

Summer 1995

Teachers as Lifetime Readers: How Teachers Might Serve as Models for Students

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TEACHERS AS LIFETIME
READERS:
HOW TEACHERS MIGHT SERVE
AS MODELS FOR STUDENTS

Beth Lorraine Korringa

Summer, 1995

MASTERS THESIS

Submitted to the graduate faculty at

Grand Valley State University

in partial fulfillment of the Masters of Education

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Abstract

Teachers as Lifetime Readers: How They Might Serve as Models for Students

An informal reading survey questionnaire explored whether teachers are lifetime readers and if so how they might help their students become lifetime readers. Teachers from three schools, preschool through fifth grade responded to the survey. Research done showed teacher and students sharing, read alouds and silent reading and teachers communicating their love of books and reading to students were the major points needed to help students become lifetime readers. Conclusions drawn from the survey show that teachers need to “act” like lifetime readers by reading more themselves and reading more in their classrooms. The survey also revealed that teachers today have far more outside competition than teachers did in the past when it comes to helping students become lifetime readers.

Considering the illiteracy rate in the United States, helping children become lifetime readers should be one of the major goals of teachers today. This study will explore how teachers motivate their students to become lifetime readers. It will include an informal reading survey of elementary school teachers that explores if the teachers are lifetime readers and if so, how might this serve as a model for their students.

Importance of the Study

Forty-four percent of adults in the United States never read a book in the course of a year. Ten percent of the United States public is reading 80% of the books. Sixty percent of inmates in this country are illiterate and 85% of juvenile offenders have reading problems. (Trelease, 1987). A study by the National Assessment of Educational Progress shows that most students do not read enough and hardly ever discuss what they are reading. (NAEP, "Three National," 1981).

Teachers are models for their students. It is often the elementary school teacher who motivates a student to read a particular book by sparking that student's interest. Teachers need to help their students read more often and read better. Teachers need to teach children to want to read not just how to read. What a teacher can do to motivate a child to read helps that child become a lifetime reader and a responsible lifetime citizen.

The U.S. Department of Education (Trelease, 1987) reported that one out of every five American adults is functionally illiterate with 34% of American adults only marginally literate. It is obvious that many American adults did not have the help they needed from the home and school when it came to reading. These adults might have benefited from teachers who knew how to help and motivate them to become lifetime readers.

Teachers can motivate and instill a desire to read in their students through various means. How teachers motivate their students to read and become lifetime readers is the topic this author will explore through research and an informal reading survey given to teachers. With an informal reading survey this author hopes to gain some insight from the teachers themselves.

In “Becoming a Nation of Readers”, Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985) made it clear that no single step taken will allow a child to read. For a child to become a skilled reader many steps need to be taken. Although small gains are achieved by the single steps, it is all the steps put together that reap the big gains with children becoming readers. Once children become readers, how teachers help and motivate students to become lifetime readers should be the next step put in place.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the informal reading survey is to compare a teacher’s childhood reading habits with the teacher’s adult reading habits. This information can be used to learn more about how these reading habits might influence the teacher to help students become lifetime readers. This author asked elementary teachers, grades pre-school through fifth grade, from three private parochial West Michigan schools to fill out the informal reading survey.

Research on how teachers can help their students become lifetime readers is remarkably consistent. Three main points emerged. The first was a need to share our stories about ourselves as people to our students and our students sharing their stories with us. The second was the absolute necessity for teachers to love books and reading

and to pass this love on to their students. The third was that although teachers need to implement and take time for all types of reading in the classroom, reading books out loud to students and silent reading by students were the two most important to insure children become lifetime readers.

Teachers and Students Sharing Together

Every teacher and student has a story to tell. Sharing our stories with each other is one of the most important parts of helping a child become a lifetime reader. It is through the stories we tell that we become friends and fellow travelers through life. It is through the stories they tell that authors reach us. They teach us meaning through the books they write. Gordon Wells (1986) writes “constructing stories in the mind - or storying as it has been called is one of the most fundamental means of making meaning.” (p.194).

This author found through research the importance of language use in the classroom. In “Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading”, Anderson et al. (1985) reported that:

Reading instruction builds especially on oral language. If this foundation is weak, progress in reading will be slow and uncertain. Children must have at least a basic vocabulary, a reasonable range of knowledge about the world around them and the ability to talk about their knowledge. These abilities form the basis for comprehending text. (p. 30).

The report goes on to state:

The successful teacher uses language in a manner that sparks children’s interest in the meanings and origins of words. In the classrooms of successful teachers, the children

are encouraged to ask questions and present information about class experiences, current world events, television programs, and so on. In classrooms that foster enthusiasm for language, the children write a lot and do so for many reasons.

(p. 86).

This author has observed in a first grade classroom a “share” time which evolved into a “story” time first thing every morning. Each child could choose to share a few sentences about themselves or “pass” on to the next child. In the beginning of the year the teacher modeled for the children by telling them something that had happened to her. These were often stories about something amusing that happened or something that had bothered her. This in turn led to the children becoming very excited to share their thoughts on a similar subject. Although this sharing could become tedious at times this author now realizes what an important part of the day it was for those first graders. James C. Higgins (1976) notes that “Above all else, a teacher must be a warm, living reality for children and the only avenue of communication open to him in this regard is his own natural and spontaneous behavior.” (p. 53).

As the year progressed this author observed the teacher using many of the stories being told by the first graders as wonderful starting points for their writing. The teacher would remind the first graders about a story she had told about herself which often lead them to remember a similar incident in their lives. Whenever the teacher heard “I can’t think of anything to write” she was also able to remind them of a story they had shared that morning or the previous day. This author could see the “light” go on as the first graders remembered what they had shared and in turn wrote about it. “Read this Mrs. Brown”

they would tell their teacher when they finished and read it she would, watching the smiles on their faces as she read *their* story. This experience is supported by what Pamela Schluter (1995) wrote in an article for Teaching K - 8. She stated that:

The lesson I learned that year was one of the most important of my life. I had confirmed my feelings that teachers cannot live in vacuums. We need to be approachable. We need to share all parts of our lives. We are real people who experience real events. Most of all, I learned the value of the daily story with authentic writing. (p.63).

