DO GRAPHIC NOVELS HAVE A ROLE IN SCHOOL LIBRARIES?

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THESIS

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DO GRAPHIC NOVELS HAVE A ROLE IN SCHOOL LIBRARIES?

A Thesis

by

Linda Loretta Cravens
Student: Linda Loretta Cravens

I certify that this student has met the requirements for format contained in the University format manual, and that this thesis is suitable for shelving in the Library and credit is to be awarded for the thesis.

Dr. Robert Pritchard, Department Chair

Department of Teacher Education

April 29, 2009
Abstract

of

DO GRAPHIC NOVELS HAVE A ROLE IN SCHOOL LIBRARIES?

by

Linda Cravens

Statement of the Problem

Research reported in educational literature suggests that the decline in voluntary reading is linked to student’s poorer performance in school. As an elementary school educator, who is always looking for new literature for primary students to read, it has come to this researchers attention that graphic novels continue to grow in popularity with each year.

This paper provides an introduction to text features graphic novels provide which are critical in developing a reader’s ability to navigate a piece of literature. It also specifically addresses the benefits and purposes of graphic novel use in the classroom. This study provides pertinent information to add additional perspective on the issue of graphic novels, and their ability to help lead non-readers back to books. The purpose of this thesis was to research and assess the effectiveness and effects on motivation that graphic novel exposure might have on students to read more for the
sheer pleasure of reading. Determining if graphic novels are an acceptable reading genre for schools

Source of Data

This study contains a quantitative analysis of pre and post interest surveys and anecdotal observational notes of students' classroom and library reading behaviors determining the motivational effect of graphic novel exposure. A quantitative analysis of local school libraries was conducted to determine the quantity of graphic novels available for student check-out and how the graphic novel collections were acquired. A qualitative analysis was also conducted using Accelerated Reader log entries and Status of the Class Record Sheets to determine change in students reading habits after they were introduced to graphic novels.

Conclusions Reached

This research data has identified through the systematic, quantitative approach, genuine insight into students' reading motivation, interest, and also their struggles with literature. A description of the conclusions gained from this research design, and assessment instruments were described. Obvious conclusions were ascertained: the results provide valid evidence for placing graphic novels in school libraries, as well as in the school classrooms. It highlighted the necessity to consider the importance of the motivational aspect graphic novels provide as a learning component in a classroom environment to increase reading for pleasure. It is clear that graphic novels can be a powerful tool for reaching many different learning styles. The use of visual elements v
in teaching and learning are important for students to be able to connect the daily use literacies from their multi-media world into their educational learning. Students need to utilize these visual literacy skills in order to survive and communicate in a highly complex world. All students reading competency will be boosted through graphic novel use.

Dr. Nancy Lee Cecil

Committee Chair

April 24, 2009

Date
DEDICATION

This is for my family – Now we have time to create many happy memories together.
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Graphic novels in the classroom are a form of text that many teachers and librarians are not comfortable using with school students. However, groups such as The American Library Association are helping educate librarians and teachers about the new medium for literacy that acknowledges the impact of visuals. Texts, according to Moje, “are organized networks that people generate or use to make meaning” (1996, p. 176). An example of formal and informal text would be books, speeches, notes, grocery lists and conversations. The text’s level of formality “does not diminish its potential as a way of making meaning or its potential to be linked consciously or unconsciously to other, more or less formal types of text” (Moje, E. & Wade S., 2000 p. 610). Text in graphic novels can serve as dialogue, narration, sound effect, commentary, clarification, image, and more.

Visual literacy involves all the processes of knowing and responding to a visual image, as well as “the learned ability to interpret visual messages accurately and to create such messages” (Heinich, Molenda, Russell, & Smaldino, 1996, p. 64). Associated with visual literacy is visual thinking, described as “the ability to turn information of all types into pictures, graphics, or forms that help communicate the information” (Wileman, 1993, p. 113). A graphic novel is the combination of written text and visual literacy including the visual symbols and shorthand that comics use to represent the physical world (Derrick, 2008).
In an increasingly visual culture, literacy educators can profit from the use of graphic novels in the classroom, especially for young adults. This visual language movement is gaining momentum as students are showing their love of reading this modern day literature. Assessing the acceptability and motivational power graphic novels have on young readers, as well as librarians’ views and opinions about popular graphic novel collection choices are the focus of this research.

Purpose of Thesis

As an elementary school educator, who is always looking for new literature for elementary students to read, it has come to the researcher’s attention that graphic novels are becoming a prominent library ticket item. The report from the National Endowment for the Arts, *To Read or Not to Read: A Question of National Consequence* (2007), reveals that “…less than one-third- of thirteen- year-olds are daily readers. In addition, the percentage of seventeen-years-olds who read nothing at all for pleasure has doubled over a twenty-year period” (p. 5). Some conclusions that can be draw from this report is that Americans are reading less frequently and less proficiently. The report links the decline in voluntary reading among teens and young adults to poorer performance in school. It also raises questions about the role of reading in a world full of digital distractions.

The purpose of this thesis was to research and access the effects graphic novel exposure might have on the target populations’ willingness to read more for pleasure. The target population was elementary school children in the second and fifth grade.
Their ages ranged from seven and eight year old second graders to 10 and 11 year old fifth graders. Primary questions that this research addressed are:

1. Should graphic novels be included in the school library?
2. Do graphic novels help lead non-readers back to books?

Secondary questions that this research was designed to address:

1. Would English-language learners benefit from reading graphic novels?
2. Do graphic novels appeal to one gender more than another?
3. Do students enjoy reading graphic novels?

Significance of the Thesis

Graphic novels continue to grow in popularity with each year, from elementary school media centers to adult collections. According to Crawford (2005) “Over the last few years graphic novels have made a considerable splash in the library world and their popularity with readers continues to expand” (p. 36). While librarians and patrons may use the term graphic novels to refer to any type of text which utilizes visual images heavily, Sheppard (2007) stated “that graphic novels tell a story, they can stand alone from other titles and many graphic novels deal with current issues, serious subjects, and learning” (p. 16).

Comics, which have been in existence much longer than graphic novels have typically been viewed by librarians in a negative way. As Weiner, R. (2001) pointed out, “Because the words ‘comic’ or ‘graphic novels’ still have the stigma of being hack literature…many teachers and librarians consider this type of reading material to be inappropriate and resist its acceptance” (p. 133). While teachers may be hesitant to
support graphic novel use there is no denying their popularity and attractiveness to a range of readers, most notably boys, and reluctant readers. As Sheppard (2007) wrote, "[I]n our increasingly visual culture, many are finding written text boring and the act of reading as a chore" (p. 16). The pictures within graphic novels draw the attention of the reader.

Contrary to concerns about the value of graphic novels, research shows that graphic novels are linguistically equal to other works of literature. This means that graphic novels bear no negative impact on school achievement or reading levels (Crawford, 2004). In fact, researcher suggested that reading for pleasure may increase willingness to read and even reading skills. Students, who think of reading as pleasurable, will want to read more often (Simmons, 2003).

Beyond fostering a love for reading, graphic novels also provide text features which are critical in developing a reader's ability to navigate a piece of literature. According to Simmons (2003), readers of graphic novels read the images as well as text – they must be able to understand mood, tone, character portrayal, and the relationships between the image and text. Graphic novel readers also learn how to decode facial and body expressions, "the symbolic meaning of certain images and postures, metaphors and similes, and other social and literary nuances" (p. 20). All of these skills are crucial to becoming a proficient reader, and individuals who may not obtain these using more traditional texts are afforded the opportunity to do so with graphic novels. Graphic novels, with their visual appeal, may be just what teachers need to scaffold the development of students to become life-long readers.
The most important factor in the development of reading skills is the amount of time a student actually spends reading (Cummins, 2003). One of the ways that teachers of English Language Learners can increase the amount of time their students read is by using graphic novels. According to Krashen (1993), picking up word meaning by reading is 10 times faster than intensive vocabulary instruction. Not only can graphic novels provide language learners with contextualized comprehensible input, they can also engage the learner and lead him or her to explore more types of reading materials. Graphic novels and comics deal with spoken language differently than books do. Usually, comic book writers attempt to capture spoken language as it really occurs, complete with gaps, hesitations, and slang (Cary, 2004, p. 33).

According to Schwarz (2006), “Educators have... urged the use of comics as an alternative, appealing way for students to analyze literary conventions, character development, dialogue, satire, and language structures as well as develop writing and research skills” (p. 58). These novels appeal to young people, are useful across the curriculum, and offer diverse alternatives to traditional texts as well as other mass media. Take a look at a copy of *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale* (1986) by Art Spiegelman, a comic book version of the Holocaust in which mice were the Jews and cats the Nazis. The story is based on Spiegelman’s father’s survival of Auschwitz. *Maus* went on to win a Pulitzer Prize, the first graphic novel to do so.

While public libraries have typically found more freedom in adding to their collections, school libraries are limited in the scope of their collection development – tied to the established curriculum. “School libraries have a harder time incorporating
graphic novels into their collection because many parents, teachers, and school librarians feel that graphic novels do not support the curriculum and have a negative impact on a child’s learning ability” (Schwarz, 2002, p. 262). However, graphic novels can be used to support the curriculum. Teachers can use graphic novels as a bridge to classic literature, create interest in science and social issues, explain complex situations, and explore alternative views of culture, history and human life in general (Gorman, 2007).

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine if graphic novels have a role in school libraries, as well as to determine what motivational weight they carry. One second grade class and one fifth grade class from an elementary school in the greater Sacramento area participated in the study. Other participants were librarians from schools in the same school district.

The data for this study was collected through quantitative closed-ended survey questionnaires. Students completed a pre and post quantitative Likert-scale survey. This survey addressed student likes and dislikes of reading, along with motivational effects of graphic novel reading. The librarian survey measured if the school library collections contained graphic novels, approximately how many were in each collection and who purchased the graphic novels. Additionally information was gathered about the collection development tools utilized for graphic novel selection for each school library, along with motivational factors involved with the establishment of the graphic novel collection. The librarian survey had one open-ended question as well as three
questions with an “other” category listed for librarians to fill in individual information. The qualitative observational notes of classroom reading behaviors gathered from the Status of the Class Record Sheet Appendix and the Accelerated Reader logs Appendix were used only to measure individual changes in reading interest.

At the beginning of the study, students were given the pre graphic novel introduction reading interest survey. The researcher then introduced graphic novels to both the second and fifth grade classes. Graphic novels were provided for daily silent reading time. Students were given a five week time period to immerse themselves into this genre of literature. At the end of the five week period students were given the post reading interest survey.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First, the target students were second and fifth graders in assigned classes, and not a randomly selected group. The age differences along with reading levels and interests might have an effect on the results of the study.

Second, the student motivation components were measured with a self-reported instrument. Self-reports can be used effectively to measure student perceptions of motivations (Ames & Archer, 1988; Meece, Blumenfeld, & Hoyle, 1988), but the results need to be replicated with other measures, such as structured interviews, or behavioral measures (Zimmerman & Pons, 1986). The researcher used behavioral observations to validate the data collected in the second grade class as their
classroom teacher, but needed to rely on another teacher's opinion for any fifth graders behavioral changes.

Third, this program was devised by a teacher who valued reading and felt the need for the students to develop a passion for reading. This could cause a contextual teacher limitation. This study might not have been as effective if another teacher implemented it into the classroom.

Fourth, the study length had a five week time factor and possibly might not represent how behaviors change over a longer period of time. Further, a greater variety of graphic novel choices might cause different behavior changes toward reading.

Delimitations

The sample of this study is geographically limited. It includes only one second grade class and one fifth grade class in an inner city school. The Student Survey consisted of 10 questions that students were directed to answer on a scale system only. There were no open-ended questions for students to express their personal opinion about reading in general or graphic novels use. The researcher chose not to personally interview students from either class because it was believed that the second graders would not fully understand the questions asked.

Implications for Future Research

The results of this study offer several implications for future research. One possibility would be a study comprised of a larger sample size with children of the same age. This would eliminate the possibility of assessing developmental differences between age groups, but it would allow researchers to focus on the dependent variable,
motivation. A further step would be to format the student reading survey questions specifically addressing graphic novel use. In addition adding open-ended questions to the student survey would provide more personal input from the students.

An extensive librarian survey, utilizing more than just one school districts libraries, conducted to determine which collection development tools media specialist utilize when they begin to establish a graphic novel collection and which tools they find to be most effective, along with specific data regarding who reads those graphic novels would provide more specific information regarding library and graphic novels use. Additional open-ended question as well as individual interviews would provide more specific information about each libraries graphic novel collection.

**Definition of Terms**

*Brain Research*: Pictures taken of the brain while people read using either a PET scan or an MRI to determine what parts of the brain are most active during reading.

*Dual Code Theory*: a theory of cognition, that postulates both visual and verbal information are processed differently and along distinct channels of the human mind.

*Graphic Novels*: book-length, high quality comic books.

