Grade 9 Students’ Perceptions of the Impact of a Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R.) Program

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Abstract

Educators continually look for strategies to enhance and improve the reading practices of their students. This is an especially challenging task for secondary level teachers as high school students often lack intrinsic motivation to read for pleasure (Bucher & Manning, 2004; Horton, 2005; Woolcott, Research Pty. Ltd. 2001). The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of the Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R.) program on writing, on reading, and on grades, from the perspective of eight Grade 9 students. Of particular interest were the students’ perceptions of the effect that participation in the program had on their grades, their writing, their motivation to reading, and their concept of themselves as readers. The eight participants were tracked over the course of a semester. Using qualitative research techniques, data were collected from four sources: two student surveys, researcher’s daily field observations, students’ weekly reading logs, and three open-ended one-on-one interviews. In order to gain an understanding of the impact of the D.E.A.R program, the data were corroborated, and analyzed with NVivo: N7 (2006). From the data analysis, five themes emerged as a function of the Grade 9 students’ experiences in the D.E.A.R. program: Reading Preferences, Time Spent Reading, Making Associations with Reading for Pleasure, Perceptions of Self-as-Reader, and Evaluations of the D.E.A.R Program. In the interest of supporting students’ positive reading habits and for the future implementation, these five themes are presented as a series of findings together with recommendations for practice.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This study served as a qualitative inquiry of grade 9 students’ perceptions of the Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R.) program. D.E.A.R. is a reading initiative that places emphasis on students’ reading for pleasure and gives students time during the school day to read the literature of their choice (Farrell, 1997; Gardner, 2003). During D.E.A.R. time, it is common for the entire school (students, teachers, administrators, secretaries, and custodians) to halt their daily activities and read (Cumming, 1997). When schools engage in D.E.A.R. time, it is assumed that everyone is engaged in reading for pure enjoyment (Farrell, 1997). Reading programs with goals similar to D.E.A.R. have existed for several decades and include Sustained Silent Reading (S.S.R.; McCracken, 1971), Uninterrupted sustained silent reading (U.S.S.R; Kornlley and Smith, 1993), and Informal Reading Inventories (IRIs; Hunt, 1996-7). These reading programs seek to provide students with both the opportunity and the environment to foster silent reading for pleasure. At the school site where this study was conducted, the goal of the D.E.A.R. program was to provide opportunities for students to establish healthy reading habits. This goal is in keeping with the current emphasis on literacy initiatives within the Province of Ontario.

In 1996, the provincial government established the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) with a mandate for designing, conducting, and reporting on curriculum-based assessments for students in publicly funded Ontario schools. Initially, the EQAO used the term, “literacy,” to indicate the reading and writing skills of students; today, mathematics is also a literacy component. Collectively, among educators, literacy is at the forefront of the curriculum: “No one questions the importance of
literacy; it is one of the measures most frequently used to predict the economic potential of nations, the general well-being of communities, and the personal success of individuals" (EQAO, 2006).

Even though there is consensus among a great majority of educators that students' literacy acquisition is at the forefront of the curriculum, the Ministry of Education and Training (2006) recognizes that there is a problem with adolescent students leaving school early with inadequate reading and writing skills. Specifically, "Statistics Canada found that the 15-year-olds who are leaving school early, have low literacy scores" (EQAO, 2006). On June 16, 2006, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty announced that the provincial government would increase "funding for school libraries in an effort to improve students' reading skills so that every student can reach their full potential" (Ministry of Education and Training). This study explored a program that sought to make use of such literature resources and focused on enhancing the reading habits of adolescents.

In fact, across the Province of Ontario, literacy programs are being implemented for the purpose of enhancing adolescent students' reading and writing skills. A commonly referred to matrix for these skills are the results from the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT). The OSSLT is a large-scale literacy assessment that is administered annually to Ontario's grade 10 students (EQAO, 2006). At a secondary school in Southern Ontario, an after school remedial program has been operating with the aim of improving students' OSSLT scores (EQAO). The program dubbed, The Personal Touch, is for students with weaknesses in literacy skills as defined by their OSSLT scores. Students attended voluntarily twice a week, and were taught by trained teachers
using individualized materials that appeal to the students’ reading interests. Students also received direct instruction using graphic organizers to build vocabulary and reading comprehension. After a year, students who attended The Personal Touch program rewrote the reading component of the OSSLT and demonstrated an increased overall success rate from 60% to 74% (EQAO). Despite the lack of empirical research to support the claim, school board administration attributed students’ success to their participation in The Personal Touch program. Other locales, such as a secondary school in a school board in southern Ontario have successfully piloted programs aimed at improving literacy skills (EQAO, 2007). This program, called Assessment for Improvement Project (AIP), has a cross-curricular approach and components of a D.E.A.R. program.

Research suggests that adolescents with basic literacy skills need an innovative and flexible school environment to support their needs (Gourthro, Griffore, & Armstrong, 2003; Taylor & Nesheim, 2000). Programs, such as D.E.A.R., may be considered viable for providing students with the environment and the time to read. In this study, specific attention was paid to grade 9 students’ perceptions of the effect that the D.E.A.R. program had on their grades and reading acumen. As well, in Chapter Four, there will be documentation regarding what the students in the study were most interested in reading, and how much of that literature they read during D.E.A.R.

Background of the Problem

The premise of the D.E.A.R. program is that every student engages in reading during a designated period of time. There is an assumption that everyone in the school has the ability to read and that all members of the school community will be reading during D.E.A.R. This is a “one-size-fits-all” approach in which there is no support for
those students who, because they may struggle with the process of reading, are hesitant to read during D.E.A.R. In this way, the D.E.A.R. program subsumes that all participating students possess the ability to read—this is not always the case as there are middle school and high school students who are unable to read (Elley, 1994; Gourthro et al., 2003). During D.E.A.R. time, students who struggle with reading may not experience the same level of comfort as students who do not struggle with reading. These students may be self-conscious of the basic reading level of the literature that they are reading. Adolescents with reading difficulties must be given instructions and feedback that heighten both their desire to read and reading comprehension (Booth, Green, & Booth 2004); Gourthro et al. point out that struggling adolescent readers respond positively to teachers who care about them, encourage them, treat them as individuals, and are fair and respectful. In this study, it was a point of particular interest to capture the impressions of grade 9 students, of varying reading adeptness, as they dropped everything and read alongside their peers and without intervention from a teacher.

The underlying premise of the D.E.A.R. program is that when students are regularly provided with the opportunity and the environment to read for fun they will attain high academic success (Cumming, 1997; Farrell, 1997). However, do all students take full advantage of the opportunities given to them to read? If they diligently engage in reading activities during D.E.A.R. time, does this always contribute to academic success? Within the D.E.A.R. program, students are not provided with any instruction or feedback—only reading time and the reading environment are provided. To suggest that high school students will apply themselves during this time and demonstrate intrinsic motivation to read, conjures up consideration. As an illustration, Rousseau (1979) stated, “a badly
instructed child is farther from wisdom than the one who has not been instructed at all” (p. 107). Tyler (1975) pointed out that students must view education as being relevant and suggested that programs be evaluated for relevancy to education.

**Statement of the Problem**

The problem in this study was how to access the perceptions of grade 9 students of a *D.E.A.R.* program and depict the effects that they believed their participation in this program had on their grades, their motivation to read, and their concept of themselves as readers.

Assessment and evaluation are not required components of a *D.E.A.R.* program. During *D.E.A.R.* time, students silently read literature of their choice without credible documentation of what they were reading. The principle behind this practice was the claim that when students engage in activities they enjoyed, the potential for learning increased. Herein lies an issue that spawned questions: Is reading an enjoyable activity for all students? Do all students willfully engage in reading and see the benefits of reading? If students are not enjoying the reading that they are engaged in, will their motivation to continue that activity drop off and will it become difficult to keep them engaged in that activity?

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the impact and effects of the *Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R.)* program through grade 9 students’ reported perceptions and experiences. To capture the students’ experiences and understanding of the impact of the *D.E.A.R.* program, students’ perspectives of their experiences were gathered through qualitative research methods and the representative data were analyzed.
These analyses will be presented in Chapter Four, with implications for practice in Chapter Five. Recommendations for the purposes of implementation of a D.E.A.R. program will be offered for school boards and teachers who are engaged in or considering commencement of a D.E.A.R. program.

**Research Questions**

Students need opportunities to exert themselves as fluent and independent readers by breaking away from the scaffolding activities that supported them as emergent readers (Pilgreen, 2000). A goal of a D.E.A.R. program is for all students to achieve voluntary reading (Cooke, 2006). Additionally, it should be the goal of all programs for struggling secondary readers to move toward independent self-sustained reading. This qualitative study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Where do grade 9 male and female students who are in a D.E.A.R. program prefer to read for pleasure and what are the types of literature and their reading topics of choice?

2. After a semester in D.E.A.R., do students spend more time on task reading and accomplish more reading?

3. What are grade 9 students' perceptions of the D.E.A.R. program as having an effect on their grades and their reading and writing abilities?

4. How do grade 9 students who are in a D.E.A.R. program perceive themselves as readers?

5. How do grade 9 students evaluate the benefits of the D.E.A.R. program?
Rationale

In order to obtain an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), a student must: earn 18 compulsory credits; 12 optional credits; complete 40 hours of community involvement activities; and successfully complete the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT; Ministry of Education and Training, 2006). The Ministry of Education mandates that the curriculum expectations of credit courses be assessed according to categories that relate to levels of achievement from level 1 to 4. Level 3 (70–79%) is set as the provincial standard (Ministry of Education, Program Planning and Assessment, 2000).

EQAO reports show that at the site where the study was conducted, over 85% of the students passed the literacy test (OSLT) in 2004-2005. Less than 70%, however, passed the OSSLT at or above the provincial standard (Ministry of Education and Training, 2006; EQAO, 2006). It was the goal of the local school board that over 80% of the students pass the OSSLT at or above the provincial standard in the 2006–2007 school year. The D.E.A.R. program has been one of the initiatives implemented at the site of this study that is aimed at enhancing students’ reading skills and moving towards attaining the school board’s goal.

At this site, I am a Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT) and a member of the school literacy team with the added responsibility of preparing grade 10 students for the writing of the OSSLT. Faced with the conundrum of trying to understand the impact of D.E.A.R. on the students who will write the OSSLT in their grade 10 year, it became apparent to me that an investigation needed to be conducted to determine the effects of the Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R.) from the perspectives of grade 9 students.
In the EQAO (2006) report, it is stated that since the OSSLT was first administered almost a decade ago, female students' scores have been higher than the male students by 10%. Since the male students lag behind the female students in literacy achievement, it is important to gather the perspectives of both and document the different perceptions that each gender has of themselves as readers. In this study, through open-ended interviews, questionnaires, and observation, insights were gathered on male and female students' perceptions of their reading habits. Further, this research explored the impressions that these grade 9 students hold with respect to the impact that a mandatory D.E.A.R. program has on their reading skills and grades.

**Theoretical Framework of the Study**

This study examined eight grade 9 students' perceptions of D.E.A.R. as a program, and how the D.E.A.R. program was facilitated in their classroom. Inherently, the D.E.A.R. program has an unstructured curriculum and a pedagogy that positions the teacher as a model of reading for pleasure. This research captured both the curricular and pedagogical perspectives of the student participants. The D.E.A.R. curriculum and pedagogy were viewed through lenses shaped by the researcher's personal philosophies of education and professional experience in education. Consequently, the researcher deems it necessary to point out that the framework for this study is biased by the researcher's personal philosophy of education.

The researcher's philosophy of education has been influenced by the writings of Rousseau, and Dewey. Dewey's pragmatism and reflective attention theories have been the most influential on the researcher's approach to education and ultimately the theoretical framework for this study. Here, the word, pragmatism, denotes a problem
solving approach to teaching. For the pragmatist, ultimate reality is the resolution of conflict, the overcoming of difficulty, the facing of change—in short, it is problem-solving (Coulter 2003; Smith, 1965). It must be noted that although the theoretical framework for this study is influenced by Dewey’s problem solving theories, it is not the intent of this researcher to portray Dewey as a one-dimensional philosopher. According to Dewey (1989), education occurs when the mind engages matter in a problem situation. Growth of the student is a result of his/her interaction with the environment. Learning does not occur when subject matter is simply poured into ‘empty’ heads; rather, learning is the result of the learner’s efforts to gain control of his or own experience.

The participants in this study interacted in an environment where they were in control of their own experience; subject matter was not poured into their heads. This is an underpinning of the D.E.A.R. program as little emphasis is placed on the reading material, but rather, emphasis shifts to the tone of the reading environment and the inclusiveness of modeling good reading habits. It is understood in this environment that everyone stops what they are doing and silently reads something the tone is set by the action that everyone is doing the same thing. With a pragmatic focus, my aim in this study was to investigate the students’ perception of this pedagogy and the benefits derived from the impact of the D.E.A.R. program.

Dewey (1977) claims, “A person who has gained the power of reflective attention, the power to hold problems, questions, before the mind, is, in so far, intellectually speaking, educated” (p.202). For Rousseau (1979), there are three types of education, the education that comes from nature, from things, and from men; we are well educated only if these three are in harmony. According to Rousseau, the education of nature is beyond
our control as it includes the development of organs and faculties through the process of maturation. The education of things is partially in our power, and includes human experiences with objects and the influence of the environment. The education of men is the primary means by which humans learn and grow through instruction and counsel (Rousseau). Since reading requires reflective connections to nature, things, and man, and D.E.A.R. provides students with the opportunity and the time to read, then it may follow that the students will experience intellectual growth. With a pragmatic focus, my aim in this study was to investigate the students’ perception of this pedagogy and the benefits derived from the impact of the D.E.A.R. program.

Through the implementation of a D.E.A.R. program, students are provided with the opportunity and the environment to participate in reading activities. In keeping with previous findings, evidence suggests that students who read frequently are more likely to achieve higher grades than students who read less frequently (Cumming 1997; Elley, 1994; Farrell, 1997; Gourthro et al., 2003). The assumption is that if everyone in the school drops everything and reads for 17 minutes a day, the frequency of students’ reading, and the modeling of reading that is demonstrated by staff and teachers will ultimately translate into higher achievement for all students.

The fundamental ideology of D.E.A.R. is such that students participate in reading activities without extrinsic motivators or positive reinforcement from their teachers. Furthermore, students are rarely given the opportunity to share their feedback around participating in the D.E.A.R. experience. This research held three significances. First, this study aimed to illustrate grade 9 students’ perceptions of a D.E.A.R. program. This study gave students a chance for their voices to be heard—this is noteworthy as often
curriculum and programs are implemented without gaining the input of students. Second, this study revealed the types of literature and how much material these students read when they were given the opportunity and the environment to read for pleasure. For these eight student participants, this may be the first time that they independently commented on a school curriculum. Given the premise of D.E.A.R., these students received no directions, no assessment, and no evaluation during D.E.A.R. In D.E.A.R., students were free to choose the literature they liked to read, and they read at whatever pace they wanted to or were capable of reading. Third, based on the findings from this study, recommendations for educators with respect to the reading behaviours of grade 9 students are offered in Chapter Five. These recommendations hold a certain degree of authenticity as they are based on the perspectives and experiences of grade 9 students.

**Scope and Limitations of the Study**

The findings of this research are dependent on the grade 9 students' abilities to articulate their perceptions of the D.E.A.R. program. To ascertain the students' perceptions, it required the students to divulge information during open-ended interviews and questionnaires. Students, who are not verbal, may not have elaborated on open-ended questions that required them to speak for extended periods of time. This, no doubt, may have contributed to the "iceberg effect" (Sanders, 1991). In this study, questionnaires were used to collect data that may not be gleaned through open-ended interviews. However, for the students with poor literacy communication skills, these questionnaires may prove ineffective for gathering information about their reading habits. These limitations that relate to students' ability to articulate their perceptions were considered in the discussion of this research.
The students’ levels of motivation and cooperation were vital to the credibility of the findings in this study. Although the researcher took necessary steps to stimulate and encourage clear and precise responses, some of the questions may have posed some communication limitations for the ESL student participant.

The sample size for this study was relatively small, and the data collected from eight participants do not necessarily represent all grade 9 students. Therefore, it must be noted that although it is possible for some generalizations to be made based on the findings of this study, this research is limited to the students in this sample.

Clarification of Terms

This research study will explore students’ perceptions of their reading behaviours and their concept of themselves as readers. Perception being inherently audacious, is positioned in Dewey’s (1989) notion that to perceive is more than just to recognize, as the past is carried into the present. “Perceptions supply judgment with its material, whether the judgments pertain to physical nature, to politics or biography” (Dewey, p.13).

For the purposes of this study, pedagogy will refer to “the integration of practice of particular curriculum content and design, classroom strategies and techniques, and evaluation, purpose, and methods” (McLaren, 2003, p.187). Based on Tyler (1975), for this examination of the D.E.A.R. program, curriculum, will be any course or program designed to meet the needs of a target group of students. Further, curriculum, “is considered to be everything that transpires in the planning, teaching, and learning in an educational institution” (Tyler, p. 17). Reading behaviours are the students’ interactions with written language for the purpose of making meaning (Booth et al., 2004).
Reading literacy is “the ability to understand and use those written language forms that are required by society and/or valued by the individual” (Elley, 1994, p.5). The understanding of basic language rules of phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics are necessary requirements for reading written text (Santrock, Woloshyn, Gallagher, Di Petta, & Marini, 2007).

For the purpose of the study, students with an IEP, are those students whom an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) has formally identified and an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is in place. Students who are English as a second language (ESL) are those students who have been identified formally by the school as speaking two languages-English is not their first language.

Outline of Remainder of Document

Chapter Two provides for the reader a summary of the literature that is relevant to this ethnographic study. The review begins with a brief historical overview of reading pedagogy and curriculum that has been predominantly driven by research and educational trends in the United States. The second section of this chapter provides background information on students’ behaviours and habits including their reading motivation, reading interests, and comprehension. The third section of this chapter is a synopsis of trends in students’ reading interests. Finally, a description and review of the Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R.) program pedagogy, curriculum, and influence on student readers is given.

Chapter Three describes the research design of this study and the steps followed to recruit and select student participants. The instrumentation development process and data gathering steps are described in detail, along with the methodology used for data
recording and analyses. The chapter also recounts the actions taken to ensure the credibility of the findings. The methodological assumptions of this investigation and the limitations are presented together with steps taken to safeguard the participants’ privacy and to comply with the school board and Brock University research ethics requirements.