It was through their own sharing during share time and writing during “Writers Workshop” that these first graders became excited about their stories being written and read by each other. Through their sharing the first graders told the story, wrote the story and read the story all on their own. They had become readers and writers by sharing.

Teachers Who Love Books and Love to Read.

This author found in the research that a teacher’s love of literature and reading was absolutely fundamental in helping children become lifetime readers. Without enthusiasm for reading and a love of books a teacher can hardly motivate her students to love books and reading. A teacher needs to communicate that love and enthusiasm to the child.

James Higgins (1986) pointed this out when he says:

It is not enough that a teacher prize books and their content; it is his responsibility to communicate this feeling to his pupils. How is it done? Again integrity, or perhaps sincerity is the clue. Children are quick to know the teacher who prizes books by the way he reads, by the way he handles the book itself, by the way he synchronizes

literature with the everyday life of the classroom, by the way he talks about books and the way he seeks and accepts the children's reactions to their reading and by the way he encourages independent reading. (p.54).

If a teacher can honestly and sincerely show her love of books and reading to her students she can motivate and encourage her students to do the same. The teacher can be one of the forces in the child's life to promote lifetime reading.

In this author's time observing a first grade class during "share" time, she noticed that nothing the teacher said passed by the first graders. When the teacher briefly mentioned to her students that she enjoyed reading mystery stories she was amazed when several weeks later the first graders brought the subject up again when reading a "Nate the Great" book together. "Mrs. Brown will really like this story because it's a mystery story" said one of the first graders. Later, the teacher noticed several first graders checking out "Nate the Great" books from the school library on their own. As Patricia Koskinen (1994) states, "Children described reading books that had been previously read aloud by parents or teachers..... 'I read it after the teacher read it aloud' (p.177). What teachers find important their students will find important.

Another aspect related to a teacher's love of books and reading was the environment created by the teacher in the classroom for the students. If a teacher loves to read and loves books then it would follow that the classroom would have many books around for the students to enjoy. There should be a comfortable area with plenty of books within easy reach for the students to settle in and read. Aidan Chambers (1973) in his wonderful style stated:

Actors know the difference costume and setting make to performance, the sense of occasion they help create. And these things hold true for teachers and children. The more care we take to prepare attractive surroundings that help our work, the more effective our work will be. (p. 37).

Teachers need to communicate their enthusiasm and love of books and reading to their students by sharing books they love with their students day in and day out. Teachers also need to provide a warm and comfortable setting for their students with plenty of books available for the students to discover and enjoy.

Read Alouds and Silent Reading

The third point that this author found to be important to help students become lifetime readers was the reading going on in the classroom. Teachers reading aloud to their students during every school day is extremely important to students becoming lifetime readers. As Margaret Mooney (1994) stated:

When an adult and a child or group of children spend unhurried and uninterrupted time viewing, reading and sharing a book together, the unspoken messages about reading and about books are as important, and perhaps longer lasting, than any part of the actual content. The enjoyment of listening and reading, viewing and thinking, remembering and wondering their way through a book with an enthusiastic teacher can convince children that books and reading offer satisfaction, knowledge, challenge, comfort and delight - and that reading is for them! (p.71).

Teachers need to take the time to read out loud to their students. They need to share their enthusiasm and love of books through story reading every day. Although there

are many things that can distract a teacher away from the time needed to read aloud, it is very important for the teacher to drop other nonessential tasks in the curriculum to take time to open up a book and read out loud to their students. Maryann Eeds and Sarah Hudelson (1995) tell us this about children. They believe that:

They need wonderful books. They need teachers who read aloud every day and ask them what they think, what they notice. They need teachers who, instead of asking questions with already known answers, share what they have noticed, or what they think, modeling for children the kinds of possibilities for talk that literature can inspire. (p.4).

In “Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading” Anderson et al. (1985) stated the following fact, “The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children.” (p. 23). Teachers *must* read out loud to their students every day to help those students become lifetime readers.

The other aspect of reading in the classroom that was also important was silent reading. Simply giving the child time alone to explore books is one of the greatest gifts a teacher can give a student on the road to lifetime reading. The study “Becoming a Nation of Readers”, Anderson et al. (1985) reported that merely seven or eight minutes a day was spent in silent reading in the typical primary classroom. This accounts for less than 10% of the total time spent in reading instruction. The study also stated that the amount of time children spend reading silently in class is associated directly with gains in reading achievement. (Anderson et al.).

This author realizes now through the research done that not enough silent reading takes place in many classrooms today. Although children in the lower primary grades cannot read silently for long at the beginning of the school year, they can certainly explore books during that time and as the year progresses become capable of silent reading in fifteen to twenty minute increments. Teachers could allow their students to do what Aidan Chambers (1983) writes about when he says that “while browsing haphazardly, searching for nothing in particular, you pick up a volume that suddenly excites you, and you know this is one of all the others you must read.” (p. 72). This author knows what a joy it is to browse through books, but has observed teachers giving their students time to browse only after the students had completed certain tasks required of them. Instead, teachers should let the browsing or silent reading come first. As Frank Smith (1985) says, “Children learn to identify themselves as members of the literacy club. They see themselves as readers and as writers. We learn and behave like the people we see ourselves as being.” (p. 125). Every teacher should desire to become a member of that literacy club for the sake of the children they teach.

