Books at Home: Weekend Reading for Students

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Abstract

Research is clear that students who do not read on a regular basis become struggling readers, and this gap widens with each ongoing year (Miller, 2015). On the contrary, there is clear evidence to show that the more extensively children read, the more proficient readers they become (Allington, 2014). Therefore, Allington (2014) concluded that more time reading text resulted in higher reading achievement. However, the access of books has not always existed in every home to afford the opportunity for all children to read on a regular basis.

Based on numerous conversations with students at her low SES elementary school, the researcher had learned that the majority of students did not have access to books, or appropriate leveled books, that they could read on the weekends at home. Even though the school had sent home books regularly on the weekdays, students needed more reading material, at their appropriate reading level, to continue to immerse themselves in reading on the weekends. For this study, a weekend reading initiative was implemented in a second grade classroom in which all students were given multiple, self-selected books to take home for weekend reading (Friday- Sunday) for four consecutive weekends. The researcher observed and tracked changes in oral reading fluency after students had been given greater access to reading self-selected books, at the student’s independent reading level, on the weekends.
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Chapter 1 - Problem

Introduction

The researcher has been an elementary reading interventionist for the past 8 years at a low SES school. She had continually observed that there was a significant correlation between the amount of reading children did at home and their success in oral reading fluency as measured by DIBELS. Because many of her students were low SES, having enough books to read at home was a challenge. She also observed how exciting and motivating it was for students when she would give them books to take home and read. Because of this, over the past few years, she began to oversee a books to home program that has allowed students to select one book to take home and read each night of the school week (Monday- Thursday). Based on numerous conversations with students at her school, the researcher then learned that the majority of students did not have access to books, or appropriate leveled books, that they could read on the weekends. Even though the school had sent home books regularly on the weekdays, students needed more reading material, at their appropriate reading level, to continue to read on the weekends. This led the researcher to wonder if sending home more books on the weekends would have an effect on their oral reading fluency.

Problem

Many elementary students from low SES schools read below grade level. As classroom teachers, the search continues to determine what can be done to assist these students in improving and reaching grade level success in their reading. Many reading strategies are
taught and practiced within the school day to improve student reading. However, often, more is needed to boost the success of student reading.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if providing multiple, self-selected books at a student’s independent reading level for home reading on weekends would increase the oral reading fluency of 2nd grade readers. Based on the results, the researcher shared this initiative with other grade levels in order to help increase access to weekend reading and impact reading performance schoolwide.

Justification for the Study

This study helped supply books to low income children who needed to continue reading at home over the weekends when they were not in school. The study provided weekend access to books at home for low SES students, which helped close the reading performance gap that existed between them and high SES students.

Research Question and Hypothesis

The research question for this study was, “What impact will sending home multiple books for consecutive weekends have on the oral reading fluency of low SES, 2nd grade struggling readers?” The researcher hypothesized that sending home multiple books for consecutive weekends with low SES 2nd grade readers would improve their oral reading fluency, as measured using DIBELs.
Definition of Terms

**SES (Socioeconomic status):**

Constitutive Definition: Dictionary.com states that SES is an individual's or group's position within a hierarchical social structure.

Socioeconomic status depends on a combination of variables, including occupation, education, income, wealth, and place of residence.

Operational Definition: For the purpose of this study, “SES” refers to family income and will be referred to as low SES for families receiving free and reduced lunch and high SES for families not on the free and reduced lunch program.

**DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills):**

Constitutive Definition: The University of Oregon states that DIBELS is defined as a set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of early literacy skills from kindergarten through sixth grade.

Operational Definition: For the purpose of this study, DIBELs refers to an assessment used to collect reading data, including oral reading fluency, at the elementary level.

**Oral Reading Fluency (ORF):**

Constitutive Definition: Rasplica & Cummings (2013) state that oral reading fluency is the ability to read connected text quickly, accurately, and with expression. In doing so, there is no noticeable cognitive effort that is associated with decoding the words on the page.