Chapter Four presents the research data and results of the data analysis. The five themes that emerged with the aid of *NVivo: N7* (2006) are discussed. First, students’ “Reading Preferences” including their likes and dislikes regarding what they read and where they liked to read are discussed. The discussion then shifts to “Time Spent Reading” which is the material the student participants chose to read in a location of their choice. “Making Associations with Reading for Pleasure” to other skills and accomplishments, such as getting good grades, are discussed next. This is followed by the student participants’ “Perceptions of Self-as-Reader.” Next, the student participants “Evaluations of the *D.E.A.R.* Program” are discussed. Finally, a summary of the chapter concludes Chapter Four.

Chapter Five brings the investigation to its conclusion with a summary of the study. In this section, the reader is presented with a brief overview of the overall design of this investigation, the data collection and analysis strategies, and the results of this study. The summary is followed by a discussion of the findings and results as they relate to the literature reviewed for this study. Chapter Five also highlights the possible implications for practice, implications for theory, and the implications for further research. Finally, this chapter finishes with an overall conclusion of the study.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter will provide a summary of the literature that is relevant to this ethnographic study. The review will begin with a historical overview of reading pedagogy and curriculum. This review will be presented in light of the competing theoretical perspectives over the past century. Over this time period, reading pedagogy and curriculum have been predominantly driven by research and educational trends in the United States. The second section of this chapter provides background information on students’ behaviours and habits including their reading motivation, interests, and comprehension. The third section of this chapter is a synopsis of trends in reading interests. Finally, there will be a description of the program that is the focus of this research, Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R). The pedagogy, curriculum, and influence of D.E.A.R. on student readers will be reviewed.

Section One

Section One presents a brief historical overview of reading pedagogy and curriculum that has been predominantly driven by research and educational trends in the United States. Particular attention is paid to the shift form oral reading instruction to favour silent reading methods and from the cognitive approaches to the behaviour approaches.

Reading Pedagogical Approaches: Beginning of the 20th Century

Teaching reading in an alphabetic language dates back to the educators of ancient Greece and Rome. Greek and Roman teachers drilled their students in reciting the alphabet, pronouncing syllables and spelling and memorizing word lists in preparation for reading text (Sadoski, 2004, p.14). This reading pedagogy continued into the 19th century
Europe with few modifications. In America in the mid 1800s, the whole word and the phonics methods that prevail today, first gained popularity among educators (Sadoski).

In Canada, and in particular, in Ontario, the School Act of 1846 made an impact on how teachers practiced (Contento, 1993). Reading and writing skills were taught with a humanistic approach. Teachers focused on maintaining proper order and discipline and paid strict attention to the teaching of moral behaviour. A byproduct of this increasingly centralized school system was the use of uniform textbooks and reading materials (Contento).

In the early 20th century, reading pedagogy utilized structured text materials (Sadoski, 2004). Instructional importance was placed on reading comprehension with an emphasis on appreciation of religious and literary text. The act of reading was regarded as a cognitive process and not merely memorization of letter sounds and oral expression. Also, during this time, standardized testing in reading began as a form of reading instruction effect. "This period was marked by scientific investigation into reading because measurement of effectiveness of methods, materials, and practices could now be done with a degree of scientific objectivity" (Sadoski, pp.28-29). Researchers, such as Buswell (1922), Huey (1908), and Thorndike (1917) became interested in the investigation of reading pedagogy (Alexander & Fox, cited in Ruddell & Unrau, 2004). The use of tests also revealed that wide differences in reading ability existed in any grade, and a concern for individual differences began to emerge. However, it was not until later in the 20th century that reading became a dedicated field of study with systematic programs of research aimed at ascertaining the processes of reading acquisition and honing reading instruction (Ruddell & Unrau).
In North America up to the 1920s, oral reading instruction methods were prominent. Teachers required students to recite passages out loud and there was emphasis on teaching the mechanics of reading (Sadoski, 2004). Then a shift occurred to favor silent reading methods. This change in preferred reading pedagogy from oral to silent reading methods was "perhaps the most drastic change in method that had ever taken place" (Smith cited in, Sadoski. 2004, p.29). Now reading teachers were concerned about the development of students' attitudes, interests, and preferences. It was their goal to stimulate students' efficient thinking, informative learning, and appreciation through text (Sadoski). Consequently, curriculum documents reflected this pedagogical shift with students being required to read a variety of materials including nonfiction texts (Sadoski).

During this period, commercial basal readers became popular. These books were a graded series of readers and used as the foundation for reading instruction. Students were given practice in a sequence of skills carefully planned and set out in a prescribed and controlled series of stories. The stories emphasized childhood experiences more than moral tales. Basal readers became an essential curricular resource to teach reading (Allington & McGill-Franzen, cited in Ruddell & Unrau, 2004).

There was a significant competing pedagogical framework that emerged out of the era spanning the 1800s to the 1930s. This school of thought was the activity movement and it was advanced by educators, such as Francis Parker and John Dewey (cited in Sadoski, 2004). These educators held that learning to read was best facilitated in an atmosphere of purposeful, child-centered exploration, experience, and activity with language. The activity approach grew in popularity in the early 20th century, but there were few schools that ascribed to operate solely on this pedagogical framework. In
practice, the use of language experience stories became supplementary to basal readers.

The reading instructional approach that prevailed beyond the 1930s was a skills approach model. With this model, distinctions were made between teaching students word recognition, comprehension, and appreciation for literature. Reading pedagogy included levels of instruction beginning with word perception in which students decoded and derived meaning from words. Then, students received instruction in comprehension and the evaluation of the author's ideas. Finally, reading teachers facilitated students' assimilation of existing knowledge and newly acquired information.

*Reading Pedagogical Approaches: 1920s to 1960*

In the period following World War II, there was a marked increase in the school student population (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004). Not surprisingly, this increase brought about a rise in the documented number of children experiencing reading difficulties. There was growing public pressure on the educational community to address the reading acquisition needs of students (Ruddell & Unrau). This tone of discontent was central in Rudolf Flesch's (1955) *Why Johnny Can't Read and What You Can Do about It*. This publication ushered in new debate between reading pedagogies. Alexander and Fox (cited in Ruddell & Unrau) stated that "Flesch attacked the prevailing look-say [or whole word] method of reading instruction as a contributor to the reading problems experienced by many U.S. students" (p. 34). Instead, he advocated for phonics-based reading pedagogies (Sadoski, 2004).

Consequently, books, such as *The New Fun With Dick and Jane* (Gray, Artley, & Arbuthnot, 1951), that espoused the whole word approach, gave way to controlled vocabulary readers and synthetic phonics drill and practice with such resources as the
Behaviourism Orientation

In the late 1950s and 1960s, the prevailing influences of behavioristic theories in education gained prominence. Skinnerian behaviourism, the prevailing research orientation of the time, guided the direction of reading research and pedagogy. Reading was conceptualized as a conditioned behaviour and a process susceptible to programming (Goetz, Alexander, & Ash, 1992, cited in Ruddell & Unrau, 2004). In accordance with behaviourism, learning to read was not regarded as a developmental process. Reading pedagogy focused on providing students with curricular materials and environmental influences that would assist them to acquire reading behaviours.

Reading Pedagogical Approaches: 1960s to 1980s

By the mid-1960s, there were alternative theories of reading instruction to Skinnerian behaviourism. Ironically, James (1890, cited in Ruddell & Unrau, 2004) had theorized almost 70 years prior to this that “reading would be best described as a mindful habit. As such, reading would be best examined through a psychological lens via introspection rather than through the behaviourists' physiological lens of observation of measurable behaviours” (p.36). Reading pedagogy in the 1960s emerged and valued introspection and self-questioning as effective tools for uncovering the process of reading.

During this period, Chomsky (1965; 1975) was an influential theorist writing about language acquisition and reading development. Chomsky (cited in Ruddell & Unrau, 2004) was influenced by the emerging research in neuroscience and cognitive
science:

It was assumed that human beings were biologically programmed to acquire language under favourable conditions ... In this new era of reading research, the conceptualization that served as the formative stance was of learning as a natural process. Language, as with other innate human capacities, was to be developed through meaningful use, not practiced to the point of mindless reaction, as behaviourists proposed (p. 38).

Chomsky “saw unquestionable relations between the universality of neurological structures and the universality of grammatical structures” (cited in Ruddell & Unrau, p. 39). These connections contributed to the emergence of a number of reading pedagogies (Sadoski, 2004).

Among them, the Language Experience Approach utilized transcriptions of students' oral language as material for reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The Modified Alphabet Approach used additional alphabet characters and diacritical marks to increase the correspondence between the 26 traditional English letters and the 44 speech sounds used in English. The Modified Alphabet method was used in beginning reading books that gradually phased into the traditional alphabet. By contrast, Linguistic Approaches immersed beginning readers in easily decodable words that were grouped into word families (e.g., mat, mat, mat, etc.). Programmed Reading was an instructional approach in which reading tasks were broken into sequential parts to which the reader responded, received immediate feedback, and frequent criterion-referenced testing. Finally, most relevant to the current study of D.E.A.R. was the Individualized Reading Approach. This approach emphasized student self-selection of reading materials,
usually from a classroom library of children's books, and self-pacing in reading progress. As part of this approach, the teacher holds individual conferences with students regularly for teaching, evaluation, and small-group work.

*Reading Pedagogical Approaches: End of the 20th Century*

By the end of the 20th century, the reading pedagogy pendulum had now moved back to favour decoding as a method for teaching beginning reading (Sadoski, 2004) alongside approaches that are based on constructivist principles for established readers. Earlier information processing approaches to reading pedagogy have been replaced by constructivist approaches that acknowledge learning as individualistic (Anderson, Reder, & Simon, 1996; cited in Ruddell & Unrau, 2004). Currently, reading pedagogy is influenced by the philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1787/1963) in which the role of prior knowledge is an essential component in reading. Kant argued that, all knowledge begins with experience for the purpose of deciphering new experiences. Hence new experiences are dependent on prior- knowledge and without prior-knowledge new experiences will have no meaning. Significant to Kantian prior-knowledge, is the distinction between the sensible world and the intelligible world as varied sources of human knowledge. These sources of knowledge are constructed through the act of engaging with text in an individual and personal way. This is a premise of the *D.E.A.R.* program that will be investigated in this current research.

**Section Two**

Section Two examines theories related to students' reading behaviours from the prospective of students reading motivation, and comprehension. Of particular interest in
this section are the stages of development of reading levels of comprehension, reading habits, reading behaviours and motivation to read.

Reading Comprehension

Readers, who have mastered the decoding of text, read to comprehend or understand text (Booth et al., 2004). When readers read with comprehension, they are able to interpret symbols as well as internalize accrued meanings and relate to previous knowledge, experiences, and texts. In short, comprehension involves producing a thought analog of printed language (Sadoski, 2004). When students in junior or senior high school read with comprehension, they are fluent and efficient readers (Itzkoff, 1986). Moreover, “comprehension is not only a cognitive process but also an emotional process, and thus, it is difficult to assess” (Booth et al., p. 61).

Literal Level of Comprehension

Comprehension at a literal level involves interpreting and making meaning from printed words. Literal comprehension requires the reader to determine the contextual meaning of sentences (Sadoski, 2004). When are readers able to comprehend at a literal level and derive contextual meaning? Are adolescent readers able to determine the contextual meanings of text and make connections to what the author is saying? Furthermore, is it important to consider how far removed the text is from the reader’s own experiences?

Readers differ in how they use their perspectives to explain readings of literary texts. Readers' responses to text are often reflected their own identities and psychological struggles (Holland, 1975). "A reader responds to a literary work by using it to re-create his own characteristic psychological processes" (Holland, p. 418). This interpretation
highlights the issues and feelings the texts evoke in readers rather than on the actual processes of reading.

There are three styles of reading that capture individuals' characteristic responses to literary texts (Dillon, 1982). The character-action-moral style assumes that meaning is evident in a text and the text is simply an extension of the real world. When readers read with this style of reading, they do not question the artifice of the text or the role of the author. Other readers dig for secrets as their style of reading. These readers focus on looking for the symbolism concealed in the text. Finally, the anthropologists' style is one that considers the cultural backdrop to the work and identifies the cultural values that help explain characters' actions. Students' preferred responses to literary texts affect their responses to text—these response styles will be explored in this current study.

As students engage with literary text, they display distinct transactional qualities (Rosenblatt, 1938/1968, 1978). Generally speaking, there is a distinction between efferent reading of text and reading for information. As one reads expository texts, the focus is on the experiential qualities; whereas, when one reads aesthetic readings, attention is paid to the literary aspects of reading (Rosenblatt, 1938/1968, 1978). The transactions between the reader and the text are of central importance to understand the ways in which readers use their own experiences and background knowledge to make sense of literary works.

A widely used approach for analyzing students' responses to literature has been the Purves-Rippere (1968) framework. Literary responses begin with the readers' perceptions that include their descriptive statements about a text, including literal retellings and summaries. Then, students attempt interpretation and comment on the text to ascribe meaning and try to generalize beyond the text. Thirdly, as a part of the
response, students display engagement-involvement in which they offer statements of emotional reaction and interest to the text. Finally, students' responses to literature should include an evaluation or judgments of the quality of the text. Elementary age students tend to focus primarily on perception in their responses, while adolescents engage in interpretation as the focus of their literary response (Applebee, 1977). There is an expectation that students in the current research will provide interpretative reading responses.

Across the last 2 decades, researchers, such as Flower and Hayes (1980) and Gardner (cited in Virginia Richardson 2003), have captured students' literary responses with techniques, such as think-aloud protocols. Students engaged in think-alouds verbalize their thought processes as they are analyzing text. In this way, educators and researchers are able to follow a reader's responses to literature. In particular, there is a trace of the reader's emerging questions and revised understandings through to his or her final interpretations. This method has been used to create portraits of students' encounters with literary works (Cooper & Holzman, 1983; Langer, 1995). The present research will engage students in a series of interviews and encourage the participants to share their interpretations of the text that they are reading.

A characteristic portrait exists for middle and high school students as they create interpretations of literary works. To build or envision an interpretation, these readers search for clues to orient themselves to a text. In this stage, readers are creating a broad and somewhat superficial understanding of text. Then, adolescent readers call on both personal and textual knowledge to question a text. The readers in this stance are immersed within the world of text as they begin to gain understanding. Next, the
adolescents figuratively step out and rethink what they have come to know from the text. This stance focuses on how text illuminates readers' lives and contributes to their understanding of the world. Finally, the adept adolescent reader begins to focus on the author's craft, features of the literary text that contribute to its power, and text connections to other literary work. This portrait quality is explicitly analytic and objective. At various points in transactions with texts, adolescent readers may move back and forth between these stances. In this way, Langer (1995) emphasizes that these stances are not linear but recursive.

This characteristic portrait of how middle and high school readers create interpretations of literature differs for remedial readers. These readers have difficulty entering the world of text and fail to move beyond a restatement of the words of the text (Purcell-Gates, 1993). Remedial readers engage in fewer dimensions of response, compared to the more engaged readers (Wilhelm, 1997). The current study will gather the perceptions of readers of varying skill levels and examine their perceptions in light of the work of Dillon (1982), Rosenblatt (1938/1968, 1978), Purves & Rippere (1968) and Langer (1995).

Readers' Behaviours, Habits, and Motivation

Most readers pass through characteristic reading behaviour stages as early emergent, developing, fluent, and independent readers (Booth, et al., 2004). Early readers generally enjoy meeting texts when they first enter school. These readers usually enter kindergarten with an orientation to text, such as left-to-right progression, and some basic literacy skills, such as phonemic awareness. Most kindergarten students have had a certain degree of language experience in their home environment. When children have
been read to by family members or caregivers literature represents a sense of pleasure and entertainment for them (Booth et al.). Like early readers, readers at the emergent stage enjoy listening to stories, and associate books with entertainment and information. Emergent readers have syntactic knowledge of text and semantic cueing systems are used to predict events and retell stories. Emergent readers tend to be confident and see themselves as capable of reading (Booth et al.).

The developing reader is able to read some texts independently by blending four cueing systems (pragmatic, semantic, syntactic, and phonographemic). Children in this stage read with comprehension. Developing readers are capable of self-monitoring their reading while identifying and correcting miscues. These readers can substitute words that make sense when they are unsure of the text. At this stage, children enjoy reading silently. Their knowledge and experience in reading allows them to develop personal literary interests and enjoy books by favourite authors, including books in a series. During the developing reading stage, children come to recognize characteristics of various genres (Booth et al., 2004).

Fluent readers have an extensive vocabulary and freedom from the inefficient word analysis of previous stages. These readers read a variety of texts, link new information with existing knowledge, and adjust their style of reading to reflect the text and the reading purpose. This can be a critical stage in reading as some students may begin to lose their motivation to read because they perceive some books are too challenging or they are disinterested in story narratives. At this stage, it is critical for students to have the opportunity to select books that they enjoy and can read successfully. At times, school environments are conforming and limit student choice. Fluent readers
need to confirm reading as an act that entertains them, brings them satisfaction, adds to their knowledge, and is undertaken for genuine reasons (Booth et al., 2004).

Independent readers read text independently and silently, and, they alter their style of reading to reflect the material being read. These independent readers read a range of books, as well as novels, that reflect other cultures, other times, and other ways of looking at the world. These readers are able to monitor their reading for understanding and they are capable of interpreting complex plots and characterization. Independent readers need to be challenged to take on complex fiction and nonfiction texts. It is likely that the student participants in the current study will be independent readers (Booth et al., 2004).

Section Three

Section Three provides a synopsis of the trends in reading interests and preferences among the adolescent student reader is provided. The intent of the section is to present a snapshot of what the literature have perceived to be of interest to the adolescent reader.

