AN EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF READING ADVENTURE PACKS ON A SIX, SEVEN AND EIGHT YEAR OLD CHILD'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS LITERACY.

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Declaration:

I, Margaret Gill hereby declare that:

(i) this thesis is my own work

(ii) all the persons consulted, and all assistance rendered are fully acknowledged

(iii) all references used are indicated in the text and accurately reported in the list of references,

(iv) the substance of this thesis has not been presented, in whole, or part by me, to any University for a degree.

3.12.08
Date


Signature

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Abstract

This study examined a School-Home partnership literacy improvement program, the Reading Adventure Pack (RAP), that aims to support the child's involvement in and attitude to reading, and involve the members of the family in the child's reading by supplying literacy material. The RAP is based on a theme, containing about five books and a variety of related activities, which promote the skills of literacy, similar to the 'Home Literacy Bags' developed by Barbour (1999). In particular the study explored the effectiveness of the RAP with students from Years K/Prep to 3 in New South Wales and Victoria. The study involved a pre-RAP child and carer questionnaire followed by the child's RAP experience and then a post-RAP child and carer questionnaire. The children borrowed the resource packs to take home on a weekly rotational basis. This continued until the children had experience with all of the sixteen different RAP packs. When RAP was returned the children shared their writing in the response journal with their peers. The child was asked the same fourteen questions on the pre-RAP and post-RAP questionnaire with an extra eight questions specific to the RAP experience included in the post-RAP questionnaire.

The questionnaires revealed that the home environment, in the majority of cases, was extremely limited in terms of appropriate reading resources for children of this age, that the mother was the carer most involved in literacy development of the younger child in the home and the father was more likely to be somewhat involved with the older child in the home. The carers reported that they enjoyed working with RAP, and indicated that RAP, from their perspective, had a positive effect on their child's attitude to reading. The children's questionnaires revealed positive attitudes towards the RAP and that the RAP experience had increased the child's willingness to explore different literacy genres and had increased their involvement in and attitude to reading. It was noticed, however, that the impact of the RAP experience was not consistent across the age groupings or between the male and female students. The RAP experience had the greatest impact on the seven and eight year old female and eight year old male children.

1.0 Research Program

1.1 Introduction

It is accepted that involving families in their children's literacy development and school experience is an important factor in the child's attitude to and achievement in their literacy development. (Boyer, 1991, Powell, 1989 and Swick, 1994 as cited in Barbour 1999). To develop a School-Home literacy partnership that involves families is a challenge. It must be meaningful and enjoyable. The activities must support classroom learning and teaching.

In the USA some early literacy initiatives and programs failed because of the lack of reading materials and other educational resources at the home (Cairney, Ruge, Buchanan, Lowie and Munsie, 1995). However there were some programs that did provide a range of literacy materials such as tote bags, books and story tapes (Mayfield 1999, Farris 1987) and anecdotal evidence seemed to indicate that these programs were effective (Barbour 1999).

1.2 Research Approach

The present study examines a literacy improvement program that aims to support and improve the child's attitudes to reading, and involve members of the family in the child's reading by supplying literacy resource material. This approach was developed after a visit by the author to the USA, where there was an opportunity to observe an early literacy parent partnership program in action. This literacy improvement program consisted of giving the child a back-pack of stimulus material entitled *Reading Adventure Packs* (RAP) to take home in an effort to encourage family involvement and generate positive attitudes towards reading. This literacy program was similar to the 'Home Literacy Bags' scheme developed by Barbour (1999). As there appears to be only anecdotal evidence available outlining the results of this and other home reading participation programs (e.g. Grande, 2004 and Richgels & Wold, 1998) and these in the American context, this study aims to ascertain the effectiveness of the literacy pack approach (RAP) within the Australian environment. The RAP program involved the collection and organisation of themed literacy and educational

resources for the child. The child borrowed the resources from the school to take home on a rotational basis. Before the system was set in place, carers were invited to participate and given information about how they might assist their child with the program.

The resources within the RAP packs were meant to provide a positive literacy experience for the child and to contribute positively toward his/her developing attitudes towards reading. The RAP was designed to involve family members in the child's home reading experience as well as to provide enrichment for the classroom literacy program. It was not meant to replace teacher organised homework reading.

1.3 Research Questions:

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the reading environment at home?
2. What is the carers' involvement in and attitude to RAP?
3. What is the child's attitude to RAP?
4. What is the child's 'Attitude to Reading' before the implementation of RAP?
5. What is the child's 'Attitude to Reading' after the implementation of RAP?

2.0 Literature Review

Research shows that literacy development commences well before children start school (Neuman, Celano, Greco & Shue, 2003). Family literacy involves the extended family and encompasses the ways that reading materials are used in the home (Mayfield 1999). The early literacy skills that are learnt by a child in the home environment are carried with him/her to school and may partially predict the success that he/she will have in learning to read (Rush 1999).

In general it has been found that socio-economic status and family may be a stronger predictor of general school achievement than measures of differences of the school environment (Cairney 1998). Specifically, children from low-income families tend to achieve lower scores on tests of reading comprehension than do the children from higher socio-economic families (Nixon & Comber cited in Carrington 2001) and children from lower socio-economic homes tend to fall into lower reading age-levels than do the children from upper socio-economic homes (Rush 1999).

These findings suggest that the economic conditions of the home could influence the kind of reading materials in the home and the manner of usage of that material. In other words, the economic conditions of the home could influence the nature of the reading environment that shapes both the development of children's early attitudes toward reading and the early pre-reading literacy skills that children carry with them to their first years of schooling. This suggestion is reinforced by a recent study from New Zealand which suggests that children's reading achievements are strongly influenced by a combination of home factors that include the reading resources of the home, parental education level and parental involvement (or non-involvement) in the children's home reading (Gerritsen 2003). It could be argued that all three factors involve an economic component.

A number of research studies suggest that it is extremely difficult for some low-income families to resource their children's early literacy needs (Comber, Barnett, Nixon & Pitt, 2002). While it appears that most families are aware of the importance of the home literacy environment (Makin & McNaught 2001) and the need for

reading resources, too many homes with children are without appropriate books and in too many homes adults do not read to children (Minkel 2002).

With the realisation that family members can positively contribute to early literacy development there has been a plethora of programs and initiatives in recent years designed to support and encourage family participation in children's literacy education (Cairney & Ruge 1998). There are many pamphlets, booklets, and family information programs, both charitable and commercial, which are readily available to inform parents of the necessity of a print rich environment (see for example Cairney 1998, McFann 2001, Minkel 2002, Rolton 2001, Neuman & Celano 2001).

Two projects engaging parents as partners in the literacy development of their child are 'Ladybug Luggage' and 'Bluebird Baggage'. These two home literacy projects were designed to let the parents know the child's grade-level expectations. This was achieved by activities, materials and ideas that may help the child meet the literacy standards being placed in take-home bags. Both projects included a Parent Feedback Journal in which they could express their opinions and feeling on the project and their interaction with the child. According to Grande (2004), parents assessed this project as being effective in three ways – home learning activities can be enjoyed and also be beneficial for both parents and child, the literacy bags can be an effective communication tool to the carer of grade-level expectations and they can make parents more aware of literacy activities that can be used at home to help their child develop literacy skills.

Australian government agencies also have policies and programs to educate and inform carers about early literacy development. However it would appear that all these initiatives, including the government programs, are largely dependent upon homes having their own access to reading resources (NSW Dept of Education and Training 2003). Unfortunately it would also appear that, for a variety of reasons, sections of the community lack access to home literary resources (Comber et al. 2002). In part, these studies are an attempt to explore what happens in the home when resource materials are supplied.

Currently within Australia, at least one program has provided take home educational literacy resources for kindergarten children (Victoria Teachers Credit Union 2002). Developed at the Allansford and District Kindergarten, it included a plastic box containing a storybook, a taped version of that book and other activities related to the theme of the story. While there is anecdotal evidence about the effectiveness of reading packs (Barbour 1999), research examining the effectiveness of the reading backpacks could not be found.

Since reading attitudes can affect reading performance (Garrett 2002), one means by which reading packs could influence reading development is to enhance their enjoyment of reading and the sense of achievement in reading. However, it has been suggested that the study of children's attitudes to reading in their early years has received little attention (Wang 2000). Wang (2000) found that a child's personal experience, confidence and success (or otherwise) with books and reading, particularly at the initial stages, were directly related to his/her attitude towards reading.

This study aims to explore the effectiveness of a literacy improvement program that attempts to support and improve the child's attitudes to reading and to involve members of the family in the child's reading by supplying reading resource material. A pilot study (Study One) was developed after a visit of the author, Gill, to the USA, where an early literacy program in action was observed. On returning to Australia, and with the assistance of Fisher (2005), a literacy program was set up, similar to that of Barbour (1999), using packs of stimulus material entitled *Reading Adventure Packs* (RAP). As there was only anecdotal evidence available outlining the results of the Barbour program (1999), this pilot study was set up to ascertain the effectiveness of the literacy pack approach within the Australian environment. The RAP program involved the collection and organisation of literacy and educational resources for the children. The child borrowed the resources from the school to take home on a rotational basis. Before the system was set in place, carers were invited to participate and given information about how they might assist their child with the program.

The resources within the packs (listed below) were meant to provide a positive literacy experience for the child and to contribute positively toward his/her

developing attitudes towards reading. The RAP was designed to involve family members in the child's home reading experience as well as to provide enrichment for the classroom literacy program. It was not meant to replace teacher organised homework reading.

A typical pack would consist of –

- a soft toy indicating the theme of the *Reading Adventure Pack*
- a 'Note of Explanation to Carers' about the *Reading Adventure Pack*
- a 'Contents List' outlining what the *Reading Adventure Pack* contained
- an 'Instruction Sheet' for using the *Reading Adventure Pack* and its many activities
- a variety of literacy activities associated with the pack theme and catering for the age group of Grade One through to Grade Three children. These activities included four or more storybooks, craft activities, jigsaw puzzles, colouring sheets, games, CD ROMs, worksheets and a writing response journal.
- all associated materials needed for the completion of the activities in the *Reading Adventure Pack* e.g. a lead pencil for writing in the Scrapbook (response journal) and scissors for the craft activities.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Study Structure.

First a small study (Study One) using the RAP home literacy partnership program, consisting of thirty three children, was implemented at two locations, one in a New South Wales (NSW) school and the other in a Victorian (VIC) school. After analysis of the results of this study and a review of the program was completed, appropriate modifications were made to the study format and a second extended study (Study Two) was implemented. The second study consisted of one hundred and three Year 1 and Year 2 children in a VIC school.

3.2 Study One

3.2.1Subjects

The subjects in this study constituted a cohort of thirty-three children from two primary classrooms, a K-3 class of thirteen children from a NSW School and a Grade One class of twenty children from a Victorian School. The first school is small and located in a semi-rural area, though a variety of socio-economic levels were represented within the student body and most children came from middle-class homes. Almost a quarter of the second school's population received the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and approximately the same proportion was English as Second Language (ESL) students.

3.2.2 Reading Adventure Packs

A total of six *Reading Adventure Packs* were made, each pack based on a particular but different theme. Following is a list of contents for each *Reading Adventure Pack*:

- a soft toy indicating the theme of the *Reading Adventure Pack*
- a 'Note of Explanation to Carers' about the *Reading Adventure Pack*
- a 'Contents List' outlining what the *Reading Adventure Pack* contained
- an 'Instruction Sheet' for using the *Reading Adventure Pack* and its many activities

- a variety of literacy activities associated with the pack theme and catering for the age group of Kindergarten through to Grade Three children. Activities included four or more storybooks, craft activities, jigsaw puzzles, colouring sheets, Dot-to-Dot pictures, games, videos, worksheets, puppets, CDs and a writing response journal.
- all associated materials needed for the completion of the activities in the *Reading Adventure Pack* e.g. a lead pencil for writing in the Scrapbook (response journal) and scissors for the craft activities.

The children borrowed the resource packs to be taken home on a weekly rotational basis.

3.2.3 Procedure

The roles of teachers and carers in the use of the RAP were carefully scripted (roles can be obtained from the authors). Prior to any material being taken home, carers were asked to attend an information night about the study. They were informed about the nature of the study, its aims, and the joint roles of carers and teachers. They were invited to join the study and complete a permission form and an anonymous questionnaire entitled 'Carer Survey about Home Reading', (see Appendix 1).

In class the participating children completed an anonymous, Pre-RAP questionnaire, (see Appendix 2), of ten items related to reading attitudes. These they scored on a three-point Likert scale. Happy and sad faces represented the two extremes on this scale.

On completion of the program two final questionnaires (Post-RAP) were distributed and completed by carers and children. The Post-RAP carer questionnaire, (see Appendix 3), examined aspects of carers' involvement with the RAP and their perceptions of the child's usage. The Post-RAP child's questionnaire, (see Appendix 4), involved eight items that sought the child's attitude toward the RAP program itself. All four questionnaires pertaining to each child were coded so they could be entered into the computer as a single case. Initial analyses of this section were published in 2005 (Fisher, Gill & Greive, 2005).

3.3 Study Two

3.3.1 Modifications

After completion of Study One, modifications were made to the program to address some of the issues identified from the analysis study on the data. These modifications included (see chapter 4 for further details):

- new packs with a greater child self-direction orientation
- identical pre and post RAP 'Attitude to Reading' questionnaire
- a four point Likert response scale to replace the three point scale used in Study One

3.3.2 Subjects

The subjects in this study constitute a cohort of one hundred and three children from six Level 2 (Year 1 and 2) primary classrooms in a Victorian School. Almost a quarter of the population received the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and approximately an eighth were English as Second Language (ESL) students.

3.3.3 Reading Adventure Packs

A total of sixteen *Reading Adventure Packs* were made, each pack based on a particular but different theme. These were created by the researcher. The following is a list of contents for each *Reading Adventure Pack*:

- a toy indicating the theme of the *Reading Adventure Pack*
- a 'Note of Explanation to Carers' about the *Reading Adventure Pack*
- a 'Content List' outlining what the *Reading Adventure Pack* contained
- an 'Instruction Sheet' for using the *Reading Adventure Pack* and its many activities
- a variety of literacy activities associated with the pack theme and catering for the age group of Year One through to Year Three children. Activities included four or more storybooks, craft activities, jigsaw puzzles, colouring sheets, Dot-to-Dot pictures, games, videos, worksheets, puppets, CDs and a writing response journal.

- all associated materials needed for the completion of the activities in the *Reading Adventure Pack* e.g. a lead pencil for writing in the lined response book and scissors for the craft activities.

The child borrowed the resource packs to take home on a weekly rotational basis. When RAP was returned the child shared their writing in the response journal, with their peers.

3.3.4 Procedure

The roles of the teachers and carers in the use of RAP were carefully scripted. Prior to any material being taken home, carers were asked to attend an information night about the study. They were informed about the nature of the study, its aims, and the joint roles of carers and teachers. They were invited to join the study and complete a permission form and a coded questionnaire entitled '*Pre-Study* Carer's Survey about Home Reading' (Appendix 5).

In the class the participating child completed a coded Pre-RAP questionnaire (Appendix 6) of fourteen items related to reading attitudes. These were scored on a four point Likert scale. Happy and sad faces represented the two extremes on this scale.

On the completion of the program, two final questionnaires Post-RAP, were distributed and completed by carers and children. The Post-RAP carer questionnaire (Appendix 7) examined aspects of carer's involvement with the RAP and their perceptions of the child's usage. The Post-RAP child's questionnaire (Appendix 8) involved twenty two items, fourteen that sought the child's 'Attitude to Reading' and eight that sought the child's 'Attitude to RAP'. All four questionnaires pertaining to each child were collated so they could be entered into the computer as a single case.

4.0 Study One Results

4.1 Participants

Thirty-three children, aged five through nine year-of-age, and their carers were involved in this study. Table 4.1 indicates the spread of ages and gender of children.

Table 4.1a: Age and gender of children attending the two schools

	Victorian School			NSW School			Grand Total
Age	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
5		1	1			0	1
6	10	9	19		1	1	20
7				2	4	6	6
8					5	5	5
9				1			1
Total	10	10	20	3	10	13	33

4.2 Pre-RAP Reading Engagement

4.2.1 The reading environment of the home

It is not surprising that all of the carers who responded to the initial questionnaire indicated that they felt that the development of literacy skills were important to their children. Twenty-seven of the thirty-three carers took time to pen comments suggesting that children's literacy was "a basic skill that they need for life", a "resource for life", "a skill that they need for the rest of their life" and "crucial for life as they get older".

Notwithstanding these comments, the home reading resources were varied (see Table 4.2.1a). One home indicated that it did not have any children's books, four homes reported that they did not have adult reading books, ten homes (35%) did not buy magazines and seven homes (20%) did not buy newspapers. What is more, six homes (30%) from the Victorian School indicated that they did not have access to a public

library (see Table 4.2.1b). It is uncertain whether this was because existing libraries were too far away or because the carers had not sought membership of a library.

Table 4.2.1c indicates that within the home environment, mothers are most likely to assist the child's reading – either in supervising the exercise or by actually reading to their child. Thirty homes indicated that mothers were involved in assisting the child's reading, nine homes indicated the father's involvement, two homes indicated the involvement of grandparents and in four homes siblings were involved in their sisters' reading. While the questionnaire did not explore the family relationship between primary carers and the child, the scope of the results suggested that in two homes, grandparents may have been the primary carers, and in one home it was the father who acted alone. Thus in the thirty homes that contained mothers, all thirty mothers were involved in some way in assisting the reading of their child. In eight homes (25%), both the father and mother were, in some way, involved in their child's reading development (see Table 4.2.1d).

Table 4.2.1a: Carers' reports of home reading resources

	Various Books	Magazines	Newspapers	Children's Books
Do not have	4	10	7	1
Have	29	23	26	32
Total	33	33	33	33

Table 4.2.1b: Carers' report of access to a public library

	Victorian School	NSW School	Total
Do not have access	6	0	6
Have access	14	13	27
	20	13	33

Table 4.2.1c: Carers' report of family involvement in child's reading

	Mother involved	Mother not involved	Father involved	Father not involved	G'parent involved	G'parent not involved	Sibling involved	Sibling not involved
Male	11	2	5	8	1	12	0	13
Female	19	1	4	16	1	19	4	16
Total	30	3	9	24	2	31	4	29

Table 4.2.1d: Carers' report of Father's and Mother's involvement in reading to child

	Mother not involved	Mother is involved	Total
Father not involved	2	22	24
Father is involved	1	8	9
Total	3	30	33

4.2.2 Gender and the child's reading habits prior to RAP

Prior to the use of the *Reading Adventure Packs* (RAP), females reported a higher involvement in reading than did the males. They had a slightly higher weekly frequency of reading than did the males. They were more likely to have been independent readers than were the males and they were more likely to have initiated the reading episodes than were the males.

4.3 Carers and RAP

4.3.1 Carers' involvement in RAP

Table 4.3.1a clearly indicates yet again that the mother was the carer most involved in the child's reading. Twenty-five (75%) out of thirty mothers supervised the use of the RAP's and in only four homes neither the father nor mother was involved. It is possible that in two of these situations grandparents were the prime carers and hence they may have been involved. In only one home were both the father and mother involved. Despite their involvement, thirty-one carers within the thirty-three homes felt that the RAP involved too much of their time (see Table 4.3.1b).

Time was a significant factor in carers' comments about aiding their child's reading. For example one carer wrote "I believe it is important, however it doesn't get done every night." Another said, "I try when I can." In addition, three comments implied that the time needed to supervise the packs was a problem for carers. For example, one carer wrote that, "it would be more helpful if the packs came home on weekends [as] I'd have more time to spend." A second carer suggested that the packs would not "take up too much time if a little was done every day." Finally, yet another carer claimed that "in addition to their take-home readers I found it [supervision of the packs] too much for one night."

It is not so surprising therefore, that not all of the carers saw advantages concerning the RAP. The carers of fifteen children (nine female, six male) considered that the packs were of no great benefit to their child's literacy development. What is more, the carers of fifteen children (eleven female, four male) felt that the packs and their associated information had not enhanced their understanding of their child's literacy needs.

On the other hand, fifteen (45%) of the thirty-three respondents to carers' post-RAP survey took the time to write more favourable comments about the packs. One carer wrote, "I think that they are fantastic." Another wrote that "we enjoyed having the packs." Yet another wrote "my child thoroughly enjoyed the reading pack."

Table 4.3.1a: Father's and Mother's involvement in supervising RAP

	Mother does not supervise	Mother supervises	Total
Father does not supervise	4	25	29
Father supervises	2	1	3
Total	6	26	32

Table 4.3.1b: Carers' report of their feeling about time involvement in RAP

	Male	Female	Total
Carer felt RAP involved too much time	12	19	31
Carer willingly made time to devote to RAP	0	1	1
Total	12	20	32

4.3.2 Carers' responses to RAP

According to the reports of the carers, thirteen children (ten female, three male) enjoyed the writing book; thirteen children (eight female, five male) enjoyed the worksheets; nineteen children (eleven female, eight male) enjoyed the games, fourteen children (ten female, four male) enjoyed the books and finally, seventeen children (eleven female, six male) enjoyed the soft toy.

4.3.3 Carers' perceptions of the over-all value of the RAP

Carers of sixteen children (seven male, nine female) indicated that the RAP promoted the daily reading of their child. Carers of sixteen children (five female, eleven male) reported that they considered that the RAP had contributed to their child's reading development. The carer of only one child (a male) felt that the RAP detracted from their child's outside playtime.

