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Feasibility of Implementing Fine-Forgiveness Program in Public School District Libraries

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Feasibility of Implementing Fine-Forgiveness Program

In Public School District Libraries

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Chapter I: Introduction

Background

Maximum access to information, including books, is a priority supported by the universal

mission of public-school libraries in providing "equal and equitable access" (American Library

Association [ALA], 2018, para 1) to all students; a mission which is legally supported by the

First Amendment to the United States Constitution. Publicly funded libraries, such as public-

school libraries, must consider information access a top priority, even in the face of "economic

pressures and competition for funding" (ALA, 2018, para 2). Access to information may be

obstructed, however, by barriers such as fines assessed for late or damaged library materials

(Adams, 2010).

Studies show the immense and direct correlation between strong school library programs

and student achievement (Johnson & Donham, 2012; Krashen, Lee & McQuillan, 2012;

Krashen, 2013). In a multivariate analysis naming contributing factors to higher reading scores,

Krashen, Lee, and McQuillan (2013) find that the "library factor was by far the strongest

predictor" (p. 29). In order for students to gain the achievement boost provided by a strong

school library program, students must have access to the library and its resources.

This paper explores a barrier to access of information sometimes found in school

libraries: the practice of library fines. This first chapter highlights the context and background of

using fines in both the public and the school library. This introductory chapter will also explain

the rationale for the research study. The second chapter of this paper examines the existing

research available regarding the subjects of school library access barriers and the effectiveness of

library fines in general. The third chapter defines the characteristics of the research study which

examined the fine practices and mindsets of teacher librarians in a specific suburban school

district. Researching the fine practices and mindsets within this district created a foundation from which more feasible fine-alternative practices can be designed and put into place. Following a description of the study, the fourth chapter presents findings of the study while the fifth chapter discusses study results in relation to the research questions and application recommendations.

Context

Despite the universal information access mission, founded on the principles of the First Amendment, of publicly funded libraries, barriers exist that threaten this equal and equitable access in school libraries. Scheduling can be one such barrier, as students may be restricted from library access by limited library hours, fixed class schedules, or lack of library staff (Dickinson, Gavigan, & Pribesh, 2008). Secondly, the usability of a school library catalog can affect students' access to the library and its resources, potentially serving as a barrier. Suggested ways to avoid this catalog barrier include making the catalog available to students from home, providing book cover images in catalog listings, and allowing students to digitally place holds on resources (National Library of New Zealand, n.d., Review Access to the Library Catalogue section, para. 2). A third potential barrier to access is the practice of restricting the number of resources a student may borrow at any given time. Although borrowing restrictions are often set by librarians who fear book loss due to young students' lack of responsibility, research by Downes & Krueger (2017) shows borrowing restrictions to be an access barrier that has little correlation to library book loss. A fourth potential barrier to access, the barrier which this paper addresses, is that of library fines.

Fines have become almost inherent to library policy. Monetary charges, in the form of fines, are often assessed to patrons because of overdue or damaged materials. The requirement of payment for public library or public school library use in any form could be viewed as a direct

violation of the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights, supported by the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment, which guarantees "free, equal, and equitable access to information for all people of the community the library serves" (ALA, 2018, para 1). School library fines are theoretically viewed as a barrier to student access of information, as fines require payment for continued use and, therefore, access of information (Adams, 2010; ALA, 2018; Wood & Almeida, 2017; Woolls & Weeks, 2014).

Despite the theoretical view of fines as an access barrier, school libraries include fine assessment in program policies for a variety of reasons, often reasons of budget or citizenship. When books are returned late or damaged, library collections suffer. Students cannot access a book that has not yet been returned by a previous student and also cannot use a book that has been returned damaged. School library staff must make decisions whether to buy replacement copies of yet unreturned or damaged books to be made available to other patrons. In many cases, school library programs, which are funded by taxpayer monies, may stress a fiduciary obligation to charge the original patron for causing a wrinkle in circulation for all users. Fines are often included in school library policy as a perceived budgetary consideration and responsibility.

Another justification for including fine policies in school library practice can be found in the unique educational characteristic of school libraries. School libraries differ from public libraries in that they exist within a school, a larger educational institution, and are folded into the mission and vision of that institution. School librarians, also known as teacher librarians or media specialists, are supporting the education of students as learners, as well as library patrons. Classroom teachers incorporate lessons of responsibility and accountability into grading policies and classroom management expectations. Teacher librarians who practice fine assessment may consider the action as an embedded lesson of student responsibility and accountability. Students

who fail to return their book promptly or who return a book damaged will be held accountable, they will experience a consequence in the form of a fine that serves as a reminder not to repeat those actions and, therefore, become more responsible.

Although the justifications for including the assessment of fines in school library policy reflect a professional desire to run an effective school library program, a multitude of research (Adams, 2010; Bundy, 2012; Caywood, 1994; Dixon, 2017) finds the common use of fines not only ineffective in the areas of budget and education, but actually harmful to overall library missions. While exploring current research on the subject of library fines, Chapter 2 of this paper reveals the rationale, offered by researchers and practitioners in the field, for recommending the discontinuation, or forgiveness, of library fines.

Problem

Students who have access to a strong school library system have been shown to perform better in reading assessments, regardless of outside factors; therefore, students who encounter barriers to library access will not statistically perform as well on assessments (Krashen, Lee &McQuillen, 2012). The practice of fine assessment can be detrimental to library practice in general (Kohn, 2015). School libraries that continue to use a fine assessment practice, without implementing any type of fine forgiveness program, could be restricting access for a population of their students.

Rationale for the Study

Students could benefit from greater information access through the implementation of a fine forgiveness program. Research into current practices of a specific district is beneficial prior to designing a fine forgiveness program for that district. A descriptive non-experimental study was designed and targeted at approximately forty school library media specialists within a

specific school district. Through this study, data analysis revealed feasibility solutions, leading to a higher probability of an effective fine forgiveness implementation within this district.

Research Questions

By enforcing a fine assessment practice, without implementation of a fine forgiveness program, school library policies restrict access for a population of their students. To determine the feasibility of implementing a fine forgiveness program in school libraries of this district, the following research questions were considered while designing, conducting, and analyzing the study:

1. Are district school library media specialists willing to try a (new) fine-forgiveness program?

2. Do any variables exist which correlate to the level of willingness district school library media specialists have in trying a (new) fine-forgiveness program?

3. What are examples of fine-forgiveness programs with which district school library media specialists have previous experience?

Significance

Fine policies and implementation of fine forgiveness programs vary from school to school, even within the same school district. A mixed method study of both qualitative and quantitative data was used to investigate the current use, and willingness for future use, of fine forgiveness programming. The study provided greater understanding of obstacles to the initiation of such programming, as well as possible ways to overcome obstacles and increase the likelihood of amnesty programming, therefore creating greater student access to the library.

