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EXPLORING THE PERCEPTIONS AND MOTIVATIONS OF PRE-SERVICE
ELEMENTARY TEACHERS TOWARD AESTHETIC READING IN AN
UNDERGRADUATE COURSE IN LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN

by

ANNE CATHERINE WILLIAMS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in Elementary Education
in the College of Education and Human Performance
and in the Burnett Honors College
at the University of Central Florida
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Thesis Chair: Rita Buchoff, Ed.D.

Abstract

Past research shows that feelings toward aesthetic reading, or reading for enjoyment, are down across the nation, even in those pursuing a degree in elementary education (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; National Endowment for the Arts [NEA], 2004). As reading rates drop, it becomes even more imperative that our future educators have a passion for reading, and are able to intrinsically motivate their students (McKool & Gespass, 2009; Nathanson, Pruslow & Levitt, 2008). The recommended practices for breaking the cycle of aliteracy are to deemphasize textbook driven lectures (Krashen, 1993; Nathanson et al., 2008; Sardo-Brown & Beeghly, 1996), enable text self-selection (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; 2014; Cardarelli, 1992; Krashen 1993; McKool & Gespass, 2009; Nathanson et al., 2008), include reflective journals (Nathanson et al., 2008), encourage open discussion (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; 2014; Krashen, 1993; McKool & Gespass, 2009; Nathanson et al., 2008; Sardo-Brown & Beeghly, 1996), provide opportunities to reflect on students' own personal views of literacy (Gomez, 2005), and incorporate "well-planned instructional experiences to allow students to experience what it feels like to be enthusiastic about reading" (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Applegate et al., 2014; Gomez, 2005; Krashen, 1993; McKool & Gespass, 2009; Morrison, Jacobs, & Swinyard, 1999; Nathanson et al., 2008; Powell-Brown, 2003; Ruddell, 1995; Sardo-Brown & Beeghly, 1996). The intent of this thesis is to explore if a positive shift in the perceptions and motivations of pre-service elementary education teachers can occur through enrollment in a course on Literature for Children. Literature for Children, LAE 3414, is a required course for those pursuing a degree in elementary education at the University of Central Florida. The course's design follows the recommended practices for teaching a love of literature. This study tracked the perceptions and

motivations of pre-service teachers enrolled in two class sections of this course over the fall 2014 semester, in order to see if a positive change in their feelings toward aesthetic reading occurred, and to what extent their enrollment in this course on Children's Literature affected this change. At the beginning of the semester, out of a total of 63 participants for the pre-survey, 68.3% reported that they felt *enthusiastic* toward reading, while 31.7% reported that they felt *unenthusiastic*. By the end of the course, out of 54 post-survey participants, 87% of participants reported that they felt *enthusiastic* toward reading, while 13% reported that they felt *unenthusiastic*. Both class sections surveyed experienced a positive shift in their perceptions and motivations toward aesthetic reading, as a result of enrollment and participation in this course.

Dedication

For Dr. Rita Buchoff, who has inspired countless students, including me, through her passion for literature. I am so grateful for all of the wisdom that you have shared with me throughout these past few years. I truly could not have done this without you.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the help of my committee, Dr. Rita Buchoff, Dr. Sherron Roberts, and Dr. Elsie Olan. Thank you for all of your expectations and suggestions; you have pushed me, and this thesis, to a level beyond what I ever imagined it could be.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis tested the effects of a course on Literature for Children on the leisure reading habits of pre-service elementary education majors. The study took place on the main campus of the University of Central Florida, located in Orlando. The course, Literature for Children, is a required course for all elementary education majors. Two class sections, taught by the same professor, were surveyed on their feelings toward aesthetic reading, or reading for pleasure (Rosenblatt, 1995), in hopes of seeing a positive outcome in aesthetic reading attitudes occur as a result of taking the course. This topic is important because past research (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Nathanson, Pruslow, & Levitt, 2008) has shown that the majority of pre-service teachers and in-service teachers do not make time for aesthetic reading in their personal lives. Ann Powell-Brown poses the question “Can a teacher of literacy not enjoy reading?” (Powell-Brown, 2003). Studies show that this does occur, and sadly the feelings of apathy towards reading transfer to their students, and then the cycle continues. Applegate and Applegate refer to this cycle as “The Peter Effect”, and they propose a few methods for breaking this pattern. The recommended teaching practices for increasing enthusiasm toward aesthetic reading are allowing for text self-selection, using open discussions to discuss readings, assigning reflective journals about recreational reading, and deemphasizing textbook driven lectures, and exposing students to the motivation and enthusiasm that comes from being a lifelong reader (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Applegate et al., 2014; Gomez, 2005; Krashen, 1993; McKool, & Gespass, 2009; Morrison, Jacobs, & Swinyard, 1999; Nathanson et al., 2008; Powell-Brown, 2003; Ruddell, 1995; Sardo-Brown & Beeghly, 1996). Since the Children’s Literature course that the surveyed students were enrolled in is known to utilize all of these recommended

practices to break the cycle of aliteracy and increase enjoyment in aesthetic reading, we expected to see an increase in the positive feelings of students toward aesthetic reading by the culmination of the course.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The goal of all colleges of education is to prepare their students to be highly effective and influential teachers. Ruddell describes the characteristics of an influential teacher as using highly motivating and effective teaching strategies, helping students with their personal problems, exhibiting a strong sense of personal caring about their students, demonstrating the ability to adjust instruction to the individual needs of the student, and creating a feeling of excitement about the subject matter they teach (Ruddell, 1995). In the article *Those Influential Literacy Teachers: Meaning Negotiators and Motivation Builders*, Ruddell further explores this idea of an influential teacher (1995). He found that teachers are influential or noninfluential based on their own levels of motivation (Ruddell, 1995). He also found that influential teachers tend to rely more on intrinsic motivation, or self-motivation, in motivating their students. They also tend to include more aesthetic reading in their classroom. Conversely, non-influential teachers favored more use of external motivation, as well as focused on more efferent reading (Ruddell, 1995).

What Ruddell found was that the type of motivation used in a classroom can be correlated to the effectiveness of a teacher. This should not be surprising, because usually students are only exposed to a teacher for one school year before they have to move on. Students who use more intrinsic motivation do not need rewards to perform well; they do so because they want to. By finding motivation within themselves, these students will most likely succeed in future classrooms. In contrast, students who are extrinsically motivated must rely on others around them to give them the motivation need to perform well.

One thing that all educators and researchers can agree upon is the qualities that describe an ideal student. An ideal student, as defined by Applegate et al. (2014) “is an avid, engaged, and enthusiastic reader, immersed in the joy of learning, with an imagination set free by words” (Applegate et al., 2014; Guthrie, 2001; Scharer, Pinnell, Lyons, & Fountas, 2003).

As a result of these exemplary qualities, ideal students tend to excel in school as compared to their student counter parts. Ideal students are intrinsically motivated (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991), and “tend to read more than the average student” (Applegate et al., 2014; Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala, & Cox, 1999; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Unfortunately, not all students exhibit the signs of an “ideal student”. In fact, most do not. So the question becomes, how do we transfer these qualities of an “ideal student” to students who do not originally have them?

The answer, it seems, is to encourage more aesthetic reading. As Steven Krashen found in *The Power of Reading*, that the more “free voluntary reading” (FVR) that a student experiences, the more that their abilities and love of reading grows (Krashen, 1993). More specifically, those who read aesthetically in their leisure time can see improvements in their reading comprehension (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Krashen, 1993), in their writing (Krashen, 1993), in their vocabulary building (Krashen, 1993), and even in their spelling (Krashen, 1993). What is fascinating is that Krashen found that given free and voluntary time to read, struggling readers, or even students learning English as their second language, can advance their abilities. Krashen cites several instances where free, voluntary, and uninterrupted reading, as opposed to direct instruction, used in a classroom setting has allowed for the same, if not greater, literacy development to occur. In one particular instance, a study was done by Elley and

Mangubhai (1983) in which students who were learning English as their second language were exposed to three different language acquisition techniques. The class was divided into three groups, with one group exposed to the traditional method of direct instruction, one group participated in a “shared book experience” where they read a book and discussed it, and the third group was only given time for free and voluntary reading. At the end of the study, after two years, the students who were involved in the “shared book experience” and those who were given free reading time greatly outperformed the students who were taught using the traditional direct approach (Krashen, 1993). This study, along with the many others, reinforces the idea that allowing time for leisure reading both in schools and at home is incredibly important. But what if the teachers that are meant to introduce students to the joys and benefits of leisure reading have never experienced it themselves? What if they choose not to read, or even worse, are unenthusiastic about reading?

Past surveys show that the reading habits of pre-service elementary teachers are less than ideal, with only 48.4% of those surveyed reporting to be enthusiastic about reading (Applegate & Applegate, 2004). We know this to be a problem because the enthusiasm of teachers greatly influences the enthusiasm of students (McKool & Gespass, 2009; Nathanson et al., 2008). We know that in time the students of today move on to become the leaders of tomorrow. They go on to be lawyers, doctors, politicians, and even teachers. The reading habits of teachers today affect the reading habits of their students, who will then go on to affect the reading habits of future generations.

We also know that as a nation, our recreational reading has declined. The National Endowment for the Arts (2004) found that there is an overall decline in the amount of leisure

time spent reading. Over the past twenty years, there has been a “progressive 10% decline in reading, each year, representing the loss of 20 million potential readers” (National Endowment for the Arts [NEA], 2004). This is shocking on all levels. This decline is happening “among every group of readers, from high school dropouts to college graduates and professionals” (NEA, 2004, pp. viii-xiii; Nathanson et al., 2008). What this means for teachers of literacy is that now, more than ever, we need to be spreading our enthusiasm for reading. The two main influences that students have on their attitudes toward reading are their teachers and school experience, and their home experience (Gomez, 2005; Nathanson et al., 2008; Powell-Brown, 2003). If as a nation there continues to be a decline in the amount of leisure reading taking place, then it can only be expected that students are being exposed to fewer enthusiastic models toward reading.

In other words, the relationship between the behaviors of teachers and the motivation of students is reciprocal (Nathanson et al., 2008). In fact, Nathanson, Pruslow, and Levitt (2008) reported that “enthusiastic readers were more likely than self-described unenthusiastic readers to credit [a] former teacher’s enthusiasm for reading as a means for promoting books and a love of reading.” What we can take from this is the idea that the enthusiasm of motivated readers is contagious and can be passed on to students, but this is not always the case. McKool and Gespass (2009) state that “when a teacher’s attitude toward reading is reduced, it is unlikely that children will see modeled the kind of behaviors that are conducive to developing lifelong readers.” If students are never exposed to the joys of aesthetic reading, or reading for pleasure, then, when they grow up, how will they be able to successfully model the behavior to future generations?

Recommended Practice for Breaking the Cycle of Aliteracy

Many articles have proposed methods and recommended practices for breaking this cycle of aliteracy (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Applegate et al., 2014; McKool, & Gespass 2009; Nathanson et al., 2008; Ruddell 1995; Sardo-Brown & Beeghly, 1996). They recommend allowing for students to select their own reading material (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Applegate et al., 2014; Cardarelli, 1992; Krashen 1993; McKool & Gespass, 2009; Nathanson et al., 2008), increasing open discussions of books that the students have read (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Applegate et al., 2014; Krashen, 1993; McKool & Gespass, 2009; Nathanson et al., 2008; Sardo-Brown & Beeghly, 1996), deemphasizing the use of textbooks in lessons by increasing the availability of other print sources (Krashen, 1993; Nathanson et al., 2008; Sardo-Brown & Beeghly, 1996), and assigning reflective journals for students to dwell on what they read and make deeper connections (Nathanson et al., 2008). Last, but certainly not least, it is agreed that students of all ages need to be exposed to the motivation and enthusiasm that comes from being a lifelong reader (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Applegate et al., 2014; Gomez, 2005; Krashen, 1993; McKool & Gespass, 2009; Morrison, Jacobs, & Swinyard, 1999; Nathanson et al., 2008; Powell-Brown, 2003; Ruddell, 1995; Sardo-Brown & Beeghly, 1996).

Variables

Two sections of Literature for Children (LAE 3414), a requirement for elementary education majors, were surveyed. Both sections were taught by the same instructor who is known to utilize all of the recommended practices for increasing reading enjoyment and breaking

the cycle of aliteracy. The independent variable was the course, Literature for Children, and its use of the recommended practices that were used to teach the course. Although both course sections were taught by the same professor, using the same teaching practices, an additional variable that may have affected the results of this study was the time of day and the day of the week that the courses took place. One section began at 7:30 am and met on Thursdays, this section was referred to as Class 1 throughout this study, while the other began at 10:30 am and met on Tuesdays, this course section was known as Class 2. There is a possibility that despite exposure to the same methods and practices, for the same length of time, one class may have experienced more of an improvement in their attitudes toward reading due to the time of day or the day of the week that the class was offered.

The dependent variable was the affect that the course and these practices have on the feelings of pre-service teachers' toward aesthetic reading. In the future, it might be interesting to follow-up on these surveyed students, to see if the methodologies used in these sections of this LAE 3414 course make a lasting impact on their motivations and attitudes toward leisure reading. The controls were the instructor of the course, where and how the surveys were given, the intended major of the students surveyed, and the universal course requirements. Both sections surveyed were required to complete a literature journal and a storytelling presentation, in conjunction with the course requirements. The population studied was students enrolled in the Literature for Children course at the University of Central Florida during the fall 2014 semester. The students were asked to identify their major, and if the major is something other than elementary education, their survey results were excluded.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to survey students to see how enrollment in an undergraduate course on Children's Literature can affect the aesthetic reading habits and literacy attitudes of pre-service elementary teachers. To track this change, students enrolled in two sections of a required course in Literature for Children were surveyed at the beginning of the semester and again at the end. The hope was that after exposure to the course, the students would experience an overall positive change in their attitudes toward aesthetic reading. Ideally, this researcher would like to see that Literature for Children causes everyone enrolled in it, but especially those who are unenthusiastic toward reading, to begin to appreciate reading for enjoyment.

