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READING ATTITUDE AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT
IN THIRD, FOURTH, AND FIFTH
GRADE CHILDREN

by
Denise L. Moretz

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the Master of Science in Teaching
Degree in the Graduate Division
of Rowan University
1997

Approved by

M.S.T. Advisor

Date Approved

July 3, 1997

ABSTRACT

Denise L. Moretz, *Reading Attitude and Academic Achievement in Third, Fourth, and Fifth Grade Children*, 1997, Dr. Randall Robinson, Thesis Advisor, Master of Science in Teaching, Rowan University.

The purpose of this study was to determine if a correlation existed between reading attitudes and academic achievement of elementary school children in grades three, four, and five. Also, the researcher wanted to determine if variables such as gender or time in school affected the relationship between reading attitude and academic achievement.

The subjects consisted of seventy students from three intact classrooms. This study took place in a middle class suburban elementary school in southern New Jersey. Twenty-seven students were from third grade, twenty-one students were from fourth grade, and twenty-two students were from fifth grade. Thirty-eight females and thirty-two males participated in the study.

The reading attitudes of the subjects were assessed with the Educational Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) developed by McKenna & Kear (see appendix A). This survey consisted of twenty questions dealing with recreational and academic reading. Each question had four standard pictorial figures for subjects to use as their answer. The academic achievement of the students was collected by obtaining the scores for each subject on the IOWA Test of Basic Skills, a standardized test taken by each student participating in the study.

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to statistically analyze the data. Positive correlations between reading attitude and academic achievement were found to exist. The relationship between reading attitude and academic achievement was not significant when looking at the groups by gender. The findings also indicated a negative trend between reading attitude and achievement (academic, reading, and comprehension) exists as students progress through school.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Denise L. Moretz, Reading Attitude and Academic Achievement in Third, Fourth, and Fifth Grade Children, 1997, Dr. Randall Robinson, Thesis Advisor, Master of Science in Teaching, Rowan University.

This study determined if a correlation existed between reading attitude and academic achievement in students in third, fourth, and fifth grade and if variables such as gender or time in school affected this relationship.

A significant relationship was found to exist between reading attitude and academic achievement but was not significant when evaluating the groups by gender. A negative trend was identified as students progressed through school.

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Chapter I
Scope of the Study
Introduction

There are many factors which influence the reading success of students in school today. Home environment, peer relationships, gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity are some of the variables that can affect the attitudes that students develop in the classroom (Cohern & Collins, 1992). Studies have shown that student reading attitudes are affected by educators. Research by McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth (1995) found that teaching practices can positively affect reading attitudes. Cullinan (1987) said that the two goals that every reading program should address are teaching students how to read and making them want to read. Consequently, it is of the utmost importance that the teachers of today understand and become familiar with the research linking attitudes to academic achievement (Tunnell, Calder, & Phaup, 1991).

In 1991, Rowe stated that one of the important goals of educators in our country was to develop students into literate individuals and lifelong learners (Barnett & Irwin, 1994). Rowe went on to remark that literacy is the key to attaining this objective (Barnett & Irwin, 1994). Athey (1985) concluded that "most reading educators appear to support

the notion that affective factors influence both reading achievement and behavior" (Shapiro & White, 1991). The affective factors that Athey spoke of included self-concept, locus of control and attitudes (Shapiro & White, 1991). Barnett & Irwin (1994) believed that improving literacy calls for the development of the affective aspects, as well as the cognitive faculty, to read. Kush and Watkins (1996) also mentioned that the reading attitude of a child is one of the affective factors that influences the reading achievement of that child. Research by Brookover, Thomas, & Patterson (1964) found that the reading attitudes of students instead of ability, restrict the students level of achievement in school (McPherson & Rust, 1987).

The literature suggests that attitudes affect subsequent academic performance (McPherson & Rust, 1987; Russ, 1989; Walberg & Tsai, 1985; McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth, 1995). Therefore, it is important that educators analyze the relationship between student reading attitudes and academic achievement (Tunell, Calder, & Phaup, 1991). Students who experience success with reading will normally display a positive attitude toward reading, while students who experience difficulty or failure, will normally display a negative attitude toward reading (McPherson & Rust, 1987). This negative attitude may prevail throughout their academic career and become a learned response (Howard, 1988). In which case, the learned response may make students believe that they will fail academically and consequently, they do (Howard, 1988).

By examining the reading attitudes of the students in their classes, teachers can identify those students who have a negative attitude toward reading, which in turn, may

raise their academic performance (Russ, 1989).

Significance of the Study

A strong correlation has been found to exist between reading attitudes and academic achievement. This study examined the effect that student attitude has on academic achievement. Students in third, fourth, and fifth grade were given a reading attitude survey to complete. The results of the survey were compared to the scores obtained on the IOWA Test of Basic Skills to determine if a relationship was present between these two variables.

Statement of the Problem

Does a correlation exist between student reading attitudes and academic achievement of elementary school children in grades three, four, and five? Does gender or time in school affect the relationship between reading attitude and academic achievement?

Research Hypotheses

There were three hypotheses for this study. First, there is a positive relationship between reading attitude scores and academic achievement in children in third, fourth, and fifth grades. Second, there is no correlation between reading attitude and academic achievement when examining the groups by gender. Finally, as students progress from third to fifth grade, a negative relationship between reading attitude and academic

achievement is found.

Limitations of the Study

The following were the limitations of this study:

1. The use of intact classrooms for subjects prevented the researcher from randomly choosing subjects. Therefore, subjects were not representative of the general population.
2. The use of the classroom of the researcher may have influenced student attitude thereby affecting the scores and overall results of the study.
3. The extraneous variable of prior experience with reading that the researcher could not control which may have affected the decisions made by the subjects.
4. The presence of the researcher while the subjects were completing the survey may have influenced the decisions made by the subjects and, ultimately, the results of the study.

Definition of Terms

The following were the operational definitions that were used for this study:

Attitude - Attitude can be defined as judgments that are formed on the basis of ones success or failure in regards to experiences (Howard, 1988). For the purpose of this study attitude was measured using the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) developed by McKenna and Kear in 1990.

Reading Attitude- For the purpose of this study, reading attitude was defined as judgments that are formed towards academic and recreational reading.

Academic Achievement- For the purpose of this study, academic achievement was defined as the scores obtained on the IOWA Test of Basic Skills.

Chapter II

Review of Related Literature

Introduction

The debate over reading attitude and reading achievement has been studied by researchers for several decades. It has also been widely reported that there is a significant relationship between the reading attitudes of students and their academic achievement (Swanson, 1982; Walberg & Tsai, 1985; Russ, 1989; McKenna & Kear, 1990; McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995). Therefore, educators need to be aware of the research that links reading attitude and achievement in children (Tunnell, Calder, & Phaup, 1991).

Educators need to be aware of how attitudes are formed, and the variables that can influence student reading attitude. This study examined the formation of attitudes, and the influence that time, teaching, and gender can have on the reading attitudes of students and their academic achievement.

Formation of Attitudes

Attitudes can be explained as judgments that are formed on the basis of ones success or failure in regards to experiences (Howard, 1988). Shaw and Wright stated that "an attitude is a response to an event or idea and is clearly a learned response which is determined by society's reaction to the presentation of ideas" (Cothorn & Collins, 1992,

p.85). Smith defined a reading attitude in 1990 (p. 215) as "a state of mind which is accompanied by feelings and emotions, that make reading more or less probable" (Kush & Watkins, 1996).

Many models of reading attitude acquisition have found that attitude formation is a cumulative process and that attitudes are molded by experiences and the beliefs of significant others (McKenna, Stratton, Grindler & Jenkins, 1995). These attitudes are normally formed early and the elementary school years are an extremely important variable that can affect the development of good readers with good reading attitudes (Howard, 1988; Heathington & Alexander, 1984). Once an attitude is formed, it may not be changed as quickly as belief systems are changed (Cothorn & Collins, 1992). One belief has been that "individuals learn and remember material which is consistent with their attitude more easily than material which runs counter to it" (Fortner & Henk, 1991, p. 2).

Student interest can also affect the reading attitudes that are formed. In 1987, a study by Anderson, Shirley, Wilson, & Fielding found that student interest in reading material was 30 times more powerful in determining or predicting a student's ability to comprehend a passage. A study by Howard (1988) looked at seventy-five poor readers and attempted to alter their negative attitudes. It had been determined that if students had a negative attitude, their academic performance would suffer (Howard, 1988). Howard also found that if a student consistently experiences difficulty with reading, a defeatist attitude may begin to develop which may lead to a negative self-image and consequently, poorer reading performance (1988). Seligman and Maier identified this behavior in 1967

(Kaminsky, 1986) but researchers have only recently begun to investigate the influence reading attitudes have on reading performance.

