
Promoting Interest in Reading Culture: Reaching One Reader at a Time among High School Students

Khristian Ross Pimentel
Antipolo National High School

Abstract

The national concern on the reading problem of students presses the urgency to come up with research on reading interest. This research was conducted to identify the impact of promoting reading interest among high school students. Specifically, it aims to answer the following questions: (1) What are the effective reading activities for students? (2) What is the impact of promoting reading interest among students? (3) How does encouragement influence readers? (4) What are the 21st century skills developed in reading books for pleasure? and (5) What are the rooms for improvement for existing reading programs? Results revealed that the effective reading activities for students at Antipolo National High School are modernization of the library, reading centers, leisure reading, school improvement projects, book fairs and book talks, and reading outputs; the impact of promoting reading interest among students includes evaluation of materials, wow factor, book awareness, and drive for reading; encouragement to readers lead to a culture of reading, reading habits, reading buddies, and emphasis on prior knowledge; the 21st Century Skills that were developed in reading books for pleasure are creative thinking skills, critical thinking skills, decision making, collaboration, and utilizing technology; and the rooms for improvement for existing reading programs are reading materials; facilities; training; community libraries; commitment, cooperation, and support; and need for a licensed librarian.

Keywords: reading interest, reading, leisure reading, resources

Reading is one of the perennial problems that Filipino educators have been facing. Teachers and researchers, as well as curriculum planners and school admin-

istrators, have initiated projects and programs that will provide solutions to these problems. One of the ways to address reading problems is through research. Hence, various studies have already been conducted. The success of every action research may be observed in its impact. The potential of research to ignite change in educational practices has been one of the important goals of researchers. The need to make a dent in education is vital in looking for answers to questions and solutions to problems through research.

Inspired by the Republic Act 10556 Section 2 which states “The State recognizes and supports endeavors that promote reading and literacy,” Pimentel and Lacerna (2017) conducted an action research that determined whether classroom practice influences students’ reading for pleasure. The study aimed to address the problem of declining reading habits of students due to technology consumption and lack of reading resources. Records on library visits, Phi-HRI results, focus group discussion notes, and Knowledge Circle meetings showed data that reading interest of students was declining. To address the need for reading materials, one of the teacher-researchers started The Coco Books Project in 2016, a reading program that provided students books to read and campaigned the perks of reading books. Different books were placed in a box labeled “Coco Books.” Data were gathered through questionnaires to students. Results revealed that reading enhances the way students think as well as developed inclination towards pleasure reading; reading evokes positive feelings and creates opportunity for reflection of personal experiences, and students prefer contemporary fiction about life experiences. These findings and their recommendations were presented in the Division Research Festival in August 2017. Pimentel and Lacerna (2017) shared the innovation to the teachers in the English Department of Antipolo National High School in a Chalk Talk in November 2017. Some teachers started similar projects. In the same year, the school librarians intensified the promotion of reading by holding a book fair and accumulated more reading materials for the students. In 2018, the accumulated books that were intended for elementary-age students were shared in two public elementary schools as a form of community service. Moreover, the English Department reopened a reading center to serve a venue for reading enhancement and enrichment. Many other projects were also born. Hence, the impact of the action research of Pimentel and Lacerna (2018) has been evident.

The Coco Books Project has continued to operate for years now. The research proponent has refined his integration of reading interest in his lessons since the introduction of The Coco Books Project. Other reading activities were introduced such as book products, book reflections, testimonials, journal writing, and

online publishing. The concern of the research proponent to examine the impact of promoting reading interest in the classrooms became the inspiration to come up with another research on reading interest, but this time this research intends to probe on a macro level.

Although the impact of The Coco Books Project has been proven and replicated, the potential of bringing it to the macrolevel may create a greater impact to more readers and educators. Also, this may provide an opportunity to examine how the current practice in promoting reading interest affect students and how this practice may inspire more educators in the field. Promoting reading interest has been common among elementary schools; only few secondary schools focus on this area. Usually, secondary schools focus on reading intervention and creation of reading materials. The affective aspect of promoting reading interest somehow remain at the back seat, and that is what this research would like to explore more. To truly ensure that every student is a reader and will continue to read for life, intentional efforts to promote reading interest should be enforced. Although research on reading interventions cater to the pressing needs on low reading profiles of readers, the focus on reading interest as it dwells on the affective domain of learning may also address the same concerns that educators have among struggling readers. When students read, it may give them several benefits. For instance, Sullivan and Brown (2015) stressed that reading is related with progress in vocabulary and Math. This is one among the many studies that confirm that reading for pleasure actually affect a child.

