The Effect of Silent Sustained Reading on the Attitudes of Students:

A Review of the Literature

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ABSTRACT

This review examines eight primary and six secondary studies which investigate the effect a Silent Sustained Reading program has on the attitudes of students. Five of the eight primary studies and four of the six secondary studies resulted in a positive increase in attitude toward reading. These studies suggest that Silent Sustained Reading could be an effective tool to help increase student attitudes toward reading. The success of the studies was contingent on a number of factors which will be further explored. Despite the success of the studies examined, it does remain evident that as a whole, the success of Silent Sustained Reading is still unknown. At the conclusion of the review, I discuss the limitations in the current research and suggest directions for further research

Note: The term "attitude" in this context refers to student motivation to read outside of the classroom.

Introduction

A primary concern of English Language Arts teachers is how to get students to read. Teachers ask themselves, "How can I get my students to read more both inside and outside of my classroom." Often, students do not read what is required of them; how are teachers going to get them to go the extra mile and pick up a book on their own?

Another claim worth examining is that students in lower level grades have a more positive attitude towards reading than students in secondary classrooms, who view reading only in terms of achieving academic success (Mitchell, 1996). A second question we must ask ourselves as ELA teachers, "How can we get students to remain positive about reading as they advance through secondary classrooms?"

Silent Sustained Reading (SSR) is a method to promote student attitudes toward reading that was put into place in both primary and secondary classrooms in the 1970s. SSR also has been referred to as High Intensity Practice (HIP), Motivation in Middle School (MIMS), Free Voluntary Reading (FVR), Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), and Daily Independent Reading Time (DIRT). Simply speaking, this practice refers to a fixed period of time that students are free to read materials of their choosing. The way the program is structured tends to vary from school to school and even from classroom to classroom.

The original concept of Silent Sustained Reading was developed by Lyman Hunt in the 1960s. In reality, however, as long as people have chosen to pick up a book on their own and read, SSR has existed. Hunt's program was originally called the *Individualized Reading Program (IRP),* and was composed of six major features: classroom environment, silent or quiet reading time, instructional guidance, book talks and conferences, skill development: USSR (Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading), records and evaluation (Hunt, 1970). The original outcomes of the IRP program were to help students develop improved reading skills through exploration of texts, become better silent readers, develop independence as readers without direct teacher instruction, and build a love of books (Hunt, 1970). These objectives have remained the same as IRP has developed into various types of SSR programs. Hunt's program has ultimately set the basis for every Silent Sustained Reading program that has followed.

From Hunt's original concept, many other programs have developed. Each of the programs has kept Hunt's basic idea; however, features such as evaluation, classroom environment and book talks and conferences have been altered, or in some cases, even dropped. The purpose of the SSR program has remained the same— to raise achievement and improve attitude toward reading.

SSR quickly gained popularity and soon schools throughout the country were putting it into place. This led to an eruption in research examining such areas as student reading achievement and attitudes in relation to Silent Sustained Reading. From there, many teachers adapted the standard program first introduced and eventually altered it to meet their specific needs, and most importantly, the needs of their students.

From the early 1970s to until the late 1980s, researchers investigated whether or not SSR programs promote reading achievement and positive attitude. Recent scholarship focuses on the best practices for implementing SSR programs in the classroom; however, even this literature is limited. In the area of SSR, "the ship has sailed." But what have we learned from the thirty or so years of research on the topic? From the material I have examined, I can say the findings are still inconclusive. While many studies show positive results from the implementation of the program, others that used SSR essentially show negative ones.

In 2002, Jun-Chae Yoon assembled a meta-linguistic review of the effects of SSR on attitude toward reading. Yoon's (2002) review concluded that the research done thus far on SSR has revealed that the program is successful in raising student attitude toward reading. Yoon (2002) also concluded that the three most important characteristics of a successful SSR program are self-selection of reading materials, role modeling from the teacher, and non-accountability. His review included seven studies from 1970, when Hunt pioneered the SSR program, to present time. Studies that were included in his analysis all contained an experimental and control group, enough statistical information to estimate effect size, publication dates after 1970, and results based on student attitudes. After examining each of the studies, Yoon concluded that as a result of SSR programs, student participants in the various studies have had improved attitudes toward reading as much as fifty-five percent.

