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## **Impacting attitudes towards reading in the second grade classroom: a reading role model intervention**

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**IMPACTING ATTITUDES TOWARDS READING IN THE SECOND GRADE  
CLASSROOM: A READING ROLE MODEL INTERVENTION**

A Thesis by

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Bachelors of Arts, Wichita State University, 2007

Submitted to Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
and the faculty of the Graduate School of  
Wichita State University  
in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Teaching

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The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in Teaching.

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Kim McDowell, Committee Chair

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Ron Matson, Committee Member

## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my first grade teacher, Mrs. Wilson, and my preschool teacher, Mrs. Pattie. I look to those good memories for strength as I become a teacher all my own. Also, to my friends who always said, and kept saying, "You'd make a great teacher."

The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who can't read them.  
-Mark Twain

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to thank Kim McDowell for getting me- and all the rest of the cohorts- through this masters program and for being a sounding board when things got really hard. I would also like to extend my gratitude to my family and my friends for their continued support during this “growing up” time in my life. To Dr. Bohn-Gettler for being so cheerful and serving on my committee. And to Ron Matson, who helped me see the humanity. Oh, the humanity!

## **ABSTRACT**

This research attempted to determine whether students' attitudes towards reading are linked to reading achievement, and whether the presence of reading role models within the classroom can help increase positive attitudes towards reading. Forty-three 2<sup>nd</sup> graders attending an urban elementary school participated in the six week intervention. Attitudes towards reading were assessed prior to introduction of the role models and were assessed following the final role model. One role model came to visit the classroom each week, following a standardized protocol involving an introduction, a short talk by the role model, student questions and a reading. The research hypothesized that by inviting student-selected, positive role models into the classroom to talk about literacy, students would have a more positive attitude towards reading.

## **PREFACE**

The topic of study was chosen because the researcher feels deeply about the importance of having positive experiences with literacy early in a student's academic career. She also believes that it is especially important for students to establish some sort of relationship with people who they look up to. To facilitate this, the researcher chose to include students in the process of bringing people into the classroom- they learned what qualities a good role model has and identified someone they consider a good role model. Then, the researcher let students know she was going to invite these different role models into the classroom to talk about literacy. Students were encouraged to ask questions and reflect on the experience afterwards by writing thank-you letters telling what they learned and why they enjoyed the visit.

Exploring the link between student attitudes towards reading and actual reading ability, as evidenced through AIMSweb data, will help pave the way for further research into good classroom practice that supports readers. Fostering a relationship between the community and students is just one small step in that process.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS / NOMENCLATURE**

ERAS: Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

FCRR: Florida Center for Reading Research

ORF: Oral Reading Fluency

PREL: Pacific Resources for Education and Learning

RRMIP: Reading Role Model Intervention Program

SES: Social Economic Status

SSA: Survey of School Attitudes

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

By the time students reach second grade, most of them can read and write. They are still fresh and curious, seeking to share what they have learned with classmates and caring adults. There is no high stakes testing; those who have learned well are armed with a litany of tools that foster success and those who are struggling are not so far behind they will never catch up. Second grade is the beginning of Piaget's concrete operational stage; students are beginning to look at problems from multiple perspectives, think more logically and excel when dealing with realistic concepts (Kirby, Ball, Geier, Parrila & Wade-Woolley, 2011). This is the golden grade.

Unfortunately, research into engagement, motivation and attitudes all show that as students progress through their educational careers, their interest and motivation wane while attitudes towards school become more negative (Beck, 1977; Finn, 1993; McKenna, 1995). Research shows that students who struggle in school are less likely to graduate. Couple this with the impacts of living in poverty, and students are five times less likely than their high-income peers to graduate from high school (Chapman, Laird & Kewal-Ramani, 2011).

The following thesis explores factors that impact attitudes and reading ability in a predominately African American, low-SES population. It explores concepts such as literacy, identity, attitudes, reading ability and community. The current research seeks to enhance second-grade student's attitudes towards reading by including positive role models in the classroom. The program, called the Reading Role Model Intervention Program (RRMIP), will seek to assess and improve students' normative beliefs about reading.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **i. Literacy- a Brief Overview**

Literacy is a word that conjures images of fantasy worlds, thick books and words that come alive on the page. For students in second grade, it includes the ability to read books of increasing length with fluency and accuracy, make inferences as to cause and effect, identify themes, describe characters and discuss what has been read (Paratore & McCormick, 2005). Given this, it is important to note that literacy is more than just reading and writing- it is a dynamic process that is constantly changing, rearranging and being redefined (Green, Dixon, Floriana & Bradley, 1994).

