

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS'  
ATTITUDES TOWARD READING

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ELEMENTARY EDUCATION PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS'  
ATTITUDES TOWARD READING

Wanda L. Warmack

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## VITA

Wanda Lucile Warmack, daughter of James Olin and Dorothy (Giddens) Warmack, was born on October 8, 1960, in Gadsden, Alabama. During her youth she lived in various places in Alabama and Georgia. She attended public elementary schools in Anniston and Munford, Alabama and after moving to north Georgia in 1972, she attended private school during her junior high years in Chattanooga, Tennessee. She graduated from Lineville High School, Lineville, Alabama with honors in 1979. She attended Alabama Christian College in Montgomery, Alabama and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education in December 1983. After teaching, she entered graduate school and obtained a Masters of Education in Early Childhood from Auburn University, Montgomery, Alabama, in August 1990. She developed, managed and taught in a private preschool in Montgomery, Alabama for three years. After serving several years in tutoring and testing services at Faulkner University, Montgomery, Alabama, she began teaching full time in the Education Department of Faulkner in 1998. She entered further graduate studies at Auburn University, in 1996, pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Elementary Education with an emphasis in Language Arts and Reading.

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS'  
ATTITUDES TOWARD READING

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This study investigated the self-reported reading attitudes of pre-service teachers enrolled in a children's literature course at the university level. The Mikulecky Behavioral Reading Attitude Measure (MBRAM) was administered to 136 pre-service teachers enrolled in children's literature courses in universities in the southeast United States. Their attitudes toward reading were surveyed at the beginning of the course and then again at the end of the course to note changes.

The research questions that served to focus the study were: (1) Do preservice teachers become more positive in their attitude toward reading after completing a course

in children's literature? (2) Do preservice teachers become more positive toward reading on the Valuing subscale after completing a course in children's literature? (3) Do preservice teachers differ in attitude change as a function of sex? (4) Do preservice teachers differ in attitude change as a function of age?

The data regarding questions were analyzed using SPSS 12.0.1 and 15.1. Variances and relationships that could cause variance in the scores are discussed in detail. The findings show that completion of a course in children's literature does increase the reading attitudes of pre-service teachers.

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## STYLE MANUAL PAGE

In the writing of this dissertation, the style manual used was the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, Fifth Edition and the computer software used was Microsoft Word, Excel and Statistical Procedures for Social Sciences (SPSS) 12.0.1 and 15.1.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Instructors in education programs have a great responsibility toward the pre-service teachers we teach as well as the children they will eventually influence. Our job is not only preparing pre-service teachers by imparting knowledge of how to teach subjects and children, but also encouraging learning and exploration of new ideas in order for them to continue to grow and learn after they have their own classrooms. One area of pedagogy that has sparked my interest is that of children's literature and the attitudes that pre-service teachers have toward its use in elementary classrooms. In recent years there has been an increased interest in using quality literature in elementary school classrooms to teach reading. This is done not only through the use of trade books, but also with quality children's literature included in commercial reading programs. While teaching university classes, I began to wonder whether pre-service teachers naturally gravitate toward using children's literature or is using literature something that pre-service teachers ought to learn in their teacher education programs? This topic, coupled with my interest in reading attitudes of children and adults, caused me to delve further into these vitally important aspects of teacher education programs. Positive comments about improved reading attitudes during children's literature courses by pre-service teachers in course evaluations also sparked more interest in this topic, which led to more research and study.

Teacher preparation programs need to be effective in preparing pre-service teachers in teaching not only subject matter, but also in helping them develop more positive attitudes toward teaching reading, the foundation of any effective elementary education program. Several things ought to be taken into account in trying to encourage more positive attitudes in these pre-service teachers. The education faculty in teacher preparation programs serve as role models for these pre-service teachers, in methodology as well as in attitude. Sharing enthusiasm for learning, we provide good models for our students to imitate. Many reasons may affect the development of reading enjoyment, but teacher educators need to be aware of these reasons in order to help them come closer to the goal of instilling a love of reading (Cole, 2003).

Teacher educators in teacher education programs may influence the improved attitudes toward reading of elementary education pre-service teachers. If teacher educators have positive attitudes toward reading, do they nurture these attitudes in the pre-service teachers they instruct? The disposition of the teacher can nurture or extinguish learning in particular settings. Do students, however, come into university teacher education preparation programs with attitudes about reading firmly in place – both positive and negative? If so, it is the goal of teacher educators to help students enhance their positive attitudes about reading and change the negative ones. Since this is often accomplished in the reading methods and children’s literature courses that these pre-service teachers take, it is important to look closely at what happens in these classes.

Children’s literature courses taught in education programs generally focus on the teaching of the same subject matter. The course usually includes an overview of the history of children’s literature, the different genres of children’s literature, how children’s

literature can be used in the classroom, and how to choose appropriate literature for certain ages of children. One thing that may vary is the methodology course instructors use in teaching the subject matter. One might use more teacher-led discussion, while another uses true discussion of children's literature texts. Others can use a variety of methods to teach how to use literature with children, from giving information on specific books to having students go and find their own reading material. The amount of quality children's literature that is required reading often varies from program to program. The method of teaching, the amount of books read, and other requirements in the course can differentially affect the reading attitudes of the students enrolled in those courses.

It is vitally important that the attitudes toward reading of pre-service teachers be identified and addressed. Institutions with teacher preparation programs have a serious obligation to address the nature of their students' attitudes toward reading. Their reading ability is not a factor in question; it is their ability to encourage children to interact with the text. If teachers themselves do not experience this transaction, then how can they effectively teach their students to do so? (Applegate & Applegate, 2004)

A positive change in a student's attitude toward reading may indicate that the professor's motivational efforts are succeeding. It is important to identify what element in the course, the literature or the teaching method, made the difference in attitude. Was the instructor's instructional style that of lecturer, collaborator, or something in between? Does instructional style matter in supporting or hindering students' knowledge, understanding or appreciation of children's literature? According to Powell-Brown, "Teachers who have a passion for reading are role models and literacy spark plugs for students. If we want to be the best teachers we can be, we must demonstrate our own

passion for reading” (Powell-Brown, 2004, p. 288). Is the instructor’s attitude toward reading the key factor influencing pre-service teachers’ attitudes?

Many teacher education programs across the United States have chosen to take children’s literature courses out of the teacher preparation programs leaving these courses to be taught in English departments. Is this a wise decision? Pre-service teachers need exposure to the educational benefits of children’s literature and to ways of effectively sharing literature with their students (Hoewisch, 2000).

The teacher education programs have integrated their children’s literature curriculum into existing methods courses, including those from content areas such as science or math (Hoewisch, 2000). Children’s literature ought to be included in these courses when it is not included in a stand-alone course.

#### Motivation

One way that can encourage pre-service teachers to use more children’s literature in the classroom is motivation. In the elementary school, there are many ways that teachers promote literacy of children (Kontos, 1986) and motivate them to read. They may provide a well-stocked classroom library with books of various reading and interest levels for their children. They may provide a comfortable, inviting reading area in their classroom, so that the children can be comfortable while reading. School libraries ought to be utilized in addition to classroom libraries and should be warm and friendly additions to any facility.

Motivation takes one of two forms: intrinsic and extrinsic. Children may start off reading for extrinsic rewards such as prizes or points, but research has concluded that

reading incentive programs had no effect on reading habits of students. McQuillan (1997) reviewed 10 academic studies on incentive programs in schools and public library programs and found that none of them had any permanent effect on the habits, achievements, or motivation of elementary and secondary students to read. Teachers may begin encouraging students to read with extrinsic rewards, but often those rewards do not encourage children to read more. McQuillan (1997) suggests that giving books as rewards for reading and allowing students time to read them are the best encouragement teachers could give students. Having to take tests on books read is a disincentive for reading more. The more children read and listen to quality literature being read, the more they gain motivation to read. The motivation could come because of an interest in the topics read about or because they have learned to enjoy reading. If children learn to love reading for the pure enjoyment that it brings to them, then reading will become its own reward. Motivation to learn to read is high when children have classroom environments that are physically comfortable, nurturing, and filled with books that are readily available to them (Gambrell, 1993; Morrow, 1992). Edmunds and Bauserman (2006) developed five recommendations for motivating students to read after conversations with elementary school children about their reading likes and dislikes. These recommendations include self-selection of books by students, attention to characteristics of books, personal interest in a book, access to books, and active involvement of others.

In teacher education programs, the job of motivating readers probably does not begin from nothing, but builds on what is already there. If, as Mohamed (1994) found, that some pre-service teachers have a positive attitude toward reading, taking a course in children's literature would build on that enjoyment, causing them to read even more. Do

university children's literature courses build on what is already there or was the motivation for reading already great prior to taking the course?

### Influence of Teachers

An important factor that affects attitudes in children's reading is the influence that the classroom teacher has on his or her students. Intrinsic motivation in reading is a highly prized goal for teachers. They hope to foster a lifelong love of reading in their students as a result of their instruction (Sweet, Guthrie, & Ng, 1998). Reading is fundamental to all other areas of learning. (Hill-Clarke & Cooley, 2002). The teaching profession shares an understanding that reading is an essential skill that students, as well as teachers ought to possess. However, many times reading is used as a tool for learning other subject matter instead of a behavior that students pursue for their own sake. Teacher education programs want to produce teachers whose attitudes toward reading and teaching methods create positive learning environments that motivate children to keep reading. Do children's literature courses promote reading for its own sake?

Research has found that one of the main factors that influence children in classrooms is the attitude of their teachers toward reading and how it is modeled in the classroom (Artley, 1975). The position statement of the International Reading Association concludes that all children deserve excellent reading teachers because teachers can make a difference in children's reading achievement and motivation to read" (IRA, 2000).

Research by Greaney (1980) reveals that having adult role models, such as teachers, librarians, or parents for reading activities also influence children's literacy

acquisition. Children who are read to by adults often begin reading earlier and they are more likely to develop a lifelong love of reading. According to the 1990 Gallup study, 31% of children who were read to by their parents learned to read before the age of six. The younger the reading begins, the better the effects on the child. Children who were read to before the age of three read an average of 21 books a year, compared to 13 books per year for those not read to early in their lives (Heath, 1997). Positive attitudes of adults toward reading likely result from positive early reading experiences, both at home and at school. Education professionals often believe that the development of positive reading attitudes in the early years of schooling will create individuals who are lifelong readers (Smith, 1990).

Teachers who provide time for sustained silent reading, who share books, and highlight book authors with children also positively influence the personal outside reading of those children in their classes (Anderson, Wilson & Fielding, 1988). In several surveys given to teachers, one consistently emerging finding indicated that teachers who had a high level knowledge of children's literature and recreational reading activities were lifelong readers themselves. They wanted to share that knowledge of good literature with their students (Block & Mangieri, 2002). It ought to be the goal of all classroom teachers to promote reading in their classrooms to create lifelong readers of the children they teach. These classroom teachers that can accomplish this are the effective teachers in today's classrooms and outstanding leaders in all aspects of life.

## Modeling

Teacher educators ought to be literate models for their students. If teachers model good literacy skills, they will, in turn, influence the students they teach. Jim Trelease, in his book, *The New Read-Aloud Handbook*, encourages teachers to lead students by their example. The children should see teachers reading for pleasure other than at read-aloud times. Teachers should share their enthusiasm for whatever they are reading with their students (Trelease, 1993). One retired librarian stated she felt she owed her love of books and of reading to a teacher” (Kimmel & Segal, 1983). When teachers share their enthusiasm for quality literature, they provide good role models for the children to imitate. Huck (1973) recognized the need for emphasizing not only learning to read, but also developing a “taste for reading” in children. If we do not help develop that taste for reading, teachers will have produced a nation of “illiterate literates” – those who know how to read, but do not choose to read (p. 305). Books ought to not only provide children with knowledge, but ultimately with a lifelong appreciation and love of literature (Manarino-Leggett, 1995).

