six percent of students reported reading at least 30 minutes a day at least twice a week. Students reported having read a variety of reading materials at least twice a week. Students responded at a rate of 94%, that reading would be important in their future. An additional 56% of students responded that they discussed what they were reading with family or friends at least twice a week. Students responded positively 16% of the time that peers viewed reading as a desirable trait. The last four questions on the student survey addressed students' perception of their reading competency. Eighty- three percent of students reported that they read a variety of literature. An additional 91% reported that they felt confident in their

ability to read and to comprehend the material. Eighty percent of the student reported that they could explain what they read to a peer with an additional 84% reporting feeling competent in using the library.

Table 3

Student Survey Sixth Grade Pretest Data for Attitude Toward Reading

	Everyday	Once or Twice a Week	Once or Twice a Month	Never
Read for 30 Min.	10%	46%	38%	10%
Read a Variety	18%	65%	18%	1%
Importance	71%	23%	5%	0%
Discuss Reading	10%	46%	26%	20%
Friends Read	16%	38%	33%	13%
Read for Info	23%	41%	30%	6%
Understand	56%	35%	6%	1%
Explain	46%	36%	13%	3%
Library	43%	41%	11%	5%

Table 4 depicted the results of the kindergarten student survey. Survey questions were again grouped to reflect two central themes: how much students value reading and how students view their reading competency. The first five survey responses in Table 4 reflect how much students and their family's value reading. Seventy-six percent of kindergarten students responded that reading was fun, while 33% of students reported being read to every day. Eighty percent of kindergarten students reported enjoying being read to by parents or teacher, and an additional 76% had a designated place in their homes to keep reading materials. Kindergarten students

reported that reading would be important to their future 57% of the time. The last two questions on the kindergarten reading survey related to the students' perception of their reading competency. Sixty-six percent of the students reported that they can retell a favorite part of a book to their family and friends, and only 47% felt comfortable using the library to find good books.

Table 4

Kindergarten Student Reading Survey Pretest Data for Attitude Toward Reading

	Excellent Feelings	Neutral Feelings	Poor Feelings
Reading is Fun	76%	23%	0%
Read Everyday	33%	52%	14%
Like to be Read To	80%	19%	0%
Special Place	76%	19%	4%
Importance	57%	38%	4%
Family and Friends	66%	23%	9%
Library with Family	47%	28%	23%

Probable Causes

Checklists, surveys and teacher observation were sources used to gather information. Also an analysis of the context presented in Chapter 1 was conducted to determine further information.

In analyzing the context, it was observed that an overuse of the Accelerated Reader (AR) program had been used in the sixth grade reading program. This extreme emphasis on AR in the lower elementary grades has caused some students to burn out on reading for leisure.

Sixth graders also viewed reading as an undesirable social trait as indicated on the student attitude survey. Students displayed embarrassment at having to bring a book to class. They also were hesitant to show too much enthusiasm when discussing books read with their peers.

Both the kindergarten and the sixth grade classroom libraries were insufficient with appropriate or adequate reading materials. The lack of quality reading material close at hand hindered some students from engaging in reading practice who might have otherwise picked up a book in their spare time.

The researchers were also concerned that parents were not as involved in their children's academic learning and were not supportive of the reading process. Families were involved in many outside activities that interfered with time that could be spent reading with their children. Sporting events, social clubs, careers, and media influences were all factors that were distractions from reading practice at home.

The socio-economic status of some families put children at risk for learning in both communities. Students from economically deprived homes did not have the financial resources to own books or get to a library. The parents of those students often expressed frustration regarding how much and how to read to their children. On the other end of the spectrum, affluent families were often involved in outside pursuits and did not provide adequate time at home with their children for reading practice.

Another cause for insufficient reading practice was the level of developmental readiness of individual students. Some students in the kindergarten were pre-readers while others were reading at a second grade reading level. Those pre-readers were not as likely to engage in literacy activities as the more advanced readers were. The same was true in the sixth grade

classroom: those who read more efficiently tended to engage in literacy activities more readily than those who struggled with reading did.

Professional literature provided several underlying causes for inadequate reading practice at home and at school. According to Moffitt (1992), students would rather choose TV and other electronic media over independent reading practice. A survey by Csikszentmihalyi and Larsen (noted in Moffitt, 1992), ranked TV viewing as the second most popular leisure activity, behind social time with friends. They found that being with friends and participating in sports were the most popular leisure activities for both genders. TV and other electronic media such as video games, computer games, and Internet activities offer an instant gratification to the consumer that reading cannot. Children today are used to quick and frequent stimulation, and it is a difficult task for teachers and parents to convince them that books can offer the same excitement and much more.

Another underlying cause, as suggested in the literature, was student apathy toward reading practice. The elementary school years are critical to developing motivation and achievement in reading. It is a currently held belief that students' self-perceived confidence in their ability to read and the value they place on reading are the major factors in motivation and engagement in literacy tasks (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, and Mazzoni, 1996). If students perceive themselves as poor readers they are less motivated to try more challenging books to improve their skills. They choose the simplest books to avoid frustration. When students do not see reading as an important part of their future, they see no reason to practice this seemingly useless skill. Not only is it important that students have adequate reading skills, they must also have the desire and willingness to grow in their reading.

