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Peggy Daisey
Eastern Michigan University

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The Reading Experiences and Beliefs of Secondary Pre-service Teachers

Peggy Daisey, Ph.D.

Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe secondary pre-service teachers' past reading experiences, present attitudes and beliefs about reading, their attitudes and beliefs about a required content area literacy course, and their predicted use of reading in future instruction. Secondary pre-service teachers ($N = 124$) of diverse subject areas completed four surveys during the required course. Responses of those who enjoyed reading throughout their lives were compared to responses for those who did not enjoy reading. The results of the study suggest that secondary pre-service teachers might benefit from reflecting upon their past positive reading experiences and attempt to recreate those experiences for their future students.

It is common knowledge that teachers are encouraged to be enthusiastic reading role models and provide meaningful invitations to students to read. Yet, in a study of high school students in 1977, Rieck found that only 20% of teenage students believed that their teachers liked to read and Rasinski's (1992) study of secondary pre-service teachers cited high school teachers as the most negative influence on them as readers. Teachers pass on their attitudes about reading to their students (Schallert & Lawrence, cited in Lapp, Flood, & Farnan, 1989). In fact, Bintz (1997) quotes a middle school mathematics teacher as saying, "How do I get [my students] more involved in reading when I don't read much myself?" (p. 17). Moreover, Graves (1990) believes that school administrators "do not assume

teachers are readers-or expect them to be” (p. 40). A few secondary pre-service teachers every semester in the content area literacy course taught by Powell-Brown (2003-2004) said that they never liked to read, and Bean (1994) reported that only 62% of his secondary pre-service teachers considered and/or could describe how they were going to foster the love of reading in their future students. Yet, Campbell and Kmiecik (2004) report that one of the top challenges of high school teachers was motivating their students to achieve literacy in their subject area.

Graves (2001) believes that teachers are the most important source for creating conditions in the classroom environment to promote student motivation to learn. Bintz (1993) predicts that teachers would gain insights into their own beliefs and intentions by reflecting upon their own reading lives. Kirby (2002) concurs and believes that “we as teachers...need to begin by discovering, or rediscovering, the passionate reader and writer within us” (p. 142). It is important that teachers talk to their students about their reading (Commeyras, Bisplingoff, & Olson, 2003). In this way, Sumara (1996) thinks it is possible for teachers to create instruction while simultaneously promoting a life that includes reading. Bintz (1997) recommends that teacher educators help future secondary teachers engage in their own reading to change the confines of school reading in their future instruction.

According to constructivist theory, knowledge is constructed from experience through reflection (Merrill, 1992). Carter (1993) argues that teaching decisions are always framed within the context of a teacher’s life history. As a result, teachers’ personal experiences with reading form an important basis for their attitudes toward infusing reading activities into their instruction (Bean, 1994; Manna & Misheff, 1987). This is because “teachers don’t just appear out of thin air. They are products-as well as active agents-of the worlds from which they came” (Greenleaf, Jimenez & Roller, 2002, p. 487). Duchein, Frazier, Konopak, & Palmer (1994) found that pre-service teachers who read for pleasure would allow recreational reading and share their enthusiasm; while those with negative experiences reported they would avoid reading including reading in the classroom, since it made them feel uncomfortable. It is important to note that secondary pre-service teachers’ attitudes toward reading are malleable (Cardarelli, 1992). For example, Roe and Vukelich (1998) found that teacher education classes and field experiences overshadowed the influence of pre-service teachers’ previous negative literacy experiences. Nourie and Lenski (1998) believe that secondary pre-service teachers need to be motivated by positive reading experiences in their content area literacy course in order to pass this attitude to their future students.

Literacy Histories

In the past, researchers have considered secondary pre-service teachers' literacy histories for insights on which to base their literacy course pedagogy (Bean, 1994). Literacy histories are important in teacher education programs because they allow pre-service teachers to understand themselves and confront prior assumptions that will help them to be open to new ideas about literacy and the teaching of reading (Roe & Vukelich, 1998). Lortie (1975) thinks that "unless teachers-to-be are aware of their preconceptions and internalizations, the varieties of instructional methods they study may be wasted" (p. 231). The intent of literacy histories is to help future teachers change negative or limited perceptions of reading. This will allow a new space for teachers to see reading less as an add-on in an already over-packed curriculum, and more as a tool for creating personally meaningful learning for students (Bintz, 1997). When Bean and Zulich (1992) developed case studies of their secondary pre-service teachers, they found that autobiographies helped future teachers construct a more accurate view of their past and present experiences.

