

Increasing Engagement in Fourth Graders' Independent Reading

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine if the implementation of a self-monitoring reading checklist would improve active engagement when reading independently in a group of fourth graders with mixed reading abilities. This study used a pre- and post-survey regarding participants' reading attitudes and levels of engagement before and after the intervention of the self-monitoring checklist was administered. The group was instructed on important components of engaged reading and asked to monitor their engagement levels during Silent Sustained Reading (SSR). The post-intervention mean score on the survey (24.33), on which higher ratings reflected more engagement than lower ratings, was slightly higher than the pre-intervention mean of 23.15. The results of the t-test indicated the mean pre- and post-scores for items 1-7 were significantly and positively correlated ($r=.783$, $p<.000$), however, the t value of 1.185 was not statistically significant ($p<.158$), therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. The study indicates that student choice can positively impact levels of engagement; however, more research needs to be done to determine instructional strategies to increase independent reading engagement.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

The deemed importance of allocating time for independent reading in classrooms across the country has fluctuated in recent history. The level of student engagement when reading independently varies greatly between those who love to read and who willingly immerse themselves in the task and those who loathe reading and will avoid reading at all costs. Determining whether children are actually engaged when independently reading continues to be a challenge for educators, leading “many educators to view independent reading as a waste of time” and eliminate it from the school day (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2009, p.313). In addition, ever-changing curricular demands, and the push to prepare students for standardized tests have limited the amount of time dedicated to independent reading in classrooms (Miller, 2012).

However, the ability to read and comprehend texts is necessary for success in all academic content areas, as well as most aspects of life during the school aged years and beyond them, into adulthood. Miller (2012) noted that to get better at reading, one must read more, which requires time and repeated practice, indicating the importance of independent reading.

The researcher set out to find ways to increase students’ active engagement when reading independently to improve their reading ability and consequently impact students’ success in academics and life. It was also the researcher’s goal to promote students’ positive attitudes towards reading and increase their level of enjoyment when engaged in the task of reading by teaching them what an engaged reader is, does, and looks like, as well as providing them time to engage in the act of independently reading.

Statement of Problem

The purpose of this study was to evaluate whether the use of a self-monitoring reading checklist would increase students' active engagement while reading independently.

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis was that there would be no significant improvement in fourth graders' self-ratings of independent reading engagement after using a self-monitoring checklist when reading independently.

ho: mean post-intervention self-ratings of engagement = mean pre-intervention self-ratings of engagement

Operational Definitions

The independent variable in the study was the students' use of a newly introduced self-monitoring checklist to assess engagement during Silent Sustained Reading (SSR).

The dependent variable was the level of student engagement while reading independently. This was rated via a pre- and post-intervention survey, found in Appendix A.

The following terms used in this study were defined as follows:

- SSR (Silent Sustained Reading) is a 35-minute period of the school day during which students read independently.
- Independent Reading is student's individual reading of a text which he or she has chosen.
- Reading engagement is defined as the active participation and involvement of the student in reading and was assessed during SSR in this study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview

Independent reading is required in all content areas, as well as in many tasks in daily life. Students' independent reading proficiency can promote their success in these areas and tasks. Increasing motivation and active engagement in the independent reading process in elementary learners can help them as they continue through school, as well as throughout life.

How Can Independent Reading and Reading Engagement Be Defined?

Independent Reading

Independent reading can be defined as time spent reading without assistance. While the definition may be simple, implementation and what independent reading looks like in a classroom setting can be quite diverse. However, effective implementation has several commonalities that promote student literacy learning and address student literacy needs. (Sanden, 2012)

Reading engagement

Engagement can be defined as the “the level of cognitive involvement that a person invests in a process” (Kelly & Clausen-Grace, 2009, p.313). Learners are completely engaged when they immerse themselves mentally, emotionally, and even physically in a task (Kelly & Clausen-Grace, 2009). Reading engagement involves a relationship between the reader and the environment and would “include indicators of action in and interaction with the environment, such as number of words read, evidence of comprehension, and actual strategies used in the reading process” (Unrau & Quirk, 2014, p.264).

