

Beyond Borders: A Partnership to Promote Independent Reading

The voices of classroom teachers are often missing in the discourse about best practices in schools. We believe that teachers' voices are essential to bridge the ever-present gap between research and practice. By reading about the efforts and experiences of others, we can build on their successes and hopefully avoid their mistakes, thus improving our own practice. In frequent conversations with Lacey about her efforts to promote independent reading in her school, Karen, her graduate advisor, suggested that Lacey share her experiences with the literacy community. What follows is Lacey's story.

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"Can't we just read our own books?" My middle school students begged me in nearly every class period, which, honestly, brought about mixed emotions for me. On one hand, I was elated that my students actually wanted to read. I hoped that meant that I was making some progress toward creating lifelong readers. On the other hand, their pleas left me feeling like I wasn't meeting their needs. Most of my students wouldn't dream of touching a book outside of school, and I knew that if I missed this opportunity to cultivate their motivation, many of these students might just give up on reading altogether. But I only had so much time with these students in my classroom, and given curricular expectations, I couldn't justify devoting more of that time to independent reading. I was at a loss. How could I possibly add more opportunities for students to read what they wanted without taking time away from the myriad language arts skills that I felt compelled to help them develop?

I had already spent hours agonizing over and adjusting our classroom schedule and had finally reached the point where I felt I was focused on building both writing and reading skills while providing regular windows for independent reading time. I had adapted Atwell's (1987) scheduling suggestions for my 6th-, 7th-, and 8th-grade language arts classes and had created a modified schedule to fit our four-day school week: three days solely dedicated to writing workshop and one day to reading workshop. And even though I would have loved to provide a solid period of independent reading on Thursdays, after we touched on reading strategies and skill building and practiced applying some of these aspects, the amount of time left for independent reading was miniscule. I knew, like many educators struggling with the same feelings, that there just would never be enough time to accomplish everything I was expected and wanted to do. Despite introducing my students to books they would enjoy and cultivating their desire to read, I couldn't adequately provide them with the time to actually immerse themselves in the books. So, as I grappled with how and when I could create more opportunities for my students to read freely, it became evident that I might need to seek support beyond the borders of my own classroom.

The Current Situation

Despite the efforts of educators who work tirelessly to get relevant literature into adolescent students' hands as they transition out of elementary school, the rates at which they voluntarily read begin drop-

ping (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007). While instructional practices like reading workshops and literature circles may be transforming adolescents into readers in our own classrooms, the same might not be true across all contexts. If we truly want to create a nation of readers, we need to stress the importance of reading beyond the confines of our individual classrooms, but we cannot do this alone. One solution may be working with other content area teachers to build reading skills outside the language arts and reading classroom.

School Barriers to Adolescent Students' Reading

When we consider the kinds of reading activities occurring in many classrooms, content area and literature classrooms alike, it should not come as a surprise that we are engaging our students in practices that do not always highlight the recreational nature of reading. Many times students are encouraged to read only from an efferent stance, as seen in the following illustration provided by Rosenblatt (2011): “[T]he student reading *A Tale of Two Cities* who knows that there will be a test on facts about characters and plot may be led to adopt a predominantly efferent stance, screening out all but the factual data” (p. 136). While such an assigned reading activity is intended to improve students’ reading abilities, in fact it may not be contributing much at all. Strommen and Mates’s (2004) research with adolescent readers indicated that even students who enjoy reading do not fully engage in these kinds of assignments and instead simply scan the text to find the correct answers to the teacher’s questions. When recreational reading is excluded from the school day, there is an unintended consequence: students perceive reading as an activity focused on obtaining information to complete predetermined tasks, rather than as a pleasurable experience in which they can enjoy a text aesthetically on their own terms.

Of course, the efferent and aesthetic stances do not exist independently of each other, and depending on the purpose, a reader’s position on the continuum fluctuates between the stances, making them both necessary and applicable in their own right (Rosenblatt, 2011). So while there is a definite place in reading instruction for practices that encourage efferent reading, which is a vital component of close reading and of developing comprehension skills, solely focusing on one stance does not provide our students with

the full experience of reading. If they are constantly exposed to reading activities that they view as fact-finding missions, they are missing the simple enjoyment of the act of reading. This one-sided emphasis on the efferent stance plays a role in decreasing the overall reading motivation of our adolescent students.

