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A Mixed-Methods Study of the Influence of Accelerated Reader on High School Students' Motivation to Read for Pleasure

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A Mixed-Methods Study of the Influence of Accelerated Reader on High School Students'
Motivation to Read for Pleasure

By
Cindy D. Hogston

A Dissertation Submitted to the
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Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Cindy D. Hogston under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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Abstract

A Mixed-Methods Study of the Influence of Accelerated Reader on High School Students' Motivation to Read for Pleasure. Cindy, Hogston D., 2016: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University, Accelerated Reader/Influence/Motivation/Pleasure Reading/ Foundations of Reading/Intrinsic/Extrinsic

The Accelerated Reader (AR) program is a computerized reading management system developed in the early 1990s by Judi and Terry Paul. The AR program was developed as an extrinsic motivational tool to encourage children to read. Judi developed comprehension quizzes to accompany popular children's books, while her husband created a computer program that would assign point values to each comprehension quiz. Students read a book, took the computerized comprehension quiz, and were awarded a certain number of points depending on the number of correct answers. During a national teacher conference, Judi Paul introduced her program to teachers. The demand for the AR program was overwhelming. Many districts purchased the program and began using it in classrooms. Today, the AR program is in over 75,000 classrooms. Teachers utilize the AR program as an extrinsic motivator to increase independent reading habits of students.

The study sought to determine (1) how students would describe the influence of AR on their current motivation to read for pleasure; (2) what, if any, discernable patterns and themes are evident in the self-reported perspectives of participants; and (3) are there variations within those patterns and themes based upon notable participant characteristics, including gender and years of participation in AR?

The results of this study indicated that the AR implementation practices of the sample district may have impacted students' motivation to read for pleasure in high school. The researcher was not able to determine the influence of AR on high school students' motivation to read for pleasure due to variables related to implementation of the program within the sample district.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Motivation is the engine that drives who we are and determines our actions, needs, and wants. It is that little thing inside each of us that urges us to complete tasks when we would otherwise choose to quit. Motivation directs choices and provides the proverbial energy needed to sustain a task to completion (Ormrod, 2008). "Motivation deals with the *whys* of behavior" (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997, p. 14). According to Malloy, Marinak and Gambrell (2010), "motivation refers to the likelihood of choosing one activity over another, as well as the persistence and effort exerted when participating in the chosen activity" (p. 2).

Motivation is a central component of student educational experiences (Center for Educational Policy, 2014). It has been determined that when students are motivated, they are equally engaged (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). "Well-motivated students seek challenges, take risks, and make use of knowledge" (Malloy et al., 2010, p. 1). Whether socially, cognitively, emotionally, or behaviorally, all students are motivated in some way to successfully complete an undertaking (Ormrod, 2008). In fact, the Center for Education Policy (2014) at George Washington University found that

> motivation can affect how students approach school in general, how they relate to
> teachers, how much time and effort they devote to their studies, how much
> support they seek when they're struggling, how they perform on tests, as well as
> many other aspects of education. (p. 2)

Malloy et al. (2010) referred to motivation as that "which moves our students to participate fully in our instruction, to sustain effort and use strategies, even when the work is challenging" (p. 1). However, when students are not motivated, it is difficult, if not almost impossible, to improve their achievement (Center for Education Policy, 2104).

In a recent survey, teachers and administrators stated they believed only four of 10 students in their schools were highly engaged and motivated (Education Week Research Center, 2014). Two decades of reading research led Edmunds and Bauserman (2006) to ascertain that many teachers consider the lack of student motivation as a root of many other classroom problems. In fact, many other researchers have concluded that motivation plays a vital role in student learning (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006).

Motivation is important in all aspects of a student's educational experience, but one area that has received a great deal of attention over the past decade is student motivation to read for pleasure. Although young adolescent students have learned to read, have a large repertoire of vocabulary knowledge, and possess the ability to comprehend text, 45% of 17-year olds reported having read no more than two books for pleasure in a year (Common Sense Media, 2014). Research by Guthrie, Wigfield, and You (2012) has proven that students who are positively motivated to read will also become engaged in reading. Marinak and Gambrell (2010) agreed that motivation is an important component in developing student literacy knowledge.

Studies have also highlighted the link between a student's reading for pleasure and improved reading achievement. In fact, Krashen (2004) found that voluntary reading improves student reading comprehension and vocabulary attainment resulting in improved scores on standardized tests. According to the 2011 report released by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), research suggested a strong correlation between reading practices, motivation, and proficiency (p. 1). Marinak and Gambrill (2010), although recognizing the importance of phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension, believed that without intrinsic motivation to read, students may never reach their full potential.

The issue with student lack of motivation for reading and reading achievement is not a new one. In 1983, our nation received sobering news pertaining to reading achievement when President Regan shared *A Nation at Risk.* This document shed light on the lack of literacy attainment by our nation's youth and sparked a fury of debate, initiatives, and programs all focused on improving literacy skills in America. In response to *A Nation at Risk*, The United Nations pledged that by 2015 all of the world's children would complete elementary school by being able to read (Lewis & Ellis, 2006, p. 1).

Statement of the Problem

More than 3 decades have passed since *A Nation at Risk* was shared with the American people. The report sparked the nation's desire to improve our nation's education with an emphasis on literacy attainment. New standards were developed, new curricula was written, and even computerized reading management programs such as Accelerated Reader (AR) were introduced as solutions to improve the problem. Nevertheless, in 2016, our nation is still faced with a literacy crisis.

According to Reardon, Valentino, and Shores (2012), "Literacy is a prerequisite not only for individual educational success but for upward mobility both socially and economically" (p. 18). However, 60% of all fourth graders still struggle with literacy. Strommen and Mates (2004) made the point that although learning to read is valued by many cultures and is regarded as the most fundamental goal of education, many students leave school unable to read beyond a basic reading level. Ippolito, Steele, and Samson (2012) suggested that too many students are leaving our nation's high schools without the necessary literacy skills to be successful in society (p. 2). Goldman (2012) found that our nation's educational system is graduating students who are not adequately prepared for the literacy requirements of the 21st century. According to Goldman, our students today

must be able to problem solve, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate text. However, the National Assessment of Educational Process (NAEP) released data stating that by the end of the fourth grade, one third of America's students have not achieved mastery of basic literacy skills (Goldman, 2012, p. 90).

Upon entering school for the first time, children have an excitement about learning and display motivation for learning (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006). However, student motivation begins to decline as students proceed through elementary school (Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Student awareness of their academic performance seems to parallel their motivation (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). If this is true, perhaps the problem may not be the deficiency of reading instruction, but rather a lack of student motivation to read.

Motivating adolescents to read has been an ongoing concern for many years (Irvin, Meltzer, & Dukes, 2007). "This disconnect between adolescents and their interest in reading is problematic as research suggests that adolescents are at a crucial time of significant brain development as well as a time when their literacy skills need to be honed" (Intrator & Kunzman, 2009, p. 18). Cambria and Guthrie (2010) asserted that ignoring the power of motivation to read is neglecting the most important part of reading and believed that a student's will to read is the greatest determination of how well a student reads, the desire they have to read, and the skills they gain from reading. According to Cremin, Mottram, Collins, Powell, and Safford (2014), engaged readers display a positive attitude toward reading and are motivated to continue to read not because it is required but because they are keenly interested in reading. Likewise, "engaged readers tend to be focused on finding, making, and thinking about meaning" (Cremin et al., 2014, p. 6). According to Alvermann and Guthrie (1993), "highly

engaged, self-determined readers are architects of their own learning" (p. 2).

Sadly, research suggests that reading for pleasure is a dying pastime among adolescent youth. A survey conducted by the Scholastic company of 2,558 parents and children discovered that many of today's children are not choosing independent reading as a pastime activity (Scholastic, 2015). In fact, the study found that only 51% of today's children report they enjoy reading as a pastime; representing a marked decrease of 7% in just 2 years and a 9% decrease over the past 4 years (Scholastic, 2015). In a similar study, Sullivan, Nichols, Bradshaw, and Rogowski (2007), with the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), found that teens and young adults read less often and for shorter amounts of time than did American teens of the past. The NEA report also indicated that less than one third of 13-year olds read daily (Sullivan et al., 2007). OECD (2011) stated that 15-year-old students were found to be much less enthusiastic about reading for pleasure than were 15-year-old students in 2000 (p. 2).

As earlier stated, motivation is a key component of reading proficiency. In 2006, the Alliance for Excellent Education released a Policy Brief entitled *Why the Crisis in Adolescent Literacy Demands a National Response* that stated millions of our nation's middle and high school students were graduating from high school lacking many of the necessary literacy skills (reading and writing) to succeed in college and/or the workforce (Christianbury, Bomer, & Smogorinski, 2009, p. 48). The report suggested that students in both middle school and high school did not possess the necessary skills to comprehend simple newspaper articles (Christianbury et al., 2009, p. 48). The National Assessment Governing Board released results of the 2013 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) report, stating,

Thirty-eight percent of students performed at or above *Proficient* in reading in

2013, which was lower than the 40 percent in 1992. At the same time, the proportion of students scoring below basic increased from 20 percent in 1992 to 25 percent in 2013, remaining essentially flat from 1994. (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013, para. 9)

Although 3 decades have passed since the release of *A Nation at Risk*, it appears that our nation is still a nation at risk. New curricula, new instructional approaches, increased technology, and an intense focus on literacy have done little to change the reading habits of teens. The words "I hate to read" are uttered daily by students throughout our nation. In the late 1980s Judith Paul, a certified teacher and stay-at-home mother, may have heard these same words from her own children. Trained in pedagogy, Judi Paul knew the importance of good literacy skills. Recognizing that her children were not choosing to read for pleasure, she feared they too would grow up with less than adequate reading skills. With the help of her tech-savvy husband Terry, Paul developed a computerized reading management program in the hopes of encouraging her own children to read more. They created a paper/pencil system containing 100 books with corresponding multiple-choice tests and a corresponding point system for each book.

Judi and Terry Paul introduced this new concept to their children and soon realized that their children's independent reading increased. Judi Paul concluded that her children were extrinsically motivated by the point system, thus increasing the number of books they read independently (Renaissance Learning, 2010). Judi and Terry Paul had successfully created a way to motivate their own children to read for pleasure.

In 1992, Judi and Terry Paul began conducting research focused on creating best literacy practices as related to AR (formally called Reading Renaissance) implementation (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). They continued their efforts to develop their

computerized reading management program; and in 1996, Reading Renaissance was introduced to educators through professional development seminars at national and state conferences (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). AR rapidly became the most widely used reading management system in the country. Since its unveiling in 1996, AR, or "today's answer to high-tech book report" (Everhart, 1996, p. 53), has been used nationwide in over 75,000 school districts to motivate students to read for pleasure, increase literacy development, and increase overall exposure to books (Renaissance Learning, 2008).

"I hate to read" remains common among elementary students (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006, p. 414). According to Edmunds and Bauserman (2006), "research over the past 20 years demonstrates that students' motivation is a primary concern of many teachers" (p. 414). Newspaper articles, educational journals, and news reports share that today's students are not motivated to read; they do not like reading for pleasure; and they actually prefer to participate in any activity other than reading (Beers, 1996). Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) suggested that as children get older, their motivation to read declines (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006). Edmunds and Bauserman emphasized that students are not engaging in reading for pleasure because of a lack of motivation and self-efficacy. Strommen and Mates (2004) contended that few adolescents choose to read on their own, because "when students judge reading and literacy activities to be unrewarding, too difficult, or not worth the effort, because they are peripheral to their interests and needs, become nonreaders" (p. 193). Alvermann (2003) described this phenomenon as "alliterate adolescents" (p. 379). Kamil, Mosenthal, Pearson, and Barr (2000) found the unmotivated reader spent less time reading, exerted lower cognitive effort, and was less dedicated to full comprehension than a more highly motivated reader.

Through informal conversations with a number of high school students, the researcher asked students about their reading choices. A majority of respondents reported they did not like to read and referred to reading as something they hated to do. Many stated that they "got burned out on reading in elementary school." Others reported that they did not have time to read. A large number of the students described reading as "boring." Respondent answers sparked the researcher's interest in the causes associated with the students' negative feelings toward reading and students' lack of motivation to read.

An informal conversation with four high school English teachers further led the researcher to question the role of motivation in students reading for pleasure. When asked about the reading choices of each teacher's students, the teachers unanimously stated that very few students seemed to enjoy reading. When asked how many students read for pleasure and enjoyment, all four teachers estimated that no more than 5% of their total student enrollment read for pleasure. The teachers shared that a majority of students read only what was required and few were motivated to read for pleasure.

Background for the Study

As a teacher and mother, the value of AR in motivating students to read was often a question of the researcher. Each of the researcher's three sons participated in the program in elementary school and middle school. By middle school, however, each child seemed unmotivated to read for pleasure. The researchers' oldest son shared that he believed his participation in AR made him actually dislike reading until he entered high school. He shared that high school was the first time since kindergarten that he was allowed to read "outside of the Accelerated Reader box." He reported that he actually began to enjoy reading again because he was allowed to read books that interested him

instead of books that would yield him the greatest number of points, regardless of topic.

The topic of AR came up during an informal conversation with high school youth. Each shared personal frustrations and unique stories pertaining to AR. Overwhelmingly, they concluded that prolonged AR participation resulted in their lack of motivation to read in high school.

While reflecting on the informal conversations with high school students regarding their lack of reading for enjoyment, the same words continued to reappear. Motivation, points, rewards, limited choices, competitions, and AR were common words mentioned by students. Many students spoke of AR in a negative connotation, while others were neutral in their perceptions of the program. The researcher began to question the influence of AR on high school students' motivation to read for pleasure. According to Renaissance Learning (2015a), a goal of AR is to motivate students to build a lifelong love of reading. Perhaps having participated in AR in elementary and middle school influenced and motivated students to continue to read for pleasure, but is it possible that the inverse could be true? Perhaps prolonged AR participation did not lend itself to developing lifelong readers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to assess high school student beliefs on the influence of their experiences with AR during elementary and middle school on their motivation to read for pleasure during high school. Through informal conversations with high school students in Grades 9-12, the researcher was able to determine that a majority of today's teens were not motivated to read for pleasure. Many reported they only read what was required; and if *Spark Notes* or *Cliff's Notes* were available, they used those rather than reading the required text. Unanimously, each student referenced their

elementary and middle grades reading requirements as a significant reason they did not enjoy pleasure reading. Each made reference to a computerized reading management program (AR), levels, points, rewards, and competitions as reasons they chose not to read as young adults. Many expressed that they had become "burned out on reading" and had not picked up a book for enjoyment since entering high school. The conversations led the researcher to question how AR influenced students' overall perceptions of reading, students' motivations to read, and students' self-efficacy as it related to reading.

Research Questions

To assess the influence of AR on high school students' motivation to read for pleasure, the following research questions were examined.

1. How do high school students describe the influence of their experiences with AR on their current motivation to read for pleasure?

2. What, if any, discernable patterns and themes are evident in the self-reported perspectives of participants?

3. Are there variations within those patterns and themes based upon notable participant characteristics, including gender and years of participation in AR?

Research Design

The research for the study was conducted in two phases. Phase one consisted of a survey provided to students in Grades 9 through 12 who were enrolled in a first-semester English class at three of the four high schools in the selected school district. The results of the survey were used to implement phase two of the research study, which consisted of qualitative interviews between survey participants and the researcher. Data from each interview were used to amass participant views and to answer the research questions.

Survey data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel and Atlas ti and displayed using

tabular format. The researcher used narrative analysis to transcribe audio recordings from participant interviews and open-ended survey comments. Results from data analysis and interview transcriptions were used to answer the research questions and identify themes and/or relationships between participant responses.

Definition of Key Terms

Accelerated Reader (AR). A computerized reading program designed to motivate students to read large quantities of books (Renaissance Learning, 2015b).

Chall's stages of reading. Chall's (1996) stages of reading development; the theory that explained the stages of reading through childhood and adolescence.

Extrinsic motivation. The tendency to perform activities for known external rewards, whether tangible (e.g., money) or psychological (e.g., praise) in nature. (Brown, 2007).

High school grades. Grades 9-12.

Intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation occurs when we act without any obvious external rewards. We simply enjoy an activity or see it as an opportunity to explore, learn, and actualize our potentials (Coon & Mitterer, 2010).

Motivation. The beliefs, values, needs, and goals that individuals possess (Pitcher et al., 2007).

Reading. (1) The action or skill of reading written or printed matter silently or aloud (Wikipedia); and (2) the use of product and principles of the writing system to get at the meaning of the written text (Rueda, 2011).

STAR reading. Standardized, computer-adaptive assessments created by Renaissance Learning for use in K-12 education (Wikipedia, n.d.b).

Zone of proximal development (ZPD). The belief that practice considered too

easy does not improve skills and practice considered too difficult frustrates the learner (Vygotsky, 1978).

Delimitations of the Study

The researcher acknowledged delimitations of the study. The population for the study was limited to a single school district and included high school students from three of the four high schools within the district. The sample population was also limited to only participants enrolled in a first-semester English course. The researcher acknowledges the following delimitations to the study.

1. Hours of operation for each selected research site.

2. Teacher willingness to allow time for students to complete the survey.

3. Survey participation by selected students.

4. Number of survey participants who volunteered for a follow-up interview.

Assumptions

The researcher acknowledges assumptions made in the study. One assumption was that all teachers would administer the surveys with fidelity. Another assumption was that all students at each research site had participated in AR while in elementary and middle school.

Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation study is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 presents an introduction to the study outlining research defining motivation and highlighting the decline in adolescents' motivation to read for pleasure. Chapter 2 provides a literature review of the current literature corresponding to the nation's current literacy data, motivation, significant research studies related to AR, and self-efficacy for reading. The methodology for the study is discussed in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 provides the data, findings,

results, and an analysis of the study. A complete summary of the research study and

recommendations for consideration are presented in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In 1983, President Reagan shocked our nation when he delivered *A Nation at Risk.* According to Birman (2013), contributor for The American Institute of Research, *A Nation at Risk* provided a tone of urgency to the nation that the educational system was failing its students and putting the nation at risk. This report ignited a firestorm of changes within America's educational system. Literacy attainment for all children was one of the areas that received considerable attention. As a result of *A Nation at Risk*, literacy attainment and reading instruction became widely discussed topics among educators.

Literacy

"Literacy is the cornerstone of our freedom" (Ippolito et al., 2012, p. 1). According to Christenbury et al. (2009), literacy means "having knowledge or competence" (p. 5). Twenty-first century literacy instruction cannot simply lead to students who can call words. Rather, literacy instruction should equip students with the knowledge to comprehend, solve problems, and make thoughtful decisions based on understanding of written text. Vacca, Vacca, and Mraz (2011) referred to literacy as "a dynamic concept that is continually evolving and can fluctuate from one social culture to another" (p. 7). "Literacy has now come to represent a synthesis of language, thinking, and contextual practices through which people come to make meaning" (Vacca et al. 2011, p. 7).

Goldman (2012) stated that learning to read and reading to learn are not the same things. Goldman emphasized that "effective readers must be able to apply different knowledge, reading, and reasoning processes to different types of content" (p. 89). Reardon et al. (2012) stated, "literacy is a pre-requisite for not only individual

educational success but for upward mobility both socially and economically" (p. 18).

Reardon et al. made the point that literacy is the culmination of many skills that must be

taught early and consistently. Reardon et al. cited the Early Childhood Longitudinal

Study, Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K) "as the best source of nationally representative

data on how children in the United States develop literacy skills in elementary and middle

school" (p. 19). In this study, 25,000 kindergarten students were assessed during the

1998-1999 school year. The same students were assessed six more times over the next 8

years. The final assessment was completed in 2007 during the students' eighth-grade

year. This longitudinal study provided evidence that early literacy instruction is

necessary for the acquisition of literacy skills. Results from the study found,

1. "Most children learn word-reading skills during the first two years of school"
   (Reardon et al., 2012, p. 20).

2. "A majority of children enter Kindergarten with basic letter recognition skills"
   (Reardon et al., 2012, p. 20).

3. "Of the students entering Kindergarten with basic letter recognition sounds,
   only 33 percent can identify the beginning sounds of words and only 20
   percent are able to identify the ending sounds" (Reardon et al., 2012, p. 20).

4. "By spring of first grade, 90% of the students were able to identify both
   beginning and ending sounds and 75% are able to read basic sight words"
   (Reardon et al., 2012, p. 20).

5. "By third grade, virtually all students can sound out words and recognized
   simple words in context" (Reardon et al., 2012, p. 20).

This study provided evidence that literacy attainment is a "prerequisite not only for

individual educational success but for upward mobility both socially and economically"

(Reardon et al., 2012, p. 20).

After careful consideration of 100,000 reading research studies, the National Reading Panel (n.d.) concluded that effective reading instruction must include the following: (1) instruction in phonemic awareness; (2) a system of phonics instruction; (3) instruction and methods for improving fluency; and (4) methods to enhance comprehension. The National Reading Panel provided a framework for literacy instruction known as the *Five Domains of Literacy*. The panel emphasized that the five domains of literacy must be included in instructional practices to provide the foundation students need to become successful readers. The foundational framework included

1. **Phonemic awareness**—the knowledge that spoken words can be broken apart into smaller segments of sound known as phonemes. Children who are read to at home—especially material that rhymes—often develop the basis of phonemic awareness. Children who are not read to will probably need to be taught that words can be broken apart into smaller sounds.

2. **Phonics**—the knowledge that letters of the alphabet represent phonemes and that these sounds are blended together to form written words. Readers who are skilled in phonics can sound out words they have not seen before without first having to memorize them.

3. **Fluency**—the ability to recognize words easily; read with greater speed, accuracy, and expression; and to better understand what is read. Children gain fluency by practicing reading until the process becomes automatic; guided oral repeated reading is one approach to helping children become fluent readers.

4. **Guided oral reading**—reading out loud while getting guidance and feedback

from skilled readers. The combination of practice and feedback promotes reading fluency.

5. **Teaching vocabulary words**—teaching new words, either as they appear in text, or by introducing new words separately. This type of instruction also aids reading ability.

6. **Reading comprehension strategies**—techniques for helping individuals to understand what they read. Such techniques involve having students summarize what they have read to gain a better understanding of the material.

However, learning to call words and connect words for meaning is only one part of reading. A child may be instructed in the five components of literature, possess all of the necessary reading skills, be able to call all of the words and construct meaning, yet still not be a proficient reader. The reason lies within the child's motivation to read.

Reading Defined

The Wikipedia (n.d.a) definition of reading is, "the action or skill of reading written or printed matter silently or aloud." However, a child does not pick up a book and begin calling words. Instead, reading is a multi-step process that will lead to a literate adult (Clark & Rumbold, 2006). Becoming a reader can be "conceptualized as a series of qualitatively different stages through which learners progress as they become increasing proficient with print" (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003, p. 3). Kuhn and Stahl (2003) stated that reading involves a shift from calling words one at a time to a "rapid, accurate, and expressive rendering of text" (p. 3). Reading involves the understanding of each component of words and how the letters in the words collectively go together to form meaning (Mesmer & Griffith, 2006).

Although there have been many stages of reading proposed by researchers, Jeanne

Chall's research lends itself to a broad understanding of how children progress from nonreader to reader. In 1967, Chall began to describe her idea of reading and her research became known as *Chall's 6 Stages of Reading.*

Chall's (1996) stages begin with stage 0 which is called the *Prereading* stage. Beginning at birth, Stage 0 continues through age 6. This stage is characterized by knowledge of the spoken language, a growth of overall knowledge of language, and the structure of words and vocabulary. Much of the knowledge at this stage is learned through rhymes, short songs, and verses. Children study what letters are, realize the association of sounds and letters, and begin to make sense of simple sentence and print structures. Prereading includes pretend reading and writing. Children learn the correct way to hold a book, grasp the idea that reading occurs left to right, and may begin to recognize and point to letters and simple words when being read to. This stage is the most important in a child's overall growth in learning to read.

The second stage (Stage 1) of reading described by Chall (1996) is called *Initial Reading*. Stage 1 reading is most often associated with students who are 6 to 7 years of age and in the first and second grade. This stage is marked with an understanding between letters and their corresponding sounds. Children begin to realize that words may be sounded out by matching a letter with its sound. Commonly found in this stage is the learning of phonological recoding skills. During this stage, students begin to form letters into sounds, thus blending sounds together to form words. Students begin to read simple text and construct simple meaning from what is read.

Stage 2, called *Confirmation Fluency, Ungluing from Print,* begins at the end of second grade and continues through third grade and is associated with students who are 7 to 8 years of age. This stage is characterized by fluent reading requiring students to

identify words and read familiar text (Chall, 1996).

Chall (1996) described Stage 3 reading as *Reading for Learning the New.* Beginning at age 8 and continuing through age 14, this stage of reading is associated with "reading to learn" (Chall, 1996). It is characterized by reading to learn new information from print, thus using reading as a tool to acquire new knowledge (Hall & Moats, 1999). Likewise, students in Stage 3 use prior knowledge while learning new knowledge.

Chall (1996) described Stage 4 reading as *Multiple Viewpoints*. This stage encompasses students from ages 14 to 18. During this stage of reading, students begin to read critically and more deeply. Students are asked to critique literature from various viewpoints and make decisions based on prior knowledge and understanding of topics. Political and historical topics are often associated with Stage 4 reading.

Chall's (1996) last stage (Stage 5) of reading is called *Construction and Reconstruction*. This stage begins at age 18 and continues throughout one's life. Abstract reading, reading from various viewpoints, analyzing various works of literature, and constructing meaning from one's own prior knowledge are characteristics of this stage of reading.

A child's reading for pleasure and enjoyment are most often associated with the first three stages of *Chall's Stages of Reading*. Data suggest that as children move from elementary age into adolescence, their desire to read for pleasure and enjoyment begins to decline. The sharp decline in adolescent students' desires and motivations to read for pleasure has been associated with a decline in overall reading comprehension skills (Logan, Medford, & Hughes, 2015). Logan et al. (2015) made a positive correlation between the role of motivation and a child's level of comprehension. Their research proposed that motivation is the energizer for reading and leads to an increase in cognitive

understanding, improved performance, growth of reading skills, and overall improvement in comprehension (Logan et al., 2015).

Pleasure Reading

Pleasure reading, otherwise known as leisure reading, recreational reading, free voluntary reading, and independent reading, plays an important role in students' overall acquisition of comprehension skills (International Reading Association, 2014). Pleasure reading may take place anytime and occur in or out of the classroom. Pleasure reading encompasses all genres including fiction novels and narratives, e-books, picture books, magazines, blogs, social media, and nonfiction informational text (International Reading Association, 2014). According to Krashen and McQuillan (1993), "there is strong evidence that free voluntary reading is effective in developing literacy. Those that read more read better, write better, spell better, and develop better grammatical competence and larger vocabularies" (p. 410). Research also supports the need for students to spend time reading for pleasure. Cox and Guthrie (2001) found that independent reading (reading for pleasure) enriches reading comprehension skills. Krashen (2004) believed that reading for pleasure is a major component in student reading competence, vocabulary, and grammatical conventions. Studies have shown that students who are allowed time to read for pleasure show considerable gains in the area of reading comprehension (Krashen, 2006). In fact, research by Krashen (2010) asserted that

> The evidence is overwhelming that reading for pleasure–that is self-selected recreational reading–is the major sources of our ability to read, to write with an acceptable writing style, to develop vocabulary and spelling abilities, and to handle complex grammatical constructions. (p. 24)

Motivation for Reading

Motivating adolescents to read has been an ongoing concern for many years (Irvin et al., 2007). According to Gottfried, Fleming, and Gottfried (2001), adolescent literacy practices are in need of attention because this group reads less than other age groups and is less motived than younger age groups. "This disconnect between adolescents and their interest in reading is problematic as research suggests that adolescents are at a crucial time of significant brain development as well as a time when their literacy skills need to be honed" (Intrator & Kunzman, 2009, p. 18). In fact, Ivey and Broaddus (2001) contended that many secondary students have little to no interest in or motivation for reading. Cambria and Guthrie (2010) asserted that ignoring the power of motivation to read is neglecting the most important part of reading. According to Cambria and Guthrie, a student's will to read is the greatest determination of how well a student reads, the desire they have to read, and the skills they gain from reading. Research related to motivation, self-efficacy, and reading for pleasure suggests that each is as important in the reading process as the act of reading itself (Clark & Rumbold, 2006).

Gambrell (1996) affirmed that motivation is as important to reading acquisition as are the five components of reading. Research by Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, and Perencevich (2004) suggested that "even the reader with the strongest cognitive skills may not spend much time reading if he or she is not motivated to read" (p. 299). Although the five components of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension) are the foundations of literacy, without the motivation to read, many students will not reach their full reading potential (Gambrell, 1996).

Research also indicated that many students are not obtaining the necessary literacy skills due to a lack of self-efficacy and motivation to read. Marinak and

Gambrell (2010) stressed that without the motivation to read, "students may never reach their full potential as literacy learners" (p. 129). Guthrie (2000) stated that "highly motivated readers are those who generate their own literacy learning opportunities, and in doing so, they begin to determine their own destiny as literacy learners" (p. 341). According to Guthrie (2001), readers who are engaged in text want to understand; they enjoy the act of learning; and they believe in their own reading abilities.

Reading for pleasure should not be viewed as a hobby or past time. In fact, reading for pleasure is extremely important to acquisition of knowledge. Krashen (1993), writing about the need for children to read for pleasure, declared,

> When children read for pleasure, when they get "hooked on books", they acquire, involuntarily and without conscious effort, nearly all of the so-called "language skills" many people are so concerned about: they will become adequate readers, acquire a large vocabulary, develop the ability to understand and use complex grammatical constructions, develop a good writing style, and become good (but not necessarily perfect) spellers. Although free voluntary reading alone will not ensure attainment of the highest levels of literacy, it will at least ensure an acceptable level. Without it, I suspect that children simply do not have a chance. (p. 85)

Clark and Rumbold (2006) defined reading for pleasure as, "reading that we do of our own free will anticipating the satisfaction that we will get from the act of reading" (p. 6). Nell (1988) described reading for pleasure as that which allows readers the opportunity to explore other worlds and use their imagination. Clark and Rumbold stated, "studies are accumulating that emphasize the importance of reading for pleasure for both educational as well as personal development" (p. 9). Strommen and Mates (2004) contended that few

adolescents choose to read on their own; and "when students judge reading and literacy activities to be unrewarding, too difficult, or not worth the effort because they are peripheral to their interests and needs, become nonreaders" (p. 193). Paris and Oka (1986) contended that students will not develop into effective readers unless they have both the skills and the will to read. Kamil et al. (2000) found that the unmotivated reader spends less time reading, exerts lower cognitive effort, and is less dedicated to full comprehension than a more highly motivated reader. OECD (2002) avowed that reading enjoyment is more important for a child's educational success than their family's socioeconomic status. Research conducted by Rane-Szostak and Herth (1995) suggested that when individuals frequently read for pleasure, "they experience the value of reading as efferent and aesthetic processes. Thus, they are more likely to read with a sense of purpose, which further supports their developing reading habit" (Sanacore, 2002, p. 68).

Recent studies have proven that children who have a positive attitude toward reading often score higher on standardized tests than children who do not find joy in reading for pleasure (Clark & DeZoya, 2011). Research by Clark and Rumbold (2006) produced data that suggested students who are not motivated to read and who rarely read are 90% less likely to score at or above their expected level in reading.

Motivation and Engagement in Reading

Phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension are the foundational principles of literacy instruction and play a crucial role in a child becoming a successful reader. However, research indicates that without the motivation to read, "students may never reach their full potential as literacy learners" (Marinak & Gambrell, 2010, p. 129). According to Tilley (2009), reading motivation is complex and is often used to define a person's reading goals and beliefs. Guthrie and Wigfield's (1997)

research discovered that there are three dimensions of reading motivation: (1) competence and efficacy beliefs, (2) goals for reading, and (3) social purposes for reading. Guthrie and Wigfield (1997) defined motivation as "beliefs, values, needs and goals that individuals have" (p. 5). Ryan and Deci (2000) stated, "to be motivated means to be moved to do something" (p. 54). Research studies by Brozo and Sutton (2008) suggested a positive correlation between motivation and engagement in reading. Citing research by Guthrie and Humenick (2004), Brozo and Sutton emphasized "engaged thinkers and readers are better students" (p. 172). Research over the past 2 decades has concluded that student lack of motivation is the root cause of many of their reading struggles (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006). According to Oldfather (1993), motivation can make the difference between temporary and permanent cognitive learning. Wigfield et al. (2004) suggested that "motivation is crucial to reading engagement" and that "even the reader with the strongest cognitive skills may not spend much time reading if he or she is not motivated to read" (p. 299). Studies have linked reading motivation to producing lifelong readers (Morrow, 1992; Wang & Guthrie, 2004). Guthrie, Wigfield et al. (2006) avowed that reading motivation plays an extremely crucial role in student reading achievement and success in school. Motivation to read is complex in its construct and has overarching influence over student reading engagement (Pitcher et al., 2007).

Through a series of student interviews conducted to determine the effect of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, Cambria and Guthrie (2010) proposed three key components of reading motivation–interest, dedication, and confidence. The researchers concluded that "an interested student reads because he enjoys it; a dedicated student reads because he believes it is important, and a confident student reads because he can do it"

(Cambria & Guthrie, 2010, p. 16). Guthrie, Hoa, Wigfield, Tonks, and Perencevich (2006) claimed, "reading motivation is substantially correlated with important cognitive outcomes such as reading achievement and the amount of reading" (p. 91). Through a pretest/posttest design, the researchers determined the correlation between motivation and engagement and increased reading comprehension skills (Guthrie, Hoa et al., 2006, p. 403).

Engaged readers are also motivated readers who share enthusiasm for and an interest in the act of reading (Guthrie, Alao, & Rinehart, 1997). Guthrie et al. (1997) stated, "engaged readers have deep-seated motivational goals, which include being committed to the subject matter, wanting to learn in context, believing in one's own ability, and wanting to share understandings from learning" (p. 439). Likewise, an engaged reader not only chooses to read for a variety of purposes, he or she is, "self-determining in that they elect a wide range of literacy activities for aesthetic enjoyment, gaining knowledge, and interacting with friends" (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991, p. 3).

Research has proven that students who are motivated and read frequently show improved cognitive growth in sight word recognition, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Morgan & Fuchs, 2007). Morgan and Fuchs's (2007) research study sought to determine the relationship between the acquisition of reading skills and motivation (p. 167). Through a review of 15 relevant studies and the examination of several scholarly books, Morgan and Fuchs were able to conclude that a significant correlation between "children's reading skills and their concurrent motivation" exists (p. 169). Guthrie (2004) suggested engaged readers were more likely to be involved in out-of-school activities and social networks.

