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Self-Selected Reading: A School Improvement Plan

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Capstone Project: A School Improvement Plan

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Abstract

Research indicates that school-aged children today are less motivated to read for fun than in previous generations, opting instead to indulge in digital media and online gaming. Studies also demonstrate that small amounts of free reading without follow-up assessments have linguistic, academic, and socio-emotional benefits. This school improvement plan was driven by the developer's success with guided self-selected reading (GSSR) and self-selected reading (SSR) in her classroom and a desire to assist other educators in the process of creating their own programs to optimize language acquisition, build enthusiasm for reading, and guide students to become autonomous readers.

Keywords: free voluntary reading (FVR), self-selected reading (SSR), guided self-selected reading (GSSR), language acquisition, motivation, narrow reading, affective filter, acquisition driven instruction (ADI), comprehensible input (CI)

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Self-Selected Reading: A School Improvement Project

Regardless of whether one is reading in their native language or a new language, reading for enjoyment is a significant component of the development of academic vocabulary and language development (Cho & Hey-Jung, 2004; Krashen, 2019). However, youth are opting to be on their devices rather than grabbing a book to read for fun. In fact, the number of high school seniors reading for enjoyment has dropped form 44% to merely 16% since the late 1970s (Twenge et al., 2018). With social media and gaming competing for their attention, less time is available during the day for children to indulge in a good book. According to O'Brien (2020), the decline of pleasure reading amongst school-aged students over the past few decades can also be attributed to two other factors: (1) schools implementing curriculum that preselects the reading material and requires students to read uninteresting texts; and (2) tying reading to tasks and assessments to demonstrate proficiency of a skill.

Research from empirical studies and multivariate analysis from case histories confirms that spending a small amount of time reading for pleasure increases motivation to read, builds general knowledge about science, literature, and history, and develops fundamental skills in vocabulary, spelling, reading, writing, and speaking (Stanovich & Cunningham, 1993; Cho & Krashen, 1994; Mason, 2004; Cho & Krashen, 2018; Krashen, 2019; Smith et al., 2021). Recent studies conducted by Mason & Smith (2021) indicate that self-selected reading (SSR) lowers anxiety when readers engage in compelling readings appropriate to their level. Although these studies indicate the vast benefits of free-voluntary reading, the majority of world language teachers are unaware of the research and have not incorporated this practice into their daily classroom routine. This problem stems from the tension that exists between teachers who instruct using a skills-based approach with grammar and vocabulary drills driving instruction and a

comprehension based approach that focuses on providing interesting texts at the language

learner's level to develop language (Krashen, 2019). World language teachers lack education on

the impact and value of acquisition driven methods that include SSR on language acquisition and

motivation to read. Cho & Krashen (2019) indicate that other factors limiting the growth of free

reading programs in world language classrooms include time constraints, equitable access to

library materials, sufficient language-learner texts at the novice and intermediate low level, and

the knowledge needed to establish a highly effective SSR program.

Through the process of SSR, students gain access to an extensive classroom library of

texts in the target language that relate to a variety of interests. During SSR, students read a book

of their choice without any comprehension activities or assessments attached (Mason & Smith,

2021). If the reader no longer enjoys the book they are reading, they simply switch books until

they find something that intrigues them. According to Mason (2019), the challenge to making a

successful SSR program is the fact that beginning language learners are often not aware of their

language level or what type of book would be the best place to start, leading many to give up

early, disengage, and lose motivation. Therefore, in recent years, second language acquisition

(SLA) scholars have encouraged the implementation of a guided stage to self-selected reading

called guided self-selected reading (Mason, 2019; Mason & Krashen, 2020; Mason & Smith,

2021; Smith et al., 2021). In this stage, the teacher guides novice readers in the selection process

to find texts that match each individual student's interests and language level. The goal of guided

self-selected reading (GSSR) is to create autonomous readers who have the confidence to select

level-appropriate reading material and enjoy these texts at their own pace (Mason, 2019).

Therefore, the primary purpose of this school improvement plan is to educate not only

world language teachers, librarians, and administration at MOC-FV of the cognitive, academic,

and emotional benefits of establishing a robust library and offering free reading time right in the classroom but also to extend the learning to nearby districts and institutions. A major outcome of this project is to offer the research, resources, and support to other language teachers to use as a guide to build bilingual and multi-lingual literacy. Currently, social media, extra-curricular activities, home, and school responsibilities are competing with young people's time to develop a joy for reading for pleasure. Through this school improvement plan, staff will gain effective tools to implement a successful GSSR and SSR program that ensures that all students have access to a wide selection of grade and level-appropriate reading material that not only interests them but compels them to opt to read for enjoyment inside and outside of the classroom. Additionally, this project focuses on inspiring connections between the world languages department and other departments in school districts to develop a common understanding of the value of students reading in their native language and language learning students reading in the target language for pleasure.

Research for this school improvement project was compiled from the DeWitt Library at Northwestern college and Google Scholar. All sources are peer reviewed, and the majority are from within the past ten years. Several older, primary studies were also included to demonstrate the development of self-selected reading programs over the years and to share the impact they have had on language acquisition compared to legacy language learning programs. Resources collected include studies conducted that demonstrate the benefits of reading for pleasure and best practices of implementation. Over 20 sources were included to inform and guide this school improvement project.

The literature review for this school improvement project will begin by discussing the various language learning hypotheses and narrowing in on the approach that is linked to SSR and

GSSR as well as the main researchers. Secondly, the designer of this project will analyze studies that have been conducted on the benefits of SSR and GSSR. Thirdly, views from critics will be evaluated, and lastly, this review will identify gaps in the literature and the need for this research to support this school improvement project.

<div align="center">**Review of Literature**</div>

Language Acquisition Hypotheses

How are new languages best learned? There are three major fundamental hypotheses of second language learning implemented in world language classrooms today. Language education has traditionally and predominately backed the first, known as the Skills Building Hypothesis, or direct instruction model. This view asserts that people learn languages when they consciously study the grammar and practice the rules. A primary focus is on error correction to improve accuracy (Cho & Krashen, 2019). The second strategy is called the Communicative Approach and focuses on how to communicate in real-life situations (Krashen, 2008). This method stems from the Comprehension Output (CO) hypothesis, developed by Merrill Swain, which states that language is acquired when the speaker attempts to communicate and fails and tries again until the message is delivered (Congmin, 2021). Through noticing these gaps in understanding, the learner figures out the correct pattern and acquires the language.

The third hypothesis of language learning is the Comprehension Hypothesis, sometimes referred to as the Input Hypothesis. Over the past 40 years, Dr. Stephen Krashen, a professor emeritus in the field of linguistics at the University of Southern California, has challenged these language learning views and has developed five hypotheses that play a significant role in language acquisition. One of his hypotheses, the Comprehension Hypothesis, states "we acquire language and develop literacy when we understand messages, that is, when we understand what

we hear and what we read, when we receive 'comprehensible input'" (Krashen, 2009, p. 81).

Krashen (2018) defines the Reading Hypothesis as a subcategory of the Comprehension

Hypothesis and asserts that language learners implicitly acquire literacy-related features of

language through reading material that is comprehended. When learners are provided with input

that contains messages that they understand, grammatical structures emerge and are acquired in a

predictable and consistent order (Krashen, 2004). Focusing on grammar to build language raises

the affective filter and prevents the brain from developing language. Krashen maintains that

language classrooms that set aside time for self-selected reading develop autonomous language

learners who perform better on reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and writing tests

than other language classrooms who do not (2018).

Most recently, Krashen and Mason (2020) have taken these hypotheses to the next step

and established the Optimal Input Hypothesis. The idea that just because a text is understandable

and interesting doesn't make it effective. For optimal acquisition, input must not only be

comprehensible and compelling but also rich and abundant (Krashen & Mason, 2020; Mason &

Smith, 2021). When input is rich, the text is more appealing and contains meaningful

descriptions, and when it is abundant, the reader is provided with multiple repetitions of

unfamiliar language to "provide numerous opportunities for acquisition" (Krashen & Mason,

2020, p. 1).

Many world language teachers apply a mixture of language teaching methods that dip

into one or more of the aforementioned hypotheses in their instruction. A method in which

educators pick and choose from a variety of methods is called the Eclectic Approach to language

learning (Mwanza, 2017). Mwanza (2017) believes that sticking to one method is inflexible and

weak, and teachers ought to pick the activities that best suit their dynamic learning setting.

