

Free Voluntary Reading: Still a Great Idea SKrashen <http://www.sdkrashen.com>

The overwhelming research case for FVR

- a. Hooked on Books! (D. Fader)
- b. Sweet Valley High (KS Cho)
- c. The Fiji Island study (Elley & Mangubhai)

Gains (months) in reading comprehension

grade	audio-lingual	sustained silent reading	shared reading
4	6.5	15	15
5	2.5	9	15

year 2: larger differences, readers better in writing, listening and grammar

- d. Shin, F. & Krashen, S. 2007: Summer Reading: Program and Evidence.
- e. Mason: The retakers study.

Reviews: Krashen (2001, Kappan; 2007, IJFLT)

Encouraging FVR

- A. rewards and incentives? (McQuillan, 1997, Krashen, 2003)
- B. reading itself and “home run books”
- C. literature
- D. light reading – a BRIDGE
- E. access and the importance of libraries
- better libraries > better reading (Lance, McQuillan, Krashen)
- the effect of poverty: Neuman & Celano

Is reading declining? The NEA report

Quantity: 17-yr-olds read book yesterday: 24 “ but all reading – about an hour.

Adults: Pew: “only” 38% did book reading yesterday. But:: 1991 = 31%; 1995, 2000 = 35%; 2002 = 34%

Quality: No change in NAEP scores for grades 4, 8 since 1984

High school seniors: four point drop since 1984, but (1) 2004 = 1971! (2) 4 points not much - range from bottom 10% to top 10% about 100 points

The Empire strikes back: <http://www.districtadministration.com>

I am writing to clarify three points in Stephen Krashen’s November 23 DA blog posting (www.DistrictAdministration.com/pulse), “Are We Reading Less and Reading Worse? Probably Not.” First, the title of his article and its conclusion lack an empirical basis, and the National Endowment for the Arts has issued substantial evidence to the contrary in its most recent report, “To Read or Not to Read: A Question of National Consequence.”

Mr. Krashen laments the report’s omission of data from a few small studies, whereas most of the analyses on which the report’s conclusions are based—specifically, that Americans are reading less and that they are reading less well—derive from large, nationally representative studies of statistical validity.

His statement that “all of these surveys are suspect” is simply false. To the contrary, “To Read or Not to Read” is based on an abundance of reliable data from federal, private, academic and nonprofit organizations. For the record, although the report does not include trend data on the Pew Foundation statistics he mentions, the report does explain

that different survey questions yield different answers. It is unreasonable, as Mr. Krashen proposes, to compare a Pew-reported reading rate of 34 percent in 2002 with separate survey results of 21 percent in 1945.

Mr. Krashen's assertion that "[c]learly, something was wrong with one of those tests" is a mystery. To which two tests is he referring? The point is not that the steepest drop in 12th-grade reading scores occurred between 1992 and 2005, but that the scores are continuing to decline. As the report indicates, 17-year-olds—in contrast to 9-year-olds, for example—have failed to show any sustainable improvement in their average reading score since 1971.

I urge Mr. Krashen to be less complacent where American reading habits and skills are concerned.

Sunil Iyengar, director of research and analysis, National Endowment for the Arts,

My response (I was limited to 150 words!):

The surveys are "suspect" because responses to questions about reading for fun may not reflect true reading habits. This has nothing to do with the number of people interviewed.

Pew reported that 38% of adults said they engaged in book reading yesterday. In 2002 Pew reported a figure of 34%, in 1991 31%, suggesting that reading is increasing, not decreasing. It is "reasonable" to compare this to a 1945 report of 21% because the data comes from a national survey that asked the same question.

NEA reported a drop of 14 points for low scoring 17-year-olds between 1992 and 2005, but does not indicate that most of this (10 points) happened between 1992 and 1994, a gigantic and bizarre drop for such a short time interval. Something must be wrong. (See also comments by testing expert Gerald Bracey, Huffington Post, November 26).