The Department of Education initiated a project in 2015 that aimed to promote the department's aim of making Filipino learners a generation of leaders via DepEd Memo No. 145 s. of 2015 with the theme "*Nasa pagbasa ang pagasa.*" As a result, schools and divisions spearheaded national reading month celebration that showcased love for reading. However, the Philippines' ranked last in reading among 79 countries and economies in the 2018 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). Specifically, 15-year-old Filipino students who took the 2018 Pisa, administered by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), had an average score of 340 on the reading portion of the test. The score was well below the OECD average of 487 points. Furthermore, it is even more worrying that, less than one-fifth of Filipino students achieved a Level 2 score, which is the minimum proficiency level. (Jaucian, 2020).

Through DepEd Memorandum No. 173 s. of 2019 (Hamon: Bawat Bata Bumabasa), the Department of Education urged all offices at the Central, Regional

and Schools Division Offices as well as in school levels to respond to the 3Bs initiatives to intensify “their advocacy for reading,” pledge “their commitment to make every learner a reader at his or her grade level,” and align “their priorities towards the promotion of culture of reading as a key step in closing achievement gaps.” These efforts are due to existing struggling learners in literacy and numeracy (Malipot, 2019). One way to promote literacy and numeracy is through an active reading program that promotes love for reading in the school and in the community. Senior (2005) argues that “By the time they reach secondary school most of our students will have managed to go through the process and be at least competent readers.”

Traditionally, a school has its own library. However, Huysmans and Kleijnen (2013) argued that a school library in itself is not sufficient to promote book reading in leisure time. The role of a reading area, facilitating both teachers and learners might have to be strengthened. For all children, the amount of time spent reading in classrooms consistently accelerates their growth in reading skills (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). Thus, students should be given the choice in selecting the book that is right for them. Clark and Phythian-Sence (2008) suggested that when children have the freedom to choose from a wide selection of books that interest them, it can have a positive impact on their attitude towards reading. In addition, Lockwood (2012) argued that having a range of reading material influences the frequency on how often children chose to read for pleasure.

Senior (2005) emphasized that *“There are more students who can read than students who actually read. Students need to read to become good readers. Schools should be seen as a place which values reading and welcomes readers to the English classrooms.”* Hence, students need to be exposed to different reading opportunities. Bridges (2014) stressed that *“Independent reading, which is reading for enjoyment—is a way for students to improve their skills and become fluent and proficient readers.”* Readers will develop the interests, willingness, and abilities to dive and swim in more challenging literary currents if they have first learned the pleasures of the swim in waters and are meaningful, safe, and engaging for them. Readers will develop the interest and willingness to read challenging literary materials if they find them pleasurable, meaningful and engaging.

Additionally, the home should also play an active role in cultivating reading enjoyment. Stipek and Seal (2001) emphasized that “Reading at home can boost children’s competencies in reading.”

This literature review accounted that there are various benefits of promoting reading interest and reading for pleasure in schools and in the classrooms. However, finding its relevance and effectiveness in local setting needs more probing. Thus, this research aims to address this gap.

Research Questions

Teachers may be challenged to innovate and walk an extra mile in promoting reading interest in the classrooms. School administrators may envision a program that will promote a school-wide culture of reading. Students may be the ultimate recipient of reading programs and activities in school. Hence, the present research aims to answer the following:

1. What are the effective reading activities for students as reported by teachers and school staff?
2. What is the impact of promoting reading interest among students as perceived by the teachers and school staff?
3. How does encouragement influence readers?
4. What are the 21st century skills that are developed in reading books for pleasure?
5. What are the rooms for improvement for existing reading programs?

Method

Research Design

This research used qualitative design, which is a type of research that investigates the quality of relationships, activities, situations, or materials (Frankel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). The researcher intends to gather qualitative data to gain deeper understanding on reading interest, its impact on the readers' reading habits, and the need to promote it in the classrooms.

Participants

The participants in this research were purposively selected based on their potential in providing the data needed for the research (Fraenkel et al., 2012). The researcher purposively selected the following school personnel as participants in this research: the school principal, English Department Chairman, a master teacher in Filipino, GPTA president, 2 school librarians, 1 English teacher, 1 reading center in English adviser, and 2 Filipino teachers (N=10). The respondents were purposive-

ly selected because their position in the school made them fit to provide the needed data for the study. The researcher purposively selected students from two classes from 2 school years at Antipolo National High School.

