

**AN EVALUATION OF THE GOOD READERS' CLUB: AN EARLY LITERACY  
INTERVENTION PROGRAM**

by

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the implementation and outcomes of an early literacy intervention program, The Good Readers' Club implemented by the Lakehead District School Board (LDSB). A mixed method sequential exploratory design was used, and data were collected via semi-structured interviews, document review, and reading level assessment. Quantitative data were analyzed using a 2-way ANOVA, and the qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis and summarized into themes. The results suggested that improvement in reading scores of students in The Good Readers' Club was significantly greater than the improvement of reading scores of students in the control group. Staff agreed that students benefited from participation in the program. The program had the proper resources, staff had sufficient training, and there was adequate administrative support to make it a well implemented and valued program in the LDSB. Improvements to the program were suggested by the staff participants. Recommendations for further strengthening of the program are provided.

## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

## What is Literacy?

Learning the concepts of literacy starts at a very young age, well before children enter school at four or five years old. Tompkins, Bright, Pollard and Windsor (2005) state that “children as young as 12 to 14 months of age who listen to stories being read aloud, notice labels and signs in their environment, and experiment with a variety of writing tools such as pencils, crayons, and chalk” (p. 140). Children make connections between their own experiences and knowledge, and new experiences to construct meaning. Vygotsky (1978) theorizes that the way we think is influenced by our social interactions and that we learn language as a result of our use of language in social contexts. Children are active learners, so that other people in the child’s immediate social context play a critical role in the child’s development. Bainbridge and Malicky (2004) discuss the social constructivist’s view of developing literacy and how it is specific to different cultures and that some believe schools provide a more appropriate environment for some children to learn than others. Tompkins et al. (2005) define literacy by stating that “the concept of literacy has been broadened to include the cultural and social aspect of language learning, and children’s experiences with and understanding of written language” (p. 140).

Tompkins et al. note that children go through three stages as they learn to read: emergent reading, beginning reading, and fluent reading. In the first stage of emergent reading, children learn the meaning of print. They can recognize environmental print, tell stories, and reread predictable books after they have memorized the pattern. In the second



stage, the beginning reader discovers phonemic awareness and starts to decode words and use other cueing systems to read simple books. In the last stage, the fluent reader recognizes most words automatically and decodes words quickly. Fluent readers can concentrate their energy on comprehension. For the purposes of this study, literacy is defined as a set of skills that includes learning concepts about the alphabet such as letter names and sounds, and phonemic awareness which leads to phonics and the development of automaticity. Literacy is a learned skill, and early childhood is a critical time for children to develop the language and reading skills they need to be literate.

Lievesley and Motivans (2000) discuss how global economies, advances in information and communication technologies, and the move towards knowledge-based societies compel us to rethink the meaning of literacy. They note that literacy involves both print media and the interaction between print and other forms of information. Rather than seeing literacy as a fixed set of skills, UNESCO has adopted the concept of 'plural literacy'. This view emphasizes that literacy is not uniform but culturally and linguistically diverse (UNESCO Education Sector Position Paper, unpublished). Millard (2003) states:

There is an increased multiplicity and integration of significant modes of meaning making, where the textual is also related to the visual, the audio, the spatial, the behavioral, and so on. This is particularly important in the mass media, multi-media and in the electronic hypermedia. Current multi-literacies are marked by a fluidity of movement between image and word, logo and logos, icon and command. (p. 5)

Lievesley and Motivans (2000) note that the new face of literacy in our global, technological, and knowledge-based world presents wonderful business and personal opportunities for some people, but excludes those with poor literacy skills from the same opportunities.

### The Need for Literacy

In 1994, Canada and eight other countries conducted the world's first large-scale, comparative assessment of adult literacy called *The International Adult Literacy Survey* (IALS). Since 1994, the IALS has provided previously unavailable information on the distribution of adult literacy and numeracy skills. The IALS has provided some key insights such as literacy being strongly correlated with life chances and use of opportunities, both social and economic; and that literacy skill deficits are not found only among marginalized groups, but also affect large portions of the entire adult population (International Adult Literacy Survey, 2005, p. 12). The purpose of *The Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey* (ALL) is to inform public policy in a number of related areas, including education, labour market policy, human resource development, and social development (*International Adult Literacy Survey*, 2005, p. 16).

In March, 2005, the Government of Canada released the findings of the ALL study. The main findings from the survey include the following:

- Four in ten Canadians do not have the literacy skills they need to meet the ever-increasing demands of modern life.
- Canadians with literacy barriers tend to be stuck in low-paid, low-skilled jobs that offer little chance of advancement or of improving their skills.

- Among the unemployed, those with the most serious literacy barriers only had a 50% chance of finding a job, even after 52 weeks of unemployment (The Movement for Canadian Literacy, 2003).

The Advisory Committee on Literacy and Essential Skills submitted a report in November 2005 to the National Literacy Program which recommends the Canadian government adopt the report's vision statement for literacy in Canada:

All Canadians have the right to develop the literacy and essential skills they need in order to participate fully in our social, cultural, economic and political life. Every person must have an equal opportunity to acquire, develop, maintain and enhance their literacy skills regardless of their circumstances. Literacy is at the heart of learning. A commitment to learning throughout life leads to a society characterized by literate, healthy and productive individuals, families, communities and workplaces. (p. 4)

This report by the Advisory Committee focuses on the adult learner, recommending greater collaboration between communities and industries and partnerships between educational institutions and employers. These recommendations towards a fully literate Canada are critical, but we must couple these strategies with an increased emphasis on creating a literate society by starting with our youngest members as they become early readers.

Increasing the literacy level in children is viewed as a critical component of increasing the literacy level of adults. The Ontario government announced in March of 2005 the goal of ensuring that 75% of twelve year old children (grade 7 or 8) reach the provincial standard in reading, writing, and math by 2008. According to provincial test

scores, fewer than 60% of all grade three and grade six students are meeting the provincial standard in reading. Subsequently, there have been many initiatives to help the government reach its goal such as practical guidebooks for teachers, symposiums to develop solutions, the establishment of the new Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, continued training for teachers, smaller classes, and a focus on the daily emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills in the classroom (Government of Ontario Home Page).

### The Challenge

Learning to read and write begins very early in a child's development, well before he or she enters Kindergarten or Grade One. Given sufficient, positive literacy experiences, most children will learn to read and write, but some will not so that schools need to have programs that will help all young children become literate. The challenge we face as educators is to ensure that every child has acquired the foundations of literacy. One way to accomplish this challenge is through early literacy intervention programs that can identify and assist young children who are at risk of not acquiring the foundation of literacy. Early literacy consists of reading and writing behaviours with a beginning awareness and understanding of letter-sound relationships.

This study evaluates the early literacy intervention program, The Good Readers' Club, hereafter referred to as "The Program". The goal of The Program is to support students who need additional help in gaining the foundations of literacy. The Program assists students who are struggling to read by placing them in small groups with a

facilitator on a daily basis for fifteen to seventeen weeks. A more detailed description of The Program will follow.

### Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the implementation and outcomes of The Program. Specifically, the research questions are these:

1. Was The Program implemented as intended?
2. Did Grade 2 students in The Program demonstrate significantly greater gains in their in their DRA, Developmental Reading Assessment, level than students in a control group?
3. What percentage of students completing The Program obtained a DRA reading level score 14 or better by mid-year of Grade 2?
4. What improvements could be made to The Program?

### Significance of the Study

An evaluation of The Program is important for several reasons. First, there is a lack of published research of any kind on this particular program; therefore, this study adds to our collective knowledge about this literacy intervention program. Second, methods used in this study may be of interest to other researchers wishing to evaluate similar literacy intervention programs. Last, this study may help the Lakehead District

School Board, LDSB, with future decisions concerning The Program by articulating its strengths and making recommendations to improve The Program.

### Limitations of Study

A small sample size was used in this study. The total number of student participants was 29, with 15 in the quasi-experimental group and 14 in the control group. At minimum, the sample size for each group should be 30 for a total sample size of 60. Thirty participants per group would allow for a better comparison between the results gained from the sample and results assumed for the general population.

The staff participants who supplied the data for the semi-structured interviews came from three schools which offered The Program. Since the LDSB did not require all schools to run The Program in 2005-06, the staff involved in these three schools could have a positive bias towards The Program since they chose to run it in their schools.

The design of this study included only one measure of students' literacy skills, the DRA. Analyzing the data from other measures could have provided insights on the reliability of reading assessment instruments.

The implementation of The Program was not directly observed in this study. No observations of any group sessions of The Program were made. Therefore, in concluding that The Program was implemented as intended, I must qualify the statement by noting that this conclusion is based on the perceptions and experiences of the people directly involved in The Program, not as a direct result of my observation.

## CHAPTER 2 – REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

## Language, Literacy, and Learning

Dunbar (1998) discusses that anthropologists estimate that humans developed oral language about two million years ago, and linguists and sociologists have identified more than 3,000 spoken languages in the world, not counting dialects. Pinker (1994) notes our current alphabetic symbol system of writing, which involves a symbolic coding of speech sounds, appears to have descended from the Canaanites around 1,700 BC. McLaughlin (1998) finds that only 78 of the world's 3,000 spoken languages, less than one-half of one percent, have developed a written, or literate, form of their language. Researchers and linguists increasingly agree that language is a natural process, but that literacy must be taught.

Theories of how children learn have changed over the years. Dewey (1929) described children as active learners, and argued for the importance of the child's experience as the basis for his or her education. Piaget (1969) also described children as active learners who are continually altering their knowledge through assimilation and accommodation. Vygotsky (1978) saw learning in terms of social, interactive activities. Vygotsky's theory describes how adults can help children to read through close interaction in a zone of proximal development (ZPD). The ZPD describes the difference between what a child can do independently and what he or she can do with the guidance of a more capable person. Tompkins, Bright, Pollard, and Windsor (2005) note that shared reading, which involves the teacher reading a book aloud while the children

follow the story in their own book, gives the children greater confidence in their ability to read as well as providing opportunities for the children to predict what will happen next in the story. Shared reading involves other activities such as drawing pictures about the story, performing dramatic plays and exploring letters, rhymes, and word-identification. Reinking, McKenna, Labbo, and Kieffer (1998) suggest that the fluent reader has automatic word identification and that such a person can read with little conscious effort. For the struggling reader, however, word recognition takes time and a conscious effort; frequently such a reader, often a child, is unsuccessful in identifying the word.

