

For Pete's Sake: Is a personal interest in reading a prerequisite in the teaching of literacy?

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The Peter Effect

When asked by a beggar for money
Saint Peter replied;

**How can I give what I myself do
not have?**

Acts 3, Verse 5





Why did we want to do this research?

- ❖ Our personal beliefs and experiences
- ❖ Faculty discussion about the 'Literate Lives of Teachers'
- ❖ Anecdotal comments about and observations of pre-service teachers.



What must beginning teachers
'have'

to be effective teachers of reading ?



Research evidence shows that:

- more students read leads to better reading and the ability to deal with different kinds of text (*Anderson, Heibert, Scott & Wilkinson, 1985; Sulentic-Dowell, Beal, & Caparo, 2006*)
- a bi-directional relationship exists between attitudes to reading and reading achievement (*Kush & Watkins, cited in Suletic-Dowell et al 2006*)
- teachers play a crucial role in student motivation for reading (*Guthrie, 1996, Skinner & Belmont, 1993, Wang & Guthrie, 2004 all cited in Nathanson, Pruslow, & Levitt, 2008; Powell-Brown, 2003/2004*)
- to be effective teachers of reading, teachers must demonstrate a positive attitude towards personal reading (*Applegate & Applegate, 2004*).



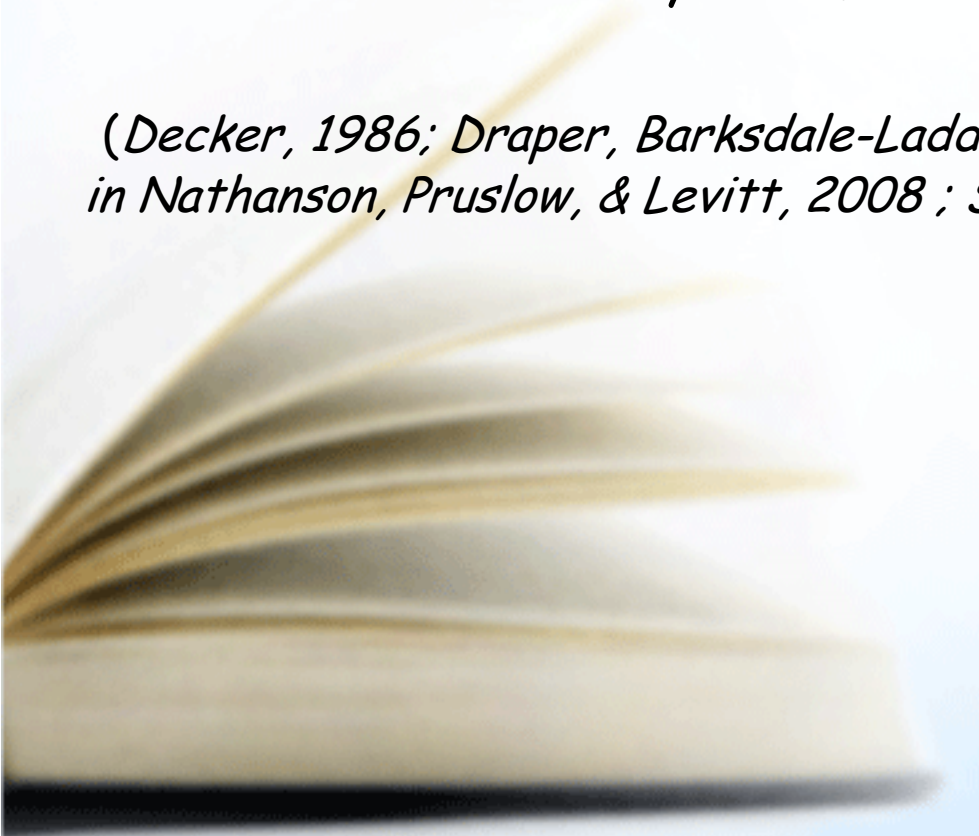


But ...

research evidence also shows that:

many pre-service teachers are **alliterate**: that is they can, but do not chose to, read.