Effects and Importance of Student Engagement During Independent Reading

Motivation

“Motivation for reading is an important contributor to students’ reading achievement and school success” (Guthrie et al., 2006, p.232). According to researchers, motivation for reading can predict reading achievement on standardized tests, as well as in grades at school in students in grades 3-5 (Guthrie et al., 2006). Motivating students to engage in learning activities, in class, groups, or independently, is one of the goals of educators. This applies to independent reading as well. “In the context of a reader preparing to read, motivation would include the reader’s self-perceived reading competency, value attributed to reading tasks, and ability to succeed given the reading task presented” (Unrau & Quirk, 2014, p.264). Naeghel et al. (2016) echoes the importance of motivation as it pertains to reading, stating “it is essential that students become competent in reading as well as committed and motivated to read throughout elementary school” (p.232).

Achievement and Performance

Independent reading can positively impact students’ achievement and comprehension. “Students who read a lot and are involved in their reading will likely have increased reading achievement scores on standardized tests” because those who read more tend to acquire a more extensive vocabulary, world knowledge, and informed decision making (Williams et al, 2013, p.25). Williams et al. (2013) also indicate that independent reading fosters reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. Kelley and Clausen-Grace (2009) noted that “highly engaged readers demonstrated higher levels of reading achievement than students who were less engaged” (p.313). Kelley and Clausen-Grace (2006) also note that students need “access to appealing, interesting text and time to silently read books of their choice to attain high levels of literacy”

(p.148). Higher levels of literacy promote higher levels of achievement in all content areas, as reading is a necessary component in all subjects.

Factors that Impact Student Engagement When Reading Independently

Student Interest in Reading and Reading Ability

Students interest in reading and their overall reading ability can impact student engagement during independent reading. Kelley and Clausen-Grace (2009) state that “if we want to support readers during independent reading and help them with engagement, it is critical for the teacher to identify the various types of readers in the classroom” (p.313). Acknowledging and identifying the various interests in reading and reading abilities of students is a crucial step in increasing reading engagement. Students in any given classroom can range from disengaged to compliant to book fanatics (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2009). In addition to reading interest levels, students’ reading abilities can vary dramatically in each educational setting. Both the reading interests and the reading abilities of students are factors which need to be addressed to improve active student engagement during independent reading at school.

Texts – Availability, Access, and Format

Access to a variety of texts which are of interest to the student, available at a student’s reading level, and available in a variety of formats, whether that be a tangible book or electronic one, impact the degree and quality of student engagement during independent reading. Guthrie and Cox (2001) note the importance of access and availability of texts. “An abundance of texts within the classroom and linkages to community resources outside of the classroom, such as libraries and the Internet, are known to directly facilitate motivation and reading achievement” (p. 291). The format of texts can also impact student engagement. Given the advances of technology and the availability of one-to-one devices that most students have access to in our

current education system, allowing students to choose the format of the texts they read empowers them by giving them choice and a feeling of ownership regarding what they read and how they read it. In a 2019 study by McVicker, 98 fourth graders were studied to determine whether they preferred e-books or traditional books. Prior to the study, the majority (63%) thought they would prefer reading a traditional book. However, after the three-phase study which allowed them to read a book in both the plugged (e-book) and un-plugged (traditional) formats, 30 of the initial 70 students who reported preferring reading a book in the traditional form discovered they actually preferred reading an electronic book (McVicker, 2019).

Time Allotted for Independent Reading

Another factor that impacts student engagement when reading independently is time. Miller (2012) notes that students “must read and read and read to become good readers” (p.89) and to develop reading proficiency. Students should engage in two hours of independent reading each week, as recommended by the Commission on Reading, yet with increased curriculum demands, this goal is not met in many classrooms (Miller, 2012). Carving out time in the daily schedule is paramount for independent reading success and engagement.

