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The Effects of Social Reading Practices on Reading Achievement Scores and Attitudes  
towards Reading among High School Students

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### Abstract

This study examined the influence of socially based reading instruction on high school students' reading comprehension and attitudes towards reading. Sixty-one high school students were divided into two groups by grade level and given different reading instruction for six weeks. The ninth grade treatment group's (N=33) instruction was based on *Literature Circles*, and the tenth grade control group's (N=28) instruction on *Independent Reading*. Data for this mixed method study were collected from a reading aptitude measure and a written survey. Results indicated no significant difference in the reading comprehension or attitudes towards reading between the groups; however, significant findings among answers to the written survey were revealed within the two groups. While this study may have implications for all high school reading teachers, it is one of the first of its kind to focus on reading instruction in Seventh Day Adventist high schools.

*Keywords:* independent reading, literature circles, cooperative learning, secondary reading instruction

### **Review of Literature**

Teachers tend to blame technology, media, or high stakes testing for the poor reading habits currently increasing among students. While these cultural and educational influences do affect reading habits, schools and teachers play a much more significant role in influencing reading habits with the method of instruction they use to teach reading (Gilmore, 2011). The way teachers often structure reading programs and instruction in their classrooms can tragically discourage students from reading (Lee, 2011). Authors and researchers on the forefront of reading instruction are increasingly reaching a consensus about the components necessary for an effective reading instruction method. One of these components is using instructional methods that facilitate a high volume of time spent independently reading while providing access to a large number of high interest books students are actually able to read (Allington, 2011; Allington, 2012; Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985; Gallagher, 2009; Krashen, 2004; Allington, 2011; Allington, 2012; Cone, 1994; Krashen, 2004). In addition, reading programs should allow students to be given choices about what they will read and be provided with instruction that will foster intrinsic motivation and lead to enjoyment of reading (Fisher & Ivey, 2007; Gallagher, 2009; Krashen, 2004; Allington, 2012; Cone, 1994; Daniels & Bizar, 1998; Morgan & Wagner, 2013).

Several instructional methods exist that include these necessary components, but some methods focus so heavily on one or two of the needed components that the other needed components are ignored. Three reading theories that incorporate a balanced concentration of the above components of a quality reading program are discussed in

detail, analyzed for their ability to meet student needs, and evaluated in the context of Adventist education.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Many educators have experienced the growing fear that reading habits are at risk for high school aged students. One study done by the National Endowment for the Arts (2007) confirms that educators should be concerned about the current trend of reading habits and the reading abilities of teen students. The report of this study shared worrisome statistics:

- Less than 1/3 of 13-year-olds can be classified as “daily readers.”
- Over a period of 20 years, the percentage of 17-year-olds who do not read for pleasure has doubled, even though the amount of school related reading they do has not changed.
- Those in the age group of 15 to 24-year-olds spend 60% less time in voluntarily reading than the average American.
- Almost 1/2 of 18 to 24-year-olds do not read books for pleasure.

Additionally, this study reported that 58% of 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders are often consuming other forms of media while reading, which alludes to another concern of educators: some aspects of modern technology can create habits that threaten to make analytical reading an at risk ability (Bauerlein, 2011).

Educators have access to a body of research about pedagogical methods that can inform effective reading instruction despite these modern challenges, but very little research has been done to address how teachers in Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) schools can apply these pedagogical methods in the unique setting of Adventist education. The nature of research-based reading programs that encourage high levels of social interaction between students and give students total freedom to select the texts they read can be

problematic for Adventist teachers because literature study is a sensitive topic within the Adventist community. The diverse beliefs about what constitutes appropriate literature among members of the Adventist community has created a culture of caution and careful regulation in many Adventist schools to avoid teaching literature that may offend the values of individual students or their families. This may cause Adventist teachers to feel that they must choose to uphold the values of their school and their faith or choose to implement effective reading instruction in their classrooms.

An Adventist teacher who searches *The Journal of Adventist Education* for guidance on the topic of reading instruction will quickly discover a large gap in the literature. Several articles touch on topics related to reading instruction, such as reading strategies, how to expand reading resources, or how to select literature that is appropriate in the Adventist setting, but most articles do not address reading instruction explicitly. The majority of articles that do address reading instruction are written for teachers of the K-8 grade levels with a highly concentrated focus on the primary and elementary years. A few articles address reading instruction for the college level, but almost none of the articles specifically target reading at the high school level. Of all these articles, only two focus on topics that are currently being widely studied in the field of reading instruction for students in middle school grades or above: independent reading, literature circles, and the use of small group cooperative learning. With few exceptions, the articles on the topic of reading are not based on extensive research and do not include research by foundational authors in the field of reading instruction.

If this deficiency in research about reading instruction for Adventist teachers, especially for high school teachers, is not addressed, Adventist schools are at risk of

producing inadequately educated students who may not be able to deeply analyze or comprehend a complex text. When one considers the complexity of the Bible as a text, this becomes a sobering problem that is directly in conflict with the mission and purpose of Adventist Education.

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence on students' reading comprehension and overall enjoyment of reading when students participated in a reading program based on the theories of independent reading, literature circles, and cooperative learning. This study also analyzed the effectiveness of this type of program within the context of Adventist education and sought to inform Adventist teachers about research based instruction that can benefit students and uphold Adventist values at the same time. The study was based on the question: How does a socially focused reading program, based on research about effective reading instruction, influence students' ability to read and their attitudes towards reading?

### **Independent Reading**

Free Voluntary Reading (FVR) can be defined as a reading practice meant to imitate the real-to-life, natural process of reading. Students read because they want to, without assessments and with the freedom to stop reading their book if they do not like it and choose a different one (Krashen, 2004). For the purpose of this study, the term "independent reading" will be used synonymously with the term "free voluntary reading." Reading programs based on the theory of independent reading usually require students to dedicate fifteen to thirty minutes of time per class period to read for pleasure (Lee, 2011). Different variations of independent reading programs include Self-Selected Reading, where students participate in independent reading while teachers hold reading conferences with

students about what has been read. Also included is Sustained Silent Reading (SSR), where students and teachers participate in independent reading together for short periods of time each class period or each day (Krashen, 2004). Regardless of the type of independent reading program used, two integral qualities of independent reading are time spent reading and student choice of text (Fisher, 2004).