Brauger, Lewis, and Hagans (1997) claim there is agreement that literacy development begins in infancy and continues progressively in young children's lives, despite the variation in our understanding of how children learn. Children coo and babble before they say their first words, then they use short, simple sentences before moving towards more complex language. Brauger et al. have shown a strong connection between language and literacy, both oral and written. Pinker (1994) notes the early childhood years from birth to eight are the most important for developing both language and literacy. Watson, Layton, Pierce, and Abraham (1994) concur, noting that this period in the early childhood years sees the development of speaking, listening, reading, and writing occurring simultaneously in an interrelated manner. Therefore, difficulties in oral language can contribute to difficulties in literacy; consequently parents, teachers, and other caregivers need to provide activities that strengthen both language and literacy skills.

Liberman, Shankweiler, and Liberman (1989) note that the most common cause of difficulties acquiring early word reading skills is weakness in the ability to process the



phonological features of language. Torgensen (1998) contends that this is perhaps the most important discovery about reading difficulties in the last twenty years. Problems in the phonological area of language development can be measured by using non-reading tasks, such as phonemic awareness. Further, Torgensen notes that identifying at-risk readers through phonemic awareness tests has identified two groups of children. The first group consists of children who have difficulties, that is, with graphophonemic cueing systems, translating between print and oral language and the second group involves children who have deficiencies in both phonological awareness - the awareness of sound structure of language and the ability to manipulate the syllables and sounds of speech - and oral language skills. Even if the children in the second group acquire adequate word reading skill, their ability to comprehend the meaning of what they have read may be limited by weak general verbal abilities. Both groups of children will require literacy intervention, but the second group will need more instruction in a broader range of knowledge and skills than those having only weak phonological ability.

Lundberg, Frost, and Peterson (1988) and Wagner et al. (1997) assert that the ability to identify children at risk of reading failure before they are given reading instruction has been greatly increased by the use of phonemic awareness tests. These tests have been shown to be causally related to the growth of early word reading skills.

Blachman (1991) and Brauger, Lewis, and Hagans (1997) note that research has identified three areas that are crucial in the development of early literacy: a strong foundation in oral language skills; an awareness of the sound structure of language (phonological awareness); and many exposures and experiences with print. These three components of literacy are interconnected so that activities that help children to develop a

strong foundation in their oral language also help to enhance their written language. Paulson, Noble, Jepson, and van den Pol (2001) suggest that through increased understanding of the structure of language, educators can be more effective in providing and planning meaningful early literacy experiences for children.

### The Role of Parents and Teachers in Early Literacy Achievement

The challenge to give all children a foundation for literacy is met, in part, by identifying and helping children at risk of literacy failure early in their formal schooling; however, the role of parents and caregivers before the child reaches kindergarten is also critical to meeting this challenge. An important component of The Program is an 'home connection' that requires children to practice with parents and caregivers the skills learned during the day. Therefore, both parents and teachers have an important role to play in laying the foundation of literacy for the child.

Fox (2001) notes that with children from as early as one to two years of age, parents and caregivers can assist in the development of language and literacy by repeating what children say in a confirming manner. Parents and caregivers should read their child's favourite books repeatedly to expand the child's language. Paulson, Noble, Jepson, and van den Pol (2001) suggest that using a variety of activities with books provides a good model of how to use language and literacy for children. Activities such as trips to the library, creating scrap books, singing, writing, drawing, or creating a picture book are excellent ways to show children how language is used. Parents and caregivers may facilitate the development of reading proficiency; encouraging story

writing; clap out syllables; play word games; encourage imaginary, dramatic, and pretend play; and provide simple games. The Canadian Paediatric Society (CPS) notes that as many as 15% of children starting school have reading difficulties and that this lack of literacy skills can lead to emotional and behavioural problems later in life. The CPS recommends that parents begin reading to their child when he or she is an infant, and continue such reading even after the child can read on his or her own.

As children enter kindergarten, there are several skill building strategies that can build early literacy and language skills. Button, Johnson, and Furgerson (1996) note that reading to children exposes them to the meaning and structure of language which improves their vocabulary and sentence structure. Reading aloud daily and shared reading also motivates children to read, helps develop a sense of story, and develops knowledge of written language structure and the way books are structured. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (1998) asserts that repeatedly reading books to children is a very important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading. Fox (2001) believes "it's beneficial to continue reading aloud to children for as long as they'll let us, even after they can finally read themselves" (p. 38). Another strategy to improve literacy instruction is scaffolding, which allows a child to read at a more complex level with the aid of another person and later with increased independence. Boyle and Peregoy (1990) say scaffolds make use of language and sentence structure that repeat and are predictable, and that the scaffold's should gradually be withdrawn as the child is able to participate successfully without them. Paulson, Noble, Jepson, and van den Pol (2001) have identified a number of scaffolding techniques, including labeling and commenting; verbal dialogue about pictures or story

lines; sentence recasting; pauses and breaks to allow children to fill in words; tag and direct questions; and story retelling by the child.

Bishop and Adams (1990) note that reading is an active, cognitive, social, and emotional process that develops from the meaning of the printed words and the accompanying pictures. Readers understand what is read to them or what they read as it relates to their experiences. Children who are likely to have problems learning to read and write will often display difficulty in learning how to talk. Early intervention programs can have a significant effect on children's development. Bishop and Adams reported that children who overcame their language difficulties by age five are not at risk of developing literacy problems, but that children who still had language difficulties after age five and a half are likely to develop reading and writing problems.

#### Components of Effective Early Literacy Intervention Programs

In a research study of early literacy interventions, Torgesen (1998) suggested four main components of an effective early literacy intervention program: (a) the type and quality of instruction, (b) the level of intensity, (c) the children, and (d) the timing. Torgesen recommends four types of instructional interventions: phonemic awareness, letter-sound recognition, blending skills, some pronunciation convention (such as the silent 'e' rule), and automatic recognition of high-frequency words. The teacher may improve the quality of instruction using some of the methods outlined earlier, such as reading aloud and scaffolding. Second, the effectiveness of the intervention program is increased by reducing the student-teacher ratio for the intervention. For the students at

risk of reading failure, more concepts must be taught by the teacher; therefore, small groups or one-on-one instruction is best. Third, the selection of students is critical to the success of the intervention. Identifying the children who are in greatest need will improve the efficiency of the program. If procedures are in place to target children accurately early in the process of learning to read, the effects of the intervention on the literacy skills for those children is the greatest. Fourth, identifying high-risk children some time in kindergarten will allow preventative work to begin as early as grade one.

#### Review of the Selected Early Literacy Intervention Programs

There are numerous literacy intervention programs. This section contains a review of four early literacy programs. The four include two international programs - Success for All and Reading Recovery – and two school board-based programs – The 5<sup>th</sup> Block Program at the Toronto Catholic School Board and The Good Readers' Club at the Lakehead District School Board.

A review of the literature on literacy interventions programs reveals many studies on the Reading Recovery Program and the Success for All Program. There are longitudinal studies, evaluations, cost analyses, meta-analytical reviews, impact studies, and studies on characteristics, implementation, and structures of support. Since this is an evaluation study of a literacy intervention program similar to the Reading Recovery and Success for All, only studies that were evaluative in nature are described.

*Reading Recovery Program*

Reading Recovery was designed in the 1970's by Marie M. Clay of New Zealand; in 1984 Dr. Gay Su Pinnell and Dr. Charlotte Huck brought the program to the U.S. By 2003, Reading Recovery had been implemented in 38 states, four Canadian provinces, and Australia and England (Marina & Gilman, 2003). Fountas and Pinnell (1996) note that Reading Recovery is designed to help the lowest achievers in grade one to develop reading strategies and reach average grade levels for their class. The goal of Reading Recovery is to assist children in becoming independent readers. Fountas and Pinnell state "the idea is to help children construct the inner control that will enable them to continue to develop reading ability independently as they encounter more difficult and varied texts" (p. 194). Clay (1993) describes Reading Recovery as a special program designed to provide individual help to low achievers: it is not meant to be a classroom program. The Reading Recovery program consists of four main components: in-service training for educators; intensive daily, one-on-one thirty minute instruction; a network of professional support for teachers and administrators; and a research program to monitor the program results.

Clay (1993) notes that the Reading Recovery program is based on two assumptions. The first is that a program for early literacy intervention for a child should be based on careful observation of that child as a reader and a writer. It should build on what he or she already knows. The second assumption is that we need to know how children learn to read and write successfully.

The literature contains numerous studies that describe the positive impact of the Reading Recovery program on the literacy of students in the primary grades (Clay, 1993; Groff, 2002; Haenn, 2002; Huggin, 1999; Swartz, 1996). Swartz (1996) led a study in California in which 1037 children completed the full program as successful readers. All of the children made important gains in their literacy skills. The study reported that 89% of the children were at or above their grade level in writing skills, 95% on dictation, and 89% in reading. These results indicated that this group of children made quick gains and caught up with their peers. Swartz reported that “children who are the lowest 20% of their class learn strategies needed to perform at or above [their] grade level in an average of 12 – 20 weeks” (p. 6). Most children who have completed Reading Recovery continue to read at or above their grade level well after leaving the program.

Haenn (2002) conducted an evaluation of the Reading Recovery Program in a long-term study in the Durham Public School of North Carolina. Haenn reported that the Reading Recovery program was helping a large number of students reach reading abilities at or above their grade level. This improvement in reading skill was still evident five to seven years after the students completed the program. The data from this longitudinal study also showed that each successive cohort was performing better, a finding which may indicate an improvement in the program over time, although other factors could contribute to the improved performance. One possible explanation for this improvement could be the increased experience of the teachers in their interactions with the struggling readers.

While there exists research on the positive outcomes of Reading Recovery, some researchers contend that there are challenges. Huggins (1999) conducted a longitudinal

study of the Reading Recovery Program for the years 1994 – 1998, inclusive, in the Detroit Public School system. Huggins found that the experimental group, those students who had taken the Reading Recovery Program, was outperformed in three of the four years in various measures of achievement by the control group. The same study showed that the experimental group had a slightly higher mean score on the California Achievement Test, CAT-E, than the control group when both groups were in kindergarten before any of them had started the program. The control group, however, was supposed to have slightly higher reading skills than the experimental group since they were randomly selected from classrooms that had students receiving Reading Recovery. Huggins explains that “they were students with no exposure to Reading Recovery tutoring and they were identified through classroom teachers as performing slightly above the children selected for Reading Recovery to the top of the class” (p. 10). The study produced two main recommendations: first, the Reading Recovery program must be closely monitored for documentation of academic achievement and effectiveness, if it is to continue; and second, the initial screening process that selects students for the program needs to be revised.