Time allocated for reading is important not only in the school setting but at home as well. Merga and Roni (2018) note that parental encouragement for their children to read at home decreases once an independent reading skill level has been attained, typically around third grade. Because of this, older elementary children’s perceived value of reading at home curtails after the early years. To promote lifelong reading habits, parental encouragement to read beyond the early years, parental modeling of reading, and allocating time to read independently or together are paramount in promoting reading engagement in children (Merga and Roni, 2018).

Effective Strategies and Best Practices to Increase Student Active Engagement While Reading Independently

Goal Setting

Educators can employ various strategies to promote student engagement during independent reading. One effective strategy is goal setting. Cabral-Márquez (2015) notes that there are numerous benefits of goal setting relating to developing students' motivation to read. Research has shown that setting goals not only increases motivation, but improves performance, directs attention and effort towards the task at hand and away from irrelevant ones, can energize and stimulate students, as well as motivate and promote persistence over time (Cabral-Márquez, 2015). Setting goals may not only improve motivation, but it can also improve students' confidence. "Elementary school children who were directed to establish their own learning goals perceived failure experiences as temporary" demonstrating resiliency, perseverance, and motivation to continue working to achieve their goals (Covington, 2000, p.190).

Opportunities for Student Choice

Allowing students to choose the books they read, the format of the books, and even their actual reading location can increase student motivation and engagement when reading independently. Student choice can begin with book selection. Sanden (2012) finds that providing students with the opportunity to read books of their own choosing is one of the foundations of independent reading success. Miller (2012) echoes this sentiment, stating "no single practice inspires my students to read as much as the opportunity to choose their own books does" (p.90). Another opportunity for students to choose is in the format of the text they read. McVicker (2019) discovered "that attitude about reading is important, and in many cases, changing the reading format (plugged or unplugged reading) can alter students' attitudes and energize

engagement” (p.739). Lastly, even location can be a choice that impacts student engagement.

Offering students things “such as beanbags chairs, quiet corners, stuffed animals, lamps, and soft music can highlight the enjoyment of the reading experience” (Sanden, 2012, p.227).

Teacher Involvement

Teacher involvement and interaction with students during independent reading can also increase student engagement. Though this may seem to be a contradictory statement, as the students are to be *independent*, Sanden (2012) notes the importance of the teacher’s supervision and management during independent reading time to promote student growth. This begins by knowing your students, not only their reading level but identifying their reading engagement. “Knowing more about students’ habits allows the teacher to differentiate independent reading to meet everyone’s needs” (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2009, p. 313). By identifying students’ interest in reading and by managing their behaviors while reading, teachers can determine the level of student independence and the steps needed to increase active engagement during independent reading sessions. Another way for teachers to increase independent student engagement is through modeling and conferencing. Sanden (2012) noted that read alouds, book talks, and whole group, small group, and individual conferences can all be effective strategies to increase student engagement during independent reading.

Conclusion

“The more students read, the better readers they become” (Miller, 2012, p.92). The research suggests that independent reading is a key step in developing reading proficiency and student success in school and beyond. Therefore, it is important for educators to employ instructional strategies to promote active student engagement during independent reading. Allotting time each day to read, encouraging student choice in the books and format that they

read, as well as settings conducive to enjoying reading and teacher involvement have all been shown to help s promote engagement in independent reading.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Design

This was a pre-experimental study that used a one group, pre-test, post-test design. Between the pre- and the post-test, an intervention which involved using a self-monitoring engaged reading checklist was used with the participants.

All student participants completed a pre-intervention survey found in Appendix A. Following the completion of the pre-test, students were given a copy of the self-monitoring engaged reader checklist (Appendix C) and participated in a mini lesson discussing and explaining the criteria on the checklist. Students then participated in twelve SSR periods over three weeks during which they were prompted to review a copy of the checklist before and during reading independently. They submitted their responses for the checklist items once a week during the three-week study after SSR to assess their levels of independent reading engagement. Then a second survey, which was identical to the initial one with the exception of four additional items (Appendix B) was administered to determine the impact, if any, of the self-monitoring checklist on their engagement over the course of the study.

