

## Student Attitudes Toward Reading Improve at an Illinois Elementary School

Source: Karen Flach, teacher, Stewardson-Strasburg Elementary School  
Research conducted during the 2000 school year.

### Study Description

Accelerated Reader® (AR™) has been available at Stewardson-Strasburg Elementary since Flach was hired seven years ago. Flach reports that she had been using AR at about 20% of its maximum potential until she attended her first ReadingRenaissance® seminar in June 1999. Reading Renaissance is the collection of techniques, materials, and software used by teachers to accelerate reading development. Flach began implementing Reading Renaissance at the start of the 1999–2000 school year. In the spring of 2000, Flach and her colleague surveyed all sixth-grade students and their parents to get feedback on Reading Renaissance.

The student survey was given out to 26 students<sup>1</sup> during the school day on March 6, 2000. It was administered confidentially. Students did not write their names or any other identifier on the questionnaires. The children were told that their responses to the survey would help determine if Reading Renaissance was going to be continued and expanded. For this reason, they were directed to answer honestly. Students were also instructed to take their time and think about their responses. When finished, the children placed their surveys in an envelope that was sealed and collected by the teacher. The questionnaire took about 30 minutes to complete.

A separate questionnaire was sent home to the parents or guardians of the 28 children in the class on March 6, 2000<sup>2</sup>. Within a week, every parent had returned the survey to the school via their child. To ensure confidentiality, the completed surveys were placed in an envelope. No names were associated with completed questionnaires.

The survey consisted of four statements and a “yes” and “no” check box. Following each statement were three lines designated for comments. There were also six lines at the bottom of the questionnaire designated for additional, general comments.

The following report discusses the results from the Accelerated Reader Survey for Students (n=26) and the Accelerated Reader Survey for Parents (n=28). Both have a 100% response rate.

### Results

**Reading More.** After a year’s implementation of Reading Renaissance, 100% of student and parent respondents agreed with the statement “I am reading more (more time or more books) than in previous years” (student) and “My child is reading more than in previous years” (parent).

Twenty of the 26 student respondents included a comment with their answer to statement one. Comments illustrating greater reading frequency and specifically acknowledging changes in reading patterns to include nighttime reading were made by 11 of the 20 respondents. Other comments expressed a new found enjoyment in reading, how AR goals have motivated students to increase their reading, and a noted improvement in reading skills.

Twenty-one of the 28 parents also included comments with their response. Fourteen parents stated specifically that their children were reading more. They made comments such as “My child reads much more, spending more time reading than watching TV.” Three parents noted that their “child goes to his room and reads, and that is something he never did before.” Two parents discussed how they see improvement in their child’s reading ability, and two parents stated that their children were reading out of obligation.

**Enjoying Reading.** Twenty-four of the 26 student respondents agreed with the statement “I enjoy reading more this year than in previous years”. Twenty-two of the 28 parents agreed with the statement “My child is enjoying reading more than in previous years”. While four parents disagreed, one parent checked both the “yes” and “no” box, and one parent did not respond to the statement at all.

Of the 24 students who agreed with the *Enjoying Reading* statement, 20 students included comments with their response. Fifteen students stated that they enjoy reading more this year. Three students wrote that they are, in fact, reading more, and two students made statements indicating that they liked reading but didn’t love it. Finally, one of the two students who responded negatively to this statement made the comment “I like reading up-to-date things better than books.”

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### Class Profile

Stewardson-Strasburg  
Elementary School  
Stewardson-Strasburg,  
Ill.

Students: 28, Grade 6

Demographics:

Rural

Free or reduced lunch: 20%

Mobility: 14%

Race/Ethnicity:

White: 100%

### Educator Background

**Karen Flach**, a sixth-grade teacher, received her bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, Ill. She has been a full-time classroom teacher for seven years and is currently working on publishing her second math article. Flach, who attended her first Reading Renaissance seminar in 1999, has been instrumental in getting Reading Renaissance adopted at her school and ensuring that all teachers are trained in Renaissance techniques.

Nineteen parents included comments with their favorable responses to the *Enjoying Reading* statement. The responses fell into three categories. Fourteen parents stated that their children are excited about reading, three parents noted that their children were reading more, and two parents made other statements. The four parents who disagreed with the *Enjoying Reading* statement included comments such as “My child is getting older and adding extracurricular activities that leaves less time to read...”

**Types of Books Read.** The majority of respondents reported favorable reactions to the statements “I am reading different types of books this year” (student) and “I have noticed a difference in the types of books my child is reading” (parent). Twenty-five of the 26 student and 26 of the 28 parent respondents agreed with these statements.

Positive comments following the *Types of Books Read* statement were made by 19 of the student respondents. Eleven students noted that their reading level was rising. Eight students remarked that they had a new perspective on reading either because they were now reading bigger books, new genres of books, or new authors. The epiphany of one student was documented through the statement “I never knew that books could be so interesting.”

Parents’ comments following the *Types of Books Read* statement were very similar to their children’s. Nineteen of the 26 parents who responded affirmatively included a comment. Nine parents mentioned the improved reading level of their child. Six parents noted that their child has “branched out and is reading a variety of different books” and four parents cited specific authors and types of books that they knew their children were reading.

**Reading Better.** Twenty-five student respondents answered affirmatively to the statement “I think I can read better now (faster, harder books, bigger words, etc.) than I could at the beginning of this school year.” The parallel statement on the parent’s questionnaire read as follows: “I believe my child is reading better because of the amount of time spent reading.” Flach, the questionnaire’s designer, measured reading improvement by addressing the parent’s perception of how much time their children were spending reading. Twenty-seven of the 28 parent respondents agreed with this statement.

Nineteen students included a comment with their response to the *Reading Better* statement. Interestingly, nine students noted that their reading level has improved, two commented that they are reading faster, and seven students reported that they are reading both faster and at a higher level. One student stated that he/she is reading more.

The comments made by parents to the *Reading Better* statement were again very similar to their children’s. Seven parents remarked that their child’s reading level has improved. Four parents stated that their child’s comprehension level has increased: “She seems to retain the story better.” Four parents noted that the extensive reading practice has helped their child to read better, and two parents made general comments about reading. In total, 17 parents included comments to this statement.

Stewardson-Strasburg students’ reading growth parallels the positive results of the Accelerated Reader Survey. A pre- and post-test analysis of the STAR Reading® Growth Report indicates an increase of two normal curve equivalents (NCEs) in reading scores. Furthermore, by the end of the school year, the level of books students read had increased by one-and-a-half grades. Because of these gains, the administration at Stewardson-Strasburg Elementary School chose to expand the use of Reading Renaissance to the third through eighth grades.

### Survey for Students (n=26)

Yes No

I am reading more (more time or more books) than in previous years.	26	0
I enjoy reading more this year than in previous years.	24	2
I am reading different types of books this year.	25	1
I think I can read better now (faster, harder books, bigger words, etc.) than I could at the beginning of this school year.	25	1

### Survey for Parents (n=28)

Yes No

My child is reading more than in previous years.	28	0
My child is enjoying reading more than in previous years.	23	5
I have noticed a difference in the type of books my child is reading	26	2
I believe my child is reading better because of the amount of time spent reading.	27	1

<sup>1</sup> Two students were in a pull-out reading program at the time of administration. Accelerated Reader was used in this reading program as well.

<sup>2</sup> The parents of the two children who did not take the student survey received and completed questionnaires.

For more information, or for additional copies of this report, contact:



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