Groff (2002) produced another study on Reading Recovery that found the data reporting system was flawed. Groff reported that the reading and writing tests were based on subjective judgments of the Reading Recovery teacher, and that no instruction was given regarding the selection of the students for the program. He noted that students in the Reading Recovery program need to be taught the rules of phonics - the reading instruction that describes sound-symbol relationships in terms of spelling patterns - much



earlier than at present, and that the delay in phonics teaching may actually cause reading problems that Reading Recovery is designed to prevent.

Overall, the literature contains studies which show the positive effects that Reading Recovery is having on struggling readers, but there are a few studies that suggest Reading Recovery needs to undergo some refinements to make further improvements.

### *Success For All Program*

Success For All (SFA) was developed in 1987 at Johns Hopkins University by Dr. Robert Slavin and Dr. Nancy A. Madden. Hopkins, Youngman, Harris, and Wordsworth (1999) report that the program uses research-based approaches to curriculum, instruction, assessment and classroom management, with one-to-one tutoring being provided for those students falling behind in their reading. SFA is based on two principles: prevention and immediate, extensive intervention. In 2003-2004, SFA was implemented in more than 1300 schools in 48 states in all parts of the United States, Guam, and the Virgin Islands. Adaptations of SFA are also used in other countries, including England, Israel, Canada, Mexico, and Australia. Slavin (2004) notes that schools using SFA have maintained the program for many years, and that more than 80% of schools that have ever used the program continue to do so. SFA is a successful intervention program that has been shown to produce positive improvements in the reading abilities of its students.

The Success For All program has been examined by educational researchers. More than 40 separate studies of Success for All have been conducted by investigators across a large number of U.S. cities and states (Slavin and Maddden, 2003). One such

study by Slavin, Madden, Karweit, Livermon, and Dolan (1989) was conducted at Baltimore's Abbottston Elementary school. The population of the school was 440 students at the time of the study. Nearly all of the students were black and 76 percent qualified for the free or reduced-price lunch program. The SFA program was introduced to the school over a two-year period, and it was expected to remain in the school for at least five years. The students in grades one through three were regrouped into heterogeneous age-grouped classes of about 25 children. The regrouping allowed the teacher to teach to the whole class without breaking the class into reading groups since each class consisted of a homogeneous reading group. The results of the Abbottston students were compared to results from a control group of students in a nearby school with comparable SES and achievement levels. The authors of the study concluded that "the Success for All Program clearly indicate that the program has positive effects on the language skills of preschoolers and kindergartners and on the reading skills of students in grades one through three" (p. 365). A recent study by Viadero (2005) concluded that

students read better after two years in the Success for All improvement program and outpace students in regular classrooms by up to one-half of a school year. The long-awaited study of 38 schools that are using the improvement program is as noteworthy for its research design as for its results. Federal education officials and other experts hope that the study heralds the beginning of a new era of large-scale experiments that use randomized research designs to provide educators and policymakers with clearer answers on what works in schools. (p. 3)

Borman et al. (in press) conducted a national randomized field trial of SFA for second year outcomes. The sample size was 41 schools from across the U.S. The schools

agreed to allow data collection for three years and maintain their program for all three years of the study. The study concluded that there was a statistically significant positive achievement effect from this large-scale randomized field trial. This finding provides a rigorous assessment of the impact of SFA. Slavin and Madden (2003) produced a summary of research on SFA and found that the results of the multi-site replicated experiment evaluating SFA showed statistically significant positive effects of SFA compared to controls on every measure at every grade level from 1-5. (Borman et al. (2003) and Slavin and Madden (2001) indicate that the cumulative evidence from these studies shows positive effects of Success for All on a variety of measures of student achievement, as well as on assignments to special education, retentions, and other outcomes.

Despite the substantial evidence supporting the effectiveness of Success for All, there are still some criticisms of the research. Pogrow (2000) and Walberg and Greenberg (1999) assert that criticisms have focused on the issue of typical research design. Shadish, Cook, and Campbell (2002) note that evaluations of the program involved a quasi-experimental, untreated control group design, in which schools using Success for All have been compared over time to non-Success for All schools that are matched on demographics, prior achievement, and other factors. Though this is a sound design, all such quasi-experiments have limitations. Most importantly, they leave open the possibility that selection artifacts could explain some or all of the differences observed between the Success for All and control groups. There may be some systematic reason that the experimental group implemented the program while the comparison group did not. For example, schools whose staffs expressed interest in Success for All and achieved

the required 80% majority vote to adopt it may have greater motivation and interest in improving their schools than the control schools' staffs who did not seek out the program. As indicated by the 80% agreement among staff, these schools may have strong cohesion among the teachers or have better leaders.

Alternatively, Shadish, Cook, and Campbell suggest the experimental schools may have better funding or fewer demands on their resources or energies. Or, perhaps the experimental schools are experiencing greater difficulties and have a greater need for change. These potential factors can make it difficult to know whether it was the characteristics related to selection of Success for All or the components of the Success for All Program that caused the improvements in the schools. Most studies of Success for All have been well-designed matched experiments that have attempted to minimize selection bias—for example, by designating control schools in advance and by avoiding the use of control schools that rejected the program—but selection bias cannot be ruled out without random assignment.

Studies reviewing Reading Recovery and Success for All, such as that by Haenn (2002) and Slavin and Madden (2001), compare the literacy skills of an experimental group to a control group where both the experimental and the control groups consist of randomly assigned participants. This design method greatly reduces most threats to internal validity and yields easily interpreted results. Other studies use a quasi-experimental design when random assignment of participants to groups was not practical, or possible. The selection of a random experimental group may not be possible when the number of participants in the experimental group is low, such as in the beginning of a new program. Quasi-experimental designs control for many biases and can give easily

interpreted evaluations, as well, but they do not achieve the high level of control of the experimental design.

### *The 5<sup>th</sup> Block Program*

In Ontario, the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) developed its own literacy intervention program based on the concepts contained in the Reading Recovery program. In 2002, the TCDSB created the 5<sup>th</sup> Block Program as an early literacy intervention program to be used in conjunction with the four blocks of literacy: word study, writing, guided reading – a technique used in reading instruction where by a small group of students reads at a similar level read and talk about the text together with the teacher – and self-selected reading (B. Stewart, personal communication, October 5, 2005). The 5<sup>th</sup> Block Program consists of the same four main components as Reading Recovery, except that the 5<sup>th</sup> Block Program uses small groups of students per teacher instead of one-to-one instruction. The 5<sup>th</sup> Block Program targets students who already have some literacy skills and who are not necessarily the bottom portion of the class as in Reading Recovery. In 2005, the 5<sup>th</sup> Block Program operated in 102 schools in the TCDSB (B. Stewart, personal communication, October 5, 2005). There are studies which evaluated the Reading Recovery program and the Success for All Program, but there are no published studies evaluating The 5<sup>th</sup> Block Program or The Good Readers' Club. The unique contribution of this research, therefore, is an evaluation of The Good Readers' Club that is being used by the LDSB in Thunder Bay, Ontario, to determine its value as an early literacy intervention program.

*The Good Readers' Club Program*

In 2004, the Program Department of the LDSB traveled to various boards in Ontario looking for a model to use for an early literacy intervention program. Among the models observed, Reading Recovery and the TCDSB's 5<sup>th</sup> Block program were the two programs of most interest to the Program Department staff. The 5<sup>th</sup> Block program was chosen, and the lead consultant for this program was contacted. A presentation of the 5<sup>th</sup> Block program was delivered to principals, facilitators, grade one and grade two teachers, early childhood educators and members of the LDSB. As a result of this meeting, the people interested in the program decided to adopt the main ideas of the 5<sup>th</sup> Block program and create a new program tailored for the LDSB elementary schools. The new program was called "The Good Readers' Club". Based on current research for the optimal timing of literacy intervention programs (Torgensen, 1998), the LDSB decided to offer The Program for struggling readers prior to the introduction of formal reading instruction in grade one and grade two.

The Program is an early reading intervention program designed to provide additional support to students who need to improve their word study and reading skills. This 15-17 week intervention program is intended to complement the regular classroom instruction. The Program is intended to bring reading success to students who have gaps in their literacy development, before they enter a cycle of failure. The goal of The Program is to give intense instruction to the students at a steady pace during the early stages of reading so that these students can become fluent readers. Graduates of The

Program should be able to function at grade level in regular classroom activities requiring literacy skills because The Program gives students the experiences and skills in reading which they are lacking. Students receive one hour per day of intensive, small group instruction in Word Study and Guided Reading. The Program is not intended for students requiring significant, long-term learning support.

Students are selected for the Program based on the following criteria. Students are in grade one or grade two and have no reading support provided outside the classroom. They have achieved a grade of C or D on the Ontario Provincial Report Card in English Reading, and they have some basic literacy skills. They are able to participate and behave appropriately in a group of 4-6 students for one hour a day. Generally, students selected for this Program are those with reading levels slightly below grade level. They have gaps in their literacy skills as a result of a lack of experience or because of a need for an intensified level of instruction in certain areas of literacy. They would be described as struggling readers by their classroom teacher. For the complete student selection process, see Appendix B. The Program is delivered to the students by teachers designated as facilitators, and the overall program is organized by the staff in the Program Department at the LDSB. The stakeholders for this program include the students, their families, teachers, administrators, and the local and global community.

The Program is accountable to its stakeholders through informal reports to parents or guardians and informal communications with the student's classroom teacher. Prior to the start of the Program, pre-program assessment data for each student considered for the Program are collected by the staff at the Program Department in the LDSB and double-checked to ensure a homogeneous group of at-risk students has been selected. The

Program Department reports on the progress of The Good Readers Club to the Board on an annual basis. Prior to a child's entry into the Program, parents, or guardians sign an informed consent form.



## CHAPTER 3 – METHOD

### Participants

Twenty-nine grade two students from ten elementary schools in the LDSB participated in the study. Twenty students were male and nine students were female. No information about the student's age or social economic status was collected. Student participants in the quasi-experimental group came from schools that offered The Program. The number of students in the quasi-experimental group was fifteen. The control group consisted of fourteen students who met the selection criteria for The Program but were not participating in The Program either because of limited enrolment or because their school was not running the program.