Participants

The participants in this study were 27 fourth grade students. The researcher used convenience sampling, as the participants were already enrolled in her class and she felt they could benefit from the intervention. The participants consisted of 13 male students and 14 female students who were nine and ten years old at the time of the study. This was a mixed ability grouping of students consisting of four students with special education goals, four students

receiving speech services, five students receiving reading specialist interventions, and three students enrolled in the school's gifted and talented program.

Instrument

The instruments utilized in this study were online pre- and post-intervention surveys developed by the researcher to determine the students' level of interest and engagement while independently reading. Engagement scores were calculated to test the null hypothesis by summing ratings from one to five on items one through 7 on both surveys. Supplemental survey items on the pre-intervention survey assessed students' reading preferences and influences on their reading at home. Items on the post-intervention survey also inquired about students' perceptions of the self-monitoring engaged reader checklist which was intended to improve their engagement in reading during SSR.

Procedure

The study began in March 2021 with the administration of the pre-intervention survey (Appendix A) and lasted for three weeks until March 2021 with the administration of the post-intervention survey (Appendix B). After students had completed the pre-test survey, a mini lesson was conducted discussing what active engaged reading is and what it looks like when independently reading. Students were provided with a self-monitoring engaged reader checklist to refer to before, during, and after independently reading to promote active engagement with texts during SSR.

Reminders about what active reading is and looks like, as well as reminders to refer to and the use of the self-monitoring checklist, were discussed and shared periodically and at the beginning of each SSR block. Students participated in SSR every Monday through Thursday 2:40-3:15 in both the hybrid and virtual learning settings. At the end of SSR each day, students

were asked to reflect on their level of reading engagement, using the self-monitoring checklist (Appendix C) to assess themselves.

At the end of the three-week study, students were given the post-intervention survey (Appendix B) to determine if their level of independent reading engagement had improved, stayed the same, or decreased after the implementation of the self-monitoring independent reading checklist. The post-intervention survey also contained 4 items to assess their perceptions about the intervention and how it impacted them as a reader. Those responses were summarized using tallies and descriptive statistics.

Results follow in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Independent Reading Engagement Before and After the Intervention

The null hypothesis was that there would be no significant improvement in fourth graders' self-ratings of independent reading engagement after using a self-monitoring checklist when reading independently. The null hypothesis (*ho: mean post-intervention self-ratings of engagement = mean pre-intervention self-ratings of engagement*) was tested using a t-test for dependent samples which compared the mean totals on items 1-7 of the pre- and post-intervention surveys which are located in in Appendices A and B respectively. The results follow in Table 1 (descriptive statistics) and Table 2 (t-test results). The descriptive statistics showed that the post-intervention mean of 24.333 was slightly higher than the pre-intervention mean of 23.148 on items one through seven which asked the students to rate their perceptions of themselves as readers and their reading habits. the following questions. Based on the literature review, higher ratings on these items were thought to reflect more engagement than lower ratings.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Pre and Post Survey Items 1 – 7 and Totals

Survey Item and Totals N=27		Mean	Std. Deviation	range
1. Which best describes you as a reader?	<i>Pre</i>	3.63	1.04	1-5
	<i>Post</i>	3.85	1.06	1-5
2. Do you read in your free time during school hours?	<i>Pre</i>	2.96	1.09	1-5
	<i>Post</i>	3.00	1.14	1-5
3. Are you motivated to read for enjoyment/fun in your free time at school/during the school day?	<i>Pre</i>	2.89	1.05	1-5
	<i>Post</i>	3.22	1.25	1-5