The promise of reading in secondary instruction will not be realized without teachers who enjoy reading and understand its potential. When teachers enjoy reading, they may be better role models and are more likely to make positive use of reading in their instruction. Given the large number of secondary pre-service teachers, it is essential for teacher educators to identify the course pedagogy that might best lead to improved attitudes toward reading. The purpose of this study was to answer the following questions:

1. What are the attitudes and beliefs about reading of secondary pre-service teachers who reported enjoying reading throughout their lives versus pre-service teachers who reported not enjoying reading?
2. What are the current attitudes and beliefs about reading of these two groups of pre-service teachers?
3. What can be done in a required secondary content area literacy course to change attitudes and beliefs?
4. How do the predictions about integrating reading into future instruction compare for these two groups of secondary pre-service teachers?

Method

Qualitative and quantitative methods were used in the design of this quasi-experimental study (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2001), which took place at a Midwest university that produces a large number of educational personnel. The university is located in one of the largest book-buying areas in the country (Hull, 1995).

Participants

Secondary pre-service teachers ($N = 124$) enrolled in a required secondary content area literacy course participated in this study. There were 57 males and 67 females, eight were African Americans and 116 were Caucasians. About a third (33.9%) of the pre-service teachers had bachelor's degrees and about half (54.0%) were enrolled in a field experience course. Pre-service teachers had a wide variety of majors including: English (23), social studies (14), physical education (12), business (12), mathematics (10), history (7), biology (5), art (5), general science (5), emotionally-impaired (4), psychology (3), instrumental music (3), earth science (3), marketing (3), communication arts (3), physics (2), political science (2), chemistry (2), technology (2), German (1), culinary arts (1), French (1), and vocal music (1). Some pre-service teachers had previous careers in business and engineering. All pre-service teachers passed a basic skills test in reading, writing, and mathematics in order to gain acceptance into the college of education.

Data Source and Analysis

Pre-service teachers completed pre, mid, post, and follow-up (open-ended and Likert-scale) surveys (see Appendix for surveys). During the course, pre-service teachers were encouraged to expand, rethink, experience, value, and ultimately model reading. They were immersed in many reading opportunities using a wide variety of subject area reading materials such as trade books (Daisey, 1993; 1994a, 1994b), biographies (Daisey, 1996, 1996-1997, 1997; Daisey & Jose-Kampfner, 2002), and websites.

In order to compare the responses of pre-service teachers who enjoyed reading throughout their lives versus those that did not, participants were divided into two groups which were defined on the first day of class, when, using a scale from 1 to 10 (one meaning strongly disagree; ten meaning strongly agree) they were asked to respond to the statement, "Throughout my life I have enjoyed reading" The 87 (70.97%) pre-service teachers who rated their enjoyment for reading between 6-10 (high reading enjoyment, HRE) were compared to the 36 (29.03%) pre-service

teachers who rated their enjoyment for reading between 1-5 (low reading enjoyment, LRE). Open-ended survey questions were read and reread to discover categories and themes using constant comparison analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Frequency counts were made, quantitative data was analyzed using Chi-square and ANOVA analysis (Greenwood & Nikulin, 1996; Timm, 2002), and quotes from pre-service teachers were selected to illustrate categories.

Results of the Study

Past Reading Experiences

In response to the statement, “Throughout my life I have enjoyed reading,” pre-service teachers with High Reading Enjoyment (HRE) had a much higher mean than those with Low Reading Enjoyment (LRE) (See Table 1). More females (59.09%) than males (40.91%) were in the HRE group. Teachers were cited more often as their most positive influences by pre-service teachers with HRE. One pre-service teacher with HRE recalled, “Mrs. Waltz, in first grade, gave me my own book, *Winnie the Pooh*. I still have it 30 plus years later.” A pre-service teacher with LRE fondly recalled reading in elementary school, “*Call of the Wild* was the only book I almost made it through.”

Table 1. Past Reading Experiences

	% HRE	% LRE
“Throughout my life I have enjoyed reading”	8.83	3.47
Teachers cited as most positive reading influence	20.46	8.34
Teachers cited as most negative reading influence	53.41	41.66
High school teachers cited as most negative reading influence	18.18	16.67
College professors cited as most negative reading influence	14.78	11.11
Middle school teachers cited as most negative reading influence	12.50	0
Pre-service teachers who had former teachers in their subject area who they thought enjoyed reading	52.27	38.89
Pre-service teachers who had “no idea” if former teachers in their subject area enjoyed reading	15.91	22.22
Pre-service teachers who had a teacher in their subject area who read aloud	5.04	3.86
Pre-service teachers who had a teacher in their subject area who read aloud to promote interest	44.32	27.78
Pre-service teachers who had a former teacher in their subject area who kept a classroom library	6.02	5.22

Half (50.00%) of pre-service teachers ($N = 124$) cited a teacher as their most negative influence on them as a reader; only 4.84% of pre-service teachers cited a college professor as their most positive reading influence. High school and middle school teachers as well as college professors were cited as the most negative influence on pre-service teachers with both HRE and LRE. The main reason cited for middle school teachers was uninteresting reading assignments (9.09%). One pre-service teacher with HRE wrote, "This started the trend of being assigned boring books." Another pre-service teacher with HRE wrote about a middle school teacher who discovered him reading something other than the text in class and aggressively threw it in the trash. A pre-service teacher with LRE whose family had moved during the high school years recalled reading *The Scarlet Letter* three times in high school.

