THE FOURTH GRADE SLUMP: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN READING ATTITUDES AND FREQUENCY OF READING

Nicole Donaldson

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Committee:

Dr. Cynthia Bertelsen, Chair
Dr. Cindy Hendricks
Dr. Nancy Fordham
ABSTRACT

Dr. Cynthia Bertelsen, Advisor

This study explored the fourth grade slump with regard to the relationship between reading attitude and reading frequency in elementary school children. The Elementary Reading Attitude Scale and the Frequency Questionnaire were administered to two classes of second graders and two classes of fifth graders in the same school. The results were divided into the categories of academic and recreational reading for attitude and frequency. This paper presents the results of the study, as well as the implications for elementary school teachers.

Once the surveys had been scored, a correlation was found between overall reading attitude and overall reading frequency, as well as between recreational reading attitude and recreational reading frequency. Surprisingly, the reading attitudes of the students did not drop significantly between second and fifth grade. The implications of this study are that the reading attitudes and frequency of students are connected and one can be improved by increasing the other. This means that teachers should be aware of these two reading elements and how one can positively impact the other.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER I  INTRODUCTION</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the problem</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER II  REVIEW OF LITERATURE</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>History of the Fourth Grade Slump</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causes of the Fourth Grade Slump</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships Between Slumping Reading Components</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Attitudes and Achievement</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Attitudes and Frequency</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Frequency and Motivation</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Frequency and Achievement</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Reading Factors</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes and Gender</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes of Students with Exceptionalities</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER III  METHODS AND PROCEDURES</th>
<th>27</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Educators are confronted with a constant struggle to motivate students to learn in all content areas, including reading. When students have a poor attitude toward reading in or out of school, they are unlikely to read. The amount that students read impacts achievement and attitudes, which in turn influence the frequency with which students read. This alarming cycle became apparent to me while tutoring five students.

The first student that I tutored was in first grade. She was highly motivated to read and, therefore, did so every day. Because of this, the student read above her grade level. On the other hand, the group of four fourth graders that I tutored all indicated a dislike toward reading, especially in school. It was a stunning revelation that there was a critical difference in reading attitudes between the younger and older students. Also, there was a major variation in the frequency with which the younger and older students read.

Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin (1990) tagged this phenomenon of declining reading attitudes through the elementary years as the fourth grade slump. Many aspects of this slump are of concern to researchers, including the cause and relationship to other reading components. One area that has received little research is the correlation between reading frequency and attitudes. Understanding all of these components may lead to higher reading achievement for students across higher grade levels.

Statement of the Problem

Reading is a complex, multi-faceted set of skills whose attainment cannot be predicted by any one factor. Researchers often study the relationship between various reading factors to determine methods for improving instruction. For example, McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) determined a correlation between reading attitudes and reading achievement, suggesting
that improvement of one will positively impact the other. Martinez, Aricak, and Jewell (2008) further contend that “Children’s attitudes toward reading, in and out of school, influence the amount of reading in which they engage, which influences their actual reading skill” (p. 1011).

Despite the importance of positive reading attitudes, the affective aspect of literacy may be pushed aside in favor of developing skills and strategies. Rosenblatt (2005) believes that teachers focus on measurable skills rather than enjoyment of reading because of the need for grades. As a result, attitudes toward reading in and out of school tend to decline as children move through elementary school. Researchers (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990; Samuels, 2007) refer to this phenomenon as the fourth grade slump, given that procession through elementary school sometimes results in a decline in reading attitudes and abilities among fourth graders. On the other hand, Tyre and Springen (2007) believe that this slump may actually occur anywhere between the end of second grade and fifth grade.

In addition to locating the age at which this slump begins, determining its cause is of concern to educators. Researchers have speculated that a shift in the curriculum is to blame. In the upper elementary school grades, students receive less specific instruction in reading and spend less time engaged in enjoyable reading activities (Gutshall, 2009; Tyre & Springen, 2007). Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin (1990) extend this idea by explaining that students shift from learning to decode words to utilizing text for learning. Students who start out a little behind get further and further behind. Morgan, Farkas, and Hibel (2008) studied this trend known as the Matthew Effect, stating, “The Matthew Effect refers to a pattern of increasing advantage or disadvantage following initial advantage or disadvantage” (p. 187). In reading, students who struggle continue to struggle as the material becomes more difficult, potentially leading to lower
achievement scores and a less positive attitude. Unfortunately, research has yet to pinpoint the exact cause of this trend.

To determine the source of the *fourth grade slump*, research must focus on ascertaining the nature of relationships between reading attitudes and other aspects of reading, such as reading ability and reading frequency. By discovering correlations between these factors, researchers may eventually propose a cause and solution to the decline in reading attitudes among older elementary school students.

Students’ reading attitudes impact the acquisition of reading skills and strategies, as well as the frequency with which they read. Cox and Guthrie (2001) sight a correlation between reading frequency, motivation, and cognitive ability. Students who are not motivated to read do not read very often, negatively influencing cognitive skills with regard to reading. In a similar manner, reading attitudes and the frequency with which students read may have an impact on each other. By determining the nature of this relationship, an increase in attitude and frequency may boost cognitive abilities.

**Research Question**

It is important to evaluate the effect of reading components on each other, as well as which factors cause the *fourth grade slump*. The first step of this study was to determine whether or not this slump was occurring at the chosen elementary school, which will be called Warner Elementary School.¹ It was thought that reading attitudes would decline in both the recreational and academic areas as students moved through elementary school. Simultaneously, recreational reading frequency would decline and academic reading frequency would increase.

¹ pseudonym
By researching the relationship between reading attitudes and reading frequency, a solution to the *fourth grade slump* may eventually become apparent. This study explored the influence of reading frequency and reading attitudes on each other. A higher understanding of these factors will lead to instructional practices that will utilize one factor for the improvement of the other. The question that was answered is this: What is the correlation between academic and recreational reading attitudes and the frequency of both types of reading?

**Rationale**

Reading attitudes and reading frequency are two crucial topics with regard to reading achievement. When students read frequently, they expand their vocabulary and world knowledge while honing reading skills and strategies. Students who do not practice reading skills will not refine them. This study will determine if a correlation exists between reading attitudes and the frequency with which children read, and, if so, what is the nature of this relationship?

Because having opportunities to read is such a critical factor in reading achievement, it is important to ensure that students engage in reading in and out of school. Reading promotes learning in all subject areas, while improving vocabulary and reading skills. Brown (2008) states that the amount that a child reads is a critical component of developing further reading skills. Students who do not read often are less likely to improve upon strategies for reading. Similarly, a student’s attitude toward reading is a key component in reading achievement. McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) contend that achievement and attitude are closely linked. Students who have a positive attitude toward reading tend to read better.

Because of its importance, assessing students’ reading attitudes has many benefits. Kerby (1986) stated “When you assess your students’ attitudes toward reading, you’ll get some surprising results. You’ll find yourself thinking of ways to encourage individual students and
classes to read more” (p. 43). In addition to identifying reasons why students struggle to read, assessment provides inspiration for teachers to find ways to increase positive attitudes.

In addition to the benefits of assessing attitudes and reading habits, finding a correlation between these factors may lead to a better understanding of the *fourth grade slump*. Although a solution has not been conclusively determined, it is known that many reading factors influence each other, such as attitude and achievement (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995). Knowing how they impact each other is the first step toward a solution to the *fourth grade slump*. Also, knowing how the components of attitude and frequency play off each other allows teachers to use one to improve the other.

**Definition of Terms**

Although similar, the concepts of *attitude* and *motivation* do contain some critical variations. Alexander and Filler (1976) define *reading attitude* as “a system of feelings related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation” (p. 1). An *attitude* about reading refers to how a student feels about reading and what type of reaction he or she has to reading. Students with a *positive attitude* feel that reading is pleasurable, while students with a *negative attitude* do not. *Attitudes* influence a student’s desire to read.

Although *attitudes* toward reading can be broken into various dimensions, McKenna and Kear (1990) split the concept of attitude into two parts: *academic reading* and *recreational reading*. *Academic reading* is generally performed inside the classroom. This may consist of textbook or any other assigned readings. On the other hand, *recreational reading* is the reading for fun that someone chooses to do in his or her spare time (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995). *Recreational reading* may occur inside or outside of the classroom. Teachers promote
recreational reading within the classroom by allowing students to choose books to read during free time in class.

Similar to attitude, motivation contributes to why students do or do not read. The difference is that motivation is the driving force behind actions. Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) consider motivation to be the reason why students read. Many factors within the child and outside of the child influence the level of motivation. If the child will receive some sort of internal or external reward for reading, the child will be more motivated to do so. Reading attitude, or how a child feels about personal reading ability and about reading in general, can influence reading motivation. Positive feelings about reading will result in higher motivation to read, while a negative attitude will result in lower motivation.

Motivations, attitudes, frequency, and reading achievement are all components of the fourth grade slump, or the decline in reading attitudes and abilities that occurs around fourth grade. Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin (1990) coined this term to describe declining reading attitudes and abilities in children from low socioeconomic statuses. It was observed that students in older grades read less and struggled to read. For the purpose of this study, the attitude and reading portion of the slump were the focus.

Another term that is pertinent to this study is direct instruction. According to the Naperville Community Unit School District (2003), direct instruction is “A planned, explicit, systematic sequence of instruction that has a goal or set of goals” (p. 15). This usually involves a teacher-directed approach in which the teacher provides information to the students and the students take notes or listen. Another teaching method is the use of cooperative learning, which is described by Daniels (2002) as student-centered, inquiry-based learning. Students work in a
group to accomplish a common goal that is based on an open-ended activity provided by the instructor.

The last term necessary for this study is strategy instruction. Naperville Community Unit School District (2003) explains that strategy instruction is “Instruction that focuses on research-based processes that define particular aspects of reading” (p. 15). This could be letter names and sounds, sight words, or strategies for recognizing new words. It can also be taught during writing and reading comprehension time.

Limitations

This study was based on the responses of students to two surveys. Although the surveys were anonymous, there is a possibility that students felt uncomfortable answering the questions honestly. Because the surveys were administered by a teacher, students may have been unwilling to honestly admit a negative attitude toward reading, especially in school. This problem was counteracted in that students were assured that the surveys were completely anonymous and not for a grade. Also, students were encouraged to answer honestly so that the results would be accurate.

A second limitation was that there was not enough time for a longitudinal study. The benefit of a longitudinal study would have been that the reading attitudes of students could have been measured in second grade and again in fifth. The results of specific students could have been compared across three grades to gain perspective on the correlation between attitude declines and reading frequency for each student. Instead, the study was completed over the course of a few weeks.