4. Rate your level of engagement during SSR. How on task and involved in reading are you during SSR?	<i>Pre</i>	3.85	.90	1-5
	<i>Post</i>	3.81	1.21	1-5
5. During SSR, how long are you actively engaged in reading before taking a break/getting bored/getting tired?	<i>Pre</i>	3.81	1.11	1-5
	<i>Post</i>	3.89	1.01	1-5
6. How often do you read at home?	<i>Pre</i>	3.11	1.28	1-5
	<i>Post</i>	3.33	1.209	1-5
7. Are you motivated to read for enjoyment/fun in your free time at home? 7	<i>Pre</i>	2.89	1.25	1-5
	<i>Post</i>	3.22	1.19	1-5
Pre-Intervention score on Items 1-7	<i>PRE</i>	23.15	5.80	9-35
Post-Intervention score on Items 1-7	<i>POST</i>	24.33	6.76	8-35
Mean Difference		1.19		

Table 2

Results of Paired Samples t-test Comparing Pre and Post Survey Items 1 – 7

	Paired Differences							
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	sig
				Lower	Upper			
Post Score Items 1-7 – Pre-Score Items 1-7	1.185	4.234	.815	-.490	2.860	1.455	26	.158

The results of the t-test indicated the mean pre- and post-scores for items 1-7 were significantly and positively correlated ($r=.783$, $p<.000$). However, as shown in Table 2, the t

value of 1.185 was not large enough to be considered statistically significant ($p < .158$), therefore, the null hypothesis was retained.

Supplemental Survey Items

Some supplemental survey items were administered on the pre- and post-intervention surveys to gather more information about the participating students' reading habits and engagement. Items 8 and 9 were the same on both surveys and rated on a five-point Likert type scale. Items 11 and 12 on the post-intervention survey were also rated on a five-point scale. Item 10 was a binary choice item that asked about whether students chose their own books or not. Items 13 and 14 asked students to select from a list of seven options those which might make them want to read at home or school, respectively. The descriptive statistics regarding items 8, 9, 11 and 12 follow in Table 3.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics Regarding Supplemental Rating Scale Items 8, 9, 11, and 12

Survey Items		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
8. Are you encouraged to read at home?	Pre	27	1	5	2.963	1.091
	Post	27	1	5	3.370	1.149
9. Do you like reading books recommended by others (classmates, friends, parents, family, and/or teachers)?	Pre	27	1	5	3.111	1.311
	Post	27	1	5	2.926	1.357
11. What impact did the Active Reader Checklist have on your level of engagement during SSR?	Post	27	1	5	3.519	1.424

12. My attitudes/feelings about reading _____.	Post	27	1	5	4.074	.997
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Tallies of responses to items 10-12 are presented in Table 4. These indicated that most students usually choose their own books, seemed to feel the checklist helped them engage in reading and improved their feelings about reading.

Table 4

Tallies of Responses to Items 10, 11, and 12

	10. Are most books you read books of your choice or books chosen for you? 1= own choice 2= others choose for me		11. What impact did the Active Reader Checklist have on your level of engagement during SSR? 1= It had no impact on my level of engagement. 2= It did not help me be engaged. 3= It helped me be somewhat engaged. 4= It helped me be engaged. 5= It helped me be very engaged.		12. My attitudes/feelings about reading _____. 1= have worsened a lot since using the Self-Monitoring Engaged Reading checklist. 2= have worsened since using the Self-Monitoring Engaged Reading checklist. 3= have not changed since using the Self-Monitoring Engaged Reading checklist. 4= have improved since using the Self-Monitoring Engaged Reading checklist. 5= have improved a lot since using the Self-Monitoring Engaged Reading checklist.	
Response Options	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1	18	66.7	3	11.1	1 (worsened a lot)	3.7

2	9	33.3	5	18.5	1	3.7
3			3	11.1	3	11.1
4			7	25.9	12	44.4
5			9	33.3	10 (improved a lot)	37.0
Total	27	100.0	27	100.0	27	100.0

Table 5 presents a tally of the things students reported would give them incentive to read at home or school in response to items 13 and 14. Responses fell into the seven categories listed.