(Decker, 1986; Draper, Barksdale-Ladd & Radencich, 2000; Scott 1996, cited in Nathanson, Pruslow, & Levitt, 2008 ; Sulentic-Dowell, et al. 2006)





There is another side:

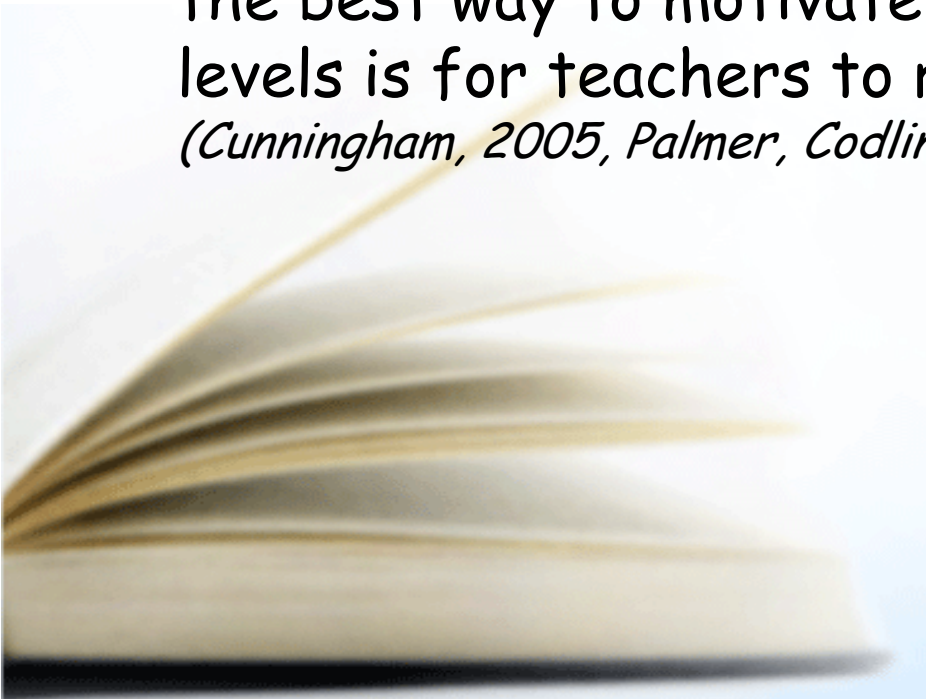
Not all research with pre-service students shows a lack of interest in reading.



and

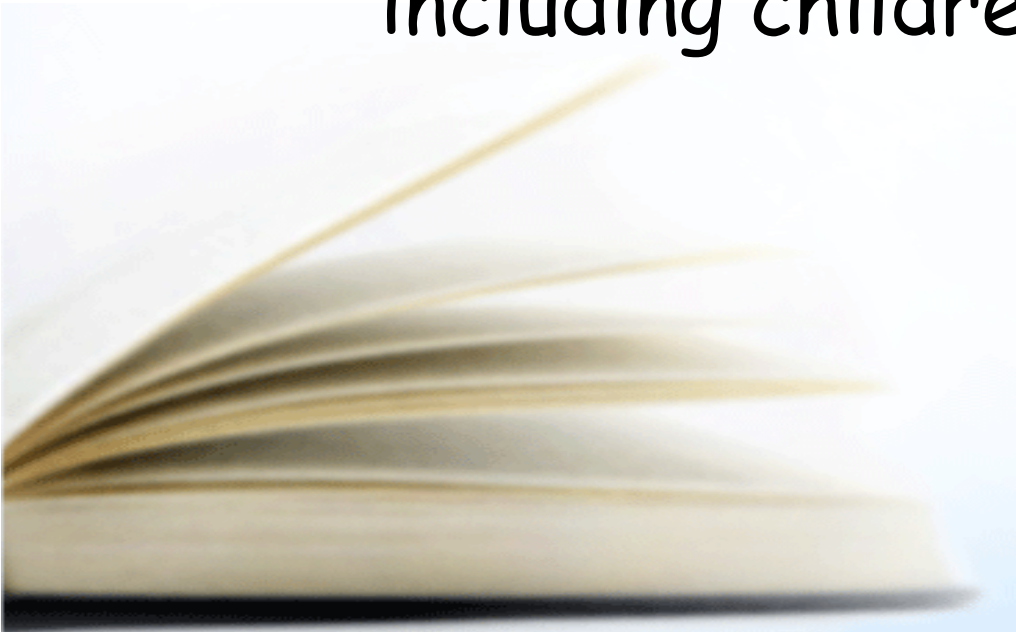
appropriate instructional experiences can change attitudes to, and habits of, reading (*Applegate & Applegate, 2004*)

the best way to motivate children to read at all grade levels is for teachers to read to their classes (*Cunningham, 2005, Palmer, Codling & Gambrell, 1994*).



Aim of the study

To examine what it is that pre-service teachers bring to their teacher education in terms of their attitudes and experiences of personal reading, including children's literature.



The research

Participants:

Two groups of students (71 in total) in the first week of their first teacher education course on language and literacy.