Pre-service teachers with HRE seemed to be set up in school to like reading. In comparison to those with LRE, more pre-service teachers with HRE had teachers in their subject area who they thought enjoyed reading. More pre-service teachers with LRE said that they had "no idea" if their former middle or high school teachers in their subject area liked to read. More pre-service teachers with HRE remembered middle or high school teachers in their content area who read aloud. The means were 5.04 and 3.86, respectively. This difference was statistically significant ($F = 5.95$, $df = 2$, $p < .05$). More pre-service teachers with HRE said that their former teachers read aloud to promote interest. More pre-service teachers with HRE recalled a teacher who kept a classroom library. The means were 6.02 and 5.22, respectively. This difference was statistically significant ($F = 6.12$, $df = 2$, $p < .05$).

Implications for Teacher Education

It is important that teacher educators be aware of the wide difference in reading enjoyment levels among pre-service teachers. Pre-service teachers could gain insights about their beliefs and teaching intentions by reflecting upon their past reading experiences by comparing the positive and negative aspects. Pre-service teachers need to realize that they often cite high school teachers, the position they are preparing to fill, as a negative influence on them as readers. In this study, it was a revelation to these pre-service teachers when they heard that high school teachers were cited as the most negative influence on them as readers. The message here for pre-service teachers is to not continue this trend. Surely, there is plenty of engaging reading to be found. Teacher educators are encouraged to consider bookstore trips (Daisey, 1995) and Amazon.com search assignments to help immerse

pre-service teachers in reading material to use with their future students and to help them begin a classroom library. In addition, pre-service teachers need to be walked through assignments where they practice finding a variety of reading materials for a particular content area lesson in order to engage a broader range of students.

Pre-service teachers need to understand that if they had negative past reading experiences, it could be helpful to discuss these experiences with their students. By doing this, their future students who have had similar experiences will know that they are not alone. When teachers were recalled as positive influences it was because they offered choice, relevancy, and encouragement in reading. It is sad that when asked about their best reading experience pre-service teachers with HRE had “so many,” but pre-service teachers with LRE spoke about the only book that “they almost finished.” It is essential for pre-service secondary teachers to realize that sometimes a person becomes a reader later in life once they have found their magic book. Pre-service teachers need to encourage their students with negative past reading experiences to keep reading. They need to understand that there are seemingly random moments when a teacher puts the perfect piece of reading material in the hands of a student, which can be a catalyst for a life that includes reading. It is important for pre-service teachers to know that they might be the only person in a student’s entire life who will take the time to try to interest him or her in reading.

College professors were cited as the second most negative influence on pre-service teachers as readers. Therefore, college professors are encouraged to let pre-service teachers choose their reading as well as encourage them to practice reading aloud. College professors need to have a classroom library available for pre-service teachers in their teacher education courses.

Pre-service teachers are encouraged to set their future students up to enjoy reading. They should understand the potential teacher read alouds to develop enjoyment for reading by focusing attention, building community, allowing students to escape into a story, and highlighting the author’s voice. Pre-service teachers may benefit from the practice of selecting and reading aloud passages for future students. They also need to understand the value of a classroom library. People collect the things they love and find valuable. If a classroom is filled with reading material that constantly flows, and readings are discussed with enthusiasm, engagement and learning might be enhanced. In the university setting, pre-service teachers need to be surrounded by reading material and be allowed to borrow them. In this way, pre-service teachers may come to discover the pleasure of reading when presented with interesting reading materials available to them at arm’s length. Ultimately,

pre-service teachers need to be afforded an opportunity to start or continue making a stash of reading materials that they can and will use in their future classrooms.

Current Beliefs and Attitudes toward Reading

Pre-service teachers with HRE had a higher mean for the extent that they thought of themselves as readers at the beginning and end of the semester than those with LRE (See Table 2). When asked for the reason for their rating, pre-service teachers with HRE cited enjoyment for reading more often than those with LRE. At the beginning of the semester, reasons cited more often by pre-service teachers with LRE, in comparison to those with HRE, were “I don’t like to read,” “I read what interests me,” “I read what’s required in school,” and “I read magazines and newspapers.”

