

7-1-1986

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Recommended Citation

Demos, E. S. (1986). Parents, Schools and HSSR. *Reading Horizons*, 26 (4). Retrieved from https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol26/iss4/8

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PARENTS, SCHOOLS AND HSSR

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Many educators have become very enthusiastic about parental involvement. The reasons are numerous, but the first years of the eighties have provided much attention to the schools in the form of commission reports and media publicity. There seems to be a growing interest across the nation to involve the community and parents in school programs.

Because of the varied levels of skills that parents possess and the changing family structures in this country, the schools must develop parent involvement programs that take these factors into consideration (Institute for Parent Involvement, 1980).

As parents become more involved in the schools and as schools strive to involve parents in meaningful ways and extend the work that is done in schools, educators should look at promising educational practices that can be reinforced in the home environment.

One of these reinforcing, supportive activities that are feasible for all parents and children, yet do not require instructional technology, is Sustained Silent Reading, which has been effectively utilized in schools.

Sustained Silent Reading

Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) sometimes referred to as Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading or USSR (Hunt, 1967) has been incorporated into school reading programs across the nation since the 1970's. Teachers, students, custodians, secretaries and principals have picked up books and read for twenty to thirty minutes daily.

Moore, Jones and Miller (1980) summarized the research over a decade and reported both positive effects on student attitudes toward reading and positive effects on reading ability when SSR was combined with regular classroom reading instruction. Adding further support to this school practice, Allington (1975) encouraged teachers to allow remedial readers the opportunity for reading increased amounts of contextual material rather than supporting the practice of heavier doses of skill instruction for those students. He rationalized that remedial or corrective readers seldom have the opportunity to apply the reading skills they learn and will never become fluent readers if not given the time to engage themselves with stories and books.

Smith (1980) contends that children enter school with both a desire and eagerness to learn to read, but the skill development focus of many reading programs detracts from promoting a love for reading.

Home Sustained Silent Reading

SSR can be easily implemented by parents in their homes. The new version, Home Sustained Silent Reading, can be used to promote a love for reading that involves parents and extends into the home to provide additional support for children and a common goal for home and school.

A number of reasons can be cited for concentrating upon this type of program. First, because students do not read outside the school setting, HSSR is viewed as an effective program for extending reading opportunities. Second, this additional practice and application opportunity is supportive to the efforts of the schools. Third, this concept can help promote lifelong learning, interest and enjoyment in reading, and lastly this procedure can involve most parents.

To begin this program, several activities should occur toward implementation. A general orientation should be held for parents. The PTA and school could jointly host such a meeting. A letter detailing the purposes and procedures should be sent to parents who cannot attend that session.

Realizing that all homes may not be equipped with sufficient reading materials, every effort should be made to include the public library in any initial effort. A second implementing step for this program could be to ensure that every family obtain a library card.

Thirdly, parents must be encouraged to set aside a fixed period of time for the silent reading that will occur. Possibly twenty minutes before night time television viewing or right after homework is completed--whatever works best for everyone. During HSSR, tell parents to take the phone off the hook. This will provide for fewer outside interruptions.

Fourth, just as teachers serve as models in school SSR programs, parents must also serve as models in HSSR. They should be reading right along with their children. It's a great time for parents to get into those novels they have been wanting to read or to get caught up in their professional reading.

Fifth, everyone must read. Strongly encourage parents to invite all members to participate in this activity. Because of increasingly busy schedules, this may be the only time that everyone in the family can be assembled in one place at one time.

Sixth, advise parents not to require their children to report on what they've read. We don't want to make this another homework assignment, but a period to enjoy what is being read.

Encourage parents to call the school with any questions they might have about HSSR.

Summary

This effort can be utilized to involve parents in a school wide reading project that can serve to reinforce



children's application of the skills they have learned in school.

Just as most students, teachers and administrators seem enthusiastic about SSR, HSSR may have the same positive effects. The quieting effect of HSSR may give some families the only relaxation and quiet they have during the day. But if HSSR can support the development of attitudes and habits conducive to lifelong learning and reading for enjoyment, it will have added much to students, parents and schools.

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