Results indicated that the carers of females were more likely than the carers of males to report that their children demonstrated a positive change in attitude toward reading as a result of using the RAP. In the perception of carers, eighteen of twenty females as opposed to six of twelve males showed positive changes in attitude toward reading as a result of the RAP activities.

4.4 Children's pre-RAP attitude to reading and post-RAP attitude to RAP

Prior to the introduction of the *Reading Adventure Packs*, the children in both schools were given a questionnaire of 10 items related to their attitude to reading. Following their use of the packs, each child was given an 8-item questionnaire related to their attitude toward the packs. Each questionnaire was set against a three-point Likert scale in which the limits of the range were determined by happy or sad faces (see Figures 4.1.6a and 4.1.6b).

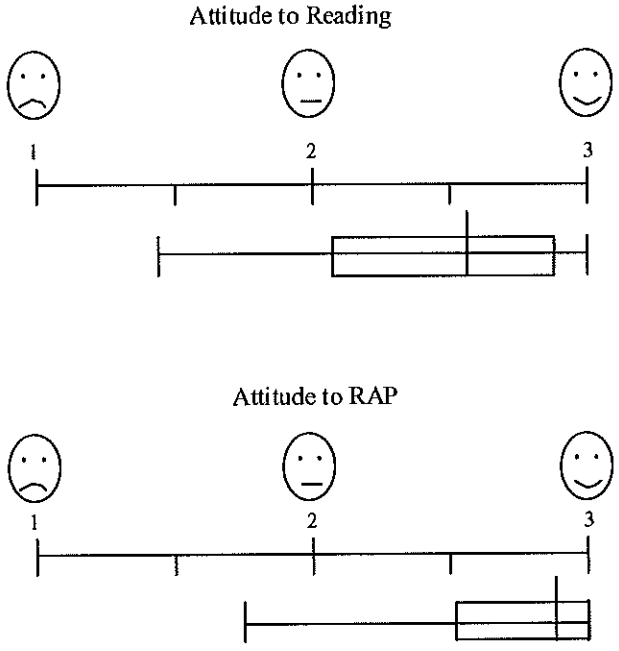
The post-RAP questionnaire was labelled 'Attitude to RAP' and exhibited a reliability of 0·78 and had a median measure of 2·93. With a lower quartile measure of 2·50,

this scale suggests that more than three quarters of the children indicated a positive attitude toward the reading packs. What is more, the upper quartile measure coincided with the maximum measure of 3·0 indicating that at least one quarter of the children had scored all items of the 7-item scale on the maximum Likert value.

It is interesting to note the apparent difference in distribution of the two scales as displayed in Figures 4.1.6a and 4.1.6b. It is acknowledged that these two scales measure different entities and similar results could be obtained from attitudes to ice cream, or cartoons. However it does indicate that a future study, with a more appropriately designed instrument, should be undertaken to see if the use of the packs does produce a short-term change in attitude to reading.

Figure 4.4.1a & 4.4.1b

Box plots for the scales 'Attitude to Reading' and 'Attitude to RAP'



4.5 Summary

In summary the study found that:

- all carers indicated that they saw literacy development as being very important to their child and that reading was more important than playing;
- mothers were the family member most involved in children's out-of-school reading;
- access to home-reading resources was varied;
- females were more likely to initiate reading, more likely to read independently and more likely to read more often than were the males;
- children were quite positive about RAP;
- some carers felt that RAP was too time consuming and not all felt that it was helpful in encouraging their children to read daily;
- carers gave a varied report on those components of the RAP that were attractive to their child.

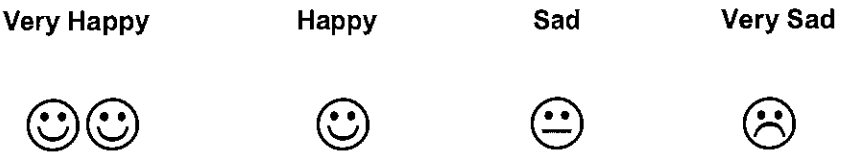
This section of the study was published and presented at the Australian Literacy Educators Association Conference (Fisher, Gill and Greive, 2005) on 24th -27th November 2004, held at the university of New England (refer to Appendix 10).

4.6 Discussion and Recommendations

In Study One, it would appear that the child's reactions to the RAP differed from those of their carers. The results suggest that most of the children were enthusiastic about the RAP while the carers were more ambivalent. Thus, it would appear that the intention of involving carers in their child's reading was only partially successful. This does not mean that the development and use of the RAP was a failure, nor does it mean that the campaign to involve carers should be abandoned. However it does mean that future RAP packs should be designed in such a way as to minimise carer-supervision.

The study also found limitations in the instruments employed. Future questionnaires should be designed to make data-entry into the computer straightforward e.g. a four-point scale.

Figure 4.6 Four Point Likert Scale



While a post-RAP child's questionnaire should examine their attitude toward the RAP itself, the questionnaire should be identical to the pre-RAP reading questionnaire to see if there is any short-term change in attitude toward reading.

5.0 Study Two Results

5.1 Participants

One hundred and three children, aged six to eight years-of-age, and their carers were involved in this study. Table 5.1a indicates the spread of ages and sex of students.

Table 5.1a: Age and sex of students attending the Victorian school

	Victorian School		
Age	Male	Female	Total
6	17	31	48
7	22	22	44
8	6	5	11
Total	45	58	103

At the initial information night, it is not surprising that in general the carers indicated that they felt that the development of literacy skills were important to their child. However, it was obvious that these carers did not always have sufficient resources at home and felt somewhat inadequate to assist in the literacy development of their child. The following is a report based on the information accessed from the pre study carer survey.

5.2 The Reading Environment of the Home

5.2.1 Home Resources

Notwithstanding these comments, the home reading resources were varied (see Table 5.2.1). Three homes indicated that they did not have any children's books, five homes reported that they did not have adult reading books, whereas the other ninety-five (94%) homes indicated that they had two or more of the types of reading material surveyed (General books, Magazines, Newspapers, Children's books) and seventy families (69%) reported they had all of the reading materials surveyed. Even though there seemed to be quite a variety of reading material at home, one wonders how

much of it was appropriate for the younger reader. What is more, sixteen homes indicated that they did not have access to a public library. It is uncertain whether this was because existing libraries were too far away or because the carers had not sought membership of a library.

Table 5.2.1a: Carers' reports of home reading resources

General books	Newspapers	Children's Books	More than 2 types	More than 3 types	More than 4 types
2	1	5	7	18	70

This was very similar to the results obtained in phase one of this study.

5.2.2 Carers Involvement

In ninety-seven of the one hundred and three homes (96%), someone was engaged in reading to the child. Table 5.2.2 indicates that within the home environment, the mother was most likely to assist in the child's reading – either in supervising the exercise or by actually reading to their child. Seventy-seven homes (76%) indicated that mothers were involved in assisting the child's individual reading, nineteen homes (18%) indicated the father's involvement, four homes indicated the involvement of grandparents and in three homes siblings were involved in other sibling's reading.

Table 5.2.2a: Carers report of family involvement in child's reading

Mother involved	Father involved	G'parent involved	Sibling involved
77	19	4	3

Again, this was similar to Study One.

5.2.3 Home Reading Habits

Home reading most often took place during the week in the evening and only seven of the children read at all during the weekend. The most common frequency of reading

was three to five times per week (Table 5.2.3). Even though it was reported that eighty-five of the children did read independently, ninety-six of them liked to read to someone. Also, most of the children preferred to have someone help them with their reading.

Table 5.2.3a: Weekly Frequency of Home Reading.

Less than once	One to three	Three to five	More than five
3	26	41	33

Even though the child initiated reading some of the time, this was very seldom always the case. At least half of the children needed to be reminded to read by the carers.

5.2.4 Gender Differences in Home Reading Habits.

Females reported a higher involvement in reading than did the boys. It was also noted that they had a slightly higher weekly frequency of reading than did the males. They were more likely to have been independent readers than were the males and they were more likely to have initiated the reading episodes than were the males.

5.2.5 Family Position Differences in Home Reading Habits.

From the data available, it would appear that the eldest child was less likely to seek carer's assistance with his/her reading and more likely to read independently. On the other hand the youngest was least likely to read independently and needed to be reminded more often than their siblings to read their books. The middle child was more likely to initiate reading, but reads less frequently that the other siblings. It was interesting to note that even though the mother had the greatest overall involvement in the child's home reading, the father had a higher involvement with the middle child than the other siblings.

Within the home environment, the mother was most likely to assist with the child's reading and girls reported a higher involvement reading. But, it would appear from the data available, that the father had more involvement with the middle child, than the other children.

5.2.6 Overview and Comparison with Study One

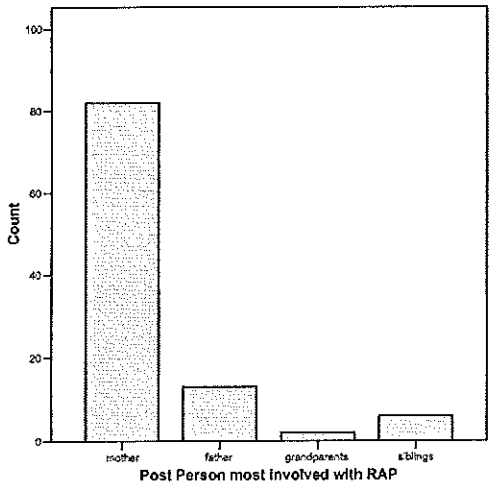
As in Study One, the reading resources at home were a variety of magazines and newspapers. But much of this reading material did not seem to be appropriate reading material for the six, seven and eight year old children. It was also noted in most of the responses, that the use of the Public Library was not rated highly in relation to the home reading environment. The mothers were the most likely to be involved in assisting the child in reading. In both studies the mother's assistance played a very important part in the child's reading supervision, but when there was more than one child in the family it appeared that the father might support the older children in their reading supervision. Most children read a little during the week, but read very little during the weekend. It seems there is a need for more encouragement and perhaps more resources to increase the amount of home based reading.

5.3 Carers' involvement in and 'Attitude to RAP'

5.3.1 Supervision of RAP

Graph 1 clearly indicates yet again that the mother was the carer most involved in the children's reading. Eighty-three (82%) mothers supervised the use of the RAP and in eight homes neither the father nor mother was involved. It is possible that in two of these situations, grandparents were the prime carers and hence they have been involved.

Graph 5.3.1 -



5.3.2 Time Devoted to RAP.

Most of the carers within the one hundred and three homes felt that the RAP did not involve too much of their time and assisted their child most days (see Table 5.3.2a and 5.3.2b). In only seven homes the carers gave no assistance to their child. Siblings may have been the helpers in this case. Using the RAP most often took place during the week in the evening and only seven of the children read at all during the weekend.

Table 5.3.2a - RAP takes too much time

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	97	94.2	94.2	94.2
	yes	6	5.8	5.8	100.0
	Total	103	100.0	100.0	

Table 5.3.2b - Carer time devoted to assisting with RAP

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	everyday	24	23.3	23.3	23.3
	three times a week	27	26.2	26.2	49.5
	twice a week	27	26.2	26.2	75.7
	once a week	18	17.5	17.5	93.2
	no assistance	7	6.8	6.8	100.0
	Total	103	100.0	100.0	

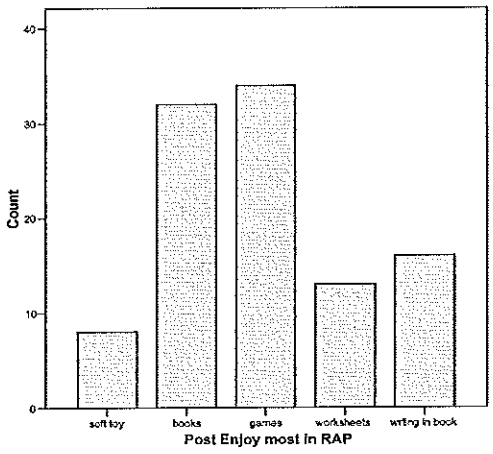
5.3.3 Carer's Responses to RAP

Of the carers, 62% indicated that they thought that RAP improved their child's attitude towards reading (see Table 5.3.3a). They saw it as an enjoyable way of getting their child to read at home. There was enough suitable material included, to keep the child from being bored, catering for all levels of literacy development. Most times the child initiated its use and about half thought that they had improved reading skills. The two articles in the back-packs that appear to be the most enjoyed were the books and the games associated with the theme of the particular back-pack (Graph 5.3.3a).

Table 5.3.3a - Post RAP improved child attitude

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	39	37.9	37.9	37.9
	yes	64	62.1	62.1	100.0
	Total	103	100.0	100.0	

Graph 5.3.3 -



It is not so surprising therefore, that most of the carers saw advantages concerning the RAP. The carers considered that the packs were of great benefit to their children's literacy development. Only 14 carers wanted the RAP to be self contained with no parental assistance (Table 5.3.3b).

Table 5.3.3b - Post Prefer RAP with no carer assistance

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	89	86.4	86.4	86.4
	yes	14	13.6	13.6	100.0
	Total	103	100.0	100.0	

5.3.4 Carers' perceptions of the over-all value of the RAP

Carers indicated that the RAP promoted the daily reading of their child. Carers of fifty-six (55%) children reported that they considered that the RAP had contributed to their child's reading development and sixty four (63%) carers indicated that their child's attitude to reading had improved.

Results indicated that the carers of girls were more likely than the carers of boys to report that their child demonstrated a positive change in attitude toward reading as a result of using the RAP.

5.3.5 Overview and Comparison with Study One

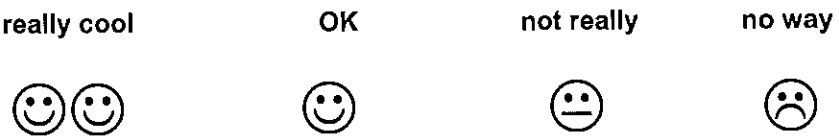
In Study One, the carers felt that too much time of their time was taken up with RAP. This did not seem to be the case in Study Two. Some of the RAP contents had been modified to be more child oriented and to minimize the demands on the carer's time. When the carers were asked the question ''Do you consider RAP takes too much of your time?' 94% answered 'No'. The carers were very positive towards the RAP materials and perceived that it was a great way to get the children into reading at home and keep the children from being bored with reading. It appears that the technique of having a game associated with the reading books was a successful way of increasing the enjoyment of reading.

5.4 Child's 'Attitude to Reading'; Pre-RAP

5.4.1 Introduction

Prior to the introduction of the *Reading Adventure Packs*, the children were given a questionnaire of 14 items related to their attitude to reading. Each question was set against a four-point Likert scale in which the limits of the range were determined by happy or sad faces as shown below.

Figure 5.4.1 Four Point Likert Scale



5.4.2 Scale Overview

The set of 14 questions was labelled 'Attitude to Reading' and exhibited a reliability of 0.72 and had a mean attitude rating of 3.06 (where a rating of 1 indicates that the child has quite a strong negative attitude to reading and 4 indicates that the child has a strong positive attitude to reading) and a median of 3.07. The lower quartile

measure of 2.78 suggests that three quarters of the children indicated a strong or very strong positive attitude to reading.

The 'Attitude to Reading' rating for the females is higher than that for the males (mean for females: 3.08, mean for males: 3.03), and the younger the child the higher the attitude rating (mean for 6yr: 3.10, mean for 7yr: 3.05, mean for 8yr: 2.95).

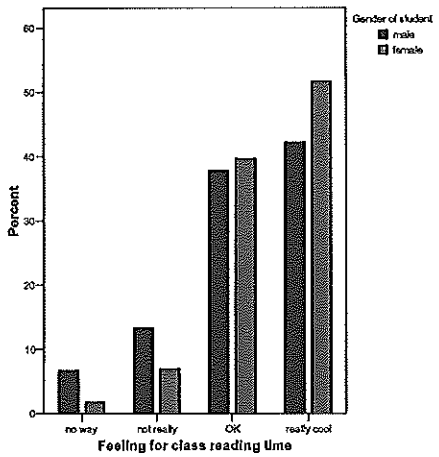
5.4.3 Individual Components of 'Attitude to Reading' Factor

Each of the 14 questions in the attitude to reading scale was explored for differences between ages and gender.

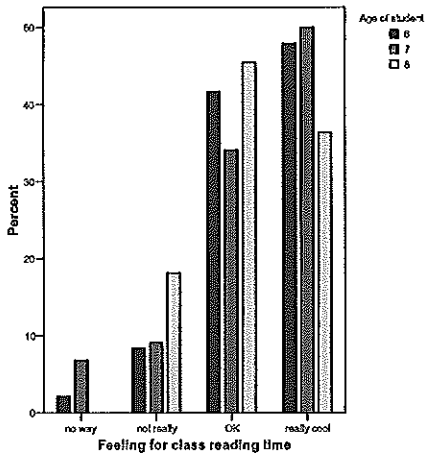
5.4.3.1 Child's feeling when it is time for reading class.

The total group mean of 3.30 for this component indicates that most were very positive towards reading in class. Even though the overall rating is very high, the females (3.41) were higher than the males (3.16) and the younger children were more enthusiastic about reading classes (3.35, 3.27, and 3.18 for the six, seven and eight year olds respectively). This is illustrated in the graphs 5.4.3.1a and 5.4.3.1b, below.

Graph 5.4.3.1a



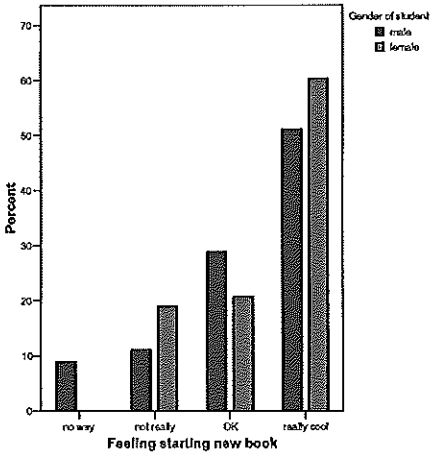
Graph 5.4.3.1b



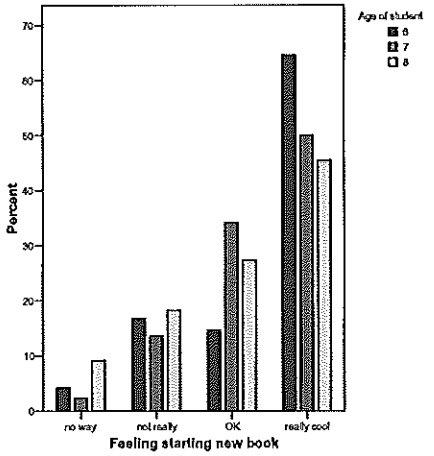
5.4.3.2 Child's feeling about starting a new book.

The total group mean of 3.33 for this component once again indicates a very strong positive attitude towards starting to read a new book. Even though the overall rating is very high, the females (3.41) were higher than the males (3.22) and the younger children were more enthusiastic about starting a new book, (3.40, 3.32 and 3.09 for the six, seven and eight year olds respectively). This is illustrated in the graphs 5.4.3.2a and 5.4.3.2b, below.

Graph 5.4.3.2a



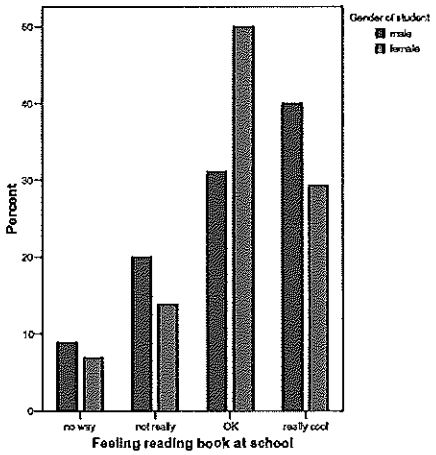
Graph 5.4.3.2b



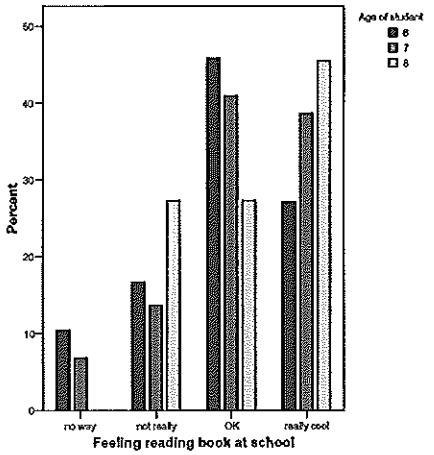
5.4.3.3 Child's feeling about reading a book at school.

The total group mean of 3.02 for this component indicates a positive attitude to reading a book at school. Even though the overall rate is high, the males and females were the same (3.02) and the eight year old children were more enthusiastic about reading books at school, (2.90, 3.11 and 3.18 for the six, seven and eight year olds respectively). This is illustrated in the graphs 5.4.3.3a and 5.4.3.3b, below.

Graph 5.4.3.3a



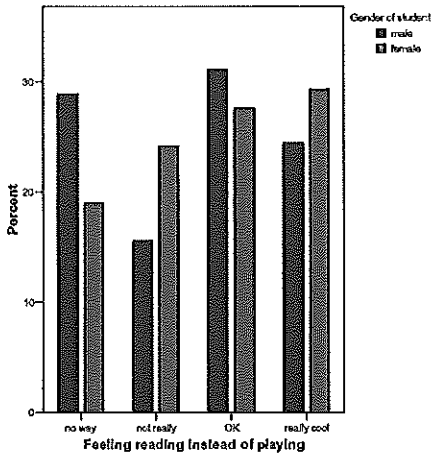
Graph .5.4.3.3b



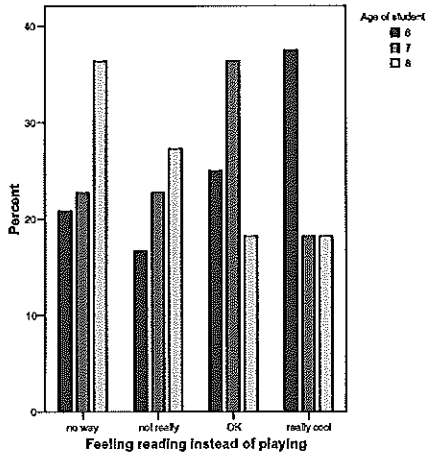
5.4.3.4 Child's feeling about reading instead of playing.