Seven staff participants from three schools in the LDSB consented to participate in the study. The staff ranged in age from the early twenties to the late fifties. Teaching experience of the staff ranged from one to over 25 years. Two had experience as reading specialists. Each staff participant was implementing The Program for the first time since this was its first full year in operation.

### Instruments

A summary sheet was used to record data from the review of The Program documents. I completed a summary sheet for each resource examined. The summary sheet was structured such that the following information could be captured: the goals and

the implementation strategies of The Program; the resources available to The Program facilitator; and ideas for questions for the semi-structured interviews of the staff participants. The contents of each summary sheet were transferred to a computer file within 24 hours of the document review.

The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) was used to measure reading levels of students in this study. The DRA is a series of leveled books and recording sheets designed to allow teachers to determine students' reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension levels. A typical DRA recording sheet, or observation guide, consists of several sections that are completed by the teacher as the child reads the leveled book. The first section consists of an introduction to the text whereby the teacher asks the student questions involving previewing and predicting. Next, the teacher records the student's oral reading behaviours, noting miscues that are not self-corrected. From the number of miscues, the teacher determines the student's percentage of accuracy for that level.

The DRA was originally developed, field-tested, and revised by primary classroom teachers in collaboration with Joetta Beaver in the Upper Arlington School District in Ohio between 1988 and 1996. The procedures, forms and benchmark texts have been revised several times in 1996 and 2000 as hundreds of primary teachers in the U.S. and Canada have provided feedback from further field tests (Ministry of Education, Ontario, 2003). The DRA reading levels are criteria-referenced with well-established text characteristics. The following factors are used to determine levels of difficulty of texts: inclusion of repetitive language; story structure; literary features; story appeal, concepts, vocabulary, and common experiences; level of picture support; text size, layout and the number of words in the text.

A student's DRA reading level is determined when he or she independently reads the benchmark text at an accuracy rate of 94% or better - this translates to a reading error ratio of one mistake for every seventeen words in the text. DRA reading levels range from A-1, 1, 2, 3, ... 38 for grades SK to 3. DRA levels 14 to 18 were the established reading level associated with a standard grade 2 reading level for the middle of the year and levels 20 to 28 for the end of grade two.

Two scores (pre and post) for all student participants were provided to me by their teachers. In 10 cases out of the 58 scores (29 pre and post), teachers provided reading level scores using the Fountas and Pinnell level system. Scores from the Fountas and Pinnell system were converted to DRA scores using the conversion chart in Appendix G. The Fountas and Pinnell system is similar to the DRA system for determining reading level since Fountas and Pinnell have produced a series of leveled books. The conversion between the two reading level systems is based on the common characteristics of the texts for each level. These quantitative data were entered by me into a SPSS program file for data analysis.

A semi-structured interview instrument was used to collect data from The Program staff. The questions on this interview instrument were based on findings from the document reviews as well as informal conversations with facilitators of The Program and grade two classroom teachers. See Appendix C for the interview questions for the Program facilitators, regular classroom teachers, principals, and Program Department staff. The interview data were recorded by hand and transferred to a computer file within 24 hours of completion of the interview.

## Design

A quasi-experimental, mixed-method, exploratory sequential strategy (Creswell, 2003) was used in this study. The collection and analysis of qualitative data were followed by the collection and analysis of quantitative data with the priority given to the qualitative data. This exploratory design strategy was chosen since the qualitative data were collected first and the quantitative data were limited by the number of participants. Qualitative data were collected first because the document reviews of the print resources and the semi-structured interviews were critical to answering two of the research questions on The Program's implementation and possible improvements. Collecting the qualitative data involved scheduling interview times, a procedure which was relatively straightforward compared to the collection of parental informed consent forms for permission to use the quantitative data from the student participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the staff in the schools offering The Program, including The Program facilitators, regular grade two classroom teachers and Principals, as well as staff in the LDSB's Program Department. Quantitative data contained the student's DRA reading levels from September 2005 and again from January 2006. The document review of the teacher resource material was completed in mid-January and the interviews were performed between mid-January and mid-February. The reading level scores were collected between the end of January and the beginning of March.

Each participant in the quasi-experimental and the control group was in grade two, and was identified by his or her classroom teacher as a struggling reader with a DRA reading level of 6 or below in September 2005. Criteria for including students in this

study are found in Appendix B. The students in the control group were given regular classroom instruction on literacy skills and the students in the quasi-experimental group were engaged in the Program as well as being given the same classroom instruction as the students in the control group. After 15-17 weeks, the length of The Program, the students in the control group were given another reading level assessment to monitor their progress. The students in the Program were also given another reading level assessment, along with other skills assessments, to determine their progress. This two-group, pre-test/post-test design helped control a number of threats to internal validity such as maturation of the students, imitation of treatment, and selection bias. Figure 1 below represents the study's design.



Qualitative → Qualitative → Quantitative → Quantitative → Interpretation of  
 Data Collection      Data Analysis      Data Collection      Data Analysis      Entire Analysis

Figure 1. Exploratory sequential strategy design gives priority to qualitative data.

Note. Adapted from Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, Second Edition (p. 214), by J. W. Creswell, 2003, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc. Copyright 2003 by Sage Publications, Inc.

### Recruitment Strategy

The Program Department at the LDSB was contacted by telephone for a list of the schools involved in The Program. Telephone calls to the schools running The Program allowed me to speak to the facilitators, grade 2 teachers, and Principals of these schools. Faculty members involved in the implementation and delivery of the Program for the quasi-experimental group were asked to sign an informed consent form if they wished to take part in an interview for this study. Those that returned the signed consent form were interviewed.

Via The Program facilitators and classroom teachers, informed consent forms were sent home to the legal guardians of all student participants, asking for permission for their child's data to be used in this study. Parents or guardians were asked to return signed consent forms to their children's classroom teacher, who collected the forms for the study. See Appendix D for sample cover letters and informed consent forms for both the quasi-experimental and the control groups. The response rate for the return of signed the informed consent forms was 29 of 66 or 44%.

### Procedure

The qualitative data from the document review were collected in the staff room of one of the elementary schools running The Program. The review of the Guided Reading Kits, The Program Toolkit, The Program Overview, and The Program Strategies lasted about three hours in total.

Qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews were collected by contacting the facilitators by telephone or in person to schedule a time for the interview. Each was presented with the cover letter for staff (Appendix E) explaining the study and each staff member was asked to sign the informed consent form prior to the interview. Generally, interviews lasted between fifteen and twenty minutes, but a few interviews took forty minutes. Upon completion of the interview, all recorded data were read back to the staff members to check for accuracy to ensure the notes were legible, and to provide an opportunity to add relevant points.

With permission from the LDSB board, Principals, and parents, quantitative data were collected from the facilitators of The Program and from classroom teachers from several elementary schools in the LSDB. The Program facilitators and the classroom teachers provided two DRA scores for each student that returned a signed consent form. The first DRA score represented their reading level in September 2005 and the second DRA score represented their reading level in January 2006. This time span represented the duration of The Program. The researcher wrote a letter C or E on the front of the signed consent form to organize the forms into control and quasi-experimental groups. The quantitative data were entered into a SPSS program file and saved.

Facilitators and classroom teachers used two methods for recording their students' reading levels. Both the Fountas and Pinnell system and the DRA system were used; with the aid of the chart in Appendix G, the conversion from one to the other is possible. This study used the DRA scale to analyze the change in the student's reading level. In the conversion chart in Appendix G, Fountas and Pinnell Level E is equivalent to DRA 6, 7, or 8. All reading levels recorded by the facilitator or classroom teacher at level E were

converted to a DRA score of 6. Since DRA scores of 6, 7, or 8 are considered equal, any score of 7 or 8 under the DRA system was assigned a DRA score of 6 for this study.

There were three such scores.

The independent variables in this study are the early literacy intervention program and time. Student participants were either in The Program (quasi-experimental group) or they were not in The Program (control group). Time was an independent variable since the study involved repeated measures using a pre-test and post-test design. The pre-test occurred in September, 2005 and the post-test occurred in January, 2006. The dependent variable was reading levels as measured by DRA scores.

### Data Analysis

The qualitative data from the document review and semi-structured interviews were validated through triangulation, member-checking, and self-reflection to clarify any personal biases from the researcher (Creswell, 2003). Specifically, to determine if The Program was implemented as intended, triangulation of the qualitative data from the document review, interview results from The Program facilitators, Principals, classroom teachers and staff in the Program Department of the LDSB were examined and used to build coherent themes. The other themes derived from the staff interviews were determined using a triangulation method as well. Interviews of The Program facilitators, classroom teachers and Principals each had similar questions which allowed different perspectives on the same topic to be recorded. Hand-written summary notes taken during the interviews were read back to the interviewee to determine if the summary was



accurate. Amendments were made at this time until the interviewee was satisfied with the summary. The document review underwent a similar process of member-checking. All documents were reviewed by The Program facilitator for each school and clarifying questions were asked of this facilitator in order to complete the review accurately.

## CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS

## Qualitative Data

The first research question asks if The Program was implemented as intended. Yes, The Program was implemented as intended. The Program was intended to give intense instruction to students at risk of reading failure, at a steady pace during the early stages of reading so these students could become fluent readers. The following document reviews and interview summary elaborate on this claim.

*Document Review*

Each facilitator was provided with two resource documents, a Guided Reading Kit and The Program Toolkit. The first resource document, The Good Readers' Club Program Overview 2005-06, provided the facilitator with the key messages, the rationale for The Program and detailed explanations of the reading assessment procedures. The Program Overview discussed the student demission process from The Program and the monthly timelines for starting and finishing the intervention. The Program Overview document contained a detailed explanation of what components the daily, hour-long group sessions would cover; strategies for covering these components; and how long to spend on each component.

The second resource document, The Good Readers' Club Strategies 2005-06, gives a sample weekly schedule for the facilitator to follow and possible word wall activities. Sample lessons and suggestions for guided reading lessons, shared reading, and

reading aloud were given in the Strategies document. The final page of the Strategies document was the informed consent form which was intended to go home to the parents or guardians of the children selected for The Program. The two documents, the Program Overview and the Strategies, were clear and concise, and provided a good framework in which to implement The Program.