Instrument

The researcher used a research-made interview schedule for teachers. A research-made interview questionnaire was crafted; the questions are anchored to answer the research problem. To identify the effective reading activities for students, the researcher asked the following questions: "How will you describe reading before you came into the library/reading center?" "What has been done?" and "Where did you get your resources?" To determine the impact of promoting reading interest among the students, the researcher asked the following questions: "What is reading interest?" "How do you promote reading interest?" "What do you think is the impact of promoting reading interest among students?" and "How important is reading interest in the child's reading development?" To identify if encouragement influence readers, the researcher asked the following questions, "Do you encourage readers to read? How?" "Is it important to encourage readers to read?" and "How do you think encouragement influence readers?" The researcher also asked what 21st century and reading skills are developed. To determine the rooms for improvement for existing reading programs, the researcher also asked, "What needs to be done?" "What resources are needed?" and "What are the common problems or obstacles in your reading program?" The researcher used these questions in a focus group discussion (FGD) composed of the school personnel who were working hands-on to the reading programs of the school. The FGD aimed to gather data through a pool of professionals and experts about their insights and experiences in promoting reading in the school.

Meanwhile, the researcher used the students' outputs (book reflections, journals, reading improvement essay, and online published articles) to check the teacher-led projects on reading. Only examples of students' work were used as a data source to provide a feel for students' performances and their change over time. Students were also given a questionnaire that sought their reading preferences and insights. The survey includes the following questions: (1) Describe your reading habit for this school year: How is it different from previous years? (2) What factors influence your reading habit this year? Explain each factor. (3) What reading-related activities did you learn most this year? Narrate your experience. (4) What are the benefits of your reading habits? Explain each benefit. (5) What books did you like best? Why did enjoy reading it? and (6) Will you still read books even after this school year? Why or why not?

Data Collection

First, permission to conduct research and gather data was sought to proper authorities. Second, the instruments were prepared and underwent content validation. The researcher asked an admin who has a master's degree on English Language Teaching to perform content validation; that is, to check if the contents of the instruments could provide the needed data to answer the research questions. Third, the researcher informed the respondents and scheduled a date for interview and focus group discussion. Fourth, the researcher held interviews and a focus group discussion.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, the researcher encoded the data and organized them depending on the common themes using thematic analysis. Specifically, the researcher read the encoded qualitative data twice. After reading, the researcher highlighted the keywords that were recurring on the transcript. From the keywords, the researcher labeled them with emerging themes.

Results

This section aims to present the answers to the following questions: (1) What are the effective reading activities for students?; (2) What is the impact of promoting reading interest among students?; (3) How does encouragement influence readers?; (4) What are the 21st century skills that are developed in reading books for pleasure?; and (5) What are the rooms for improvement for existing reading programs?

Effective Reading Activities for Students

The effective reading activities for students at Antipolo National High School are modernization of the library, reading centers, leisure reading, school improvement projects, book fairs and book talks, and reading outputs.

Modernization of the Library. Since their designation in 2016, the two librarians, who were English teachers initiated the rehabilitation and modernization of the school library. *"It was a disaster. The library is not that powerful,"* disclosed by one of the librarians when they came in the library. The librarians shared that students just went to the library because of teacher involvement. For example, stu-

dents needed to answer assignments, but those students who really went to library just because they were interested were more or less 10 percent.

A participant stated that *“We detect the main problem why very few students are visiting the library. Why only teachers are visiting the library. We searched the root causes. We renovated the library to make it appealing. We identified the books that they like. We asked the help of private companies to get books that are interesting to them. Probably, we are forcing them to read but they don’t have interest at all. We asked for different companies and agencies to share their best practices. We have TIP, National Book Development Board, National Children and Young Learners Reading,”*

Reading Centers. Reading centers are not new in Antipolo National High School, but in 2015, the English Reading Center was closed due to lack of classrooms. It was only in 2018 during the term of a new English Department chairman when a new reading center was opened. It all started when the English Department was granted a small vacant room in Ynares Building. Grade 7 teachers refurbished the room and placed some pre-procured children’s books. One English teacher was designated to run the center.