Modern textbooks include activities from all different methods and encourage this approach

while Mason and Krashen (2020) maintain that optimal input is sufficient for language

development based on studies of the past 30 years.

Reading for Pleasure and Language Acquisition

Acquiring language through reading is not a new concept. In her book *Polyglot: How I
Learn Languages*, Kató Lomb (2008) attributes her acquisition of 17 languages to reading for

pleasure. When asked how to read, Kató states,

> We should read because it is books that provide knowledge in the most interesting way,
>
> and it is a fundamental truth of human nature to seek the pleasant and avoid the
>
> unpleasant. The traditional way of learning a language (cramming 20–30 words a day and
>
> digesting the grammar supplied by a teacher or course book) may satisfy at most one's
>
> sense of duty, but it can hardly serve as a source of joy. Nor will it likely be successful.
>
> (Lomb et al., 2008, p.73).

According to Lomb, books provide elaboration and frequent repetition enabling the

internalization of vocabulary and grammar patterns.

In an interview with Lomb, Krashen and Kiss (1996) discovered that Lomb was an avid

reader and could comprehend what she read. Interestingly, she acquired the languages as she was

exposed to unfamiliar vocabulary through reading, and she had little to no contact with native

speakers. Lomb expressed in the interview that studying grammar was a waste of time, and that a

person does not learn a language by studying the grammar (Krashen & Kiss, 1996, p. 210).

Krashen introduced this concept of reading for pleasure in the 1990's as a tool to aid in second

language acquisition in language immersion schools that were struggling (Ulrich & Tyndorf Jr,

2018). After much success, Krashen (2018) went on to note the benefits of self-selected reading

in the early 2000's as a powerful method for first and second language learners. These benefits include "substantial development of reading ability, writing ability, vocabulary and grammar" (Krashen et al., 2017, p. viii).

Self-Selected Reading is for Every Student

Students from all reading backgrounds who are forced to read required texts can become detached and indifferent to the material. On the other hand, when students choose the book that they read, self-selection has the potential to encourage and empower them. This opportunity to choose builds self-confidence and leads to a positive attitude towards reading (Miller, 2010). Every student who enters the classroom brings with them their own personal experiences with reading. Negative labels such as "struggling reader" are attached to those who do not perform well on standardized tests. Instead, Miller (2010) flips the script and has defined three groups of readers in a more positive light: Developing, Dormant, and Underground. Developing readers may have a learning disability, see themselves as poor readers, struggle in all aspects of reading, achieve low test scores, and receive interventions (2010). A marker of a developing reader is that they've had significantly fewer opportunities to read as their peers or less access to texts (Krashen, 2004, Miller, 2010). Dormant readers are those who get by reading what is required but have not discovered the joy of reading for themselves. They need the opportunity to discover the magic of independent reading (Miller, 2010). Underground readers are exceptionally gifted and often go overlooked in the classroom, and material offered to them is uninspiring, so they often secretly read what they want to in class. All three categories of readers benefit from the freedom to select their own material from a quiet, comfortable environment rich in printed material to read for enjoyment (Krashen, 2004).

In the world language classroom, when the teacher takes these types of readers into consideration and provides robust choices to students, the probability of developing naturally motivated readers increases. When the reading is optimal, the students enter into what Krashen et al. (2017) deem as "flow", or a state in which the reader forgets that they are reading in another language because they are so enthralled in the story (p. 3). When this occurs, linguistic growth happens naturally while the reader is in such a zone that nothing else matters but the content of what's happening in the book. Self-selected reading becomes a "bridge to advanced language competence" and will make future reading of authentic texts attainable (Krashen et al., 2017, p. 14).

Guided Self-Selected Reading (GSSR)

As mentioned before, a guided stage has been added to self-selected reading by Beniko Mason (2019a) for beginning students to help them to establish a solid start to free reading. In the guided stage, the teacher makes book recommendations for the students based on their individual language level and interests (Mason, 2019a). In an interview with Krashen, Mason (2019b) stated that she designed this pre-stage as a result of hearing students complain about not having anything of interest to read. When students begin to experience success, they become invested in the GSSR process and are less likely to waste time. In GSSR, after the students finish a book, they journal information such as book title, author, book level, number of pages read, a book rating, and a short summary or other information the teacher may want to know to help recommend future books (Mason 2019a; Mason & Krashen, 2020). With this information, the teacher is able to direct the reader to books that are most suitable for the learner. GSSR does not include explicit drills, tests, or comprehension questions, but it may involve student conversations with the teacher or sharing about the book with others or in their journal (2019b).

To keep the GSSR process manageable and impactful, the reading should be narrow. This means that in the beginning stages the reader should stick with the same author and genre so that the reader is more likely to come across familiar topics and words causing less "lexical burn for the reader" (Mason & Smith, 2021, p. 393). Comprehensible text does not mean the reader must know every word before reading. Through the Optimal Input Hypothesis, when readers are exposed to a new word or structure repeatedly, they will eventually acquire that language, and most texts will contain incomprehensible pieces or "noise" (Krashen & Mason, 2020, p. 1; Mason & Smith, 2021). Keeping the affective filter low is an important component of language acquisition. When the affective filter is high, like during testing or when something is not comprehensible, a student's motivation, stress, and anxiety rise, and language acquisition is blocked or prohibited (Krashen, 1982; Mason & Smith, 2021). Therefore, GSSR does not include the use of error correction or assessments as these have been determined to be not only harmful but also unproductive (Mason, 2019b).

Research that Supports Self-Selected Reading

Case histories demonstrate the tie between reading for enjoyment and the development of language. For example, William Marson started a "Reading is Fun" daily segment in his class, and students spent 45 minutes a day reading with zero pre or post-reading accountability requirements (Ulrich & Tyndorf Jr, 2019, p. 30). Throughout the study, Marson witnessed his students enthusiastically engaging in the reading, and based on surveys, 70% of parents noted their students were reading at home out of excitement for the program, and 91% said their children were reading more than they had before (2019). A similar study of English as a second language students in Indonesia revealed that students made substantial language gains and motivation to read for enjoyment after two weeks of Story Listening and GSSR (Smith et al.,

2021). During this time, the researcher noted students enthusiastically reading. The entire group

read 6,413 pages and read an average of 20.3 hours per student. A 6th grade level cloze reading

test was given in which the students had 100 word blanks to supply. The same test was given at

the beginning of the study and the end of the study. The students who came to class every day

displayed remarkable reading gains from the pre-test to the post-test, demonstrating the power of

GSSR to boost student motivation and literacy (Smith et al., 2021)

In an effort to exhibit the power of narrow reading on language acquisition, Cho

conducted a study with three Korean women and one Spanish woman known as the "Sweet

Valley Studies" (Cho & Krashen, 1994). Prior to the study, these women had not gained much

growth in English in a typical classroom setting. Cho had the subjects read the Sweet Valley

High series as many teenage girls found those to be interesting at that time. The women

underlined unknown words and created their own personalized lists of from 275-535 words. Out

of context, at the end of the study, the participants were asked to define these words. They were

correct from 56%-80% of the time. The average learning rate increased to 62% for the four adult

learners, and all four women grew in their speaking and ability to understand English based on

self-reporting and reflection at the conclusion of the program (1994). This study confirmed that

no memorization was needed to acquire these words. These women acquired their vocabulary

through the use of self-selected reading.

In a replication study to determine the impact that SSR had on vocabulary, spelling,

writing, reading, attitude, and confidence in the target language, Cho et al. (2004) divided 140

English language learning 6th grade students in Korea into one experimental group and one

control group. While students in the control group continued a textbook driven approach during

the study, learners in the experimental group read from a selection of 250 easy-to-read English

story books from the internet because of lack of suitable print readers. Instructors gave a reading

test that had 20 vocabulary terms and thirty comprehension questions as a pre-test, and then

questions were switched around for the post-test. On T-tests, results collected by Cho et al.

(2004) indicate that students who read for pleasure made gains of 4.1 on writing, 4.2 on

vocabulary, 3.92 on spelling, 3.61 on reading, and 7.51 on overall interest in reading, revealing

that students who read for at least one hour per week made significant gains in writing,

vocabulary, spelling, reading, and attitude towards reading, confidence, and interest.

In a more recent, yet similar study, Abualzain (2017) conducted research to determine if

there was a positive relationship between free voluntary reading and university students' creative

writing abilities in English. The researcher divided the students into a control and testing group

and administered pre and post-tests to students as well as a creative writing rubric. Abualzain

(2017) discovered that self-selected reading substantially boosts students' creative writing skills.