Influencing Attitudes

A 1995 study by Davies and Brember concluded that reading attainments are affected by numerous factors including attitude. A series of attitude surveys conducted by Gorman in 1987 in junior and secondary schools, revealed a positive association between student reading attitudes and reading performance (Davies & Brember, 1995). Howard found that if teachers were able to modify the negative attitudes of their students, an increase in their reading performance and their desire to engage in reading related activities occurred (1988). Consequently, it is up to the educators of our nation, and the world, to instill positive attitudes toward reading, and every subject, into the students they teach. If teachers can help their students succeed by improving the attitudes of their students, they must try various methods to obtain this goal (Tunnell, Calder & Phaup, 1991).

Teachers can and do influence the reading attitudes that their students develop (Barnett & Irwin, 1994; McKenna, Stratton, Grindler & Jenkins, 1995). The reading attitude of students is a component that teachers must be aware and take into account when constructing their lessons, choosing their materials, and implementing instruction (Johnson & Gaskins, 1992). A 1994 year long study by the National Reading Research Center found that teachers recognize that motivation can and does affect their students (Koskinen, 1994). In fact, a study by Watkins & Edwards in 1993 showed that teachers

had a profound impact upon the amount of reading their students did outside of the school environment (Barnett & Irwin, 1994).

The way students feel about reading is directly related to their success with it (Russ, 1989). Russ continued by addressing the fact that teachers understand this idea and that many teachers believe that attitude does have a direct effect on the individuals achievement (1989). Epstein (1980) stated that the attitude of the reader is frequently the heart of reading difficulties and the solution to the problem begins with a change in attitude (Bruneau, 1986). Therefore, if these negative attitudes can be altered, the first step in the solution will have been taken. A study by Tunnell, Calder & Phaup (1991) involving 508 students in grades two through six, found that reading attitudes were as important as the ability of the students to read. The researchers continued by stating that teachers need to observe the attitudes of their students as well as their achievement.

The Influence of Time on Attitudes

Researchers also have found that attitudes can change as students progress through the different grade levels. A study of 116 first-grade students by Swanson (1982) found that younger students had basically positive attitudes, but when learning to read became a "chore," the attitudes increasingly became more negative. This idea has been supported by research which has also found that over time, the reading attitudes of students becomes increasingly more negative (Kush & Watkins, 1996; McKenna, Stratton, Grindler & Jenkins, 1995; McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth, 1995; Barnett & Irwin, 1994;

Tunnell, Calder, Justen & Phaup, 1991; Shapiro & White, 1991; Anderson, Tollesfson & Gilbert, 1985).

A 1967 study by Neale and Proshok found that as children moved from fourth to sixth grade, their answers to school related phrases became increasingly more negative (Parker & Paradis, 1986). The results of this study and one by Brown et al (1979), showed that attitudes did change as students progressed through school (Parker & Paradis, 1986). Another reason why reading attitudes may change was presented by the McKenna (1990) model. It stated that as children mature and more and more leisure activities are available to them, positive attitudes towards reading will on average worsen. Attitudes appear to be most positive at the beginning of the elementary school experience (McKenna, 1990).

In fact, the general trend shows that primary students have the most positive reading attitudes and for each advancing grade level, their attitudes become less positive (Anderson, Tollefson & Gilbert, 1985). Findings from a study involving over 18,000 subjects found that attitudes towards reading steadily became more negative as students progressed from first through sixth grade (McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth, 1995). A 1986 study by Parker & Paradis of 234 elementary students in grades one through six determined that children in grades one through three had the most positive reading attitudes. Consequently, teachers must try to influence the attitudes of their students in a positive manner.

The Influence of Teachers on Attitudes

The research has shown that children develop attitudes early in the elementary school years (Howard, 1988). For this reason, teachers must always be sensitive to the reading attitudes of their students and adjust their teaching style to fit the needs of their students. Therefore, "analysis of student's learning styles and attitudes is a practical tool for improving classroom accomplishments" (Reiff, 1985, p. 33). Teachers must be aware of the academic performance of their students as well as their attitudes, and incorporate the building of positive reading attitudes into their curriculum (Davies & Brember, 1995). In 1982, Fredericks indicated that planning appropriate activities which include choosing reading topics based on student interest and monitoring attitudes by informal inventories could help students develop positive attitudes towards reading (Heathington & Alexander, 1984). "Exploring children's attitudes towards books and reading is a useful diagnostic process which could lead towards the more effective use and relevant provision of books in school for children at different ages and stages of development" (Davies & Brember, 1995, p. 312).

One technique that teachers could use in the classroom is to make reading more meaningful to their students (Howard, 1988; Cothorn & Collins, 1992). If this is done, their students will be more likely to expend the effort required to read and to share what they have learned (Cothorn & Collins, 1992). Heathington (1978) listed several ideas for teachers to use which would aide in the development of positive reading attitudes. These included making plans to incorporate reading activities in a wide range of settings:

providing opportunities for organized reading in the classroom; allowing time for free reading in the classroom, the library, at home, and in other recreational environments (Heathington & Alexander, 1984).

Shapiro and White (1991) found that reading attitudes were affected by the type of reading instruction at the primary and intermediate grade levels. A recent study supported the conclusions of Shapiro and White. A year long study of 330 third and fifth graders by the National Reading Research Center identified six strategies teachers can incorporate in their classroom which will motivate students and help them to develop positive reading attitudes (Koskinen, 1994). The six factors included establishing a book-rich classroom environment, allowing students to choose the books they would like to read, providing opportunities for students to discuss books with others, encouraging students to read books in a series, helping students to have prior experience with the book, and promoting book ownership (Koskinen, 1994).

Guthrie and Greaney (1991) also supported the idea of a classroom rich with reading materials and continued by stating that these materials should be available to the students (Kush & Watkins, 1996). Beech (1990) mentioned that schools need to actively involve parents and inform them of how attitudes can affect performance in reading (Kush & Watkins, 1996). McKenna (1986) believed that teachers have a responsibility to find out what topics motivate and interest their students. In his study of 576 low-ability readers, McKenna (1986) found that strange, unusual or odd stories appealed to secondary boys and girls regardless of age. Therefore, "Would it not serve to increase a

student's interest in science, for example, to present books dealing with the oddities that science has not explained? In the same way, might not a book of simple but unusual math puzzles encourage students to read more mundane fare in the area of mathematics?" (McKenna, 1986, p. 350). These techniques and others, may help students develop positive reading attitudes which, in turn, may help their academic achievement.

The attitudes of the teacher can affect the attitudes of their students in many ways (Hummel, 1985). Therefore, teachers must attempt to influence their students in positive ways. If a teacher realizes that her students are displaying negative attitudes towards reading, interviews and questionnaires could be used to try to find out what activities or interests they enjoy and incorporate them into the curriculum to try to change their reading attitudes (Quinn & Jadav, 1987; McKenna & Kear, 1990). Teachers need to develop precise activities and instructional methods that attempt to enhance and foster positive reading attitudes in their students (Kush & Watkins, 1996). "...Specific features should be included in the curriculum and in instructional methods to improve both achievement and attitude" (Quinn & Jadav, 1987, p. 371).

The Influence of Gender on Attitudes

Not only can time and teachers influence attitudes, but gender also plays a part in how attitudes are influenced. For instance, numerous studies have found that girls consistently display more positive attitudes towards reading than boys (Kush & Watkins, 1996; McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth, 1995; McKenna, Strarton, Grindler & Jenkins, 1995; Parker & Paradis, 1986; Walberg & Tsai, 1985; Anderson, Tollefson & Gilbert, 1985). A

similar observation was made twenty years ago by Nielsons (Hummel, 1985). Nielsons reported that in older elementary students, girls had a more favorable attitude towards reading than boys (Hummel, 1985). Recent research supports the conclusion made by Nielsons in 1977. For instance, a 1995 study by McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth in which 18,185 children in grades one through six were surveyed reported that at all grade levels, girls possessed more favorable attitudes toward recreational and academic reading than boys. "It may be that societal beliefs lead first to more positive attitudes towards reading in girls, which in turn facilitate an advantage over boys in acquiring ability, and that this difference in ability then helps to perpetuate more positive attitudes in girls" (McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth, 1996, p.94). In a study of over 1,400 nine year olds, Walberg & Tsai (1985) found that girls scored higher and expressed more interest in reading than boys. A 1996 study of over 300 students in grades one through four also concluded that girls consistently expressed more positive reading attitudes than boys (Kush & Watkins). This study also reported that girls demonstrated greater stability in reading attitudes than boys (Kush & Watkins, 1996). The National Center for Educational Statistics (1992) discussed the implications of these findings and came to the conclusion that the reading attitudes of girls should not be neglected, but that the research does seem to suggest that additional attention should be focused towards boys (Kush & Watkins, 1996).

The development of attitudes and the influences that can affect them have been studied by researchers for over the past thirty years (Parker & Paradis, 1986; Kaminsky, 1986). A relationship does exist between reading attitude and academic achievement

(Swanson, 1982; Walberg & Tsai, 1985; Russ, 1989; McKenna & Kear, 1990; McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995). Educators need to be aware of this relationship and the influence it may have upon their students (Tunell, Calder, & Phaup, 1991).