Table 2. *Current Beliefs and Attitudes toward Reading*

	% HRE	% LRE
Extent pre-service teachers thought of themselves as readers:		
pre semester	8.05	4.65
post semester	8.24	5.60
Reason for rating (pre): enjoyment for reading	61.36	2.78
“I don’t like to read”	0	27.78
“I read what interests me”	9.09	22.22
“I read what’s required in school”	9.09	22.22
“I read magazines and newspapers”	1.14	13.89
Extent preservice teachers wish to be a reader (post semester)	8.52	7.11
Motivation for reading is escape and relaxation	26.14	8.33
Motivation for reading is need or curiosity for information	63.63	72.22
Belief that if read more would be less stressed	20.45	0
Belief that if read more would be overwhelmed or out of school	13.64	5.55
Belief that if read more would be more educated and interesting	80.55	69.22
Preservice teachers read more about their subject area everyday or once per week:		
on the Internet	64.77	47.22
in the newspaper	40.91	27.78
in magazines	23.86	16.67
in tradebooks	20.45	11.11

Table 2 cont.	% HRE	% LRE
Pre-service teachers who would rather talk than read (pre)	17.04	5.55
Pre-service teachers who would rather be active than read (pre)	34.09	50.00
Pre-service teachers who would rather watch TV/videos than read (pre)	9.09	19.44
Pre-service teachers who would rather read than clean (post)	20.45	8.33
Pre-service teachers who would rather read than watch TV (post)	15.91	2.78
Pre-service teachers who would rather read than do nothing/be bored	5.68	19.44
Pre-service teachers who read for pleasure in the last month	80.68	61.11
Pre-service teachers who read novels and tradebooks for pleasure in last month	52.27	38.88
Pre-service teachers who define pleasure reading as "fun" or "interesting"	17.04	8.33
Pre-service teachers who define pleasure reading as "not for school" or "my choice"	32.95	22.22
Pre-service teachers who say they read any time	22.73	8.33
Source of reading material (pre):		
bookstores	97.73	86.11
libraries	75.00	44.44
borrowed from others	40.91	16.67
mail subscriptions	14.77	25.00
Pre-service teachers who shared their reading with friends or relatives in the past	98.86	83.33
Pre-service teachers who shared their pleasure reading with friends or relatives in the past	88.64	55.56
Pre-service teachers who shared their reading in their subject area with a middle/high school student in the past (midsemester)	47.73	33.33
Pre-service teachers who shared their reading in their subject area with a middle/high school student in the past (midsemester)	47.73	33.33
Pre-service teachers who shared their reading in their subject area with a middle/high school student for pleasure in the past (midsemester)	19.32	2.78
Pre-service teachers who were enrolled in the field experience course	63.64	30.55

Pre-service teachers with HRE, in comparison with those with LRE, had a higher mean for the extent they wished to be a reader at the end of the semester. Pre-service teachers with HRE cited escape and relaxation as a motivation for reading, more often than those with LRE. A pre-service teacher with HRE noted that reading afforded “getting lost in another world and forgetting about everything else.” Pre-service teachers with LRE cited their motivation to read was “curiosity” and “need for information” more often than those with HRE.

Pre-service teachers with HRE said more frequently that if they read more they would be “less stressed” and “calm.” They also thought if they read more they would be “overwhelmed” because they already have so much school reading or they might be “out of school” and be free from school reading, more often than pre-service teachers with LRE. Pre-service teachers with LRE more often completed the phrase, “If I read more _____” with “I’d be more educated” and “interesting” than those with HRE. More pre-service teachers with HRE said they spent more time reading about their subject area “everyday” or “once a week” on the Internet, newspaper, magazines, and trade books.

At the beginning of the semester, pre-service teachers with HRE said that they would rather talk than read; whereas pre-service teachers with LRE said they would rather “be active” or “watch TV/videos” than read. At the end of the semester, pre-service teachers with HRE, said that they would rather read than clean or watch TV; whereas pre-service teachers with LRE, said more often that they would rather read than “do nothing” or “be bored.”

More pre-service teachers with HRE read for pleasure “in the last month.” They cited reading novels and trade books more often for pleasure than pre-service teachers with LRE. They described pleasure reading as “fun and interesting” and “not for school” or “my choice” more frequently than pre-service teachers with LRE. When asked, “What would it take to get you to read for pleasure?” more pre-service teachers with LRE, who had not read for pleasure in the past month, cited “more time” and “less assignments” (100% vs. 73.33%), respectively). A pre-service teacher with LRE wrote, “Just time-I have a stack waiting on my dresser.”