The population surveyed was enrolled during the fall 2014 semester in the Literature for Children course at the Main Campus of the University of Central Florida, located in Orlando, Florida. Literature for Children is described by the University of Central Florida's Course Catalog as "Criteria for analysis and evaluation of children's literature in terms of interests, needs, and abilities of children." ("UCF Course Catalog 2014 to 2015", n.d.). This course is a program requirement for an undergraduate degree in elementary education.

Two sections of the Literature for Children course were surveyed, and as previously stated, both sections were taught by the same professor. These particular course sections were surveyed because they incorporate all of the recommended practices to break the cycle of aliteracy. This course was surveyed because in addition to the goals stated in the university catalog, this instructor uses recommended methods within her class to attempt to encourage a love for aesthetic reading. Essentially the course has one of the same goals as this study, to

increase enjoyment in reading for pre-service teachers, in order to hopefully break the cycle of aliteracy known as “The Peter Effect”.

The first section, “Class 1”, met weekly on Thursday mornings from 7:30 am to 10:20 am. The second section, “Class 2”, also met weekly, but on Tuesdays from 10:30 am until 1:20 pm. Both courses met for the same duration of time, two hours and fifty minutes, and for one full semester, sixteen weeks. Between the two course sections, 63 students participated in the pre-survey, and 54 students participated in the post-survey. Nearly every student enrolled in these two course sections participated in this study; however, some surveys were excluded because the person surveyed was not an elementary education major. By taking this course at the University of Central Florida’s Main Campus, it was assumed that all students surveyed lived within the Central Florida area, and that all subjects were capable of reading, due to the University’s admission standards.

This population is important to study because they are future elementary teachers. Students are most impressionable during the elementary years, so the motivational level of their teachers to inspire children to read is critical (McKool & Gespass, 2009). In fact, a long term study tracking the reading abilities of students over a ten year period found that “early success at reading acquisition is one of the keys that unlocks a lifetime of reading habits” (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997). It is important to study these pre-service teachers while they are still learning the qualities of an influential elementary teacher that can yield student success. McKool and Gespass (2009) found that “both teachers’ personal reading habits and their beliefs about the importance of reading do affect the instructional decisions that teacher’s make”. Hopefully any negative attitudes toward reading will be replaced as a result of this course. If positive changes

in the attitudes of pre-service elementary teachers are not made, changes may need to occur in the format and delivery of the Literature for Children course.

Procedure

In order to track the changes in the attitudes of the surveyed students, participants were given a pre-survey, to see what the reading habits and attitudes of the population is before the course, and a post-survey, to track the effect that the course has made on the population's reading habits and attitudes.

For the both surveys, this study used adapted versions of the Literacy Habits Questionnaire (LHQ) developed by Applegate and Applegate (2004), reproduced by Nathanson, Pruslow & Levitt (2008), and later revisited by Applegate et al. (2014). This questionnaire tracks the reading habits and literacy attitudes of the students in this study. This questionnaire also inquired about the student's intended major, in order to disqualify those who were enrolled in the course who are not majoring in elementary education. Additionally, a question that asked if the student ever qualified for any reading accommodations while in grades K-12 was included.

The first survey, or pre-survey, was administered at the beginning of the semester, before any students had been influenced by the content or presentation of the course. More specifically, it was given to students on the second meeting of each course section. This was to eliminate results of any student that may have dropped the course, and to allow the professor time to cover course procedures and the syllabus during the first class meeting. The second survey, or post-survey, was given the last day of the class before final exam week begins. There were

approximately twelve weeks in between the two surveys, with the goal of seeing the maximum possible change in reading attitudes take place.

The Questionnaire Instruments

The Pre-Survey

The Literacy Habits Questionnaire (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Applegate et al., 2014; Nathanson et al., 2008) asked students about their past and current reading experiences. Question 1 asked about the student's summer reading experiences, and asked them to identify any titles of books they read over the summer. This portion of the questionnaire was excluded for this research study, because although it would be informative to learn which books the students read, the extra data collected would be irrelevant to this study. For the purpose of this study, the original Question 1 was replaced by a question that asked the participant for their intended major. The goal of this question was to focus this study on the changes in the reading habits and attitudes of pre-service elementary teachers, not of pre-service teachers in general. Although it would be interesting to compare how the reading habits change of all education majors change, that study may need to be completed in the future.

Question 2 was "When you think of yourself in general as a reader, how much enjoyment do you associate with reading? What reasons do you have for responding this way?" This question was used to determine how students rank themselves as readers. A ranking system was used, with *No Enjoyment of Reading*, *Little Enjoyment of Reading*, *Lukewarm* regarding reading,

Like Some Reading, Enjoy Reading, and Avid Reader. The survey choices *No Enjoyment of Reading, Little Enjoyment of Reading, Lukewarm* regarding reading were combined to form the classification of unenthusiastic toward reading, while the options *Like Some Reading, Enjoy Reading, and Avid Reader* were used to form the category enthusiastic toward reading. An open-ended portion of the question was included, so students could explain their reasoning to clarify responses.

Question 3 required students to rank the emphasis placed on different aspects of reading while in elementary school and high school. The categories asked are “Remembering the details of what you read”, “Your own reaction to or interpretation of what you read”, “Discussing your reactions and interpretations with classmates or teachers”, and “Completing assignments or reports associated with reading”. The purpose of these questions was to determine a major correlation with the reading instruction techniques used by teachers, and the level of enthusiasm of the student. In addition, this question asked the students to rank their elementary and high school experiences separately to identify any trends in the teaching style of elementary or high school teachers. Perhaps all of the recommended practices are used at the elementary level, but the emphasis on enthusiastic reading drops in high school, or it could be that unenthusiastic readers were only exposed to unenthusiastic reading models throughout their entire reading experience.

Question 4 inquired “When you consider your early elementary school reading experiences with learning to read, do you recall them as primarily positive, negative, or neutral?” The results of this question were compared with the results of question 7, which asked the same thing about college reading experiences, to see if a significant change took place over time.

Question 5 was “Did your experiences with reading at home differ from your experiences at school? If so, how?” This researcher was particularly interested in the results of this question. Perhaps the majority of students who are enthusiastic about reading learned this behavior through home experiences. On the other hand, maybe students who are unenthusiastic about reading read a lot at home, and just are not enthusiastic about the reading that took place in the classroom.

Question 6 asked “Were any of your teachers effective in sharing with you a love of reading? If so, how did they do this?” This question was pertinent to this study; it attempts to find a correlation between the effectiveness of teachers and a love of reading. Ideally, students provided responses such as class discussions of reading, text self-selection, and provided time daily to read for enjoyment.

Question 7 asked “When you consider your college level reading experiences, do you see them as primarily positive, negative, or neutral? Why?” This researcher was interested to see if the reading experiences were primarily positive in the lower level grades, and primarily negative or neutral in college. A trend was expected because most college level classes emphasize textbook reading (or efferent reading) over aesthetic reading.

In addition to these questions from the Literacy Habits Questionnaire, this adapted survey also included a question that asked if students ever qualified for additional reading accommodations. For instance, having been enrolled in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), having been diagnosed with a learning disability, having an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan, or having every been in extra reading classes. The hope with this question was to see if there is a connection consistent with the findings of other studies

between those who may have struggled with reading in the beginning, and those who are unenthusiastic about leisure reading in adulthood (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997).

The Post-Survey

The post-survey was also adapted from the Literacy Habits Questionnaire. Instead of asking about past reading experiences, this new survey focused on how the Children's Literature course (LAE 3414) has positively affected the reading habits and attitudes of those enrolled in it.

As before, question 1 inquired about the student's major. Again, this was to eliminate the results from students who were not in the elementary education program.

Question 2 asked the students to reflect on how much enjoyment they receive from reading. A ranking system identical to that of Question 2 from the pre-survey was used, with *No Enjoyment of Reading*, *Little Enjoyment of Reading*, *Lukewarm* regarding reading, *Like Some Reading*, *Enjoy Reading*, and *Avid Reader*. The survey choices *No Enjoyment of Reading*, *Little Enjoyment of Reading*, *Lukewarm* regarding reading were combined to form the classification of unenthusiastic toward reading, while the options *Like Some Reading*, *Enjoy Reading*, and *Avid Reader* were used to form the category enthusiastic toward reading. There was also room for the students to explain their answer in further detail. Although this question was identical to that of Question 2 from the pre-survey, this researcher expected to see a change in participants' responses.

Question 3 inquired about students' feeling towards reading after taking this course. The students were presented with a scale almost identical to that of Question 2 from the pre-survey and post-survey. There was a space provided for students to explain their responses.

Question 4 required students to rate the level of reading instruction provided in Children's Literature (LAE 3414). The students were given a 1-5 scale to rate their experiences, with 1 meaning "no emphasis", and 5 representing "a great deal of emphasis". Students were asked to review the same strategies as in the pre-survey, "Remembering the details of what you read", "Your own reaction to or interpretation of what you read", "Discussing your reactions and interpretations with classmates or teachers", "Completing assignments or reports associated with the reading". They were also provided with two additional strategies to rank, "Selecting reading material based on you own interests", and "Motivating others to experience a love of reading". With the addition of these two sections, all of the recommended practices to stop aliteracy were included in this question. The hope was to see a positive change in the practices that students were exposed to in the past, versus the practices they were exposed to while enrolled in this course.

Question 5 sought to discover if there was a change between students current reading experiences at home versus their current reading experiences at school. This question was almost identical to Question 5 on the pre-survey, but with an emphasis on the students' current experiences.

Question 6 asked if this course, LAE 3414, was effective in sharing with the student a love of reading. It also provided those surveyed with a place to explain their answers.

Question 7 expected the students to rank their view of their college level reading experiences, after enrollment in this course, as primarily positive, negative, or neutral. This question corresponds to Question 7 in the pre-survey. Similarly, a space was provided for students to explain their answer. Also, a subsection for question 6 asked students who have experienced a positive shift in their outlook toward reading to explain what specifically they liked about this course that helped to make this positive change occur. The hope was that there would be many of the recommended practices to break aliteracy represented in these responses.

Question 8 was the final question of the post-survey. It asked if the one taking the survey ever qualified for additional reading accommodations, and was identical to Question 8 in the pre-survey.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Before surveying the two classes, this researcher expected to see results similar to those of Applegate's study from 2004, where only 48.4% of pre-service teachers reported feeling enthusiastic about reading. Question 2 for both the pre-survey and post-survey asked "When you think of yourself in general as a reader, how much enjoyment do you associate with reading?". Students' enthusiasm was grouped into two categories, with those who responded with *No Enjoyment of Reading*, *Little Enjoyment of Reading*, and *Lukewarm toward Reading* making up the *unenthusiastic* category, and *Like Some Reading*, *Enjoy Reading*, and *Avid Reader* comprising the *enthusiastic* category.

Table 1 reveals the students' responses to Question 2 of the pre-survey, given at the beginning of the semester, before beginning the course in Children's Literature. 29% of Class 1 and 34.4% of Class 2 reported that they felt *unenthusiastic* about reading, while 71% of Class 1 and 65.6% of Class 2 reported feeling *enthusiastic* about reading. These results are already higher than the results from Applegate's previous studies in 2004 and 2014; however, the goal of this study was to see if using the recommended practices for teaching literature could help to improve the perception and motivations of pre-service teachers toward aesthetic reading. To see if there were a change in these pre-service teachers' perceptions and motivations toward reading, a post-survey was given at the end of the semester, and students' open-ended responses were read and categorized into key phrases and then used to track the percentage of students who mentioned each key phrase, in hopes to quantify what qualities of this course in Children's Literature, if any, helped to change the motivations and perceptions of these pre-service teachers' feelings toward aesthetic reading.

Table 1: Initial Enthusiasm Toward Reading

	Unenthusiastic	Enthusiastic
Class 1	29%	71%
Class 2	34.4%	65.6%

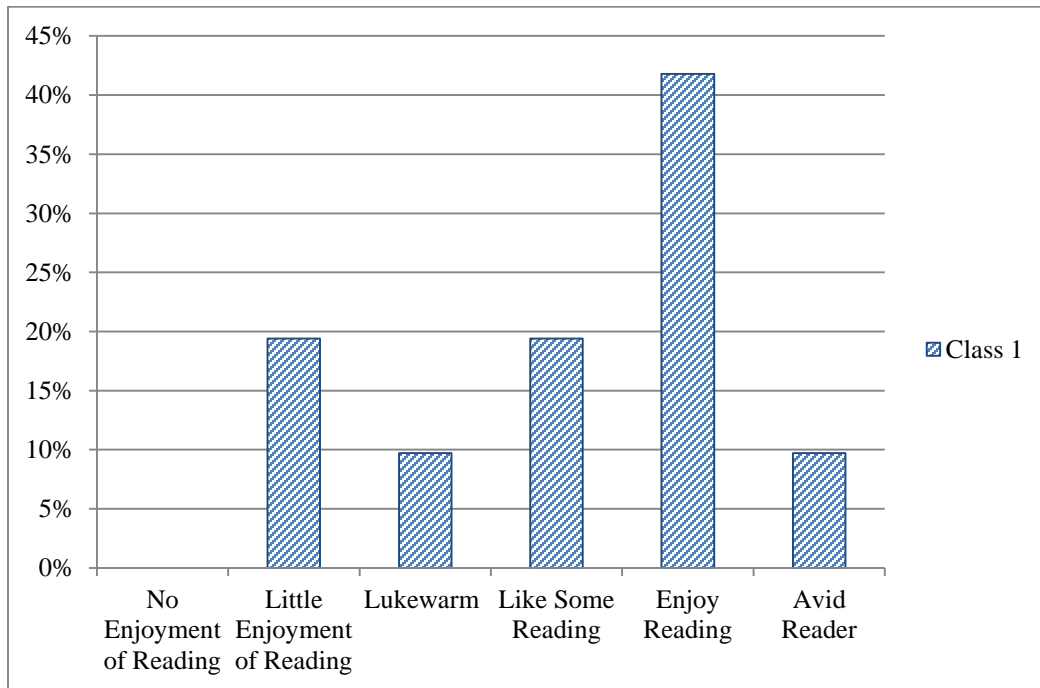


Figure 1: Analysis of Class 1's Initial Enthusiasm Toward Reading

Figure 1 reveals a more detailed analysis of Class 1's responses to Question 2 from the pre-survey. Out of a total of 31 surveys, 0 students responded that they had *No Enjoyment of Reading* (0%), 6 students responded that they had *Little Enjoyment of Reading* (19.4%), 3 students responded that they had *Lukewarm* feelings toward reading enjoyment (9.7%), 6 students responded that they *Liked Some Reading* (19.4%), 13 students responded that they *Enjoy Reading* (41.8%), and 3 students responded that they are *Avid Readers* (9.7%).

