

Kansas Middle School Students Improve Reading Achievement and Attitudes Toward Reading After Only Nine Weeks of Reading Renaissance®

Source: Julie Clingan, reading teacher

Susan B. Anthony Middle School & Dwight D. Eisenhower Middle School
Manhattan, Kansas

Introduction

The study's author, Julie Clingan, had been using Accelerated Reader® for several years, but when she started a new position in a new district, she felt compelled to demonstrate the effectiveness of Accelerated Reader and Reading Renaissance to her principal, parents of her students, and, most importantly, herself. Clingan completed this study for a graduate-level "Teachers as Researchers" class.

Study Description

Clingan teaches reading classes for seventh- and eighth-grade students at two middle schools. During the first quarter of the 1999–2000 school year, Clingan studied the changes in reading achievement and attitudes toward reading of students enrolled in her six reading classes. While reading is an elective class, the seventh- and eighth-grade students who enroll in the class each quarter come from a wide range of reading backgrounds. Some students enroll because they are very good readers and want to have more time for reading in school, while other students read far below grade level and thoroughly dislike reading. Since it is an elective class, students often enroll for just one quarter or for non-consecutive quarters, making it even more important to have an effective reading program in place.

Prior to this study, Clingan attended a Reading Renaissance seminar and modified the structure of her classes to incorporate several Renaissance techniques including devoting more time to reading, identifying zone of proximal development (ZPD) ranges, and implementing student reading logs.

The reading classes in this study met for 46 minutes daily. Students spent the first 30 minutes reading and taking Accelerated Reader quizzes and the last 16 minutes completing reading skills worksheets or projects based on the books they read. Students selected books to read from the schools' collections of over 1,100 books. In order to identify each student's appropriate reading range, Clingan administered the STAR Reading® computer-adaptive reading test at the beginning of the quarter. Then, students used their tested reading levels to guide their book selections. Students kept track of their reading on daily reading logs.

Results

Clingan surveyed and tested her students during the quarter to measure changes in attitudes toward reading and changes in reading achievement. She also surveyed her students' parents. On all measures, Clingan found substantial improvements in both the attitudes and achievement levels of her students.

At the beginning of the quarter, 28% of students thought that reading was enjoyable, 33% felt that reading was okay, and 39% thought it was boring. At the end of the quarter, 46% of the students thought that reading was enjoyable, 41% thought it was okay and only 14% thought it was boring. These survey results are displayed in Graph 1.

At the end of the quarter, 77% of students said they would continue to read for pleasure. Those students gave several reasons including: they like or love to read; they have books or magazines they want to

School Profile

**Susan B. Anthony
Middle School**

Manhattan, Kansas

Students: 473, Grades 7–8

Socio-Economic Status:

Free or reduced lunch: 22%

Mobility: 26%

Race/Ethnicity:

American Indian or

Alaska Native: 1%

Asian or

Pacific Islander: 5%

Black or

African American: 6%

Hispanic or Latino: 4%

White: 84%

**Dwight D. Eisenhower
Middle School**

Manhattan, Kansas

Students: 495, Grades 7–8

Socio-Economic Status:

Free or reduced lunch: 35%

Mobility: 29%

Race/Ethnicity:

Asian or

Pacific Islander: 5%

Black or

African American: 13%

Hispanic or Latino: 3%

White: 79%

Educator Background

Julie Clingan has taught reading at the middle school level for nine years. She received her bachelor's degree in elementary education from St. Mary of the Plains College in Dodge City, Kansas, in 1992, and her master's degree in elementary education from Kansas State University in 2000. Although she has used Accelerated Reader for eight years, it became a fully integrated part of her reading program in 1996 after she attended a Reading Renaissance Professional Development seminar.

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read; they want to improve their reading skills; they find reading relaxing; and they believe reading stirs their imaginations.