Similarly, in 1980, two reviews of the current literature were done. Sadoski (1980) concluded that SSR had definite value in helping to increase positive student attitudes toward reading. He does suggest, however, that SSR not stand alone as primary reading instruction, as it is just practice for students to develop their reading skills (Sadoski, 1980). Sadoski does assert that at the time of the review, SSR had been proven to be the most effective method in helping to improve student attitudes toward reading. Moore, Jones and Miller (1980) also conclude in their review that SSR has been proven to have positive effects on student attitudes toward reading. They do, however, claim that although a student may not recognize one, a change in attitude may have occurred, there just may not be a way to effectively measure that change. More importantly, Moore et. al (1980) identifies areas that need further examination in relation to SSR. These areas include long-term studies, research on the best combination of SSR and formal reading instruction, and the development of new tools to measure the benefits of SSR (Moore, Jones & Miller, 1980). Although this review was written more than twenty years ago, from my research it is clear that these are still areas which need further study.

One other point to note is that only one study, Wiesendanger and Bader (1989), examined the effects of SSR after a significant amount of time had passed. This study examined the reading habits of students throughout the summer following a SSR program they participated in. There were four participants, all of whom who had just completed third grade, two of them in a classroom that participated in SSR. Students were asked to record the number of minutes per week that they spent reading. The results showed that the students who had participated in the SSR during the school year spent more time during the summer reading than the students who did not have a SSR in their classroom.

The purpose of this review is to examine a number of these studies, look at the implications of the studies and offer my suggestions for research that needs to be done in the area of SSR in order to determine its effectiveness.

Organization of the Review

I will first discuss my methods for selecting the articles I examined. Next, I will look at student attitudes toward SSR and I then go on to discuss the areas of convergence that were present in studies. Next, I will talk about the conclusions and implications of these studies and finally, I will offer my suggestions for further research in the field of SSR.

Method

An abundance of literature exists on the topic of Silent Sustained Reading. For the purposes of this review, I focused my attention on articles and studies which dealt with promoting student attitudes toward reading. This meant eliminating those studies that examined student reading achievement in relation to SSR. As my research progressed, it became evident that the bulk of research on student attitudes had taken place fifteen to twenty years ago. In order to cover the current research being done, I branched out to expand my search to what teachers, who were implementing a SSR program in their classrooms, were saying about how the program should be carried out. The primary databases I used to conduct my research were ERIC and WilsonSelect. I used search terms such as "Silent Sustained Reading," "best practices for SSR," "implementing a SSR program," "student attitudes," "student motivation," "reading habits," and "independent reading."

How do students feel about SSR?

Because students are the participants in the SSR programs, I thought I should examine studies that explore their views. Using a survey, Herbert (1987) discovered that students typically do not like Silent Sustained Reading programs. 636 students were surveyed, who

participated in twelve minutes of SSR, four to five times a week. Furthermore, students who like to read and consider themselves good readers generally have negative feelings toward the programs. These same students reported that that they did not participate in silent reading during the designated time and felt that it did not help them to improve their reading skills. In a similar survey conducted by Rick Meyers (1998), only 53% of students wanted their school to continue with an SSR program, despite its positive results. If one were to base his or her opinions on these surveys alone, it would be evident that they would not recommend use of SSR. However, other findings suggest that the program is successful.

Results of the Studies

Five of the eight primary studies, as well as four of the six secondary sources I examined resulted in positive attitudes of students toward reading. Of the primary sources, Cline and Kretke (1980), Holt & O'Tuel (1989), Wiesendanger and Bader (1989), Ozburn (1995), as well as Ivey and Broaddus, all resulted in positive increases in student attitudes toward reading. Farrell (1982), Mitchell (1996), Nagy, Campenni & Shaw (2000), as well as Bryan, Fawson & Reutzel (2003) of the secondary sources I examined resulted in a positive increase in student attitude toward reading using a SSR program

In addition, of the primary sources, Minton (1980), Herbert (1987), Dwyer & Reed (1989) all produced negative results, while Worthy, Turner & Moorman (1998), and Worthy, Moorman & Turner (1999) of the secondary sources all produced negative results.

These studies will be discussed in further detail throughout the review.

Areas of Convergence

As I began to examine the literature, it became evident that there are common aspects that account for the effectiveness of an SSR program. These areas included: student ownership over reading material, teacher and other school officials serving as role models, availability of materials, use of assessment and the role of gender.