Modeling reading ought to also include discussion of the book being read or doing reflective, meaningful activities that go along with the book. Having books available to students readily in their classroom is also good modeling. Reading does not just have to be modeled actively, but can be modeled passively. Telling students about a new book that you are reading is an example. Having students see teachers reading on break or seeing teachers in the bookstore, purchasing books can have a positive influence on students. Teachers ought to also share what they read with their students. A teacher’s aesthetic stance toward reading may be more important to the reading motivation of

children because of the model they portray to the students in their classroom. Teachers become models for their students when they share their own reading experiences with them and emphasize how important reading is to them (Applegate & Applegate, 2004). Teachers, at all levels, need to encourage students to become lifelong readers. When teachers read and enjoy quality literature, they help contribute to the literate environment in their classrooms.

### Environment

Does the children's literature classroom's environment further develop pre-service teachers' love of reading? Classroom environments should be comfortable and inviting enough to motivate children to read and to continue reading. Those teachers that are enthusiastic readers are more likely to use instructional activities such as literature circles, book discussions and other methods that promote engagement of students with quality literature (Applegate & Applegate, 2004).

Encouraging reading for pleasure during the school day can be a powerful incentive for reading in the classroom. Many teachers incorporate quality literature into their daily curriculum as read-alouds or read-alongs. Many schools promote a set daily reading time during the school day, termed Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) or Sustained Silent Reading (SSR). An uninterrupted reading time provides time for children to read and encourages them to choose their own books to read during that time. They may read books because of a recommendation from a friend or a teacher. Manning and Manning's study (1984a) concluded that students who had peer and teacher interaction with choosing their books obtained higher scores on a reading attitudes

measure than students who were involved in sustained silent reading only. Readers need to be actively involved in choosing their reading material as well as in the reading process itself. Another Manning and Manning study (1984b) looked at early readers and nonreaders and found that early readers were read to often, checked out books from the library on a consistent basis, and had parents who were readers themselves. Also influential in encouraging reading is having teachers and students presenting book talks on specific books, sharing favorite books with others, or utilizing literature circles in the classroom (Au, 1997). In these ways, students can be motivated by their peers to read books that they might never have chosen to read on their own (Routman, 1994). Often, the only way that some children will read a book is if their friends recommend it or if they see someone else reading it.

### Volume of Reading

One way to identify reading attitude is to ask how much people read. But are researchers obtaining a true measure of volume of reading? The volume of reading that a person does during a specified time may be difficult to measure. Different factors affect reading. One might begin a book, become distracted by another task, and not complete the book for a long period of time, or one may begin a book, become disinterested, thus never finishing the book at all. Books may not be the choice of reading for some. Their choice could include magazines, comics or newspapers. They are still reading, perhaps even daily, but if given a survey that specifically ask questions about reading books, they would not answer in a positive manner. It does not mean that they are not readers; it may mean that they have been too busy with other tasks to concentrate on reading books.

## Conclusion

The responsibility of instructors in teacher education programs is great in preparing pre-service teachers for their own classrooms. In order to be effective, educators need to be aware of the factors that influence the attitudes toward reading. Teacher educators themselves and their attitudes toward reading, the way that they teach their courses in reading and the way they model reading can influence pre-service teachers greatly. Attitudes themselves are ever-changing and factors that influence those attitudes toward reading can be motivation to read, influence of former teachers, environment, and the volume of reading one does. Continued research needs to be done on these topics and how they can influence pre-service teachers.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate if the completion of a course in children's literature changed the reading attitudes of pre-service teachers. The study also attempted to determine a change between the pre- and posttest scores on specific survey items that correlated to valuing reading.

The following research questions were used to guide this study:

1. Do pre-service teachers become more positive in their attitude toward reading after completing a course in children's literature?

2. Do pre-service teachers become more positive toward reading on the Valuing subscale after completing a course in children's literature?
3. Do pre-service teachers differ in attitude change as a function of sex?
4. Do pre-service teachers differ in attitude change as a function of age?

#### Method of Data Gathering

In the present study, I surveyed the attitudes toward reading of elementary education pre-service teachers before and after completion of a course in children's literature at the university level. The Mikulecky Behavioral Reading Attitudes Measure (MBRAM) (Mikulecky, 1976a) (Appendix A) was used as the survey instrument. The scores of the participants were analyzed to see if the course in children's literature created more positive attitudes toward reading. Specific responses of the survey correlated with the Valuing of reading and those responses were looked at in more detail. I considered methodology in teaching the courses as a variable, along with the age and sex of the participants.

#### Significance of Study

This study can help teacher education programs to identify the factors that cause change in attitudes toward reading of elementary education pre-service teachers. The methodology used in teaching the children's literature courses and the focus on interaction of pre-service teachers with quality children's literature may be factors that change attitudes positively.

The continued study of teacher educators' practices and their effect on pre-service teachers' attitudes can also initiate changes in the teacher education programs of universities. The results of this study can help college educators and researchers gain more insight into the attributes of literate teachers and how those attributes can be encouraged in teacher education classes, specifically in children's literature, language arts, and reading methods courses. The findings can help colleges of education to reflectively look at their teacher education programs and make changes, if necessary, to encourage the use of more literature in elementary school classrooms. This increase in the use of literature may help encourage pre-service teachers to promote and nurture more literacy activities in the classroom that will, in turn, encourage the students they teach to become lifelong readers.

#### Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions apply:

Aliterate – those readers who can read, but choose not to do so.

Attitude – predisposition or tendency to react specifically toward a situation, such as reading, accompanied by feelings and emotions. Attitudes are not directly observable but are inferred from an objective response that a person makes. Investigators depend heavily on behavioral indicators of attitudes – what people say or how they respond to questionnaires.

Extrinsic – a form of motivation for reading that originates outside the person through prizes or rewards.

Intrinsic – a form of motivation for reading that originates inside the person's mind. A person will read for the pleasure it brings them.

Literacy – the ability to read and write.

Motivation – an internal incentive drive encouraging persons to continue reading without extrinsic rewards.

Post-test – instrument given to participants at the conclusion of a children's literature course.

Pre-service teachers – students admitted to a teacher education program at a university who have not completed internship.

Pre-test – instrument given to participants at the beginning of a children's literature course.

Reading – a complex cognitive task which involves the process of constructing meaning of printed texts, including decoding, comprehension, and the learning of new ideas.

Teacher educators – those who teach education methods courses in a teacher education program at a university.

Value – objects, actions, or feelings that are regarded in a particularly favorable way. When an individual begins to accept the worth of reading as a value to be preferred over other tasks and even extended to others.

## II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

Theories of reading acquisition, factors that can influence attitude, methodology in teaching children's literature and attitude surveys were researched and will be discussed. In the review of related literature and research, I will examine theorists' beliefs about the acquisition of reading, motivation toward reading, roles of teacher educators in promoting reading, and research methods used to gain information about attitudes toward reading. Piaget and Vygotsky are the theorists that this writing focuses on, along with theories on reading by Rosenblatt and Stanovich. Krathwold's Taxonomy of Affective Domain is discussed because it is the psychological theory basis for the measurement instrument I used in my research. Other topics of review cover attitudes toward reading, volume of reading and motivation to read. Along with these main topics, I reviewed several surveys of reading attitudes for younger and older school aged students.

### Theories

In his belief about the acquisition of reading, Jean Piaget's (1929) theory of cognitive development is based on four stages in a child's development: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete-operational and formal-operational. During the preoperational stage, children begin to use symbols to stand for spoken words. When this occurs, they begin to realize that writing represents meaning, a concept that is basic to reading

comprehension. They still lack many of the concepts needed to understand reading, but an immersion in a variety of language materials and experiences allows them to form their own concepts about print. Many variables account for children going through Piaget's stages at different times (Piaget, 1929). Classroom teachers who practice the theory that a child's optimal education depends on a good match between the curriculum and the child's level of thinking help children by offering appropriate practices to help a child begin to learn to read (Wink & Putney, 2002).

Lev Vygotsky (1962; 1978), a Russian psychologist and one of Piaget's later contemporaries, believed that experiences of children give rise to two different groups of concepts – spontaneous and scientific. In the spontaneous concept, a child would learn from what he or she directly sees or manipulates and in the scientific concept, the child would learn from what the teacher tells them. Vygotsky believed that learning and development are interrelated processes that begin at birth and differ with individuals because of social experiences. A teacher encourages these experiences by creating a scaffold of learning for the child, for example, by first taking a lead in storybook reading, but then allowing the child added responsibility as he or she learns to read. Vygotsky termed the difference between what a child can do alone or with assistance from others as the zone of proximal development.

Piaget, a cognitive constructivist, believed that a teacher ought to be a guide in learning, while Vygotsky, a social constructivist, thought a teacher ought to be more of a mentor to students. Both beliefs emphasize the need for a classroom teacher to be an active part in a child's learning in the classroom and can be used in classrooms with students of any age. Some students do need guidance in their learning, and teachers can

encourage that by creating opportunities for students to learn. In reading, some students will need encouragement to read certain books. This can happen through the influence of the teacher or by having the teacher create opportunities for the students to read. One example would be to assign certain books to be read by the entire class or to present a variety of books that a student could choose to read. However, students also need a teacher who can allow them to learn on their own, helping them to construct new meaning to ideas. In both models of learning, the student becomes the active thinker and the interpreter of the concept learned (Wink & Putney, 2002).

Another theorist, Louise Rosenblatt (1976; 1978), focused more on reading comprehension and interest in reading. In her transactional theory of reading, Rosenblatt explained that every act of reading is an event that involves the reader and the text. Each “transaction” occurs when the reader and text are joined at a particular time. The meaning of the text comes into being when the transaction between the reader and text occurs. Readers make connections and gain knowledge from the text when they bring their prior knowledge into the reading. If the same text were read by the same reader at a different time, another transaction would take place. The reader is an important factor in the transaction.

According to Rosenblatt, readers take one of two stances toward the text. When readers take an efferent stance toward the material being read, they are focused on gaining information. When readers take an aesthetic stance toward the material, they are focusing more on the images and the feelings that the text arouses. In either stance, they are constructing knowledge and transforming their schemata. Both stances can be encountered during the reading of a text, but usually one is predominant. Rosenblatt’s

transactional view of reading supports the need for pre-service teachers to interact with various children's literature texts and find personal ways to relate information about them to others (Hoewisch, 2000). Rosenblatt (1976) explained the literary power of children's books, stating, "through the medium of words, the text brings into the reader's consciousness certain concepts, certain sensuous experiences, and certain images of things, people, actions, and scenes" (p. 30).

Keith Stanovich (1986) has done much work over the years in literary research that has made him one of today's leading reading experts. As a result of his research, Stanovich coined the term "Matthew effects" in reading achievement. This term is taken from the biblical passage in the book of Matthew that describes the rich-get-richer and the poor-get-poorer philosophy. When this concept is applied to reading achievement, it implies that poor readers have greater difficulty early in the reading process, are exposed to less text than good readers and often find themselves reading material too difficult for them. This provides an unpleasant reading experience and often causes poor readers to not read much. On the other hand, better readers enjoy reading and read more. The more these readers read, the better they become at reading.