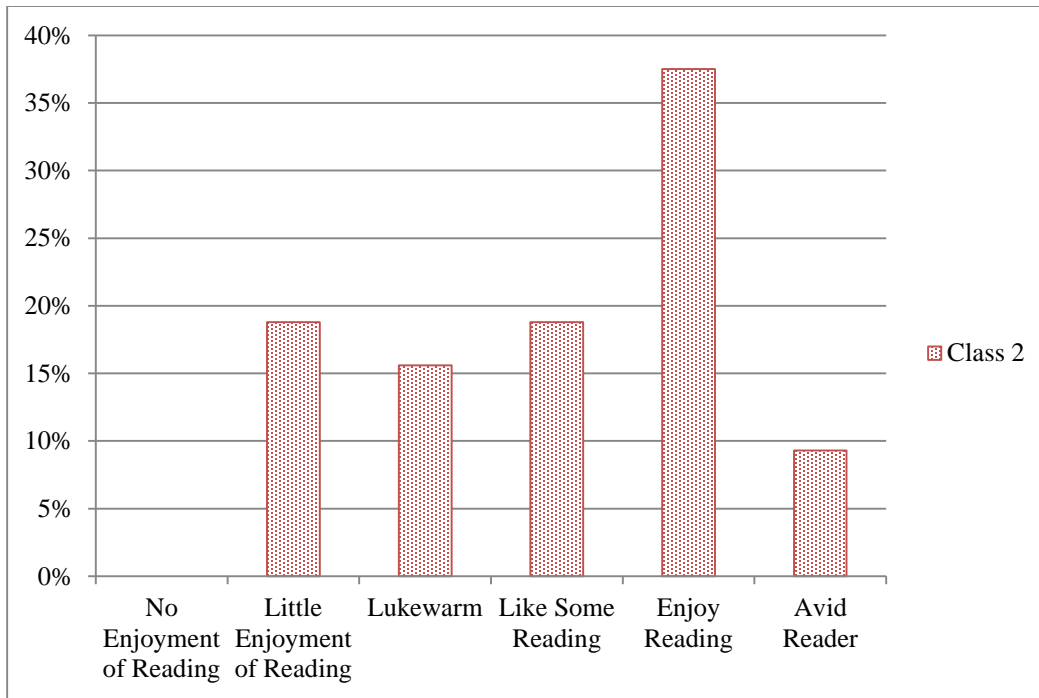


Figure 2: Analysis of Class 2's Initial Enthusiasm Toward Reading

Figure 2 reveals a more detailed analysis of Class 2's responses to Question 2 from the pre-survey. From a total of 32 surveys, 0 students responded that they had *No Enjoyment of Reading* (0%), 6 responded that they had *Little Enjoyment of Reading* (18.8%), 3 responded that they had *Lukewarm* feelings toward reading enjoyment (15.6%), 6 responded that they *Liked Some Reading* (18.8%), 13 responded that they *Enjoy Reading* (37.5%), and 3 responded that they are *Avid Readers* (9.3%).

Table 2: Comparison of Class Sections' Initial Enthusiasm Toward Reading

	No Enjoyment of Reading	Little Enjoyment of Reading	Lukewarm	Like Some Reading	Enjoy Reading	Avid Reader
Class 1	0%	19.4%	9.7%	19.4%	41.8%	9.7%
Class 2	0%	18.8%	15.6%	18.8%	37.5%	9.3%

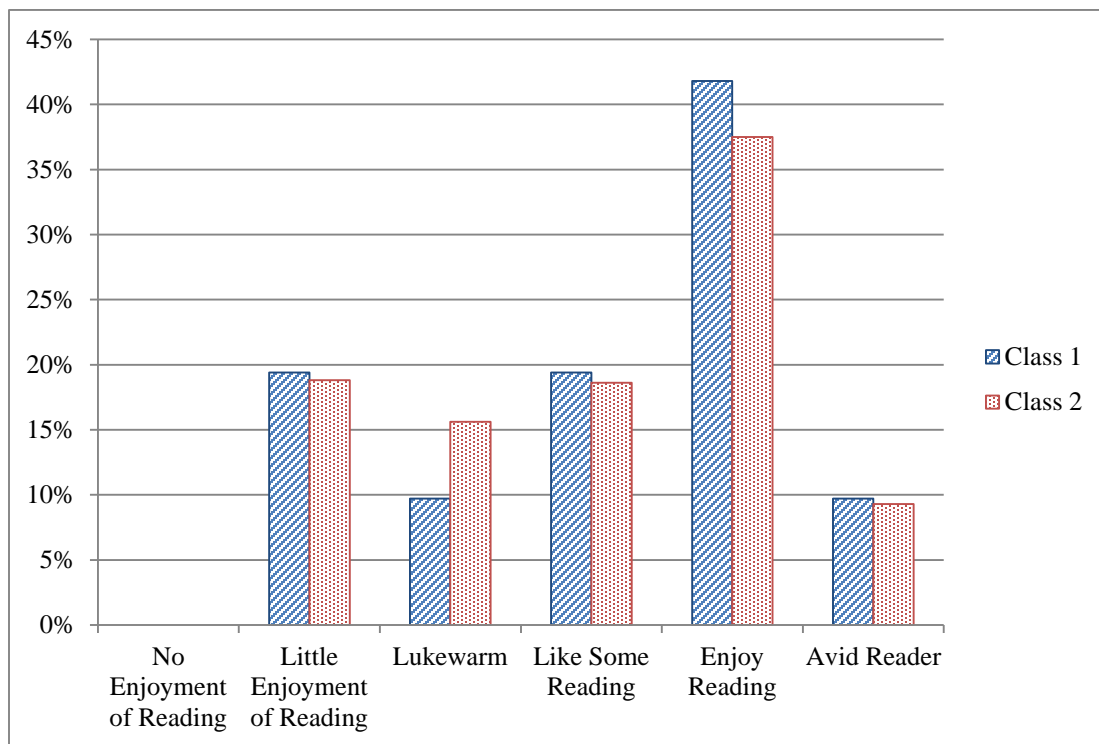


Figure 3: Comparison of Class Sections' Initial Enthusiasm Toward Reading

Table 2 compares the percentages of student's responses to Question 2 from the pre-survey, while Figure 3 compares the percentages using a bar graph. Both reveal the same data as Figure 1 and Figure 2, but instead of revealing each class' responses individually, Table 2 and Figure 3 compare the percentage results between classes. As evident from Table 2 and Figure 3, the majority of students in both Class 1 and Class 2 reported that they *Enjoy Reading* on the pre-

survey, with a slightly higher percentage of students from Class 1 falling in to this category.

Neither class had any students report that they find *No Enjoyment of Reading*.

At the end of the semester, participants were once again asked Question 2 “When you think of yourself in general as a reader, how much enjoyment do you associate with reading?”

The general results for this question are categorized into *unenthusiastic* and *enthusiastic* about reading, and can be found in Table 3. The results were positive, with only 16.7% of students from Class 1 reporting to be *unenthusiastic* about reading, and a mere 8.3% of students from Class 2 reporting that they feel *unenthusiastic* about reading. More importantly, 83.3% of students from Class 1, and 91.7% of students from Class 2 reported feeling *enthusiastic* toward reading.

Table 3: Final Enthusiasm Toward Reading

	Unenthusiastic	Enthusiastic
Class 1	16.7%	83.3%
Class 2	8.3%	91.7%

Figures 4 and 5 provide a more specific analysis of the students' responses to Question 2 of the post-survey. Figure 4 reveals the responses from Class 1, while Figure 5 shows the responses from Class 2.

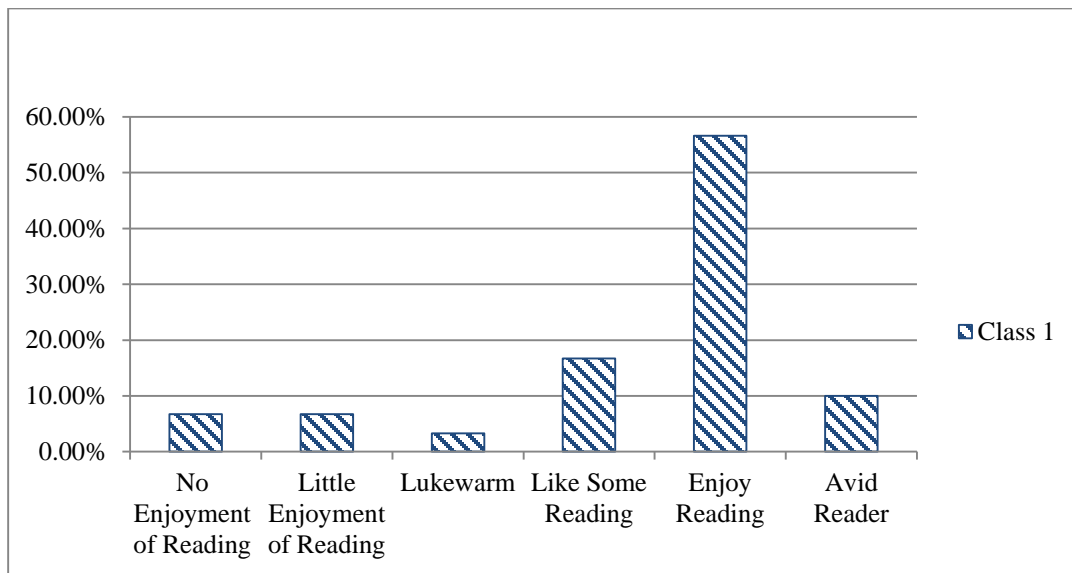


Figure 4: Analysis of Class 1's Final Enthusiasm Toward Reading

Figure 4 reveals that out of a total of 30 post-surveys from Class 1, 2 students responded with *No Enjoyment of Reading* (6.7%), 2 responded that they feel *Little Enjoyment of Reading* (6.7%), 1 responded that they feel *Lukewarm* toward reading (3.3%), 5 responded that they *Like Some Reading* (16.7%), 17 responded that they *Enjoy Reading* (56.6%), and 3 responded that they are *Avid Readers* (10%).

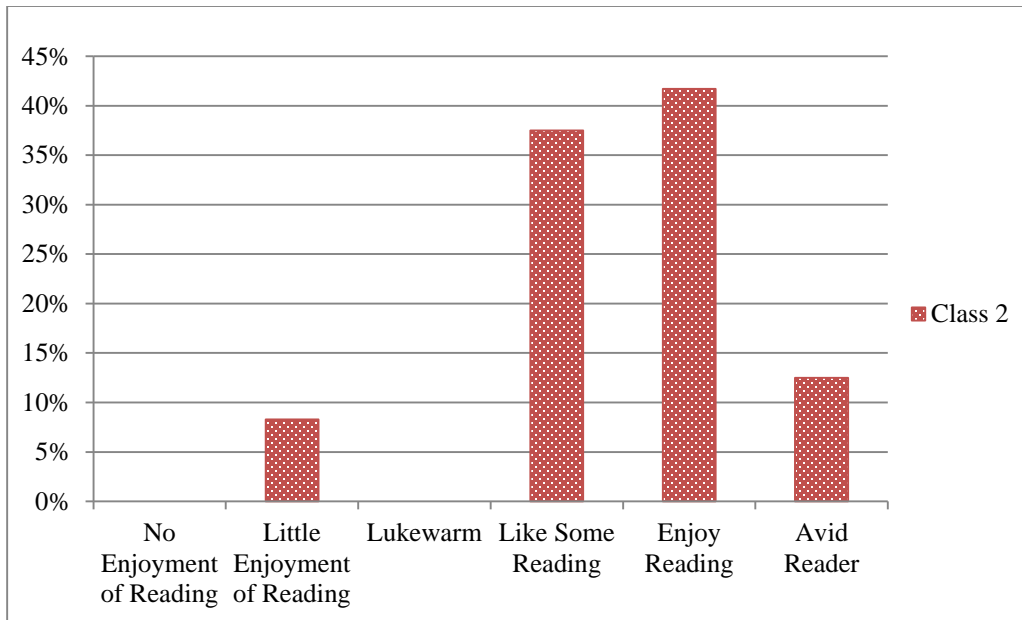


Figure 5: Analysis of Class 2's Final Enthusiasm Toward Reading

Figure 5 shows that out of 24 returned post-surveys from Class 2, 0 students responded that they feel *No Enjoyment* toward reading (0%), 2 responded that they felt *Little Enjoyment* toward reading (8.3%), 0 responded that they feel *Lukewarm* toward reading (0%), 9 responded that they *Like Some* reading (37.5%), 10 responded that *Enjoy Reading* (41.7%), and 3 responded that they are *Avid Readers* (12.5%).