When students choose their own material at their level, they achieve remarkable improvement in

creative writing. On the pretest, only 7% of the students in the experimental group received an

excellent score, and on the post-test this number rose to 12.46%. The students who achieved a

good score rose by 2% on the post-test. Over 16% of the students scored poorly on the pre-test,

and this lowered to 8.64% on the post test, showing significant improvement after the

intervention (2017). Results on a teacher questionnaire revealed that the majority of the teachers

confirmed the value of SSR and noted improvement in overall creative writing skills.

In a replication study, Cho & Krashen (2019) discovered similar results based on a

survey given to Korean English language learning teachers. The researchers identified positive

and significant correlations ranging from .34 to .51 between self-reported pleasure reading and

self-reported competence in the four skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. These

findings confirm the comprehension hypothesis, which states that language development occurs when we comprehend what we hear and read (2019). Similarly, in a 12-week study with 4th graders in Korea to determine the impact of SSR on language acquisition and attitudes towards reading, Cho et al. (2005) provided students with a preliminary questionnaire to ascertain if students had ever read in English before and their overall interest level in reading. One class period per week was a traditional lesson and another 40 minute class period was dedicated to narrow reading. Cho et al. (2005) chose a series of Clifford books for the narrow reading material as many students were familiar with the TV program. Students took an English vocabulary and comprehension test as well as a questionnaire on a 5-point scale at the beginning of the study and again at the end, with question order altered on the final test. As a result, Cho et al. (2005) noted a significant gain in reading interest from 2.76 to 4.54, demonstrating a growing enthusiasm for reading in the target language. T-test results show gains of 4.91 on reading comprehension and 3.31 on vocabulary development, confirming the power or self-selected reading and increasing the probability that students will continue to read for pleasure on their own (2005).

Research that Supports Guided Self-Selected Reading

Several studies demonstrate the effectiveness of the recent addition to self-selected reading, guided self-selected reading, on language development. In a three-week study conducted by Smith et al. (2021) of 11 English language learning university students in Surabaya, Indonesia, students engaged in a total of 30 hours of GSSR in class, as well as additional free reading time outside of class. Instructors guided students to pick books at the appropriate level. Students were directed to note how many pages they read, the title, and to journal any key vocabulary that stood out to them. Researchers observed from the results that not only will students accept an optimal input approach to language acquisition, but also that guided self-

selected reading leads to substantial language acquisition in a short-term course. For reading, participants gained a mean of .24 points per hour (2021). (Mason, 2018).

In a comparable study by Mason & Smith (2021), when introduced to free reading through GSSR, senior citizens made remarkable gains on the TOEFL assessment after reading between 100-150 pages each week of the study. In another study, Japanese students experienced the same gains on the TOEFL test with GSSR as international students who were completing an intensive study abroad program in the United States (2021). Additionally, Mason & Smith (2021) discovered in a comparison study that teenagers at a junior college in Taiwan who participated in a GSSR program made more improvement in reading comprehension and vocabulary than the comparison group that used intensive and extensive reading.

Input Only Verses Input Plus

Scholars have differing views on implicit and explicit approaches to reading. Wang (2020) asserts that Krashen's "input only" strategy to reading is deficient and that language learners need an "input plus" model to increase the student's exposure to new words in the text (p. 473). He claims that extra repetitions are a strong predictor of acquiring language incidentally. Krashen maintains his position that optimal input alone is sufficient, and the crucial element of a successful GSSR program is that the material be about 98% comprehended by the reader for acquisition of new vocabulary to occur (Krashen, 2005). Contrary to what Krashen states, Peters et al. (2009) argues that reading is a very slow process, and learners may misinterpret words they are reading if they are not accompanied with supports and that very few words are picked up by reading. Despite what Peters et al. (2009) claims, Mason and Smith (2021) confirm that acquisition is a process, and explicit vocabulary instruction does not lead to implicit internalization of the language because language learned through studying is short-term

(p. 392). Likewise, Lichtman & VanPatten (2021) reiterate Krashen's theory of second language acquisition by expressing that what is learned explicitly does not become implicit knowledge. These learning processes both develop differently and do not overlap (p. 289). Therefore, explicit activities that focus on form instead of meaning do not help students to internalize the language.

According to Goodman et al. (2004), through reading for enjoyment without pre and post activities, we implicitly develop our ability to spell, comprehend academic vocabulary, and acquire complex grammar rules (p. 38). Additionally, Mason & Smith (2021) assert that when students engage in comprehensible, compelling, rich, and abundant reading, they are ready to internalize the language (Mason & Krashen, 2020). Consequently, active conscious language study is unnecessary. Lichtman & VanPatten (2021) stress that the only circumstances in which explicit learning can be of some use is when writing compositions and self-editing. Language teachers should instead dedicate classroom time to "whole-language activities where learners understand language and use it to communicate" (p. 299). In 1989, Krashen reviewed studies previously conducted on vocabulary teaching and noted that explicit vocabulary instruction was less productive than just reading when analyzing vocabulary gains (McQuillan, 2019b). Similarly, McQuillan (2019a) discovered through a sequence of studies that the use of classroom time for "reading only" was a more effective use of time to build vocabulary than explicit vocabulary instruction.

Skeptics of GSSR believe that students prefer conscious instruction to acquisition based strategies (Mason & Krashen, 2020). In response to this, Mason and Krashen (2020) state that through studies of the impact of reading for pleasure, the results indicate that the majority of students who are exposed to reading for optimal input enjoy the experience. Additionally, Mason and Krashen (2020) stress that for best results, the teacher must orient their students to the

research and how acquisition works before beginning GSSR. Krashen's Monitor Hypothesis claims that explicit teaching of grammatical rules requires learner to focus on form to be able to communicate, thus limiting the time the learner has to implement the rules in conversation (Krashen, 2004). Mason and Krashen (2020) indicate that when students experience success with free reading, they won't want grammar exercises, drills, worksheets, comprehension activities, and practice.

As the research in this school improvement plan have demonstrated, SSR and GSSR are associated with strong gains in writing, reading, vocabulary, and grammar as well as increased motivation and excitement to read in a new language. A majority of the research available as of today has been on the impact of SSR and GSSR on English language learning students. At MOC-FV, the students are making linguistic gains while acquiring Spanish, and the developer of this plan predicts that with optimal resources available, language learners will experience similar gains as students learning English. More research is needed to reveal the effectiveness of reading for pleasure on Spanish language acquisition. This school improvement project intends to inform and educate teachers, librarians, and school leaders at MOC-FV and area schools of the benefits of implementing a strong literacy program for language learners as well as the tools to establish a robust library to meet the needs and interests of every language learner.

School Profile

Student Performance

According to the ESSA Status report provided by Iowa.gov, MOC-FV High School scored an overall performance of Commendable in the 2021-2022 school year with a score of 58.96/100, exceeding the state average of 54.65 (Iowa.gov, 2022). MOC-FV students have surpassed the state average achievement average of 50 in English Language Arts with a score of

54.79/100. The majority of students are meeting benchmarks for proficient achievement on the ISASP 2022 assessment (Iowa.gov, 2022).

Student and Community Characteristics

The MOC-FV School District is located in Orange City, Iowa, a thriving community of 6,228 residents located in Sioux County of Northwest Iowa. MOC-FV High School was established in 1994 when the Maurice-Orange City and Floyd Valley districts merged together. MOC-FV partners with families in the communities of Orange City, Maurice, Alton, Hospers, Newkirk, and Granville and enthusiastically serves students from diverse backgrounds, languages, abilities, and individual needs. In the 2021-2022 academic school year, there were 435 students enrolled in the high school (MOC-FV CSD, 2022a). Of these students, 77.9% are White, 15.9% are Hispanic, 0.4% are Native American, 2.3% are Multiracial, 1.3% are Black/African American, 0.4% are Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 1.7% are Asian (Iowa.gov, 2022). Male students make up 52.9% of the population, with female students making up 47.1%. Students with disabilities (IEP) make up 13.6% of the group, 5.7% are English Learners, and 22.7% are low socio-economic status (2022).

Parent Involvement

The staff and administration at MOC-FV collaborate with parents to assist students with their academic, social, physical, and emotional needs (MOC-FV CSD, 2022a). Parents and caregivers of students who attend MOC-FV School District are invited to attend parent-teacher conferences each semester to discuss their student's academic performance, behavior, or any other topic related to school. Parents have access to student grades and attendance on Infinite Campus, a student information platform. Teachers post up-to-date lesson plans and assignments for parents to access on the school's website and invite parents to call or email with any

questions or concerns. MOC-FV is active on social media and posts results and information

regularly for families and caregivers to access. Parents are also invited to participate in athletic

boosters, prom committee, music boosters, and the Pride of the Dutchmen Band Parent

Organization. A parent care-team provides treats in the faculty lounges as well as meals during

parent-teacher conferences.