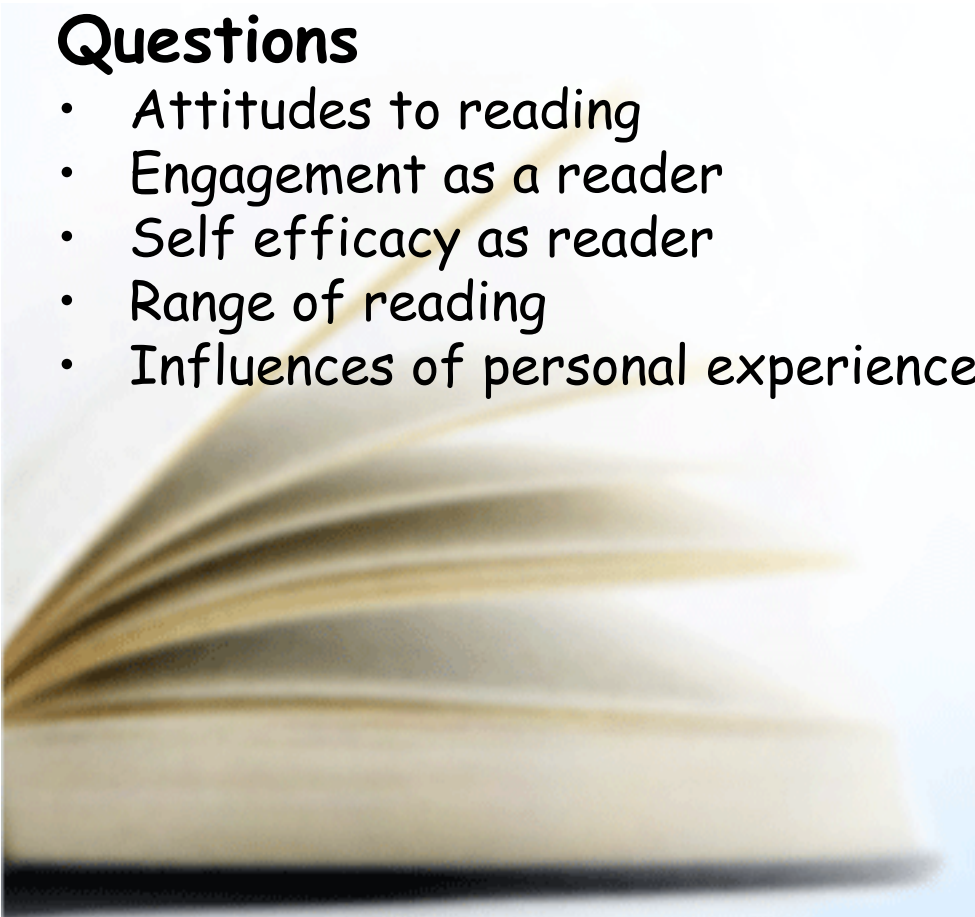


The research method

An anonymous survey analysed quantitatively and qualitatively.

Questions

- Attitudes to reading
- Engagement as a reader
- Self efficacy as reader
- Range of reading
- Influences of personal experiences on attitude to reading



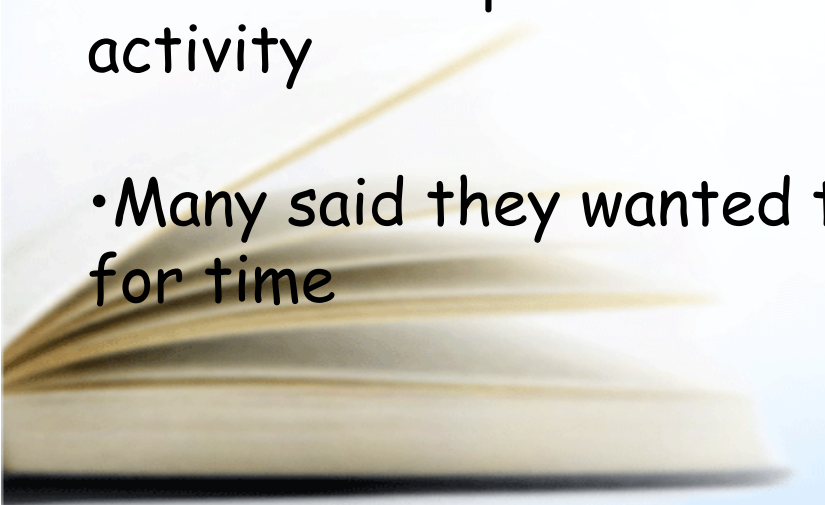
So...

Are our students alliterate?