Student Ownership over Reading Material

It should be no surprise that allowing students to have some ownership over the materials they study will yield students who are invested in their learning. By allowing students to choose the materials they want to read, teachers hope to motivate their students and encourage them to read. For teachers in two studies, this expectation was realized. Ozburn (1995) and Holt and O'Tuel (1989) both report a positive increase in student attitude when students choose their own reading material during SSR. Materials such as newspapers, magazines, short stories and novels were placed in the classrooms they studied. Furthermore, in the Holt & O'Tuel

(1989) study, students were not permitted to read school related textbooks during periods designated for SSR. However, as shown in Cline and Kretke (1980), complete freedom to choose materials is not necessary. In this study, students, who were only allowed to choose hardback or paperback novels to read during silent sustained reading, showed an increase in positive attitudes towards reading (Cline & Kretke, 1980).

The results are different when students are forced to read materials that the teacher chooses for them. In a study by Dwyer and Reed (1989), students were required to use school related materials, such as basal readers, during time designated for SSR. Dwyer and Reed used both an experimental and control group to assess whether the participation in the SSR program had any effect on the attitude of students toward reading. The experimental group engaged in fifteen minutes of SSR time, while the control group was given twenty more minutes of traditional reading instruction. However, both groups still used the same basal reading materials. Post-test scores on the *Rhody Secondary Reading Attitude Assessment* revealed that the students in the experimental group had an overall drop of almost two points on the attitude scale. Because the students were required to read teacher selected texts, this lack of choice most likely contributed to their negative attitudes toward reading.

As Nagy, Campenni & Shaw (2000) point out, restricting what students are allowed to read or requiring students to read certain materials detracts from the original plan developed by Hunt and also aids in the deterioration of student motivation to read. Although the Cline and Kretke (1980) study detracts slightly from this aspect of the original concept, their acceptance of students having some choice over their reading material seems to have aided in the improvement of student attitude toward reading.

Teacher and Other School Officials as Role Models

In effective SSR programs, teachers and other school officials model the behavior that should be taking place. If teachers are not reading during the designated time, students do not feel as though the activity is important and therefore, resist the program. Leading by example helps to motivate students to continue to read (Farrell, 1982). Ganz and Theofield (1974) as well as Cline and Kretke

(1980) suggest inviting principals and other administrators to participate in the program as well, encouraging them to stop by classrooms and spend a significant amount of time reading as a model.

Another aspect of teacher modeling that is important is displaying enthusiasm (Cline & Kretke, 1980). In their study, Cline and Kretke (1980) found that all teachers, especially those who are not English Language Arts instructors, should not act if the SSR period is a waste of time and a chore that has to be done. Their study was based on student attitude surveys of an experimental group composed of ninth grade students in Colorado participating in a school wide SSR program. The students were only allowed to read hard cover or paperback books; no magazines, newspapers, or comic books were allowed. The study participant teachers were encouraged to display enthusiasm toward reading and not act as though the SSR period was a waste of time or a chore. The positive attitude was reciprocated in the students, who showed a positive increase in attitude on post-test surveys.

Furthermore, Farell (1982), as well as Worthy, Turner and Moorman (1998) found that modeling is also an effective way to subtly suggest texts to students This technique was shown to also help teachers to become better connected to the students. By reading materials at their level, teachers were able make recommendations to students as to what they should read next. Worthy, Turner and Moorman (1998) also found that taking suggestions from the students helps to empower them and show them that teachers are interested in what they are reading.

Modeling will not guarantee that students will develop a positive attitude towards reading. Dwyer and Reed's (1989) study showed a decrease in student attitude toward reading, even when the teacher read along with the students during SSR. Similarly, Minton's (1980) study showed that even when a whole school participated in the SSR, including teachers and administrators, student attitudes toward reading did not improve. These results were obtained through attitude questionnaires completed by both the teachers and the students. The results of these two studies make clear that obviously, other factors need to be taken into account when trying to establish a program to motivate students to read.