“In its first school year, it was just a trial in Grade 8. All the activities that we did last year, we are implementing them this year. Now teachers are conducting reading sessions. In Grade 7 and 8. However, Grade 10 have their own venues. The most number of frustration readers are in Grade 7 and 8. Before reading center, the teachers have their own remediation. When the reading center came back, we started to have a venue and schedule for reading remediation. Instead of conducting these activities along hallways and stairwells, teachers now can reserve venues.”

The reading center had a humble beginning. *“During first year, there are really no resources. We solicit mostly from friends. I even used personal money. Later on, agencies come to provide support like PsiCom and Books for a Cause.”*

Aside from a reading center in English, the Filipino Department also opened a reading center in Filipino.

Leisure Reading. To promote leisure reading, the researcher-proponent introduced The Coco Books Project in 2016. The project came to life to give opportunities to a small community of readers to find leisure in leafing the pages and lose

themselves in the process. It aimed to intensify their love for reading that in doing so, they will become readers for life. Various books were placed in a box labeled “Coco Books.” Any student who wished to borrow a book should fill out the borrower’s card and log sheet and pass it to any of the five students in charge. Then the book was easy-to-go with them. After two weeks, they should return the book to give chance to others. Those who would be able to finish a book were encouraged to share their thoughts and experiences in reading a book to inspire other readers. No fees, chargers, penalties, and the likes in this project. It’s all for the love of reading.

School Improvement Projects. Each department or subject has at least one school improvement project. For Filipino Department, they previously had HAMAKA (Hayaang Makabasa at Makasulat). This project aimed to provide reading intervention activities so that students who were left behind could catch up in their reading levels.

One of the teachers expressed, *“Kasi mahina o mababa ‘yung foundation nila. Hindi masyadong nadedevelop. Sa elementary, 3 shifts sila. Mas maikli ang contact time ng teacher sa bata. Kaya hindi sila natutukan.”*

Currently, the Filipino Department is conducting Project HALINA (*Hayaang Linangin ang Napag-aralan*). This just elevated the previous project and aimed to assist students to catch up with their lessons.

Although there is a project name, one of the Filipino teachers revealed, *“Actually, wala naman talagang ano yun kanya-kanya naman kami ng gamit. Ang mas maganda kasi may plano yan. Parang halimbawa ikaw ang nag-assess sa bata na yon. Ikaw din ang magreremedial. Naalalal ko kasi si Sir Andrade noon. Nagparemedial sa mga bata. Siya talaga ang nagtuturo ngayon. Parang elementary ang approach niya. Mas maganda kung meron tayong isang material na gagamitin.”*

Book Fairs and Book Talks. The participants of this research, including the researcher proponent, spearheaded various reading programs such as book fairs and book talks. In book fairs, the librarians and reading center adviser invited publishers to set up books for sale for students at a cheaper price. They also set up booths for students to enjoy some perks of reading. The researcher-proponent held book talks. He invited writers and educators to share their passion in reading. These activities were participated by most students in the school.

Reading Outputs. The researcher-proponent gave various reading enrichment activities. As students borrowed books by their own choice, they were asked to write one to two book reflections per quarter. This activity aimed to develop their writing and thinking skills, as well as their appreciation of literature and reading. Students were also asked to write a weekly journal where they can share their insights about their experiences and the things that they read. At the end of the school year, the students were urged to write a reading improvement inventory essay where students were given a chance to reflect how their reading has improved. Also, the students were instructed to create a Wordpress account, a free website for blogging, and post their essays in their accounts with reading tags so other readers will be able to see their work, encourage them to read as well, and continue to passion in reading.

Results show that facilities and program play a significant role in promoting reading interest of students. Facilities, such as reading centers and library, provide an avenue for readers to be exposed with different reading materials. On the other hand, intentional programs give readers opportunities to explore reading and get a chance to be exposed on the perks of reading for pleasure.

The effective reading activities for students at Antipolo National High School are modernization of the library, reading centers, leisure reading, school improvement projects, book fairs and book talks, and reading outputs. It reinforces what Senior (2005) is pointing out that schools should make an effort to send a message to learners that it is a place where all types of readers are welcome. The findings also show that aside from intervention activities, assessment, and teaching strategies, programs outside the classroom may serve as a solution to reading problems that schools and students are facing at the moment. When implemented properly, these programs may save one reader at a time.

