

Conclusion

Data Analysis

As stated throughout my research, I used a variety of methods to collect data including student observations, student surveys, circulation data, and short oral and written responses. Throughout this process, I analyzed the results of each data collection tool to determine if, in fact, I was helping to change my students' feelings towards reading and increase an interest in independent reading. I have included this data in the previous sections of my report.

Final Survey

As a means to determine my students' feelings towards independent reading, I decided to do a final survey to gain honest, thoughtful feedback about the project, just as many of the action researchers studied this semester did and was discussed by MacLean and Mohr in *Teacher-Researchers at Work*. I varied my questions from the first survey and had students complete this survey using Google Documents, just as they had the first one. The questions I asked my students evolved throughout the process, and I jotted notes and ideas in my research log and on scraps of paper throughout the month they were reading to target areas that I continued to have questions about. In addition, I also wanted to collect a final piece of data that would provide me with some comparison points between my students' attitudes and feelings at the beginning of the project because it is hard to measure attitudes and feeling changes.

Survey Results

Did they like it? The graphs below show my students results. The data displays that students' feelings before reading were actually quite similar to their feelings after we finished the study. The data results do not display a clear change in my students feeling when comparing the before graph displayed in green to the after reading displayed in yellow. However, when asked if

they like reading a book of their choice now more than they did before (displayed in blue), 52% of students either agreed or strongly agreed that they did like reading a book of their choice more than they did at the beginning of this study. Unfortunately, my results did not supply me with a clear cut answer of yes, I did increase my students' interest in reading, but when compiled together, it appears that some students' interests were changed.

Diagram 7: Before Reading

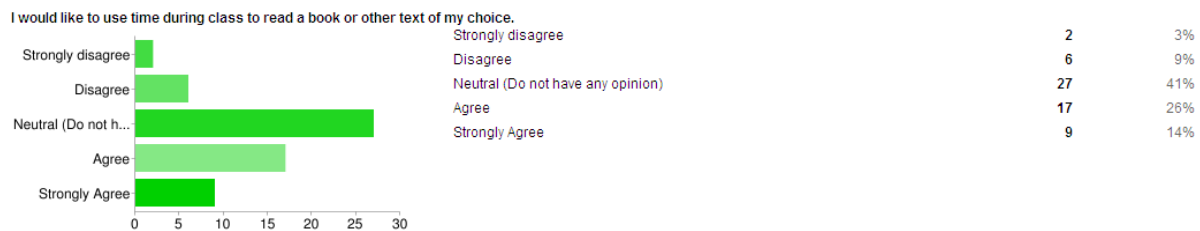


Diagram 8: After Reading



Diagram 9: Before vs. After



In an effort to receive a set of more candid, thorough responses, I also asked my students to provide written responses about the project. The tables below display the question and some sample responses. As noted in the student responses, this set of responses provide a much more positive outlook on the study and actually shows that students were engaged and interested in the

study. As I hoped, the students' responses in were vivid and candid and offered a lot of insight into this study and implications for myself and other teachers that I will later discuss.

Table 13: Student Responses – Favorite Part

Question: What was your favorite part about reading a book of your choice?
1. we could read what ever we wanted and we can read whenever we want
2. We got to choose a book of our choice to read during class and outside of school
3. I like how I can choose what I want to read and enjoy it at the same time. Reading is actually fun.
4. My favorite part about reading a book of my choice is its more interesting because when we pick a book out it will most likely be something we like to read about. When we are assigned a book we are more likely to think its boring and not pay attenchnion.
5. you get to choose what book you like best instead of the teacher deciding what book to choose for you
6. Beignn able to read when I wanted to and not have to wait for the rest of the class to catch up or for me to have to read for a long time to catch up with the class.
7. My favorite part about reading a book of my choice is that I can make connections while reading and I wont feel bored and sluggish while reading because I will stay intrested in my book.
8. My favorite part about reading the book of my choice is i actually enjo it because i chose it.
9. I can read at my own past with out people telling my to read faster.
10. It really didn't have to be a long book, I could pick out any book that I wanted, and I got the easy book.