School Mission and Vision

The mission statement of MOC-FV is "fostering learning, excellence and civic

responsibility" (MOC-FV CSD, 2022a). The faculty and staff are dedicated to this mission by

empowering all students to reach their full potential through a learning community rich with

relevant and meaningful learning experiences. Students work alongside a passionate staff

committed to teaching, challenging, supporting, and celebrating the whole child as they achieve

high levels of learning. The faculty and staff in the MOC-FV school district strive to reflect the

following core values: cooperation, effort, responsibility, respect, excellence, integrity, and

creativity (MOC-FV CSD, 2022a).

Current Student Learning Goals

The first Wildly Important Goal (WIG) for climate and culture for the 2022-2023 school

year is to consistently practice sincere gratitude and encouragement. The belief is "If we practice

authentic gratitude and encouragement on a consistent basis, then the climate and culture at

MOC-Floyd Valley will be positive and welcoming, and will positively impact student learning,

staff, and student efficacy, and school spirit" (MOC-FV CSD, 2022b). A second WIG is to

successfully implement "gold-seal lessons" and develop and utilize formative and summative

assessments to accurately measure student learning and achievement of essential standards

(MOC-FV CSD, 2022a). Secondly, the school will emphasize the importance of creating a safe

environment for students and provide optimal learning conditions for students to thrive without the fear of bullying or harassment. Thirdly, MOC-FV will increase student performance on all Iowa Assessment tests and reevaluate testing and administrative procedures.

Teacher Work and Curriculum

The majority of teachers at MOC-FV High School teach seven of the eight academic periods during the school day and direct a 25-minute intervention period called Dutch Time. During Dutch Time, teachers provide extra help or extensions to individual students or reteach small groups of students. Once per week, students gather with their TEAMS or homeroom group during Dutch Time for a lesson and activity from the *Leader-in-Me* curriculum lead by their TEAMS teacher.

Students at MOC-FV high school have a wide variety of course options from which to choose ranging from general education courses to concurrent online enrollment courses through Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa, Dordt University in Sioux Center, Iowa, and Northwest Community College (NCC) in Sheldon, Iowa. MOC-FV offers a challenging and extensive selection of curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular programs as well as opportunities to participate in fine arts, music, theater, athletics, speech, Future Farmers of America (FFA), Center for Advanced Professional Studies (CAPS), a number of clubs, Student Council, and National Honor Society. Students may also choose courses from the following career and technical programs: Business, Family & Consumer Science, Industrial Technology, and Vocational Agriculture. MOC-FV offers honors classes in Physics, Calculus I & II, and Statistics. Additionally, heritage and non-heritage language students who are proficient in two or more languages, one of which is English, are offered the opportunity to take the AAPPL

language proficiency and performance assessment every spring to earn the Iowa Seal of
Biliteracy.

Teacher Instructional Strategies, Assessment Practices, and Professional Development

An instructional target that MOC-FV school district currently has for instruction is to
"consistently utilize the Iowa Instructional Framework and the District-adopted APL
Instructional Strategies across the system" (MOC-FV CSD, 2022a). All teachers have been
trained to display their agenda and daily objectives as well as incorporate strategies such as
bellringers, think-pair-share, wait time, on the clock, the interaction sequence, checks for
comprehension, formative assessment, and closure to their daily routine to enhance student
learning and achievement. The leaders in the district perform instructional rounds to observe
evidence to support the use of APL strategies for learning. Results of these instructional rounds
are consolidated and discussed during professional development time with the full staff.

Additionally, during weekly professional development meetings, the staff meet in
collaborative small groups to discuss student learning goals. show specific recognition and
celebration for achieving goals, meeting collaboration benchmarks, and specific efforts staff have
accomplished that lead to school improvement (DuFour, 2016). Through this professional
development opportunity, staff and leaders learn how to intentionally celebrate each other and
support one another appropriately and productively and learn how this ties to our core values of
respect, cooperation, and responsibility. In an effort to meet the goal of the second WIG for
learning at MOC-FV, teachers also discuss in their collaborative teams group the implementation
and use of formative and summative assessment and ways to "proactively use student data to
drive instruction and intervention" (MOC-FV CSD, 2022b).

In addition to ensuring academic progress at MOC-FV, faculty and staff have started to implement *Leader in Me* to address the need to teach students socio-emotional skills as well as leadership abilities. On the ISASP survey given to students in 2021, students of low socio-economic status reported feeling levels of insecurity and low levels of safety on campus (Iowa.gov, 2021). Collaborative groups meet to address these matters weekly as they work through the *Leader in Me* model with improving students' leadership skills and socio-emotional health at the heart of the process (Leader in Me, 2022). A teacher leadership group trains staff every Friday on lessons, activities, and relationship building games to be delivered during Dutch Time once per week to engage students in conversation and reflection based on the book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens* by Sean Covey.

Needs Assessment

One area in need of improvement at MOC-FV High School is School Climate and Culture. As mentioned before, teens are opting to be on their devices rather than diving into a good book for pleasure reading. Boredom arises when students are asked to participate in a full class novel that fails to garner their attention and investment. Comprehension assignments, activities, and assessments tied to reading raise disengagement and can lead to attendance issues and minimal literacy gains. In an effort to raise student motivation to read, to make the reading process equitable, and to drive language development, GSSR and SSR have been established and have become a successful part of the weekly routine for Spanish 3 and 4 at MOC-FV High School. Students are choosing from a wide assortment of genres and levels and are experiencing gains in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. This school improvement project intends to implement this program for Spanish levels 2-4, English Language learning classes, and general English education core classes as well as extend the program to area districts with the goal of

increasing motivation to read and language development. With excitement to read and an

understanding of the benefits, students become invested in the process as they experience growth

in language acquisition. Students will want to be in school, and these gains will boost school

climate and culture as students opt to read what they want inside and outside of the classroom.

The English department at MOC-FV high school has already implemented Free Reading

Fridays; however, there is not a consistent system of tracking reading or guiding students to the

appropriate level of literature. Heritage speakers and English Language Learners (ELL) in core

English classes are unaware of the leveled-texts available to them in Spanish, and a variety of

language leveled texts are not available to ELLs in the high school library. The program has been

established at the basic level but requires the implementation of a process that ensures that native

English learners and students who speak languages other than English have access to multiple

texts at their level. The English Language Learning class utilizes Comprehensible Input (CI) to

instruct, engages in free reading daily, and would benefit from a robust selection of English titles

in the library at the novice and intermediate levels to boost interest in free reading, make

language equitable, and develop English language skills.

Data and Analysis

### Data Collection from AAPPL Assessments

In the spring of Spanish 4, students are given the ACTFL Assessment of Performance

toward Proficiency in Languages (AAPPL) assessment. This test assesses standards-based

learning of presentational writing, interpersonal listening and speaking, interpretive reading, and

interpretive listening (Language Testing International, 2022). In order to receive the Iowa Seal of

Biliteracy, students must earn a score of Intermediate Mid (I2) or higher on all three modes of

communication. Data was collected from the AAPPL test results for interpretive reading and

demonstrates growth from 2019-2022 since the implementation of self-selected free reading and

guided self-selected reading.

In 2019, students were receiving Comprehensible Input instruction, but they were not

engaging in GSSR and SSR at this point. Students read the same texts in class, were assessed on

these readings, and were not exposed to a library of readers at their level. Figure 1 shows that

7.41% or 2/27 students earned Advanced, 16/27 or 59.26% of the students scored at the

Intermediate High level (I5), 7. 41% or 2/27 earned Intermediate High (I4), 11.11% or 3/27

earned Intermediate Mid (I2), 7.41% or 2/27 earned Intermediate Low (I1), and 7.41% or 2/27

scored Novice High (N4) on the assessment.