Impact of Promoting Reading Interest among Students

The impact of promoting reading interest among students includes evaluation of materials, wow factor, book awareness, and driver for reading.

Evaluation of Materials. The reading programs urged teachers and librarians to evaluate reading materials that were used for classroom discussion and leisure reading. According to a participant *"Students are not really interested in reading. That's why teachers nowadays have difficulties in engaging them. You have to find reading materials that they are interested to read. The problem is we are providing reading materials that they are not interested to read."* This participant

insisted that the review of current materials was needed to make sure that the books that they provide the student are interesting.

“Wow” Factor. One of the Filipino teachers stressed that the books that students read should have a wow factor or an impact that is strong enough to capture and sustain students’ interest. The participant expressed that, *“Kung ano ang gusto ng bata ang dapat ipabasa. Kung ano ang interest nila in reading. Baka kasi kung ano-ano na lang ang binabasa nila hindi naman pala sila interesado,”* stated by the other participant.

In addition, another participant asserted, *“As librarians, we are accumulating books that are of their interest. Those are the books that will let a reader say ‘wow.’ That’s why we got fiction books. Then we accumulated visual books and picture books. They also like books like Guinness Book of World Records, Readers’ Digest, almanacs. Actually, purchasing these kinds of books stopped in 2009, so probably that’s one factor why interest in reading dropped.”* This participant further emphasized that there are certain books that attract students’ interest.

Book Awareness. In connection to getting interested with books, students become aware with particular books already. One of the librarians mentioned, *“When Students became more aware of existing books, we have increased the number of visitors. Hence, they will be aware of the library services.”*

Drive for Reading. The drive to continue to read or read more is also one of the benefits of promoting interest. *“That’s very important. When the interest of a child sparked, the rest will follow. If you don’t know what you are doing, you don’t have time and energy to do it. If you want what you are doing, it will become your habit and routine. Those difficult stuff becomes easier. It really starts with the interest of the students,”* of the librarians shared.

The qualitative data highlight the relevance of evaluating the reading materials that learners read. It is important that readers consume reading materials that are appropriate to their reading level, as well as it has the ability to capture readers’ interest. In that case, a reading material needs to be compelling for readers so that they will read it and finish it. Making a reader read a book is one thing; making him sustain his reading is another. The efforts to let readers read should not stop from introducing interesting books to readers, but continue to make sure that readers read another book or more.

Although the data presented in this research does not quantify how much impact does promoting reading interest have among students, it confirms qualitatively how this effort creates impact. Hence, it is suggested that teachers and other school personnel, together with community and parent involvement, look for more ways on how to dig deeper and make this project more accessible to more, if not all, learners.

Influence of Encouragement to Readers

Based on the interviews and focus group discussions, encouragement to readers lead to a culture of reading, reading habits, reading buddies, and emphasis on prior knowledge.

Culture of Reading. Encouraging readers gradually promotes a culture of reading. One of the participants reported that, *“Teachers and adults are great influencers. When we teachers are discussing, and we share our readings to them, they jot down notes. Then right after that, you will just notice that they are already reading the same book that you are reading. Also in the house, there is also an impact when parents are simply reading in front of their children. When a child sees his father reading a newspaper, and he is into it. They will be inspired to read as well. That’s a good trigger. Then when it is brought to school, it will also influence others, too. We have AP teachers who love readers. Like in ordinary conversations, they share what they are reading and I believe that they are really sharing it to their students.”*

Reading Habits. Reading habits were formed among students after they were encouraged to read. Below are some responses when asked about how students improved during the school year when they were encouraged to read books.

“This year, my reading habit is very different compared in previous years. Actually, I didn’t read books in previous years. I read books, but I didn’t finish any books that I’ve read before. This year, I read books more often since I started appreciating books and read more books. I already read some books unlike in the previous years I didn’t even finish one book.”

“My reading habit this year is very different unlike last year. This year, I learned to read as much as I have my time, long enough to finish several chapters or even a whole book. Unlike last year, I only read when I want to and kill boredom.”

"My reading habit became better compared to the previous years. Despite the hectic schedule, I always find time to read novels especially those genres that I like the most. I became eager each and every day to discover new things in every turn of the book that I'm reading unlike before, if I don't like the genre I will not read it at all."