An additional cause indicated in the literature, was the educational level of the mother. The more education the mother has the more likely a child is to succeed in school. This is true of reading practice also. It was noted that children whose parents' possessed at least a bachelor's degree were more likely to have been read to or visited their local library than children whose parents had a high school diploma or GED (National Council of Family Literacy, 1999). Parents with less awareness of the importance of literacy are not as likely to model reading for pleasure at home. Reading with and to children should begin as early as birth and should continue long after children can read independently. Students who are read to, above their reading level, have a marked increase in their vocabulary and grammar skills (Mikulecky, 1996).

CHAPTER 3
THE SOLUTION STRATEGY
Literature Review

Some of today's students, who live in the technological world of the twenty-first century, do not always understand the benefit and gratification of reading practice. Many students today are simply not engaging in sufficient reading practice. For the purposes of this research paper, reading practice is defined as reading independently, reading with someone, or being read to. Reading practice may occur both at home and at school. Students in the targeted kindergarten and sixth grade classes displayed apathy toward reading that interfered with their reading performance.

Teachers observed many students were not choosing to read for pleasure in the classroom setting and were not spending adequate time practicing reading. In turn, this affected their reading performance in the classroom. Students need to appreciate the pleasure and value of reading and the benefits that reading provides for their future.

The following statement by Jim Trelease (1985) illustrates the drastic amount of time children spent in front of the television:

The nation's 3-year-olds are now watching as much TV as the 10-year-olds--an average of thirty hours a week. As a result, the average kindergarten graduate has already seen

more than 5,000 hours of television in his young lifetime. That is more time than it takes to obtain a bachelor's degree (pg. 3).

Many students choose TV and other electronic media entertainment rather than reading for pleasure. Based on teacher observation, parental comments, and baseline data collected from surveys and checklists, teachers observed student conversations regarding TV shows and popular video games more frequently than they witnessed conversations concerning literature. Information gathered from parent observation checklists indicated excessive family time involved with TV/media usage. Student surveys suggested TV and media were of high interest to them.

McEwan (Online, 2000) advocated the "Turn Off the TV and Turn Onto Books" approach that focused families on using free time to read as opposed to watching TV. This reading incentive program encouraged families to turn off their TV for one week. By turning off the TV for a week, families had the opportunity to refocus their priorities with the hope that literacy would be given a high priority. During Turn off the TV and Turn Onto Books week, parents modeled literacy behaviors to show students that engagement with literature could be a pleasurable leisure time activity. Trelease (1985), a well-known advocate for family literacy, supported many elements of McEwan's theory. Both authors promote parental restriction on TV viewing. Trelease, however, advocated limited child selected viewing to one TV show on a week night and limited viewing on two out of the three weekend nights.

If TV viewing is limited, and literacy activities are promoted in the home, then literacy may become an important focus for the family. When literacy is a priority, reading performance increases and students may, in turn, develop long lasting reading habits (Schwartz, 1999).

A common theme in research suggested another possible explanation why students are not engaged in independent reading practice is that students have become apathetic and lack motivation to read. Student attitude surveys, administered in the targeted classrooms, suggested a low level of motivation toward reading based on the responses to questions from the survey regarding values toward reading. Teachers observed that during free times in the classroom students did not choose to read, but instead chose to socialize with peers, draw, participate in a writing activity, or engage in disruptive behaviors.

One strategy suggested in the research literature was the Running Start (RS) program endorsed by Gambrell (1996). The RS program was designed to support the literacy development and motivation of first grade children. Over a 10-week period children were encouraged to read 21 books reflecting the theme "Creating Readers for the 21st Century." The choice was given to read the books independently or to have the books read to them. Each child was given a personal challenge chart and stickers to record their progress toward their 21-book goal. This differs from other reading incentive programs, which chart an entire class's progress toward a reading goal. A public display of students' progress can be intimidating or embarrassing for low achieving readers. In the RS program children received a book of their choice to add to their home library after meeting the 21-book goal. If students are rewarded for reading at home and at school, it may increase the amount of time they engaged in reading practice.

Another motivational program, endorsed by Gamrell (1996) and used at the third through sixth grade level, advocated the use of a Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) and elements of classrooms that are conducive to reading motivation. A student survey instrument and a teacher/student conversational interview were the two major elements of the MRP. The survey was administered to collect data on the students' self-concepts as readers and the importance they

placed on reading. The components of a classroom conducive to reading motivation offered these opportunities: to see the teacher as a model for reading, classrooms with a print rich environment, student selection of literature, interactions with peers about literature, familiarity with a variety of books, and reading related incentives with books as the most effective rewards. When teachers understand what motivates a child to read and create a supportive literacy environment, reading may be viewed as a positive experience and reading practice may increase.

