

The Effects of Reflection Logs on Kindergarten Student's Engagement During Independent
Reading

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Abstract

Most educators agree that reading skills are enhanced when students are given time to experience text independently. In addition, educators also try to maximize the benefits by making this time as productive as possible. The purpose of this study was to determine if Kindergarten students would demonstrate more on-task behavior during independent reading time if they were given a personal reflection log to complete. The null hypothesis was that students in a kindergarten classroom, when given a personal reading reflection log, will not show a significant difference in their engagement levels during independent reading time. After collecting observational data on 18 kindergarten students for thirty, 15-minute periods of independent reading, there was sufficient evidence that the reflection log likely works to lessen disruptive behaviors. The biggest change in behavior can be observed in the last five minutes of independent reading time. From minute 1 through minute 15, the mean pre-post change in the number of observed off-task behaviors increased from 0.4 to 5.2. In conclusion, the null hypothesis was rejected. Students are more motivated to stay on-task when they are held accountable for reflecting on the text they were reading.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

This study will explore a method to motivate students to be more engaged during independent reading time. Most educators' support the idea that increased time spent engaging with text will result in increased literacy skills. For many years, educators have been looking for ways to increase the amount of student reading. The hope is to fill a void in the educational system that leads to low literacy levels.

The aspects of independent reading are used by most schools across the country. The process looks different in every classroom. It can be defined in this researcher's classroom as a set time that students are reading self-selected "just right" leveled text independently. Each student is allowed to pick out books from leveled bins. They must only select from bins that match their assigned reading level based on the Fountas and Pinnell reading assessment.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2019), 43 Million U.S. adults possess low literacy skills. They are unable understand laws, their rights, and fully participate in society. Americans with low literacy skills are more likely to live in poverty. Gunn (2018) reports that people with low literacy scores are 16.5 times more likely to need public financial aid. According to The Literacy Center (2018), American businesses and taxpayers lose more than \$225 billion annually from poor literacy.

In addition, crime is often committed by people having low-level literacy skills. Seventy-five percent of inmates incarcerated in state prisons do not possess a high school diploma and/or have low literacy skills. Health is also impacted greatly by educational gaps. Even worse, low literacy become intergenerational because children do not have the necessary support to be successful.

In this researcher's classroom, kindergarten students find the task of reading independently challenging because it is often their first experience using their new skills to decode and make meaning of text. Some students are not motivated to use newly taught strategies independently. Some kindergarten students begin to find joy in books when they realize they have the skills to read and/or understand the text. Some kindergarten students demonstrate off-task behaviors such as looking around, playing with the book, or talking to peers.

Statement of Problem

The focus of this study is to find a motivational tool to help kindergarten students engage in grade-level text for an increased amount of time and reduce off-task behaviors.

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis is that students in a kindergarten classroom, when given a personal reading reflection log, will not show a significant difference in their engagement levels during independent reading time.

Operational Definitions

The *student's personal reading reflection log* is the independent variable in this study. This can be defined as a paper where students record the title of the book they read, tally how many times they read the title, and reflect on their feeling about the book using a smiley face rating scale. The personal reading reflection log is strictly to motivate the students and give them some responsibility. The dependent variable is the *level of engagement* in a text for a set amount of time. The student's level of engagement will be assessed by completing one-minute interval observational "sweeps" of the room and counting/tallying off-task behaviors. For example, if independent reading begins at 1:00, the researcher will scan the room at one-minute intervals and tally the number of children off-task. This type of assessment will be conducted before the

children use the personal reading reflection log. The log will then be introduced and use of the log implemented. Assessment will then be done of off-task behavior after the reading log has been implemented.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview

This literature review examines independent reading and strategies that motivate students to increase their time spent reading independently. Section one describes independent reading in its traditional and modern form and its importance. Section two explores the challenge of implementing independent reading. Section three outlines possible motivation strategies that can be used in the classroom, in the school, and at home.