"I can very well say that for this school year, my reading habit has improved a lot. I've been reading frequently. I've been using books as my escape whenever I am so stressed with the things that I'm doing. It's motivating really, refreshing. Reading takes me in a world where I've never been before. For the past few years, whenever I'm so stressed, I avoid reading. It only takes me up to another task and doesn't keep me from thinking so I end up getting a lot worse than before. Before, reading for me was just another heavy task, lots of words and pages, but now, I've come to a conclusion that books are where I find my comfort."

"I'm reading more this year than last year but I'm not fan of reading books. I'm still not fan of reading books because I love to do other things than reading."

The last response of a student still highlighted that the student improved his reading habit although he pointed out that reading is not his preferred activity.

Reading Buddies. Those students who become interested in reading also served as reading buddies. *"If they become active readers, we can get them as partners. We will get them to propagate more readers,"* stated by another participant. This participant added that assigned students by category.

Emphasis on Prior Knowledge. One of the Filipino teachers noted that if students would not read, they would not have answers in the discussion. She added that it is important that teachers activate students' prior knowledge before reading and that helps promote the reading interest of students. She also emphasized the importance of asking motive and motivation questions. Aside from prior knowledge, another Filipino teacher disclosed that she told students that they can travel and reach different places when they read.

The findings show that reading culture is formed when teachers encourage readers to read books. It affirms what Clark and Phythian- Sence (2008) claimed that when readers are given autonomy in choosing books to read, they tend to im-

prove their reading skills and habits. Just letting students read for the purpose of testing and assessment is different from making students read even after assessment or even after a school year. Creating independent readers is one important contribution of promoting reading culture not only in the classroom but also in the entire school, making a wide community of readers.

Results also show that a change in students' reading behavior is observable. Describing it qualitatively, rather than quantitatively, allows researchers to peer into what extent do readers improve. The stories shared by students only prove that encouraging them to read make a significant impact on their choice to read more. Also, experience and prior knowledge are important factors that need to be stressed when encouraging learners to read. These two are important to make readers enjoy what they read because they can comprehend text easier than when their prior knowledge is not activated.

21st Century Skills Developed in Reading Books for Pleasure

The 21st Century Skills that were developed in reading books for pleasure are creative thinking skills, critical thinking skills, decision making, collaboration, and utilizing technology.

Creative and Critical Thinking. One of the 21st century skills that was developed was creative thinking. The students were tasked to produce a book product of their most loved book for the school year. Some of the products include puzzle, diorama, poster, notebook, planner, etc. Book reflections molded the critical thinking of the students. The following are answers of students on how reflecting about book shaped their reading.

"The reading related activity that I learned in the course of my reading habit is how to write a book reflection. It made me think and contemplate on how the values on the book are related to the values that are important in real life."

"I enjoyed making reflection paper and critique paper. Every quarter we need to pass one but sometimes two reflection papers about the book that we had read. At first, it's hard for me to make reflection paper because I don't really know how to make reflection paper, and I'm not good in English. But now It's easy for me to make reflection paper, of course with the help of Mr. Pimentel who taught us and who gave us knowledge in making reflection paper and critique paper."

"I've developed the habit of reflecting while reading. I keep a notebook, a pen and pencil beside me. I underline the words that I find insightful. I write down my thoughts whenever I get to encounter a chapter that I find myself in. It's fun really. Knowing that you are really "in" the book, not just reading."

"My reading-related activity that I learned this year are making and thinking a realization and writing a reflection in every book that I've read. We can express and elaborate what our feeling and emotions by writing and doing a reflection because we can learn a life lessons by the happenings inside a book. Whatever genre it is, book always have a moral that was expressed and narrated."

"The reading-related activities that I had learned is to reflect from the book I finished reading. After I finished reading I spend some time to summarize the content of the book and I'll list the most insightful content of the book and next to it is I'll write some happenings in my life which I can connect it and I'll make a reflection from it."

"From reading the books that our adviser lent us, I now appreciate books more. As I read I tend to be more involved in the stories as I start to reflect and relate the lessons and stories to my own life. I found myself getting carried away just by reading and reflecting on the life lessons and challenges. I now think more carefully and start to develop a better empathy for others."

"I actually don't know what to write because I don't know what is reading-related activity so I have searched a little bit. I found out that I was able to relate myself to the characters in the book. In all honesty, I have done this multiple times and sometimes I write it in my book reflection. Also, every time I do that, I found myself becoming more sensitive on what to say or what actions I should do. In addition to this, my perspective of life becomes more positive. If those characters can overcome such hard obstacles, what makes me think that I can't overcome my petty, little problems myself?"