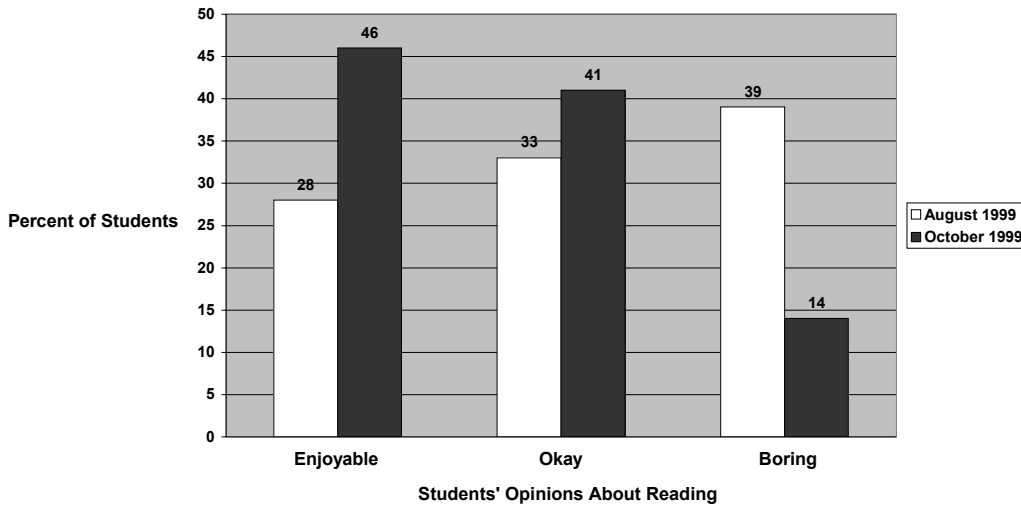
Both students and parents felt that the students' reading skills improved over the quarter. Seventy-seven percent of students felt that their reading skills improved, while 83% of parents thought that their child's reading skills had improved. This is particularly remarkable given the short time span of the class.

However, reading improvement was not just a matter of student and parent perceptions. Clingan also found positive achievement results by looking at changes in STAR Reading test scores. Clingan pretested her students at the beginning

of the quarter and post-tested at the end of the quarter. Over the nine-week period, her students' average scores increased from the 58th percentile to the 63rd percentile (see Graph 2).

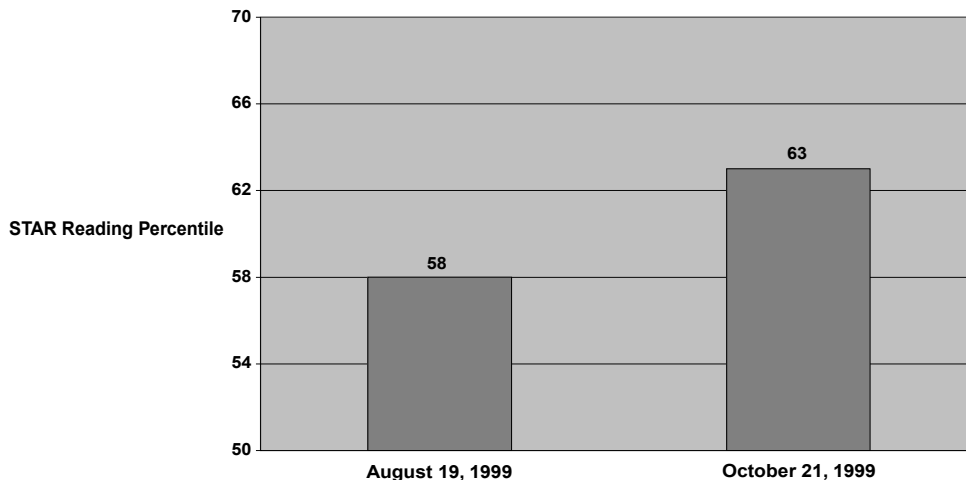
The students in this study experienced improvement in their reading skills and an increase in their enjoyment of reading. Clingan concluded that Accelerated Reader enables her to give students their choice of reading materials at their individual reading levels, while still holding them accountable for what they read. Clingan's study shows that this is a very successful combination for her middle school students.

Graph 1: Student Attitudes Toward Reading Improve with Reading Renaissance
Anthony and Eisenhower Middle Schools, Manhattan, Kansas



Graph 2: Student Reading Achievement Increases by 5 Percentile Points After 9 Weeks of Reading Renaissance

Anthony and Eisenhower Middle Schools, Manhattan, Kansas



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