The Guided Reading Kit (The Kit) provided the reading material necessary for implementing The Program. The multiple copies of the DRA-leveled books contained in The Kit enabled each student to read from the same text simultaneously and the Guided Reading Program Overview book from The Kit gave each facilitator the information he or she needed to implement The Program. Finally, The Program Toolkit allowed the facilitator to provide a variety of teaching strategies for the visual, tactile, and kinesthetic learner. The Program Toolkit helped the facilitator implement The Program by increasing the quality of instruction through a greater variety of teaching strategies.

### *Interview Summary*

The following summary represents the combined comments of the facilitators, regular classroom teachers, Principals, and Program Department staff organized into four main themes: Available Resources for The Program, Meeting the Needs of the Students, Facilitator Training, and Students' Attitude Toward The Program. A fifth theme, Improvements for The Program, will be discussed in Chapter 5.

*Theme 1: Available Resources for The Good Readers' Club*

According to the facilitators, while there are sufficient resources available for The Program, The Guided Reading Kits and The Program Toolkits are critical to successful implementation of The Program. The Guided Reading Kit is a comprehensive resource for The Program and for teachers new to teaching at-risk readers. One facilitator commented that “the inclusion of non-fiction books increases the interest for reading with the boys.” The infusion of new, previously unseen texts is very important according to the facilitators. The Toolkit is seen as a valuable resource with its many manipulative devices and activity guides which are helpful for the tactile, visual, and kinesthetic learner.

Some facilitators reported that they created their own manipulative devices and borrowed items from other teachers and the school library. Another facilitator cited “fellow teachers as an important human resource for The Program.” Some facilitators discussed their own training in special education or print literacy as an important resource. The Program Department in the LDSB purchased all of the required resources for The Program. The Principals, in consultation with the program facilitators, were responsible for ordering the proper number of resources for their school. The Principals were responsible for finding an appropriate space in their schools for The Program. Each school surveyed had a dedicated room with sufficient space to allow for student movement and various other activities.

*Theme 2: Meeting the Needs of the Students*

The Program identifies and selects at-risk students in senior kindergarten and gives them the support they need as soon as formal reading instruction begins in grade one.

The selection process (Appendix B) identifies the appropriate students for The Program. These students have some basic understanding of literacy but are reading below the grade standard and have not been involved in other special programs. The selection process is designed to accept students who will have the greatest chance of success in reaching the grade standard in reading through The Program. Facilitators and teachers begin their discussions about specific students and analyze any reading readiness data months before The Program begins. Many facilitators stated that communication with the regular classroom teacher was an integral component of the selection process. The Program facilitators and the classroom teachers share running record data and other measures of reading success with each other to determine the appropriate students for consideration for The Program. Constant communication between the teachers and the facilitators ensures the students in The Program are receiving specialized instruction tailored to each individual. Details about daily activities and achievements are shared as well as any work going home from The Program. These largely informal discussions help the facilitator and the regular classroom teacher to build on each other's work. The classroom teacher supports The Program by helping each student catch-up on work he or she may miss while in The Program group. In some schools, the work missed is not re-

taught, but the parents and the children are informed of this policy before prior to entry into The Program.

Checks on OSR's – Ontario School Records - and other school records allow facilitators to identify a student's school history including issues such as attendance problems or constant movement between schools. Evidence of either issue usually dissuades the facilitators from accepting the student into The Program since daily attendance is crucial.

The selection process strives to create a small group of readers with the same reading abilities and DRA reading level scores to enhance the learning environment for each student. This homogeneous grouping allows the facilitator to work with everyone on the same concepts simultaneously. The small group setting of The Program allows the facilitators to successfully target the areas requiring the most attention of their students. These students have basic literacy skills but they need help with developing effective reading strategies and habits. Those facilitators with special education training are applying their skills with the students in The Program, especially those students who have little exposure to literacy experiences in their home. One respondent remarked that “seeing the students daily for one hour is a beneficial component of The Program,” although some part-time facilitators were able to see their group only three times a week. Small groups allowed facilitators to engage less attentive students and keep them interested in the activities. Another respondent stated that “regular meetings with the students gave them a chance to consolidate their new knowledge and practice their new strategies for reading.”

School administrators were very supportive of The Program, the facilitators and the students involved. Proper classrooms for The Program with sufficient space to move around were found with the help of the school's Principal. Sufficient time was allotted to allow the facilitator to prepare for lessons and communicate with parents and other teachers. The Administration staff understood the time commitment needed to run The Program properly and they tended to be flexible about the demands on the facilitator's time. Priority was given to the successful implementation of The Program and meeting the needs of the students.

### *Theme 3: Facilitator Training*

Facilitators agreed that they have had the proper training for implementing The Program successfully. Many facilitators felt the combination of initial training and ongoing training had been the key to The Program's success. Training for the facilitators started with an introductory meeting which was followed by monthly meetings. Facilitators stated that they were given a video created by the 5<sup>th</sup> Block program at the TCSB to watch a reading group in session. From this video, new facilitators gained useful information about how each session could be run. Facilitators were trained in the use of the pre- and post-assessment tools and on the selection process. Attendance at the monthly meetings was voluntary and these meetings focused on a variety of aspects of The Program such as the use of word walls, shared reading strategies, guided reading, phonemic awareness, and the use of manipulative devices. Staff members from the Program Department at the LDSB were willing to observe any facilitator who wanted

help with The Program. These observations were designed to offer advice about how to improve The Program. One facilitator stated that “collaboration between staff and the training that occurred between colleagues within the school was most helpful.”

Teachers can gain additional expertise in reading instruction through summer institutes and night school courses on reading offered by the LDSB. As well, the LDSB is an additional qualifications provider for Reading Specialist – Part 1; therefore, teachers had several avenues from which to choose in order to increase their skills as reading specialists and enhance their qualifications so they could increase the quality of their instruction for the students.

#### *Theme 4: Student Attitude toward The Program*

Interviewees reported that the attitudes of the students in The Program varied from group to group, but that, in general, the students regarded The Program as a positive experience and a chance to be with a small, special group of peers. Some students were reluctant, at first, to leave their work in the classroom, but once they were engaged in The Program they didn't want to leave. Some facilitators reported that the students' lack of attention and listening skills may have been the cause of the initial reluctance to leave the classroom for The Program since The Program requires a student's full attention for the entire hour. Some facilitators reported that the students' attitudes towards The Program changed, depending on what activity the student was missing in the regular classroom. Once these students learned to focus in the small groups, they enjoyed their time in The Program. Facilitators felt the students enjoyed the small group setting since it allowed the



students who would not normally participate in the larger class to participate in this smaller setting.

### Quantitative Data

The quantitative data from the study are represented in Figure 2 as a box plot of the DRA scores of the students in The Program and students in the regular classroom. The raw data of DRA scores are found in Appendix F. The DRA scores are interval-level data and subject to various statistical treatments (Lord, 1953). The 'box' in the box plot represents the middle 50% of the distribution of scores. The box extends from the first quartile at the bottom of the box to the third quartile at the top of the box. The thick line inside the box represents the median and the two 'whiskers' extend to the lowest score at the bottom and the highest score at the top. Any points lying outside the range of 1.5 times the height of the box are called outliers and are represented by a small circle. In Figure 2, there are two outliers: one at a DRA score of 20 and the other at a DRA score of 24 for the final DRA scores of The Good Readers' Club. The box plot reveals several important trends in the data, including the following:

- i) final DRA scores of students in The Program tended to be higher than the final DRA scores of students in the regular classroom;
- ii) initial DRA scores for both groups were very similar;
- iii) final DRA scores of the students in the regular classroom had more variability than the final DRA scores of the students in The Program;

- iv) the distribution of the initial DRA scores for the students in both groups was highly negatively skewed; and
- v) the distribution of the final DRA scores for the students in the regular classroom was highly positively skewed.

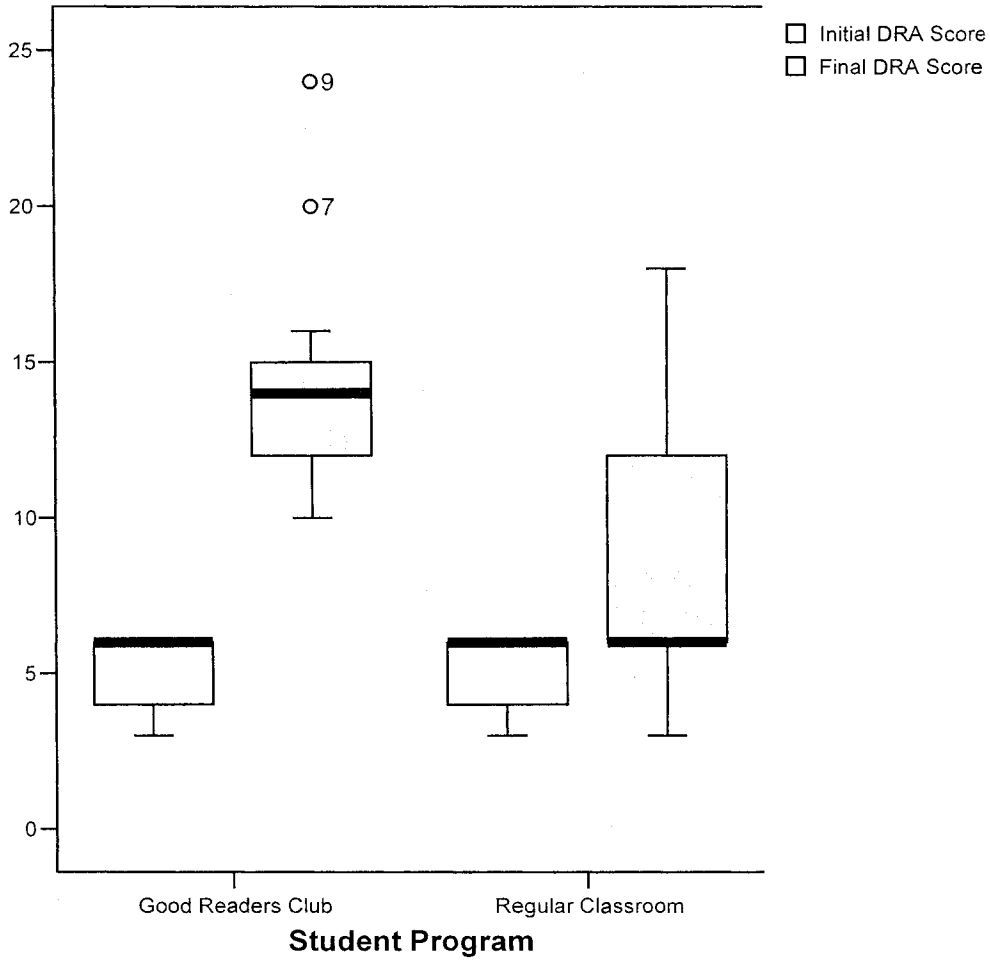


Figure 2. Box Plots of the initial and final DRA scores for students in The Good Readers' Club and the regular classroom.

