

ANALY HIGH SCHOOL SUSTAINED SILENT READING PROGRAM

What is Sustained Silent Reading?

Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) is a period of uninterrupted silent reading intended to improve reading comprehension, the pace of student reading, vocabulary skills, and spelling. Students, and ideally their teachers, silently read a book of their choice for a set amount of time. SSR appears in a variety of forms depending upon the level of the school and needs of the students.

The purposes and procedures for SSR were first outlined by L.C. Hunt in 1970. It is often said that SSR is based on one simple principle: Reading is a skill. As with most skills, the more you practice it, the better you become at it. The less you use it, the more difficult it is. Most skills like swimming you will never forget once you learn them. But in order to get better at either reading or swimming, you must jump into the book or the water and do it over and over (Mrs. D-Dowling Central 2001). Research has shown that reading ability is positively correlated with the extent to which students read recreationally according to the Reading and Writing Habits of Students in the Condition of Education (1997), published by the National Center for Education Statistics. That report also indicated that students who read for fun at least once a week had higher average reading proficiency abilities than those who reported never or hardly ever reading for enjoyment. Unfortunately students in the United States do not appear to be "jumping into the water" on a regular basis when it comes to reading. Jim Trelease, a well-known expert in the world of reading recounts surveys that report that 90% of students devote only 1 percent of their free time to reading and 30% to watching television. 50% of students read for an average of four minutes or less per day, 30% read two minutes per day, and 10% read nothing at all. Most schools do not appear to be setting aside time for reading either. In a comprehensive seven-year study by John Goodland entitled *A Place Called School*, it was reported that only 3 percent of class time is occupied by the act of reading in the middle school, and 2 percent in the high school.

Why SSR at Analy High School?

Over the last few years standardized tests have shown us that our students are improving in reading, spelling and vocabulary skills, but are still lagging behind state and national averages. We have worked hard to address these needs through an emphasis on vocabulary skills and spelling in our language arts courses and numerous reading initiatives sponsored by our library. However, the best way to improve student vocabulary, reading comprehension, reading pace, and spelling remains through reading itself. SSR offers our students the time and opportunity to independently explore and practice their reading skills in a regular, pleasurable, and stress-free manner. By devoting 20 minutes two days a week to reading, our students could get up to 35 hours of additional reading time per year! In addition, parents of children in other SSR programs report that they see an increase in their child's reading outside of school as they get hooked on books they begin during school hours.

Guidelines for SSR at Analy High School

- SSR will run from 10:00 to 10:20 every Tuesday and Thursday during period 4.
- Students are expected to bring a book of their own choice to SSR and read silently for the full 15 minutes. Children's books, comic books, picture books are not permitted. Newspapers may be used, but students should not pass sections around the room. Magazines & journals that are related to content areas and recommended/approved by the SSR teacher may be used. Students are encouraged to read for their own pleasure and utilize our library, but novels being read for classes and textbooks will be permitted.
- Reading material should be selected outside of SSR time unless the teacher takes the class as a whole to the library to select reading material. Mrs. Brannon is willing to work with any teacher who might want to bring their SSR group in to select books. Please be sure to make arrangements beforehand though.
- Teachers are encouraged to set aside a secure location in their room for students to leave books (the teacher is not responsible for these books, however, and should make this clear to the students)
- Students should not sleep or do homework (other than reading assignments) during SSR.
- SSR is most effective when adults model reading. By reading alongside their students, teachers demonstrate that reading is a valued activity, a life-long endeavor, and important to every discipline and content area. Catching up on professional journals or personal interest books are just a few of the ways teachers can use SSR. Teachers are strongly encouraged to read with their students.
- SSR is not intended to create additional work for teachers. Grades and evaluations of students will not be a part of SSR. Teachers can, however emphasize the enjoyment of reading and purpose of SSR by asking questions such as:
 - ◆ How was your reading period today?
 - ◆ Did you read well?
 - ◆ Were you able to concentrate on your silent reading?
 - ◆ Do you feel as though your reading is improving?or by soliciting book reviews or recommendations from the SSR group from time to time.
- If a student is unprepared for SSR, teachers should require the student to obtain a textbook or an extra book the teacher has available.

Introducing SSR to Students

Students should be told how SSR will be carried out and why they're doing it. Emphasize that SSR is supposed to be a pleasurable activity. Tell them that they won't be graded or asked comprehension questions over what they read.

How Parents Can Help

- Help your child to select a novel or other book to read during the SSR period.
- Ask your child each evening to summarize and discuss what they read during that day's SSR period.
- Consider setting aside SSR time at home where televisions are turned off and the whole family reads.