Availability of Materials

Availability of materials is an important motivator in getting students to read. In response to the question, "What makes you want to read in this class?," 42% of the 1765 sixth graders Ivey and Broaddus (2001) surveyed responded that the biggest motivation was having good materials to read and having a choice in the selection of these reading. Ensuring that students have sufficient and relevant materials to read, either inside the classroom or in the school library is a vital component of a successful SSR program. In the same survey of sixth graders, a mere 28% reported that they found the materials they wanted to read in their classrooms (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). If students do not have access to materials which they find interesting, and perhaps, more importantly, that are at their reading level, they will quickly lose interest in a SSR program.

In a 1998 study, Worthy, Moorman and Turner examined the reading preferences and the materials available to sixth-grade students through use of a survey in three different schools in Texas. Three student subgroups were also formed based on student achievement from scores on the state competency test, gender, and income. Based on the results of their study, the biggest group affected by the lack of high-interest materials were boys and lower level readers, as the material they prefer to read is mostly nonacademic (Worthy, Moorman & Turner, 1999). This is disheartening, as these are two groups that are most at risk of developing negative attitudes towards reading.

Worthy, Turner and Moorman's (1998) study suggests that availability of materials contributed to the positive attitude of students toward reading. Through interviews with secondary teachers, the study concluded that when the teachers encouraged their students to bring in materials from home and allowed time for the students to share these high-interest materials with their classmates the attitudes of the students toward reading improved. This method allowed students to share with classmates, titles that they may not be familiar with. The method also takes advantage of the idea that students will do what their peers do. Furthermore, using this method is also a way to remedy a lack of high-interest materials available in the school library (Worthy, Turner & Moorman 1998).

Having relevant materials available to students is not a guarantee that they will read or improve their attitude as Minton's (1980) study concluded. Uncomfortable settings do not provide ideal reading environments, even if the materials are available to the students. Students are often distracted by other activities these types of classrooms provide (Minton, 1980). As mentioned earlier, through use of student attitude questionnaires, it was shown that student attitudes toward reading did not improve. Minton cited various reasons for the failure of the program including inadequate training of school officials, quick adoption of the program, uncomfortable settings, and the belief that all students are capable of reading silently at the same time (Minton, 1980). These findings led to the subject school's termination of the SSR program for the next school year.

Assessment

My review of the literature revealed that while the original concept of SSR called for book talks and conferencing to allow students to share important aspects of their books (Hunt, 1970) more recent SSR programs have moved from "sharing" to more formal methods of assessment. Examples of assessments of SSR that I found in my research were SSW (Silent Sustained Writing), where students wrote for five minutes after the SSR period was complete (Pyle, 1990), grading based on the number of books completed as well as observation of daily reading habits (Farrell, 1982), and engaging students in literary discussions (Bryan, Fawson & Reutzel, 2003). Because students often times associate reading with other literacy assessments that they dislike, such as vocabulary quizzes or book reports, they equate these activities with reading and in turn develop a negative attitude towards reading.

Requiring some type of assessment to go along with the books students are reading for SSR provides benefits for both the teacher and the student. Pyle's (1990) technique of SSW allowed her to assess student progress, while at the same time allowing students to better understand what they were reading. As the school year progressed, students were able to look back at their journals and see how they had improved as writers. Farrell (1982) also used assessment in her SSR program and saw a positive increase in student attitudes toward reading. Her students were administered a grade based on the number of books they read in a marking period. The following marking period, students were assessed based on their reading habits. Each time a student was observed to be not reading, they received a "minus" for the day. These techniques proved to be useful because they gave students ownership over their grades, while at the same time allowing Farrell to assess the progress of each student.

Another benefit of assessment is that it can help disengaged students to focus better during times that are designated for SSR. As Bryan, Fawson & Reutzel (2003) discovered in their study, assessment does not necessarily have to be assigning a grade to students; it can also mean engaging students in a discussion of what they have read. Their study was based on observations of three fourth-grade students who regularly exhibited "off-task" behaviors during SSR time. These "off-task" behaviors included making noise, being out of their seat, not reading, daydreaming or fiddling with physical objects such as pens and pencils. Bryan et al. (2003) spent time observing these three students, noting every time they exhibited an "off-task" behavior. The researchers next intervened, engaging the students in a literary discussion of the material the student was reading, after they had spent ten minutes in SSR. The subjects then returned to non-treatment conditions where they were observed to see if the intervention resulted in fewer "off-task" behaviors. Each of the subject students demonstrated fewer "off-task" behaviors, even after the treatment was withdrawn. The results of this study suggest that even minimal assessment, a simple conversation, can have positive effects on how students spend their time during SSR.