A plot of the mean DRA scores for experimental and control groups from the Pre-Post measurement is shown in Figure 3.

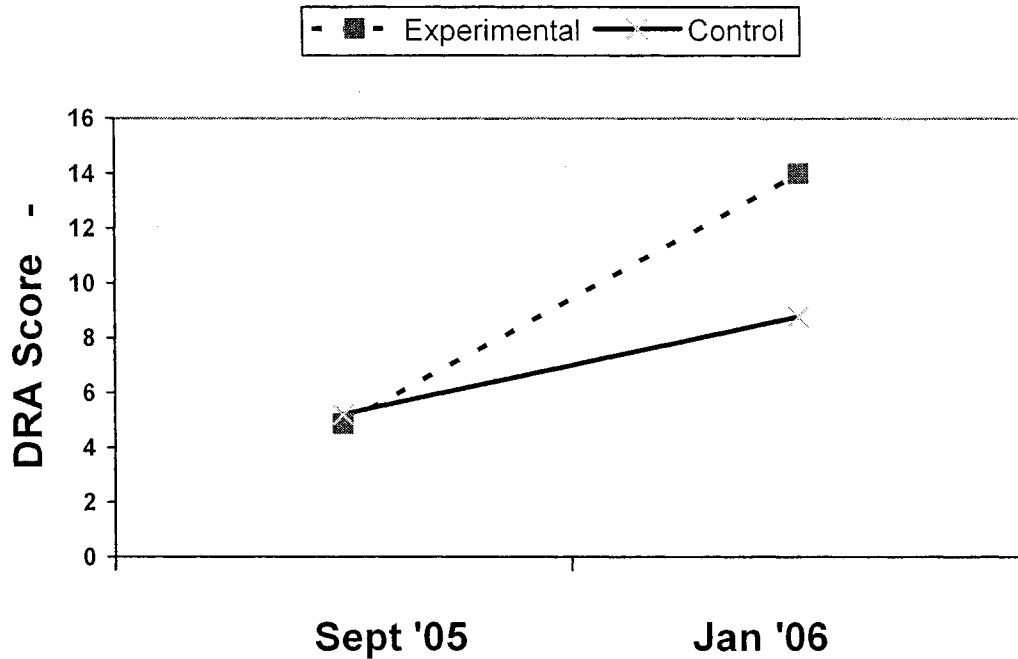


Figure 3. Pre-Post DRA reading level scores for the experimental and control groups.

A 2-way ANOVA was used to explore the relationship between DRA reading level scores and type of program. To assess the assumption of homogeneity of variance for the ANOVA statistic, the researcher performed a Levene Test for Equality of Error Variance, which revealed that there was no significant difference between the control and experimental group error variances for Pre-DRA score,  $F(1,27) = 1.99, p > .05$  and Post-DRA scores,  $F(1,27) = 2.05, p > .05$ . The 2-way ANOVA revealed that the interaction effect of program\*time resulted in a significant difference in DRA scores,  $F(1, 27) = 15.70, p < .05$ . The 2-way ANOVA has been shown to be a robust statistical test with non-normal sample distributions (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2005; Hsiung & Olejnik, 1996).

Eight of fifteen students in The Program, or 53%, and two of fourteen students in the regular classroom, or 14%, reached a DRA level of 14 or better in the Post-DRA score. None of the students in either group was at level 14 in the Pre-DRA score.

## CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION

## Summary of Results

This evaluative study was conducted to answer four questions about The Program:

1. Was The Program implemented as intended?
2. Did Grade 2 students in The Program demonstrate significantly greater gains in their DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) level than students in a control group?
3. What percentage of students completing The Program obtained a DRA reading level score 14 or better by mid-year of Grade 2?
4. What improvements could be made to The Program?

From the data analysis in the Results chapter, the Grade 2 students in The Program did demonstrate a significantly greater gain in their DRA level than students in a control group. Of the students in The Program, 53% obtained a DRA level of 14 or better while 14% of the students in the control group reached level 14 or better.

The first question has been answered through the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative review of the document entitled “The Program Overview” was very important in describing the rationale and aims of The Program. The Program Overview document revealed that The Program was intended to:

- i) provide additional instruction in guided reading and word study to improve the literacy skills of at-risk students in Grade One and Grade Two;

- ii) be closely connected to classroom programs and service at-risk readers as soon as possible in their education;
- iii) include ongoing assessment of the students' progress to assist in the design of explicit strategic instruction appropriate to each student's learning needs;
- iv) include explicit instruction in the zone of proximal development (Vygosky, 1978) to make gains in reading;
- v) utilize small group instruction;
- vi) provide time for classroom teachers and facilitators of The Program to consult one another and to collaborate on the progress of each student in The Program;
- vii) provide daily, one-hour group sessions covering thirty minutes of word study and thirty minutes of reading for 15 to 17 weeks. The word-study component was to consist of phonemic awareness, phonics, high frequency words and word patterns. The reading component was to consist of guided reading, shared reading, reading aloud to the students, and independent reading;
- viii) provide training for The Program facilitators to give them the proper instruction and assessment skills for the students in The Program;
- ix) provide a home connection involving books sent home to allow the students' parents/guardians to help their children practice their reading with an adult.

The qualitative data showed that the staff involved in The Program received the proper training, material resources, and administrative support to deliver The Program successfully in 2005-06. The facilitators reported a sense of commitment from the Program Department at the LDSB for The Program through the training the facilitators

received. The monthly meetings, helpful consultations and availability of the proper material and human resources were cited as important components of this training. In the interviews, facilitators and classroom teachers reported that they consulted each other frequently, on an informal basis, to ensure consistency between The Program instruction and the classroom teaching. The Program was conducted with small, homogeneous groups, with respect to reading ability, and it was offered for 15 to 17 weeks.

The material resources such as the Guided Reading Kits and the Guided Reading Toolkits were reported as being critical components to the successful implementation of The Program. Each facilitator was supplied with these resources as well as The Program Strategies document to assist them in the delivery of The Program. The Guided Reading Kits contained information folders to help guide the facilitator through the necessary steps before, during, and after the introduction of a new book.

Brauger, Lewis, and Hagans (1997) identified three critical areas for the development of early literacy: a strong foundation in oral language skills; an awareness of phonological awareness; and many exposures and experiences with printed material. Results from this study suggest that The Program offers many opportunities for its students to increase their oral language skills through the Word Study and Guided Reading component. The Program also contains specific phonological awareness instruction through rhythm and rhyming games and manipulation of sounds. Students are exposed to much more reading and word study through The Program since it provides one hour a day of extra language instruction on top of the regular classroom language activities.

Tompkin, Bright, Pollard, and Windsor (2005) note that shared reading gives the children greater confidence in their ability to read as well as providing opportunities for the children to predict what will happen next in the story. Results of this study indicate that components of The Program are consistent with critical areas of successful early literacy intervention by providing opportunities to involve the students in shared reading, thereby enhancing their confidence levels and their ability to predict outcomes of a story. As well, the Home Connection portion of The Program is another opportunity for the students to practice their word-recognition skills and listening skills. Phonological awareness is the most common difficulty in acquiring early word-reading skills (Lieberman, Shankweiler, & Liberman, 1989), and The Program's Word Study component contains ample practice and skill development in phonics. Students' oral language skills were promoted through guided reading, shared reading, and re-telling of the books studied in The Program, and the wide variety of new, previously unseen books exposed the students to more printed material.

Torgensen (1998) noted that effective early literacy intervention programs involve four main components: quality of instruction, level of intensity, timing, and the appropriate children. The Program contains elements of each of the four components. The Program's quality of instruction is evident through the training of the facilitators and their teaching strategies. Scaffolding strategies such as labeling, verbal dialogue about pictures, and story re-telling, that gradually diminish as the student gains more independence in these skills increase the quality of instruction, as well (Paulson, Noble, Jepson, & van den Pol, 2001). The Program facilitators guide the reading through a picture walk or by modeling the reading and by monitoring the reading success of the



students. Group reflection of the reading strategies employed during the reading of the new book and comprehension checks through story retelling were components of The Program. The quality of instruction was enhanced through the use of the various manipulatives in The Program Toolkit. These manipulatives allowed the facilitators to provide learning strategies for the visual, tactile, and kinesthetic learners in the groups. The Program's level of intensity was increased by ensuring a small student-to-teacher ratio by keeping the group size around six students. Proper timing was ensured by identifying the students at risk of reading failure in senior kindergarten and at the beginning of Grade One; the appropriate students were channeled into The Program through The Program's selection process.

The quantitative data showed students in The Program improved significantly more in their reading ability than students in the control group (see Figure 3).

The Program was not implemented on a daily basis by all schools involved in this study. Some schools had part-time staff acting as The Program's facilitator and as a result, The Program was offered only three days a week. Most facilitators reported that they found it difficult to cover the Word Study and Guided Reading components in each hour of The Program. Facilitators reported that they would rotate the Word Study and Guided Reading components on a daily basis in order to give time to each component. The facilitators found the students responded to the daily rotation of Word Study and Guided Reading better than the attempt to cover both in the same day. Therefore, based on the qualitative and quantitative data, The Program was implemented as intended, with the exception of a few minor points.

The fourth and final research question to be answered by this study (What improvements could be made to The Program?) was answered through the semi-structured interviews. The main issues cited by the staff participants were these: more staff for The Program, better communication, and revising some of the assessment tools.

Most staff participants agreed that staffing more facilitators in all the schools, especially schools with larger populations, would be beneficial for The Program. More facilitators would allow two or more intervention programs to run concurrently in any one school, an improvement which would enable facilitators to move students between programs as the students' reading levels changed. An increase in the number of facilitators would allow all Programs to have full-time facilitators and eliminate the difficulty of operating part-time Programs. Finally, increasing the number of facilitator staff would enable The Program to have even smaller group sizes and continue to operate all year giving more students a greater chance to reach their reading goals. In his longitudinal study of the Reading Recovery program, Heann (2002) discusses the success of the Reading Recovery program and the link to its one-to-one student-to-teacher ratio. A one-to-one ratio may seem too expensive, although Marina and Gilman (2003) found that Reading Recovery was very cost effective in terms of monetary expenditures. More facilitators, however, would likely improve the quality of The Program.