In contrast, Johnson (1999) asserted sticker and prize reward programs might be detrimental to reading motivation. Kohn (1993) argued extrinsic motivation programs, such as Accelerated Reader (AR) and Book-It, not only do not achieve desired results, but also actually work against desired behaviors. Programs like AR can discourage risk taking. Students tend to choose books in their color level, so that they may reap the rewards, thus missing out on other exemplary literature choices. Young readers may view reading as something undesirable if rewards are always attached to it. They may internalize the belief that reading is something undesirable if they are paying one to do it. Teachers would rather have students reading from intrinsic motivation, where they learn to value reading for its long-term benefits and not for gaining a token reward.

Another strategy for increasing motivation for reading practice was offered by Lacedonia (1999). She proclaimed the benefits of reading aloud in a classroom as one of the best-documented activities for promoting independent reading. She cited "There is no substitute for a teacher who reads children good stories. It whets the appetite of children for reading, and provides a model of skillful oral reading. It is a practice that should continue throughout the grades" (Andersen, Hiebert, Scott, Wilkinson, as cited in Lacedonia, p. 3). The first steps in choosing an appropriate read-aloud book are to identify the reading level, determine frequency

and duration of a read-aloud, and the time of day set aside for reading. Next, teachers look for read-alouds that support topics and themes covered in their classrooms, introduce students to esteemed and well-known authors, and look for books that encourage a love of reading. A unifying theme, connecting teachers across all grade levels, is the motivation to develop a love of reading in children. When students are read to, they may develop a love of reading, and their motivation to read may become a positive and rewarding part of their lives.

Reading "buddies" have recently gained popularity as a method for increasing reading motivation in children. Caserta-Henry (1996) studied the affects of reading buddies in a first grade classroom. Her reading buddies program paired high school tutors, selected by volunteer interest, a willingness to commit for a seven-month program, and a requirement to participate in continuous inservicing. The students were selected by teachers based on concerns for their lagging literacy development and were showing signs of frustration with their reading. The program adhered to the following criteria: each week a predictable book was read, a familiar book from the previous week was read, students wrote in journals a minimum of twice a week, and word study activities were practiced at least twice a week. More advanced literacy activities were introduced as students and tutors became more proficient with the program. Caserta-Henry's reading buddies program is not unique. Teachers in the field have used variations of the reading buddy format. The benefits of any reading buddy program foster a connection between older and younger students, where both students gain valuable reading practice that may promote a love of reading.

When classroom instruction is aimed at motivational strategies, student apathy toward reading practice may decrease, and motivation for independent reading practice may be fostered.

If students are motivated to read they are more likely to spend leisure time engaged in literacy activities and, therefore, become more competent readers.

Further information from research indicated a lack of parental involvement influences students' lack of reading practice. Along with lack of parental involvement, a basic understanding of the value of reading has often not been demonstrated among parents. Parental observation checklists collected by the researchers indicated a low level of interest in the areas of value for reading and reading for pleasure.

Fletcher and Zabroske (2000) designed a program, for pre-kindergarten through seventh, to expand summer opportunities for families: *Improving Literacy: A Home School Connection*. This program included a family reading evening over a period of five weeks. One night a week students and families were invited into the school for literacy activities led by a reading specialist. Each week students were given a book of a particular genre and asked to read it and participate in assigned activities with their families. During the weekly literacy evenings, parents were instructed separately from their children regarding questioning techniques and strategies to use when discussing the assigned book. At the conclusion of the evening, students and families were drawn back together for an enjoyable, literacy activity. When families are shown how to read and engage in literacy activities as a family in partnership with schools, an important connection and bond is made that may develop long-term involvement with schools for the process of literacy development. It is critical that families value their role in their children's learning. A literacy evening can reinforce the goal of families and schools working together.

Talk to a Literacy Learner (TALL) is another strategy aimed to achieve a lasting effect on parent child interactions in order to promote long-term literacy growth (Cairney and Munsie, 1995). This Australian program trained and identified parents of children, one to twelve years

old, to interact more effectively with their own children as they engaged in reading practice. The major components of the program include 16, two-hour workshops and home activities for parents and children to practice together over a period of 8 weeks. Parents are taught that their attitudes toward reading practice strongly impacted their child's literacy development. The TALL program offers parents reading strategies and helps them learn how to select appropriate reading materials for use with home literacy tasks. This program also instructs parents in choosing resource materials and guidance in how to use libraries appropriately. If parents are given insights into instructional reading strategies and gain a greater understanding of how to select reading materials, their confidence in guiding their child's literacy development may be positively affected.

Barrentine (1996) contributed another strategy for parental involvement: Interactive read-alouds. She promoted ongoing verbal interaction as a story is being read to enhance how meaning is constructed. Interactive read-alouds involve opening a literacy event with conversation related to the literature. While the story is being read, the reader models comprehension strategies and students are encouraged to engage in an ongoing dialogue about the content of the story. The reader must be mindful of balancing reading with responses to the literature. With this strategy it can be difficult to balance listening and comprehension of the story with conversation related to the literature. Parents are often frustrated by what they consider "interrupting" when reading aloud to their children. If parents understand the importance of literacy dialogue, they may be more comfortable with their own competence in reading aloud and engaging in conversation about the story being read. This may create a bond between a parent and child that makes reading a pleasurable experience.