My research also showed that an SSR program can be effective without assessing. In Cline and Kretke's study (1980), students were not assessed on their SSR materials, and the results showed an increase in student attitude after the completion of the SSR program. As discussed earlier, the results of this study were based on the post-test surveys of ninth grade students in Colorado. The students were not assessed on the material they read. The results of the study showed that students were more positive about reading, felt better about doing assigned reading, and were more positive about the importance of reading (Cline and Kretke 1980).

There are definite drawbacks to assessment of SSR. Students want time to "just read" without having to worry about what work is going to follow. Allowing them this luxury, say Worthy, Turner and Moorman (1998), will help to improve their attitudes towards reading. As shown in their study, one of the interviewed teachers allowed time for their students to just read. This teacher reported that her students were much more involved with their books without the pressure of having an assignment to follow.

Gender

In almost every study I examined, there was a significant difference in the attitudes toward SSR expressed by males and females. In a survey to ascertain the reading attitudes of students in 9-12th grades, Mitchell and Ley (1996) found a significant difference between the attitudes of the boys and those of the girls. The purpose of Mitchell and Ley's study was to ascertain the reading attitudes of students measured by the Teale-Lewis Reading Attitude Scales and the Reading Behavior Profile. Three specific groups were focused on: gender, grade and achievement level. 1027 total subjects were involved. When asked to view reading in terms of academic success, both males and females scored equally; however, the females viewed reading as a means of enjoyment and growth, while the males saw it as a means for doing well in school. From this, Mitchell and Ley were able to conclude that this study supports earlier work done on gender in relation to attitude toward reading. The research they examined (Kennedy & Halinski, 1975) concluded that females have more positive attitudes toward reading than do males. The results of this study support the idea that males, in general, do not enjoy reading as much as females do.

 Another study in which male attitudes were assessed was conducted by Dwyer and Reed (1989). After a six week SSR program, where the students participated in fifteen minutes of reading, the attitudes toward reading significantly dropped, mostly due to the attitudes of the male participants (Dwyer & Reed, 1989). As previously discussed, this could be largely in part due to the students being required to read basal reading materials, instead of allowing the students to choose their own reading materials.

Explanations of boys' negative experiences with SSR are given by Warrican (2006) and Cavazos-Kottke (2005) as well as Worthy, Moorman & Turner (1999). They suggest that the materials available to students are not appealing to male readers. Warrican's (2006) study examined seventeen students, mostly males, in a lower level class of reluctant readers. His goal was to promote leisure reading amongst the students. Warrican suggests two reasons for negative attitudes toward reading from the males: either they cannot read, or they are uninterested in the materials that are available to them. The school library where this study was set was filled with mostly novels that either did not appeal to the students, or were too difficult for them to read. No magazines, which the students expressed interest in, were present.

Cavazos-Kottke suggests that secondary teachers are stuck in a "pedagogy of control" which inhibits them from embracing non-traditional texts that males are likely to enjoy. He claims that males do not stop reading; rather, their instructors see little instructional value in the materials which they are choosing to read, and therefore discourage these students from reading this material (Cavazos-Kottke, 2005). In order to get males to see that the literary activities they are participating in outside the classroom, count for something inside the classroom, Cavazos-Kottke claims that secondary teachers need to drop their "pedagogy of control." This, he asserts, will help students, especially males, "see what they do in school counts for real life" (183).

However, in all cases males will not have a negative attitude towards reading. When students were allowed to choose their own materials, the attitudes of boys and girls showed no significant differences (Holt & O'Tuel, 1989). Cavazos-Kottke (2005) points out that when the restrictions were lifted on a SSR program that had originally been based on teacher-selected material, the motivation of the students to read, especially the boys, was raised significantly. In his classroom, he allowed students to choose their own reading materials each grading period and make a presentation to the class for each piece that they had read. In order to get his students to experiment with different genres and also to help his students, especially the males, realize that materials such as magazines and newspapers were considered reading material, he assigned a different genre (non-fiction, fiction, poetry, etc.) to be read for each marking period. Cavazos-Kottke saw an increase in motivation to read, especially from the males who seemed to have re-discovered literature.