**Time spent reading.** Students who spend large amounts of time reading for pleasure also experience improvements in the areas of reading comprehension, vocabulary, and writing (Krashen, 2004), and there is a strong correlation between other academic achievement and voluntary reading (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007). Allington (2012) emphasizes that this correlation works in both a negative and positive direction: low achieving students typically read three times less than their higher achieving peers each week. Additionally, Krashen (2004) found that spending time reading for pleasure not only helps the reading and language skills of traditional students improve, but it also helps English Language Learners (ELL) develop beyond conversational skills to skills that can be used for more rigorous academic purposes, such as literature study, at a quicker pace.

How often and how long should students participate in independent reading to receive a benefit? Early research indicates that students need to read for at least two hours a week by the end of third or fourth grade (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985). More current research asserts that students may optimally need up to one and a half to two and a half hours of dedicated, in-class reading time during school each day (Allington, 2012). In reality, the time teachers generally give students to read for an independent reading program can widely vary. However, 15-30 minutes per day, or per class period, is a good starting place that can still provide benefits to the students (Lee, 2011).



**Choice of texts to read.** In order for students to commit to dedicating large quantities of time to reading, they must be able to read texts they will enjoy. Engagement is one of the largest factors that influence student motivation to read, and students who lack power and input in decisions about their education can experience demotivation (Miller, 2012). Giving students choice over the texts they read increases the likelihood that they will engage in the texts and therefore be more motivated to read the texts (Cambourne, 1995). Since choice can foster intrinsic motivation, students are more likely to find personal enjoyment in reading, which can in turn encourage more time spent reading both inside and outside of the classroom (Fisher & Ivey, 2007; Krashen, 2004),

For students to have choice, they must have access to a wide selection of high interest texts. This may mean that teachers and schools need to increase the volume and variety of books in classroom and school libraries. Many students may not have the means to access interesting books at home or outside of the school setting; therefore, their choices can be greatly limited if their school or classroom libraries do not offer enough diverse, engaging texts (Allington, 2011; Gallagher, 2009).

Fisher and Ivey (2007) argue that an important benefit of allowing students to choose their own texts is that students are given the freedom to choose a text difficulty within their comfort level. Teachers may fear that this will create a scenario where students do not challenge themselves or do not learn to master complex texts. However, the alternative is that students often do not read the texts at all when they are given texts above their difficulty level, and if they do read them, they do not read them with meaningful depth. Students can increase their reading abilities by reading more books on their comfort level and moving on to more complex texts when they are ready. For

struggling readers, this is vital as they generally do not show improvement when they try to read texts that are too difficult for them (Fisher & Ivey, 2007).

The most common alternative to allowing students to select the texts they read is for the teacher to assign a single text to the entire class. Whole class texts are problematic because no single text exists that can attend to the diverse needs, interests, and reading levels represented in a classroom (Miller, 2012). Eventually resulting in limiting the variety and quantity of texts students read in addition to the depth at which they read the texts (Fisher & Ivey, 2007). Teachers often assume that choosing predominantly whole classroom texts better helps them meet Language Arts standards, but this is not always the case, and it often shifts the focus of learning away from the student (Fisher & Ivey, 2007). Furthermore, respectable selections of literature for whole class texts are frequently based on a list from a 1928 study in which librarians rated the “literary merits” of various books. Over time, this original list of books has become a self-propagating, out-of-date canon of literature that English teachers can be reluctant to deviate from (Gilmore, 2011).

**Problems with independent reading.** Despite the positive relationship between time spent reading for pleasure and academic achievement, independent reading programs are rarely used in high school classrooms. Because of this, students tragically learn to put aside the practice of reading for pleasure in favor of trying to complete other assignments for school, and they eventually lose touch with the satisfaction that can come from reading (Atwell, 2007). One reason teachers are reluctant to use independent reading is that they are afraid to give up instructional time to allow time for reading. Miller (2012) suggests that teachers can realistically create time for reading by streamlining activities such as passing out papers, eliminating some types of classroom assignments like brief sentence

editing or grammar and vocabulary worksheets. He argues that the academic benefit of fifteen minutes of reading can far outweigh the benefits of such activities.

A valid criticism of independent reading is the effects of students not taking assessments that hold them accountable to finish a book or complete a task. As a result of this, teachers cannot be sure that students are actually spending time reading, and since spending time reading is the key factor that makes this method effective, this can become a self-defeating problem (Lee, 2011). One suggested solution is for teachers to use alternative types of assessments that are markedly different than the traditional book report or comprehension quiz assessments. Creative assessments that help students express their excitement about books they have read, such as performing a reader's theater or creating a poster promoting a book, are acceptable assessments that create some accountability in a nonthreatening way for students (Fisher, 2004; Lee, 2011).

Another concern of teachers is that there seems to be conflicting research about the effective nature of independent reading programs. A study by the National Reading Panel that reported negative results about using SSR is widely shared to discourage teachers from independent reading programs. However, several authors challenge this study for flaws such as testing SSR for inadequate durations, not including important SSR studies for evaluation, and not focusing on the topics of motivation or student engagement (Lee, 2011). Research like this, examples of poorly implemented independent reading programs, and a lack of staff training can mislead teachers to think that independent reading is ineffective when, in actuality, it is being implemented ineffectively. Pruzinsky (2014) reiterates that independent reading programs must be carefully, intentionally planned programs with a deep and clear focus, not simply announcing to students "get a book and

read now.” To achieve this focus and intentionality, teachers should frequently conference with individual students for three to five minutes during reading time. These conferences should be structured and focused yet flow like a natural conversation. Conferencing with students allows teachers to give guidance and discuss the literacy focuses students should be applying to their texts, gives teachers an opportunity to push students in a positive direction when they are not challenging themselves, demonstrates that teachers care about what their students are reading, and can act as a form of assessment since it is difficult for students to discuss books that they have not read (Anderson, 2000; Pruzinsky, 2014).

A flaw in the independent reading model is that it does not foster strong social practices for reading. Students can discuss what they are reading with their teacher in conferences, but they are missing social interactions with their peers based on their reading experiences. This is a substantial flaw because positive pressure from peers and recommendations from peers have a significantly larger influence on students’ motivation and likelihood to read texts than adult recommendations (Krashen, 2004).