As students transition from elementary to middle school, the different organizational format of texts and resulting practices of analysis contribute to a more “teacher-directed” classroom, resulting in an increase in extrinsic motivators and a decline in intrinsic motivators (Guthrie & Davis, 2003). Ivey and Broaddus (2001) highlighted three “themes” in middle school instructional practices that negatively influence middle school students’ intrinsic reading motivation.

First, most reading activities in middle schools do not take into account the “developmental and personal differences between students” (p. 353). Given the wide range of student interests and abilities, it is not surprising that the predominant practice of whole-class reading assignments does not account for individual interests.

Second, middle school curricula do not necessarily match up with what students are interested in learning and reading about. The textbook focus in many middle school classrooms and the absence of a variety of reading materials completely disregard any notion of student choice or interest when it comes to what students would like to learn (Guthrie & Davis, 2003).

And third, students may have a hard time connecting “school reading and writing with their out of school reading and writing” (p. 354). This disconnect is illustrated by the discrepant ways in which students view in-school and out-of-school reading. In-school reading is commonly viewed as a demonstration of performance controlled by extrinsic motivators (grades, teacher approval, etc.). In contrast, out-of-school reading is intrinsically guided and connected to individual lives and interests (McKenna, Conradi, Lawrence, Jang, & Meyer, 2012). Lenters (2006)

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argues that schools contribute to this disconnect by ignoring students' reading preferences and by providing students with reading materials that they do not see as relevant to their lives. The fact that students cannot connect the formulized reading assignments found in many classrooms with their own experiences, coupled with students' lack of choice in the classroom, con-

tribute to students' lack of motivation (Guthrie & Davis, 2003).

This tendency to ignore adolescent students' intrinsic desires when considering the reading materials we put in front of them is detrimental for a number of reasons. First, intrinsic reading motivation is linked to higher reading comprehension rates (Wang & Guthrie, 2004). Obviously if students want to read, they are more likely to understand what they are reading. Additionally, students with higher intrinsic motivation to read tend to read around three times as much as students

with lower levels of intrinsic motivation (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). And finally, as Mucherah and Yoder (2008) explain, relying on extrinsic motivators to shape student reading habits in schools is dangerous because "students start expecting rewards for every reading they engage in as opposed to developing an interest in reading for its own sake" (p. 216), which directly conflicts with the goal of creating lifelong readers. Because intrinsic motivation is a vital piece in the puzzle of creating readers, it makes sense that we should encourage its development by exposing students to reading activities that actually increase the chance that they will want to continue reading.

Secondary Students Need More Independent Reading Time

"Leisure reading," as defined by a joint position statement of the International Reading Association, the

Canadian Children's Book Centre, and the National Council of Teachers of English:

. . . [also] known as recreational reading, pleasure reading, free voluntary reading, and independent reading, is independent, self-selected reading of a continuous text for a wide range of personal and social purposes. (International Reading Association, 2014, p. 2)

This definition is based on the understanding that reading for one's own enjoyment is intrinsically motivated. The position statement also goes on to explore and highlight the many benefits of recreational reading (enhanced comprehension, vocabulary development, general knowledge, empathy, self-confidence, reading motivation, etc.) as further support for the practice, encouraging both teachers and policy makers to create time within the course of a school day to implement the practices of leisure reading within schools (International Reading Association, 2014).

A vast body of research directly links increased amounts of reading with increased academic achievement (Mucherah & Yoder, 2008)—motivation, overall reading ability, writing skills, vocabulary, and grammar skills (Krashen, 2004). But despite the resulting professional recommendations for increased reading time in schools, the average amount of in-school reading time has remained at around 15 minutes per day since the 1980s (Brenner, Hiebert, & Tompkins, 2009). When considering my own classroom context and the potential benefits of providing all of my students with more recreational reading time, I knew I couldn't create more hours in the day, but I hoped to "find" additional time by asking for help from my cross-disciplinary team.