Adolescents' Reading Interests

There are numerous views regarding adolescents' reading interests (Horton, 2005). One view holds that technological interests have replaced adolescents' interest in reading. Another view claims that boys neither enjoy reading nor are they particularly good at reading (Horton). Others (e.g., Bucher & Manning, 2004) have suggested that growing up with television and video games has influenced adolescent reading interests. In this section of the literature review, the reading interests of adolescents will be explored.
Trends In Reading Interest

In a recent study of the reading interests of youth, Woolcott Research Pty. Ltd. (2001) found that 69% of boys and 80% of girls enjoy reading. They also reported that among children between the ages of 5 and 14 years, 75% of both boys and girls spend time reading for pleasure. Woolcott Research Pty. Ltd. also found that 8 out of 10 young people agree that books are exciting and interesting; 49% of boys and 58% of girls read every day or every few days. Nonetheless, 41% of boys consider reading to be boring, 45% consider it to be “nerdy,” and only 23% think that it is “cool.” Even though reading for pleasure for boys drops from primary to secondary school from 67% to 43%, the same incidence for girls drops even more; from 88% to 48%. The study also found, that two-thirds of both boys and girls would read more if they had more time.

According to the EQAO (2007) survey of grade 10 students, female and male students read nonhomework related text for more than 3 hours per week. The reading literature preferences indicted by both female and male students were: websites, e-mails, chat messages, and magazines. As well, female students rated novels, fictions, and short stories relatively high; whereas, male students did not give these genres a high rating.

Traditionally, secondary school teachers tend to be restrictive and specific with respect to providing students with directions on what they should be reading in school (Koelling, 2005). These recommendations extend to poetry, classic novels, and textbooks. Even though a sizable proportion of these students want to be actively engaged in reading, their reading interests are not always accommodated for in secondary schools (Koelling). For example, some students become hooked on a reading series, such as Harry Potter, or a certain periodical, such as a newspaper or magazine, and these forms
of literature are restricted in the high school English class (McPherson, 2006). Biases are also present in English teachers who do not view graphic novels as 'real' reading literature.

Graphic novels are adventure-oriented and include cartoon-like sketches and speech bubble dialogue. This form of literature has quickly grown in popularity among young adults (Bucher & Manning, 2004) and this popularity has been attributed to the genre's content (McPherson, 2006). For example, from 2001-2003 $75 million to $120 million (Raiteri, 2003). Further, “in libraries we have found that while the graphic novel collection comprises only 1% of the collection, it now accounts for more than 25-30% of circulation” (Heckman, 2004, p.3). For many young adult readers, graphic novels represent a welcome move away from what they consider traditional school reading (Bucher & Manning).

What are the lessons learned with respect to the reading interests of adolescents? The current growth in traditional print-bound graphic literature provides students, teachers, and teacher-librarians with new materials and opportunities for discovering and developing engaging paths toward textual and visual literacy (McPherson, 2006). The school reading environment must include a range of texts and genres, a range of reading level challenges, and appeal to a host of students’ interests (Booth et al., 2004). With this in mind, perhaps, the answer is to support adolescent readers to make their own choices with respect to reading material.
Section Four

This Section Four presents a description and review of the *Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R.)* program pedagogy, curriculum, and expectations resulting from the participation in *D.E.A.R.* influence on student readers.

*Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R.)*

*Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R.)* programs provide the environment and the opportunity for students to read literature of their choice (Farrell, 1997). It is understood that *D.E.A.R.* is a common time for all individuals in an entire school (students, teachers, administrators, secretaries, and custodians) to halt their daily activities and read. When schools engage in *D.E.A.R.* time, it is assumed that everyone is engaged in reading for pure enjoyment (Farrell). Reading programs with goals similar to *D.E.A.R.* have existed for several decades and include *Sustained Silent Reading (S.S.R.)*; McCracken, 1971) and *Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (U.S.S.R.;* Seow, 1999). Despite varying degrees of success in implementation, *D.E.A.R.* is a common reading program, which many schools have used it to promote reading (Seow; p. 1).

*Objectives.* The global objective of sustained silent reading programs, such as *D.E.A.R.*, is to afford students with the opportunity to become fully proficient readers (Pilgreen, 2000). In a review of the literature on *D.E.A.R.* programs, other secondary objectives come to the fore (Seow, 1999). Silent reading programs have the objective to provide students with an adult reading model and emulate a life-long love of reading. It is an objective to provide students with positive experiences with books so that they will establish good reading habits for extensive reading. Silent reading programs tend to seek to expose students to a wide range of literary genres. An ultimate objective is to increase
students' desire to read independently during their free time and increase their concentration when doing so.

Goals. The overarching goal of a D.E.A.R. program is for all students to achieve voluntary reading (Cooke, 2006). Students need opportunities to exert themselves as fluent and independent readers by breaking away from the scaffolding activities that supported them as emergent readers (Pilgreen, 2000). It should be the goal of all programs for struggling secondary readers to move toward independent self-sustained reading. Often these students do not practice reading outside of school and, consequently, they need time to practice reading during the school day. In addition to providing students with reading time, there is the goal of increasing students' abilities to sustain reading for a period of time. Proponents believe that silent reading programs have the potential to help students value reading, become more fluent, and improve their vocabularies and comprehension. (SEDL, 2001). The National Reading Panel (NRP) (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHA], 2000) makes the claim that programs like Sustained Silent Reading merely encourage students to read and do not improve their reading. Thus, it is not clear whether there are conditions under which these practices would promote vocabulary growth, fluency, and/or comprehension.

Pedagogy. Across the 20th century, there has been increased emphasis on silent reading as a viable pedagogy (Sadoski, 2004). Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R.) provides students with that period of time during the school day to silently read with no required assignments or activities related to the reading (Farrell, 1997). Fifteen minutes of dedicated time on a daily basis is ideal to devote to D.E.A.R. (Cooke, 2006).
It is important for teachers to explain to students that while reading out loud is a good idea when you are reading to a group, for the most part in our daily lives reading is done silently (Reynolds, 2006). Both fluent and independent readers are capable of reading without saying words out loud (Booth et al, 2004). Students must understand that during D.E.A.R. it is important that they read silently. Students can be told that silent reading may increase reading comprehension (Booth et al.; Sadoski, 2004). Silent reading may contribute to a reader’s motivation as the reader learns to associate silent reading time as a positive, enjoyable experience (Booth et al.).

*Curriculum.* Initially, students are encouraged to begin reading text that is manageable and enjoyable. The goal is for students to establish the habit of sustained silent reading (Seow, 1999, p. 1). It is important to the success of a D.E.A.R. program that teachers learn strategies for connecting students with books to read freely (Pilgreen, 2000). In addition to this, teachers should have a working knowledge of high quality, age-appropriate literature for middle and high school students. Other than access to a variety of appealing books and the commitment to allocate time for reading, little else is needed for the implementation of programs such as D.E.A.R. (SEDL, 2001).

*Evaluation.* There is documented research on the effectiveness of silent reading programs such as D.E.A.R. (Cunningham & Allington, 2003; Pilgreen, 2000); however, the results are mixed. As well, these studies are often methodologically flawed as in silent reading programs it is rare for students to report on what they have read. Research results from silent reading studies with special populations (struggling readers or ESL students) indicate that more accountability for silent reading material would be helpful to establish valid research methods. Researchers should consider carefully matching student
participants with reading materials and implementing shared readings and group think alouds and discussions.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Research is one of many different ways of knowing or understanding (Mertens, 1998). Through the process of systematic inquiry, data are collected, analyzed, and interpreted in order to understand, describe, predict, or control an educational or psychological phenomenon, or to empower individuals in such contexts. Creswell (1998) defines qualitative research as the “process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem... and conducts the study in a natural setting” (p. 15). Palys (1996) adds that qualitative research is “… inductive reasoning which begins with specifics and uses these to generate general principles. In qualitative research, the inquiry moves from observation to theory rather than from theory to observation” (p. 39). Qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that begins with observation in order to understand phenomena in context-specific settings. For the most part, data collection for this study will be gathered through observation of the participants in their classroom. Consequently, qualitative research methodology is most appropriate for this exploratory study.

Research Design

Goetz and LeCompte (1987) state that in the social science context, ethnography is a branch of qualitative research that is associated with anthropological evaluation of cultural perspectives. The focal point of ethnographic research is an up-close, personal examination, which may include immersed language and culture learning, intensive study of a single field or domain, and a blend of historical, observational, and interview methods (Genzuk, 2003). Ethnographic designs are qualitative research procedures and the method of choice often used for describing, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of
behaviour of a culture-sharing group (Creswell, 2005). Ethnographic researchers typically collect three kinds of data: interviews, observations, and documents. From this data base, quotations, descriptions, and excerpts of documents emerge as a narrative description of the study (Genzuk, 2003). Using ethnographic case study as a method, I used multiple data collection strategies to gather, interpret, and analyze the data for this research.

This study sought to develop an understanding of grade 9 students’ shared patterns of experience, behaviours, beliefs, and language as they came together in a culture-sharing group and engaged themselves with a program over time. Consequently, ethnographic case study was well-suited for this investigation. It must be noted that for the purpose of this study, “culture” referred to all aspects of the group behaviour and beliefs (Creswell, 2005). Through the students’ own words, this study attempted to present a narration of their culture during their participation in D.E.A.R sessions.

Selection of Site and Participants

Through purposeful sampling, the researcher intentionally selects individuals in order to learn or understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2005). My goal was to investigate students’ perceptions of the D.E.A.R. program. Of the different types of purposeful sampling strategies, maximal variation sampling was well suited for use in this study. Maximal variation sampling is a form of purposeful sampling that requires the researcher to find individuals with different characteristics and dimensions of those characteristics (Creswell).

The secondary school selected as the research site, houses approximately 700 students and offers a complete spectrum of educational programming including English
as a Second Language (ESL) and Individual Education Programs (IEP) for students with special needs, along with a wide range of activities to meet varied student and staff interests. The student mix is ethnically, academically, racially, multiculturally, and gender diverse, of different socioeconomic levels, and a variety of lifestyles at the site. The staff of approximately 65 members is comprised of administrators, teachers, educational assistants, office and clerical staff, and custodians. Community members and social agencies frequent the school to offer their services when available or as required.

One year prior to this study, the school principal implemented a Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R.) program to enhance and improve the reading practices of the overall student population and to bolster the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) achievement scores. At the site of this present study, there were concerns around the literacy scores of the secondary students. A Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R.) committee piloted a D.E.A.R. program in the second semester of the 2004-2005 school year. Based on the D.E.A.R. committee’s recommendations, the principal implemented a D.E.A.R. program in the 2005-2006 school year in order to encourage students to read while at school. In that school year, the 20-minute D.E.A.R. session was conducted between periods one and two for each of the two semesters. Students generally brought their own books for reading during D.E.A.R. However, available in each classroom was a box of books for those students who did not bring a book for the D.E.A.R. session.

During the semester in which the study was carried out, the D.E.A.R. session was also between periods one and two for 17 minutes on most days.

With a thrust to understand grade 9 students’ perceptions of a D.E.A.R. program, the researcher believed that the diversity in this school and the fact that there was a
A.D.E.A.R program already in place encompassed the necessary elements needed for this study.

*Classroom Description*

The data for this study were collected between the last week of September 2006 and the third week of January 2007 in a secondary school classroom on the first floor of a three story, 85-year-old brick building located in south central Ontario. The classroom was a well-lit rectangular shaped room with sidewalls 7 meters long and 3 meters high and a front and back wall of about 12 meters wide and 3 meters high. The roof, which appeared to have a drop ceiling design, was covered with 1-meter square white ceiling tiles. Mounted on the ceiling and also rectangular shaped, were 20 double florescent bulb fixtures. The floor surface was covered with 30 cm square smooth floor tiles.

Mounted on, and in the middle of, the front wall, about 1-meter from floor level, was a 1 meter high by 1.5 meter wide chalkboard. Small corkboards covered with several pieces of paper of varying sizes and colors were also mounted on both sides of the chalkboard on the front wall. The pieces of paper on these corkboards displayed, in both graphic and text, different school-related information, such as school policies, regular and shortened classroom period durations, *D.E.A.R.* duration information, fire drill information, WHMIS information, etc. On both sides of the front wall and approximately 1.6 meters from the sidewalls, were two 1 meter wide by 2.3 meters high entrance/exit doors.

The back wall, which was also one of the outside walls for the building, was located on the west side of the school. Windows (1.3 meters high and 1 meter wide) were about 1-meter from floor level and separated with about 1.3 meters of a solid section of
the outside wall. Hanging over these windows were dark brown, heavy drapes, but during the time of the study these drapes were always drawn open emitting a considerable amount of natural sunlight into the classroom on most days. On either side of these windows were solid sections of wall.

Five symmetrically arranged rows of desks with attached seats lined the floor. Each row had five paired desks facing the front of the room. The rows were about 61 cm apart and the desks in the rows were very close to each other and at times touching one another. All of the desks were identical: from the floor to the top of the desk was about 76 cm high and the seats were about 46 cm from the floor. With this seating arrangement, all of the participants faced the front of the classroom.

Selection of Participants

In September of the 2006 – 2007 school year, letters of invitation and consent forms were mailed to the parents and students of a grade 9 class. After the forms were returned, analyzed, and checked for accuracy, students were visited in their classroom where I introduced myself, described the study, stated its purpose, explained the data collecting process, and how the data would be used. It was made clear to these students that this was a study of the impact of the D.E.A.R. program a mosaic and not them.

The data collection process focused on capturing the school student population. For the purposes of both data collection and obtaining profiles of the students, all of the students in the selected grade 9 class were given an initial questionnaire to complete (see Appendix A). Questionnaire data were used to select a subgroup of eight students through maximal variation sampling. The selection of the subgroup was conducted using a two-step process. With a subgroup of only eight participants, the researcher believed it was
necessary to select student participants that represented the grade 9 student population at the site. First, the researcher reviewed the responses generated from the questionnaire and made some preliminary notes regarding students’ reading interests and reading levels. Second, the researcher visited the D.E.A.R. classroom and matched the questionnaires to the students. This matching resulted in the selection of an ethnic diversity subgroup with five female and three male student participants with different reading interests and reading levels.

Within the subgroup of participants, one female participant was 15 years old and the other seven student participants were all 14 years old. The subgroup of eight participants were asked to sign consent forms. They were then assigned a pseudonym and their actual names were kept confidential to protect their privacy and identities.

Susan, a 15-year-old female student, came to Canada 2 years ago from Korea. English was not her native tongue and it was not the language spoken at her home. With the exception of the previous 2 years, Susan’s education was in Korea where she was not required to speak English or read text written in English. Her favourite reading materials were books with pictures, magazine articles, letters, e-mail messages, journals and diaries. At the time of recruitment for the study, Susan did not believe that she was a particularly good reader of books written in English, but she thought that she was a very fluent reader of books and newspapers written in her native language. At the school where this study was conducted, Susan was registered as an ESL (English as a Second Language) student. ESL denotes school courses that are geared towards students whose native language is not English.
Grace was a 14-year-old female student born in Canada. English was her native tongue but it was not that of her family. English was not the language spoken at home but Grace was only able to read in English. All of her elementary schooling was in Canada and her favourite things to read were fairytales, adventure books, mysteries, and myths. At the time of recruitment for the study, Grace did not believe that she was a particularly good reader.

Wendy, a 14-year-old female student, was born in Canada. English was her native tongue and the language spoken at home. Her elementary schooling was in Canada and her favourite things to read were letters, fairytales, adventure books, science fiction, mysteries, and myths. At the time of recruitment for the study, Wendy described herself as someone who really liked reading and read a lot.

Mary, a 14-year-old female student, came to Canada in 1992 from La Paz, Bolivia. English was her native tongue and the language spoken at her home. All of her elementary schooling was in Canada. Her favourite things to read were relationship/friendship books, e-mail messages, fairytales, poetry, adventure books, science fiction, mysteries, myths journals, and diaries. At the time of recruitment for the study, Mary described herself as someone who was a good reader and enjoyed reading.

Brenda, a 14-year-old female student, was born in Canada. English was her native tongue and the language spoken at home. All of her elementary schooling was in Canada. Brenda described herself as someone who really liked reading and read a lot. Her favourite things to read were relationship/friendship books, magazine articles, e-mail messages, and mysteries.
Sam, a 14-year-old male student, was born in Canada. English was his native tongue and the language spoken at his home. All of his elementary schooling was in Canada and his favourite things to read were magazine articles, adventure books, newspapers articles, and mysteries. At the time of recruitment for the study, Sam described himself as a pretty good reader who read a lot.

Rob, a 14-year-old male student, was born in Canada. English was his native tongue and the language spoken at his home. All of his elementary schooling was in Canada and his favorite things to read were magazine articles, biographies, and mysteries. At the time of recruitment for the study, Rob described himself as someone who liked to read and enjoyed reading a good book.

Chris, a 14-year-old male student, was born in Canada. English was his native tongue and the language spoken at his home. All of his elementary schooling was in Canada and his favourite things to read were magazine articles, letters, e-mail messages, science fiction, mysteries, and myths. At the time of recruitment for the study, Chris described himself as one who did not think reading was difficult but did not read that much. During the time of the study, Chris was on an Individual Education Plan (IEP), which is a program designed for students with special needs.

**Instruments**

Triangulation, the multiple data collection methods, was employed for the purpose of validation of the results in this study. This was important because “Ethnographers use many types of data collection techniques, so that data collected in one way can be used to crosscheck the accuracy of data generated in another way” (Goetz & LeCompte, 1987, p. 11). In this study, four instruments were used to collect data: two
questionnaires (see Appendices A & B), three interview protocols (see Appendices C, D, and E), weekly log sheets (see Appendix F), and fieldnote observations (see Appendix G).

In order to gain a detailed profile of the eight grade 9 students' background reading experiences and attitudes, facets of their reading behaviours were explored in two questionnaires. The questionnaires were designed to generate and document data that pertained to the participants' reading habits. Through interviewing techniques, the student participants' reading behaviours both inside and outside of the D.E.A.R. program were documented and analyzed. These open-ended interview questions also sought to capture the student participants' impressions of the impact of the D.E.A.R. program. Students' weekly log sheets were used for the purpose of collecting information that participants documented on a weekly basis, such as literature they were reading and how much of it they were reading. Finally, observational fieldnotes were taken on a daily basis for the purpose of recording what the participants were doing during D.E.A.R. time.