To offset this limitation, the participants in the study were second and fifth graders in the same school. The fifth grade students had progressed through the same reading program as the
second grade students. It is likely that many of the students responded to the program in a similar manner so that the differences in reading attitudes across the grades demonstrated an accurate pattern. This school, which will be identified as Warner Elementary, used a program called Success for All that was implemented across the whole elementary school. Administering the survey to students at Warner helped to ensure that the attitudes and reading frequencies of the fifth graders were similar to the future attitudes and frequencies of the second graders.

A third limitation is that the students at Warner are required to read for 15 minutes every night. Students may have counted this as reading for fun in the survey, instead of academic reading. Also, the students across all grade levels participate in the same reading block each day. Although fifth grade students typically spend more time reading text books, they may not have counted reading in other subject areas as part of their academic reading. The questions were worded carefully to offset this limitation and it was specifically explained to the students that reading required for school was not considered reading for fun.

Unfortunately, the final limitation is that not all of the students had attended Warner Elementary since kindergarten, thus not all of the students had participated in the same reading program all through elementary school. This limitation did not impact the study significantly because the *fourth grade slump* is a general trend in many schools, as demonstrated in research (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990; McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995). The students who had not participated in the program may have attended a school with a similar program. Either way, a majority of the students had participated in similar reading programs.

Summary

In this study, the correlation between reading frequency and reading attitudes was explored. This was done on the basis of recreational and academic reading. The goal of this study
was to assist teachers in understanding these two components of the fourth grade slump and how they affect each other. If there is a correlation between the two, one may be used to improve the other.

Reading attitude and the frequency of reading are both crucial in increasing reading achievement. In the past, teachers have often neglected attitudes toward reading because of a push to meet standards. If teachers work to improve reading attitude and increase recreational reading frequency, they will be able to improve the reading achievement of their students at the same time.
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

For many years, educators and researchers alike have noticed a trend reflecting decreased reading attitudes as students progress through elementary school. Around fourth grade, these attitudes begin to plummet, warranting the term *fourth grade slump* (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990). Although research has not provided a definite cause, insight into the nature of this drop in reading attitudes has been ascertained. The research focuses on causes of the *fourth grade slump*, as well as correlations between reading attitudes, reading frequency, reading achievement, and other components of reading.

Especially important is the work of McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) that led to the development of a reading scale for measuring attitudes. Use of this scale and other measures resulted in the knowledge that many components of reading decline around fourth grade. This was an extension of the work of Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin (1990) who first named the trend. The purpose of this chapter is to present the relevant research with regard to the *fourth grade slump*, starting with its history, causes, and relationships between slumping reading components.

History of the Fourth Grade Slump

Although the *fourth grade slump* is a relatively new term, its impact has become widespread over the past two decades. Researchers (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990; McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995) have begun to investigate causes and solutions to this slump, as well as the breadth of its reach. Over time, the term has been extended to include more groups of children and more declining reading components.

The reading abilities of students begin to decline around the fourth grade. This trend was termed the *fourth grade slump* by Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin (1990) who tested the reading abilities of elementary school children from second through fourth grade. The results of this
study showed that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds began to achieve lower reading scores around the fourth grade. Interestingly, this research also revealed that students who started out as lower achievers in reading declined at a faster rate than those who began as higher achievers. Shortly after the term *fourth grade slump* was employed for the decline in reading achievement, it shifted to include reading attitudes, motivation, and interest.

Around this time, McKenna and Kear (1990) produced a new assessment for reading attitudes called the *Elementary Reading and Attitude Survey* (ERAS). This new tool led to extensive research surrounding the nature of the fourth grade slump and the impact of reading attitudes on other reading components. The ERAS divides reading into two parts: recreational and academic reading. Recreational reading is the reading that students complete for pleasure or personal purposes, while academic reading involves reading to learn. Another key difference is that recreational reading is done by choice, while academic is usually the result of school assignments.

To assess elementary school attitudes, McKenna and Kear’s ERAS (1990) contains pictures of Garfield the cat. Each Garfield depicts a different emotion ranging from happy to upset. Students listen to a survey administrator read statements about reading in or out of school, and they circle the image of Garfield that best matches how they feel in the described situation. At the end, the administrator adds the number of points the child obtained for academic and recreational reading to determine an attitude score. Because of the potential benefits of this scale, it is available to all educators free of charge and has been used for research on reading attitudes in many instances.

One such instance is the research of McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) that compared the reading attitudes of students across the elementary school grades. In this study, teachers were
sent copies of the ERAS and were asked to estimate the students’ reading ability levels. Comparisons were made to attitude, achievement, and gender. This landmark study has been paramount to the development of an understanding of the fourth grade slump and the influence of reading attitudes on other reading skills.

The main reason for the importance of the study by McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) is that the results confirmed observations by educators that the fourth grade slump exists. Two hundred and twenty nine schools across the country administered the ERAS to students. In the end, the researchers concluded that reading attitudes showed a steady decline as students progressed through elementary school. This alarming conclusion set the stage for other researchers to explore the exact causes and nature of the fourth grade slump in reading attitudes.

Many researchers gained inspiration from the work of McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995). To confirm the findings of this initial research, Kush and Watkins (1996) administered the ERAS to 319 students from grades one to four. The findings of this study were consistent with previous research, suggesting a significant decline in reading attitudes between grades one and four. Kush and Watkins state, “This somewhat alarming, but not unexpected, trend occurred for attitudes expressed about both academic and recreational reading” (p. 317). At this point in time, the fourth grade slump in reading attitudes had become an accepted fact that required additional research to acquire a plausible solution.

Although the cause of the fourth grade slump has not yet been fully determined, researchers have studied possible sources. Tunmer and Chapman (2002) explored the effects of instructional methods and strategies for readers on reading attitudes. A three year, longitudinal study was employed to look at the self-perception portion of reading attitude. In the end, the study did not provide an absolute cause, but it did indicate that students who used word-based
reading strategies had more positive attitudes toward reading than students who were taught to use text-based strategies. Word-based strategies are methods that focus on decoding the word based on its sounds and parts, while text-based strategies focus on utilizing the meaning of the passage and context clues to determine unfamiliar words. Though not a conclusive cause of negative attitudes, the use of text-based strategies may play a role in this trend. Further research will be necessary to prove this.

Causes of the Fourth Grade Slump

Various sources of the fourth grade slump have been proposed, though none have been conclusively proven. Researchers (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990; Tyre & Springen, 2007) have considered effects of school and home factors, including environment, instructional techniques, and testing. These efforts have led to a broader view of the slump and may eventually lead to a solution.

One explanation of the fourth grade slump is that it is a result of the Matthew Effect. Research by Morgan, Farkas, and Hibel (2008) suggests that students who begin as poor readers become poorer, while rich readers become richer. By examining the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Class (ECLS-KC), the researchers were able to witness this effect. The findings indicate that a Matthew Effect does exist in reading. Children who were initially poor readers did not catch up to peers. Instead, their skills seemed to develop at a slower rate. Morgan, Farkas, and Hibel conclude that a child’s socio-economic status and gender have an impact on reading development. Students from low socio-economic statuses tended to develop reading abilities at a slower rate than students from middle and high socio-economic statuses. Similarly, girls tended to accumulate skills at a faster rate than boys. Although this does
not imply a definitive cause of the fourth grade slump, gender and socio-economic status may play a role in this trend.

Another suggested cause of the slump in reading attitudes and achievement is the shift from learning to read to reading to learn. According to Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin (1990), students in grades two and three focus on learning to decode words and read the words that are already present in their speaking vocabulary. On the other hand, students from fourth grade through high school use reading to learn new information. The vocabulary is often unfamiliar, as are the concepts. This shift in the focus of reading instruction may be the reason for declining attitudes and achievement, and also explains why students who struggle in the lower grades face a more significant plummet than students who have high achievement levels when beginning to read (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990; Tyre & Springen, 2007).

In addition, the teaching styles of teachers change through the elementary school years, resulting in less social interaction. In kindergarten, students spend a great deal of time working in groups and socializing, whereas fifth grade students generally spend less time involved with these types of activities. Daniels (2002) believes that social interaction in group settings can be a powerful way to increase reading attitudes. Because teachers of higher grades utilize more direct instruction and tend to neglect the social aspects of reading, reading attitudes decline through elementary school.

Hirsch (2003) explains this idea in more detail with regard to a drop in reading comprehension abilities around the fourth grade. This is also related to reading fluency. When students are unable to rapidly decode text, the meaning is lost. The academic texts that are presented to students in fourth grade are unfamiliar and more difficult to decode. Students who cannot adapt to this new situation may lose the meaning behind the text. In this situation,
students are required to do more than just decode unfamiliar words. The sentence structure may also be unfamiliar, causing extra difficulty with the information.

In addition to the shift in curriculum and text structure, students face more difficult material each year. Students who are struggling generally continue to lag behind as the reading material becomes more challenging. Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin (1990) also believed that a lack of fluency skills is the cause. Students who cannot read fluently in the fourth grade spend more time decoding unfamiliar words than comprehending new information. Because these students struggle with the information, they may become frustrated with the material. This decreases their reading attitude, as well as their reading achievement.

Another factor that could potentially cause this slump today is state-wide testing. Testing often results in a change in the curriculum based on pressures for students to succeed. Tyre and Springen (2007) believe that teaching-to-the-test results in teachers neglecting to use multiple genres to engage students. Also, this style of teaching may result in teachers neglecting to allow choice for students, which is a powerful motivator and improves attitudes. Another hypothesis for the slump is that students may be less interested in reading due to advances in technology. Instead of reading, children may choose to play video games or watch television because of the graphics and entertainment value. These aspects of the home environment may impact how often students read and the amount that they value reading.

Interestingly, Scher and Baker (1994) studied the relationship between the home literacy environment and reading attitudes. Sixty five first graders completed a Motivation for Reading Interview and their parents answered interview questions about the students’ reading attitudes and home literacy environment. The results of the study suggested that there was no correlation between reading attitudes and the home literacy environment. If the reading attitudes of these
first graders were not affected by the home literacy environment, it is possible that older students will not be affected differently.

Although some causes of the fourth grade slump have been suggested, none have been conclusively proven. It may be that a variety of factors are responsible, or one of the causes presented could contribute more significantly than others. More research will be necessary to determine an exact cause and solution. At this point, the research is focused on finding relationships between slumping components, such as reading attitudes, achievement levels, motivation, and frequency.