The definition of literacy is more or less stable, when one considers the context of learning literacy within the classroom (Green et al., 1994). As students move through school, their literacy experience is scaffolded so that they learn the skills necessary to succeed. In pre-K and kindergarten, students work to master phonemic awareness, phonics and letter recognition. As they move through first grade, sight word recognition, fluency, comprehension and writing become paramount to success (K. McDowell, personal communication, September 29, 2011; Paratore & McCormack, 2005). Although some students continue to struggle with basic components of literacy into second grade, it is still possible for them to excel as a member of the “literate classroom.”

#### **ii. What is a “Literate Classroom?”**

Although literacy is an important component of the curriculum in every classroom, it is fair to say that every classroom is not a “literate classroom.” Research has shown that there are

both environmental and instructional components to good literacy education. These tools in a teacher's tool belt make the difference between engaging, interesting and relevant coursework and that which falls subpar.

Before students even enter the classroom at the beginning of the year, teachers have the opportunity to 'curate' their environment using posters, pocket charts, word walls, book shelves, lamps, desks, bulletin boards etc. What the teacher puts on the walls and how the teacher arranges the room expresses a lot about what is important to them as an educator (PREL, 2006). For example, a teacher who includes small comfortable chairs, pillows or bean bags in the library makes it an inviting place for students to relax and explore literacy. Alternately, when a bookshelf is messy and disorganized or the books are typically inaccessible to students it sends a different message: 'I don't care about my books,' or 'You can only have books when I say so.'

In their guide to Creating Literate Environments, Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) lists several factors that help increase chances that the classroom will provide meaningful opportunities to practice literacy skills. One of the most salient suggestions is that classroom print be *functional*, rather than just ornamental (PREL, 2006). Charts, labels and posters should all be used regularly enough that students understand how to access the information.

Another important aspect of functional classroom literacy is collaboration between teacher and students. When making posters, graphic organizers and the like, it is important that teachers recognize the value of student input. Students like to see their ideas and their handwriting on the walls. They need to understand how what they know fits into graphic organizers and more importantly that their input counts (PREL, 2006). By allowing students to

be co-creators of the information that adorns the walls, they are more likely to accept it, understand it and value it as a tool.

Using print for communication, such as for helper charts, class schedule or morning message is also an integral part of a literate classroom (PREL, 2006). It gives students a visual reminder of what to do, what's next or what their role is within the classroom. This type of print also helps students have more control over their experience in the classroom, as they can act on cues autonomously- without help from the teacher.

Instructional methods are another important aspect of the "literate classroom." There are several schools of thought on how to teach literacy, but most agree that it should be engaging, support learning goals and include some direct instruction. Strategies such as *I do, we do, you do* give students opportunities to learn through direct instruction, guided instruction and independent (or group) practice (Levy, 2007). Teachers move through this sequence in order to teach new skills; it is a way to provide scaffolding, check for understanding and then allow students to explore concepts on their own.

On the other hand, learning centers (or rotating small groups) may be set up for students to work on different literacy activities, including vocabulary, fluency, phonics and reading. Small groups are good for students who have mastered skills, because it gives them a chance to show what they know. Learning centers are set up so that students can work autonomously on tasks they already understand how to do (FCCR, 2006). Alternately, small groups are a great place for intervention to take place for students who have difficulty reading or comprehending. When a teacher or para-educator is available to regularly work with students in a small group, it gives students the intensive instruction they need in order to succeed (Torgesen, N.D.).

### iii. Classroom as Social Construct

A literate classroom frames the experience of reading and writing within the context of the Ecological Systems Theory. It is a place where literacy is more than just a process of learning to read and write- it is a “social accomplishment” (Green et al., 1994). In this view, literacy is an active, exploratory and culturally mediated process whereby students hold themselves and each other accountable for their own learning.

The ecological perspective places the student within a set of systems that influence and perpetuate their development. According to Bronfenbrenner, there are “four worlds of childhood,” the *microsystem*, the *mesosystem*, the *exosystem* and the *macrosystem* (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, p. 431 in Marks, 2000). These systems work together to shape who the child becomes through the experiences, opportunities and ideas which they perpetuate.

For the child in the classroom, the *microsystem* includes roles, relationships and activities they may participate in, such as the role of line leader, or their designation as ‘member A’ in a reading group. The *mesosystem* includes links between two or more systems that influence the student, such as the interaction of library time on interest and understanding of proper reading strategies during classroom reading time. The *exosystem* includes systems that the student does not participate in actively, but that act upon them. A salient example of this is when a parent loses a job and can’t afford gas for the car (therefore the student has to walk to school), or when a teacher is tired from staying up late with her baby the night before. Lastly, the *macrosystem* includes the student’s cultural upbringing- a student from an affluent African American family would have a very different cultural background than an African American student from a family of poverty (Marks, 2000).