*Individual Student Survey*: individual survey asking questions about reading habits, student’s library use, as well as other reading interest related questions.

*Librarian Survey*: survey questions about graphic novel books collections choices, and number of books in school library.
Linguistic Literacy: Meaning making derived from written or oral human language which is commonly taught in schools.


Struggling Readers: Struggling readers lack the word accuracy to make comprehension of text possible.

Visual Literacy: refers to a group of vision-competencies a human being can develop by seeing and at the same time having and integrating other sensory experiences, making meaning from information presented in the form of an image.

Visual Performance: The ability to visually perceive details and carry out a visual task.

Organization of Thesis

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the purpose rationale and methodology of this research study. Definitions of terms and limitations of the study were also discussed. Chapter 2 presents an overview of the research and professional literature related to graphic novel use in school settings, as well as librarian opinions and book title ideas of popular graphic novels choices for a class or school library. Chapter 3 offers descriptions of the instruments, strategies, and procedures used in this investigation. Chapter 4 provides results of data collection instruments, assessing reading attitudes and behaviors, as well as librarian attitudes and book collection ideas. Chapter 5 presents discussion of the pre and post student survey results, as well as the librarian survey results, integrating these outcomes with the existing literature. Further, suggestions for future research and classroom practice are offered.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Comics have been a staple of American culture since the turn of the last century, whether in the Sunday paper or a critically acclaimed graphic novel. Only recently, however, have scholars begun turning any sustained attention to the graphic novel as an art form, a specific text medium, and a cultural artifact. For this reason, many of us are familiar with the basics of reading graphic novels, but not with any critical vocabulary for deciphering or discussing them. Based on the fact that teachers are not fully aware of the benefits of utilizing graphic novels in their classrooms, educators perhaps need to be more knowledgeable on the advantages of including them in their curriculum. This research specifically addresses the benefits and purposes of graphic novel use in the classroom. The following chapter contents provide a definition of the Graphic novel; the background of graphic novels, as well as the purpose of comics in education. The purpose of comics in education is addressed through the topics of motivation, multilingual students, and bridging literacies through graphic novels. Additionally, the benefits of graphic novels for visual learners are addressed as well as comprehension through graphic novels use.

Graphic Novels Defined

"Graphic novels," is an evolving term according to the admittedly suspect source Wikipedia, is not strictly defined, and is sometimes used, controversially, to imply subjective distinctions in artistic quality between graphic novels and other kinds of comics.
[Graphic novels are] as noted in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*: book-length, high quality comic books that introduce children and adults to a wide range of literacy fiction and non-fiction subjects. Graphic novels stand alone as complete works, as opposed to comic books, which are usually short serials, or a continuing story (Burdge, 2006, p. 166), and they deal with current social issues, serious subjects, and promote learning across curriculums.

Books created in the format recognized as graphic novels are presented in sequential visual art, with the requirement upon the creator and reader to work between image and word for a full understanding of narrative content. Such books usually include a structured series of rectangular panels. "Sequential Art is the arrangement of pictures or images and words to narrate a story or dramatize an idea, according to one of the original graphic novelists" (Eisner, 1985, pp. 7-9). Leading comics theorist, Scott McCloud, stated that "graphic novels contain a serialized narrative, or a graphic juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and or produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (1994, p. 9).

Many graphic novels deal with current issues, serious subjects and learning across the curriculum (Sheppard 2007). They explore the world around us in more keen depth. Graphic novels may present alternative views of culture, philosophy, human interactions, and history, making them more accessible to students (Schwarz, 2002). Art Spiegelman's (1991) *Maus* for example, has been used to teach about the
horror of the Holocaust (Leckbee, 2005). Leckbee noted “[t]he image and the text work together on the page, bringing the complicated story of a man and his father, one comic strip frame at a time, to life” (p. 30). Graphic novels offer a unique opportunity to engage students in reading and interpreting texts.

The complexity and relevance of these stories is being increasingly recognized, with new works such as Shaun Tan’s (2006) *The Arrival* and Gene Luen Yang’s (2006) *American Born Chinese* winning unprecedented critical acclaim recognition. *American Born Chinese* became the first graphic novel to be a National Book Award finalist and to win the Michael L. Printz Award for excellence in young adult literature. It also received favorable reviews from all the journals and magazines that review books for teens, and won an assortment of other awards. *The Arrival’s excellence in graphic storytelling has an international following. It* won the 2008 Boston Globe Horn Book Award. In addition it was named a top ten graphic novel for teens and placed on the top ten books for Young Adults list.

What makes graphic novels different than comics, picture books and novels with supplementary visuals is that they have a beginning, middle and end, as well as a main character that develops through conflict and the story’s climax. The most significant difference from a comic is that the graphic novel’s text is both written and visual. Every part of each frame plays a role in the interpretation of the text, and hence, graphic novels actually demand serious readers.

*Manga*, another commonly heard graphic novel term, refers to “Japanese comics – that are generally but not always released in the United States. They are
compiled in a soft cover, graphic-novel-format” (Exner, 2007, p 13). One main difference between manga and graphic novels is the organization of the text. Typically a manga reader work as a case in point, from back to front and from right to left, while reading. Manga is read by children, teenagers, corporate types, and the elderly because there is such a wide array of titles. Manga is so popular at Henry Wise Wood High School in Calgary, Alberta according to Cat Turner, a secondary English specialist “many students are actually learning Japanese so that they can read the newest manga straight off the press, instead of waiting for translations” (Turner, 2005).

Graphic novels, like any other format, have multi-layers of meaning. They can be enjoyed on the surface or deeply, depending on what the reader background and experience is. One of the most compelling reasons to use graphic novels in the classroom is that they can simplify complex and controversial topics. For example, graphic novels may help students explore social issues and terrorism (Butcher & Manning, 2004). Many graphic novels emphasize drama, adventure, character development, and politics.

The popularity of graphic novels is only growing as more people become familiar with works in this appealing and diverse format. A thriving market for graphic novels and rich cross-cultural influences mean that more experimental, innovative, high-quality stories and art are available now than ever before. Readers have a wide variety to choose from, so readership is no longer limited to fans of superhero escapades or slapstick humor.
Graphic Novel Background

Unlike comic strips and books, which have a long and distinguished publishing history, graphic novels are a relatively new and growing phenomenon. New York comic artist, Will Eisner (1917-2005), is a legend in the industry and, arguably, the most influential comic illustrator of all time. He pioneered what he called “the sequential art form” and was a leading protagonist for the graphic novel genre and the use of comic strip art as an instructional device. He is credited with creating one of the first graphic novels _A Contract with God_ (1978) as well as with coining the term “graphic novel” (Butcher & Manning, 2004, p. 67).

In 1978, Marvel Comics produced the first original mass-market trade paperback graphic novel, _The Silver Surfer_, by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. The most successful graphic novel series in the United States so far has been Neil Gaiman’s (1978) _Sandman_ series. Collecting the original comic book series into book form, there are currently 10 volumes with estimated sales of over one million copies.

A bizarre twist on the concept of graphic novels involves American creations that have had limited success here in the States, but enjoy enormous popularity overseas. A great example of this is the _Phantom_. While still done as a continuing daily strip in American papers, _Phantom_ is most popular in graphic novel form throughout Europe and Australia. Yet the most popular graphic novel series of all time features the characters of Walt Disney. Although Disney comics have been sporadically published in the United States since the late 1970s, they have been in constant publication all over the world, usually in graphic novel form and not comic
books (Tychinski 2004). Currently Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse, and Uncle Scrooge albums are printed in over 90 languages worldwide.

As current media interest continues to focus on comic books and related series, the popularity of the graphic novel will likely continue to grow. The time has come for mainstream public awareness of graphic novels. Graphic novels need to take their place as a fully accept genre of literature in the United States, as they have been for years in the rest of the world.

Purpose of Comics in Education

*Motivation*

Many children do not read for pleasure and do not succeed in reading for information or to perform a task. Static text on an immobile page is not just often seen as boring and laborious, it is practically alien (Lyga & Lyga, 2004) to today’s technologically savvy students. The reasons vary as to why some readers are reluctant to read. Some are below grade level in reading and have poor self-esteem; some have unidentified learning disabilities; others are struggling to learn a new language and still others have not been properly taught the necessary reading strategies to help them be successful during the act of reading. Some of these children avoid reading because the right book hasn’t been matched to their needs and interests. Children are not fully aware that video games, chat rooms, e-mail, and other computer generated forms of entertainment are in competition for their limited discretionary reading time.
Teachers can use graphic novels to enable multi-level learning by including the struggling reader, motivating the reluctant one, and challenging the high-level learner. According to Simmons (2003),

[graphic novel readers learn to understand print, but can also decode facial and body expressions, the symbolic meanings of certain images and postures, metaphors and similes, and other social and literacy nuances teenagers are mastering as they move from childhood to maturity. (p. 20)]

Graphic novels provide educators and librarians the means to reach students who don’t read before they become permanent adult non-readers. Moreover, graphic novels can promote reading engagement by employing a format that may be enjoyed outside the classroom (Booth, 2002; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). According to Kerr and Culhane, (2000) the synergy of art and words that characterize graphic novels can “stimulate active participation and engagement, generating a kind of role playing immediacy that can make attention addicts out of otherwise attention disordered individuals” (para. 3).

Self-selection of reading material is a crucial aspect that allows students to experience reading as pleasure. Krashen (2004c) strongly encouraged that self-selected reading have minimal academic strings attached to it. Choice of engaging materials, opportunity and access are the deciding factors in whether or not reluctant readers will pick up a book (Beers, 1996). Graphic novels help avoidance readers because the books themselves are different in format from the texts and basal readers used during classroom instruction, and from the fiction books found in the school library. The blending of art and text, as well as and the excitement and sophistication
of the stories motivate students to read and engage their attention. Once a graphic novel is in the hands of reluctant or avoidance readers, those students become transformed by the experience and they feel successful with the act of reading (Lyga, 2007). Such students experience reading as something enjoyable, which motivates them and kindles a desire to keep reading for pleasure.

A number of studies by Krashen (2004a), Worthy (1996), and Worthy, Moorman, & Turner (1999) report that when adolescents choose materials that truly interest them and read for pleasure, the many benefits include gains in vocabulary, reading fluency, a greater effort, motivation, and a more positive attitude towards reading. They also conclude that the increased confidence leads to tackling more complex texts (Krashen, 2004a; Worthy; Worthy et al.). When students experience success they are more likely to take risks.

Gunther Kress (2003) would say that forcing youth and adult learners to read simply print text is a disservice to the reality of the “communication revolution” happening right now. According to Kress,

…the movement within this information age - via the screen, the computer, the iPod, and all other forms of multimodality – is similar to the changes in our language and the ways in which we communicated prior to the invention of printing press. In short, we find ourselves in the midst of the information age where the dominance of print text is replaced with the dominance of the image. (p. 1)
Personal interest is the most motivating factor in choosing to read and improve attitudes towards reading (Beers, 1996; Krashen, 2004a; Nippold, Duthie, & Larsen, 2005; Worthy, 1996; Worthy et al. 1999). Arizpe (2001) and Krashen (2004a) identify the important role that intrinsic motivation plays in reading. No teacher tactic or motivational tool is going to encourage students to read if they do not feel a sense of ownership, get to choose material they have a genuine interest in, and do it because they want to. There is also contemporary research and current practice that directly illuminates the utility of comic and graphic novels on the classroom. Smith & Wilhelm (2002) have demonstrated via their longitudinal study into the reading habits of young men that graphic novels are one of the few media able to hold their interest. Another study of the reading preferences of 49 boys found they “privileged highly visual texts … [which] stimulated visual thinking” (Wilhelm & Smith, p. 788), for example, graphic novels.

In an increasingly visual culture, teachers and teacher-librarians can use graphic novels to make the most of the way that students entertain themselves, to foster learning about alternative views of culture, history and human experience which in turn gives voice to minorities and those with diverse viewpoints (Burmark, 2002; Schwartz 2002). While, “a lack of visual literacy is as much a handicap as the inability to read or write” (Burmark, p. 7), the lack of motivation to engage with texts when fully capable is more disheartening. We have an opportunity to draw in those students who are disenchanted with reading because they have not found something that they can personally connect with. If we deny our weakest and most vulnerable students the
materials in which they are able to delight, we also deny them all of these skills that develop with reading. “While it may not be true that everything that is good for you is pleasant, the most effective way of building literacy happens to be the most pleasant” (Krashen, 2004b, p. 151).

Multilingual Students

Graphic novels are a natural for second language development. Their unique mix of abundant, comprehension-building visuals and authentic text readily engages learners, contextualizes language, and offers a window into the culture. They appeal to students from a myriad of different backgrounds, cultures, and personalities (Schwarz 2006). Yet despite their obvious advantages, graphic novels are misunderstood and underutilized as a literacy learning tool.