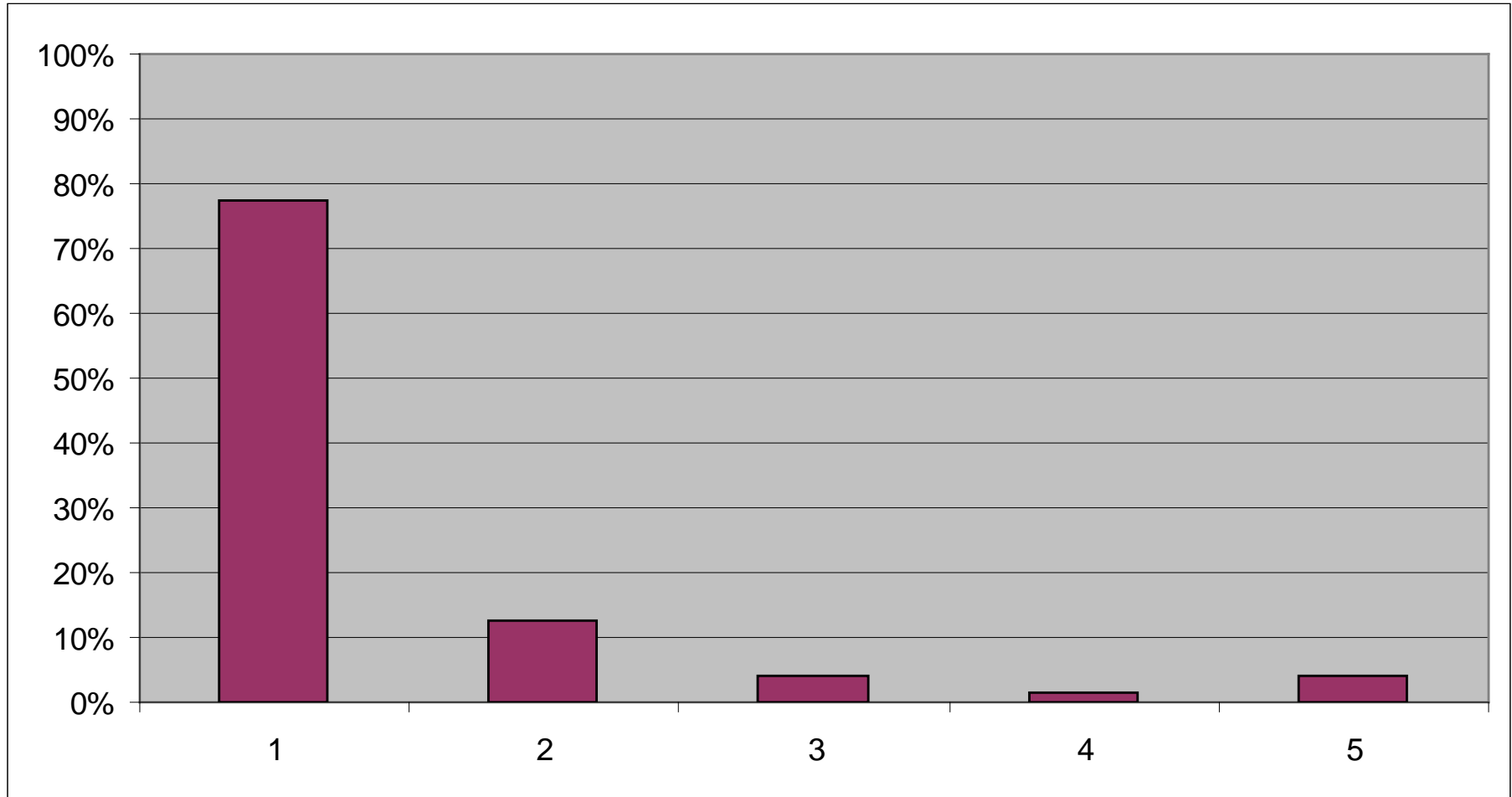


What are our students' attitudes to reading?