As you can see, taking an ecological perspective is important because it frames and adds perspective to the students' experiences in the classroom. The classroom becomes a context for learning, sculpted by the norms, expectations, roles and relationships that are established between the students and their teachers. Teaching methods frame the experience of literacy in a meaningful way, constructing the experience with careful scaffolding (Weade & Green, 1989 cited in Green et al., 1994).

When a child identifies with his classroom community, he flourishes; when a child fails to identify with his classroom community, he is more likely to exhibit “disruptive behavior in class, absenteeism, truancy and juvenile delinquency” (Finn, 1993, p. 250). The student is also less likely to create habits that lead to insight, success, understanding and effective use of resources (Langford, 2005). This said, one can go far to influence a student's attitudes towards reading by helping him to identify with it and enjoy the experience.

One might be tempted to argue that all classrooms perform this function, as teachers set down rules and expectations for performance and behavior; however, the “literate classroom” reaches beyond the walls and worksheets of regular curriculum to engage students on a personal level and ensure their success.

#### **iv. Theories on Attitude and Reading Ability**

When a child enters school, her attitude towards learning is typically positive. School is a new place with new friends that can be explored. Unfortunately, research has shown that attitudes towards reading- and other subjects- tend to decrease as students get older (Beck, 1977; Finn, 1993; McKenna, 1995). Although there are several factors that impact these attitudes, it is first important to look at what an attitude *is*.

Attitude can be defined in terms of how someone responds to an object, idea or event. Attitudes are learned through multiple experiences with an object, idea or situation over time; attitudes tend to build upon themselves and remain fairly consistent (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Think of it this way- you show a student the cover of a book that she likes. She knows she likes it because she has heard the story before, or read it herself and therefore she has a positive attitude towards it.

However, given novel experiences for better or worse, attitudes may change over time. For instance, if you show a student his math book, or have math instruction when the student has just learned he failed a math test, the student is likely to have a negative attitude towards math. The attitude towards math may change over time, if the child is given opportunities to do well at math. It is important to recognize that although the individual reactions may be different, they are part of a consistent pattern; a thought process, a personality and a field of experiences.

In regards to reading, the Mathew Effect Pattern is one of the most influential models of attitude and reading ability. The Mathew Effect came out of research from social psychologist G.C. Matthewson who found that the outcome of a reading experience influences the reader's attitude toward reading (McKenna, 1995). It asserts the importance of attitude in relation to ability and looked at what other factors influence the desire to read. Matthewson developed a three part view, which includes feelings (affective), action readiness (conative) and beliefs (cognitive) about reading. External motivators and present emotional state are also seen as contributing to a student's decision to read or continue reading in a given situation.

Matthewson's findings are significant because they postulate that poor reading ability leads to an unrewarding reading experience where students lose interest and future reading is

impacted (Kirby, 2011). It is a circular model that feeds into itself, and is especially important to consider for young children who are just beginning to read. Several strategies, such as teaching students how to recognize books on their reading level or how to sound out words using phonetics can help minimize this effect. Under this model, poor attitudes towards reading may be consequential (due to negative experiences) rather than causal when it comes to poor reading ability (Petscher, 2010).

Because attitudes are a psychological construct that moderates- but does not predict- motivation and intention to read, it is important to look at the role of the *locus of control* in regards to reading ability and success (Petscher, 2010). *Locus of control* refers to how much perceived control a person may feel in a certain situation, and whether he believes this control is internal or external. People with *internal* locus of control are likely to believe that their actions determine their experiences (Blaha, 1982). They believe that they are successful because they pay attention, work hard and turn in their assignments on time. The ball is in their court, you could say. This confidence is referred to as *self-efficacy*; it ties into emotional and social self-regulation as well as increased self-esteem (Berk, 2008).

Alternately, people with *external* locus of control view their experiences as the result of things beyond their control, such as the actions of others, luck, etc. (Blaha, 1982). These students believe that they have no control over the grade they receive, how well they read or even what their behavior is. Students with an *external* locus of control are more likely to develop *learned helplessness*, giving up on challenging school work before even trying (Berk, 2008).