Graphic novels readership cuts across age, gender and even social class in other countries. Because of the popularity of graphic novels’ in other countries, there is a distinct possibility that English Language students have read them in their native language. Familiarity with graphic novels provides English learners a reading medium that they are able to manage and keeps their interest in reading through added pictures and text blend. English Language students do not experience the daunting task of dealing with pages full of stumbling-block-words. Large amounts of written text can be overwhelming for second language readers, whereas the graphic novel tends to have simplistic sentences, and richly varied vocabulary that may foster interest on a broad range of topics.
While second language learners might not use graphic novels to enhance media literacy, students may find clues in the pictures that help demystify the text and increase comprehension (Cary, 2004). In *Going Graphic: Comics at Work in the Multilingual Classroom*, Cary provided a rationale for the various ways that graphic novels, as “authentic literature,” can assist second language learners by providing engaging content in a sequential, logical order. Krashen’s (2004c) *Comprehension Hypothesis* adds additional perspective on the issue of whether and how to use the student’s first language in foreign language education. It also states that information provided in the first language can help the same way pictures and realia can help make input comprehensible, supporting the use of graphic novels with second language students.

In addition, Stephen Krashen (1994c), argues that students will acquire a second language when they receive understandable messages (comprehensible input) and when their levels of anxiety (affective filters) are low enough to allow those messages in. According to Cary (2004),

...graphic novels provide both the needed input and positive affect. Abundant visual clues increase the amount of comprehensible input and consequently boost reading comprehension and second language acquisition. Increased comprehension, in turn, keeps the affective filter low by eliminating or considerable reducing the anxiety and frustration many student feel when confronting...text that is miles above their current independent reading level. (p. 13)
The most important factor in the development of reading skills is the amount of time a student actually spends reading (Cummins, 2003, p. 20). One of the ways that teachers of English Second Language student can increase the amount of time their students read is by using graphic novels. Not only can they provide language learner with contextualized comprehensible input, they can also engage the learner and lead her or him to explore more graphic novels or books, magazines, newspapers, and other reading materials.

Graphic novels deal with spoken language differently than books do. Usually, graphic novel writers attempt to capture spoken language as it really occurs, complete with gaps, hesitations, vagueness and downright sloppiness of spoken English, by introducing, language learners to these aspects of spoken language that English textbooks might not deal with. An ellipsis signified by a mark or series of marks that usually indicate an intentional omission of a word from the original text, is an example of the language of Graphic novels, as well as non-words or made-up words, and nonverbal language (Cary, 2004). If these aspects are dealt with through textbook learning it is usually as an afterthought.

Research confirms what educators had already known intuitively and reinforced experientially: Combining visual images with written text can help students remember what they read (Burmark, 2002). When pictures and words are used together to communicate, the result can be much greater than either alone could produce (Thomsen, as cited in Weiner, 1996). Additionally, Thomsen asserts that "visual communication is rich, evocative, and immediate, and transcends barriers that
language sometimes raises” (p. 8). Jim Trelease (2004), the author of *The Read-Along Handbook*, felt strongly about using graphic novels as a read-aloud for low readers and English Language learners. He stated:

> A commonly overlooked area for read-aloud is the graphic novel. A graphic novel can be viewed as an interesting sequential diagram of conversation—a language blueprint. Once the blueprint is understood, the child will be ready and willing to follow it on his own without your reading it aloud. (p. 134)

Williams (1995, p. 2) cited the “permanent, visual component” of graphic novels is one of his many reasons for using graphic novels in his English Second Language class. Film and animation, in contrast to graphic novels, are visual but “time bound.” Language and actions in film and animation are “fleeting.” The medium, rather than the audience, dictates how quickly the viewing progresses. The same is true of a traditional fact-to-face lecture; the speaker has primary control over the speed of the lecture. The text medium, on the other hand, shares comics’ “permanent” component but not its “visual.” Visual permanence then, is unique to comics as well as graphic novels.

McCloud (1993) described this quality in another way: “In learning to read comics, we all learned to perceive time spatially, for in the world of graphic novels, time and space are one and the same” (p. 100). Time within a graphic novel progresses only as quickly as the reader moves his or her eyes across the page. The pace at which information is transmitted is completely determined by the reader. In educational settings, this “visual permanence” firmly places control over the pace of education in
the hands and the eyes of the student. This allows second language students a sense of control over their literacy learning and creates a positive learning environment.

Words and pictures working together are more than the sum of their parts. The reader of picture books, comics and graphic novels moves from the whole to details, back to the whole. Readers turn their attention repeatedly back and forth between verbal and visual in a widening assimilation of understanding (Arizpe & Styles, 2003), an understanding that English Language students will find easier to grasp than text-only reading, and an understanding that will hugely benefit their literacy skills. Lewis (2001) used the term “inter-animation,” which is defined as the process by which, in composite texts the words and images mutually influenced one another so that the meaning of the words is understood in light of what the pictures show, and vice versa. This text to image feature of graphic novels is according to Lewis, critical in developing a second language reader’s ability to navigate a piece of literature.

English Language Learners can benefit from graphic novels because of the duality of text and art. The two modes of input allow students to grasp meaning quicker and more efficiently. There are details in the art, which can slow the reader down and help them absorb the meaning without necessarily having to struggle to decode every word. Graphic novels are more accessible than straight prose for beginning English readers who are struggling with their reading skills. The words are broken down into easily digested 'chunks', and the art offers valuable clues to the written narrative. The visual aspect of graphic novels, for English Second Language
Students can be a non-threatening and easily understood way of building reading and writing skills.

Another advantage of graphic novels is that they give the teacher an opportunity to bring youth culture into the classroom. This is done through the acknowledging to our students that we care about their interests and recognize the value of their contributions to the classroom community. When we use graphic novels, according to Frey and Fisher (2008), we are acknowledging to our students that we care about their interests and make sure our students see us as fellow learners. Invariably, their ability to read these texts far exceeds our own.

Bridging Literacies through Graphic Novels

It seems that while most teachers understand that concept maps, word webs, graphs, and flowcharts are good for reading and remembering, as well as a host of other valuable cognitive skills, sequential art (which also utilizes visual information) is rarely seen in the same light. According to Frey & Fisher (2008) “Any visualization, whether it is made of pictographs we recognize as drawing, or drawings we have come to recognize as letters, must be interpreted, coded, and comprehended by the mind of the one who views it” (p. 49). These are all acts of reading; perhaps the idea of reading pictures is still too unfamiliar for many teachers to accept. Teachers must realize the depth and breadth of content of the graphic novel format and the tremendous motivational impact that they can have on reluctant readers.

Some educators see the educational potential of graphic novels, according to Shelley Hong Xu, associate professor in the department of teacher education at
California State University, Long Beach, stated (2005), that “graphic novels should have a classroom role similar to children’s literature (p. 20). Graphic novels can be used to support the curriculum. According to Schwartz (2002) and Krashen (2004c) teachers can use graphic novels to help develop a taste for reading and a bridge to other classic literature, create interest in science and social issues, explain complex situations, and explore alternate views of culture, history and human life in general.

Graphic novels can be used as a “point of reference” to bridge what students already know with what they have yet to learn, Xu says (2005). For example, graphic novels can be used to teach students about making inferences since readers must rely on pictures and just a small amount of text. Students can be taught to transfer this skill, lessening the challenge of a new book (p. 35).

Jon Scieszka, the National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature for the Library of Congress, promoted the use of educational comics at “Graphica in Education: Graphic Novels Come Out from Under the Desk,” the first academic conference examining graphic novels, co-sponsored by the Graduate School of Education (GSE), January 2009. Scieszka stated:

It is educators’ mission to bring quality graphic novels into the classroom curriculum. Kids today are wired and stimulated in different ways—they’re more visual,” They’ve been told by us that TV is bad, computers are bad, and books are good. But they know that’s not true. They know there’s good TV,
there’s crazy great stuff online and they know that there’s some not-so-good books. (para. 4)

Teachers, librarians, and parents can ameliorate reading motivation by providing access to materials students are interested in and provide a place where their interests are valued and respected. Choice of engaging materials, opportunity and access are the deciding factors in whether or not reluctant reader will pick up a book (Beers, 1996). Educators can show an interest in what students choose to read and what they think about it. Norton’s (2003) study with fifth, sixth, and seventh grade students in the Vancouver area found that, “...children’s reading preferences received little recognition or validation from teachers or parents. The reading of chapter books, for example, was considered a much more productive activity” and Norton concluded that, “in such a context, children have little ownership of text, and hence little pleasure in school-authorized literacy practices” (p. 38).

Teachers and teacher-librarians are concerned that all students get to know the joy of reading for pleasure and for lifelong learning. The research suggests that practitioners should frequently consult students to ensure that our libraries contain materials that young people want to read. Graphic novels are materials requested consistently by adolescents but are frequently unavailable in school libraries (Beers, 1996; Krashen, 2004a; Nippold et al., 2005; Worthy, 1996; Worthy et al., 1999). We need a better understanding of why it is that educators are frequently dismissive of graphic novels.
Educators accept that picture books communicate that which cannot be communicated by words alone to young children. Parents and teachers alike share them with children without reservation. They accept, “that even the youngest children can interpret, comprehend and communicate the visual- far beyond what they might be assumed to know” and understand that children develop “deeper understanding through their visual explorations” (Arizpe & Styles, 2003, p. 128). It may be conjectured that picture books capture children’s hearts and as well as their minds [and that] “the power of art to evoke emotions may be the picture book’s most significant contribution to children’s cognitive and aesthetic understanding” (Kiefer, 1995, p. 12).

As children approach the middle and upper school years, such visual reading materials are not considered as valuable to them. We tend to devalue images and expect that young adults will interact more with the written word. Educators regard “text only” materials as more complex. Highly sophisticated picture books are becoming more prevalent in middle and upper grade classrooms; yet graphic novels are often thought of as frivolous and are often not included in great numbers in upper grade classroom or school libraries. They are generally not regarded as a literary art form. There appears to be a lack of knowledge about the depth and breadth of subject matter in graphic novels.

According to Amy Kiste Nyberg (2002) in Poisoning Children’s Culture: Comics and their Critics, an analysis of the criticisms leveled against graphic novels shows that educators and librarians believe allowing children to read graphic novels and comics can be harmful in two ways. First, educators argue that graphic novel
reading hampers the development of reading skills and language use. Second, they believe that children who read graphic novels may find it difficult to appreciate better literature (Nyberg, as cited in Shurman & Johnson, 2002).

Educators understand now that this is simply not the case. It is through exposure to a broad spectrum of literature and making comparisons within all formats that one learns to appreciate quality and excellence. Graphic novels offer value, variety, and a new medium for literacy that acknowledges the impact of visuals. (Schwartz, 2002). Graphic novels promote literacy, offer diverse alternatives to the traditional text book. According to Krashen (1992), these comic like books as they are called by some provide 20% more rare vocabulary than a typical chapter book. The reality is that graphic novels entice adolescents into the library and into reading in general. In one study, the presence of graphic novels in a junior high school library resulted in a dramatic 82% increase in library traffic and a 3% increase in circulation of non-graphic books (Dorrell & Carroll, 1981).

All students benefit from reading visual texts. The primary literacy of the 21st century according to Burmark (2002), will be visual: pictures, graphics, and images of every kind...it is no longer enough to be able to read and write. Our students must learn to process both words and pictures. They must be able to move gracefully and fluently between text and images, between literal and figurative worlds (p. 1). The need to learn to read visual images is an urgent one that exists at all levels in our society and with students at all levels of learning. The place to begin teaching people how to understand pictures is in our schools. Pictures exist all around us. We are
surrounded by them. "Understanding pictures is a vital life-enriching necessity—not to understand them is visual illiteracy" (Oring, 2000, p. 5).

Graphic Novels and Visual Learners

Recently, visual literacy has become an integral part of literacy development. Just as vision entails more than seeing, being visually literate means that students can interpret, negotiate, make meaning, and reflect upon images as well as words. As with reading comprehension, visually literate learners are able to make connections, determine importance, synthesize information, evaluate, and critique (Lyga, 2007). Further, these visual literacies are interwoven with textual ones, so that their interacting forms the basis for a more complete understanding. The twenty-first-century learner must master this intermediality of images and text in order to interpret an increasingly digital world. (Lapp, Flood, & Fisher, 1999). Visualization impacts the motivation to read tremendously; without making mental pictures a great deal of understanding is lost.

Visually-dependent readers, according to Lyga (2007), are students also known as "Generation Visual". One can identify these children quite easily, as they talk about TV shows, check out magazines geared toward video games and hand-held games, and tell about the film they went to see over the weekend. Their afternoons and evenings are filled with MySpace adventures and instant messaging with their buddies. These children feed off of anything that flashes, moves fast, and utilizes pictures and computer-generated graphics. Graphic novels provide a comfort zone for these children, who can relate to the use of sequential pictures, word balloons, and
captions telling a story. For them, the format of graphic novels is similar to what their
eyes see and what their brains process all the time. One might argue that “enthusiasm”
for the visual doesn’t—and shouldn’t-supplant written literacy, but is valid method of
learning and “knowing” in an increasingly media-rich world (Lyga, 2007).