Venturing beyond the Borders of My Classroom

Approaching the other two members of my middle school team with the prospect of creating an all-school—6th, 7th, and 8th grades—-independent reading time was a bit daunting. As many of us know, change is not always welcomed, and I knew that what I was going to ask of my team would require flexibility. I also knew that approaching this from the viewpoint of a language arts teacher was not the answer; I would need to illustrate how this change would benefit all of our students and their work in math and science, as well. Despite my apprehension,

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I had a number of other factors working in my favor that I knew would be conducive to implementing this change.

First, I was fortunate enough to be part of a solid team with two other teachers (a math teacher and a science teacher) in a small, rural middle school in the Midwest where we enjoyed a relatively high level of autonomy. By way of context, our school, a designated Title I school, was overwhelmingly populated with students who were economically disadvantaged. And while our overall test scores were not alarming, there were students in our school who struggled in all of their classes; many were reading far below grade level. Moreover, a majority of our students self-identified as non-readers on their beginning-of-the-year reading surveys, and many of them indicated that they never read outside of school. Some of these students were not able to list the title of a book that they had read in recent years, and quite a few shared that they had faked their way through reading (and the required book reports) over the last few school years.

Second, we already had a block of time built into our afternoon schedule in which we could potentially implement a recreational reading time while working with our respective classes. Since we were the only content area teachers in the middle school, our students spent most of their day in our classrooms. Our morning schedule was focused on content area work with each grade-level class (average of 15 students) rotating through our classrooms and spending 70 minutes focused on our particular area (math, science, and language arts). The afternoons were spent with our designated “homeroom.” Each of us was assigned one grade level (6th, 7th, or 8th) as a “homeroom,” and in the afternoons, we were expected to teach grade-level social studies and reading—though the content and scope of our “curriculum” for these classes were very ambiguous. While I had already begun using this “reading block” as a recreational reading time for my 7th-grade students, I knew that in the other classrooms, it had become a time in which students read assigned stories from their grade-level anthology series and answered the subsequent questions. The two other teachers were not completely comfortable teaching reading; they had expressed their reservations before, and they were simply doing the best that they could with a lack of reading instruction training and resources. And so it seemed that this

block of time might be better used as a schoolwide independent reading block in which students could read books of choice.

Finally, my team members’ concerns about standardized testing and the influence that students’ reading abilities had on their content area scores would also work to convince the team that a recreational reading time would potentially benefit everyone. We had previously engaged in a number of conversations centered on standardized testing, and at one point, our math team member shared her belief that the math test scores of her students were a reflection of not only math ability but also the students’ varying reading abilities. Similarly, the science teacher repeatedly shared concerns about the difficulties that many students encountered while reading her content area textbooks. If I could convince these two educators that independent reading time would not only relieve some of the pressure surrounding their reading instruction but also had the potential to increase overall reading scores and benefit the students’ performance in their content area classes, I knew that they would support the change.

So, after extolling the benefits of recreational reading and the potential positive effects that improved reading abilities might have on our students’ content area work, my team was on board. It was agreed that all of our middle school students in grades 6, 7, and 8 would spend 30 minutes each day reading books of their choice. At this point, it is important to note that despite our favorable contextual factors (i.e., small school and small class size), our framework, as well as many of the components that will be outlined, could be implemented in a variety of school settings. Larger schools with larger teams, or even smaller schools with smaller teams, could easily adapt the framework to meet their specific needs. Of course, it is important to remember that simply implementing a shared reading time will not necessarily ensure that students will read or be engaged; it is also necessary to develop procedures to help guide the program.

Our Foundation

We began by establishing common ground about what would be acceptable in our classrooms. Our primary goal was to ensure that all students spent the entire reading block actually engaged in reading. We agreed

that this time was reserved solely for student-choice reading. There would be no assignments, and this period was not to be used as a study hall; the only activity allowed would be silent reading. Our students were permitted to read a variety of material during this time, though the main focus would remain on novels and other chapter books. Occasionally, our students were permitted to read magazine articles and other forms of literature, but our goal was to encourage them to make their way through an entire book.