The unique thing about locus of control is that research has shown that people who have an internal locus of control achieve more than those who don't (Blaha, 1982). This means that

students who believe they have power to *affect* their surroundings are less likely to fail academically; they can control their behavior, join in a game of basketball or take the extra time to get an “A.” Additionally, underprivileged students tend to have a stronger correlation between locus of control and achievement (Blaha, 1982). Because of this, it is even more important for teachers to keep strategies on hand that help students overcome learned helplessness.

#### **v. The *Affective* Basis of Attitude**

To look at attitudes in another light, McKenna (1995) has proposed three components to attitude: “the beliefs an individual harbors in relation to the object, the behavioral intentions that concern the object, and the feelings the individual experiences because of the object.” Although this work is built on the work of Mathewson, McKenna switched focus to highlight the *affective* basis of attitude- specifically the causal relationship between attitude and beliefs. In his view, attitude works on different types of beliefs; there are normative beliefs, such as how your friends value reading; beliefs about the outcomes of reading; and beliefs specific to reading experiences. By breaking down the relationship between attitudes and beliefs in this way, McKenna (1995) has provided researchers with a useful tool for measuring and understanding some of the factors that impact attitudes.

#### **vi. Background Factors**

Research shows us that while attitudes may be linked to academic success, there are many factors involved that may have a greater influence, especially for students in early grades (Kirby, 2011). These factors are often environmental and social in nature, relating to the *macrosystem*- or culture- in which the child was raised.

Until a child goes to school, her family is typically the child's primary source of beliefs,

attitudes and knowledge towards the world. The media, experiences at church or with relatives are other primary sources of attitudes that have a lasting impact on what a child values. This effect, called *social comparison*, is when normative beliefs set up by the student's community influence the student's attitudes towards various things in her life (McKenna, 1995). For example, a child who goes to a Baptist church every Sunday may value singing more than others, due to social comparison. Alternately, a child who is read to every night may value reading more because it is important to his daily routines with his family.

In this sense, a student's attitude towards reading is partially a socially constructed concept. The child transfers what he knows about books and literacy from his prior experiences at school and growing up to his current experience at school. Given this, one begins to understand how important it is for a teacher to set up her classroom as a learning community, distinct yet impacted by the cultural identities of the students it serves. While it is impossible to control for background factors such as SES, exposure to literacy at home and current levels of achievement, it is possible for teachers to create a classroom culture that supports literacy through establishing normative beliefs about why, when and how we read.

Another important factor in attitude towards reading is reading ability- how well a student reads. Ability, naming speed, and general cognitive factors all play a role in how interested a student is in reading; students express interest and value in tasks they can succeed at (Kirby, 2011). When a student has fallen behind and no longer reads near grade level, assignments become more difficult, frustrating and overwhelming. For example, students spend time reading out of their literature text books every day. Sometimes students partner read, other times they choral read or listen to the story as it is read out-loud and then follow along. For a

student who is not reading on grade level, it is hard to keep up during reading time. A page full of print may be overwhelming and he may be unable to follow along while being read to because he doesn't know what the words they are pointing to sound like.

Logically, negative attitudes towards recreational reading are related to ability, as less able readers are less likely to enjoy and engage in recreational reading (McKenna 1995). Current research, using the Elementary Reading Attitudes Survey, showed that students who were lower readers had more negative attitudes towards reading (Kirby, 2011). Considering this, early intervention for children with reading difficulties may help students become better readers and have more positive attitudes towards literacy (McKenna, 1995). As we know, these positive attitudes bring more literacy experiences for the student.

Lastly, gender is a background factor that has been shown to correlate with student's attitudes towards reading. Consistently, girls have been shown to view reading as a more acceptable behavior than boys. They are more likely to have positive attitudes towards reading and maintain them over time, although their attitudes decrease at the same rate as boys (McKenna, 1995; Shapiro, 1980).

#### **vii. Importance of Appropriate Role Models**

Before beginning a discussion on role models, it is relevant to look at the difference between tutors and role models. Tutoring occurs as a one-on-one activity between a child and an adult or a child and another peer. Tutoring is typically effective, especially in primary grades where students may still be struggling to build foundational knowledge (Wasik & Slavin, 1993). Some of the benefits of tutoring include increased self-esteem, increased confidence and increased classroom participation (Ellis, Small-McGinley & Hart, 1998).

While tutors may act as role models, all role models are not tutors. In this context, a role model is someone who a student looks up to; it could be a sports star, a big brother or the coach of their football team. The role model may be an active part of the child's life, or someone the child would like to be like someday. Role models occur as part of the process of *collective socialization*, whereby adults in a community influence children who are not their own (Collective Socialization, 2004).