Many struggling readers, (students who read below grade level) are unable to
visualize pictures in their head. They cannot “see” in their minds what is happening in
the text; consequently, they do not comprehend the text’s message. For such students,
reading is a mandated task of decoding letters devoid of meaning, without pleasure,
and something to avoid. They have grown up with TV, electronic games, video games,
and graphic software, and they need graphics to help them understand the message.
Graphic novels can provide a “comfortable place during reading,’ whereby the images
provide a scaffold for the reader and provide visual cues that facilitate the construction
of meaning. (Lyga & Lyga, 2004, p. 6). The images in graphic novels not only provide
a scaffold for potentially difficult text, but also engage and stimulate more able
readers. They often introduce advanced vocabulary and demanding concepts.

Based on brain research, about eight percent of students cannot visualize
during reading. This number crosses gender lines, as both boys and girls are affected.
If a child is reading a novel, no matter how descriptive the passages are, that child may
not be able to put together images, or form pictures inside, his or her head (Lyga,
2007). Research suggests this is not a learning disability; it is simply how the brain is
wired, just as some people have an affinity for math or literature. The pictures in a
graphic novel assist the reader who does not visualize during reading. The graphics
support the text and allow the reader to comprehend the meaning of the story. Instead of struggling to create mental pictures, the child can focus on constructing meaning and comprehending the plot of the story.

Cary (2004), in addition to giving some excellent and field-tested ideas for using sequential art in the classroom, also details recent brain-based research that supports a focus on visualization. Perhaps the most publicized benefit of reading graphic novels for the curriculum is their potential to engage the struggling or reluctant reader. In the case of students who struggle with reading word-only texts because they lack visualization skills, graphic novels can remove the hard work of decoding and set students free to focus on the analysis and synthesis of the text.

According to Hibbing and Rankin-Erickson (2003):

If students are not able to develop images because they are using all their mental energy to decode words or their personal experiences have limited their vocabulary or background knowledge, external visual images can be used to develop understanding. (p. 2)

Both Beers (1996) and Sadoski (1998) recognize that visualization during reading has a significant effect on comprehension, memory, interest in and aesthetic appreciation for texts. Many reluctant or non-readers are unable to form mental pictures and need concrete images to aid their understanding. It is not surprising, then, that students who do not visualize are not drawn into the text in a meaningful way. They may not always be able to engage fully with the text and therefore can be denied the very personal emotional responses that motivate many of us to read.
Students who have difficulty with this, because they have trouble forming pictures in their mind of what they are reading, may often not enjoy reading (Beers, 1996, Paxton, 2003). But visualization is a skill that can be learned. Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner defined the ability to create and manipulate mental images as a part of spatial intelligence (Lyga & Lyga, 2004). Graphic novels could actually help such students by providing images to complement the text and therefore foster students’ understanding of what they read (Lyga & Lyga; Norton, 2003).

The text and images in graphic novels do not simply mirror one other. Indeed, they interact in ways that allow a greater meaning then either one would on its own (Miller, 2005; Saraceni, 2003). This “symbiotic relationship” (Khordoc, 2001, p. 172) can challenge the reader “to engage with a text in a slightly different way” (Mahoney, 2006, p. 2). Graphic novelist Jeff Smith has said, “one of the strengths of working in the graphic novel medium is being able to use pictures to tell part of the story” (as cited in Blasingame, 2006, p. 444).

Just as proficient readers bring a deep understanding of literacy devices and allusions to other literature and derive much more from books than a novice, an avid graphic novel reader brings a complex set of visual skills to the reading. Just as text literacy skills are developed through study and practice so, too, are visual skills. Young people today, called the “Millennial generation” (Gee, 2002), are comfortable with visual materials such as graphic novels; “it is rather the teachers who need to broaden [their] knowledge of multi- modal communication practices” (Callow, 1999, p. 97) and learn what it really means to be literate.
Comprehension through Graphic Novel Use

Research suggests that mixing words and images (what most graphic novels do skillfully) is a great way to foster comprehension and memory skills in abundance. As the pictures and the words work interdependently, they convey the gist of graphic texts. In graphic novels the picture share power with the text in that they help hold and support the meaning. Readers can’t just look at the pictures or read the word for graphic text to make sense. They have to do both. With this relationship strongly in place, the illustrative nature of the medium acts as a visual representation of comprehension strategies in a way that traditional text cannot. In a nutshell, graphic text make the unseen (Thompson, 2008) in-the-head components of comprehension visible. They therefore offer new ways to fortify comprehension strategy instruction.

Consider the importance that understanding dialogue plays in comprehending texts. Struggling readers often get confused when navigating dialogue in traditional text and often lose the meaning. But graphic novels offer a visual model of this often difficult to understand component of reading comprehension. Who is speaking and what the character is saying are represented with speech bubbles, so there is little confusion for struggling readers. Additionally the artful nature of graphic texts according to (Thompson, 2008) shows readers:

How the character is feeling when speaking (through actions and facial expressions). What words are being emphasized when speaking (shown through italicized words within the speech bubble). How the character says
what he or she says (through the shape and size of the speech bubble and lettering. (p. 49)

Graphic texts can do more than represent words for learning new vocabulary and visibly support new readers in understanding the dialogue. Deeper comprehension components, such as visualizing, determining importance, and monitoring meaning are visibly represented as well. Schnorr and Atkinson (1969) observed that encoding words visually helps students remember twice as many words as those who only encode verbally. Moreover, Gambrell and Bales (1986) found that comprehension among students increased after only thirty minutes of image instruction. The pictures are the pillars that support meaning making, and we can take this visuality to our advantage as we attempt to make comprehension strategies obvious in our instruction.

One major strategy effective readers use in order to deepen their comprehension is determining importance, and graphic novels can offer instructional support in this area. Just as they do in traditional text readers must wade through a great deal of extra information in graphic text while focusing their attention on the most important pieces. The difference here, again, is the visual representation of the meaning afforded through the illustrations in graphic text. Even though much is happening in each panel, most of it is pictorial, making the wading more manageable especially for readers that get “lost in words” of traditional texts.

Nancy Frey and Douglas Fisher (2008), California high school teachers and the Authors of Using Graphic Novels, Anime, and the Internet in an Urban High School, say “graphic novels can be an effective means of teaching struggling adolescent
readers key comprehension skills” (p. #9). They like to use graphic novels to teach comprehension skills, especially inferencing. Struggling readers have often been told for years that inferencing is about “reading between the lines” an explanation that often creates more confusion for the reader. In graphic novels the pictures and illustrations are between the lines.

Gunning (2005) illustrates key research on this area in his text Creating Literacy for all Students. Creating images serves three functions: fostering understanding, retaining information, and monitoring for meaning. Additionally, an image can also be used as a pictorial summary, and Gunning recommends direct teaching of imagery as a potent teaching strategy. Duke Pearson reiterated Gunning’s claim thusly: “There is an old saying that a picture is worth a thousand words. When it comes to comprehension, this saying might be paraphrased, ‘a visual display helps readers understand, organize, and remember some of those thousand words’” (as cited in Farstrup & Samuels, 2002, p. 218). Indeed, there is an entire theory built around the idea that schema can be stored both verbally and visually. Dual Coding Theory, or DCT (Clark & Pavivio, 1991; Pavivio, 1986; Sadoski & Pavivio, 1991), continues to have a major impact on cognitive psychology and education. Dual-coding theory, a theory of cognition was first advanced by Allan Pavivio of the University of Western Ontario. The theory postulates that both visual and verbal information are processed differently and along distinct channels with the human mind creating separate representations for information processed in each channel. Supporting evidence comes
from research that shows that memory for some verbal information is enhanced if a relevant visual is also presented.

Research supports what educators had already sensed intuitively and reinforced experientially: Combining visual images with written text can help students remember, thus comprehending what they read (Burmark, 2002). Thomsen asserts that visual communication is rich, evocative, and immediate, and transcends barriers that language sometimes raises. When pictures and words are used together to communicate, the result can be much greater than either alone could produce (Thomsen, as cited in Weiner, 1996). Some of the most compelling recent image-related research of recent decades includes studies that both Krashen (2004c) and Cary (2004) have undertaken, suggesting that graphic novels can act as a gateway to more varied reading. Krashen shows that the comic-education connection is almost as old as superhero comics themselves.

Educators need to recognize that all “students need the skills and abilities to ‘read’ their multi-media world and understand its many layers of messages” (Thoman & Jolls, 2005, p. 2) and that the development of students’ visual literacy skills has a positive effect on reading comprehension and provides students with a choice of modes in which to make sense of their social and cultural contexts (McPherson, 2004, p. 5). Questions about the relationship among visual and verbal information, memory, and learning, date back to circa 500 B.C. when the poet Simonides said ‘Words are the images of things,’ and, when later Aristotle said ‘Without image, thinking is impossible’ (Benson, 1997, p. 2). Will Eisner puts it best when he muses that the
format of the comic book presents a montage of both word and image, and the reader is thus required to exercise both visual and verbal interpretive skills. The regimens of art (e.g. perspective, symmetry, brush stroke) and the regimens of literature (e.g. grammar, plot, syntax) become superimposed upon each other. The reading of the graphic novel is an act of both aesthetic perception and intellectual pursuit (Eisner, 1985).

Conclusion

Not too long ago, an educated person was someone who knew how to read and write text. Information was delivered at a manageable pace (Friesen, 2003) that time is gone forever. Today, literacy involves a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol system of a culture for personal and community development (Friesen). Graphic novels, a part of that dominant symbol system of the 21st century, are increasing in number, quality, variety and availability. They offer a new kind of text for the classroom and they demand new reading abilities. Moreover, they tend to appeal to diverse students, including reluctant readers, and they offer both great stories and informational topics.

Educators need to harness the power of visual images to teach students to read and write in order to comprehend and communicate across the curriculum. Visual literacy should be taught as a means of preparing students for a life where a primary vehicle for communication (the Internet) is based on a graphical interface. For students who no longer deal with pure word texts in their daily lives, multiple literacies are a necessity. Schools must prepare young people to think critically with and about all
kinds of text. Teachers must encourage students to illustrate, demonstrate, and celebrate what they learn in their own creative ways, rather than simply regurgitating irrelevant, facts on impersonal, institutionalized standardized tests (Burmark, 2002).

In our work to break down the barriers to student success, graphic novels are a viable, creative option to add to our toolkits. They capitalize on our students’ natural affinity for images and on their knowledge of the various media forms in their daily lives. The graphic novel inspires creativity. Students feel connected to the genre for its entertainment value and popularity, and find comfort and success in the classroom. Graphic novels have a universal value for all students, not just those at risk, and have an important place in the English classroom.

The present research on the use of graphic novels will help answer questions about graphic novels reading worthiness, if graphic novels should be available to students in the classroom or school library, and if they are indeed a credible source for school assignments. This study provides pertinent information to add additional perspective on the issue of graphic novels, and their ability to help lead non-readers back to books. Also in this research the readers will find information about the usefulness of graphic novels for teaching English-learners. It is important to remember that educators must motivate children to read willingly before they can make them read what we want them to. Mark Twain said, “The man who doesn’t read is no better off than the man who can’t read.” The graphic novel appears to be one answer to this conundrum. A description of the research design and the assessment instrument are described in the following chapter.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Students read abundantly when provided with pleasurable and diverse experiences with a variety of enjoyable books and recreational reading activities. This research addresses the question if students were introduced to graphic novels and provided with a variety for use would graphic novels help to hook these readers on books and increase the reading that they do for pleasure. Increased reading creates increased fluency which in turn aids comprehension. The whole circle of reading benefits if students pick up books and read them. Graphic novels are now widely reviewed in most major professional review journals, their representation on award lists continues to increase, and they have become a significant part of every major library vendor’s inventory (Crawford, 2005.) The majority of this study and research information provided has been directly or indirectly tied to the elementary grades, with an emphasis on second and fifth graders.

Research Design

This study contains an informal quantitative analysis utilizing pre and post reading interest surveys along with observational notes. A qualitative analysis was also conducted using Accelerated Reader log entries and Status of the Class Record Sheets to determine any change in students reading habits. Contained within this study is a quantitative analysis of librarian surveys. The data collected from the librarian survey was necessary to help identify the importance of graphic novels in the school library. The Librarian Survey, Student Interest Survey, along with research
information was used to answer the primary thesis questions: 1. Should graphic novels be included in the school library? 2. Do graphic novels help lead non-readers back to books? Triangulation of the reading interest survey, observational notes, Accelerated Reader logs, as well as the Status of the Class Records Sheets was utilized to answer the secondary questions. 1. Would English-language learners benefit from reading graphic novels? 2. Do graphic novels appeal to one gender more than another? 3. Do students enjoy reading graphic novels?