The total group mean of 2.60 for this component indicates a weaker positive attitude to reading instead of playing. The females (2.67) are a little higher than the males (2.51) and again the younger children were more enthusiastic about reading instead of playing (2.79, 2.50 and 2.18 for the six, seven and eight year olds respectively), but still these ratios are relatively quite low. This is illustrated in the graphs 5.4.3.4a and 5.4.3.4b, below.

Graph 5.4.3.4a



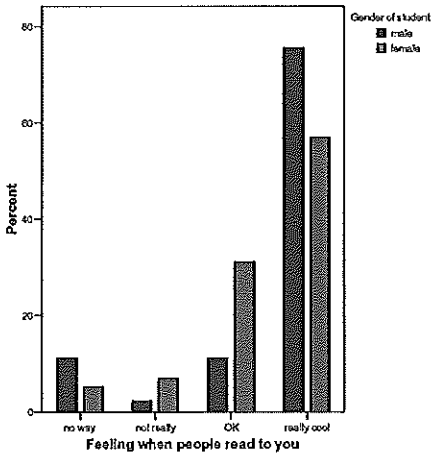
Graph 5.4.3.4b



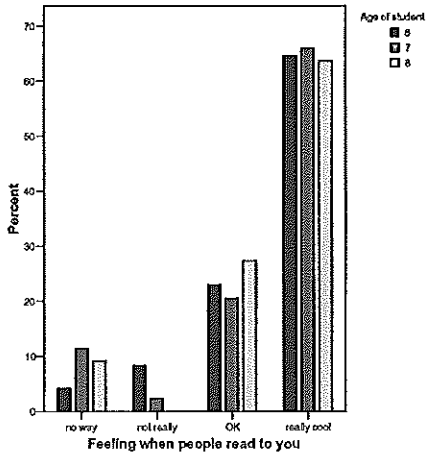
5.4.3.5 Child's feeling when someone reads to them at home.

The total group mean of 3.45 for this component indicates a very strong positive attitude towards having someone to read to them. The overall rate is high and interestingly, the males (3.51) are slightly higher than the females (3.40). The younger children were the most enthusiastic about being read to at home (3.48, 3.41 and 3.45 for the six, seven and eight year olds respectively). This is illustrated in the graphs 5.4.3.5a and 5.4.3.5b, below.

Graph 5.4.3.5a



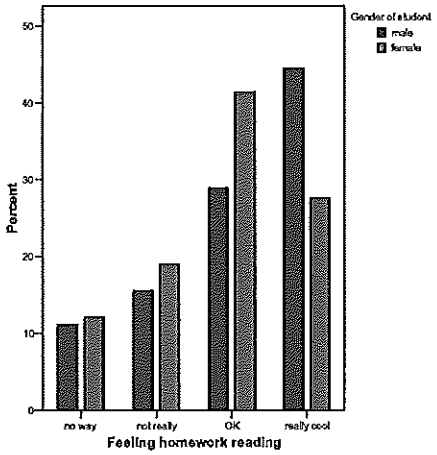
Graph 5.4.3.5b



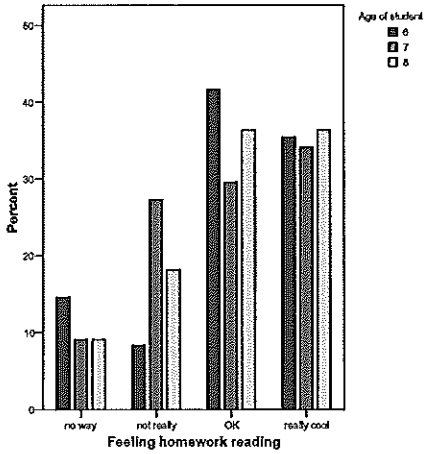
5.4.3.6 Child's feeling about doing homework reading.

The total group mean of 2.94 for this component indicates a reasonably positive attitude towards homework reading. But here we have the reverse of the common trend with the males (3.07) scoring higher than the females (2.84) and the eight year old children are more enthusiastic about homework reading (2.98, 2.89 and 3.00 for the six, seven and eight year olds respectively) than the six year olds. This is illustrated in the graphs 5.4.3.6a and 5.4.3.6b, below.

Graph 5.4.3.6a



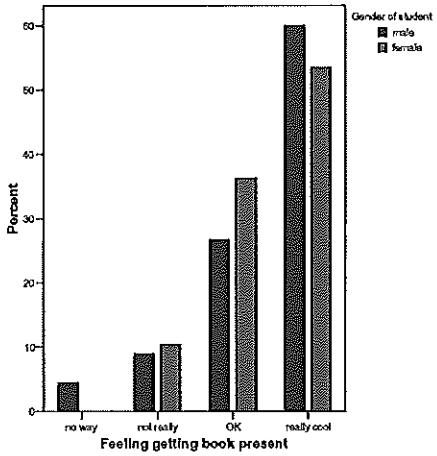
Graph 5.4.3.6b



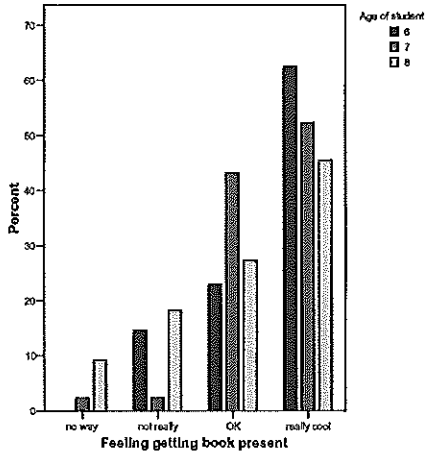
5.4.3.7 Child's feeling about getting a book for a present.

The total group mean of 3.43 for this component once again indicates a very strong positive attitude towards getting a book as a present. There is no significant difference between males (3.42) and females (3.43) and the younger children being more enthusiastic about receiving a book as a present (3.48, 3.45 and 3.09 for the six, seven and eight year olds respectively). This is illustrated in the graphs 5.4.3.7a and 5.4.3.7b, below.

Graph 5.4.3.7a



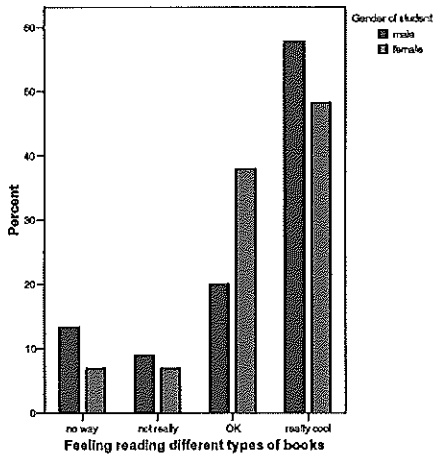
Graph 5.4.3.7b



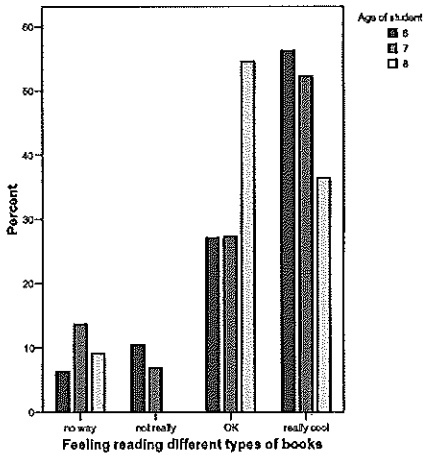
5.4.3.8 Child's feeling about reading different kinds of books.

The total group mean of 3.25 for this component indicates a very positive attitude towards reading different types of books. This score is quite high, but the females (3.28) are higher than the males (3.22) on this score and again the younger children are more enthusiastic about reading different kinds of books (3.33, 3.18 and 3.18 for the six, seven and eight year olds respectively). This is illustrated in the graphs 5.4.3.8a and 5.4.3.8b, below.

Graph 5.4.3.8a



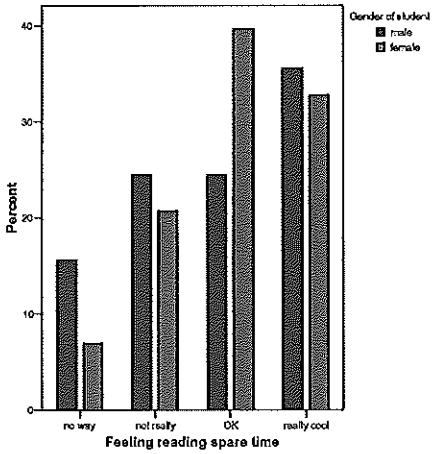
Graph 5.4.3.8b



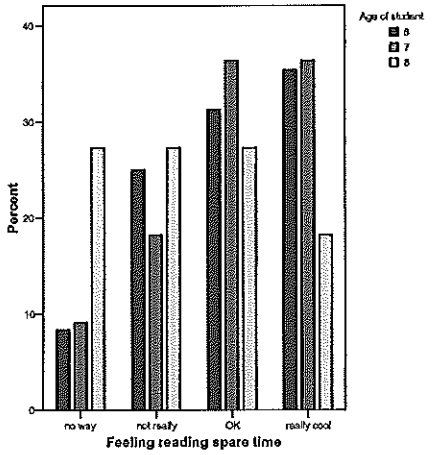
5.4.3.9 Child's feeling about reading in his/her spare time.

The total group of 2.90 for this component indicates a weaker strong positive attitude towards reading in his/her spare time. The females (2.98) are higher than the males (2.80) and the seven year old children more enthusiastic about reading in their spare time (2.94, 3.00 and 2.36 for the six, seven and eight year olds respectively) than the other age groups. This is illustrated in the graphs 5.4.3.9a and 5.4.3.9b, below.

Graph 5.4.3.9a



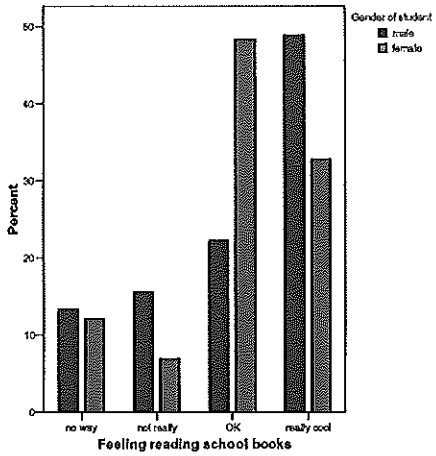
Graph 5.4.3.9b



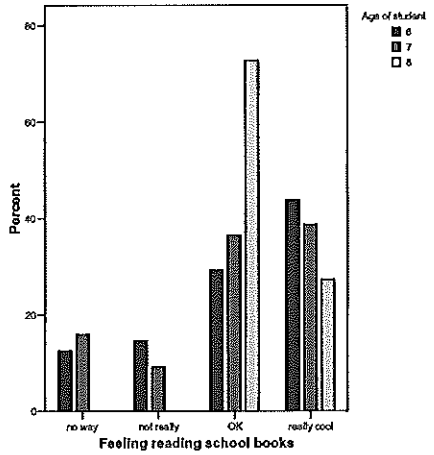
5.4.3.10 Child's feeling about reading school books.

The total group mean of 3.04 for this component indicates a positive attitude towards reading school books. Here we also have the reverse of the typical responses with the males (3.07) scoring higher than the females (3.02) and the eight year old children more enthusiastic about reading school books (3.04, 2.98 and 3.27 for the six, seven and eight year olds) than the other age groups. This is illustrated in the graphs 5.4.3.10a and 5.4.3.10b, below.

Graph 5.4.3.10a



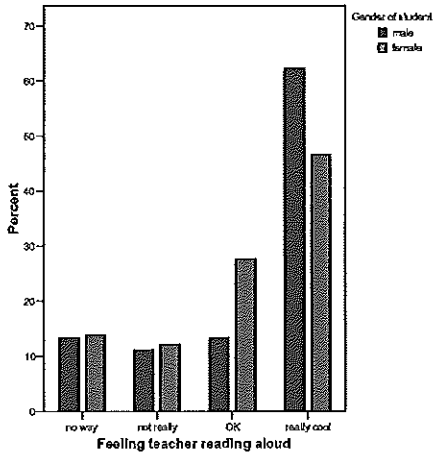
Graph 5.4.3.10b



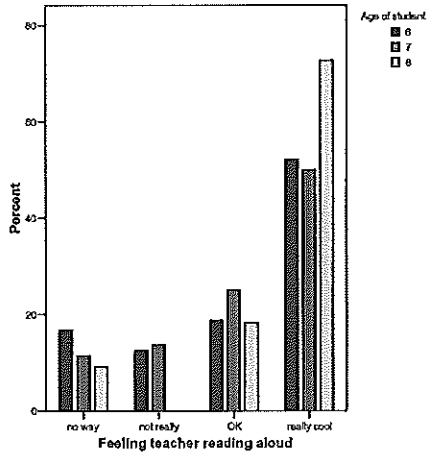
5.4.3.11 Child's feeling when teacher reads a story aloud.

The total group mean of 3.15 for this component indicates a strong positive attitude towards the teacher reading books aloud. Here is yet another reversal of the typical response with the males (3.24) scoring higher than the females (3.07) and the eight year old children more enthusiastic about reading aloud to the teacher (3.06, 3.14 and 3.55 for the six, seven and eight year olds respectively) than the other age groups. This is illustrated in the graphs 5.4.3.11a and 5.4.3.11b, below.

Graph 5.4.3.11a



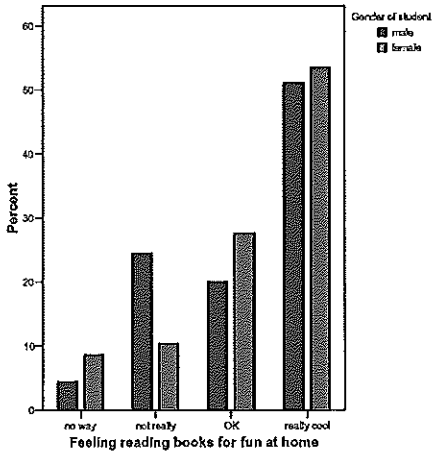
Graph 5.4.3.11b



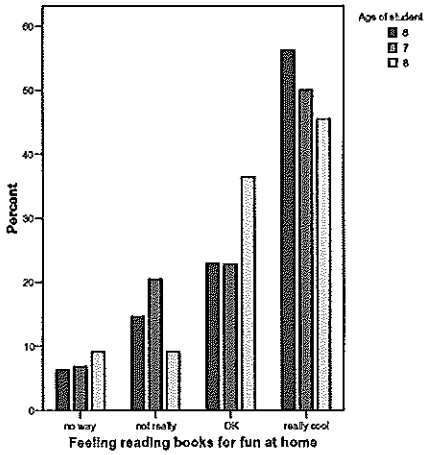
5.4.3.12 Child's feeling about reading books for fun.

The total group mean of 3.22 for this component indicates a strong positive attitude towards the reading of books for fun. Here we have a return to the typical response pattern with the females (3.26) scoring higher than the males (3.18) and the younger children more enthusiastic about reading books for fun (3.29, 3.16 and 3.18 for the six, seven and eight year olds respectively) than the others. This is illustrated in the graphs 5.4.3.12a and 5.4.3.12b, below.

Graph 5.4.3.12a



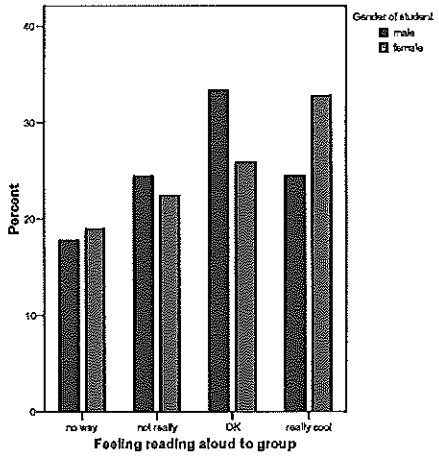
Graph 5.4.3.12b



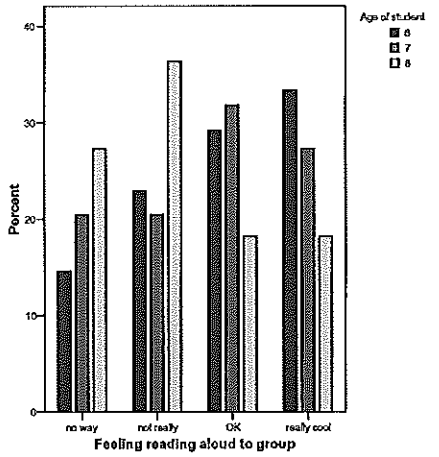
5.4.3.13 Child's feeling when asked to read aloud to the group.

The total group mean of 2.69 for this component indicates a weaker positive attitude towards reading aloud to a group. Once again, the females (2.72) were higher than the males (2.64) and the younger children was more enthusiastic about reading aloud to the group (2.81, 2.66 and 2.27 for the six, seven and eight year olds respectively) with the eight year old group having a considerably lower score than the other groups. This is illustrated in the graphs 5.4.3.13a and 5.4.3.13b, below.

Graph 5.4.3.13a



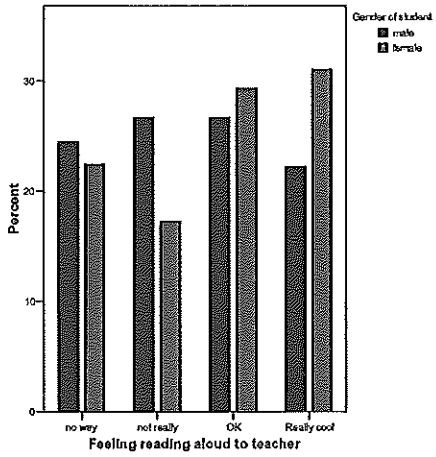
Graph 5.4.3.13b



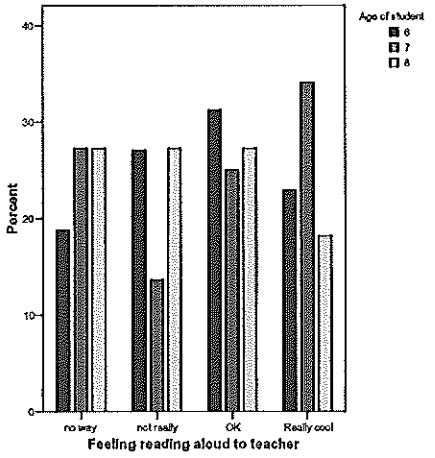
5.4.3.14 Child's feeling when asked to read aloud to the teacher.

The total group mean of 2.59 for this component indicates a weaker positive attitude towards reading to the teacher. The females (2.69) were higher than the males (2.47) and the seven year old group were more enthusiastic about reading aloud to the teacher (2.58, 2.66 and 2.36 for the six, seven and eight year olds respectively) as with reading aloud to the group, the eight year old children scored considerably lower than the other ages on this question. This is illustrated in the graphs 5.4.3.14a and 5.4.3.14b, below.

Graph 5.4.3.14a



Graph 5.4.3.14b



5.4.4 Overview of the Individual Questions of the pre-RAP 'Attitude to Reading'.

The pre-RAP 'Attitude to Reading' mean scores for all the individual questions are quite high, with the highest being 3.45. The lowest score (2.59) is still greater than theoretical middle score of 2.50. This shows the children generally exhibited an overall positive 'Attitude to Reading' before their experience with RAP. The children rated their feeling towards the class reading time, starting a new book, when someone reads to you at home, and getting a book for a present, questions the highest. This seems to indicate that the children have a perception that books are important. However, and perhaps not surprisingly, they rated their feeling towards reading instead of playing, reading aloud to the group, and reading aloud to the teacher, questions as the lowest. This is characteristic of most children at this age because they are quite worried about making mistakes when reading. The reading a book at

school, doing homework reading, reading different kinds of books, reading in your spare time, listening to your teacher read and reading books for fun at home, questions were rated somewhere in-between.

Of the group of questions the children rated the highest; the females gave higher ratings than the males, except for the question about someone reading to them at home. This trend of the females rating the individual questions higher than the males was common for most of the questions. However, the males rated their feeling towards the homework reading, reading school books and their teacher reading to them questions, higher than the females. Further, even though in most of the questions the 6 year olds rated the individual questions higher than the other age groups, the 8 year olds also followed the pattern of the males scoring the same three questions higher than the other age groups. It is interesting to note that these situations appear to be less threatening than the situations accessed in the other questions.

5.5 Child's 'Attitude to Reading' – Post RAP

5.5.1 Introduction

Following their use of the RAP packs, each child was given a 22 item questionnaire, related to their 'Attitude to Reading' and towards their 'Attitude to RAP'. The post-RAP questionnaire repeated the pre-RAP 'Attitude to Reading' questions and then added eight others that were labelled 'Attitude to RAP'. The following data relates to the child's response to the 'Attitude to Reading' scale after he/she had experienced the RAP packs.