Figure 1

*Interpretive Reading Scores from 2019*
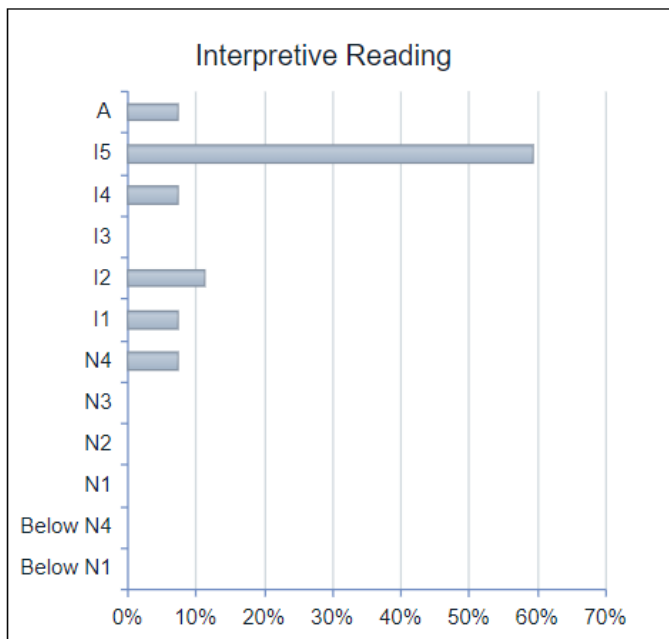
In the spring of 2020, five Spanish 4 students engaged in online learning and self-selected

reading at home during the fourth quarter of school due to COVID 19 school closures. Figure 2

presents results of their interpretive reading assessment growth. 40% or 2/5 students earned

Advanced, and 3/5 or 60% of the test takers earned Intermediate High (I5).

Figure 2

*Interpretive Reading Scores from 2020.*
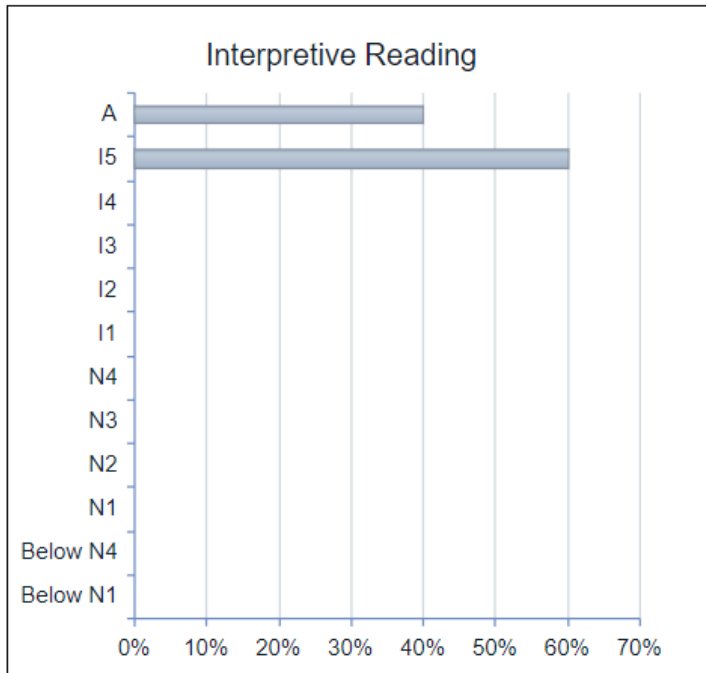
In the 2021 school year, Spanish 4 students engaged in SSR throughout the year, and

their results indicate a continued growth in interpretive reading. Students exhibited an increased

motivation to read what they wanted at their own pace. Figure 3 indicates that 70% or 7/10

Spanish 4 students earned a score of Advanced, 20% or 2/10 scored Intermediate High (15), and

10% or 1/10 scored Intermediate High (I4).

Figure 3

Interpretive Reading Scores from 2021
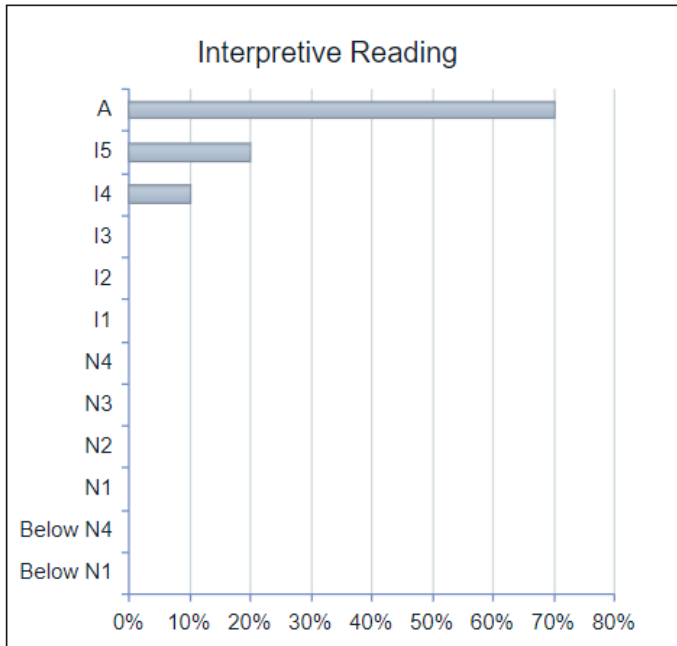
In the spring of 2022, 11/16 students or 68.75% of the students who took the AAPPL

assessments scored Advanced in interpretive reading (see Figure 4). 31.25% or 5/16 of the

students earned Intermediate-High. The 2022 school year was the first year that guided self-

selected reading was added to self-selected reading for the full academic school year. Students

continued to demonstrate a strong desire to read autonomously at their own pace, taking note of

what stood out to them academically. All students scored well above the proficiency level

needed to earn the Iowa Seal of Biliteracy.

Figure 4

Interpretive Reading Scores from 2022
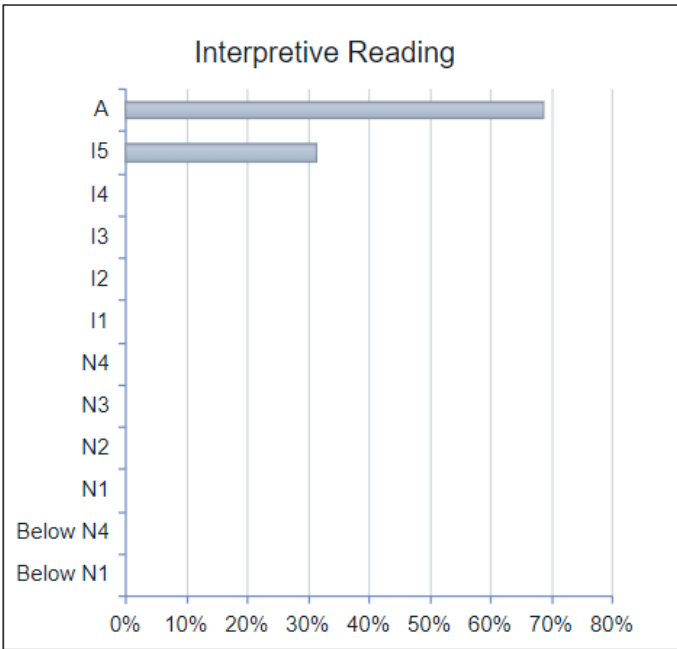


Data Collection from English Teachers

In the fall of 2022, teachers from the English Department and the English Language

Learner classroom were surveyed regarding free reading. Teachers were asked about the

frequency of free reading, variety of texts, motivation to read, as well as their personal interest in

implementing guided self-selected reading into their classroom routine. Every teacher indicated

that they offer free reading time in their classes one time per week. On that day, 33.3% read for

30 or more minutes, 33.3% read for 20 minutes, and 33.3% read for 30 minutes (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

Length of Free-Reading Time

If you offer a set free reading time, for how long do students read?

3 responses

- 5 min.
- 10 min.
- 15 min.
- 20 min.
- 25 min.
- 30 min.
- 30+ min.
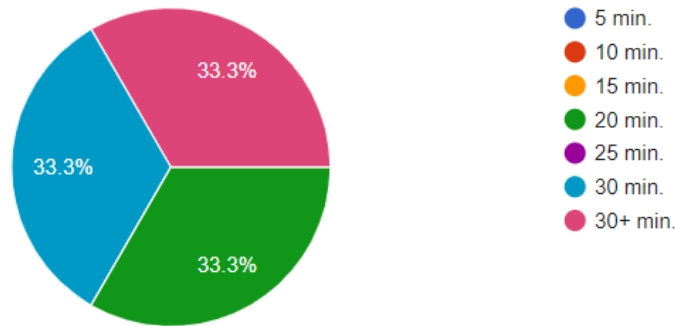
When asked about their interest level in a wider selection of texts for English Language

learners and students will reading needs, 100% of the English Department and the English

Language Learner teacher indicated that they were very interested and that a variety of texts at

multiple levels would boost motivation and benefit all learners.