Description of the Subjects

The subjects are second and fifth graders attending an inner city school in Sacramento, California. The fifth graders are big buddies for the second graders. The school has a very diverse population; 18% Hispanic, 32% African American, 19% White 14% Asian, 8% Filipino, and 9% other cultures. The school is part of Natomas Unified School District. The district has 32 different languages represented in its student population, with 23% titled as English Language Learner. In the classes that were observed the school student population average percentages were not observed in the second grade class. This class was represented by 55% African American, 1% White, 18% Hispanic, 15% Asian, 2% Filipino and 9% other. The district English Language Learner average was representative in both study groups.
Figure 1 Comparison of Diversity Across Groups With Total School Population

The inter-racial percentages are ever-changing district wide.

Identification of the factors associated with the perpetuation of the hierarchical structure of ethnic classification is extremely difficult and perhaps not really necessary. Research by Catherine Cornbleth (2002), a professor of education at the State University of New York College at Buffalo, suggested that the focus on racial categories might be out of sync with how young people, in particular, think about themselves.

The school in which the research was conducted is a newly opened school and as such did not qualify for Title One classification for the 2008-2009 school years. The Title One classification would mean that the school receives extra money to supplement the programs for the disadvantaged students according to federal guidelines. At the time of this research, 51% of the students’ attending the school were on Free or reduced lunch (see Figure 1). In addition, there were 25 foster children and 9 homeless children currently in attendance.
The teachers of the targeted classrooms are both experienced, middle-aged white females. They have a combined total of 30 years of teaching experience in assorted grade levels. Neither teacher had any graphic novels in their classroom libraries prior to this study.

The librarians involved in the study were all classified employees of the Natomas Unified School District. The librarians were not required to have a degree in Library Studies or previous library experience to secure this position.

Materials and Methods of Investigation

Two weeks prior to the start of this research the Parent Permission Letter (Appendix A) was sent home with both the second grade and fifth grade target classes. Letters were only to be returned if parents objected to their child's participation in this study. None of the letters were returned. Before initiating a program of graphic novel immersion the researcher described the learners using the data collected from the Reading Interest Surveys. The ideal method of finding out what school students like to read for pleasure is that of personal interviews, and direct observation of the students reading for pleasure (Wigfield, A., Guthrie, J. T., & McGough, K., 1996). This method was realistic enough for the researcher to do in one of the subject's classrooms, but not the other. In addition, it would be very difficult to ascertain the amount of reading for pleasure that students engaged in away from the school setting. The direct-observation of individual and group behaviors before and during the treatment also allowed the researcher to supply ample amounts of the targeted genre
reading books, creating an environment where the students were able to take responsibility for their choices, leading to an increase in positive reading behaviors.

A week before this study was started; the Student Reading Surveys were handed out to each student to fill-out and were returned immediately to the researcher after completion. Students were instructed verbally and through the written instruction on the survey to choose and circle one number answer for each question. The second graders were assisted with any questions they did not understand.

Quantitative Survey Measures

Librarian Surveys were supplied to school district librarians. The results were be utilized to determine if schools house a graphic novel collection, the size of the collections, when they were acquired, and what collection development tools were utilized to make graphic novel purchase choices. The Student Interest Survey was administered to the second and fifth grade classes. The survey results were be analyzed and used to determine what if any effect graphic novel immersion had on student motivation to read for pleasure.

Informal Qualitative Measures

Included in the study were anecdotal notes, from teachers of both target classes, detailing the students’ comments before, during, and after silent reading time, library behaviors, and the Accelerated Reader log of book titles, pages read, quizzes taken, along with the Status of the Class Record Sheet weekly notations. The
Accelerated Reader log, Status of the Class Record Sheets and observational records were used to monitor any increase in time spent by the student reading for pleasure.

Instruments

There were a variety of strategies suggested in the professional literature to increase the amount of reading among students. For this study, intensive exposure and immersion into graphic novel reading was the first priority. Other intervention techniques selected to use were teacher modeling, books-shares, and creating a comfortable reading environment.

Reading Interest Survey

To be able to document the extent of reading interests, and motivations as well as degree of change, an assessment survey was necessary. One interesting survey available was (Ross & Simone, 1982) but it was for older students, too broad, and time consuming for the target groups. The survey used by Blackwood in 1991, included 13 questions about which section of the newspaper were read, 10 questions about what type of magazine were read, and 14 categories about nonfiction books. The fifth grade target group would have been able to manage such a survey, but not the second grade group. The researcher needed something eye-catching to draw in the second graders and yet also hold the attention of the fifth graders. Due to time constraints and the unique differences in the target groups, the researcher created the Student Reading Survey (Appendix B). The survey questions were created to capture students' reading
interests, as well as to identify students’ awareness of graphic novels. Consequently the items on this survey were generated by the researcher. The Student Reading Survey consisted of ten questions revolving around student reading interests and knowledge of comics and graphic novels. The Likert style answer key range was: #1- A lot, #2- A little bit, #3 Not very much, #4 Not at all, and #5 Don’t know. Each number on the answer scale was paired with a different style of happy- thru– sad faces to create a visual cue for each answer.

Librarian Survey

Natomas Unified School Districts’ inner city schools were selected as the sample for this study. A total of fourteen schools comprised the sample for the survey. The schools encompass elementary, middle, high schools, as well as charter schools. Although the sample included schools serving ethnically, racially, and socioeconomically diverse populations, these factors were not taken into account in the sample selection, nor were other factors, such as the age, gender or race of the media specialist, the size of the library budget, or test scores considered.

The three-page questionnaire consisted of nine questions and was estimated to take approximately ten minutes to complete (see Appendix C & D ). The cover letter, questionnaire, along with a self-addressed stamped envelope for returning the survey, were sent by US mail to all fourteen elementary schools in the sample. Each respondent was provided with the option of completing the survey and returning it anonymously, or filling in their name and school. Address information for the schools
was located on the school district website. The surveys were addressed to “Library Media Technician” or “Library Media Specialist” depending upon the librarian’s rank in the district. The last question on the survey asked respondents if they would be willing to participate in a short follow-up interview if necessary. If the respondent selected yes, and provided contact information, they were placed into a group for further interviewing with follow-up questions if needed.

*Accelerated Reader Log and Bulletin Board*

The students were each responsible for an Accelerated Reader daily log (Appendix E) sheet entry. Students recording on these log sheets provided daily records about their reading habits, through the entire five week study. Each student was responsible for recording the date, title of book, pages read, book level, and test scores from culminating Accelerated Reader comprehension quiz. The daily logs were also used to validate the information originally gathered from the Student Reading Surveys. Teachers used the logs to check in daily with students and to make note if they were reading a graphic novel or another genre. In the teacher comment area of the Student Reading Log teachers wrote the letter G if a student was reading a graphic novel.

The Status of the Class Record Sheet (Appendix F) was used for the researcher and fifth grade teacher to track students’ reading behaviors during silent reading time each day. Students names were all listed on the sheet as well as the days of the week, Monday through Friday. The notation key was: A for absent, I for
intervention and a check mark for OK. Teachers made daily notations of student that were off task, not reading, or absent. If a student was reading quietly they received a check mark. If they were off task, talking, out of their seat, or any other variety of avoidance behaviors the teachers put an I for intervention. Teachers were encouraged if they had time to note the specific off task behavior.

The researcher set a bulletin board area in each target classroom, where student reading progress could be monitored by the students. As students read books and took the Accelerated Reader quizzes, the AR program kept track of their scores. A student goal of 85% on all comprehension quizzes were set for each target student in both classes to achieve during the test period. As students progressed through the percentages, stars were moved up the percent graph to show reading growth. Every student's goal was pre-set at 85%; the goal was still individualized per student based on their reading level. The student progress chart was only used as a motivational incentive for students to map their reading progress.

Immersion

The whole idea of immersion was to surround the students with graphic novels, paperbound books, leveled books, and anything that the students might pick up and read (Carlsen, 1988; Fader, 1968). Both the second grade and fifth grade teachers encouraged students who had completed tasks early to read for the few minutes they had while waiting on other to finish. Students were also encouraged to read as an option during their Workshop – May Do –time. The teachers distributed some of the
reading material to students who finished a task ahead of time. Graphic novels were placed across the white board and window sills and table in the computer area of the classrooms. Eighty-two graphic novels, all which were Accelerated Reader quiz friendly were purchased. Fifty of these books were at the fifth grade reading level and thirty-two were leveled for second grade reading. Forty Graphic novels were checked-out of the public library for both study groups.

A six-foot-by-five foot bookshelf in the rear of each target classroom served as the classroom library. At the beginning of the year there were about twenty books located in the second grade classroom library and twenty-five books in the fifth grade classroom, none of which were graphic novels. Forty library and fifty new graphic novels were placed in the fifth grade class and thirty-two new plus forty library books were placed in the second grade classroom library. During the course of the five week treatment the class libraries grew to approximately one-hundred books each. These books were a variety of genres and reading levels, including picture books.

Observations

During silent reading time, students were required to have their Student Reading Log out on their desk and filled in with the date, title of the book, book level and Authors name. Teachers checked in with each student placing a G. in the teacher note box if a student was reading a graphic novel. Teachers observed students during their silent reading time and took notes on student behaviors if necessary. Students were being observed for how long it took them to choose a book and begin reading,
and if they were focused on their reading or off task. Each teacher had a Status of the Class Record Sheet that was used daily to note absences, off task behavior and on task reading. The A=absent, I=Intervention, and check mark = Ok key was followed. The observed behaviors were kept in notebooks by teachers in each target classroom. The observation process was done in a matter- of- fact fashion just to note any changes in student reading interest behaviors. Information was collected to use alongside other hard data.

Procedures

The week before the study was to begin, the researcher handed out the Student Reading Survey to the fifth grade students. Students were instructed verbally and through the written instruction on the survey to choose and circle one number answer for each question. The students were told they had fifteen minutes to take the survey but were allowed more time if needed. All fifth graders completed their survey in less than fifteen minutes. After the surveys were collected the researcher asks the fifth grade class how many students had read comic books. All fifth-graders responded “yes”. Then students were asked how many had read graphic novels? Only three responded “yes” to this question. The researcher than asked the fifth graders to raise their hand if they knew what a Graphic novel was? The same three students raised their hands. The researcher took out a Graphic novel opened it up and showed the class, explaining that though the Graphic novel may look somewhat like a comic book, they are different because the stories all have a beginning, middle and an ending,
unlike comic books which usually have the continuance of a story in the next book. Different Graphic novels were passed around for the classroom for students to peruse, share, and discuss amongst their peers. Students were told that graphic novels would be provided for them to read for the next five weeks. A few graphic novels were placed on the bookshelf area that had been preset for the class library and students were given instruction by their teacher as to the check-out process.

The second grade class was handed the Student Reading Survey by the researcher. All students were instructed verbally and through the written instruction on the survey to choose and circle one number answer for each question. The researcher read the survey questions aloud to the second grade students to eliminate any misunderstanding of the questions due to reading difficulties. All second graders were assisted with any questions they did not understand. The students were given an unlimited time to take the survey. All second grade students completed their surveys within approximately fifteen minutes. After the surveys were collected the researcher asks the second grade class how many students had read comic books. All students responded “yes” to this question. Students were then asked how many had read a Graphic novel. None of the second graders answered yes to this question. Many asked what a Graphic novel was, or commented they did not know what a Graphic novel was. The second graders were introduced to graphic novels through book and picture walks. Each student was given a graphic novel to peruse and share with their neighbors. Students were given a five minute time period to explore a
Graphic novel. The researcher then read aloud one of the many books shown to the class. Students were told that graphic novels would be provided for them to read for the next five weeks. The class library area where the Graphic novels would be placed was shown to the second graders and check-out procedures were discussed.

On the first day of the study, librarian surveys were mailed out to all thirteen of the Natomas schools and the fourteenth one was placed in the target school’s librarian’s mailbox. Graphic novels checked-out from the public library and those purchased were placed in both targeted classroom libraries. Each student was given an Accelerated Reader log in a folder. Each student was instructed to label their folder with personal information and they were trained how to enter information onto the log sheets. The information to be logged was for all genres of books read in class. Log folders were to be kept in each student’s desk for easy access. All of the Graphic novels chosen for this study were checked to make sure they were listed on the Accelerated Reader quiz list to avoid books being read that could not be recorded causing a possible discrepancy in the study. The fifth grade teacher and researcher each wrote all of their students names on the Status of the Class Record Sheet.

During each of the next four weeks, ten more graphic novels were checked-out from the local public library; the other library books were renewed and kept in the classrooms. Twenty additional graphic novel purchases were made. These new books were rotated in and out of the classrooms to keep student interest levels elevated. Student share time was provided allowing students the opportunity to talk about the
books that they were reading and discussing likes and dislikes, favorites topics, and recommendations for other students. On Friday of each week the fifth grade big buddies came to the second graders classroom and shared their favorite book, during silent reading time.