5.5.2 Scale Overview

The overall post-RAP 'Attitude to Reading' scale had a mean attitude rating of 3.07 (where a rating of 1 indicates that the child has quite a strong negative attitude to reading and 4 indicates that the child has a strong positive attitude to reading) and a median of 3.07. These values indicate that most of the children were happy to be involved in a range of reading activities. The lower quartile measure of 2.78 suggests

that three quarters of the children indicated a strong or very strong positive attitude to reading.

The 'Attitude to Reading' rating for the females, as with the pre-RAP testing, is higher than that for the male (mean for females: 3.15, mean for males: 2.93), which is a significant difference at the p=0.05 level. As the overall 'Attitude to Reading' index did not change from pre to post testing the significant difference between males, females at the post-RAP testing would seem to indicate that the RAP experience has resulted in the females becoming more positive towards school reading, and the males becoming less positive towards school reading. In contrast to the pre-RAP testing, the younger the children reported a lower attitude rating than the older children (mean 6yr: 3.03, mean 7yr: 3.06, mean 8yr: 3.10).

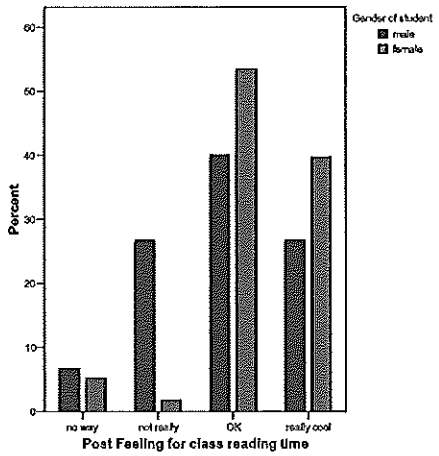
5.5.3 Individual Components of 'post-Attitude to Reading' Factor

In considering the various components of this "Attitude to Reading' scale it was noted that there were distinct differences between these components and differences within these components for males and females and age levels. Further, these differences did not always follow the pre-RAP patterns.

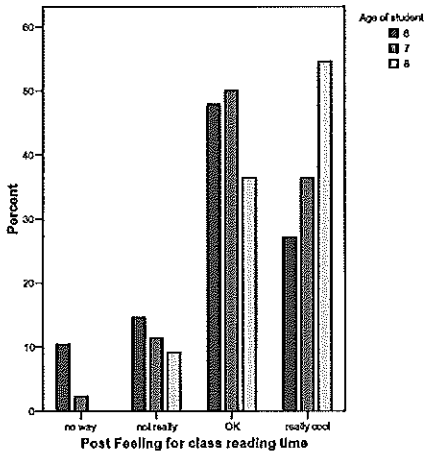
5.5.3.1 Child's feeling when it is time for reading class.

The total group mean of 3.10 for this component indicates that most were positive towards reading in class but this rating was lower than the pre testing value of 3.30. Even though the overall rating is very high, the females were much higher than the males (mean female: 3.28, mean male: 2.87), and this difference was significant at the 0.05 level, and is illustrated in graph 5.5.3.1a. In contrast to the pre testing the 6 year old children were less enthusiastic about reading classes (mean 6yr: 2.92, mean 7yr: 3.20, mean 8yr: 3.45), as also illustrated in the graphs 5.5.3.1b.

Graph 5.5.3.1a



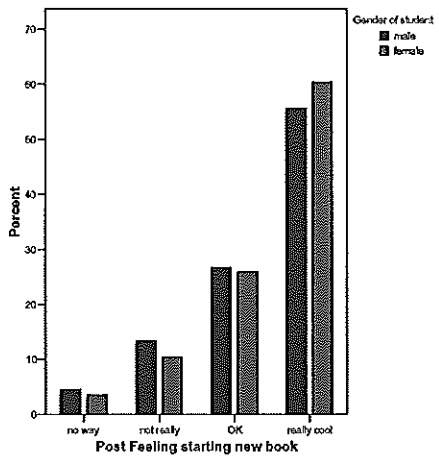
Graph 5.5.3.1b



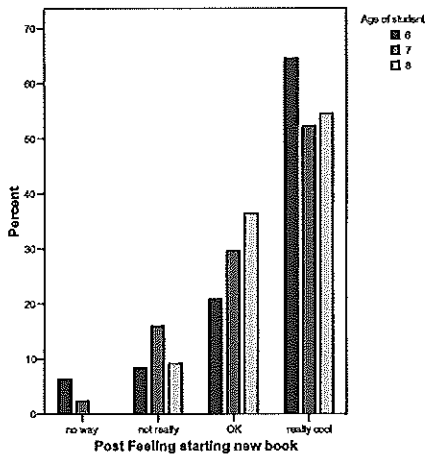
5.5.3.2 Child's feeling about starting a new book.

The total group mean of 3.39 for this component indicates a stronger positive attitude towards starting to read a new book than that of pre-RAP because this value is higher than that of the pre-test of 3.33. Even though the overall rating is very high, the females were higher than the males (mean female: 3.43, mean male 3.33), which follows the pre test pattern (graph 5.5.3.2a). As distinct from the pre test where the younger the children the more positive they are about starting a new book, in the post testing the least positive attitude was displayed by the seven year olds (graph 5.5.3.2b).

Graph 5.5.3.2a



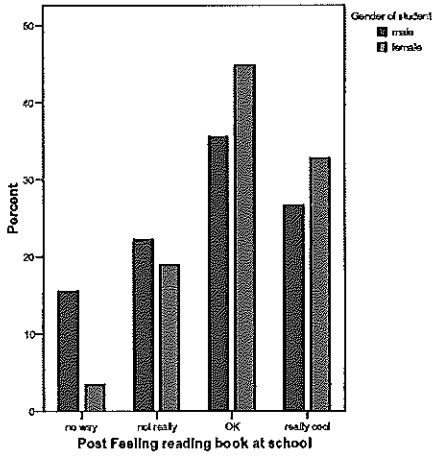
Graph 5.5.3.2b



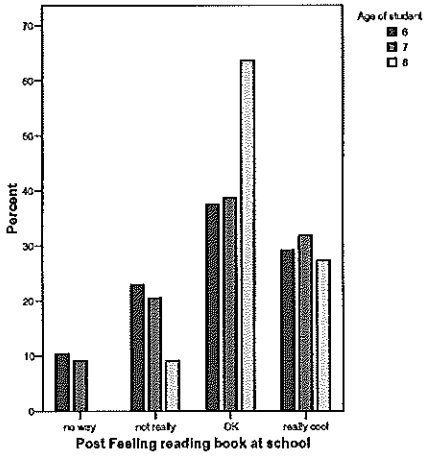
5.5.3.3 Child's feeling about reading a book at school.

The total group mean of 2.92 for this component indicated that most were positive towards reading a book at school but this rating was lower than the pre testing value of 3.02. The females were much higher than the males (mean females: 3.07, mean males: 2.75), and the difference was significant at the p=0.05 level, as illustrated in graph 5.5.3.3a. In contrast to the pre testing the younger child was less enthusiastic about reading a book at school (mean 6yr: 2.85, mean 7yr: 2.93, mean 8yr: 3.18), but these ratios are relatively low as illustrated in the graph 5.5.3.3b

Graph 5.5.3.3a



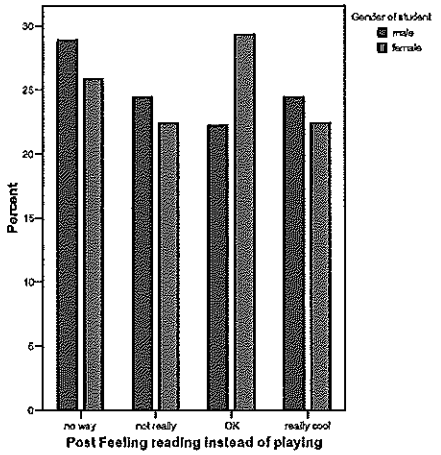
Graph 5.5.3.3b



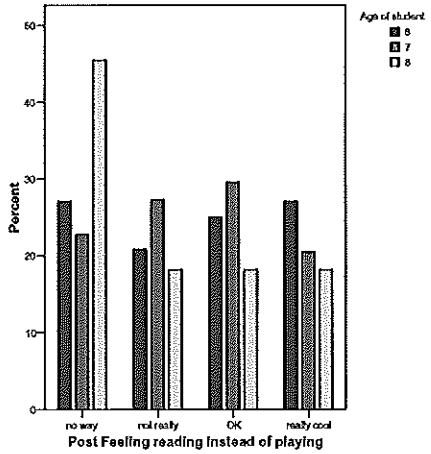
5.5.3.4 Child's feeling about reading instead of playing.

The total group mean of 2.46 for this component indicates that most were not so positive towards reading instead of playing but this rating was lower than the pre testing value of 2.60. The overall rating is high and interestingly, the females were a little higher than the males (mean female: 2.48, mean male: 2.42), as illustrated in graph 5.5.3.4a. In pre testing, the younger children were the most positive about reading instead of playing (mean 6yr: 2.52, mean 7yr: 2.48, mean 8yr: 2.09), but again these ratios are relatively low as illustrated in the graph 5.5.3.4b

Graph 5.5.3.4a



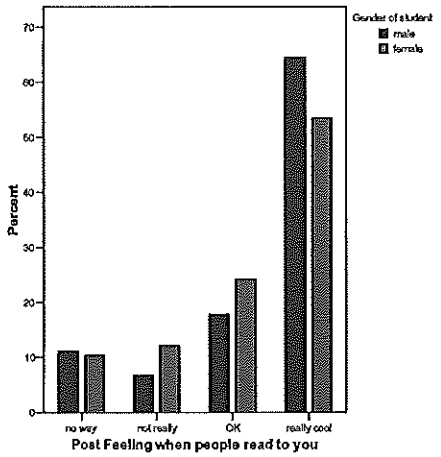
Graph 5.5.3.4b



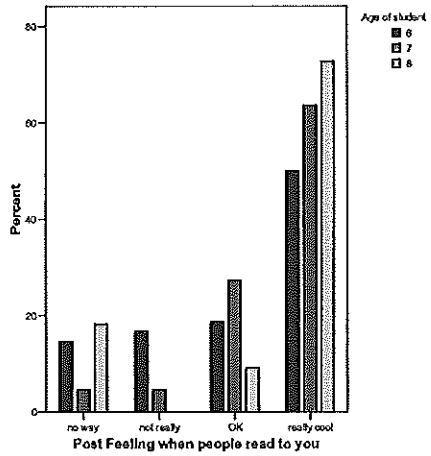
5.5.3.5 Child's feeling when someone reads to him/her.

The total group mean of 3.27 for this component indicates that most were very positive towards someone reading to them but this rating was lower than the pre testing value of 3.45. Here we have the reverse of the typical response with the males higher than the females (mean males: 3.36 mean female: 3.21), as shown in graph 5.5.3.5a. In contrast to the pre testing the younger children were less enthusiastic about having someone read to them (mean 6yr: 3.04, mean 7yr: 3.50, mean 8yr: 3.36), as illustrated in the graph 5.5.3.5b.

Graph 5.5.3.5a



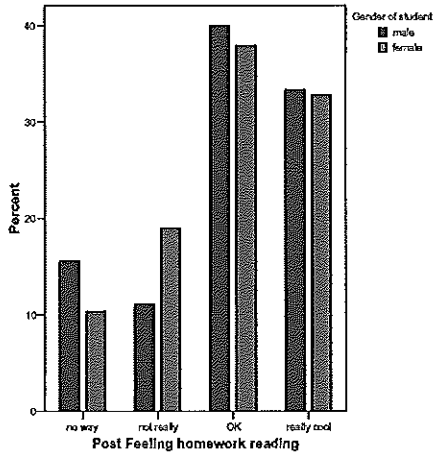
Graph 5.5.3.5b



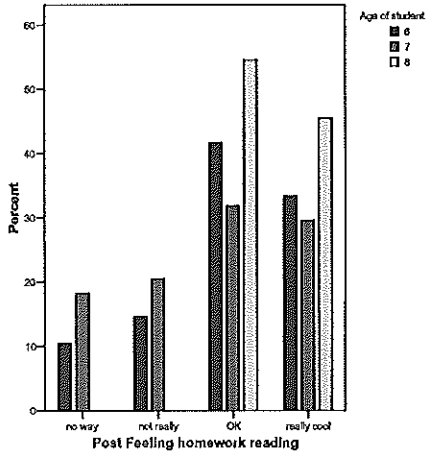
5.5.3.6 Child's feeling about doing homework reading.

The total group mean of 2.29 for this component indicates a reasonable attitude towards doing reading homework but this rating was lower than the pre testing value of 2.94. Again the overall rating is quite high, the females were higher than the males (mean female: 2.93, mean male: 2.91), but only by 0.02, as illustrated in graph 5.5.3.6a. In contrast with the pre testing the older group of children were more enthusiastic about homework reading (mean 6yr: 2.98, mean 7yr: 2.73, mean 8yr: 3.45), as illustrated in graph 5.5.3.6b.

Graph 5.5.3.6a



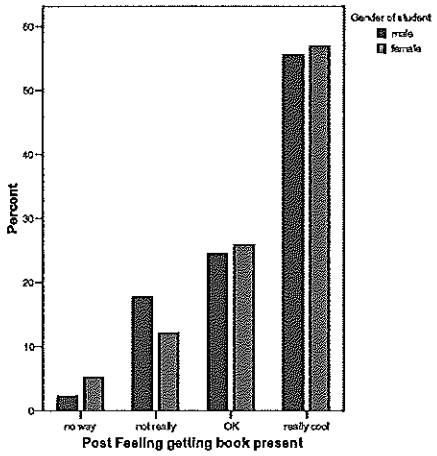
Graph 5.5.3.6b



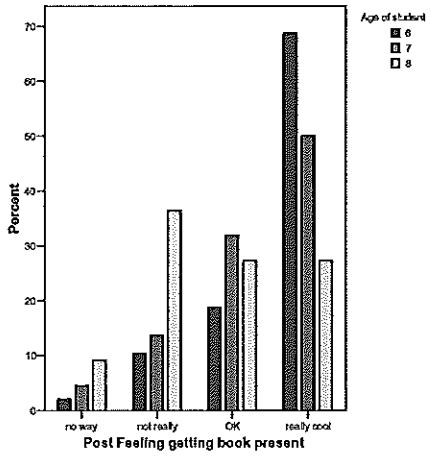
5.5.3.7 Child's feeling about getting a book for a present.

The total group mean of 3.34 for this component indicates that most were positive towards getting a book for a present but this rating was lower than the pre testing value of 3.43. Even though the overall rating is very high, the females are a little higher than the males (mean female: 3.34, mean male: 3.33). Here we have only a 0.01 difference between the means, as illustrated in graph 5.5.3.7a. In contrast to the pre testing the younger children were more enthusiastic about getting a book for a present (mean 6yr: 3.54, mean 7yr: 3.27, mean 8yr: 2.73), as illustrated in graph 5.5.3.7b.

Graph 5.5.3.7a



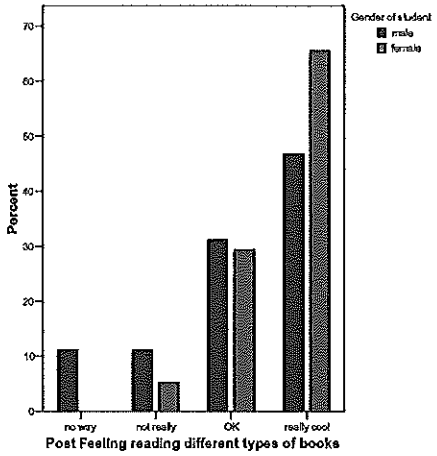
Graph 5.5.3.7b



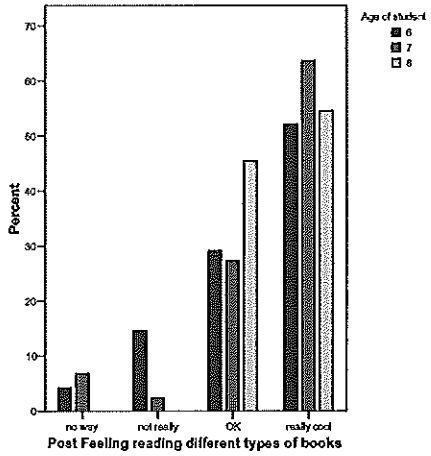
5.5.3.8 Child's feeling about reading different kinds of books.

The total group mean of 3.40 for this component indicates a stronger positive attitude towards reading different kinds of books than that of the pre-RAP because this value is higher than that of the pre-test of 3.25. Even though the overall rating is very high, the females were much higher than the males (mean female: 3.60, mean male: 3.13), which follows the pre test pattern (graph 5.5.3.8a), as distinct from the pre test where the younger the child the more positive they were about reading different kinds of books. In the post testing the least positive attitude was displayed by the six year old children (graph 5.5.3.8b).

Graph 5.5.3.8a



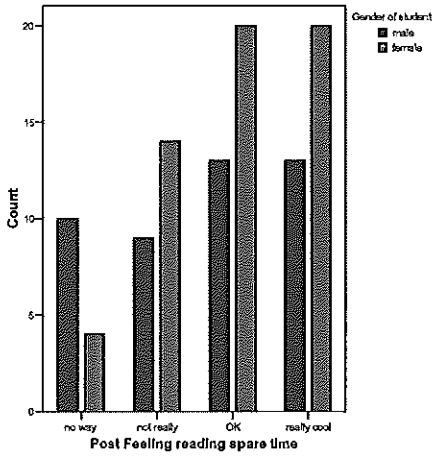
Graph 5.5.3.8b



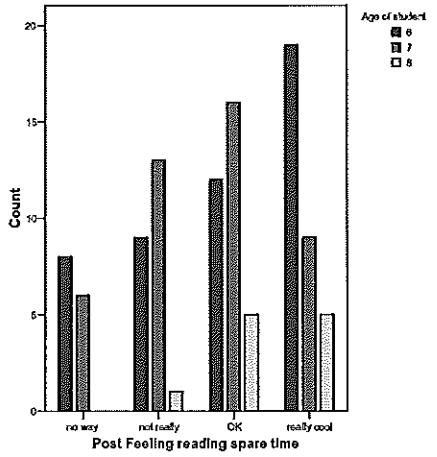
5.5.3.9 Child's feeling about reading in his/her spare time.

The total group mean of 2.83 for this component indicates a reasonable attitude towards reading in their spare time but this rating was lower than the pre-testing value of 2.90. Even though the overall rating is high, the females are much higher than the males (mean female: 2.97, mean male: 2.64), illustrated in the graph 5.5.3.9a. In contrast to the pre testing the seven year old group were less enthusiastic about reading in their spare time but the eight year old children were very enthusiastic (mean 6yr: 2.88, mean 7yr: 2.64, mean 8yr: 3.36), as illustrated in graph 5.5.3.9b.

Graph 5.5.3.9a



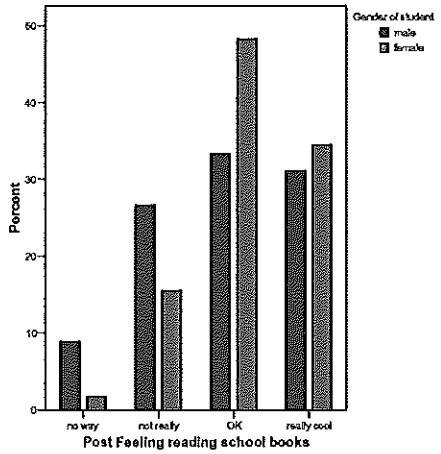
Graph 5.5.3.9b



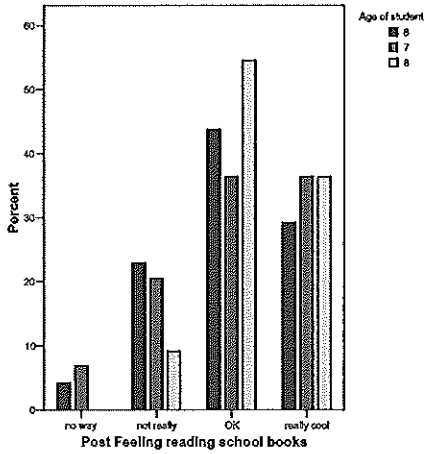
5.5.3.10 Child's feeling about reading school books.

The total group mean of 3.03 for this component indicates that most were positive towards reading books at school but this rating was slightly lower than the pre testing value of 3.04. Even though the overall rating is very high, the females were much higher than the males (mean female: 3.16, mean male: 2.87), as illustrated in graph 5.5.3.10a, below. In contrast with the pre-RAP questionnaire, the eight year olds are more enthusiastic about reading school books than any of the other age groups (mean 6yr: 2.98, mean 7yr: 3.02, mean 8yr: 3.27), as illustrated in the graph 5.5.3.10b.

Graph 5.5.3.10a



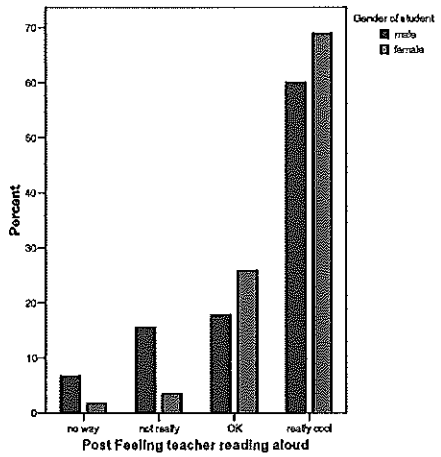
Graph 5.5.3.10b



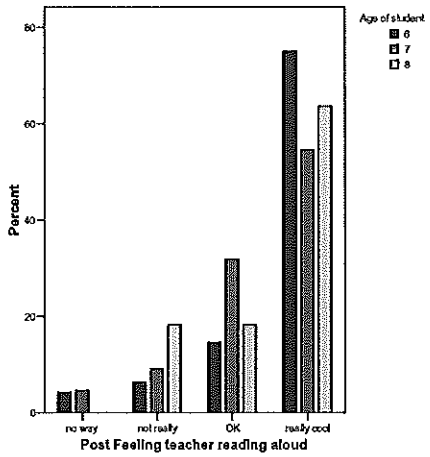
5.5.3.11 Child's feeling when the teacher reads a story aloud.