Operational Definition: For the purpose of this study, oral reading fluency (ORF) refers to the number of words students read correctly in a given passage for one minute.
**Independent reading level:**

Constitutive Definition: The Florida Center for Reading Research states an independent reading level is the level at which a reader can read text with 95% accuracy (i.e., no more than one error per 20 words read).

Operational Definition: For the purpose of this study, independent reading level refers to a level of reading a student is able to read on his own with little or no assistance.

**Self-selected:**

Constitutive Definition: Merriam-Webster dictionary states “self” refers to belonging to oneself and “selected” means chosen from a group to include the best people or things.

Operational Definition: For the purpose of this study, “self-selected” refers to books chosen by a student for him or herself.
Chapter 2- Literature Review

Research is clear that the more children read, the better readers they become. Reading more, or increasing the volume of reading, is key in enhancing reading achievement and reading fluency. If one is looking to help struggling readers increase their reading fluency and comprehension, it is important to allow them to increase their reading volume as a first step in bridging the reading gap (Allington, 2014). Lewis and Samuels (2005) tracked 49 studies that followed students who were given independent reading opportunities throughout the school day. The overall effect of the volume of reading these students participated in was moderate to significant. In addition, research has found that the single greatest factor in reading achievement, even above one’s socioeconomic level, was the volume of reading that children do (Krashen, 2011).

However, the access and number of books in a home is a strong predictor of a child’s reading achievement (Schubert & Becker, 2010). Therefore, it would seem logical that, if children do not have access to books at home, they will not read in the volume that is necessary to improve reading achievement.

Also, studies show that within school to home reading initiatives, it is important to provide students a choice of books to read. Lehman (2011) followed students in a third grade classroom consisting of: 14 reading at grade level, 4 reading slightly below grade level and 4 reading very much below grade level over a 16 week frame. After the classroom teacher implemented scaffolded self-selected reading, focused on reading motivation, comprehension and fluency, results showed increased motivation for reading and increased comprehension for all students and improved fluency for most students. It
seems probable, then, that providing the opportunity for students to self-select books for weekend reading will improve their oral reading fluency.

Much success has been documented of introducing home to school literacy initiatives to low SES (social economic status) families in order to support their child’s reading achievement success. O’Neil (2008) conducted twenty interviews of low income families in order to gain the parental perspectives of school to home literacy initiatives. Findings reveal that low income parents have high academic expectations for their children even though they believe the school may not, favor face to face communication with the school versus written communication, strive to complete at home literacy activities sent by school despite sometimes lacking sources of books and activities for their children, and desire more individualized instruction for their child based on his/her needs. Dearling (2006) followed 329 students from across the United States who were low income students from kindergarten to 5th grade. The purpose of the study was to examine the implications of family and school connections. Findings show that despite income differences, students with high family school involvement result in showing improved letter act performance. Another study involved 17 student participants comprising of twelve first grade students transitioning to second grade and five second grade students transitioning to third grade. 34% of these students were low SES. All students were the lowest readers in their grade. This study was focused on summer reading growth using a parent supported structured reading program. Results of this study show large reading gains as measured with DIBELS oral reading fluency (Mitchell & Begeny, 2014). The researcher predicted that this same type of structured at home reading initiative on weekends, rather than in the summer, would also improve oral
reading fluency. Therefore, despite lack of books and poverty affecting their reading growth, research has found that many school to home literacy initiatives have proven beneficial for low SES children and their families.
Chapter 3- Procedures

After reviewing the literature on the effects of providing access to books to lower income students, the researcher found that it was warranted to determine, in a study, if a correlation existed between 2nd grade students, from a low SES school, taking home multiple books to read on the weekend and higher scores in oral reading fluency.

Description of the Research Design

The purpose of this study was to determine if providing multiple, self-selected books at a student’s independent reading level for home reading on weekends would increase the oral reading fluency of 2nd grade readers from a low SES school. Based on the success of this study, this initiative was shared with other grade levels in the building in order to increase access to weekend reading and impact reading performance schoolwide.

Specifically, the researcher measured the effectiveness of sending books home for consecutive weekend reading with students from a low SES school. Students were first given an oral reading fluency pretest, books were sent home for four consecutive weekends, and then an oral reading fluency posttest was administered to determine growth.

