

**Attitudes to Reading: An Investigation
Across the Primary Years**

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ABSTRACT

Students' attitudes to reading and the texts they choose to read impact on literacy achievement and willingness to engage with literacy-related activities in the primary years of schooling. This study was conducted in an urban Catholic school in Queensland in Years 1 to 7. Students' developing attitudes to reading and the perceptions of these attitudes held by their teachers were examined. An adapted version of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) and Teacher Checklist (Young, 2003) was utilized.

Results from the study indicate older students' attitudes towards recreational reading (in primary school) are not significantly different to younger students' attitudes. Female students however, show more positive attitudes to recreational reading than male students. Older students' attitudes towards academic reading are more negative overall and female students showed significantly more positive attitudes than their male peers. Students' choice of texts varied across the year levels with the most preferred reading materials being chapter books, children's magazines and comics.

Teachers' perceptions of students' enjoyment of reading in class correlated significantly with students' own perceived level of reading achievement. Teachers perceive that as students' level of reading enjoyment increases, their level of academic reading achievement also increases.

Five recommendations are made from the findings of this study. First, recreational reading engagement needs to be publicly promoted and positively celebrated within the school community. It was found that for students to be motivated and see the value of engaging in reading they must be immersed in a school classroom environment that offers a range of recreational activities and opportunities. Second, a structured approach to literacy sessions (literacy block) needs to be established and implemented with students across all primary year levels. This enables students to be scaffolded in their literacy learning and so develop positive attitudes towards themselves as academic readers. Third, it is recommended that guided reading occur

as a key instructional approach to the teaching of reading across all primary year levels. This may serve to increase students' motivation and interest in reading a range of text types and may provide a source of information for the teacher in relation to students' engagement with reading.

Fourth, a range of text types need to be purchased and made available for students to read independently and for teachers to use in class shared reading activities across all primary year levels. Students should be exposed to various text types throughout their primary years of schooling. Finally, the teaching of reading needs to be 'data-driven' rather than based on teachers' perceptions of students' reading needs. Periodic assessments of students' reading achievement should occur to provide these data for teachers.

The recommendations from this study align with priorities and recommendations included in current Commonwealth and State documents. Directions for future research also are suggested especially for qualitative data collection. This methodology, if included, would glean more in-depth data concerning students' attitudes to reading and the perceptions held by their teachers. Investigating students' attitude towards and use of digital literacies also would provide a greater understanding of primary-age students' attitudes towards reading in the 21st century.