Definition of Terms

      Amnesty programs: An event or time frame during which students can have their library fines removed, sometimes in exchange for a money-alternative such as a library chore or canned good (Zettervall, 2012).

      Fine forgiveness: The fine on a student's account is waived or deleted at the discretion of library policy (Zettervall, 2012).

      Library fee: A monetary charge assessed to a student's library account for use of a library resource, usually for use of printer, copier, or computer. A lost or unreturned book may result in a replacement fee (Adams, 2010).

      Library fine: A monetary charge assessed to a student's library account as a consequence for an overdue or damaged library book (Caywood, 1994).

      Library Patron: Someone who supports and/or uses the services of a library. May also be referred to as "library user", "library customer", or "library member". School library patrons include students and staff within the school district (Pundsack, 2015).

      Public Library: An establishment of curated print and non-print materials, as well as, services provided for citizens of a community that is funded and regulated, at least in part, by state laws or guidelines (Gerber, 2019).

      Public School Library: A facility within a public school that provides services to students, staff, administration, and sometimes, parents, of that school community. Services include a collection of print and non-print resources which support curriculum and/or personal interest (Library Research Service, 2014).

      Replacement Fee: A monetary charge assessed to a student's library account as a consequence for an unreturned library resource (American Library Association, 2018).

Summary

Libraries share a common mission of making information accessible to the community of which they serve. School libraries share this mission of making information resources accessible to students of their school. While there are several potential obstacles to providing maximum access, this paper takes particular note of introducing the barrier effect fine assessment plays on school library accessibility. Having looked at the background and context of the use of fines in libraries, a summary of current research and a rationale for further research has been introduced.

The following chapter delves deeper into a literature review of current research addressing libraries, fines, academic achievement, and the effectivity of the relationships between them. The third chapter of this paper outlines a research study investigating the use of fines and fine forgiveness in the school libraries of a single school district, while chapters four and five report the results of the study, the relationships of the results in regards to the research questions, and recommendations for future action based on these results and relationships.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

Library fines have historically been an integral part of library, including school library, policy (Wood & Almeida, 2017). The relationship between library fines and library access, as well as the practice of fine-forgiveness programs is explored in this chapter. This chapter discusses the methods of collecting and reviewing literature regarding library fines and fine-forgiveness programs. The following section of this chapter begins this discussion by defining the selection and analysis methods used for the literature review.

Methodology

Selection of the literature review. The search for and collection of relevant print and non-print literature, published by both researchers and practitioners, on the practice of library fines and the implementation of fine-forgiveness programs was conducted through online academic databases and a web-based search engine.

The online academic search began within databases provided through St. Cloud State University including Academic OneFile, Academic Search Premier, Directory for Open Access Journals, EBSCO, ERIC, Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts, MasterFILE Premier, Google Scholar, Professional Development Collection, as well as access to interlibrary loans. An initial inquiry used the keywords *school library* and *student access*, using the Boolean operator *AND*. In skimming through search results, a theme of access barriers was found; barriers that prevented students from accessing information in the school library (American Library Association, 2018). A particular barrier that recurred often in the search results was that of library fine policies. Revising the search indicators, literature specifically on *school library* and *library fines* was collected, as well as literature on *library fine alternative*, *library amnesty*, and

library fine forgiveness. All articles reviewed were available as full text through St. Cloud State University Library and were peer reviewed. In an effort to highlight the longevity of discrepancy between knowledge of the library fine access barrier and lack of fine forgiveness implementation, date search limiters were expanded to include articles published up to fifty years ago.

A web-based search was conducted through Google to assess the availability of literature from information media professional organizations and peer reviewed journals with the Boolean operator *AND* and keyword phrases *school library* and *library fines*, *student access* and *library fines*, *school library* and *amnesty program*.

Analysis method. Descriptive information, such as author and publication date, from article results were charted in a literature matrix (Table 2.1). Variables used in the literature review and therefore added to the matrix include information access, correlation of library fine and/or the development student responsibility, correlation of library fine use and library budget concerns, and library fine-forgiveness or amnesty programs. Results of this analysis, and how each article addresses the variables considered, is discussed in the next section.

Review of Literature

Much literature exists regarding the use of, and justification for, library fine assessment. A credible amount of literature also exists addressing library fines as a barrier to information access. This section reviews literature by focusing first on information access (and its barriers), then on two common justifications for library fines and, finally on the introduction of fine-alternative practices.

Table 2.1

Research Variables Found in Literature Review

Author(s)	Year	Variables Considered in the Study				
		Information Access	Fine/ Patron Responsibility	Fine/ Budget Concerns	Fine Forgiveness/ Amnesty Program	School Library Policy
Adams	2010	X			X	X
Bundy	2012	X	X	X		
Caywood	1994	X	X	X	X	X
Dickinson, Gavigan & Pribesh	2008	X		X		X
Dixon	2017	X	X	X	X	
Downes, Krueger, Taylor	2017	X				X
Ford	2001	X		X	X	
Griffith	1977	X	X	X		X
Johnson & Donham	2012	X	X	X		X
Kohn	2015		X	X	X	
Krashen	2013	X				X
Krashen, Lee & McQuillan	2012	X				X
Livingston	1975	X	X	X	X	X
Morrison, Blood, Thorsborne	2005		X			X
Schoenberg	2016	X	X	X	X	
Wood & Almeida	2017	X	X	X	X	

Note: Matrix of literature reviewed. Adapted from *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Applications* (pg. 98), by L.R. Gay, G.E. Mills & P. Airasian, 2012, Boston: Pearson.

Information access (and barriers to access). The American Library Association (2018) correlates the rights guaranteed by the United States First Amendment to the right all persons have "to receive the constitutionally protected expression of others" (para 1). Libraries provide access for people to receive these expressions, in the form of print and non-print materials and services. School libraries provide access to print and non-print information and services to students of the school. Numerous studies prove an additional benefit of student access to a school library as a positive relationship to student academic achievement (Johnson & Donham, 2012;

Krashen, 2013; Krashen, Lee & McQuillan, 2012). Access to information through school libraries is important for students. Sometimes, however, there are barriers, such as library fines, to that access of information.

The American Library Association (2018) warns that library fine policies can be potential barriers to information access for some patrons (Principles Governing Fines, Fees, and User Charges section). The threat of fines may make people in lower socioeconomic statuses, or with limited abilities to get to a library regularly, simply avoid using library materials (Bundy, 2012). Parents may restrict their children, the very population that school libraries serve, from borrowing library resources due to the threat of fines (Caywood, 1994). Caywood notes that restrictions of library privileges, instead of fines, forbid patrons from borrowing additional materials, literally barring access to information. Even patrons who are financially able to pay a library fine may avoid returning an overdue book in an effort to avoid the sometimes unpleasant, or even embarrassing, interaction with library staff regarding the fine (Kohn, 2015).