Description of Sample

The participants in this research study were male and female, 2nd grade students within one second grade classroom of Woodside Elementary School in the West Ottawa District in Holland, Michigan.
Description of Instruments Used

The instrument used to measure the effectiveness of this proposal was Dynamic Indicators of Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). The DIBELS assessment instrument is mandated by the West Ottawa School District and is the standard assessment used to record and follow student reading growth at Woodside Elementary School.

Explanations of the Specific Procedures Followed

This quantitative study was done to consider if sending home multiple books with low SES students over the course of four weekends would increase oral reading fluency. The following were the procedures used. The study took place at Woodside Elementary during the school day. One week prior to the start of the weekend reading initiative, a letter was sent home to parents detailing the weekend reading program and inviting students to participate and parents to give consent (Appendix A). Then, participating students were pretested for a one minute read using a DIBELs progress monitoring ORF (Oral Reading Fluency) reading probe (Appendix B). Next, each additional Friday of the four weeks, students self-selected 5 books at their independent reading level for weekend reading from the baskets of leveled books in a cart in the hallway. They placed these books in a bag labeled, “Weekend Reading.” On each Monday, reading bags were collected, and books placed back into leveled reading baskets. This weekly pattern of sending home books on the weekend continued for four consecutive weeks. After the completion of the fourth weekend, a posttest was conducted which consisted of a one minute read using a different DIBELs progress monitoring ORF (Oral Reading Fluency) reading passage (Appendix C). The researcher analyzed the data by comparing the words
read correctly per minute using the DIBELs oral reading fluency pretest and that of a posttest. Data was collected, organized and presented in a scatter plot.

Validity

According to Tuckman and Harper (2012), “Internal validity affects observers’ certainty that the research results can be accepted, based on the design of the study”, (p. 6). Based on this study one could argue that there could be bias since the researcher is also the students’ small group reading support teacher. For example, students may be more inclined to participate in this study and/or less inclined to participate in this study due to the students’ knowing the researcher. The participation and/or findings of the study will not affect the student’ reading grade and there will be no pressuring for them to participate.

“A study has external validity if the results obtained would apply in the real world to other similar programs and approaches”, (Tuckman & Harper, 2012). This study was limited to 2nd graders in one classroom at Woodside Elementary. However, the study could be replicated by offering books home to all students in all grade levels in a school. For this replication, more leveled books would be needed to allow more students to choose books to take home on the weekends. The results of this study are of interest to those schools who service low SES, below grade level readers and are searching for additional methods of increasing reading achievement.
Chapter 4- Results

Using DIBELS as a measure of student oral reading fluency, the researcher used data from the oral reading fluency pretest, administered before weekend reading books were sent home, and the oral reading fluency posttest, administered following the four weekends that books were sent home with 2nd grade students.

The hypothesis for this research considered how sending home multiple, self-selected books with second grade students over four consecutive weekends would increase oral reading fluency. A comparison was made using pretest and posttest data in order to determine the effect of additional student reading on the weekends and how it impacted student oral reading fluency. The before and after results were measured and analyzed using the Pearson. Finally, the results were followed by a discussion.
It would appear that providing books for students to read on multiple weekends increased oral reading fluency scores overall. For the majority of participants, oral reading fluency scores increased. In particular, for the majority of students, oral reading scores increased by 7 to 22 words per minute. The average increase was 13 words per minute. However, for one participant, scores decreased. The decrease may be a result of this student’s frequent absences on Fridays, therefore not allowing him to collect books to read on the weekend. It seemed that students beginning with fewer words per minute on the pretest showed the most gains in oral reading fluency scores. The students who started with a higher words per minute oral reading fluency score may have increased their words per minute, but not by as many words. One may assume that students who started with the lowest words per minute in oral reading fluency grew at a more rapid pace because of the wider gap from where they were to begin with and where they needed to be at grade level. They may have had more desire and incentive to put forth more effort to catch up to their grade level peers in oral reading fluency. Whereas students who already started near or at grade level, in regards to words read per minute, had a smaller reading fluency gap to fill. These students simply needed to grow minimally or maintain their oral reading fluency level which was already at or almost at grade level expectations. In conclusion, the scatter plot indicates a high correlation between greater access to books and additional reading on the weekends for second graders from a low SES school and an increase in oral reading fluency scores.
Chapter 5- Discussion