Decision-Making. Participant claimed that, *"When students read many materials, they will be able to weigh things better. They may balance things. They will have the right decisions in life."*

Collaboration. Students were able to collaborate with peers during school-based activities such as book fairs and book talks. They were able to work with their peers in planning and implementing the projects.

Utilizing Technology. The reading center adviser mentioned, “Because we are in the Digital Age, we also used nonprint materials. We should also adopt information that they can find online.”

The findings show that while students’ interest rise, they also develop 21st Century Skills as they read. Among those 21st century skills include creative thinking skills, critical thinking skills, decision making, collaboration, and utilizing technology.

Aside from the skills that students learn in each discipline, they are also expected to develop 21st century skills as prescribed in Kto12 curriculum. Hence, the endeavors to promote reading interest play a significant role in making this possible.

Rooms for Improvement for Existing Reading Programs

The rooms for improvement for existing reading programs are reading materials; facilities; training; community libraries; commitment, cooperation, and support; and need for a licensed librarian.

Reading materials. The primary need of the school according to all teachers and personnel are reading materials. *“We need reading materials appropriate for the students, especially to the target competencies. In that terms, we will look for materials that are appropriate to our learners,”* one of the librarians stressed. Aside from acquiring reading materials, the librarians indicated that some books should not just be one copy. She added, *“We have books that really cater the needs of the students, but we have 11,000 students, so books are not really enough even if we have one copy. What if 5,000 students like to read that book. We cannot provide all the copy. We cannot photocopy books because that is illegal.”*

“We need to acquire more updated books and books that are really the interest of the students,” the reading center adviser mentioned.

Facilities. The second primary concern of all participants is facilities. The librarians called for continuous modernization of the library. Also, they hinted the need for internet connection. A Filipino teacher mentioned that they used videos

and presentations in their classes. Hence, they recommended the installation of TV or LCD projector in the classrooms. *“Nakakapagod kasi mag-set-up ng projector. Katulad minsan, sa isang section nagamit ko siya ng maayos. Doon naman sa isang section, hindi ko na maayos. Ang problema talaga ay iyong time pa nang pages-set-up. Pero kung may TV na sa bawat classroom, mas mabilis at mas madali sana,”* a Filipino teacher explained.

Training. The reading center adviser mentioned that there is a need for training and skilled trainers are preferred.

Community Libraries. For library use, the librarians confirmed that students can loan books as long as they have their library card. However, one of the librarians stated that it is not enough. She mentioned, *“Another is to prioritize libraries. Don’t take libraries for granted. Based on research, communities that do not have library produce more illiterate citizens. Not only public schools but also communities need to join in the efforts of building a village of readers.”*

Commitment, Cooperation, and Support. To have a successful reading program, all of the participants agreed that commitment, cooperation, and support should be present. *“Our problem now are committed members who will perform their tasks. We have limited people who are interested,”* the reading center adviser stated. The participants also emphasized that teachers’ involvement must be strengthened. One of the librarians disclosed that if the librarians were too enthusiastic to level up, but the teacher would not feel the same way, any program will fail. *“We don’t have enough support especially in the department itself and other departments. Besides, this is not a problem of English teachers only, but everybody is at stake. Some people keep on complaining that we have many readers in frustrated level. It’s not only a problem of the librarians or the English teachers. It is everybody’s problem. We really want to help solve the problems, but if other teachers are not that cooperative, the task becomes even harder. It’s a good thing that our principal is very supportive.”*

The reading center adviser stated, *“At this point, the camaraderie of teachers is not that strong. Partnerships are not fully established. Probably, we are still in the planning stage.”*

Another participant mentioned, *“We need to break the culture. Oftentimes, only few are working and sometimes they are not consistent. Perhaps, some of them are asking what benefit it will give them.”*

Need for licensed librarian. The librarians revealed that there is an actual need for a licensed librarian especially for a school that has more than 11,000 students. One of them shared, *“In Grade 7, they have library visit that is indicated in the curriculum but we cannot cater the need for card catalog because only licensed librarians can do that.”* She also suggested the need to review the curriculum and contextualize library visits, especially for schools who do not have libraries.