### **Cooperative Learning and Social Reading Practices**

Using a conceptual approach to cooperative learning (Johnson & Johnson, 1994) during reading instruction is a powerful way to meet students’ social needs. Over nine hundred studies validate the effectiveness of using cooperative learning methods over competitive or individualistic methods for general education (Johnson, Johnson, & Stanne, 2000). The value of cooperative learning for the English classroom was initially explored with the creation of Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC), a technique applying cooperative learning principles to literacy and English skills (Kagan, 1994). This single technique is no longer the only cooperative learning method being studied for

Language Arts use. There is an emerging body of research that documents the use of cooperative learning methods for reading and literacy instruction among English as Foreign Language Learners (EFL) in many Eastern and Middle Eastern countries. One study of Iranian EFL learners showed that students had positive attitudes towards using cooperative learning methods for reading instruction (Farzaneh & Nejadansari, 2014), an important factor in student engagement and motivation. Another study in Pakistani schools found a significant growth in reading comprehension skills of students who received reading instruction with cooperative learning methods (Khan & Ahmad, 2014).

Although cooperative learning methods are beginning to be studied more for their ability to improve literacy skills, the value of using cooperative learning for reading instruction is the social community it can create. Learning that incorporates a “mandatory social dimension” is usually successful (Cambourne, 1995). The social needs of students participating in independent reading programs can be addressed by incorporating cooperative learning methods. The apparent inactivity of reading silently and alone can create an “outsider” status for reluctant readers who find the isolation of reading this way an unnatural task that goes against their social instincts. This can especially affect boys who enjoy being active or working at a task (Newkirk, 2002) and who are not likely to read if they are not given time to read during class (Jones, 2006).

Social reading communities could create positive peer pressure for reluctant readers because non-reading habits exclude them from the community. Not only can nurturing communities that highly support and encourage reading draw in those who do not naturally identify as readers, but they can also inspire a love of reading (Sicherman, 1989). Communities like this are integral to fostering the type of engagement that

encourages students to form a life-long commitment to reading, not just enjoyment of reading in the moment, and classes that facilitate this type of commitment are classes that truly have long term value (Addington, 2001). When reading communities are made up of peers, students are likely to encourage other students to read books that they have enjoyed in the past, which also increases student engagement (Cone, 1994). Participating in group discussions as part of a reading community exposes students to differing perspectives and cultural interpretations that help them view the content of texts as connected to significant events and discussions in the real world, an important need for students who do not naturally enjoy reading (Graff, 1994).

**Problems with cooperative learning.** Splitting students into cooperative learning groups to read together or discuss literature can fulfill students' need for community and social interactions while reading, a task that students may incorrectly feel is a non-social activity. However, this method does not encourage the teacher-student reading conferences that were a valuable part of the independent reading method, leaving a gap in an important area of instructional mentorship and guidance the teacher can offer to readers. Additionally, the cooperative learning method does not place a heavy emphasis on setting aside dedicated time for students to read individually, an important factor in the success of a reading program.

### **Literature Circles**

Daniels and Bizar (1998) define literature circles as “a sophisticated fusion of collaborative learning with independent reading, in the framework of reader-response theory.” Literature circles combine the strengths of independent reading and cooperative learning methods while also addressing many of the weaknesses of these individual

approaches. Daniels (1994) and Daniels and Bizar (1998) outline the structure of literature circles. Students are placed in small groups with students who chose to read the same text. Students plan their reading assignments within a teacher directed deadline and spend time reading individually as well as time meeting in their groups to discuss the text. Group discussions are open ended and student directed, but students select “reading roles” with corresponding written or illustrated notes to guide their independent reading as well as help them focus their group discussions. These roles rotate for each group meeting so students are exposed to a variety of ways to interpret and view texts. The teacher fills a facilitator role with carefully chosen assessments that only test the desired reading practices and do not become a burden to the students.

Although a large majority of the research about literature circles is conducted at the middle school level, this method was designed to be applicable to high school students as well. Participating in literature circles has many benefits for students because this method naturally allows for differentiation (Daniels, 1994). Students in different age groups, students who learned traditionally, and students who learn nontraditionally have showed improvements in reading comprehension and attitudes towards reading when they participated in literature circles that were facilitated well and involved appropriate accommodations when needed (Daniels, 1994; Daniels, 2006). Literature circles also help struggling readers and appeal to students who can read well but do not enjoy reading (Wright, 2006).

Participating in literature circles helps students to slow down the reading process to make deep reflection, divergent thinking, and self-reflection a possibility. Through group discussions, students also are exposed to a positive tension between focusing on the

information in the text and the aesthetics of the text as well as a tension between their own personal responses and critical responses to the text (Sanacore, 2013). Since the discussions are student lead and open-ended in nature, students are given the opportunity to use their own insights to deeply analyze texts and learn how to implement reading as an intentionally strategic, cognitive process (Brabham & Villaume, 2000; Daniels, 1994). The community created in group discussions engenders engagement, responsibility, and positive peer pressure (Daniels, 2006) as well as presenting students with discussion opportunities that can help them work through underdeveloped knowledge and skills (Cambourne, 1995). Graff (1994) affirms that discussion opportunities like this are beneficial for students because students' ability to read well is tied to their ability to discuss what they have read. Exposing them to conflict, multiple perspectives, and various interpretations will help them engage in discussions that assist them in learning to speak well about what they have read.

**Problems with literature circles.** As with the previously discussed reading instruction methods, literature circles need to be intentionally and carefully facilitated by the teacher to yield positive results. Johnston, Ivey, and Falkner (2012) caution that the way in which teachers facilitate group discussions and the language used to discuss books must be very carefully chosen. Students should be directed to share what they think about texts and the processes that led to their insights and positive reading habits. Discussions that focus on "correct" answers to check for comprehension or reading completion can discourage students from becoming independent thinkers and forming questions or reflections of their own. Well facilitated discussions will help students use each other as



resources of learning and create a learning community based on positive social interactions.

Literature circles capture most of the best qualities of independent reading and cooperative learning, and this method is continually being improved to better meet students' needs, but there are still two significant areas of weakness: explicit social skills instruction and teacher involvement. Students have well defined roles as readers and are guided to strongly connect with a reading community through discussion in literature circles, but the positive emphasis on social roles that are fostered with cooperative learning methods is deemphasized. Authors are now encouraging teachers to remedy this by more explicitly developing the communication and social skills of students through written and verbal exercises (Daniels, 2006; Harvey & Daniels, 2015). With the high level of social involvement among students and the focus on student led groups, the role of the teacher as a participant and mentor is also deemphasized in literature circles. The brief student-teacher conferencing suggested as a compliment to the independent reading method could be a valuable tool for teachers to use in conjunction with literature circles to give teachers a more active role. This type of conferencing would not take away from positive social interactions between students, but it would allow the teacher a chance to give students the one-on-one attention they may need.