Tracking student participation. To track student reading habits and keep up to speed on what they

were actually reading, we drew upon Nancie Atwell's (1987) reading workshop suggestions and instituted a reading log (see Appendix A) on which students recorded the title of the book they were reading and the date they finished it. Each student needed a teacher's signature on this tracking sheet when he/she finished, or abandoned, a book. Students would then choose another book and add the title to their logs, so at any given time, we could review these logs and know exactly what our students should be reading in class. This helped to address accountability and, for the most part, helped

prevent students from jumping from book to book or chronically forgetting their books at home.

A consistent grading system. The next hurdle we faced was determining how we, as a group, would assign reading grades during this time. We settled on the contract-based system that I had already implemented during my 7th-grade class's independent reading time. We gave students a contract (see Appendix B) that outlined exactly how independent reading time should look (e.g., silent reading, weekly progress in books, each student comes prepared with a book, etc.). On Monday, our students would record the title and page number of the books they were reading. Then on

Thursday, they would record the page numbers again and write one-sentence summaries of what they read/accomplished during that week. This contract system allowed us to quickly assign grades each week and could easily be adapted to accommodate larger class sizes.

We also incorporated self-assessment into our contract-based system. Students assigned themselves a grade based on their participation and actions during reading time each week. Each teacher made notes throughout the week recording student behaviors and participation. The format of these notes varied, as we each used a different method: one teacher only noted problem behaviors; another took more detailed notes on behaviors and progress; and I simply placed a + or - sign next to each student's name in my grade book every day. The students in my classroom quickly learned that if they were off task and required redirection more than once, this behavior would result in a minus for the day, which would affect their weekly grade.

We also tried to converse briefly with each student every week about what they were reading. By limiting these conversations to five minutes, we could easily meet with up to five students in one class period. At the end of the week, each of us was able to quickly review the contracts and meet with any students whose own weekly assigned grade deviated from what we had observed. These contracts not only placed the responsibility of grading on the students, but they also freed us from having to constantly police our students and provided a system for grading that didn't require additional assignments that might impede the goal of simply reading for pleasure.

Access to books. In addition to having guiding procedures in place, it was crucial that we provide students access to books that they wanted to read. Even though we had implemented a recreational reading time, I continued to use the same schedule that I had previously used in my own classroom: three days focused on writing and one day focused on reading. It was during the weekly reading workshop in my own classroom that each class participated in activities that exposed them to new books of interest. The students kept track of the books they wanted to read. Many times, when I obtained new books for our extensive classroom library, the students participated in a "book pass" activity in which they read a few pages of each

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of the books and kept track of the texts they might like to read. This activity allowed them to explore books outside of what they normally would choose and forced them to look beyond the covers.

We also engaged in “book talks” during which students and I would briefly discuss with the class the books we were excited about. Students would then add titles of interest to their “Books I Want to Read” sheets. When they finished a book and a teacher signed off on it, the students were allowed to travel to my classroom and peruse the classroom library for their next book. Only on rare occasions were we faced with the “I don’t know what to read” dilemma, and this process provided us with the structure to direct students to their own lists to find their next book. It also helped ensure that students were finding books they liked and were interested in from the beginning. It helped that I was privy to the books students were reading and knew what they liked to read, enabling me to guide their choices as needed. This removed pressure from the other teachers who, self-admittedly, did not have much knowledge of young adult literature, though as our reading time advanced, they began to join in on the reading time.

Challenges

The biggest challenge that I faced while championing this reading time was the responsibility I felt for its success. I knew students needed to buy into the idea if this was going to work because I couldn’t be in three different classrooms at once. I needed to trust in my team members and avoid overstepping boundaries in their classrooms. One way I kept my pulse on student reading was by personally discussing books in conferences with my students. Each week during our reading workshop, I would conference with each student briefly, and we would talk about what they were reading, their progress, and what was happening in their books (see Appendix C). We would also discuss the students’ favorite aspects of the books and similar books they might enjoy. I kept many detailed notes on each student’s interests and reading habits.

As a team, the biggest challenge we faced was the scrutiny from parents (and even other teachers) regarding classroom instructional time that was spent allowing students to “just” read. Some interpreted recreational reading time as a “time-out” class in which the teacher could simply relax and not work. While I

had shared my vision with the principal early on, and he was on board, I initially found it difficult to justify this so-called downtime to others. In fact, each team member often found herself on the defensive. One way we faced this problem was to arm ourselves with research extolling the benefits of recreational reading (see Appendix D). Later, as we collected data and shared success stories, the objections and questions became less frequent.