Krathwohl's *Taxonomy of the Affective Domain* (1964) is ordered according to the principles of internalization, the process by which a person progresses from a level of general awareness to a point where thoughts and beliefs consistently guide a person's behavior. Krathwohl's taxonomy is composed of five different stages that correspond with different components of attitude of a person. The different components of attitude used were affective, cognitive, and behavioral. Those five stages are: Attending or Receiving, Responding, Valuing, Organization and Characterization (Krathwohl, Bloom

& Masia, 1964). When the Attending or Receiving stage is reached, the individual is usually aware of reading and is tolerant of it. At the Responding stage, the individual is willing to read under certain circumstances and often begins to choose reading over other activities. At the Valuing stage, the individual begins to accept the worth of reading as a value to be preferred and even to extend to others. When an individual reaches the Organization stage, reading is a part of an organized value system, and is so much a habit that it could be considered “instinctive.” The final stage, Characterization, is reached when the individual counts reading so much a part of his or her life that both the reader and others see reading as crucial to this person. By interpreting these stages, a deeper understanding of reading attitude of students is possible.

### Volume of Reading

The reading volume of an individual can have an effect on their reading achievement. If a person reads several books a week or a month, he or she usually has a higher motivation for reading. The volume of books read increases the reading achievement of students (Stanovich, 1986). Reading volume is the main contributor to vocabulary development in persons of any age (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). According to these authors, the language of children’s books exposes them to more complex vocabulary than conversations with adults or television watching. This is not only true of children, but college students as well.

## Attitudes

One difference between readers and non-readers is their attitude toward reading (Lamper & Saunders, 1976). Researchers have recognized the importance of how attitudes toward reading affect a student's overall learning. Students with more positive attitudes toward reading are more likely to read and achieve higher scores in reading (Biggs, 1987). In a study of fifth-grade student's activities, it was found that the best predictor of a child's reading growth was the amount of time spent reading books (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988). Effective teachers of reading not only teach students how to read, but also motivate them to want to read more.

Readers with positive attitudes toward reading are avid readers themselves. They enjoy reading and may have been motivated to read early in their lives. Literacy is the ability to read and write on a basic level. Readers termed aliterate are capable of reading, but choose not to read (Brozo & Simpson, 1999). Research has given us varied reasons for this attitude toward reading, but the bottom line is that they do not read (McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth, 1995). The average American adult reports reading just 24 minutes per day, which is less than it was 20 years ago (Sherman & Krethnar, 1991). The 1990 Gallup Poll reports that 24% of Americans had completed a book in the last week, down from 35% in 1975. The 2005 Gallup Poll noted that the numbers fifteen years later were not much different. The proportion of Americans who completed no books at all during the past year doubled from 8% in 1978 to 16 % in 1990 (Heath, 1997). Most of these surveys do not take into account reading materials other than books, and so it is not necessarily an accurate picture of adult reading habits. Adults may read just as much as

they always did, but it may be items such as magazines, newspapers, work related materials, Internet information, etc.

The National Reading Panel (2000) reviewed many correlational studies and found evidence that good readers read more than poor readers do. These studies suggest that the more children engage in independent, silent reading, the better their fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills become; however, that does not insure that these children will enjoy reading or will continue to read into their adult years. It is possible that the better one reads, the more he or she chooses to read. But being able to read well is not enough. Although many children can read fluently, they choose not to do so, resulting in many nonreaders. Negative attitudes toward reading have even more dire consequences for weak readers. Unless they want to read, children won't do enough of it to ever become good at it in the first place (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Fields & Lee, 1987; NRP, 2000).

Some reading experts have referred to ideal readers as engaged readers or avid readers. They are the ones who read regularly and enthusiastically for their own purposes (Applegate & Applegate, 2004). Avid readers tend to be different from nonreaders on a variety of cognitive skills, behavioral habits and background variables. According to Rorty (1997), "We are changed by what we read. Reading broadens our knowledge base and opens many new doors to adventures" (p. 85). Those who are deficient in decoding skills, those who do not have much practice in reading, and those who try to read materials too difficult for them will have negative reading experiences that lead to less reading and reading-related activities (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). Reading for avid

readers can be a source of pleasure or a stress reliever, where with nonreaders reading becomes a chore or dreaded assignment and a source of stress.

## Motivation

Motivation to read is emphasized in schools today. The research suggests that teachers promote more positive attitudes toward reading in several ways, including setting a purpose for reading (Baker & Wigfield, 1999). In an extensive study, Sweet, Guthrie and Ng (1998) had elementary school teachers rate their students on reading motivation. They found that the teachers perceived their higher achievers to have higher intrinsic motivation for reading and lower achievers to be motivated by extrinsic factors. Sweet et al. (1998) summarized that teachers that are effective in fostering motivation to read give choices to children for reading, provide interesting tasks for students to complete after reading, create cooperative situations for reading, and encourage activity-based reading.

Teachers in quality programs not only have children read daily, but they also read to their classes and discuss what they have read. Teachers who are more enthusiastic about reading and promoting the reading interests of their students produce more students that have positive attitudes toward reading and become life-long readers in their later years (Cullinan, 1987; Grambs, 1959). However the assumption that once children become readers and enjoy reading, they will automatically want to read and continue to do it throughout their lives is false (Yohe, 1997). Only when children read for their own reasons will they choose to read on their own (Schumm & Saumell, 1994).

Children may start off reading for extrinsic rewards such as prizes or points, but the more they read, the more that motivation becomes internalized (Flora & Flora, 1999). Gambrell & Marinak looked at several studies that measured intrinsic motivation with incentives to read. They found that non-tangible incentives, such as verbal praise or receiving a reward not expected, increased the motivation of some children (Gambrell & Marinak, cited in Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997). Intrinsic motivation seems to be one way that describes motivated readers who read just for the pleasure reading brings. Surveys show that intrinsically motivated students read more than do students who are not intrinsically motivated (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Metsala, Wigfield, & McCann, 1997). These students also attain higher levels of reading achievement and perform better on standardized tests (Applegate & Applegate, 2004).

Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) researched the reading motivation of fourth and fifth graders during a school year. They explored various aspects of reading motivation and looked at how motivation related to the amount of reading the children did. They found that reading motivation is multifaceted and that highly motivated readers possessed self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation.

### Surveying Reading Attitudes

Surveying reading attitudes of individuals is a complicated procedure. Attitudes are changeable. They may differ from day to day or from hour to hour, especially with children in school. In my research of instruments designed to assess reading motivation and attitudes toward reading, I found a number of self-reporting instruments currently used in measuring elementary school students' general attitudes toward reading. Other

self-reporting surveys that were researched were for older students in high school or college and adults. Self-reporting attitude scales are the most frequently used attitude measures (Mitchell, 1993, p. 23).

Answers vary on attitude surveys for several reasons. The current feelings of the students at the time they complete the survey may affect answers. Respondents may feel that they do not read the way that they ought to, so they give socially approved answers to please the teacher or researcher. They might answer survey-type instruments in favor of reading, even if they read little, just to demonstrate a socially accepted behavior (Stanovich & Cunningham, 1992; Mitchell & Ley, 1995). The statements given on most reading attitude surveys are stated positively; therefore, it is easy to answer the socially approved way. The way in which a survey is answered can affect not only the reliability of the instrument used, but also its validity if the instrument is repeated with the same group of participants.

### Reading Attitude Surveys for Children

I reviewed several self-reporting surveys that are used with children in classroom settings to help understand their attitudes toward reading. Most of the surveys were simple enough for young children to complete by themselves and could be used in any classroom setting or on an individual basis. Most of the instruments reviewed focused on the attitudes of school age children and not adults.

One survey by Tunnell, Calder, & Justen (1988), A Short Form Reading Attitude Survey, gives 18 different statements about books and reading that participants rate from 1 (sometimes) to 5 (not at all). It is short in length and easy enough for young children to

answer. In subsequent studies, it was found reliable and quick and simple to use by classroom teachers (Tunnell, Calder & Justen, 1988).

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) uses the cartoon character Garfield in four different poses ranging from “very happy” to “very upset” to help younger elementary school children respond to 20 statements about reading such as, “How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?” Half of the statements focus on recreational reading, while the other half pertain to academic reading. Statistically significant differences in attitudes toward reading were found between recreational reading and academic reading. Students who checked out library books demonstrated a more positive attitude toward recreational reading than those who did not check out books. Students that were classified by their teachers as very good readers also tended to have a more positive attitude toward reading for academic purposes than the students that were classified as low-level readers (Mitchell, 1993, p. 42).

The ERAS takes only 10 minutes to administer, making it a quick measure of the reading attitudes of children in a classroom, and data gathered can help the classroom teacher plan instruction. It was designed to be used with children in grades 1 through 6. The survey is located in the public domain along with instructions for administration, so all teachers can have easy access for use in classrooms to help measure students’ attitudes toward reading either informally or formally (McKenna & Kear, 1990; McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth, 1995). The most vulnerable aspect of this survey would be the desire of children to mark all answers with a socially approved response of a smiling Garfield. Linda Gambrell and others (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996) used the Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) to collect data on elementary school children. In the

MRP, there are two instruments used for collecting data: the Reading Survey and the Conversational Interview. The Reading Survey consists of 20 items with opened ended statements and uses a 4-point response scale for completion of those statements. For example, “I am \_\_\_\_\_” is the statement with the choices being (1) a poor reader; (2) an OK reader; (3) a good reader; and (4) a very good reader. The MRP was designed to be given to a group of students, and then the Conversational Interview is administered individually. The survey assesses two dimensions of reading motivation, self-concept as a reader and value of reading. The Conversational Interview, composed of 14 scripted, open-ended responses is then used to provide more specific information about the individual nature of a student’s reading motivation, such as favorite authors, interesting books, etc. It explores a more personal dimension of students’ reading motivation. The MRP has both strengths and weaknesses. The survey takes 15 to 20 minutes to administer to a group and gives a self-concept as a reader and how much a participant values reading. On the other hand, the conversational interview takes approximately 20 minutes to administer per participant, making it difficult for classroom teachers to administer to each student. It could be utilized as a useful tool in individual portfolio assessments instead of being used as a whole class assessment.

### Reading Attitude Surveys for Older Students

Other reading surveys that measure attitude are designed to be used with older students and adults. These are the ones that I focused on since the participants in my study were university students.

The Estes Attitude Scale, (1971) a self-reporting, Likert-type scale, measures levels of positive attitudes toward reading. The scale consists of a series of 20 statements and five possible responses to each, ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Each response is given a numerical value, with high scores representing a more positive attitude toward reading. The Estes Attitude Scale was developed to be used with elementary school through high school students and items can be modified or rewritten to suit the reading abilities of the participants (Estes, 1972). The Estes scale is an effective instrument for measuring the levels of positive attitude toward reading. It evidences good internal consistency and validity and contains many interesting and useful features (Dulin & Chester, 1974; Summers, 1980). In further research using the mean scores on the scale, Estes found that students in lower grades displayed a more positive attitude toward reading than students in higher grades (Estes, 1971).

The Dulin-Chester Scale (1976) also measures reading attitudes and helps distinguish different reading attitude groups. It measures choices between reading a book and other activities (Chester & Dulin, 1977). It consists of 30 paired pro and con arguments, coupled with an 11-point scale, ranging from -5 to 0 to +5. Five statements for each scale ranged from “very ineffective” to “highly effective.” All negative statements were scored 1 to 11 in terms of negative to positive judgment, and all positive items were scored in reverse order. The higher the score on the measure, the more positive the attitude toward reading. The survey also includes three self-rating categories (liking of reading, amount read, and the degree to which reading is valued or respected) that correspond on a five-point scale. This measure was designed for use in secondary

classrooms. There was no reliability data reported for this measure (Dulin & Chester, 1974).