Figure 6 and Table 4 compare the responses from Class 1 and Class 2 to Question 2 from the post-survey.

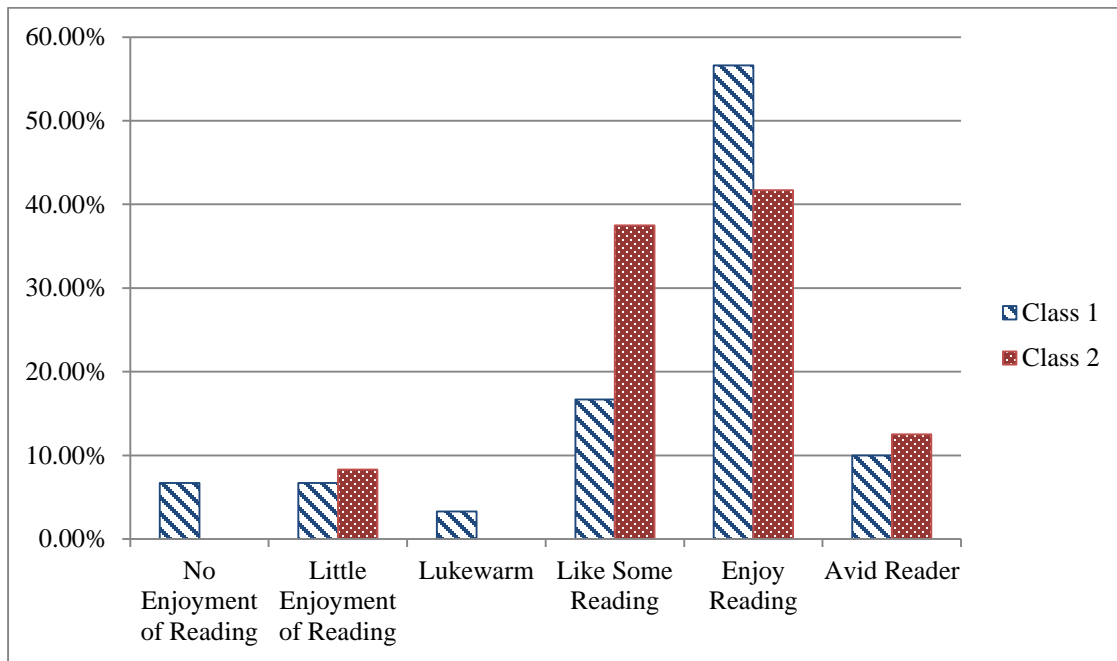


Figure 6: Comparison of Class Sections' Final Enthusiasm Toward Reading

Table 4: Comparison of Class Sections' Final Enthusiasm Toward Reading

	No Enjoyment of Reading	Little Enjoyment of Reading	Lukewarm	Like Some Reading	Enjoy Reading	Avid Reader
Class 1	6.7%	6.7%	3.3%	16.7%	56.6%	10%
Class 2	0%	8.3%	0%	37.5%	41.7%	12.5%

As one can see from Figure 6 and Table 4, both classes reported a higher percentage of students who fall under the “enthusiastic about reading” category, with the highest percentage of students responding that they *Enjoy Reading*.

Based on these responses, the students enrolled in the Literature for Children course have gained an appreciation for reading. This leaves us questioning whether the Children’s Literature course played a role in changing these students’ perceptions toward aesthetic reading, to what extent their enrollment in this course impacted their perceptions, and what aspects of the course influenced this change.

The Change in Perceptions of Class 1

Table 5: Class 1’s Changes in Enthusiasm Toward Reading

	Unenthusiastic	Enthusiastic
Pre-Survey	29%	71%
Post-Survey	16.7%	83.3%

As represented in Table 5, Class 1 began the semester with 29% of the enrolled students feeling *unenthusiastic* toward reading in general, and 71% feeling *enthusiastic* toward reading. By the end of the course, 16.7% felt *unenthusiastic* toward reading, while 83.3% of students reported feeling *enthusiastic* about reading in general. Based on these results, Class 1 experienced a 12.3% growth in their enthusiasm toward reading.

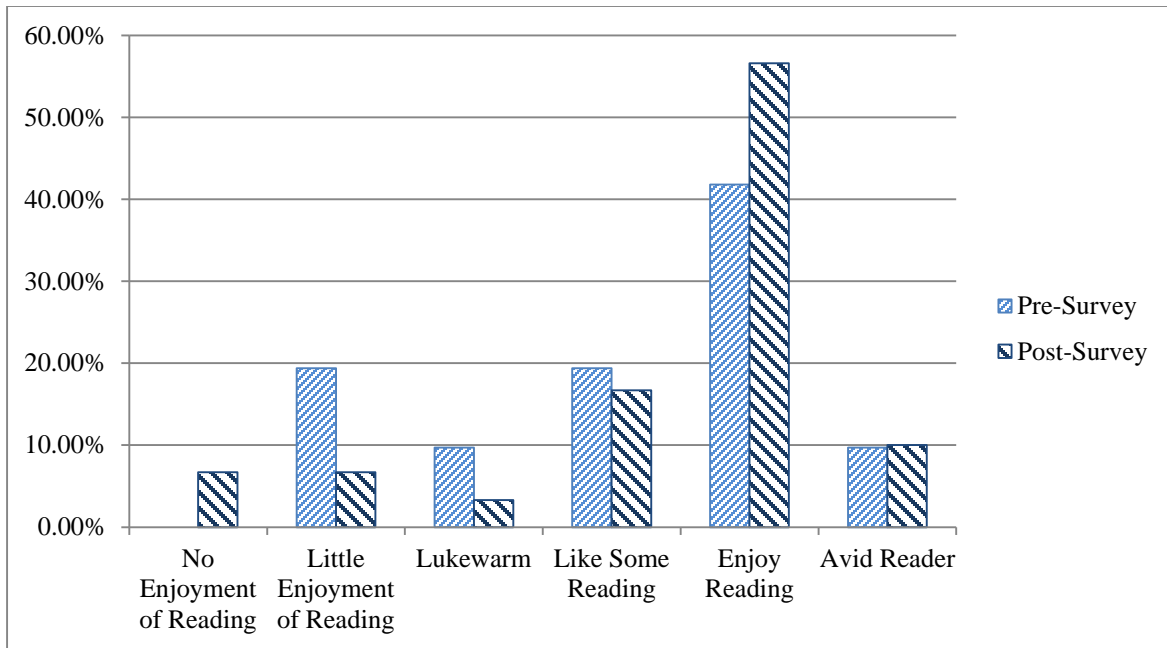


Figure 7: Comparison of Class 1's Enthusiasm Toward Reading

Table 6: Analysis of Class 1's Change in Enthusiasm Toward Reading

	No Enjoyment of Reading	Little Enjoyment of Reading	Lukewarm	Like Some Reading	Enjoy Reading	Avid Reader
Pre-Survey	0%	19.4%	9.7%	19.4%	41.8%	9.7%
Post-Survey	6.7%	6.7%	3.3%	16.7%	56.6%	10%

Figure 7 compares the percentage change between the responses for Question 2 from the pre-survey and post-survey for Class 1 in a visual manner, while Table 6 provides a more detailed explanation of the percentage results for Question 2 of the pre-survey and post-survey for Class 1.

The Change in Perceptions of Class 2

Table 7: The Change in Class 2's Enthusiasm Toward Reading

	Unenthusiastic	Enthusiastic
Pre-Survey	34.4%	65.6%
Post-Survey	8.3%	91.7%

Table 7 represents the percentage results from Question 2 of the pre-survey and post-survey that was given to Class 2. At the beginning of the semester, 34.4% of the students enrolled in Class 2 reported feeling *unenthusiastic* about reading, and by the end of the semester that percentage decreased to only 8.3% of students feeling *unenthusiastic* about reading. At the same time, the percent of students who felt *enthusiastic* about reading increased from 65.6% at the beginning of the semester to 91.7% by the end of the semester. Based on these results, Class 2 experienced 26.1% positive change in the participants' perceptions of reading.

Figure 8 and Table 8 below present the same data in two different ways. Table 8 reveals the percent of students enrolled in Class 2 who responded each category from Question 2 in the pre-survey and post-survey, while Figure 8 presents the same data in a bar graph. Figure 8 and Table 8, it is clear that Class 2 experienced a positive change in their perceptions toward reading in general.

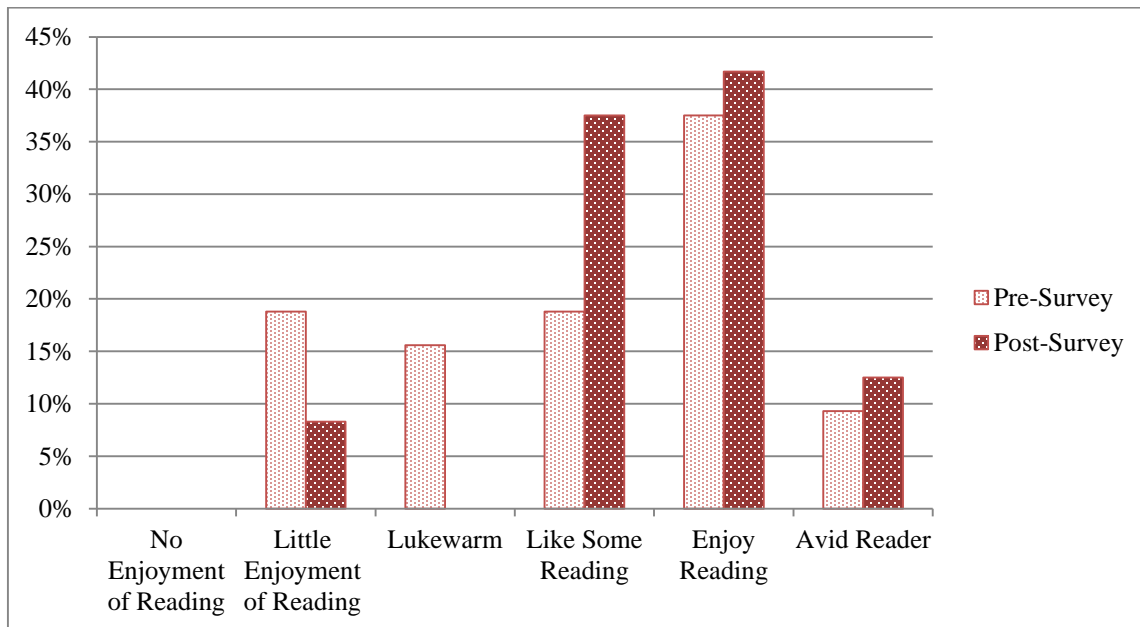


Figure 8: Comparison of Class 2's Reported Enthusiasm Toward Reading

Table 8: Analysis of Class 2's Change in Enthusiasm Toward Reading

	No Enjoyment of Reading	Little Enjoyment of Reading	Lukewarm	Like Some Reading	Enjoy Reading	Avid Reader
Pre-Survey	0%	18.8%	15.6%	18.8%	37.5%	9.3%
Post-Survey	0%	8.3%	0%	37.5%	41.7%	12.5%

Students' Perceptions of Reading After Taking This Course

Question 3 from the post-survey asks “After taking this course, when you think of yourself in general as a reader, how much enjoyment do you associate with reading?”

Participants were given the same ranking scale for Question 2, with the options of *No Enjoyment of Reading*, *Little Enjoyment of Reading*, *Lukewarm*, *Like Some Reading*, *Enjoy Reading*, and *Avid Reader*.

Figure 9 represents Class 1's responses to Question 3 from the post-survey, and Figure 10 displays Class 2's responses.

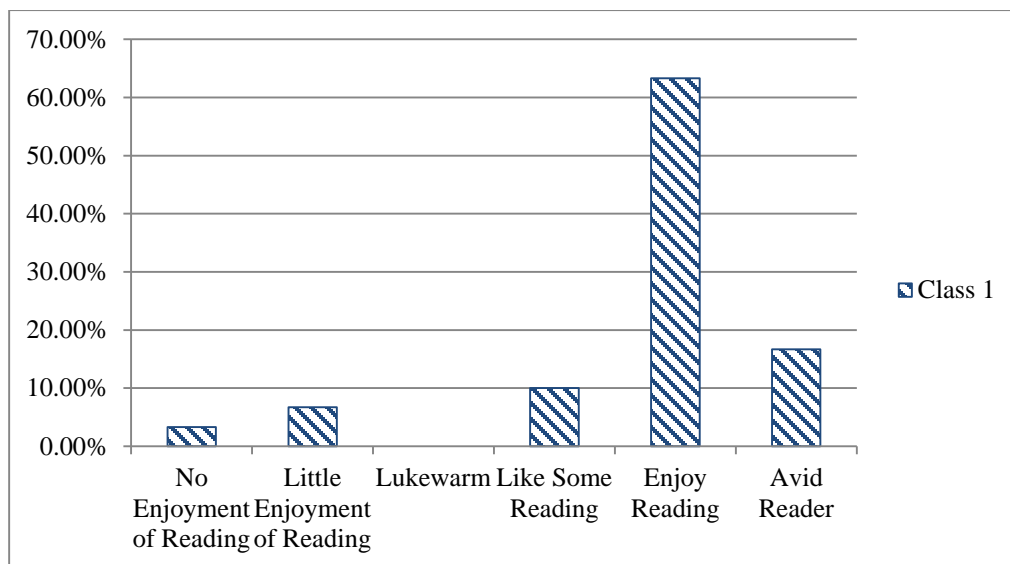


Figure 9: Class 1's Enthusiasm Toward Reading After Taking This Course

Based on Class 1's results of the post-survey, in regards to students' perceptions toward reading after taking the course, 1 student responded that they found *No Enjoyment of Reading* (3.3%), 2 students responded that they felt *Little Enjoyment of Reading* (6.7%), 0 students

responded that they felt *Lukewarm* toward reading (0%), 3 students responded that they *Like Some Reading* (10%), 19 students responded that they *Enjoy Reading* (63.3%), and 5 students responded that they are *Avid Readers* (16.7%).