It is often believed that low socioeconomic backgrounds produce unmotivated and unengaged readers. Guthrie (2001) found this to be a myth. He maintained that motivated and engaged readers can "overcome traditional barriers to reading achievement, including gender, parental education, and income" (p. 5). Guthrie and Wigfield (1997) affirmed, "when children internalize a variety of personal goals for literacy activity, such as involvement, curiosity, social interchange, emotional satisfaction, and self-efficacy, they become self-determining" (p. 433). Motivated readers are curious readers, reading to answer questions posed through intrinsic curiosity. However, the motivated reader may become a disengaged reader when reading is linked to compliance (Guthrie, 1996). Compliance is often linked to requirements that are teacher-directed, assignment-driven, or program-driven (Guthrie, 1996). Compliance is associated with extrinsic motivation and produces temporary satisfaction in the form of rewards, recognition, grades, or competition (Deci et al., 1991).

As previously mentioned, there are two forms of motivation–intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is often described as a person's inner drive to succeed regardless of rewards. Smith (2014) described motivation that comes from within as intrinsic motivation and alleged it is the strongest type of motivation. Extrinsic motivation is motivation driven by external stimuli. Students who are extrinsically motivated are said to complete tasks not for the internal satisfaction, but rather for some end-of-task reward. Deci et al. (1991) explained that extrinsic motivation is that which is controlled by external factors and rewards.

Intrinsic Motivation

"Moved to be moved to do something" is the definition researchers Ryan and Deci (1985) provided for motivation (p. 54). Intrinsic motivation is the act of completing

tasks for internal satisfaction as a result of internal goals one has set for one's self (Coon & Mitterer, 2010). Deci and Ryan (1985) illustrated intrinsic motivation as being engaged in a task because one enjoys the task itself, not for external rewards. According to Deci, Ryan, and Williams (1996), "intrinsic motivation encompasses exploration, spontaneity, and interest . . . and is readily evident in curiosity, mastery strivings, and assimilation" (p. 167). Simply put, students, who are intrinsically motivated to read, read simply for the pleasure and enjoyment of reading, not for a prize or reward.

White's (1959) research suggested that animal behavioral studies are the precursor to an understanding of intrinsic motivation. In the animal behavioral studies, animals were observed engaging in activities for the curiosity and enjoyment of the activity, not because rewards were provided. Opponents of the belief that intrinsic motivation is absence of rewards cite Skinner's (1953) Operant Theory as the basis for their belief; however, proponents of intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy theories do not disagree. They conclude that the person's internal reward is the satisfaction of completing the task. Researchers have labeled the five components of intrinsic motivation as curiosity, challenge, control, cooperation, and recognition. Likewise, they have listed the four constructs of intrinsic motivation as self-determination, self-perceived competence, relatedness, and perceived salience (Watts, Cashwell, & Schweiger, 2004).

Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination is the first construct of intrinsic motivation. Deci and Ryan (1985), the researchers behind self-determination theory, described it as one's internal desire to "grow and gain fulfillment" (p. 6). Self-determination theory suggests that individuals have a need to feel competent, connected, and autonomous in order to be

intrinsically motivated (Watts et al., 2004). Research findings by Deci and Ryan (1985) indicated that when these three components are present, individuals become determined and motivated to complete tasks. According to Deci and Ryan (2002),

> Self-determination begins by embracing the assumption that all individuals have natural, innate, and constructive tendencies to develop an ever more elaborated and unified sense of self. That is, we assume people have a primary propensity to forge interconnections among aspects of their own psyches as well as with other individuals and groups in their social worlds. (p. 182)

Deci et al. (1991) further explained self-determination theory as motivation that is intentional and controlled by choice.

Research by Vallerand (1997) proposed three distinct types of intrinsic motivation–intrinsic motivation to know, intrinsic motivation to accomplish, and intrinsic motivation to experience (Areepattamannil, Freeman, & Klinger, 2010). Research suggests that *intrinsic motivation to know* is the desire one has to perform and complete an activity (Areepattamannil et al., 2010)*. Intrinsic motivation to accomplish* relates to the "pleasure and satisfaction that one receives from accomplishing or creating new things" (Areepattamannil et al., 2010 p. 429*). Intrinsic motivation to experience* refers to the pleasure one receives from experiencing something new, resulting in new knowledge or skills (Areepattamannil et al., 2010). Intrinsic motivation is that inner motivation that one possesses that inspires him or her to complete a task for the pleasure of completion.

Extrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivation "refers to a broad array of behaviors having in common the fact that activities are engaged in not for reasons inherent in them, but for instrumental reasons" (Vallerand & Ratelle, 2002, p. 42). Research by Ryan and Deci (2000)

suggested that students were not intrinsically motivated to complete an activity just for the enjoyment of completing the activity; rather, they completed it only to receive a stated reward or prize upon completion (Areepattamannil et al., 2010). Research by Ryan and Deci (1985) concluded that there are four types of extrinsic motivation: external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation.

Extrinsic motivation–external regulation is regulated by rewards. Simplistically stated, students complete an activity to satisfy an external demand, reward, or punishment (Areepattamannil et al., 2010). *Extrinsic motivation–introjected regulation* has components of external regulation but also includes components of internal guilt that results in completion of an activity. Students who complete assignments not because they necessarily have the motivation to do so but so they do not disappoint their teacher or parent display this type of extrinsic motivation (Areepattamannil et al., 2010). *Extrinsic motivation–identified regulation* refers to motivation a person exhibits that completes an activity because they deem it of great importance. This type of extrinsic motivation is considered the most autonomous. *Extrinsic motivation–integrated regulation* is considered the "most developmentally advanced for of extrinsic motivation because behavior motivated by integrated regulation is done for its presumed instrumental value with respect to some outcome that is separate from behavior" (Deci et al., 1991, p. 330).

For the past decade, researchers have been interested in how motivation to read relates to comprehension and reading skills necessary for a child to become a successful reader. Guthrie, Wigfield et al. (2006) conducted a study of 98 third-grade students to determine the extent to which motivation contributed to student overall reading achievement. The research study revealed the following.

1. "Using content goals for reading instruction expands students' interest and motivation. Interested students focus on gaining meaning, building knowledge, and understanding deeply, rather than on learning skills or gaining rewards" (Guthrie, Wigfield et al., 2006, p. 233).

2. "Affording students choice in the classroom is a well-supported motivational practice. When students can choose the texts they read, the tasks they perform with the texts, or their partners during instruction" (Guthrie, Wigfield et al., 2006, p. 233).

3. "Properties of texts increase interest" (Guthrie, Wigfield et al., 2006, p. 233).

4. "Social goals or cooperative-learning structures in reading activities improve students' motivation and achievement" (Guthrie, Wigfield et al., 2006, p. 233).

5. "Teacher involvement, which refers to students' perceptions that the teacher cares about them, is associated with intrinsic motivation in academic activities" (Guthrie, Wigfield et al., 2006, p. 233).

6. "Extrinsic rewards for reading are controversial, and under some circumstances, undermine intrinsic motivation" (Guthrie, Wigfield et al., 2006, p. 233).

7. "Emphasizing mastery goals in the classroom–when students read for mastery, they seek to gain knowledge from text, understand stories fully, and grasp the essence of literary texts" (Guthrie, Wigfield et al., 2006, p. 233).

Extrinsic motivation is used in all classrooms and schools to motivate students to complete classroom and homework assignments. Extrinsic motivators, in the form of rewards and incentives, are in every school district and classroom throughout America

(Kohn, 1999). Tangible rewards (extrinsic motivators) such as stickers, candy, and points are provided to students in exchange for completion of work (Kohn, 1999).

Computerized Reading Management Programs

Computerized reading management programs are one type of extrinsic motivation that schools implemented to encourage and motivate students to read (Topping & Fisher, 2003). The main purpose of these technology-based software programs was to "encourage, direct, and assess students' individual reading from books" (Hansen, Collins, & Warschauer, 2009, p. 57). These programs reward students for the number of words, books, or minutes they read (Kohn, 1999). More specific programs require students to set a specific goal within a given timeframe (Kohn, 1999).

In 1981, a school librarian invented the first reading management program and called it The Electronic Bookshelf (Everhart, 1998). The main purpose behind the creation of The Electronic Bookshelf was to encourage and promote reading while holding students accountable for reading independently (Everhart, 1998). The Reading Electronic Bookshelf consisted of a recommended booklist accompanied by multiple-choice reading comprehension quizzes as well as a point and record-keeping system (Everhart, 1998).

The popularity of The Reading Electronic Bookshelf (later known as Reading Counts!) resulted in other developers creating their own versions of The Reading Electronic Bookshelf. Other reading management programs included BookSharp, That's a Fact Jack!, and AR (Everhart, 1998). Although all of the reading management programs were similar, AR was the most favored with Reading Counts! as a close second (Chenoweth, 2001).

History of AR

After the invention of The Reading Electronic Bookshelf, other reading management software products began to hit the market. The AR program was one such program that was developed in the basement of Judi Paul in 1984 (Renaissance Learning, 2010). She developed this program out of the desire to motivate her own children to read (Renaissance Learning, 2014). Judi Paul created a paper/pencil system containing 100 books with corresponding multiple-choice tests. Judi and her husband Terry, a technologist, created a book level and corresponding point system for each book. Judi and Terry Paul realized their children were extrinsically motivated by the point system, thus increasing the number of books they read independently (Renaissance Learning, 2010).

Beginning in 1992, Judi and Terry Paul conducted research focused on creating best literacy practices as they related to AR (formally called Reading Renaissance). Judi and Terry Paul continued their efforts to develop their computerized reading management program. In 1996, Reading Renaissance was finally introduced to educators through professional development seminars at national and state conferences. After its introduction, AR become the most popular and widely used computerized reading management program in the nation (Paul, VanderZee, Rue, & Swanson, 1996).

AR Program

AR was originally created as a software prototype and formally called Reading Renaissance (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). AR, as it is referred to today, is a supplemental reading program that many schools have purchased and implemented to encourage and motivate students to read (Topping & Fisher, 2003). According to Renaissance Learning (2015b), AR "is to enable powerful practice" (p. 9). The AR

program determined the reading level of a book by use of the Flesch-Kincaid readability

index. After determining the book level, the book was then given a maximum AR point

value. This point value is determined from its length and reading level by using the

formula: AR Points = (10 + Reading Level) x Words in Book divided by 100,000

(Renaissance Learning, 2012). AR testing produces quick feedback for a teacher which

includes test scores and points earned while giving the teacher an efficient way to track

and monitor student progress (Renaissance Learning, 2012). AR has been implemented

in over 75,000 schools worldwide and contains over 40,000 book titles. It is the most

widely used in K-8 schools but can be implemented for use in high schools as well

(Renaissance Learning, 2015b; Stefl-Mabry, 2005).

STAR Reading Assessment

The Star Reading program is a companion program to be used in conjunction with

the AR program. The STAR Reading assessment is a computer-adaptive assessment

designed to provide teachers with accurate, reliable, and valid data quickly in order to

make good decisions about instruction and intervention. A teacher administers the STAR

reading test to students in order to obtain each student's reading level. The report

generated by the STAR test provides the teacher with each student's ZPD or the reading

level. ZPDs, or the student's individual reading range, are then matched with leveled

books. Students are allowed to choose books one level up from their ZPD. Students are

not permitted to choose books outside of the reading range.

Implementation of AR

Beginning in the early 1990s, AR became widely implemented in elementary and

middle schools across the United States. In fact, Renaissance Learning, parent company

of AR, asserted, "Accelerated Reader (AR) is the world's most popular reading

management software . . . and provides teachers with an easy and effective way to monitor all forms of guided reading practice" (Stefl-Mabry, 2005, p. 1). According to Renaissance Learning (n.d.), AR has been implemented in more than a third of U.S. schools and over 60 countries. Goldman (2012) contended the main purpose of AR was to "empower the classroom teacher to motivate and manage extensive amounts of in-class reading practice time, to monitor student performance, and to intervene with individualized strategies for students" (p. 11).

AR Critiques

In spite of the popularity of AR, research by Smith and Westberg (2011) contradicted this affirmation. Smith and Westburg concluded that "students have unfavorable views about the program and that the AR program does not increase students' achievement or self-efficacy about reading" (p. 2). Likewise, Schmidt's (2008) research revealed a significant contrast in the beliefs of teachers and students with regard to the computerized reading management system. Schmidt's research revealed teachers believed the program was important for helping students gain a love of reading; however, the students reported they read only for the points and not for the enjoyment of reading.

In another study, Pavonetti, Brimmer, and Cipielewski (2003) found that once completing the AR program, the students read no more books than before, suggesting that AR does not increase student motivation to read for pleasure. In fact, Sharon Coatney, former president of the American Association of School Librarians, believed that reading for points and rewards will work to motivate reading while students are involved in the practice, rather than developing a love for lifelong reading (Chenoweth, 2001). According to Pavonetti et al., "students will not become lifelong readers from tests or points or incentive programs" (p. 309). Pavonetti et al. found no positive correlation

between participation in the AR program and increased or even sustained student love for and pleasure of independent reading.

Noted AR Research Studies

Over the past 20 years, a number of research studies have been conducted to determine the overall effectiveness of the AR program. Each research study discusses AR as it relates to student motivation to read and overall reading achievement.

Krashen (2003) released his findings of an extensive literature review of the effectiveness of the four components of AR. Krashen (2003) concluded, "That of the four aspects of AR, access to books, time devoted to reading, tests, and rewards, only the first two are supported by research" (p. 30). His research also found there was "suggestive evidence that incentives do not promote additional reading in the long run" (Krashen, 2003, p. 30). Krashen (2003) suggested the best way to motivate students to read is to provide interesting books and reading material instead of purchasing expensive programs that may "have long term harmful effects" (p. 22).

Huang (2012) used a mixed-methods research design to investigate the effectiveness of the AR program on middle school students' motivation and achievement. His study included a survey administered to 211 middle school students in Grades 6-8. After the initial survey, 30 of the students were randomly selected to participate in interviews and classroom observations during an entire semester. Each of the 30 students' pre and posttest AR test scores were collected. After thorough data analyses, Huang's research results concluded that participation in AR "neither improved students' reading scores nor promoted intrinsic reading motivation for middle school students, but did increase the amount of time they read" (p. 221). Huang concluded that the AR program was not effective in improving student achievement.

Mallett, Henk, and Melnick (2004) investigated *The Influence of Accelerated Reader on the Affective Literacy Orientations of Intermediate Grade Students*. The primary goal of their study was to determine if the claims made by the AR program of motivating all children to read regardless of reading ability were true. The results of the study revealed that the use of AR did have an influence on the academic reading attitudes of students but did not affect student recreational reading choices. More importantly, the study revealed that the AR program had a negative effect on low-achieving males (Mallett et al., 2004).

Thompson, Madhuri, and Taylor (2008) conducted a study to investigate *How the Accelerated Reader Program Can Become Counter Productive for High School Students.* In 2002, a principal from a Southern California high school contacted Thompson to conduct a study regarding the lack of achievement among students enrolled in the school. The principal's goal was to determine why some students (mainly students of color) were not performing as well on standardized tests as other students. The study included questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. Two hundred thirty-eight questionnaires were returned; of these, 144 students agreed to be a part of the focus-group discussions. The focus groups were homogenously grouped with students of like race being placed together. Earlier research studies led Thompson to choose this grouping because previous research studies indicated, "people are often uncomfortable discussing issues pertaining to race in a mixed group setting (Thompson et al., 2008, p. 553).

The original research was commissioned to determine why students of color were underperforming. However, Thompson et al.'s (2008) research noted, "group after group of students described their frustrations with the implementation of the AR program" (p. 553). Thompson et al. concluded that since research studies had identified student voice

as positively affecting school achievement, it was necessary to listen to the students

concerns regarding the AR program (p. 553).

Thompson et al. (2008) held eight focus-group sessions containing 13-29

participants from all academic subjects and representing grade levels 9-12. Each focus

group had equal gender representation. The researcher provided questions with regards

to teacher-student relations, curriculum, school improvement, and standardized testing.

During each focus group, the researcher noted that participants made it clear they wanted

to discuss a certain program being implemented within the school. The researcher noted

that each participant had strong feelings toward the AR program. Thompson et al.

reported that many respondents reported they did not care for the AR program and "that

their English teachers disliked the program and gave mixed messages about it" (p. 554).

Thompson et al.'s research revealed the following student concerns regarding the AR

program.

1. "The way the program was being used had been counterproductive and had
   actually made some students who had previously loved reading develop an
   aversion to recreational reading" (Thompson et al., 2008, p. 554).

2. "The program had led to widespread cheating on the required tests"
   (Thompson et al., 2008, p. 554).

3. "The amount of reading required was unrealistic and too time consuming"
   (Thompson et al., 2008, p. 554).

4. "Students did not like being 'forced to read'" (Thompson et al., 2008, p. 554).

5. "They did not enjoy the book selections" (Thompson et al., 2008, p. 554).

6. "They resented their course grade being tied to earning points for reading"
   (Thompson et al., 2008, p. 554).

7. "They disliked having to pass tests to earn points" (Thompson et al., 2008, p. 554).