*Instrument Validation*

The questionnaire protocols, interview protocols, and weekly log sheets were validated in two phases. In phase one, five grade 9 students were randomly chosen from the school's daily attendance list. These five students voluntarily completed the questionnaire protocols and reviewed the interview protocols over a 2-week period. Their feedback on these protocols was collected. Misconceptions, ambiguous wording, and misinterpretations around the question prompts and/or the design of the instruments were clarified with these five students and changes were then made to the instruments. In the second phase of the validation of instruments, two grade 9 teachers who monitor
D.E.A.R. classes were consulted to review these same protocols for the purpose of making recommendations. Modifications that they suggested were made to the instruments. Both the students and the teachers who participated in the validation process did so voluntarily and their data were not used in this study.

Field Procedures

Within the school that hosted this research study, the D.E.A.R. sessions were attached to the first period class. Teachers with first period classes were responsible for the supervision of the 17-minute D.E.A.R. session in their classrooms. In this format, the D.E.A.R. session preceded one of the four subjects that the grade 9 students were enrolled in without a break between D.E.A.R. and the end of period one.

During the semester in which the study was carried out, the researcher was not teaching any grade 9 classes in order to remain objective and not influence the participants in any fashion. Additionally, the teacher who supervised the 17-minute D.E.A.R. session was not the students’ regular period one teacher; this teacher simply volunteered to supervise the class for the 17-minute D.E.A.R. session on the days the researcher conducted observations. This accommodation was made to ensure that the students were not affected by the presence of their period one subject teacher. With the removal of the potential subject-teacher influence, students were expected to adhere to the protocols of the D.E.A.R. program with the freedom to interact in the classroom.

Data Collection

As previously described, the first questionnaire was administered to the entire grade 9 class in the first week of September and used for the purpose of subgroup selection. For the eight student participants, the initial questionnaire data were further
analyzed and, at the end of the semester, they were given a second questionnaire. Questionnaire responses were examined to determine if trends or shifts in reading habits emerged from September 2006 to January 2007.

The eight student participants were tracked throughout the first semester as they participated in the *D.E.A.R.* program with additional data collection instruments. Interviews were considered to be a viable source for collecting qualitative material (Creswell). Interviewees were able to respond to open-ended prompts, which were often difficult to articulate on paper and pencil questionnaires. The interview protocol included open-ended prompts so that the participants could voice their experiences unconstrained by the researcher's perspective or past research findings (Creswell). There were three 17-minute interviews in this study. The first interview took place in early October, the second in late November, and the third during the last week of January. Interviews took place in the school library in the presence of only the teacher-librarian. The researcher audiotaped the interviews to guarantee accurate documentation of the participants' responses. During the interviews, fieldnotes were taken. The audiotapes were forwarded to a transcriber for transcription (see Appendix H).

As part of their typical *D.E.A.R.* class activities, the entire grade 9 class completed a weekly-log on the last day of each week (see Appendix F). Log entries included the number of *D.E.A.R.* sessions completed for the week, the title of the piece of literature, the author, the type of literature, the quantity of pages read and a brief comment of their experience in *D.E.A.R.* for that week. These logs spawned a bank of data to document the participants' reading practices during *D.E.A.R.*. Only the logs of the eight participants in the subgroup were analyzed.
Observation leads to an understanding that is not readily available to the researcher through interviews alone (Patton, 1987). The researcher was able to gather open-ended, firsthand information by observing student behaviours within the research context. Through observation, the researcher was able to see things that the participants may not have discussed. As previously noted, the researcher’s fieldnotes were not compromised by the definitions of the situation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) as the researcher was not observing participants that were his students.

For the purpose of observing the eight participants during the 17 minutes of D.E.A.R. time, the researcher randomly visited the classroom on average twice per week from late September 2006 to late January 2007. These visits yielded approximately 9 hours of observation time resulting in several pages of fieldnote data. These notes were recorded on a laptop computer and with paper and pen using an organizer. The researcher’s comments and reflections were kept in a journal as a record of experience during the observation of the students in D.E.A.R. These data were useful in the triangulation of the participants’ perceptions of how much time they spent reading during D.E.A.R., what type of literature and topics they were reading, and the information they entered into their weekly logsheets.

Over the semester, the eight participants completed weekly logsheets cataloguing information regarding the amount of pages and the type of literature and topics they were reading in D.E.A.R. These weekly logsheets generated 14 weeks worth of data. These data were useful in the triangulation of what the participants’ perception of how much time they spent reading during D.E.A.R. and if, during D.E.A.R., they were reading the
type of literature and topics they cited in the surveys and interviews as their preferred literature and topics.

Each of the eight participants in the study completed two surveys. The first survey was completed and returned in early September 2006 and the second was completed and returned in January 2007. For both surveys, four questions sought to capture the participants’ preferred literature and topics, their perceived comprehension of literature, and their preferred reading locations. These four questions were organized and phrased to generate responses on a 3-point Likert scale. To generate the responses that represented the participants’ interest, they were instructed to circle 1 to indicate if they “don’t really like it,” circle 2 to indicate if “it is okay,” or circle 3 to indicate they “like it a lot.” In the survey conducted in late January 2007, the participants were asked if they liked reading silently, and if they liked reading during D.E.A.R. For these two questions, the 3-point response format mentioned above was also used to generate the participants’ interest.

The eight participants took part in three semistructured interviews. The first interview took place in early October, the second in late November, and the third in the last week of January. In these interviews participants were asked to describe themselves as readers and answer questions related to the reading habits both during D.E.A.R. and outside of the school environment. The three interviews were audiotaped yielding 74 pages of transcribed notes.

Data Analyses

Analysis is the process of bringing order to data and organizing it into patterns, categories, and basic descriptive units (Hoepfl 1997; Patton, 1987). Qualitative analysis and interpretation involves disciplined study, creative insight, and careful attention to the
purpose of the evaluation (Patton). Data analysis should take place on an ongoing basis and in a timely manner.

For the purpose of the analysis, the phrase “reading for pleasure” meant the reading that the participants engaged in was of their own volition. An example interview question was, “Do you think reading for pleasure contributes to better reading and or grades?” These types of interview questions often generated participant responses such as “yes,” “yup,” “yeah,” “no,” or “I don’t know.” For these responses, the researcher used the follow criteria: “Yes,” “yup,” and “yeah” responses were viewed as agreeing positively with the association between reading and other outcomes, while “no” or “I don’t know” were viewed as disagreeing with the association between reading and other outcomes. The data collected from the questionnaires, the students’ weekly logs, and the researcher’s daily observations were analyzed first. The interview recordings were transcribed and then analyzed with the interview fieldnotes. In order to break down the data into identifiable themes or categories, a process known as “open-coding” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was used. During this phase, “the data were separated into discrete parts, closely examined, compared for similarities and differences, and questions were asked about the phenomena as reflected in the data” (Mertens, 1998, p.352). During open-coding, conceptual categories were identified and tentatively named in order to group the observed phenomena.

The categories were reexamined to determine how they were connected. This was accomplished using “axial-coding” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). “Axial coding is the phase of the analytic process in which the researcher puts the parts of the data identified and separated in open codes back together to make connections between categories.”

**Limitations**

Although every effort was made to ensure a high level of professional and ethical standards in the collecting and reporting of data in this study, it must be noted that ethnographic inquiries are about human beliefs and behaviours in a cultural setting and, accordingly, the researcher may be subject to the “iceberg illusion effect” (Sanders, 1991). This effect describes the incidence of what is observed on the surface of research and may bear little resemblance to what is taking place under surface; thus, the total view of a situation is rare.

Inherent in this research study with adolescents was the potential development of a negative stigma associated with reading. “Being labeled a social outcast by one’s peer group because one reads a lot may ultimately lead to an avoidance of reading” (Alvermann, Young, Green, & Wisenbaker; cited in Kinney, 1993). In the event that the participants perceived that reading was an undesirable activity, limitations with respect to the true nature of the results in this study may have been masked by the “iceberg illusion effect.”

In this study, the researcher’s instruments, the students’ interpretations of reading comprehension, and their perceptions of their own reading comprehension was not a sufficiently reliable means for evaluating reading comprehension. Findings in this study that relate to reading comprehension inherently contain participant and researcher judgment biases.
Establishing Credibility

The goal of establishing credibility was addressed through a variety of methods. Communication methods were selected that would allow participants to accurately and clearly express their views. During the interview, participants were asked to confirm that the specific organizational arrangements of their interview were satisfactory.

Credibility of the data was also addressed through the triangulation of the data. The two surveys and the three interview protocols included questions to cross-check participants' responses regarding their reading preferences and time spent reading. As well, the data from the two surveys and three interviews were cross-checked against with the students' weekly logs and the researcher's observation fieldnotes. Patterns or inconsistencies that appeared in the early analyses of the survey and first interview were noted for the purposes of alleviating ambiguities in further interview questions.

The participants each provided data at three different stages: 7 weeks after the participants had been in the D.E.A.R. program, midway through the semester, and at the end of the semester. This three-stage collection provided a means of checking the findings and exploring topics further. The credibility of the findings of this study is enhanced by the prolonged engagement of data collection during a semester in the D.E.A.R. program.

Member Checking

After the data were coded and analyzed, the findings were validated through the process of member checking. Member checking is a necessary procedure whereby the researcher requests that the participants of the study check the accuracy of the account (Creswell, 2005). This process is normally done either in writing or through an interview.
In this study, the participants were invited to the school library to member check and validate the data gathered through the previously administered interview protocols.

**Ethical Consideration**

Brock University’s Research Ethics Board requirements state that before research with human participants commences, the Board must approve the researcher’s project. Research cannot and must not be undertaken without clearance from an ethics committee responsible for granting such approvals. Educational research also requires that the collection of data cannot and must not begin without obtaining permission from the senior administrators of a hosting school board. Brock University’s Research Ethics Board granted ethics approval for the study in September 2006 (see Appendix I). The School Board Ethics Committee also granted ethics approval for the study in September 2006.

**Restatement of the Area of Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate grade 9 students’ perceptions of the Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R.) program. This qualitative inquiry was conducted to answer the following research questions:

1. Where do grade 9 male and female students who are in a D.E.A.R. program prefer to read for pleasure and what are the types of literature and their reading topics of choice?

2. After a semester in D.E.A.R., do students spend more time on task reading and accomplish more reading?

3. What are grade 9 students’ perceptions of the D.E.A.R. program as having an effect on their grades and their reading and writing ability?
4. How do grade 9 students who are in a D.E.A.R. program perceive themselves as readers?

5. How do grade 9 students evaluate the benefits of the D.E.A.R. program?

The data for this study were gathered through questionnaires, interviews, observations, and log sheet instruments. In late September and again in mid January, the participants completed questionnaires related to their reading interests and their preferences regarding what they read and where they read. Over the semester, three interviews were conducted. The first interview took place in early October, the second in late November, and the third during the last week of January. These interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, and coded for the development of themes, patterns, and categories. During the semester, weekly log sheets were collected and analyzed for the purpose of gathering data regarding the literature, the quantity, and the amount of time the student participants were reading during D.E.A.R. Over 9 hours of observation generated several pages of fieldnotes. These fieldnotes together with the weekly log sheets were used to triangulate the data that emerged from the two surveys and the three interviews. The findings and the data analysis that emerged from this study are presented in the next chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

This research has gathered the perspectives of eight grade 9 students to determine the effects of the Drop Everything And Read (D.E.A.R.) program. As previously noted, this qualitative inquiry was conducted to answer the following research questions:

1. Where do grade 9 male and female students who are in a D.E.A.R. program prefer to read for pleasure and what are the types of literature and their reading topics of choice?

2. After a semester in D.E.A.R., do students spend more time on task reading and accomplish more reading?

3. What are grade 9 students’ perceptions of the D.E.A.R. program as having an effect on their grades and their reading and writing ability?

4. How do grade 9 students who are in a D.E.A.R. program perceive themselves as readers?

5. How do grade 9 students evaluate the benefits of the D.E.A.R. program?

To gain insight into the above questions, qualitative methods were employed. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, observations, and log sheet instruments. In late September, and again in mid January, the participants completed questionnaires related to their reading interests and their preferences regarding what they read and where they read. The purpose of administering two questionnaires was to analyze data in search of consistency and/or changes in the participants' responses after a semester in D.E.A.R. In the second questionnaire, two questions were specifically tailored to elicit responses that related to the participants’ perceptions of silent reading and the amount of time that they spent on reading during D.E.A.R. Over the semester, three
semistructured interviews were conducted. The first interview took place in early October, the second in late November, and the third during the last week of January. These interviews were audiotaped, transcribed and coded for the development of themes, patterns, and categories. During the semester, the participants completed daily reading logs. These logs were collected and analyzed for the purpose of gathering information regarding what and how much the participants were reporting that they read during D.E.A.R. Over the semester, I logged over 9 hours of observation time in the classroom where the eight participants were engaged during D.E.A.R. From these observations, several pages of fieldnotes were generated. The fieldnotes were analyzed for the purpose of triangulating the data from the questionnaires, interviews, and log sheets.

Using the data analysis computer software, *NVivo: N7* (2006), the transcribed interviews and the two surveys were coded. These codes generated five themes that emerged as a function of the grade 9 students’ experiences in the D.E.A.R. program. First, students’ “Reading Preferences” were drawn from their likes and dislikes regarding what they read and where they liked to read. This contributed to the participants’ “Time Spent Reading” the material of their choice in a location of their choosing. When asked to reflect on the impact of participating in the D.E.A.R. program, the students were “Making Associations with Reading for Pleasure” to other skills and accomplishments, such as getting good grades. At the end of the D.E.A.R. program, the student participants each held “Perceptions of Self-as-Reader.” Finally, the student participants’ overall reflection of their 5-month experience in the D.E.A.R program resulted in their “Evaluations of the D.E.A.R Program.” Each of these five themes will now be described in detail.
Reading Preferences

The first finding with respect to reading preferences is interesting given the fact that participants in this research were engaged in an in-school reading program. When asked on both of the questionnaires where they preferred to read for pleasure (in a public library, in the school library, on vacation, in a car, at home, or in their classroom), reading at home was most often the choice for all eight participants in this study. In general, reading in the classroom was not highly favoured by the participants. Specifically, three female and two male participants stated in the questionnaire administered in late September 2006 and in the first interview, that they did not like reading in the classroom:

Well, honestly, I love reading, but I don’t like reading that much in school... it just seems hard to focus and then once I get into it, it’s over (Susan, Interview 1, p. 2 of 3).

Ambivalently, the other three participants (one male and two females) stated that reading in the classroom was okay. There was little change in the participants’ questionnaire responses over the course of the D.E.A.R. program. In late January 2007, two female participants and two male participants still claimed that they did not like reading in the classroom. Grace was the student who had a change of view regarding reading in the classroom. In early stages of D.E.A.R., she commented that reading in the classroom was okay; whereas, near the end of the D.E.A.R. program, she stated that reading in the classroom was something she liked a lot.

This prompted a closer examination of participants’ preferences for reading at home as reported in both questionnaires and in their interviews. In September 2006, one
male and all five female participants stated in their responses that reading at home was something they liked a lot. Then, in the questionnaire administered near the end of a semester of *D.E.A.R.*, seven of the eight participants strongly preferred reading at home as Sam reported that he now liked reading at home a lot:

> If I read every day, I will get faster and I will understand more words.... a book [may] have a word that I don’t understand I [would] ask my mom or my dad, “What does that word mean?” They say, “Oh, it means this” and I say, “Oh great,” and then next time I see a book with that word, I will just know what it means... I read all the time at my house... I get more distracted by the people around me (Sam, Interview 1, p. 4 of 5).

I don’t usually read all that much during *D.E.A.R.* I get more done by myself at home (Sam, Interview 3, p. 2 of 3).

Even though the participants were in an in-school *D.E.A.R.* program, what seems to be emerging here is, although they report that they like to read, they preferred reading at home.

When asked on the questionnaire about literature and topics of choice, four female and all of the male participants overwhelmingly chose mysteries, magazine, and humour. The four female participants also included myths, fairytales, adventures, picture books, and legends in the list of literature and topics of choice. Susan (ESL participant) also stated that journals/diaries are what she liked reading the most. The female participants noted that technology-related topics were their least preferred topics and the male participants reported that math, home decorating/remodelling, fashion, travel, and cooking were the topics they did not like reading about. All five female participants
chose journals/diaries and mysteries to be the most comprehensible reading material, while all three male participants chose newspapers as the most comprehensible reading material.

In particular, these participants noted that they enjoyed reading: *A Series of Unfortunate Events* (Grace, Interview 2, p.1 of 3); The *Clique* series which is about this girl stuff (Brenda Interview 2, p.1 of 3); and *Memories of a Geisha* (Mary, Interview 2, p.1 of 3). Mary went on to elaborate:

[When] I read books [written] by particular authors, [reading becomes] easier. But if I read books by different authors, then not really... because I have gotten used to some authors [and the] language [they] use, I think [my reading may have improved] slightly (Mary, Interview 3, p.1 of 3).

Interestingly, even though magazine articles and humour were preferred literature and topic choices for seven of the eight participants, these genres were not recorded in any of participants' weekly log sheets. As well, an overview of the fieldnotes failed to provide observational evidence that any of the participants read magazine articles and/or humour during *D.E.A.R.* Rather, for the majority of time during the early stages of *D.E.A.R.*, Sam, Brenda, and Susan spent a significant proportion of their time flipping through the pages of a grade 9 science textbook. This was cross-confirmed with the participants' weekly log sheets.

**Time Spent Reading During D.E.A.R.**

During my observations I noted that at least five of the eight participants were consistently silent for the full 17 minutes during the *D.E.A.R.* period. Among these five participants was Susan, and, even though she was quiet for most of the allotted *D.E.A.R.*
time, she spent the majority of her time either looking around the classroom, gazing blankly in the direction of the chalkboard, or flipping the pages of a grade 9 science textbook. Three other participants, Brenda, Sam, and, especially, Chris, were not silent on several occasions, and did not appear to spend much of their time reading during the *D.E.A.R.* sessions. Chris sat directly in front of Brenda and spent a large amount of his time either in conversation with Brenda or trying to engage her into activities unrelated to silent reading. Sam sat next to Rob and similarly he also devoted a fair amount of his time trying to engage Rob in activities unrelated to silent reading.