An interesting research study done by Meyer, Wardrop, Stahl & Linn on the “Effects of Reading Storybooks Aloud to Children” (1994) found that reading aloud to children alone does not improve the reading achievement of children. The researchers of this study also included research done by Pikulski and Tobin (1989) on precocious readers who found that the amount of independent reading these children did in first grade, rather than the amount of time they were read to, was the strongest predictor of their later reading. This author is not surprised at these findings. Teachers should read aloud to students, not

to improve their reading achievement scores, but to engage them in the delight and enjoyment of reading. This, in turn, will make children want to pick up that book and read on their own for the pure enjoyment of reading. Once children start reading more on their own, reading achievement scores will show improvement. It should be noted that the researchers Meyer, Wardrop, Stahl & Linn (1994) could not find research that spoke to this very issue of whether reading books aloud to children makes them more interested in reading or learning to read. The researchers felt that there was a need for research to be done in this area. No single step taken in the process of reading can work a miracle all on its own, but all the steps put together can help children become skilled and lifetime readers.

Another research study this author found interesting had to do with children's reading in relation to social, cognitive and instructional connections. (Guthrie, Schafer, Wang & Afflerbach, 1995). This study was carried out on 9, 13 and 17 year old children. One of the conclusions that the researchers drew for all three age groups was:

Students who were relatively active readers reported relatively high levels of social interaction and relatively high amounts of teacher-directed reading instruction. This path suggests that teachers who emphasize comprehension processes also create an environment which supports students' verbal interactions surrounding literacy. These social exchanges, in turn, seem to foster the frequency of choosing to read. (p. 18).

Teachers who enjoy reading and share that enjoyment with their students encourage those students to discuss with the teacher and among themselves what books they are reading

and why they are reading them. Students who can share their enjoyment with others are students who will read more books.

One part of another research study this author read had to do with a comparison made between two first grade teachers and how these teachers implement a whole language program in their classrooms and what effect this implementation had on their students' attitudes toward reading. (McKenna, Stratton, Grindler & Jenkins, 1995). Although it was made clear by the researchers that neither first grade teacher was a purist when it came to the implementation of a whole-language philosophy, the most striking information was that technique was not as crucial as the manner in which the techniques were employed by the teacher. The teacher who made the connection with her students, who explained and emphasized why the students were learning to read and write and how it helps them learn meaning was the teacher who had students with positive attitudes towards reading.

McKenna et al. (1995) go on to say that there is no evidence that the whole-language philosophy holds any advantages over traditional instruction when it comes to students' attitudes toward reading but that the importance of how each teacher implements their philosophies into practice is something that needs to be looked at closer. How teachers interact with their students and the atmosphere a teacher creates in a classroom seem to be more important than the philosophy being used by the teacher. Teachers can be either a positive or negative influence on their students when it comes to reading attitudes. The teacher seems to be the catalyst that can help children become lifetime readers.

The Problem

The purpose of this study was to find out how teachers could help their students become lifetime readers. To do this, an informal reading survey was used as this author's tool for gathering information. The survey contained questions that asked teachers about their reading habits as children, their reading habits as adults and their reading habits in the classroom. Also, this author specifically asked the teachers for their input on what they thought helped children become lifetime readers and what stood in the way of children becoming lifetime readers. This author compares the teachers' childhood reading habits and their adult reading habits to see if there are any significant links between the two that could help their students become lifetime readers. The informal reading survey contained 31 questions. All percentages have been rounded off to the nearest tenth.

Method

All together, 30 teachers, pre-school through fifth grade, answered the informal reading survey. Eighty-seven percent of the teachers were female, 13% were male. All grades, pre-school through fifth grade were represented. Eighty percent of the teachers had taught from one to 15 years while 20% had taught from 15 to 30 years.

Procedure

This author asked colleagues from three private parochial West Michigan schools to hand out the survey to their elementary staff, pre-school through fifth grade and to collect the surveys as well when finished. (See Appendix for survey). Of the three schools that were involved, the first school had a return rate of 90%, the second had a return rate of 50% and the third school had a return rate of 60%.

Teachers as Children in School

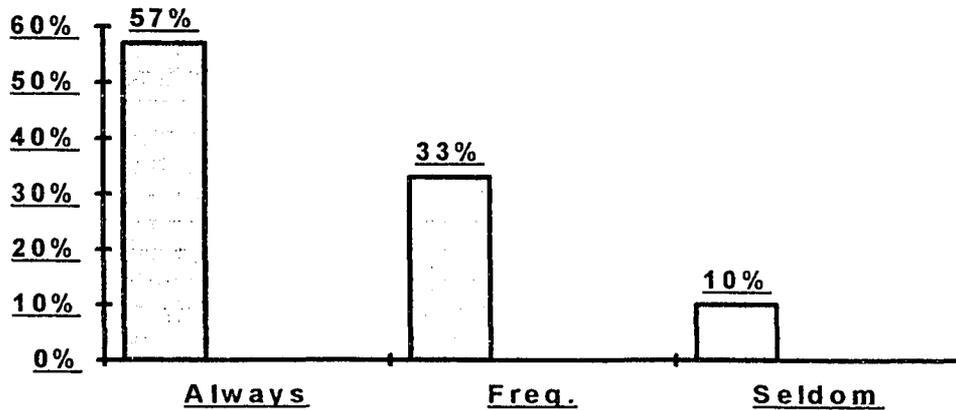
In grade school the top three favorite subjects of these teachers were reading at 53%, geography at 33% and math at 30%. In high school the top three favorite subjects were English at 47%, history at 30% and math at 30%. In college the top three majors were language arts at 33%, elementary education at 13% and history at 13%. It seems that favorite subjects carried over from grade school to high school and even college.

Considering the language arts was a favorite subject in grade and high school, this is not surprising to this author .