Figure 6

Interest Level in Leveled Texts

Would your English Language Learners and students with reading needs benefit from
a variety of lower level English language texts in the library to boost motivation to
read? Texts such as newspapers, graphic novels, comics, fiction, non-fiction, etc.

4 responses

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
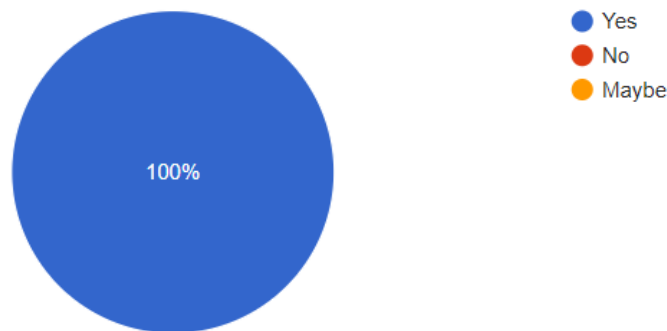
In the survey, the teachers were asked to indicate whether or not their English Language Learners knew about the Spanish language learning texts that are available to all students in the library. 100% of the teachers marked maybe, indicating that students have not been formally introduced or guided to the Spanish section in the library.

Figure 7

Awareness of Readers in Library

Do your native Spanish speaking students and English Language Learners know that their are Spanish language learning texts available to them in the library at all language levels?

3 responses
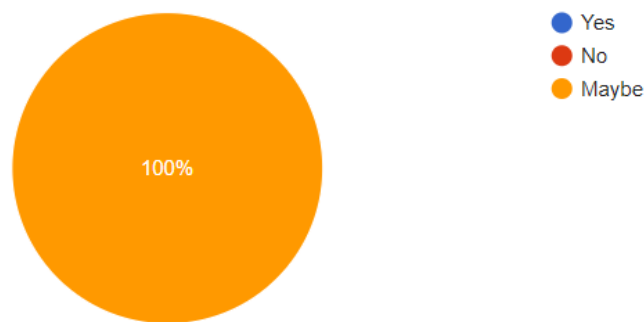
The MOC-FV librarian has collaborated with the Spanish department in building the current Spanish selection of readers. On the first day of free reading, she loads the texts onto a moving library cart, heads directly to the Spanish classroom, and demonstrates the variety of texts available to the students. Students are able to peruse the selection and check out books right from the cart. When asked on a survey if the English department would be interested in having the librarian explain the process and selection of books to them, 66.7% or 2/3 English teachers indicated maybe, and one teacher marked no.

Figure 8

Interest in Demonstration

Would you be interested in a visit by the librarian with a cart of Spanish readers and easy English readers to your classroom to show students the different texts and to allow them to browse?

3 responses
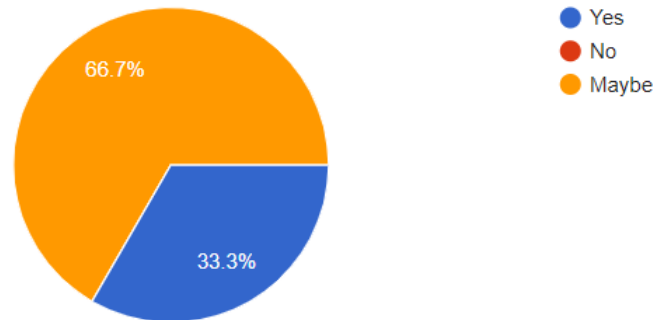
In an open-ended question to teachers, the survey asked if students disengage during free-reading time. Every teacher indicated that many students are engaged and continue to read outside of class, yet some students are not motivated to read and either pretend to read or hide their devices behind their books. When asked if they guide their students to texts that may be of interest or at their level, the language teachers responded that books are chosen independently, yet they are willing to guide students if asked.

Data Collection from Iowa.gov

Although MOC-FV received an overall Commendable Status on the ESSA Status report provided by Iowa.gov for the 2021-2022 school year, the high school earned a Targeted status due to below average scores under Conditions for Learning for students of low socio-economic status (FRL). The low-socio-economic status subgroup at MOC-FV scored -12.28 below the state average of 54.65 due to absenteeism (Iowa.gov, 2022). Students who miss more than 10% of the school year are said to have chronic absences (Iowa.gov, 2021).

Data Analysis

Results from 2019-2022 of the AAPPL assessments demonstrate that there is strong evidence of the benefits of implementing guided self-selected reading and self-selected reading. Even during the quarter when students were not in school during 2020, all five students in Spanish 4 continued to read outside of school, indicating that reading has the power to not only boost motivation to read but also increase language proficiency. With every year of self-selected and guided self-selected reading, not only did scores rise but the number of students reaching the higher intermediate and advanced levels increased.

Data from the survey from the English Department and English Language Learner teacher demonstrates the need for a more robust selection of texts offered to students at different levels in the library as well as an explanation to all students of the positive benefits of reading for pleasure. Students in the English classroom as well as the English Language Learner classroom would benefit from guided self-selected reading to help match readers with texts of interest at their level.

As indicated in the recent report from Iowa.gov (2022), school absenteeism is a concern for students of low socio-economic status at MOC-FV High School. The connections that can be built between the student and teacher during the guided self-selected reading and reflection stage have the power to not only encourage students of poverty and trauma to come to school because they've established relationships with adults, but also to increase literacy and "balance the negative effects of poverty" (Krashen et al., 2017, p. 72).

Assessment Needs and Analysis

The data collection process for this school improvement project includes results from the AAPPL language proficiency examination, a survey from the English department and English

language learner teacher, and results from the recent school report from Iowa.gov. Results

indicate that self-selected reading and guided self-selected reading have led to gains in the

Spanish department. Future assessment is necessary to reveal the benefits of incorporating this

program fully and consistently in the English Language core classes as well as the English

Language Learner department to identify gains in linguistic development. Future research is also

necessary to determine the impact of guided self-selected reading on literacy and attendance for

students of low socio-economic status.

Action Plan

The intention of this school improvement project is to educate language teachers,

librarians, and administration at MOC-FV of the academic and socio-emotional benefits of free

reading as well as provide education, support, structure, tools, and guidance to world language

teachers in area districts and institutes interested in implementing self-selected reading to help

their language learners develop literacy. The key elements of a successful guided self-selected

reading program include funding for a variety of texts at all language learning levels in the

targeted language, space for the library, support from administration and colleagues, training in

comprehension based strategies, knowledge of the benefits of GSSR and SSR, and tools to set

the stage and create "buy-in" from students.

Before beginning a GSSR and SSR program, the language teacher needs to address the

administration to discuss implementation and library expenses. The biggest challenge is

obtaining the money for these resources. School librarians may have extra funding and can assist

with purchasing or at least direct the teacher to potential grant opportunities (Wienhold, 2021).

Educators can write to state and national organizations for World Language grants and talk to the

school counselor, union representatives, and even their local education association to see what

funding is available. Administrators are likely to support the implementation of SSR because it encourages a student-centered classroom and is an equitable approach to acquiring a language. One of the main goals of schools is to help students grow in their strengths and "to provide the means for students to explore their interests and develop their talents so they can reach their full potential" (Krashen et al., 2017, p. 85).

Therefore, the first step in developing a sustainable GSSR and SSR program that meets the needs of every learner is purchasing a wide variety of leveled readers. Von Sprecken and Krashen noted that students read more in classes where a vast selection of books were promoted and when the teacher was also engaged in reading along with their students (Krashen, 2004). Krashen suggests that "it is more effective to do a little each day than to devote large segments of time once or twice a week" because the goal is to introduce the students to "a taste for reading" and "to stimulate the once-reluctant reader to read more outside of school" (Krashen, 2004) Small amounts at first will reap benefits in the future. A contrast to other types of free reading programs is that the world language teacher makes the time mandatory, and the "voluntary" aspect of self-selected reading is the choice of the text (Patrick, 2019). The educator can gauge engagement and acquisition, and then lengthen the time as the course advances. In this way, the likelihood of students taking the time seriously and reading during the allotted time increases.