Pre-service teachers with HRE, in comparison to those with LRE, said more often that they read “anytime.” A pre-service teacher with HRE wrote, “I have several books going at once.” At the beginning of the semester, pre-service teachers with HRE more often said that their source of reading material was bookstores, libraries, and borrowing from others. More pre-service teachers with LRE reported that mail subscriptions were a source of their reading material. At the beginning

of the semester, pre-service teachers with LRE said they would buy magazines and CDs if they were given a \$100 gift certificate to a bookstore. In contrast, pre-service teachers with HRE had a list of titles and authors ready.

More pre-service teachers with HRE, in comparison to those with LRE, noted that they shared reading with a friend or relative during their life. Both groups of pre-service teachers cited wonderful examples of sharing their reading material. For instance, a pre-service teacher with HRE wrote, "The best book I read last year was *Feast of Love* by Charles Baxter, and I gave it to my brother and suggested it to several people. I have a friend who likes me to suggest books as well." A pre-service teacher with LRE wrote about sharing, "A book I read on P.O.W.'s in the Viet Nam War. It was so fascinating I had to tell someone about it. I actually lent it to my friend and he read it too!" At the beginning of the semester, pre-service teachers with HRE were more likely to share reading with a friend or relative for pleasure than those with LRE. At the same time, more pre-service teachers with HRE noted that they had shared reading with middle or high school students in their subject area during the past. When asked why they shared reading with a student, more pre-service teachers with HRE noted personal or pleasure reasons, as well as field experience course requirements. A pre-service teacher with LRE cited an example of sharing reading with a student: "It was about mental preparation for baseball. I thought it would help him."

Implications for Teacher Education

Pre-service teachers with LRE read for "others" rather than for themselves. Ownership and enjoyment are keys to the extent pre-service teachers identified themselves as readers. Teacher educators need to discuss with their students the characteristics of reading for "others" (i.e., teachers or professors), in contrast to reading for one's self, including motivation, active versus passive reading, the level of critical thought, and perseverance. It is essential to walk pre-service teachers through reading experiences that promote ownership and enjoyment by including choice, relevancy, and variety, to suggest that they are reading for themselves rather than others.

Pre-service teachers who are readers are likely to be teachers who are readers. Readers in the general public are described as a minority (Carlsen & Sherrill, 1988; McWhorter, 2003). Yet, on the first day of class many (57.26%) pre-service teachers circled 8, 9, or 10 when rating their enjoyment for reading throughout their lives. A third (33.06%) of pre-service teachers circled 10. In the general public, although

readers are said to be in the minority, “what they lack in numbers they make up for in passion” (Hamilton, 2000, p. 5). Many pre-service teachers (75%) said that they had read for pleasure in the past month. This is similar to the 72% of teenagers in the Nation’s Report Card study (cited in Clinton, 2002), and 78% of teenagers in the Moffitt and Wartella study (1992), said they had read for pleasure in the past month. In addition, more than the 52% of college-aged Americans reported reading one book for pleasure in the past year (National Endowment for the Arts, 2004). It is essential to remind pre-service teachers of the value and pleasure of recreational reading (Carlsen & Sherrill, 1988; NCES, 1994). Pre-service teachers are encouraged to put reading material of interest by their bed and couch, as well as books-on-tape in their car or by their treadmill (Powell-Brown, 2003-2004). Teacher educators might suggest that their students buy their coffee at a bookstore and sit and read and then discuss what they discovered about the experience.

Pre-service teachers need to discuss how, when, and why to share reading with teenagers. Dauna Easley (2004), a high school vocational education teacher, describes how she sometimes runs into her former students in bookstores. They tell her that they were just ambling around, noticing the books that she had read aloud to them in class. She notes that, “Every once in a while, as a teacher, if you are really lucky you get a brief glimpse at the difference you have made in a student’s life” (p. 36). This teacher believes that reading aloud to her students for a few minutes everyday is one of the most powerful things she does as a teacher. Through reading aloud, she feels that her students come to realize that she is a reader. She shares her reading with her students, who in turn want to read more. Sumara (1996) believes that space is needed in secondary schools for the enjoyment of reading and the school curriculum to coexist.

Although there are many reasons for reading, readers may be grouped into two categories: “those who read to remember and those who read to forget” (W. L. Phelps cited in Kaplan & Rabinowitz, 2001, p. 76). Pre-service teachers with HRE read for escape and therapy (i.e., “to forget”), while pre-service teachers with LRE read for information (i.e., “to remember”). Teacher educators need to discuss the variety of reasons for reading including relaxation, escape, and inspiration. Real life examples of young people who have benefitted from bibliotherapy could also be discussed. Pre-service teachers need to reflect upon their own reading that has provided them with escape, direction, or built their self-esteem. We must challenge stereotypes about readers as inactive. There is room and need in students’ lives for both reading and physical activity (Williams, 2007).