Chapter III

Procedure and Design of the Study

Introduction

For over the past thirty years, researchers have been examining the reading interests and attitude development of children. A strong relationship between reading attitude and achievement has been reported by numerous researchers (McPherson & Rust, 1987; Russ, 1989; Walberg & Tsai, 1985; McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth, 1995). This study examined the development of reading attitude and its relationship to academic achievement. The effect of time in school and gender were also studied to determine if a relationship existed between these variables and student reading attitude. All of the variables of this experiment were found in an educational setting. This setting limited the sample size, therefore limiting randomization.

Population and Sample

The subjects in this study consisted of seventy students from three intact classrooms in grades three, four and five. This study took place in a middle class suburban elementary school in southern New Jersey. Twenty-seven students were from third grade, twenty-one students were from fourth grade, and twenty-two students were from

fifth grade. Thirty-eight females and thirty-two males participated in the study.

Research Design and Procedure

This study was conducted by the researcher with a third, fourth and fifth grade class. The reading attitudes of the subjects were assessed with the Educational Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) developed by McKenna & Kear (see appendix A). The academic achievement of the students was collected by obtaining the scores for each subject on the IOWA Test of Basic Skills, a standardized test taken by each student participating in the study.

The researcher gained the approval of the principal and the participating teachers before assessing the students. This was accomplished by a discussion of the intended project and review of the instrument (ERAS) with the principal. After receiving approval, the researcher began by administering the ERAS to the participating classrooms.

The test was given to one class at a time. The researcher was present as the students completed the test. The directions were given orally by the researcher. The students were told that the questionnaire was a set of questions that asked how they felt about reading. The researcher explained that they were to circle the picture that most closely represented how **they** felt about the question. The students were told that there were no right or wrong answers. To avoid any misunderstandings and reading difficulties, each question was read aloud twice to the students. Time was given to respond to the question before the researcher continued. If more time was needed to respond to a

question, the students were instructed to raise their hand and additional time would be given. After the twenty questions were answered, the researcher collected the surveys from the students.

The academic achievement scores of the subjects were obtained from the main office. The researcher was permitted to access the files of each subject and record the scores that were obtained on the IOWA Test of Basic Skills.

Description of the Instrument

Reading attitude of the subjects was measured with the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) developed in 1990 by McKenna and Kear (see appendix A). Estimates of reliability, as well as evidence of validity, were based on the nation wide administration of this instrument to over 18,000 children in grades one through six (McKenna & Kear, 1990). Cronbach's alpha was calculated at each grade level for both subscales and for the composite score (McKenna & Kear, 1990). The results of these calculations have been reprinted (see table 1).

"...With only two exceptions, coefficients were .80 or higher. These were the recreational subscale at grade 1 and 2. It is possible that the stability of young children's attitudes towards leisure reading grows with their decoding ability and familiarity with reading as a pastime" (McKenna & Kear, 1990, p. 638) .

table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Internal Consistency Measures

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Recreational Subscale</u>					<u>Academic Subscale</u>				<u>Full Scale (Total)</u>			
	<u>N</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>SeM</u>	<u>Alpha</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>SeM</u>	<u>Alpha</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>SeM</u>	<u>Alpha</u>
1	2,518	31	5.7	2.9	0.74	30.1	6.8	3	0.81	61	11.4	4.1	0.8
2	2,974	30.3	5.7	2.7	0.78	28.8	6.7	2.9	0.81	59.1	11.4	3.9	0.8
3	3,151	30	5.6	2.5	0.8	27.8	6.4	2.8	0.81	57.8	10.9	3.8	0.8
4	3,679	29.5	5.8	2.4	0.83	26.9	6.3	2.6	0.83	56.5	11	3.6	0.8
5	3,374	28.5	6.1	2.3	0.86	25.6	6	2.5	0.82	54.1	10.8	3.6	0.8
6	2,442	27.9	6.2	2.2	0.87	24.7	5.8	2.5	0.81	52.5	10.6	3.5	0.8
All	18,138	29.5	5.9	2.5	0.82	27.3	6.6	2.7	0.83	56.8	11.3	3.7	0.8

The measure consisted of 20 simple questions relating to recreational and academic reading with four standard pictorial answers (McKenna & Kear, 1990). Each item was worded with a uniform beginning: "How do you feel..." to create a consistent and appropriate judgment from the subjects (McKenna & Kear, 1990). To ensure the honesty of responses, a discussion with the subjects took place in which they were assured that there were no right or wrong answers and that they were not completing a test or something that would be graded. The researcher discussed the four answer choices with the subjects before administering the test using the directions provided (See appendix B). The answers were a pictorial representation of the cartoon character, Garfield, showing

four distinct moods (very happy, a little happy, a little upset, very upset) (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995). Each item was read aloud twice as the students circled the picture that most closely represented their feelings. Each picture was assigned from 1 to 4 points, from most negative to most positive (McKenna & Kear, 1990). Scores on each of the two subscales, recreational and academic reading, can range from 10 to 40 total points (McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth, 1995). Recreational items focused on reading for fun outside the school setting while academic items examined the school environment such as reading aloud to the class, reading workbooks and worksheets and reading school books (Kush & Watkins, 1996).

Statistical Treatment

For this study data was collected which determined the relationship between the reading attitudes of students and their academic achievement. The data also showed the effect of gender on attitudes and achievement and the trend for attitudes to decline throughout the school years. After the data was collected, the following statistical procedures were used to analyze the data.

The Pearson r was used as the measure to evaluate the data collected. This statistical technique was chosen because the researcher wanted to determine if a correlation existed between reading attitudes and academic achievement and to derive a number that could be used to interpret the data. A two-tailed test was used to determine whether there was a difference between the attitudes and achievement of boys and girls participating in the study.

Chapter IV

Analysis of Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a significant relationship between reading attitude and academic achievement. The study was conducted in a suburban public school district in southern New Jersey. There was a total of 70 subjects (n=70) in the sample.

Data was collected by administering the McKenna and Kear Elementary Reading Attitude Survey and obtaining the scores received on the IOWA Test of Basic Skills.

Reading Attitude Correlations

The reading attitudes of the subjects were collected and organized by totaling each subjects scores for recreational reading and academic reading. These totals were then combined for a final reading attitude score. A frequency polygon (see figure 1) displayed the distribution of each score.

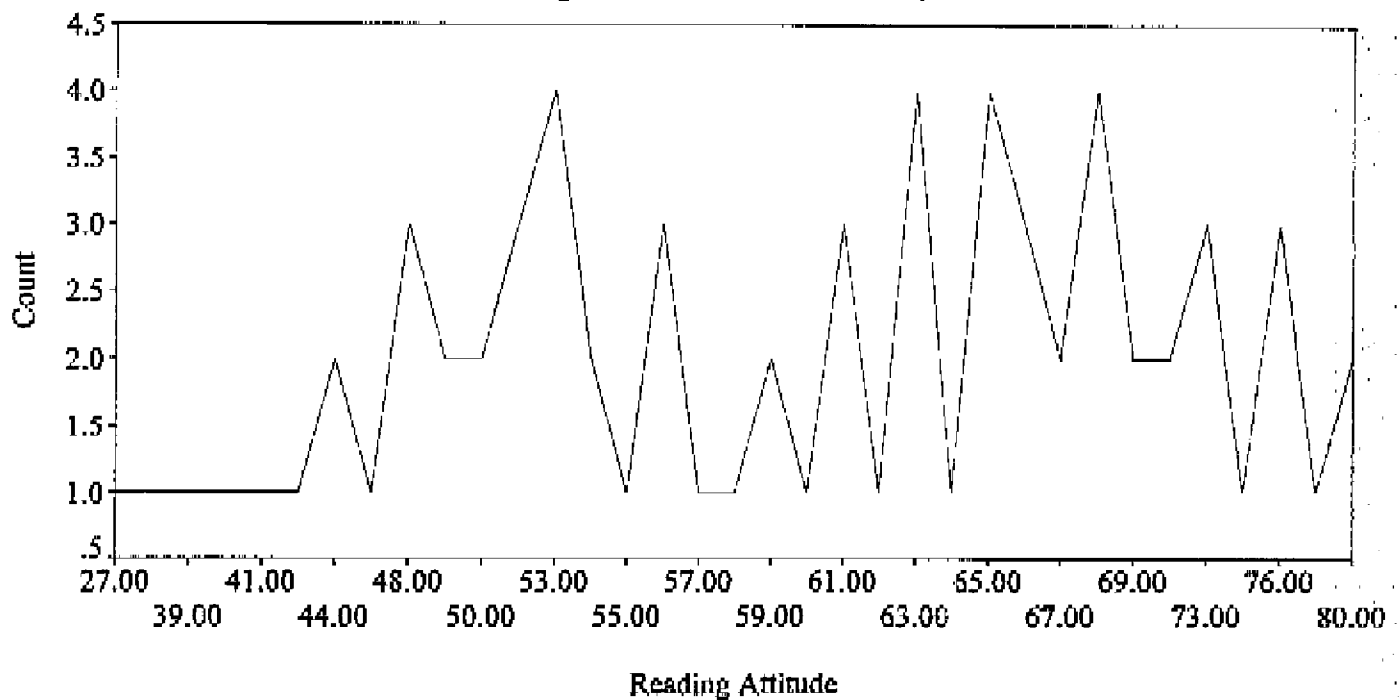
Correlations were calculated between reading attitude and academic achievement.