Table 5

Tally of Incentives for Reading Reported in Items 13 and 14

Item:		13.Please tell me what would really make you WANT to read a book or a reading assignment AT HOME:		14.Please tell me what would really make you WANT to read a book or a reading assignment AT SCHOOL:	
<i>Response Option</i>		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
1	nothing	5	18.5	3	11.1
2	free time (breaks/avoidance/bored/finished work/etc.)	6	22.2	8	29.6
3	good book/interested	8	29.6	7	25.9
4	read to/with others	5	18.5	4	14.8
5	good spot (comfy/free from distractions)	1	3.7	3	11.1
6	told to by parents/teacher	1	3.7	1	3.7
7	if given a reward	1	3.7	1	3.7
Total		27	100.0	27	100.0

Finally, Table 6 lists the descriptive statistics for self-ratings students made of their reading behaviors at the start, middle and end of this study.

Table 6

Self-Monitoring Checklist Descriptive Statistics

Item	Start Mean	Start s.d.	Middle Mean	Midde s.d.	End Mean.	End s.d.
1. I chose an appropriate text.	4.89	.320	4.63	.629	4.70	.823
2. I had eyes on the text.	4.40	.797	4.70	.465	4.40	.694
3 I was in a comfortable space.	4.37	1.115	4.48	.700	4.44	.934
4. I was free from distractions.	3.78	1.340	4.11	1.155	4.04	1.400
5.I thought about the text as I read and made connections to my life/other texts/the world	3.52	1.397	3.74	1.289	3.85	1.379

Discussion of the results follows in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine if using a self-monitoring reading checklist would increase students' engagement while reading independently. The null hypothesis stated that there would be no significant change in fourth graders' self-ratings of independent reading engagement after using a self-monitoring checklist when reading independently and was retained in this study.

The mean pre- and post-test survey data for items 1-7 also support the retainment of the null hypothesis. All but one of the 7 items on the survey showed a slight improvement in rating on the post test. However, the mean increase was less than a half point for all 6 of the increased responses proving to be not significant. The one item that showed a slight decrease of .04 was the survey question regarding level of engagement. This data also supports that the self-monitoring checklist did not dramatically improve student engagement during SSR.

Though the null hypothesis was retained and no significant improvement in independent reading engagement was found when using a self-monitoring checklist, participants' overall ratings about their active reading engagement and attitudes about reading showed improvement on the post test. Over half (59.2%) of the participants stated that the self-monitoring checklist helped them be more engaged during SSR and 81.4% of participants noted that their attitudes about reading had improved since using the self-monitoring checklist.

Threats to the Validity

There are several factors that could have impacted the validity of the results of this study. One threat to the validity is the brief duration for which this study was conducted. The study was

conducted over just a three-week period which provided a limited amount of data, as well as a limited amount of time to impact reading habits and preferences related to engagement.

Another threat to the validity of this study were the modes of delivery of the pre- and post-tests, as well as the intervention itself. During this study, some participants were at times engaged in in- person learning while others were virtual students and vice versa. The inconsistency and relative novelty of the learning environment due to the COVID 19 pandemic may have impacted the results of the study.

Additionally, the lack of a control group and limited number of participants in the study may have impacted the study's validity. The researcher only had access to her classroom students, limiting the sample and not allowing for the inclusion of a control group which would not have received the intervention and to which the outcomes could have been compared.

Connections to Previous Research and the Literature

Many factors can impact the level of student engagement when reading independently. Research has shown that student choice is one determining factor that can increase student motivation to read and engagement while reading. Sanden (2012), Miller (2012), and McVicker (2019) all suggest that student choice in both book and format can inspire students to read and promote a positive attitude towards reading. Participants in this study echoed that sentiment with 66.7% of them stating they prefer to choose their books rather than having them chosen for them.

Research also suggests that readers are more engaged when they are interested in both the act of reading and the content of the books they are reading. Guthrie and Cox (2001) noted that availability of a large quantity of texts can motivate students to read. A large variety of texts of different genres, levels, and formats would better meet the needs and interests of all readers.

Supporting those findings, participants in this study most frequently cited interest in the book was a factor that would make them want to read at home (29.6%) or school (25.9%).