In this study, reasons for reading (i.e., to answer questions) needed to be met immediately for pre-service teachers with LRE, while pre-service teachers with HRE enjoyed the exploration and the serendipity of finding something of interest to read (i.e., to escape). They read for pleasure despite their heavy load of school reading. Consequently, motivation needs to be central in content area literacy instruction. "Students must have both the skill and will to read" (Gambrell, 2002, p. 39). English teacher Jim Burke (1999) has this wish for his students: "If I could give you just one gift, leave just one legacy in this world, it would be to infuse in you an absolute passion for the written word....It's a gift to yourself, and to your future" (p. 18).

Teachers are encouraged to expand the limited opportunities that currently exist in school for teenagers to nurture their reading lives (Greenleaf, Jimenez, & Roller, 2002). Atwell (1987) pointed the way by suggesting that teachers contrast their own reading against the reading that occurs in their classroom. She realized that she did not allow her students the same freedom that she allowed herself as a reader. Atwell (1987) explained that her students motivated her to fill her classroom with books. "They showed me that if I gave them the chance they would devour books....My students taught me that they loved to read. They showed me that in-school reading...could actually do something for them" (p. 20).

Beliefs and Attitudes toward the Content Area Literacy Course

Pre-service teachers with HRE, in comparison to those with LRE, were more likely to understand the rationale for the course at the beginning of the semester (See Table 3). The means were 8.09 versus 6.83, respectively, and this difference was statistically significant ($F = 6.98$, $df = 2$, $p < .05$). They were also more likely to see the rationale for the course at the end of the semester than pre-service teachers with LRE. A pre-service teacher with HRE wrote, "We automatically assume, I think, that secondary students should know how to read by the time they get to us. There are 'other people' who will take care of it. This class should teach us to become those 'other people.'" When asked at the beginning of the semester what they thought they would learn, pre-service teachers with HRE cited promoting the enjoyment of reading more often. Pre-service teachers with HRE explained more frequently at the end of the semester (in an open-ended question) that they received many ideas for teaching. A pre-service teacher with HRE wrote, "Trade books. Bring in more outside reading and have students do something with their reading."

Table 3. *Beliefs and Attitudes toward the Content Area Literacy Course*

	% HRE	% LRE
Pre-service teachers understand the rationale for the course: pre semester	8.09	6.83
Post semester	8.79	7.55
Pre-service teachers predict they will learn to promote reading enjoyment in the course (pre semester)	28.41	16.67
Pre-service teachers believed that they received many ideas for teaching in the course (post semester)	63.64	41.67
Pre-service teachers believed there was an overlap in required and pleasure reading during the course	68.18	41.67

At the end of the semester, more pre-service teachers with HRE thought that there was an overlap in required and pleasure reading in the content area literacy course (68.18% vs. 41.67%, respectively). When asked at the beginning and again at the end of the semester, these students ($N = 124$) reported an increase in library use for their source of reading material (66.13% vs. 73.39%, respectively). This difference was statistically significant ($F = 4.18$, $df = 2$, $p < .05$).

Implications for Teacher Education

Nourie and Lenski (1998) found that a content area reading course did little, if anything, to enhance secondary pre-service teachers' attitudes toward reading or increase their personal reading. The results of the current study suggest that the content area literacy course reduced the resistance to the inclusion of reading in instruction, but did not eliminate the gap between pre-service teachers with HRE and those with LRE. Perhaps, pre-service teachers with LRE were less likely to understand the rationale for the course because they did not wish to integrate reading into their future teaching, since they did not enjoy it or experienced the inclusion of reading in their own past instruction.

Predictions about Integration of Reading into Future Instruction

There was a statistically significant difference between the beginning and the end of the semester in the number of pre-service teachers ($N = 124$) who circled "strongly agree" and "agree" for the statement, "My future students will enjoy reading in my classroom" ($F = 7.72$, $df = 2$, $p < .05$). Pre-service teachers ($N = 124$) said that they were likely to read aloud to their future students (mean = 8.14), even though many of them had not been read to by their former teachers in their subject

area (mean = 4.70). This difference was statistically significant ($F = 7.84, df = 2, p < .05$). Participants also said that they were likely to have a classroom library (mean = 8.52), although fewer of them remembered a classroom library kept by former teachers in their subject area (mean = 5.78). This difference was also statistically significant ($F = 4.80, df = 2, p < .05$).

At the beginning of the semester, pre-service teachers with HRE, in comparison to those with LRE, circled “strongly agree” more often for the statement, “It is my goal to be a positive reading role model” (See Table 4). When asked if they thought that teachers in their subject area thought it was their goal to be a positive reading role model, more pre-service teachers with HRE, in comparison to those with LRE, circled “strongly agree.” More pre-service teachers with HRE thought that school administrators expected teachers in their subject area to be readers. At the end of the semester, pre-service teachers with HRE had a higher mean for the statement, “It is my goal to be a positive reading role model.” They also had a higher mean for the statement, “My students will know I like to read.” When pre-service teachers ($N = 124$) were asked for advice for future teachers who did not like to read themselves, they suggested “start” and “be honest” (44.35%). When asked at the beginning and end of the semester if they thought it likely that they would use what they learned in the content area literacy course in their student teaching, pre-service teachers with HRE, in comparison to those with LRE, had a higher mean both pre and post semester.