In his research on *collective socialization*, Ainsworth (2002) found that students from low-income neighborhoods may not see evidence of a positive outcome for students who work hard at school. Up to three times as many students from low-income neighborhoods will drop out of school as compared to non-poverty neighborhoods, and up to 80% of those will remain unemployed after dropping out (Ainsworth, 2002). Couple this with the lack of structuring norms and lack of opportunities, it is easy to see how exposure to positive role models may be diminished; the effect of providing more positive role models for these students may be one key to success.

### **viii. Measures of Attitudes**

Survey of School Attitudes (SSA) was one of the first school attitude tests available for researchers. It consisted of 60 self-report questions that were administered over several settings (Beck, 1977). Students would be read a prompt and asked to point to a face on a pictorial rating scale (the face represented one of three emotions towards the question- happy, bored or sad). This survey was groundbreaking for its time, giving researchers a tool that could sort, quantify and begin to link students' attitudes towards reading with their performance in the classroom.

The SSA was norm referenced in October 1973 using 13,500 first through eighth grade students from over twelve school systems in ten states (Beck, 1977). The data was norm

referenced using 1970 census data, making it representative of the U.S. population at the time. This test was widely used up into the early 1990s, when a new test- the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey- was developed.

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) is the current industry standard, as evidenced by its wide use in research today. It is a shorter test than its predecessor, consisting of 20 self-report questions that are typically administered in one sitting. It is similar to the SSA in that it was norm referenced to represent the U.S. population at the time it was developed- 1989. In total, 18,138 students from 38 states participated in the survey with 9.5% of the students African American and 6.2% Hispanic (Johns & Lenski, 2010). Although the population has shifted significantly, the survey has been shown to hold validity regardless of this shift (McKenna, 1995).

Students tested were in grades 1-6, allowing the survey to accurately represent attitudes and reading achievement over time, or as a snapshot in a particular arena. Results can be interpreted like achievement-test percentile ranks and are easily quantifiable (Johns & Lenski, 2010).

One of the benefits of the ERAS- as the SSA before it- is that it is self-report, measuring students on items such as “how do you feel about learning from a book?” and “how do you feel when the teacher asks you questions about what you read?” The questions represent attitudes towards two types of reading- recreational and academic. Scores may be broken down into these two subsets, which have ten questions each. Student responses are measured using a pictorial rating scale of emotional identifiers that correlate to points on a Likert scale (McKenna, 1995). Answers are represented by a picture of Garfield showing an emotion along a “happiest” to “slightly smiling” to “mildly upset” to “very upset” continuum (Johns & Lenski, 2010 , p. 27).

### **ix. Reading Role Model Intervention Program**

The current research proposes to answer the question of whether more positive experiences with literacy can lead to more positive attitudes towards reading and better reading scores. The students were asked to identify people they would like to see in the classroom, and write about one person who is a role model to them- giving them investment in the process. The idea for the Reading Role Model Intervention Program (RRMIP) came from a book called *Improving Reading: Interventions, Strategies and Resources* by Johns and Lensk, (2010). The goal of the RRMIP is to increase student attitudes towards reading.

The research questions addressed in this study include: (1) What is the impact of Reading Role Model Intervention Program on second graders' attitudes towards reading? (2) Does this vary as a function of reading skill?

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### **i. Participants**

Participants are 43 students from a convenience sample of two second grade classes in an urban school in the Midwestern United States. One class served as the control group while the other served as the experimental group. At the school, 85.89% of students come from economically disadvantaged homes, with 14.11% coming from non-economically disadvantaged homes. Sixty-six point eight seven percent of students at the school are African American, 14.31% are Caucasian, 5.52% are Hispanic and 13.2% are designated as “other.”

Both classes were comparable in terms of size; the control group had 21 students and the experimental group had 22 students. Both classes fall below target for comprehension and fluency scores when using the AIMSweb test. When measured in terms of comprehension, the control group averaged 7.8 correct, with a target of 11 correct while the experimental group averaged 5.8 correct with a target of 11. For fluency, students in the control group averaged 86 words per minute, with a target of 88, while the experimental group had an average of 61 words per minute, with a target of 88.

#### **ii. Materials**

The Elementary Reading Attitudes Survey (Appendix A) was used twice, necessitating approximately 85 copies. Pencils and paper were provided to the students for letter writing purposes. Four books were selected by the researcher for the Reading Role Models to read to the class: *Officer Buckle and Gloria* by Peggy Rathmann; *Yes Day*, by Amy Krouse

Rosenthal; *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*, by Dr. Theodore Seuss Geisel; and *Cool Dog, School Dog*, by Deborah Heiligman.