Parental modeling is another strategy suggested by literature research that supports emerging literacy. Ollila (1992) offered suggestions for parental modeling of literacy behaviors ranging from minimal assistance to an environment rich in literacy.

According to Ollila, a parent should provide a home that has many books, with an abundance of writing materials available. If families provide a print rich environment, early reading ability may be influenced. Creating a print rich environment with writing materials available does not guarantee that children will engage in reading. It is most effective when a child and an adult interact together. Reading aloud to children is another integral part of parental modeling. Ollila suggested reading aloud at least three times a week, keeping the readings 10 to 15 minutes in length, and making the session enjoyable to both parent and child. Listening to read-alouds may help children increase their attention span and concentration. Attending and concentrating are two skills necessary for school success.

Another suggestion was promoting functional literacy activities as a means to make literacy relevant to a child's world. Parents can demonstrate how literacy is used on a daily basis in their world for such things as shopping lists, letter writing, leisure reading, religious endeavors, schoolwork, and activities of daily living. When parents see the importance of modeling literacy behaviors and demonstrating the value of literacy they are more aware of their influence on their children's emerging literacy development. When confidence is high, parents are more likely to become involved in the reading process.

A child's first teachers are the parents. A parent's influence is much more far-reaching and long lasting than the influence from school. Children spend the majority of their childhood years at home and not in the school environment. If parents become better educated and see the

importance of developing good literacy habits with their children, they may instill a positive attitude in helping children develop into competent and avid readers.

Overall, the national literature conveyed a variety of strategies to get children motivated to read and parents involved in the reading process. Journals, books, and Internet sources provide a wealth of information to motivate students to practice reading. A major obstacle of families' and children's reading practice is the over use of TV/electronic media. Ninety-eight percent of our nation's households have a television set and one out of every two families has more than one (Trelease, 1985). Similar figures exist for households with computers and video games (National Council of Family Literacy, 2000). Several sources offered strategies that promoted restricted TV/ electronic media from complete restriction to modified restriction with extrinsic rewards offered. These strategies promote spending the time that would have been spent watching television or other electronic media now be used for reading practice. It was documented that students who read just 11 pages each day for pleasure or homework have better reading scores than their classmates who read fewer than 5 pages each day (National Council of Family Literacy, 2000).

Student apathy for reading and a lack of motivation for reading practice are concerns addressed by the literature. Educators have long been aware that motivation is at the crux of many of the problems facing teaching children to read. At the heart of motivation is the value children place on reading and their belief in themselves that they can become capable readers. The literature offered strategies for shaping students who believe that reading is valuable. When students believe in the value of reading it may become personally relevant to them and they are more likely to engage in reading practice. Children who have a high opinion of their reading ability consistently outperform those who do not hold the same beliefs (Gambrell, Palmer,

Codling, and Mazzoni, 1996). When students have success with reading and feel good about their reading they are more likely to continue to practice reading and may choose reading as a leisure activity.

Besides TV/electronic media influence and motivation factors, parental support is a major issue addressed in the research literature. Parents play a vital role in laying the groundwork for children to become successful readers. They often do not realize the impact they have on their children through the value they place on reading by their words and action. What they say and do influences their children's motivation and value on reading. " A parent is a child's one enduring source of faith that somehow, sooner or later, he or she will become a good reader " (National Academy of Education, pg. 27). Parents often do not realize that they are primarily responsible for helping children understand that reading is not just something that they do at school but has real life implications. Parental support must be fostered in order for families to help children become competent, life long readers.

These three factors: increasing motivation, decreasing TV/ electronic influences, and encouraging parental involvement, play a critical part in helping children value reading and understanding the importance of becoming life long readers. Working in partnership with schools, teachers and parents may positively influence our next generation of leaders.

Taking into consideration the many strategies available from which to design an effective plan of action to increase reading practice, this research team concluded that their approach would include a combination of diverse strategies. National research supported strategies to decrease media influence on the family, motivational techniques to involve families with literacy, and the need for parental involvement in the reading process.

Project Objectives and Processes

Taking into consideration the many strategies available from which to design an effective plan of action to promote change among elementary age students, members of this research team concluded that their approach would encompass a combination of diverse strategies. Teachers would implement each of the following: motivational activities, communication for families about literacy, and a TV/ media awareness plan.

As a result of motivational activities implemented by the teachers during the period from September 2000 through December 2000, the targeted elementary students will increase their interest in reading at home and at school, as measured by student surveys, parent checklists, and teacher observation. In order to accomplish this objective the following processes are necessary:

1. Administer student motivation survey and teacher observation checklist. Collect the results and use as baseline data.
2. Utilize teacher read alouds, of a specific genre, to promote student awareness of types of quality literature.
3. Develop author studies to increase motivation to read by familiarizing students with notable authors' works, so that they may select books by those authors when making choices for reading practice.
4. Create a classroom climate that encourages reading practice.
5. Collect post test data.