Independent Reading

Independent reading is a classroom procedure that has been implemented for many years. Sanden (2012) points out that teachers define, view, and implement independent reading differently, thus resulting in different outcomes. Traditionally, independent reading is the action of students reading quietly by themselves for an extended period of time. Independent reading has also been referred to as SSR which stands for sustained silent reading. Four typical steps of SSR include providing students with a scheduled amount of time, allowing students to select their own reading material, no participation in follow-up discussions, and teachers modeling good reading behavior as students are reading (Sanden, 2014).

More modern procedures for independent reading have been adopted over the years. Some teachers require students to read a text that matches the reading level they are currently working on. In addition, Sanden (2012) explains highly effective teachers have begun providing adult support, embedded instruction, and a student focus during independent reading time. Sanden (2014) explains, despite conclusive evidence, that SSR impacts reading ability, most teachers feel strongly about its importance and continue to support independent reading. Through

the modern aspects of independent reading, SSR can be used to increase reading growth.

Votypka (2018) believes there is a strong correlation to amount of reading and academic success stating, “Students who consistently read for their own interest are often very competent and are typically high achieving readers” (p.49).

Challenges with Independent Reading

There are a few challenges educators and students face when it comes to reading independently. First, students who struggle with reading may find reading independently for a set time frame to be a daunting, and undesirable task. They may feel overwhelmed by the time and focus on the countdown instead of their book. Secondly, students may struggle with appropriate text selection. Trudel (2007) points out that often during SSR students select books that are either much higher or much lower than their reading ability. This results in students half-heartedly reading. They might just look at the pictures instead of engaging with the text or even worse, demonstrate off task behaviors like chatting or giggling.

Another challenge is the lack of motivation to read. According to Votypka (2018) reading motivation is multidimensional. Students should be self-motivated, as well as motivated by peers, teachers, other schools’ staff, and parents. This researcher believes that students should have constant reminders to read, contingent rewards, and a sense of ownership of their reading. These many parts required for motivation are challenging by the fact that they require a large effort on the part of the teacher to implement activities, rewards, communication logs, and extra classroom procedures.

Motivation Strategies

There are many different strategies to help motivate students and create an effective independent reading time in the classroom. Trudel (2007) believes that an important part of independent reading is having students reflect on their reading. Some teachers choose to do this through a reading log. However, this can have some disadvantages. Davis (2014) shared her experience that reading logs did not help students to read for fun. Students reported they were only reading to complete the log, not because they were taking an interest in reading a good book. Instead of a reading log, Davis suggests doing a daily check in, with students just stating the title of the book they are reading and the page number they are on. In addition, this researcher believes that asking students to reflect on what they are reading with a group of peers is a good way to check in with students without making reading seem like work.

Another motivational strategy for the classroom is to organize the classroom library in a way that promotes self-selection. Votypka (2018) demonstrated this strategy by using colored shelves for leveled books. It was also noted that each level should contain many different genres including fiction, nonfiction, and magazines. This helps encourage students to select a text based on level and interest, which helps children become active and engaged readers.

A third motivational strategy that should be used in the classroom is the task of setting reading goals. This could be a certain number of books or a specific time. Cabral-Márquez (2015) explains setting goals help direct attention and effort toward a desired task and away from irrelevant activities. Goals set for reading should have three attributes including specificity, proximity, and difficulty. Specific goals provide precise details about the actions and effort necessary for success. Proximity in terms of time is important, especially for young children, because children have difficulty understanding time too far into the future. For this reason, goals

for young children should have a shorter time frame. Lastly, the level of difficulty should be taken into consideration when setting a goal. According to this researcher, motivation is most positively influenced by moderately difficult goals.

In addition to classroom strategies, there are activities that can be done school-wide to help motivate students to spend more time reading independently. Rasinski & Padak (2011) discusses the importance of reaching goals as a school. They suggest planning school recognitions and celebrations whenever reading goals are met. These school recognitions and celebrations could be as simple as names on the morning announcements or as elaborate as a school assembly. These researchers also discuss the use of signs in the lobby or hallway of school indicating the number of minutes read per person, class, or school. These should be updated weekly for more motivation. Schools should also be displaying motivational quotes around the campus. This is similar to Votypka's (2018) idea of posting "Read Every Day" on the wall as a constant reminder.

