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Grad student receives grant through seminar project

By **Rebecca Wyatt Thomas**, OU Web Writer

Visit Jane Winn's third grade classroom at Ewell Elementary School and you might find students reading. While this doesn't seem out of the ordinary, Winn provides the students with silent reading time—a time when the students can make themselves comfortable and immerse themselves in the storyline of their favorite book. Winn said this isn't just classroom busywork; the silent reading helps students connect their interests with what they read. With the help of a \$2,000 "Teacher as Researcher" grant from International Reading Association, Winn will look at the importance of silent reading.

While taking a research seminar with Dawn Pickard, associate professor and associate dean in the School of Education and Human Services, Winn learned about applying for grants and decided to try for a grant to support research on silent reading. She applied and was in shock when she learned she had received the go-ahead to examine the topic.

"If I had never had that research class, I might not have had the opportunity to do this. It was a lot of work preparing the grant. I spent a lot of time looking for resources and researching the topic," Winn said. "Silent reading is one of those elements of classroom education that you have to justify. As educators, we know it's good for children, but because it is a silent activity we cannot visually see the results."

The study, "Can reading comprehension be significantly improved through the use of alternative sustained silent reading techniques, notably R5?," focuses on silent reading and an alternative technique to enhance silent reading success.

All three third grade classes at Winn's elementary school will be divided into three groups for silent reading. The groups will be a cross-section of students ranging in reading skill level. The students won't know who is part of the study and who is in the control group.

All students will be administered a Gates-MacGinitie reading test, an attitude and metacognitive survey and a student interest survey at the beginning of the study, which will begin in October. At the end of the four months of the study, the test and surveys will be readministered to determine what effect silent reading and the alternative techniques had on their reading comprehension.

"Children learn to read starting in kindergarten. Third grade is the last year they are learning how to read. Starting in fourth grade there is a shift in reading, student's become responsible to read independently to learn new concepts and ideas on their own," Winn said.

Through the grant, Winn is purchasing books the children have selected .

"Children will read what they are interested in. In schools, we tell children what to read all the time and they don't get a choice. We want to give them a choice," Winn said. "I like silent reading and I'm a big advocate of it. The children get to pick what they read. In this society we make children do so many things, this is one thing we can let them choose for themselves."

Next summer, Winn plans to analyze the study results and possibly publish her findings.

Winn is in her second year of the doctoral program in early childhood development at Oakland University. While she has an interest in reading development, she plans to study peer relationships for her dissertation. Having received this grant, Winn is more confident that she apply for more grants in the future.

"It was kind of a fluke. I applied for it thinking that I had a good topic but I didn't actually expect to receive the grant. I'm the only person from Michigan to receive this kind of grant. It's exciting," Winn said.

SUMMARY

Visit Jane Winn's third grade classroom at Ewell Elementary School and you might find students reading. While this doesn't seem out of the ordinary, Winn provides the students with silent reading time—a time when the students can make themselves comfortable and immerse themselves in the storyline of their favorite book. Winn said this isn't just classroom busywork; the silent reading helps students connect their interests with what they read. With the help of a \$2,000 "Teacher as Researcher" grant from International Reading Association, Winn will look at the importance of silent reading.

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