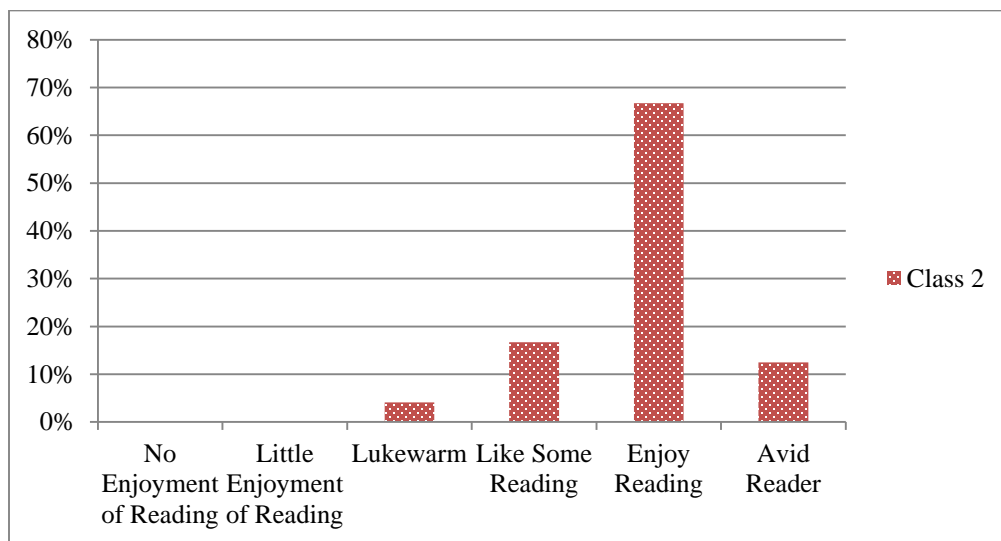


Figure 10: Class 2's Enthusiasm Toward Reading After Taking This Course

Based on the results of the post-survey, in regards to students' perceptions toward reading after taking the course, 0 students (0%) responded that they found *No Enjoyment of Reading*, 0 students responded that they felt *Little Enjoyment of Reading* (0%), 1 students responded that they felt *Lukewarm* toward reading (4.1%), 4 students responded that they *Like Some Reading* (16.7%), 16 students responded that they *Enjoy Reading* (66.7%), and 3 students responded that they are *Avid Readers* (12.5%).

In comparing the results of Question 3 from Class 1 and Class 2, one can see that both classes reported a high percentage of students with enthusiasm toward reading. Table 9 represents the percentages of student responses in each category, while Figure 11 depicts these findings in a bar graph.

Table 9: Comparison of Class Sections' Enthusiasm Toward Reading After Taking This Course

	No Enjoyment of Reading	Little Enjoyment of Reading	Lukewarm	Like Some Reading	Enjoy Reading	Avid Reader
Class 1	3.3%	6.7%	0%	10%	63.3%	16.7%
Class 2	0%	0%	4.1%	16.7%	66.7%	12.5%

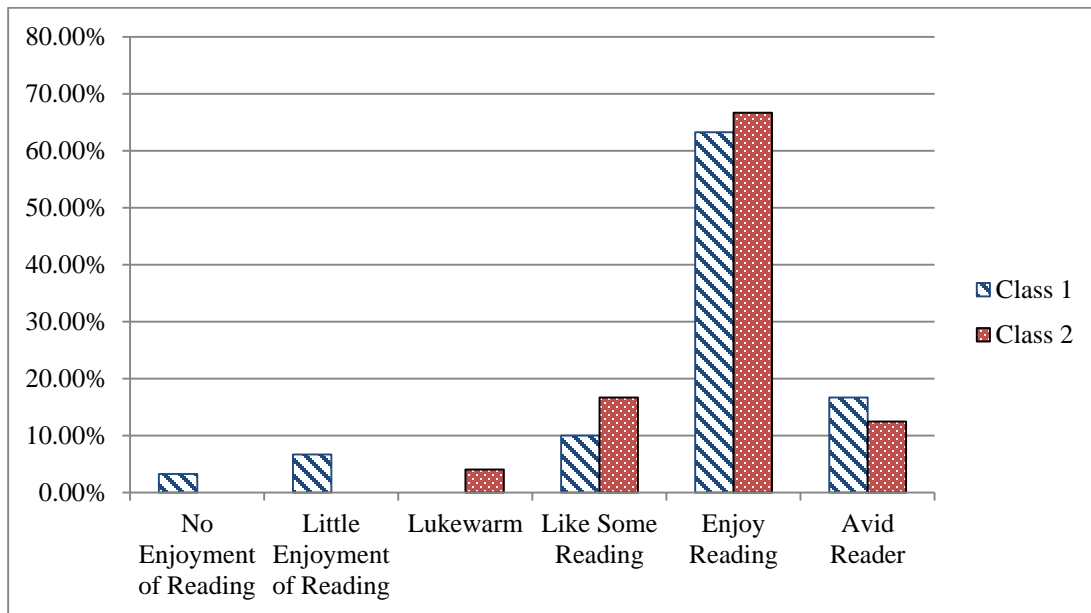


Figure 11: Comparison of Class Sections' Enthusiasm Toward Reading After Taking This Course

One can see from these results in Table 9 and Figure 11 that a high percentage of participants from both classes reported that after taking this course in Children's Literature, they feel enthusiastic about reading.

Even more striking are the results from Table 10, which groups the students' perceptions toward reading into the categories *enthusiastic* and *unenthusiastic*, where *No Enjoyment of Reading*, *Little Enjoyment of Reading*, and *Lukewarm* are combined to form the *unenthusiastic* label, and *Like Some Reading*, *Enjoy Reading*, and *Avid Reader* are combined to form the *enthusiastic* category.

Table 10: Overall Enthusiasm Toward Reading After Taking This Course

	Unenthusiastic	Enthusiastic
Class 1	10%	90%
Class 2	4%	96%

What Factors Contributed to this Shift in Perceptions

As evident in Table 10, the perceptions of pre-service teachers toward reading is significantly higher than data found during other studies. What is it about this course in Children's Literature that contributed to this change in perceptions? In order to find this answer, the surveys were reread, students' responses to questions 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7 of the post-survey were analyzed, and the use of several key ideas was noted. Out of a total of 31 post-surveys from Class 1 and 24 post-surveys from Class 2, several key ideas were mentioned repeatedly throughout the open-ended portion of the survey. These key ideas consist of "enthusiastic about reading", "Instructor's passion for reading and methodology", "exposure to a variety of text", "appreciate reading more as a result of this course", and "text self-selection". Figure 12 below represents the percent of post-surveys from each class that mentioned each key idea.

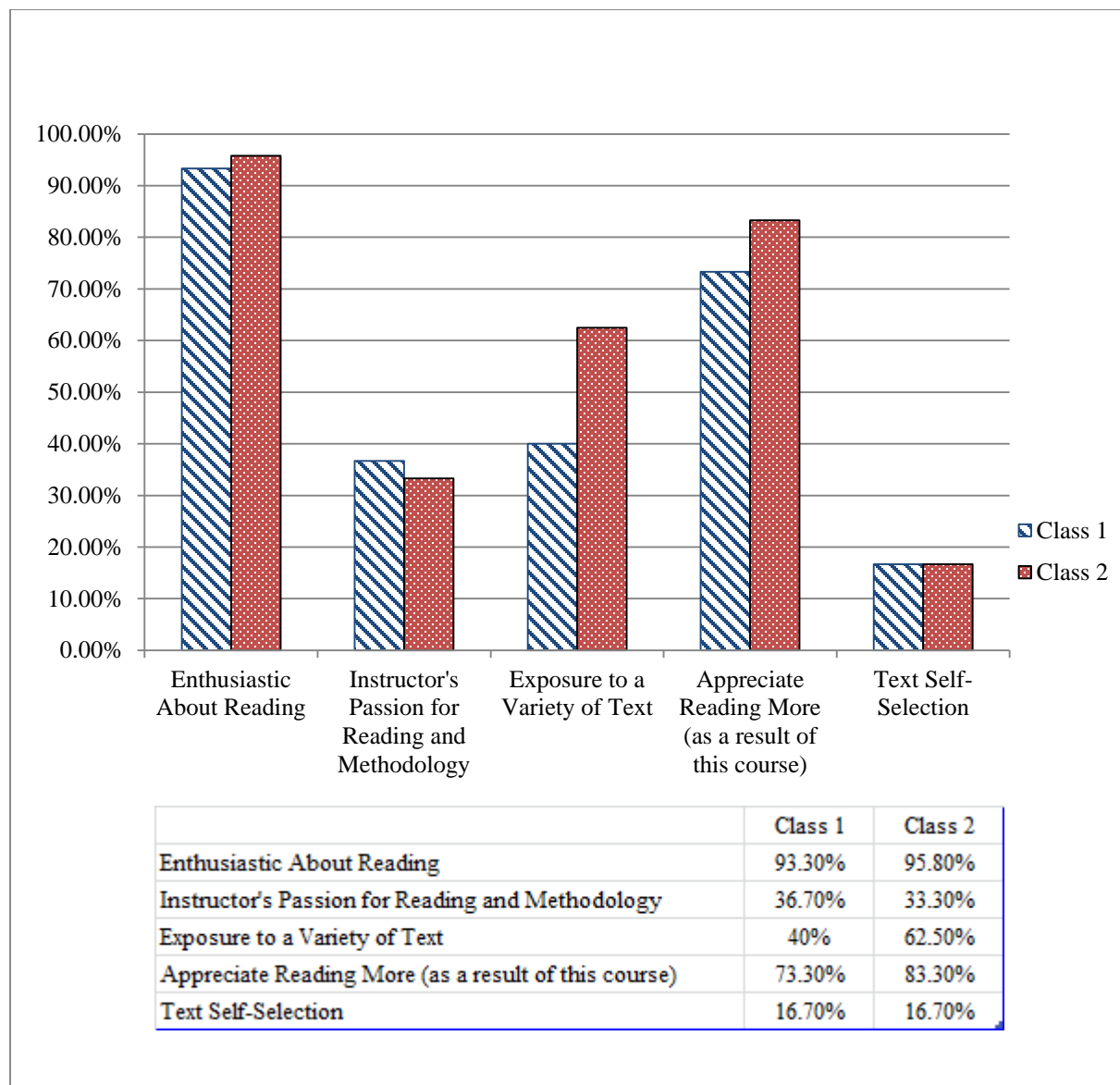


Figure 12: Percentage Analysis of Key Ideas Mentioned in Post-Surveys

Enthusiastic About Reading

The most common key idea mentioned in the post-surveys was enthusiasm about reading in general. Roughly 93.3% of post-surveys collected from Class 1, and 95.8% of post-surveys collected from Class 2 mentioned this key idea “enthusiastic about reading”. Not all students

used this exact phrasing; those who said that they were “excited to read” or “enjoy reading” were grouped into this category. Some notable quotes include:

- “I am starting to read for fun at home!”
- “I enjoy reading a lot”
- “I love children’s books”
- “I actually have started reading more at home, so now I read more books that I enjoy as well as textbooks.”
- “I read all the time. I love it!”
- “[I] found a love for children’s books!”
- “I realized that reading can be enjoyable”
- “I love reading children’s books now!”
- “This course makes reading fun and interesting because [it does not] make you tear apart the book like composition classes, but [instead] enjoy the content.”
- “This class has really opened my eyes and I’m excited to read in my spare time.”

Instructor’s Passion for Reading and Methodology

This category is a composition of students who stated that the instructor’s passion for reading or their methodology played an important role in their change in perception toward reading. 36.7% of post-surveys from Class 1 and 33.3% of post-surveys from Class 2 explicitly state that the instructor played a role in helping to change their perceptions toward reading. Some notable quotes include:

- “[The instructor] really made books exciting. She brought them to life and made me want to read the books [that] she showed us.”
- “The professor’s love for reading is contagious.”
- “[The instructor’s] love for books is definitely contagious. She was always so enthusiastic. [Her] enthusiasm and introduction of good books is what made my shift to truly loving kid’s books.”
- “[The professor’s] passion for reading definitely was shown through her teaching and made me love reading even more.”
- “[The instructor] shared her passion for books and reading, and it made the course enjoyable and inspiring.”
- “[The professor] teaches her love for reading through a variety of useful tools.”
- “The teacher really expressed her love for [reading] by reading us stories”
- “[The professor] did a great job instilling into me a love for reading. She opened up a whole new world of books for me.”

Exposure to a Variety of Text

The post-surveys reported that 40% of surveys from Class 1 and 62.5% from Class 2 stated that the exposure to a variety of text throughout the Children’s Literature course contributed to the positive shift in their perceptions toward reading. Some notable quotes include:

- “I learned so much about different types of books, plus I could picture my own student library; I have bought more books!”
- “The books that the professor introduced as ‘potential’ books to read was a big help; I jotted down a lot of them.”
- “[This course] expands my knowledge of books, which is great.”
- “this course opened my mind to other genres that I now enjoy”
- “I still love reading, maybe even more than before because I have been introduced to more genres.”
- “I enjoyed reading different types of books”
- “I really enjoy reading after learning about all of the different types of books.”
- “I discovered that I really enjoy reading historical fiction.”
- “I was able to try different genres and find ones that I like”
- “Learning the different genres [helped me] learn that I like reading biographies”
- “I got to read different children’s books that I didn’t know existed, and it helped me gain more knowledge of books to read to my future students.”
- “[This course] gave me the opportunity to read a lot of great children’s books. Without this class I wouldn’t have read these great books.”
- “We discovered a lot of great books to share with kids.”
- “[I was] introduced to some good books, and some fun ways to tell them.”