The Kennedy-Halinski Reading Attitude Inventory (1975) is a psychometric-based reading attitudes measure used with secondary school students. It consists of a 70-item Reading Attitude Inventory based on a four point Likert-type scale. The items are open-ended statements about reading. Terminology for the responses was developed from secondary school students. The higher the score, the more positive the attitude is toward reading. It provides reliable diagnostic information to teachers about reading attitudes (Pierson, 1984; Summers, 1980). After developing the instrument, Kennedy and Halinski (1975) used a population of secondary students in a study, observing the variables of sex and academic ability. They found that female students' reading attitudes were significantly higher than those of males in that setting (Summers, 1980; Mitchell & Ley, 1996) and those students with higher academic grades in English classes exhibited more positive reading attitudes than did students with lower grades (Mitchell, 1993, p. 43).

Mikulecky used both the Dulin-Chester Scale (1977) and the Kennedy-Halinski Reading Attitude Inventory (1975) in the construction, norming and validation of the Mikulecky Behavioral Reading Attitude Measure (MBRAM) (1976a), which was the instrument I used for this research. The MBRAM was one originally developed by Mikulecky in 1976 to measure the stages of reading attitudes of mature readers (grades seven through college age adults) for his doctoral dissertation. It was one of the first instruments based upon sound psychological theory in the affective domain (Mitchell, 1993).

Mikulecky developed his 20-item, Likert-type Mikulecky Behavioral Reading Attitude Measure (MBRAM) based upon Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia's (1964) taxonomy of affective development and Hovland and Rosenberg's (1960) tripartite model consisting of the affective, cognitive, and behavioral components of attitude (e.g. "Even though you are a very busy person, there is somehow always time for reading" or "Sometimes you find yourself so excited by a book you try to get friends to read it").

The participants are to respond to statements about reading, such as, "Even though you are a very busy person, there is somehow always time for reading," on a five value Likert-type scale, with "very like me" responses assigned the highest value of 5, while "very unlike me" responses assigned the lowest value of 1. The mid-point of 3 was given a "neutral" value. The highest possible total summed score value is 110 (good or positive attitude); and the lowest, 22 (poor or negative attitude), with the midpoint score of 55 being considered generally neutral.

The MBRAM has a readability of seventh grade and is easily scored, making it useful for classroom use. The instrument permits the participants to be classified into one of five developmental stages of reading attitude internalization: Attending, Responding, Valuing, Organization and Characterization. Three to five of the MBRAM items relate to each of the five stages (Dismukes, pp. 56 - 57).

#### Validity and Reliability of Instrument

In a validation study of the MBRAM, Mikulecky discovered a positive correlation between reading attitude and reading achievement (1976). In his validation study, Mikulecky looked at the demographic variables of sex, race, education, family income

and employment to norm the MBRAM scores. The MBRAM demonstrated a test-retest reliability of .9116 (Mikulecky, 1976a, pp.120-121).

Mikulecky established correlations of concurrent validity ranging from .446 to .770 with such formal reading-attitude measures as the Estes Scale, the Dulin-Chester Scale, and the Kennedy-Halinski Reading Attitude Measure (1975). This was done during a graduate-level seminar on Affective Domain Measurement that helped Mikulecky survey and refine all items on the MBRAM to reflect everyday reading-related behaviors (Mikulecky, 1976a).

#### Norming and Validation Information for the MBRAM

The Mikulecky Behavioral Reading Attitude Measure (MBRAM) was developed to be a sound reading attitudes measure appropriate for use with adult readers. The 20 items on the MBRAM were reviewed by a panel of judges after an item analysis that eliminated items that correlated at less than  $r = .600$  with the sum of items reflecting the Krathwohl framework (Appendix E). All items in the MBRAM were written with direct references to the stages of Krathwohl's *Taxonomy of the Affective Domain* (1964) appropriate to each item. The five stages of Krathwohl's taxonomy (Attending, Responding, Valuing, Organization, and Characterization) may be used to assess the level at which an individual's reading attitudes have been internalized (Dismukes, 1989, p. 50). The MBRAM hierarchy gave evidence of a .933 out of a possible 1.000 goodness-of-fit to an ideal hierarchy. This was interpreted as empirical support for the Krathwohl theoretical foundation of the MBRAM (Mikulecky, 1976b).

The MBRAM was administered by Mikulecky (1976b) to 1,750 randomly sampled participants ranging from seventh grade through college. More than 75% of the participants used were public school students selected from urban, suburban and rural populations (Mikulecky, 1976a).

A graduate-level seminar helped Mikulecky survey and refine all items to reflect everyday reading-related behaviors, thereby establishing face validity. Correlations of concurrent validity ranging from .446 to .770 were established by Mikulecky with such formal reading-attitude measures as the Estes Scale, the Dulin-Chester Scale (1977), and the Kennedy-Halinski Reading Attitude Measure (1975). The MBRAM correlated more highly with the Estes Scale and the Dulin-Chester Scale than either of those measures did with each other (Mikulecky, 1976a).

To establish construct validity, five informal criteria for reading-attitude (self reported liking of reading, amount of reading, teacher judgment of reading attitude, classmate judgment of reading attitude, and number of books read in six months) were administered by Mikulecky along with the MBRAM. All MBRAM correlations with these informal criteria were significant at the .001 level, and the majority of correlations ranged from .500 to .791. The MBRAM correlated significantly more highly with these informal measures than did the other, formal reading-attitude measures used in the study. Analysis of variance demonstrated the ability of the MBRAM to discriminate subjects of high, average, and low reading-attitude as measured by the informal criteria (Mikulecky, 1976a).

Mikulecky researched adults in the workplace, using the Mikulecky Behavioral Reading Attitudes Measure (MBRAM), to see the congruence between their reading and

the reading of students in high school. The MBRAM allows participants to describe their reading attitude not only in positive or negative terms based on the total score, but also in terms of their internalization of reading attitudes based on the individual scoring of each item. He concluded that the amount of formal education a person has correlates strongly with literacy abilities at all levels and among males and females, different racial/ethnic groups, and different age groups (Kaestle, Campbell, Finn, Johnson & Mikulecky, 2001). Mikulecky found that adult workers read more, read a greater variety of materials, and read for more specific purposes than school age students. This being the case, teachers could use the MBRAM scores to predict whether a student merely tolerates reading, is more likely to choose reading over other activities, or reads daily. The MBRAM can also permit teachers to delve further to learn more about the kinds of changes that attitudes can undergo and to identify the developmental stages of an individual's reading attitude. (Ley, Schaer & Dismukes, 1994; Ley, Schaer, Wright, & Neal 1988).

#### Other Uses of the MBRAM

In a longitudinal study of reading attitudes using the Mikulecky Behavioral Reading Attitudes Measure, sixth graders were followed as they progressed through middle school and data were gathered annually. Data from the research project showed that there was a statistically significant relationship between the reading attitudes and the reading behaviors reported by middle school students. It was also found in this study that teachers' estimates of their students' reading attitudes were not accurate (Ley, Schaer & Dismukes, 1994).

Dismukes (1989) assigned 665 middle school students into three groups based on their Stanford Achievement Tests in order to observe differences in reading attitudes among achievement levels. She found that female students in the top 25% of reading achievement also achieved the highest stages of attitude internalization on the MBRAM. The females also reported more positive attitudes toward reading than did the males at four of the five stages of Krathwold's reading attitude internalization (Mitchell & Ley, 1995).

Nourie and Kenski (1998) used the MBRAM as one measure to determine whether pre-service secondary teachers enrolled in a required content literacy class have an overall positive attitude toward reading and are active readers themselves. Nourie and Lenski administered the MBRAM to 90 secondary education pre-service teachers, and the majority scored above the midpoint of 2.5 on the instrument. The only exceptions were students with grade-point averages below 2.5. Nourie and Lenski found from their research that secondary pre-service teachers tend to value reading (Nourie & Lenski, 1998).

#### Other Studies of Reading Attitudes

Other studies have concluded that reading attitudes of university students likely influence their reading behavior and choices of what to read (Mikulecky, Shanklin & Caverly, 1979). Mohamed (1994), in a study of first year university students' attitudes toward reading, found that those who were planning to become teachers possessed strong positive attitudes and routinely read for pleasure outside of their university classes, potentially a factor in influencing the learning behavior of children in the classes they

taught. Mohamed's study also suggests that teacher educators ought to routinely assess the pre-service teacher's attitudes toward reading by in-class surveys or questionnaires in order to plan for more effective instruction in the methods courses taught.

Applegate and Applegate (2004) found a significant correlation between students' college-level reading experiences and their level of reading enjoyment. This suggested that college can provide powerful experiences that can affect a student's perspective on reading, both positively and negatively. Twenty-two of the students surveyed stated that their attitudes toward reading had improved as a result of their reading experiences. This suggests that it is possible to affect the reading habits and attitudes of students in college programs.

Smith (1988) performed a longitudinal investigation of reading attitudes from childhood to adulthood based on occupational levels. Building upon Krietlow's (1962, 1966) research from 1949 to 1966, Smith tracked 84 individuals for nearly 40 years, examining their reading attitudes three times from their early school years into adulthood. Smith concluded that the adults who had the most positive reading attitudes were those who had the most education. Also, persons with occupations that demanded more reading (e.g., teacher, banker, attorney, engineer) had more positive attitudes about reading. The data suggests that positive attitudes about reading that are fostered during the school years will continue to be positive into adulthood. Continued education and occupational choice also affect reading attitude (Smith, 1988).

Adults who value reading, and work with children of any age, elementary school through college, face a challenge if they hope to nurture positive attitudes toward reading. As children become older, their attitudes toward reading change and decline (Ley, Schaefer

& Dismukes, 1994; Mikulecky, 1976b). Studies done with middle school and high school students using the Mikulecky Behavioral Reading Attitudes Measure found positive relationships between reading attitudes and reading behaviors of these students (Ley, Schaer & Dismukes, 1994; Mitchell & Ley, 1996). One group of middle school students were tracked over a three-year period and research findings determined that their voluntary reading did decline over time (Ley, Schaer, & Dismukes, 1994). This can be attributed to the fact that as children progress in school, their reading tasks become more numerous and complex. As students enter college and begin to make plans for careers, reading tasks become even more demanding.

#### Other Means of Determining Reading Attitudes

There are several means of determining pre-service teachers' reading attitudes. There is no evidence from the professional literature as to methods university instructors of children's literature emphasize. University instructors teaching children's literature courses may use various means to determine the status of the reading attitudes of their pre-service elementary education students. Observation, interviews, peer assessment as well as reading attitude surveys may be used. After defining the ranges of reading attitudes of their students, the instructors may be using a variety of instructional strategies that are designed to encourage the use of children's literature in elementary classrooms. Actual experiences with reading children's literature and appropriate field experiences using children's literature in classrooms may be critical for developing pre-service teachers' pedagogical theory base. These experiences could enable them to have the chance to test and reflect on the instructional methods they read about in courses

(Hoewisch, 2000). Although there is no literature available to track whether this change occurs, this ought to encourage the positive attitudes of the pre-service teachers to thrive and grow during the course. Looking at attitude changes following a children's literature course, therefore, is important.