Conclusion

In 1983, Ronald Reagan shocked our nation with information that the educational system was failing our students. Reading acquisition and attainment among our nation's youth was the one area that received the most attention. According to research, millions of our nation's middle and high school students graduated from high school lacking many of the necessary literacy skills (reading and writing) to succeed in college and/or the workforce (Christianbury et al., 2009). This report sparked a fury of debate, initiatives, and programs all focused on improving literacy skills in America.

Three decades have passed since the release of *A Nation at Risk*. However, according to Strauss (2015), reading achievement among our nation's youth is not improving. In fact, as compared to the 2013 NAEP results, the reading scores of students in fourth grade stayed stagnant while the reading scores of students in eighth-grade decreased (Strauss, 2015). Based on a 2014 study by Common Sense Media, it seems that young adolescent students are not motivated to read. The study revealed that over 50% of 17-year olds reported that they have read no more than two books in a year (Common Sense Media, 2014).

Although motivation to read is an important component of student reading acquisition, a review of literature revealed that many adolescents are not motivated to read for pleasure. The review of literature provided clear evidence of the importance of motivation on students' vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension skills. As was previously noted, without the motivation to read, a student's reading skills may remain stagnant.

Pleasure reading, silent reading, free-voluntary reading, and sustained silent reading are all phrases that described reading for the enjoyment of reading. Krashen's (2011) research has proven that students who engage in reading for pleasure improve their literacy skills at a faster rate than those students who do not read for pleasure. The literature review discussed different forms of motivation including extrinsic and intrinsic. As was discussed, intrinsic motivation is a key factor in reading for pleasure. Intrinsic motivation is a main ingredient in a student's decision to begin, sustain, and complete a task. The literature review detailed the importance of intrinsic motivation on students' desire to read and provided empirical evidence from research regarding the connectedness of literacy, reading, pleasure reading, motivation, and student engagement in reading. The review of literature concluded with noted AR studies related to reading enjoyment. The literature, research, and data provided an understanding of the components of adolescent literacy.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a detailed description of the methodology that was used in the study. Additionally, the chapter explains the purpose of the study while providing an outline of the research design, participants, data collection procedures, and data analysis.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to assess high school student beliefs about the influence of their experiences with AR during elementary and middle school on their motivation to read for pleasure during high school.

Research Design

The research study was conducted using a mixed-methods research design. According to Creswell (2014), a mixed-methods study allows the researcher to collect both quantitative and qualitative data that "provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative alone" (p. 19).

The research study was implemented in two phases. The first phase included a survey containing 13 questions, and the second phase included 12 postsurvey interviews. A survey entitled *Accelerated Reader Survey* (Appendix A) was provided to students in Grades 9-12 who were enrolled in a first-semester English class at three of the four high schools in the selected sample district. The results of the survey were used to implement phase two of the research study, which consisted of qualitative interviews between survey participants and the researcher. Data from surveys and interviews were used to amass participant views and answer the research questions.

The research study provided participants an opportunity to share their perceptions

and opinions regarding the influence AR has had on their motivation to read for pleasure in high school.

Instrumentation

The researcher collected data through the use of an anonymous survey. According to Fink (2003), "Researchers use surveys to find out about people by asking questions about feelings, motivations, plans, beliefs, and personal backgrounds" (pp. 1-2). The survey included three sections containing a total of 13 questions. Section 1 consisted of six questions that related to participant demographics; section 2 consisted of four questions that asked participants to select answers from choices provided; and section 3 requested participants to provide a short answer to three open-ended questions. The last question on the survey provided participants the opportunity to volunteer for a one-to-one interview with the researcher. The interviews were used to provide additional information about how participation in AR had influenced students' motivation to read for pleasure in high school. Survey participants who chose to participate in an interview were required to complete and return a signed Parental Consent Form (Appendix B). The follow-up interview (Appendix C) asked participants to share responses to 10 open-ended questions about their participation in AR. An interview protocol (Appendix D) was used to conduct each interview.

In an effort to validate the data collection instruments, the researcher completed a pilot study. A pilot study, according to Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009), is important in the validation of research instruments because it allows a researcher the opportunity to "test drive procedures, identify possible problems in the data collection protocols, and set the stage for the actual study" (p. 203). Feedback from the pilot study was used to make modifications, additions, and omissions to the data collection instrument. The use of the

pilot study ensured validity of the data collection instruments.

To conduct the pilot study, the researcher identified 10 high school students from a high school not included in the actual sample. The researcher provided each selected participant a copy of the survey the researcher planned to administer for data collection. After completing the survey, pilot study participants met with the researcher to provide feedback regarding survey specifics such as (1) clarity of the survey directions, (2) clarity of the questions, (3) simplicity of the questions, (4) appropriateness of questions, and (5) overall survey layout and design. As a result of feedback received from pilot study participants, the researcher modified the research survey, which ensured a valid and clear survey was used when conducting the actual research study. Pilot study survey data were not included in the actual survey results.

Site Selection

The researcher selected a single school district located in western North Carolina to conduct the research study. The researcher met with the selected district's superintendent and was granted permission to conduct the research study. The sample district was selected due to its consistent and prolonged use of AR. The sample district purchased AR in the late 1990s and began implementing AR in classrooms beginning in 1998.

Currently, the district has 16 elementary schools (K4 and K5), two intermediate schools with Grades 5 and 6, two middle schools with Grades 6-8, and two middle schools with Grades 7 and 8. Each elementary (K-4 and K-5) and each intermediate school (5-6) continues to implement AR within its instructional program. Three of the four middle schools include AR in their instructional program, while one of the four middle schools discontinued AR implementation beginning with the 2011-2012 school

year.

Within the sample district, student participation in AR began in kindergarten and continued through Grade 5. All intermediate and middle schools in the district implemented AR through June of 2011. Beginning in the fall of 2011, one middle school (Grades 7 and 8) elected to withdraw from AR participation. The district's remaining two intermediate schools and three middle schools continued to implement AR within the instructional program. This resulted in the students at the corresponding feeder high school ending their participation in AR in sixth grade. Because they did not participate in AR through Grade 8, the students did not meet the criteria of the study. The researcher eliminated the high school from the study and limited the study to the district's three remaining high schools in which currently enrolled students in Grades 9-12 participated in AR from kindergarten through eighth grade.

Research Sites

Site 1 was a public high school located in rural western North Carolina. The student population was made up of 1,238 students. There were 86 full-time teachers with a student teacher ratio of 1:14. The school provided a range of classes from standard to Advanced Placement for students in Grades 9-12.

Site 2 was a public high school located in a rural western North Carolina town. The school had a population of 1,056 students. There were 78 full-time teachers with courses offered from standard to Advanced Placement for students in Grades 9-12.

Site 3 was a small suburb of North Carolina located 30 miles from a metropolitan city. The school had a student population of 1,244 students represented by 50% male and 50% female. The school had 87 full-time teachers providing courses ranging from standard to Advanced Placement for students in Grades 9-12.

Research Participants

Participants for this study were students enrolled in Grades 9-12 from a single school district located in North Carolina who participated in AR beginning in kindergarten through eighth grade. The total student population for all three high schools was approximately 4,327 students. The researcher employed a convenience sample by limiting the survey population to students who were enrolled in an English course during the fall semester of the 2015-2016 school year. As a result of the convenience sample, there were a total of 1,837 participants.

Sample

The researcher chose to utilize a convenience sample by limiting the survey participants to students enrolled in a first-semester English course at three research sites. The sample size for the study included 1,837 participants. Based on the sample size of possible participants enrolled in a first-semester English course and a confidence interval ±3, the researcher sought 675 participants for the study.

Demographic Data

The research study consisted of three demographic categories: (1) grade level, (2) gender, and (3) number of years of AR participation.

Data Collection

Prior to any data collection, the researcher ensured informed consent. The researcher provided each research site copies of a Parental Informational Letter (Appendix E). The informational letters were delivered to each research site and distributed to all students enrolled in an English course for the fall semester of 2015-2016. The informational letter served as an introduction of the researcher and provided a detailed description of the research study.

The informational letters were organized and sorted in groups of 30, placed in manila envelopes, and labeled with each English teacher's name. The informational letters were delivered to each research site's main office. The researcher requested the envelopes be delivered to each English teacher using customary delivery methods already in place at each research site. Three days following the delivery of the informational letters, the researcher delivered the surveys to each research site.

Surveys

The paper/pencil surveys were sorted in increments of 30, placed in manila folders, and labeled with the teacher's name and class period. Each teacher's set of surveys was placed in a large manila envelope and bound with a rubber band. Each set of bound manila envelopes was labeled with the English teacher's name and contained the following items: (1) manila envelopes containing surveys for all students enrolled in each class period and (2) follow-up interview Parental Consent forms. Attached to the front of the top manila envelope was a short letter that provided the Instructions for Administering the Survey (Appendix F). The instructions also directed the English teacher to place all completed surveys back in the manila envelope labeled with the class period and return the completed surveys to the school's main office and place them in the large plastic bin labeled, "Return Surveys Here."

There was a separate manila envelope labeled "Parental Consent" included in each teacher's bound survey materials. The letter attached to the top manila envelope included instructions that directed teachers to provide students who volunteered for an interview a copy of the Parental Consent form. The letter instructed students to have their parent or guardian read and sign the Parental Consent form and return it to the site's main office. Parental Consent forms were due to each research site office 1 week

following the survey administration. After collecting Parental Consent forms from each research site, the researcher contacted the principal of each research site and enlisted his/her assistance in scheduling follow-up interviews. After interviews were scheduled, each site principal informed interview participants of the date and time of their interview.

Interviews

Many participants volunteered for a postsurvey interview; very few returned the necessary permission forms to be considered. From all returned forms, the researcher secured 12 postsurvey interviews. The researcher completed all interviews using an interview protocol. Each interview was audio recorded and the recordings used for transcription. Although some interviews were longer than others, interviews averaged 10 minutes in length. After completing all interviews, the researcher used the audio recordings to create a transcription of each. To validate the accuracy of the transcripts, the researcher emailed each participant a copy of his or her individual interview transcription. The email instructed each participant to review the transcript for accuracy. If errors were discovered, participants were asked to inform the researcher by email. After receiving no reply emails requesting corrections to the interview transcripts, the researcher considered all transcripts accurate and valid. The researcher retained copies of all recordings and transcriptions for review.

Data Collection Timeline

The research study informational letter was delivered to each research site on November 9, 2015. The researcher delivered the survey materials to each research site on November 12, 2015. One week following the survey delivery date, the researcher collected all survey materials from each research site.

Follow-up interviews at Sites 1 and 2 were scheduled for November 23, 2015.

Interviews for Site 3 were scheduled for November 24, 2015. The researcher was unable to complete all interviews on November 23 and November 24 due to student absences. The researcher scheduled interviews throughout the month of December in order to conduct and complete all interviews. Each participant interview was audiotaped and used during transcription.

Data Analysis

The researcher compiled participant responses and used Microsoft Excel to create a master spreadsheet. Through Microsoft Excel data analyses, the researcher was able to ascertain themes and patterns with regards to participant gender, grade, years of AR participation, whether AR was a percentage of participant language arts grades, and overall enjoyment of AR.

Qualitative data analysis software, called Atlas ti, was used to analyze the three open-ended survey questions as well as the interview transcripts. Utilizing Atlas ti allowed the researcher to manage, code, and analyze the data in a more effective and efficient manner. Coding from open-ended questions and interview transcripts allowed the researcher to discern themes and patterns with regards to participant likes and dislikes of AR, current feelings toward reading today, and the influence of AR on participants' motivation to read for pleasure in high school. A Master Code Sheet (Appendix G) represented the codes the researcher used to code and analyze the qualitative data.

The researcher used narrative analysis to transcribe audio recordings from participant interviews and open-ended survey comments. Results from each data analysis were used to identify themes and/or relationships between participant responses. Survey response data and interview responses were displayed in tabular format describing a culmination of respondent responses.

Limitations of the Study

As with any study, there were limitations that must be identified. A limitation of this study was in the administration of the survey itself. It was not feasible for the researcher to administer surveys at each research site, thus having to rely on the site staff to deliver and administer the surveys.

The sample size was also a limitation of the study. The study employed a convenience sample of the total population at each site and represented roughly half of the total population within each site.

The analysis of qualitative data was a limitation of the study. Although the researcher used Atlas ti to code and analyze responses to the open-ended questions and interview transcripts, subjectivity of responses may have yielded various interpretations.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Chapter 4 includes a description of the sample and presents the findings of the study. The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to assess high school student beliefs about the influence of their experiences with AR during elementary and middle school on their current motivation to read for pleasure in high school. The study included data from surveys and researcher interviews. Surveys were used to determine patterns among participants such as gender, grade level, years of participations in AR, whether it was part of their language arts grade, and whether they enjoyed the program. Interviews were used to gain insight into student perspectives of enjoyment of reading today and the influence AR had on their motivation to read for pleasure in high school. This chapter includes a description of the participants, research tools used, and an analyses and summary of the findings.

To assess the influence of AR on high school students' motivation to read for pleasure, the following research questions were examined.

1. How do high school students describe the influence of their experiences with AR on their current motivation to read for pleasure?

2. What, if any, discernable patterns and themes are evident in the self-reported perspectives of participants?

3. Are there variations within those patterns and themes based upon notable participant characteristics, including gender and years of participation in AR?

The sample for this study included 1,837 high school students (Grades 9-12) from a single school district located in western North Carolina. The researcher was granted permission from the district's superintendent to seek student participation for the study.

The district included a possible sample size of 4,327; however, the researcher narrowed the sample size to students enrolled in a first-semester English course. Creswell (2008) described this narrowing of the sample based on accessibility as a convenience sampling. The subsequent sections provide a detailed description of the participants, research tools used, data analyses, and a summary of findings.

Participants

Participants for the study were students in Grades 9-12 ranging in age from 14 to 18 years. Each participant was enrolled in English 1, English II, English III, or English IV at one of the district's high schools and had previously participated in AR during elementary and middle school. The sample included 552 males and 529 females. Males represented 51% of the sample, and females represented 49%. Table 1 displays the number and percentage of participants based on gender.

Table 1

Distribution of Responses by Gender

Gender	Number	%
Male	552	51
Female	529	49

Participants included 321 ninth graders, 253 tenth graders, 281 eleventh graders, and 226 twelfth graders. Of the male participants, 29.7% were ninth graders, 21.0% were tenth graders, 28.4% were eleventh graders, and 20.8% were twelfth graders. Of female participants, 29.6% were ninth graders, 25.9% were tenth graders, 28.4% were eleventh graders, and 21.0% were twelfth graders. Ninth graders represented the largest number

of participants at 321, while twelfth graders represented the fewest number at 226.

Table 2 represents the grade level and gender of all survey participants.

Table 2

Distribution of Participants

Grade Level	Male N=552		Female N=529	
	#	%	#	%
9	164	29.7	157	29.6
10	116	21.0	137	25.9
11	157	28.4	124	23.4
12	115	20.8	111	21.0

Participant interviews were conducted at the conclusion of the survey period. The interviews were conducted at three high schools within the research district. Representing Site 1 was one 18-year-old male, one 14-year-old male, and two 17-year-old females. Site 2 was represented by one 17-year-old male, one 16-year-old male, and one 15-year-old female. Site 3 included two 17-year-old males, one 16-year-old male, one 16-year-old female, and one 15-year-old female. Each research site, with its corresponding number of interview representatives, is displayed in Table 3.

Table 3

Interview Participants

Research Site	Male N=7		Female N=5	
	#	%	#	%
1	2	16.7	2	16.7
2	2	16.7	1	8.3
3	3	25.0	2	16.7

Of the interview participants, seven of the 12 were highly involved in extracurricular activities including sports and afterschool clubs; one had an afterschool job; five were involved in weekly church activities; one was a member of JROTC; and two reported no involvement in any afterschool activities. Among all interview participants, the following characteristics existed: (1) each had previously participated in AR in elementary and middle school; (2) each said that their high school English teachers directed book choices based on their specific English curriculum; and (3) each said they didn't read for pleasure because of limited free time due to homework demands.

Data Collection and Research Tools

The research study was implemented in two phases. The first phase included a survey containing 13 questions, and the second phase included 12 postsurvey interviews. A survey entitled *Accelerated Reader Survey* was distributed to each of the three research sites. The researcher distributed 1,837 surveys and had 1,081 surveys returned, which was a return rate of 58.8%. An examination of the return rate indicated that Site 1

returned 42.4% of surveys; Site 2 returned 71.6%; and Site 3 returned 62.4%. The data

revealed that Site 2 had the lowest enrollment at 1,056 but the highest return rate as

compared to the other research sites. Although Sites 1 and 3 had similar enrollments (in

both school and English courses), Site 3 returned 20% more surveys than did Site 1. At

42.4%, Site 1 had the lowest return rate. Survey distribution and return rates are

displayed in Table 4.

Table 4

Survey Distribution

Survey Sites	Research Site Enrollment	Surveys Distributed		Surveys Returned	
		#	%	#	%
1	1,238	610	49.3	259	42.4
2	1056	613	58.0	439	71.6
3	1244	614	49.4	383	62.4

The survey was administered in a paper/pencil format to provide equal access for

all participants. The survey included 10 multiple-choice questions that instructed

participants to select an answer from the choices provided and three open-ended

questions in which participants were instructed to answer using a short answer format.

After completing all survey questions, participants were provided the opportunity to

volunteer for a postsurvey interview by sharing their contact information in the spaces

provided at the end of the survey. Although many participants volunteered for a

postsurvey interview, very few returned the necessary permission forms to be considered.

The researcher secured 12 postsurvey interviews.