Correlations were also done between reading attitude and reading achievement and reading attitude and vocabulary (see figures 2, 3 & 4). The Pearson Product Moment

Correlation Coefficient was calculated and significant relationships were found. Positive correlations between reading attitude and academic achievement ($r = .3687, p < .002$), reading attitude and reading achievement ($r = .4393, p < .0001$), and reading attitude and vocabulary ($r = .3639, p < .002$) were found to exist.

figure 1

Reading Attitude Scores of Grades 3, 4 & 5



Mean= 59.33, Std. Dev.= 11.47

figure 2

Reading Attitude and Reading Achievement

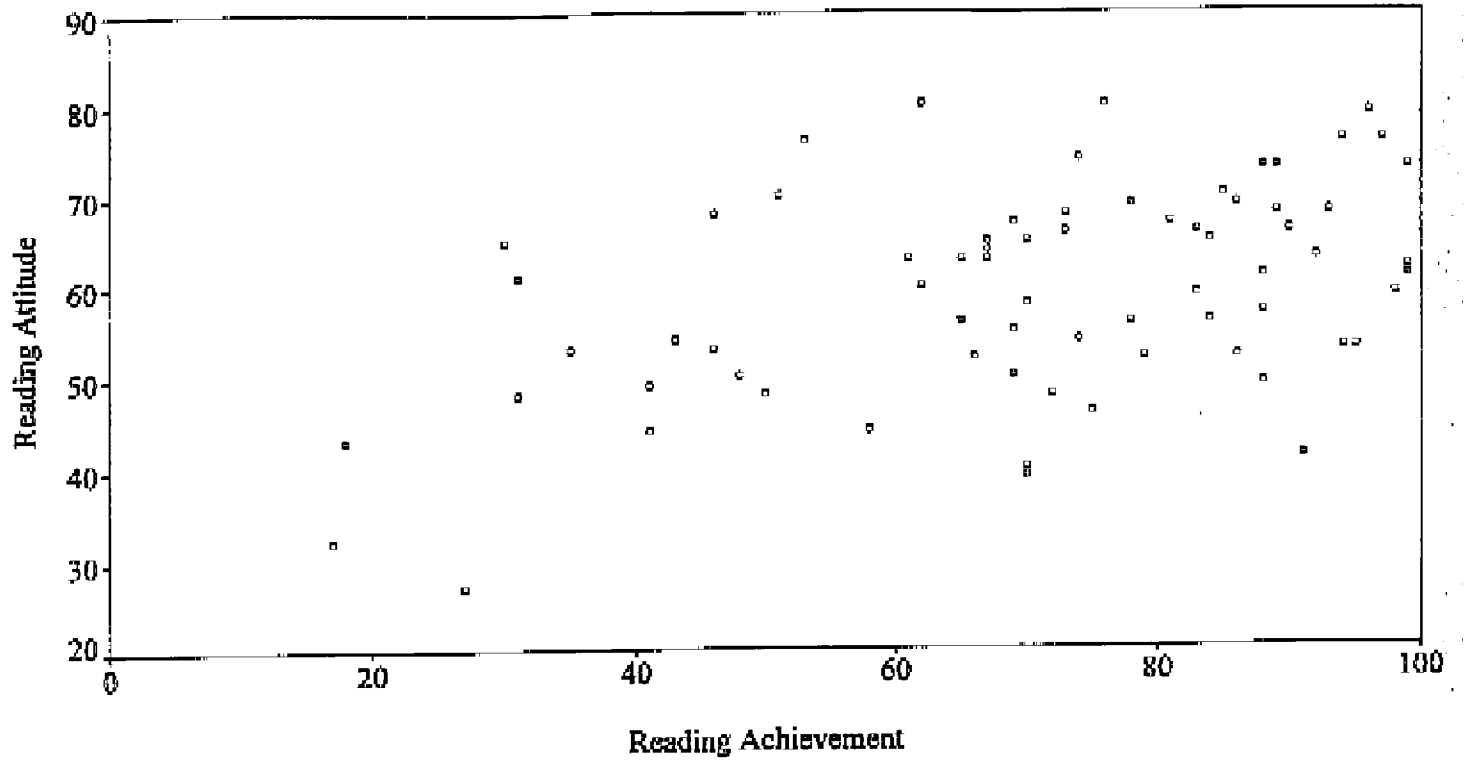


figure 3

Reading Attitude and Academic Achievement

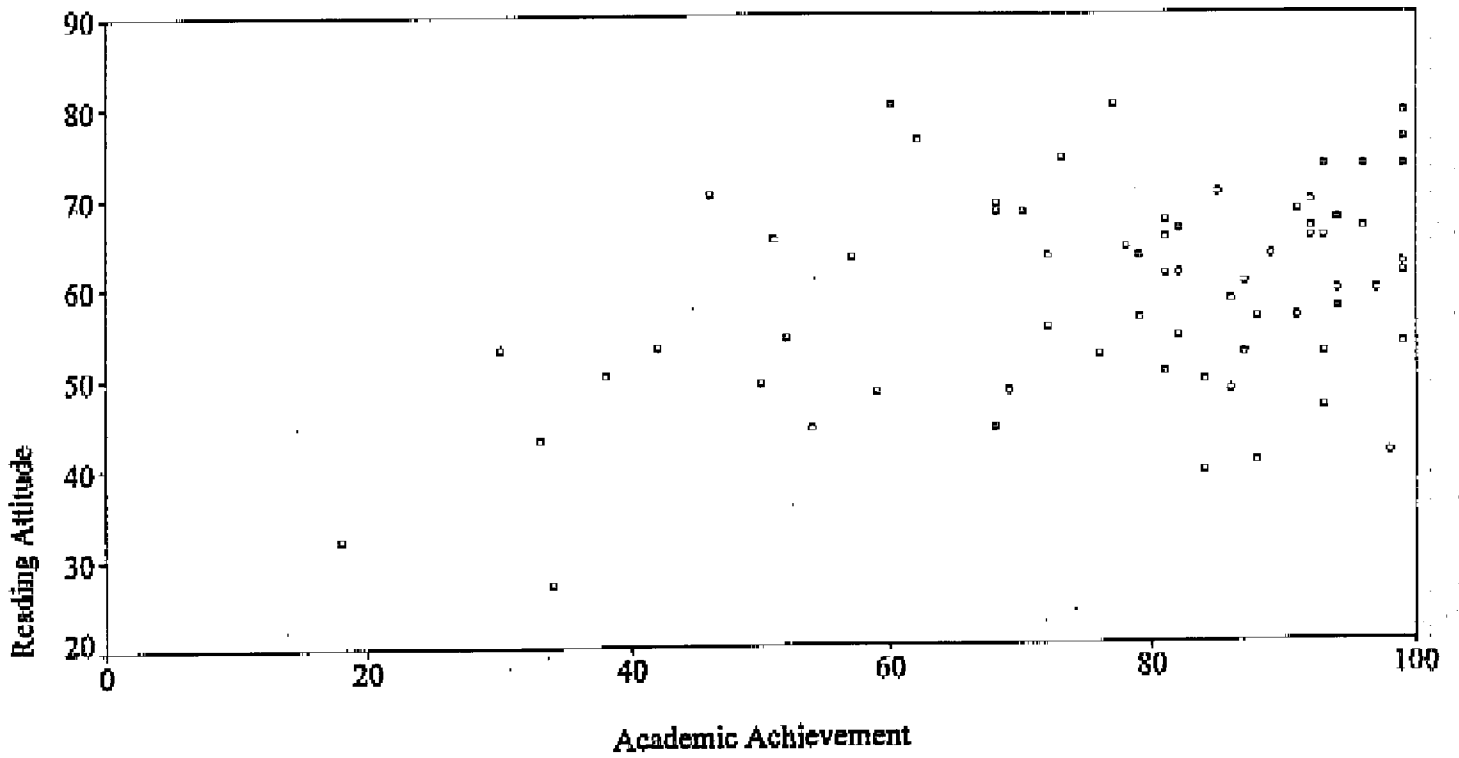
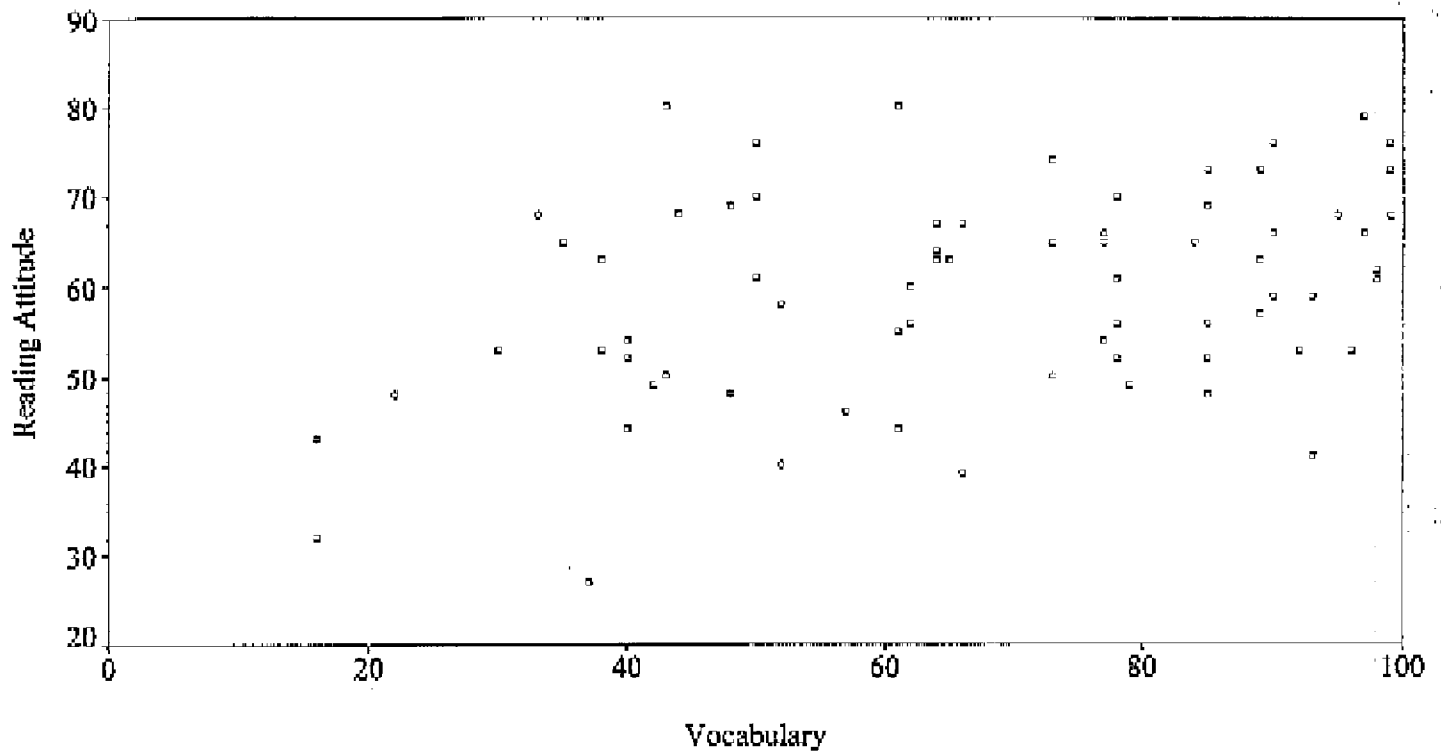