Table 14: Student Responses – Least Favorite Part

Question: What was your least favorite part about reading a book of your choice?
1. No one els now what the book was about usles they read the book to.
2. Theres really nothing that I dont like about picking the book of my choice.
3. My least favorite part about the personal reading is the reading log. Reading logs to me sound like a second grade assignment that gets in the way at times
4. when u cant find the book u wanna read.
5. I don't know what was my least favorite part of reading my book of choice becausae I like reading. But if i had to pick something i did'nt like it would be that the assignment was'nt long enough.
6. sometimes you get that feeling you really dont feel like reading at the time
7. I dont have a least favortie part.
8. my least favorite part is the reading log because i usually forget to record what i read and sometimes i lose it
9. My least favorite part was reading by myself.
10. I didnt have a least favorite part I would read my book and think this is interesting. So pretty much the only bad part is all the time it takes to fill out the reading log. Thats only

because my lazy i still do it though.

Should we continue this? I asked for students’ opinions on whether they wanted to continue to use classroom time to read a text of their choice. This felt like another strong indicator to see if they were engaged in the idea of reading and if their interest levels were increasing. As I noted previously, 12% of students disagreed or strongly disagreed with using class time to read a book they selected. After reading for a month, the number decreased to 10%. Interestingly, before conducting the survey 34% of students were neutral about this, but after only 24% were neutral and more fell into the agree or strongly agree category. Students were also surveyed to determine the number that may continue to read a book of their choice if it was not a requirement of class. The results are indicated in diagram 12. It is important to point out that 16% of students disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, while 42% of students agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

Diagram 10: Students’ Interest in Continuing in Class



Diagram 11: Students’ Interest in Continuing Outside of Class



Book Circulation

Prior to starting this study, my media center specialist compile data on how many books my students borrowed from the media center since the first month of school. Of the 54 students I taught, only seven of them had visited the media center and checked out a total of 11 books amongst the seven of them. After the first month of our study, 94 books were checked out by my 51 students eligible to check out a book; three of my students were ineligible to check out a book due to fines. I provided these students books from my personal library and other reading materials I borrowed from colleagues and friends. Additionally, at the beginning of the survey, I had students document whether they had library memberships or visited the library. The data from this question is displayed in diagram 12. At the end of the survey, I asked students if they would continue to visit the media center even if they were not given class time to do so. Results displayed in diagram 13. 52% of students said they plan to visit the media center in the future and only 16% of students said they did not have any intention of visiting the media center on their own time. This is compared to the 11% of students that said at the beginning of the study that they visited the media center “often” and 39% of students “rarely” visited the media center. This data shows that students’ interest in reading and using the media center as a means to access books has increased throughout this experience.

Diagram 12: Library Exposure

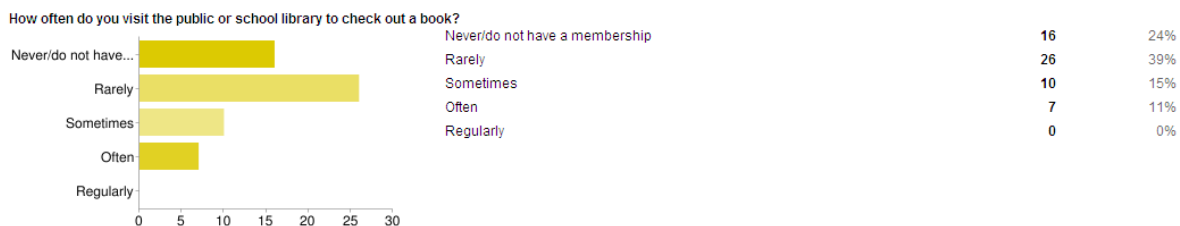
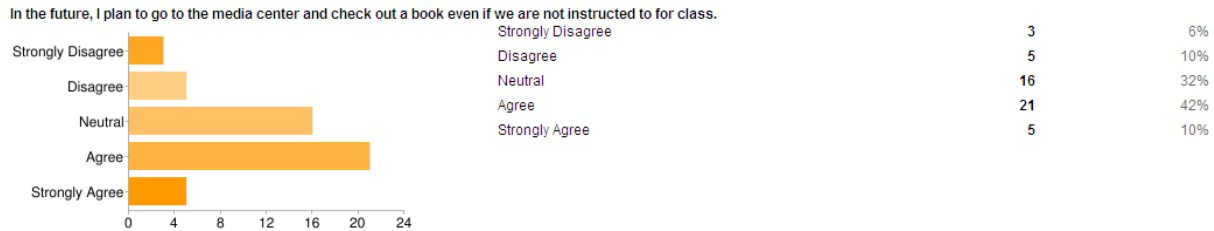


Diagram 13: Continued Use of Media Center



Conclusion

The data displayed throughout my research study displays an interesting trend with my students. It does appear that my students' feelings towards independent reading are changing slowly, which is why I will continue to experiment with this idea throughout the remainder of the school year. It is evident that some students' perceptions are still similar to what they were when they began based on the survey I provided them, but some of the questions posed interesting results as not all results were completely aligned. My observational data continues to display a change in student behaviors and engagement in the classroom, as well as an increased interaction with the media center. It is important to note that a number of my students were not pleased with the way in which they were held accountable for their reading, so this will be something I will amend in the future and may help increase students' interest.