The researcher completed all interviews using an interview protocol in which all participants were asked each of the questions found on *The Accelerated Reader Interview Questions* document. Each interview was audio recorded and the recordings used for transcription. Although some interviews were longer than others, each interview was an average of 10 minutes in length. After completing all interviews, the researcher used the audio recordings to create a transcription of each. To validate the accuracy of the transcripts, the researcher emailed each participant a copy of his or her individual interview transcription. The email instructed each participant to review the transcript for accuracy. If errors were discovered, participants were asked to inform the research by email. After receiving no reply emails requesting corrections to the interview transcripts, the researcher considered all transcripts accurate and valid.

The mixed-methods study was comprised of both quantitative and qualitative data. To analyze survey questions 1 through 10, the researcher assigned each answer choice a corresponding number. For example, letter choice A received a 1; letter choice B received a 2; letter choice C received a 3; and letter choice D received a 4. The process of assigning a number to represent an answer choice was applied to each of the first 10 survey questions. The researcher then used Microsoft Excel to create a master spreadsheet in which each column corresponded to a question from the survey and each line represented a completed participant survey. By converting answer choices to numbers, the researcher was able to determine the number and percentage each answer choice received. Through Excel data analyses, the researcher was able to ascertain themes and patterns with regard to participant gender, grade, years of AR participation, whether AR was a percentage of participant language arts grades, and overall enjoyment

of AR.

Qualitative data analysis software, called Atlas ti, was used to analyze the three open-ended survey questions as well as the interview transcripts. Utilizing Atlas ti allowed the researcher to manage, code, and analyze the data in a more effective and efficient manner. Coding from open-ended questions and interview transcripts, allowed the researcher to discern themes and patterns with regards to participant likes and dislikes of AR, their feelings toward reading today, and the influence of AR on participants' motivation to read for pleasure in high school.

Survey Data Analysis

Survey data analysis was used to gain insight into participants perspectives related to the following: (1) years of participation in AR; (2) enjoyment of AR in elementary and middle school; (3) current feeling toward reading for pleasure; (4) AR book choice; (5) whether they were motivated by rewards or points; and (6) whether their AR points were a percentage of their language arts grade in elementary and middle school.

Years of AR Participation

Survey responses indicated that all 1,081 participants had previously participated in AR during elementary and middle school. When completing question 3 of the survey, participants selected each grade level in which they had participated in AR. Findings demonstrated that of the 1,081 respondents, 82 (7.6%) participated in AR between 1 and 4 years; 319 (29.5%) participated in AR between 5 and 7 years; and 680 (62.9%) participated in AR 8 or 9 years. Participants reporting 5 or more years of AR participation indicated that they had participated in AR for a majority of elementary and middle school. Nine hundred ninety-nine (92.4%) participants indicated that they had participated in AR for 5 or more years. Eighty-two (7.6%) participants indicated they

participated in AR between 0.9% and 44.0% of their time in elementary and middle school.

Of the 999 participants who participated in AR for 5 or more years, data indicated that males represented 506 participants and females represented 493 participants resulting in 46.8% of males and 45.6% of females participated in AR for 5 or more years. Data displayed in Table 5 demonstrate years of participation among all survey participants.

Table 5

Distribution of Responses for Question 3

Years of AR Participation	Male N=552		Female N=529	
	#	%	#	%
1	4	0.72	3	0.6
2	9	1.63	6	1.13
3	19	3.44	8	1.51
4	14	2.54	19	3.60
5	28	5.07	23	4.35
6	58	10.5	64	12.1
7	70	12.7	76	14.4
8	135	24.5	169	32.0
9	215	38.9	161	30.4

Enjoyment of AR

Participants were asked to indicate whether they enjoyed participating in AR in elementary and middle school. Specifically, survey question 4 asked participants if they liked participating in AR in elementary school and question 5 asked participants if they liked participating in AR in middle school. Participants could select a single answer of "yes" or "no" to answer questions 4 and 5. Data analysis showed that 364 participants, including 154 males and 210 females, answered question 4 by selecting "yes" indicating that they enjoyed AR in elementary school; while 713 participants, including 394 males and 319 females, selected "no" indicting that they did not enjoy AR in elementary school. These numbers revealed that 33.7% of participants enjoyed AR in elementary school and 66.0% did not enjoy it. Data related to gender and enjoyment of AR in elementary school revealed that 11.8% (56) more females than males enjoyed the program in elementary school, while 75 (11.1%) more males than females did not enjoy participating in AR elementary school. A breakdown of participant responses to the question of enjoyment of AR in elementary school is displayed in Table 6.

Table 6

Distribution of Answer Selections for Question 4

Answer Choice	Male N=552		Female N=529		Total N=1,081	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	154	27.9	210	39.7	364	33.7
No	394	71.4	319	60.3	713	66.0
Blank	4	0.72	0.0	0.0	4	0.003

Participants were also asked about their enjoyment of AR while in middle school. An analysis of the data discovered that 75 males and 102 females (16.4%) participants selected "yes" to question 5 indicating that they enjoyed participating in AR in middle school, while 472 males and 421 females (82.6% of participants) selected "no" indicating that they did not enjoy participating in AR in middle school. From the data, it can be concluded that 6.3% more females than males enjoyed participating in AR in middle school and 5.9% more males than females did not like participating in AR in middle school. A breakdown of participants answer selection to question 5 regarding enjoyment of AR in middle school is displayed in Table 7.

Table 7

Distribution of Answer Selections for Question 5

Answer Choice	Male N=552		Female N=529		Total N=1,081	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	75	13.6	102	19.3	177	16.4
No	472	85.5	421	79.6	893	82.6
Blank	5	0.91	6	1.13	11	0.01

An analysis of participant responses to questions 4 and 5 revealed that 33.7% of all participants enjoyed AR in elementary school, while 16.4% enjoyed it in middle school. Data indicated a 17.3% decline in participant enjoyment of AR from elementary to middle.

Participant Feelings about Reading

When answering question 6, participants were instructed to select the statement that described how they felt about reading today. The possible answer choices were (a) I like to read and read for pleasure as often as I can; (b) I like to read, but choose not to read for pleasure; (c) I do not like to read for pleasure, but will read when it is a requirement from my teacher; and (d) I do not read for pleasure and do not read even if it is required assignment from my teacher. Data analysis indicated that 244 (22.6%) participants, including 80 males and 164 females, selected answer choice "a" indicating that they liked to read and read for pleasure as often as they could; 272 (25.2%) participants selected answer choice "b" indicating that they liked to read but did not

choose to read for pleasure; 450 (41.6%) participants, including 253 males and 197

females, selected answer choice "c" indicating that they did not like to read for pleasure

but would read when it was a requirement; and 113 (10.5%) participants, including 79

males and 34 females, selected answer choice "d" indicating that they did not like to read

and would not read even when it was a requirement from their teacher. Data analysis

discovered that a little more than 20% of participants liked to read for pleasure as often as

possible, while 25.2% liked to read but did not read for pleasure. Analysis also indicated

that of those participants who indicated that they did not like to read for pleasure, 41.6%

would read when it was a requirement from their teacher. A deeper analysis related to

gender and answer selection for question 6 revealed that 16.4% more females than males

liked to read and read for pleasure as often as they could, while 8.6% more males than

females indicated that they did not like to read for pleasure but would read when the

reading was associated with an assignment from their teacher. As compared to females,

7.9% more males indicated they did not like to read for pleasure and would not read even

if it were a requirement from their teacher. Data related to participant answer choices for

question 6 are displayed in Table 8.

Table 8

Participants' Feelings toward Reading for Pleasure

Answer Choice	Male N=552		Female N=529		Total N=1,081	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
A	80	14.5	164	31.0	244	22.6
B	139	24.2	133	25.1	272	25.2
C	253	45.3	197	37.2	450	41.6
D	79	14.3	34	6.4	113	10.5
Blank	1	0.2	1	0.19	2	0.001

Amount of AR Book Participants Read

Participants were asked about the amount of an AR book they read while participating in AR. Participants were instructed to choose the answer that best described how much of an AR book they read. Participants could choose an answer from the following choices: (a) I always read the entire AR book; (b) I sometimes read the entire AR book; or (c) I never read the entire AR book. An examination of the data revealed that more than half (53%) of all participants, including 268 males and 305 females, chose answer choice "a" indicating that they always read the entire AR book. Data also revealed that 200 males and 183 females (35.4%) chose answer choice "b" indicating that when reading an AR book, they always read some of the book. A comparison of all responses found that 88.4% of all participants always read all or some of their AR book.

A comparison between gender, as it related to the amount of an AR book participants read, discovered that 9.1% more females read the entire AR book as did males; 1.6% more males than females read some of the book; and 7.2% more males than females did not read any of the AR book. Data depicting participant answer choices regarding the amount of an AR book they read are displayed in Table 9.

Table 9

Amount of AR Book Read

Answer Choice	Male N=552		Female N=529		Total N=1,081	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
A	268	48.6	305	57.7	573	53.0
B	200	36.2	183	34.6	383	35.4
C	76	13.8	35	6.61	111	10.2
Blank	8	1.44	6	1.13	14	0.01

Selection of an AR Book

Participants were asked about how they selected AR books to read while participating in AR. When describing how they selected an AR book, participants were instructed to choose from one of the following answer choices: (a) based on the number of AR points the book was worth; (b) based on what they liked to read regardless of AR points; (c) based on movies they had seen; (d) based on their Star level; (e) based on teacher requirements such as fiction, nonfiction, informational text; or (f) based on what a

friend was reading. Although the survey directions instructed participants to select only one answer, some participants selected more than one answer. Due to some participants selecting more than one answer, the researcher had to display the data as the frequency in which each answer choice was selected instead of how many participants selected an answer choice. A careful examination of the data indicated that when selecting an AR book, about as many participants selected books based on the point value assigned to the book as books that they liked. In fact, the data revealed that participants chose choice "a" 477 times and choice "b" 435 times. The data also showed that participants selected a book based on their STAR reading level (answer choice D) and what a friend was reading (answer choice F) at a rate of 8.32%, which was less than 10% of the time. The data indicated that participants chose books based on teacher requirement (answer choice E) at a rate of 4.99%. The frequency in which each answer choice was selected is displayed in Table 10.

Table 10

Frequency of Answer Selection to Question 8

Answer Choice	Frequency Selected	%
A	477	44.1
B	435	40.2
C	72	6.76
D	90	8.32
E	54	4.99
F	90	8.32

Motivation to Read Based on Points and Rewards

Participants were asked about what motivated them to read while they

participated in AR. Question 9 asked participants to indicate from the choice answers

provided whether they were motivated to read by points, classroom rewards, or school

rewards. The answer choices were (a) the points I received after taking the AR test; (b)

the rewards I received in my classroom from earning my required number of points; or

(c) the school rewards I received. An analysis of the data showed that 26.6%, including

127 males and 161 females, selected answer choice "a" indicating that they were

motivated by the points they received after taking an AR test. Two hundred six males

and 211 females, or 38.6% of all participants, selected answer choice "b" indicating that

they were motivated by receiving classroom rewards for meeting their AR point goals.

According to the data, 29.9%, including 180 males and 144 females, selected answer

choice c indicating that they were motivated by the receiving school rewards. An

examination of data concluded that 288 of 1,081 (26.6%) participants were motivated by

the points they received, whereas 741 (68.5%) participants were motivated by either

classroom or school rewards. When comparing males to females, 7.1% more females

than males were motivated by the points they received. Data indicated that both males

and females were motivated to read more by the classroom rewards they received than by

points or school rewards. Data representing participant selection of an answer choice to

question 9 is displayed in Table 11.

Table 11

Distribution of Responses to Question 9

Answer Choice	Male N=552		Female N=529		Total N=1,081	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
A	127	23.3	161	30.4	288	26.6
B	206	37.3	211	39.9	417	38.6
C	180	32.6	144	27.2	324	29.9
Blank	39	7.06	13	2.50	52	0.05

AR as a Percentage of Language Arts Grade

Question 10 asked participants whether AR was or was not a percentage of their

language arts grade in elementary and middle school. Answer choices included (a) was a

percentage of my language arts grade in elementary school; (b) was not a percentage of my language arts grade in elementary school; (c) was percentage of my language arts grade in middle school; and (d) was not a percentage of my language arts grade in middle school. An examination of respondent data revealed that 585 (54.1%) participants, including 279 males and 306 females, selected "a" indicating AR was a part of their language arts grade in elementary school; and 653 participants, or 60.4%, selected letter "c" indicating that AR was a percentage of their language arts grade in middle school. Comparatively, 99 males and 82 females, or 16.7%, selected "b" indicting that AR was not a percentage of their language arts grade in elementary school while 13.4% (84 males and 57 females) selected choice "d" indicating that AR was not a percentage of their language arts grade in middle school. A comparison of the data indicated there was a 6.3% increase in the number of participants responding that AR was a percentage of their grade in middle school as in elementary school. Data also showed that there was 3.3% decrease in the number of participants responding that AR was not a percentage of their language arts grade in middle school. Seven point three percent more females than males indicated that AR was a percentage of their language arts grade in elementary school, and 6.1% more females than males responded that AR was a part of their language arts grade in middle school. Table 12 and Table 13 display a breakdown of answer selection based on gender.

Table 12

Distribution of Responses to Question 10 (Elementary School)

Answer Choice	Male N=552		Female N=529		Total N=1,081	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
A	279	50.5	306	57.8	585	54.1
B	99	17.9	82	15.5	181	16.7
Blank	174	31.5	141	26.7	315	29.1

Table 13

Distribution of Responses to Question 10 (Middle School)

Answer Choice	Male N=552		Female N=529		Total N=1,081	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
C	317	57.4	336	63.5	653	60.4
D	84	15.2	57	10.8	141	3.4
Blank	151	27.4	136	25.7	287	26.5

Data Analysis of Open-Ended Responses and Interview Transcripts

Open-ended questions and interview transcripts were analyzed to discover patterns and themes within the data. Three open-ended survey questions asked participants to provide answers to the following: (1) what they liked best about AR; (2)

what they liked least about AR; and (3) how did participation in AR influence their motivation to read in high school.

Data analysis revealed that 269 (24.8%) participants, including 124 males and 145 females, indicated that receiving rewards was what they best about participating in AR. Participants indicated they liked being able to choose their own book, totaling 38 males and 25 females (5.8%); and 18 males and 31 females (4.5%) responded that they liked earning points the best. There were 23 males and 27 females (4.6%) who responded that they just enjoyed the opportunity to read; while 15 (1.39%) participants, including eight males and seven females, said they liked competing with their peers and classmates to see who could earn the most points. There were eight participants (0.74%), including five males and three females, who stated they liked that AR challenged them to read harder books and become a better reader. Even though the question asked participants to tell what they liked best about participating in AR, 308 (28.5%) participants, including 193 males and 115 females, answered the question by saying that they did not like anything about AR. A total of 4.5% of participants (32 males and 17 females) left the answer blank.

The second open-ended question (question 12 of the survey) asked participants to tell what they liked least about AR. When analyzed, participants listed the following as things they did not like about AR: (1) reading requirements; (2) point requirements; (3) AR as a percentage of their language arts grade; (4) the amount of reading they did during AR; and (5) punishment related to not meeting point goals;

Data revealed that 305 (28.2%) students, including 139 males and 166 females, indicated that they did not like participating in AR because of the requirements placed on them by their teachers. Participants referenced not feeling as if they had the freedom to

read for pleasure, instead they referenced being "forced" to read. In fact, 15.2% (76 males and 88 females) of participants used the word "forced" in the answer provided for question 12. When describing how they felt about reading today, six of the 12 (50.0%) interviewees said they did not like reading today and related their current feeling to being forced to read while participating in AR in elementary and middle school. One of the six interviewees indicated that he felt he was forced to read but still liked to read today while the remaining five participants said that they did not enjoy reading today.

Participants also indicated that they did not like having to read for points. One hundred sixty (14.8%) participants, including 62 males and 98 females, felt that reading for points took the pleasure out of reading. The responses referenced words such as "too many points," "excessive point requirements," and "unattainable point requirements" to describe what they did not like about AR. There were six of the 12 (50%) interview participants who indicated that having to earn lots of AR points was what they enjoyed least about AR. Of the six, three were male and three were female.

AR being factored into the participants' language arts grade was another aspect of participating in AR that participants did not like. Data conveyed 71 (6.57%) participants, 22 males and 49 females, responded that they did not like that the AR point goal was a part of their language arts grade. During their interview, seven (58.3%) participants, including three males and four females, referenced that AR was as a percentage of their language arts grade in elementary and middle school. Two (16.7%) of the four females said they did not like that their AR goal was a percentage of their language arts grade. Both indicated that their overall language arts grade had been negatively affected by not reaching their AR goal for a specific grading period.

The amount of reading they had to do while participating in AR was what 17.0%

(102 males and 82 females) of participants said they did not like about participating in AR. The responses indicated that participants felt pressured to read instead of being encouraged to read. Eight of the 12 interview participants referred to a developing a feeling that they were required to read even when they may not have wanted to read. Several participants, seven males and 10 females, referenced receiving punitive consequences for not earning their AR goal as that which they liked least about participating in AR. Two of the 12 interview participants specifically referenced punitive consequences for not receiving their point requirements.

When describing what they liked least about AR, 159 (14.7%) survey participants, including 103 males and 56 females, felt that there was nothing about the program that they liked or enjoyed. Two females (16.7%) of the 12 interview participants also referenced there being nothing about AR that they liked or enjoyed. There were 41 participants, including 18 males and 23 females, who left the answer blank.