### **iii. Measures**

The Elementary Reading Attitudes Survey was scored for each class, and norms referenced. Individual student scores on the ERAS were correlated with individual student scores for the winter 2011 AIMSweb reading and comprehension sections to determine if attitudes towards reading are correlated with reading scores, as evidenced in prior research.

### **iv. Procedures**

At the beginning of the study, control and experimental students were given the Elementary Reading Attitudes Survey. The researcher administered the test to the whole class at once, explaining directions and reading each question out loud. Next, the researcher let students in the experimental group know that people from the community would be visiting the classroom to talk to the students about reading. In a writing activity, students were asked to think of someone they would want to come visit and be a part of the classroom. The researcher explained that this person is a role model, someone who the students look up to and might not already know. Before writing, the whole class brainstormed types and qualities of a role model while the teacher wrote their ideas down on the whiteboard. Students used this vocabulary to write about the person they choose as their role model.

From this assignment, the researcher made a list of the most common role models and scheduled visits over the phone. The program took six weeks to complete with four visiting role models: a police officer, a third grade teacher, a cartoonist and a hip hop artist. Each visit took approximately 45 minutes and began with an introduction by the researcher, a short talk by the

guest, a question and answer period and then a book reading on the carpet. The visits occurred as follows:

*Session 1:* After contacting the police station, a community police officer came to visit. He talked about home schooling his children, what types of things he did on the job and some of the qualities he thought made a good role model. After answering student questions, he read *Officer Buckle and Gloria*, by Peggy Rathmann.

*Session 2:* A third grade teacher from the building came and talked about what students could expect in third grade. She talked about writing sentences, how to write in cursive and what kinds of books she reads in her classroom. After answering student questions, she read *Yes Day*, by Amy Krouse Rosenthal.

*Session 3:* The researcher got in touch with an arts organization to bring out a cartoonist. After selecting a book from the school library, the cartoonist visited the classroom and demonstrated drawing different characters. The cartoonist encouraged students to practice their writing, drawing and reading. He explained that Dr. Seuss was a writer as well as an illustrator of his books. The cartoonist read from *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*, by Dr. Seuss.

*Session 4:* The researcher used the internet to find a local hip hop artist who could come to the classroom. After speaking with his manager, the hip hop artist visited the classroom with his manager and his videographer. He talked to students about where he grew up and about his two children. He rapped a song, answered questions, gave each student an autograph and talked about his personal philosophy. He read *Cool Dog, School Dog*, by Deborah Heiligman.

After the completion of the RRMIP program, students in the experimental and control groups were given the ERAS post-test.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

Descriptive statistics are reported in Table 1. There were a total of 43 participants.

Twenty-one (49%) were in the control group (no reading role models) and twenty-two (51%) were in the experimental group (reading role models).

Table 1  
*Descriptive Statistics*

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
<b>Control group (n=21)</b>			
AIMSweb			
Oral reading fluency	70.76	29.74	13.0-106.0
Maze comprehension	8.05	5.29	0.0-18.0
ERAS Survey			
Recreational Reading pre	26.48	7.78	10.0-40.0
Recreational Reading post	25.38	8.56	11.0-40.0
Academic Reading pre	27.33	8.05	10.0-40.0
Academic Reading post	25.19	8.29	12.0-40.0
Total Reading pre	53.81	15.56	20.0-80.0
Total Reading Post	50.57	16.03	26.0-80.0
<b>Experimental group (n=22)</b>			
AIMSweb			
Oral reading fluency	64.41	38.34	11.0-169.0
Maze comprehension	6.14	5.57	0.0-22.0
ERAS Survey			
Recreational Reading pre	25.05	7.06	10.0-40.0
Recreational Reading post	26.95	6.65	14.0-40.0
Academic Reading pre	25.77	7.04	10.0-34.0
Academic Reading post	28.55	6.28	16.0-40.0
Total Reading pre	50.82	13.42	20.0-74.0
Total Reading Post	55.50	11.78	37.0-80.0

To address the first research question (i.e., what is the impact of Reading Role Model Intervention program on second graders' attitudes towards reading?), a one sample t test was computed using data from the experimental group. Recreational reading scores were compared from pre-test to post-test to see if statistically significant growth was made in attitudes towards

recreational reading. The results were statistically significant,  $t(21) = 19.01, p < .001$ . Secondly, academic reading attitudes pre-test and post-test were compared to see if statistically significant results were found. These results were statistically significant as well,  $t(21) = 21.57, p < .001$ . These results indicate that the students in the experimental group made statistically significant improvements in their recreational and academic attitudes.