When the teachers were asked if they liked school the results were:

Table 1

Teachers who Liked School

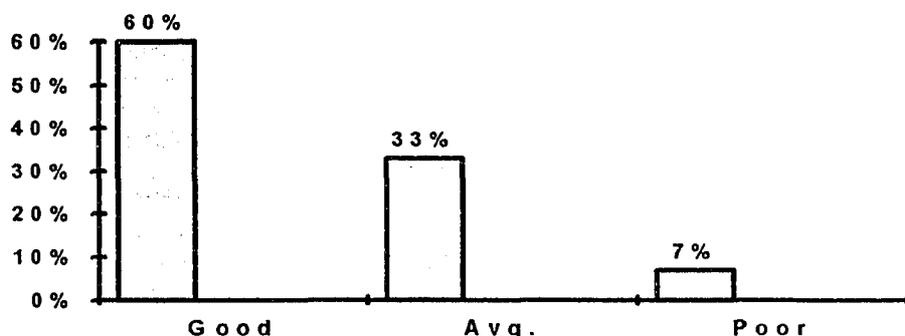


As expected, a majority of the teachers enjoyed school which made sense since these teachers chose the teaching profession as their life work.

When the teachers were asked if they were good, average or poor readers the results were:

Table 2

Good, Average or Poor Readers as Children



When it comes to perceptions of how good a reader these teachers were as children, a majority considered themselves good readers. It is interesting to note here that the poor readers were also teachers who said they never liked school. A good reader has a much better chance of success in school than the poor reader, so it is no wonder these poor readers never liked school. As Table 1 and 2 show, liking school and being a good reader go hand in hand as does not liking school and being a poor reader.

Examples of Authors/Books From Childhood

When the teachers gave examples of books they liked to read in grade school, the top three choices were:

Table 3

Choices	Authors/Books	Percent
#1	The Bobbsey Twins Series Nancy Drew Mystery Series	33%
#2	Little House on the Prairie Series	23%
#3	Black Stallion	13%

(table continues)

Trixie Beldon Mystery Series		
#3	Charlotte's Web	13%
	Dr. Seuss Books	

As the teachers grew older, choices of books/authors they remembered decreased dramatically from junior high through high school. Thirty percent of the teachers can't even remember any books or authors they liked in junior high. Fifty percent said romance novels, sports books and Judy Blume books were ones they remembered in junior high while 20% said the Nancy Drew series and Beverly Cleary books were books they remember.

In high school, 33% of the teachers only remember reading books they were required to read in their classes. Twenty-seven percent remember reading romance novels and 17% don't remember any books they read during their high school years.

Clearly, reading for pleasure when they were children plunged when these teachers grew into adolescence. This author feels that peer pressure, less reading aloud by teachers and homework during the junior and high school years are the main reasons for this decline. This author feels that because teachers in junior high and high school read less to their students than grade school teachers, adolescents are not as motivated to read as they were in grade school. Adolescence becomes a very social time when being with your peers is more important than anything else. Reading for pleasure is not a priority for many adolescents.

When teachers were asked to name three of their favorite books or authors from childhood, the top three choices were:

Table 4

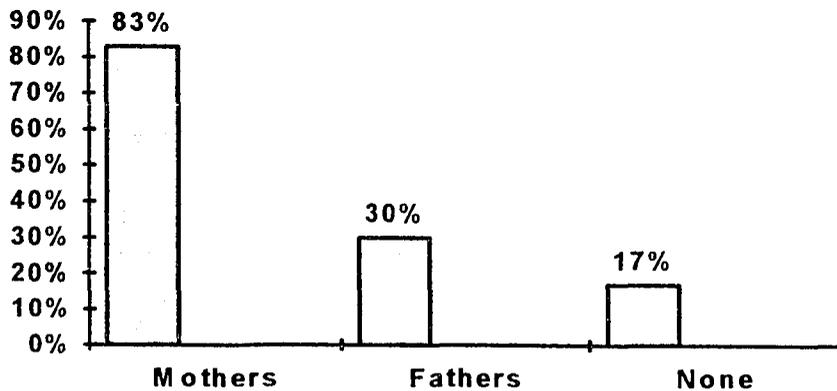
Choices	Books/Authors	Percent
#1	Dr. Seuss books	23%
#2	Laura Ingalls Wilder books	20%
#3	E.B. White books	20%

It is interesting to note that all the authors or books listed above are still widely read in our schools today. The books these authors wrote are classics, the kind of book that never becomes dated or old. It is gratifying and reassuring for this author to know that the favorite authors from these teachers' childhood are still being read today by the students in their classrooms.

When asked if adults read to them as children, the teachers responded as follows:

Table 5

Adults who Read to Teachers as Children



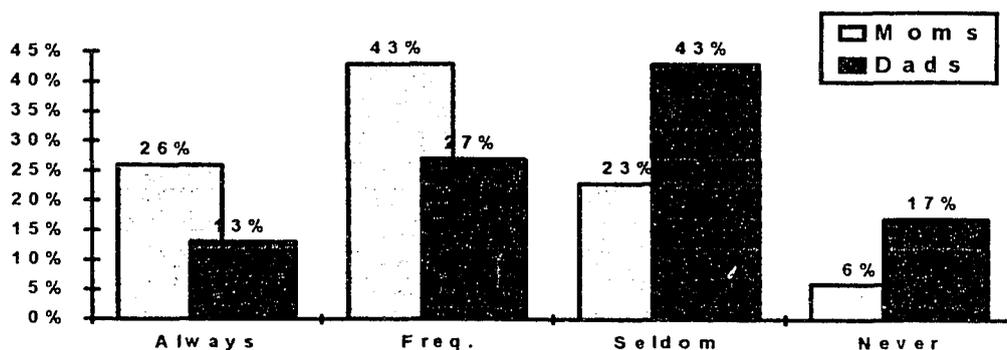
It is clear that mothers were the primary readers to teachers as children. Considering that many more mothers were stay at home moms 20 to 30 years ago, this author was not surprised at this result. Although times have changed, it seems mothers as primary readers in the home has not. Even though many more mothers are now working outside of the home compared to 20 to 30 years ago, mothers are still the primary story readers in homes today.