Another positive aspect of GSSR is that it is equitable. One of the reasons that some schools have lower national reading test scores than others is because many children come from poor living conditions and lack access to a variety of books (Krashen, 2017). Krashen states, "Poverty is related to lower reading achievement. Libraries are related to higher reading achievement" (Krashen et al., 2017, p. 80). With proper support and compelling materials, children from impoverished communities can have success in reading (Patrick, 2019). During

self-selected reading, every child has an equal opportunity to find material at their level without

the stress of tests. Fast processors can select the level that challenges them while slower

processors can take their time reading without the anxiety to read a certain number of books or

finish in a specific timeframe (2019). Publishers such as Wayside Publishing and TPRS Books

provide comprehension-based leveled readers in multiple languages that help to facilitate the

acquisition process. Thus, the materials are readily available, and with the help of administration

and grants, the teacher will be able to create a wide selection of texts to match the likes and

needs of every student.

      After the readers have arrived, it is time for the teacher to set-up the readers in a logical

manner for students to access. Many world language teachers create a library in their own

classrooms. At MOC-FV, all Spanish readers and texts are stored and processed through the

school library. Students are held accountable to return books on or before they are due and pay

for any books that are lost or damaged. Every text is labeled with a level, A-G, to guide students

to the reading material that corresponds to their current interpretive reading level. The Level A

readers are novice high, level B readers are intermediate low, level C-D readers are intermediate

mid, level E-F readers are intermediate high, and level G readers are Advanced Low. Every

publisher and author make their own recommendations of the level of the reader; therefore, the

language teacher needs to read every book and determine the appropriate level based on the

proficiency of the students reading the texts (Bex, 2020).

      Before implementation, the educator can draw in the students by discussing the research

and rationale behind reading in the target language (Patrick, 2019). When the students have the

buy-in, they are more likely to want to engage. Projecting the instructions on the whiteboard and

reviewing the routine is necessary during the first weeks to provide consistency. After the

students understand the expectations, it is time to help them choose appropriate readers. Some

teachers utilize "speed dating" where the teacher creates enough stations as there are students

with a variety of text options from which to choose. At each station, the students have a couple

of minutes to check the level, read the back and the first page or two, and decide if the material

appeals to their interests (Bex, 2020). It is helpful if the teacher provides each student with a

form to fill out as they explore their options to help them personally assess the compatibility of

each reader (2020). When the buzzer rings, they can move on to the next station and the process

continues until they find their match. Other teachers suggest allowing the students to peruse the

library at their leisure and then decide. At MOC-FV, the librarian brings the texts on a cart and

students sample the books in the classroom and check them out from the cart when they've found

a book that matches their level and interest.

   After the students have selected their book and read for the allotted time during class,

many educators choose to do nothing for follow-up and move right on to the lesson for the day.

The effectiveness of self-selected reading is that there is no one-size-fits-all process, and the

teacher has the flexibility to adjust the system according to the needs of their class. At MOC-FV,

students keep a journal with the following information for each book based on suggestions from

Mason (2019). The journal takes only 5-10 minutes to complete for each book and does not

include any language output practice, drills, comprehension questions, or assessment.

Journal Information:

1.   The date the reader started and finished the book

2.   The book title

3.   The author's name

4.   The difficulty level of the book

5. The number of pages

6. A brief synopsis of the reading in English

7. An optional short list of some new words or expressions that are of interest

8. A book rating out of 5 stars

9. Any questions that the reader has for the teacher in English (Mason, 2019a).

A simplified option that allows teachers to quickly view student data is demonstrated in Figure 9. Mason (2019a) suggests taping this student record to the inside of each student's journal to keep track of the books that they have read as well as page numbers. The chart includes the date, title, publisher of the book, level of the book, minutes spent reading, number of pages read, and subtotal number of pages read. Students can indicate with a symbol their interest level in the text by the book number.

Figure 9

Student Reading Record

No. ★o×	Date	Title	Publisher	Level	Minutes	Pages	Sub Total
1							
2							
3							
100							

Allowing students to evaluate their own reading habits from time to time is an essential component of creating a positive reading culture while building interpretive skills in the target language. For classes that struggle to stay motivated to read or resist free reading, Bryce Hedstrom (2021) offers the following rubric (Figure 10). The rubric is not to be used for the

teacher to evaluate participation or behavior, but rather, it "is an attempt to measure student's involvement with the most powerful way to acquire language - through reading. (B. Hedstrom, personal communication, November 23, 2022)

Figure 10

Interpretive Skills Rubric: Reading

Name _____   Class/Period _____

Dates(s) _____   Score: ____/40

INTERPRETIVE SKILLS RUBRIC: READING

Notes:

ENGAGEMENT WITH READING					
	Exemplary 10	**Proficient 8**	**Developing 5**	**Insufficient 1**	**Not Observed**
1. **I Choose Material that Is *Interesting* & *Comprehensible* to Me in Some Way** I can explain *why* the reading material I have chosen is interesting to me, and I can demonstrate that I understand it.	Consistently	Almost all of the time, with little-to-no prompting	Often, with minimal prompting	Rarely, only when helped and prompted	Not observed
2. **I Read for Meaning** It is obvious that I am trying to get the message in the text, not just going through the motions. I can explain *what* I am reading.	Consistently	Almost all of the time, with little-to-no prompting	Often, with minimal prompting	Rarely, only when prompted	Not observed
3. **I Read Without Disrupting Myself or Others** I do not make unnecessary noise, talk or move around the room. I do not break other students' concentration and interrupt their reading.	Consistently	Almost all of the time, with little-to-no prompting	Often, with minimal prompting	Rarely, only when prompted	Not observed
4. **I Read During the Entire Reading Time** I keep on reading. I do not only read when reminded or redirected.	Consistently	Almost all of the time, with little-to-no reminding to whole class	Often, with minimal reminding to whole class	Rarely, with individual reminding	Not observed
"Our knowledge of new words comes both incrementally (little by little) and incidentally (as a by-product of our main activity, comprehension)." —Jeff McQuillan, author of The Literacy Crisis					
"Teaching vocabulary lists is inefficient—the time is better spent reading alone." —Stephen Krashen, PhD, Emeritus Professor of Education, University of Southern California					

By Bryce Hedstrom. Based on a rubric by Grant Boulanger & Virginia Hildebrandt.

Implementation of Plan

Timeline

A timeline for integration of GSSR and SSR has been developed to assist teachers, librarians, and administrators in the process for successful implementation (see Figure 11). Included in the timeline is a teacher checklist of the necessary meetings, purchases, and materials needed to set-up an effective and robust library to meet the needs of all language learners.

Figure 11

Timeline for Implementation of GSSR and SSR

JULY/AUGUST	*Introduce GSSR and SSR to administrators* -present Google Slides presentation of benefits, discuss funding needs *Meet with School Librarian* -discuss extra funding, space to put the readers, and check out process if the books will be set up in the library *Purchase Readers* – order 150+ leveled readers from Wayside Publishing and TPRS Books, graphic novels form señorwooly.com, and a subscription to El Mundo en tus manos from The Comprehensible Classroom. *Forms* – Fill out requisitions and grant forms to purchase the readers, newspapers, and novels
AUGUST/ EARLY SEPTEMBER	*Level readers* **–** open the boxes and read each reader, sort readers by level based on the level of the students *Label readers* – place stickers on the binding with the letter of the level of each reader (A-G+) *Cover books* – take books to the librarian to get covered to protect the books and to check into the library circulation *Plan Book Sample* – organize book sampling day and process with librarian, decide if students will go to library or if librarian will take a cart to the classroom *Present to English Department* –share benefits of GSSR and SSR, the set-up process, materials available, and the section in the library for English Language learners
SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER	*Presentation to Students* – benefits of reading, acquisition quotes, how to select the right level, how to set up journal to track books, rules during reading time, and habits of strong readers (rubric) *Reading Survey* – Students take survey about current reading habits, motivation to read, and types of texts they prefer *Goals* – Students make goals for number of texts and/or page numbers they hope to read during the quarter *Create Student forms* – make and print a journal form or a 5-Star reflection sheet for students to track books and react to reading *Book Sampling* – Either set up tables with different leveled readers for students to peruse and check-out from the library or have the librarian load a cart with the readers sorted and come to your classroom. *Guided Self-Selected Reading* – Teacher assists novice students in the selection process, using information from student survey

	First Time Free Reading – Teacher and students read for five minutes, students determine if the level is right or not and switch books if necessary with guidance by teacher *Journal* – teacher guides students to note down any new words as they read in their journal and then share one thing about their new book with their partner (vocabulary, characters, something interesting) *Establish Routine* – adjust length of reading based on student overall reading stamina, avoid giving too much time to new readers, provide free reading 2-3 times per week *Observe and Adjust* – note if students need more support to avoid distractions and, if determined they do, implement the reading rubric to help students self-assess progress to meet their goals

Teacher Responsibilities

GSSR and SSR are effective components of acquisition driven classrooms and work optimally in settings where acquisition driven instruction (ADI) and comprehensible input (CI) are the cornerstone of the curriculum and not treated as an "add-on" or extra activity. A major piece of this school improvement project is to educate language teachers and instructors not only of the benefits of GSSR and SSR in their classrooms but also the importance of delivering optimal input into the daily routine.