For the duration of this investigation, Mary, Wendy, and Grace were the only participants who seemed to have utilized the majority of time allotted for the *D.E.A.R.* program. An examination of the observational fieldnotes, suggests that Mary, Wendy, and Grace were reading for over 95% of the time, Rob and Brenda were reading for about 60% of the time, Sam for 35% of the time, and Susan and Chris less than 20% of the time. One participant, Sam, admitted that he could not commit to reading unless he was in a particular location to read. "When I get my book, I would rather sit in a spot... by myself. I find I get distracted if people and sounds are around me" (Sam, Interview 1, p. 5 of 5). A cross-check of the data in the participants weekly log sheets revealed that Mary recorded reading 769 pages, Wendy recorded reading 690 pages, Grace recorded reading 777 pages, Brenda recorded reading 427 pages, Rob recorded reading 353 pages, Chris recorded reading 270 pages, Susan recorded reading 130 pages, and Sam recorded reading 115 pages. It should be noted, however, that individual reading rates vary according to the type of reading material and speed of decoding.
Interestingly, what was observed during D.E.A.R. and what the participants reported in their weekly log sheets was both confirmed and refuted when compared to the questionnaires and the three interviews. For example, when the participants were asked in the interview if they had 17 minutes to read, what would they do with it, seven of the eight participants said they would use the time wisely and be devoted to reading. Wendy’s sentiment was, “I would probably take a book that I have most likely read before that I really loved, and I would just read it over” (Wendy, Interview 1, p. 3 of 3). Chris knew that he did not read for the full 17 minutes, “I would read [for] some of it. I would read for 10 minutes and then my attention span would [be gone]” (Chris, Interview 1, p. 3 of 3). Consequently, the number of pages Chris claimed to have read during D.E.A.R. was relatively low compared to his peers.

A third interview was conducted with the participants at the end the semester. In this interview, only one male participant and three female participants claimed that they used the full 17 minutes of each of the D.E.A.R. periods for reading. In this interview, like the first and second interviews, both Chris and Sam reported not using all of their allotted time in D.E.A.R. for reading. At this point, two of the female participants reported for the first time, that they did not use the full 17 minutes allotted to D.E.A.R. for reading.

... Some days I was more focused than others so on those days I read for most of the 17 minuets and the days I was not focused I just could not concentrate on reading anything (Brenda, Interview 3, p. 3 of 3).

Some days, [I did] not read... because I don’t want to read (Susan. 3, p. 3 of 3).
Collectively, these participants were honest in their admission of time spent reading and this candor revealed an overall decrease in the participants’ engaged reading time over the course of the D.E.A.R. program.

Making Associations with Reading for Pleasure

The student participants were at times inconsistent in making associations between reading for pleasure and residual academic benefits. The participants were asked explicitly to comment on how they perceived reading for pleasure was connected to their grades, and their reading and writing skills.

Associations with Grades

In response to interview questions after 7 weeks into the D.E.A.R program, five of the eight participants (one male and four females) believed reading for pleasure could possibly contribute to the attainment of better grades. After the participants had been in D.E.A.R. for about 3 months, the participants were again asked if they thought reading for pleasure contributed to better grades and only four female participants believed decisively that reading for pleasure could contribute to better grades. For example, Chris, Mary, and Brenda stated:

When you read [...] for pleasure] it helps you [...] become a better reader and] you are able to] read [test] questions [...] because you read all the time (Chris, Interview 1, p. 2 of 3).

... if you read daily, it helps you with questions. It helps your spelling; it helps everything (Chris, Interview 2, p. 3 of 3).

[I was in] a program, called IQ [which] tested your reading ability and how fast [you read] and it showed that the more often you read, it could help increase the
speed at which you can read. So, that helped me get faster reading. That could help with answering test questions (Mary, Interview 1, p. 3 of 3).

If you are able to understand what you are reading, I think it can help you answer questions better or reflect easier (Mary, Interview 3, p. 3 of 3).

The more you read, it just helps in school and everything and when you are reading outside of school, it will help you in school, when you read in school (Brenda, Interview 1, p. 3 of 3).

When you are reading outside of school, which could help inside school too (Brenda, Interview 2, p. 3 of 3).

Because the more I read books, the more I am reading in class too. So the more I read, the more I understand things. It helps me in class (Brenda, Interview 3, p. 3 of 3).

These participants indicated that reading outside of school was associated with better grades, but at no time did they mention that reading during D.E.A.R. could be associated with achieving better grades.

Overall, at the end of the D.E.A.R. program, one male participant and the five female participants were convinced that reading for pleasure contributed to better grades. Two participants did not associate reading for pleasure with good grades. Sam’s interview comments encapsulate the perspective of a participant who was not convinced that reading for pleasure was associated with achieving better grades.

Not really. I find it [reading for pleasure] just helps me think. Like wow that was a great book and it [reading for pleasure] helps me like interact with people who
have read the same book. But it doesn’t really help me with my grades that much (Sam, Interview 1, p. 4 of 5).

I don’t think it [reading for pleasure] does. Well for me anyway (Sam, Interview 2, p. 2 of 3).

I don’t think it [reading for pleasure] does (Sam, Interview 3, p. 3 of 3).

**Associations with Reading Skills**

Seven weeks into the *D.E.A.R.* program, three male and four female participants associated reading for pleasure with better reading. Susan was the exception as she did not believe that there was an association with reading for pleasure and better reading. There was a change after 3 months - five participants (two males and three females) associated reading for pleasure with better reading, and three participants (two females one male) believed that there was an association between reading for pleasure and their reading skills. After the participants had actually experienced 5 months of *D.E.A.R.*, they reflected, and four participants (two females and two males) did not think reading became any easier, while four participants (three females and one male) thought that reading did become easier for them.

When participants were asked if, over the past 5 months, they perceived that they had become better readers, six participants (four females participants and two males) thought that they did become better readers. Chris and Susan were among these participants. It is noteworthy that Chris was the only participant who explicitly associated *D.E.A.R.* with becoming a better reader. “You just start reading material, you find out different words and then you get used to reading and then your vocabulary gets bigger and you are able to read faster too, because you practice. Practice makes perfect” (Chris,
Interview 2, p. 2 of 3). Initially, Susan did not believe reading for pleasure could be associated with better reading. “Not this kind of reading” (Susan, Interview 1, p. 3 of 3). However, after Susan had experienced D.E.A.R. for 5 months, she claimed that reading for pleasure was helping her become a better reader.

After 5 months in the D.E.A.R program, two participants, Sam and Wendy, perceived their ability to understand what they read had not shown any improvement. The other six participants perceived for them, reading material had become much easier to understand:

I understand it more now... I don’t have to reread things and everything. I am [to] concentrate more I guess (Brenda Interview 3, p. 1 of 3).

I understand what the words mean and stuff like that (Grace, Interview 3, p. 1 of 3).

A little bit easier... I can understand more (Susan, Interview 3, p. 1 of 3).

[My reading has gotten] a bit [better] because I have gotten used to some of the author’s language... so I think maybe slightly... If I read...books by the same author, it has become easier. But if I read books by different authors, then not really (Mary, Interview 3, p. 1 of 3).

**Associations with Writing Skills**

At the first interview juncture, approximately 7 weeks into the D.E.A.R. program, two of the eight participants in this study did not associate reading for pleasure with better writing skills. These students stated:

I don’t know. I find just reading, I just read – it doesn’t really help me be a writer. Personally, I think I am a very uncreative person, so I am not a very good writer (Sam, Interview 1, p. 2 of 5).
No. I think I am on my own with that [writing skills] (Chris, Interview 1, p. 1 of 3).

In the interview conducted after the participants had been in D.E.A.R. for 5 months, the majority of the participants had changed their perceptions about the reciprocal effect that reading for pleasure had on writing skills. Seven participants thought that reading during D.E.A.R. might contribute to their abilities to become better writing students; Sam was the only participant not convinced by the possibility of such an association. When probed, one participant claimed to believe that there was association between reading during D.E.A.R. and becoming a better writing student; however, the connection was not clearly attributed to any metacognitive rationale, "I think it would, but I just don't know how" (Wendy, Interview 1, p. 3 of 3).

Summary: Making Associations with Reading for Pleasure

At the halfway point after 7 weeks in the D.E.A.R program, five of the participants associated reading for pleasure with achieving good grades, seven of the participants associated reading for pleasure with the potential to become a better reader, and six of the participants associated reading for pleasure with the potential to become better writers. After 5 months in the D.E.A.R program, six of the participants associated reading for pleasure with achieving better grades. Six of the grade 9 participants associated reading during D.E.A.R. with their potential to become overall better readers and writers. Even though the majority of the participants recognized the benefits of reading and why reading was an important aspect for the attainment of high academic achievement, this association changed very little over the course of the program. In fact,
during the semester of *D.E.A.R.*, some of the participants' associations regarding reading for pleasure with possible academic benefits vacillated from one interview to the next.

**Perceptions of Self-as-Reader**

As stated in their interviews, reading was an enjoyable activity for seven of the eight participants. On several interview occasions throughout the study, participants commented, "I enjoy reading." In the early stages of *D.E.A.R.*, Rob claimed, "I like to read. When I have a good book, I enjoy reading it usually" (Rob, Interview 1, p. 1 of 3). Three months into the *D.E.A.R.* program, Mary commented, "I enjoy reading. I think I am a pretty avid reader" (Mary, Interview 2, p. 1 of 3).

All eight participants claimed to have understood that the overall goal of the *D.E.A.R.* program was for students to achieve voluntary reading enjoyment. Yet, among these participants there appeared to be a disconnect between their enjoyment of reading silently and the context of the *D.E.A.R.* program in their school. In the questionnaire administered in late January, five of the eight participants claimed they liked silent reading a lot, but only two participants (Grace and Wendy) viewed *D.E.A.R.* as a program they liked a lot. Susan and Mary both claimed to like silent reading a lot, but their impression of the *D.E.A.R.* program was that it was just okay. Brenda and Rob both thought that silent reading and reading during *D.E.A.R.* was okay. Chris, the participant on an IEP, revealed that although he liked reading during *D.E.A.R.*, he did not really like reading silently. Sam, on the other hand, claimed to like reading silently, but did not like reading during *D.E.A.R.*. For these latter six participants, there appeared to be inconsistencies in the way in which they viewed silent reading as connected to the *D.E.A.R. program.*
Perceptions of Reading Prolificacy

After participating in the D.E.A.R. program for 7 weeks, Chris, Susan, and Grace still had somewhat negative perceptions of themselves as prolific readers. Susan and Chris also admitted that they were not reading that much during D.E.A.R. Susan noted that she was having difficulties with reading in English due to the vocabulary. Chris comments were, “I don’t read that much... I just don’t... I read for 10 minutes... and then my mind just kind of drifts” (Chris, Interview 1, p. 1 and 3 of 3). There seemed to be a contradiction in Grace’s self-perception, as she claimed, “I don’t think I am that good of a reader... I don’t know. I don’t really read” (Grace, Interview 1, p. 3 of 3). After 7 weeks, Grace had read over 350 pages of text, and observational notes corroborated that she was one of the participants who seemed to be reading for the full 17 minutes of D.E.A.R.

The other five participants (three females and the two males) held positive perceptions of themselves as productive readers:

I was reading chapter books when I was really, really young (Wendy, Interview 1, p. 3 of 3).

I find myself a stronger reader and I can read faster than I used to be able to (Brenda, Interview 1, p. 3 of 3).

[I really enjoy reading but], I like to start a book at home (Mary, Interview 1, p. 3 of 3).

Yeah. I am a good reader... I like to read. When I have a good book, I enjoy reading it usually, but I don’t read that often (Rob, Interview 1, p. 3 of 3).
I am a pretty good reader. I read a lot. I just read on my own time and stuff. I read mostly at nighttime though. I find it best then... I read fairly quickly as well (Sam, Interview 1, p. 3 of 3).

Of interest here is the emphasis that Sam placed on reading mostly at nighttime.

For most of the participants, after being in D.E.A.R. for about 3 months, their perceptions of themselves as readers had not changed. Chris and Grace, still held negative perceptions of themselves as readers; whereas Mary, Wendy, Brenda, Rob, and Sam continued to perceive themselves positively as readers. Susan’s perception of herself after 3 months into the D.E.A.R. program changed from negative to a positive perception of herself as a reader.

Interestingly, a few of the participants self-reported changes to their reading habits in spite of participating in the D.E.A.R. program. These changes were noted but only linked implicitly to the program:

...since I started D.E.A.R., for some strange reason, I have been reading a little bit less. I don’t know why. I have had a lot more homework this year, so I have been going to bed later and having less time to read at night (Wendy, Interview 2, p. 1of 4).

I haven’t been for pleasure that much during D.E.A.R. I have been reading mostly my textbook and stuff and trying to catch up on reading (Brenda, Interview 2, p. 1of 3).

It appeared as if the *D.E.A.R.* program was providing something that Chris needed to help him read.

**Evaluations of the D.E.A.R Program**

After 7 weeks in the *D.E.A.R.* program, five of the eight participants perceived that they had derived benefits from participating in the program. They believed that *D.E.A.R.* allowed them time to read that they would not otherwise have to read:

I get just the time to read my books in quiet and just kind of catch up on reading

(Brenda, Interview 1, p. 2 of 3).

It [*D.E.A.R.*] gives me a time to actually make time for reading, because sometimes it's hard at home because I am very busy. So I have that time set aside to read (Mary, Interview 1, p. 2 of 3).

It [*D.E.A.R.*] helps me look for more books that I like. Say I finish a book, and then tomorrow we have to read another one, I have to find a book that I like. It helps me find it (Chris Interview, 1 p. 2 of 3).

Well I like that it’s a break from class to read. If I have a good book, then it’s good (Rob, Interview 1, p. 2 of 3).

Conversely, during the first interviews, Susan, Wendy, and Sam, did not evaluate positively the benefits of the *D.E.A.R.* program:

I don’t know. *D.E.A.R.* to me, it’s not like a big thing since I read all the time at my house. I could do with it [*D.E.A.R.*] or without it [*D.E.A.R.*]. But sure, *Drop Everything And Read* every day [at school], is great” (Sam, Interview 1, p. 2 of 5).

Well, honestly, I love reading, but I don’t like reading that much in school. I don’t know but it just kind of seems hard to focus and then once I get into it, it’s over.
It’s like it’s beginning to get enjoyable and you want to read [and then it is] the time you have to leave for your next class (Wendy Interview 1, p. 2 of 3).

At the end of 3 months in the D.E.A.R. program, the participants’ perceptions of the benefits of D.E.A.R. varied from the first interview. The four female participants, did perceive D.E.A.R. to be either beneficial or somewhat beneficial:

Yeah, [during D.E.A.R.] I was getting caught up on my reading and stuff, which helps (Brenda, Interview 2, p. 2 of 3).

Yes… I [like] to have to set aside time for reading so I know that I will be able to read during that time. If not, [there is not] any other time outside of D.E.A.R. (Mary, Interview 2, p. 2 of 3).

[During D.E.A.R.], I am making up reading time I am missing at night (Wendy, Interview 2, p. 2 of 3).

[The benefit of D.E.A.R. is that] my reading has become much better (Chris, Interview 2, p. 2 of 3).

The time provided to read during D.E.A.R. was viewed as functional for these four participants – this was viewed as a positive evaluation of the D.E.A.R. program.

At the 3-month juncture, Grace, Sam, and Rob appeared ambivalent to the attached benefits derived from the D.E.A.R. program. This was a shift for both Grace and Rob from their evaluation of D.E.A.R. during the first interview. Particularly, Rob’s perception of D.E.A.R. vacillated and his affirmation in support of the benefits of D.E.A.R. was not as well defined as it was at the 7-week point:

I don’t really know. I do like to just be able to sit there and read (Rob, Interview 2, p. 2 of 3).
I don’t really think so. I think that, I don’t know, I am reading at home. I have always read a lot, so… (Sam, Interview 2, p. 2 of 3)

At the end of the semester the eight participants still varied in their overall evaluation of the D.E.A.R. program. When asked in the third and final interview if D.E.A.R. was a beneficial program, participants interpreted the word, “beneficial” in different ways. Five participants perceived that the D.E.A.R. program had provided for them a break from work, reading skill enhancement, information, or time to get caught up on reading:

I think a break from the class [work] to read is good (Rob, Interview 3, p. 2 of 3).

It’s a great way to improve your reading and find good books to read (Chris, Interview 3, p. 2 of 3).

I think that the more we get to read, the better reader I get. Just like reading more makes me better understand (Brenda, Interview 3, p. 2 of 3).

Some benefits [of D.E.A.R.] are that you learn more (Susan, Interview 3, p. 2 of 3)

Well, if we [need to] finish a book for another period, I would use that time [D.E.A.R. time] to help me to try to finish it, because at home it can be more difficult to try to find time. So I use my D.E.A.R. time to try to get all my reading materials finished (Mary, Interview 3, p. 2 of 3).

On the other hand, Grace, Sam, and Wendy appeared somewhat tentative as to whether D.E.A.R. might be a beneficial program for them:

[Is] Drop Everything And Read a good program? I don’t know (Grace, Interview 3, p. 2 of 3).
I really don’t know, because I read a lot at home, so there’s not really many benefits [of D.E.A.R.] for me (Wendy, Interview 3, p. 2 of 3).

I don’t know. For me, it [D.E.A.R.] doesn’t really do anything for me because I get distracted. I don’t usually read all that much during D.E.A.R. I get more done by myself at home, so it doesn’t really give me any benefit (Sam, Interview 3, p. 2 of 3).

Overall, these statements illustrate that the slight majority of the participants in this study believed that the D.E.A.R program was beneficial.

**Chapter Summary**

This research gathered the perspectives of eight grade 9 students to determine their perception of the effects of a Drop Everything And Read (D.E.A.R.) program. The analyzed data revealed five themes, “Reading Preferences,” “Time Spent Reading,” “Making Associations with Reading for Pleasure,” “Perceptions of Self-as-Reader” and an “Evaluations of the D.E.A.R. Program.” Despite the claim that adolescents do not practice reading outside of school and consequently, they need time to practice reading during the school day (SEDL, 2001), when the participants in this study were asked where they preferred to read for pleasure (in a public library, in the school library, on vacation, in a car, at home, or in their classroom), reading at home was most often the choice for all eight participants.