Research has found that the single greatest factor in reading achievement, even above one’s socioeconomic level, is the volume of reading that children do (Krashen, 2011). This study seems to support this research as was evident that greater access to books on the weekends allowed second graders to read a higher volume of books. This, then, led to an increase in oral reading fluency scores overall. As a result of the outcome of this study, this particular second grade class implemented weekend reading with all students in the classroom. This led to the other sections of second grade in the building also implementing this practice. As a result, more books needed to be purchased in order to sustain this practice at the second grade level and provide enough books to accommodate student choice of text. In the future, this elementary school plans to continue duplicating this weekend reading initiative beginning in the younger grades so that as students progress in grade levels, weekend reading will be a regular routine with which they, and their families are familiar. It would be probable that by implementing this structure and system of weekend reading across more grade levels, this elementary school would see an increase overall of student oral reading fluency. This, in turn, might lead to higher comprehension of text which is the ultimate goal of developing oral reading fluency. A final benefit would be that all students would learn to love and value reading as lifelong learners.
References


Appendices
Research Resources
Appendix A  
Information Letter and Consent Form for Parents or Guardians

Date

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s):

I am writing to ask your permission for your child to participate in a research project titled, “Books at Home: Weekend Reading for Students.” I am conducting this research project as a graduate student of Aquinas College and the results will be a part of my master’s thesis. This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Carol Winkle, professor of Aquinas College. She may be reached at winklcar@aquinas.edu with any questions. This study will be conducted at school and at home over the four weekends. We are interested in determining if sending home multiple, self-selected books with students on the weekend will increase reading achievement. This project may help us understand more about how additional reading on the weekends affects student reading achievement.

The project in which your child has been invited to participate is expected to be an enjoyable experience and will require additional reading time over the weekend. However, the decision about participation is yours. To help you in this decision, a brief description of the project is provided below.

Students will receive 5 self-selected books at their independent reading level on each Friday in a bag labeled “Weekend Warriors Reading.” We request that you, as the parent or guardian, encourage and monitor their reading over the weekend. Then, on Monday morning, please have your child return the weekend reading bag and books to school. This process will be repeated for four weeks, allowing children to choose new books each Friday to bring home for weekend reading. Progress will be monitored using a pretest before the study begins and concluding with a posttest to measure reading growth.

All children’s performances are considered confidential and individual children’s results will not be shared with school staff. Student and parents’ names will not be used during research. Students’ names will be replaced with Student 1, 2, 3 and so on. The data collected will be stored in a secure and locked file cabinet, which is located in the researcher’s classroom and only the researcher has access to it. The analyzed data will be stored in a computer with password protection. The researcher will keep the data until thesis is complete and after thesis has been submitted, will shred all data used in this study.

Only children in second grade at Woodside, who have parental permission, and who themselves agree to participate, will be involved in the study. Participation in this study is voluntary. Children or parents may withdraw their permission at any time during the study without penalty by indicating this decision to the researcher. There are no known or anticipated risks to participation in this study.

If you agree to permit your child to participate in this project, please complete the attached permission form, whether or not you give permission for your child to participate, and return it to the school by (Insert Date).

If you have any questions about the study, or if you would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision, please feel free to contact me, Mrs. Jill Kuiper at kuiperj@westottawa.net. Thank you in advance for your interest and support of this project.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Jill Kuiper
Core Support teacher
I have read the information letter concerning the research project entitled “Books at Home: Weekend Reading for Students,” conducted by Mrs. Jill Kuiper, Core Support teacher at Woodside Elementary. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and receive any additional details I wanted about the study.

I acknowledge that all information gathered on this project will be used for research purposes only and will be considered confidential. I am aware that permission may be withdrawn at any time without penalty by advising the researchers.