Accelerated Reader logs were checked daily, during silent reading time, by teachers in both target classrooms to monitor students' reading. Teachers were monitoring students to assure they were reading at an appropriate level and taking comprehension quizzes. The incentive star charts were update weekly. Student's stars were moved to the appropriate percentage area on the bulletin board that they had achieved, showing movement toward their personal goals.

During the fourth week of the study, phone calls and e-mail reminders were sent to the four librarians who had not returned their completed survey. One survey was sent back from a middle school with a note that this school did not have its own library. A Sacramento Public Library branch was housed on this school site, students used the public library in the place of a school library. The eight returned librarian surveys information was being processed.

At the end of the study, during the fifth week, targeted second and fifth grade classes were given the post Student Reading Survey. Instructions were given in the same fashion as the pre-test. Students circled their answers and returned the survey to their teachers. Three librarians were contacted and asked the survey questions over
the phone. The librarian’s answers were recorded on survey forms and the data was collected and reviewed making a total of eleven librarian surveys collected.

Conclusion

During the course of five weeks eighty-two graphic novels that were Accelerated Reader quiz friendly were purchased. Fifty were at the fifth grade reading level and thirty-two were for second grade reading. Forty Graphic novels were checked-out of the public library for both study groups. The data from the Reading Interest Survey, the Librarian Survey, the Accelerated Reader reading log and Status of the Class Record Sheets, were collected and analyzed. In addition the observational records of the students’ behaviors’ toward recreational reading were also analyzed and the results are presented in the following chapter.
Chapter 4

RESULTS

Children currently in school have been born into a “mesmerizing and kaleidoscopic world of representation”, where image, sound and print are constantly refracted by each other (Schwarz, 2008, p. 15), presenting an unending supply of media information sources. Yet, these same children and young adults’ increased access to the many varied means of multimodal information does not necessarily mean that they are sophisticated or knowledgeable (Millard, 2003). Online text information observed in the forms of PowerPoint presentations, text messaging, online newspapers; magazines, dictionaries and encyclopedias, as well as text stories require new reading abilities and knowledge. Schools need to teach students to think critically both with and about these new forms of media; a text media, that many believe will engage students into thoughtful new and multiple literacies; a media that a graphic novel seems to fit into like a custom glove. The purpose of this study was to determine the purposiveness of the graphic novel in school and classroom libraries. The following discussion presents the outcomes from various assessments and observations conducted during the study.

Outcomes

Over the course of a five-week-period, pre and post student reading surveys were presented for the target second grade and fifth grade students to complete. Graphic novels were provided for reading in both target classrooms. The Librarians’ survey was presented and completed. The research findings are
reported in three categories: Student Reading Survey results, Librarian Survey results, and Accelerated Reader Logs and anecdotal Qualitative results. The results of these surveys follow.

**Student Reading Survey Results and Discussion**

A total of 50 Student Reading surveys were filled out. Twenty second graders and 30 fifth graders completed the surveys during two different sessions. All students responded producing 100% survey results. The responses are broken into five categories: 1-A lot, 2-A little bit, 3-Not very much, 4-Not at all, and 5-Don’t know. The first survey question was used to determine if students enjoyed reading at school.

![Bar Graph](image)

**Figure 2.** How Much Students Enjoy Reading at School.

Only 10 students responded that they like reading at school in the pre reading interest survey, whereas 18 students answered they liked reading at school in the post survey (see Figure 2). The “don’t know” respondents and all but 4 of the “not at all” respondents moved into the “a lot” and “a little bit” categories. The difference in the pre-to-post survey results shows that student choices in reading materials improved their thinking about reading at school.
Figure 3. How Much Students Enjoy Reading Away From School.

Question two asks students if they enjoy reading away from school. Each categories response remained the same for both the pre and post reading interest survey except for the “don’t know” category. The 5 students that said they didn’t know if they enjoyed reading away from school in the pre reading survey responded in the post survey that they liked reading away from school a little bit.

Figure 4. How Much Students Enjoy Book Stores.
The fourth question sought to establish if students have an enjoyment for bookstores. There was no change in student response from the pre-to-post survey. Of students surveyed, 38 answered they enjoyed going to the bookstore, “a lot”, 9 answered “a little bit”, 2 felt they did not enjoy going to the book store very much, and 1 student answered they did not know if they liked going to the book store. (see Figure 4).

![Enjoy going to the library](figure)

**Figure 5.** How Much Students Enjoy Going to the Library.

Question four also relates to the enjoyment of books and self-selection. According to the data collected (see Figure 5) 31 students answered they enjoyed going to the library “a lot”, 15 students answered “a little bit” and 4 students didn’t like going to the library very much. There was no notable change from the pre-to- post survey results.
Question 5 was seeking to determine if students enjoyed receiving books as a gift. Only 22 students surveyed thought getting a book for a present was enjoyable, whereas a combination of 19 students responded to one of the negative categories, "a little bit," "not very much" or "not at all." There were no notable differences in student responses from the pre-to-post student reading interest surveys.

Figure 6. How Much Students Enjoy Getting Books for Presents.

Figure 7. How Much Students Like Reading Chapter Books.
The sixth question sought to establish if students like reading chapter books. Many of the graphic novels provided for this study were chapter books, classic novels and history-based topics. The pre-to-post survey results show a slight increase in every category with the exception of the “don’t know” category (see Figure 7).

![Like reading comic books](image)

*Figure 8. How Much Students Like Reading Comic Books.*

This question results (see Figure 8) directly relate to question nine and graphic novels. Students were not introduced or provided any comics to read during this study, yet felt they would enjoy them more after exposure to graphic novels. Survey results changed from the pre-to-post survey in the negative response categories. The 10 negative responses moved into the “a lot” and “a little bit” categories.
Figure 9. How Much Students Like Reading Graphic Novels.

The greatest difference from the pre-to-post survey answers was with the question, "Do you like to read graphic novels?" Before the introduction of graphic novels to the target classes 19 students answered they did not know if they like reading them or not (see Figure 9). After being immersed in reading graphic novels for five weeks 42 students stated they liked reading graphic novels, whereas only 17 said they liked reading them in the pre-survey. In just a five week period, 25 more students were picking up books and reading them for pleasure.
Question 10 sought to determine how many of the target students were reading at home for pleasure. Interestingly, the only change that occurred from the pre-to-post reading surveys was 3 students that answered “don’t know” on the pre interest survey and then answered “not very much” on the post survey (see Figure 10). Otherwise there were no notable changes in any of the other categories from the pre-to-post survey answers to the question on reading at home for enjoyment.

**Figure 10.** How Much Students Like Reading Books at Home When not Required.

**Figure 11.** How Much Students Like it When Family Reads Together.
As Figure 11- shows families are not reading together. After exposure to graphic novels in the classroom and the enthusiasm they generated this was still not carried over to student’s home life. There were no changes in the responses from the pre-to-post survey except 2 students who stated they “don’t know” on the pre reading interest survey moved into the “not at all” category on the post survey.

Librarian Survey Results and Discussion

A total of 11 librarian surveys were returned, making the survey response rate 79%. Due to the small size of surveyed librarians, it was necessary to collect as many responses as possible, creating the need to contact 3 of the 11 respondents’ by e-mail and telephone calls for the collection of their survey question responses. One high school in the Natomas district houses a public library on its school site, making it irrelevant to have a private school library collection. For the purposes of this study, it was decided not to include the public library in this study. The two school librarians that did not respond to e-mail or phone calls, after many attempts by the surveyor, were the two Charter Schools. These schools were not included in the data analysis.

The first survey question asked if the school library had a graphic novel collection, which, for the purposes of this research, included manga, comic books, and graphic novels. All of the respondents, 100% indicated they did have a graphic novel collection.

The second question sought to determine how many graphic novels each school library had. This question did not specify that the graphic novels be shelved
within a designated graphic novel collection; rather it was assessing the number of graphic novels in the school library collection as a whole.

![Diagram: Quantity of graphic novels in the collection]

Figure 12. Quantity of Graphic Novels in the Collection.

The largest number of respondents indicated that their graphic novel collections contained 51-100 volumes (see Figure 11). Only one of the school collections contained more than 50 volumes. The data makes it clear that while graphic novels are purchased for elementary school collections, the number of books in this format is still a significantly lower percentage of the total number of books within the collection as a whole. According to California Department of Education Library Survey (2008), the average number of school library books per student in the school year 2006-2007 was 17.9 (see Appendix D). Based upon the average number of students per school involved in the study (approximately 700), the average collection size per library was approximately 12,530. Thus, every school in the study had less than 1% of their total collection containing graphic novels.
Question three looked at when the graphic novel collection was first established, and also had the purpose of looking at a potential relationship between the year in which graphic novels were first added to the collection, and the number of graphic novels currently in the collection.

![Year graphic novels added to collection](image)

*Figure 13. Date Graphic Novels Initially Added to Collection.*

As can be seen in Figure 13, the largest number of schools purchasing graphic novels in one year was six. The six school libraries purchased graphic novels for their collections in the 2006-2007 school years, followed by two in the 2007-2008 school year. The other school years 2004-2005, 2005-2006, and 2008-2009 each show one school purchasing graphic novels to begin their collections. The school that made its purchases in the 2008-2009 school year was only because it was a newly opened school. One high school librarian listed that the collection was first started in 2004-2005 school year. There appeared to be little relationship between the number of graphic novels in a library’s collection, and the year in which they were first added.
Question four looked at which individual had established the graphic novel collection. The purpose of this question was to identify participants for a follow-up interview. This question also provided information as to if anyone else beside the Library Media Technician was involved in decision about book purchases. All of the survey respondents were the individuals who had established the graphic novel collection, or added graphic novels to the collection. This seemed to send a clear message that lead media specialist in district-level positions identify graphic novels as an essential part of an elementary school collection.

Questions five through eight were for Media Specialists who had established a graphic novel collection. The survey directed the respondents to complete the rest of the survey only if they were the individual who had established the graphic novel collection at their school. Question five looked at which collection development tools Media Specialists used in determining which graphic novels to purchase. Respondents were able to select all choices that were applicable to them, with a total of eleven choices, including an “other” category. For several of the selections, examples were provided of specific collection development tools, such as the names of professional review journals, and websites.
Figure 14. Use of Graphic Novel Collection Development Tools.

As seen in Figure 14, the most frequently utilized tool was professional review journals, followed closely by websites. Student requests and other results were tied. Recommendations from other Media Specialists and recommended title lists also had the same number of responses. The “other” choice was selected by eight respondents, placing it as the fourth most popular choice.

Question six asked respondents to write which collection development tools they would have utilized had they been aware of them when first establishing their graphic novel collection. The question was open-ended to provide the opportunity for any resources, rather than providing a list. Responses varied, with the mention of professional books, websites, professional review journals, and vendor catalogs, as well as other collection development tools. Professional books, mentioned were Children’s Catalog, Best Books for Children, Graphic Novels Now by Francesa Goldsmith (2005), and Getting Graphic by Michele Gorman (2007). For those who
responded by stating websites’, specific web addresses were not listed. A recommended title list from the California School Library Association Conference was written in as the responses on two surveys, and LM-Net, a web connection site dedicated to school library Media Specialists worldwide, was also referenced on one survey.

Question seven looked at the factors which motivated media Specialists to establish a graphic novel collection. Respondents were able to select as many choices as applicable, and as the data shows, there is overlap with some respondents multiple choices.

![Motivation for establishment of graphic novel collection](image)

*Figure 15. Motivation for Establishment of Graphic Novel Collection.*

The most popular reason for establishing a graphic novel collection was research, followed by patron requests (see Figure 15). Clearly the research on the value of graphic novels in elementary school collections is persuasive, and is being
read and given value by librarians. Patron requests also hold value for the Media Specialist, with nine respondents selecting this as a motivation, and it was interesting to look at in relation to the number of respondents, who selected students as a collection development tool when purchasing graphic novels. The “other” responses included the mention of support for alternative learning styles, professional conferences, knowledge of their popularity, lectures in graduate school classes, and reading book reviews.

The final question sought to learn the reservations Media Specialists had about establishing a graphic novel collection. Again, as with the previous question, there was some overlap in the data, with a number of respondents selecting multiple choices.

![Reservations about establishing a graphic novel collection]

*Figure 16. Reservations About Establishing a Graphic Novel Collection.*
As Figure 16 shows, the concern most often cited was appropriate of graphic novels for the elementary school audience. One respondent wrote about concern over violence, another commenting on the perception on the part of teachers as to graphic novels being appropriate. This response was followed by a lack of knowledge about which titles to purchase. Of much less concern was issues of acceptance and availability. Of the three respondents who selected acceptance as a reason, two wrote in that their concern was the acceptance of this format by teachers, rather than students, administrators or parents. “Other” responses were focused on the poor quality of graphic novels, specifically their durability and the fact that they easily fall apart due to frequent use by students, with the majority of graphic novels being paperback.