Another strategy to increase reading school-wide would be to provide a wide selection of text. This should include e-books on the school's devices or computers. Barnyak & McNelly (2016) describe how students had an increase in motivation to read when they were given e-books. A study of first, second, and third graders demonstrated that teacher support of comprehensions and vocabulary plays a more important role than technology. However, it was concluded that e-books are a wonderful motivation tool for students who struggle with reading.

Lastly, motivation for reading can be largely impacted by parents at home. There is more that parents should do besides speaking to children about the importance of reading and wanting them to do well. Parents need to create an environment that places value on reading. Klauda (2009) explains "it is not only what children think others believe about reading...but the literacy

environment that others create. The environment conveys a message about the value that others place on literacy” (p. 331).

Darling (2005) believes parents can foster a good literacy environment by modeling reading for fun and pleasure. Also, parents should provide children with a large array of books and magazines at home. Public libraries are always a good option for families without means to own many books. Klauda (2009) suggest that parents share their own books with children and discuss books or articles with mutual interests. Lastly, Families can help motivate the child to read more by providing structured time and space for them to do so.

Summary

Educators feel strongly that independent reading time is an important part of reading success. Over the years, teachers have modified the structure of independent reading to make it more beneficial to students and combat the challenges. Literature is available to give educators many different strategies to motivate students to make the most of their independent reading time. Strategies can be used in classrooms, school-wide, and at home. Through consistent use of multiple motivation strategies, students can make substantial gains in reading by engaging independently in different forms of text.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The focus of this research is to investigate the impact that a reflection log has on student engagement during independent reading time.

Design

This study can best be categorized as a quasi-experimental study that uses a one group pre-post design. Between the pre and post, there is a deliberative process change in the classroom. A motivational strategy, using a reflection log, is used as an intervention with one group of students.

All students the in class were assessed for fifteen days during the fifteen-minute reading time before the personal reading/reflection log was introduced. The researcher did an observation sweep around the room and tallied the number of off-task children every minute of the fifteen-minute reading time. For example, if reading time starts at 1:00, the researcher tallied off-task children at 1:01, 1:02, 1:03, etc. Following that fifteen-day assessment, the personal reading reflection log was introduced and modeled for the same group of children. For the next thirty days, students completed the reflection log after their independent reading time. The researcher completed the same type of observational sweep, tallying off task children.

Participants

The research was conducted at an elementary school in Baltimore County, Maryland. The school houses students from Pre-kindergarten to fifth grade. Students from this school come with varying backgrounds, religions, ethnicities, and races. As of September 2019, 23% of the school population is English learners, 57% qualify for free/reduced lunches, and 9% receive special education services. The sample used for this study was 18 kindergarten students of varying

reading ability. At the time that the data was collected, this sample consisted of 5 six-year olds, and 13 five-year olds. Their races can be recorded as 2 Hispanic, 7 African-American, 8 Asian, and 1 with two or more races. Lastly, this sample was composed of 6 females and 12 males.

Instrument

The instrument used in the study was observational. The researcher determined if a child was off-task during reading time. The task was to sit with a book in your hand, use strategies to decode the text, view illustrations/photographs, and be silent. The researcher tallied the number of children off task in one-minute increments. The information was recorded on a data sheet, before and after the independent variable was introduced.

The researcher collected the data before and after the use of the independent variable, providing consistency in acquiring the data. The instrument used to collect data was straightforward, with a simple response of “Yes or No.”

Procedure

The first step in the execution of the research was to select students that the researcher had access to and could assess frequently. Second, the students needed to be assigned the correct reading level so the data would not be skewed based on the ability to engage with a text because of it’s difficulty. These reading levels were determined using the Fountas and Pinnell assessment already given to these students as a school requirement. Next, participants were given lessons on how to select a good book, advised by modeling what good independent reading looks like, and were taught strategies to help them read their leveled text and engage with books. Then students were given 3 months (October, November, and December) to build reading stamina as independent reading time was slowly increased from 3 to 15 minutes. Assessment started in January to collect engagement data before introducing the reading reflection log. In February,

the reflection log was introduced, and modeled. Students were given five days to use the reflection log before observational assessments resumed. The researcher continued to collect data for the next twenty-five days to assess the number of students engaged with their books.