If I have any questions about the study I can feel free to call the researcher Mrs. Jill Kuiper at 786-1900, x3311, kuiperj@westottawa.net. In addition, you may contact Dr. Carol Winkle, Aquinas College faculty research advisor at winklcar@aquinas.edu.

☐ Yes – I would like my child to participate in this study

☐ No – I would not like my child to participate in this study.

Child’s Name (please print) ____________________________________________________________

Child’s Birth Date ______________ Gender of Child ___ Male ___ Female

Parent or Guardian name ____________________________

Parent or Guardian Signature ____________________________ Date ______________
Carta de información y formulario de consentimiento para padres o tutores

Fecha

Estimado padre(s) o tutor(s):

Le escribo para pedirle su autorización para que su hijo participe en un proyecto de investigación titulado, ""Los Libros en el Hogar: Lectura de Fin de Semana Para los Estudiantes". "Estoy haciendo este proyecto de investigación como estudiante graduada de la Universidad de Aquinas y los resultados serán parte de mi tesis de maestría. Esta investigación se está llevando a cabo bajo la supervisión de la Dra. Carol Winkle, profesora de la Universidad de Aquinas. Puede ponerse en contacto con ella a winklcar@aquinas.edu con cualquier pregunta. Este estudio se llevará a cabo en la escuela y en casa durante los cuatro fines de semana. Estamos interesados en determinar si el envío a casa de varios libros auto-seleccionados por los estudiantes en el fin de semana aumentará el logro de lectura. Este proyecto puede ayudarnos a entender más acerca de cómo la lectura adicional en los fines de semana afecta el rendimiento de lectura de los estudiantes.

Se espera que el proyecto en el cual su hijo haya sido invitado a participar sea una experiencia agradable y requerirá tiempo de lectura adicional durante el fin de semana. Sin embargo, la decisión sobre la participación es suya. Para ayudarle en esta decisión, se proporciona una breve descripción del proyecto a continuación.

Los estudiantes recibirán 5 libros auto-seleccionados en su nivel de lectura independiente cada viernes en una bolsa de lectura llamada "Weekend Warriors Reading". Le pedimos, como padre o tutor, que anime y vigile la lectura de su hijo durante el fin de semana. Luego, el lunes por la mañana, por favor, haga que su hijo devuelva la bolsa de lectura del fin de semana y los libros a la escuela. Este proceso se repetirá durante cuatro semanas, permitiendo a los niños elegir libros nuevos cada viernes para llevarlos a casa para leer durante el fin de semana. El progreso será monitoreado usando un pretest antes del inicio del estudio y concluyendo con un posttest para medir el crecimiento de lectura.

Todas las actuaciones de los niños se consideran confidenciales y los resultados individuales de los niños no serán compartidos con el personal de la escuela. No se usarán los nombres de los estudiantes ni de los padres durante la investigación. Los nombres de los estudiantes serán reemplazados por: estudiante 1, 2, 3 y así sucesivamente. Los datos recogidos se guardarán en un gabinete seguro y cerrado con llave, que se encuentra en el aula de la investigadora y sólo la investigadora tiene acceso a ello. Los datos analizados se guardarán en una computadora con protección por contraseña. La investigadora mantendrá los datos hasta que la tesis esté completa y después de que la tesis haya sido presentada, ella desmenuzará todos los datos utilizados en este estudio.

Sólo participarán en el estudio los niños del segundo grado de Woodside, que tienen permiso de los padres, y que ellos mismos aceptan participar. La participación en este estudio es voluntaria. Los niños o los padres pueden retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento durante el estudio sin penalización. Sólo tiene que indicar su decisión de retirarse a la investigadora. No hay riesgos conocidos o previstos para participar en este estudio.

Si permite que su hijo participe en este proyecto, por favor complete el formulario de permiso adjunto. Si no le da permiso para que su hijo participe, y devuelva el formulario de permiso a la escuela por el (fecha).