### **Summary**

A reading program that can combine the independent reading, cooperative learning, and literature circle methods to address the strengths and the weaknesses of each student, would greatly benefit students in reading skills as well as other academic areas. Students need a program that facilitates a slowed down, reflective process of reading to be able to

decipher complex texts, the biggest factor influencing the college-readiness gap in the area of reading (Bauerlein, 2011). In an article detailing the skills Adventist academy students need to develop to be prepared for college, reading was an important area of concern. Based on a survey done by Martha McCarthy and George Kuh, only two percent of high school seniors read for eleven hours or more a week because of reading assignments in school, an amount that will disadvantage their preparation for college (Osborn, Bietz, & Geraty, 2007). Additionally, one author cautions that making choices about what to read for our students can create “weak individuals” that have been robbed of the skills needed to enable them to make good choices on their own in the future. The best thing that teachers can do for students is to learn to make thoughtful, principle-based decisions about reading choices and then teach students to do the same (Oliver, 2001). There is a great need for Adventist high school teachers to begin using and researching research-based reading instruction methods in their classrooms if they intend to prepare their students for college, careers, and important decision making habits.

### **Focus, Hypotheses, & Research Question**

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence on students’ reading comprehension and overall enjoyment of reading when students participated in a reading program based on the theories of independent reading, literature circles, and cooperative learning. The quantitative portion of the study tested the following null hypotheses:

1. There is no significant difference between the reading comprehension for students who participate in a socially focused independent reading program and students who participate in a similar program without the social component.
2. There is no significant difference between attitudes towards reading for students who participate in a socially focused independent reading program and students who participate in a similar program without the social component.

The qualitative portion of the study explored the research question: Does the instructional method used to teach reading in high school English classrooms influence the students' attitudes towards reading and their motivation to read?

## **Methodology**

### **Location & Population**

The high school where the study took place is a private, Adventist boarding school associated with a self-supporting corporation which provides funding for the school. Because the high school is a boarding school, participants were a mix of both students who lived in the campus dorms and students who commuted from local homes. This school is located in a rural area of western North Carolina in a community of predominantly middle to upper level socio-economic status although many students who attend the school come from quite diverse socio-economic backgrounds and qualify for substantial student aid.

The sample for the study was the ninth and tenth grade English students from study site high school. Sample size was 61 participants with 28 participants (45.9%) in the tenth grade control group and 33 participants (54.1%) in the ninth grade treatment group.

Of the 61 participants, 45.9% (n=28) were male, and 54.1% (n=33) were female. A slight range of ages was represented among the participants: 45.9% (n=28) were 14 years old, 36.1% (n=22) were 15 years old, 16.4% (n=10) were 16 years old, and only 1.6% (n=1) was 17 years old. A few diverse ethnic backgrounds were also represented. The largest ethnic group represented was Non-Hispanic White participants who made up 57.4% (n=35) of the sample. The next largest ethnic groups were Hispanic/Latino participants, 19.7% (n=12) of the population, Black/African American participants, 11.5% (n=7) of the population, and Asian/Asian American participants, 8.2% (n=5) of the population. Only two

participants identified with other ethnic backgrounds. One identified as American Indian (1.6%), and one identified as Middle Eastern (1.6%).

Participants were not offered any incentive to participate in this study other than the opportunity to be given a voice in the evaluation of reading instruction methods used in their English classes.

### **Research Design**

A mixed method research study that included a quasi-experiment was conducted. There were three variables in this study: one independent and two dependent. The independent variable was the instructional reading program method that students were exposed to, and this variable had two levels: a reading program that incorporated independent reading with a social focus and a similar reading program without the social focus. The two dependent variables were achievement scores on the Reading portion of the ACT ASPIRE test and ratings of attitudes towards reading on the “Survey of Reading Attitudes.”

In addition to whole class literature studied, the reading program without a social component included the following activities:

- Students were given 15 minutes of time to read 2-3 times a week during class.
- Students read 1 book of their choice each month during in class reading time from a fifteen page list of approved books appropriate to the Adventist setting.
- Students completed a weekly “Reading Role” about the book they choose to read.
- Students answered brief essential questions about their book at the end of each month.
- Students shared the 1<sup>st</sup> of 4 creative presentations about books they have read to be completed during the school year.

For the reading program with a social component, students participated in all activities of the previous program with the following additions:

- Instead of choosing books individually, students were placed in small literature circles of 3-4 students to read 1 book of the group's choice each month during in class reading time. These books were also chosen from the list of approved books.
- Students met in their literature circle groups to discuss their book once a week.
- Students completed "reading roles" just like the other group but with the intention of preparing for their literature circle group meetings.
- Students chose cooperative learning "social skills roles" to implement in their literature circle meetings each week.

During the first month of the school year, the "Survey of Reading Attitudes" was given twice to twelfth grade students who were not a part of this study to perform a test-retest reliability check. The ACT ASPIRE pre-test was given at the start of the second month of the school year, and the post test was given at the end of the third month of the school year. The "Survey of Reading Attitudes" was also given during at the end of the third month of the school year. The quasi-experiment took place during the six weeks between the pre and post ACT ASPIRE test dates.

### **Delimitations**

Participants had to meet two criteria to be included in the study. First, they had to be a ninth or tenth grade student enrolled at the Adventist boarding school chosen as the site for the study. Second, they had to be enrolled in either the Freshman or Sophomore English class that corresponded with their current grade level for the duration of the study. Because of the unusual English Language Learner (ELL) program at the study site, ninth and tenth grade ELL students in an alternative ELL English class, or ELL students who were enrolled in an English class different from their current grade level, were not eligible for the study. There were, however, ELL students who did meet the study criteria and were included in the study. Two students, one in the ninth grade and one in the tenth grade, did not give consent to participate and were excluded from the study. Two students, one in the

ninth grade and one in the tenth grade, were absent on days of the reading comprehension testing and were excluded from the study.

### **Ethics**

Permission without reservation was obtained from Southern Adventist University's Institutional Review Board, and informed consent was obtained from both parents and students before the study was conducted for all participants included in the study (See Appendix B for "Consent Form"). The identity of all participants was protected with safety measures to ensure the confidentiality of data collected for the study, and no information was or will be shared in any public report that could lead to the identification of the participants.

### **Instrumentation**

The ACT ASPIRE test was used as a pre and post treatment measure of participants' reading comprehension. Because of the nature of the security of this type of standardized test, examples of test questions could not be shared. To test attitudes towards reading at the end of the study, participants were given the "Survey of Reading Attitudes" (See Appendix A) with questions about demographics, statements to be rated with a Likert scale, and open-ended questions.