A total group mean of 3.49 for this component indicates a stronger positive attitude towards listening to the teacher reading aloud, than that of pre-RAP because this value is higher than that of the pre-test of 3.15. The overall rating is high, the females were higher than the males (mean female: 3.62, mean male: 3.13), a return to the typical response pattern. This is illustrated in graph 5.5.3.11a. The younger children are more enthusiastic towards listening to the teacher read aloud than any of the other age groups (mean 6yr: 3.60, mean 7yr: 3.36, mean 8yr: 3.45) as illustrated in the graph below, 5.5.3.11b.

Graph 5.5.3.11a



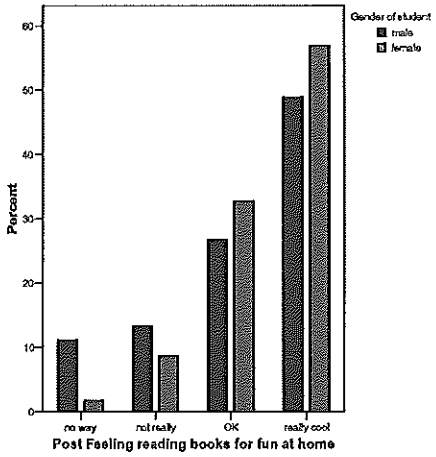
Graph 5.5.3.11b



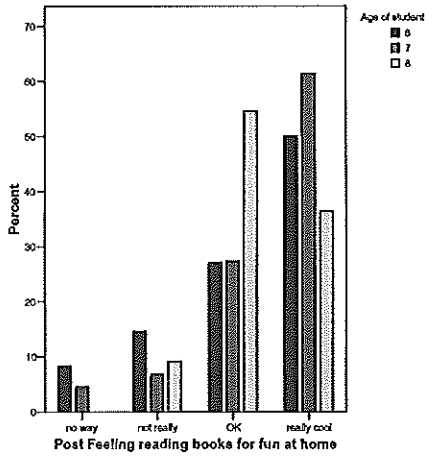
5.5.3.12 Child's feeling about reading books for fun.

The total group mean of 3.31 for this component indicates a stronger positive attitude towards reading books for fun at home, than that of pre-RAP because this value is higher than that of the pre-test of 3.22. The overall rate is high and this again follows the typical pre-RAP response pattern. The females were much higher than the males (mean female: 3.45, mean male: 3.13), as shown in graph 5.5.3.12a. As distinct from the pre test the seven year old children were more positive about reading books for fun (mean 6yr: 3.19, mean 7yr: 3.45, mean 8yr: 3.27), as shown in graph 5.5.3.12b, below.

Graph 5.5.3.12a



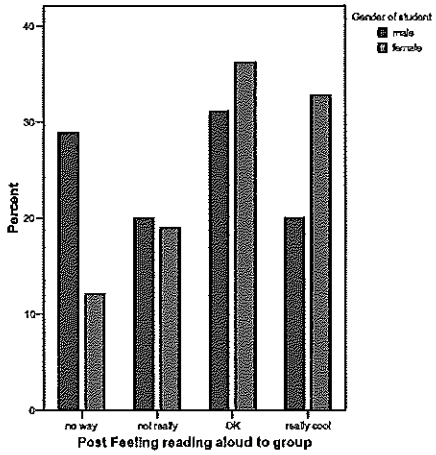
Graph 5.5.3.12b



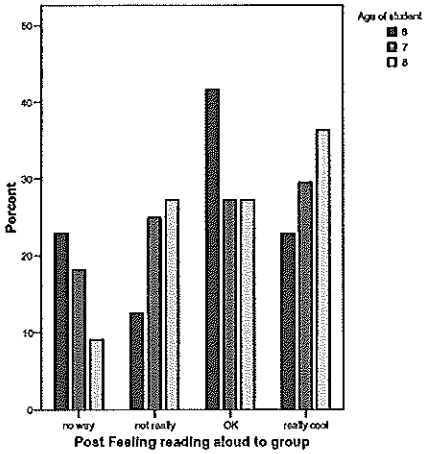
5.5.3.13 Child's feeling when asked to read aloud to the group.

The total mean of 2.69 for this component indicates that most were positive about reading aloud to a group and this rating was the same as the pre testing value, 2.69. Once again the females were much higher than the males (mean female: 2.90, mean male: 2.42) as illustrated in graph 5.5.3.13a. The eight year olds scored considerably higher than the other age groups, on this question (mean 6yr: 2.65, mean 7yr: 2.68, mean 8yr: 2.91). This is a reversal of the response in the pre-test where the 6 year old group scored higher. This is shown below in graph 5.5.3.13b.

Graph 5.5.3.13a



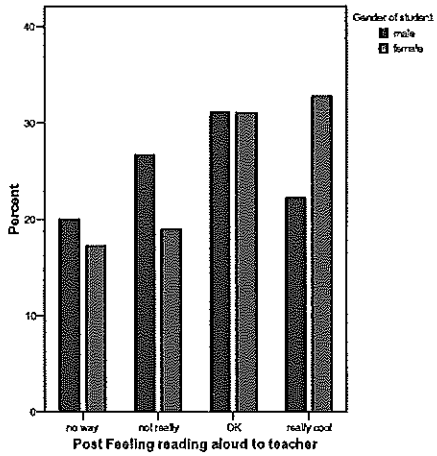
Graph 5.5.3.13b



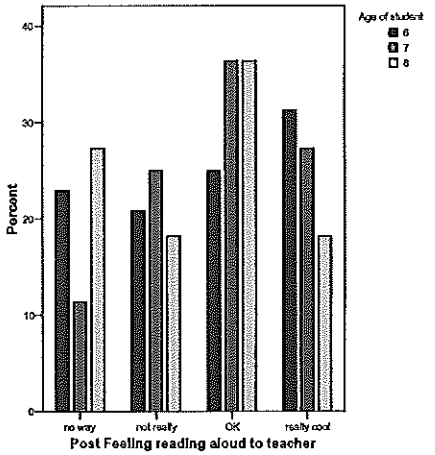
5.5.3.14 Child's feeling when reading aloud to the teacher.

The total group mean of 2.69 for this component indicates more positive attitude to reading aloud to the teacher, than that of pre-RAP because the value is higher than that of the pre-test of 2.59. This was exactly the same mean as 'reading aloud to a group' question. The females were higher than the males (mean female: 2.79, mean male: 2.56), following the pre-test pattern (graph 5.5.3.14a) and the seven year olds were more enthusiastic about reading aloud to the teacher (mean 6yr: 2.65, mean 7yr: 2.80, mean 8yr: 2.45) with the eight year old group having a lower score than the other groups. This is illustrated in the graph 5.5.3.14b.

Graph 5.5.3.14a



Graph 5.5.3.14b



5.5.4 Overview of the Individual Questions of the post-RAP 'Attitude to Reading'.

The post-RAP 'Attitude to Reading' mean scores for all the individual questions are quite high; with the highest being 3.49 and the lowest at 2.46 which is just below the theoretical middle score of 2.50. Once again, this shows the children generally exhibited an overall positive 'Attitude to Reading' after their experience with RAP. The children rated their feeling towards starting a new book, when someone reads to you at home, getting a book for a present, reading different types of books, when the teacher reads to the class and reading books for fun, questions the highest. This seems to indicate that the children have a perception that books are important and they are now more willing to explore different reading genre. However, and perhaps not surprising, after the RAP program they still rated their feeling towards reading instead of playing, reading aloud to the group, and reading aloud to the teacher, questions as the lowest. The time for reading class, doing homework reading, reading in your spare time, and reading school books, questions were rated somewhere in-between. What is noted in terms of their responses to the individual 'Attitude to Reading' questions after the RAP program is the increase in their responses to the two questions reading for fun and interest in reading different types of books.

For all questions except one, the female responses were higher than the male responses. As in the pre-RAP situation, the males rated their feeling towards someone reading to them at home higher than the females. However, as distinct from the pre-Rap situation, the males did not rate the reading school books and teacher reading aloud to them higher than the females in the post-RAP situation. In contrast to the pre-RAP situation where the six year olds rated most questions higher than the other age groups in this post-RAP situation they only rated the following three questions higher than the other age groups: starting a new book, reading instead of playing, and having the teacher read aloud to them. It seems as though the RAP program has assisted the seven and eight year old children and has developed their willingness to explore a greater range of reading resources and confidence to read to others.

5.6 Child's Attitude to RAP

5.6.1 Introduction

The questions 15 to 22 of the post-RAP questionnaire were labelled as the 'Attitude to RAP' factor. The purpose of this factor was to attempt to measure the child's reaction to the RAP experience. The following data relates to the child's responses to the 'Attitude to RAP' scale after he/she had experienced the RAP packs.

5.6.2 Scale Overview

The set of 8 questions was labelled 'Attitude to RAP' and exhibited a reliability of 0.73 and had a mean attitude rating of 3.34 (where a rating of 1 indicates that the child has quite a strong negative attitude to reading and four indicates that the child has a strong positive attitude to reading) and a median of 3.50. These values indicate that most of the children were very happy to be involved in the RAP program. The lower quartile measure of 3.12 suggests that three quarters of the children indicated an exceptionally strong positive attitude to RAP.

The 'Attitude to RAP' rating for the females is higher than that for the males (mean for females: 3.41, mean for males: 3.26), and the seven year old children rated the RAP experience highly with a mean of 3.24 but the six and eight year old children rated it even higher with a mean of 3.41 and 3.44 respectively.

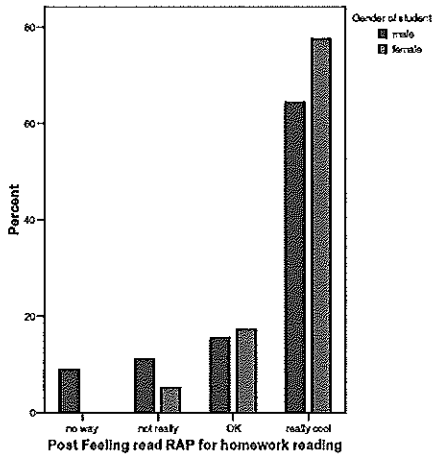
5.6.3 Individual Components of 'Attitude to RAP' Factor

In considering the various components of this "Attitude to RAP' scale it was noted that there were distinct differences between these components and differences within these components for males and females and age levels. Each of the 8 questions in the attitude to RAP scale was explored for differences between ages and gender.

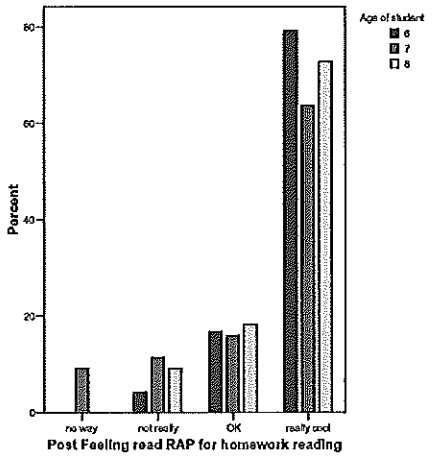
5.6.3.1 Child's feeling when reading RAP for homework reading.

The total group mean of 3.56 for this component indicates that most were very positive towards RAP reading as homework reading. Even though the overall rating is very high, the females were even higher with a mean of 3.72, and the males with a high mean of 3.36 (graph 5.6.3.1a), and this difference was significant at the p=0.05 level. The seven year old children rated the RAP as homework reading highly with a mean of 3.34, but the six and eight year old children rated it even higher with a mean of 3.75 and 3.64 respectively (graph 5.6.3.1b).

Graph 5.6.3.1a



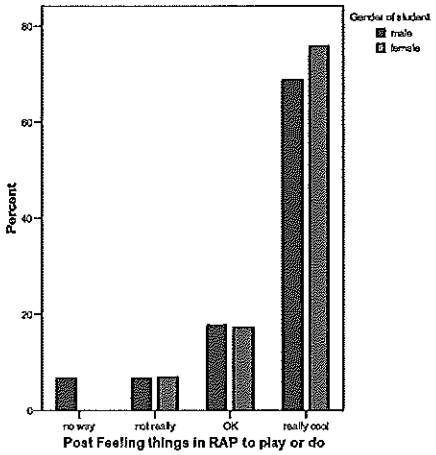
Graph 5.6.3.1b



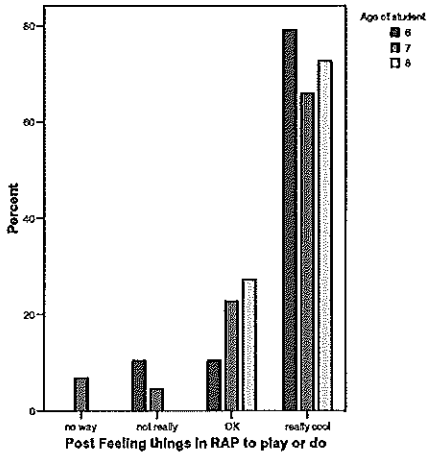
5.6.3.2 Child's feeling about all the things included in RAP.

The total group mean of 3.60 for this component indicates that most were very positive towards all the things included in RAP. Even though the overall rating is very high, the females were even higher with a mean of 3.69 and the males with a high mean of 3.49 (graph 5.6.3.2a). The eight year old children rated the thing in the RAP highly with a mean of 3.73, but the six and seven year old children rated it a little lower with a mean of 3.69 and 3.48 respectively (graph 5.6.3.2b)

Graph 5.6.3.2a



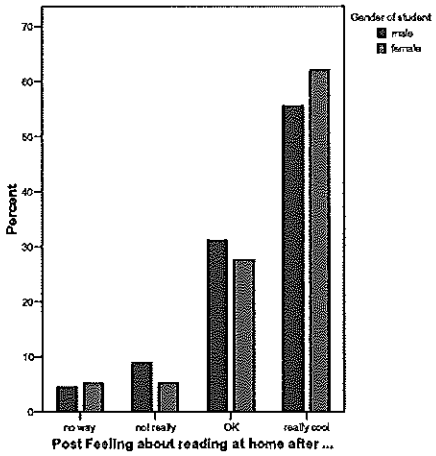
Graph 5.6.3.2b



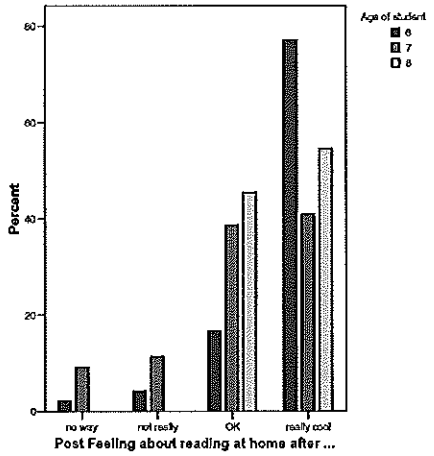
5.6.3.3 Child's feeling about reading now that they had used RAP.

The total group mean of 3.43 for this component indicates that most were positive towards reading after he/she has used RAP. Even though the overall rating is high, the females were even higher with a mean of 3.47, and the males had a mean of 3.38 as illustrated in graph 5.6.3.3a. The six year old children rated their feelings about reading now that they had used RAP very highly with a mean of 3.69, but the seven and eight year old children also rated it highly with a mean of 3.11 and 3.55 respectively (graph 5.6.3.3b).

Graph 5.6.3.3a



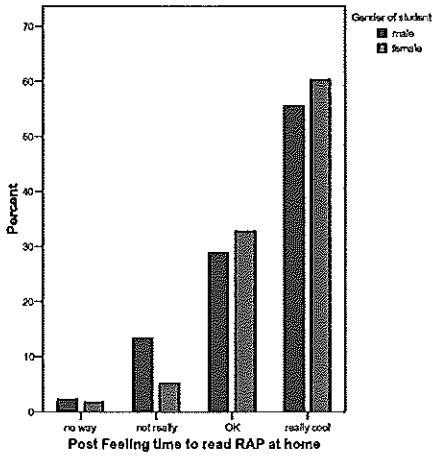
Graph 5.6.3.3b



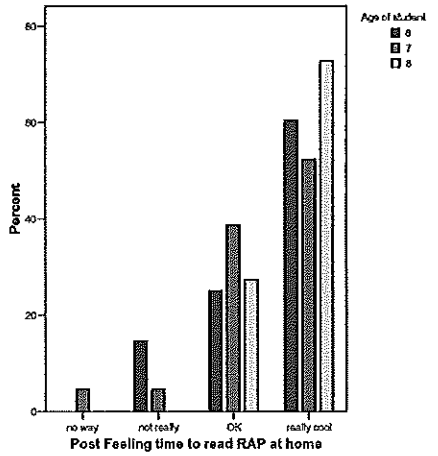
5.6.3.4 Child's feeling when it's time to read RAP at home.

The total group mean of 3.46 for this component indicates that most were positive towards reading RAP at home. Here we have a return to the typical response pattern the females score rating higher with a mean of 3.52 than the males with a mean of 3.38 (graph 5.6.3.4a). The eight year old children rated reading RAP at home highly with a mean of 3.73, but the six and seven year old children rated it a little lower with a mean of 3.46 and 3.39 respectively (graph 5.6.3.4b).

Graph 5.6.3.4a



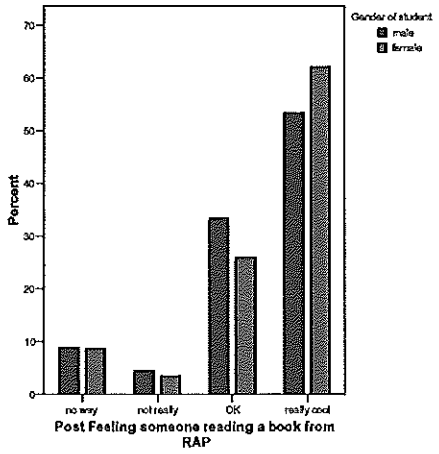
Graph 5.6.3.4b



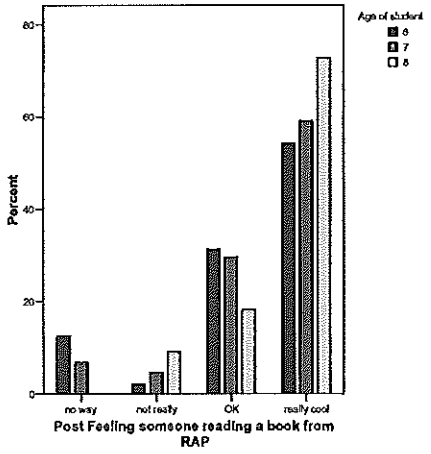
5.6.3.5 Child's feeling if someone reads to them from RAP.

The total mean of 3.37 for this component indicates that most were positive towards someone reading to them from RAP. Even though the overall rating is high, the females were higher with a mean of 3.41, the males had a mean of 3.31 (graph 5.6.3.5a). The eight year old children rated having someone read to him/her from RAP highly with a mean of 3.64, but the 6 and seven year old group also rated it highly with a mean of 3.27 and 3.41 respectively (graph 5.6.3.5b).

Graph 5.6.3.5a



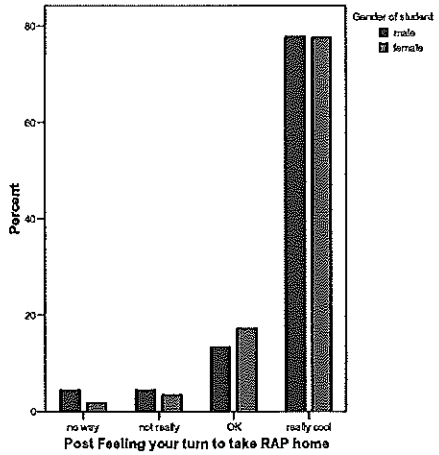
Graph 5.6.3.5b



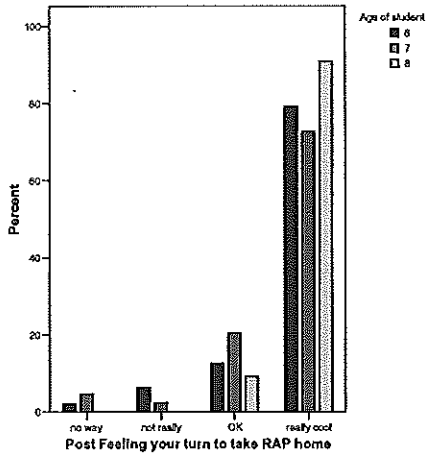
5.6.3.6 Child's feeling when it is they take RAP home for the week.

The total group mean of 3.68 for this component indicates that most were very positive towards taking RAP home for the week. Even though the overall rate is very high, the females were even higher with a mean of 3.71, and the males had a mean of 3.64. The eight year old children rated taking RAP home for the week highly with a mean of 3.91, but the six and seven year old children also rated it highly with a mean of 3.69 and 3.61 respectively (graph 5.6.3.6b).