Despite the potentiality as a barrier to library's important mission of providing information access, the practice of using library fines remains common in both public and school libraries. The next section delves into justifications for the use of library fines.

Two common justifications for library fine use. Fines have long been an intrinsic part of library policy, "even though a non-negligible proportion of librarians and patrons have long considered fines at best an unpleasant hassle and at worst a serious barrier to resources…" (Dixon, 2017, para 1). More than forty years ago, Griffith (1977) and Livingston (1975) recognized that some librarians continued to assess fines due both to intentional collection maintenance efforts and to simple habitual practice. Both researchers recommended, forty years ago, the abolishment of fine practice or at least the implementation of fine-forgiveness programs.

These recommendations have failed to be universally adopted, however, and researchers (Caywood, 1994, Kohn, 2015) continue to explore the obstacles to implementation of fine-forgiveness programs and the justifications for the persistent practice of library fine assessment. Two frequently reported reasons for a fine policy are discussed in this section; the first being to teach patrons/students responsibility (Bundy, 2012; Caywood, 1994; Dixon, 2017) and the second being to address library budgetary concerns (Kohn, 2015; Livingston, 1975; Woods & Almeida, 2017).

Teaching student responsibility. Caywood (1994) sums up the main perspectives of library mission as being either regulatory or service oriented. Caywood qualifies school librarians who use fines "to teach children responsibility" (p. 44) as library professionals with a regulatory orientation. These school librarians fear that students will not be responsible with borrowed books unless there is a stated consequence, such as a fine, for neglecting responsibility (Kohn, 2015). In a study of school librarians, Johnson and Donham (2012) found that the most restrictive borrowing policies were found in schools with the most experience of students losing books. Although this is an interesting statistic, Johnson and Donham's study was, unfortunately, unable to determine whether the restrictive policies had direct correlation, positive or negative, to the proportion of lost books. Fines are often "instituted to motivate borrowers to return materials…" (Caywood, 1994, p. 44), a method of regulating the circulation of library materials. A service-oriented school librarian will remember that "not every child or young adult has a stable home or a good example of adult responsibility in their life" (Adams, 2010) and will seek flexible ways to provide students agency in maintaining library access. As demonstrated in the next paragraph, research shows that fine-alternative methods may be more effective in motivating patrons, particularly students, to be responsible with library materials.

In their article, "If we charge them, will they come?", Wood and Almeida (2017) examine the practice of a small academic library in which fines are not assessed for overdue resources. While the theory of attaching a fine to an overdue resource is meant to help expedite the return of said item, Wood and Almeida concluded that, in this particular library, the opposite was true. According to Wood and Almeida, students who discovered they would not be charged for tardiness in returning their books were universally more apt to return books on time, due to a sense of intrinsic social obligation instead of an extrinsic threat of consequence. Wood and Almeida provide examples of direct correlation between fine-free programming, or what they label as "service-forward practices" (p. 159) and the self-regulating timely return of library materials by students. By eliminating the punitive climate of fine assessment, the library creates instead, a culture of kindness and reciprocity, which leads to increased student responsibility, patronage and access.

In a study observing the number of book circulations before and after a lending policy revision, Downes, Krueger, and Taylor (2017) found an increase in both overall circulations and in lost books. Having discovered a unique situation of a school about to change borrowing limits, Downes, Krueger, and Taylor were able to gather statistics from two years of the former, more restrictive policy and then also statistics from two years of the revised, more generous borrowing policy. While a librarian's fear of lost books from the collection is often what keeps strict borrowing limits in place, the results of Downes, Krueger, and Taylor's study show a significantly lower increase in lost books (55%) than in overall circulations (80%). The conclusion from this study, which took place in a K-5 elementary school, was that loosening restrictions on borrowing limits did not directly correlate to an increase in lost or damaged books. In fact, after the first year of transition, total circulations continued to increase while total

lost books dropped back to pre-revision numbers. Easing restrictions on borrowing limits did not result in proportionally more lost books.

Loosening library fine policies, like loosening circulation policies, does not inherently result in more lost books. Dixon (2017) discusses a library in Vermont that, after abolishing their fine policy, reported seeing not only an increase in the timely return of books but also an increase of patron satisfaction in the more welcoming climate. The San Francisco Public Library (2018) announced the return of nearly 700,000 library items returned as result of a single fine forgiveness event; books that patrons hadn't returned earlier for fear of the fine. Knowing they would not be charged with a fine, patrons felt more comfortable coming back to the library, returning their books, and accessing other library materials.

Some patrons may view a fine as an optional cost, instead of the consequence, of keeping a book longer. Patrons who can afford the fine may simply pay for the convenience of keeping the book longer (Bundy, 2012). This phenomenon exacerbates the inequity of access due to a patron's ability, or inability, to satisfy a library fine.

Library fines do not effectively achieve the goal of teaching responsibility. Although library fines were originally implemented to ensure patron responsibility, current research by Dixon (2017) and by Bundy (2012) show that such practice may not be the most effective strategy. A second justification used for library fines is discussed in the following section.

Library budgetary concerns. A second reason used for the implementation of fines is that of library budgeting concerns. Libraries are not in the business of giving books away for free. When books are not returned or are returned damaged, they are not available to be borrowed by another patron. The library must spend money to repair the books or to purchase replacement copies. Many libraries distinguish a difference between a fee assessment for the replacement of

lost books and a fine charged for overdue or damaged books (Ford, 2001; Kohn, 2015:

Livingston, 1975). Adams points out that "school library professionals have a fiduciary

responsibility to ensure that the users of the collection return or pay for the replacement of

library resources damaged or lost" (2010, p. 48). Wood and Almeida (2017) caution that the

desire to subsidize increasingly reduced budgets with library fines should be heavily considered

against simultaneous struggle of libraries to maintain substantive library patronage. While

requiring a replacement fee for lost books may be necessary, continuing the use of fines for

overdue books is simply not good for public relations.

Fines are assessed in an effort to ensure smooth circulation and retention of library

resources (Livingston, 1975). In actuality, however, fines cost time and money to collect

(Caywood, 1994). Assessing, communicating, and collecting library fines also has a negative

cost to library/patron relations, often resulting in lowered usage and, therefore, reduced budgets

(Ford, 2001; Wood & Almeida, 2017). Fines are often communicated to patrons by library staff

at the point of check-out. Dixon (2017) points out that this interaction is stressful both for

patrons and for library staff. Some libraries even include dollars in their budget for training to

help staff navigate these oft negative fine communications. In a school library, the interaction of

fine communication can strain relations between the teacher librarian and student patrons,

patrons who are financially dependent upon their guardians. Dixon concludes that the costs of

imposing library fines are often found to outweigh the infractions they were meant to deter.