Because the Survey of Reading Attitudes was developed for this study and therefore was not a reputable and trustworthy measure like the ACT ASPIRE test, two statistical tests were run to determine its reliability. A Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient of 0.853 (n=61) strongly indicated that the Likert scale questions of the survey were reliable. Additionally, a test retest reliability coefficient of .908 (n=21) was obtained across a 2 day interval, showing strong significance at the .01 level and also strongly indicating that the

Likert Scale questions were reliable. Face validity of the Survey of Reading Attitudes was determined by a group of graduate students and a professor trained in research. This group provided feedback on the content of the questions, and any needed modifications were made to the survey before it was distributed to participants.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Participants completed the ACT ASPIRE instrument online during English class at the start of the experiment and again at the end of the experiment. Both the treatment group and the control group were given 40 minutes to complete the ACT ASPIRE test for both the pre and post testing sessions. The data from this test was collected, analyzed, and shared online through the Aspire testing service. Participants completed a written survey with both Likert scale questions and open ended questions at the end of the experiment. Participants were given whatever amount of time they needed to complete the written survey. Quantitative data for both instruments was transferred to a password protected spreadsheet. Qualitative survey data was analyzed by hand in the original, written surveys completed by participants.

### **Quantitative Data Analysis Methods**

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze scores for both the ACT ASPIRE test and the “Survey of Reading Attitudes” to test the study’s two null hypotheses:

1. There is no significant difference between the reading comprehension for students who participate in a socially focused independent reading program and students who participate in a similar program without the social component.
2. There is no significant difference between attitudes towards reading for students who participate in a socially focused independent reading program students and who participate in a similar program without the social component.

To test the first null hypothesis, an independent sample *t*-test was performed on the ACT ASPIRE pre-test scores to determine if there was a difference between the control and treatment groups at the start of the study. The treatment group's scores ( $M=56.73$ ,  $SD=22.81$ ) appeared observably different from the control group's scores ( $M=61.43$ ,  $SD=23.16$ ), but the *t*-test determined there was no significant difference between the groups at the start of the study,  $t(59) = -.797$ ,  $p=.429$ . This allowed for the groups to accurately be compared to each other.

Another independent sample *t*-test was performed to determine if there was a difference between the groups at the end of the study using the ACT ASPIRE post-test scores. There was no significant difference between the treatment group's scores ( $M=56.79$ ,  $SD=22.39$ ) and the control group's scores ( $M=65.07$ ,  $SD=21.50$ ) after six weeks of reading instruction,  $t(59) = -1.47$ ,  $p=.148$ . Therefore, the first null hypothesis was accepted.

Additionally, a paired samples *t*-test was performed to determine if there was a difference between the treatment group's ACT ASPIRE pre-test ( $M=56.73$ ,  $SD=22.81$ ) and post-test ( $M=56.79$ ,  $SD=22.39$ ) scores as well as the between the control group's pre-test ( $M=61.43$ ,  $SD=23.16$ ) and post-test ( $M=65.07$ ,  $SD=21.50$ ) scores. There was no significant difference between the pre and post-test scores within both the treatment group,  $t(32) = -.022$ ,  $p=.983$ , and the control group,  $t(27) = -1.21$ ,  $p=.237$ .

To test the second null hypothesis, a Chi-Square test of independence determined that there was no significant difference between how the treatment group and control group answered the Likert scale questions on the "Survey of Reading Attitudes." Therefore, the second null hypothesis was also accepted.



However, a Chi-Square Goodness of Fit test showed Chi-Square values that indicated the treatment group significantly answered “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” over the other options for three statements about the value of reading (“I learn new things that are valuable and relevant to my life when I read.”/“I believe reading well is an important skill that I need to have.”/“I believe that reading has positively influenced areas of my life outside of English class.”) and one statement about texts read for class (“I am likely to read a text the teacher chooses and assigns in English class.”). The Chi-Square values for the control group indicated that the answers “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” were significantly chosen over the other options for only one statement about the value of reading (“I believe reading well is an important skill that I need to have.”) and one statement about reading in class (“I enjoy reading time and reading activities in English class.”). Chi-Square values for both the treatment and control groups indicated that the answer “Neutral” was chosen significantly over the other options for the statement “Texts that I read in English class are interesting to me.”

### **Qualitative Data Analysis Methods**

Responses to the open-ended questions on the “Survey of Reading Attitudes” were coded by hand to explore answers to the research question: Does the instructional method used to teach reading in high school English classrooms influence the students’ attitudes towards reading and their motivation to read? Thematic summaries of participant’s responses to open ended questions were digitally recorded in a document. Using lean coding, participants responses were labeled with the following codes: overall attitude towards reading, what made reading enjoyable, what made reading not enjoyable, and what made reading in English class work or not work. Participants’ responses were then

analyzed and sorted into four main themes: reading value, reading time, reading environment, and reading choice. Particularly insightful or articulate responses representative of the responses of many participants were highlighted and then recorded for each of the four main themes.

### **Analysis of Quantitative Results**

The focus of the quantitative portion of the study was centralized around the research question: How does a socially focused reading program based on research about effective reading instruction influence students' ability to read and their attitudes towards reading? Since both the control and treatment groups were given reading instruction based on researched methods, the primary difference between the groups was the social component to the reading instruction given to the treatment group. Because the statistical data was not significant for both the reading comprehension test and the attitudes survey, and both null hypotheses were accepted, one could conclude that the social component given to the treatment group did not influence the participants' reading ability nor their dispositions towards reading.

However, participants did not show growth from the start to the end of the study in reading comprehension within the control or treatment groups, indicating that neither method of reading instruction used affected the participants' reading ability even though both were based on methods with substantial research backing them. Furthermore, the ninth grade treatment group and the tenth grade control group began the study with no significant difference in reading comprehension levels between the groups, an unexpected finding since the tenth grade group had previously experienced an extra year of reading instruction. Instead of concluding that reading instruction methods did not influence the

participants' ability to read and their attitudes towards reading, which is a distinct possibility, the results of this study could be due to a significant limitation: the short time frame in which the study was conducted. Reading instruction was given to the treatment and control groups for only six weeks when research indicates that reading programs need to be implemented for at least seven months before accurate results about the effectiveness of those programs can be collected. This is problematic since testing reading methods for an inadequate duration has been identified as a problem with other studies done on independent reading programs as well (Lee, 2011).