Relationships Between Slumping Reading Components

Although the causes of the slump are not definitive, the proposed ideas are quite plausible. To find a cause and potential solutions, researchers (Martinez, Aricak, & Jewell, 2008; McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995) focus on finding the correlation between the reading components that are affected during the slump time. These include reading achievement, reading attitudes and reading frequency. Determining the full impact of the slump on reading broadens the general knowledge base that may lead to knowledge of causes and solutions.

Reading Attitudes and Achievement

The relationship between reading attitudes and achievement has been clearly determined in multiple studies (Conlon, Zimmer-Bembeck, Creed, & Tucker, 2006; Martinez, Aricak, & Jewell, 2008; McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995). In each case, students with more positive reading attitudes tend to have higher achievement levels with regard to reading. Though a correlation is present between these two factors, the direction of this relationship has not yet been determined.
One of the landmark studies that determined a correlation between reading achievement and reading attitudes was the research of McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995), in which the *Elementary Reading Attitude Survey* (ERAS) was employed to ascertain a relationship between reading attitudes and other components of reading. The research found a positive correlation between reading attitudes and reading achievement, though this may be open to debate. To assess reading achievement, teachers were asked to categorize students into high, middle, or low reading groups. Because of the subjective nature of this assessment technique, however, it is questionable whether or not the teachers provided accurate information on achievement categories.

Despite the dilemma with the subjective nature of the research of McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995), it is logical that reading attitudes and achievement scores would have an impact on each other. To extend this work and further examine the relationship between reading attitudes and achievement, Martinez, Aricak, and Jewell (2008) compared the scores of 76 fourth graders on the ERAS to reading achievement scores from state wide tests. These tests were administered four months after the ERAS. Although the data concurs with that of other researchers, the study was slightly flawed. Not only was the population small, but the achievement levels were measured four months after the attitude levels. The attitude and achievement levels may have remained constant over the four month period, but there is a possibility that unpredictable factors came into play at this time.

Despite errors in the research, Martinez, Aricak, and Jewell (2008) found results that were compatible to those of McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995). The students with the highest achievement scores had higher reading attitudes in general and vice versa. Interestingly, the strongest correlation was discovered between fourth grade attitudes toward recreational reading
and later achievement scores, consistent with the earlier findings of Ogle, Sen, Pahlke, Jocelyn, Kastberg, Roey, and Williams (2003).

Ogle and colleagues (2003) determined that recreational reading, especially reading of fiction, is an indicator of reading achievement on the combined reading literacy scale. Logically, students who read outside of school will apply reading skills and strategies more often than children who do not read outside of school, increasing reading ability. The students who are most likely to read outside of school are students with a positive attitude toward recreational reading.

Inside of school, reading attitude affects various components of reading achievement. Because reading is a complex task, it can be broken into skills that students acquire. Each part has been linked to reading attitudes by Conlon, Zimmer-Bembeck, Creed, and Tucker (2006) who studied the family histories, cognitive abilities, and attitudes of one hundred and ninety elementary school students. The results of this study suggest that a correlation exists between reading attitude and word recognition, comprehension, and spelling skills. In this study, the controversy lies in the direction of the correlation. The conclusions drawn from the results do not indicate a direction, though the factors do influence each other in some way.

Chapman and Tunmer (1995) disagree with this lack of direction, stating that reading attitude is determined by reading achievement. Others, such as Gerber, Ginsberg, and Reiff (1992) argue that students must have a positive reading attitude to achieve high reading levels. In this case, reading attitudes include the student’s self-perceptions about reading abilities. According to Gerber, Ginsberg, and Reiff (1992), “Each individual must take the personal stance that he or she is going to try to gain better control of his or her existence and, ultimately, succeed in life. Simply put, success does not just happen. The beginning point is an internal, very personal set of decisions” (p. 480). Before attempting to become a successful reader, the student
must believe that he or she can become successful. A negative attitude toward reading is a severe hindrance to this process.

**Reading Attitudes and Frequency**

Unlike reading achievement and attitudes, the relationship between reading attitudes and frequency has not yet received sufficient research. Aaroutse and van Leeuwe (1998) investigated the relationships between reading comprehension, vocabulary, reading frequency, and reading pleasure, which is an aspect of reading attitude. This study did not conclusively determine a correlation between reading pleasure and frequency. On the other hand, it is suggested that there is some common source or factor that influences the two.

Aaroutse and van Leeuwe (1998) further contest that reading frequency and attitude as a whole have an impact on each other in the early grades. The direction of this correlation was not determined, nor was the strength. As mentioned previously, Anderson, Tollefson, and Gilbert (1985) contend that reading attitudes and frequency decline as students grow older. Unfortunately, the measure of reading frequency was amount of books with no regard for the length of the books or the actual amount of time spent reading. Because of this, no correlation between reading frequency and attitude can be definitively decided from this research. The purpose of the currently described study was to fill in the gaps and determine the directions and strength of the correlation between reading attitude and frequency.

**Reading Frequency and Motivation**

On the other hand, motivation to read and reading frequency have been found to influence each other (Cox & Guthrie, 2001; Wang & Guthrie, 2004; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Students who are highly motivated to read are more likely to do so, while students with low motivation often choose not to read. Because motivation is the driving force prompting people to
do things, it is logical that motivation would affect the frequency of reading. The real question is whether or not the frequency of reading influences motivation in return.

Many theories surround the topic of motivation and how to motivate students (Ford, 1992; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). One of these theories is the motivational systems theory by Ford (1992). In this theory of motivation, Ford contends that the key to motivation is value and the perception of attainment. People will be motivated to work toward goals that hold value and that seem possible. On the other hand, people are less motivated to perform a task that holds little value or seems unattainable. This is true for students in reading class. They are unlikely to read texts that they do not value or that seem too difficult.

This idea of reading motivation was tested by Cox and Guthrie (2001), who studied 251 third and fifth graders from three diverse schools, administering measures of comprehension and surveys for motivation, student strategies, and reading frequency. By controlling other reading factors, Cox and Guthrie (2001) found that “Motivation accounted for a substantial proportion of variance in amount of reading for enjoyment when cognitive factors of previous achievement and reported strategy use were controlled” (p. 127).

Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) also found that motivation is a predictor of reading amount and breadth, as is the amount and breadth of past reading. To do this, 105 fourth and fifth grade students completed the Motivation for Reading Questionnaire, which measures motivation, and the Reading Activity Inventory, which measures reading frequency. These were administered twice during the school year. A correlation was determined between reading motivation and reading frequency in this study. These studies indicate that motivation is a predictor of reading frequency. Because control groups were utilized in both studies to extinguish the influence of
other reading components, the researchers were able to isolate the factors of motivation and frequency.

The results of the two previous studies were confirmed by Wang and Guthrie (2004) who compared the results of the *Motivation for Reading Questionnaire* to the *Reading Activity Inventory*. This was done with 187 American students and 197 Chinese students. The results suggested a significant relationship between the amount that students read for pleasure and their motivation to read. Another goal of this study was to compare the relationship between reading motivation and frequency in two different cultures. It was found that culture did not have a significant effect on this relationship, suggesting that these trends of declining motivation and frequency occur outside of the United States.

*Reading Frequency and Achievement*

In addition to a correlation between reading motivation and frequency, there appears to be a significant relationship between reading frequency and achievement. The more a student reads, the more opportunities the student has to practice skills and strategies. Increasing the frequency with which students read will increase reading abilities and achievement scores. Brown (2008) contends that extensive reading will result in improved vocabulary, reading, and writing skills. Constant reading provides chances to practice reading skills and strategies learned during direct instruction.

Theorists have proposed constructs of motivation that explain its connection to achievement. One such construct is described by Wigfield and Eccles (2000), the expectancy-value theory of motivation. This theory suggests that motivation is composed of two parts; expectancy and value. Students who expect to do well are motivated to perform a task. Also, students who value the task are more likely to perform it. With regard to achievement, this theory
indicates that students who have performed well in the past on reading assignments will expect to perform well in the future and will be more likely to read. On the other hand, students who have performed poorly in the past will not expect to do well and will have lower motivation for the task.

To explore the correlation between reading frequency and achievement, Chard and Kameenui (2000) observed 20 first grade classrooms. The number of instances of oral reading in the classroom was documented, as well as the number of other literacy practices. The results of the study indicated that struggling readers read significantly less than average and above average readers. Despite the significance of the relationship between the two factors, it was not discovered whether frequency determines achievement or vice versa.

In a similar study, Guthrie, Schafer, Wang, and Afflerbach (1995) assessed the reading frequencies of students, as well as reading achievement levels. The students were in three age groups: 9 years old, 13 years old, and 17 years old. Across all age groups, the students who read the most had the highest comprehension scores. Comprehension is a critical part of reading achievement, suggesting that, once again, frequency and reading achievement have an impact on each other.

On the other hand, not all researchers agree on the relationship between text comprehension and reading frequency. Wang and Guthrie (2004) did not find a significant correlation between the two components when studying students in America and China. In this study, motivation was a controlled factor so that comprehension and frequency could be studied exclusively. When isolated, there did not appear to be a relationship between the factors.
Additional Reading Factors

Not only do reading components interact with each other, but they also interact with external factors. Researchers (Kush & Watkins, 1996; McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995; Ogle et al., 2003) have compared reading attitudes to characteristics of the student, such as gender and intellect. Gender has come into play during many research studies because of the difference between girls and boys in reading levels. Similarly, students with exceptionalities participate in most reading research. When looking at reading attitude, gender and students’ exceptionalities affect the outcome of the study.

Attitudes and Gender

One of many factors that may impact attitudes toward reading is gender. Many researchers (Kush & Watkins, 1996; McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995; Ogle et al., 2003) have noted a significant difference in the reading attitudes of boys and girls. In general, girls tend to have more positive attitudes toward reading. Although these levels decline for girls at a rate similar to boys, the attitudes of girls tend to remain more positive in elementary school.

A second implication of the research by McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) is an observation that girls across all grade levels had higher attitude levels. Although the reading attitudes of girls declined in recreational and academic areas at a rate similar to boys, boys tended to have lower reading attitudes across the board. This idea was further studied by Kush and Watkins (1996) who agreed that girls tend to have more positive reading attitudes than boys. Although this applied to most of the schools that were studied, one school showed no significant difference between the reading attitudes of the boys and girls. This was considered an atypical group, so it is an exception to the rule.
Because girls tend to have higher attitude scores toward reading, it is logical that girls would also score better on reading assessments. This idea was proved by Ogle and colleagues (2003) who found that fourth grade girls in the U.S. outperformed fourth grade boys on the combined reading literacy scale. In addition, this trend was found to exist internationally. Research such as this appears to reinforce the correlation between reading attitudes and reading achievement.