Evidence of Collaborative Success

To examine whether or not our efforts were successful, we employed a relatively simple data collection

process. Every quarter, students participated in the required testing regimen (Renaissance Place STAR and Curriculum-Based-Measurement), and at the end of the year, they completed a reading survey. In this anonymous survey, we asked students if they felt they were becoming better readers. (Representative responses are included in this discussion in italics.) When I conferenced individually

with students about their scores, we also talked about what they had been reading, how often they were reading, and how their reading habits may or may not have influenced their scores. The students were surprisingly honest and genuinely interested in their test scores. We ended each conference with setting a reasonable goal (e.g., read at home three nights a week; finish at least one book this quarter; improve by half a grade level) and discussed strategies that might help the student reach that goal (e.g., reading every night before bed, reading higher level books, exploring different genres).

I shared these goals and students’ reading progresses with the rest of the team, and these student conferences formed the foundation for our student-led parent/teacher conferences. Students were able to share their own reading scores and progress with their parents—explaining their growth and what they were doing to work toward their goals. Students could

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articulate specific gains in reading fluency (“*I can read a lot faster now.*” “*I have gone from reading 125 words a minute to being able to read 160 words per minute.*” “*I am finishing books a lot faster now than I did before.*”), and the results showed that, overwhelmingly, all of our students were experiencing growth when it came to their reading scores. In fact, students were aware of their own growth (“*On my STAR test scores,*

In fact, almost all of our students identified themselves as readers on the end-of-the-year reading survey.

I went from a 7th-grade level to a 12th-grade level.” “*I’ve always just been at my grade level, and this year I have jumped like 3 grade levels!*”), thus increasing their self-efficacy for reading (“*I am reading harder books than last year.*” “*I am making progress in reading.*” “*I am becoming a way better reader.*” “*Since 2nd or*

3rd grade I have barely been able to finish a book.”).

Of course, this growth could have been the result of a variety of different factors, but there was no arguing with the fact that many students were changing their views and outlooks on reading. Again, representative comments from the survey capture their increased volume of reading: “*I do read a lot more than I used to.*” “*I have been reading a lot of new and interesting stuff, also I have been reading a lot more.*” “*I am beginning to like a different type of book.*” “*I have read different genres and have learned some new words.*” In fact, almost all of our students identified themselves as readers on the end-of-the-year reading survey. This was a significant shift from the reading surveys they completed at the beginning of the year. As part of the survey, students were asked to respond to the question, “Do you feel you are becoming a better reader? Why or why not?” All but two students responded affirmatively. Students’ responses indicated increased enjoyment in reading (“*I do feel that I am a better reader because I read more fluently, I comprehend better, and I LOVE reading more and more each day.*” “*I enjoy more things, I have learned more things, so I have been reading different types of things.*”). Additionally, each student could list at least two books that he/she had read throughout the year (“*I’ve read Jane Eyre and Pride and Prejudice [sic] and those are hard books.*”)—even the students who previously had

not finished a book in a number of years (“*Ever since about second or third grade, I have barely been able to finish a book!!!*”).

Finally, the biggest increase in scores and buy-in levels occurred with students who could have been classified as struggling or reluctant readers:

Those who do not have basic conceptual knowledge in history, mathematics, science, or other academic domains; those who do not have the requisite strategies to cope with the increasingly abstract concepts or complex content; those whose self-concept as a reader is based on perceptions of reading as schoolish; and those who have no heart to read or the will to engage—all belong to the ranks of the struggling adolescent reader. (Alexander & Fox, 2011, p. 170)

Many of these struggling students realized that it wasn’t the act of reading that they hated; instead, they discovered that reading could be enjoyable if they could read what interested them. (“*I think I am becoming a better reader because my ckmphrensions [sic] gone up and I am beginning to like a different type of book.*” “*I’m reading books I usually wouldn’t.*”)