As a result of the television viewing awareness plan designed by the researchers during the period from September 2000 through December 2000, the targeted elementary students will decrease their amount of television viewing and increase the amount of reading practice at home

as measured by student surveys and a parent checklist indicating how their children choose to use their leisure time at home. In order to accomplish this objective the following processes are necessary:

1. Provide parents with a parental observation checklist to complete and return to school, to establish baseline data.
2. Implement TV Tune Out Tuesday plan that will encourage families to limit television viewing and instead, encourage family literacy activities.
3. Design a reporting system for families to record television or electronic media use as compared to literacy activities. Researchers will record data on the teacher observation checklist.
4. Collect post data.

As a result of increased emphasis on family involvement in literacy activities, during the period from September 2000 through December 2000, teachers in the targeted elementary classes will focus parental awareness on the value of independent reading practice, as measured by the parental observation checklist. In order to accomplish this objective the following processes are necessary:

1. Provide parents with a parental observation checklist to complete and return to school, to establish baseline data on family involvement in literacy.
2. Publish a weekly family literacy newsletter with a focus on literacy facts and figures, family literacy activities, and updates on literature experiences in the classroom.
3. Collect post data.

Project Action Plan

The action plan for the research project was designed to increase reading practice at home and at school in the targeted grade levels. Motivational activities, family involvement, and TV/ media awareness were the strategies used in this action plan. The intervention period spanned from September 11, 2000 through December 15, 2000. Each targeted grade level followed the action plan outlined below.

	Kindergarten Classroom	6th Grade Classroom
Week of September 11, 2000	student survey, teacher checklist, send parent observation checklist, send newsletter home on Friday	student survey, teacher checklist, send parent observation checklist, send newsletter home on Friday
Week of September 18, 2000	begin read alouds, implement TV Tune Out Tuesdays, send family newsletter	begin read alouds, implement TV Tune Out Tuesdays, send family newsletter
Week of September 25, 2000	continue read alouds, report on TV Tune Out progress, send family newsletter	continue read alouds, report on TV Tune Out progress, send family newsletter
Week of October 2, 2000	author study, TV Tune Out, family newsletter	author study, TV Tune Out, family newsletter
Week of October 9, 2000	author study, TV Tune Out, family newsletter with library card emphasis	author study, TV Tune Out, family newsletter with library card emphasis
Week of October 16, 2000	author study, TV Tune Out, family newsletter with library card emphasis	author study, TV Tune Out, family newsletter with library card emphasis
Week of October 23, 2000	author study, TV Tune Out, family newsletter	author study, TV Tune Out, family newsletter
Week of October 30, 2000	author study, TV Tune Out, family newsletter	author study, TV Tune Out, family newsletter
Week of November 6, 2000	read alouds, TV Tune Out, family newsletter	read alouds, TV Tune Out, family newsletter
Week of November 13, 2000	read alouds, TV Tune Out, family newsletter	read alouds, TV Tune Out, family newsletter
Week of November 20, 2000	read alouds, TV Tune Out, family newsletter	read alouds, TV Tune Out, family newsletter
Week of November 27, 2000	read alouds (kids favorites), TV Tune Out, family newsletter	read alouds, TV Tune Out, family newsletter
Week of December 4, 2000	read alouds, TV Tune Out, family newsletter with an invitation to family reading night at school	read alouds, TV Tune Out, family newsletter with an invitation to book swap night an school
Week of December 11, 2000	collect post data information	collect post data information

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of student motivation activities, a student motivation survey will be implemented. In addition, specific family literacy activities will be designed and assessed by a parental observation checklist. Activities designed to limit television and other electronic media activities will also be implemented, and a parental observation checklist will be used to assess effectiveness. In addition to the parent and student surveys, a teacher observation instrument will also be used as part of the assessment process.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to increase student independent reading at home and at school. One of the expected outcomes was to enable students to appreciate the benefits and gratification of independent reading. Another objective of this project was increasing parental awareness of the importance of independent reading, as well as increasing student motivation to read independently.

The implementation of weekly family newsletters was used to increase parental awareness of the importance of independent reading. Each week for the fourteen-week intervention period, students were given a Bridges to Learning family literacy newsletter that described a variety of strategies, current research about literacy, and suggestions for family support. Newsletters were created to offer a variety of literacy activities, such as how to read to children, and suggestions for high-quality authors and books for children from preschool to grade six. A sample Bridges to Learning family newsletter can be found in Appendix A.

A second intervention was the implementation of an activity designed to encourage families to turn off the television and participate in literacy activities. Each Tuesday, for the fourteen-week intervention period, students received a "TV Tune Out Tuesday" reminder slip to take home with suggestions for alternatives to television viewing. The suggested activities included visiting the library, playing a board game, reading, or educational television viewing.

On Wednesday mornings, the students returned their slips to school. In the kindergarten classroom, the students discussed what they chose to do on Tuesday nights. The sixth grade students were given "merit money" for participating in TV Tune Out Tuesday. An example of the TV Tune Out Tuesday reminder slip can be found in Appendix B.