Survey question 13 asked participants to describe how they felt their participation in AR had influenced their motivation to read in high school. A total of 100 (9.3%) participants, including 39 males and 61 females, felt participating in AR had influenced their motivation to read for pleasure and improved their overall reading abilities. There were 230 males and 195 females (39.4%) who did not feel participating in AR had influenced their motivation to read for pleasure. Data also revealed that 231 (115 males and 116 females; 21.4%) participants responded that they simply did not enjoy reading. Of the 231 participants who indicated that they did not enjoy reading, 43 (4.0%) participants, including 12 males and 31 females, responded that participating in AR had no affect on the motivation to read for pleasure because they did not enjoy reading with or without the presence of AR. Data discovered 30 (2.8%) participants, 14 males and 16

females, indicated that they did not enjoy reading but would read when it was a

requirement from their teacher. Of all participants, 105 did not answer the question.

Of the 12 interviews, four participants (33.3%), including one 17-year-old male,

one 16-year-old female, one 16-year-old male, and one 15-year-old male indicated that

they felt participation in AR had influenced their motivation to read in high school. The

remaining eight of the 12 (66.7%) interview participants felt that participation in AR had

not influenced their motivation to read for pleasure.

Data and Findings for Research Question 1

The first research question was designed to determine the influence that

participation in AR had on high school students' current motivation to read for pleasure.

According to the data, 33.7% of survey participants reported that they enjoyed

participating in AR in elementary school and 16.4% enjoyed participating in AR in

middle school, whereas a majority of survey participants indicated that they did not enjoy

participating in AR in elementary or middle school. Data also indicated that 80 males

and 164 females enjoy reading and read for pleasure as often as they could. Survey

responses indicated that 81 (22 males and 59 females) participants indicated that they

enjoyed participating in AR in elementary and middle school and still enjoyed reading for

pleasure today. One hundred participants (9.3%), 39 males and 61 females, indicated

through open-ended responses that participation in AR had influenced their motivation to

read for pleasure in high school. Two hundred thirty-two males and 195 females (39.5%)

indicated that they did not feel participation in AR had influenced their motivation to read

for pleasure in high school. Two hundred thirty-one (21.4%) participants, including 115

males and 116 females, indicated that they simply did not enjoy reading. Survey data

also indicated that 80 males and 164 females enjoyed reading and read for pleasure as

often as they could. Open-ended responses revealed 12 males and 31 females indicated

that they were motivated to read because they enjoyed reading; therefore, they would

read for pleasure with or without participating in AR. Four interview participants said

that AR had influenced them to read for pleasure in high school, while eight indicated

that they did not feel their motivation to read for pleasure had been influenced by their

participation in AR.

After all survey data were analyzed, results indicated that about 9.3% of

participants felt that participation in AR had influenced their motivation to read for

pleasure in high school, while 39.5% felt that their motivation to read for pleasure had

not been influenced by their participation in AR.

Data analysis of open-ended question 13 revealed that 100 participants felt their

participation in AR during elementary and middle school had influenced their motivation

to read for pleasure in high school. Examples of open-ended responses supporting the

findings include a female student from site 2 who stated, "Yes, AR influenced my

motivation to read for pleasure . . . I developed a passion for reading!" A female

participant from Site 1 stated that "Accelerated Reader influenced me by making me

want to read every chance I get." A male from Site 2 echoed the same feeling regarding

the influence of AR on his motivation to read for pleasure when he responded, "It

influenced me to read in high school by getting me into the habit of reading." A female

from Site 3 stated, "The influence was tremendous–I probably would not have chosen to

pick up a book had it not been for AR." A male from Site 1 shared how AR had

influenced him to read for pleasure when he stated, "AR influenced me to read books and

find out more interesting fact about life."

Interview transcripts revealed that four of 12 (33.3%) interviewees felt that AR

had influenced their motivation to read for pleasure in high school. A 16-year-old male student said, "It has motivated me to read more and find out more stuff since I know that books help me learn." During her interview, a female from Site 3 shared that she felt participation in AR had influenced her motivation to read in high school as well. When asked how she felt participation in AR had influenced her motivation to read in high school, she replied,

> It influenced it a little bit because it helped me read more because I had to get points and it helped me to read more and then I got to where I loved reading. I mean I didn't just like to read when I was a little girl after the AR system thing, I started loving to read!

While discussing his participation in Accelerate Reader, a 17-year-old male shared that he felt his motivation to read for pleasure was influenced by AR participation. The researcher asked him how specifically, and he responded, "Probably it has made me want to read more."

A close examination of the data indicated that 9.3% of survey participants, as well as 33.3% of interviewees, felt AR had influenced their motivation to read for pleasure in high school. Comparatively, data indicated that 39.5% of survey participants and 66.7% of interviewees did not feel participation in AR had influenced their motivation to read for pleasure in high school. Open-ended responses supporting these findings included a female student from Site 2 who said, "It was my teachers, not AR that influenced my motivation to read." A male student from Site 3 shared that he felt AR had not motivated him at all. He stated, "AR has discouraged me from reading in high school outside of our required reading for class." A female from Site 3 explained that she did not feel AR had influenced her motivation to read for pleasure in high school because, "AR took the

enjoyment from reading in earlier grades, now I tend not to not enjoy reading." A female from Site 1 said, "I had actually forgotten about AR until this survey. It has had no influence on me whatsoever."

Data from interview transcripts revealed that 66.7% (8) of interviewees believed that AR had not influenced them to read for pleasure. When asked to describe the influence AR had on her motivation to read for pleasure in high school, a 17-year-old female stated that "AR has not motivated me to read at all, in fact I don't like reading anymore today than I did." A senior high male responded, "Well, honestly I don't think it has influenced me any at all." A 17-year-old student compared his participation in AR with that of a job when he said,

> Yeah, I feel like if we weren't forced to read, I would read more. I mean I guess
> it's kind of like maybe like a job or school. . . . I mean once you do it for so long,
> I mean you kind of, you get burned out and you get tired of it.

Data and Findings for Research Question 2

Research Question 2 sought to uncover any discernable themes and patterns from the self-reported perspectives of participants. After completing data analysis of survey questions, open-ended responses, and interview transcripts, the following patterns were identified: (1) participants enjoyed receiving rewards while participating in AR; (2) participants felt required to read instead of reading for enjoyment; (3) point goals were a concern of participants; and (4) AR was a part of participants' language arts grade. Each of these patterns was associated with the implementation of AR within the sample district and not attributed to the AR program itself.

One pattern revealed from the study was that a majority of participants (741 or 68.5%) were motivated to read in elementary and middle school by the classroom and

school rewards they received from participating in AR. Open-ended responses resulted in 269 (24.8%) of participants indicating rewards were what they liked best about participating in AR. Four of the 12 (33.3%) interview participants also indicated that the classroom and school rewards motivated them to read in elementary and middle school. A female state that she "liked reading books for reading books she enjoyed."

A second pattern revealed through data analysis was the feeling among participants that reading for AR was a requirement and not a task they enjoyed. Three hundred five (28.2%) participants, including 139 males and 166 females, considered their participation in AR as a requirement and not a choice. In fact, 166 of the 305 responses included the word "forced" to describe their participation. Fifty percent (6) of the interviewees used the word "force" during their interview. Open-ended responses as well as interview transcripts indicated that while participating in AR, participants viewed reading as a requirement and not a choice. To describe his feeling towards reading during AR, a male wrote, "We were required to read and reach a certain amount of points that it took the fun out of reading for me." A female also shared that she saw reading as a requirement because she was told, "To get a certain books, certain levels, certain amount of points, in a certain amount of time." Another female participant described this as, "I wasn't allowed to read what I wanted to. I was forced to read and not encouraged to read." Interview transcripts revealed similar feeling among interviewees. A 14-year-old boy from Site 1 stated his concern over his AR requirement. He stated, "I don't think you should force someone to read because if they don't like to read, they are not going to read outside of school if they don't like it, so I mean you shouldn't force it on them." When asked about how she felt about reading today, a 17-year-old girl from Site 3 stated,

Since AR, I don't really particularly care for reading because at the very

beginning of AR I liked it because I could read and I liked being in a competition so to speak with other kids of my age about reading. But now, after it was kind of forced on us for so many years, I just feel like it's pushed me away from it.

A third pattern that emerged from the data was the implementation practice of making AR a part of the students' language arts and reading grade. Survey results indicated 585, or over half (54.1%) of participants reported that AR was factored in as a portion of their reading grade in elementary school. The number increased for middle school, with 653 (60.4%) participants reporting that it was a percentage of their language arts grade in middle school. Sixteen point seven percent of participants indicated that it was not a percentage of their language arts grade in elementary school, while 13.1% said it was not a percentage of their language arts grade in middle school. Twenty-nine point one percent of participants did not select an answer regarding percentage of language arts grade in elementary, while 26.5% did not select an answer regarding percentage of language arts in middle school. An examination of open-ended responses revealed that 71 (6.57%) participants, including 22 males and 49 females, indicated that the participants' AR point goals were factored in as a percentage of their language arts grade. Interview participants also indicated that their AR point goal was a percentage of their language arts grade. Of the 12 interview participants, eight (including three males and five females) shared that their language arts grade was affected by their AR goal requirement.

Another pattern discovered in the data was participant perceptions of goal setting and point requirements associated with participant participation in AR. An examination of the data indicated that 127 (23.3%) males and 161 (30.4%) females were motivated to read by the points they received. An examination of open-ended responses indicated that

160 participants (62 males and 98 females) felt that reading for points took the pleasure out of reading. Fifty percent (6 of 12) of interview participants referenced point requirements when describing their participation in AR. Data from survey responses and interview transcripts suggested that participants felt their AR point requirements were too high and often unattainable. A female from Site 2 shared that "reading for points and deadlines took the fun out of reading." A male mentioned that while participating in AR, he did not enjoy reading due to "excessive amount of required points." A female indicated that she did not enjoy reading because she was always "rushing through books in order to pass the test and get my points." A male stated, "The point system made me feel like I couldn't read books I enjoyed but only books with more points." A 17-year-old female interview participant responded similarly as she said,

> We had to meet our AR goals, so we would have to read. And if we didn't meet it, we either made a bad grade or we couldn't participate in the AR reward or whatever it was. So, we felt the need that we had to get it done and we had to read.

A 15-year-old female shared that having to earn many points became harder in middle school, stating, "I think it got worse because like in middle school my point goal got higher, so I had to read more books and then I was like these books are getting bigger. I don't like books." A 17-year-old male from Site 3 responded that his lack of motivation to read today stemmed from the fact that he had read so many books in elementary and middle school and by the end of middle school, he found it hard to find books worth the points he needed in order to meet his point goals. A 17 year-old female from Site 1 responded that her AR point goals were such that she was unable to reach them thus affecting her grade. She stated that "I actually made my very first B on a report card in

the eighth grade because I did not get my AR points."

Analysis of survey responses and interview transcripts indicated that when participants felt they were reading only to reach their point requirements and not for the enjoyment of reading, they may not be motivated to read for pleasure.

The theme of enjoyment in AR is a second notable theme derived from the study. Data indicated that 33.7% of participants enjoyed participating in AR in elementary, while 16.4% enjoyed it in middle school. Survey responses indicated that 81 (22 males and 59 females) participants indicated that they liked participating in AR in elementary school and middle school and currently still enjoy reading for pleasure. One participant indicated his enjoyment of AR as he stated, "It helped me realize how great reading is." "Having an excuse to read" is how a female participant described her feeling toward participating in AR. A 16-year-old interview participant said that he enjoyed AR because it allowed him to learn new things and that he felt participating in AR had "helped him a lot." The data indicated that more than 65% of participants did not enjoy participating in AR in elementary school and 82.6% did not enjoy AR in middle school.

Lastly, open-ended response data as well as interview transcripts indicated that participants, who were intrinsically motivated to read, read for the enjoyment of reading regardless of points, rewards, and incentives. Forty-nine survey participants, including 12 males 37 females, responded that they enjoyed reading and they were motivated to read in high school by the enjoyment they received from reading, not by their previous participation in AR. When asked how participation in AR had influenced their motivation to read, respondents wrote, "I like to read anyway so it hasn't influenced me much. It did help me learn to set and reach goals." Another respondent wrote, "AR never influenced me to read. I have always loved to read and still do." A third responded, "I

like to read anyway whether I did AR or not–I just love to read!" Lastly, a respondent wrote, "It hasn't influenced me. I have always loved to read ever since I was in Pre-K."

Interview data supported the survey findings as well. Of the 12 interviewees, three (25%) shared that they loved to read for the enjoyment of reading regardless of rewards. An 18-year-old male stated, "I love reading. It's just something I just love to do. It's a great past time and I really enjoy it." Likewise, a 15-year-old female described her love of reading: "Reading gives me an opportunity to relate to other people that are not exactly true in life, it also takes you on an adventure."

Data and Findings for Research Question 3

Research Question 3 sought to determine if findings from the research study uncovered any variations in the themes and patterns revealed through the research study.

One theme revealed in the data was that prolonged participation in AR might not have influenced participants' motivation to read for pleasure. Data indicated that 376 participants, including 215 males and 161 females, participated in AR for 9 years beginning in kindergarten and continuing through eighth grade. According to the data, 22 (10.2%) males and 46 (28.6%) females who participated in AR for 9 years felt their participation in AR had influenced their motivation to read for pleasure in high school. Comparatively, the data revealed that 141 (65.6%) male and 84 female (52.2%) participants who participated in AR for 9 years felt that their participation in AR had not influenced their motivation to read for pleasure in high school. Data indicated that 38 participants did not provide an answer indicating whether AR had or had not influenced their motivation and 45 participants left the answer blank.

Another notable characteristic of the study was the comparison of participant enjoyment of AR during elementary and middle school to their current feeling toward

reading today. An examination of the data revealed 244 participants indicated they enjoyed reading and read for pleasure as often as they could. Of the 244, 164 were females, indicating that more than twice as many females as males enjoyed reading and would read for pleasure as often as they could. Also, data indicated that 113 (79 males and 34 females) participants responded that they did not enjoy reading and would not read even when it was a requirement of their teacher. The data suggested that two times as many males than females did not enjoy reading and would not read even as a requirement. The researcher concluded that male survey participants were less likely to read for pleasure today than were there female counterparts. Table 14 provides a cross-tabulation of survey questions 4 and 6. Survey question 4 asked students to tell whether they did or did not enjoy AR in elementary school, and question 6 asked respondents to tell how they feel about reading today. To answer questions 4 and 5, participants had the choice between (a) yes or (b) no to indicate if they enjoyed participating in AR during elementary and middle school. Question 6 asked participants how they would describe their feeling towards reading today. Possible answer choices to question 6 were (a) I like to read and read for pleasure as often as I can; (b) I like to read, but choose not to read for pleasure; (c) I do not like to read for pleasure, but will read when it is a requirement from my teacher; and (d) I do not read for pleasure and do not read even if it is required assignment from my teacher. Table 14 represents the number of students who indicated they did or did not enjoy AR in elementary (question 4) and who also chose A, B, C, or D to question 6. Table 15 represents the number of students who indicated they did or did not enjoy AR in elementary (question 4) and who also chose A, B, C, or D to question 6

Table 14

Cross Tabulation of Questions 4 and 6

	I like to read for pleasure and read as often as I can	I like to read, but do not choose to read for pleasure	I do not like to read for pleasure, but will read when it is a requirement	I do not like to read and will not read even if it is a requirement from my teacher
Male–I enjoyed AR in elementary school	40	61	44	9
Male–I did not enjoy AR in elementary school	37	78	208	70
Female–I enjoyed AR in elementary school	92	67	47	4
Female–I did not enjoy AR in elementary school	72	66	149	30

*Top row represents results of question 4
*Column represents results of question 6

Table 15 represents the same data as Table 14 but for participant answers to

questions 5 and 6.

Table 15

Cross Tabulation of Questions 5 and 6

	I like to read for pleasure and read as often as I can	I like to read, but do not choose to read for pleasure	I do not like to read for pleasure, but will read when it is a requirement	I do not like to read and will not read even if it is a requirement from my teacher
Male–I enjoyed AR in middle school	27	33	11	4
Male–I did not enjoy AR in middle school	50	104	241	74
Female–I enjoyed AR in middle school	58	31	12	0
Female–I did not enjoy AR in middle school	102	99	185	34

*Top row represents results of question 5
* Column represents results of question 6
*Numbers represent cross tabulation by options for question 5 and 6

A notable trend from the data in Tables 14 and 15 was the number of participants, male and female, who stated that they did not enjoy AR during elementary and middle school, yet who still enjoyed reading today. Sixty-seven males and 150 females stated that they liked AR in elementary and middle school and still enjoyed reading for pleasure today as compared to 87 males and 174 females who said they did not enjoy AR in elementary and middle school, but enjoyed reading for pleasure today. These data represent that 3.6% more males and 4.4% more females did not enjoy AR in elementary

and middle but enjoyed reading for pleasure in high school. These data would suggest that participation in AR did not influence students' motivation to read for pleasure in high school.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to determine the influence of AR on high school students' motivation to read for pleasure. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher was able to determine that of the participants represented in the study, 100 (39 males and 61 females) felt AR had influenced them to read for pleasure in high school. The findings also indicated that 427 (39.5%) participants (including 232 males and 195 females) did not feel participation in AR had influenced their motivation to read for pleasure in high school.