Once teachers and instructors have a solid grasp of the value of GSSR and SSR and are ready to begin the implementation process, they will schedule to visit with the administration and department team to detail the benefits and discuss funding necessities. After receiving the approval and support of the administration, the teacher will meet with the school librarian to determine if there is space in the library for the leveled readers and if there is any extra funding or grants available to purchase readers. The support and guidance of the school librarian is essential in the development of a secure home for the readers, the process of check-in and out of the readers, and the careful binding process that protects the books from damage. If collaboration

with the librarian is not an option, the teacher can create a space with bookshelves in the

classroom and develop a secure check-in and check-out system to keep track of the books.

After collaborating with the librarian and purchasing and labeling the books, the teacher

will present the reading program to the students. While sharing the new program, the teacher will

discuss the benefits of reading and why they have decided to set aside time to read silently in the

target language. When the program begins, the teacher will guide students to readers at their

level and support them in the selection process. During reading, the teacher will model reading,

demonstrating that the reading time is valuable for every member of the class (Patrick, 2019).

Developing consistency and respecting the time are crucial elements that the teacher must

enforce for the program to be impactful on language acquisition and for student investment.

As part of the GSSR system, if readers are not comprehending their reader, the teacher

will direct the student to texts that are 98% comprehensible or higher (Krashen, 2005). A

common pitfall of programs that struggle is failure on the teacher's part to ensure that every

reader has a text that they can understand. When a reading is incomprehensible, students are

more likely to disengage and struggle with a high affective filter, leading them to give up and

determine that free reading is too challenging for them and that it doesn't work. Mason (2019a)

asserts that the affective filter plays a valuable role in the subconscious process of acquisition,

and "when the teacher is familiar with the graded readers that she provides the students, and

when she guides the students with the help of the students' reading logs, she can observe quite

accurately whether students are progressing from the books that they enjoy reading" (p. 452). In

this way, the teacher must take an active role in ensuring student support and regularly check in

with students to determine if more interventions are needed to help them to progress in their

language development and reading enjoyment.

Data Collection

To access the progress of GSSR and SSR on language development, the teacher will review student journals every 1-2 weeks, depending on how often the teacher provides free reading time in class. From these data, the teacher can note concerns, assist students in finding texts that are appropriate, and determine if the students are continuing to take interest in their books. Occasional book talks and turn-pair-share opportunities in the target language provide the teacher the time to informally access speaking and also note interest level. Every 2-3 weeks the teacher can administer a 10-minute timed writing assessment about the reading to determine the impact that GSSR and SSR have had on spelling and writing. The rubric in Figure 12 can be used to evaluate presentational writing based on ACTFL's performance descriptors for writing (The Comprehensible Classroom, 2019).

Figure 12

Presentational Writing Rubric

NOVICE HIGH ✷ You can use familiar words and phrases on familiar tasks, topics, and activities. You can elaborate a little. ✷ You use phrases and simple sentences to provide basic information and are beginning to combine words and phrases to create original sentences. ✷ You can mostly be understood by someone used to a language learner. ✷ Reading and listening to language that you understand will help you to be able to produce more clear, detailed, and meaningful messages.	You add your own ideas, perspective, and style into what you do. You are confident and are reaching for the next level of proficiency.	Advanced **ADV**	A (95%)
NOVICE MID ✷ You can use a limited number of words and phrases for common objects and actions, but they are repetitive. ✷ You can use words, phrases, and occasional sentences to provide basic information. ✷ You can be understood with difficulty by someone used to a language learner. ✷ Reading and listening to language that you understand will help you to be able to produce more clear and meaningful messages.	You consistently meet the target proficiency level, and you are ready to move on.	Proficient **PROF**	B (85%)
NOVICE LOW ✷ You can use a small number of repetitive words and phrases for common objects and actions. ✷ You can use some simple words to provide basic information. ✷ You can be understood only with great effort. ✷ Reading and listening to language that you understand will help you to be able to produce more clear and meaningful messages.	You can meet the target proficiency level in familiar tasks and situations.	Developing **DEV**	C (75%)
EMERGING ✷ You can use some words that are related to your message. ✷ You cannot yet be understood. ✷ You need more to read and listen to more language that you understand in order to be able to produce meaningful messages.	You know what to do to meet the target proficiency level, but you need extra help.	Emerging **EM**	D (65%)
BEGINNING ✷ You cannot yet use any words that help to communicate the intended message. ✷ You need more to read and listen to more language that you understand in order to be able to produce meaningful messages.	You know what the target proficiency level is, but you are confused and probably frustrated. You need some help to get started!	Beginning **BEG**	F (55%)

Another effective data collection tool is the ACTFL Assessment of Performance toward

Proficiency in Languages (AAPPL) assessment. This assessment is given in the spring at MOC-

FV and provides teachers with valuable score reports that have descriptions and

recommendations for further growth for each part of the four components of the test: Interpretive

Listening, Interpretive Reading, Interpersonal Listening and Speaking, and Presentational

Writing (Language Testing International, 2022). This assessment is recommended because

language teachers, instructors, administrators, and stakeholders can compare scores from year to

year after implementing GSSR and SSR and use these data to inform instruction and to note

areas of strength and weakness.

Barriers and Challenges

In the early implementation stages of GSSR and SSR, one challenge is purchasing

enough readers that span a variety of interests and proficiency levels. There are more

Comprehensible Input readers available for intermediate readers than there are for novice

learners. Therefore, purchasing multiple copies of novice low, mid, and high readers from

publishers such as Wayside Publishing, The CI Book Shop, and TPRS Books will provide

beginning readers with texts that they can access. For students learning English, Mason (2019a)

suggests starting with Penguin Graded Readers and have novice students read books of five

pages length and gradually build to reading longer books with the goal of reading 1,000 pages

within the first semester. Figure 13 is a sample guide by Mason (2019a) for language learners

who rapidly progress.

Figure 13

Suggested Reading Guide for Fast Processors

Month	Each book	Books/week	Pages/week	Books/month	Total pages
1st (4 weeks)	5 pages	5	25	20	100
2nd (4 weeks)	15 pages	5	75	20	300
3rd (4 weeks)	35 pages	3	105	12	420
4th (3 weeks)	35 pages	3	105	9	315
TOTAL (15 weeks)				61 books	1135

Teachers may also encounter students who require more time than other students to reach their reading goals. In Figure 14, Mason (2019a) provides a secondary sample program to guide students on their way to reading authentic texts in English. By differentiating programs based on student level through GSSR, students have a manageable plan to stay on track.

Figure 14

Suggest Reading Guide for Slower Processors

Month	Each book	Books/week	Pages/week	Books/month	Total pages
1st (4 weeks)	5 pages	5	25	20	100
2nd (4 weeks)	5 pages	5	25	20	100
3rd (4 weeks)	15 pages	5	75	20	300
4th (3 weeks)	15 pages	3	75	9	225
TOTAL (15 weeks)				69 books	725

Conclusion

As demonstrated through this school improvement project, reading for pleasure has cognitive benefits, it's stress free, and it's a natural way to acquire language. Currently many teens choose their devices over a good book and disengage during opportunities to free read. Language teachers at MOC-FV as well as area school districts and institutions can implement a thriving free-reading program that meets students where they are cognitively, academically, and socio-emotionally. As presented in this school improvement project, GSSR and SSR lead to gains in language acquisition and boost student motivation to read for enjoyment. If reading material is compelling, comprehensible, rich, and abundant, the learner will be more inspired to read, have lowered levels of anxiety, and will naturally make language gains without any unnecessary conscious strings or assessments attached to the process (Krashen & Mason, 2020; Mason & Smith, 2021). The connections and common goals that are established between teacher and student during GSSR contribute to higher motivation to find joy in the process and experience the "flow" of getting lost in a book in a new language (Krashen et al., 2017). MOC-FV language teachers and area language teachers and instructors will observe students engaging in free-reading while growing in their language proficiency through the implementation of this school improvement project.

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