Increased communication between facilitators and the regular classroom teachers, parents, and the principals would help coordinate the best time to offer The Program during the day. This coordination of timing could improve the students' attitudes towards The Program by having a consistent time in the day for The Program, thereby building a routine. As well, students could be made aware of any activities they will miss while in

The Program. The classroom teacher and the facilitator should discuss the time and block that is most appropriate in June before The Program begins in September. As well, a summary of each student's progress and accomplishments in The Program should be given to the student's classroom teacher and parents or legal guardian to assist in coordinating literacy strategies with as many people as possible and continue the work of improving the child's reading and writing skills. Communicating with the Principal and giving them the responsibility of having a final check and approval of the students selected for The Program could assist in ensuring the right students are in The Program. The Principal's final approval could give them an opportunity to become more involved in The Program, as well. Finally, if children from The Program changed schools, a communication binder containing their assessment folder and any other anecdotal evaluation should follow them to their new school to ensure these students receive literacy help consistent with their past experiences.

To improve the program further, a change in some of the assessment tools will be made for the next school year, 2006-2007. The Letter Sound Recall assessment, which involves letter sound recognition as well as recall, will be changed from its present form. Facilitators report that this test is difficult to assess, especially with some of the vowel combinations. The DRA is viewed as a critical component of the assessment folder and the high-frequency word test is also very useful and will remain intact. Some facilitators commented that the Rosner Test of Auditory Analysis Skills provided little insight into the student's reading skill since all students scored very high on the test.

A handbook to help guide the facilitators through The Program will be ready for September, 2006.

### Further Research Ideas

As the LDSB moves into its second year of offering The Program, longitudinal studies could be planned to determine the progress of The Program from year to year. Future research could involve similar data collection strategies using the pre-post test design. This two-group pre-test, post-test design would control a number of threats to internal validity such as maturation of the students, imitation of treatment, and selection bias. Frequency distribution analysis, Chi-squared tests, correlations, one-way and factorial ANOVA and other multivariant tests could be used to analyze the data in this longitudinal study.

A study on the reliability and validity of the various assessment measures would be valuable to the overall improvement of The Program. To ensure the value of the measurement tools used in The Program, an assessment of the measurement tools would determine if the tools are have a valid design and whether the tools are truly testing for reading skill and word study. The measurement tools would be assessed on their reliability to ensure the tools are consistent in their measurement of reading skill and word study. Finally, to further assess whether The Program is being implemented as intended, a qualitative evaluation case study would be useful.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The Program delivered the right level of intensity and duration of learning to the right children at the right time. The Program included instruction on phonemic

awareness, letter-sound recognition, blending skills, some pronunciation convention (such as the silent 'e' rule), and automatic recognition of high-frequency words. The quality of instruction was reflected in the wide variety of techniques used such as guided and shared reading, reading aloud and scaffolding. The Program facilitators were encouraged to enhance their quality of instruction through readily available courses and constant collaboration. The intensity of The Program was increased by reducing the student-teacher ratio for the group sessions to a six-to-one down to a four-to-one ratio. The Program is identifying high-risk children in kindergarten allowing preventative work to begin before formal reading instruction began in grade one.

Reflecting on The Program, one facilitator stated "The Good Readers Club is a terrific program that has the resources and the support necessary to make it successful in improving the reading level of its students." Every staff participant held the same view that The Program was effective in attaining its goal to improve the reading levels of struggling readers in the LDSB. The quantitative data analysis supported this claim. According to the data collected, The Program produced significant increases in the reading skill scores of its participants from the pre-post assessment measures within the program and between the students in The Program and students in the regular classroom.

This evaluative study of The Program showed that the program was successful in improving the reading levels of at-risk students through its intensive, short-term early literacy instruction. The staff participants, including The Program facilitators, classroom teachers, principals, and Program Department staff involved in the study agreed that the students benefited from the reading intervention and that they made important gains in their reading skill levels and their self-esteem. The Program worked very well and it

served the needs of the young students who needed help to overcome their reading difficulties.

The recommendations given below summarize the ideas discussed earlier to improve The Program.

- 1) Mandate that all of the elementary schools in the LDSB offer The Program in 2006-2007 for at-risk grade one and grade two students.
- 2) The Program should be staffed with early literacy specialists wherever possible.
- 3) Allow for two or more Programs to run concurrently in schools that report more than six students meeting the selection process criteria for entering The Program.
- 4) Seek the advice of experts in statistical analysis and program evaluation to help determine the reliability and validity of assessment tools used in The Program.
- 5) Create a formal reporting template to be used for each student in The Program to increase the accountability of The Program to its stakeholders.

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Appendix A

**GOOD READERS CLUB ASSESSMENT FOLDER**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Entry Date Assessment: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Exit Date Assessment: \_\_\_\_\_  
 DRA Results: Pre: Reading Level \_\_\_\_\_ Comprehension Level \_\_\_\_\_  
 Post: Reading Level \_\_\_\_\_ Comprehension Level \_\_\_\_\_

Administer these tests before the student begins the program and at the end of the program. This folder can be given to the classroom teacher at the end of the program.

**Grade One Measure: High Frequency Word List**

**Purpose:** Students must have a bank of sight words including the most highly frequent words in our language. This is one of the components along with phonemic awareness and letter sound knowledge that enable a student to read.

**Instructions:** Teacher flashes the word and checks the words that the student reads correctly. The first column is used before the intervention program begins. The second column is for recording at the end of the intervention program.

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>		1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>		1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>		1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>		1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>
a			all			and			are			an		
at			be			but			came			for		
from			go			got			had			have		
he			her			him			his			I		
if			in			is			it			me		
my			of			on			one			out		
said			saw			she			so			that		
the			their			then			there			they		
this			to			up			was			were		
went			with			you			your			we		

Total Score: / 50

### Running Record Recording Sheet

Name _____	Date _____
Book Title _____	Familiar Text _____ Unfamiliar text _____
Number of Words _____	Level _____ Accuracy Rate _____
	Self Correction Rate _____
Cues used:	Strategies used:
<input type="checkbox"/> meaning _____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> structure _____	_____
Visual _____	_____

Page		Count		Analysis	
		E	SC	E MSV	SC MSV
<b>Totals:</b>					

### Rosner Test of Auditory Analysis Skills

**Purpose:** to provide the teacher with an indication of a child's Phonemic awareness. This measure provides an indicator of a student's ability to hear and manipulate the sounds within words and to segment words into component sounds.

**Procedure:**  
 Begin with the trial items in order to be sure that the student understands the concept of the task:  
*Teacher says : say football*  
*Teacher pauses and lets child reply.*  
*Teachers says, now say it again but don't say ball*  
*Student replies.*  
 Correct the child, if necessary, on the practice items, but not on the measurement items . Manipulatives such as block or chips may be used with the trial items in order that the student understands the concept presented. If using manipulatives, place one chip or block on the table to represent each part of the compound word. Say the words slowly, pointing to each of the chips or blocks then remove the manipulative.  
 Place a check mark if correct. If incorrect write in the student's response. If no response is given mark with a dash.

**Practise Items:** ( do not score)  
 a) Say football. Now say it again but don't say ball.                      Foot  
 b) Say cowboy. Now say it again but don't say boy.                      Cow  
 c) Say steamboat. Now say it again but don't say steam.                      Boat

	Pre	Post
<i>Compound Words</i>		
1. Say keyboard. Now say it again but don't say key.	_____	_____
2. Say doghouse. Now say it again but don't say house.	_____	_____
3. Say sunshine. Now say it again but don't say shine.	_____	_____
<i>Initial Syllable</i>		
4. Say picnic. Now say it again but don't say pic.	_____	_____
5. Say cucumber. Now say it again but don't say cu.	_____	_____
<i>Initial Consonant.</i>		
6. Say coat. Now say it again but don't say k the k sound	_____	_____
7. Say meat. Now say it again but don't say m the m sound	_____	_____
8. Say take. Now say it again but don't say t the t sound	_____	_____
<i>Final consonant</i>		
9. Say same. Now say it again but don't say m	_____	_____
10. Say wrote. Now say it again but don't say t	_____	_____
11. Say please. Now say it again but don't say z	_____	_____

Administer all items up to #7. After #7 stop administering the measure if the student is visibly frustrated.

### Letter Sound Recall

**Purpose:** This measure provides an indicator of a student's ability to identify the sounds associated with letters of the alphabet

**Procedure:** There are two portions to the test.

1. **Letter-sound recognition:** Present the letter sounds to the student. Ask the student, "Which letter makes the \_\_\_\_ sound? (make the appropriate letter-sound do not say the letter name). If the child needs repeat the instructions again. If the student shows no sign of responding after 5 seconds move on to the next letter-sound. Check the letter-sounds that the student identifies correctly. Draw a dash through the sounds that the student doesn't respond to.

2. **Letter-sound recall:** Point to the relevant letter and say, "What sound does this letter make?". The student makes the sound. Do not accept the letter name from the student.

#### Pre program

#### Post program

Letter	Recognition	Recall	Recognition	Recall
s				
a				
t				
i				
p				
m				
c				
k				
e				
h				
r				
n				
d				
g				
o				
u				
l				
f				
b				
ai				
j				
oa				
ie				
ee				
or				
z				
w				
ng				
v				
short oo				
long oo				
y				
x				
ch				
sh				
voiced th				
unvoiced th				
qu				
ou				
oi				
ue				
er				
ar				



## Appendix B

**Student Selection**

The Good Readers Club is designed to provide short-term, intensive, high quality instruction to grade one and grade two students who are reading at level E and below (grade two students) and level C and below (grade one students). The program allows students who have gaps in their literacy development to succeed before they enter a cycle of failure. Given intense instruction at a measured pace during the emergent reading stage, these students can realize their potential thus avoiding the need for special education support in the future. Since it is a short term program, it is not suitable for students already deemed to require significant and/or long-term learning support

**Student Selection Process:**

Students are selected for Good Readers Club through a combination of teacher judgment and assessments. Before beginning a session, the facilitator :

1. Meets with grade one/two teachers to discuss possible Good Readers' Club candidates.
2. Uses the current DRA assessment to identify possible students: Students who are reading below level E in Grade Two, below level C in Grade One
3. Develops a list of students to consider for the program based on the classroom teacher's observations and findings from the DRA and ELKA testing
4. Conducts an OSR search
5. Administers the following measures: Rosner, Letter/sound recognition recall, running record and the high frequency sight word test
6. Consults with the principal
7. Contacts the parents and receives permission for participation in the program
8. Places selected students in groups based on their **running record level**. For the program to be of maximum effect in a minimal amount of time it is essential that the students of the same reading level be placed together. Ideally there will be 6 students in each group whose instruction reading levels and reading strategy needs are similar. However there may be situations where it is necessary to have a group with fewer than 6 students. Over the course of the program the levels will start to differ and the teacher adjusts the program accordingly.