**Attitudes of Students with Exceptionalities**

Within any sampling of students, there will be a mixture of ability levels. A recent emphasis on full inclusion of students with exceptionalities (learning disabilities or giftedness) ensures that most classrooms will have a wide variety of student levels. Because of this, the research on attitudes toward reading for students with learning disabilities and gifted students must be considered.

Unfortunately, few studies have investigated the reading attitudes of students with exceptionalities, causing inconclusive results. Lazarus and Callahan (2000) conducted a study with 522 elementary school students with learning disabilities. The ERAS was utilized to assess the academic and recreational reading attitudes of students. Although this is not an extremely large sample size, the students were selected randomly from 42 schools in Ohio, Michigan, Kansas, and Georgia, creating more accurate results.

In contrast to the common notion that students identified with learning disabilities have more negative attitudes toward reading, Lazarus and Callahan (2000) found that the students who participated in the study had similar attitudes to peers without disabilities. Also, the academic reading attitudes of these students remained more stable than those of non-disabled peers. Finally, the students with disabilities had higher recreational reading attitudes than non-disabled
peers, though it is probable that these will decrease over time. Further research is necessary to ascertain the accuracy of these results.

Similarly, further research on gifted children would be beneficial. It is commonly thought that gifted students are prolific readers. Anderson, Tollefson, and Gilbert (1985) put this idea to the test with a reading questionnaire. Two hundred and seventy six gifted students (scored two standard deviations above the mean on an ability test and achieved reading scores in the top 5% of the norm) participated in this study. The students were all placed in grades one through twelve.

Anderson, Tollefson, and Gilbert (1985) discovered two important aspects of reading attitudes for gifted students. First, the trend in reading attitudes for gifted students was the same as normal peers. As the students got older, they reported less interest in reading and had more negative attitudes. Second, the older students reported less reading activity. The former aspect is consistent with other studies in general classrooms and seems accurate, while the latter is subject to scrutiny. To measure the frequency with which students read, they were asked how many books they read each month. In general, older students read longer books, resulting in fewer books read each month. Young children who read picture books or short chapter books are able to read many more at a time; suggesting that older students read less because they read fewer books is not quite logically sound.

Summary

Since the determination of the term *fourth grade slump*, research has broken apart reading components that are impacted by this slump. Attitudes, achievement, and frequency have been studied in elementary schools in search of a solution. In the past two decades, researchers have come to find relationships between attitude and achievement and achievement and frequency.
Unfortunately, the correlation between attitude and frequency has not received sufficient research. Determining the exact nature of these relationships is the next step for researchers.

Though reading achievement, attitudes, and frequency impact each other, research has not determined the exact nature or direction of these relationships as of yet. All of these factors are part of the *fourth grade slump* as coined by Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin (1990). By understanding the relationship between all of these components, researchers take one step toward further comprehension of causes and solutions of the fourth grade slump. Specific insight into attitudes and frequency will provide educators with opportunities to improve one through the use of the other.
CHAPTER III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

To assess the reading attitudes of students, this study employed the *Elementary Reading Attitude Survey* (ERAS) by McKenna and Kear (1990). In addition, students were asked four questions about the frequency with which they read on the *Frequency Questionnaire*. These surveys are developmentally appropriate for elementary school children due to the use of child friendly language, pictures, and easily understandable choices. The surveys and the procedures for administering them are outlined in this chapter.

**Methods**

**Research Design**

To assess the attitudes of students and the frequency with which they read, survey research was employed. According to Mertler (2009), survey research is a quick way to assess the current opinions of a group of people. In this case, a sample group was used to determine the attitudes of the elementary population as a whole. Because of the abbreviated time frame, the surveys were an efficient way to determine the attitudes and frequencies of a large group of students.

For this study, the survey research was in the form of a quantitative research design. This means that numerical data were collected and analyzed. Because of the nature of the surveys that were utilized in this study, the type of quantitative research was correlational. According to Mertler (2009), “Correlational studies measure the degree to which a relationship exists between two or more variables” (p. 10). The two variables in this case were the students’ attitude toward reading and the frequency with which the students read. This was measured for second and fifth graders with regard to academic and recreational reading.
Specifically, the information was analyzed using a Pearson correlation and a t-test of independent samples. According to Pyrczak (2006), a Pearson correlation coefficient determines the relationship between two variables and describes the direction and strength of this relationship. In this case, three relationships were investigated: the relationship between overall reading attitude and overall reading frequency, the relationship between academic reading attitude and academic reading frequency, and the relationship between recreational reading attitude and recreational reading frequency.

The t-test of independent samples tests the accuracy of a hypothesis about two independent groups (Pyrczak, 2006). In this case, the reading attitudes and reading frequencies of second graders were compared to the reading frequencies of fifth graders. This was done for academic scores and recreational scores in both categories. The purpose of this test was to determine the changes in reading attitudes and frequencies across the grade levels, providing an analysis of the fourth grade slump and its effect at this particular school.

Participants

The participants in this study were from an urban elementary school in Northwest Ohio, which will be called Warner Elementary ¹. Fifty students participated; 24 from two second grade classrooms and 26 from two fifth grade classrooms. This school was chosen because of the reading program. All of the students in the elementary school participated in the same reading program, Success for All. The Success for All Foundation (2009) describes the program as “a comprehensive reading approach designed to ensure that every child will read at grade level or above” (p. 1). For 90 minutes a day, students participate in a literacy block devised to improve

¹ pseudonym
reading, writing, and oral language skills. This includes utilization of cooperative learning groups, one-on-one tutoring, and direct instruction. The students are grouped according to ability level.

At Warner Elementary, all of the students from kindergarten to grade five take part in a reading block simultaneously. Students move to a classroom based on their ability levels and spend the time moving from direct instruction to groups. Students who require additional assistance receive one-on-one tutoring from college freshmen. This occurs once a week. The books that students read in both the tutoring and the reading block consist of leveled readers that are chosen by the literacy specialist. Students do not choose which books to read at any point. These books are utilized in literature circles, cooperative learning activities, paired activities, and independent work.

The age groups were chosen based on research. Because of the focus on the fourth grade slump, the students were from second and fifth grade classes. According to McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995), the reading attitudes of students drop as they progress through elementary school. The greatest decline occurs around fourth grade. By surveying students in second and fifth grade, it was possible to see what the relationship is between reading attitudes and frequency before and after this slump takes place.

Warner Elementary School was chosen for various reasons, the most important of which is that the reading program is the same for students across all grades. Because a longitudinal study was not possible, having students in the same program provided the closest results to surveying one group of students multiple times. The researcher was familiar with this program because she had supervised college students who tutored during reading time at this school.
To obtain the most accurate results, the classes were chosen by the principal. The principal chose these classes based on the schedules of the teachers. The teachers who had the most free time during the week of surveying were selected. Two of the four classes in grades two and five were asked to participate. The teachers then signed consent forms and sent consent letters home to the parents. The students whose parents had consented were selected to take the survey. To ensure accurate results, the students signed assent forms before participating. This way, only students who wished to take the surveys did so and no one was forced into the study.

**Instrumentation**

To assess the reading attitudes of the participants, the *Elementary Reading Attitude Survey* (ERAS) by McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) was administered (see Appendix A). This survey utilizes a Likert-type scale to determine the student’s attitude toward academic and recreational reading. Mertler (2009) describes a Likert-type scale as a scale that exists on a continuum to measure agreement toward a statement. Unlike a Likert scale, a Likert-type scale measures something other than agreement to the statements. In this case, it is attitude about the statements.

Instead of numbers, the answer choices are four pictures of Garfield the cat with facial expressions portraying a range of emotions from extremely happy to extremely upset. Students circle a Garfield character that matches how they feel about each statement of the survey. Because there were an even number of choices, there was no neutral answer. Students must choose a positive or negative feeling toward each statement.

There are many reasons why this survey was beneficial when working with elementary school students. For one thing, the character of Garfield was relatable to most students. Children understood the response scale because the images included body language and facial expressions
with which they could identify. Finally, the ERAS measured academic and recreational reading separately while also providing a general attitudes score. This provided insight into the specific reading areas in which a student had high or low attitudes.

The first 10 statements of the survey addressed recreational reading, while the last 10 attended to academic reading. Students were asked how they felt about reading in and out of school, as well as their emotions during different reading situations. Each of the responses corresponded with a number from one to four. The numbers in the recreational section were added together for a raw score, as were the numbers for the questions in the academic section. A percentile rank was then found to determine how the students’ reading attitudes compared to those of same age peers. The instructions for the Elementary Reading Attitude Scale are described by McKenna and Kear (1990).

The second instrument that was administered to the students was a brief questionnaire about how frequently the students read in and out of school, the Frequency Questionnaire (see Appendix C). The questionnaire consisted of four multiple choice questions and was identical for both age groups. These questions provided ranges of amounts of time that are spent reading in different situations. Two of the questions addressed recreational reading, while the other two regarded academic reading. The answers were given a number that corresponded with the amount of time the student spends reading each day or week. The numbers were added together for the student’s frequency score. The scoring of this assessment was similar to that of the Elementary Reading Attitude Scale, which makes these surveys easy to use in combination to compare reading attitude and reading frequency scores.

Students were asked to estimate the amount of time they spend, on average, reading. Although numbers are less relatable than characters, the ranges on the survey contain small
numbers that are widely spread. This way, students are able to easily find a range of numbers that is most accurate for them.

The chosen assessments were developmentally appropriate for the students and provided accurate insight into their reading attitudes and frequency. Both assessments divide reading attitude and frequency into the categories of academic and recreational. In this way, the two surveys are appropriate and compatible. The surveys are easy for elementary school children to read, and also can be read to the students with minimal difficulty.

Procedures

Data Collection

Finding participants

Before beginning the surveys, the researcher obtained permission forms (see Appendix D) from the parents of each participant and from each participant. These forms explained the surveys and guaranteed anonymity for all participants. Once participants were identified, the researcher began the process of administering the surveys.

Administration of the Elementary Reading Attitude Scale.