Appreciate Reading More as a Result of this Course

Of the post-surveys, 73.3% from Class 1 and 83.3% from Class 2 stated that they appreciate reading more as a result of this course. Some notable quotes include:

- “This class has truly opened me up to reading. I did not have a love, I do now”
- “I can say [that] after reading all those books I gained an appreciation for books and [I] even checked out 2 to read over break.”
- “I grew to like reading, and found that I am reading more.”
- “This class helped me enjoy reading in general”
- “I now see children’s books in a different way and enjoy really looking in to the story and pictures”
- “[This course] showed me how to encourage students to love reading”
- “It made me love to read again”
- “After taking this course it has shown me that reading can be fun”
- “I did not use to enjoy reading, but I am starting to enjoy some genres now. After this class I love reading children’s books!”
- “I have a better understanding of literature and not just consider reading for face value”
- “[This course] emphasized the need for reading in a classroom”
- “[This course] made me read a lot, and now I love it.”
- “This class definitely brought my love of reading back; [now] I try to make more time to read.”
- “This class made me feel better about reading”

- “This class made me enjoy reading”, and “This course really showed [me] the love of reading and it made me enjoy it and appreciate it more.”

Text Self-Selection

Both Class 1 and Class 2 had 16.7% of post-surveys state that the ability to choose what they read played an impact on the positive shift of their perceptions toward reading. Some notable quotes include:

- “At school I am forced to read informational texts, and it’s not nearly as enjoyable as reading what I want to read”
- “Yes [this course shared with me a love of reading because] I chose the books [that] I read for projects”
- “I enjoy choosing what I read”
- “We were encouraged to pick books [that] we enjoyed”
- “The fact that I could pick the books [that] I read [led to the positive shift in my perceptions toward reading]”
- “Until this course, no classes have offered enjoyable readings”
- “I like choosing what I read”
- “I was able to pick the books for myself, just as I do when I read for pleasure”

Additional Information Obtained Through Surveys

Additional information regarding students' past reading experiences was gleaned from the pre-surveys.

Question 3 of the pre-survey asked "When you consider the instruction of reading that you received in school, how would you rate the emphasis placed upon each of the following?" The aspects of reading instruction that the survey inquired about are "Remembering the details of what you read", "Your own reaction to or interpretation of what you read", "Discussion your reactions and interpretations with classmates or teachers", "Completing assignments or reports associated with reading". These aspects of reading instruction were ranked by students on a 1-5 scale, and then averaged to determine the overall emphasis for each category. Figures 13 and 14, below, show those who reported feeling more enthusiastic toward reading also on average reported more emphasis on these aspects of reading instruction.

Figure 13 shows participants' enthusiasm toward reading as compared to their average rating of emphasis placed on certain aspects of reading instruction during elementary school. Figure 14 reveals participants' average rating of emphasis placed on certain aspects of reading instruction regarding their high school reading instruction, as compared to their reported enthusiasm toward reading on the pre-survey.

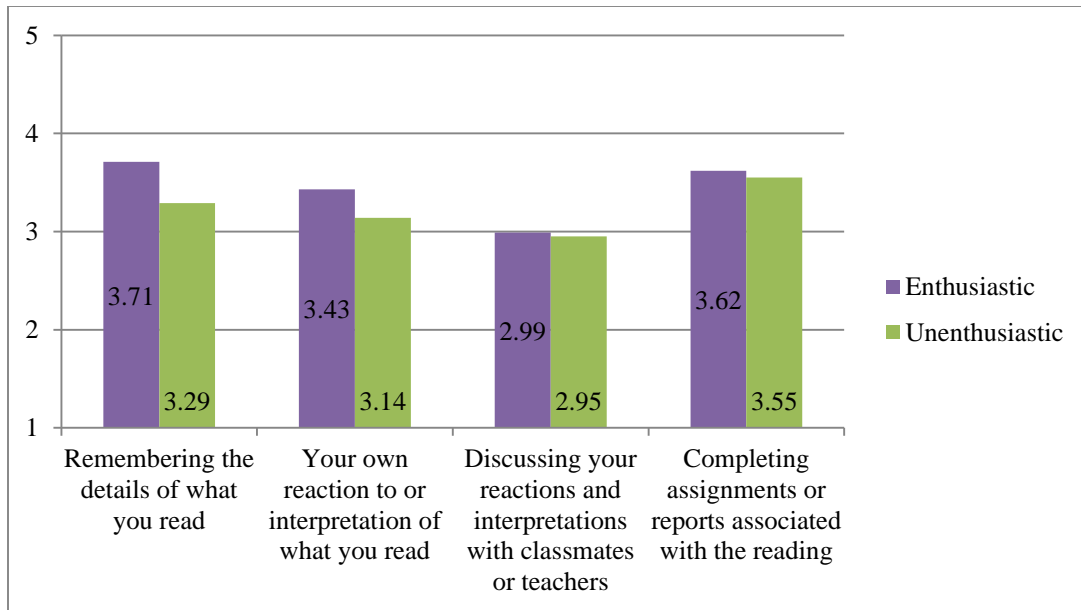


Figure 13: Participants' Average Elementary School Reading Instruction, As Compared To Their Level of Enthusiasm

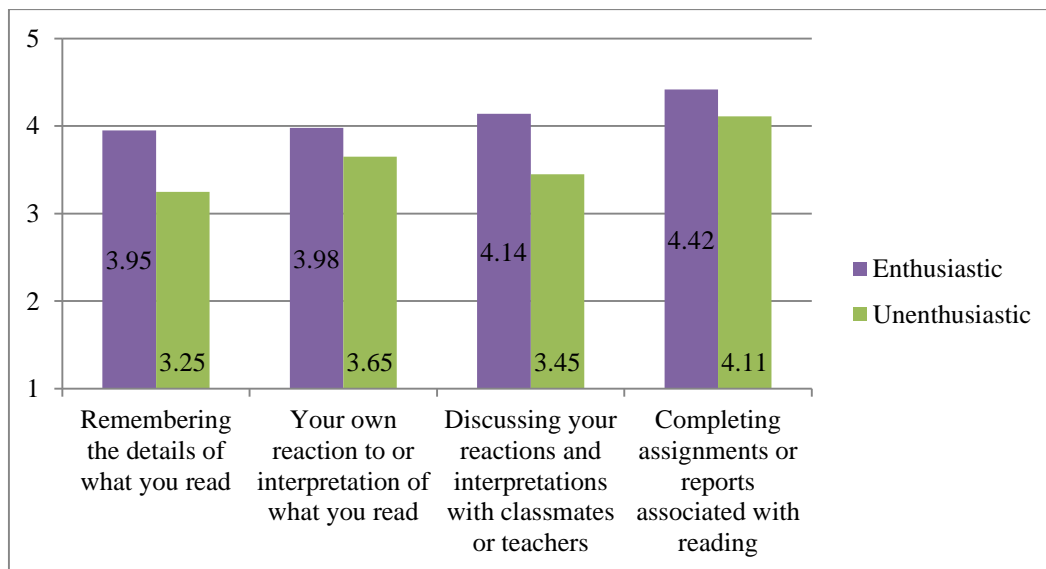


Figure 14: Participants' Average High School Reading Instruction, As Compared To Their Level Of Enthusiasm

Connection Between Reading Experiences At Home And Overall Enthusiasm

Toward Reading

Question 5 of the pre-survey asked if participants' "experiences with reading at home differ from [their] reading experiences at school?". A trend was discovered regarding students' perceptions toward reading and their responses to this question. Of those who reported feeling unenthusiastic toward reading, 60% responded that their at home reading experiences were negative, or that they did not read at home at all. Conversely, of those who reported feeling enthusiastic toward reading 76.7% mentioned that their reading experiences at home were enjoyable.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the two main influences on students' perceptions toward reading are their teachers and their at home reading experiences (Gomez, 2005; Nathanson et al., 2008; Powell-Brown, 2003). With this connection between students' at home reading experiences and their feelings of enthusiasm toward reading, this researcher began to wonder how participants' past experiences with reading instruction affected this trend.

Question 6 of the pre-survey asks "Were any of your teachers effective in sharing with you a love of reading? If so, how did they do this?" Some participants mentioned how a teacher chose specific texts for her students based on interest. Others stated that they had a teacher who would talk to the class each week about what she was reading, and her personal favorite books. While others responded that either they did not have a teacher who effectively shared a love of reading, or they did not read at all.

Connection Between Early Reading Experiences And Enthusiasm Toward Reading

Question 4 of the pre-survey asked “When you think of your early elementary school reading experiences with learning to read, do you recall them as primarily positive, negative, of neutral?” To organize this data, two groups were formed; those who reported feeling *enthusiastic* toward reading, and those who feel *unenthusiastic* toward reading. Then, the percentage of participants within each category that reported having early reading experiences that were *positive*, *negative*, or *neutral* was calculated.

Of those who reported feeling *enthusiastic* toward reading on the pre-survey, 69.8% remembered their early reading experiences as primarily *positive*, 4.7% remember the experience as *negative*, and 25.6% have a *neutral* memory of their early reading experience. These results corresponded to this researcher’s predictions, with the majority of participants who feel enthusiastic toward reading reporting a primarily positive early reading experience.

Of the participants who reported feeling *unenthusiastic* toward reading, 45% remembered their early reading experiences as *positive*, 15% remember them as *negative*, and 40% have a *neutral* memory of their early experiences learning to read. These results also correspond to what this researcher expected, with a higher population of participants citing negative or neutral early reading experiences.

Connection between Enthusiasm and Accommodations

Question 8 of the pre-survey and the post-survey asked if the participant had ever qualified for any reading accommodations. Based on the data collected, there is a negative connection between the participants reported need for additional reading accommodations and their enjoyment toward reading. Figure 15 shows the percentage of students who qualified for reading accommodations, as compared to their reported enthusiasm.

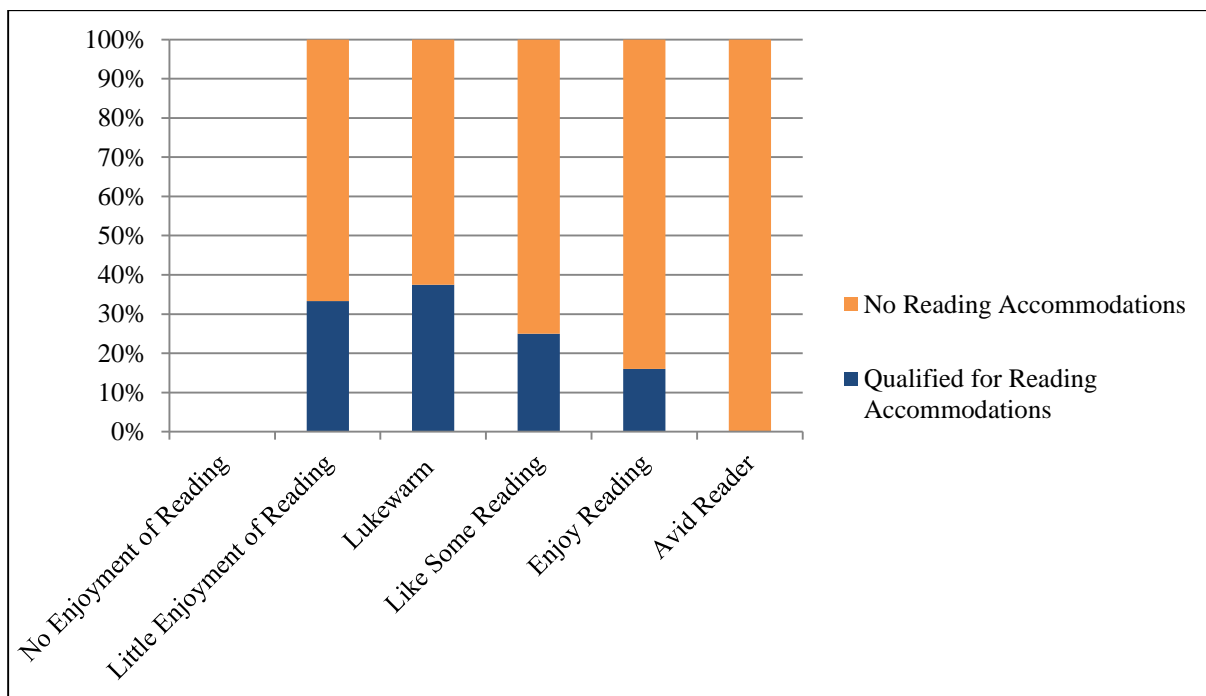


Figure 15: Percentage Of Participants Qualified For Reading Accommodations As Compared To Their Initial Level Of Enthusiasm Toward Reading

Of those who reported themselves as *Avid Readers* on the pre-survey, there were no participants who reported qualifying for any reading accommodations.

Of those who stated that they *Enjoy Reading* on the pre-survey, three participants qualified from Class 1 for reading accommodations, making up 23.1% of those who responded

that they *Enjoy Reading* in Class 1. Class 2 had only one student from the category *Enjoy Reading* who reported that they qualified for reading accommodations; making up 8.3% of those who responded that they *Enjoy Reading* in Class 2. Of the population of students who reported that they *Enjoy Reading* on the pre-survey, 16 % qualified for reading accommodations.

Of those who reported that they *Like Some Reading* on the pre-survey, two participants from Class 1 responded that they qualified for accommodations, 33.3% of the population from Class 1, while only 1 participant from Class 2 reported that they qualified for reading accommodations; making up 16.7% of the participants from Class 2 who reported that they *Like Some Reading*. Out of all participants who responded that they *Like Some Reading* on the pre-survey 25% reported that they qualified for extra reading accommodations.