Considering first that the universal mission of libraries is to provide information access to

all (ALA, 2018), secondly that fines initiated to teach responsibility can be ineffective

(Caywood, 1994; Johnson & Donham, 2012), and thirdly that fines assessed to replenish budgets

often cost more than they recoup, the next section explores fine-forgiveness options (Dixon,

2017; Ford, 2001; Wood & Almeida, 2017).

   Fine-forgiveness programs. While fines may remain a necessary part of business in

many libraries, fine-forgiveness programs can be an effective strategy in both motivating

responsibility and in recouping library materials (Adams, 2010; Dixon, 2017). When the San

Jose Public Library, the San Francisco Public Library, and the Chicago Public Library offered

fine amnesty, or fine forgiveness, programs lasting one to two weeks, they each experienced

better than expected results in number of books returned (Dixon, 2017; San Francisco Public

Library, 2018; Schoenberg, 2016). During these amnesty programs, accumulated fines could be

removed from patron accounts when overdue library materials were returned within the

advertised time frame. Library collection materials are returned, not only making the materials

accessible to other patrons but also allowing the library to retain budget for new materials instead

of replacement copies. Additionally, positive public relationships are not only maintained but

enhanced by the goodwill of an amnesty program (Dixon, 2017).

   While fine amnesty programs can also be effective in school libraries, Adams (2010)

suggests other potential strategies that simultaneously teach students responsibility and sustain

equal and equitable access to all patrons. Strategies such as allowing students to purchase a

replacement book through an outside book source, at a lower cost than the library's vendor, will

maintain the book's accessibility to other patrons while providing flexibility and understanding

of student/family financial resources. Allowing students to complete small library chores as a

non-monetary fine payment is another strategy to teach responsibility while being conscious of

varied student/family economic statuses (Adams, 2010). Many libraries, including the Ramsey

County Library (2015), invite students to read off their fines, offering amnesty compensation for

specified time intervals, such as a dollar removed from accumulated fines for every 15 minutes of reading. This strategy demonstrates another option that emphasizes borrowing responsibilities while also recognizing the financial limitations of students/families. Having the option and agency to read off a fine promotes responsibility and creates greater library access for a student patron.

Ford (2001) offers yet another unique fine forgiveness option. Detailing the planning, implementing, and collection of the Williamsburg Regional Libraries' Food for Fines program, Ford provides positive results of returned materials and an overall improved library/public relationship. The Food for Fines program allows patrons to bring in donations for a food drive in exchange for fine amnesty. Much like reading off a fine mentioned earlier, during the Food for Fines program, patrons can have accumulated fines cleared with a prescribed ratio of dollar/donated food. For example, every food item donated may clear a dollar from a patron account or every item may clear the entire fine from one overdue book. Benefits noted from the Food for Fines program include an increased return rate of overdue and lost books, improved staff morale, elevation of community respect, and the strengthening of a positive library public image (Ford).

Gaps in Research

Literature reviewed addresses both public library policy and school library policy. There is a noted gap, however, in articles on fine-forgiveness programs implemented specifically in school library programs. School library policy and programming can vary greatly from district to district and even from school to school within the same district. The reviewed literature provides room for analysis of fine procedures and recommended fine forgiveness programs for school libraries in general. More targeted research is needed, however, on the level of implementation

within school libraries in a specific singular school district. A study examining the level of willingness school library media specialists, within this single targeted school district, have in implementing fine forgiveness programs reveals the feasibility of actualizing such programs and provides a pathway for a district wide initiative.

Summary

The review of literature addressed in this chapter led to a deeper understanding of the background and justification of fine assessment practice in library policies. Fines are typically charged for overdue or damaged materials, while lost books are charged a fee. Two recurring goals of fine practice discovered in the literature were that of maintaining library budget and that of teaching student/patron responsibility. Further review highlighted the effectiveness of fine forgiveness programs in better accomplishing both of these goals. A description of the study of both qualitative and quantitative data collected from school library media specialists within a single large school district on their willingness to implement a fine forgiveness program is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed literature weighing the benefits and challenges of fine forgiveness programs in the library. In the effort to reveal school library practices in the researcher's district, a study was designed and executed with a final goal of gaining support for implementation of such amnesty programs. This chapter provides an explanation of methods used to design the survey study, as well as methods used to collect descriptive data from survey responses in order to answer the following research questions:

1. Are district school library media specialists willing to try a (new) fine-forgiveness program?

2. Do any variables exist which correlate to the level of willingness district school library media specialists have in trying a (new) fine-forgiveness program?

3. What are examples of fine-forgiveness programs with which district school library media specialists have previous experience?

The first two questions required examination into quantitative data percentages of media specialists' survey responses on demographic information and on willingness to implement a new fine forgiveness program. These two questions also delved into possible relationships between willingness to implement and other factors such grade level of students served, socio-economic status of students served, and the population sizes of students served. Additional factors considered include the SLMSs' familiarity of and previous experience with fine-forgiveness implementation. The third research question allowed the collection of qualitative data.

This chapter includes information on this study's research design, methods, and procedures, as well as, the pilot study and data collection. Research parameters and subject considerations are also addressed in this chapter.

Research Design

A descriptive research study, using a survey method, was conducted in the fourth week of a new school year. The population for this study was all school library media specialists in the researcher's school district. Following approval from the Institutional Review Board, the school district's Media Services department granted permission for researcher to send a cover letter (Appendix B) and a link to a Google Form survey (Appendix C) to media specialists via email. Email addresses are publicly available on the district website. The survey was designed using Google forms, a frequently used application in this district and, therefore, familiar to participants. Survey questions were designed to extract relevant information targeting each of the research questions.

Institutional Review Board

After successfully completing Institutional Review Board (IRB) training, the researcher submitted an application for IRB process, including copies of the informed consent to participate (Appendix B) and the proposed survey (Appendix C). Because the survey falls under a category of minimal risk to subjects, exemption status was approved and granted (Appendix A).

Research Methods and Procedures

This midwestern suburban public K-12 school district was purposefully selected for two reasons. The first being that it is the researcher's employment district, making results from the study professionally relevant. The second reason being that is the largest district in the state of Minnesota, with nearly 38,000 students. The district boundaries cover 172 square miles and

serves 13 municipalities in 2 metro-area counties (Anoka-Hennepin School District, n.d.). Being

such a large district provided a meaningful size of population to conduct such a survey.