The second most frequently cited factor about what impacts students' desire to read was having free time. Six (22.2%) of the students stated having time would make them want to read at home, and 29.6% of students stated having time at school would make them want to read. The research supports the importance of time in improving reading engagement and achievement. For example, Miller (2012) notes students must have time to read daily to develop reading proficiency and promote reading success and engagement. Merga and Roni (2018) note that parental encouragement to read at home can also promote reading engagement and skill level. That was reflected in participant ratings that reading with others might motivate them to read.

Interestingly, 5 (18.5%) and 3 (11.1%) of the participating children indicated "nothing" would make them want to read at home or school, suggesting there is more to learn about supporting and incentivizing engagement in reading.

Theoretical Consequences

Many factors impact students' attitudes and preferences towards reading. Participants in this study all had varying experiences prior to the study that could impact their attitudes and levels of reading engagement. Participants' prior experiences related to reading, including positive reading behaviors being modeled at home, amount of time having been read to, and encouragement to read at home, all are factors that could impact the participants' views of and attitudes about reading. Though the participants are young, their previous school experiences could also impact their attitudes and perceptions about reading. Cognitive, social, and emotional development could also impact the motivation and ability of students to read successfully, impacting their level of engagement as well.

Implications for Future Research

The findings of this study suggest there are several next steps to learn more about improving students' active engagement in independent reading. One possibility for future research would be to increase both the duration of the study and the number of participants. Conducting this research over a longer period may find different results. Also, more participants may yield different results as well providing future researchers with more information that could promote independent reading engagement among a wider population of students. More participants would also allow for the opportunity to have a control group that would not receive the intervention to determine the effectiveness of the self-monitoring checklist more conclusively and improve the validity of the study.

Conducting this study in a more controlled learning environment or comparing it across a few kinds of settings would also likely provide different results. It would be optimal to have all students in in-person learning settings when giving the pre- and post-tests, as well as when administering the intervention to ensure they understand and are invested in providing effort and accurate responses to assessments.

Another option for future research would be to increase the amount of times the participants complete the self-monitoring checklist. In this study, the students were shown and reminded of the self-monitoring checklist items daily, yet they only completed the checklist three times, once a week to get beginning, middle, and ending data. It may be beneficial to have students complete the checklist daily to determine if this would have a greater impact on their level of engagement.

Future studies could also investigate the impact of self-monitoring across grade levels, types of texts and subject matter to see if the impact is consistent in all scenarios.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this brief action research study failed to find statistically significant improvement in independent reading engagement when students used a self-monitoring checklist. Limitations of the study were its short duration and small number of participants, as well as conducting the research during a pandemic when students were learning both in person and virtually. Future research could address and control better for these needs to improve the validity of the results.

Though the null hypothesis was retained, results were obtained that suggested that student choice and time allotted to read and reading with others could improve students' attitudes towards reading and that some students feel there is no way they could feel better about reading. Teachers should take all these results into consideration when implementing independent reading programs in their classrooms.

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Appendix A
Pre-Intervention Reading Survey
(Items 1-7 are the same on pre and Post Intervention Reading Survey)
(Note: Positive responses about reading were 5's, negative ones were 1's)

1. Which best describes you as a reader?
 - I love reading!
 - I like reading.
 - I don't like or dislike reading.
 - I don't like reading.
 - I really dislike reading!
2. Do you read in your free time during school hours?
 - Everyday
 - Many days
 - Some days
 - Not often
 - Never
3. Are you motivated to read for enjoyment/fun in your free time at school/during the school day?
 - Everyday
 - Many days
 - Some days
 - Not often
 - Never
4. Rate your level of engagement during SSR. How on task and involved in reading are you during SSR?
 - Very engaged
 - Engaged
 - Somewhat engaged
 - Not very engaged
 - Not engaged at all
5. During SSR, how long are you actively engaged in reading before taking a break/getting bored/getting tired?
 - The entire 45 minutes.
 - Most of the time – at least 30 minutes.
 - About half of the time – 20 minutes or so.
 - Some of the time – at least 15 minutes.
 - Not long at all – 5 minutes or less.
6. How often do you read at home?
 - Everyday
 - Many days
 - Some days
 - Not often
 - Never