Of the participants who reported that they feel *Lukewarm* towards reading on the pre-survey, there were two participants from Class 1 who reported qualifying for reading accommodations, making up 66.6% of those who responded that they feel *Lukewarm* toward reading in Class 1. Class 2 had one participant responded that they were enrolled in intensive reading classes, making up 20% of the *Lukewarm* responses from Class 2. Out of all participants who responded that they feel *Lukewarm* toward reading on the pre-survey, 37.5% reported that they qualified for additional reading accommodations.

Lastly, of the participants who responded that they find *Little Enjoyment in Reading* on the pre-survey, three participants from Class 1 required additional reading accommodations, comprising 50% of the population of participants from Class 1 who reported that they find Little Enjoyment in Reading, while one participant from Class 2 reported that they qualified for reading accommodations, 16.7% of those participants from Class 2 who feel *Little Enjoyment in*

Reading. Of the total population of participants who reported feeling *Little Enjoyment in Reading* on the pre-survey, 33.3% reported that they qualified for reading accommodations.

Summary of Results

Both classes reported a positive change in their perceptions and motivations toward aesthetic reading as a result of this course in Children's Literature. Figures 16 and 17 below represent the entire population of participants' enthusiasm toward reading in general, as obtained from Question 2 of the pre-survey and post-survey.

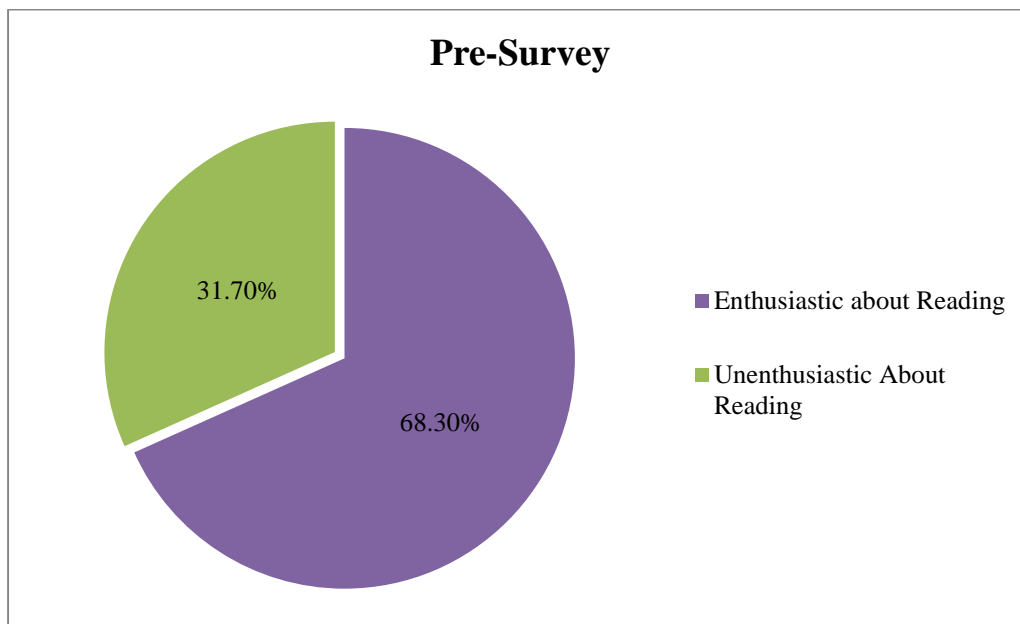


Figure 16: Overall Initial Enthusiasm Toward Reading

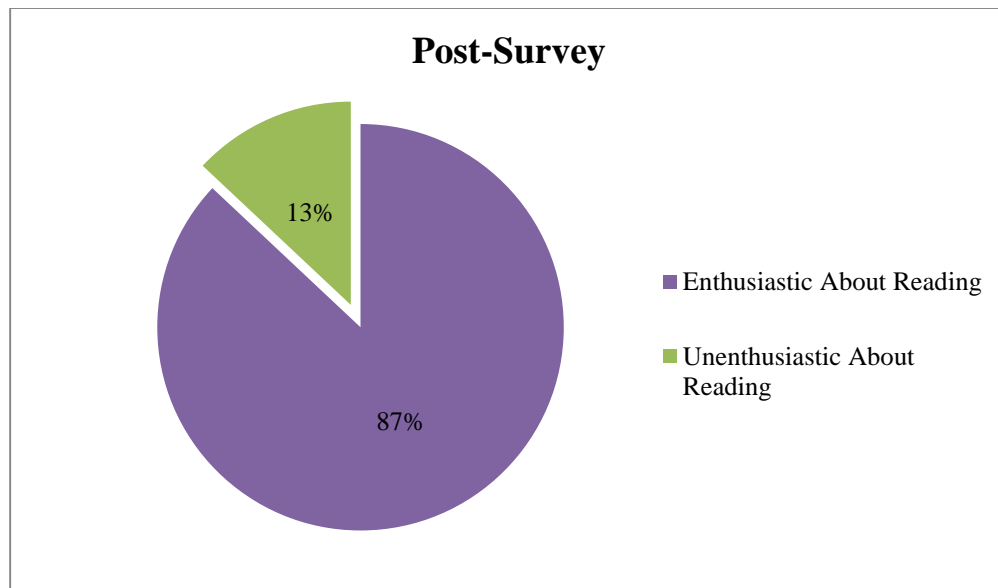


Figure 17: Overall Final Enthusiasm Toward Reading

As evident from the results shown in Figure 16 and Figure 17, both classes experienced a positive shift in perspectives and motivations toward reading after taking this course in Children’s Literature. Each class experienced a positive shift in their feelings toward reading in general, and both classes reported feeling more enthusiastic toward reading after taking this course. Based on the data, Class 2 experienced slightly more change in perceptions toward reading than Class 1. When prompted about what contributed to this change, both classes agreed that exposure to a variety of texts, the instructor’s enthusiasm and passion for reading, the ability to select their own reading material, and the time provided for aesthetic reading played important roles in helping to change their perspectives.

Question 4 of the post-survey asked students to rate the amount of emphasis placed on certain aspects of reading instruction while enrolled in this course. These aspects of reading instruction are “Remembering the details of what you read”, “Your own reaction to or interpretation of what you read”, “Discussing your reactions and interpretations with classmates or teachers”, “Completing assignments or reports associated with reading”, and “Selecting reading material based on your own interests.” Figure 18, below, shows that there is a trend between those who reported enthusiastic feelings toward reading, and their reported amount of emphasis placed on each aspect of reading. The responses were grouped into two categories, *enthusiastic* and *unenthusiastic*, and the ratings were averaged within each group.

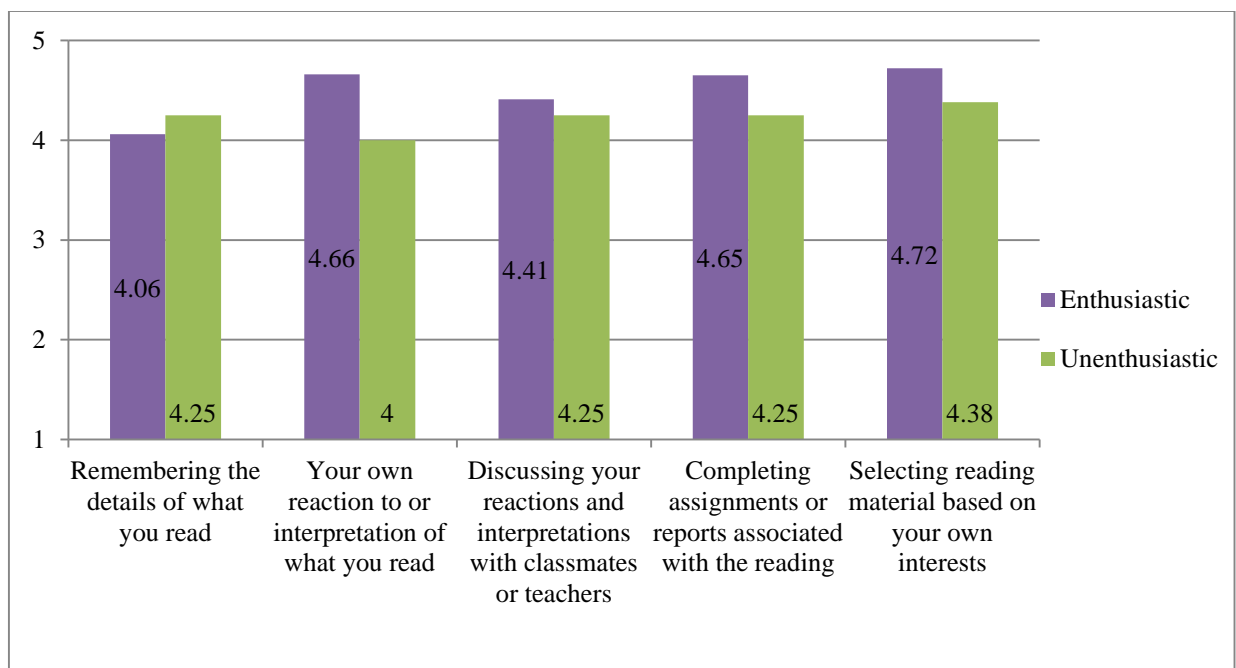


Figure 18: Average Reported Emphasis on Aspects of Reading Instruction in This Course, As Compared to Overall Enthusiasm

This researcher found a weak negative connection between participants who qualified for reading accommodations, and their enjoyment of reading. In other words, participants who qualified for reading accommodations represented a higher percentage of those who reported feeling unenthusiastic toward reading, than the participants who did not report qualifying for reading accommodations. As shown in Figure 13, out of the 63 participants of the pre-survey 68.3% reported feeling enthusiastic toward reading, while 31.7% reported feeling unenthusiastic toward reading. Of those who reported feeling *enthusiastic* toward reading on the pre-survey 18.9% qualified for reading accommodations, while 35% of participants who reported feeling *unenthusiastic* toward reading qualified for reading accommodations.

Interestingly, there was a stronger connection between the participants reported at home reading experiences and their enthusiasm toward reading. There was only one student who responded that they felt *No Enjoyment* toward reading on the post-survey. In reference to Question 5, which asked “Do your current experiences with reading at home differ from your reading experiences at school?”, this student stated “I don’t read at home”. This trend was apparent on the pre-survey results as well, with the 60% of those reporting that they felt *unenthusiastic* toward reading also reporting that they had negative or no reading experiences at home. Conversely, 76.7% of those who reported feeling *enthusiastic* toward reading on the pre-survey mentioned that they had positive reading experiences at home.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

I chose to study this topic because I have always loved reading. I especially enjoyed taking the course in Children's Literature, LAE 3414. I loved how the professor shared such a wide breadth of text within each genre of Children's Literature, and how she ended each class meeting by providing examples of how to tell stories to a classroom using a variety of methods. While enrolled in the course, I was informed of Applegate's study from 2004 *The Peter Effect*, which opened my eyes to the dwindling number of enthusiastic readers, especially those who are pursuing a degree in elementary education. After reading this study, I was interested to see if these statistics applied to pre-service teachers at the University of Central Florida. As I began to research more into the phenomena of the decline in aesthetic reading, I came upon the recommended practices for breaking the cycle of aliteracy; deemphasize textbook driven lectures (Krashen, 1993; Nathanson et al., 2008; Sardo-Brown & Beeghly, 1996), enable text self-selection (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; 2014; Cardarelli, 1992; Krashen 1993; McKool & Gespass, 2009; Nathanson et al., 2008), include reflective journals (Nathanson et al., 2008), encourage open discussion (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; 2014; Krashen, 1993; McKool & Gespass, 2009; Nathanson et al., 2008; Sardo-Brown & Beeghly, 1996), provide opportunities to reflect on students' own personal views of literacy (Gomez, 2005), and incorporate "well-planned instructional experiences to allow students to experience what it feels like to be enthusiastic about reading" (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Applegate et al., 2014; Gomez, 2005; Krashen, 1993; McKool & Gespass, 2009; Morrison, Jacobs, & Swinyard, 1999; Nathanson et al., 2008; Powell-Brown, 2003; Ruddell, 1995; Sardo-Brown & Beeghly, 1996). I realized that the University of Central Florida College of Education and Human Performance has a course

specifically designed to follow these recommended practices, LAE 3414. Since I had taken the course previously, I believed that the instructor who teaches the sections that I planned to study also aligned her curriculum with these recommended practices. This researcher wondered if the positive feelings associated with reading as a result of taking this course were limited to me, or if all students enrolled in this course experienced similar results. So then the question became, can this course in Children's Literature change the perceptions and motivations of pre-service elementary teachers toward aesthetic reading?

The findings of this study suggest that this course in Children's Literature did positively impact feelings and motivations toward aesthetic reading. Out of a total of 63 participants for the pre-survey, 68.3% reported that they felt *enthusiastic* toward reading, while 31.7% reported that they felt *unenthusiastic*. By the end of the course, out of 54 post-survey participants, 87% of participants reported that they felt *enthusiastic* toward reading, while 13% reported that they felt *unenthusiastic*.

When asked about what factors contributed to this positive change, participants gave many reasons. Some stated that the instructor's passion for literature was contagious, and that she played the greatest role in changing their perceptions of reading for enjoyment. A number of students specified that a major contributing factor to their feelings of enthusiasm was the freedom within this course to choose their own reading material. Others mentioned the fact that the course emphasized using a wide variety of texts from different genres in future classrooms, which allowed for students to be exposed to and experience reading material that they had previously been unfamiliar with. Some participants mentioned that they enjoyed how the instructor read or shared a different story at the end of each class meeting, including different

visual aids such as felt board, storytelling apron, magnetic presentations, transparency presentations, storytelling box, storytelling glove, and even music integrated while reading a story. This allowed students to view different storytelling methods for their own future classrooms, and to gain ideas for their storytelling presentations. An assignment that multiple participants mentioned as a benefitting factor in their shift toward positive perceptions of reading is the storytelling presentation; where students were required to memorize a story and present it to the class using one of the storytelling methods presented by the instructor throughout the semester. Still, others mentioned that the journal assignment was the most influential factor in the change in their perceptions; where students are required to read a certain number of books within each genre of Children's Literature, and write a brief summary of the book including how they might use this text in their future classroom.