Analysis Plan

The dependent one-group *t*-test was used to assess the pre-to-post changes in the population mean off-task behavior, based on the pre-post changes of the 18 kindergarten students in the study sample. The customary alpha level of 0.05 was used to test the efficacy of the null hypothesis. Since a true population mean difference might go undetected due to the small sample, Cohen's effect size was also calculated to measure the direct impact of the treatment on the pre-post change. Effect size measures the pre-post change independent of sample size.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Data was collected for a total of 35 days in 1-minute increments for 15 minutes a day. The pre observations occurred over 15 days, while the post observations occurred over 25 days. To compare pre-to-post, only the first 15 days of the post observations were used. Table 1 shows post mean number of off-task behaviors for 15 days, 25 days, and for days 16 through 25. It should be noted that the post data for day 16 through 25 shows an increase in off-task behavior compared to the first 15 days of post data as viewed in Table 1. The mean for days 16 through 25 is still lower than the pre data.

Figure 1 displays the difference in off-task behaviors when comparing the 15-day pre-and post-data. The number of observed off-task behaviors increased across the 15 one-minute observations more during the 15 days pre-treatment than during the 15 days post-treatment.

It is important to view the mean change that occurred minute by minute. Figure 2 illustrates the increase of change that occurred over the 15 one-minute observations. From minute 1 through minute 15, the mean pre-post change in the number of observed off-task behaviors increased from 0.4 to 5.2. The biggest change can be observed in the last five minutes of independent reading time. This data gives evidence that the motivational strategy was useful at getting students to sustain their attention to the text for an extended period of time. Before the motivational strategy was introduced, more off task behavior was observed in those last minutes of independent reading time.

Table 2 explains that over the first four minutes, the mean pre-post changes in off-task behaviors were not sufficient to reject the null hypothesis of no mean change at the customary alpha level of .05. However, from minute 5 through minute 15, the mean pre-post changes in off-

task behaviors were sufficient to reject the null hypothesis of no mean change at the customary alpha level of .05. In conclusion, the treatment was successful in keeping students on-task during independent reading. The biggest change in behavior can be seen after the 4 minutes mark.

Table 1.

Mean Number Off-Task Behaviors Counted during Daily 15 One-Minute Observations

Minute	Pre 15-Day Mean	Post 15-Day Mean	Post 25-Day Mean	Post 16-25 Day Mean	15-Day Mean Decrease
1	1.4	1.0	1.0	1.1	.4
2	1.5	1.1	1.4	1.8	.4
3	1.6	1.2	1.7	2.4	.4
4	2.4	1.5	2.1	3.0	.9
5	3.5	2.3	2.6	3.2	1.2
6	4.1	2.4	2.7	3.2	1.7
7	4.5	2.3	2.8	3.6	2.2
8	4.2	2.1	2.6	3.3	2.1
9	4.7	2.3	2.7	3.2	2.4
10	5.0	2.3	2.9	3.9	2.7
11	5.7	2.3	3.1	4.2	3.4
12	6.3	2.3	3.1	4.4	4.0
13	7.0	2.3	3.3	4.8	4.7
14	7.1	2.4	3.1	4.2	4.7
15	7.4	2.2	3.0	4.2	5.2

Figure 1.