Although there was no significant difference between the treatment and control groups' answers to the survey questions, a discussion of the significant answers within the groups yields insight into participants' attitudes towards the reading instruction methods used. The treatment group, which was given socially based reading instruction, significantly answered "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" to four survey questions. Answers to three questions indicated the treatment group valued reading as an activity: reading is an important skill, teaches valuable and relevant things, and can positively influence life outside of English class, and answers to one question indicated that the treatment group students were likely to read texts assigned in class. The control group, which followed an independent reading program with no social component, significantly answered "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" to two survey questions. One of these answers indicated that the control group valued reading as an important skill, and the other answer indicated the control group enjoyed the reading time and reading activities that were a part of English class. Both the treatment and control groups significantly answered "Neutral" to the question asking if texts read for English class were interesting to them.

Both groups significantly indicated that they valued reading and either were likely to read for class or enjoyed reading in class, and while participants did not feel positively that texts read for class were interesting, they also did not feel negatively about the interest level of in class texts. These attitudes affirm previous research about the major components of effective reading programs. Students need to be reading books of interest (Allington, 2011; Allington, 2012; Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985; Gallagher, 2009; Krashen, 2004) and must perceive reading as a valuable or desirable activity because intrinsic motivation to read is a substantial factor in the likelihood of students actually spending time reading (Fisher & Ivey, 2007; Gallagher, 2009; Krashen, 2004), which in turn can help develop reading skills and foster academic growth in other content areas for traditional, struggling, and ELL students (Allington, 2012; Krashen, 2004; National Endowment for the Arts, 2007).

### **Analysis of Qualitative Results**

The qualitative portion of the study explored the research question: Does the instructional method used to teach reading in high school English classrooms influence the students' attitudes towards reading and their motivation to read? Participants' responses to the open ended questions on the attitude survey were categorized into four main themes: reading value, reading time, reading environment, and reading choice.

**Reading value.** Many participants indicated that they valued reading as an activity, but there was a diversity of reasons why they valued reading. Some participants indicated that reading helped them learn more about the world, life, and other perspectives. One voiced that reading became a valuable activity to them when they could see a connection to what they had read through references in popular culture or media. Participants who

espoused this view of reading seemed to enjoy the feeling of growth that reading helped them achieve and appreciated required reading time in class: "I am grateful you are making me read that is helping me...and I am starting to read for fun." Others indicated that the value of required reading for school was that it challenged them to read on topics they would not have chosen to read about on their own. These responses affirmed existing research advocating practices that help intrinsically motivate students to read (Fisher & Ivey, 2007; Gallagher, 2009; Krashen, 2004). The positive intrinsic motivation these participants experienced while reading in class helped motivate them to extend reading time outside of class.

Another group of participants viewed reading as an important way to learn new things, but they did not enjoy reading. These participants felt that reading was a boring or uninteresting activity. For some, the difficulty of the task made them dislike reading: "I have just never really been forced to [read] until recently, so I am not very good at it, but I want to get better." Among this group of participants, the attitude that reading was important prevailed, but the perception that reading was boring or too hard discouraged them from reading. These participants again mirrored conclusions of previous research about student motivation to read. Engagement and interest in texts being read is one of the largest factors in student motivation to read (Miller, 2012; Cambourne, 1995), and allowing students the freedom to choose texts within their appropriate reading level allows students to have positive, successful experiences with reading and increases the likelihood that they will enjoy what they read and show growth in their reading ability (Fisher & Ivey, 2007). These participants' responses validated a vital aspect of effective reading instruction;

students who do not already enjoy reading or who struggle with reading need to be able to feel successful and enjoy what they are reading to be motivated to continue to read.

A smaller group of participants found reading to be valuable as a means to an end. They would read if they were required to for school but not outside of school nor for pleasure. Earning a good grade in class was motivation enough for these students to read: "I don't mind [reading for school] it's just for my good to get a better grade on the exam." Since a substantial consensus in research advocates intrinsic motivation as the best method to train students to be life-long readers, the responses of these participants was intriguing. Could the use of grades as an external motivator help students become better readers? Is the reading that takes place when students only read to earn a grade for class deep and meaningful? Perhaps the motivation of receiving a good grade could be the impetus to start students on the reading path, and the act of reading frequently, if facilitated well in the classroom, could then intrinsically motivate them to continue reading.

A smaller group of participants felt that reading was not only a boring activity but that it was altogether a waste of time. These participants did not see any value in reading and did not desire to read for school or for pleasure. Conversely, another small group of participants already viewed reading as a beneficial and pleasurable activity that they routinely participated in both inside and outside of school. Unlike the other participants whose motivation could be influenced by many factors, these participants seemed to have firmly engrained dispositions towards reading that were quite difficult to change.

**Reading time.** A large percentage of the participants voiced the desire to read more if only they could find the time to read. Many desired more time to read in class because it forced them to get reading done without having to take time from their schedules outside

of school: “I would like to be able to read more during class because I don’t really read out of English Class unless I have to.” Others indicated that they did not have the time to finish books required for class without extra time in class to read. Finding the time to read in addition to time spent completing other schoolwork was also a common point of anxiety: “It’s hard to find time to read a good book because of so much class work.” These responses were evocative of Atwell’s (2007) claims that students in high school are not given enough in class time to read; consequently, they stop reading, or only read to study for school, and lose the pleasure and enjoyment that should accompany reading.

Participants also wished that reading instruction in class was more based on actual time reading than reading-based assignments or reading reports. Students did not like having to do the reading roles about what they read, claiming “Reading activities take time that you could be reading.” Some felt that reading activities took the fun out of reading: “Having to remember everything, writing book reports on it, and having to basically study the book” made reading not enjoyable for these participants. For others, reading became a burden when it was an assessed activity: “I love reading books just to read them. Not reading them to determine my grade.” While some form of accountability for reading and assessments to measure reading growth are an unavoidable requirement for the high school Language Arts classroom, participants identified that these practices can interfere with the natural reading process and the enjoyment of reading, affirming practices that advocate creative assessments which do not threaten or greatly intrude into students’ reading time (Fisher, 2004; Lee, 2011).

**Reading environment.** Participants explained that the environment surrounding reading time had great potential to make reading enjoyable or not enjoyable for them. A

vital need for some was an environment that was quiet, still, and uninterrupted. They could not enjoy reading when “it’s too loud, and lots of moving around. It needs to be still around me.” If reading time during class was not quiet enough, participants related that their reading experiences were quite negative and frustrating: “It’s too distracting. Every time I read in here, I have to re-read at home because I don’t remember!” Others needed the environment to be one of physical comfort, especially to get them out of their desks: “I like sitting in the bean bags instead of sitting in the hard chairs because when I read in the hard chairs I can’t seem to concentrate.” Although small acts like providing a comfortable spot for students to read and keeping a quiet environment may seem insignificant, protecting a reading space can greatly contribute to what Atwell (2007) describes as getting students into the “reading zone.”