### Unanswered Questions

A neglected area of research is the influence that classroom teachers have on their students. It has only been within the last 10 years that any research in this area has been done. Teachers are regarded as a significant influence on their student's reading achievement, but this is a greatly neglected area of research (Schofield & Start, 1977; Artley, 1975). Most research done in the area of reading attitudes has focused on the attitudes of children toward reading and not the attitudes of their teachers. In 2001, Block and Mangieri (2002) replicated a study done twenty years earlier of elementary school teachers' knowledge of current children's literature, children's books, and activities that could be done to promote students' reading. In the earlier study teachers were asked to complete a three question survey about children's literature. This same procedure was used in the 2001 study. It was concluded that on each question, the 2001 respondents scored higher than their 1981 counterparts. They found that teachers who had a high knowledge of children's literature and reading activities were lifelong readers themselves. They concluded that the research challenge for the 21<sup>st</sup> century is to further examine teachers' knowledge concerning children's literature and recreational reading. (Block and Mangieri, 2002).

## Methodology in Teacher Education Programs

There have always been intelligent, college-educated professionals who do not read for pleasure. They can read, but choose not to. Applegate and Applegate found in their study of reading habits and attitudes of pre-service teachers that a significant number of future teachers had little interest in reading themselves, and only read as an academic obligation (Applegate & Applegate, 2004). What influences did they have that led to this attitude? And which condition is more prevalent, that pre-service teachers have a strong positive attitude toward reading, as Mohamed (1994) found, suggesting that students come to their children's literature classes already fully motivated to read, or that many read simply to fulfill professional obligations as Applegate and Applegate (2004) found.

## Summary

This review of research examined various forms of reading attitude surveys developed over the years for all ages of participants, from young children to adults. According to findings, all reading attitude surveys follow the same basic structure with statements about reading in which responses are recorded using a point scale. The higher the score, the more positive attitude the participant has about reading. Several factors affect the reading attitudes of students, ranging from motivation, to volume of reading that is done, to influences by others.

This research suggests that reading attitude surveys ought to be used in classrooms, from elementary school through college, in order for teachers to help evaluate their students and plan for instruction. Factors such as choice in reading,

students' motivation to read, and the amount of reading required of students also need to be taken into consideration when planning instruction.

There are still many unanswered questions when it comes to the subject of reading attitudes of pre-service teachers. Do students come into teacher education programs with positive attitudes toward reading? Does the methodology used by the instructors influence attitudes to be more positive toward reading? Are there other factors that influence pre-service teachers to have more positive attitudes toward reading? More research ought to be done with the subject of attitudes of pre-service teachers and the specific classroom situations they are in. It is possible that different classroom situations could be a factor in cultivating or diminishing the reading attitudes of those who will become teachers.

In conclusion, the research analyzed shows that surveys do help in finding out attitudes toward reading and can measure if those attitudes scores increased positively over a period of time. There was not much research on the influence a course in children's literature might have on the reading attitudes of pre-service teachers, but reading attitudes tie into motivation for reading, which is also related to ability to read and to comprehend text.

### III. METHODOLOGY

I surveyed the attitudes toward reading of elementary education pre-service teachers before and after completion of a course in children's literature at the university level. The scores of the participants were analyzed to ascertain if significant changes occurred from the onset of the course in children's literature to the conclusion of the course. Some of the responses on the survey correlated with responses to the Valuing stage of reading as outlined in Krathwohl's *Taxonomy of the Affective Domain* (1964). Those identified responses were examined in more detail in this study of attitude changes. When people reach the Valuing stage in Krathwohl's taxonomy, they begin to accept the worth of reading as a value that is personally preferred over other activities and even is extended to others. For example, "Sometimes you find yourself so excited by a book you try to get friends to read it." Methodology in teaching the course in children's literature was also considered as a variable, to be evaluated along with the age and sex of the participants.

#### Research Sites and Participants

In this present study, I made an effort to gather information on the population context of pre-service teachers enrolled in children's literature courses in the southeast United States. The sample size was narrowed to major universities in Alabama and

religion-affiliated institutions in the southeast that had a teacher education department. After searching the internet for information on universities requiring courses in children's literature for their teacher education programs, the instructors teaching children's literature courses were e-mailed with an inquiry if they would be interested in participating in this study. Instructors at ten universities were contacted by e-mail. Two of the six universities declined participation in the study due to participation in other reading studies that same semester. Of the ten instructors originally contacted, six of the instructors responded positively to the request. The remaining four instructors did not respond.

The deans of the respective colleges of education (Appendix B) of the responding instructors granted approval for participation of the research at their university. Contact with the instructors who were teaching children's literature courses was established by me, and all correspondence was by e-mail. I provided each of the participating course instructors with a packet containing the pre-printed survey instrument in pretest form. Each instructor was provided a script for verbal instructions to participating students as well as written instructions for their own surveys (Appendix C) and for each student participant (Appendix D) by me. I mailed the information to the course instructors at the beginning of the spring semester of 2005 and made a request that the initial survey administration to be completed within the first week of class meetings. All verbal and written instructions were standardized and scripted. Informal inquiries indicated that the course instructor followed them at each university at the time of the administration of the survey. A pre-addressed, stamped envelope was enclosed to return all materials to me after administration of the survey.

The research centered on the reading attitudes of the pre-service teachers enrolled in these courses. In order to gather that information, the surveys were given to 180 students between the ages of 19 and 41. They were enrolled in children's literature classes at four universities in the states of Alabama and Arkansas. Universities were both public and private institutions located in small cities. All four of the institutions have well-established programs of education licensed by their respective states. One is a small teaching university, while of the other three large universities; only one is considered a teaching university. The other two are strong research institutions. Of the four universities surveyed, one did not return all materials needed to complete the analysis. This reduced the participating institutions to three.

All of the participants were enrolled in a children's literature course at their respective schools. Students were asked to participate by the instructors of the course. Participation was voluntary and participants were at least 19 years of age since the course is a junior or senior level course at each university.

Nine different sections of children's literature, taught by five different instructors, were initially used to gather data. Of those nine sections, only seven classes completed both the pre- and post-test surveys. Participants were university students ranging in age from 19 to 41 years of age who had completed most of the coursework for a degree in early childhood or elementary education and were near completion of their program of study. Demographic data, such as race, GPA, and IQ were not collected. The demographics of age and sex were not required of the participants, but were noted on the survey instrument by the majority of respondents.

Of the achieved sample of 136 respondents, approximately 95% were females, with the average age being 22.3 years, and 5% were males, with the average age being 21 years (Table 1). Not all initial participants were retained in the study because some had not completed both pre- and posttests. Some were absent on one of the days the survey was administered in class, or they withdrew from the children’s literature course during the semester.

**Table 1:**  
**Characteristics of the sample (total sample size 136 students,**  
**from three higher education institutions)**

Totals	Sex		Age Range	
	F	M	19-20	21-41
136	127	9	77	57

### Procedures

The data collected for this study was gathered during the spring semester of 2005 at each university, during a regular class session of the children’s literature course. Data was gathered using the Mikulecky Behavioral Reading Attitudes Measure (MBRAM) (Appendix A). This survey is designed to measure the reading attitudes of adults and reflects the participant’s attitude toward reading.

The MBRAM consists of 20-item statements about attitudes toward reading. The scores are calculated by assigning a value of 1 to 5 to Likert-type responses. Face validity of the MBRAM was established by Mikulecky using a graduate-level seminar, and correlations of concurrent validity range from .446 to .770 with formal reading-attitude measures as the Estes Scale (1971), the Dulin-Chester Scale (1977), and the Kennedy-

Halinski Reading Attitude Measure (1975). To establish construct validity, five informal criteria for reading–attitude were administered along with the MBRAM. The majority of MBRAM correlations ranged from .500 to .791 with these informal criteria and was significant at the .01 level (Morgan and Richardson, p. 450).

Two additional questions were added to the MBRAM by me to specifically ask about the pre-service teacher’s reading attitudes during his or her college career. The survey and additional items were self-reported by the pre-service teachers and took only 10 to 15 minutes of the children’s literature class session.

The survey instrument was again administered near the end of the spring semester in the same way, during the last two weeks of the semester. Each course instructor was again provided a packet containing the preprinted instrument in posttest form, with written instructions for the course instructors and written instructions for each participant. All instructions were standardized and scripted, and informal inquiries suggested they were followed at each university by the course instructor at the time the survey was administered. A pre-addressed, stamped envelope was enclosed to return all materials after this second administration of the survey.

## Variables

The methodology of instruction used could have an impact on the outcome of the differences in attitudes from the students at each university. I asked course instructors to submit a syllabus for the course and describe the methods of instruction that were used in teaching the course. All syllabi and answers to the questions were returned to the researcher by e-mail. After review of the syllabi, I concluded that all of the instructors

used the same general method of instruction. Discussions of books by the whole class, as well as teacher led discussion of children's literature, were the main methods used. Instructors also used lecture, showing numerous examples of children's book titles in their teaching. Class assignments such as book reviews, book talks, small group discussions, units and story reading are also required in the course by all of the instructors.

When the reading attitude surveys were received from each of the instructors, they were placed in numerical order according to a four-digit code that participants provided. Individual student data from pretests and posttests was identified by these codes known only by the respondents. These codes were used only to match pretest and posttest scores at the conclusion of the study. Most of the respondents did indicate age and sex, making it possible to analyze those variables. Each of the pre-printed questionnaires was hand tabulated, and results from the questionnaire were entered into an Excel spreadsheet, and then transferred into Statistical Procedures for Social Sciences (SPSS) 12.0.1 and 15.1 for data analysis.

The data from each university was tabulated separately at first, but later all data was combined in order to have a larger sample size. Data was analyzed using a Paired samples T test and a one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) repeated measures with pretest survey scores and posttest survey scores as the dependent variables. The pre- and post survey scores were evaluated by assigning a numeric value of 1 to 5 to each of the Likert-type items. 1 reflected disagreement and 5 indicated high agreement. The highest possible score for the survey was 110, and the lowest was 22. A midpoint score of 55 was considered neutral.

#### IV. RESULTS

This study was designed to measure the self-reported attitudes toward reading of pre-service teachers as identified by the Mikulecky Behavioral Reading Attitudes Measure (MBRAM). A total of 136 pre-service teachers enrolled in elementary education programs in the states of Alabama and Arkansas took part in a survey. The following questions served to focus the study:

1. Do pre-service teachers become more positive in their attitude toward reading after completing a course in children's literature?
2. Do pre-service teachers become more positive toward reading on the Valuing subscale after completing a course in children's literature?
3. Do pre-service teachers differ in attitude change as a function of sex?
4. Do pre-service teachers differ in attitude change as a function of age?

The total sample size of 136 subjects was used in compiling data. Reliability Statistics were run on the pre- and posttest scores from the combined schools. The reliability statistics on the pre- and posttest showed a Cronbach's Alpha of .92 on all items of the instrument and a Cronbach's Alpha of .92 on the Valuing items, which indicates that the Mikulecky Behavioral Reading Attitudes Measure is a very reliable survey instrument. The correlations that were obtained when compared to the published

reliability data, as presented by the survey author, indicates that the survey instrument was reliable in this administration.

The personal attitudes toward reading of elementary education pre-service teachers can vary greatly at the beginning of a children’s literature course. This could be due to prior experiences in reading, either positive or negative. The survey results indicated that the pre-service teachers in this study had varied attitudes toward reading at the beginning of the children’s literature course. The posttest survey results indicated that the personal attitudes of elementary education pre-service teachers still varied greatly upon completion of the course in children’s literature, but there was an increase in the mean between the pre-test and posttest scores by an average of 3.6 points (Table 2).