figure 4

Reading Attitude and Vocabulary



Academic Achievement Correlations

Academic achievement was obtained by the scores from the IOWA Test of Basic Skills for each subject. A significant correlation was found to exist between reading attitude and academic achievement ($r = .3687, p < .002$). Therefore, the two variables have an influence on each other.

Gender Correlations

Subjects were divided into groups on the basis of gender to see if a relationship existed. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was calculated for each group. Although a relationship was found to exist between reading attitude and academic achievement (Males $r = .4066$, $p < .021$; Females $r = .3464$, $p < .033$) it was not significant. However, a significant correlation between reading attitude and comprehension and reading attitude and reading achievement was found in both males and females (see table 2).

table 2
Correlation Coefficients for Males and Females

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Comprehension</u>	<u>Reading Achievement</u>	<u>Mean</u> (Reading Attitude)	<u>Std. Deviation</u> (Reading Attitude)
Male	$r = .4592$ $p < .008$	$r = .4811$ $p < .005$	55.31	11.32
Female	$r = .4621$ $p < .003$	$r = .4436$ $p < .005$	62.71	10.6

The reading attitude mean for females was higher than for males. The minimum and maximum scores for females were 32 and 80 respectfully while the minimum and maximum scores for males were 27 and 74. Overall, the females rated reading and reading related activities higher than the males.

Grade 3, 4 & 5 Correlations

The subjects were divided into groups by grade level to determine if attitudes changed as students progressed from third to fifth grade (see figures 5, 6 & 7). The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to statistically analyze the data. Statistically significant relationships between reading attitude and achievement, reading achievement, and comprehension were found to exist in grade three, and decline through grades four and five (see table 3).

table 3

Correlation Coefficients for Grades 3, 4, & 5

Grade	Academic Achievement	Reading Achievement	Comprehension
3	$r = .6469$ $p < .0001$	$r = .7413$ $p < .0001$	$r = .7545$ $p < .0001$
4	$r = .4201$ $p < .058$	$r = .4687$ $p < .032$	$r = .5447$ $p < .011$
5	$r = .3234$ $p < .142$	$r = .3679$ $p < .092$	$r = .3552$ $p < .105$

The correlations were highly significant in third grade and were much less significant by grade five. These findings indicate a negative trend between reading attitude and achievement (academic, reading and comprehension) exists as subjects move through school.

In conclusion of the analysis of findings regarding the hypotheses, a significant correlation was found between reading attitude and academic achievement, an insignificant correlation between reading attitude and academic achievement by gender was discovered, and a negative correlation between reading attitude and academic achievement over time in school was identified.