Motivational activities were the final intervention aimed at increasing independent reading. Throughout the fourteen-week intervention period, author studies, read alouds, and book talks were implemented in both the kindergarten and sixth grade classrooms.

To address author studies in the kindergarten classroom, the action plan was designed to implement five author studies. During a three-week period, three individual author studies were introduced in the kindergarten classroom. The teacher read two or three books by a specific author, and these books became part of an independent reading center, that included several other books by that same author. Students were encouraged to visit the author study center during regular center time or during D.E.A.R. time. The researchers planned to implement five author studies in kindergarten during the intervention period; however, author studies were discontinued after a three week period due to lack of student interest. The researcher, instead, implemented book talks that focused on the students' books that they checked out from the LRC.

Throughout the fourteen-week intervention period five author studies were implemented in the sixth grade classroom. The sixth grade teacher presented book talks, summaries of the story plots, on the author in focus. A bulletin board, including a poster and author information, and a display of books was available for students to read and check out for independent reading for each author study.

Both researchers engaged in read-alouds within their respective classrooms. The kindergarten researcher read picture books daily to her students. The books were selected to

match the alphabet letters being studied as integrated themes. The sixth grade teacher-researcher read two novels during the intervention period. The first novel was a parody of super heroes chosen to engage reluctant readers, and whereas the second novel was chosen to enrich the multidisciplinary unit being studied.

The final motivational strategy implemented in both the kindergarten and sixth grade classrooms during the intervention period was the concept of book talks. In the kindergarten classroom students were given the opportunity to share orally the books they checked out from the LRC. During the opening activities of the day students were encouraged to bring their books to the alphabet rug and share a summary of their stories with their peers. The book talks occurred from week four and continued on a daily basis as part of the kindergarten opening activities throughout the intervention period.

In the sixth grade classroom book talks were mainly centered on the list of nominated books for the Rebecca Caudill award for the year 2000. On Mondays, for a period of seven weeks, three or four books were summarized by the teacher-researcher and displayed in the classroom to spark student interest in the Caudill nominees. Later on Mondays, during library check out time, students were encouraged to check out a Caudill nominated book. Book talks were scheduled on the same day as library check out day to increase the likelihood that students would check out Caudill books from the library. Students were required to present a book talk to their class as a means of encouraging a peer recommended book for independent reading.

There were two major deviations from the original project action plan. These deviations included a decision on the part of the researchers to not include a kindergarten family reading night or a sixth grade book swap night. The kindergarten reading night was canceled to avoid duplication of the district reading specialists' family reading night. For the same reason, the sixth

grade book swap night was not implemented, since a book swap was added to the district's Young Author's Recognition night.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess the effects of TV Tune Out Tuesday, motivation activities, and family newsletters a posttest survey was sent out to the parents in both the kindergarten and the sixth grade classroom. The researchers were looking at the amount of time students were reading at home and whether there had been an increase in the parents' value of reading and parental support of literacy. The researchers were looking for gains in the kindergarten parent survey in the amount of time the families read together for leisure and whether the children chose to read over other leisure activities. Table 5 shows a comparison of the results of the pretest and posttest surveys of the kindergarten parents.

Table 5

Kindergarten Parent Survey Pretest and Posttest Data for Attitude Toward Reading

	Everyday		Once or Twice a Week		Once or Twice a Month		Never	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Read for 20 Min	41%	41%	52%	58%	5%	0%	0%	0%
Books as Gifts	29%	33%	58%	66%	11%	0%	0%	0%
Leisure as Family	23%	41%	58%	50%	17%	8%	0%	0%
Leisure Reading	29%	41%	52%	59%	11%	8%	5%	0%
Confidence	70%	83%	17%	16%	11%	0%	0%	0%
Positive Attitude	70%	100%	23%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%

The interventions appeared to have a positive effect on the amount of time families read for leisure. On the pretest the parents reported reading everyday as a family only 23% of the time; however, on the posttest the percentage rose to 41%. Parents reported that their children chose reading over other leisure activities only 29% on the pretest, but after the intervention period the parents reported that their students were choosing reading over other leisure activities 41% of the time.

Table 6 shows a comparison of the results of the pretest and posttest data from the sixth grade parental observation checklist. Teacher-researchers were looking for gains in the sixth grade parent survey in the amount of time students were reading at home and whether there had been an increase in the families' awareness in the value of reading.

Table 6

Parental Observation Checklist Responses for Sixth Grade Pre / Posttest Data

	Everyday		Once or Twice a Week		Once or Twice a Month		Never	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Reads for 30 Min.	18%	16%	22%	40%	39%	40%	20%	2%
Asks for books	16%	21%	40%	45%	28%	28%	11%	4%
Reading Value	91%	90%	8%	9%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Leisure Reading	11%	11%	28%	54%	42%	26%	20%	7%
Discusses Books	22%	33%	59%	52%	13%	11%	5%	2%
Positive Attitude	33%	40%	44%	47%	20%	11%	1%	0%
Confidence	47%	64%	42%	28%	8%	4%	1%	2%

The interventions appear to have made small increases in the amount of time the students read at home. On the pretest survey of the parents, 30% of the parents responded that their children read at home at least 30 minutes daily or at least once or twice weekly; however, on the posttest survey the number responding increased from 30% to 56% reporting that their children read daily or at least once or twice per week. The weekly parental newsletters appeared to have made no difference in the percentages of parents responding to the survey prompt on the value of reading.