Implications

Creating Opportunities through Choice

As evidenced by other researchers, students are motivated by choice and the freedom to find something that is interesting to them. Most of my students indicated at one point or more during this study that they liked reading a book they got to choose, not a book the teacher choose for them. It gave them freedom. It gave them power. It gave them control. How often do students ever have these things in the classroom? In addition to these three intriguing attributes, it also

gave students the ability to work at their own pace and to find a topic that was of interest to them.

Many of my students noted that they liked this study because they did not have to wait for someone else or someone else did not have to wait for them. Who wouldn't like that? It is embarrassing to be the one student everyone is waiting for, and it is frustrating to be finished before everyone else. Independent reading allows students to read at their own pace and on their own level. Nancie Atwell states that, "My students range from dyslexics to speed readers to sophisticated literary critics. The common denominator is that they know what the reading zone feels like, and they want to be there" (2009, para. 15). No matter what the students' reading level is, independent reading provides the opportunity to discover ideas and experiences at your own pace, rate, and level. Independent reading is means to meet all students' levels and interests.

My students like having the ability to select a topic they were interested in; it's practically impossible for me, as the teacher, to find a text that interests every student in my classroom, but independent reading creates this chance, this opportunity. We all have different hobbies, interests, and backgrounds; independent reading celebrates these differences.

Accountability

How should students be held accountable for independent reading? I, like most teachers, agree that there needs to be some type of accountability for reading, or at least I think I do. However, I am still uncertain as to the best method to achieve this, so my plan is to continue to investigate and test out a few different approaches. Many of my students stated that they were not a fan of my trendy Facebook approach, so I will head back to the drawing board and try again.

Literature Groups/Circles

Many of my students noted in their responses that they would like to have the opportunity to read the same book as another person or group of people in the classroom, so they could conduct book discussions with their classmates. Although this would probably limit some of the freedom students have in choosing their own book, this would help promote communication and literature analysis, so this could be an excellent tool to utilize in the language arts classroom. Additionally, students learn from each other and love interacting with each other, so this could also promote interest and engagement. Students enjoy interacting with each other and learning from each other, so exploring the idea of literature groups or circles may be an effective way to use independent reading in the classroom.

Resources

Teachers need to have the resources to be able to provide opportunities for students to read book that are of interest to them. Although my media center specialists were very helpful, there were multiple authors I asked them to look for in the library based on recommendations from websites and colleagues, and they did not have them. In addition, due to budget restraints, they were not able to order any of them. It would be beneficial for all language arts teachers to have a classroom library in their own classroom, but, again, this may not be feasible due to budget concerns.

Exposure and Training

Throughout my study, I heard a few negative comments from my colleagues on their feelings toward independent reading. A lot of them felt that it was not a valuable tool and could be considered a waste of time. However, independent reading exposes students to new vocabulary, ideas, and experiences. It would be beneficial for teachers to receive training about

effective methods to implement independent reading in the classroom to help dispel these negative feelings.

Student Feedback

Ask for it. Students like to be invested in their education and value having their opinions heard so incorporate this in the classroom. When my students told me they did not like a book they were reading, I did not ignore them, but I gave them the opportunity to find a new book. They appreciated this and told me this when we discussed changing their book. Students want to be heard. Listen to what they are saying.

Increasing Male Engagement

It was evident throughout my research that my male students were more reluctant to read than my female students. They were the students that chose the computer over reading and had more difficulty finding a text that was of interest to them. Teachers should consider this disconnect when selecting texts and activities in the classroom to help increase male engagement in the English classroom.

Students' Needs

As evidenced by the variety of responses and opinions I received through surveys, writing, and speaking with my students, it is even clearer that my students have a wide variety of interests and needs. This displays the importance of differentiating lessons even independent reading activities based on the students in the classroom. This idea is not a new concept, but one that may sometimes be dismissed due to the number of duties and responsibilities teachers face. Some students openly said they prefer reading alone, while others preferred working with classmates. To truly increase engagement, it is important to offer a variety of learning situations to the variety of students in the classroom.