**Table 2:  
Descriptive Statistics for Pre-test and Posttests Scores**

	N	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Mean	SD
Pre-test	135	36	101	67.07	17.11
Posttest	135	39	104	70.65	16.15
Gain	135	-24	31	3.59	8.97

Table 2 shows the minimum and maximum scores of the combined subjects on the pre-test and the posttest. The scores on the pre-test ranged from 36 to 101; the mean being 67.07, with a standard deviation of 17 points. The scores of the post-test ranged from 39 to 104; the mean being 70.65, with a standard deviation of 16 points. On both the

pre- and posttest the scores were in a similar range, but the gains did show an approximate 3.6 point gain in overall scores.

**Table 3:  
One-way ANOVA comparing Total MBRAM  
Pre-test scores and Posttest scores**

Source of variation	Mean	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	p
Pre-test	67.07	134	39244.4	399.31	1.56	.05*
Posttest	70.65	134				

\* Significant at the .05 level

Table 3 presents the summary data for the one way analysis of variance for total MBRAM scores of the pre-course administration and post course administration in all participating schools. The .05 significance level indicates that there are less than 5 possibilities (events) in 100 that the results, as obtained, reflected a chance outcome. This implies that there is a 95% probability that the results, as obtained, reflect a real difference between the pre-course survey results versus the end of course survey results. Thus the pre-course survey mean value of 67.07 as compared to the post-course survey mean value of 70.65 is indicative of real or meaningful difference. The post-course responses reveal an improved positive attitude toward reading. Since no important differences were found among the instructors' methodologies of teaching the course, I was unable to further examine that variable. With these meaningful differences it is possible to draw the conclusion that the scores of the reading attitudes of the participants

improved. It can be stated with confidence, regardless of instructor, that their attitude toward reading improved positively after completion of the course in children’s literature.

The surveys were re-tabulated for each participant with only six of the reading attitude survey items being used. These six items corresponded with Krathwohl’s stages of Valuing reading (Appendix E). Both pre- and posttests scores were tabulated on these six survey items (Table 4). All data from the three universities were combined for comparison of the six items corresponding to Valuing. The more positive the responses to these six items a participant had, the more likely they were to have reached the stage of Valuing reading. Participant’s survey scores were tested to see if there was an improvement in Valuing reading after completion of the course in children’s literature. There was an increase in the overall mean of the participants scores at approximately 1.34 points (Table 4), indicating that overall the participants did become more positive toward reading on the Valuing subscale after completion of the course in children’s literature.

**Table 4:  
Descriptives of Pre- and Post Comparisons of Gains in Overall  
Reading Attitude and Valuing Reading Subset Scores**

Group	N	Pre- test Mean	Posttest Mean	SD	Gain Score Mean
Overall Reading Attitude	135	67.07	70.65	8.97	3.59
Valuing Reading Items	135	17.18	18.52	3.70	1.34

Table 4 gives the pre- and posttest mean, standard deviation and gain score mean of both the overall reading attitude of the combined subjects and the six items that correlated to Valuing reading. The pre-test mean of overall attitude was 67.07 and the posttest mean was 70.65, with a standard deviation of almost 9 points. The pre-test mean of Valuing items was 17.18 and the posttest mean was 18.52, with a standard deviation of almost 4. The subjects increased their score by a mean of 3.6 points on the overall reading survey and increased their valuing reading scores by a mean of 1.3 points.

**Table 5:  
ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) of Overall Reading  
Attitude and Valuing Subsets**

<b>Overall Reading Attitude</b>						
Source	N	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	p
Between groups		134	8.1	.135		
Within groups		1	10.3	.141	.96	.57
Total	135	135				
<b>Valuing Subset Scores</b>						
Between groups		134	68803.6	513.5		
Within groups		1	867.6	867.6	.21.6	.00
Total	135	135				

\* p <.01

Table 5 presents the summary data for the analysis of variance for the overall reading attitude scores and for the subset scores on the Valuing reading items of the MBRAM. Neither the overall reading attitudes nor the valuing subset scores showed a significance level greater than .01 within groups. This implies that there is a great

probability that the results as obtained reflect a real difference between the pre-course survey results versus the end of course survey results on both the overall reading attitude and the Valuing of reading items.

**Table 6:  
ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) of Valuing items on the MBRAM**

	DF	Mean	Mean Square	F	p
Pre- Within	134	17.18	37.101	1.685	.05*
Post Within	134	18.52	37.068		

\* significant at the .05 level

Table 6 presents the summary data for the one way analysis of variance for total MBRAM scores of the pre-course administration and post course administration in all participating schools using only the six items that correspond with Valuing reading. The .05 significance level indicates that there are less than five possibilities (events) in 100 that the results as obtained reflected a chance outcome. This implies that there is a 95% probability that the results as obtained reflect a real difference between the pre-course survey results of the Valuing reading items versus the end of course survey results of the Valuing of reading items. Thus the pre-course survey mean value of 17.18 as compared to the post course survey mean value of 18.52 is indicative of real or meaningful difference in the six Valuing of reading items. The range of the scores of the six Valuing items could have ranged from 6 points to 30 points.

In order to look at possible variances in the overall scores, other specific data were analyzed using a repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA). The scores for sex (male/female), and age level (19 to 20 year olds versus 21 to 41 year olds) and variance in pre- and posttest scores as the classification variables (Table 7).

**Table 7:  
Descriptive Statistics: Age and Overall Scores on MBRAM**

	Age	N	Mean	SD	N
Pre- test	19-20	77	68.71	17.48	77
	21-41	57	64.81	16.65	57
	Total	134	67.05	17.18	134
Posttest	19-20	77	71.08	16.80	77
	21-41	57	70.19	15.49	57
	Total	134	70.70	16.20	134

Table 7 breaks down the subjects by age ranges and average scores on the pre- and posttests. There were 77 subjects in the 19 to 20 year old age group. Their average pre-test scores were 69, with a standard deviation of almost 17.5 points. The younger participant's average posttest score was 71, with a standard deviation of almost 17 points. The total increased mean for the younger group of subjects was almost 2.4 points.

There were 57 subjects in the 21 to 41 year old age range. Their average pre-test scores were almost 65, with a standard deviation of almost 17 points. The older participant's average posttests score was approximately 70 points, with a standard deviation of a little over 16 points. The total increased mean for the older group of subjects was a little over 5 points. Combining both age groups, their mean score on the pre-test was 67 points with a standard deviation of 17 points. Their mean score on the

posttest was almost 71 points with a standard deviation of 16 points. Their overall mean score increased over 3.5 points.

**Table 8:  
Descriptive Statistics: Sex and Overall Scores on MBRAM**

	Sex	N	Mean	SD	N
Pre- test	Male	9	43.89	5.86	9
	Female	125	68.63	16.48	125
	Total	134	66.97	17.14	134
Posttest	Male	9	52.44	9.77	9
	Female	125	71.84	15.76	125
	Total	134	70.54	16.16	134

Table 8 breaks down the subjects by sex and average scores on the pre- and posttests. There was no significant difference at the .05 level for sex of participants on the pre-test measure. There were 9 males that participated in the research. Their average pre-test scores were almost 44 points, with a standard deviation of almost 6 points. The male’s average posttest score was a little over 52 points, with a standard deviation of almost 10 points. The total increased mean for the males was over 8.5 points.

There were 125 females participating in the study. Their average pre-test scores were almost 69 points, with a standard deviation of almost 16.5 points. The female’s average posttests score was almost 72 points, with a standard deviation of almost 16 points. The total increased mean for the female subjects was a little over 3 points (Graph 1). Combining genders, their mean score on the pre-test was almost 67 points with a standard deviation of 17 points. Their mean score on the posttest was over 71.5 points

with a standard deviation of 16 points. Their overall mean score increased over 3.5 points.

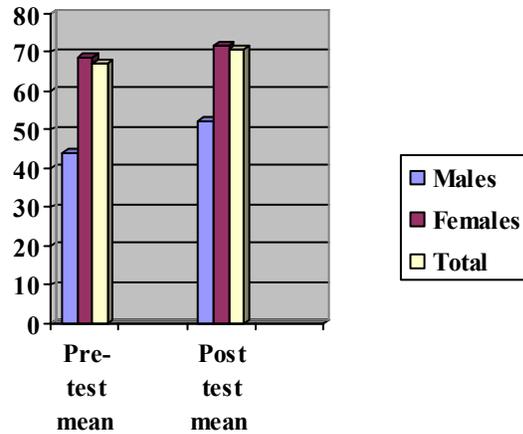
**Table 9:  
Results of variables on scores obtained from repeated measure  
ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)**

	N	Mean	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	p
Sex	133	-2.59	4.88	.149	3.0	.07
Age	133	-0.26	3.18	.093	3.8	.05*

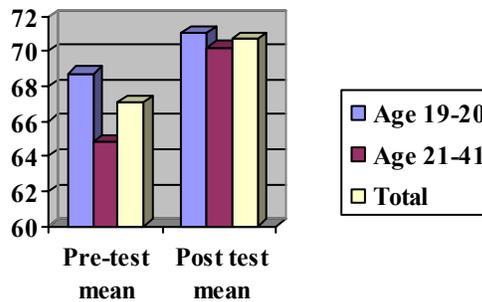
\* significant at the .05 level

The only variables used in the calculations of differences between all three schools were sex and age range. There were only 9 males that participated in the entire study, composing about 5% of all respondents. The age ranges of the pre-service teachers surveyed varied greatly from 19 years to 41 years. The age ranges of 19 to 20 years and 21 to 41 years were used in calculating differences in reading attitude. Two of the participants did not indicate age, so their information was not tabulated (see Table 8). There was no significant difference for gains for sex (Table 9, Graph 1), but there was significance at the .05 level for age of participants (Table 9, Graph 2).

**Graph 1:  
Significant sex differences and means on MBRAM**



**Graph 2:  
Significant age differences and means on MBRAM**



In table 9, data from all participating subjects pertaining to sex and age of participants were aggregated. Table 9 presents the summary data for the repeated measure analysis of variance (ANOVA) for total MBRAM scores of sex and age of the participants. The .07 significance level for sex indicates that there are less than seven possibilities (events) in 100 that the results as obtained reflected a chance outcome. This implies that there is a 93% probability that the results as obtained reflect a real difference

between the pre-course survey results versus the end of course survey results. While not significant, the post-course responses suggest that there may be a differential increase of scores in improved attitude toward reading based on sex. There was a greater increase with males than with females. Male students seemed to have gained more appreciation for reading over the course of the semester. Their average scores rose 8.5 points overall, where the female students' scores rose only 3.2 points.

The .05 significance level for age indicates that there are less than five possibilities (events) in 100 that the results as obtained reflected a chance outcome. This implies that there is a 95% probability that the results, as obtained, reflect a real difference between the pre-course survey results versus the end of course survey results. Older students seemed to have gained more appreciation for reading over the course of the semester. Their average scores rose about 5 points, where the younger students only rose approximately 1 point.

## Conclusions

Based on the pre- and post- test surveys administered, the evidence indicates that taking a course in children's literature positively increased the pre-service teacher's attitude scores toward reading. Not only did their overall attitude scores increase, but their Valuing of reading scores also increased. There was a slight improvement in the attitude of male pre-service teachers while taking the course, as compared with female pre-service teachers, but we could not conclude that this change was significant because of the small number of male participants.

The age of participants did cause a significant variance in scores of reading attitude. Older students tended to gain more appreciation for reading over the course of the semester, than did younger students.

Even after the completion of this study, there are unanswered questions as to what really impacts the elementary pre-service teacher's attitude toward reading. Replication studies, as well as more in depth studies on this topic, should be conducted to test the reliability of these findings and to further pursue the question.