Graph 5.6.3.6a



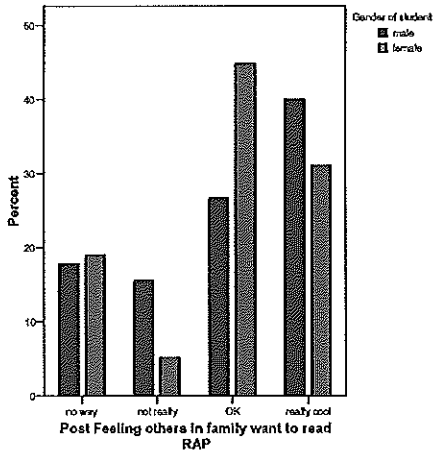
Graph 5.6.3.6b



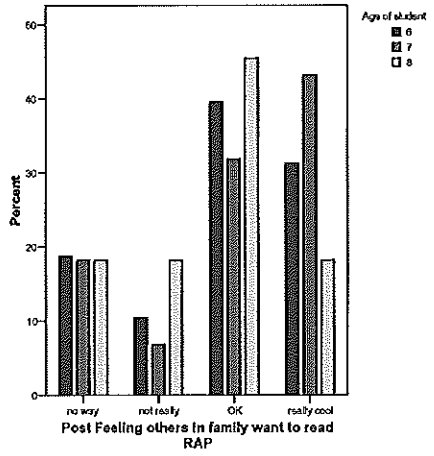
5.6.3.7 Child's feeling when others in the family want to read the RAP materials

The total group mean of 2.88 for this component indicates that most were less positive towards others in the family reading the RAP material. Here we have the reverse of the typical responses with the males scoring higher with a mean of 2.89 than the females (2.88) as illustrated in graph 5.6.3.7a. The seven year old group rated others in the family reading the RAP material higher with a mean of 3.00, but the six and eight year old children rated it with a mean of 2.83 and 2.64 respectively as shown in graph 5.6.3.7b.

Graph 5.6.3.7a



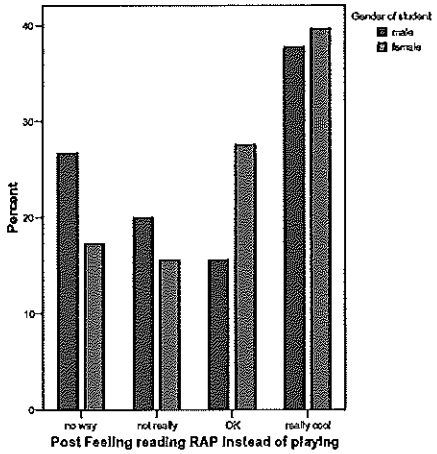
Graph 5.6.3.7b



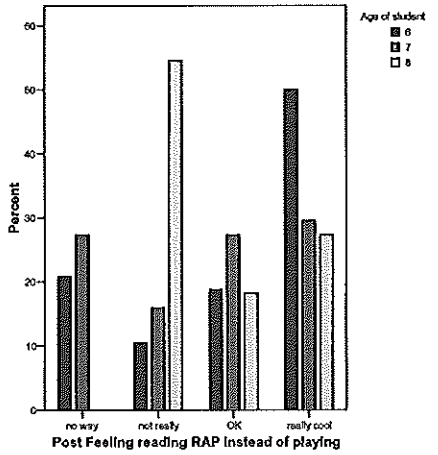
5.6.3.8 Child's feeling about using RAP instead of playing.

The total group mean of 2.79 for this component indicates that most were not so positive about using RAP instead of playing. The overall rating is still quite high, the females were higher with a mean of 2.90, and the males with a mean of 2.64 (graph 5.6.3.8a). The six year old children rated using the RAP instead of playing higher with a mean of 2.98, but the other age groups, seven and eight year old children, rated it with a mean of 2.59 and 2.73 respectively (graph 5.6.3.8b).

Graph 5.6.3.8a



Graph 5.6.3.8b



5.6.3. Overview of the Individual Questions of the 'Attitude to RAP'.

The 'Attitude to RAP' mean scores for all the individual questions are quite high with the highest being 3.68 and the lowest 2.79, which is still above that of the theoretical middle score of 2.50. This shows that the children generally exhibited an overall positive 'Attitude to RAP'. The children rated their feeling toward RAP for homework reading, things in RAP that can be played with and its activities, and taking RAP home, questions the highest. This seems to indicate that the children are eager to explore the contents of the RAP. It is not really surprising they rated their feeling when reading RAP instead of playing and sharing the RAP materials with other members in the family, questions the lowest. Most children up to the age of seven are egocentric. The reading RAP at home, reading a book from RAP, and feeling about reading now that they had taken RAP at home, questions were rated somewhere in the middle.

For all the questions except one, the female responses were higher than the male responses. The males rated their feeling towards having other members wanting to read the materials in RAP higher than the females. In most of the questions the eight year olds rated the individual questions higher than any other age group. The seven year old males did not like other members of the family reading any of the materials in RAP. It would also appear that the eight year olds enjoyed the new RAP themes that were designed with a greater child self-direction in mind.

5.7 Carer's Comments to 'Attitude to RAP'

The Post Questionnaire for carers gave them the opportunity to make general comments about the program overall. Fifty percent of the respondents took the opportunity to make a comment and these comments were transcribed and stored as shown in appendix 9. Overwhelmingly these comments were positive towards the program as a whole and the carers felt that it had a positive affect on the children's desire to read and participate in the activities provided.

Analysis of the written responses from the carers relating to the RAP program indicates that from their perspective the children were very positive and enthusiastic about RAP. Typical of their responses was, "The anticipation of bringing RAP home is overwhelming". Carers saw RAP as providing a different approach to the regular home reading as "An excellent, engaging learning activity...", "..provided a break from the usual reading books....", "...a good way to introduce variety in the homework" and a "Fantastic opportunity for children to interact learning with fun" (no.50). Some carers stated that it 'didn't improve his reading BUT created high interest and enjoyment", "...a tremendous asset for my child's reading and writing skills" and "It really helps with comprehension!". It also appears that carers were involved with their child's reading as well as with the activities that were included in RAP (no.23). Sometimes the siblings got more enjoyment out of the activities included in RAP, as we see in comment 32, "She didn't like the CD Rom but her siblings did".

5.8 Overview

In summary the study found that:

- most carers indicated that they saw advantages concerning the RAP;
- mothers were the family member most involved in children's out-of-school reading;
- access to home-reading resources were varied but limited;
- most children have a positive 'Attitude to Reading';

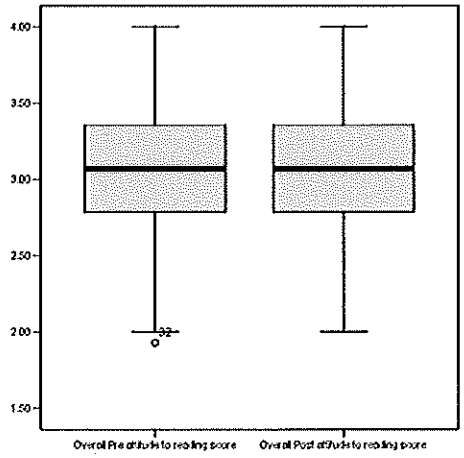
- most children read a little during the week, females were more likely to initiate reading, more likely to read independently and more likely to read more often than the males;
- most children were quite positive about RAP;
- carers were overwhelmingly positive towards the program;
- the RAP program has had a greater impact on the seven and eight year old children than the six year olds, generating a greater willingness to explore a range of reading resources and more confidence when reading to others.

6.0 Comparisons: pre-RAP and post-RAP 'Attitudes to Reading'

6.1 Overall scale

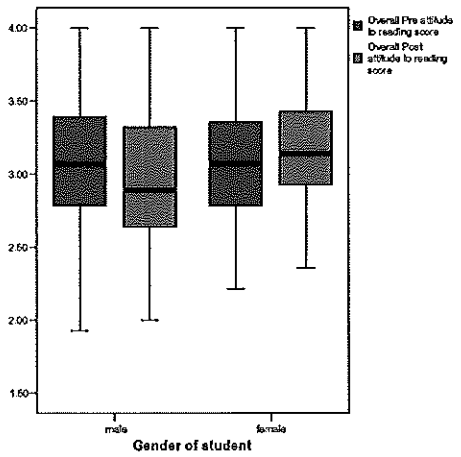
The post-RAP overall 'Attitude to Reading' scores, with a mean of 3.07 and median of 3.07, are similar to the pre-RAP 'Attitude to Reading' indices, with a mean of 3.05 and median of 3.07 and this would seem to indicate that this RAP experience has not altered the child's short term attitude to school-based reading, as illustrated in graph 6.1.1

Graph 6.1.1 Box plot mean overall 'Attitude to Reading' scores for the group as a whole



There was, however, a noticeable difference between the males' pre-RAP and post-RAP scores when compared with those of the females (graph 6.1.2).

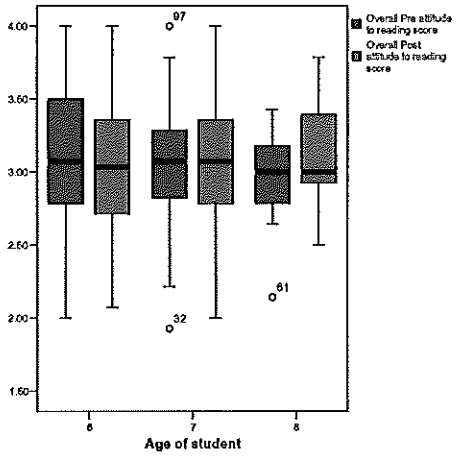
Graph 6.1.2 Box plot mean overall 'Attitude to Reading' scores for gender.



The data indicates that the males post-RAP are lower than the pre-RAP scores, but the females post-RAP are higher than the pre-RAP scores.

There was also a difference noted in the pre-RAP and post-RAP scores for the different age groups (graph 6.1.3)

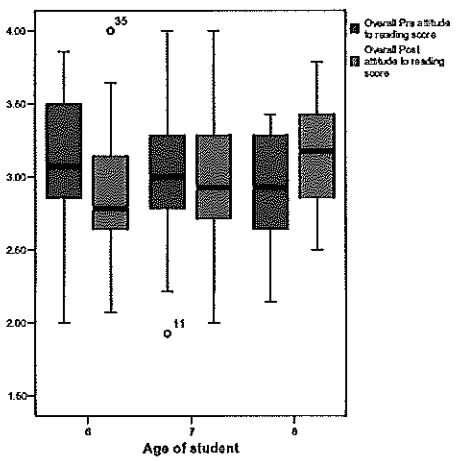
Graph 6.1.3 Box plot mean overall 'Attitude to Reading' scores for the age groups



The data indicates that the six year old group has lower post-RAP scores than pre-RAP scores, the seven year old group has a slight increase in post-RAP scores when compared with their pre-RAP scores and the trend for the eight year old group is an increase in post-RAP scores, particularly for those scores above the median.

As noted in graph 6.1.2, the males' post-RAP scores were lower than their pre-RAP scores but this was not the situation for every age group (graph 6.1.4).

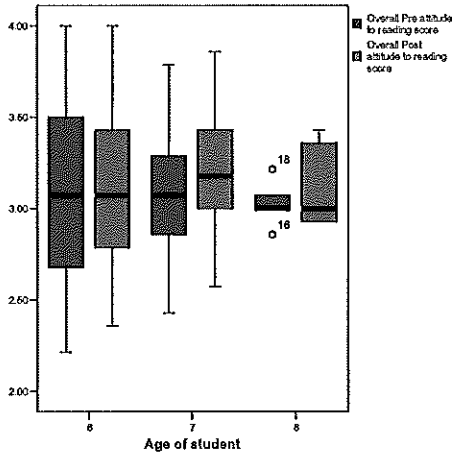
Graph 6.1.4 Box plot mean overall 'Attitude to Reading' scores for the males in age groups



For the males' it was the six year olds that had the greatest drop in post-RAP scores compared to their pre-RAP scores. For the seven year olds there was once again a drop in post-RAP scores but this was much less than the six year olds'. The eight year olds, on the other hand reported a substantial increase in their post-RAP scores compared to their pre-RAP scores

As noted in graph 6.1.2, the females' post-RAP scores were higher than their pre-RAP scores but this was not the situation for every age group (graph 6.1.5).

Graph 6.1.5 Box plot mean overall 'Attitude to Reading' scores for the females in age groups



For the females' the six year olds that had only a small drop in post-RAP scores compared to their pre-RAP scores. For the seven year olds however there was an increase in post-RAP scores. The eight year olds reported an increase in their post-RAP scores for those whose scores were above the median compared to their pre-RAP scores.

In summary, in terms of overall 'Attitude to Reading', the post-RAP scores were greater than the pre-RAP scores for the female seven and eight year olds, but for males, only the eight year olds had post-RAP scores that were greater than the pre-RAP scores. This seems to suggest that this RAP program with its greater self-direction orientation is best suited to the older children, in particular the seven and eight year old females and the eight year old males and resonates with the accepted view that the maturation process occurs earlier in females than males.

6.2 'Attitude to Reading' Individual Components

On comparing the post-RAP and pre-RAP results of the first fourteen questions of the 'Attitude to Reading' questionnaire, it was noted that only one question 'How do you feel when your teacher reads a story?' had a significant difference (at the .p=05 level) between the post-RAP and the pre-RAP results. This response seems to indicate that the children have a greater appreciation for the written word and an interest in the teacher reading to them, after using RAP. Increases in 'Attitude to Reading' scores, however, were noted on Question 2 (How do you feel about starting a new book?), Question 8 (How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?), Question 12 (How do you feel about reading books for fun?) and Question 14 (How do you feel when you are asked to read aloud?). These responses suggest that the children, after the RAP program are more likely to explore different reading genres and feel somewhat more confident to read aloud.

The scores obtained on the Post 'Attitudes to Reading' post-RAP (Post) questionnaire for questions 1 to 14 were then subtracted from the scores obtained from the Pre 'Attitudes to Reading' pre-RAP (Pre) questionnaire, to generate a set of 'difference scores'. When the Post scores were greater than the Pre scores the different scores are positive and when the Post scores are smaller than the Pre scores the different scores are negative. This procedure was used for the group as a whole and then for the different age levels as shown in table 6.0a, and for gender.

Table 6.2a Comparison Scores

	Whole group mean	6yr old	7yr old	8yr old
1. Post Feeling for class reading time – Pre Feeling for class reading time	-.19	-.43	-.04	.27
2. Post Feeling starting new book – Pre Feeling starting new book	.07	.04	.04	.36
3. Post Feeling reading book at school – Pre Feeling reading book at school	-.07	-.04	-.13	.00
4. Post Feeling reading instead of playing – Pre Feeling reading instead of playing	-.13	-.27	.00	-.09
5. Post Feeling when people read to you – Pre Feeling when people read to you	-.16	-.43	.11	-.09
6. Post Feeling homework reading – Pre Feeling homework reading	-.01	.00	-.13	.45
7. Post Feeling getting book present – Pre Feeling getting book present	-.06	.06	-.13	-.36
8. Post Feeling reading different types of books – Pre Feeling reading different types of books	.16	-.04	.48	.36
9. Post Feeling reading spare time – Pre Feeling reading spare time	-.06	-.06	-.34	1.00
10. Post Feeling reading school books – Pre Feeling reading school books	-.01	-.06	.09	.00
11. Post Feeling teacher reading aloud – Pre Feeling teacher reading aloud	.36	.54	.27	-.09
12. Post Feeling reading books for fun at home – Pre Feeling reading books for fun at home	.09	-.10	.32	.09
13. Post Feeling reading aloud to group – Pre Feeling reading aloud to group	.00	-.16	.04	.63
14. Post Feeling reading aloud to teacher – Pre Feeling reading aloud to teacher	.11	.06	.18	.09

Analysis of these results, for age groups, showed that there were no significant (at the p=.05 level) differences between the different age scores in all questions except Question 9 (How do you feel about reading in your spare time?). It is obvious, however, that the eight year olds 'Attitude to Reading' increases in the Post scores were generally much higher than that of the six and seven year old groups, for most of the questions. In terms of the impact of RAP on the children's 'Attitude to Reading' this data suggests that RAP experience had a far great effect on the eight year olds than the six and seven year olds.

When comparing the 'difference' results across gender, there were two scores with significant differences (at the p=.05), Question 8 (How do you feel about reading different kinds of book?) and Question 11 (How do you feel when your teacher reads a story aloud?), where the female scores increased much greater than the male scores. Even though the overall group score went up by .1456 in Question 8, the females (.327) went up by a greater amount but the males (-.088) went down by a small amount. Question 11 also shows an overall increase of .340 and again the females (.551) go up by a larger amount than the males (.066), which only go up by a small amount. This data would suggest that the previously-noted increase in willingness to explore reading genres is greatly influenced by the increase in confidence in this area displayed by the females rather than the males.

7.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

This study examined the nature of the Home reading environment and explored the impact that a School-Home partnership literacy improvement program (RAP) had on six, seven and eight year olds' involvement in and attitude to reading. The RAP program, the data would suggest, had a positive effect, at least in the short term, on both the student's involvement in and attitude to reading. The impact, however, was greater for specific sub-groups within the study sample. The study was carried out in two stages: Study One, a pilot study, and Study Two, an extended study whose design, particularly the pre and post measurements, was influenced by the results of the pilot study. Both studies generated similar results.

In relation to the reading environment in the home Study One and Study Two generated a similar picture, with the children having access to a variety of different types of reading material. But much of this reading material did not seem to be appropriate reading material for six, seven and eight year old children. The positive responses of the parents to the material supplied to the family through the RAP program and the eagerness with which the children and carers looked forward to the RAP materials, supports this view. It appears the RAP program is meeting a need for appropriate home based reading resources. It was also noted in most of the carer's responses, that the use of the Public Library is not rated highly in relation to the home reading environment. In both studies the mother's assistance played a very important part in the child's reading supervision, but when there is more than one sibling in the family it appears that the father may support the older siblings in their reading supervision. It is interesting to note that the female children reported a higher involvement in their reading than that of the male children. In terms of reading at home most children read a little during the week but read very little during the weekend and most of this home reading relates to the specified school reading books. There appears to be very little in the way of complementary and exploratory reading.

In both studies, the responses indicate that carers as well as the children mostly reacted very positively to RAP. In Study One the carers commented that the RAP activities provided were very time consuming. In Study Two, however, the contents

of the RAP were designed to be more child self-directed and the carers found it was not as time consuming. In Study Two the carers were pleased that the new design minimised carer supervision. They reported that it was an enjoyable way of getting their child to read at home. Carers indicated that RAP promoted daily reading and positively contributed to their child's attitude to reading.

The Study Two children's 'Attitude to RAP' mean scores for all the individual questions are quite high with the highest being 3.68 and the lowest at 2.79, and given that scores above 2.5 indicate a positive attitude to RAP, this data indicates that almost all students reacted very positively to RAP. With respect to the individual 'Attitude to RAP' questions, children rated 'their feelings toward RAP for homework reading', 'things in RAP that can be played with and its activities', and 'taking RAP home', questions the highest. This seems to indicate that the children are eager to explore the contents of the RAP. It is not surprising they rated 'their feeling when reading RAP instead of playing' and 'sharing the RAP materials with other members in the family', questions as the lowest. Most children at this age are egocentric and only look at situations from their point of view. The 'reading RAP at home', 'reading a book from RAP', and 'feeling about reading now that they had taken RAP at home', questions were rated somewhere in the middle.

For the 'Attitude to RAP' responses in all questions except one, the female responses were higher than the male responses. The males rated 'their feeling towards having other members wanting to read the materials' in RAP higher than the females. In most of the questions the eight year olds' responses to the individual questions were higher than the other age groups. The seven year old males were less positive about other members of the family reading any of the materials in RAP. It would appear that the eight year olds really enjoyed the new RAP themes that were designed for greater child direction and independence.

In relation to the Study Two children's 'Attitude to Reading' pre-RAP data, the mean scores for all the fourteen individual questions were quite high, with the highest being 3.45 and the lowest 2.59 which is still greater than the theoretical middle score of 2.50. This shows the children generally exhibited an overall positive attitude to reading even before their experience with this family involvement literacy program.

The children rated 'their feeling towards the class reading time', 'starting a new book', 'when someone reads to you at home', and 'getting a book for a present', questions the highest. This seems to indicate that the children have a perception that books are important. However, and perhaps not surprisingly, they rated their 'feeling towards reading instead of playing', 'reading aloud to the group', and 'reading aloud to the teacher', questions as the lowest. This is characteristic of most children at this age because they are quite worried about making mistakes when reading. Of the group of questions the children rated the highest; the females rated them even higher than the males except for the question, 'someone reads to them at home'. This trend of the females rating the individual questions higher than the males was common for most of the questions. However, the males rated their 'feeling towards the homework reading', 'reading school books' and 'their teacher reading to them', questions higher than the females. The six year olds rated most of the individual questions higher than the other age groups. The eight year olds, however, followed the pattern of the males scoring the same three questions higher than the other age groups. It is interesting to note that these situations appear to be less threatening than the situations accessed in the other questions.

The Study Two children post-RAP 'Attitude to Reading' mean scores for all the individual questions were quite high; with the highest being 3.49 and the lowest 2.46, which is comparable with the pre-RAP score distribution. In the post-RAP responses the children rated 'their feeling towards starting a new book', 'when someone reads to you at home', 'getting a book for a present', 'reading different types of books', 'when the teacher reads to the class' and 'reading books for fun', questions the highest. This seems to indicate that the children have a perception that books are important and they are now more willing to explore different reading genres. However, and perhaps not surprisingly, after the RAP program they still rated their feeling towards 'reading instead of playing', 'reading aloud to the group', and 'reading aloud to the teacher', questions as the lowest. What is noted in terms of their responses to the individual 'Attitude to Reading' questions after the RAP program is the increase in their responses to the two questions 'reading for fun' and 'interest in reading different types of books'.