A second finding from the study indicated that perhaps the implementation of AR resulted in participants not enjoying the AR program in elementary and middle school. One such finding indicated that participants felt that they were required to read instead of reading for pleasure and enjoyment. Participants indicated they enjoyed reading when they were able to read what they wanted; but when they were required to read certain books worth certain points, reading became more of a requirement and less of a choice. Findings also revealed that participants felt they did not have control over point requirements, therefore their book choices became more about choosing the book worth the most points and less about the genre they liked to read. Research findings also discovered that for over 75% of study participants, their AR point goal was factored into their language arts grade, thus affecting their overall language arts grades.

A third finding indicated that prolonged participation in AR may or may not have influenced students' motivation to read for pleasure in high school. In fact, 376 (over a

third) participants had participated in AR from kindergarten to eighth grade; yet of these participants, 68 (or 18.1%) felt participation in AR had influenced their motivation to read for pleasure in high school. Comparatively, 225 participants indicated that their motivation to read for pleasure had not been influenced by their previous participation in AR. The findings also indicated that of those 376 participants, 83 provided an answer that was not related to the question or chose not to answer the question at all.

Data collected through surveys and interviews were used to answer the research questions. Data analysis and interview excerpts were summarized and presented in this chapter. The chapter concluded with a summary of the findings as indicated by data analysis. Chapter 5 provides interpretations of the findings, implications for change, and recommendations for future studies.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The final chapter of this dissertation offers a brief review of concepts of the study and research questions, followed by a review of the methodology used to investigate the research questions. The chapter also includes key findings of the study. The significance of the findings and the implications of the study are discussed in the broad context of the framework of the study.

Motivation is "being moved to be moved to do something" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 54). Citing Eggen and Kauchak (1994), Karsenti and Thibert (1998) referenced motivation as "a force that energizes and directs behavior toward a goal" (p. 2). Malloy et al. (2010) defined motivation as that "which moves our students to participate fully in our instruction, to sustain effort, and use strategies, even when the work is challenging" (p. 1). Motivation is that engine guiding one to choose one task over another. Motivation dictates our actions, needs, and wants and provides the spark that ignites one to complete tasks when we would otherwise choose to quit. Motivation can come from within, leading to personal satisfaction only, or can be based on earning incentives for completing a task or job. Researchers such as Watson and Bandura have long debated whether our choices are based on our responses to behavior that we find pleasurable or whether individuals choose to engage in activities based on what internally moves them (Malloy et al., 2010). Simply put, motivation means doing something because one enjoys it (intrinsic) or doing something to receive incentives or rewards (extrinsic). Whatever the reason might be, motivation plays a huge role in successes in work, school, and life.

A review of literature indicated that many students are not obtaining the necessary literacy skills due to a lack of motivation to read. According to Irvin et al. (2007),

motivating adolescents to read has been an ongoing concern for many years. In 2014, Common Sense Media reported that 45% of 17-year olds had read no more than two books for pleasure in the past year. Most notably, a 2015 study found that, on average, teens were engaged in the task of reading only 6 minutes per day (Willingham, 2015). A 2014 study found that slightly over half (51%) of today's children reported that they enjoy reading, while only one third of 13-year olds reported that they read daily (Scholastic, 2015).

There is much more to this notion of motivation to read than just encouraging students to pick up a book and call words. Cambria and Guthrie (2010) asserted that ignoring the power of motivation to read is neglecting the most important part of reading. The researchers believe a student's will to read is the greatest determination of how well a student reads, the desire they have to read, and the skills they gain from reading (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010). Wigfield et al. (2004) suggested, "even the reader with the strongest cognitive skills may not spend much time reading if he or she is not motivated to read" (p. 299). According to Gambrell (1996), without the motivation to read, many students will not reach their full reading potential. Marinak and Gambrell (2010) asserted that without the motivation to read, "students may never reach their full potential as literacy learners" (p. 129). Colker (2007) stated that "highly motivated readers are those who generate their own literacy learning opportunities, and in doing so, they begin to determine their own destiny as literacy learners" (p. 4). Guthrie (2001) wrote that readers who are engaged in text want to understand; they enjoy the act of learning; and they believe in their own reading abilities.

Psychologists have suggested that the motivation to complete tasks is determined by whether a person is motivated by receiving a reward or prize for completing the task

or if the person engages in the task simply out of enjoyment for the task. When motivated by receiving something such as food, rewards, or incentives, the person is said to be extrinsically motivated. On the other hand, when a person engages in a task for the pleasure gained from the task, they are said to be intrinsically motivated. Extrinsic motivators for students may be stickers, coupons, or extra free time. Examples of extrinsic motivators are (1) being a part of a team to receive awards; (2) studying for a test in order to receive a good grade; and (3) a student who does extra credit not to gain knowledge but to receive extra points on a test. Playing the violin during free time, working crossword puzzles, and playing a pick-up game of basketball are examples of intrinsic motivation in which the person engages in the activity for the enjoyment of the activity, not for any rewards or incentives. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation play a role in determining our actions and choices.

Motivating students to read has been a concern of many educators for decades. In 1983, *A Nation at Risk* was released presenting evidence that our nation's children were not attaining literacy skills necessary to be ready for the workforce upon graduation. This report was the beginning of reading reform directed at improving the literacy skills of all children beginning in kindergarten. From newly developed curriculum standards to supplemental reading programs, the nation's educators had one primary focus: to make sure all students learned the five components of literacy.

All educators were searching for any programs that could supplement their curriculum and spark student interest in reading. One such program made its debut at a National Teacher's Conference in 1996. This program, originally called Reading Renaissance, later became known as AR. AR was the answer many school districts and teachers were searching for to motivate students to read more often, ultimately increasing

their reading achievement. According to AR, their program "is a powerful tool for monitoring and managing independent reading practice while promoting reading for pleasure" (Renaissance Learning, 2015b, p. 1).

The purpose of this mixed-methods research study was to assess high school student beliefs about the influence of their experiences with AR during elementary and middle school on their current motivation to read for pleasure in high school. To assess the influence of AR on high school students' motivation to read for pleasure, the following research questions were examined.

1. How do high school students describe the influence of their experiences with AR on their current motivation to read for pleasure?

2. What, if any, discernable patterns and themes are evident in the self-reported perspectives of participants?

3. Are there variations within those patterns and themes based upon notable participant characteristics, including gender and years of participation in AR?

Interpretations of Findings

The first research question asked how high school students would describe their experience with AR on their current motivation to read for pleasure. The data indicated that 244 participants liked to read and read as often as possible, while 272 participants liked to read but did not read for pleasure. Data from open-ended responses indicted that 81 participants (22 males and 59 females) enjoyed reading in elementary and middle school and still enjoy reading today. Data revealed that 100 participants (39 males and 61 females) indicated that they felt participation in AR in elementary and middle school had influenced their motivation to read in high school. One participant said, "It (AR) influenced me to read in high school by getting me in the habit of reading." A second

participant attributed her "passion for reading" to her participation in AR. Another participant responded, "It (AR) has made a better reader and influenced me to continue reading." Another participant said that AR "has influenced me to read books inside and outside of school."

The data indicated that 232 males and 195 females did not feel participation in AR had influenced their motivation to read for pleasure in high school. One participant wrote, "AR introduced me to new genres and nurtured my love for reading, but since then my motivation for reading is purely based on requirement and not pleasure." Another participant responded, "I have always loved to read, but if I weren't a big reader I feel like it would make me not want to read because of the stress it caused in elementary and middle school." According Pavonetti et al. (2003), there is no positive correlation between participation in the AR program and increased or even sustained student love for and pleasure of independent reading. Thompson et al. (2008) also found that participation in AR was not leading to lifelong readers.

Several participants indicated that they were motivated to read simply because they liked the enjoyment they received from reading. Forty-three participants (12 males and 31 females) felt their motivation to read was a result of their inner desire to read, not due to any program. A male responded, "AR never influenced me, I have always loved to read and still do." "I just love to read and that is how it is and how it will always be," was the response of a female. Another male's response was, "It (AR) hasn't motivated me, I read regardless of prizes."

The data also revealed that 231 participants responded that they just did not like to read; therefore, they were not motivated to read for pleasure. A female responded that she "only read when she was required to, not because she wanted to." "It (AR) hasn't

motivated me in any way, I just don't like to read." The responses led the researcher to conclude that regardless of any program including AR, these participants were unmotivated to read for pleasure simply because they did not find enjoyment or pleasure in reading.

The survey data indicated that 741 participants responded that they were motivated to read by the rewards they received from meeting their AR goal. However, the data revealed that only 100 participants (9.3%) felt that their participation in AR had influenced them to read for pleasure in high school. Ryan and Deci (2000) asserted that intrinsic motivation is the engagement in an activity based on personal interest in the activity. From these data, it may be concluded that the 100 participants who indicated that AR had influenced their motivation to read may actually be intrinsically motivated by the act of reading, whereas the 741 participants motivated by the rewards were reading for the extrinsic reward and not for the enjoyment of reading. Research by Cameron and Pierce (1994) found that when using extrinsic rewards to motivate students in tasks such as reading, the students become dependent on the rewards for motivation. The data from the study suggested that the participants became dependent on the reward as the motivating factor for reading; however, when the reward was removed, so was their motivation to read for pleasure.

This finding is consistent with research by Stephen Krashen. In 2005, Krashen wrote that there is no research that proves participation in AR increases student attitudes toward reading. Because AR provides extrinsic motivation by rewarding students for reading, the students are motivated by the rewards or incentives, not by the act of reading. Once the rewards are removed, so is their motivation to read. Malloy et al. (2010) asserted that when students read primarily for the purpose of receiving prizes, points, or

other rewards, they are motivated by the environment that controls their reading choices not by reading itself. Cameron and Pierce (1994) found that when using extrinsic rewards to motivate students, the students become dependent on the reward; but once the reward is removed, the occurrence of the activity declines. Participants stating that they liked the rewards the best also reported not being motivated to read for pleasure in high school. The conclusion could be made that the students were not intrinsically motivated to read but equated reading to receiving a reward. Once the rewards were removed, so was the motivation to read for pleasure.

The second research question sought to uncover any discernable patterns and themes from self-reported perspectives of participants. From the AR Survey and participant/researcher interviews, the data indicated that many of the patterns found within open-ended responses and interview transcripts dealt with the manner in which AR had been implemented in the schools within the sample district. Under the theme of "Implementation," the following patterns were discovered: (1) student reading for rewards; (2) students feeling required to read instead of reading for enjoyment; (3) AR being factored in as a percentage of students' language arts grade; and (4) inconsistent reading goals associated with large point requirements. Each of these patterns became evident through coding of open-ended responses and are associated with the implementation practices associated with AR, not the program itself.

The survey revealed that 741 (68.5%) participants listed "rewards" as that which motivated them to read in elementary and middle school. Two hundred sixty-nine survey participants (124 males and 145 females) and four interviewees indicated receiving rewards for meeting their goals was the best part of AR. This finding is consistent with research that says when a reward is attached to an activity, the activity becomes less

important as the activity on its own and more about the reward (Beavers, 2013). Carter (1996) said when rewards are attached to reading, the value of reading is lost on the rewards; thus, the enjoyment of reading becomes the reward or incentive. When the rewards and incentives are removed, so is the enjoyment for reading. According to Cambria and Guthrie (2010), "extrinsic rewards do not motivate reading achievement in the long term. Students who read only for the reward of money, a grade, or a future job are not the best readers" (p. 17). When the reward itself becomes the reason for completing a task such as reading, students do it for the reward not for lifelong learning (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010). Data from the research study indicated that when students use reward as the reason for completing a task, it does not lead to lifelong motivation to read. Many respondents reported that they were motivated to read by the rewards yet are not motivated to read for pleasure in high school.

A second pattern under the theme of "Implementation" was that participants felt participation in AR was a requirement in which they felt "forced" to read instead of being provided a choice to read. Data analysis revealed that 166 participants and six interviewees included the word "forced" in their open-ended and interview responses when describing their participation in AR. In a 2008 study by Thompson et al., students described their participation in AR as being "forced" to read. Students in the study indicated that they did not like being "forced" to read, and they did not like that the points they received were tied to their English average. Findings from the research study indicated that participants had similar feelings with regards to being "forced" to read in elementary and middle school. Many participants indicated through open-ended responses and interviews that they had enjoyed reading in elementary school, but had lost the desire due to being required or "forced" to read. A female stated, "AR has made me

not want to read anymore because it was a forced requirement instead of allowing me to read for pleasure." Research by Schiefele stated that the ability to choose one's task is a "powerful motivator" (Malloy et al., 2010, p. 89). When students are provided the opportunity to choose tasks that they enjoy and have an interest in, they are much more likely to continue the task. Participants in the study clearly did not feel they had a lot of choice over their reading choices, including amount of time they spent reading. Perhaps providing students the freedom to choose their reading material and allowing them input on their reading goals would increase the number of high school students choosing to read for pleasure.

A third pattern related to the implementation of AR was that AR was a percentage of the students' overall reading or language arts grade. The study found that 585 participants (54.1%) indicated that their AR grade was a part of their overall reading or language arts average in elementary school. The number of participants indicating AR was a percentage of their language arts grade in middle school increased by 68 to 653 (60.4%). From open-ended responses, the researcher concluded that participants considered this a common implementation practice based on their participation in elementary and middle school. However, according to Renaissance Learning's (2014) *Getting Results with Accelerated Reader* guidance document, it is not recommended that grades be given for reading practice.

Data from the survey and interviews found that students felt that their point requirements were excessive resulting in unreachable goals. Many survey participants listed having to earn "lots of points" as that which they liked least about AR. An interviewee shared that the better she did in class, the higher her point requirement became, to the point she just could not reach her goal. The participants' point

requirement affected their book choices as well. Many participants reported that as their point requirement increased, their choice in books became based solely on which books had the most point value. Johnson and Blair (2003) believed that student self-selection of literature is an important factor in their engagement in reading. Ollman (1993) believed that providing students the freedom to choose the books they wanted to read gave them control over what they read and fostered intrinsic motivation.

Student lack of enjoyment in participating in AR was evident in the multiple-choice and open-ended survey questions. Of 1,081 survey participants, 713 stated that they did not enjoy AR in elementary school. That number rose to 893 reporting that they did not enjoy AR in middle school. Interesting to note is the number of participants stating that they liked the rewards provided by meeting their AR point goal is the same as participants responding that they did not enjoy the program. These findings support the belief that when students work only for the rewards and incentives, they are not engaged readers. Guthrie (2001) stated that readers who are engaged in text want to understand; they enjoy the act of learning; and they believe in their own reading abilities. Paris and Oka (1986) contended that students will not develop into effective readers unless they have both the skills and the will to read. According to Cambourne (1995), when people (including students) lack input into the decision making, they feel powerless and unmotivated. Perhaps allowing students to be an integral part of deciding their point goals would increase student reading enjoyment.

Lastly, the research study found that students who read because they were intrinsically motivated to do so would read regardless of AR. Forty-three participants responded that they just enjoyed reading for the act of reading itself. Of the 43, 12 represented males and 31 represented females. Although all stated they were motivated

to read simply for the enjoyment they received from reading, in a few cases these students actually reported that they felt that their participation in AR had hurt their motivation to read. This thought is consistent with research by Deci and Koestner (1999), who found "tangible rewards tend to have a substantially negative effect on intrinsic motivation. Even when the tangible rewards are offered as indicators of good performance, they typically decrease intrinsic motivation" (p. 658).

After completing the research study, the researcher concludes the data suggest that prolonged participation in AR does not influence high school students' motivation to read for pleasure in high school. Additionally, the data suggest that the implementation practices of AR within the sample district may have resulted in negative feelings among participants with regards to their enjoyment of the program. The researcher observed that the percentage of participants reporting they disliked AR in middle school increased by 16.6% from 66.0% to 82.6%. Although participants indicated liking the rewards, receiving rewards did not increase their enjoyment of AR. The increase in decreased enjoyment would suggest that the students become less extrinsically motivated by the rewards and tend to enjoy participating in AR less.

Another significant finding from the study was the feeling of being "forced" to read a certain book worth a certain number of points, on a certain level, and in a certain amount of time. Participants indicated that oftentimes they did not feel as if they had any choice in their reading material or genre. Participants who described themselves as loving to read indicated they too felt forced to read while participating in AR. When students are not allowed to make choices in selecting the reading material that interests them, they begin to develop a negative feeling towards reading and books. This was true of the study. Each of the 166 participants who reported feeling "forced" also reported

that they did not enjoy AR in elementary or middle school. The study suggests that when students perceive reading in a negative context, they are less likely to read for pleasure. Gallager (2009) wrote that many students have been affected by "readicide" or the "systematic killing of a love of reading, often exacerbated by the inane, mind-numbing practices found in schools" (p. 2). Students who felt they were forced to read and who were not motivated to read for pleasure today, may be experiencing "readicide" as defined by Gallager. Data from the research study suggested that when students did not perceive reading as enjoyable, they developed negativity toward reading and thus chose not to read for pleasure in high school. Krashen (2005) stated,

> Despite the popularity of AR, we must conclude that there is no evidence supporting it, no evidence that the additional tests and rewards add anything to the power of simply supplying access to high-quality and interesting reading material and providing time for children to read them. (p. 24)

Likewise, a 2003 study by Pavonetti et al. suggested that AR might negatively impact student attitudes and recreational reading.