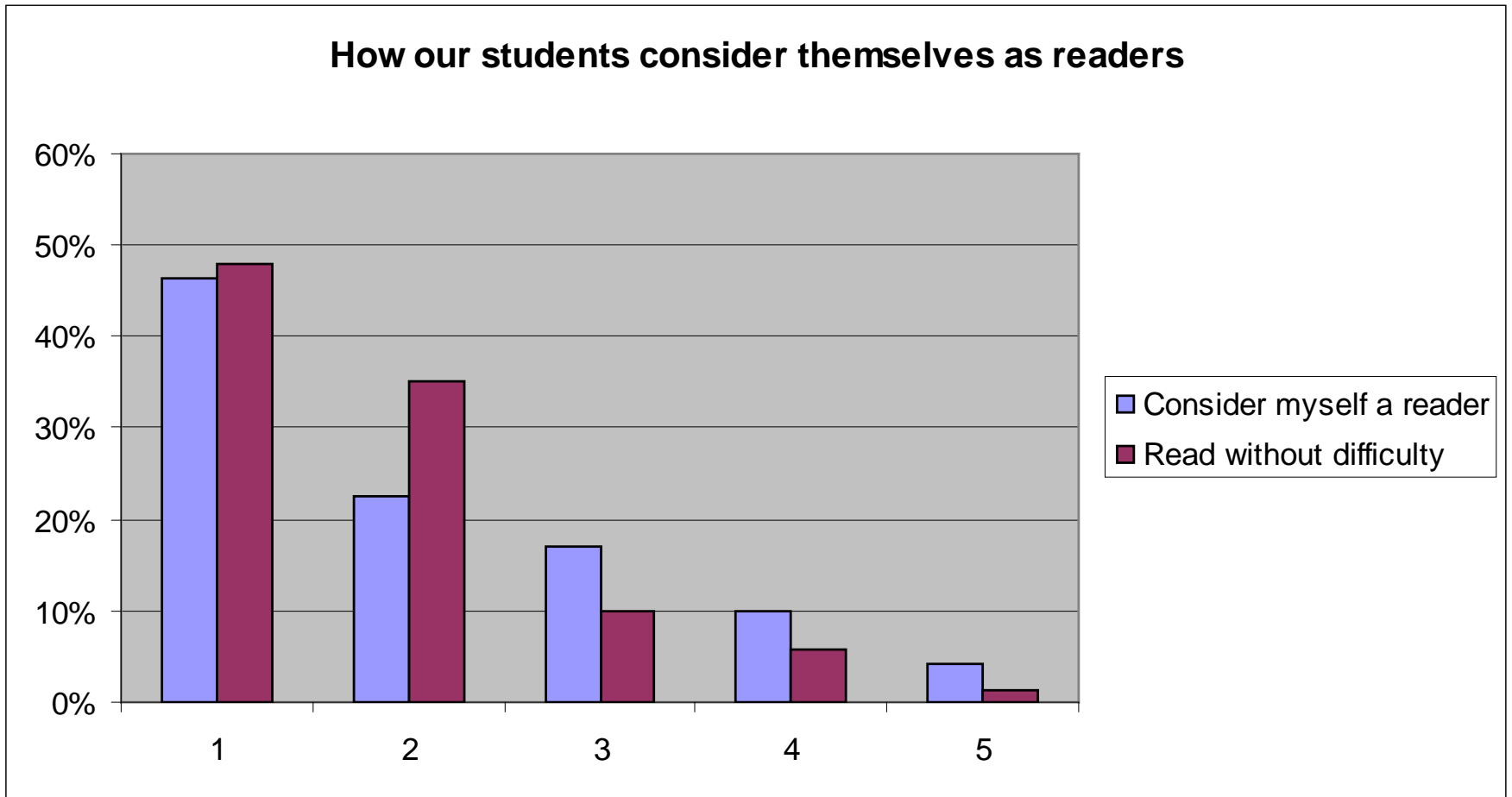
- The majority of students (77%) felt it was important to be a reader but only 46% considered themselves to be readers.
- Nearly half the students (46%) surveyed stated that they could read without difficulty
- 34% accessed the library on a regular basis
- 69% viewed personal reading as a pleasurable and positive activity
- Many said they wanted to read more but were compromised for time



Students beliefs about the importance of being a reader

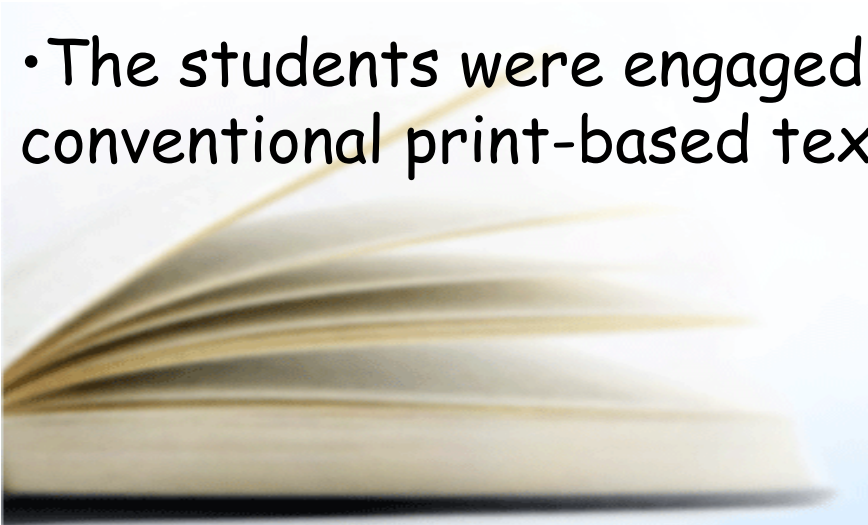


What are our students' attitudes to reading?