Furthermore, Holt and O'Tuel (1989) examined the effects of a SSR program on the attitudes toward reading of seventh and eighth grade students, who were reading two or more years below their academic grade level. These students were permitted to choose their own materials during SSR; however, textbooks from any class were not permitted. Students were also allowed a notebook of their choosing in order to partake in SSW (Silent Sustained Writing) twice a week. Post-test results of the *Estes Attitude Scale* revealed that there were no significant differences between the males and the females toward reading. For the sake of their students, teachers should be willing to relinquish control and allow their students the opportunity to choose materials that will motivate them to read.

 In sum, research reveals that allowing students to choose materials that they have interest in, even if little or no educational value exist in it, may be the key. In addition, giving students access to materials such as magazines, comic books or newspapers during SSR time may help to engage readers, especially males, who may find little interest in novels. If students, especially males are taking advantage of the SSR time and engaging themselves in some type of reading material, despite it being educational or not, this should be viewed as a positive. Students should not be discouraged from reading materials that hold their interest.

Implications/Conclusions/Discussions

My examination of the research reveals that in most cases, SSR has a positive effect on the attitudes of students toward reading. In five of the eight primary studies that were looked at, students were shown to have an increase in positive attitude towards reading after they had completed a SSR program. As discussed earlier, reviews of the literature by Sadoski (1980), Moore, Jones & Miller (1980) and Yoon (2002) stated that SSR has positive effects on the reading attitudes of students. However, it seems as though the trend of SSR has significantly deteriorated, leaving still room for more to be done.

As I discussed earlier, five of the eight primary studies, as well as four of the six secondary sources I examined resulted in positive attitudes of students toward reading. Of the primary sources, Cline and Kretke (1980), Holt & O'Tuel (1989), Wiesendanger and Bader (1989), Ozburn (1995), as well as Ivey and Broaddus, all resulted in positive increases in student attitudes toward reading. Farrell (1982), Mitchell (1996), Nagy, Campenni & Shaw (2000), as well as Bryan, Fawson & Reutzel (2003) of the secondary sources resulted in a positive increase in student attitude toward reading using a SSR program.

In addition, of the primary sources, Minton (1980), Herbert (1987), Dwyer & Reed (1989) all produced negative results, while Worthy, Turner & Moorman (1998), and Worthy, Moorman & Turner (1999) of the secondary sources all produced negative results.

Many things accounted for the positive attitude increase resulting from a SSR program. The most common characteristics of these studies were: allowing students to choose their own texts, teachers who acted as role models, availability of high-interest materials and informal assessment. As with any educational research, one must keep in mind that participant groups of students are not and cannot be representative of every student. Any of these methods which produced positive results could be taken into another classroom and produce negative ones.

Negative attitudes towards SSR may be the result of a number of different factors. These factors include, but are not limited to: teacher selection of texts, formal assessment, teachers who do not act as role models during time set aside for SSR, environments that are not ideal for silent reading, inadequate training of teachers, quick adoption of the program, and unavailability of high-interest materials.

From the examination of these studies, much can be learned about what research still needs to be done in the area of SSR. One aspect of these studies that was a limitation, even if not stated, was time. In order to determine if a SSR program is working, it will take around four months, as it takes that long to get adolescents into books (Ozburn, 1995). The studies that only lasted six weeks (Dwyer & Reed, 1989) or ten weeks (Holt & O'Tuel, 1989) may have had more accurate results if they would have allowed the program to continue for a longer period of time. One suggestion is to follow a group of students who participate in an SSR program for an entire school year.

Another aspect of SSR that needs to be further examined is the effects of the program after a significant amount of time has passed. Only one study, Wiesendanger and Bader (1989) examined the effect the SSR program had on the students after the school year had ended. Most of the studies (Cline & Kretke, 1980; Dwyer & Reed, 1989; Holt & O'Tuel, 1989; Ozburn, 1995) administered surveys immediately after the program had ended. It did not allow students time to continue to develop their attitudes and habits towards reading.

Furthermore, another aspect of SSR that should be further researched is how SSR functions as part of a workshop setting. None of the studies I examined took into account that all students are not in the mindset at the same time to read. An interesting study would be to see how student attitudes towards reading changed if, with SSR, students were allotted a workshop type setting, where they could either read, or work on a piece of writing, depending on what type of mood they were in. Although some of the studies, (Holt & O'Tuel, 1989; Pyle, 1990) allowed students to spend time writing; the students were first required to spend the majority of the time reading.