This progress with struggling students was epitomized in one particular student, a funny and personable 7th-grade boy who began the year reading at a third-grade level and who would, at any given chance, proclaim to the world how much he hated reading. He started the year, reluctantly, working his way through *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (Kinney, 2007). When we conferenced at the end of the first quarter, I discovered that although he was resistant to reading, he *really* wanted to read at his grade level, and he was very self-conscious about his reading ability. So we focused on setting reasonable goals, and it actually became my mission to try and find books that he could read and enjoy. And then I came across a text that appealed to a number of adolescent boys in my classroom: *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie (2007). This book helped to transform this student’s attitude towards reading. As he read, there were times he actually laughed out loud, clearly enjoying himself and engaging fully, intrinsically, with the book. While I would love to report that he jumped four grade levels in reading that year, that is not what happened. Instead, he read a few books repeatedly, and we still struggled to find books that fully engaged him, but by the end of the year (according to a number of assessments), he was only about one and a half grade-levels behind his peers. And while, in a perfect

world, every student would be reading at grade level, in this case, seeing his attitude toward reading change completely was a major success for me.

Teachers Partnering to Advance Literacy

The implementation of independent reading is overlooked in many schools for a variety of reasons. At this point in our educational landscape, time that is spent allowing students to read at their leisure is viewed as time that could be better spent prepping for high-stakes tests or closely reading informational texts. Some of the blame for this lack of implementation may also result from policies developed in response to the National Reading Panel report (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). This influential report found no research-based evidence (according to its inclusion criteria) demonstrating a positive effect of silent reading on reading skills and fluency. And yet, as mentioned previously, there is an extensive amount of evidence extolling the benefits of independent reading. This suggests that these benefits, along with the influence of independent reading on intrinsic motivation and the process and usefulness of encouraging recreational reading in general, all need to be considered and examined more closely.

Yet independent reading is not even on the radar of literacy professionals. In 2014's "What's Hot & What's Not" list of topics published by the International Reading Association, independent reading did not even make the list (Cassidy & Grote-Garcia). Instead, the list was populated with topics such as close reading and text complexity. In addition, motivation/engagement was rated as "not hot," though the respondents felt it "should be hot" (Cassidy & Grote-Garcia, 2014). When faced with this information, it seems that although the link between motivation and recreational reading should not be ignored, it obviously is not valued. With the current focus on increasing the rigor of texts to meet the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010), it becomes increasingly important for students to be motivated and engaged in the reading process to meet the challenges they face. Balancing these instructional experiences with a focus on independent reading might increase motivation and engagement.

In addition to exploring the instructional practices that hinder reading motivation, Ivey and Broaddus (2001) also shed light on the themes that produce positive experiences with literature, including: *responsive teachers* who support literary habits, understand students, and respect their choices while guiding them toward meaningful experiences; *student ownership*, which can be interpreted as allowing student choice and honoring students' own decisions; and *programs that connect* with students' "out of school issues and personal interests" (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001, p. 254). By implementing an all-school independent reading time, our team of teachers was able to touch on all of these themes. And because this practice extended beyond the language arts classroom, our students were exposed to content area teachers who were willing to emphasize the importance of reading, thus demonstrating the value of reading beyond the reach of a singular discipline.

This program was a success, and we, as a team, were approached on more than one occasion by parents who were amazed by the transformations that they saw in their own children as readers. Our students, collectively, were talking about books with anyone who would listen, and they became excited about literature and sharing their experiences. All of this was accomplished by working together to create space and opportunity for our students to freely make their own choices and follow their own interests to explore what they *wanted* to read.

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Appendix A: Reading Log

Name: _____

BOOKS I'VE READ

Title	Author	Date Started	Date Finished/ Abandoned	Teacher Initials
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				

Appendix B: Reading Contract

I want to earn a(n) _____, and I understand that I must meet all the requirements in order to achieve that grade. I understand all the requirements and will do my best to achieve my intended goal.