Pre and Post 15-Day Mean Off-Task Behaviors from 15 One-Minute Observations

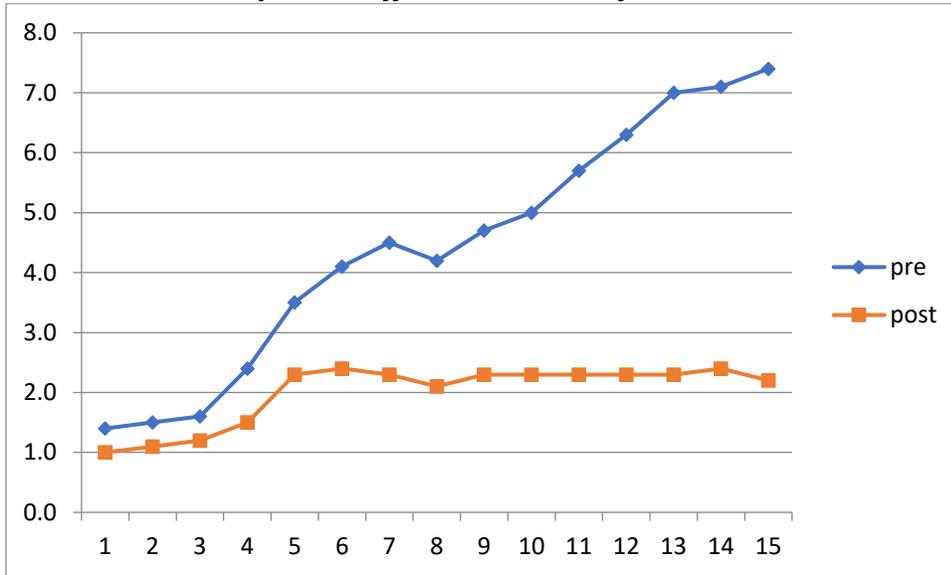


Figure 2.

Figure 2. Pre-Post Decline in Mean Off-Task Behaviors during 15 One-Minute Observations

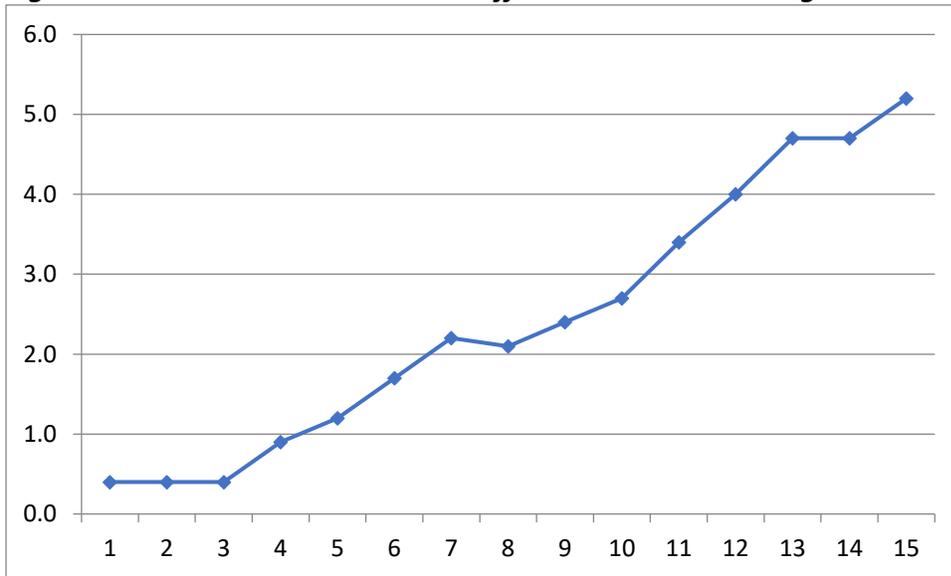


Table 2.

***t*-tests for the Null Hypotheses of No Pre-Post Mean Change in Off-Task Behaviors -15 Days**

Minute	Pre Mean	Post Mean	Pre Std Dev	Post Std Dev	t-test	p-value	Decision
1	1.4	1.0	1.5	.9	.79	.44	Null
2	1.5	1.1	1.4	1.0	1.16	.26	Null
3	1.6	1.2	1.2	1.0	1.00	.33	Null
4	2.4	1.5	1.5	1.2	1.93	.07	Null
5	3.5	2.3	2.0	1.2	2.17	.04	Alternative
6	4.1	2.4	1.2	1.0	3.95	.001	Alternative
7	4.5	2.3	1.8	1.0	3.85	.002	Alternative
8	4.2	2.1	1.9	1.2	4.20	.001	Alternative
9	4.7	2.3	1.7	.9	4.32	.001	Alternative
10	5.0	2.3	1.2	1.2	6.52	.001	Alternative
11	5.7	2.3	2.0	1.4	4.85	.001	Alternative
12	6.3	2.3	2.3	1.1	6.18	.001	Alternative
13	7.0	2.3	1.8	1.2	9.83	.001	Alternative
14	7.1	2.4	2.4	.9	7.00	.001	Alternative
15	7.4	2.2	2.1	.9	7.56	.001	Alternative