Interestingly, some participants viewed reading as transporting them out of their physical environment to a better place. These participants viewed reading as a way to release stress and relax, often in the form of escapism: “Reading to me is an escape from my life,” or “Reading is fun and a way to be taken to another world where the things happening in my life are no longer relevant.” Some enjoyed the vicarious adventures they could experience through reading: “I feel that [reading] is a gateway to a whole other world where imaginations run wild. It also opens my eyes up to new and different things.” Others enjoyed the chance to view the world through different eyes: “I love being able to enter other worlds, times, and being a different person through the eyes of each book’s characters.” Many of these participants were self-identified readers who already enjoyed reading, but perhaps helping other students experience reading as a relaxing activity could help them enjoy it more as well.



However, the inactive reality of reading made it hard for some participants to enjoy. Comments such as “I like reading but it’s not my favorite thing I would rather go outside and play,” and “I can’t sit for a long time and like the book because I want to get up and move around,” related how students viewed reading as a static activity that was at best a last resort if other forms of entertainment were not available. Several participants felt that fun activities to accompany the reading time in class and break up the long periods of sitting would be enjoyable. Others felt that reading out loud together or using audio tapes so they could see the book and hear it at the same time could help make reading more interactive, enjoyable, and understandable. Although the group of participants who voiced these concerns was small, their responses touched on the concept that social reading practices can help draw in students who are not naturally readers (Cambourne, 1995; Sicherman, 1989).

Participants from the treatment group who were split into reading circles shared that reading and discussing in small groups helped them better understand the books they read, and they enjoyed sharing their different opinions: “I liked the freedom to choose certain books and discuss with a group of people that I relate to well.” Other’s viewed the groups as a positive challenge: “I like that we are able to choose a book and read it together as a group because it’s a challenge to keep up with everyone else in your group.” Some participants from the control group who were not split into reading circles shared the desire to read in groups: “I wish we could have more reading groups and be able to share more about the books we read in our groups instead of the class.” These responses mirrored the belief that group discussions exposing students to diverse perspectives and

interpretations of text is an important need for all students but especially for struggling readers or students who do not naturally enjoy reading (Graff, 1994).

**Reading choice.** The one thing that participants unequivocally voiced concern over was not having enough choice to read what they enjoyed. Choices of books that interested the participants could make reading fun: “Reading is a great skill to have and as long as I’m reading a book that I’m interested in, then I will read for hours straight,” even for students who did not typically read: “[Reading] isn’t something I’ll do just because. I would need a really good and interesting book if I wanted to read just for fun.” Unfortunately, reading interesting materials and reading for school were not frequently associated with each other: “Usually school related reading is never quite as interesting as texts I read on my own, but sometimes they can be.” Participants also shared that reading was more enjoyable when they were able to choose books that were not too difficult to understand. Reading books that were perceived as too hard or too long caused frustration and displeasure with reading.

Without choice, participants felt that reading was a burden: “[I don’t enjoy reading] when people dictate what I can or cannot read for me without communicating with me at all on the matter.” Even students who identified as avid readers for pleasure resisted being told when and what to read for school: “I would rather read for personal reasons just because I don’t like to be forced to do anything and I feel that reading for school is NOT something I have a choice in doing.” Not only being given input and choice over texts that must be read for class was important to participants but also when and how they read were areas they wished they had more choice.

Since the freedom to choose texts from a selection of interesting options is one of the largest contributing factors of student motivation and engagement in reading (Cambourne, 1995; Fisher & Ivey, 2008; Gallagher, 2009; Krashen, 2004; Miller, 2012), it was expected that students would express the desire to have more choice over what they read. However, it was concerning that so many participants still felt dissatisfied with their ability to select texts when both the treatment and control groups participated in a reading program centralized around student choice, albeit somewhat limited choice because of the conservative Christian community the school was affiliated with.

### **Limitations**

Because the data needed to be able to verify that the participants of this study were reflective of the larger population of high school students within the Adventist school system does not exist, making generalizations of this nature cannot be justified for the design of the study. The study school's curriculum dictated that ninth grade students had to be used for the treatment group and tenth grade students had to be used as the control group so random assignment to the groups was not possible. Additionally, the researcher and the teacher implementing the reading instruction for the study were the same person. Because the researcher and the teacher were the same person, the participants' answers on the reading survey could have been influenced by their willingness to please the teacher or their dislike for the teacher. Self-reporting of this nature could have caused some inaccuracies in the survey responses.

### **Conclusion & Recommendations**

Although the design of this study does not permit generalizations to larger populations, conclusions drawn from the data can better inform the researcher's reading

instruction practices in her own classroom and could be of significance to other high school English Language Arts teachers. A recursive theme of student motivation emerged throughout the course of this study. Since student motivation is one of the single greatest predicting factors in the likelihood of students participating and engaging in meaningful reading practices (Fisher & Ivey, 2007; Gallaher, 2009; Krashen, 2004), this researcher intends to modify her reading instruction methods in the following ways based on the participants' responses about what motivated them to read.

**Time.** Students need more time to read during class. More time spent reading in class could allow students to read without the stress of feeling that they should be working on other school work and could increase the chances that reading will actually take place among non-frequent readers. Enough time to read in class could also allow students to finish required books and have positive experiences with reading that could encourage the enjoyment of reading so often lost during the high school years (Atwell, 2007). Reading time in class must replicate the natural reading process as far as possible. Assessments or accountability measures should be modified to cause minimal interference with the reading process and should not be perceived as unreasonably intrusive by the students (Fisher, 2004; Lee, 2011). In the high school classroom, time spent on reading instruction is often in the form of analyzing a text under the assumption that the student has read the assigned portion of the text outside of class. Even in a classroom with a healthy mixture of instruction incorporating both whole class texts and student selected texts, time to read in class must be prioritized alongside structured reading instruction.

**Environment.** The classroom environment during reading time must be a protected space of quiet and comfort. This safe space is vital for students who struggle with focus

while they read. Allowing students to sit on alternative furniture or move around the room to find their own “reading zones” could help students find pleasure in reading (Atwell, 2007). Helping nonreaders experience the relaxing “escape” reading offers to active readers could provide yet another motivating opportunity to enjoy reading. An occasionally interactive environment could especially benefit struggling non-readers. The use of audio books, reading out loud together, group discussions, and interactive activities could help combat nonreaders’ perception that reading is a static, isolating experience and could help struggling readers by providing academic support and enticing interactions with their peers (Cambourne, 1995; Sichertman, 1989).