Si usted tiene alguna pregunta sobre el estudio, o si desea información adicional para ayudarle a hacer una decisión, no dude en ponerse en contacto conmigo, Señora Jill Kuiper a kuiperj@westottawa.net. Gracias de antemano por su interés y apoyo de este proyecto.

Sinceramente,

Sra. Jill Kuiper
Maestra de Apoyo  
Escuela Primaria Woodside

**Formulario de Consentimiento - Niño**  
*(Acompaña la carta de información sobre el estudio)*

He leído la carta de información en relación con el proyecto de investigación titulado "Los Libros en el Hogar: Lectura de Fin de Semana Para los Estudiantes", realizado por la Señora Jill Kuiper, maestro de La Primaria de Woodside. He tenido la oportunidad de hacer preguntas y recibir cualquier detalle adicional que quisiera sobre el estudio.

Reconozco que toda la información recopilada en este proyecto se utilizará únicamente con fines de investigación y se considerará confidencial. Entiendo que puedo retirar mi permiso en cualquier momento sin penalización. Sólo tengo que avisarle a la investigadora.

Si tengo alguna pregunta sobre el estudio llamaré a la investigadora, la Señora Jill Kuiper al 786-1900, x3311, kuiperj@westottawa.net. Además, puede comunicarse con el Dr. Carol Winkle, Aquinas College asesora de la facultad de investigación a winklcar@aquinas.edu.

- Sí - Me gustaría que mi hijo participara en este estudio
- No - No quisiera que mi hijo participara en este estudio.

Nombre del Niño *(en letra de imprenta)*  
_____________________________________________________

Fecha de Nacimiento del Niño _________________________  
Sexo del Niño  ____ Masculino  ____  
Femenino

Nombre del padre o tutor  
_____________________________________________________

Firma del padre o tutor  
_______________________________  Fecha _______________
Appendix B

Making Orange Juice

What is the best part about eating an orange? There are many things to choose from. Your eye may notice the fruit's bright orange skin. Just the sight of an orange may be enough to make your mouth water! When you peel off the rough skin, the sweet smell tickles your nose. When you bite into the fruit, the juice wakes up your taste buds.

There is another way to enjoy the taste of an orange. You can make orange juice. Making orange juice is easy and fun, and you only need a few things. You need six oranges, and an adult to help cut them. You will also need a pitcher and some cups.

First, squeeze the oranges to get them soft. Then wash the oranges. Have the adult help you cut the oranges in half safely. Take out the seeds from each half. Now you are ready to squeeze out the juice. Grip half an orange and squeeze the juice into a pitcher. Turn the orange and squeeze again. Keep squeezing until no more juice comes out. Repeat with each orange half.

You have some choices when you make orange juice. If you like, you can scrape the orange with a spoon and add the fruit to the juice. Or if you do not like pulp, place a strainer over the pitcher. This will catch all the orange bits, and only juice will fall into the pitcher. If you want cold orange juice, add ice to the pitcher.

Now you are ready to pour the orange juice into a cup. You may want to share with a friend. Drink the juice and enjoy!
Circus Tickets

The sign said, "Get a free ticket to the circus." Jake showed the sign to his brother, Adam. The library wanted to encourage children to keep reading in the summer. Any student who read five books would be given a free ticket to the circus. The boys had never been to the circus. It was something they had always wanted to do. They showed the sign to their mother. She agreed to take them to the library to get books to read.

The brothers went to their local library for the first time. With help from their mother, they got library cards. Then they began looking for books. Jake did not know what to read. He searched the shelves and found a biography about a swimmer. Jake loved to swim. He glanced through the book and thought it was something he would enjoy reading. Adam was not sure what to read either, but he found a mystery that he thought would be good to read.

Back at home, the boys sat on the couch and started reading. It was quiet in the room. They thought they would be bored without TV, but they were wrong. They read for an hour until their mother called them to dinner.

Jake and Adam quickly finished their books. They went back to the library for more. In two weeks, they had read five books and earned their circus tickets. When the circus came to town, they proudly presented their tickets at the ticket booth. On the way in, a clown gave them a high five. It was going to be a great show!