Subjects for the study were every K-12 school library media specialist (SLMS) employed

by the researcher's school district. This sampling lent the greatest convenience to the researcher

as well as appropriateness as to the targeted population. The survey questionnaire (Appendix C)

and cover letter (Appendix B) were distributed via email on a Sunday evening, asking SLMSs

for voluntary participation in completing and submitting the survey within the timeframe of five

days, making a deadline of the following Friday. A reminder email was sent to all SLMSs on

Thursday, the day before the deadline. Upon the deadline date, only 22 responses had been

submitted. In an effort to increase participation, the researcher sent an additional email to all 36

district SLMSs on the Monday following the deadline, with an update on participation level, as

well as a repeated request and two-day extension for those who had not yet submitted a response.

Information about access to study results was included in the original cover letter, and also

attached to the reminder emails and extension emails. Some bias was inherent in the study, as a

familiarity exists between researcher and subjects.

Assumptions

An assumption was held that survey participants would have no reason to falsify

responses and would answer honestly. Another assumption was that subjects share a common

professional goal of being effective stewards of their respective library collections; that policies

and/or opinions are made by SLMSs with this in mind. The researcher's district hires only

licensed SLMSs, therefore the assumption was inherent that all subjects have been formally

educated and were licensed in school library programming. While one SLMS shares time

between two buildings, all other district SLMSs are in individual schools. Therefore, an

assumption was made that multiple surveys, addressing separate schools, need not have been sent. Because the researcher is a member of the professional group of subjects, the assumption was made that subjects would be willing to participate in the study, as well as would be open to further discussion of amnesty program implementation. Qualitative open-ended questions can provide subjects space to explain answers that multiple choice questions do not. The researcher made an assumption that providing such space, and therefore the inclusion of qualitative open-ended questions, would stimulate not only more accurate answers to the survey's multiple-choice questions, but also motivate discussions resulting from the study and contributing to the design of new fine forgiveness programming within the district.

Limitations

The beginning of the school year can put district SLMSs under excessively tight time constraints which may explain why some chose not to participate in the survey. Possibly significant data from these particular SLMSs is not, therefore, included in the study results, an omission that may have limited the study's final interpretation. Another limitation was the number of subjects who did choose to participate. Although the desired amount was set at 75% of the total population (27 participants), the actual degree of participation, 72%, was just slightly lower.

Delimitations

Being a K-12 SLMS, the researcher sought to find effective ways to improve K-12 school library programming. Research questions in this study focused on SLMSs methods of implementing fine-forgiveness programming within the district. Therefore, the target population for the study was defined as all district K-12 SLMSs. This population included 25 elementary (K-5), six middle school (6-8), and five high school (9-12) library teachers.

Pilot Study

In order to test the validity of survey questions, a pilot study was conducted prior to sending out the study survey. A request to participate in a pilot study was sent, via private social media message, to seven Minnesota K-12 SLMSs outside of the targeted study population. The pilot survey study was then sent via email to the five consenting SLMSs who responded to the request. Informal email discussions followed the pilot study, allowing feedback from participants on question readability, terminology clarity, friendliness of available answer options, and ease (time and effort) of survey completion.

Question readability. All respondents agreed that the questions were well written and appropriate with the exception of question #11 which read, "How willing would you be to forgive library fines of former students who complete the requirements of a fine forgiveness program at another school?" After reviewing the question, a determination was made that the question will be of better use in implementation conversations of the future. The question is not pertinent to answering the stated research questions and has, therefore, been removed from the survey.

Terminology Clarity. The pilot study responses showed that terminology was clear and appropriate. One respondent made specific comments to having actually learned from the terminology explanation and examples.

Friendliness of available answer options. No changes were suggested in regard to the available answer options for the survey questions. The levelled answer options in questions 8, 9, and 10 were determined appropriate.

Ease (time and effort) of survey completion. While one pilot study participant commented on ease of survey completion, remarking specifically the level of engagement and thought

provocation of the inclusion of open-ended questions, another participant felt the survey

seemed too long and suggested the cover letter state the exact number of questions. This

participant felt that knowing the total number of questions beforehand might eliminate the

feeling of lengthiness. A statement regarding the exact number of questions (16) was added

to the cover letter.

Participants of the pilot study did not participate in the final study, as they are not members of

the targeted district audience. Results from the pilot study aided in revising the final study,

eliminating an unclear question, and adding assumptions that were previously unrecognized.

Data Collection Procedures and Instruments

The researcher approached the district media department, gaining approval to invite

members to complete the survey questionnaire. A link to the Google Form survey, as well as, a

cover letter was then emailed to targeted participants. District SLMSs decided whether or not to

participate. Those who chose to participate clicked on the Google Form survey link and were led

through a concise series of 16 questions regarding use of fine assessment and fine-forgiveness

practices in their school library programming. The survey was kept as brief as possible to

encourage participants to complete. On the survey submission deadline, the survey submission

option was deactivated. Using Google Forms *response*s module, data was collected which

captured both individual participant responses and summaries of responses.

After printing all individual responses, the researcher created a Google Sheets

spreadsheet. The researcher then analyzed the quantitative data by comparing the level of

willingness a SLMS has in implementing a fine forgiveness program (question 10) to other data

collected from survey response. Qualitative data collected from the remaining questions

regarding support, justification, and procedural practices of fine assessment will be used for future design of a district fine forgiveness program.

Confidentiality

The survey link was emailed and accessible only to district SLMSs. Participants were able to access the survey and submit responses through a Google Form. Because of the local nature of the survey and the identifying possibilities of answers, lack of anonymity was addressed in the cover letter. The cover letter also detailed the open discussion possibilities and district programming development opportunities offered by the study data so that participants became aware of results visibility.

Validity and Reliability

Survey questions for this study were carefully crafted to result in responses that both answer the research questions regarding district implementation of amnesty programming and that promote universal understanding which is pertinent prior to programming design.

The face validity of the questionnaire was established through a pilot study of media specialists outside of the district who completed the survey and followed-up with discussion evaluating the survey's usability and effectivity. Conducting a pilot study allowed questions to be revised, ensuring higher levels of validity.

Most questions in the survey were of a quantitative, closed answer variety such as whether or not the SLMS has ever implemented a fine-forgiveness program. The answer was either 'yes' or the answer was 'no'. There were, however, questions with space for the SLMS to add open responses, providing qualitative data. Open responses may have created less reliability as SLMSs may have been more or less inclined to add details depending on amount of time available for the survey. Wherever possible, multiple choice and Likert-type scale questions were

added to provide as many predetermined responses as possible, therefore increasing the reliability of results.