Dr. Don Pottorff (1993) in his study on “Gender Perceptions of Elementary and Middle School Students About Literacy at School and Home” found that children still name their mothers as the primary readers at home today. In fact, the study found that the majority of children view reading and writing as “female” activities. (Pottorff, Zrentarski & Skovera, In Press). It may be more than coincidence as not that the majority of elementary school teachers are female where the teaching of reading and writing is done extensively in the classroom. As you go further up in the grades, junior high through high school, you see an increase in the number of male teachers. This author wonders if perhaps many teachers also believe that reading and writing are “female” activities, especially in the elementary grades.

When it came to parents of teachers reading for pleasure, the results were:

Table 6

Mothers and Fathers Reading for Pleasure



Almost twice as many mothers read “always” or “frequently” compared to fathers. Twice as many fathers “seldom” or “never” read for pleasure compared to mothers. Mothers are named as the predominant story readers and pleasure readers in the home.

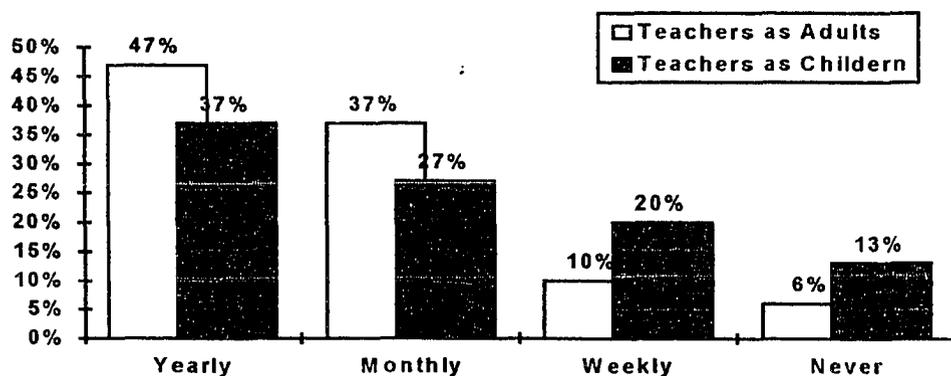
Children need to see more male role models reading to them and reading for pleasure. It will be a shame if reading and writing are seen by children as only “female activities”.

The Library

When asked how often they visited the public library as children and adults the results were as follows:

Table 7

Teachers Visiting the Library



This author expected teachers who didn’t visit the library often as children, to be teachers who ranked reading as a low priority on the survey, read less to their students in class and read fewer number of books for pleasure. That assumption was wrong. There were no major differences between the teachers who went to the library often and those who didn’t concerning the three areas mentioned above. Apparently the habit of going or not going

to the library as children isn't as significant as this author thought it would be. This comes from this author's own personal bias. Visiting the public library as a child and an adult regularly is a habit this author enjoys. It has been a great help to this author as a teacher and lifetime reader as well.

It should be noted that the 6% who never visit the public library wrote on their surveys that they visited their own school libraries often to look up books for their classroom. Comparing teachers' childhood library habits with their adult library habits resulted with 37% frequenting the library more as adults than as children, 33% frequenting the library less as adults than as children and 30% staying the same in their library habits. This author wonders if many of the teachers visit bookstores more often than public libraries. Teachers are excellent scavengers and books are an important part of any elementary classroom. This author wishes another question asked had been how often the teachers frequent bookstores as well.

Teacher Influence

The teachers were asked if they remembered any particular teacher(s) influencing them to read when they were children. The results were surprising to this author because the assumption had been made by this author that somewhere in a child's past there would be at least one teacher who influenced that child to read. Seventy percent were not influenced by any teacher to read and 30% were influenced by a teacher to read. The 30% who were influenced by a teacher remembered the teacher reading them stories they liked and teachers who shared their love of reading and books with their students. It appears to this author that many teachers did not share their love of books and reading with these

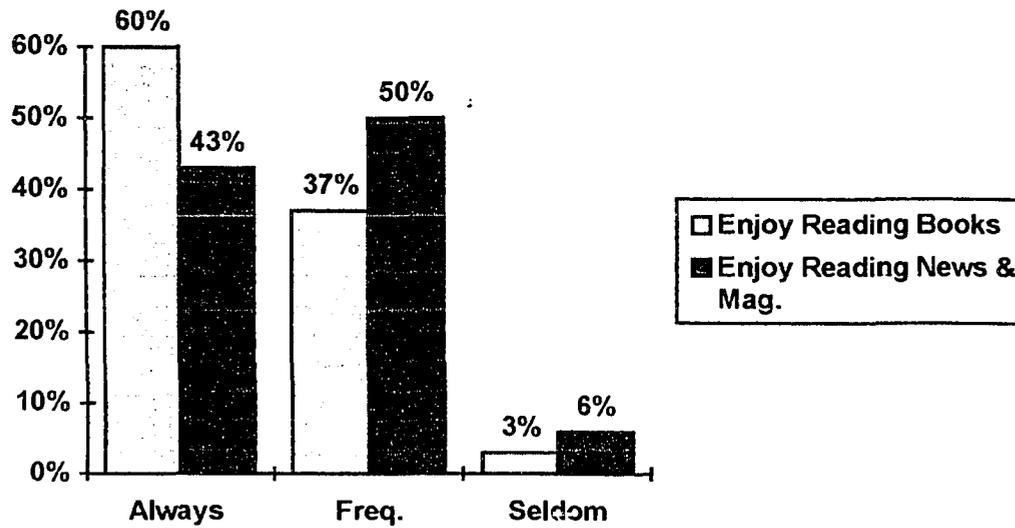
teachers as children. Not enough enthusiasm was shown for reading books and not enough sharing between student and teacher about books took place. Perhaps too much emphasis and time were spent on reading skills and not enough time and emphasis placed on reading and enjoying books together.