<p>A: I will ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be on task in class (book out and reading as soon as class starts). • Maintain my reading log. • Read at least one book this quarter and share a review with the class. • Make weekly progress in my book. • Interact respectfully with other students and my teacher. 	<p>B: I will ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be on task most of the time. • Keep my reading log updated. • Read at least one book this quarter and write a review. • Make weekly progress in my book. • Interact respectfully with other students and my teacher.
<p>C: I will ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be on task most of the time • Occasionally update my reading log. • Make weekly progress in my book. • Interact respectfully with other students and my teacher most of the time. 	<p>D: I will ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggle to be on task. • Likely forget to update my reading log. • Not stick with a book and not come close to finishing any books. • Make weekly progress in my book. • Struggle with respect.
<p>F: I did not read much of the time, I did not finish a book, and my reading log is not up to date.</p>	

Your Name: _____ Sign Here: _____

	Mon.	Thurs.	Grade you think you deserve this week and why:
Week 1			
Week 2			
Week 3			
Week 4			
Week 5			
Week 6			

Appendix C: Teacher-Student Conferencing Guide

Student Name	Week 1: Date/Book/Progress	Week 2: Date/Book/Progress	Week 3: Date/Book/Progress
Student 1	9/20: <i>Looking for Alaska</i> (Green, 2005), p. 40. Asked for brief summary; likes the voice of the main character (sarcastic, witty). Discussed diary entry format including “BEFORE” section title; she is not sure what that means but assumes a plot-changing event and guesses that Miles may get kicked out of school.	9/27: Same book, p. 200. Nearly done; read very fast. LOVED. Talked about why author would write in the format he did. Discussed possibly reading another John Green book when finished— <i>An Abundance of Katherines</i> (Green, 2006) or maybe <i>Eleanor & Park</i> (Rowell, 2013)?	
Student 2	9/21: <i>The Things They Carried</i> (O’Brien, 1990), p. 30. Loves military book so likes so far. A little unsure about short story format. Check back and ensure he is following.	9/28: Same book, p. 100. Has a good handle on format now. Summarized favorite story.	
Student 3	9/21: <i>Middle School: The Worst Years of My Life</i> (Patterson & Tebbetts, 2011), p. 30. Struggling to get into the book. Likes the humor, but feels it is a bit childish. Check library for other options (low readability—high interest).	9/28: Same book, p. 60. Wants to abandon; can’t really get into it. Seems too childish, but wants some humor. Chose a few for him to look at and choose from. He checked out <i>Holes</i> (Sachar, 1998) at the end of class.	

Appendix D: Research to Support Independent Reading Time

Block, C. C., & Mangieri, J. N. (2002). Recreational reading: 20 years later. *The Reading Teacher*, 55, 572–580.

- “. . . Students who spent more time in recreational reading activities: a) scored higher on comprehension tests in grades 2, 4, 8, and 12; b) had significantly higher grade point averages; and c) developed more sophisticated writing styles than peers who did not engage in recreational reading” (p. 572).
- “Moreover, Smith and Joyner (1990) reported that students who engaged in ongoing recreational literacy activities during school hours read books out of school more frequently and significantly increased their independent reading levels on informal reading inventories. Even when elementary students read for only 15 minutes a day, they significantly increased their reading abilities” (p. 573).

Ivey, G., & Broaddus, K. (2001). Just plain reading: A survey of what makes students want to read in middle school classrooms. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 36, 350–377.

- “. . . Adolescent students who participate in programs that connect literacy with real-life out-of-school issues and personal interests indicate more positive feelings about reading and writing in school” (p. 354).

Krashen, S. (2008). Free voluntary reading: Still a great idea. *CEDER Yearbook*, 1–11.

- “In experimental studies, students who participate in ‘sustained silent reading’ consistently outperform those in traditional classes” (p. 2).

Strommen, L. T., & Mates, B. F. (2004). Learning to love reading: Interviews with older children and teens. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 48, 188–200.

- “The preponderance of research findings suggest that few children, skilled readers or not, choose to devote their leisure time to reading” (p. 188).
- “Krashen concluded that children who frequently read for pleasure ‘will become adequate readers, acquire a large vocabulary, develop the ability to understand and use complex grammatical constructions, develop a good writing style, and become good (but not necessarily perfect) spellers. Although free voluntary reading alone will not ensure attainment of the highest levels of literacy, it will at least ensure an acceptable level (p. 84).’ Those who do not develop the habit of reading for pleasure may have ‘a very difficult time reading and writing at a level high enough to deal with the demands of today’s world (p. x)’” (p.188).