Timeline

The researcher's graduate committee was formed in May 2019 with a preliminary meeting held on July 16, 2019. After approval from the committee, the researcher applied for and was granted IRB approval to proceed. Upon attaining IRB approval, a request was made to and granted by the district media department for approval to send a cover letter and survey link to all district SLMSs. The cover letter and survey link were emailed to district media specialists on September 22, with a response deadline set for September 27. An email reminder was sent on September 26, the day before the original deadline. An email announcing an extension to the deadline was sent on September 30, with the extended deadline set and maintained for October 2. On October 2, the survey was closed by deactivating the Google Form submissions option. When the survey closed, data collected from the submitted responses was analyzed. Results of the study will be shared with those participants who have requested such and with district media department personnel in the future.

Summary

While library fines may be a necessity in some school library programs, they can create barriers to student access of the library. Fine forgiveness programs may be an avenue around those barriers. In an effort to continually improve school library programming, this study sought data on library demographics/statistics and their relationship to the level of willingness district media specialists have in implementing a fine-forgiveness program. This chapter has identified a need to examine the researcher's school district for further insight into obstacles that could prevent fine forgiveness programs from effective implementation.

The following two chapters present findings from the survey, as well as, analysis and discussion of results.

Chapter IV: Results

Introduction

Having, in the first and second chapters, established the context and need for a study

regarding the feasibility of implementing a fine forgiveness program in a specific district's

school libraries, as well as having reviewed relevant available literature, Chapter Three detailed

the methodology of designing, distributing, and collecting data from a questionnaire survey

study. This chapter reveals results of that survey of SLMSs from the largest school district in

Minnesota regarding their willingness to implement a fine forgiveness program. Survey response

data can be found in Appendix D and implications of these results will be discussed in Chapter

Five.

Response Rates

The survey was sent to all 36 SLMSs in the targeted district. Of those 36, 22 responded

by the initial deadline. After a follow-up email request and submission deadline extension, four

more responses were generated, bringing the total response submissions to 26, establishing a

72% response rate. Being only slightly lower than the desired response rate of 75%, it provided

substantive data for interpretation.

Demographics

Respondents from the survey included SLMSs from 15 elementary schools, six middle

schools, and five high schools. Respondents represented schools ranging in size from less than

500 to more than 2,000 students (Figure 4.1) with percentages of student populations qualifying

for free/reduced lunch ranging between zero and eighty percent (Figure 4.2).
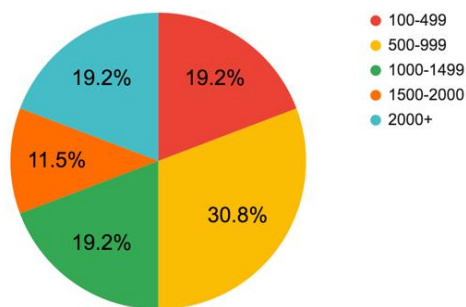
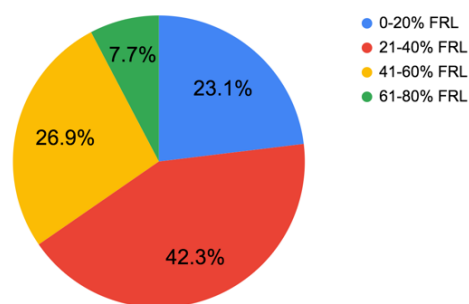*Figure 4.1.* Percent of SLMSs with each student population size

Figure 4.2. Percent of SLMSs with each percentage range of free/reduced lunch

Familiarity & Previous Experience

Sixty-nine percent of the 26 respondents said they were somewhat to very familiar with fine forgiveness programs, while 19% of the 26 said they had little to no familiarity with such programs. Nearly 12% of respondents selected a neutral response to the question (Figure 4.3). Sixty-two percent of respondents had no experience with implementing a fine forgiveness program in a library, while 38% said that they had some previous experience with fine forgiveness programs (Figure 4.4).
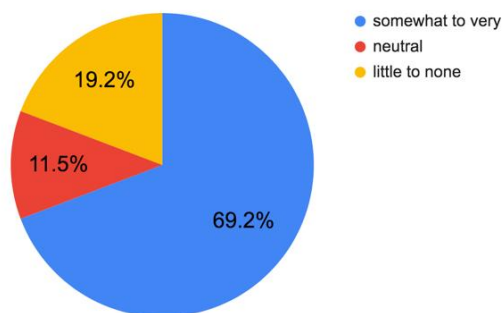
Figure 4.3. Percent of SLMSs who had familiarity with fine forgiveness programs
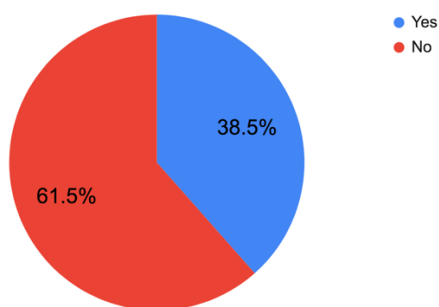
Figure 4.4. Percent of SLMSs who had previous experience with fine forgiveness programs

Willingness

Responses to the direct question of willingness to implement a fine forgiveness program revealed 65% respondents (n=17) identifying as somewhat to very willing, 31% (n=8) were neutral to the idea, and only four percent (n=1) stated little to no willingness (Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5. Percent of SLMSs' willingness to implement a fine forgiveness program

Qualitative Examples

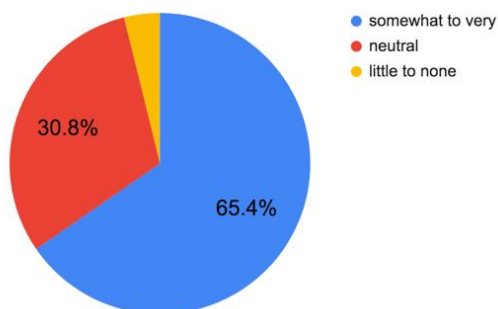   Respondents provided comments and examples in the open-ended questions of the survey. Twelve responses to these open-ended questions address the two common justifications for the inclusion of fine assessment: that of teaching student responsibility and that of budgetary obligation. Other open-ended responses included examples of fine forgiveness programs already implemented by some of the 38% of SLMSs who have previous experience with such programs. These examples include variations of reading or working down/off fines. Reasons for not having yet implemented fine forgiveness responses, provided by the other 62% of SMLSs, include lack of administrative support, complications with the textbook manager module in the library management system software, the nonpermanent nature of student patronage, and lack of knowledge, awareness or interest in such programs. This qualitative data will be used in future discussions among district media specialists when designing a fine forgiveness program.