Before beginning the survey, the researcher reiterated that the results of the survey would not be shared and that this activity was not for a grade. For second graders, the researcher explained the directions to the whole group before and answered questions about the directions. The students looked at each of Garfield’s faces and briefly described how they thought Garfield felt in each case. The students were then told to listen carefully to each statement and circle the Garfield that best matched how they would feel in that situation. Each statement was read twice to ensure that the students understood it.
Students were monitored by the researcher and the classroom teacher. Each student was separated from neighbors and was discouraged from talking to make certain that responses were honest and accurate. On the other hand, fifth graders moved to their own space in the classroom away from everyone else. The survey was administered to the whole class and students read the questions silently and answered independently. Students were encouraged to answer honestly and to ask questions about any of the statements.

Administration of the Frequency Questionnaire

Once the students completed the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, they were asked to answer four multiple choice questions. Students were asked to listen carefully to the questions and response choices. They then circled the choice that best matched the amount of time they spend reading each day and each week. Each question was read twice to second graders to ensure that the students understood.

It was crucial that students were provided with specific directions and that they felt comfortable in the confidentiality of the surveys. Once the surveys were collected, each set was given a random number for identification purposes. All of the surveys were destroyed at the conclusion of the analysis of data.

Data Analysis

Once all of the surveys had been administered, they were scored. To score the ERAS, the researcher first looked up the numbers that corresponded with each Garfield face. The scores were added up for recreational reading questions and academic reading questions to produce a score for each category. These scores determined the student’s attitude toward each type of reading respectively. The two raw scores were also added together to find a composite score. This score represented the student’s overall attitude toward reading.
Similarly, the scoring for the frequency questionnaire involved adding numbers that corresponded with each option on the multiple choice questions. The questions consisted of a range of time frames. Higher time frames received a score of four, while the lowest received a score of one. The numbers for the recreational questions were added together, as were the numbers for the academic questions.

After determining the recreational and academic scores for each survey, a correlation was determined between the two scores. The scores were put in the computer program Statcrunch to provide a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) between the reading frequencies and reading attitudes. This was done for recreational, academic, and overall reading, providing three correlation coefficients. A critical level was determined based on the fact that the test will be two-tailed. The critical level was then compared to the calculated correlation coefficient.

The Pearson correlation coefficients were either positive or negative to depict the direction of the relationship. The number was between zero and one, indicating the strength of the relationship. If the Pearson correlation coefficient exceeds the determined critical value, the relationship is significant and the direction and strength will provide further details about this relationship (Pyrczak, 2006). The final step was to compare the r-critical level to the correlation coefficient. According to Pyrczak, the r-critical level determines the significance of the correlation. The correlation coefficient must be greater than or equal to the r-critical level to establish significance. The r-critical level was calculated using the r-critical table, which requires the alpha level of the test, in this case .05, and the degrees of freedom, which is the sample size minus two (Pyrczak).

Once a correlation had been determined, the t-test of independent samples was utilized via the program Statcrunch. The recreational attitude and academic attitude scores were inserted
into the program for each grade. This was repeated with the recreational frequency and academic frequency scores. The t-statistic provided by the program was compared to the chosen alpha level, .05, to establish whether or not fifth grade students had significantly lower reading attitudes, lower recreational reading frequencies, and higher academic reading frequencies. According to Pyrczak (2006), the alpha level is a measure of accuracy. By testing at the .05 alpha level, the results are at a 95% accuracy level.

The Pearson correlation was utilized to provide the most important statistic of the study; the relationship between factors. The strength and direction of three relationships were determined by inputting data sets into the computer program Statcrunch. Similarly, the t-test of related samples was used in Statcrunch to verify that the fourth grade slump is occurring at Warner Elementary. The results of these relationships will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Time line

Securing the participants and receiving permission took two weeks. In this time, the consent forms were distributed to teachers, then to students. Within two weeks, the forms were filled out and returned to the school. Additional time was allotted in case of low participation, but was not necessary.

The next stage involved collecting data by administering the surveys. The exact timeframe of this process was dependent on the schedules of the teachers involved. One day was planned for each classroom to ensure that the researcher worked around the teachers’ schedules. With four classrooms involved, this part of the project was planned to occur over four days. Because the teachers had open schedules before Valentine’s Day, all four classes received the survey in one day. Each class took approximately fifteen minutes for both surveys.
Because the teachers’ schedules had to be taken into account, securing consent and administering the survey took three weeks. This process began in mid-January and ended after the second week of February. At this time, the data were analyzed. Data analysis took two days. In its entirety, the study was completed over the course of three and a half weeks.

**Budget**

Because the students had their own pencils, there were few expenses for this study. The ERAS is available to educators for free online and copies were made for free. The only other potential expense was transportation to the schools, but this cost was minimal as there were only three trips made and it was a short distance. Overall, this study was inexpensive.

**Summary**

Two surveys were administered to each student to determine reading attitudes and reading frequency. These surveys were the *Elementary Reading Attitude Survey* by McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) and a frequency questionnaire. These surveys were administered together and both separated academic and recreational reading.

By scoring these two surveys, a correlation was found between the amount that a student reads and the student’s attitude toward reading. Based on research, the students’ attitudes toward reading should decline from second to fifth grade. This study determined the relationship between the students’ reading frequency and attitudes as the attitudes drop at the end of elementary school.
CHAPTER IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This study examined the relationship between reading attitudes and reading frequencies of students in second and fifth grade with the goal of exploring the nature of the *fourth grade slump*. According to Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin (1990), the *fourth grade slump* is a phenomenon in which reading achievement rapidly declines around fourth grade. McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) extend this idea by stating that this slump occurs in reading attitude as well. This study focused on reading attitudes and frequency before and after the *fourth grade slump*. The research question was as follows: What is the correlation between academic and recreational reading attitudes and the frequency of both types of reading?

In this chapter, the results of the study will be presented and explained. The results of the *Elementary Reading Attitude Scale* and the *Frequency Questionnaire* will be addressed, as well as correlations between reading attitudes and frequencies. To fully investigate these two reading components, three correlations were scrutinized. The first is the correlation between academic reading attitudes and academic reading frequencies. The second is the correlation between recreational reading attitudes and recreational reading frequencies. Finally, a correlation between overall reading attitudes and overall reading frequencies will be presented.

**Data Analysis**

**Research Question**

The research question was answered by the results of this study. The question was as follows: What is the relationship between academic and recreational reading attitude and reading frequency during the *fourth grade slump* years? The prediction was that recreational attitudes and recreational reading frequencies would decline between second and fifth grades. At the same time, academic reading frequencies would increase and academic reading attitudes would
decrease. This was not the case at Warner Elementary. Despite the findings of researchers such as McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995), the prediction was not correct in this study.

As seen by the results of the t-test of independent samples in Table 1, there were no significant changes in recreational reading attitudes or frequencies between second and fifth grade. The only significant difference occurred in academic reading frequency, which increased between second and fifth grade. Table 1 contains the p-value obtained from the t-tests of independent variables. For the change between grade levels to be significant, the p-value must be lower than the alpha level of .05 (Pyrczak, 2006). In the case of academic reading frequency, the p-value was .04, barely lower than the alpha level. The averages of second and fifth grade scores also indicate that most of the scores did not change significantly.

Table 1

Results of the T-test of Independent Samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Second Grade Average</th>
<th>Fifth Grade Average</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>t-score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recreational Attitudes</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational Frequencies</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>-0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Attitudes</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Frequencies</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-1.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Tested at the .05 alpha level for 50 participants

Correlation Between Academic Reading Attitudes and Frequency

It was predicted that academic reading attitudes would decrease as academic reading frequency increased. As shown in Figure 1, academic reading attitudes did not decrease significantly between second and fifth grade, though academic reading frequency increased. The
next step was to calculate the correlation between academic reading attitude and academic reading frequency.

The Pearson Correlation was employed on Statcrunch to establish this correlation. A correlation coefficient that is close to one implies a strong correlation, while a coefficient below .38 suggests a weak correlation. The direction of the relationship is indicated by whether or not the number is positive. As seen in Figure 1, the slope is positive, meaning that the correlation is positive. This shows that as academic reading attitude increases, so does academic reading frequency. The correlation coefficient is .21, which is a weak correlation. This is also presented in Figure 1. The dots show the coordinates of student test scores. The closer these are to the slope, the stronger the correlation. Unfortunately, in Figure 1 the coordinates are fairly widespread, suggesting that not much of a correlation exists.

The next step was to compare the r-critical value to the correlation coefficient (r). By using the alpha level and degrees of freedom, which is the number of participants minus two, the r-critical level was calculated (Pyrczak, 2006). In this case, r-critical is .243. When compared to the correlation coefficient, the significance of the correlation is determined. In this case, the correlation coefficient is less than the r-critical level, demonstrating that the relationship is not significant. Figure 1 shows the correlation between academic reading factors, with variable 1 representing academic reading frequency scores from the Frequency Questionnaire and variable 2 providing academic reading attitude scores from the ERAS.
In contrast to academic reading factors, it was thought that recreational reading attitudes and recreational reading frequency would have a positive relationship; therefore increasing and decreasing simultaneously. The correlation between recreational reading attitude and frequency was found by following the same procedures as the ones for academic reading attitude and frequency. In this case, a fair positive correlation was found. The correlation coefficient was .58, as calculated by Statcruch, suggesting a fair correlation. Figure 2 provides a visual of this correlation. The slope is positive, indicating that as recreational reading attitudes increase, so do recreational reading frequencies. The coordinates are the student survey scores and are fairly close to the slope. When compared to the r-critical level of .243, it is seen that the correlation is
significant. The correlation coefficient of .58 is greater than the r-critical level of .243, demonstrating the significance of the correlation. Figure 2 shows this correlation with variable 1 representing recreational reading frequency scores and variable 2 representing recreational reading attitude scores.

Figure 2
Correlation Between Recreational Reading Factors

Because a correlation was suggested between academic reading frequency and attitude and between recreational reading frequency and attitude, it seemed logical that a similar relationship would exist between overall reading attitude and reading frequency scores. By entering the survey scores into Statcrunch, it was possible to see this relationship between overall reading attitude and reading frequency scores. The correlation coefficient was calculated by Statcrunch to be .55, which is a fair correlation. The direction of the relationship is positive,
suggesting that reading attitude and reading frequency increase and decrease simultaneously. Because the coordinates of survey scores are fairly close to the slope, it is clear that the correlation is fairly strong. In this case, the correlation coefficient of .55 is greater than the r-critical level of .243, suggesting a significant relationship. Figure 3 shows this relationship with variable 1 representing overall reading frequency scores and variable 2 representing overall reading attitude scores.