## V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Summary

#### The Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate if the completion of a course in children's literature caused a more positive attitude toward reading of pre-service teachers. The study also attempted to determine if there was a change between the pre- and posttest scores of pre-service teachers on specific survey items that correlated to valuing reading while taking the course in children's literature. The specific variables of sex and age of participants were also explored to see if they had a positive effect on attitude change of pre-service teachers.

#### The Research Questions

The following research questions focused the study:

1. Do pre-service teachers become more positive in their attitude toward reading after completing a course in children's literature?
2. Do pre-service teachers become more positive toward reading on the Valuing subscale after completing a course in children's literature?
3. Do pre-service teachers differ in attitude change as a function of sex?

4. Do pre-service teachers differ in attitude change as a function of age?

#### The Population, Sources and Instrument

A total of 136 pre-service teachers enrolled in children's literature courses in three universities in the southeast United States participated in the study of reading attitudes. There were 127 females and 9 males taking part in the study ranging from 19 to 41 years of age. Information on these variables was obtained voluntarily by the participants. Ethnicity of the participants was not noted in this study.

The Mikulecky Behavioral Reading Attitudes Measure (MBRAM) was the instrument used to provide data for this study. The reliability statistics on the pre- and posttest from combined schools showed a Chronbach's Alpha of .92 on all items of the instrument and a Chronbach's Alpha of .92 on the Valuing items, which indicates that the Mikulecky Behavioral Reading Attitudes Measure is a very reliable survey instrument. Two types of data analysis, a t-test and a repeated measure analysis of variance (ANOVA) were performed in order to address the research items. A repeated measure analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed on scores that pertained to the Valuing stage of the Mikulecky Behavioral Reading Attitudes Measure (MBRAM). Another repeated measure analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to analyze the participants' pre- and posttest scores with the variables of sex and age.

#### Findings

The research found a statistically significant improvement between the reading attitudes of elementary pre-service teachers before and after completion of the university

course in children's literature at the .05 level. The personal attitudes of subjects varied greatly at the beginning and upon completion of the course, but there was an average increase in the mean between the pre-test and posttest of 3.6 points on the overall survey is indicative of real or meaningful difference. The three schools that participated in this study had an overall statistically significant increase in the average of the pre-test and posttest scores on the measure during the semester. There was a decrease in negative responses overall, even though some of the participant's overall scores were lower on the posttest than on the pre-test. In most cases, student's attitudes toward reading improved positively while taking the undergraduate course in children's literature.

Since no important differences were found among the instructors' methodologies of teaching the course in children's literature, I was unable to further examine that variable. It can be stated with confidence, regardless of instructor, that their attitude toward reading improved positively after completion of the course in children's literature.

### Valuing Items

The six items on the MBRAM that corresponded with Krathwohl's stages of Valuing reading were re-tabulated from both pre- and posttests to examine if there was an increase in the attitude scores on Valuing reading items after completion of the course in children's literature. There was an improved attitude in the overall mean of the participants' scores at approximately 1.34 points, indicating that a real or meaningful difference did occur in Valuing reading after completion of the course in children's literature. This was significant at the .05 level.

Each of the three participating schools was then analyzed individually to see if there were gains within schools. One school did show significant gains at the .05 level, while another showed significant gains at the .01 level. The last school did not show significant gains in Valuing posttest scores, but there were very few students completing the survey. In order to strengthen the sample size, data from all three schools were aggregated on these six items corresponding to Valuing reading.

### Sex

Results of this study tend to support the conclusions drawn by Dismukes (1989) based on earlier research studies (Mitchell & Ley, 1996) that the reading attitudes of female students are significantly more positive overall than those of male students. The survey pre-test scores indicated that females were more positive than males in their reading attitudes, but only 5% of the 135 participants were male, making the pool narrow. While not significant, the post-test responses indicate that there was a greater increase in positive attitudes with males than with females by the end of the course. The average scores of males rose 8.5 points, where the female students' scores rose only 3.2 points.

### Age

Older students (21 to 41 years) gained significantly (at the .05 level) more appreciation for reading than the younger students (19 to 20 years) over the course of the semester. The scores of the older students rose about 5 points, where the younger students' scores only rose approximately 1 point.

This could be due to several factors. Students that return to school at an older age may be more concerned with pursuing their educational careers than younger, traditional age students. The age variation of the subjects in this study indicated that some students are older when they enroll in education courses, possibly having returned to school at a later age.

Using a control group, further studies could determine if the significance in the increase in positive reading attitudes or in the frequency of voluntary reading is caused by the course in children's literature or other factors. Other studies could focus on the methodology used by instructors in teaching the course in children's literature. Studies could also focus on specific age ranges of students or their sex to determine if these variables are significant.

### Conclusions

This study concluded however, based on the pre- and post- administered surveys that taking a course in children's literature did positively increase pre-service teacher's attitudes toward reading. Not only did their attitude scores, but their Valuing of reading sub scores also increased. Although there was a slightly greater improvement in the attitude of male pre-service teachers while taking the course in children's literature as compared with female pre-service teachers, we could not conclude that this change was significant because of the small number of male participants.

The age of participants did cause a significant variance in scores of reading attitude. Results obtained from the ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) between pre- and

posttest scores of reading attitude variance and age of students indicated that age is a significant factor in the Valuing of children's literature.

With the findings of this study, there are still unanswered questions as to what really affects the pre-service teacher's attitude toward reading. Replication studies ought to be conducted to test the reliability of these findings. A higher number of respondents or the responses of other pre-service teachers could yield other outcomes that are more significant. Also, a closer analysis of the variance in the methodology used by various teacher educators could yield other outcomes. This was not addressed in this research because of the similarity of each of the teacher educator's methods of teaching the course in children's literature. Other studies could analyze the various methods that instructors use in teaching courses.

This study and others like it did not support generalizations about pre-service teachers' reading attitudes, such as all teachers enjoy reading and that Children's Literature courses encourage students to read more. There was a large variation in the reading attitudes of the pre-serviced teachers surveyed. The results of this study did not show that taking a course in children's literature encourages one to read more or to gain a more positive attitude toward reading. The results of this study did not support any one method of instruction used in teaching children's literature courses. These are options for further research on this the topic of reading attitudes of pre-service teachers.

#### Limitations of the Study

1. The sampling of the study was comparatively small (just over 100 participants) using students from three universities in the southeast United States. This

population does not represent the total number of pre-service teachers pursuing their degrees in any one state or region of the United States.

2. The sampling of universities of the study was also comparatively small. Only three different universities were used, with a total of five different classes and four instructors.
3. When using a repeated measures design, the effect of testing could be a disadvantage. There is only one group of participants, and they have seen the questions before. There were no causal interferences possible. The time between the administering of the measures (three months), however, was sufficient time from recalling their responses from one administration to the next (Campbell & Stanley, 1966).
4. Some believe that reading is a socially desirable behavior and may answer in favor of reading, even if they do not read themselves.
5. The nature of the program students are enrolled in (elementary education) may attract students participating who have a more positive attitude toward reading, therefore it could be selection biased.
6. The Likert-type scale used in the instrument itself could cause changes in the sub scores because questions are based on respondents' feelings at the time of testing, and may not be reliable. Such variations could occur from the two times they took the test, however, with no significant overall increase or decrease. (Ley, Schaer & Dismukes, 1994).

### Implications for Educators

Courses in children's literature in teacher education programs have the potential to improve the positive attitudes of pre-service teachers toward reading. Instructors need to share their passion for reading and children's books in their roles as teachers of reading. They ought to encourage pre-service teachers to read quality literature and ought to provide first-hand opportunities to select, read and analyze children's literature. "Pre-service teachers need exposure to the educational benefits of children's literature and to effective ways of sharing that literature with their students" (Hoewisch, 2000, p. 3). Instructors and pre-service teachers ought to not assume that all of their students are enthusiastic readers, but ought to provide instructional experiences that will alter the attitudes of the pre-service teachers enrolled in their courses. Faculty in teacher preparation programs have an obligation to provide pre-service teachers with experiences and models that will help to promote their reading engagement (Applegate & Applegate, 2004). There are various activities that can be used to encourage positive reading engagement and improve the desire for voluntary reading in the university classroom. Some suggestions for pre-service teachers in children's literature or other methods courses are:

1. Present students with various opportunities to read, analyze and select children's books (Kagan, 1992; Richardson, 1986).
2. Encourage books to be read for pleasure and shared with class via "book talks" or "literature circles." Many times students choose the books that are the easiest access to them and not necessarily of the highest quality literature. Instructors

could provide some suggestions as to types of books to be read for sharing with the class.

3. Give students a variety of opportunities to check out books from various libraries.
4. Teacher educators ought to be enthusiastic about the books they read and should model reading techniques in the education courses taught. The books can be read with character voices or with feeling. Hearing books read in the classroom can help expand students' vocabularies as well as help to motivate students' additional reading for pleasure.
5. If there is limited time for reading, encourage students to listen to audio books when they are traveling or doing other tasks. These audio books can be checked out of public libraries or purchased at used bookstores.
6. Have students read aloud. Practice in reading quality literature to their peers first, then to children in classroom settings multiple times during their methods courses will increase their comfort level in reading aloud. This will help them to become more comfortable reading to children, as well as more reflective about the books they read.
7. Form book groups with faculty and students that meet regularly to read and discuss the same literature. Children's books, young adolescent literature or professional books could be chosen to get a variety of new materials into the hands of students and teachers.
8. Incorporate children's literature into content area lessons. Children's literature courses are not the only place where quality children's literature can be read and enjoyed. Using books in other methods courses (language arts, science, math,

social studies and fine arts) will help to broaden a pre-service teacher's knowledge of available quality reading materials. These books can also be used in units required by methods courses.

### Recommendations for further research

Further qualitative research could explore why some pre-service teachers are avid readers while others are not. This could be done by informal surveys and interviews.

Other research could focus on the habits of avid readers and whether those habits contribute to an increased level of reading. Also the time when those habits were formed could be a factor in increased levels of reading. This would focus on reading habits of young children and the influences they have in their lives and may produce research over an extended period of time.

More extensive research ought to be done on the topic using other variables to notice if the attitudes of pre-service teachers are improved or decreased during the course of a semester class in children's literature by specific factors.

Other future studies ought to focus on differences not only in the methodology of how the course is taught, but what department it is taught from at various universities, perhaps correlating methodologies with departments. Often universities do not have a children's literature course taught through the Education Department, but one taught through the English Department that is still required of education majors. Content comparisons between children's literature classes taught in different departments could provide insight into the effects of different treatment of the subject on student's

motivation to read. According to the professor teaching the course, there could be variance on the topics covered, as well as the methodology used for teaching the course. An experimental research design could determine whether the way children's literature courses are taught could cause improvement in reading attitudes of pre-service teachers by comparing a control group of students with a group that is taught children's literature by a specific method, such as small group discussion of books read. The instructor for both courses could be the same, eliminating instructor bias. The control group would be given the same assignments for the course as the discussion group, but with no interaction between students in discussion of the books read. The discussion group would read books individually and discuss them in small groups. Pre- and posttests of reading attitudes would be given at the beginning and conclusion of the course in children's literature to see if there were differences between groups and if the reading attitude of one group improved more than another.

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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
SURVEY INSTRUMENT  
MICKULECKY BEHAVIORAL READING ATTITUDE MEASURE

Mikulecky Behavioral Reading Attitude Measure

ID number : \_\_\_\_\_ Circle one: Male Female Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Please respond to all of the following statements about your general and academic reading. An example and the scale are provided below.

Example:

You receive a book for a Christmas present. You start the book, but decide to stop halfway through.