## Appendix C

### Interview Questions

#### *Program Facilitator*

1. Describe the resources available for you in your school for The Good Readers' Club.
2. Describe how The Good Readers' Club is meeting the needs of its students.
3. Describe the training you received in order to facilitate The Good Readers' Club.
4. Describe the support you receive from the student's regular classroom teacher.
5. Describe the support you receive from the school's administration.
6. Describe the students' attitudes towards being in The Good Readers' Club.
7. Describe how the selection process gets the appropriate students in the program.
8. What can be done to improve the program?

*Principal*

1. Describe the resources available for you in your school for The Good Readers' Club.
2. Describe how The Good Readers' Club is meeting the needs of its students.
3. Describe the training the facilitator receives in order to run The Good Readers' Club.
4. Describe the support the facilitator receives from the student's regular classroom teacher.
5. Describe the support the school's administration gives to The Good Readers' Club facilitator.
6. Describe the students' attitudes towards being in The Good Readers' Club.
7. Describe how the selection process gets the appropriate students in the program.
8. What can be done to improve the program?

*Regular Classroom Teacher*

1. Describe how The Good Readers' Club is meeting the needs of your students.
2. Describe the support the program facilitator gives you.
3. Describe the students' attitudes towards being in The Good Readers' Club.
4. Describe how the selection process gets the appropriate students in the program.
5. What can be done to improve the program?

*Program Department Staff*

1. What led to the LDSB creation of The Good Readers' Club?
2. Is there a plan to expand the program? What is the plan?
3. How is the LDSB supporting the facilitators of the program?
4. Are there any PD opportunities for current or future facilitators in special education or guided reading beyond the training provided for the program?
5. Has the program been implemented as originally planned?
6. What changes have been made to the operation of the program since it began in September of 2005?
7. What further changes do you see for future years?
8. How is the program accountable to the stakeholders?

## Appendix D

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am conducting a study on The Good Readers' Club program for emerging readers offered by the Lakehead District School Board. The study is called An Evaluation of The Good Readers' Club: An Early Literacy Intervention Program. The purpose of the study is to evaluate The Good Readers' Club to determine if this program provides the support required to improve the reading skills of the students in the program. The design of the study involves an experimental group of students who were involved in the program and a control group of students who were not involved in the program.

Since your child was involved in The Good Readers' Club program last term, I am asking for your permission to use your child's data from the assessments already completed by the lead teacher for the program. I will not be asking your child any questions, nor will your child need to perform any further assessments.

This project will be conducted in strict adherence to the ethical policies for research for both Lakehead University and the Lakehead District School Board. All information gathered during the study will be securely stored at Lakehead University for seven years. Your child will not be identified in any manner in this study. All participants' names will be replaced by identification codes. The finished study will be kept at Lakehead University and given to your school board upon completion. You have the right to withdraw your permission at any time during the study.

To give permission for me to use your child's data, please sign and return the attached consent form to your child's teacher tomorrow. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at (807)768-8223, or at [jfriesen@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:jfriesen@lakeheadu.ca). You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Christina van Barneveld at Lakehead University at 343-8330.

Sincerely,

John Friesen

**An Evaluation of The Good Readers' Club: An Early Literacy Intervention Program**

**Consent Form**

My signature on this form indicates that my son or daughter will participate in the study conducted by Mr. John Friesen on The Good Readers' Club.

I have received an explanation about the nature of the study and its purpose. I understand the following:

1. My child is a volunteer and can withdraw from the study at any time.
2. There is no apparent danger of physical or psychological harm to my child.
3. The data provided by my child will be coded to eliminate his or her name from the study and will be released only as part of the larger group of data gathered and analyzed from all participants in the public domain. Data will be securely stored at Lakehead University for seven years.
4. The finished study will be kept at Lakehead University and copies will be given to the Lakehead District School Board.

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Name of Parent or Guardian (please print)

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Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

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Name of Your Child (please print)

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am conducting a study on The Good Readers' Club program for emerging readers offered by the Lakehead District School Board. The study is called An Evaluation of The Good Readers' Club: An Early Literacy Intervention Program. The purpose of the study is to evaluate The Good Readers' Club to determine if this program provides the support required to improve the reading skills of the students in the program. The design of the study involves an experimental group of students who were involved in the program and a control group of students who were not involved in the program.

Your child has been selected to be in the control group since he or she was not involved in The Good Readers' Club program last term. I am asking for your permission to use your child's reading level scores from the beginning of the school year and now in January. By allowing me to collect these marks, you will be helping me determine the impact of the program on improving the reading levels of young readers. Your child's teacher already has these two marks and I will not be asking your child any questions, nor will your child need to perform any further assessments.

This project will be conducted in strict adherence to the ethical policies for research for both Lakehead University and the Lakehead District School Board. All information gathered during the study will be securely stored at Lakehead University for seven years. Your child will not be identified in any manner in this study. All participants' names will be replaced by identification codes. The finished study will be kept at Lakehead University and given to your school board upon completion. You have the right to withdraw your permission at any time during the study.

To give permission for me to use your child's data, please sign and return the attached consent form to your child's teacher tomorrow. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at (807)768-8223, or at [jfriesen@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:jfriesen@lakeheadu.ca). You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Christina van Barneveld at Lakehead University at 343-8330.

Sincerely,

John Friesen



**An Evaluation of The Good Readers' Club: An Early Literacy Intervention Program**

**Consent Form**

My signature on this form indicates that my son or daughter will participate in the study conducted by Mr. John Friesen on The Good Readers' Club.

I have received an explanation about the nature of the study and its purpose. I understand the following:

1. My child is a volunteer and can withdraw from the study at any time.
2. There is no apparent danger of physical or psychological harm to my child.
3. The data provided by my child will be coded to eliminate his or her name from the study and will be released only as part of the larger group of data gathered and analyzed from all participants in the public domain. Data will be securely stored at Lakehead University for seven years.
4. The finished study will be kept at Lakehead University and copies will be given to the Lakehead District School Board.

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Name of Parent or Guardian (please print)

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Signature of Parent or Guardian Date

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Name of Your Child (please print)

## Appendix E

Dear Staff Member:

I am conducting a study on a program for emerging readers offered by the Lakehead District School Board. The study is called An Evaluation of The Good Readers' Club: An Early Literacy Intervention Program. The purpose of the study is to evaluate The Good Readers' Club to determine if this program provides the support required to improve the reading skills of students performing below the grade-level standard as defined by the Ontario Ministry of Education. The design of the study involves an experimental group of students who are involved in the program and a control group of students who are not involved in The Good Readers' Club. The students in both groups will complete an assessment of their current reading and word study skills. They will complete this assessment with the help of their teacher and the assessment will take about fifteen minutes. The students in both groups will complete the same assessment about fifteen weeks later with the help of their teacher. During the time between the initial and final assessments, the experimental group of students will take part in the program and the control group of students will not. The students in the control group will not have any change in their routine at school as a result of this study.

As a staff member involved in The Good Readers' Club, I am asking you to allow me to interview you so I can gain a better understanding of the program. The interview will take about 10-15 minutes.

All information gathered during the study will be securely stored at Lakehead University for seven years. You will not be identified in any manner in this study. All interview data will be combined and analyzed for themes and I will interview about twelve staff members. The finished study will be kept at Lakehead University and given to your school board upon completion. You have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time.

If you agree to participate, please sign and return the attached consent form. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at (807)768-8223 or [jfriesen@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:jfriesen@lakeheadu.ca). You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Christina van Barneveld at Lakehead University at 343-8330.

Sincerely,

John Friesen

**An Evaluation of The Good Readers' Club: An Early Literacy Intervention Program**

**Consent Form**

My signature on this form indicates that I will participate in the study conducted by Mr. John Friesen on The Good Readers' Club.

I have received an explanation about the nature of the study and its purpose. I understand the following:

1. I am a volunteer and can withdraw from the study at any time.
2. There is no apparent danger of physical or psychological harm to me.
3. The data provided by me will be released in aggregate form, only, as part of the larger group of data gathered and analyzed from all staff participants. Data will be securely stored at Lakehead University for seven years.
4. The finished study will be kept at Lakehead University and copies will be given to the Lakehead District School Board.

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Signature of Staff Member

Date

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Name of Staff Member (please print)

## Appendix F

Reading Level Scores for Students in the Quasi-Experimental and Control Group

Student ID	Gender	Pre-DRA Score	Post-DRA Score	Change
E1	M	4	14	10
E2	M	4	12	8
E3	F	6	14	8
E4	M	6	14	8
E5	F	6	10	4
E6	M	6	12	6
E7	M	6	20	14
E8	F	3	14	11
E9	M	6	24	18
E10	M	6	16	10
E11	M	3	16	13
E12	M	6	10	4
E13	F	4	12	8
E14	M	4	10	6
E15	M	3	12	9
C1	F	6	12	6
C2	F	6	6	0
C3	M	6	14	8

C4	M	6	12	6
C5	F	4	4	0
C6	M	4	6	2
C7	M	6	18	12
C8	M	3	3	0
C9	F	6	6	0
C10	M	4	6	2
C11	F	4	6	2
C12	M	6	6	0
C13	M	6	12	6
C14	M	6	12	6

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## Appendix G

Grade	Fountas & Pinnell	DRA
K	A	A – 1
K	B	2
K	C	3
1	D	4
1	E	6-8
1	F	10
1	G	12
1	H	14
1	I	16
1	I	16
2	J	18
2	K	20
2	L	24
2	M	28
2	M	28
2	N	30
3	N	30
3	O	34
3	O	34
3	P	38

Conversion table for different reading level systems. Note. Taken from <http://www.readinga-z.com/guided/correlation.html> on January 23, 2006.