Accelerated Reader

The Accelerated Reader program is a computer-based reading management system that includes a database of thousands of books ranging in reading levels from one to twelve. The system helps teachers manage literature-based reading by giving teachers good information about the reading behaviors of students. It keeps a record of each book read, the amount of questions answered correctly on the comprehension quiz, and if the student is reading at a suitable level for understanding. For the purposes of this study the Accelerated program was used only to tally how many book each student read for the five weeks during the study. The tracking system provided information in both targeted grades. The researcher was able to access information for both classes. The fifth grade teacher as well as the researcher made notes on the
Accelerated Reader log sheets as well as daily use of the Status of the Class Record Sheets.

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**Second Grade**

**Accelerated Reader Log in Results**

- AR Books logged after Graphic novels introduced
- AR Books logged Prior to Graphic novels introduced

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*Figure 17. Accelerated Reader Log in Results Second Grade Class.*

The data in Figures 17 and 18 show a marked difference in the number of books read during the target five week over the five weeks prior to the study. This difference could be attributed to student’s interest in reading graphic novels. Approximately every other book read by each of the target students was a graphic novel. Books read in other genres were matched almost one-to-one with a graphic novel being read.
Fifth Grade
Accelerated Log in Results

- Books logged after Graphic Novels introduced
- Books logged Prior to Graphic novels introduced

Figure 18. Accelerated Reader Log in Results Fifth Grade.

Qualitative Findings

1. Using information obtained from the Status of the Class Record Sheets and the Accelerated Reader Log with the researcher’s and the fifth grade teachers observational records, the amount of time a student would read for pleasure increased. At the beginning of each week the researcher read all or portions of a new Graphic novel to the second grade class to pique their reading interest. For the fifth grade class the researcher introduced and showed the covers of new Graphic novels available for reading.

2. The researcher noted from the Status of the Class Record Sheet and the Accelerated Reader log notes that the first week students were observed showed 65% of students in the second grade and 70% of the students in the fifth grade were reading on task.
(These percentages might show some inconsistency from week to week, especially with the fifth grade class, due to the “halo” effect and students being conscious of the fifth grade teacher and researcher observing and taking notes.) The second week showed no real change in students reading on task. The percentages stayed at 65% for the second grade and 70% for the fifth grade. During the third week the researcher noted two second grade students choosing the same book to read and asking to read together during silent reading time. Others students were engaged and reading on task. The second grade had 72% on task and the fifth grade had 78% of students reading on task. The fifth grade teacher noted that a student left their seat during her lecture to get a Graphic novel to read. The fourth week showed the greatest increase in on task reading time. More second grade students wanted to read the same books together. Students that spoke during reading time were sharing their favorite books and or recommending books to read to others. The fifth graders were requesting higher level books to read and were provided some Graphic Shakespeare books along with other classic novels that had been converted to graphic style. The percentages showed 85% of the second grade and 89% of the fifth grade classes reading on task. The fifth week the students continued to read more willingly during silent reading time. Their interest in Graphic novels continued. Students were requesting to read longer than the 20 minute silent reading time and it was extended to 30 minutes each day.
during the final week of this study in both the second grade and fifth grade classes. On task percentages increased for both target classes resulting in 92% for the second grade and 90% for the fifth grade (see Figure 19).

![Time on Task Summary](image)

**Figure 19.** Time On Task Summary.

3. The time that student invested on different distraction and avoidance mechanisms: out of seat, playing with pencil box, putting head down, flipping book to pretend to be reading decreased from the beginning of the study to the end by 28% in the second grade and 20% in the fifth grade.

4. Student Accelerated Reader Log entries list of all books read the first week for the second graders averaged twenty quizzes taken (see Figure 19). Of these 20 quizzes, 12 were taken by girls and 8 were taken by boys in the class and 2 were taken by English Language students. The fifth grade class had 25 quizzes taken with 18 being girls and 1 English Language student.
The second weeks yielded the same amount of quizzes taken by the same numbers of student groups in each grade. In the third week of the study an increase in reading quizzes was noted. In the second grade class 25 students took Accelerated quizzes, of those 18 girls, 5 boys and 2 English Language students. The fifth grader took 32 Accelerated Reader quizzes with 20 girls, 2 English Language students and 10 boys. The forth week quiz totals for the second grade were 34 total, 20 girls 4 English Language and 10 boys. In the fifth grade class the total quizzes were 44, 22 girls, 6 English Language students and 14 boys. The fifth weeks quiz numbers included at total of 42 quizzes taken, with 25 girls, 8 English Language students and 10 boys haven taken quizzes. The fifth graders took a total of 46 quizzes during the fifth week with 22 girls, 5 English Language students and 18 boys taking quizzes.

![Books Read Weekly](image)

*Figure 20. Books Read Weekly.*
Conclusion

The research data has supported a conclusion that graphic novels made an impact on students in both the second and fifth grade targeted classrooms. Not only did students feel empowered to read in the classroom, they also demonstrated improved results. It motivated them to feel part of a classroom environment where they have often felt disconnected. The students were curious about the graphic novels and shared them with their peers.

In our work, as teachers, to break down the barriers to student success, graphic novels are a viable, creative option to add to our toolboxes. They capitalize on our students’ natural affinity for images and on their knowledge of the various media forms in their daily lives. Students feel connected to the genre for its entertainment value and popularity, find comfort through its familiar media format and have success in the classroom. Graphic novels have a universal value for all students, not just those at risk, and have an important place in the language arts classroom. What a promising thought for students who rarely use the library for pleasure reading.

Furthermore, as graphic novels continue to grow in popularity and the prevalence in public libraries, bookstores and school media centers increases, the number of elementary school media specialists searching for information regarding best practices in collection this format will continue to increase. Media Specialists are feeling the pressure to relate to students interest and are slowly succumbing to the fact
that graphic novels are literature. Libraries need to respond to the demands of readers and provide them with books that they are interested enough to read. A description of the conclusions gained from this research design, the intervention protocols and assessment instruments are described in the following chapter.
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Images are all around us, and the ability to interpret them meaningfully is a vital skill for students to learn. In education’s continuing mission of meeting the needs of all learners, an apparent shift from the long-standing process of reading, writing, and text memorization methods of language learning, that may have once been appropriate, are giving way as new and emerging technologies permeate activities of daily living. Since a culture’s predominant mode of literacy depends on the technology and mass media it embraces (Sinatra, 1986), it is pertinent to promote visual learning to coincide with the technology of this age. The goal of this research was to learn if the graphic novel should play a motivational role in creating literate students in today’s visually intensive environment.

The research conducted in this graphic novel study and the work of other researchers (Cary, 2004; Frey& Fisher, 2008; Krashen, 2004b; Schwarz, 2006) suggests that classroom and school libraries that provide graphic novels will be better able to survive in this new text intensive society. Classroom, school, and community libraries have to become more creative in their methods of reaching out to younger readers. Teacher-librarians need to be proactive in providing a place that offers a fresh, new look at the world of books and reading for reluctant students. The format, flow, and methods of graphic storytelling, align well with the internet’s popularity with today’s youth, creating a perfect tool for enhancing student reading literacy.
Discussion

The following discussion of the results of this research is organized around the research questions framed in Chapter 1 of this thesis. The research questions are cited, the instruments used for analysis are listed, followed by a discussion of the outcomes of the data analysis.

- **Question**: Do graphic novels play an important role in the school library?
- **Instruments used for analysis**: Research, Librarian Surveys, Student Reading Surveys, Accelerated Readers logs, Status of the Class Record Sheets.
- **Outcomes**: Based on Librarian Surveys, Individual student Accelerated Reader and Quiz logs, regarding student exposure to graphic novels, the amount of reading increased in both target grades and across genders. On the onset of this study the students of both the second and fifth grade classrooms admitted to not being happy about having to read silently for 20 minutes each day. Once students were introduced, exposed to, and allowed to self-select the graphic novels from the many choices provide, students wanted to read all the time. Student Post Surveys also relayed the message that graphic novel exposure helped increase students interest in reading.

These findings supported the research outcomes by Krashen (2004a), Worthy (1996), and Worthy et al. (1999), that personal interest is the most motivating factor in choosing to read. According to Amabile (1990), intrinsic motivations for learning are linked with learner autonomy. Autonomy, Deci and Ryan (1991) indicate, involves learner choice. The implication as related to this study suggests that readers should
have opportunity to make choices in the materials read. Educators who teach reading and literacy theorists agree that frequent reading is directly related to higher performance in reading. An increased amount of time for free voluntary reading is associated with better literacy development (Krashen, 1996). Graphic novels appear to benefit and motivate all students who read this new form of visual texts. In addition it is possible to build a graphic novel collection which challenges the good reader as much as supporting those less enthusiastic. This key strength along with the phenomenal reader enthusiasm, are clearly reasons to promote graphic novel use in a school or library setting.

- Question: Do graphic novels help lead non-readers back to books?
- Instruments used for analysis: Graphic Novels, Accelerated Reader Logs, Status of the Class Record Sheet.
- Outcomes: The Accelerated Reader Individual Student Quiz results showed that an increased interest in the graphic novel genre seemed to spark an increased interest in reading in general. More books of all genre were being read and students were taking the Accelerated Reader Quizzes in greater numbers. The motivating nature of graphic novels promoted independent, uninterrupted reading amongst students of both grade levels, for sustained periods of time. Even in the short five week targeted time period it was noted by the researcher and fifth grade teacher, reading stamina was considerably improved. The graphic format did affect the reading interest and motivation of the target students in both grade levels.
At the beginning of the study, whether in the classroom during Silent Reading time or in the Library, the students were easily distracted and exhibited behavioral problems, needing constant reminding as to appropriate behavior during reading. As the study progressed, students started to show changes in their attitude toward silent reading time. During the third week of this study student talking turned into sharing an exciting part of a story or leading another student to a book they just finish that was being recommended. This studies results parallel to Tandarich’s belief, that graphic novels “can spark that imagination and create the foundation for a love of reading” (2006, pp. 16-17).

Proponents of comics in the classroom say that they can lure struggling readers who may be intimidated by pages crammed with text. They also say that comics, with their visual cues and panel-by-panel sequencing, are uniquely situated to reinforce key elements of literacy, like story structure and tone. According to Dana Gioga, the chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, “the prevalence in American life of television and the other electronic media has been increasingly stealing time from readers” (2004, par 4). Graphic novels are a huge motivational tool that grasps readers away from new age technology, drawing them back into books.

- Question: Would English-Language learners benefit from reading graphic novels?
- Instruments used for analysis: Research, Graphic Novels, Student Surveys, Status of Class Record Sheets
Outcomes: Based on the Student Surveys, classroom observation, and Accelerated Reader Logs, the nine English Language students (five in the second grade class and four in the fifth grade class, per district placement records in student CUM files) were very excited and willing to read the graphic novels provided in the target classrooms. These findings support Cummins’ (2003) research discussing the motivational effect graphic novels have on English Language students. Cummins felt that the most important factor in development of reading skills was the amount of time students actually spend reading. The Status of the Class Record Sheet and Accelerated Reader logs showed that the English Language students were reading the graphic novels just as willingly as all the other students in the second and fifth grade classes.

In addition graphic novels are written by an increasingly diverse group of individuals, and such offer diverse stories that have gone far beyond the white male, power fantasies associated with the Super Hero genre many associate with the graphic novel. Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* (1986) was only the beginning of what non-fiction graphic novels can, and have done to enhance the way important stories can be told.

- Question: Do graphic novels appeal to one gender more than another?
- Instruments used for analysis: Graphic Novels, Student Surveys, Status of the Class Record Sheets
- Outcomes: Graphic novels had the same capacity as a text only book to emotionally connect with the readers. For boys and girls alike, using reading materials in a text-plus-graphic format provides a non-intimidating way to
discuss and integrate scholastic concepts across the curriculums. Students in the target second grade class started checking out *Baby Mouse* books, and other graphic novels from the school library, to read together in small groups. Boys and girls set up their own reading groups by their interests in particular stories. The groups were self made and changed weekly. The Accelerated Reader log entries showed a rise in all students’ book reading, boys, girls, as well as English Language students. The results were too close to state one group read more than another.

The fifth grade class read classics: *Shakespeare, H.C. Wells, 9-11, The Hobbit* and many other stories, in graphic novel format, about American history that fit in with required standards. Big buddies and little buddies, a mix of genders and ethnicities, shared their favorite stories on Fridays. Graphic novels appeared to work well with boys and girls who are struggling with motivation and achievement, “the positive effects of creating and engaging students of all genders in graphic novel active reading programs can be seen in even the highest level English classes” (Gurian, Stevens, King, 2008, p. 105). The enjoyment of graphic books and stories by both genders also ties in with research related to self selection of reading material. This supports the notion that the books and stories students find most interesting are those they have selected for their own reason and purposes (Gambrell 1996).