The students in both the kindergarten and sixth grade classrooms were given surveys in order to assess the effects of the motivational interventions and the TV Tune Out Tuesday intervention. The teacher-researchers were looking for increases in the responses regarding the amount of time spent reading at home and positive changes in their attitudes toward reading. Table 7 shows a comparison of the results of the kindergarten student pretest and posttest survey results.

Table 7

Kindergarten Student Reading Survey Pretest and Posttest Data for Reading Attitude

	Excellent Feelings		Neutral Feelings		Poor Feelings	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Reading is Fun	76%	100%	23%	0%	0%	0%
Read Everyday	33%	35%	52%	65%	14%	0%
Like to be Read To	80%	100%	19%	0%	0%	0%
Special Place	76%	100%	19%	0%	4%	0%
Importance	57%	60%	38%	40%	4%	0%
Family and Friends	66%	95%	23%	5%	9%	0%
Library with Family	47%	30%	28%	30%	23%	40%

The interventions appear to have made a positive effect on the attitudes of the kindergarten students' interest in reading. The students reported excellent feelings about reading only 76% of the time on the pretest, but on the posttest results, all of the students reported that reading was fun. When asked if students liked to be read to every day, only small gains were made in the positive and neutral categories; however no students reported negative feelings about being read to every day on the post-test, an increase from the 14% reporting on the pretest.

Table 8 shows a comparison of the results of the pretest and posttest data from the sixth grade student reading survey. Teacher researchers were looking for gains in the in the amount of time students were reading at home and increases in students discussing reading with their family/friends and thinking that their peer group reads (coolness factor).

Table 8

Sixth Grade Student Survey Pretest and Posttest Data on Attitude Toward Reading

	Everyday		Once or Twice a Week		Once or Twice a Month		Never	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Read for 30 Min.	10%	17%	46%	47%	38%	21%	10%	14%
Read a Variety	18%	15%	65%	50%	18%	28%	1%	4%
Importance	71%	57%	23%	33%	5%	3%	0%	3%
Discuss Reading	10%	25%	46%	34%	26%	19%	20%	19%
Friends Read	16%	15%	38%	49%	33%	22%	13%	11%
Read for Info	23%	19%	41%	47%	30%	25%	6%	7%
Understand	56%	66%	35%	23%	6%	6%	1%	1%
Explain	46%	50%	36%	36%	13%	7%	3%	3%
Library	43%	52%	41%	47%	11%	25%	5%	7%

The intervention appeared to have little effect on the amount of time students read at home. Fifty-six percent of students reported reading at least 30 minutes per day everyday or once or twice a week on the pretest. On the posttest results, only 64% of the students surveyed reported reading at least 30 minutes per day, everyday, or once or twice a week. The motivation interventions appeared to have a slight effect on students reading attitudes. There was a 15% increase on the posttest results of students who reported discussing reading with family and friends every day. When surveyed on whether their friends read, on the pretest only 54% of the students responded that their friends read every day or at least once or twice a week compared to a 64% response on the posttest results.

An additional interpretation of Table 5 from teacher's log and parents' comments on the TV Tune Out Tuesday, indicate an increase in family leisure reading time. Several parents of kindergarteners commented that the TV Tune Out Tuesday night presented their families with more time to participate in family literacy activities. Many parents inquired whether the TV Tune Out Tuesday would continue after the fourteen-week intervention period concluded. Parents, of both the sixth grade and kindergarten classes, also commented positively on the valuable information about literacy gained by reading the weekly newsletter. Furthermore, many parents indicated they would appreciate continuing to receive additional literacy information throughout the remainder of the kindergarten school year. Additional comments by parents of kindergarteners, included remarks regarding their children's pride and enjoyment in reading books from home and school. This may be a further explanation for the increase in the numbers shown in Tables 5 and 6, for the items: positive attitude toward reading as well as confidence in their reading ability.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data from the parent and student surveys on increasing motivation to read both at home and at school, the interventions may have positively affected student motivation to read. A slight increase was noted in independent reading time in both the kindergarten and sixth grade classrooms. The strategies used during the intervention period appear to have contributed to the increase in independent reading time. The three interventions used during the action research project included a television awareness activity, a weekly family literacy newsletter, and classroom motivation activities.

The television awareness activity, TV Tune Out Tuesday, appeared to have had a positive impact for the students in the kindergarten classroom on the amount of time spent reading at

home. This was indicated by the number of tune out slips returned each week, and parent notes or comments, as well as discussion among the kindergarten students.

The television awareness activity seemed to have less of an impact on the sixth grade students. In the sixth grade classroom participation in TV Tune Out Tuesday was initially well received by the students, but results decreased by the third week of the intervention period. The teacher-researcher noted limited participation and feedback on this intervention from both parents and students.