Table 4. *Predictions about Integration of Reading into Future Instruction*

	% HRE	% LRE
“It is my goal to be a positive reading role model” (strongly agree/agree) pre semester	59.09	25.00
Pre-service teachers believed that teachers in their subject area thought it was their goal to be a positive reading role model (strongly agree)	31.82	11.11
Pre-service teachers believed school administrators expected teachers in their subject area to be readers (pre semester)	7.97	7.20
“It is my goal to be a positive reading role model” (post semester)	9.14	7.78
“My students will know I like to read” (post semester)	8.82	7.13
Pre-service teachers believe they will use what they learned in the content area literacy course: pre semester	8.09	6.83
Post semester	8.83	7.97

Implications for Teacher Education

It is possible during a content area literacy course to extend pre-service teachers' reading enthusiasm and instructional know-how, so that pre-service teachers believe that their future students will enjoy reading in their instruction. One explanation for the statistically significant difference may be that pre-service teachers said they were more likely to read aloud to their students than their former teachers read to them. In addition, they said they would have a classroom library in the future, compared to the limited classroom libraries they remembered of former teachers.

Teacher educators need to discuss how to encourage reading among middle and high school students even when other teachers in a subject area are not reading role models, and administrators are not perceived to expect it of them. They need to discuss how to find like-minded colleagues to include in their instructional initiatives and reflections (Nieto, 2003).

Conclusions

“What, then, draws one particular group of people to reading as a source of recreation and delight?” (Carlsen & Sherrill, 1988, p. xi). For 30 years, between the mid-1950s to the mid-1980s, Carlsen asked thousands of librarians, English in-service and pre-service teachers to write their reading autobiographies. Carlsen and Sherrill (1998) believed that those who became readers, although they might have grown up in very different circumstances, had remarkably similar reading experiences. These researchers wondered if readers who were engineers, physicians, or lawyers, would have written different autobiographies and then decided that the stories would probably be similar. The current study, which included secondary pre-service teachers from diverse subject areas, suggested that those with High Reading Enjoyment had discovered the joys of reading. In contrast, pre-service teachers with Low Reading Enjoyment did not have this experience. Some students flourish given school reading, some survive school reading to become life-long readers, while others do not. School reading could be the anticipation of reading the next book in the Nancy Drew series. School reading could be the awaited night-time escape and reward that reading affords. As stated previously, teacher educators need to show their secondary pre-service teachers how to set their future students up to enjoy

reading. A teacher's passion makes the difference between an ordinary teacher and a "teacher who opened up a world of the mind to some students who had no one else to make them feel that they were capable of doing great things with test tubes, trumpets, trigonometry, or T. S. Eliot" (Fried, 1995, p. 18). An e-mail from a former secondary content area literacy course student who is now teaching suggests the inclusion of reading in her teaching.

...I am currently teaching chemistry and biology at X High School.... Teaching is going well, although the first year is most certainly a LOT of work. I am trying to put all that you taught us into practice in my classroom, and I already have a small classroom library in place. Hopefully it will grow over the years. (received December 14, 2004)

During the content area literacy course, minds were changed and epiphanies occurred about reading. Two unsolicited e-mails from pre-service teachers suggest this is true.

I just want to let you know how much I enjoyed being in your class. I had never really considered myself a reader until I had taken it. This summer I read 10 books! It may not sound like much, but for me it is amazing. (A music pre-service teacher, received September 2, 2003)

I just wanted to let you know that your [course]...changed my life. Throughout my college years I pretty much stopped reading for pleasure. I always felt like if I was reading that I should be reading one of my textbooks – the effect ended up being that I began to avoid reading at all costs. Once, long ago, I loved to read and you have rekindled that spark in me. (A biology pre-service teacher, received September 26, 2004)

Secondary pre-service teachers are encouraged to reflect upon their past positive reading experiences and attempt to recreate those experiences for their future students. Adolescents need teachers who are enthusiastic readers and know how to foster the love of reading. At the same time, teachers who have had negative reading experiences need to talk to their students about these feelings and experiences. These pre-service teachers must promise themselves not to repeat negative reading experiences in their instruction.