Limitations of the Study

As is the case with any research study, limitations must be addressed. One limitation to this study was the sample size. The sample size included only those students enrolled in a first-semester English course, which was possibly only half of the total population at each research site. Additionally, due to a limited number of returned parental permission forms, the number of postsurvey interviews was relatively small and represented a very small sample of the total population at each research site.

Reading ability, reading level, and subjectivity of survey participants were additional limitations of the research study. Whether participants found reading to be

easy or difficult could potentially affect the way in which they responded to the survey. Likewise, the study did not include any accommodations for students with disabilities such as read aloud, large print, or completion over multiple class periods.

Providing the survey in only paper/pencil format is another limitation of the study. There may have been additional participants had the survey been available electronically. Had the survey been offered online, students who were out of school on the day of administration could have accessed and completed the survey at home, whereas in this situation they may have not had an opportunity to complete the survey due to their absence.

Providing the survey in one language (English) was another limitation of the study. Had the survey been provided in multiple languages, students would have been able to access the survey in their native language.

Recommendations for Future Studies

A future study may include a case study of the implementation practices of AR within the research study's sample district. Interview transcripts as well as open-ended responses indicated that AR practices are not uniform within the sample district. Findings from the case study could be used to inform instructional practices regarding the implementation practices of AR within the sample district.

A future study may include replicating the current study within the sample district at the high school not included in the current research study. One of the sample districts' middle schools discontinued using AR in 2011. The students attending the high school not included in the study participated in AR in elementary school but not in middle school. A comparative study of those students participating in AR in both elementary and middle school to those who only participated only in elementary school could

provide the sample district data to inform instructional decisions regarding the use of AR in middle school.

It would be beneficial to know how students who have never participated in AR would describe their motivation to read for pleasure in high school. A future study may include comparing data from this study to that of data from a study of students never having participated in AR to determine if students who have never participated in AR are more motivated, less motivated, or similarly motivated to students who participated in AR.

Implications for Change

This research study has implications for change. The study revealed that the implementation practices among schools within the district might be a contributing factor on high school students' motivation to read for pleasure.

The implementation of AR was referenced 333 times in both the survey responses and interviews. Both survey respondents and interviewees mentioned implementation factors such as unreachable reading goals, excessive point requirements, percentage of reading and language arts grades, and punitive consequences as factors related to their motivation to read for pleasure in high school. One interviewee stated,

> I feel like I was achieving my goal but now after being forced to do it for like seven years, it's just I don't want to read anymore. I have done it for so long and I feel like I have read everything I can read.

Another stated, "I have read so many different kinds of books and I read them so fast so I could meet my goal that it made me not like reading." A survey respondent stated, "I think AR shaped me to be not much of a reader because I would say I read when a

teacher tells me to but I don't really much read for fun or for enjoyment of a book." An interviewee stated,

> I always got my points. But now my brother for example. . . . I mean my brother has ADHD and he just doesn't like to read and so it's really hard . . . it's like trying to get a nail into something that it won't go through to read. And so, I mean his grades . . . he gets his points eventually but it's like biting a tooth to get his points. And so his grades can reflect from it and it just pushes his grade down.

A survey respondent referred to the implementation as, "limited amount of time to get excessive amount of points." Other survey respondents referred to AR as follows: "Certain books, certain levels, and getting a certain amount of points in a certain amount of time."

> There is a specific goal to be met. I remember not getting to read books because they were not AR. Also, I liked taking my time when reading, but I would rush through some great books in order to meet a deadline or move on to another book worth more points.

> I love to read. I could read every day of my life. With Accelerated Reader I was at a disadvantage because I always had to go to the library and pick out an AR book that I didn't want to read.

"I liked that in my elementary school it wasn't required but we were allowed to do it for fun!" Based on open-ended and interview transcripts, characteristics of AR implementation were linked to high school students' lack of motivation to read for pleasure.

In future practice, the researcher would suggest the sample district consider

examining the implementation practices within the district, specifically within the middle schools. Renaissance Learning (2015b) provided a best practices document entitled *Getting Results with Accelerated Reader*. In this publication, Renaissance Learning provided guidelines for implementing the program in schools. According to the publication, "When used casually, AR helps students' reading abilities grow. When used thoughtfully and with proven techniques, it leads to tremendous gains and a lifelong love of reading" (Renaissance Learning, 2015b, p. 6). In addition, the guide specifically outlines goal setting, point requirements, and competitions while also providing guidance on restricting book choice and emphasizing comprehension over points.

Several respondents referenced having excessive and unattainable AR point goals while in elementary and middle school. According to *Getting Results with Accelerated Reader,* to ensure that each student's reading goals are "individualized, fair, and realistic" (Renaissance Learning, 2015b, p. 22), the following steps should be considered.

> "The student's reading ability, as indicated by a grade-equivalent score on
> STAR Reading" (Renaissance Learning, 2015b, p. 22)
>
> "The amount of time you schedule for daily reading practice" (Renaissance
> Learning, 2015b, p. 22)
>
> "The length of the marking period" (Renaissance Learning, 2015b, p. 22)

However, Renaissance Learning (2015b) stated,

> Goals must not be imposed upon students but developed with them. When you
> establish goals with students, you give them the opportunity to reflect upon their
> abilities and what they want to achieve. As a result, they "own" their goals and
> feel a sense of control and purpose. (p. 73)

One possible change for the sample district would be to allow students to be a collaborative part of setting their individual reading goals. Renaissance Learning (2015b) provided a reading plan document in which students and teachers work collaboratively to determine each student's reading goal (p. A14). By allowing students the opportunity to be an integral part of setting their individual reading goals, the student works toward reaching the goal they helped set rather than reaching a goal set for them.

Another possible change in the implementation of AR would be in the practice of including the AR point goals in the students' 9-week reading average. Survey participants and interviewees referenced AR goals being factored in as a part of their overall reading grade for each grading period. Although some participants said they liked that it was a part of their reading and language arts grade, many said that they disliked the practice. One interviewee stated, "I made my first B in the eighth grade on a report card. I had As from kindergarten to eighth grade and my grades suffered because of Accelerated Reader."

Getting Results with Accelerated Reader does not contain any mention of grading or using AR as a percentage or a portion of a students' grade average. However, data from the survey revealed that 585 participants said AR was a percentage of their grade in elementary school, while 653 participants said AR was percentage of their grade in middle school. Since AR does not mention goals and their association to grading in the 2015 *Getting Results with Accelerated Reader* document, the district may consider eliminating the practice of factoring AR as a percentage of students' language arts grades.

The results of this study indicated that the AR implementation practices of the sample district might have impacted students' motivation to read for pleasure in high school. The researcher was not able to determine the influence of AR on high school

students' motivation to read for pleasure due to variables related to implementation of the

program.

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Appendix A

Accelerated Reader Survey

Part I: Demographics – Place an X in the blank that best describes you.

1. I am a:

    Male   ☐

    Female☐

2. I am in the:
    a. 9th grade   ☐
    b. 10th grade ☐
    c. 11th grade ☐
    d. 12th grade ☐

3. I participated in Accelerated Reader in the following grades (**check all that apply**):
    a. Kindergarten ☐
    b. 1st grade   ☐
    c. 2nd grade   ☐
    d. 3rd grade   ☐
    e. 4th grade   ☐
    f. 5th grade   ☐
    g. 6th grade   ☐
    h. 7th grade   ☐
    i. 8th grade   ☐
    j. I did not participate in Accelerated Reader in any grade ☐

4. I enjoyed participating in Accelerated Reader in elementary school.
    a. Yes ☐
    b. No ☐

5. I enjoyed participating in Accelerated Reader in middle school.
    a. Yes ☐
    b. No ☐

6. If someone asked me to describe how I feel about reading today, I would tell them:
    a. I like to read and read for pleasure as often as I can ☐
    b. I like to read, but do not choose to read for pleasure ☐
    c. I do not like to read for pleasure, but I will read when it is a requirement from my teacher ☐
    d. I do not like to read for pleasure and do not read even if it is a required assignment from my teacher ☐

Part II

Directions: Please read each statement and <u>place an X in the box beside the statement that best describes you.</u>

7. When reading an Accelerated Reader book:
    a. I always read the entire AR book ☐
    b. I sometimes read the entire AR book ☐
    c. I never read the entire AR book ☐

8. When participating in Accelerated Reader, I selected books:
    a. based on the number of AR points the book was
       worth   ☐
    b. based on what I liked to read regardless of the AR points ☐
    c. based on movies I had seen ☐
    d. based on Star assessment level ☐
    e. based on teacher requirements such as fiction,
       non-fiction, informational text, etc. ☐
    f. based on what a friend was reading ☐

9. I was motivated to read an Accelerated Reader book by:
    a. the points I received after taking the Accelerated Reader test ☐
    b. the rewards I received in my classroom from earning my required number of
       points ☐
    c. the school rewards I received ☐

10. My Accelerated Reader point requirement:
    a. was a percentage of my language arts grade in elementary school ☐
    b. was not a percentage of my language arts grade in elementary school ☐
    c. was a percentage of my language arts grade in middle school ☐
    d. was not a percentage of my language arts grade in middle school ☐

Part III
Open-ended Questions

11. What did you like most about Accelerated Reader? _____
    _____
    _____

12. What did you like least about Accelerated Reader? _____
    _____
    _____

13. How do you feel participation in Accelerated Reader has influenced your motivation to read in high school? _____
_____
_____

14. The researcher is interested in conducting interviews about students' Accelerated Reader participation. If you would like to volunteer to participate in an interview with the researcher, please provide your contact information in the spaces provided below.

Student's Full Name_____

Age_____

Parent or Guardian Name_____

Home Address_____

High School Student Attends_____

Student's School Email Address_____

Appendix B

Information Letter and Parental Consent Form

November 12, 2015

Dear Parent:

My name is Cindy Hogston and I am a student at Gardner-Webb University pursuing a *Doctorate of Education* in Educational Leadership. Currently, I am completing the requirements for graduation, which includes writing and defending a dissertation. My dissertation is entitled, *The Influence of Accelerated Reader on High School Students Motivation to Read for Pleasure*

Recently, your child participated in an anonymous survey about his or her participation in Accelerated Reader while in elementary and middle school. The last question on the survey allowed students to volunteer for a follow-up interview with the researcher. Your child provided his or her contact information seeking to participate in an interview. In order for your child to participate in an interview, he or she must have parental consent on file.

Interviews will be conducted in November at your child's high school. Interviews are scheduled to take less than 20 minutes and will occur in the school's media center. To ensure all student responses are accurately reported, interviews will be audio-recorded. Each interviewee will be provided a copy of the transcribed interview by email within 4 weeks of the scheduled interview. The interviewee will be instructed to review the interview transcription to ensure his or her answers were recorded correctly. If corrections are needed, the interviewee will be asked to make the necessary corrections and return the corrected transcription to me by email.

All interviewee responses are considered confidential and individual student results will not be shared in any format. Interviewee responses will be used in the data results and narrative analyses, but no interviewee identifiers will be present in the data analysis. Students and 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.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Review Board at Gardner-Webb University. In addition, it has the support of the district's superintendent and the principal at your child's school. However, the final decision regarding your child's participation is yours. Should you have any concerns or comments resulting from your child's participation in this study, please contact Dr. Doug Eury at Gardner-Webb University. Dr. Eury's contact information is XXXXXXXXXXX.

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, Cindy Hogston at XXXXXXXXX or by phone at XXXXXXXXXXXX.

Thank you in advance for your interest and support of this project.

Sincerely,

Cindy Hogston

****

☐   Yes – my child is permitted to participate in an interview

☐   No – my child is not permitted to participate in an interview

Student's Name **(please print)**_____

Parent or Guardian Signature _____Date _____

School Student Attends _____

Appendix C

Accelerated Reader Interview Questions

1. Tell me about how you feel about reading?
    a. Do you enjoy reading?
    b. Explain what you enjoy most or least about reading.

2. Why do you choose to read? Why do you choose not to read?

3. What kinds of reading material do you enjoy reading the most?

4. What reading material do you like to read the least?

5. Tell me about the flexibility you have with reading choices regarding in-class and outside-of-class reading assignments.
    a. How do you think "choice" of reading material affects your attitude toward the assignment?

6. Think about the other activities that you are involved in. How do your extracurricular activities influence the time you have to read for pleasure?

7. Think back to Kindergarten to now – If you had the opportunity to share a message with your former teachers about the best way to encourage you to be a better reader today, what would you tell them?

8. My research study seeks to find out about students' experience with Accelerated Reader. How do you feel AR has shaped the reader you are today?

9. How do you feel your participation in Accelerated Reader in elementary and middle school has influenced your motivation to read for pleasure in high school?

10. I do not have any more questions for you. But please feel free to share any additional information on the topics of reading, Accelerated Reader, or reading for pleasure that you would like to.

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

Good afternoon. My name is Cindy Hogston and I am a student At Gardner-Webb University pursuing a doctorate degree in Educational Leadership. Thanks for volunteering to talk with me about your past experiences with reading and the influence of participation in Accelerated Reader on your current motivation to read in high school.

As we get started with the interview, I want to let you know that there are no wrong answers. Positive and negative comments are both useful so please feel free to be honest as the questions are asked. Your anonymity will be maintained at all times and you may be assured of complete confidentiality, as I will not use any names in the final reports.

As was disclosed in the parental consent, the interview will be audio recorded. I am taping the interview so that none of your answers are inadvertently omitted as I try to write down your answers. The audio recording will be transcribed and a copy of your answers will be emailed to you. If the transcription contains errors, you will be asked to make the corrections and email the corrected transcription to me. If the recording contains no errors, you will be asked to send me an email stating that the transcription is correct as written.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Researcher:

      I will ask each question and allow you time to respond. Please feel free to respond honestly. Are you ready to begin?

Researcher:

      Please state your first name.
      Please state the grade level for the 2015-2016 school year

Researcher begins to ask question

Appendix E

Parental Information Letter

November 5, 2015

Dear Parent or Guardian:

My name is Cindy Hogston, and I am a doctoral student at Gardner-Webb University pursuing a *Doctorate of Education* in Educational Leadership. I am conducting a research study entitled: *The Influence of Accelerated Reader on High School Students' Motivation to Read for Pleasure.*

The purpose of this research study is to assess high school students' beliefs about the influence of their experiences with Accelerated Reader during elementary and middle school on their motivation to read for pleasure during high school. Dr. Doug Eury, Department Chair for the School of Education and the Graduate School of Education at Gardner-Webb University, is supervising the research study.

An anonymous survey consisting of 13 questions will be provided to students enrolled in a first-semester English course. Participation in the survey is completely voluntary. A student may choose to complete the survey, but participation is not mandatory. No part of the survey will be used for instructional purposes, or as part of a student's grade for the course.

Although student anonymity will be maintained at all times, the last question of the survey will allow students to volunteer for an interview by providing their name and contact information. The purpose of the interviews is to allow students the opportunity to share any additional information about their participation in Accelerated Reader as it pertains to their motivation to read for pleasure in high school. Students who offer their contact information on the survey will be provided an additional *Parental Consent* form. Students wishing to participate in an interview must obtain a parent or guardian signature and return the *Parental Consent* form to the school's main office no later than Tuesday, November 19, 2015. Only students with a signed *Parental Consent* form will be scheduled for a follow-up interview.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at XXXXXX, or by phone at XXXXXXXXXXXXX.

Sincerely,

Cindy Hogston

Appendix F

Instructions for Administering the Survey

Each survey respondent has the opportunity to participate in a follow-up interview with the researcher. In an effort to provide uniformity in data collection, please follow the directions below.

<div align="center">Teacher Directions:</div>

1. Provide each student one copy of the survey.

2. Have students read the survey directions.

3. Provide students time to complete the survey.

4. When students return the surveys, turn the survey over so that you can see item 14. If the student has left item 14 blank, place the survey in the manila envelope labeled "No Follow-up Interview." If the respondent provided his or her contact information in item 14, please place the survey in the manila envelope labeled "Follow-up Interview" and provide the student with a *Parental Consent* form.

   a. Parental Consent forms are located in a manila envelope labeled "Parental Consent forms"

5. Inform respondents wishing to participate in a follow-up interview that a signed Parental Consent form is required. These forms should be turned into the school's main office by Thursday, November 12, 2015.

6. Repeat these steps for each of your class periods.

7. Once all surveys have been completed for all class periods, return all survey items to the plastic storage bag.

8. Return the plastic storage bag to the plastic storage bin labeled "Return Surveys Here" located in your school's main office.

Appendix G

Master Code Sheet

Family	Code	Definition
Implementation	Implementation	Implementation associated with the manner in which schools managed the Accelerated Reader program within their individual schools.
	Requirement	Implementation associated with participants being required to participate in Accelerated Reader. Students referred to requirement as feeling forced to read.
	Points	Implementation associated with participants' point goals and in some cases students feeling their point goals were excessive.
	Rewards	Implementation associated with rewards for reaching participants' designated point goals.
	Percentage of Grade	Implementation associated with participants' point goals being averaged into their language arts grades.
	Likes	Implementation associated with characteristics of the Accelerated Reader participants said they enjoyed about Accelerated Reader.
	Dislikes	Characteristics of the Accelerated Reader participants said they did not like about Accelerated Reader.
	Stressful	Implementation associated participants feeling stress from participating in the Accelerated Reader.
Motivation	Influenced	Motivation associated with participants' current level of desire to read for pleasure in high school.
	No Influence	Motivation associated with participants' current level of desire to read for pleasure in high school.