Teachers as Adult Readers

When asked if they enjoyed reading books and/or magazines and newspapers, the teachers responded as follows:

Table 8

Teachers Reading Books or Newspapers and Magazines



Considering that language arts is an important part of an elementary curriculum, it is not surprising to this author that the majority of teachers enjoyed reading.

When asked to rank four activities (read a good book, shop at the mall, garden and “other”) from one to four, the results were:

Table 9

Rank	Read book	Shop mall	Garden	Other
1st	46%	29%	7%	18%
2nd	21%	25%	21%	29%
3rd	18%	18%	36%	29%
4th	14%	29%	36%	21%

As seen from Table 9 above, 67% of the teachers preferred reading a good book as their first or second choice. This author considers that fact an example of teachers as lifetime readers. Since 87% of the teachers are female this author was sure “shopping at the mall” would be the category that would compete the most with “read a good book” and so it did with 54% of the teachers ranking the mall as their first or second choice.

When asked what types of books they liked to read as an adult, the top four choices were mystery at 40%, devotional at 23%, historical fiction at 20% and self-help books at 20%. Then, when asked to rank nine types of books they would like to read the results were:

Table 10

Choices	Type of Books
1st	Historical fiction
2nd	Inspirational
3rd	Romance
4th	Mystery
5th	Great American novel
6th	Self - help
7th	Historical non-fiction
8th	Other

(table continues)

9th	Science fiction
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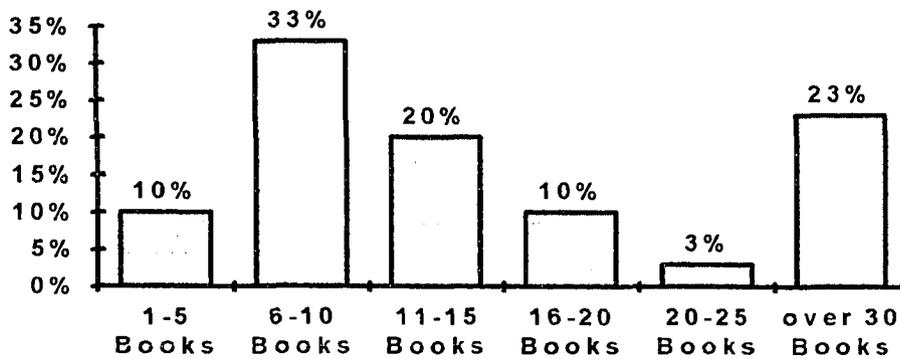
This author was surprised at the popularity of historical fiction as a top book choice. Often when talking to other teachers about books this author has found mystery and devotional books to be popular. Apparently these teachers prefer learning some history as they read good fiction.

When told they were taking a trip to Tahiti and they needed to bring three books the top three choices were a thriller novel at 47%, an inspirational book at 47% and the Bible at 33%. It appears this group of teachers enjoy some escapism during vacation, enjoy being inspired and enjoy their spiritual side as well.

The following table shows how many books a year these teachers read:

Table 11

Books Read in One Year



What surprises this author is that 67% of the teachers previously ranked reading a good book as their first or second choice, but 63% of the teachers read 15 books or less a year.

At the high end with 15 books, that's a little more than one book a month and by this author's standards not very many books are being read by this group of teachers.

Even though many of the teachers rated reading high on their list to do, the actual number of books being read in a year is low. Perhaps teachers put off reading until all the other things in their lives are done first. Similar to classrooms where students browse through books only after they're done with their work. Teachers need to make reading for themselves and their students a high priority.

When asked if parents or teachers could have done more to help them become lifetime readers 43% said there was nothing more parents could have done, 27% wished they had more books to read, 17% wished their parents had read to them more, 6% wished reading had been more fun, 6% wished there had been more time for reading, 3% think phonics should have been taught and 3% wished there had been less pressure in learning how to read. Approximately 60% of the teachers surveyed felt that parents and teachers could have done more to help them become lifetime readers. This author remembers reading basal readers in school but remembers very few other books available in the classroom. It is not surprising that 27% of the teachers also wished they had more books in the home and school when they were children.

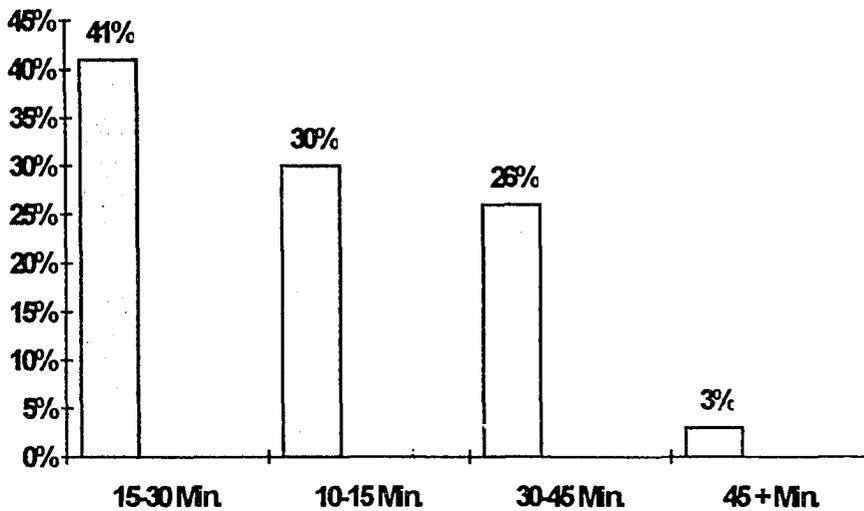
It is interesting to note that 17% of the teachers previously said that neither parent had read to them as children and 17% now say they wish parents had read to them more often as children.