More specifically, the journal assignment requires that students read a total of 34 books from a variety of genres throughout the semester: 3 poetry, 16 picture books, 1 transitional chapter book, 3 folklore books, 1 fantasy chapter book, 1 realistic fictions chapter book, 1 historical fiction chapter book, 1 biography chapter book, 3 nonfiction books, 3 culturally diverse books, and one additional chapter book. Within these genres, students must also read at least 10 books that have won a Caldecott Medal and at least 2 Newberry Medal or Honor recipients. Students are free to choose their own reading material within each genre, but are discouraged from reading more than two books by the same author. For the final assignment, students were required to write one summary paragraph, 7-8 sentences, including the beginning, middle, and end of the story, as well as one other paragraph where students reflect on their own personal opinions about the book and pictures, include suggestions for use in their future classrooms,

address any possible ESOL accommodations, and relate the story to their own experiences. This assignment not only helped to expose students enrolled in this course to a variety of texts, it allows for text self-selection, and it required students to reflect upon their reading.

The participants' open-ended responses from the post-survey show that the instructor's methodology, through bringing in a variety of texts each week and modeling storytelling methods, as well as the required assignments for these course sections which allowed for text self-selection, the storytelling presentation and the journal assignment, contributed to the positive change in perceptions that the participants of the two course sections experienced toward aesthetic reading.

Limitations of this Study

One factor of this study that I would change if reproduced, would be the length of the surveys used. Although I feel that the questions led to some insightful responses, some participants completely missed the back of the survey, and failed to answer those questions. The results of this study may have been altered as a result of some participants failing to answer the back of the survey.

There were 63 participants for the pre-survey, and only 54 participants for the post-survey. Nearly every student enrolled in the two course sections participated on the pre-survey. The 9 unreturned post-surveys were all from Class 2, and the survey was given on the morning of the class' story-telling presentations, leading this researcher to believe that the discrepancy in participation was due to this extenuating factor. This may be accounted for by the fact that the

students were likely nervous and preoccupied by their looming presentations. This reduced number of surveys may have affected the results of this study, and may explain why, based on the data collected, Class 2 experienced more change in perceptions toward reading than Class 1.

Additionally, the majority of the information used to determine the results came from the information gleaned from the post-surveys. Perhaps, if this study is reproduced, only questions 1 and 2 from the pre-survey need to be given to participants, to determine their major and the amount of enjoyment that they associate with reading.

Implications for Further Study

The results of this study showed that indeed a course in Children's Literature could positively affect the perceptions and motivations of pre-service teachers toward aesthetic reading. Through the use of the recommended practices for teaching literature, as well as the instructor's passion and the required curriculum, students were able to experience a love of reading first-hand.

The results regarding the connection between at home reading experiences and enthusiasm toward reading were eye opening. Of those who reported feeling unenthusiastic toward reading, 60% responded that their at home reading experiences were negative, or that they did not read at home at all. Conversely, of those who reported feeling enthusiastic toward reading 76.7% mentioned that their reading experiences at home were enjoyable. In order to combat this trend, parents should encourage aesthetic reading at home, especially if the child tends to feel unenthusiastic toward reading. Implementing the recommended practices to break

the cycle of aliteracy can be useful in homes, as well as in classrooms. Furthermore, classroom teachers should try to set aside time daily for free and voluntary reading, so that students have the best chance to become lifelong enthusiastic readers.

This study only tracked the changes in perceptions for only two class sections of the entire population of students taking LAE 3414 during the fall 2014 semester, and both sections were taught by the same instructor. The results of this study showed that a positive change in the perceptions of pre-service teachers can be made by taking a course in children's literature, but do these results remain consistent across all sections of LAE 3414? Would these findings be similar if this study was repeated on sections of this same course taught by a different instructor? In other words, was this course effective in changing perceptions toward aesthetic reading due to the required course content, the instructor's passion for reading and methodology, or a combination of these factors? I believe that a combination of these factors led to the reported change in perceptions, however a follow-up study surveying all students enrolled in LAE 3414 taught by a variety of professors may reveal otherwise.

One aspect to consider is if the reported changes in perceptions toward reading are permanent changes, or temporary changes. Will the participants who reported experiencing a positive shift in their perceptions toward aesthetic reading continue to feel this way as time passes? Will they report feeling the same way about reading once they are no longer enrolled in a course designed to promote a love for aesthetic reading and Children's Literature? Will their experiences from this course affect how they use literature in their future classrooms? These are questions that I might be interested in addressing in future research.

The results of this study showed that a positive shift in feelings toward aesthetic reading could be made as a result of taking a course in Children's Literature. Can this change in perceptions be repeated in an education program that does not include a stand-alone course in Children's Literature? I feel that a major factor that contributed to the results of this study was the combination of the use of the recommended best practices for teaching literature, as well as the fact that the course was entirely devoted to Children's Literature and gaining an appreciation for aesthetic reading. Without this combination of elements, text self-selection, introduction to a wide variety of texts, reflections and discussions about reading, and exposure to the instructor's passion for reading, I do not feel as though the shift in perceptions would have been as dramatic, nor as effective. There is the possibility that the University of Central Florida College of Education and Human Performance will attempt to integrate some aspects of this course into other program requirements, with the intent of losing Literature for Children as a stand-alone course. Although this action might lead to students taking fewer credit hours, integrating this course would mean losing the aspects that make it so affective in changing the perceptions and motivations of pre-service teachers toward aesthetic reading. While enrolled in this course, students become immersed in a world of children's literature. Every class meeting they are exposed to a new genre, a new story-telling method, and a new collection of books to read and potentially use in their future classrooms. Students are given the freedom to choose their own reading material to satisfy course requirements, and are then asked to reflect upon what they have read. Coupled with the intense passion for aesthetic reading expressed by the professor, and the sheer number of books in each genre that students are required to read throughout their

assignments, it would be nearly impossible for the fundamental elements of this course to be replicated through integration into another course.

Based on the results of this study, it seems apparent that LAE 3414 is affective in causing a shift in motivations and perceptions of pre-service teachers toward aesthetic reading. We know that teachers are influential based on their own levels of motivation, and that influential teachers tend to include more aesthetic reading in their classrooms (Ruddell, 1995). We also know that the two main influences that students have on their attitudes toward reading are their teachers and school experience, and their home experience (Gomez, 2005; Nathanson et al., 2008; Powell-Brown, 2003). And that the enthusiasm of teachers greatly influences the enthusiasm of students (McKool & Gespass, 2009; Nathanson et al., 2008). By encouraging the enthusiasm of pre-service teachers toward reading, through the use of the recommended practices to break the cycle of aliteracy, this course has made a positive impact on the declining rates among aesthetic readers at the University level. Hopefully, through implementing more stand-alone courses that utilize these recommended practices, the cycle of aliteracy will be broken.

APPENDIX A: EXPLANATION OF TERMS USED

Aesthetic Reading- reading for the purpose of enjoyment and entertainment

Aliteracy- the phenomenon of individuals who are able to read but choose not to do so

Efferent Reading- reading for the purpose of retrieving information

Literacy Habits Questionnaire- The survey used by Applegate and Applegate in 2004, Nathanson in 2008, and Applegate et al. in 2014 to determine the reading habits of college students.

The Peter Effect- the phenomena explained in Applegate and Applegate 2004 where students are never taught the benefits of aesthetic reading, or modeled how to read aesthetically. Then they grow up and go in to the field of education where they are unable to model these behaviors to their own students.

APPENDIX B: IRB APPROVAL LETTER



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1
FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **Sherron E. Roberts and Co-PI: Anne Williams**

Date: **August 19, 2014**

Dear Researcher:

On 08/19/2014, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Exempt Determination
Project Title:	Can an undergraduate course in Literature for Children change the perception and motivation of pre-service elementary education teachers toward aesthetic reading?
Investigator:	Sherron E Roberts
IRB Number:	SBE-14-10494
Funding Agency:	
Grant Title:	
Research ID:	N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 08/19/2014 03:04:42 PM EDT

IRB Coordinator

APPENDIX C: EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH



EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH

Title of Project: Can an undergraduate course in Literature for Children change the perception and motivation of pre-service elementary education teachers toward aesthetic reading?

Principal Investigator: Dr. Sherron Roberts

Other Investigators: Anne C. Williams

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Whether you take part is up to you.

- The purpose of this research is to see if the methods used in LAE 3414 are effective in positively altering the attitudes and motivations of those enrolled in the course toward aesthetic reading. In other words, can this course effectively create passionate reading teachers who enjoy reading?
- You will be asked to fill out two surveys, one at the beginning of the semester and one at the end. These surveys are about a page in length. The surveys focus on questions related to your past and current reading experiences. The surveys will be given in this class, LAE 3414.
- Your participation in this study will only last throughout this Fall 2014 semester during your enrollment in the LAE 3414 course. The surveys will take approximately 10 minutes. You will be given time in class to complete the surveys. Other than the two surveys, no extra participation will be necessary. Your participation is completely voluntary. Your participation, or lack of participation, will not effect your grade in the course in any way.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.

Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem: If you have questions, concerns, or complaints please feel free to contact:

Anne Williams, Undergraduate Student, Elementary Education Program, College of Education and Human Performance, by email at katie.williams@knights.ucf.edu

or Dr. Sherron Roberts, Faculty Supervisor, College of Education and Human Performance, School of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership by email at sherron.roberts@ucf.edu

IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint: Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.

APPENDIX D: PRE-SURVEY

This survey is part of my undergrad thesis on reading attitudes. The study has been approved by IRB at UCF, where Sherron Roberts is the primary investigator along with me, Katie Williams. You do not have to participate. However if you do, your identity will be held in confidence and never associated with either your pre or post responses, nor will it in any way, impact your evaluation or grade in this course.

By filling out this survey, you agree to allow your responses to be used in this thesis. THANK YOU for your time and honest responses.

1) What is your major? _____

2) When you think of yourself in general as a reader, how much enjoyment do you associate with reading? (please circle)

No enjoyment of reading	Little enjoyment of reading	Lukewarm	Like some reading	Enjoy Reading	Avid Reader
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What reason(s) do you have for responding this way? _____

3) When you consider the instruction of reading that you received in school, how would you rate the emphasis that was placed upon each of the following:

1-No emphasis	2-little emphasis	3-some emphasis	4- considerable emphasis	5- great deal of emphasis
Elementary School				
Remembering the details of what you read	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Your own reaction to or interpretation of what you read	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Discussing your reactions and interpretations with classmates or teachers	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Completing assignments or reports associated with the reading	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
High School				
4) When you consider your early elementary school reading experiences with learning to read, do you recall them as primarily positive, negative or neutral?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Positive	Negative	Neutral
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Why?

- 5) Did your experiences with reading at home differ from your reading experiences at school? If so, how? _____

- 6) Were any of your teachers effective in sharing with you a love of reading? If so, how did they do this? _____

- 7) When you consider your college level reading experiences, do you see them as primarily positive, negative, or neutral? (please circle)

Positive	Negative	Neutral
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Why? _____

- 8) Did you ever qualify for any reading accommodations in school (for instance ESOL, extra reading time, or have a reading disability?)

Please clarify _____

APPENDIX E: POST-SURVEY

This survey is part of my undergrad thesis on reading attitudes. The study has been approved by IRB at UCF, where Sherron Roberts is the primary investigator along with me, Katie Williams. You do not have to participate. However if you do, your identity will be held in confidence and never associated with either your pre or post responses, nor will it in any way, impact your evaluation or grade in this course. By filling out this survey, you agree to allow your responses to be used in this thesis. THANK YOU for your time and honest responses.

1) What is your major? _____

2) When you think of yourself in general as a reader, how much enjoyment do you associate with reading? (please circle)

No enjoyment of reading	Little enjoyment of reading	Lukewarm	Like some reading	Enjoy Reading	Avid Reader
-------------------------	-----------------------------	----------	-------------------	---------------	-------------

What reason(s) do you have for responding this way? _____

3) After taking this course, when you think of yourself in general as a reader, how much enjoyment do you associate with reading? (circle)

No enjoyment of reading	Little enjoyment of reading	Lukewarm	Like some reading	Enjoy Reading	Avid Reader
-------------------------	-----------------------------	----------	-------------------	---------------	-------------

What reason(s) do you have for responding this way? _____

4) When you consider the instruction of reading that you received in this course (LAE 3414), how would you rate the emphasis that was placed upon each of the following:

1-No emphasis	2-little emphasis	3-some emphasis	4- considerable emphasis	5- great deal of emphasis
Remembering the details of what you read				
Your own reaction to or interpretation of what you read				
	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Discussing your reactions and interpretations with classmates or teachers	1	2	3	4	5
Completing assignments or reports associated with the reading	1	2	3	4	5
Selecting reading material based on you own interests	1	2	3	4	5

5) Do your current experiences with reading at home differ from your reading experiences at school? If so, how? _____

6) Was this course effective in sharing with you a love of reading? If so, how did it do this? _____

7) After this course, when you consider your college level reading experiences, do you see them as primarily positive, negative, or neutral?

Positive	Negative	Neutral
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Why? _____

a) If there was a positive shift in your perceptions, specifically what did you like about this course that led to this shift in reading perceptions? _____

8) Did you ever qualify for any reading accommodations in school (for instance ESOL, extra reading time, or have a reading disability?)

Please clarify _____

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