For the post-RAP responses, in all 'Attitude to Reading' questions except one, the female responses were higher than the male responses. As in the pre-RAP situation, the males rated 'their feeling towards someone reading to them at home' higher than the females. However, as distinct from the pre-RAP situation, the males did not rate the 'reading school books' and 'teacher reading aloud to them' higher than the females in the post-RAP situation. In contrast to the pre-RAP situation where the six year olds rated most questions higher than the other age groups in this post-RAP situation they only rated the following three questions higher than the other age groups: 'starting a new book', 'reading instead of playing', and 'having the teacher read aloud to them'. It seems as though the RAP program has assisted the seven and eight year old children more than the six year olds and has developed their willingness to explore a greater range of reading resources and their confidence to read to others.

When using the students' responses to compare the overall pre-RAP and post-RAP 'Attitude to Reading' scores, the data would indicate that this RAP experience has not altered the overall group's short term attitude to reading with means of 3.05 and 3.07 respectively. But there is a noticeable difference between the males' pre-RAP and post-RAP scores when compared with those of the females. The data indicates that the males' post-RAP scores were usually lower than that of the pre-RAP scores but it was the reverse for the females, the post-RAP scores being higher than the pre-RAP scores. There was also a difference noted in the pre-RAP and post-RAP scores for the different age groups. The six year old group has lower post-RAP scores, the seven year old group has a slight increase in the post-RAP scores when compared with the pre-RAP scores and the trend for the eight year old group is an increase in the post-RAP scores. The post-RAP scores were greater than the pre-RAP scores for the female seven and the eight year old group. It was only the eight year old male group where the post-RAP scores were greater than the pre-RAP scores. This seems to suggest that this RAP program with its greater self-direction orientation is best suited to the older children, in particular the seven and eight year old females and the eight year old males and this resonates with the accepted view that the maturation process occurs earlier in females than males.

When looking at the pre-Rap and post-RAP individual results for the first fourteen questions of the 'Attitude to Reading' questionnaire, it was noted that only the

question 'How do you feel when your teacher reads a story?' had a significant difference (at the p=.05 level) between the pre-RAP and post-RAP results. This response seems to indicate that the children have developed a greater interest and appreciation for listening to the written word read to them by the teacher. However, it was also noted that an increase in 'Attitude to Reading' scores was recorded for the questions 'How do you feel about starting a new book?', 'How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?', 'How do you feel about reading books for fun?' and 'How do you feel when you are asked to read aloud?'. This seems to suggest that the children, after experiencing the RAP program, are more likely to explore different reading genres and feel somewhat more confident to read aloud.

Analysis of the Study Two 'difference' results (post scores minus pre scores) for each age group showed that there was no significant difference between the different age scores in all questions except the question 'How do you feel about reading in your spare time?', where the eight year olds' increase was large. It was noted, though, that the eight year olds' 'Attitude to Reading' difference scores were generally much higher than those of the six and seven year old group for most of the questions. It would suggest that the RAP experience had a far greater effect on the eight year old group than the six and seven year old group.

Comparing the 'difference' results across gender, it was noted that there were two scores with significant differences. The questions 'How do you feel about reading different types of books?' and 'How do you feel when you teacher reads a story aloud?' where the increase in the female scores was much greater than the increase in the male scores. This data would suggest that there is a willingness to explore different reading genres, which was noted previously and this is greatly influenced by the increase in confidence in this area displayed by the females rather than the males.

In summary, the data obtained through this study from both the carers and the students themselves would suggest that this particular School-Home partnership literacy improvement program (RAP) (and therefore other programs of this nature) first of all meets reading resource needs not met by many homes. Secondly, the RAP program helps generate a confidence in the children that results in a child's willingness to explore different reading genres. But perhaps most importantly, the

data indicates that the RAP program (and possibly other programs of this nature) is worthy of inclusion in a school's overall strategy for the teaching of reading for six, seven and eight year olds; and in its present format particularly so for seven and eight year old girls and eight year old boys, as it also contributes positively to the child's involvement in and attitude to reading.

It is important to note that the RAP approach is only one of many techniques that one can use to increase six, seven and eight year old children's involvement in and attitude to reading. The use of Informational and Computer Technology (ICT) for this age group has now become a reality in many schools and homes (Gill & Wood, 2007) and ICT multimedia based activities have the potential to supplement such things as RAP programs.

This study, is also limited in a number of areas and further study is needed to address these limitations. Firstly, the sample size is relatively small, especially in terms of the number of eight year olds, and this study has been based in only a few schools. This type of study needs to be extended to cover a range of schools and school types and include a greater number of children. Further the study did not look at the optimum length of time for this program to continue and if a second or other RAP presentation block(s) has the same impact as the first experience. And there is also a need to test the long term impact of such a program on children's attitude to reading and to determine how this interacts with the child's typical maturation. Finally, there is a need to further explore how the nature of the RAP pack impacts different age groups and different home situations.

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9.0 Appendices

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Appendix 1

Pre-study Carer Survey about Home Reading

1. *What reading materials are in your home? Circle the answer.*
a. Books b. Magazines c. Newspapers d. Children's Books e. other

2. *Does anyone read to your child at home? Circle the answer.* Yes/No

3. *Who is the person who reads most often to your child? Circle the answer.*
a. mother b. father c. grandparents d. siblings e. other

4. *When does this reading mostly happen? Circle the answer.*
a. weekends b. mornings c. evenings d. other

5. *How many times a week does this reading occur? Circle the answer.*
a. less than once b.1-3 times c.3-5 times d. more than 5 times

6. *Does your child like to read: Circle the answer.*
a. independently?
b. to someone else?
c. with help from someone?

7. *How interested is your child in reading? Circle the answer.*
a. always initiates the reading of a book
b. has to be reminded to read a book
c. sometimes initiates the reading of a book

8. *Do you have access to a public library? Circle the answer.* Yes/No

9. *If you answered "Yes" to the above question, how often do you go to the Library? Circle the answer.*
a. weekly b. monthly c. rarely d. other

10. *How do you feel about homework reading? Circle the answer*
a. It takes up too much time from the child's day when I think they should be outside playing after school.
b. It is necessary for my child to advance consistently and therefore I make the time available every night.
c. I don't have the time to devote to such daily activities due to other pressing family matters.
d. Other
11. *Do you see literacy and reading as important skills for young children to master?* Yes/No, Why/Why not?

Appendix 2

Pre survey Child

Age in years: 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 Boy/Girl

1. How do you feel when it's time for reading class?



2. How do you feel about starting a new book?



3. How do you feel when you read a book at school?



4. How do you feel about reading instead of playing?



5. How do you feel when someone reads to you at home?



6. How do you feel about doing homework reading?



7. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?



8. How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?



9. How do you feel about reading in your spare time?



10. How do you feel about reading your school books?



Appendix 3

Post-study Carer Survey about Home Reading

1. *What was your response to the literacy materials brought home in the READING ADVENTURE PACKS? Circle the answer.*

a. They contain too many activities to be completed in the allocated time.

b. They contain sufficient material to be completed in the allocated time.

c. They don't contain enough material for the allocated time.

2. *How would you rate the interest level your child showed with regard to the READING ADVENTURE PACKS? Circle the answer.*

a. showed great interest b. showed slight interest c. didn't show any interest

3. *Who was involved mostly in using the READING ADVENTURE PACKS with your child? Circle the answer.*

a. mother b. father c. grandparents d. siblings e. other

4. *Who else was involved in using the READING ADVENTURE PACKS with your child? Circle the appropriate answer/s.*

a. mother b. father c. grandparents d. siblings e. other

5. *When did the READING ADVENTURE PACKS mainly get used? Circle the appropriate answer/s.*

a. mornings b. evenings c. other

6. *What content/s of the READING ADVENTURE PACK did your child appear to enjoy the most? Circle the appropriate answer/s.*

a. soft toy b. books c. games d. worksheets e. writing in the book

7. *How helpful have you found these READING ADVENTURE PACKS to be in encouraging your child to develop a greater love of reading? Circle the answer.*

a. My child already had a great love of reading prior to using these materials.

b. My child doesn't seem to have shown any change in his/her attitude towards reading.

c. My child has shown a negative attitude change towards reading since using these materials.

d. My child has shown a very positive attitude change towards reading since using these materials.

8. *How have you felt about these READING ADVENTURE PACKS being part of the homework reading? Circle the answer.*

a. It takes up too much time from the child's day when I think they should be outside playing after school.

b. It was helpful in getting my child to read every day.

c. I don't have time to devote to such daily activities due to other pressing family matters.

d. Other

9. *Has your attitude changed towards literacy since your child has participated in the READING ADVENTURE PACKS? Yes/No, Why/Why not?*

Appendix 4

Post survey Child

Age in years: 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 Boy/ Girl

1. How do you feel when you read the *Reading Adventure Pack*, at home, for homework reading?



2. How do you feel about all the things in the *Reading Adventure Pack* that you can play with or do?



3. How do you feel about reading now that you've been taking the *Reading Adventure Packs* home?



4. How do you feel when it's time, at home, to read the *Reading Adventure Pack?*



5. How do you feel if someone reads a book to you from the *Reading Adventure Pack?*



6. How do you feel when it is your turn to take the *Reading Adventure Pack* home for the week?



7. How do you feel if someone in your family wants to read the materials in your *Reading Adventure Pack*?



8. How do you feel about reading your *Reading Adventure Pack* instead of playing?



Appendix 5

Pre-Study Carer Survey about Home Reading.

1. *Is your child the* □ youngest □ middle □ eldest

2. *What reading material do you have at home? Tick any box.*

□ General books □ Magazines □ Newspapers □ Children's books

3. *Does anyone read to your child at home?*

□ yes □ no

4. *Who is the person who reads most often to your child? Tick one box.*

□ Mother □ Father □ Carer □ Grandparents □ Siblings

5. *When does this reading mostly happen? Tick one box.*

□ weekends □ weekday - morning □ weekday - evening

6. *How many times a week does this reading occur?*

□ less than once □ 1-3 times □ 3-5 times □ more than 5 times

7. *Does your child like to read independently?*

□ yes □ no

8. *Does your child like to read to someone else?*

□ yes □ no

9. *Does your child like to read with help from someone?*

□ yes □ no

10. *Does your child always initiate the reading of a book?*

□ yes □ no

11. *Does your child have to be reminded to read a book?*

□ yes □ no

12. *Does you child sometimes initiate the reading of a book?*

□ yes □ no

13. *Do you have access to a public library?*

□ yes □ no

14. *How often do you go to the library? Tick one box.*

□ weekly □ monthly □ rarely

15. *Marital Status - Tick one box.*

□ Single □Married □Separated □Divorced

14. *Occupation –*

Office use : O S.E.S

□ M.S.

Appendix 6

CHILD SURVEY ABOUT READING

Pre Survey

R.R. Level: _____ E.R. _____ %

Age in Years: 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. Boy / Girl

1. How do you feel when it's time for reading class?



2. How do you feel about starting a new book?



3. How do you feel when you read a book at school?



4. How do you feel about reading instead of playing?



5. How do you feel when someone reads to you at home?



6. How do you feel about doing homework reading?



7. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?



8. How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?



9. How do you feel about reading in your spare time?



10. How do you feel about reading your school books?



11. How do you feel when your teacher reads a story aloud?



12. How do you feel about reading books for fun at home?



13. How do you feel when you are asked to read aloud to your group?



14. How do you feel when you are asked to read aloud to your teacher?



Appendix 7

Post-Study Carer Survey about Home Reading.

1. *What is your response to the amount of material in the RAP? Tick one box.*

□ too much □ about right □ too little

2. *Do you feel that the RAP material was suited to your child's age/need?*

□ yes □ no

3. *How would you rate the interest level your child showed with the RAP? Tick one box.*

□ showed great interest □ showed slight interest □ didn't show any interest

4. *Who was the person most involved in using the RAP with your child? Tick one box.*

□ Mother □ Father □ Carer □ Grandparents □ Siblings

5. *Who else was involved in using the RAP with your child? Tick any box.*

□ Mother □ Father □ Carer □ Grandparents □ Siblings

6. *When was the RAP mainly used? Tick one box.*

□ morning □ evening □ either morning or evening

7. *What did your child appear to enjoy the most in the RAP? Tick one box*

□ soft toy □ books □ games □ work sheets □ writing in the book

8. *Do you consider that the RAP improved your child's attitude to reading?*

□ yes □ no

9. *Do you consider that RAP improved your child's reading?*

□ yes □ no

10. *Did your child enjoy RAP?*

□ yes □ no

11. *Did your child become bored with RAP?*

□ yes □ no

12. *Did you have to tell your child to use RAP?*

□ yes □ no

13. *How many times in the week did your child use RAP? Tick one box.*

□ 4 □ 3 □ 2 □ 1 □ never

14. *How much of your time was devoted to assisting with RAP? Tick one box.*

□ everyday □ 3 x a week □ 2 x a week □ once a week □ no assistance given

15. *Do you consider RAP takes too much of your time?*

□ yes □ no

16. *Would you prefer that RAP require no parental assistance?*

□ yes □ no

Any comment:

_____

_____

Appendix 8

CHILD SURVEY ABOUT READING

Post Survey

1. How do you feel when it's time for reading class?



2. How do you feel about starting a new book?



3. How do you feel when you read a book at school?



4. How do you feel about reading instead of playing?



5. How do you feel when someone reads to you at home?



6. How do you feel about doing homework reading?



7. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?



8. How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?



9. How do you feel about reading in your spare time?



10. How do you feel about reading your school books?



11. How do you feel when your teacher reads a story aloud?



12. How do you feel about reading books for fun at home?



13. How do you feel when you are asked to read aloud to your group?



14. How do you feel when you are asked to read aloud to your teacher?



15. How do you feel when you read the RAP at home, for homework reading?



16. How do you feel about all the things in the RAP that you can play with or do?



17. How do you feel about reading now that you've been taking the RAP home?



18. How do you feel when it's time, at home, to read the RAP?



19. How do you feel if someone reads a book to you from the RAP?



20. How do you feel when it is your turn to take the RAP home for the week?



21. How do you feel if someone in your family wants to read the materials in your RAP?



22. How do you feel about reading your RAP instead of playing?



Appendix 9

Comments from Carer Post-RAP Questionnaire Study Two:

1. Amber really enjoyed the backpack (Frog). She was very excited. Loved the puzzle and enjoyed writing in the book. (4)
2. Child was quite happy to use on her own. Wanted to play the game with parents. (5)
3. Cara and I enjoyed the frog books, but I found them above her reading level. She found the books very interesting, so tried very hard to read them on her own. (6)
4. Lachlan was given RAP during his birthday week so he was a bit busy with birthday presents. If he received it in another 'normal' week, I feel he would have got more out of it. (10)
5. Great idea, perhaps should take turns more often (Chrissy's only had it twice so far). Thanks. (11)
6. Sarah was very excited about bringing home the back pack and it made a nice change from the nightly reading ritual. (12)
7. My daughter found the worksheet very easy. I think there should have been more fun worksheets and maybe books and tapes for them to read-along and listen to. (13)
8. Is a good exercise for child and parent to team together. (14)
9. Laini is a very keen reader and this complimented her take-home reader work. I think it is very worth while and has the potential to encourage students to read and enjoy it. Well done!!!! (15)
10. Content/Topic/Level of books a little easy. Loved the puzzle though it was relatively easy for her. Worksheet material difficult to cut out. (16)
11. An excellent, engaging learning activity – thankyou. (17)
12. Jack loved it. Was great to do together as well as on his own. (20)
13. It was nice to be involved, but they could do independent activities if they wish to. I think the concept is great. (22)
14. Some things seemed a bit babyish so she got a little bored. (23)
15. I think RAP is a good idea every now and again. It is a novelty. (24)
16. Child found several books too easy. Subject matter was more suited to boys therefore maybe reduced interest a little. Overall the concept was great and child greatly enjoyed. (25)
17. Rachel got bored with the easy things. Rachel would do everything herself but we did the reading together. We enjoy that. (28)
18. I think that they are fantastic. Keep up the great work, well done Mrs Gill. (37)
19. I like the RAP as it is educational but "fun" and a great change from normal homework activities and also helps my child to focus on one thing and learn in a fun different way. (44)
20. An excellent encouragement for student reading even though Lisa loves reading! (46)
21. The cookbook backpack is a great idea. (49)
22. Didn't improve his reading BUT created high interest and enjoyment. Would need to be much more frequent to improve reading and then the interest level may decrease. Very worthwhile. (54)

23. Matthew was so proud to have RAP, and treated it with enthusiasm. He loves cooking – so this particular theme was perfect for him. He also enjoyed sharing the products of his toils with 2ES on 3 consecutive days. Interpreting the recipes for him was fun and seemed to me that he wasn't really aware that he was 'reading' for homework. He especially liked the 'Gruesome' recipe book – we made two of those. (56)
24. Julianna happily worked on the RAP and required little assistance. (57)
25. Although I've ticked 'no assistance' I was showing interest and encouraged the child to use RAP. I don't mind to help my child with RAP, but I believe it shall stimulate independent learning. RAP's have a lot of reading, I think books need to cover all levels of reading abilities, so the child can pick up a suitable ones. (59)
26. It's a great idea that makes extra reading fun. (61)
27. James enjoyed RAP but I didn't have much time to spend with him on it. (62)
28. Adam wanted to cook something every evening which would have been too time consuming. (63)
29. What a great idea – it really helps with comprehension! Some of the books, we found were a little long, so we didn't get to read them all. (67)
30. Taylah enjoys it, and I feel all that counts. (69)
31. Stephen was very excited to receive this library bag. (70)
32. We helped ration out activities so that there was something new each evening to enjoy she was much more interested in the diary 'what each person wrote' and the worksheets but was willing to read the books. She didn't like the CD Rom but her siblings did. (71)
33. She only had two back packs, I would have liked to see a bit more. (72)
34. RAP has been an exciting and tremendous asset for my child's reading and writing skills. The anticipation of bringing RAP home is overwhelming. (73)
35. Child was quite happy to use on her own wanted to play the game with parents. (75)
36. Some of the books are not interesting. Some of the books in the level need to be changed i.e. some too easy for the level, some too hard for the level. (77)
37. Indigo was very excited to receive the backpack and quite eager to begin activities. Regarding Q 8 & 9, Indigo already has a good attitude to reading and reading at a high level for grade 1, so RAP hasn't necessarily improved her reading but certainly increased her motivation. (79)
38. I find the pack to be a good 'break' between the daily home readers as his enthusiasm for the daily readers has dropped, but when he brought the pack home he couldn't wait to start it. It's a good way to introduce variety in the homework. (81)
39. We found the backpacks to be very popular. He enjoyed all the books although some were probably a bit too easy. (85)
40. It would be good if there will be a level of RAP – meaning there is a Level one, Level two or Level three for more advanced children. This is only a suggestion. Thank you. (87)
41. She is reading well. I think she is going to another level reader. (93)
42. Had the dog bag. My child enjoyed reading the books as well as listening to the tape. I would have liked some activities relating to books contained in bag e.g. some comprehension activities. (94)
43. Gives the kids something a little different and they can pick what they want to do and when knowing they have a week to do so. (95)

44. Difficult to answer Q 9 as RAP 'could' improve child's reading if it was provided more than X2 in the year. It complements reading beautifully. Q 2 – My child received the RAP (same bag) in Year 1 and then in Year 2. Wasn't as enthusiastic in Yr 2 as I think he needed a RAP that was a bit more challenging. (99)
45. The RAP provided a break from the usual reading books as well as having a theme and software which was greatly enjoyed. (100)
46. Only had RAP for 3 nights – would be good if we could keep it over a weekend. (103)
47. Child was disappointed that this pack contained no games (only jigsaw) and the books were all picture–story – my child loves reading and will read a chapter book a night – a Morris Gleitzman over the weekend. We had the 'dogs' backpack. (107)
48. Great all round for all. (111)
49. I think it is great for the kids. I hope it keeps going. (112)
50. Fantastic opportunity for children to interact learning with fun. (115)

Appendix 1O

Reading Adventure Packs.



Building Back-Pack.



Cooking Back-Pack.

Appendix 11

Copy of Study One published in 2005.

Australian Literacy Educators' Association &
The University of New England

MultiLiteracies & English Teaching K-12 in the Age of Information & Communication Technologies 2004

READING ADVENTURE PACKS: A PILOT PROGRAM PROMOTING FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S LITERACY ATTITUDINAL DEVELOPMENT.

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The authors wish to acknowledge Ms. Sheree Weber for her assistance by implementing the Reading Adventure Pack procedure with the students of her class and their families.

Abstract

This pilot study explored the effectiveness of the Reading Adventure Pack (RAP) with students from classes K to 3. The RAP contained books and a variety of activities that promote the skills of literacy. It involved a pre-RAP and post-RAP student and carer questionnaire. The children's questionnaires revealed positive attitudes towards the RAP while the carer's reports were ambivalent. The study found that the mother was the carer most involved in the literacy development of the children in the home.

Introduction

Research shows that literacy development commences well before children start school (Neuman et al. 2003). Family literacy involves the extended family and encompasses the ways that reading materials are used in the home (Mayfield 1999). The early literacy skills that are learnt by a child in the home environment are carried with him/her to school and may partially predict the success that he/she will have in learning to read (Rush 1999).