Teachers and Reading in the Classroom

When asked how much time they spent in the classroom reading aloud to their students the results were:

Table 12

Minutes Spent Reading Aloud in Class per Day



This author thought that teachers who were read to “always” or “frequently” by their parents would read more to their students in the classroom. This simply was not true. It did not matter if parents read aloud always, frequently, seldom or never to them when it came to influencing the amount of time teachers read aloud in the classroom.

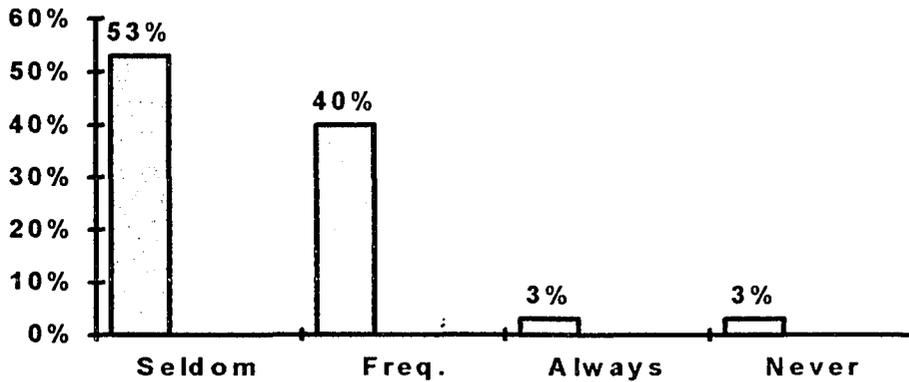
Approximately 70% of the teachers read aloud to their students 30 minutes or less in the course of a school day. After the research this author has done it is this author’s belief that teachers should be reading aloud to their students at least 30 minutes or more each day (Anderson et al., 1985). Perhaps too much time is spent trying to fit in all the other curriculum at the expense of reading aloud to children. This author also should have

asked teachers if reading aloud to students was becoming more difficult because of increasing curriculum demands on the teacher’s time.

When asked if they shared with their students the types of books they enjoyed reading the teachers responded as follows:

Table 13

Share With Students Books You Enjoy

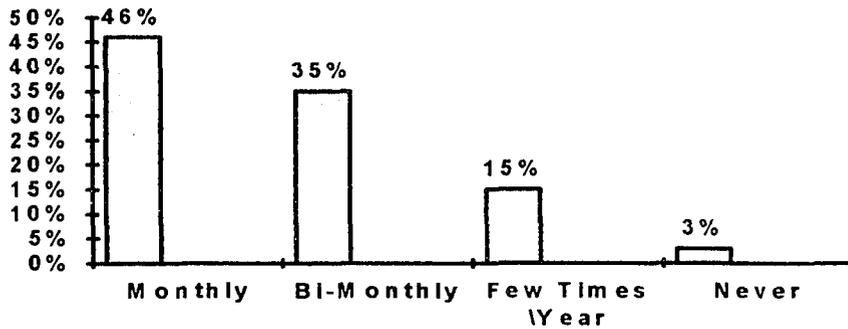


Over half of the teachers, 56%, seldom or never share with students the books teachers enjoy reading. Often teachers will hear about their students’ lives but do not share enough of their own lives with students. Sharing the types of books they enjoy with students is a way for teachers to show students that teachers are a part of the lifetime reading club and, in turn, helps students become members as well.

Teachers were asked how often they sent bookorders home with their students. The following table shows the results:

Table 14

Bookorders Sent Home With Students



A majority of the teachers send bookorders home every month or every other month which makes good sense if teachers hope to make books available to children. It is important for teachers to consistently send home bookorders so students are given the chance to choose their own books to read. Often, students will choose books they have heard their teacher read. The teacher motivates children to read for themselves by reading aloud and making books available to them through bookorders.

Teachers were asked what were the most important things children needed to know about reading. The following table shows the results:

Table 15

What Children Need to Know About Reading	Choices
Read for enjoyment	1st
Read for information	2nd
Understand what you are reading	3rd

(table continues)

You experience new things	4th
You become better the more you read	5th
Develops reading skills	6th
Reading is for a lifetime	7th
Previous experience is important if you want to read	8th
Read everyday	9th

Reading for enjoyment was the top choice of teachers which makes sense when you consider reading without enjoyment will get you students who don't read. Enjoyment of reading must be communicated to students by giving them time to read for pleasure. This helps students to become lifetime readers.

When teachers were asked what stands in the way of children becoming lifetime readers the results are as follows starting with the top choice:

Table 16

Why Students do not Become Lifetime Readers	Choices
Poor reading attitudes at home	1st
Weak reading ability	2nd
Too much television	3rd
Video games	4th
Too busy with outside activities	5th
Computers	6th
Too much "seatwork" in school	7th
Peer influence	8th

Clearly teachers are aware of the importance of home life when it comes to their students' reading. If the parents do not encourage reading and read to their children, it becomes more difficult for teachers to convince students that reading is important and enjoyable. Also, teachers know that children who are read to at home have a better chance of becoming successful readers in school.

Many of the activities listed in Table 16 are activities that teachers in the past never had to deal with. Although television has been around, the amount of time children spend watching it has increased dramatically in the last few years. The increased time spent on playing video and computer games are also more recent activities added to the list. Increasing outside activities like after school sports games also take their toll making life very busy for many families.

This author wonders if the second choice listed in Table 16, "weak reading ability" doesn't have something to do with all the other activities listed. With all the other activities competing for children's attention, how much time is really left over for reading? Perhaps helping children become lifetime readers has more competition today than ever before.