- Question: Do students enjoy reading graphic novels?
- Instruments used for analysis: Graphic Novels, Accelerated Reader Log, Status of the Class Record Sheet.
Outcomes: At the onset of this study only 10 students responded that they like reading at school “A lot”, whereas 25 students stated they like reading “A lot”, away from school during their free time. From the first day that graphic novels were introduced it was noted that students’ attitudes were changing. When the time came to stop classroom reading, they responded with such phrases as “Just five more minutes!”, or “Do we have to do Math today?” Students even went so far as to get up during the fifth grade teacher’s lecture to seek out books to read. While others would try to sneak them into their book bags, or place them under their textbooks for a quick peak when they thought a teacher was not looking. This study’s finding relates well to Schneider’s (2007) description of how “graphic novels were both my bridge for improving [a struggling reader’s] reading ability and a way to build trust with a frustrated student” (p. 57). According to keynote speaker Jason Ohler (2008), “[y]our students have iPods, you have books. They use the web, you use the encyclopedia. To you a laptop is a place for your cat; to them it’s their doorway to the world” (par 20). Graphic novels fit comfortably into students technology based world.

All 50 students were very receptive and responded positively toward the immersion of graphic novels in their classrooms. Students’ response to the post survey question about reading at school had eight more students answering that they enjoyed reading at school. The results almost doubled from five weeks prior, whereas the question about students liking to read away
from schools stayed at 25. The number of respondents did not change from five weeks prior.

Implications

This study focused mostly on the motivational factor graphic novels had on students when provided in the classroom and school library. The implications discovered here appear to be multidimensional with extrinsic and intrinsic variables. Four things really stood out as being factors to motivate students to read graphic novel for pleasure:

1. The visual ability to interpret and reflect upon images as well as words aid students in understanding of a stories text. Visualization is an integral part of literacy development and a valid learning tool that teachers need to encourage student to use.

2. Interwoven throughout this research design was self-selection of reading material. Self selection according to Krashen (2004c) has an effect on the amount of reading and comprehending students achieve. Students need to feel ownership in their book choices. Allowing students to have choice in what they read and how they respond to their reading are two necessary motivational elements.

3. Reading practice is a necessary component of literacy. Students reading abilities and levels will only improve if they read more books. Students need accessibility and exposure to all genres and levels of books. Providing
a specific time each day for reading in a reading friendly structured environment helps students to enjoy and learn from the books they read.

4. Teacher-Librarians are the motivators; they hold the power to motivate students to develop a love for reading. A teacher who believes in the importance of reading will develop exciting ways to motivate their students to read.

Recommendations for Further Development

The researcher recommends, on the basis of the information gathered from related literature and the analysis of information obtained from this research along with the limitations posed by time, numbers of students, and librarians surveyed, that applying the methods on a larger scale and collecting additional data would enhance the study results.

1. The graphic novel has value in its own art and text-storytelling as many readers have realized. The potential for using the graphic novel in school to teach multiple literacies is significant. However, there is need for a longitudinal study to find out the stability of attitude change and reading practices due to graphic novel use over a longer period of time. Stronger data will help avoid both total rejection of the visual media or intense inappropriate use of it.

2. Some research is in process seeking to connect graphic novels in the classroom to increased reading or content area achievement, such as the Maryland Comic Book Initiative
(www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/recognition-partnerships).

3. However, additional research is needed if educators are to proceed to use graphic novels sensibly and not closet them after a quick in-service training.

4. Further research into a number of topics specific to graphic novel collection development is needed in order to provide information which can be utilized in a thoughtful, knowledgeable collection development, not only for school libraries but classroom libraries as well.

5. A more extensive study needs to be conducted to determine Librarian’s views, as well as the opinions of Media Specialist regarding the inclusion of this format into their Library collection would certainly be a beneficial study. In addition, follow-up interviews focused on gathering more in-depth information about which collection development resources were most useful, those that proved to be less helpful, those that are no longer used, and those which continue to be used would be an interesting study on its own or a way to broaden a library study about graphic novels.

6. The individual group student relationships may vary by classroom. Different relationships between student performance, student motivation, and student reading may be obtained in different classroom settings. Clearly more valid classroom research is needed on the multivariate
relationship between student motivations, self-selective reading and graphic novels.

7. Educators who are trying to incorporate graphic novels into their classrooms are only guessing about the kinds of literacy skills students need to read the graphic novels. Books by creators of graphic novels and graphic novel enthusiasts help point the way to understanding this new verbal-visual literacy. However, facts, true hard data, about what readers do, from the reader's point of view, would be more beneficial.

8. Do graphic novels help English Language students learn English? Looking at the history of graphic novels in the classroom, one can find many anecdotal accounts of benefits, but solid, ongoing research by educators is still lacking.

9. Graphic novels could very well fit into teaching with multiple learning styles in mind and would be another area of interest for continued study.

10. Positive results to graphic novel introduction would make it necessary to follow up on a larger scale to see if increased student numbers reacted in the same manner.

Conclusion

The systematic, qualitative approach to this research allowed genuine insight into students' reading motivation, interest, and also their struggles with literature to be gained by the researcher. The results provide valid evidence for placing graphic novels in school libraries, as well as in the school classrooms. It highlighted the necessity to
consider the importance of the motivational aspect graphic novels provide as a learning component in a classroom environment to increase reading for pleasure.

The research also discussed the authentic language learning opportunities that graphic novels provide English Language learners as well as beginning level readers through the dramatically reduced text, making them manageable and language profitable. As graphic novels continue to grow in popularity and their prevalence in public libraries, bookstores and school media centers increases, the number of elementary school media specialist searching for information regarding best practices in collection this format will also increase.

As educators become increasingly aware of the importance of different learning styles, it is clear that graphic novels can be a powerful tool for reaching the many types of learners. It is also important to become familiar with the enormous benefits of using graphic novels to help teach literacies. The literature suggests that using visual elements in teaching and learning yields positive results. Our technological society demands that we can make meaning from information presented in the form of an image and that meaning can be communicated through a process of reading.

Visual literacy is not that contrary to linguistic literacy. Educators are recognizing the importance of helping students develop visual literacies in order to survive and communicate in a highly complex world. Multiple literacies are necessary to meet the challenges of today's society. Teachers must be willing to integrate information literacy and technology skills into their curriculum and classrooms in
order for their students to be able to connect the daily use literacies from their multi-
media world over into their educational learning.

While we can think of more reasons for including graphic novels than reasons
for excluding them from classroom use, the best reason just might be that they get
student into reading. Student reading competency will be boosted through graphic
novel use. If students believe that they are capable readers they become competent
readers. If they value literacy, they are likely to become cognitively engaged in
reading and become more autonomous and successful (Maehr, M.L., & Midgley, C.,
1991) in pursuit of literate activities. Reading graphic novels will help promote a life-
long love of both the magic of art and literature.
APPENDIX A

Parent Permission Letter
Dear Parent,

Your child will be participating in a reading survey. She/he will be answering questions about what types of books they like to read and other questions related to their reading habits. If you have any questions about this reading questionnaire please feel free to e-mail me @ lcravens@natomas.k12.ca.us

Please sign and return the bottom of this form if you choose not to have your child participate in the reading survey.

I do not give my child __________________ permission to participate in the reading survey.
APPENDIX B

Student Reading Survey
Student Reading Survey

Each question has the numbers 1-4 listed below it. Number 1 means very much and #4 means I don't know.

Please choose and circle one number for your answer.

1. How much do you like reading in school? (During free time)?

A Lot  A little Bit  Not very much  Not at all  Don't Know

1  2  3  4  5

2. How much do you like reading in your own time (Not at school)?

A Lot  A little Bit  Not very much  Not at all  Don't Know

1  2  3  4  5
3. Do you enjoy going to a bookstore?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Lot</th>
<th>A little Bit</th>
<th>Not very much</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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</table>

4. Do you like to go to the library?

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<th>A Lot</th>
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<th>Not very much</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
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5. Do you like getting books for presents?

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<th>A Lot</th>
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<th>Don't Know</th>
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<td>1</td>
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6. Do you like reading chapter books?

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7. Do you like reading comic books?

A Lot  A little Bit  Not very much  Not at all  Don't Know
1 2 3 4 5

8. Do you like reading graphic novels?

A Lot  A little Bit  Not very much  Not at all  Don't Know
1 2 3 4 5

9. Do you choose to read books at home when it is not required?

A Lot  A little Bit  Not very much  Not at all  Don't Know
1 2 3 4 5
10. Does your family read books together?

A Lot  A little Bit  Not very much  Not at all  Don't Know

1  2  3  4  5
APPENDIX C

Librarian Survey Cover Letter
Title of Study: Do Graphic Novels have a role in school libraries?

Investigator: Linda Cravens

Date: January 1, 2009

Dear Library Media Specialist,

I am inviting you to participate in a research project I am conducting at the University of California, Sacramento that examines which collection development tools are most useful in establishing a graphic novel collection in the elementary Media Center. In addition I am interested in how popular graphic novels are at your library site. In order to identify Media Specialists who would be able to provide information on these topics, I am distributing a brief questionnaire which should take no more than 5 minutes to complete. If you are willing, please complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to me in the addressed, stamped envelope by January 15th, 2009. I estimate this will require only 5 minutes of your time.

Participation is voluntary. You may choose not to respond to the questionnaire, or to answer only some of the questions. Your participation in this survey will help inform the discussion of collection development in the area of graphic novels and comics.

This research has been approved by the Human Subjects Review Board at the University of California, Sacramento. All responses will remain confidential, and all documents pertaining to this research will be stored in a secured location. The information gathered from the survey will be used only for the purpose of academic research.

If you have any questions concerning this survey, you may contact me via e-mail at lcravens@natomas.k12.ca.us or at 916 205-8979.

Thank you for your cooperation and the valuable information you are providing.

Sincerely,

Linda Cravens

MLL/Reading Specialist student, University of California, Sacramento

2nd Grade Teacher, H. Allen Hight Elementary, Natomas Unified School District
APPENDIX D

Librarian Survey
Establishing an elementary school graphic novel collection:
A survey of the approaches taken by Elementary School Media Specialists

While confidentiality will be maintained, you may opt to leave the identifying information below blank:

Name

School

For the purpose of this survey, the term “graphic novel” is used to refer to books which are in comic book format, manga format and graphic novel format.

1. Does your school library collection contain a graphic novel collection?
   ___ Yes  ___ No

2. Approximately how many graphic novels are currently in the collection?
   ___ 0-10  ___ 10-25  ___ 25-50
   ___ 50-100  ___ >100

3. When were graphic novel first added to the collection?
   ___ 2007-2008 school year  ___ 2004-2005 school year
   ___ 2006-2007 school year  ___ prior to the 2004-2005 school year
   ___ 2005-2006 school year  ___ unknown

4. Who was the individual that began purchasing graphic novels?
   ___ Myself
   ___ Another media specialist currently employed at school
   ___ Another media specialist not employed at school
   ___ Another individual (central office, principal—please specify)
If you are the individual who began purchasing graphic novels for the school library collection, please answer the remaining four questions.

5. Check the collection development tools you utilized in determining which graphic novels to select:

___ websites (ex: “No Flying No Tights”)

___ professional books (ex. Graphic Novels in your Media Center – Allyson Lyga)

___ professional review journals (School Library Journal, Booklist, Kirkus Review)

___ recommended title lists (ex. “Best Graphic novels for elementary schools”

___ recommendations from other professionals (check all that apply):

___ Media Specialist

___ Public librarians

___ Comic bookstore owners

___ Students

___ Teachers

___ Other ________________________________

6. What collection development tools would you have utilized if available?

7. What motivated you to establish a graphic novel collection?

___ Patron requests

___ Research and/or articles on their popularity and value

___ Discussion and/or encouragement from other librarians

___ Other ________________________________
8. What reservations did you have in regards to establishing a graphic novel collection?

___ Unsure of what titles to purchase
___ Unsure of their appropriateness
___ Unsure of their acceptance by library patrons
___ Unsure of availability
___ Other ____________________________

9. If needed, would you be willing to participate in a short (approximately 20 minute) follow-up interview at a time of your convenience? A graphic novel will be provided in appreciation of your participation.

___ Yes  ___ No

If yes please provide the best way to contact you (phone, email)

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. Your participation in this survey will help inform school library media professionals of specific selection development tools elementary school library media specialist use to develop graphic novel collections
APPENDIX E

Accelerated Reader Daily Log
APPENDIX F

Status of the Class Record Sheet
### Status of the Class Record Sheet

**Student Name**

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A = Absent  I = Intervention  √ = OK

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Page 1 of 1
APPENDIX G

Library Books per Student
Number and Age of California School Library Books per Student

Books per student is based on the total number of books in the school library. Average copyright dates are determined by sampling books in the nonfiction section.

SOURCES: CDE Online School Library Survey 1999-2007

Revised 10-06 by Jeffus
California Department of Education
REFERENCES


Young, R. (2007). Graphically speaking: The importance of graphic books in a school