A second strategy used during the action plan intervention period was weekly family literacy newsletters. Researchers in both the kindergarten and sixth grade classrooms felt that the weekly information given to families helped increase their awareness of literacy. In turn, this information appeared to have encouraged families to set aside and support more independent reading time at home. Families indicated to researchers through notes and comments that the newsletters were effective in giving them ideas and strategies to use with their children. Researchers noted comments to this effect during formal parent teacher conference times, as well as incidental remarks throughout the intervention period.

The final intervention strategy that may have affected the increase in time spent in independent reading was the use of motivational activities in the classrooms. The kindergarten teacher researcher felt having the students tell each other about the books that they had checked out at the LRC seemed to be one of the most motivating factors for students to read. Another motivation strategy that seemed to be effective was allowing the students to re-read a book already read to the class by the teacher. The researcher observed the students often chose to re-read these books at the reading center or during DEAR time. The students role- played the

teacher reading to her students at center time. It was also noted by the researcher that student appeared to be choosing the same LRC books that their peers had discussed.

The sixth grade teacher researcher felt that book talks of the Caudill nominees and the author studies had the greatest impact on the amount of time students engaged in independent reading. The teacher noted an increase in the amount of Caudills being read at DEAR time and the Caudills being put on hold in the LRC. The teacher-researcher overheard several student conversations regarding books that they were reading. The teacher-researcher, prior to the motivational interventions, had not observed the amount of conversations about books. Families indicated through notes and comments that their children appeared to be more interested in books and reading than they had been in the past two years. Further comments by families indicated that the children were more likely to engage in conversations about books both at home and at school.

The teacher-researchers would recommend using these intervention strategies with a few minor modifications. These strategies are easily modifiable for grade levels kindergarten through sixth. The researchers recommend making a few modifications to each of the three strategies in general, and then teachers and researchers could make appropriate modifications of materials to make the interventions fit their grade level.

The television limiting strategy is recommended by the teacher researchers, and would probably be received better in the primary grades. Even though it was not received well by the sixth grade students, it heightened the awareness of both students and families of the amount of time they spend watching television, and conversely, the amount of time they could be reading. Procedurally, the TV Tune Out strategy could be used in many classrooms with very little

modification. It was not too limiting to the families or too over burdensome on the classroom teacher.

Communicating with parents and making them aware of literacy information is also recommended. The researchers recommend a family literacy newsletter, kindergarten through grade six, to emphasis the issues of literacy. Developing a literacy newsletter from current research was time consuming and may have been unnecessary due to the commercial materials available on the market. The literacy newsletters developed through the action plan were based on the most current research available, compared to commercially developed newsletters that may have contained outdated materials. A modification recommended by the teacher researchers could be to include a weekly motivational assignment for families to implement at home.

Getting children motivated to increase their independent reading is what teachers and families desire. Motivational activities in the classroom may be time consuming but may also be well worth the time spent if the activities help children make the connection that reading is both enjoyable and important in their lives. The teacher-researchers do not recommend author studies before second grade. In place of author studies, the researchers recommend allowing students the opportunity to re-read a known book and discuss it with a peer. Author studies are recommended as a motivational activity for grades second through sixth. Researchers recommend book talks at all grade levels. For the lower primary grades, students appeared to enjoy presenting their own book talks; whereas at the sixth grade level, students appeared to be motivated by teacher book talks. Researchers recommend expanding book talks at the intermediate grade levels to include book talks related to themes being taught in the classroom as well as the Caudill list.

Additional study is needed to understand the factors that influence motivation to read independently at home and at school. Professionals in the field of education must continue to

address the issues that make students understand the benefit and gratification of independent reading. Student and family apathy toward the value of independent reading are challenges that will continue to face families and educators in the years to come. Teachers and families together must bridge family connections, motivation to read and cultivate a love of reading in order to create a generation of life long learners.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
Family Newsletter

Bridges to Learning

The Home to School Connection

Dear Families,

For the next twelve weeks we will be sending home a family literacy newsletter as part of our action research project that promotes reading practice at home and at school. This newsletter will provide information that you may find interesting and useful for your child's literacy development. The information you will be receiving will be focusing on a full range from pre-readers to independent readers and may not always directly apply to your child. The newsletter may give you ideas to use with your own children, nieces and nephews, or neighbor children.

As we read current national research about reading this summer, we were amazed by some of the information we learned and wanted to pass these ideas on to our families. We hope you find the information as interesting and useful as we did. Please feel free to share any of the newsletter ideas with grandparents, neighbors and friends. If you run across any useful information about reading that you could share with us or have any comments about what you learn we would welcome your input.

Look for a short newsletter coming home on Fridays. Happy reading!!

Appendix B
TV Tune-Out Record Form

TV Tune-Out Tuesday

On Tuesday night our family chose to:

- Watch no TV ____
- Watch only educational TV ____
- Go to the public library ____
- Play family board games ____
- Read together ____
- Other _____

Please check the activities that best describe your family.





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