figure 5

Grade 3- Reading Attitude and Achievement

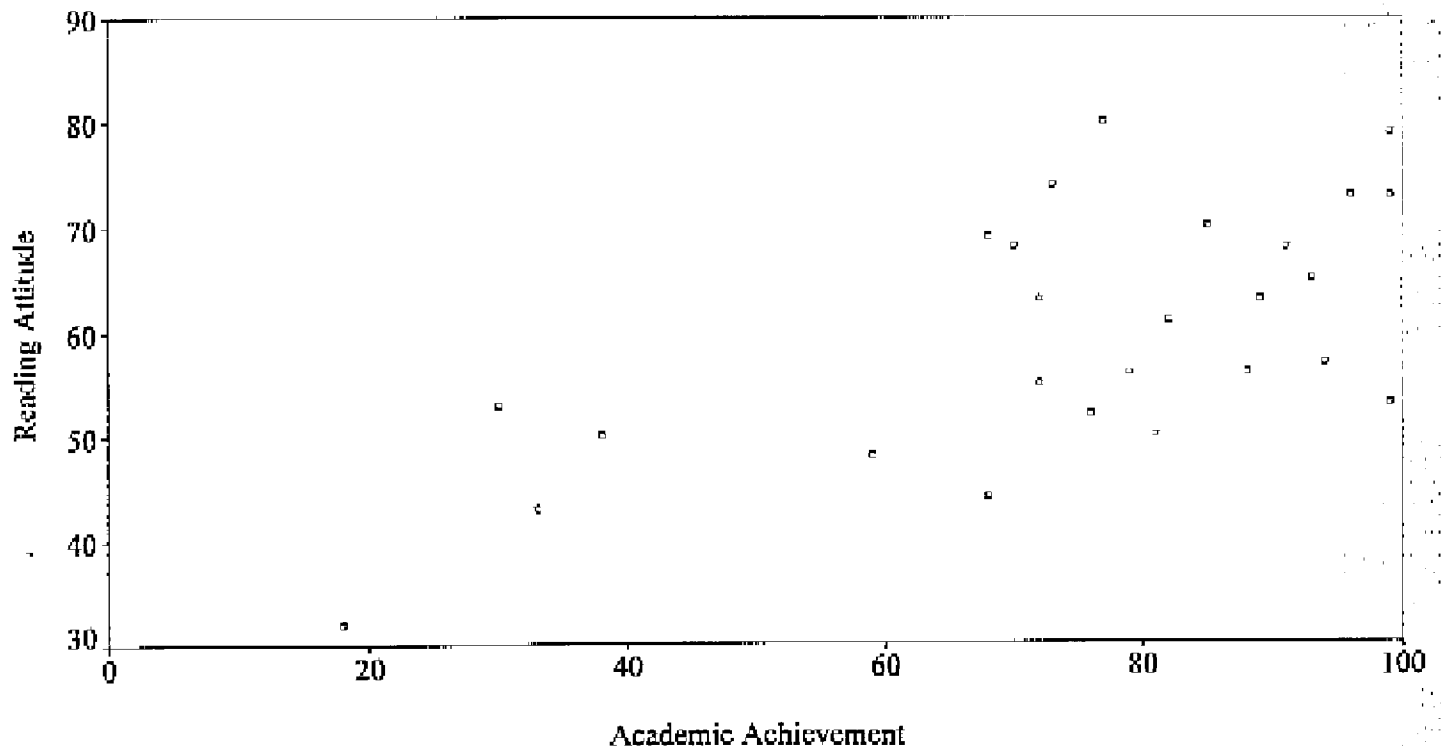


figure 6

Grade 4- Reading Attitude and Achievement

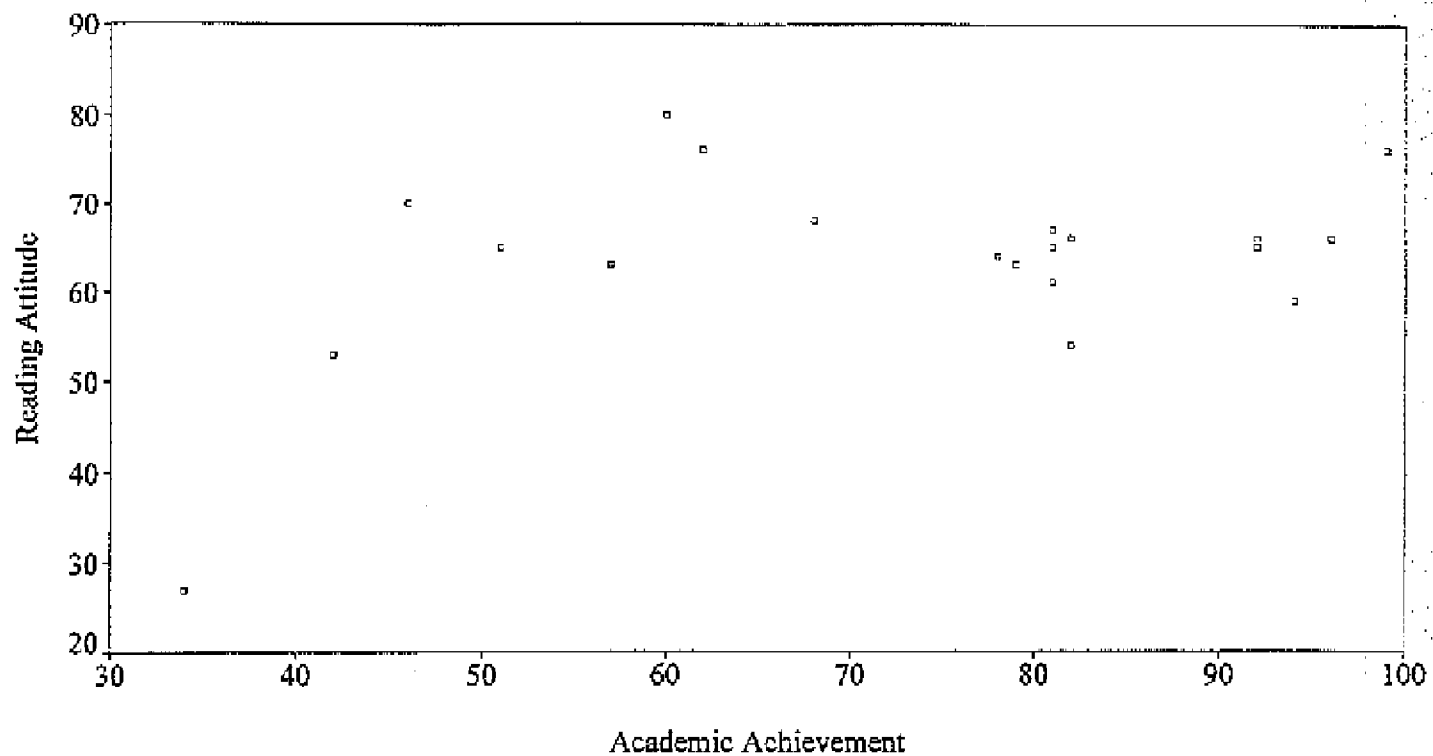
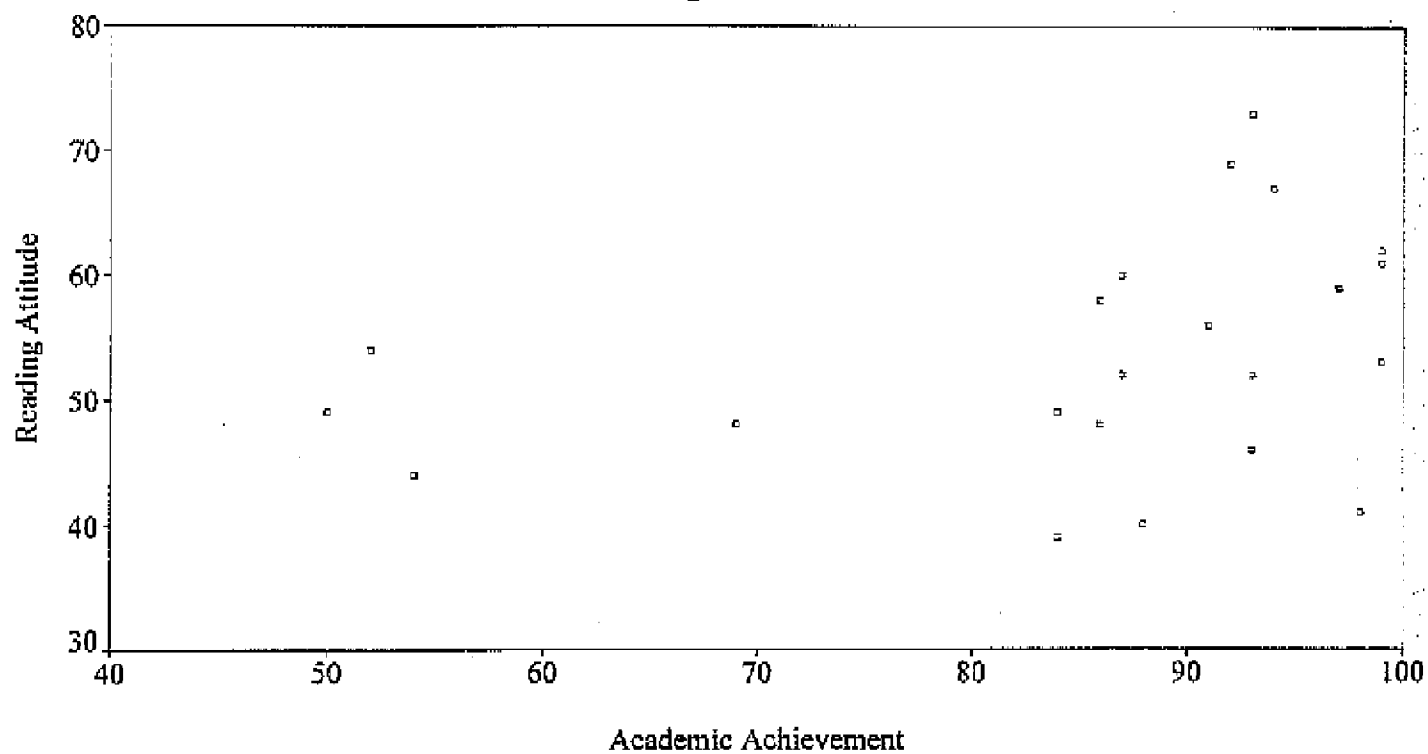


figure 7

Grade 5- Reading Attitude and Achievement



Chapter V

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

Research has shown that student reading attitude affects academic achievement. It has also been found that attitudes change as children progress through grades (McPherson & Rust, 1987; Russ, 1989; Walberg & Tsai, 1985; McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth, 1995).

The purpose of this correlational study was to determine if a relationship exists between reading attitude and academic achievement. The effects of gender and time in school were examined to determine if these variables affected reading attitude.

Summary of the Problem

Does a correlation exist between student reading attitudes and academic achievement of elementary school children in grades three, four, and five? Does gender or time in school affect the relationship between reading attitude and academic achievement?

Summary of the Hypotheses

There were three hypotheses for this experiment. First, there would be a positive relationship between student reading attitude and academic achievement in children in

third, fourth, and fifth grades. Second, a correlation between reading attitude and academic achievement by gender would not exist. Finally, a negative correlation between reading attitude and academic achievement over time in school would exist.

Summary of the Procedure

After receiving approval from the school principal and the participating teachers, the researcher began collecting the data by administering the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS). The ERAS was developed in 1990 by McKenna & Kear. The survey was given to one class at a time. The directions were given orally by the researcher. Each statement was read twice to avoid any misunderstandings or reading difficulties. The reading attitude survey was a set of twenty questions in which the students circled a picture of the cartoon character Garfield that best represented their answer.

Academic achievement scores were acquired from the school office. The researcher collected the scores that the subjects received on the IOWA Test of Basic Skills.

The subjects consisted of seventy students in third, fourth, and fifth grades. They were from a middle class suburban elementary school in southern New Jersey. Thirty-eight females and thirty-two males participated in the study. Twenty-seven students were in third grade, twenty-one students were in fourth grade, and twenty-two students were in fifth grade.

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to statistically

analyze the data.

The study was limited because of geographical constraints, the assignment of the school, and the non-randomization of the subjects. Therefore, this study can not be generalized to the general population.