Figure 3

Correlation Between Overall Reading Factors

Discussion of Results

The prediction for this study was that recreational reading attitude and recreational reading frequency would decrease from second grade to fifth grade. Also, academic reading attitudes would decrease as academic reading frequency increased. The results of the t-test of independent samples do not support this prediction. Although there was a significant increase in
the academic reading frequency between second and fifth graders, there was not a significant decrease in recreational attitude, recreational frequency, or academic attitude. Because of this, the prediction is not correct.

Similarly, the research question was answered based on the results of the analysis of survey scores with the Pearson correlation. Table 2 contains the three sets of correlations with the correlation coefficient and direction of the relationship. Based on the results, the strongest correlation was between recreational reading attitude and recreational reading frequency. This means that students with lower recreational attitudes tend to read less frequently than students with higher recreational attitudes. Because the correlation is fairly strong, it is presumable that this is the trend at Warner Elementary.

In addition, there was a fairly strong correlation between total reading attitude and total reading frequency scores. This relationship was positive, indicating that students who have a higher attitude read more in general. Although this relationship is not as strong as the correlation between recreational reading factors, it is still fairly strong.

Finally, the correlation between academic reading attitude and academic reading frequency was weak and positive. Based on the prediction that academic reading attitudes decrease as academic reading frequency increases, this relationship should have been negative. Instead, it seems that these two factors increase and decrease together, though this relationship is weak.
Table 2

Comparison of Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
<th>Direction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Attitude and</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational Attitude and</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Attitude and Frequency</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

As an answer to the research question, the strongest relationship was between recreational reading factors and the weakest was between academic reading factors. The Pearson correlation and t-test of independent samples were both successful in determining the various relationships between reading attitude and reading frequency, as well as between the scores of second and fifth graders.

Based on these findings, it seems that the fourth grade slump is not occurring with regard to reading attitudes at Warner Elementary. Instead, reading attitudes and recreational reading frequency are remaining fairly stable through elementary school. On the other hand, the amount that students are required to read in school is increasing significantly between the second and fifth grade. The implications of these results will be discussed in the next chapter. Also, the individual scores are presented in Appendix E.
CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are numerous implications for the results of this study. Teachers, teacher educators, parents, librarians, and researchers are all impacted by the findings. In this chapter, the first four chapters will be reviewed, followed by the conclusions drawn from the data presented in chapter four. Finally, recommendations will be made for the parties affected by the implications of the study.

Summary of Chapters

The purpose of this study was to explore relevant elements of the *fourth grade slump*, specifically reading attitude and reading frequency. Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin (1990) explained that the *fourth grade slump* is a noticeable decline in reading achievement and attitudes that occurs toward the end of elementary school. Other researchers, such as McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) have studied this trend. It is a constant struggle for educators to keep elementary school students positive about reading while increasing achievement scores. Although there is not a definite solution to the slump as of yet, it has been proven to affect motivation, attitude, and achievement (Cox & Guthrie, 2001; McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995).

Because each element of the slump must be understood in relation to other elements, the research question was: What is the correlation between academic and recreational reading attitudes and the frequency of both types of reading? Research on this correlation has been minimal and inconclusive, though Anderson, Tollefson, and Gilbert (1985) believe that there is not a correlation between the two. To further test this idea, 50 elementary school students were surveyed using the *Elementary Reading Attitude Scale* and the *Frequency Questionnaire*. 
Twenty six fifth graders and 24 second graders were administered these two surveys. By comparing the results with a t-test of independent samples, it was possible to evaluate the trend in attitude and frequency between second and fifth grade. Interestingly, the recreational and academic attitudes of the students did not show a significant decline in fifth grade, nor did recreational frequency decline. The only factor that changed was academic frequency, which increased significantly for fifth grade.

Regarding the answer to the research question, it appears that the strongest correlation that was present was between recreational reading attitude and recreational reading frequency. There was also a fair correlation between overall reading attitude and overall reading frequency but only a weak relationship between academic reading attitude and academic reading frequency. These results are in contrast to those of Anderson, Tollefson, and Gilbert (1985), who did not find any kind of correlation.

Despite the importance of these findings, it is critical to keep the limitations of the study in mind. The students may not have felt comfortable admitting to a dislike of reading activities, though anonymity was promised. Also, only one school was used in this study. The results may vary depending on the programs used at other schools. Finally, the Success for All program is implemented across all of the elementary school grades at Warner Elementary School¹. This is an advantage, as well as a limitation. By choosing a school that uses this program, it is clear to see the trends that will occur over time without performing a longitudinal study. On the other hand, the lack of change from year-to-year may have resulted in findings that are slightly different from those of other schools.

¹ pseudonym
Conclusions

The results of this study were somewhat surprising. Based on the research of McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) and Martinez, Aricak, and Jewell (2008), it would be logical that the attitude scores of all of the fifth graders would be lower than those of the second graders. This was not the case. Instead, the reading attitudes of the fifth graders did not show any kind of significant decline. The reason for this may have been that the students all participate in the exact same reading program, Success for All. Because of this, the program may have an impact on the attitudes of the students and the static nature of the program across the elementary school years may affect the students’ reading attitudes.

A second aspect of the Success for All program that may have influenced the results is the inclusion of socialization opportunities. Students participate in literature circles and paired reading sessions throughout the literacy block. These chances to socialize very likely have a positive affect on the reading attitudes of students, especially in the higher elementary school grades where social opportunities are decreased in many classrooms. Daniels (2002) believes that social interaction is a powerful tool for increasing reading attitude. Students participate in true, collaborative learning when they can benefit from face to face interactions.

In addition, the fifth grade students with low achievement scores receive tutoring from a college student once a week. This added attention during reading time may have increased the attitudes of students who would generally have lower reading attitudes. McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) found that lower reading achievement scores are correlated with lower reading attitudes. The students with lower scores at Warner Elementary School may very well have had lower reading attitudes if not for the assistance and attention from a college-age tutor.
The surprising part of these results is that the absence of being able to choose books independently did not seem to affect the reading attitudes of the students. Although the reading specialist chooses all of the books that are read during the day, the students in fifth grade do not have lower reading attitudes. This does not suggest that choice is not usually a factor in reading attitudes, as indicated by Tyre and Springen (2007). Instead, the lack of choice seems to be outweighed by other factors, such as social interaction opportunities.

It is not assumed that the results of this study refute researchers such as McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) or Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin (1990) who noted a trend of decreased reading attitudes across the elementary school years. Instead, it is presumed that the limitations of the study impacted these results. There has been ample research that the fourth grade slump exists, but it seems that the students at Warner Elementary School are not affected in the same way due to the Success for All program or other school factors.

The only significant difference between the two grade levels was in the academic reading frequency of students. This was to be expected, as students tend to read more and more each year in school. It is reasonable to expect fifth grade students to read more in school than second grade students because older students are more capable of this task. Despite the consistency of the Success for All program across the elementary school years, older children spend more time reading text books in other content areas.

On the other hand, the correlations between reading attitude and frequency were prevalent. The highest correlation was between recreational attitude and frequency, with overall attitude and frequency close behind. This indicates that students with a more positive recreational attitude tend to read more recreationally than students with a negative attitude. Also, students who have a more positive attitude in general tend to read more. On the other hand, the
correlation between academic reading attitude and academic reading frequency was weak and positive. Because the correlation was so weak, definite conclusions cannot be drawn about this relationship. It seems that the more students read in school, the more positive their attitude. Once again, this correlation is weak and may have been a coincidence.

These results extend the work of Aaroutse and van Leeuwe (1998) who found a correlation between reading attitude and frequency but not a strength or direction for the relationship. It seems that the information from this study supports previous studies while providing more detail. On the other hand, Anderson, Tollefson, and Gilbert (1985) contend that reading attitudes and frequencies decline as students proceed through the elementary school years. This was not the case in this study. There are two reasons for this difference. The first is that Anderson, Tollefson, and Gilbert (1985) did not divide reading frequency into academic and recreational categories. Because of this, they may not have realized that academic reading frequency tends to increase through the elementary school years, while recreational reading frequency tends to decrease. It would have been more accurate for the researchers to suggest that recreational reading frequency would decrease, though this did not occur in the present study. The second reason for the variances among the research is that Anderson, Tollefson, and Gilbert (1985) measured reading frequency with the quantity of books that the students read each week. Logically, students in kindergarten who read picture books will read more each week than students who read chapter books. This is not an accurate measure of frequency. The present study used the quantity of time spent reading each week as the frequency unit, which is a more accurate measure.

The overall conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that there is some sort of relationship between reading attitude and frequency. In general, students who read more have a
more positive attitude and vice versa. This relationship was not determined to be causal, meaning that it is unclear whether positive attitudes cause more reading or more reading causes a more positive attitude. Still, improving one should have a positive affect on the other.

Based on the results of the correlation between academic reading attitude and academic reading frequency, it could be presumed that increasing the amount of reading in school does not affect the students’ attitudes toward academic reading. Many educators have noted just the opposite, suggesting that the limitations of this study have impacted the results. The limitation that may have had an effect is that all of the students participate in the same reading program all through elementary school. Because the program does not change much between second and fifth grade, students’ attitudes may remain stable as well. This would further explain the results of the study by McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) in which academic reading attitudes declined as students aged, provided that the reading curriculum changed from grade-to-grade in this study.

The next implication of the results is that it appears that the fourth grade slump is not occurring at Warner Elementary School. Though the *fourth grade slump* is a well documented trend, the reading attitudes of the second and fifth grade students were very similar. There could be a number of reasons for this, but the most likely cause is the Success for All program. Because the program does not change from year-to-year, the students’ attitudes are remaining fairly consistent. This is not to say that all of the students have positive attitudes, but in general, attitudes are staying consistent over the years.

Finally, there are general conclusions that can be drawn from this study. It seems that reading attitudes tend to drop during elementary school, though not at this particular elementary school. Also, there is a correlation between reading frequency and reading attitude, though it is
not causal. Reading attitude and frequency increase and decrease together, suggesting that they influence each other. Further research is necessary to determine whether or not one causes the other. This may be the case, or other factors might be affecting attitude and frequency as well.

Recommendations

Because the fourth grade slump is a concern for numerous groups of people, the findings of this study lead to many recommendations. To improve reading attitudes and reading frequency for elementary school students, various people need to be involved with the literacy instruction of children. These groups include researchers, teachers, teacher educators, librarians, and parents. With these groups working together, a solution to the fourth grade slump may be found.