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine if using a reflection log would motivate kindergarten students to stay on task during independent reading. Data was collected before and after the reflection log was introduced and being used by the students. The null hypothesis was rejected because there was substantial difference observed with students on-task behavior. It can be concluded that the reflection log was effective in its goal to motivate students to stay on task during independent reading.

Implications of the Results

After reviewing the results of this study, it can be determined that kindergarten teachers in a similar school setting should use reflections logs when implementing independent reading. It is evident that students are more focused when they are given a task that they are responsible for completing.

Theoretical Consequences

It is clear from the day 16- 25 post data, that students on-task behavior started to decline after the reflection log had been used for some time. This could suggest that educators need to update, change, or enhance the reflection log frequently, to freshen the motivation, in order to sustain on-task behavior.

Threats to Validity

There are a few threats to validity that are present in this research. First, there are multiple factors that affect kindergarten students' behaviors. Those factors may include personal illness, stress from home, social pressures, distractibility, use of medicine, etc. In addition, the amount of teacher redirection could alter results. For example, one day, the researcher could sit

quietly at his/her desk during independent reading. Another day, he/she may walk around verbally redirecting students. This change in guidance could pose a threat to the validity of the research. It is important that the researcher is aware of their behavior and remain as consistent as possible. Lastly, the lack of a control group, is another threat to the validity. In this particular research, there was not a control group because the availability of students was limited to a specific class.

Connections to Previous Studies/ Existing Literature

The research that was conducted had a different process for independent reading than what is often referred to as SSR (Silent Sustained Reading) in existing literature. Outdated SSR routines had no recording sheets for students to complete. Students were directed to sit quietly with a book with no real motivation to stay on-task.

Some ideas from this study were supported by existing literature and previous studies. The results from this research support Sanden's (2012) idea that teachers need to support students' independent reading behavior while students develop abilities to engage with reading. The data proves that the reflection log is a great tool to support students. Also, it is noted in the literature that students benefit more when they interact with text on their own. Being asked to form an opinion about the book, such as done on the reflection log used in this study, allows students that opportunity. Additionally, educators have agreed that failing to have accountability requirements may result in students who don't maintain active engagement during reading. The reflection log used in this study was that accountability piece that educators have deemed so important to the behaviors during independent reading.

Implications for Future Research

There are several “next steps” for this research. In the future, it may be beneficial to assess students’ attitudes about independent reading. This would give researchers information about whether the reflection log is enhancing or diminishing views about reading. This would be important to know because the goal, as educators, is to motivate students to love reading. It would be interesting to know what affect the reflection log has on reading enjoyment.

The data from this study suggested that students were beginning to be less engaged as the reflection log lost its newness. There may be an optimal length of time for the reflection log, perhaps 15 days. A variable to study would be different time periods for the treatment. Another option would be to introduce new styles or versions of the reflection log to keep increasing student motivation. Often new things can be motivating but only for a short period of time. It may be valuable to track data for a longer period of time, with newer versions of a reflection log being introduced, and without newer versions being introduced.

Lastly, it may be useful to create a design that incorporates a control sample. This can be accomplished by using a larger group of students. More than one class would be needed. The results would be more valid and reliable.

Conclusion/ Summary

This action research project has succeeded in showing that a deliberative process change using reflection logs for at least 15 days most likely will improve student engagement during independent reading for similar kindergarten classrooms. The conclusion can be made that holding students accountable, while interacting with the text during independent reading time, proves beneficial in keeping students on-task.

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