VERY UNLIKE ME            1        2        3        4        5            VERY LIKE ME

1. You walk into the office or a doctor or dentist and notice that there are magazines set out.

VERY UNLIKE ME            1        2        3        4        5            VERY LIKE ME

2. People have make jokes about your reading in unusual circumstances or situations.

VERY UNLIKE ME            1        2        3        4        5            VERY LIKE ME

3. You are in a shopping center you've been to several times when someone asks where books and magazines are sold. You are able to tell the person.

VERY UNLIKE ME            1        2        3        4        5            VERY LIKE ME

4. You feel very uncomfortable because emergencies have kept you away from reading for a couple of days.

VERY UNLIKE ME            1        2        3        4        5            VERY LIKE ME

5. You are waiting for a friend in an airport or supermarket and find yourself leafing through the magazines and paperback books.

VERY UNLIKE ME            1        2        3        4        5            VERY LIKE ME

6. If a group of acquaintances would laugh at you for always being buried in a book, you'd know its true and wouldn't mind much at all.

VERY UNLIKE ME      1      2      3      4      5      VERY LIKE ME

7. You are tired of waiting for the dentist, so you start to page through a magazine.

VERY UNLIKE ME      1      2      3      4      5      VERY LIKE ME

8. People who are regular readers often ask your opinion about new books.

VERY UNLIKE ME      1      2      3      4      5      VERY LIKE ME

9. One of your first impulses is to "look it up" whenever there is something you don't know or whenever you are going to start something new.

VERY UNLIKE ME      1      2      3      4      5      VERY LIKE ME

10. Even though you are a very busy person, there is somehow always time for reading.

VERY UNLIKE ME      1      2      3      4      5      VERY LIKE ME

11. You've finally got some time alone in your favorite chair on a Sunday afternoon. You see something to read and decide to spend a few minutes reading just because you feel like it.

VERY UNLIKE ME      1      2      3      4      5      VERY LIKE ME

12. You tend to disbelieve and be a little disgusted by people who repeatedly say they don't have time to read.

VERY UNLIKE ME      1      2      3      4      5      VERY LIKE ME

13. You find yourself giving special books to friends or relatives as gifts.

VERY UNLIKE ME      1      2      3      4      5      VERY LIKE ME

14. At Christmas time, you look at the display window of a bookstore and find yourself interested in some books and uninterested in others.

VERY UNLIKE ME      1      2      3      4      5      VERY LIKE ME

15. Sometimes you find yourself so excited by a book you try to get friends to read it.

VERY UNLIKE ME      1      2      3      4      5      VERY LIKE ME

16. You've just finished reading a story and settle back for a moment to enjoy and remember what you've just read.

VERY UNLIKE ME      1      2      3      4      5      VERY LIKE ME

17. You *choose* to read nonrequired books and articles fairly regularly (a few times a week).

VERY UNLIKE ME      1      2      3      4      5      VERY LIKE ME

18. Your friends would not be at all surprised to see you buying or borrowing a book.

VERY UNLIKE ME      1      2      3      4      5      VERY LIKE ME

19. You have just gotten comfortably settled in a new city. Among the things you plan to do is check out the library and book stores.

VERY UNLIKE ME      1      2      3      4      5      VERY LIKE ME

20. You've just heard about a good book but haven't been able to find it. Even though you are tired, you look for it in one more bookstore.

VERY UNLIKE ME      1      2      3      4      5      VERY LIKE ME

21. Has there been an increase in your attitude toward reading during your college years?

NO    1      2      ABOUT THE SAME      4      5      YES

22. Has there been a decrease in your attitude toward reading during your college years?  
NO    1        2        ABOUT THE SAME        4        5        YES

Mikulecky Behavioral Reading Attitude Measure by L. J. Mikulecky, 1976, In *Adult-reading habits, attitudes and motivations: A cross-sectional study*. Bloomington: Indiana University, School of Education.

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT COVER LETTERS  
FROM THE DEANS OF COLLEGES OF EDUCATION

# Auburn University

Auburn University, Alabama 36849-5221

Educational Foundations,  
Leadership, and Technology  
4036 Haley Center

Telephone: (334) 844-4460  
FAX: (334) 844-3072

January 20, 2005

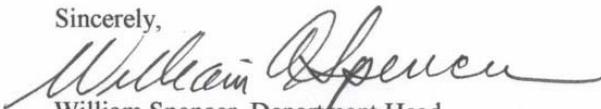
To whom it may concern:

With this letter we agree to participate in a research study with Wanda L. Warmack, Auburn University doctoral student, which will compare the reading attitudes of pre-service teachers before taking and upon completion of a Children's Literature course at our university.

We understand that student participation is voluntary and no personal information about students will be collected.

We understand that this comparison will benefit pre-service teachers and the universities that participate.

Sincerely,



William Spencer, Department Head



January 12, 2005

To whom it may concern:

With this letter we agree to participate in a research study with Wanda L. Warmack, Auburn University doctoral student, which will compare the reading attitudes of pre-service teachers before taking and upon completion of a Children's Literature course at our university.

We understand that student participation is voluntary and no personal information about students will be collected.

We understand that the benefit of this comparison will benefit pre-service teachers and the universities that participate.

Sincerely,

Dr. Claudia Nisbett  
Head, Dept. of Education

# HARDING

U N I V E R S I T Y

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

March 2, 2005

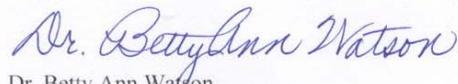
To Whom It May Concern:

With this letter we agree to participate in a research study with Wanda L. Warmack, Auburn University doctoral student, which will compare the reading attitudes of pre-service teachers before taking and upon completion of a Children's Literature course at our university.

We understand that student participation is voluntary and no personal information about students will be collected.

We understand that the benefit of this comparison will benefit pre-service teachers and the universities that participate.

Sincerely,



Dr. Betty Ann Watson  
Director, Early Childhood Education

February 25, 2005

To whom it may concern:

With this letter we agree to participate in a research study with Wanda L. Warmack, Auburn University doctoral student, which will compare the reading attitudes of pre-service teachers before taking and upon completion of a Children's Literature course at our university.

We understand that student participation is voluntary and no personal information about students will be collected.

We understand that the benefit of this comparison will benefit pre-service teachers and the universities that participate.

Sincerely,



Dr. Charles Calhoun  
Chair, Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
SOE #119, School of Education  
University of Alabama at Birmingham

119 Education Building  
901 13th Street South  
205.934.5371  
Fax 205.934.4792

The University of  
Alabama at Birmingham  
Mailing Address:  
EB 119  
1530 3RD AVE S  
BIRMINGHAM AL 35294-1250

APPENDIX C

INFORMATION SHEET FOR COURSE INSTRUCTORS  
FOR READING ATTITUDES SURVEY OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

January 14, 2005

Dear Professor,

Thank you for agreeing to administer the enclosed Mikulecky Behavioral Reading Attitude Measure to your undergraduate Children's Literature students. Please hand out the enclosed information sheet and read the following instructions to students before they begin the survey.

*Thank you for taking a few minutes to complete the Mikulecky Behavioral Reading Attitude Measure and to help gather research for a doctoral dissertation.*

*Please use a #2 pencils to complete the measure. Read each statement that is given and respond to the scale appropriately.*

*Your responses to this survey will remain anonymous and no personal data is required. I do ask that you provide a four-digit code in the top right-hand corner of the survey. You will use this code again at a later time and the codes will be matched to compare data. The completion of this survey is voluntary.*

*When you are finished, please turn your survey back in to your professor. They will return the information to me. Thank you again for your participation.*

When students have completed the survey, please return them to me in the enclosed pre-paid postage envelope. I greatly appreciate your help in my collection of data. You may contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Wanda L. Warmack  
Ph.D. Candidate  
Auburn University  
[wwarmack@faulkner.edu](mailto:wwarmack@faulkner.edu)  
(334) 386-7314

APPENDIX D

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS  
FOR READING ATTITUDES SURVEY OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

# Auburn University

Auburn University, Alabama 36849-5212

Curriculum and Teaching  
College of Education  
5040 Haley Center

Telephone: (334) 844-4434  
FAX: (334) 844-6789

## INFORMATION SHEET FOR Reading Attitudes Survey of Pre-Service Teachers

You are invited to participate in a research study that will compare the reading attitudes of pre-service teachers before taking and upon completion of a Children's Literature course. I, Wanda Warmack, an Auburn University doctoral student, under the supervision of Dr. Bruce Murray, Associate Professor of Reading Education, am conducting this study. I hope to learn the affects that taking a course in Children's Literature has upon the reading attitudes of pre-service teachers. You were selected as possible participants because you are enrolled in an undergraduate Children's Literature course during the Spring semester of 2005 at your university.

If you are age 19 or older and choose to participate, I ask that you fill out the survey that I have provided to your professor. The survey has statements about your general and academic reading. Please answer each question as to your attitude at this time. All responses should be made with a No. 2 pencil. The time involved in taking this survey will be no more than 10 minutes.

Students are to remain anonymous and no personal data is required. I will ask that you choose a four-digit code and write it in the top right hand corner of the survey. You will need to remember this code and use it again at a later time. I will assign each college/university an ID number for identification and data collection purposes only.

I hope to learn from this comparing of information how Children's Literature course benefit pre-service teachers, specifically in increasing their positive attitudes toward reading and using literature in their classrooms. This is a RESEARCH project - not a treatment for the attitudes of pre-service teachers.

Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain anonymous. Information collected through your participation will be used to complete my dissertation and possibly published in a professional journal. Participation of colleges/universities and students is voluntary.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University, the Department of Curriculum and Teaching or the College of Education.

If you have any questions I invite you to ask them now. If you have questions later, please contact Wanda Warmack (334) 386-7314 ([wwarmack@faulkner.edu](mailto:wwarmack@faulkner.edu)) and I will be happy to answer them.

For more information regarding your rights as a research participant you may contact the Office of Human Subjects Research by phone or e-mail. The people to contact there are Executive Director E.N. "Chip" Burson (334) 844-5966 ([bursoen@auburn.edu](mailto:bursoen@auburn.edu)) or IRB Chair Dr. Peter Grandjean at (334) 844-1462 ([grandpw@auburn.edu](mailto:grandpw@auburn.edu)).

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT. IF YOU DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE, THE DATA YOU PROVIDE WILL SERVE AS YOUR AGREEMENT TO DO SO. THIS LETTER IS YOURS TO KEEP.

*Wanda J. Warmack* 2/18/05  
Investigator's signature Date

Page 1 of 1

## APPENDIX E

### STAGES OF KRATHWOLD'S TAXONOMY

Stages of Krathwohl's Taxonomy as reflected by  
Mikulecky's Behavioral Attitude Measure Items

Krathwohl Stages	Items (1 – 5 Points Possible Each Item)	Criterion Score (75 percent of Possible Points)
I. <b>Attending:</b> The individual is generally aware of reading and tolerant of it.	1, 3, 5, 7	15 points
II. <b>Responding:</b> The individual is willing to read under certain circumstances. He or she begins to choose and occasionally enjoy reading.	11, 14, 16	11 points
III. <b>Valuing:</b> The individual begins to accept the worth of reading as a value to be preferred and even to extend to others.	13, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20	23 points
IV. <b>Organization:</b> For the individual, reading is a part of an organized value system and is so habitual that it is almost “instinctive”.	9, 10, 12	11 points
V. <b>Characterization:</b> For the individual, reading is so much a part of life that both the reader and others see reading as crucial to this person.	2, 4, 6, 8	15 points

Richardson & Morgan (1997), p. 454.