Also needing to be put into consideration is that not all students are capable of sitting still and reading at the same time. The study done by Bryan, Fawson, & Reutzel (2003) brings this issue to light. Students do need to develop self-discipline and be able to sit silently for a set amount of time; however, not all students are capable of this (Minton, 1980). This consideration needs to be taken into account when deciding if a SSR program will work in a certain classrooms. An active group of students who are full of energy and who often times is even hard to keep under control, are probably not the best candidates for a SSR program to help them to improve their attitudes towards reading.

When deciding to implement a SSR program into a classroom, a teacher must keep in mind the characteristics of the studies that produced positive results. From my research, it is clear that allowing students to choose their own materials, having a teacher act as a role model during SSR, having high-interest materials available to students, and assessing students informally all are characteristics of programs that work. Teacher selected texts, formal assessments, teachers who do not model proper SSR behavior, and a lack of high-interest materials can all account for programs that do not produce positive results. When implementing a SSR program into a classroom, teachers must take each of these characteristics into account and decide which ones are going to be most beneficial to their students.

My research has indicated that SSR is an effective tool for motivating students to read. While certain characteristics of the program must be carried through in order to produce the most effective results, these factors are simple to implement in any classroom. What's more is that SSR is a cost-effective way to help produce a life-long skill that students need—reading. Although in order to get a fuller picture of the true effects of SSR, more research needs to be done, the evidence we have shows that it has been successful in helping students develop positive attitudes towards reading.

| Table 1:

Primary Sources

Author(s)	Participants	Purpose	Methods	Findings
Cline and Kretke (1980)	Junior High School Students in Boulder, Colorado. A control group with a traditional reading program and an experimental group who had partook in an SSR program for three years.	To compare the effect of a school-wide SSR program in one school to a traditional reading program in another school of similar ability and socio-economic status on the attitudes of the students towards reading	SRA Assessment Survey on Reading, Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Tests, Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, Short Form Test of Academic Aptitude and a locally developed attitude scale were administered and analyzed for results.	Students in the SSR program felt happier about going to the school library, more positive about reading a book that they chose, better about doing assigned reading and were more positive about the importance of reading. The achievement test results showed no significant differences.

Minton (1980)	550 Ninth Graders in San Diego County, California.	To improve reading comprehension and attitude	A school-wide SSR program added to the third period of the school day between 10 and 10:15 AM. Students were assessed pre and post test with surveys and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test	The program had some effect on the comprehension of the students. But little to no effect on the attitudes.
Herbert (1987)	636 students in grades 7-9. Students spent 12 minutes a day 4 or 5 days a week in SSR	To determine student attitudes towards Silent Sustained Reading	A survey with twenty questions to be answered on a scale of 1 (most like me) to 4 (least like me) was administered to the students	Most of the students had negative attitudes towards SSR. Even those students who liked to read and consider themselves good readers wished SSR would be eliminated from their school day.

Dwyer and Reed (1989)	An experimental group of fourth and fifth graders and a control group of fifth graders.	To determine if participation in an SSR program results in a more positive attitude towards reading and how male and female students differ in this attitude.	The Rhody Secondary Reading Attitude Assessment was given to the students both before and after the study was done. The experimental group participated in 15 minutes of SSR while the control group had approximately 20 more minutes of regular reading instruction time.	No significant differences were noted as a whole were noted; however, the boys did have significantly lower scores than the girls.
Holt and O'Tuel (1989)	216 seventh and eighth grade students reading two or more	To determine if a program in SSR and SSW would	A 10-week program of SSR and SSW was implemented.	All students engaged in the SSR and SSW programs