**Choice.** Students need more choices of texts or a more positive perception of their choices. Perception of choice in what and how they read is often the greatest determining factor in student motivation to read, even among students who already enjoy reading (Cambourne, 1995; Fisher & Ivey, 2008; Gallagher, 2009; Krashen, 2004; Miller, 20). Choice allows all students to invest time in reading on topics that interest and engage them while also allowing struggling learners to choose books on the appropriate reading level, giving them a chance to experience the intrinsic satisfaction that can follow a positive, successful experience with reading.

However, participants in this study were permitted to select reading options from a collection of over one thousand books, yet they still felt dissatisfied with the level of choice they were given or perceived difficult and uninteresting books that they selected as forced upon them by the teacher. To combat negative student perceptions in settings where unlimited choice is not an option, such as the conservative Adventist community of the study site, the options students can choose from must be quite exhaustive, and greater

intentionality of teacher guidance through formal conferencing or carefully crafted conversations with students is needed (Anderson, 2000; Pruzinsky, 2014). Students may need to be encouraged to read books on the appropriate reading level so frustrations with difficult books do not poison students' perception of reading, and additional encouragement to read books within genres or topics of student interest may be necessary for some students as well.

The lack of knowledge and research about effective reading instruction in high schools, especially Adventist high schools, is still of great concern. The qualitative portion of this study has affirmed several core concepts of effective reading methodology previously studied for younger age groups, but more research is needed focusing on what motivates high school students to read. Because the sample size of this study was small and specific to a single location, more studies with larger and more representative samples are needed. One of the greatest needs for research in this area is research conducted over an appropriate length of time to yield accurate results, both about reading methods in general and about high school reading methods.

As teachers continue to gain a greater understanding of why students value reading and what motivates them to spend time reading, teachers will be able to better encourage and motivate a greater diversity of students to read both inside and outside the classroom. With the implementation of new instructional methods and continuing research on the topic, teachers can begin to close the gap between students who are non-readers and students who learn to become life-long readers in our high schools.

### **Appendix A - Survey of Reading Attitudes**

What is your sex?     **Male**     **Female**

What is your age?     **13**     **14**     **15**     **16**     **17**

What is your current school grade?     **9<sup>th</sup>**     **10<sup>th</sup>**

What is your ethnicity?     **American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian/Asian American, Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander, Non-Hispanic White, Hispanic/Latino, Other (please specify)**\_\_\_\_\_

What was your first language?     **English**     **Spanish**     **Other (please specify)**\_\_\_\_\_

How many hours a week do you spend participating in reading related to school assignments or study? **Less than 1 hour**     **1-2 hours**     **3-4 hours**     **5-6 hours**     **7-8 hours**     **9-10 hours**     **10+ hours**

How many hours a week do you spend participating in reading for personal enjoyment?  
**Less than 1 hour**     **1-2 hours**     **3-4 hours**     **5-6 hours**     **7-8 hours**     **9-10 hours**     **10+ hours**

How many books do you personally own?     **None**     **1-10**     **11-20**     **21-30**     **31-40**     **41-50**     **50+**

How many books did you read in the last 12 months? **None**     **1-10**     **11-20**     **21-30**     **31-40**     **41-50**     **50+**

How often do you purchase or borrow books that are new to you?  
**Never**     **Once a year**     **Once in 6 months**     **Once in 3 months**     **Once a month**     **Once a week**     **More than once a week**

How do you feel about reading?

What kinds of things make reading enjoyable for you?

What kinds of things make reading not enjoyable for you?

How do you feel about reading for school (textbooks, studying, reading assignments, etc.) versus reading for personal reasons (reading for fun, looking up info on topics you are interested in, etc.)?

What types of texts do you enjoy reading?

How do you feel about the types of texts you read for English class?

What would you want to change about reading time and reading activities in English class? Why?

What did you like about reading time and reading activities in English class? Why?

**Rate your opinion about the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5:**

**1=Strongly Disagree**     **2=Disagree**     **3=Neutral**     **4=Agree**     **5=Strongly Agree**

I learn new things that are valuable and relevant to my life when I read.

I believe reading well is an important skill that I need to have.

I believe that reading has positively influenced areas of my life outside of English class.

I am likely to engage in reading for my own enjoyment outside of English class.

Texts that I read in English class are interesting to me.

I enjoy reading time and reading activities in English class.

I am likely to read a text the teacher chooses and assigns in English class.

I want to read more because of reading assignments and activities in English class.

I enjoy reading more when I can share what I have read with others.

### **Appendix B - Parent Consent & Student Assent Form**

Dear parents and students,

I am conducting a research study as part of my Master’s Degree program through Southern Adventist University. I will be researching two different ways to teach reading in my classroom to see if either of these methods is more effective and enjoyable for students. Students in the ninth grade will be taught using one method and students in the tenth grade will be taught using a different method. Both methods are designed to foster a quality reading education for the students.

Students who choose to participate in this study will be asked to complete an in class reading comprehension test at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year, and they will also be asked to answer questions on a survey to indicate their opinions about reading. Only I or members of the academy administration will have access to information given by the students, and research records will be kept in a locked file or password protected document. All records from this study will be kept private, and any sort of public report will not include information that will make it possible to identify the student.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Both parents or the student may choose for the student to not participate in the study. At any time during the study, both parents or the student may choose to end participation. The decision to participate or not participate in this study will not cause any student to receive different treatment, privileges, or disadvantages.

The reading methods I am researching will be taught to all students in my classes regardless of whether or not students choose to participate in this study. The reading comprehension tests and survey questions will be given to all students regardless of their participation in the study for the purpose of collecting data for the school. This is a very low risk situation for students who desire to participate. **The only difference between students who participate in the study and those who do not is that I will be allowed to officially use the comprehension test and survey information from those who agree to participate as part of my research study.**

If you have any questions or you would like more information, please feel free to talk to me in person, call, or email me. My number is (828) 606-4915, and my email is bjohnson@fletcheracademyemail.com.

Sincerely, Bethany Johnson

\_\_\_ I grant permission for data collected from my child to be used in Mrs. Johnson’s reading study.

\_\_\_ I do not grant permission for data collected from my child to be used in Mrs. Johnson’s reading study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Parent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_ I grant permission for data collected from me to be used in Mrs. Johnson’s reading study.

\_\_\_ I do not grant permission for data collected from me to be used in Mrs. Johnson’s reading study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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