In both surveys, for seven of the eight participants, the overwhelming choice of type of literature and topics to read were mysteries, magazines, and humour. Although the participants in this study claimed to have understood the goal of D.E.A.R. was to silently read literature and topics of their choice for pleasure, interestingly, the data
revealed that among the eight participants, five of them spent a considerable amount of time reading a grade 9 science textbook. For the most part, the time allotted for pleasure reading during *D.E.A.R.* was not fully utilized for that purpose. To this end, some of the participants in this study did not participate in much voluntary reading for pleasure.

When the student participants were asked explicitly to comment on how they perceived reading for pleasure to be connected to their grades, and their reading and writing skills, the data from this investigation yielded mixed and inconsistent results regarding the associations between reading for pleasure and residual academic benefits.

Reading was an enjoyable activity for seven of the eight participants. All eight participants claimed to have understood that the overall goal of the *D.E.A.R.* program was for students to achieve voluntary reading enjoyment. However, none of the eight participants appeared to have connected the enjoyment of reading silently and the context of the *D.E.A.R.* program in their school. Nonetheless, after a semester in the *D.E.A.R.* program, it would appear that for the slight majority of participants, there was the belief that the *D.E.A.R.* program had benefited them in some way.
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R.) is a program that provides students with a period of time during the school day to read silently with no required assignments or activities related to the reading (Farrell, 1997). Fifteen minutes of dedicated time on a daily basis is ideal to devote to D.E.A.R. (Cooke, 2006). The D.E.A.R. program claims that when students are provided with the environment and the opportunity to read, they will engage in reading for pure enjoyment (Farrell; Pilgreen, 2000) and they will attain high academic success (Cumming 1997; Farrell). This is based on the premise that all students strive to achieve voluntary reading (Cooke).

The purpose of this study was to investigate grade 9 students' perceptions of the D.E.A.R. program. At the site where this study was conducted, D.E.A.R. was implemented to enhance and improve the reading practices of the overall student population and to bolster the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) achievement scores. Using a qualitative research approach in this study, the researcher focused on the students' concepts of themselves as readers, their perceptions of the D.E.A.R. program, and the effects that they perceived that the D.E.A.R. program had on their grades, their reading and writing skills, and their overall ability to become better students.

Summary of Study

With the goal to understand grade 9 students' shared patterns of experience, behaviours, beliefs, and language as they come together in a culture-sharing group engaged in D.E.A.R., this investigation was undertaken as an ethnographic case study. Dewey's (1977) reflective attention theory provided the theoretical framework for
examining the participants’ shared experiences in the D.E.A.R. program from curricular and pedagogical perspectives.

Four information collection methods were selected as a means of gathering data. For the purpose of gathering data related to where the participants liked to read, and what their reading interests were, the researcher developed two written surveys. Survey questions were framed to invoke participants’ perceptions of what literature and topics they were most interested in reading, where they liked to read for pleasure, and if they perceived reading for pleasure had an effect on their reading and writing skills, or their grades. The first survey was administered in late September 2006, and the second survey in late January 2007. The findings drawn from the surveys were probed further during three audio taped open-ended interviews.

The first of these three interviews was conducted after the participants were in D.E.A.R. for 7 weeks; the second interview was conducted after 3 months, and the third after 5 months. Each of the three interviews summoned participants to expand on their thoughts regarding where they liked to read, what literature and topics they were most interested in reading, and if they perceived reading for pleasure during D.E.A.R. was improving their reading and writing skills, or grades.

At the end of each week starting with the first week in October 2006, and ending the third week in January 2007, the participants’ weekly log sheets were collected. These log sheets were completed by the students who recorded what literature and topics they were reading during D.E.A.R. and how many pages they read each week. On average, the researcher randomly observed the eight participants in the D.E.A.R. classroom, twice per week from late September 2006 to January 2006. Observation fieldnotes generated data
related to what the participants were reading and how much time the participants spent reading during D.E.A.R.

*NVivo: N7 (2006)* was used to organize and collapse data generated from both surveys and the three interviews. From these analyses, five themes emerged as a function of the grade 9 students’ experiences in the *D.E.A.R.* program. First, students’ “Reading Preferences” were drawn from their likes and dislikes regarding what they read and where they liked to read. This contributed to the participants’ “Time-Spent Reading” the material of their choice in a location of their choosing. When asked to reflect on the impact of participating in the *D.E.A.R.* program, the students were “Making Associations with Reading” to other skills and accomplishments, such as getting good grades. At the end of the *D.E.A.R.* program, the student participants each held “Perceptions of Self-as-Reader.” Finally, the student participants overall reflection of their 5 months of experience in the *D.E.A.R.* program resulted in their “Evaluations of the *D.E.A.R.* Program.” The credibility of the findings that were derived from the surveys and the interviews were corroborated with the participants’ weekly log sheets and the researcher’s observation fieldnotes – this contributed to the triangulation of the data.

**Summary of Findings**

The premise of *D.E.A.R.*, according to Farrell (1997), is that during *D.E.A.R.* everyone will be engaged in reading for pure enjoyment. The results of the study revealed that although most of the student participants appreciated that reading during *D.E.A.R.* implied that they should be reading for pleasure, when asked where they preferred to read for pleasure, reading at home was most often the choice. In general, reading in the classroom setting was not highly favoured by the participants. Specifically, three female
and two male participants stated in the questionnaire administered in late September 2006 and in the first interview, that they did not like reading in the classroom.

A second contradiction was apparent in the students’ reported reading preferences. In their interviews, four of the five female participants included myths, fairytales, adventure, picture books, and legends in the list of preferred literature. As well, magazine articles and humour were the preferred literature and topic choices for seven of the eight participants. These findings closely matched those of EQAO (2007) and Koelling (2005) in that some students become hooked on a reading series, such as *Harry Potter*, or a certain periodical, such as a newspaper or magazine. However, the data results did not reflect the Bucher and Manning (2004) claim that the emerging trend is showing adolescents choosing graphic novels over the traditional school reading materials. What is most interesting is that these genres were not recorded in any of participants’ weekly log sheets. Rather, at times, five of the eight participants were reading their grade 9 science textbooks. Curiously, preferred reading material (as stated in questionnaires and interviews) was not accessed by the participants during *D.E.A.R*.

As well, the data in this study did not support Woolcott Research Pty. Ltd. (2001) findings that two thirds of both males and females would read more if they had more time. In general, the female participants spent more time engaged in reading during *D.E.A.R* than did the male participants. The weekly log sheets from both the male and female participants revealed the males read on an average 80% less than the female participants. The seemingly lack of interest in reading during *D.E.A.R* on the part of the male participants was corroborated with data in all three interviews and both surveys.
Despite the espoused positive benefits of D.E.A.R. participation, only three of the eight participants seemed to have taken full advantage of the time given to them for reading. For some of the participants, 17 minutes was an insufficient amount of time to settle in to read, while others claimed it was too much time to concentrate on reading. Additionally, two of the student participants who were not in a regular streamed program, appeared to be disenfranchised by the D.E.A.R. program - likely due to a lack of intrinsic motivation as developing readers (Booth et al., 2004).

In addition to identifying the participants’ reading preferences, and the amount of time the participants engaged in reading their preferred material, three broad themes are presented as findings of this research. The first theme highlighted how the participants made associations with reading to other skills and accomplishments, such as better writing skills and good grades. Although most of the participants associated reading for pleasure with becoming better readers, they did not associate reading for pleasure during D.E.A.R. with achieving better grades or becoming better students. Over the course of the D.E.A.R. program, some of the participants associated reading for pleasure with possible academic benefits, but this vacillated from one interview to the next. For these student participants, the association of D.E.A.R. with academic outcomes did not support Cumming (1997) and Farrell’s (1997) claims which suggest that students engaged in D.E.A.R. programs attain better academic standings. Rather, the associations made by the participants in this study were more similar to that of The National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) report that stated there is no conclusive evidence to suggest whether or not silent reading or programs like
DEAR, promote improvement in academic outcomes, vocabulary growth, fluency, and/or comprehension.

The second theme discussed the participants’ perceptions about themselves as readers. The data from this study revealed that most of the participants in the study believed they were good readers who also enjoyed reading. Woolcott Research Pty. Ltd. (2001) found that 69% of boys and 80% of girls enjoy reading. They also reported that among children between the ages of 5 and 14 years, 75% of both boys and girls spend time reading for pleasure. Surprisingly, however, seven of the eight participants did not claim to enjoy reading during D.E.A.R. and they would rather read at home. These findings are consistent with those cited in the EQAO (2007) survey report that pointed out among grade 10 students, both males and females read an average of 3 hours per week (nonhomework related reading) outside of school. However, this finding contradicts Horton (2005) and Bucher & Manning (2004) who claim that the majority of students do not read outside of school.

The third theme elucidated the participants’ evaluations of the D.E.A.R. program. All three male participants claimed they did not really need D.E.A.R. and observation fieldnotes revealed they did not engage themselves in the program with the same commitment, as did the female participants. According to Cunningham & Allington, (2003) and Pilgreen (2000), there is documented research on the effectiveness of silent reading programs such as D.E.A.R., however, according to the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000), while these programs do encourage students to read, evidence to support student reading improvement is unavailable. The results in this study actually contradicted both of these
claims, as five of the participants evaluated the *D.E.A.R.* program as effective, and did not show much interest in reading during *D.E.A.R.* In fact, at the end of the semester, the eight participants in this study were still varied in their overall evaluation of the *D.E.A.R.* program. When asked in the third and final interview if *D.E.A.R.* was a beneficial program, participants interpreted the word, "beneficial" in different ways. Five participants perceived that the *D.E.A.R.* program had provided for them a break from regular schoolwork, some reading skill enhancement, and time to get caught up on course-related reading. Nonetheless, the data from this study seem to suggest that a slight majority of the participants believed that the *D.E.A.R.* program was personally beneficial.

**Discussion**

Throughout the 20th century, there has been increased emphasis on independent silent reading as a viable pedagogy (Sadoski, 2004). The individualistic learning approaches of constructivists have heavily influenced the pedagogical framework of such programs as *D.E.A.R.* (e.g., Anderson, Reder, & Simon, cited in Ruddell & Unrau, 2004). Interestingly, this pedagogical framework is void of Kant's (1787/1963) student prior knowledge prerequisite for curriculum development. The eight participants who participated at this site were required to partake in *D.E.A.R.* without prior knowledge assessment of their reading comprehension, their reading fluency, or their reading interests.

Background literature on *D.E.A.R.* does not suggest that a *D.E.A.R.* program is intended to be curriculum; however, when a program is assigned (for the purpose of improving student reading and academic success), an environment is designated and a time is allotted during the school day, the program must be viewed as curriculum.
Whereas the pundits of D.E.A.R. fail to recognize the curricular aspect of D.E.A.R., philosophical trepidation is injected. The implementation of a D.E.A.R. program should not move forward without carefully considering a pedagogical framework that includes prior-knowledge with a focus on students’ reading comprehension, fluency, and reading interests.

Given that the underlying premise of D.E.A.R. is to improve students’ reading and academic skills (Cooke, 2006; Cumming 1997; Farrell, 1997; Pilgreen, 2000), the researcher held the understanding that D.E.A.R. must be viewed as curriculum. At the site of the study, the D.E.A.R. program lacked curriculum relevance (Tyler, 1975). Curriculum activities should be within students’ present abilities to carry on successfully and confidently with further activities (Tyler). In my teaching experience, I have found high school students are motivated to participate in a learning activity when they are able to connect that activity to something that is personally relevant (Eisner, 1985). Without personal relevance, students are reluctant to voluntarily involve themselves. For participants Sam, Chris, Brenda, and Susan, reading their grade 9 science textbook during D.E.A.R. was viewed as a relevant curriculum activity, as opposed to reading literature for pleasure.

Proponents of D.E.A.R. claim that if adolescents are provided with the environment and the opportunity to read, they will engage in reading for pure enjoyment (Farrell, 1997; Pilgreen, 2000). The assumption here is that all students possess the ability to read, and as such will read during D.E.A.R. and enjoy doing so. This premise is short sighted for there are some middle school and high school students who struggle to read due to a disability or language barrier (Elley, 1994; Gourthro et al., 2003). As well,
students with learning difficulties often experience reading difficulties (Bender, 2003). Adolescents with reading difficulties must be given instructions and feedback that heighten both their desire to read and reading comprehension (Booth et al., 2004).

In this study, Chris was a participant with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) designed to accommodate his learning difficulties. Chris claimed he did not spend much time reading during D.E.A.R. because he would get bored after 10 minutes. It is likely that reading was very difficult for Chris. Sam, another participant, read very little during D.E.A.R. (according to his weekly log sheets). Sam qualified this during his interview, as he expressed his preference for reading at home—there, when he experiences difficulty with reading comprehension, he is able to seek his parent’s help.

English as a Second Language (ESL) students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds often reject unfamiliar curriculum and instructional methods (Erickson, 1984; Ogbu, 1992). During her three interviews, Susan, the participant who was an English as a Second Language (ESL) student, expressed her difficulty with reading English text. Data from observation fieldnotes and Susan’s weekly log sheet records revealed that during D.E.A.R. Susan attempted to read passages from the grade 9 science textbook more than any other reading material. One has to question whether the claim that if adolescents are provided with the environment and the opportunity to read during D.E.A.R., will they all engage in reading for pure enjoyment?

There is also the claim that students, who participate in regular reading for pleasure, such as during D.E.A.R., will realize academic success (Cumming 1997; Farrell 1997). Surprisingly, when the participants in this study were asked if reading during D.E.A.R. contributed to their academic success, they attributed little or no academic
outcomes to the *D.E.A.R.* program. Further, proponents of *D.E.A.R.* (Farrell, 1997; Pilgreen, 2000; Seow, 1999) believe that silent reading programs have the potential to help adolescents' value reading, become more fluent, and improve their vocabularies. At the end of the semester, the participants were asked whether they perceived their reading had improved. Six of the eight participants claimed that they perceived their reading had improved; however, only one student attributed this improvement to participating in *D.E.A.R.*

The National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) report has made the assertion that there is no conclusive evidence that participation in unstructured programs, such as *D.E.A.R.*, contributes to students' reading achievement. Although it was not the intent of this study to investigate the academic effects of *D.E.A.R.*, the potential residual academic benefits are an interesting discussion point. The findings of this study do suggest that *D.E.A.R.* failed to accommodate students on IEP’s, those with learning difficulties, and ESL students; however, given the qualitative methods and small sample size, there is limited generalizability of this conclusion.

**Implications for Practice**

A basic premise of *Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R.)* programs is that the students participating in the program are independent readers. Independent readers read text without assistance, silently, and alter their rate of reading to reflect the material being read (Booth et al., 2004). It is also assumed that sustained silent reading programs, such as *D.E.A.R.*, afford students with the opportunity to become more proficient at reading
(Pilgreen, 2000). A methodological assumption was made that participants in this study were “independent readers” (Booth et al.).

Interestingly, the data generated in this study revealed Sam, Chris, and Susan exhibited very few traits that characterized independent readers. The researcher’s fieldnotes confirmed that on several occasions during D.E.A.R. time, these three participants showed signs of what appeared to be frustration and/or boredom. An implication for practice would be for educators to begin a D.E.A.R. program with a diagnostic reading assessment and interest survey. A reading assessment could identify reading skills and diagnose independent reading level. A reading interest survey could assess student prior knowledge and reading interests. The information gathered from such diagnostic measures would allow educators to tailor a program to meet the needs of the students in the D.E.A.R. program. When students’ needs are met, they are generally motivated to participate in curriculum. Thus, this implication for practice may make the program personally relevant and, thereby, reduce students’ frustration and/or boredom during D.E.A.R. It should be an inherent goal to ensure that the program is invitational to all participants.

Basic language rules of phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics are necessary requirements for reading written text (Santrock et al., 2007). Once these mechanical functions of reading are mastered, the purpose of reading focuses on the ability to understand written discourse (Santrock et al.). Further, reading literacy is “the ability to understand and use those written language forms that are required by society and/or valued by the individual” (Elley, 1994, p.5). Literature on D.E.A.R. states students should be encouraged to read text that is manageable and enjoyable (Seow, 1999; ¶1).
Based on the findings of this study, it was apparent that not all students possessed command of the mechanics of reading, or read with understanding. This is unjust. To implement a *D.E.A.R.* program without first knowing whether or not the students are capable of understanding written discourse is what Novak and Purkey (2001) refer to as "unintentionally inviting education". An implication for practice is to support the optimal development of independent, fluent reading skills within a *D.E.A.R.* program. This could centre around a pedagogy that strikes a balance between independent reading, and an exchange of ideas, critiquing, and feedback from peers and teachers. Adams (1990) sums up this suggestion for practice, "if we want to induce children to read a lot, we must also teach them to read well" (p. 5).

As previously noted, an assumption of the *D.E.A.R.* program is that if the environment and the opportunity are provided, all students will enjoy reading-this did not apply to all of the participants in this study. For example, Susan, an ESL student, was having difficulties reading the text that was available to her. ESL students and students with learning difficulties often require extra help to be academically successful (Klingner, Artiles, & Barletta, 2006). It is likely that Susan could not access appropriate reading materials and she experienced a language barrier. Regardless, Susan’s reading needs were not attended to. This issue indicates a lack of thoughtfulness of perceptual traditions, which take student’s cultural filters into consideration (Novak & Purkey, 2001).

An implication for educators’ practice is to honour and strive to meet the unique needs of all participants. The group of student participants shared collective characteristics, however, as individuals their needs were not always met through a homogeneous program. It may be the case with ESL students, that language barriers and...
the cultural homogeny of a program can be frustrating and stressful. If ESL students’ needs are going to be met during D.E.A.R., the program must be an invitational one that begins with an assessment of prior knowledge and differentiated programming.