Recommendations for Teachers

One important thing for teachers to be aware of is the reading attitude and frequency of students. Informal inventories and questionnaires can be utilized at the beginning and end of the year to monitor student attitudes and how often they read. It is crucial for teachers to consider this information about the class each year and to use this data to inform instruction. Careful choices should be made about which books to read and how much choice to provide students. If a class has a low attitude in general and does not choose to read often, the teacher should focus on fostering positive attitudes. This should slowly lead to an increase in reading frequency.

In the classroom, teachers can aid students in improving their attitudes and reading frequency in many ways. In turn, this will improve student motivation and achievement. By making choices to enrich student attitudes, teachers may encourage students to read more often. When students are reading more often, they may enjoy reading more and have a more positive attitude about reading assignments. An excellent way to improve attitudes is to allow students to make choices about reading in and out of the classroom. Students enjoy reading more when they
have ownership over this task, making them more likely to read avidly. Students also respond well to teachers who demonstrate a positive attitude toward reading and who are excited about reading (Dreher, 2002).

No matter how teachers decide to monitor and improve attitudes, it is critical that an effort is made to do so. Although it can be tempting to focus solely on standards and skills for standardized tests, students benefit from having an abundance of positive reading experiences. The more students read, the better they will become. It is the job of teachers to make sure that students enjoy reading and practice often. Monitoring reading attitude and frequency is an excellent way to do this. In addition, teachers should be aware of the individual interests of students to ensure that appropriate materials are available. This can be done through informal reading attitude surveys or simply through conversations. Either way, being aware of student interests allows for teachers to develop lessons and materials that promote a positive attitude toward reading for each student.

**Recommendations for Teacher Educators**

Because it is crucial for teachers to consider attitude and reading frequency, it is also critical for teacher educators to provide teacher candidates with the means to foster a love of reading. This begins with the teacher candidate demonstrating appreciation for reading. One of the best ways to do this is to teach teacher candidates as if they are young students.

By modeling real classroom teaching methods, teacher candidates not only witness the technique, but also experience it as a student. This can apply to literature circles, reader response journals, or even silent reading time. No matter which strategy is used, teacher candidates will observe the effects of reading more often on their reading attitude and vice versa. When teachers are inspired to read, they are more likely to instill this inspiration in students. Providing
opportunities for teacher candidates to read is an excellent way to improve their attitudes toward
reading and increase the frequency with which they read. Increasing each of these factors will
improve the other. Once teacher candidates have experienced these phenomena first-hand, they
will be more apt to replicate these techniques in the classroom.

Teacher educators should also supply teacher candidates with research involving the
*fourth grade slump* and the correlations between reading attitude, reading frequency, and reading
achievement. Teachers who understand these correlations will be able to utilize techniques to
increase each factor simultaneously. Teachers who know that students have a poor attitude can
then search for strategies to improve reading attitude, as well as reading frequency. Quality
reading experiences will eventually improve student attitudes. Awareness of the problems in the
reading classroom and knowledge of the relationship between each problem helps to ensure that
a resolution is achieved.

*Recommendations for Librarians*

Many professionals have the chance to improve the reading attitude and frequency of
students. In addition to teachers, librarians provide excellent resources for students to use. One of
the key components to improving reading attitude and frequency is having diverse materials that
are easily accessible to students. A well-stocked library and knowledgeable librarian are essential
in encouraging students to choose appropriate and interesting books.

Students tend to read more when they have choices about what they read and are able to
find interesting materials (Tyre & Springen, 2007). By reading interesting books more often,
students may develop a more positive attitude toward reading and continue to read more.
Librarians support this positive cycle by providing students with books that meet their interests.
Because student interests differ greatly, a wide variety of books and reading materials should be
available. This should include various genres, material types, and subject areas. Students will benefit from exposure to these materials and will also be more likely to discover reading materials that they love.

Librarians should also be knowledgeable about the available materials, as well as the interest levels of the students in the building. This way, students can approach the librarian for assistance in choosing books and can feel comfortable reading something new. Once students have had the opportunity to choose reading materials that inspire them, they will be more motivated to continue reading and will have a better attitude toward reading.

Recommendations for Parents

Perhaps the most influential group that can improve reading attitudes and frequency is parents. This study showed a correlation between recreational attitude and frequency, suggesting that student attitudes can improve with increased recreational reading frequency and vice versa. Parents can influence how often students read at home and how they feel about reading.

Parents are the first model that students have for reading. They see their parents reading books or the newspaper, creating a sense of value for reading. One of the best ways for parents to inspire reading is to read. This may be simply modeling the act of reading, or reading to a child before bed. Students who see reading as a valuable and enjoyable task are more likely to read and have a more positive attitude about reading.

A second method for parents to promote reading is by having reading materials available. Similar to the librarian, parents can become experts on books that their child will enjoy via resources such as the internet or talking to teachers. This way, parents can assist their child in choosing books that match his or her interests and ability level. By making smart choices about reading materials, parents ensure that their child will choose to read often.
Finally, parents can make reading part of the daily routine. At a young age, children benefit from being read to and pretending to read books. Parents can select a convenient time, such as bed time, to read with their child. By doing this, reading becomes a fun part of the day for the child to be with his or her parents, and reading will become an exciting experience.

*Recommendations for Researchers*

It is crucial that further research examines the *fourth grade slump* and the correlation between reading attitude and reading frequency. Students who have a negative attitude toward reading are less likely to read, therefore inhibiting reading achievement. Teachers require an understanding of the *fourth grade slump* and its causes to solve this dilemma in the classroom. Researchers can provide this knowledge by further exploring the correlations between the factors involved in the slump.

The first step for any researcher should be to determine exactly where the slump is occurring. As in the case of Warner Elementary School, this trend may not be prevalent everywhere. By comparing the programs of the schools where the slump does happen to those where it does not, researchers may be able to pinpoint the factors that lead to it.

In addition, researchers should search for correlations between the elements of reading, such as motivation, attitude, achievement, and frequency. This way, researchers will have a better understanding of student reading habits and will be able to use one factor to improve another. Insight into the factors involved in the *fourth grade slump* could potentially lead to solutions to this problem.

Parents, teachers, librarians, and others are able to positively influence the reading attitude and frequency of students to solve the problem of the *fourth grade slump*. The most important thing to remember is to demonstrate the value of reading and to make reading exciting.
Students who are excited about reading and who have a positive attitude toward reading are much more likely to read (Cox & Guthrie, 2001). In turn, extensive practice reading will lead to a more positive attitude. If students have a negative attitude, increased reading of appropriate materials will help to improve this attitude. Similarly, working to improve the attitude of a student who chooses not to read often will increase the amount that this student reads. Being aware of the correlation between reading attitude and frequency will raise the number of options that educators and parents have to enhance reading attitude and frequency.

**Summary**

Though the reading attitudes of the students at Warner Elementary did not significantly decline as anticipated, a correlation exists between reading attitude and reading frequency, especially for recreational reading. This means that improving attitude or frequency will lead to the improvement of the other factor. It is critical for teachers, parents, librarians, researchers, and teacher educators to acknowledge this and to know how to utilize this information in the classroom.

Students benefit from having a positive attitude toward reading in that they are more likely to practice reading. In the same way, students benefit from practicing reading, because they develop a positive attitude and enhance reading skills. Knowing that this is the case, educators will be better equipped to handle the fourth grade slump and to prevent it from happening in the elementary school years. This is not to say that more research is not required on the subject because it is. Researchers can further assist teachers in this endeavor by continuing to explore other reading factors that are impacted during the slump time and by determining why this slump occurs in some schools and not in others. This will be the key to solving this dilemma and creating life-long reader.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey
Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

School________________ Grade______ Name__________________________

Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

1. How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?

2. How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?

3. How do you feel about reading for fun at home?

4. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?
Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

5. How do you feel about spending free time reading a book?

6. How do you feel about starting a new book?

7. How do you feel about reading during summer vacation?

8. How do you feel about reading instead of playing?
Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

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<th>How do you feel about going to a bookstore?</th>
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<th>How do you feel when a teacher asks you questions about what you read?</th>
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<th>How do you feel about reading workbook pages and worksheets?</th>
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Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

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?
Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

17. How do you feel about 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?
## Elementary Reading Attitude Survey Scoring Sheet

**Student Name________________________________________________________**
**Teacher_____________________________________________________________**
**Grade________________________ Administration Date______________________**

### Scoring Guide

4 points Happiest Garfield  
3 points Slightly smiling Garfield  
2 points Mildly upset Garfield  
1 point Very upset Garfield

**Recreational reading** | **Academic reading**
--- | ---
1. ____ | 1. ____
2. ____ | 2. ____
3. ____ | 3. ____
4. ____ | 4. ____
5. ____ | 5. ____
6. ____ | 6. ____
7. ____ | 7. ____
8. ____ | 8. ____
9. ____ | 9. ____
10. ____ | 10. ____

**Raw Score:** ____ | **Raw Score:** ____

Full scale raw score . . . . . . . . . . . . . (Recreational + Academic): ____

**Percentile ranks:** . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . **Recreational**

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . **Academic**

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . **Full scale**

© PAWS – www.professorgarfield.org  
Survey designed by Dennis J. Kear, Wichita State University
Appendix B:

Permission to Use the Elementary Reading Attitude Scale
Garfield revisited: Unlimited extension of permission to copy the ERAS

Michael C. McKenna
Georgia Southern University, Savannah, USA
Dennis J. Kear
Wichita State University, Kansas, USA

The appearance of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) in the May 1990 issue of *RT* was based originally on an agreement with United Media, which allowed the survey to be reproduced through December 31, 1995. The Garfield character has since been acquired from United Media by the creator Jim Davis and his company, Paws, Inc., and the agreement was extended to December 31, 1999. Davis contributed to the development of the instrument by producing the four poses of Garfield used in the pictorial scale. He has now kindly consented to extend permission to reproduce the ERAS until further notice.

Educators wishing to use the scale for classroom use should copy and paste the following credit line on each page of the scale:

©Paws, Inc. The Garfield character is incorporated in this test with the permission of Paws, Inc., and may be reproduced only in conjunction with the reproduction of the test in its entirety for classroom use until further notice by Paws, Inc., and any other reproduction or use without the express prior written consent of Paws is prohibited.

Since its appearance, the ERAS has grounded a number of research studies of reading attitudes, which have contributed to an understanding of the instrument. The following sources may be useful to educators who have used the ERAS.