7. Are you motivated to read for enjoyment/fun in your free time at home?
 - Everyday
 - Many days
 - Some days
 - Not often
 - Never
8. Are you encouraged to read at home?
 - Everyday
 - Many days
 - Some days
 - Not often
 - Never
9. Do you like reading books recommended by others (classmates, friends, parents, family and/or teachers)?
 - Usually
 - Often
 - Sometimes
 - Not often
 - Never
10. Are most books you read books of your choice or books chosen for you?
 - Books of my choice
 - Books chosen for me

Appendix B
Post intervention Reading Survey

(Items 1-7 are the same on pre and Post Intervention Reading Survey)

1. Which best describes you as a reader?
 - I love reading!
 - I like reading.
 - I don't like or dislike reading.
 - I don't like reading.
 - I really dislike reading!
2. Do you read in your free time during school hours?
 - Everyday
 - Many days
 - Some days
 - Not often
 - Never
3. Are you motivated to read for enjoyment/fun in your free time at school/during the school day?
 - Everyday
 - Many days
 - Some days
 - Not often
 - Never
4. Rate your level of engagement during SSR. How on task and involved in reading are you during SSR?
 - Very engaged
 - Engaged
 - Somewhat engaged
 - Not very engaged
 - Not engaged at all
5. During SSR, how long are you actively engaged in reading before taking a break/getting bored/getting tired?
 - The entire 45 minutes.
 - Most of the time – at least 30 minutes.
 - About half of the time – 20 minutes or so.
 - Some of the time – at least 15 minutes.
 - Not long at all – 5 minutes or less.
6. How often do you read at home?
 - Everyday
 - Many days
 - Some days
 - Not often
 - Never
7. Are you motivated to read for enjoyment/fun in your free time at home?
 - Everyday

- Many days
 - Some days
 - Not often
 - Never
8. Are you encouraged to read at home?
- Everyday
 - Many days
 - Some days
 - Not often
 - Never
9. Do you like reading books recommended by others (classmates, friends, parents, family and/or teachers)?
- Usually
 - Often
 - Sometimes
 - Not often
 - Never
10. Are most books you read books of your choice or books chosen for you?
- Books of my choice
 - Books chosen for me
11. What impact did the Active Reader Checklist have on your level of engagement during SSR?
- It helped me be very engaged.
 - It helped me be engaged.
 - It helped me be somewhat engaged.
 - It did not help me to be engaged.
 - It had no impact on my level of engagement.
12. My attitudes/feelings about reading _____.
- Have improved a lot since using the Self-Monitoring Engaged Reader checklist.
 - Have improved since using the Self-Monitoring Engaged Reader checklist.
 - Have not changed since using the Self-Monitoring Engaged Reader checklist.
 - Have worsened since using the Self-Monitoring Engaged Reader checklist.
 - Have worsened a lot since using the Self-Monitoring Engaged Reader checklist.
13. Please tell me what would really make you WANT to read a book or a reading assignment at HOME.
14. Please tell me what would really make you WANT to read a book or a reading assignment at SCHOOL.

Appendix C

Self-Monitoring Engaged Reader Checklist

To make the most of SSR and improve the amount of time spent reading and independent reading stamina, actively engaged readers:

- Have chosen an appropriate text
- Have eyes on the text
- Are in a comfortable space
- Are free from distractions
- Think about the text as they read and make connections to their life/other texts/the world

Rate how well you did with each of these criteria during SSR today. (Each criterion is rated on a 1 to 5-star scale-1 being the worst and 5 being the best.)

1. I chose an appropriate text.
2. I had eyes on the text.
3. I was in a comfortable space.
4. I was free from distractions.
5. I thought about the text as I read and made connections to my life/other texts/the world.