The implementation of programs, such as D.E.A.R., requires a variety of appealing books and the commitment to allocate time for reading (SEDL, 2001). Further, Pilgreen (2000) proposed that it is important to the success of a D.E.A.R. program that teachers should have a working knowledge of high quality, age-appropriate literature for middle and high school students and learn strategies for connecting students with books to read freely. The school reading environment must include a range of texts and genres, a range of reading level challenges, and appeal to a host of students’ interests (Booth et al., 2004). Participants in this study indicated a preference for reading mystery books and magazines. This preference is typical for students of this age (Booth et al.; McPherson, 2006). Yet, the findings revealed that most students were not reading these preferred genres; the preferences of the participants should have been considered when choices were made to select books for the classroom for reading during D.E.A.R. At this site, effective implementation of D.E.A.R. required democratic ethos (Novak & Purkey, 2001). Novak and Purkey’s democratic ethos emphasize a deliberative dialogue and mutual respect as people work together to construct the character, practices, and institutions that promote a fulfilling, shared life. Viewed this way, an invitational democratic ethos D.E.A.R. program will be an educative approach for both students and teachers to experience mutually meaningful shared reading experiences. Prior to implementation, adolescents should have been given an opportunity to make their choices with respect to
reading material for *D.E.A.R.* and their choice of literature should be made available for reading during *D.E.A.R.*

An underpinning goal of a *D.E.A.R.* program is for all students to achieve voluntary reading (Cooke, 2006). The findings suggested that only three of the eight participants in this study read voluntarily for pleasure. If students are going to engage themselves in a program, they must perceive program activities as interesting and/or relevant (Tyler, 1975). Within this *D.E.A.R.* program, five of the eight participants expressed a lack of personal relevance. In principle, the *D.E.A.R.* program is a worthwhile endeavour. However, an evaluation at different stages of implementation is needed for the purpose of assessing whether the program is actually appropriate, relevant, and effective at developing the patterns of behaviours that are the intent of the program. As a summary, an illustration regarding the implications for practice is provided in Figure 1.

**Implications for Theory**

This study builds on previous work by authors and researchers who focused on the theoretical premise that students voluntarily read for pleasure in programs such as *Drop Everything and Read* or *D.E.A.R.* (Cooke, 2006; Cumming, 1997; Farrell, 1997; Gardner, 2003; Seow, 1999). Although theory can serve a useful purpose, the results from this study revealed some specific shortcomings of Farrell’s theory, in particular. Specifically, results of the present study point to the problem that insufficient attention is given to students in silent reading programs who are ESL learners or who struggle with reading. In this way, theory cannot always be put into practice when educators are attempting to practice what is dictated by theories.
Implement an Invitational Democratic Ethos D.E.A.R. Program with available reading material appropriate to student reading levels and interest.

- DISCUSSION
  - *Drop Everything And Read Program. D.E.A.R*

Students complete diagnostics reading assessments and interest surveys

Feedback For Teachers and Students

Periodic reading discussions among students and teachers, and regular evaluation of the D.E.A.R. program to maintain constant relevance and motivation for students to read.

*Figure 1. Enunciation for an invitational democratic ethos in a D.E.A.R. program.*
A distinguishable attribute of silent reading programs, such as D.E.A.R., is that the participants read independently. Booth et al. (2004) indicate that this element of silent reading may contribute to reader motivation as silent reading time is viewed as a positive, enjoyable experience. Further, proponents of the D.E.A.R. program assert that if students are sitting silently with a book in front of them, the students are reading for pure enjoyment (Cumming, 1997; Farrell, 1997). Observational fieldnotes taken during this study revealed otherwise and participants claimed not to have read on some days while other participants complained of being bored during D.E.A.R. Accordingly, if we want to engage poor readers in silent reading, appropriate independent reading materials at their level must be accessible to them (Spear-Swerling & Sternberg, 1994). This provision would enhance the potential to realize the theory that silent reading time is enjoyable for all students.

Perhaps there is an overemphasis on being silent during D.E.A.R. Could the implementation of D.E.A.R. include less silence and some discussion? With no words being spoken during or after D.E.A.R. by the teacher or students (e.g., “Describe a character in the book you are reading?” “How do you like that book?” “Tell me something about the book you are reading.”), there was no way to ascertain if enjoyment is being derived from reading. Without dialogue between the silent student readers and the silent teacher it is even difficult to gauge how much reading is taking place during D.E.A.R. Like most subject curricula, within D.E.A.R. there is a constant need for feedback, reflection, and assessment for both teacher and students. Discussion is a useful tool to garner feedback, share ideas, and engage individuals. This is what Dewey (1977) calls “reflective attention.” Enhancing students’ silent reading skills is a worthwhile
endeavour (Reynolds, 2006); discussion could be an indispensable aspect of feedback for promotion student educational growth.

The effectiveness of any program is dependent on whether the program reaches its intended goal(s). Some proponents (e.g., Cooke, 2006) state that the overarching goal of a D.E.A.R. program is for all students to achieve voluntary reading. In this study most of the participants did not engage in voluntary reading. To simply declare it is D.E.A.R time with the expectation that all adolescents will stop what they are doing and begin voluntary reading is making the assumption that all students are motivated and capable of reading. Educators should not be fooled to think that a quiet classroom during D.E.A.R. is a classroom full of students who are gainfully engaged in silent reading. In order to voluntarily read, students must be able to use and understand written language (Elley, 1994) and students must be taught to read well (Adams, 1990).

Yet, there continues to be a lack of discussion with respect to the D.E.A.R. pedagogy. Rousseau (1979) stated, “A badly instructed child is farther from wisdom than the one who has not been instructed at all” (p. 107). Without discussion about the opportunity for both feedback and reflection, potential educational growth as a function of the D.E.A.R. program is not realized. Both Rousseau and Dewey (1977, 1989) believed that children are not empty buckets waiting to be filled with knowledge. Rather, children are dynamic organisms that develop and grow and, as such, the education of a child should promote and facilitate that growth.

It would seem as though the theoretical basis of the D.E.A.R. program was postulated over 100 years ago by James (1890, cited in Ruddell & Unrau, 2004) who
stated that "reading would be best described as a mindful habit" (p. 36). This is in accordance with behaviourism when learning to read was not regarded as a developmental process. In keeping with this theoretical basis, reading pedagogy focused on providing students with curricular materials and environmental influences that would assist them to acquire reading behaviours.

Yet, the literature on reading pedagogy suggests that in North America it was some time after 1920 that oral reading instruction which placed emphasis on a cognitive processes gave way to silent reading instruction which placed emphasis on behavioural processes (Sadoski, 2004). In fact, the debate regarding reading instruction dates back to educators of ancient Greece and Rome (Sadoski). Thus, the debate of the pros and cons between cognitivist and behaviourist approaches to reading instruction is fairly recent. It should be noted that the findings of this study are consistent with the theory of Tyler (1975) that states that students will not willfully partake in a curriculum if they are unable see that curriculum as relevant.

Regardless, the pedagogy for D.E.A.R. program was grounded on a weak theoretical framework, and, as such, to expect participation in D.E.A.R. to yield student academic success is an unrealistic expectation. The literature as it relates to D.E.A.R. pedagogy speaks only of providing the environment and, the time to read (Sadoski, 2004). Yet, the D.E.A.R. program is not recognized as a curriculum and, until it is, D.E.A.R. cannot be implemented with reference to a pedagogy. This pedagogy should be cognizant of students' prior knowledge and include instruction that is based on assessment of their skills and interests. Perhaps, then, a D.E.A.R. program may be able to realize academic success with the majority of student participants.
In particular, secondary level students need opportunities to exert themselves as fluent and independent readers without the scaffolding activities that supported them as emergent readers (Pilgreen, 2000). It should be the goal of all programs for struggling secondary readers to move toward independent self-sustained reading. Often, these students do not practice reading outside of school, and, consequently, these students need time to engage in reading during the school day. In addition to providing struggling students with reading time, students should be encouraged to increase their abilities to sustain reading for a period of time. In this study, not all of the participants were able to sustain reading for long periods.

In general, existing literature on secondary-level males suggests that they spend little time reading for pleasure. For example, reading for pleasure in males drops from 67% for primary-aged boys to 43% for secondary-aged boys (Woolcott, Research Pty. Ltd. 2001). The findings from this study concur with Woolcott Research Pty. Ltd., as the male participants were not strongly committed to reading during D.E.A.R. In particular, the data revealed that the three male participants claimed they did not really need D.E.A.R. time. Corroborating their claim were the data obtained from the observational fieldnotes revealed the male student participants did not engage themselves in the program with the same commitment as did the female student participants. Overall, the results in this study further confirmed the findings of Woolcott Research Pty. Ltd. (2001) regarding adolescent males’ seemingly lack of interest in reading for pleasure.

**Implications for Further Research**

The D.E.A.R. program is based on the premise that students will voluntarily read and enjoy reading if they are provided with the environment and the time to read
(Cunningham & Allington, 2003; Pilgreen 2000; Sadoski, 2004; SEDL 2001). This assumption is worth addressing explicitly in future research. Specifically, a study on reading motivation and the pleasure derived from reading as a function of D.E.A.R. could be pursued with students of various ages.

It is also assumed that sustained silent reading programs, such as D.E.A.R., afford students with the opportunity to become fully proficient readers (Pilgreen, 2000). Yet, the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) has refuted the notion that D.E.A.R. provides the opportunity for students to become fully proficient, as there is no conclusive evidence to support that claim. If programs, such as D.E.A.R., adopted a structured pedagogy and defined a curriculum, would students benefit and realize growth in their reading achievement? A recommendation for further research might consider ways to conceptualize reading proficiency outcomes as they relate to D.E.A.R. or other similar programs.

Three of the participants took full advantage of the D.E.A.R. program and perceived that they benefited from their participation in D.E.A.R. By contrast, the D.E.A.R. program failed to accommodate for the needs of a student with a reading difficulty, an ESL student, and a student on an IEP. Programs, such as D.E.A.R., do have the potential to be individualized and assume a remedial role in students’ curriculum. It would be noteworthy if further research could be conducted from the perspectives of students with exceptionalities on the effects of D.E.A.R. and other reading curriculum that might be differentiated to their needs.

Within this study, the ESL student participant did not appear to have benefited from the program in the same way as the non-ESL students. ESL teachers often use
differentiated instructional methods with ESL students (Malozzi & Malloy, 2007). For example, Malozzi and Molloy illustrated how digital technology is implemented as a form of pedagogy for teaching English as a Second Language in countries, such as Chile, Hong Kong, Iran, Italy, Nigeria, and Singapore. The results of the current study highlighted that insufficient attention is given to the potential use of computers during D.E.A.R. In both the interviews and the questionnaires, the ESL student participant in this study indicated that she had a strong preference for reading information from the Internet. The findings in this study accentuate the need for research regarding the implementation of digital technology into literacy programs, such as D.E.A.R. Furthermore, research regarding the techniques used to teach ESL students to read silently may be helpful for teachers participating in the D.E.A.R. program.

All reading should be contextual. Specifically, reading for pleasure might be more enjoyable for students during D.E.A.R. if they were invested in what they read and, accordingly, they were motivated to read. The stringing of words together without making connections to the social and political context of the world is what Freire (1983) referred to as mechanically grouping memorized words. A recommendation for further research includes considering ways to get students to become motivated and critical readers within their social and political contexts.

**Conclusion**

The goal of this study was to investigate eight grade 9 students’ perceptions of the Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R.) program at their school. Further research is still needed to add to the base of literature regarding the possible educational outcomes related to D.E.A.R and other programs like it. The findings of this research cannot be
generalized to the larger population of grade 9 students; nonetheless, the possibility exists for the results to be used by education stakeholders, administrators, and educators to identify factors that will predict students’ willingness to involve themselves in sustained silent reading programs, such as D.E.A.R. Finally, while the aims of D.E.A.R are justifiable and have admirable merits, the results of this study suggested that D.E.A.R. at the middle and high school levels is a curriculum in need of pedagogy and an implementation plan that incorporates ongoing curriculum assessment.
References


(Original work published 1778)


# APPENDIX A

**Student Reading Interest Survey**

Name: ___________________________  Date: ______________

For each of the questions, circle one of the following responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I don’t really like this</th>
<th>It’s okay</th>
<th>I like this a lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Picture books</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Relationship/friendship books</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Magazine articles</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Biographies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Letters</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. E-mail messages</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Blogs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Fables</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Fairytales</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Poetry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Adventure books</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Science fiction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Newspaper articles</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Mysteries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Myths</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Textbooks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Journals/Diaries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Manuals/How-to books</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How much do you like to read about the following topics?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I don’t really like this</th>
<th>It’s okay</th>
<th>I like this a lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cars and transportation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Home decorating or remodelling</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Cooking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**This is where I like to read....**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>In a public library</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>In a school library</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>In a classroom</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>At home</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>On vacation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>In the car</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**I comprehend and understand the material when I read....**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Science fiction books</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Newspaper articles</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Mysteries books</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Technology books</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Textbooks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Journals/Diaries books</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Manuals/How-to books</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Complete this section by checking off Yes No or I don’t Know....**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>I don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Are you an ESL student?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Are you a GLE student?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Do you have an IEP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Is English to the language spoken at home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Were you born in Canada</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

Student Reading Interest Survey

Name: __________________________    Date: ______________

For each of the questions, circle one of the following responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I don't really like this</th>
<th>It's okay</th>
<th>I like this a lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How much do you like reading the following types of literature during D.E.A.R.?

1. Picture books 1 2 3
2. Relationship/friendship books 1 2 3
3. Magazine articles 1 2 3
4. Biographies 1 2 3
5. Letters 1 2 3
6. E-mail messages 1 2 3
7. Blogs 1 2 3
8. Fables 1 2 3
9. Fairytales 1 2 3
10. Poetry 1 2 3
11. Adventure books 1 2 3
12. Science fiction 1 2 3
13. Newspaper articles 1 2 3
14. Mysteries 1 2 3
15. Myths 1 2 3
16. Textbooks 1 2 3
17. Journals/Diaries 1 2 3
18. Manuals/How-to books 1 2 3

How much do you like to read about the following topics during D.E.A.R.?

1. Art 1 2 3
2. Math 1 2 3
3. Humour 1 2 3
4. Sports 1 2 3
5. History 1 2 3
6. War 1 2 3
7. Facts and non-fiction 1 2 3
8. Legends 1 2 3
9. Technology 1 2 3
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cars and transportation</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Home decorating or remodelling</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Cooking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is where I like to read....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>In a public library</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>In a school library</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>In a classroom</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>At home</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>On vacation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>In the car</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I like to read....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Silently</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>During D.E.A.R time</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I am able to comprehend, understand and make personal connections when I read....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Science fiction books</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Newspaper articles</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Mysteries books</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Technology books</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Textbooks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Journals/Diaries books</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Manuals/How-to books</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

Reading Interview Protocol

Name: _______________________________   Date: __________

Grade: _______  Age: _______  Tape #: _______  Interviewer: **Anthony Corbin**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Fieldnotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Describe yourself as a reader. What makes you think this about yourself as a reader?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you find reading easy or difficult? What do you find easy to read? What makes it easy? What do you find difficult to read? What makes reading difficult for you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What is the last book that you really enjoyed reading? Why did you enjoy this book?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do you think reading helps you to be a better writer?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Do you read the newspaper? If so, which one(s) do you read?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What kind of reading do you do using technology (e.g. websites, e-mail, CD-ROMs, ICQ, MSN)? How often do you read with technology?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Do you read in any other language(s) at home or at school? If so, what language(s)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Think of someone who is an avid reader. Describe this person. What does this person read? How often does this person read?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. What benefit do you get from D.E.A.R.?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. How would you define reading for pleasure? How often do you read just for pleasure?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Do you think that reading for pleasure contributes to better grades? If so, how does it contribute to better grades?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Does reading for pleasure make you a better reader?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why or why not?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Do think reading is difficult?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. How do you know when you don’t understand what you are reading?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. When you have difficulty understanding what you are reading, what do you do?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. If you had 17 minutes to read what would you do with it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# APPENDIX D

**Reading Interview Protocol**

Name: ____________________________  Date: __________

Grade: ______  Age: ______  Tape #: ______  Interviewer: **Anthony Corbin**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Fieldnotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Describe yourself as a reader. Has this changed in the past few weeks?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Are you experiencing any difficulties with the material you are reading in D.E.A.R.? If yes, why do you think you are having difficulties?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What is the last book that you really enjoyed reading? Were you able to make connections with it? What connections were you able to make?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do you understand all the materials you are choosing to read during D.E.A.R.?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What kind of reading do you do using technology (e.g. websites, e-mail, CD-ROM's, ICQ, MSN)? Would you like to have these technologies available to you during D.E.A.R.?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Other than English, are you reading in any other language(s) during D.E.A.R.? If so, what language(s)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Are you getting any benefits from D.E.A.R.? If yes, what are they?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. How would you define reading for pleasure? How often do you read just for pleasure?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Do you think that reading for pleasure contributes to better grades?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Does reading for pleasure make you a better reader? Why or why not?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Do think reading is difficult?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. How do you know when you don’t understand what you are reading?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. When you are experiencing difficulties understanding reading materials, what do you do?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. What have you been doing with the 17 minuets for D.E.A.R.?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E

*Reading Interview Protocol*

Name: ___________________________ Date: ____________

Grade: _________ Age: _________ Tape #: _______ Interviewer: Anthony Corbin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Fieldnotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you see yourself as a better reader now than you did in September?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you find reading any easier now than you did in September? If you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>find reading to be easier, what makes reading easier for you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What was the last book you enjoyed reading? Did you make connections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with that book and your personal experiences? What were those</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connections?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do you think reading during D.E.A.R. is contributing to making you a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>better student?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Are you enjoying reading during your D.E.A.R. time?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What kind of reading do you do using technology (e.g. websites, e-mail</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD-ROM's, ICQ, MSN)? Would you rather use technology for reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>during D.E.A.R.?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Other than English are you reading in any other language(s) during</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.E.A.R.? If so, what language(s)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Do you enjoy reading? Why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Describe the benefits of D.E.A.R as you see them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. During D.E.A.R did you view reading as pleasurable activity?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Do you think that reading for pleasure contributes to better grades?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If so, how does it contribute to better grades?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Did you stop reading any material you attempted during D.E.A.R? If</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes, why did you stop reading the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>material?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. **What did you do with your 17 minutes of D.E.A.R**
APPENDIX F

WEEKLY LOG SHEET FOR D.E.A.R.  
(DROP EVERYTHING AND READ)

Directions: Student are responsible to fill out a DEAR log and hand it in to Mr. Corbin on a weekly basis.