	years below their grade level, They were divided into an experimental group who engaged in 20 minutes of SSR three times a week and 20 minutes of silent writing two days a week and the control group continued with standard basal reading instruction for these 20 minutes.	significantly raise the reading achievement and attitudes of students reading two or more years below their grade level.	The Gates-MacGinitie Reading test and the Estes Attitude scale were used for pre and post tests were used to measure reading attitude and achievement and the Sequential Tests of Educational Progress and the Sager Writing scale were used to assess writing.	significantly improved in at least one area of reading and writing.
Wiesendanger and Bader (1989)	Four groups of students who had completed third grade. Two groups had received a SSR program, two had not.	To determine the effect an SSR program had on the reading habits of students after the program had ended.	Students were given forms to fill out recording the number of minutes they read each day during the summer.	Students who had participated in the SSR program the previous school year had read significantly more during the following summer than the other students. The SSR program had the greatest effect on the average level readers who were reading an average of 40 minutes more a week than the students who had not participated in the SSR.
Ozburn (1995)	60 Students. None were ESL, all were Hispanic. Many had been in remedial classes and only 10 had read a book for pleasure. Only 14 reported that they enjoyed reading.	To determine the effects of SSR on student attitudes and achievement.	The Gates MacGinitie Reading test was administered in August and in May. Students read a self-selected book for the first 10-15 minutes of each daily 55 minute class. Reading sources came from various sources, but not textbooks.	All students improved in their reading levels. The average grade level improvement was 3.9.The least improvement was 1.5 levels by three students who did not read outside of class. Eleven students improved five grade levels, Seventeen improved four, twenty-two improved three and seven improved

				two.
Ivey and Broaddus (2001)	1765 sixth-grade students	To use student responses to determine what aspects of middle school reading instruction motivates their engagement with reading.	Surveys with both open-ended questions as well as checklist items were administered. Follow up interviews were given to 31 students.	63% of participants stated that they preferred free reading time. 42% of students responded that they were motivated by finding good materials to read and having a choice in the selection of those reading materials.

Table 2: Secondary Sources Author	Participants	Purpose	Methods	Findings
Farrell (1982)	Eighth grade students	To determine the effects of SSR on reading attitudes and achievement	Students kept a progress log, noting how many pages were read both in and out of class. They also made vocabulary lists of unfamiliar words which were used for quizzes. Students were graded each marking period based on how many books they had read.	Students improved in their reading achievement based on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test. Students also became more interested in reading and started reading books of a higher reading level. Other school officials noticed a change in the students, who were seen reading during study halls, lunch and homeroom.
Mitchell & Ley (1996)	High School students in grades 9-12.	To determine if the variables of gender, grade and achievement level had any effect on the self-reported attitudes and behaviors of high school students towards reading.	Students answered questions on the Teale-Lewis Reading Attitude Scales and the Reading Behavior Profile (RBP)	On the Teale-Lewis Reading Attitude Scale, females had significantly higher positive attitudes towards reading than males, however both valued reading for achieving success in school. On the RBP, males participated in voluntary reading behavior more than

				females; however, it was not by a large margin.
Worthy, Turner & Moorman (1998)	Middle School students	To determine how common the practice of self-selected reading is and what the protocol for this type of reading instruction is.	Interviews with teachers to determine what a day in their ELA classroom consisted of.	Most teachers attempted to allot some time for students to "just read;" however, most found it difficult because of time constraints, materials the students were choosing having little instructional value and colleagues viewing this time as not real instruction.
Worthy, Moorman & Turner (1999)	Sixth grade students from three different schools in Texas	To determine if the materials that Middle School students are interested in reading are readily available to them in schools	A survey was first given to the students to examine what their reading preferences were. Then, the teachers were interviewed about the quantity and acquisition of materials that were available in their classrooms and in the school library.	Most of the materials that students want to read are not available in school. This is due to a number of factors including durability of magazines and other similar materials, cost, and educational value.

Nagy, Campenni & Shaw (2000)	Seventh Grade Students	To determine how SSR takes place in schools in order to make it more useful to students	Surveys of seventh grade teachers on how their SSR was implemented in their classrooms.	SSR is still going on in the classroom, although not as it was originally designed.
Bryan, Fawson & Reutzel (2003)	Fourth grade "non-engaged" readers	To determine if discussion on books read during SSR had any effect on non-engaged readers	Observations of study participants in an unobtrusive way. The students involved in the study were then asked to meet with a researcher after 10 minutes of reading to discuss what they were reading for the final 10 minutes devoted to SSR time. After the intervention was withdrawn, the researchers returned to an unobtrusive observation of the study participants.	The number of "off task" behaviors that were observed by the researchers in each of the three students significantly dropped after the students had partook in the treatments of literary engagement.

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