Results show that the rooms for improvement require both physical and social factors. Promoting reading interest may not succeed if reading materials are not available or enough for all readers. Also, commitment of teachers and the entire community is required to ensure that any project or program will come to fruition.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The effective reading activities for students at Antipolo National High School are modernization of the library, reading centers, leisure reading, school improvement projects, book fairs and book talks, and reading outputs. The impact of promoting reading interest among students includes evaluation of materials, wow factor, book awareness, and drive for reading. Based on the interviews and focus group discussions, encouragement to readers lead to a culture of reading, reading habits, reading buddies, and emphasis on prior knowledge. The 21st Century Skills that were developed in reading books for pleasure are creative thinking skills, critical thinking skills, decision making, collaboration, and utilizing technology. The rooms for improvement for existing reading programs are reading materials; facilities; training; community libraries; commitment, cooperation, and support; and need for a licensed librarian.

Facilities and programs promote reading. When these two aspects are enriched, it may lead to greater results. Promoting reading interest among students have impact to teachers and students. Building reading culture and enforcing reading habits are among the significant influence of encouraging readers to read. Aside from reading interest, the 21st Century Skills of students are also developed in reading books for pleasure. Both physical and social needs are identified to be the rooms for improvement in school level.

Since facilities are a major necessity for promoting reading in schools, school administrators, together with community partners, may consider to continuously upgrade the said facilities. Teachers may also support the library and reading

centers by encouraging their own students to visit these facilities. Teachers may consider other activities as well to promote reading more and to reach out more students, especially struggling and reluctant readers. Teachers may continue to evaluate reading materials that fit students' abilities and interest. The school may consider procuring books that have wow factor. Also, there is a need to intensify the campaign in motivating students to read. Teachers may work hand-in-hand to promote a school-wide reading culture. Teachers (not only those who teach English and Filipino) should encourage students to read. Encouraging readers regardless of discipline may open the eyes of every learner that reading is necessary and worthwhile. Thus, parents may get involved by encouraging and supporting their children to read books. Aside from the school, parents may expose their children to reading by visiting public libraries or bookstores. Barangays may set up libraries even in small scale in the beginning. In that sense, students get more access to books. School administrators may train teachers on how to improve 21st century skills in reading. Particularly, they may show how to promote in their respective disciplines through reading. The entire school stakeholders should perform their roles in addressing the needs of the school in terms of reading. Since the school is considered large-scale, school administrators may consider procuring more books and building bigger facilities that will cater to all students.

References

- Bridges, L. (2014). *Open a World of Possible*. New York: Scholastic Inc.
- Clark, C. & Phythian-Sence C. (2008). Interesting choice : the (relative) importance of choice and interest in reader engagement. London : National Literacy Trust
- Cunningham, A. E. & Stanovich, K. E. (1998). What reading does for the mind. *American Educator*
- Fraenkel, J., Wallen, N., & Hyun, H. (2012). *How to design and evaluate research in education*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Huysmans F., Kleijnen E., Broekhof K., van Dalen T. (2013). The library at school: Effects on reading attitude and reading frequency. *Performance Measurement and Metrics*
- Jaucian, M. (Feb. 17, 2020). "Bicol pupils can't read." Manila: Philippine Daily Inquirer. <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1229537/70000-bicol-pupils-cant-read-deped#ixzz6EIQtjrOq>

- Lockwood, M. (2012). The Status of Literature: English teaching and the condition of literature teaching in schools. *English in Education*. Volume 46, Issue 3.
- Malipot, M. (Dec. 25, 2019). "DepEd orders schools to 'intensify' reading advocacy." Manila: Manila Bulletin. <https://news.mb.com.ph/2019/12/25/depd-orders-schools-to-intensify-reading-advocacy/>
- Quismodo, T. (Nov. 2, 2011). "DepEd hopes to rekindle interest in reading." Manila: Philippine Daily Inquirer. <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/86795/depd-hopes-to-rekindle-interest-in-reading#ixzz6EISe6t7g>
- Senior, C. (2005). *Getting the Buggers to Read*. New York: Continuum.
- Stipek, D. & Seal, K. (2001). *Motivated Minds: Raising Children to Love Learning*. New York: Henry Hold and Company, LLC.
- Sullivan, A & Brown, M. (2013). Social Inequalities in Cognitive Scores at Age 16: The Role of Reading. London: Centre for Longitudinal Studies, Web.
- Wilhelm, J. (1997). *You Gotta Be the Book: Teaching Engaged and Reflective Reading with Adolescents*. New York: Teachers College Press.