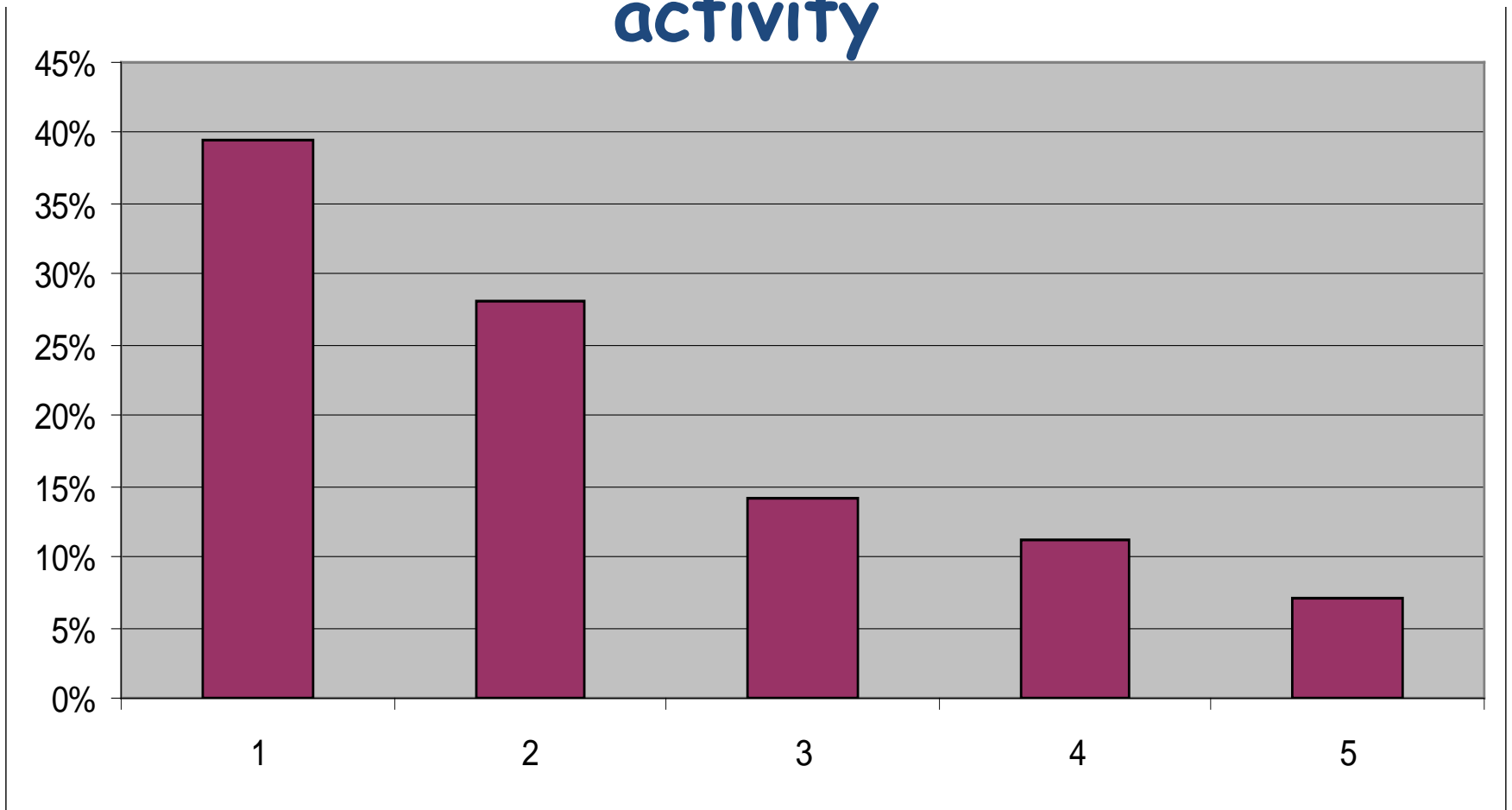


To what extent do our students engage in reading?