Conclusion

      This chapter presents the results of survey research investigating the willingness of public-school media specialists to implement a fine forgiveness program in the library. Although serving students from a variety of demographics, roughly two-thirds of respondents profess a willingness to implement a fine forgiveness program. In the next chapter, analysis of the survey results will be followed by recommendations for application, future continued research and possibilities for sharing this study.

Chapter V: Conclusions

Introduction

This final chapter provides discussion regarding the results of the survey study. Conclusions drawn in this chapter are founded based on the review of literature examined in Chapter 2 and analysis of variables in both quantitative and qualitative data collected from survey results. After discussing analysis of the survey results, this chapter will suggest recommendations for application and for future continued research, as well as explore options for sharing study results.

Analysis of Survey Results

One question on this study's survey simply asked respondents whether or not they were willing to implement a fine forgiveness program. Although the responses to this question might provide a short answer to the main inquiry of this study, feasibility of implementation, variables may exist which impacted the way respondents answered that direct question of willingness. Reviewing some of the survey's other questions illuminates possible relationships between these other variables and willingness to implement a new program. Through analysis of multiple survey results, this study's original research inquiries are addressed.

Are district school library media specialists willing to try a fine forgiveness program? With nearly 65% of respondents professing willingness to implement, the answer to this question is affirmative. However, there remains roughly 35% of the respondents in the neutral or unwilling categories. It is beneficial to review further analysis of results from both demographic and experiential survey questions in order to determine a truer answer to feasibility.

Do any variables exist which correlate to the level of willingness district school library media specialists have in trying a fine forgiveness program? Analysis of the relationships

between variables, in the quantitative data collected from the survey, reveals interesting insight into how both demographic and experiential survey question results relate to a SLMS's willingness to implement fine forgiveness.

When analyzing the relationship between each respondent's self-assessment of willingness (Survey Question #10) to each same respondent's answer to demographic questions, such as the number of students served (Survey Question #2), the grade level of students served (Survey Question #1), and the socio-economic status as measured by the percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch (Survey Question #4), some patterns are detected while others are not.

Comparing SLMSs' willingness to forgive fines to grade levels of students served shows that elementary and high school SLMSs were predominantly more willing to forgive fines, with no respondents unwilling to do so. Middle school SLMSs, however, responded as predominantly neutral, with some even unwilling to try fine forgiveness. The researcher speculates that the reason may lie in the fewer number of years students spend in middle school versus years spent in elementary and high school, as well as the fact that these middle school years are sandwiched between the other two school levels. Elementary SLMSs have students for the first six years of a K-12 education. Through six years, SLMSs can get to know students more extensively, are often privy to student family situations, and are empathetic to the responsibility expectations of this age group. For all of these reasons, elementary SLMSs may be more willing to try a fine forgiveness program. High school SLMSs have students for the final four years of a K-12 education. While some high schools may limit non-academic privileges, such as social events like prom or ceremonial events like commencement, as a consequence for students' unpaid library fines, there is little else of consequence that happens once students graduate and leave the
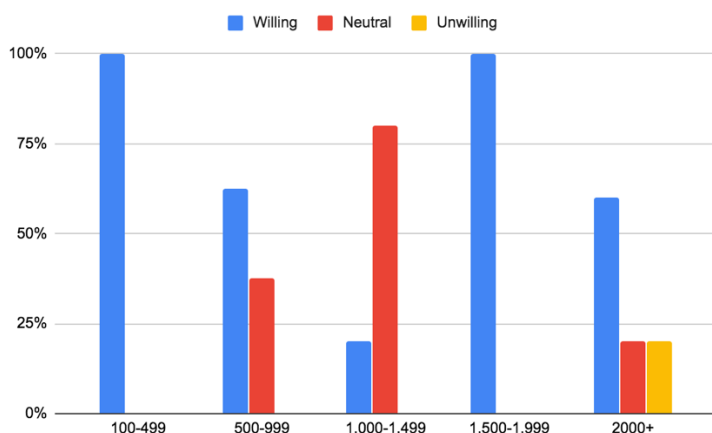
school. Implementing a fine forgiveness program may be a high school SLMS's last effort to have a student take responsibility for a library fine. Middle school SLMSs acquire students who may have racked up substantial fines in elementary school and are only in the middle school for three years. These SLMSs may be unable to become acquainted with a student's situational need for a fine forgiveness. Middle school SLMSs may also have heightened budget concerns as students are in their middle school environment for such a short time. Offering a non-monetary option seems to be least attractive to middle school SLMSs (Figure 5.1).
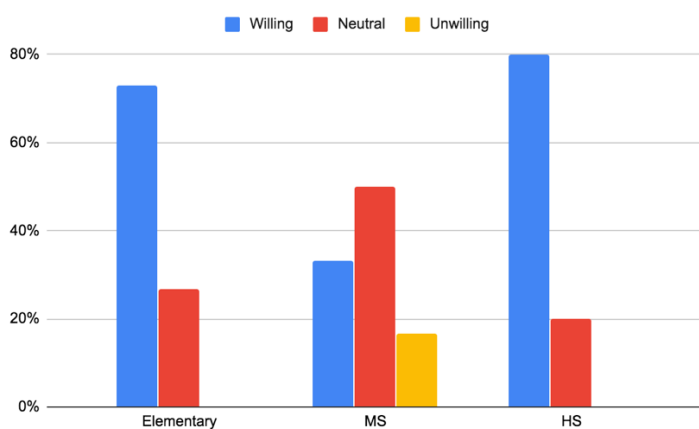

Figure 5.1. Grade level of students served and SLMSs' percent willingness to implement a fine forgiveness program

When comparing SLMSs' willingness to forgive fines to the number of students served, a relational pattern is not evident (Figure 5.2). The number of students served does not seem to affect a SLMSs willingness to implement fine forgiveness.

Figure 5.2. Number of students served by school library and SLMSs' percent willingness to implement a fine forgiveness program

Similarly, comparing SLMSs' willingness for fine forgiveness to the socio-economic status (as determined by qualification for free and reduced lunch) of students served, presents no correlational pattern in results (Figure 5.3). SLMSs from schools with high percentages of students who qualify for free/reduced lunch present results showing complete willingness to forgive fines. Explanation may lie in those SLMSs understanding of their students' inability to satisfy a monetary fine.
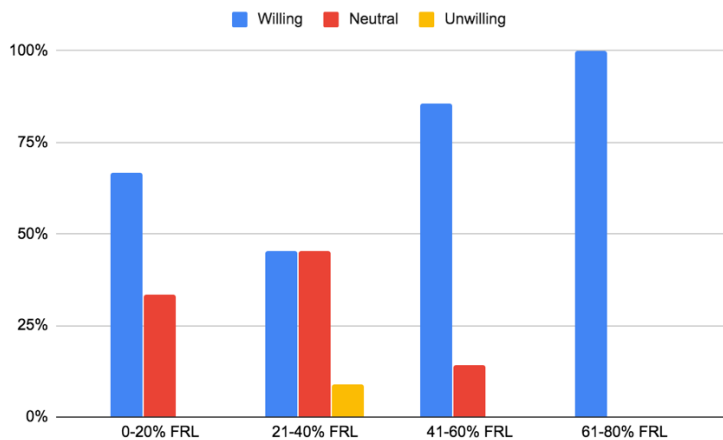
Figure 5.3. Percent of students who qualify for free/reduced lunch and SLMSs' percent willingness to implement a fine forgiveness program