In general it has been found that class and family may be a stronger predictor of general school achievement than measures of differences of the school environment (Cairney 1998). Specifically, children from low-income families tend to achieve lower scores on tests of reading comprehension than do the children from higher socio-economic families (Nixon & Comber cited in Carrington 2001) and children from lower socio-economic homes tend to fall into lower reading age-levels than do the children from upper socio-economic homes (Rush 1999).

These findings suggest that the economic conditions of the home could influence the kind of reading materials in the home and the manner of usage of that material. In other words, the economic conditions of the home could influence the nature of the reading environment that shapes both the development of children's early attitudes toward reading and the early pre-reading literacy skills that children carry with them to their first years of schooling. This suggestion is reinforced by a recent study from New Zealand which suggests that children's reading achievements are strongly influenced by a combination of home factors that include the reading resources of the home, parental education level and parental involvement (or non-involvement) in the children's home reading (Gerritsen 2003). It could be argued that all three factors involve an economic component.

A number of research studies suggest that it is extremely difficult for some low-income families to resource their children's early literacy needs (Comber et al. 2002). While it appears that most families are aware of the importance of the home literacy environment (Makin & McNaught 2001) and the need for reading resources, too many homes with children are without books and in too many homes adults do not read to children (Minkel 2002).

With the realisation that family members can positively contribute to early literacy development there has been a plethora of programs and initiatives in recent years designed to support and encourage family participation in children's literacy education (Cairney & Ruge 1998). There are many pamphlets, booklets, and family information programs, both charitable and commercial, which are readily available to inform parents of the necessity of a print rich environment (see for example Cairney 1998, Mcfann 2001, Minkel 2002, Rolton 2001, Neuman & Celano 2001).

Australian government agencies also have policies and programs to educate and inform parents about early literacy development. However it would appear that all these initiatives, including the government programs, are largely dependent upon homes having their own access to reading resources (NSW Dept of Education and Training 2003). Unfortunately it would also appear that, for a variety of reasons, sections of the community lack access to home literary resources (Comber et al. 2002). In part, this pilot study is an attempt to explore what happens in the home when resource materials are supplied.

In the USA some early literacy initiatives and programs failed because of the lack of available support services that provided take-home books or home educational resources (Cairney et al. 1995). However there were some programs that did provide a range of literacy materials such as tote bags, books and story tapes (Mayfield 1999, Farris 1987) and anecdotal evidence seemed to indicate that these programs were effective (Barbour 1999).

Currently within Australia, at least one program has provided take home educational literacy resources for kindergarten children (Victoria Teachers Credit Union 2002). Developed at the Allansford and District Kindergarten it included a plastic box containing a storybook, a taped version of that book and other activities related to the theme of the story. While there is anecdotal evidence about the effectiveness of reading packs (Barbour 1999), research examining the effectiveness of the reading backpacks could not be found.

Since reading attitudes can affect reading performance (Garrett 2002), one means by which reading packs could influence reading development is to enhance their enjoyment of reading and the sense of achievement in reading. However, it has been suggested that the study of children's attitudes to reading in their early years has received little attention (Wang 2000). Wang (2000) found that a child 's personal experience, confidence and success (or otherwise) with books and reading, particularly at the initial stages, were directly related to his/her attitude towards reading.

The present pilot study (described below) is an attempt to support and improve children's attitudes to reading and involve members of the family in the children's reading by supplying reading resource material. It was developed after a visit by one of the authors, Gill, to the USA where she saw an early literacy program in action. On her return, and with the assistance of Fisher, they set up a literacy program, similar to that of Barbour (1999), using packs of stimulus material that they entitled *Reading Adventure Packs* (RAP). As there was only anecdotal evidence available outlining the results of the Barbour program (1999), this pilot study was set up to ascertain the effectiveness of the literacy pack approach within the Australian environment. The RAP program involved the collection and organisation of literacy and educational resources for the children. Students borrowed the resources from the school to take home on a rotational basis. Before the system was set in place, parents were invited to participate and given information about how they might assist their children with the program.

The resources within the packs (listed below) were meant to provide a positive literacy experience for the children and to contribute positively toward them developing attitudes towards reading. The RAP was designed to involve family members in the child's home reading experience as well as to provide



enrichment for the classroom literacy program. It was not meant to replace teacher organised homework reading.

The following research questions guided the study.

Research Questions:

1. Who within the family is involved in the children's home reading?
2. What is the children's attitude to reading before the implementation of RAP?
3. What is the children's attitude to RAP?
4. What is the carers' attitude to RAP?
5. What is the carers' perception of the children's response to RAP?

Research Method

Subjects

The subjects in this study constituted a cohort of thirty-three students from two primary classrooms, a K-3 class of thirteen students from a NSW School and a Grade One class of twenty students from a Victorian School. The first school is small and located in a semi-rural area, though a variety of socio-economic levels were represented within the student body and most students came from middle-class homes. Almost a quarter of the second school's population received the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and approximately the same proportion were English as Second Language (ESL) students.

Reading Adventure Packs

A total of six *Reading Adventure Packs* were made, each pack based on a particular but different theme. Following is a list of contents for each *Reading Adventure Pack*:

- a soft toy indicating the theme of the *Reading Adventure Pack*
- a 'Note of Explanation to Carers' about the *Reading Adventure Pack*
- a 'Contents List' outlining what the *Reading Adventure Pack* contained
- an 'Instruction Sheet' for using the *Reading Adventure Pack* and its many activities
- a variety of literacy activities associated with the pack theme and catering for the age group of Kindergarten through to Grade Three children. Activities included four or more storybooks, craft activities,

jigsaw puzzles, colouring sheets, Dot-to-Dot pictures, games, videos, worksheets, puppets, CDs and writing books.

- all associated materials needed for the completion of the activities in the *Reading Adventure Pack* e.g. a lead pencil for writing in the Scrapbook and scissors for the craft activities.

The students borrowed the resource packs to be taken home on a weekly rotational basis.

Procedure

The roles of teachers and carers in the use of the RAP were carefully scripted (roles can be obtained from the authors). Prior to any material being taken home, carers were asked to attend an information night about the study. They were informed about the nature of the study, its aims, and the joint roles of carers and teachers. They were invited to join the study and complete a permission form and an anonymous questionnaire entitled 'Carer Survey about Home Reading', (see Appendix 1).

In class the participating children completed an anonymous, Pre-RAP questionnaire, (see Appendix 2), of ten items related to reading attitudes. These they scored on a three-point Likert scale. Happy and sad faces represented the two extremes on this scale.

On completion of the program two final questionnaires (Post-RAP) were distributed and completed by carers and children. The Post-RAP carer questionnaire, (see Appendix 3), examined aspects of carers' involvement with the RAP and their perceptions of the children's usage. The Post-RAP children's questionnaire, (see Appendix 4), involved eight items that sought the children's attitude toward the RAP program itself. All four questionnaires pertaining to each child were coded so they could be entered into the computer as a single case.

Results

Participants

Thirty-three children, aged five through nine years-of-age, and their carers were involved in this study. Table 1 indicates the spread of ages and sex of students.

Table 1: Age and sex of students attending the two schools

	Victorian School			NSW School			Grand Total
Age	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
5		1	1			0	1
6	10	9	19		1	1	20
7				2	4	6	6
8					5	5	5
9				1			1
Total	10	10	20	3	10	13	33

The reading environment of the home

It is not surprising that all of the carers who responded to the initial questionnaire indicated that they felt that the development of literacy skills were important to their children. Twenty-seven of the thirty-three carers took time to pen comments suggesting that children's literacy was "a basic skill that they need for life", a "resource for life", "a skill that they need for the rest of their life" and "crucial for life as they get older".

Notwithstanding these comments, the home reading resources were varied (see Table 2). One home indicated that it did not have any children's books, four homes reported that they did not have adult reading books, ten homes did not buy magazines and seven homes did not buy newspapers. What is more, six homes from the Victorian School indicated that they did not have access to a public library (see Table 3). It is uncertain whether this was because existing libraries were too far away or because the carers had not sought membership of a library.

Table 4 indicates that within the home environment, mothers are most likely to assist the children's reading – either in supervising the exercise or by actually reading to their children. Thirty homes indicated that mothers were involved in assisting the child's reading, nine homes indicated the father's involvement, two homes indicated the involvement of grandparents and in four homes siblings were involved in their sisters' reading. While the questionnaire did not explore the family relationship between primary carers and the children, the

scope of the results suggested that in two homes, grandparents may have been the primary carers, and in one home it was the father who acted alone. Thus in the thirty homes that contained mothers, all thirty mothers were involved in some way in assisting the reading of their children. In eight homes, both the father and mother were, in some way, involved in their children's reading development (see Table 5).

Table 2: Carers' reports of home reading resources

	Various Books	Magazines	Newspapers	Children's Books
Do not have	4	10	7	1
Have	29	23	26	32
Total	33	33	33	33

Table 3: Carers' report of access to a public library

	Victorian School	NSW School	Total
Do not have access	6	0	6
Have access	14	13	27
	20	13	33

Table 4: Carers' report of family involvement in child's reading

	Mother involved	Mother not involved	Father involved	Father not involved	G'parent involved	G'parent not involved	Sibling involved	Sibling not involved
Male	11	2	5	8	1	12	0	13
Female	19	1	4	16	1	19	4	16
Total	30	3	9	24	2	31	4	29

Table 5: Carers' report of Father's and Mother's involvement in reading to child

	Mother not involved	Mother is involved	Total
Father not involved	2	22	24
Father is involved	1	8	9
Total	3	30	33

Sex and the child's reading habits prior to RAP

Prior to the use of the *Reading Adventure Packs* (RAP), girls reported a higher involvement in reading than did the boys. They had a slightly higher weekly frequency of reading than did the boys. They were more likely to have been independent readers than were the boys and they were more likely to have initiated the reading episodes than were the boys.

Carers' involvement in RAP

Table 6 clearly indicates yet again that the mother was the carer most involved in the children's reading. Twenty-five out of thirty mothers supervised the use of the RAP's and in only four homes neither the father nor mother was involved. It is possible that in two of these situations grandparents were the prime carers and hence they may have been involved. In only one home were both the father and mother involved. Despite their involvement, thirty-one carers within the thirty-three homes felt that the RAP involved too much of their time (see Table 7).

Time was a significant factor in carers' comments about aiding their children's reading. For example one carer wrote "I believe it is important, however it doesn't get done every night." Another said, "I try when I can." In addition, three comments implied that the time needed to supervise the packs was a problem for carers. For example, one carer wrote that, "it would be more helpful if the packs came home on weekends [as] I'd have more time to spend." A second carer suggested that the packs would not "take up too much time if a little was done every day." Finally, yet another carer claimed that "in addition to their take-home readers I found it [supervision of the packs] too much for one night."

It is not so surprising therefore, that not all of the carers saw advantages concerning the RAP. The carers of fifteen children (nine female, six male) considered that the packs were of no great benefit to their children's literacy development. What is more, the carers of fifteen children (eleven female, four male) felt that the packs and their associated information had not enhanced their understanding of their children's literacy needs.

On the other hand, fifteen of the thirty-three respondents to carers' post-RAP survey took the time to write more favourable comments about the packs. One carer wrote, "I think that they are fantastic." Another wrote that "we enjoyed having the packs." Yet another wrote "my child thoroughly enjoyed the reading pack."

Table 6: Father's and Mother's involvement in supervising RAP

	Mother does not supervise	Mother supervises	Total
Father does not supervise	4	25	29
Father supervises	2	1	3
Total	6	26	32

Table 7: Carers' report of their feeling about time involvement in RAP

	Male	Female	Total
Carer felt RAP involved too much time	12	19	31
Carer willingly made time to devote to RAP	0	1	1
Total	12	20	32

Carers' responses to RAP

According to the reports of the carers, thirteen children (ten female, three male) enjoyed the writing book; thirteen children (eight female, five male) enjoyed the worksheets; nineteen children (eleven female, eight male) enjoyed the games, fourteen children (ten female, four male) enjoyed the books and finally, seventeen children (eleven female, six male) enjoyed the soft toy.

Carers' perceptions of the over-all value of the RAP

Carers of sixteen children (seven male, nine female) indicated that the RAP promoted the daily reading of their child. Carers of sixteen children (five female, eleven male) reported that they considered that the RAP had contributed to their child's reading development. The carer of only one child (a male) felt that the RAP detracted from their child's outside playtime.

Results indicated that the carers of girls were more likely than the carers of boys to report that their children demonstrated a positive change in attitude toward reading as a result of using the RAP. In the perception of carers, eighteen of twenty girls as opposed to six of twelve boys showed positive changes in attitude toward reading as a result of the RAP activities.

Children's pre-RAP attitude to reading and post-RAP attitude to RAP

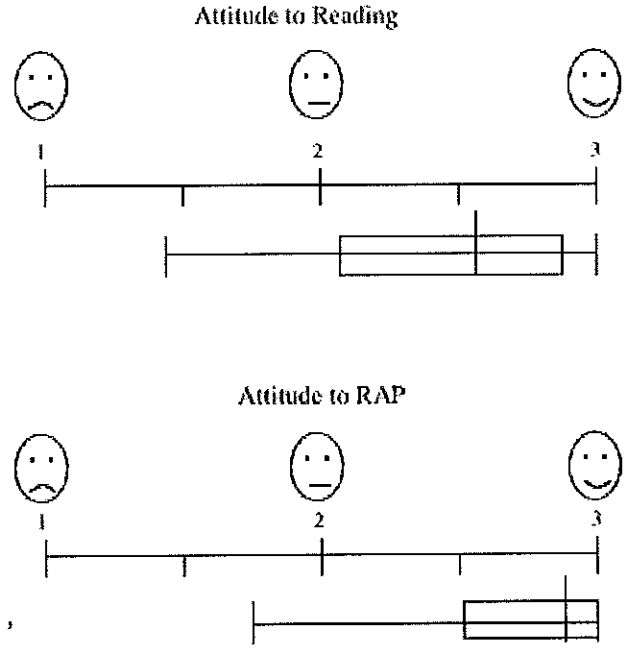
Prior to the introduction of the *Reading Adventure Packs*, the children in both schools were given a questionnaire of 10 items related to their attitude to

reading. Following their use of the packs, each child was given an 8-item questionnaire related to their attitude toward the packs. Each questionnaire was set against a three-point Likert scale in which the limits of the range were determined by happy or sad faces (see Figures 2a and 2b).

The post-RAP questionnaire was labelled 'Attitude to RAP' and exhibited a reliability of 0·78 and had a median measure of 2·93. With a lower quartile measure of 2·50, this scale suggests that more than three quarters of the children indicated a positive attitude toward the reading packs. What is more, the upper quartile measure coincided with the maximum measure of 3·0 indicating that at least one quarter of the children had scored all items of the 7-item scale on the maximum Likert value.

It is interesting to note the apparent difference in distribution of the two scales as displayed in Figures 2a and 2b. The authors acknowledge that these two scales measure different entities and similar results could be obtained from attitudes to ice cream, or cartoons. However it does indicate that a future study, with a more appropriately designed instrument, should be undertaken to see if the use of the packs does produce a short-term change in attitude to reading.

Figure 2a, 2b Box plots for the scales 'Attitude to Reading' and 'Attitude to RAP



In summary the study found that:

- all carers indicated that they saw literacy development as being very important to their children and that reading was more important than playing;
- mothers were the family member most involved in children's out-of-school reading;
- access to home-reading resources was varied;
- girls were more likely to initiate reading, more likely to read independently and more likely to read more often than were the boys;
- children were quite positive about RAP;
- some carers felt that RAP was too time consuming and not all felt that it was helpful in encouraging their children to read daily;
- carers gave a varied report on those components of the RAP that were attractive to their children.

Conclusion

It would appear that the children's reactions to the RAP differed from those of their carers. The results suggest that most of the children were enthusiastic about the RAP while the carers were more ambivalent. Thus, it would appear that the intention of involving carers in their children's reading was only partially successful. This does not mean that the development and use of the RAP was a failure, nor does it mean that the campaign to involve carers should be abandoned. However it does mean that future RAP packs should be designed in such a way as to minimise carer-supervision. One-way of achieving this goal could be to ensure that all activities and games are self-correcting with less carer intervention required. In addition, the components of the RAP packs could be augmented to allow them to appeal more strongly to boy's unique literary preferences and needs. For example, a boy's only pack could include texts geared to boy's interests including CD computer activities that integrate literacy skills with games.

The study also found limitations in the instruments employed. Future questionnaires should be designed to make data-entry into the computer straightforward e.g. a four-point scale.

Very Happy	Happy	Sad	Very Sad
			

While a post-RAP children's questionnaire should examine their attitude toward the RAP itself, the questionnaire should repeat the pre-RAP reading questionnaire to see if there is any short-term changes in attitude toward reading.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 *Pre-study* Carer Survey About Home reading

Appendix 2 *Pre-survey* Child

Appendix 3 *Post-study* Carer Survey About Home reading

Appendix 4 *Post-survey* Child

Appendix 1

Pre-study Carer Survey about Home Reading

1. What reading materials are in your home? Circle the answer.

   a. Books b. Magazines c.Newspapers d.Children's Books e.other

2. Does anyone read to your child at home? Circle the answer. Yes/No

3. Who is the person who reads most often to your child? Circle the answer.

   a.mother b.father c.grandparents d.siblings e.other

4. When does this reading mostly happen? Circle the answer.

   a.weekends b.mornings c.evenings d.other

5. How many times a week does this reading occur? Circle the answer.

   a.less than once b.1-3 times c.3-5 times d.more than 5 times

6. Does your child like to read: Circle the answer.

   a. independently?
   b. to someone else?
   c. with help from someone?

7. How interested is your child in reading? Circle the answer.

   a. always initiates the reading of a book
   b. has to be reminded to read a book
   c. sometimes initiates the reading of a book

8. Do you have access to a public library? Circle the answer. Yes/No

9. If you answered "Yes" to the above question, how often do you go to the Library? Circle the answer.

   a.weekly b.monthly c.rarely d.other

10. How do you feel about homework reading? Circle the answer

    a. It takes up too much time from the child's day when I think they should be outside playing after school.
    b. It is necessary for my child to advance consistently and therefore I make the time available every night.
    c. I don't have the time to devote to such daily activities due to other pressing family matters.
    d. Other

11. Do you see literacy and reading as important skills for young children to master? Yes/No. Why/Why not?

Appendix 2

Pre survey Child

Age in years: **5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10** **Boy/Girl**

1. How do you feel when it's time for reading class?



2. How do you feel about starting a new book?



3. How do you feel when you read a book at school?



4. How do you feel about reading instead of playing?



5. How do you feel when someone reads to you at home?



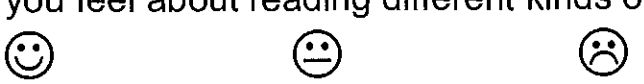
6. How do you feel about doing homework reading?



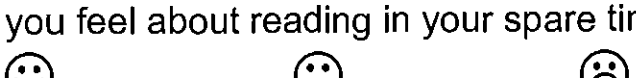
7. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?



8. How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?



9. How do you feel about reading in your spare time?



10. How do you feel about reading your schoolbooks?



Appendix 3

Post-study Carer Survey about Home Reading

1. *What was your response to the literacy materials brought home in the READING ADVENTURE PACKS? Circle the answer.*

   a. They contain too many activities to be completed in the allocated time.
   b. They contain sufficient material to be completed in the allocated time.
   c. They don't contain enough material for the allocated time.

2. *How would you rate the interest level your child showed with regard to the READING ADVENTURE PACKS? Circle the answer.*

   a. showed great interest b. showed slight interest c. didn't show any interest

3. *Who was involved mostly in using the READING ADVENTURE PACKS with your child? Circle the answer.*

   a. mother b. father c. grandparents d. siblings e. other

4. *Who else was involved in using the READING ADVENTURE PACKS with your child? Circle the appropriate answer/s.*

   a. mother b. father c. grandparents d. siblings e. other

5. *When did the READING ADVENTURE PACKS mainly get used? Circle the appropriate answer/s.*

a. mornings b. evenings c.other

6. *What content/s of the READING ADVENTURE PACK did your child appear to enjoy the most? Circle the appropriate answer/s.*

   a. soft toy b. books c. games d. worksheets e. writing in the book

7. *How helpful have you found these READING ADVENTURE PACKS to be in encouraging your child to develop a greater love of reading? Circle the answer.*

   a. My child already had a great love of reading prior to using these materials.
   b. My child doesn't seem to have shown any change in his/her attitude towards reading.
   c. My child has shown a negative attitude change towards reading since using these materials.
   d. My child has shown a very positive attitude change towards reading since using these materials.

8. *How have you felt about these READING ADVENTURE PACKS being part of the homework reading? Circle the answer.*

   a. It takes up too much time from the child's day when I think they should be outside playing after school.
   b. It was helpful in getting my child to read every day.
   c. I don't have time to devote to such daily activities due to other pressing family matters.
   d. Other

9. Has your attitude changed towards literacy since your child has participated in the READING ADVENTURE PACKS?

   Yes/No. Why/Why not?

Appendix 4

Post survey Child

Age in years: **5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10** **Boy/Girl**

1. How do you feel when you read the *Reading Adventure Pack*, at home, for homework reading?



2. How do you feel about all the things in the *Reading Adventure Pack* that you can play with or do?



3. How do you feel about reading now that you've been taking the *Reading Adventure Packs* home?



4. How do you feel when it's time, at home, to read the *Reading Adventure Pack?*



5. How do you feel if someone reads a book to you from the *Reading Adventure Pack?*



6. How do you feel when it is your turn to take the *Reading Adventure Pack* home for the week?



7. How do you feel if someone in your family wants to read the materials in your *Reading Adventure Pack*?



8. How do you feel about reading your *Reading Adventure Pack* instead of playing?