Name: ____________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TITLE AND AUTHOR</th>
<th>PAGES READ</th>
<th>NO PAGES READ</th>
<th>REFLECTION AND COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>09/09/06</td>
<td>Myths and Folk Tales Around the World</td>
<td>P. 14–26</td>
<td>7.5 pages</td>
<td>This book is holding my attention and I really would like to know what the author has to say next</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**APPENDIX G**

**OBSERVATION SHEET**

Teacher ___________________ Date __________ School ___________________
Grade ___________ Observer ___________ # of students ___________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Self Observations:</th>
<th>Observations: Students</th>
<th>Comments and Reflections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX H

Third Party Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement Form

Title of Study: Grade 9 Students' Perceptions of the Impact of a D.E.A.R. Program

Investigators: Anthony Corbin (Investigator), Tiffany Gallagher (Advisor)

Name of Transcriber: ________________________

An important part of conducting research is having respect for privacy and confidentiality. Respect for human dignity also implies the principles of respect for privacy and confidentiality. In many cultures, privacy and confidentiality are considered fundamental to human dignity. Thus, standards of privacy and confidentiality protect the access, control, and dissemination of personal information. In doing so, such standards help to protect mental or psychological integrity. They are thus consonant with values underlying privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity respected [From the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, August 1998].

Out of respect for human dignity and people’s right to privacy we ensure our research participants’ confidentiality. Researchers protect privacy by not disclosing a participant’s identity after information is gathered (Neuman, 1991). While the identity of the participant has been removed from questionnaires, tapes, and transcripts and replaced with a pseudonym, other references that identify other people and organizations have not been removed. In signing below, you are agreeing to respect the participant’s right to privacy and confidentiality and that of the people and organizations that are referred to in these documents.

As a transcriber, you are asked to respect people’s right to confidentiality by not discussing the contents of these documents in public, with friends, or family members. The study and its participants are to be discussed only during research meetings with the investigators.

In signing below you are indicating that you understand the following:
• I understand the importance of providing confidentiality to research participants.
• I understand that while I do not know the name of the participants, the content of the documents may contain references to other individuals or organizations in the community. I understand that this information is to be kept confidential.
• I understand that the contents of the documents are not to be discussed outside of research meetings with the co-investigators.
• In transcribing audiotapes, I will be the only one to hear the audiotapes, and I will store these tapes in a secure location at all times.
• I understand that all data files (electronic and hard copy) are to be secured at all times (e.g., not left unattended). Furthermore, I agree to return all audiotapes and electronic copies of the transcripts to the researchers upon completion of the transcription process.

In signing my name below, I agree to the above statements and promise to ensure the confidentiality of the participants in this study.

Signature of Transcriber: ________________________ Date: ________________________
I have fully explained the issues of confidentiality to the above transcriber.
Researcher's Signature: ________________________ Date: ________________________
APPENDIX I

Letter of Invitation: For Participation/Student

HALTON DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
And
BROCK UNIVERSITY, FACULTY OF EDUCATION

To: Parent/Guardian/Student

From: Anthony Corbin (Investigator), Tiffany Gallagher (Advisor)

Title of Study: “Grade 9 Students’ Perceptions of the Impact of a D.E.A.R. Program”

Date of Study: September 2006 – April 2007

I am a graduate student at Brock University and a Teacher at Burlington Central High School, researching students’ perception of Drop Everything and Read or D.E.A.R.

Your Daughter/Son: ______________________ is invited to participate in this research study project of the Drop Everything and Read or D.E.A.R. program at his/her school. The purpose of my study is to capture an in-depth understanding of your daughter/son experiences in the D.E.A.R. program at their school. Of particular interest will be your child perceptions of the effect her/his participation in the program has on her/his grades, her/his reading behaviours and her/his concept of her/his selves as readers. Her/his participants will be tracked over the course of semester 1. In order to gain an understanding of the impact of the D.E.A.R program, data will be corroborated, analyzed and presented in Masters of Education thesis. Recommendations will be made in the interest of supporting students’ positive reading habits and for the future implementation of reading programs such as D.E.A.R.

1. Where do Grade 9 male and female students who are in a D.E.A.R. program prefer to read for pleasure and what are the types of literature and their reading topics of choice?
2. After a semester in D.E.A.R., do students spend more time on task reading and accomplish more reading?
3. What are Grade 9 students’ perceptions of the D.E.A.R. program as having an effect on their grades and their reading and writing ability?
4. How do Grade 9 students who are in a D.E.A.R. program perceive themselves as readers?
5. How do Grade 9 students evaluate the benefits of the D.E.A.R. program?

In to answer these questions I need your permission to observing your child during D.E.A.R in the first semester of the 2006/2007 school year. During that time I will need to complete three interviews and two questionnaires and collect their daily information from her/his daily DEAR reading logs.

The Halton District School Board’s Research Advisory Committee and subsequently your child’s school Principal have officially approved this study. When the study is completed a report on the findings will be available in the school programs for interested parents.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and should you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study, or any portion of it, at any time, for any reason, without penalty. There will be no payment for participation in this study.

In addition, all information gathered from participants during this study will be kept confidential. All fieldnotes, program planning documentation, debriefing logs, and interview information will be coded so that your name cannot be associated with any data. Only the principal investigator will have access to the information that can relate any participant with his/her code and will not share this with other members of
the research team or with other teachers or school administrators. All information gathered during this study will be held in the Principal Investigator’s office in a locked file cabinet for a period of 2 years following the completion of this study. Electronic data will be entered into a computer that will have secured access and will only be available to the participating researchers. After that interval, the questionnaires/surveys, goal-setting documentation, interview transcriptions and data analyses documents will be placed in the confidential recycling container in the Faculty of Education and audiotapes will be destroyed. All electronic versions and files relating to this study will also be destroyed.

If you approve of your son or daughter participating in this study, please indicate this by contacting Tiffany Gallagher either by telephone at 905-688-5550 ext.5114 or by e-mail at Tiffany.Gallagher@brocku.ca. Within a week, you will be sent an informed consent form that you will be asked to sign and return to the researchers, if you agree to participate in this study.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Brock University Research Ethics Board (File # tba) and the Halton District School Board’s Research Advisory Committee If you would like more information or have any questions or concerns about your participation in the study, you may contact Tiffany Gallagher at 905-688-5550 ext.5114 or by e-mail at Tiffany.Gallagher@brocku.ca, or Anthony Corbin at 905-688-5550 ext.421 or by e-mail at ac99ac@brocku.ca. Any questions or concerns about your involvement in the study may also be directed to the Brock University Research Ethics Officer in the Office of Research Services at 905- 688-5550, ext. 3035.
APPENDIX J

Informed Consent: For Student Participation

HALTON DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

And

BROCK UNIVERSITY, FACULTY OF EDUCATION

To: Parent/Guardian

From: Anthony Corbin (Investigator), Tiffany Gallagher (Advisor)

Title of Study: “Grade 9 Students’ Perceptions of the Impact of a D.E.A.R. Program”

Date of Study: September 2006 – April 2007

I am a graduate student at Brock University and a Teacher at Burlington Central High School, researching students’ perception of Drop Everything and Read or D.E.A.R.

Your Daughter/Son: ___________________________ is invited to participate in this research study project of the Drop Everything and Read or D.E.A.R. program at their school. The purpose of my study is to capture an in-depth understanding of your daughter’s/son’s experiences in the D.E.A.R. program at their school. Of particular interest will be your child’s perceptions of the effect her/his participation in the program has on her/his grades, her/his reading behaviours, and her/his concept of her/him self as a reader. Her/his participation will be tracked over the course of semester 1. In order to gain an understanding of the impact of the D.E.A.R. program, data will be corroborated, analyzed, and presented in a Masters of Education thesis. Recommendations will be made in the interest of supporting students’ positive reading habits and for the future implementation of reading programs such as D.E.A.R. For this study the researcher is interested in five questions:

1. Where do Grade 9 male and female students who are in a D.E.A.R. program prefer to read for pleasure and what are the types of literature and their reading topics of choice?
2. After a semester in D.E.A.R., do students spend more time on task reading and accomplish more reading?
3. What are Grade 9 students’ perceptions of the D.E.A.R. program as having an effect on their grades and their reading and writing ability?
4. How do Grade 9 students who are in a D.E.A.R. program perceive themselves as readers?
5. How do Grade 9 students evaluate the benefits of the D.E.A.R. program?

To answer these questions am asking for your permission to observe your child during D.E.A.R. in the first semester of the 2006/2007 school year. During that time I will need to complete three interviews, two questionnaires, and collect their daily information from her/his daily D.E.A.R. reading logs.

The Halton District School Board’s Research Advisory Committee and subsequently your child’s school Principal have officially approved this study. When the study is completed a report on the findings will be available in the school library for interested parents.

By signing this informed consent form:
• I understand the purpose of this study and the research methodology as outlined above,
• I understand that no harm or risk is anticipated through my Son’s/Daughter’s involvement,
• I understand that my Son’s/Daughter’s participation in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw him/her from the study at any time and for any reason without penalty,
• I understand that my Son’s/Daughter’s decision participate or not participate will not affect my grades.
• I understand that there will be no payment for my Son’s/Daughter’s participation.
• I understand that my Son’s/Daughter’s interviews will be audiotape and the information gathered on the tape/s will be kept strictly confidential and that all information will be coded so that his/her name cannot be associated with any data. Only the principal investigator and the advisor will have access to the information that can relate any participant with his/her code and this information will not be shared with other members of the research team nor with other teachers or school or board administrators.
• I understand that all personal information will be kept strictly confidential and that all information will be coded so that my Son’s/Daughter’s name cannot be associated with any data. Only the principal investigator and the advisor will have access to the information that can relate any participant with his/her code and this information will not be shared with other members of the research team nor with other teachers or school or board administrators.
• I understand that all information related to this study will be held in the Principal Investigator’s office in a locked file cabinet for a period of 2 years following the completion of this study. Electronic data will be entered into a computer that will have secured access and will only be available to the participating researchers. After the two-year interval, all documentation including fieldnotes, program planning documentation, debriefing logs, and interview transcriptions and data analyses documents will be placed in the confidential recycling container in the Faculty of Education and audiotapes will be destroyed. All electronic versions and files relating to this study will also be destroyed.
• I understand that the results of this study will be distributed in academic journal articles and conference presentations.

I have read and understand all of the information provided within this form about the study. I understand that I may ask questions in the future; and by signing below, I am giving my free consent my Son Daughter ____________________________ to participate in this study.

Parent/Guardian’s signature: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

This study has been reviewed and has received ethics clearance through the Brock University Research Ethics Board (File #tba) and the Halton District School Board Research Review Committee. If you have any questions or concerns about your Son/Daughter participating in the study, you may contact Anthony Corbin at 905-634-7768 ext.421 or by e-mail at ac99ac@brocku.ca or Tiffany Gallagher at 905-688-5550 ext.5114 or by e-mail at Tiffany.Gallagher@brocku.ca. Any questions or concerns about your son’s/daughter’s involvement in the study may also be directed to the Brock University Research Ethics Officer in the Office of Research Services at 905- 688-5550, ext. 3035.

Feedback about the use of the data collected will be available before June 2007.

Thank you for your help.

Please return one signed copy of this consent form to the researcher in the enclosed postage-paid envelope. Please keep one copy of this form for further reference.
APPENDIX K

Informed Consent: For student Participation

HALTON DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

And

BROCK UNIVERSITY, FACULTY OF EDUCATION

To: Student’s Name: __________________________

From: Anthony Corbin (Investigator), Tiffany Gallagher (Advisor)

Title of Study: “Grade 9 Students’ Perceptions of the Impact of a D.E.A.R. Program”

Date of Study: September 2006 – April 2007

I am a graduate student at Brock University and a Teacher at Burlington Central High School, researching students’ perception of Drop Everything and Read or D.E.A.R.

You are invited to participate in this research study project of the Drop Everything and Read or D.E.A.R. program at your school. The purpose my study is to capture an in-depth understanding of your experiences in the D.E.A.R. program at your school. Of particular interest will be your perceptions of the effect your participation in the program has on your grades, your reading behaviours, and concept of yourself as a reader. Your participation will be tracked over the course of semester 1. In order to gain an understanding of the impact of the D.E.A.R. program, data will be corroborated, analyzed, and presented in a Masters of Education thesis. Recommendations will be made in the interest of supporting students’ positive reading habits and for the future implementation of reading programs such as D.E.A.R. For this study the researcher is interested in five questions:

1. Where do Grade 9 male and female students who are in a D.E.A.R. program prefer to read for pleasure and what are the types of literature and their reading topics of choice?
2. After a semester in D.E.A.R., do students spend more time on task reading and accomplish more reading?
3. What are Grade 9 students’ perceptions of the D.E.A.R. program as having an effect on their grades and their reading and writing ability?
4. How do Grade 9 students who are in a D.E.A.R. program perceive themselves as readers?
5. How do Grade 9 students evaluate the benefits of the D.E.A.R. program?

To answer these questions am asking for your permission to observe your child during D.E.A.R in the first semester of the 2006/2007 school year. During that time I will need to complete three interviews, two questionnaires, and collect their daily information from her/his daily D.E.A.R. reading logs.

The Halton District School Board’s Research Advisory Committee and subsequently your school Principal have officially approved this study. When the study is completed a report on the findings will be available in the school library for interested parents.

By signing this informed consent form:

- I understand the purpose of this study and the research methodology as outlined above,
- I understand that no harm or risk is anticipated through my involvement,
• I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without penalty,
• I understand that my decision participate or not participate will not affect my grades.
• I understand that there will be no payment for my participation,
• I understand that my interviews will be audiotape and the information gathered on the tape/s will be kept strictly confidential and that all information will be coded so that my name cannot be associated with any data. Only the principal investigator and the advisor will have access to the information that can relate any participant with my code and this information will not be shared with other members of the research team nor with other teachers or school or board administrators.
• I understand that all personal information will be kept strictly confidential and that all information will be coded so that my name cannot be associated with any data. Only the principal investigator and the advisor will have access to the information that can relate any participant with my code and this information will not be shared with other members of the research team nor with other teachers or school or board administrators.
• I understand that all information related to this study will be held in the Principal Investigator’s office in a locked file cabinet for a period of 2 years following the completion of this study. Electronic data will be entered into a computer that will have secured access and will only be available to the participating researchers. After the two-year interval, all documentation including fieldnotes, program planning documentation, debriefing logs, and interview transcriptions and data analyses documents will be placed in the confidential recycling container in the Faculty of Education and audiotapes will be destroyed. All electronic versions and files relating to this study will also be destroyed.
• I understand that the results of this study will be distributed in academic journal articles and conference presentations.

I have read and understand all of the information provided within this form about the study. I understand that I may ask questions in the future; and by signing below, I am giving my free consent to participate in this study.

Student’s signature: ___________________________ Date: ______________________

This study has been reviewed and has received ethics clearance through the Brock University Research Ethics Board (File #tba) and the Halton District School Board Research Review Committee. If you have any questions or concerns about your Son/ Daughter participating in the study, you may contact Anthony Corbin at 905-634-7768 ext. 421 or by e-mail at ac99ac@brocku.ca or Tiffany Gallagher at 905-688-5550 ext. 5114 or by e-mail at Tiffany.Gallagher@brocku.ca. Any questions or concerns about your son’s/daughter’s involvement in the study may also be directed to the Brock University Research Ethics Officer in the Office of Research Services at 905-688-5550, ext. 3035.

Feedback about the use of the data collected will be available before June 2007.

Thank you for your help.

Please return one signed copy of this consent form to the researcher in the enclosed postage-paid envelope. Please keep one copy of this form for further reference.
APPENDIX L

BROCK UNIVERSITY. RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD APPROVAL

Office of Research Services
Research Ethics Office
www.brocku.ca

DATE: September 11, 2006
FROM: Linda Rose-Krasnor, Chair
Research Ethics Board (REB)

TO: Tiffany Gallagher, Education
Anthony CORBIN

FILE: 06-016 CORBIN

TITLE: Grade 9 Students' Perceptions of the Impact of a D.E.A.R Program

The Brock University Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above research proposal.

DECISION: Accepted as clarified.

This project has received ethics clearance for the period of September 11, 2006 to June 30, 2007 subject to full REB ratification at the Research Ethics Board's next scheduled meeting. The clearance period may be extended upon request. The study may now proceed.

Please note that the Research Ethics Board (REB) requires that you adhere to the protocol as last reviewed and cleared by the REB. During the course of research no deviations from, or changes to, the protocol, recruitment, or consent form may be initiated without prior written clearance from the REB. The Board must provide clearance for any modifications before they can be implemented. If you wish to modify your research project, please refer to http://www.brocku.ca/researchservices/forms to complete the appropriate form Revision or Modification to an Ongoing Application.

Adverse or unexpected events must be reported to the REB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Principal Investigator, the safety of the participants and the continuation of the protocol.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and clearance of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research protocols.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored. A Final Report is required for all projects upon completion of the project. Researchers with projects lasting more than one year are required to submit a Continuing Review Report annually. The Office of Research Services will contact you when this form Continuing Review/Final Report is required.

Please quote your REB file number on all future correspondence.

LRK/bb
APPENDIX M

Feedback Letter for Participants

BROCK UNIVERSITY, FACULTY OF EDUCATION Letterhead

Date: ____________

Dear (Insert Participant Name),

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your participation in the research project “Grade 9 Students’ Perceptions of the Impact of a D.E.A.R. Program.” The researcher’s areas of interest for the study and information regarding the findings for the study are outlined below.

There were areas of interest to the researcher:

1. Where do Grade 9 male and female students who are in a D.E.A.R. program prefer to read for pleasure and what are the types of literature and their reading topics of choice?
2. After a semester in D.E.A.R., do students spend more time on task reading and accomplish more reading?
3. What are Grade 9 students’ perceptions of the D.E.A.R. program as having an effect on their grades and their reading and writing ability?
4. How do Grade 9 students who are in a D.E.A.R. program perceive themselves as readers?
5. How do Grade 9 students evaluate the benefits of the D.E.A.R. program?

The findings of this study are … (OUTLINE FINDINGS)

The findings of this study will be reported in… (Insert Relevant Forums of Dissemination)

If you would like more information about this study and/or have further questions about the associated findings, please contact Anthony Corbin at 905-634-7768ext.421 or Tiffany Gallagher at 905.688.5550 ext. 5114.

Sincerely,

Tiffany Gallagher, Ph.D. ______________________ Anthony Corbin ______________________
Assistant Professor M.Ed. Candidate

Speak only or mostly English at home
Speak another language or (languages) as often as English at home
Speak only or mostly another language (or languages) at home
First language learn at home was other than English