When teachers were asked what they could do to help students become lifetime readers the results were:

Table 17

Ways to Help Students Become Lifetime Readers	Choices
Read to students everyday	1st
Show you enjoy and love books	2nd

(table continues)

Let students read silently for enjoyment	3rd
Be enthusiastic about reading	4th
Have books available for students	5th
Teach them to read	6th
Make it fun to read	7th
Share with your students	8th
Use age appropriate books	9th
Show information you receive from books	10th
Educate parents on importance of reading	11th
Have students write to express themselves	12th

It is gratifying to this author that so many teachers thought reading to students every day, showing you enjoy and love books and letting students read silently were the top choices. Those choices are the same choices this author found in the research needed to help students become lifetime readers.

Although sharing with students only came in as the eighth choice, this author believes it is one of the most important things a teacher can do in the classroom to help students become lifetime readers. Perhaps sharing time with children is not popular with teachers because of all the curriculum teachers feel they need to fit into each school day. Sharing with children gets lost in the daily curriculum instead of being an important part of the curriculum.

Conclusion

It is evident to this author from the results of the informal reading survey and research that teachers have more competition today helping students become lifetime readers than

ever before. It is also apparent to this author that because of this, teachers need to make reading in the classroom a top priority.

Although many teachers placed reading as a top priority in their own lives, when it came down to actual books being read, the number was small. Demands made on teachers in the classroom and outside of the classroom seems to diminish their chances of reading. Too often demands in and out of the classroom become a priority instead of reading, not just for teachers but for students as well. If teachers are truly lifetime readers and hope to help their students become lifetime readers they need to “act” like lifetime readers.

Lifetime readers know that sharing and showing their love of reading and books is an absolute necessity in the classroom to help their students become lifetime readers. Lifetime readers know that making time to read during the school day, aloud and silently is extremely important as well. If teachers are to help students become lifetime readers, they need to open themselves up to their students, share their love of reading and books with their students and make time in their own lives and in the classroom for reading. Teaching children to become lifetime readers should be a top priority of teachers everywhere.

This author has made arrangements with the three schools involved in the informal reading survey to pass on the results and recommendations of this study to the schools’ faculty at time of completion. This study will also be available for reference on the ERIC online network.

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Appendix

Reading Survey Questionnaire

1. I am a male _____. I am a female _____.
2. Do you enjoy reading books?
always _____ frequently _____ seldom _____ never _____
3. Do you enjoy reading magazines and newspapers?
always _____ frequently _____ seldom _____ never _____
4. Did adults read to you as a child?
mother _____ father _____ neither parent _____ other _____
5. How often did your mother or father read to you?
always _____ frequently _____ seldom _____ never _____
6. When you were a child, did you like school?
always _____ frequently _____ seldom _____ never _____
7. What were your favorite subjects in the elementary grades?

What were your favorite subjects in high school?
8. Would you consider yourself a good, average or poor reader when you were a child?
good _____ average _____ poor _____
9. Give some examples of books you liked to read when you were in grade school.
10. Give some examples of books you liked to read when you were in junior high.
11. Give some examples of books you liked to read in high school.

12. Please name three of your favorite books\authors from childhood.

13. As a child, how often did you visit the public library in a year?

every week___ every month___ several times a year___ never___

14. Do you remember any teacher influencing you to want to read when you were a child? yes_____ no_____

If yes, in what way did they influence you?

15. When you were a child, do you remember your parents reading books for pleasure?

Mom - always___ frequently___ seldom___ never___

Dad - always___ frequently___ seldom___ never___

16. What type of books do you like to read as an adult?

17. Please rank the type of books below from 1 through 9, with one being your first choice to read and nine being your last choice to read.

mystery___ science fiction___ romance___ great American novel___

historical fiction___ historical non-fiction___ self-help book___

inspirational___ other___

18. As an adult, how often do you visit the public library?

every week___ every month___ several times a year___ never___

19. What was your major in college?

20. How many years have you been teaching?

1 - 5 yrs___ 6 - 10 yrs___ 11-15 yrs___ 15 -20 yrs___ more than 20 yrs___

21. What grade do you teach?
22. Approximately how many books a year do you read?
1 - 5 ___ 6 - 10 ___ 11-15 ___ 16-20 ___ 20-25 ___
25 - 30 ___ over 30 _____
23. You are going on a trip to Tahiti. What three books do you take along?
24. Rank your preference from 1 - 4, with one being your first choice.
read a good book ___ shop at the mall ___ garden ___ other _____
25. How much time do you spend reading aloud to your students during the course of the day?
10 - 15 mins. ___ 15 - 30 mins. ___ 30 - 45 mins. ___ 45 + mins. _____
26. Do you share with your students what types of books you enjoy reading?
always ___ frequently ___ seldom ___ never ___
27. How often do you send home book orders with your students?
every month ___ every other month ___ few times a year ___
28. Concerning reading, the most important thing for a child to know is:
29. What do you think stands in the way of children becoming lifetime readers?

30. What are three things teachers can do to help children become lifetime readers?

31. Looking back, was there anything your parents or teachers could have done, that they didn't do, to help you become a lifetime reader?

GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

ED 695 DATA FORM

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TITLE: Teachers as Lifetime Readers: How Teachers
Might Serve as Models for Students

PAPER TYPE: (Choose only 1)

SEM/YR COMPLETED: Summer-1995

Project
 Thesis

SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE OF APPROVAL _____

Using the ERIC thesaurus, choose as many descriptors (5 - 7 minimum) to describe the contents of your paper.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Lifelong Learners | 6. Independent Reading |
| 2. Reading Attitudes | 7. Reading Interests |
| 3. Sustained Silent Reading | 8. |
| 4. Reading Habits | 9. |
| 5. Habit Formation | 10. |

ABSTRACT: Two to three sentences that describe the contents of your paper.

How teachers as lifetime readers might influence their students
to be lifetime readers with an informal reading survey of
teachers used to gain information. Sharing between teacher and
students, read alouds, silent reading and teachers sharing their love
of books and reading are needed to help students become lifetime
readers.

** Note: This page must be included as the last page in your master's paper.