Summary of Findings

After scoring and analyzing all of the data, the researcher calculated the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to determine the relationship between reading attitude and academic achievement. The data was also correlated with respect to gender and time in school to identify any relationships.

Significant relationships were found to exist. First, a significant relationship between reading attitude and academic achievement was identified ($r = .3687$, $p < .002$). Second, the correlation that was found to exist between reading attitude and academic achievement by gender was not significant (Males $r = .4066$, $p < .021$; Females $r = .3464$, $p < .033$). Finally, a negative relationship between reading attitude and achievement (academic, reading and comprehension) exists as students progress through school (see table 3).

Conclusions

After a thorough analysis of the data, one correlation was found to be statistically significant. From the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients that

were performed with regard to the hypotheses, the relationship between reading attitude and academic achievement was found to be significant ($r = .3687$, $p < .002$). Therefore, a relationship seems to be evident from this correlation. From this finding, one can conclude that if a student possesses a positive attitude towards reading, it is reasonable to predict that the student will succeed academically. Consequently, if a student possesses a negative attitude towards reading, it is reasonable to predict that the student may not do as well academically. This conclusion supports the extensive research that has been done regarding reading attitude and academic achievement.

No relationship seems to exist from the correlation between reading attitude and academic achievement by gender (Males $r = .4066$, $p < .021$; Females $r = .3464$, $p < .033$). Therefore, one can conclude that gender does not affect the relationship between reading attitude and academic achievement. Although girls displayed a more positive attitude towards reading than boys, this fact alone is not enough to predict future relationships between reading attitude and academic achievement.

The negative trend that was identified between reading attitude and achievement (academic, reading and comprehension) as students progress through school (see table 3) was significant. Thus, a relationship between progression through elementary school, specifically third, fourth, and fifth grades, and a decline in reading attitudes does exist. Therefore, it is possible to predict that as students progress through elementary school, the relationship between reading attitude and achievement (academic, reading and comprehension) will continue to decline.

Implications and Recommendations

Everyone who teaches children wants them to learn to read, as well as learn to love reading. This is a skill which will benefit them academically and socially.

Researchers in the educational field are constantly trying to understand the relationship between reading attitude and academic achievement and the variables that affect the attitudes of students.

Being a competent, successful reader is one skill that teachers focus on throughout the year. However, as this study has shown, a significant relationship exists between reading attitude and academic achievement. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that teachers try to foster a positive attitude towards reading in their students.

Teachers could implement a program to help their students begin to develop a positive attitudes toward reading. By altering their teaching strategies, teachers may help to reverse the negative reading attitudes of their students. For instance, teachers could try to make reading experiences fun, exciting, and meaningful for their students. Teachers could also try to convey to their students their love of reading and the importance of reading in their everyday lives. Also, teachers could provide numerous opportunities for their students to engage in reading activities and reading experiences with many forms of literature. Over time, these positive experiences with reading and literature may affect the reading attitudes of the students in a positive way.

Teachers could also try to use a reading attitude survey in the beginning of the year to determine the attitudes of their students and again at the end of the year to see if

student reading attitudes were altered. The information collected would also be valuable to succeeding teachers. Implementing this procedure would allow teachers to monitor student attitudes toward reading from year to year, thus allowing teachers to address negative reading attitudes as soon as they were displayed.

When replicating this study, the researcher may want to obtain a truly random sample which will include younger and older subjects. If this is done, the results may be able to be inferred to the wider population. Also, the researcher may want to consider other variables such as geographical location, teaching style, and home life when studying reading attitude and academic achievement. Further research is needed in the area reading attitude and academic achievement.

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Appendix A

ELEMENTARY READING ATTITUDE SURVEY

Grade Name

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1. How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?



Jim Davis

2. How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?



3. How do you feel about reading for fun at home?



4. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?



5. How do you feel about spending free time reading?



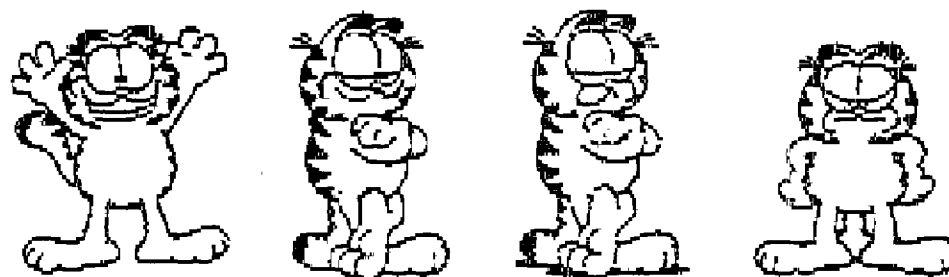
6. How do you feel about starting a new book?



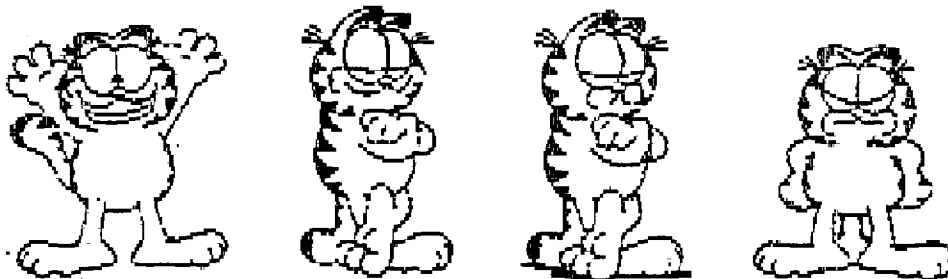
7. How do you feel about reading during summer vacation?



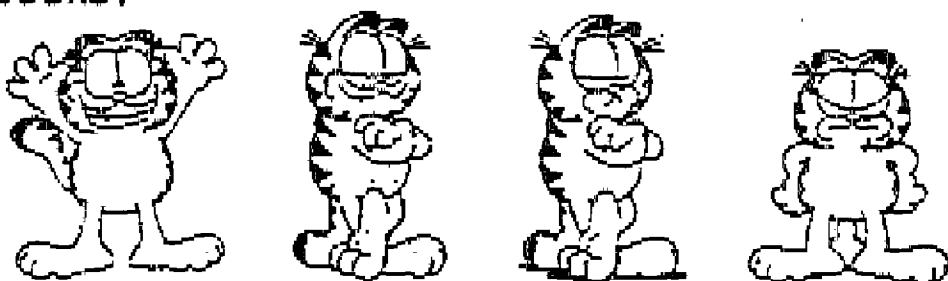
8. How do you feel about reading instead of playing?



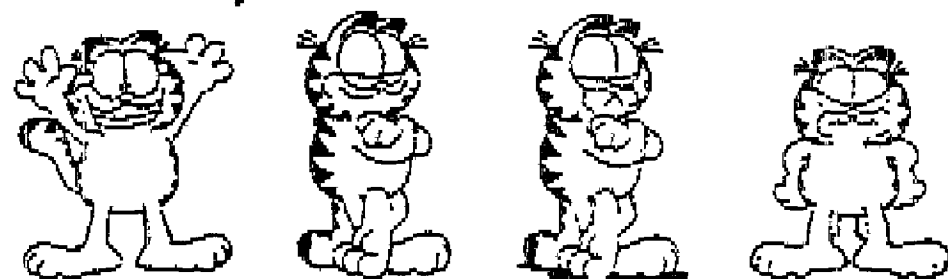
9. How do you feel about going to a bookstore?



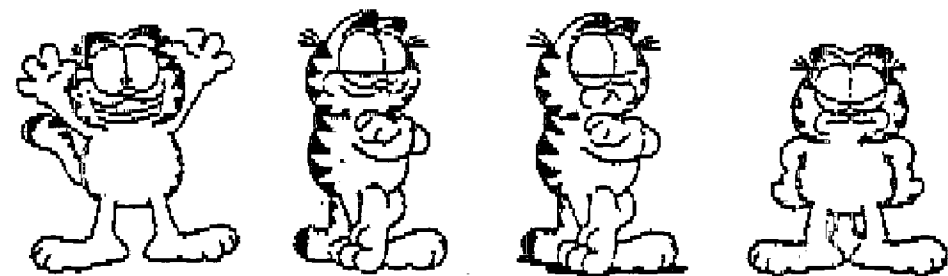
10. How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?



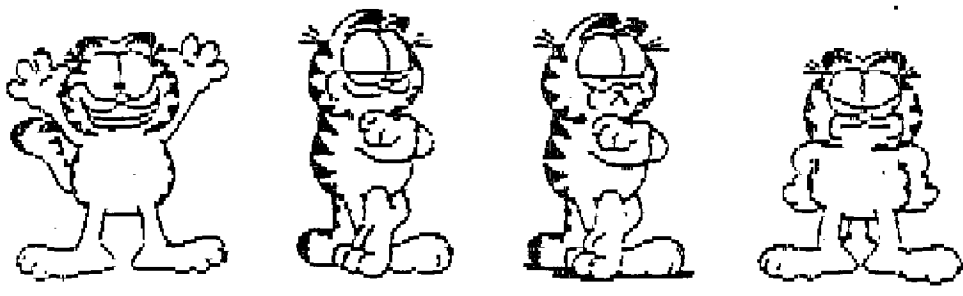
11. How do you feel when the teacher asks you questions about what you read?