- 67% agreed that reading was a positive leisure time activity
- 71% saw it as a relaxing activity
- The majority reported themselves to be engaged readers although most of their current reading was academic
- The students were engaged in a wider range of reading than conventional print-based text



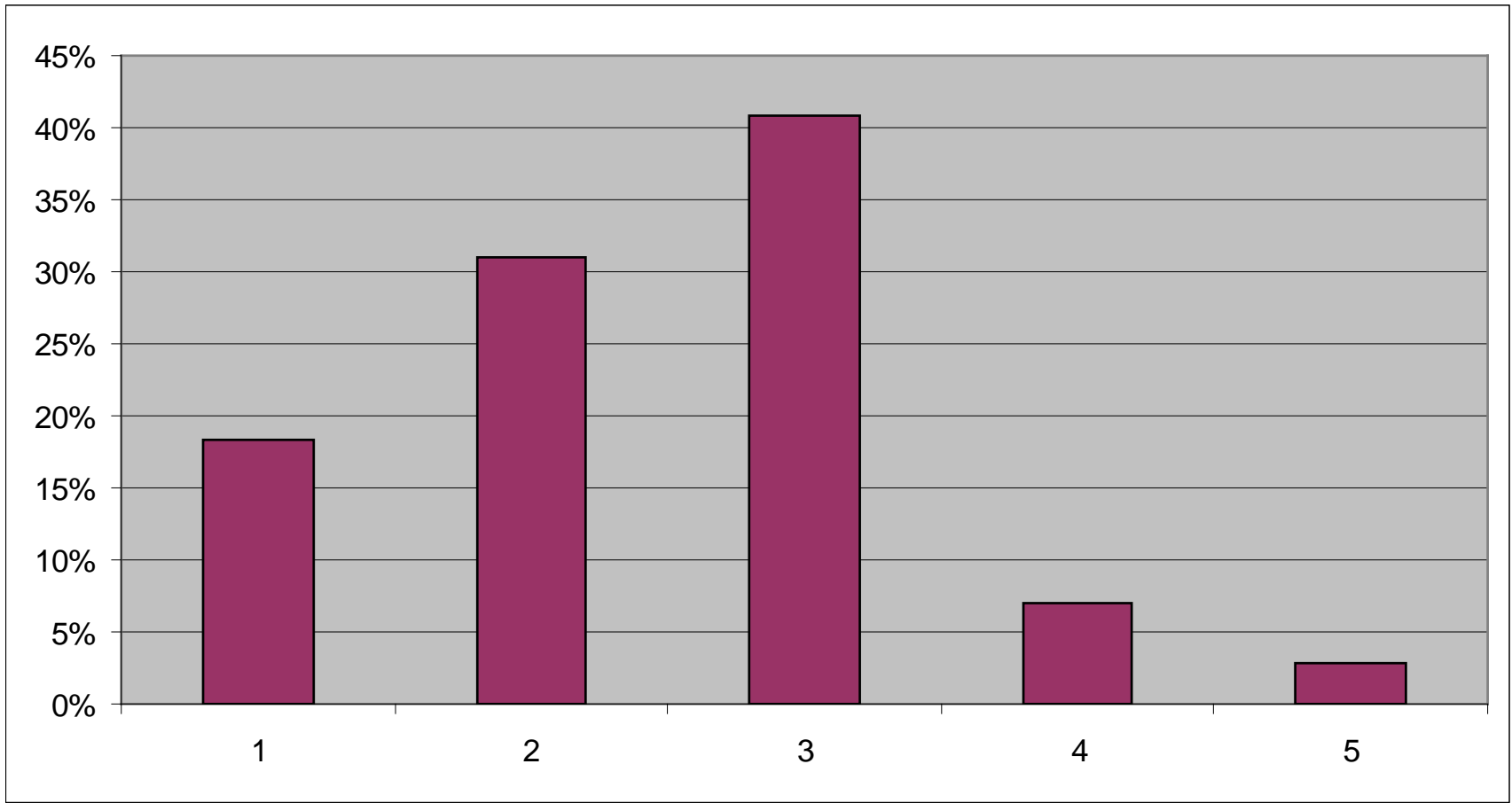
Students' engagement in reading: choosing to read as a leisure time activity



How widely do our students read?

- 49% read widely (from novels to electronic texts)
- 10% stated they did not read widely at all
- Many recalled the canon of literature from school: Shakespeare, EB White, Tolkien, Dahl, CS Lewis and Paul Jennings
- Current print-based reading showed an even spread over magazines, novels, newspapers and non fiction text
- Emailing dominated students' electronic reading (85%).
- Electronic newspapers and social networking were both popular
- E-books made a tentative showing at 7%

Do our students read widely?



What are the influences on our readers?