To address the second research question (i.e., does this vary as a function of reading skill?), bivariate correlations were computed among the oral reading fluency (ORF) measure and the recreational and academic attitude scores for the experimental group. Results were not statistically significant ( $r = .16, p < .94$  for ORF and recreational reading attitudes;  $r = .04, p < .87$  for ORF and academic reading attitudes). Additionally, bivariate correlations were computed among the ORF Maze comprehension scores and the recreational and academic attitude scores for the experimental group. Results were not statistically significant ( $r = .25, p < .26$  for Maze and recreational reading attitudes;  $r = .28, p < .20$  for Maze and academic reading attitudes). These results indicate that there was no pattern of relation among reading skill (as measured by the ORF scores and the Maze comprehension scores) and academic and recreational reading attitudes among those students in the experimental group.

To determine if there were group differences in reading skill and/or reading attitudes among those in the control group and those students in the experimental group, a series of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVAs) were computed. No statistically significant results emerged. See Table 2. These results suggest that children in the experimental group did not outperform those in the control group in terms of academic or recreational reading attitudes nor did they outperform the students in the experimental group in ORF or the Maze comprehension measures.

Table 2  
*Group Differences*

Variable	Experimental Group Mean (N=22)	Control Group Mean (N=21)	F and significance
AIMSweb			
ORF			$F(1, 41) = .37 p < .55$
Maze Comprehension			$F(1, 41) = 1.33 p < .26$
ERAS Survey			
Recreational Reading pre			$F(1, 41) = .40 p < .53$
Recreational Reading post			$F(1, 41) = .46 p < .50$
Academic Reading pre			$F(1, 41) = .46 p < .50$
Academic Reading post			$F(1, 41) = 2.27 p < .14$

Finally, to determine if gains made from pre to post test on the reading attitude survey were significantly different between the groups, a one way analysis of variance was computed. Results indicate that gains made in recreational reading were not statistically significantly different,  $F(1, 42) = 1.61, p < .21$ . However, when examining academic reading gains, statistically significant differences emerged with the children in the experimental group outperforming those in the control group in gains,  $F(1, 42) = 5.15, p < .03$ . This indicates that the children in the experimental group grew more in their attitudes towards academic reading than did the children in the control group.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

When looking at previous research regarding attitudes and reading ability, the researcher expected to find a positive relationship between reading ability and attitudes towards reading. However, the researcher found no relationship between ability and attitudes. In this case, increased ability did not necessarily indicate better attitudes towards reading. While this data refutes current research, the limitations of this study- including small sample size, the duration of the study and low dosage of RRMIP- make it necessary to do more extensive research before ruling out the impact of Reading Role Models and the relationship between ability and attitudes in this population of students.

It is interesting to note that students' attitudes towards reading did increase by 4.68 points in the experimental group, as opposed to the decrease of 3.42 points in the control group. There was a significant amount of gain from pre-test to post-test for students in the experimental group for attitudes towards academic reading. In the future, completing this research with a larger sample size would help to minimize background factors and bring stronger results.

One reason for the mixed results could be that the post-test was given during the last full week of school, when there was not a typical reading and literacy unit being taught; therefore, student responsibilities and experiences with literacy during that week were non-typical and may have impacted attitudes. Maturation, where students' attitudes towards reading changed over time as the year progressed, is another factor that must be considered when reviewing the results of this study.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

While it is not possible for the researcher to conclude that having a Reading Role Model in the classroom benefited student's attitudes towards reading, anecdotal evidence suggests that students had positive experiences with the role models who visited the classroom. Students met a Police Officer, a Third Grade Teacher, a Cartoonist and a Hip Hop Artist. Observation during each of the four visits showed that students were engaged and interested during the visits. Students asked questions that linked learning to their personal lives and they got access to role models who may have been previously unavailable to them.

Informal data was recorded regarding students' participation in each question and answer session, with more than 50% of students raising their hands to ask questions during each visit. Another measure of student engagement was student behavior while sitting on the carpet and being read to; no students were reprimanded for behavior issues during this time, indicating their respect and interest in the materials being read. As a third indicator of students' engagement, each student was asked to write a thank-you letter to each Role Model. After analyzing the letters for content and vocabulary, it was possible to see (1) something the student learned from the role model and (2) something the student enjoyed about the visit. Because this letter was written the next day, it became a good measure of how much the students had learned from the visiting role model. It also gave the researcher an idea of which guests were most effective in communicating with students and whether the researcher did a good job setting up the visit and communicating with the guest.