Appendix

Pre-Semester Survey Questions I

Numbers 1 through 6 are based on a Likert Scale from 1 - 10

(Strongly disagree = 1; Strongly agree = 10)

1. I can see the rationale for this course.
2. Throughout my life I have enjoyed reading.
3. Teachers in middle and high school classes in my content area typically read aloud to students.
4. Teachers in middle and high school classes in my content area typically have their own classroom libraries.
5. I believe that my junior and senior high school teachers liked to read.
6. I think that it is likely that I will use what I learn in this course in my student teaching.
7. I think my future students will enjoy the reading in my class.
8. Where do you like to read?
9. I would rather _____ than read.
10. I would rather read than _____.
11. If you were given a \$100 gift certificate from a bookstore, what would you buy?

Mid-semester Survey Questions

1. To what extent do you think of yourself as a reader?
2. Please explain your answer to question 1.
3. It is my goal to be a positive reading role model for my future students.
Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree
4. How much do you agree that most teachers in your subject area believe it is their job to be a positive reading role model for their students?
Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree
5. If your answers for 3 and 4 are not the same, please explain why they are different.
6. Where do you get your books, magazines, newspapers, and other reading material?

(Check all that apply) __bookstore __online __library __other
(where?)_____

7. Are you enrolled in the field experience course? Yes/No
9. What percent of your middle and high school teachers in your subject area, based on the evidence that you recall, would you say enjoyed reading themselves? (Please circle one). 0% 1-20% 21-40% 61-80% 81-99% 100% I have no idea
10. On the first day of class, a question of the survey asked, on a scale from 1-10 (Strongly disagree = 1; Strongly agree = 10), for you to rate this statement: "Teachers in middle and high school classes in my content area typically read aloud to students." You rated this statement a _____
_____ Based on the reading aloud that you recalled by middle and high school teachers in your subject area, why did they read aloud to the class? (Check as many as apply)
_____ To promote interest
_____ To promote focus and attention of students
_____ Because some students in the class couldn't read well or were unlikely to read, if not read to, by the teacher
_____ Other reason (Please describe):
11. Have you read anything in the past month for pleasure? Yes/No
 - a. If yes, why would you classify it as pleasure reading?
 - b. If no, what would it take to get you to read for pleasure?
12. Who (what) was the most positive influence on you as a reader? (Please just circle one).
Mother Father Grandfather Grandmother Sister Brother Other
Elementary teacher Middle school teacher High school teacher College Prof
- 12a. Why do you say that?
13. Who (what) was the most negative influence on you as a reader? (Please just circle one).
Mother Father Grandfather Grandmother Sister Brother Other
Elementary teacher Middle school teacher High school teacher College Prof
- 13a. Why do you say that?

14. Have you ever shared something that you read with a friend or family member?
Yes/No
If yes, tell me about one example of what it was that you shared and why you shared it.
15. Have you ever shared something that you read with a middle/high school student?
If yes, tell me about one example of what it was that you shared and why you shared it.
16. On a scale from 1-10 (1 = strongly disagree; 10 = strongly agree), respond to this statement: "School administrators expect teachers in my subject area to be readers."
17. Please fill in the blanks for this statement with what comes to your mind:
If I read more, I think I would be _____.
18. How often do you read the following for pleasure in your subject area (on the average during the school year and vacations)? Please circle one for each.
 - A. Tradebooks: Everyday, more than once a week, once a week, twice a month, once a month, a few times a year, once a year, less than once a year.
 - B. Magazines: Everyday, more than once a week, once a week, twice a month, once a month, a few times a year, once a year, less than once a year.
 - C. Newspapers: Everyday, more than once a week, once a week, twice a month, once a month, a few times a year, once a year, less than once a year.
 - D. Internet: Everyday, more than once a week, once a week, twice a month, once a month, a few times a year, once a year, less than once a year.

Post Semester Survey (Based on the same Likert Scale as Pre-Semester Survey)

1. I can understand the rationale for this course.
 - 1a. Please explain your answer to 1.
2. I plan to read aloud to my students.
3. I plan to have a classroom library.
4. I plan to use what I learned in [the content area literacy course] in my student teaching.
5. I think my future students will enjoy the reading in my class.
6. Was there an overlap in personal and required reading in [the content area reading course]? Yes/No If yes, what percent overlapped? _____%
7. I would rather _____ than read.
8. I would rather read than _____.

Follow-up Survey (Based on the same Likert Scale as Pre-Semester Survey)

1. To what extent do you think of yourself as a reader?
2. It is my wish to be a reader.
3. My future students will know that I like to read.
4. It is my goal to be a positive reading role model for my future students.
5. What advice do you have for future teachers, who do not like to read themselves?

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About the Author:

Peggy Daisey is a professor in the Department of Teacher Education at Eastern Michigan University where she teaches secondary content area literacy courses. Her research interests are in secondary content area reading and writing, as well as motivation.