51% were inspired by their teachers but 31% were not

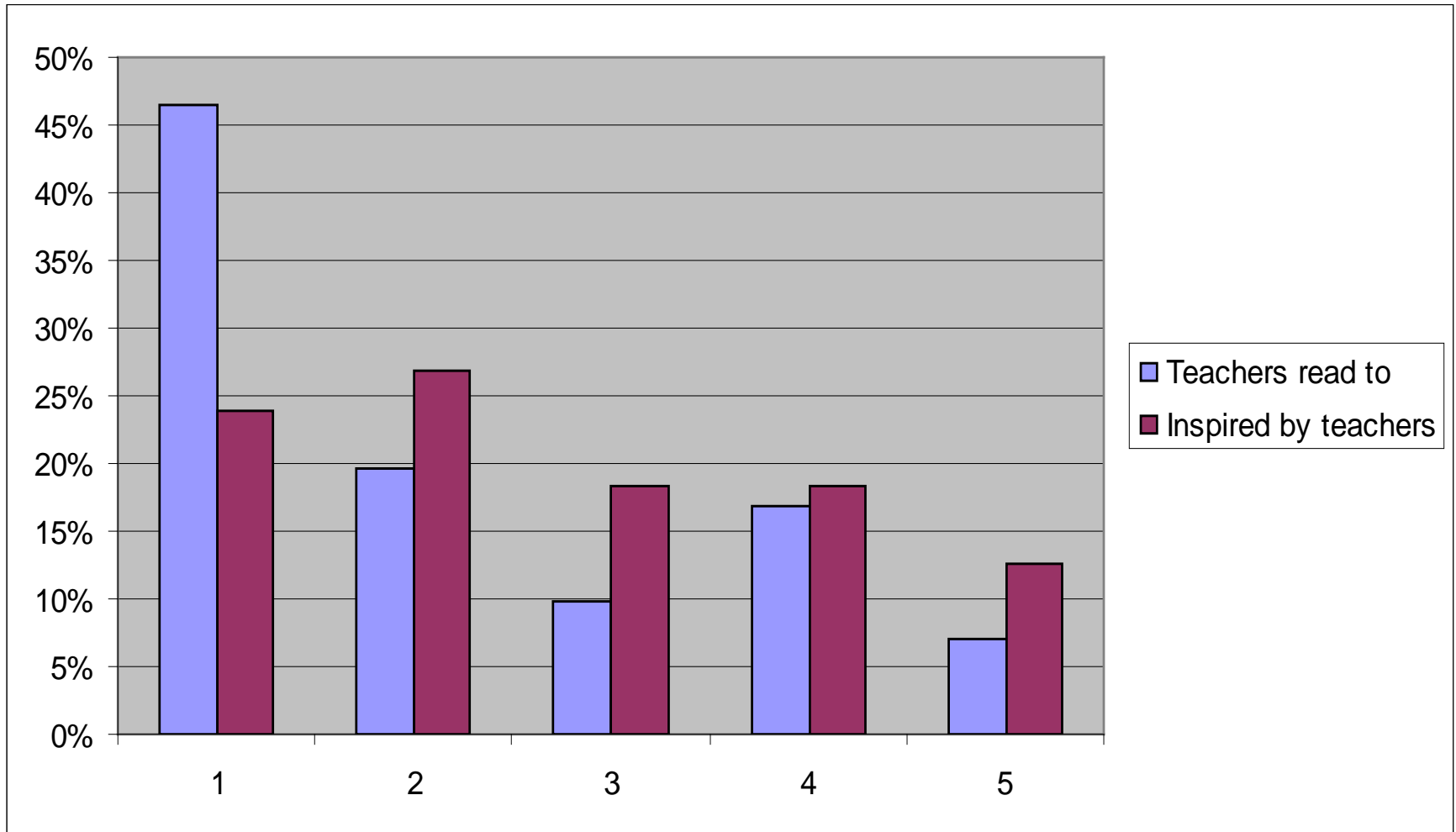
66% remembered their teachers reading aloud to them but 24% did not

63% were read/told stories at home 27% were not

58% enjoyed talking with others about their reading 29% did not



What are the influences on our students as readers?



Where to from here with this pilot study?

Re-survey the sample and follow up with focus group interviews at the end of the semester in 2009.

Repeat with larger sample in 2010

Survey and focus group pre and post teacher education courses in literacy



How can we ensure that our students will 'have' something to give the children they work with?



Principles that inform our courses.

- Reading to
- Knowing and using children's literature
- Requiring engagement with reading
- Responding to children's literature

How can we try to make sure that students 'have' something to give?

' If you make time to read and become engaged in the process it becomes natural, habit forming behaviours. Because these teachers experienced the joy of introducing children's or young adult literature to their students, they found themselves deeply involved with plots and language structure in a way that moved them emotionally"

(Powell-Brown,2003.)





“Teachers who have a passion for reading are role models and spark plugs for students. If we want to be the best teachers we can, we must demonstrate our own passion for reading”

(Powell-Brown, 2003)





Where to from here?

“College courses should tap into not only the minds and competencies of students but their hearts as well.”

(Nathanson et al., 2008, P319)