This research serves as a pilot study for more intensive research into the effectiveness of Reading Role Models. While the intended impact of the role models was to increase student attitudes towards literacy, issues of character education came to the forefront as the study ran its course. The question remains whether it was the presence of the adult role models or the impact of targeted reading and writing activities that was most influential to student attitudes

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **FUTURE RESEARCH**

This investigation leaves the door wide open for future research. While a solid body of evidence suggests that attitudes towards reading are linked to reading ability, it would be interesting to explore whether this is always true for minority and low SES populations. Although some research has been done to show that the ERAS can accurately represent attitudes of these populations, the increasing diversity of students in U.S. schools gives good reason to re-evaluate the effectiveness of this tool.

Another area of future research to be considered is the impact of bringing role models into the classroom. While this research primarily targeted student attitudes towards reading, character education became an important part of the research. An astute researcher would no doubt find interesting ways to incorporate role models into the curricula through a myriad of lenses, including character education, reading role models, focus on careers or project-based learning and skill shares.

In the future, the researcher would be interested to dissect the role of the classroom volunteer, taking the idea of “volunteering in the classroom” to a new level by asking “What makes an experience valuable for students and volunteer alike?” Finding out what makes volunteering in the classroom meaningful to the students and the visitor will be a big step in bridging the gap between community and schools in a meaningful way. Although everyone may not be a born teacher, everyone has valuable knowledge and insights to share within the context of a learning community.

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## **APENDIX**

APENDIX : ELEMENTARY READING ATTITUDES

















SURVEY

**E**LEMENTARY READING ATTITUDE SURVEY



















Name \_\_\_\_\_

















Date \_\_\_\_\_

<small>GARFIELD: © 1978 United Feature Syndicate, Inc.</small>	<p>1. How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?</p> <p>   </p> <p style="text-align: right;"><small>JIM DAVIS</small></p>
	<p>2. How do you feel when you read a book in a school during free time?</p> <p>   </p> <p style="text-align: right;"><small>JIM DAVIS</small></p>
	<p>3. How do you feel about reading for fun at home?</p> <p>   </p> <p style="text-align: right;"><small>JIM DAVIS</small></p>
	<p>4. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?</p> <p>   </p> <p style="text-align: right;"><small>JIM DAVIS</small></p>

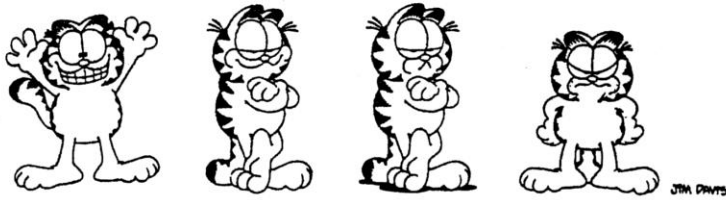
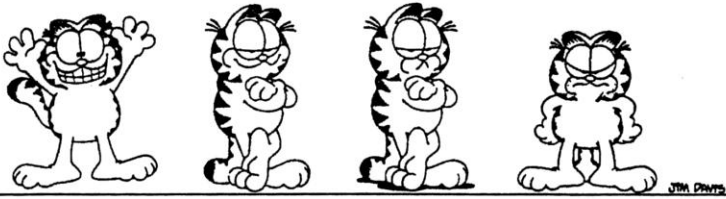


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GARFIELD: © 1978 United Feature Syndicate, Inc.	5. How do you feel about spending free time reading?					JIM DWYER
	6. How do you feel about starting a new book?					JIM DWYER
	7. How do you feel about reading during summer?					JIM DWYER
	8. How do you feel about reading instead of playing?					JIM DWYER





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GARFIELD © 1978 United Feature Syndicate, Inc.	9. How do you feel about going to a bookstore?					JIM DWYER
	10. How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?					JIM DWYER
	11. How do you feel when the teacher asks you questions about what you read?					JIM DWYER
	12. How do you feel about doing reading workbook pages and worksheets?					JIM DWYER

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<small>GARFIELD: © 1978 United Feature Syndicate, Inc.</small>	13. How do you feel about reading in school?
	
	14. How do you feel about reading your school books?
	
15. How do you feel about learning from a book?	
	
16. How do you feel when it's time for reading in class?	
	

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GARFIELD: © 1978 United Feature Syndicate, Inc.	17. How do you feel about the stories you read in reading class?
	
	18. How do you feel when you read out loud in class?
	
19. How do you feel about using a dictionary?	
	
20. How do you feel about taking a reading test?	
	

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