Research references


McKenna, M.C., Stratton, B.D., & Grindler, M.C. (1992, November). Social desirability of children's responses to a reading attitude survey. *Paper presented at the meeting of the College Reading Association, St. Louis, MO.*


Appendix C

Frequency Questionnaire
Grade: ________

Frequency Questionnaire

1. For how long do you read books for fun each day?
   a. Less than 30 minutes
   b. 30 minutes to 1 hour
   c. 1 hour to 1 ½ hours
   d. More than 1 ½ hours

2. How many times a week do you read books for fun?
   a. Less than once a week
   b. Once a week
   c. 2-5 times a week
   d. More than 5 times a week

3. For how long do you read school books each day?
   a. Less than 30 minutes
   b. 30 minutes to 1 hour
   c. 1 hour to 1 ½ hours
   d. More than 1 ½ hours

4. How many times a week do you read school books?
   a. Less than once a week
   b. Once a week
   c. 2-5 times a week
   d. More than 5 times a week

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Appendix D

Consent Forms
Permission to Participate in Study

Hello, my name is Ms. Donaldson. I am a student at Bowling Green State University. I am doing a study about reading and would like your help. If you agree, you will fill out two papers. I will ask you questions about when you read and how you feel about reading.

You will not be in trouble if you do not agree to do the study. You will do another activity from your teacher if you do not agree to do the study. Your name and school will NOT be on the papers or in my report.

You can stop the study at any time. There are no risks for you if you do the study. It is your choice.

Thank you,

Ms. Donaldson
Permission to Participate in Study

I read Ms. Donaldson's letter for her study about reading.

PLEASE CHECK ONE:

_____ I DO agree to do the study with Ms. Donaldson.

_____ I do NOT agree to do the study with Ms. Donaldson.

_____________________________________
Name

_____________________________________
Signature                                     Date
Permission for my Child to Participate in a BGSU Reading Study

Hello, my name is Nicole Donaldson and I am a graduate student in the reading program at Bowling Green State University. I am collecting data for my thesis at your child’s elementary school and would like your child to participate in my research by taking two surveys: The Elementary Reading Attitude Scale (measures feelings toward reading) and the Frequency Questionnaire (measures how often a student reads).

If you consent, participation in my study will require your child to consider statements about reading that best match his or her feelings about reading. Your child will also choose how many hours a week that he or she reads. This survey is voluntary and YOUR CHILD DOES NOT HAVE TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY IF HE OR SHE DOES NOT WANT TO. Not participating will have no impact on your child’s grades or standings at his or her school. Your child will complete another school assignment from his or her teacher during the survey administration if you do not consent.

There are no anticipated risks of participating in this study. Your child may withdraw from the study at any time and any collected information will be destroyed. Your child’s responses to the surveys are confidential. If you consent, your child’s name WILL NOT be written anywhere on the surveys and WILL NOT be used in classes, reports, or conferences. A random number will be assigned to the surveys to identify them in reports. Surveys will remain locked in a cabinet that is only accessible to the researcher, Ms. Donaldson. At the end of the study, all papers will be destroyed.

If you consent for your child to participate in my study, please let me know by returning the attached form to your child’s school. If you have questions about the study, you can email or contact me. Nicole Donaldson at ndonald@bgsu.edu or (513) 288-7601, my chairperson, Dr. Cynthia Bertelsen at bertels@bgsu.edu or (419)372-4249, or the principal of your child’s school. You may also contact the chair of the Human Subjects Review Board, Bowling Green State University, at hrsb@bgsu.edu. (419) 372-7716 with any comments, questions, or concerns about this study or about participant rights.

If you consent for your child to participate in this study, you must return the attached form. I am excited to begin working with the students in your child’s school, and I hope you will allow your child to participate in this important research. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Nicole M. Donaldson
Graduate Student
Bowling Green State University
Phone: (513) 288-7601
Email: ndonald@bgsu.edu
Permission to Participate in Study

I have read the letter about the survey being conducted by a graduate student from Bowling Green State University at Whittier Elementary.

PLEASE CHECK ONE:

_____ I **DO** consent to let my child to complete the two surveys about his or her reading habits and attitudes.

_____ I do **NOT** consent to let my child to complete the two surveys about his or her reading habits and attitudes.

____________________________  ______________________
Signature                       Date

____________________________  ______________________
Printed Name                    Phone Number

____________________________  ______________________
Child's Name                    E-mail
Dear Teacher,

My name is Nicole Donaldson and I am a graduate student in the reading program at Bowling Green State University. For my thesis, I am gathering research on the relationship between reading attitudes and frequencies in second and fifth grade. I would like to collect this information in your classroom.

For this study, with your consent, your students will complete the Elementary Reading Attitude Scale. This requires students to circle the picture of Garfield the cat that best matches their feelings about a statement. The questions revolve around the student’s reading interests and attitude toward reading. Next, with your consent, the students will complete the Frequency Questionnaire, which requires the students to circle the response that best matches the amount of time they spend reading each week. The questions do not involve any risk beyond what students would encounter in every day life.

All collected data will be confidential. The surveys will be identified in the report only by a randomly assigned number and no identifying information will be attached to the survey. The information will be collected and kept locked up by me, the researcher, and will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. No identifying information, such as names and locations, will be used in the report. Surveys will be assigned a random number for identification purposes. If you consent, this study will begin at the end of January and will require the researcher to spend up to one hour a day for three days surveying. Participation is voluntary and requires that the students and student’s parents sign a consent form. If you consent and some students do not wish to participate, it will be at your discretion to assign an alternative task for the students.

I recognize that this project contains the reporting of sensitive information. If you have any questions about the administration of the surveys or the goals of the research project, please contact me at the phone number or email address listed below. You may also contact my chairperson Dr. Cynthia Bertelsen, at bertels@bgsu.edu or (419)372-4249. Additionally, if you have questions about the conduct of this study, or if any problems or concerns arise during the course of the study, you may contact the Chair of Bowling Green State University’s Human Subjects Review Board at (419) 372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time.

Please sign the consent form only if you are comfortable with the research design and consent to participating. If you have any concerns about this study or are uncomfortable with the researcher collecting information in your classroom, please do not sign the form. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Nicole M. Donaldson
Graduate Student
Bowling Green State University
Phone: (513) 288-7601
Email: ndonald@bgsu.edu
Permission to Conduct Study

I have been informed that as a part of research for a Master’s degree, graduate student Nicole Donaldson will be surveying the students in my classroom using the Elementary Reading Attitude Scale and the Frequency Questionnaire. I have also been informed that the study will take approximately three days to complete and involves no unusual risk to the students.

I have further been informed that the study is voluntary and students will not participate without parental consent. Furthermore, I have been informed that the results of the surveys are confidential and that the child’s name, school district, and school will NOT be mentioned in any reports, classes, or conferences. I have been informed that the information will only be accessible to the researcher, will be locked up at all times, and will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

Finally, I have been informed that any child, parent, or school official can stop the survey process at any time with no consequences. Also, all students will be treated equally, whether they have agreed to participate or not.

Furthermore, I have been informed that I can withdraw my class from the survey process at any time.

I hereby give my permission for the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, Frequency Questionnaire, and research study to be conducted as described above in my classroom for research purposes only by Nicole Donaldson.

________________________  ______________________  
Signature                                      Date

________________________  ______________________  
Printed Name                                      Title

________________________  ______________________  
School District Name                                School Name

________________________  ______________________  
Phone                                            E-mail address

529 Education Building          Phone 419-372-7320
Bowling Green, Ohio  43403-0247        fax 419-372-6265
Dear Principal,

My name is Nicole Donaldson and I am completing my Master’s in reading education at Bowling Green State University. As part of my graduation requirements, I am conducting research to compare the reading attitudes and frequencies of second and fifth graders. To do this, I would like to administer surveys to two classes of second graders and two classes of fifth graders.

Specifically, I would like to administer the Elementary Reading Attitudes Scale to all four classes. With your consent, this will require students to look at a statement about reading and decide which Garfield character best matches their feelings about the statement. The Frequency Questionnaire will also be administered with your consent. This requires students to circle the number of hours that they read each week.

If you consent to the surveys, all of the information that I collect will remain confidential. No names or identifying information will be attached to the data or shared in my report, with my class, or at conferences. The surveys will be identified by a random number in all conferences, discussions, and reports. The information will be kept locked up by me, the researcher, and will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

To begin, I would like to distribute the accompanying parental cover letter and parental permission slips to two second grade classes and two fifth grade classes. I am writing to you to seek written permission to administer the Elementary Reading Attitude Scale and the Frequency Questionnaire in the classrooms mentioned.

Another purpose is to stress the project’s volunteer nature. Only students who sign an assent form AND who have parental consent via a signed permission slip will be eligible to take the surveys.

I recognize that this project contains the reporting of sensitive information. If you have any questions about the administration of the surveys or the goals of the research project, please contact me at the phone number or email address listed below. You may also contact my chairperson, Dr. Cynthia Bertelsen, at bertels@bgsu.edu or (419) 372-4249. Additionally, if you have questions about the conduct of this study, or if any problems or concerns arise during the course of the study, you may contact the Chair of Bowling Green State University’s Human Subjects Review Board at (419) 372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time.

Please sign the consent form only if you are comfortable with the research design and consent to your school participating. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Nicole M. Donaldson
Graduate Student
Bowling Green State University
Phone: (513) 288-7601
Email: ndonald@bgsu.edu
Permission to Conduct Study

I have been informed that as a part of research for a Master’s degree, graduate student Nicole Donaldson will be surveying the students in my building using the Elementary Reading Attitude Scale and the Frequency Questionnaire if I consent. I have been informed that the study will take approximately twelve days to complete and involves no unusual risk to the students.

I have also been informed that the study is voluntary and students will not participate without parental consent. Furthermore, I have been informed that the results of the surveys are confidential and that the child’s name, school district, and school will NOT be mentioned in any reports, classes, or conferences.

Finally, I have been informed that any child, parent, or school official can stop the survey process at any time with no consequences. Also, all students will be treated equally, whether they have agreed to participate or not.

Furthermore, I have been informed that I can withdraw my school from the survey process at any time.

I hereby give my permission for the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, Frequency Questionnaire, and research study to be conducted as described above in my building for research purposes only by Nicole Donaldson.

____________________________________  ____________________
Signature                                      Date

____________________________________
Printed Name

____________________________________
School District Name

____________________________________
School Name

____________________________________
E-mail address

529 Education Building
Bowling Green, Ohio 43403-0247
Phone 419-372-7320
Fax 419-372-6205
Appendix E

Individual Student Results
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