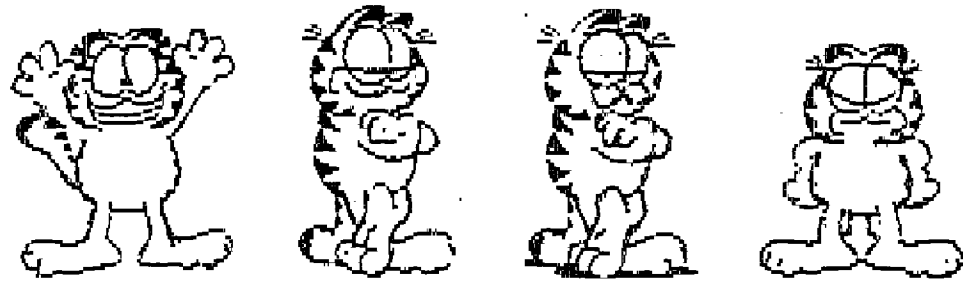
12. How do you feel about doing reading workbook pages and worksheets?



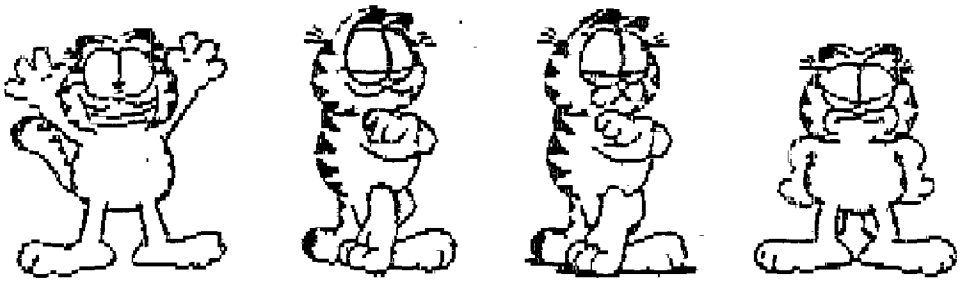
13. How do you feel about reading in school?



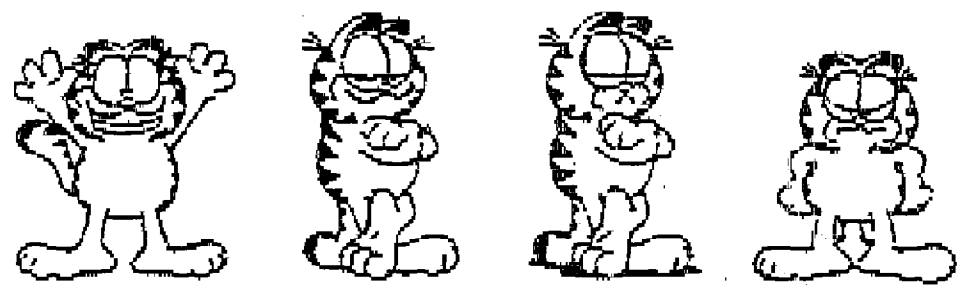
14. How do you feel about reading your school books?



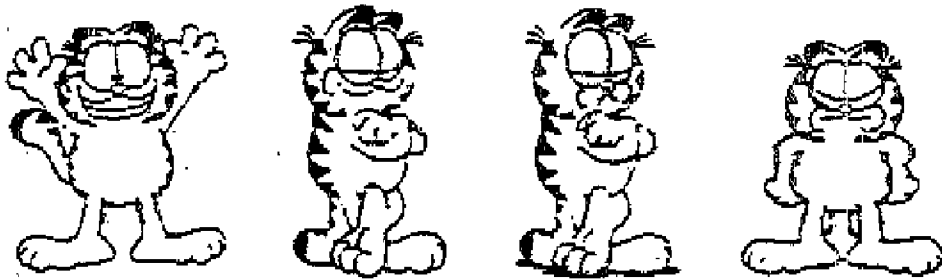
15. How do you feel about learning from a book?



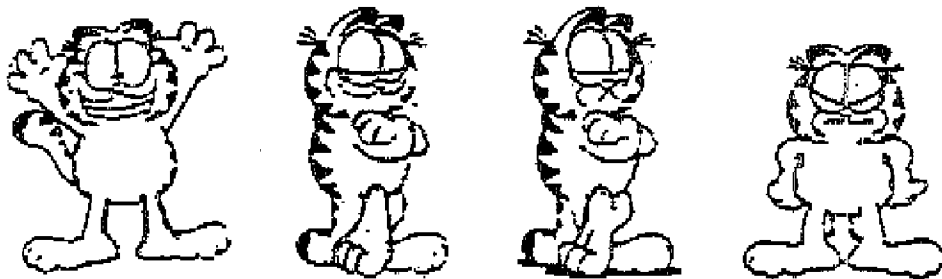
16. How do you feel when it's time for reading class?



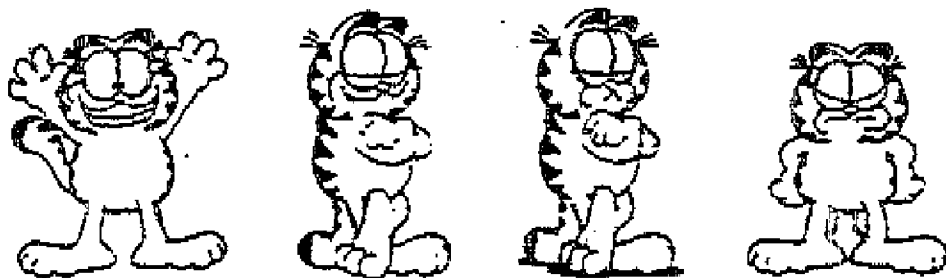
17. How do you feel about the stories you read in reading class?



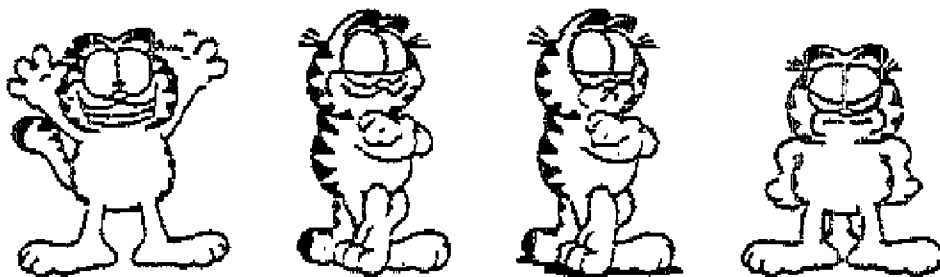
18. How do you feel when you read out loud in class?



19. How do you feel about using a dictionary?



20. How do you feel about taking a reading test?



Appendix B

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

Directions for Use

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey Provides a quick indication of student attitudes toward reading. It consists of 20 items and can be administered to an entire classroom in about 10 minutes. Each item presents a brief, simply-worded statement about reading, followed by four pictures of Garfield. Each pose is designed to depict a different emotional state, ranging from very positive to very negative.

Administration

Begin by telling students that you wish to find out how they feel about reading. Emphasize that this is *not* a test and that there are no "right" answers. Encourage sincerity.

Distribute the survey forms and, if you wish to monitor the attitudes of specific students, ask them to write their names in the space at the top. Hold up a copy of the survey so that the students can see the first page. Point to the picture of Garfield at the far left of the first item. Ask the students to look at this same picture on their own survey form. Discuss with them the mood Garfield seems to be in (very happy). Then move to the next picture and again discuss Garfield's mood (this time, a *little* happy). In the same way, move to the third and fourth pictures and talk about Garfield's moods—a little upset and very upset. It is helpful to point out the position of Garfield's *mouth*, especially in the middle two figures.

Scoring

To score the survey, count four points for each leftmost (happiest) Garfield circled, three for each slightly smiling Garfield, two for each mildly upset Garfield, and one point for each very upset (rightmost) Garfield. Three scores for each student can be obtained: the total for the first 10 items, the total for the second 10, and a composite total. The first half of the survey relates to attitude toward recreational reading; the second half relates to attitude toward academic aspects of reading.

Interpretation

You can interpret scores in two ways. One is to note informally where the score falls in regard to the four nodes of scale. A total score of 50, for example, would fall about mid-way on the scale, between the slightly happy and slightly upset figures, therefore indicating a relatively indifferent overall attitude toward reading. The other approach is more formal. It involves converting the raw scores into percentile ranks of Table 1. Be sure to use the norms for the right grade level and to note the column headings (Rec = recreational reading, Aca = academic reading, Tot = total score). If you wish to determine the average percentile rank for your class, average the raw scores first; then use the table to locate the percentile rank corresponding to the raw score mean. Percentile ranks cannot be averaged directly.

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