Two other variables analyzed were the study participants' familiarity with and previous experience with fine forgiveness programming. Respondents who were familiar with fine forgiveness programming and also had history in implementing such programming proved highly likely (90%) to be willing to try a new implementation (Figure 5.4). As research reviewed in Chapter 2 showed, fine forgiveness programs can increase positive outcomes in teaching student responsibility, as well as goals of budgetary maintenance (Adams, 2010; Dixon, 2017). SLMSs who have implemented fine forgiveness programs and experienced these positive outcomes seem to be more willing to try fine forgiveness again.
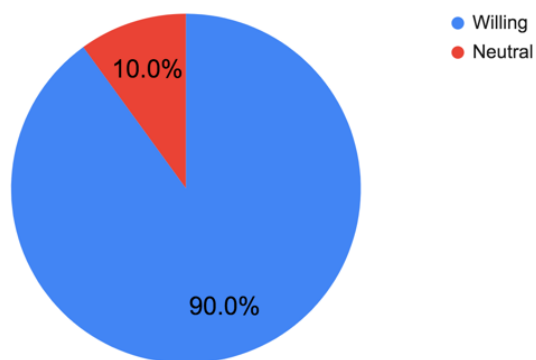
Figure 5.4. Percent of willingness of SLMSs who had familiarity with and also previous experience with fine forgiveness programs

Sixty-four percent of respondents who are familiar with fine forgiveness, yet have had no experience in implementing a program, were willing to try implementation (Figure 5.5). This is lower than the willingness of SLMSs who had familiarity as well as experience (64% compared to 90%). Analysis of responses from SLMSs who had little to no familiarity, as well as no experience with fine forgiveness programs shows that the level of willingness is only twenty percent (Figure 5.6). SLMSs who were not familiar with such programming and who, therefore had no experience with fine forgiveness, were unsure of their willingness to implement, therefore

making up the 80% neutral response. The more familiarity and experience SLMSs have with fine

forgiveness programs, the more willing they are to implement a new fine forgiveness program.

The variables of familiarity and experience have a clearly favorable relationship to a SMLS's

willingness to implement a fine forgiveness program.
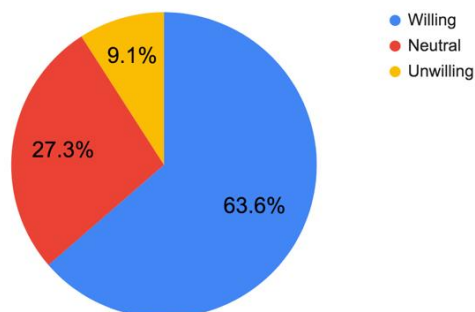
Figure 5.5: Percent of willingness of SLMSs who had familiarity with but no experience with

fine forgiveness programs
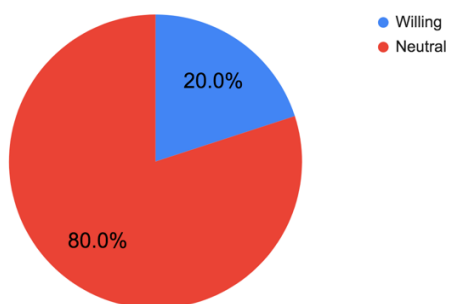
Figure 5.6: Percent of willingness of SLMSs who had neither familiarity or previous experience

with fine forgiveness programs

What are examples of fine forgiveness programs with which district school library media

specialists have previous experience? Having analyzed survey results and found that SLMSs'

prior familiarity and experience will favorably affect the feasibility of a fine forgiveness

implementation, it made sense to ask which programs these respondents have already tried.

Examples found in the survey results illustrate variations of ways students can either work in the

library or read for extended periods of time as payment for their fines. A respondent from an elementary school described offering students an option to shelve books, straighten shelves, dust, clean Chromebooks, or wipe down tables in the media center to work off their fine. The amounts forgiven from a fine per number of minutes worked or read varies a great deal. Three separate middle school SMLSs allow students to read or work in the library during a homeroom period, earning one dollar forgiveness for every 10 minutes of reading at one school, one dollar for every five minutes at another school, and one dollar for every 20 minutes at the third school. Although a district initiative may benefit from more consistent forgiveness ratios, a program of reading or working off fines is one that has worked in this district.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future research into feasibility of fine forgiveness implementation would be beneficial, especially in the relationships of demographic variables. For future surveys, questions regarding school library budget, books per student, and annual book repair costs would be included to better explain demographic patterns in relation to SLMSs willingness to forgive fines. The distributed intervals of variables embedded in survey questions would be more detailed as 80% of students qualifying for free/reduced lunch can be quite different from 61%. This difference may be significant. While a multiple-choice question may create greater ease for respondents in completing the survey, requiring exact answers to demographic questions would allow more detailed analysis of results. While this study created greater awareness of fine forgiveness programs in this district, further research would create even greater awareness, a variable which has proven to positively influence feasibility of implementation.

Sharing Research Results

The results of this study will be made available in St. Cloud State University's

Institutional Repository. Research participants were made aware of access to an available link to

the study and have inter-district access to the researcher via email, phone, and face-to-face

meetings. Research findings will be discussed in district collaborative team meetings. At least

two participants from the pilot study have reached out to the researcher, requesting information

and discussion of literature reviewed in Chapter Two. Sharing this information and information

about this study is important in that it creates awareness of fine forgiveness programs, increasing

the likelihood that more school libraries will implement such programming and therefore

increase student access to information.

Conclusion

The literature review of this research study revealed how ineffective, yet historically

prevalent, fine assessment policy is to both public and school libraries. Fine assessment practices

were shown to create barriers to information access and to fail at achieving the goals of teaching

patron/student responsibility and in maintaining budget obligations. The reviewed literature also

brought to light the more rewarding practice of fine forgiveness programming.

The survey of this research study revealed district library media specialists' willingness

to try a fine forgiveness implementation. Awareness of and experience with fine forgiveness

programs was shown to positively influence adoption of fine forgiveness practices. This study

has been, and will continue to be, a tool in that greater awareness, therefore pushing fine

forgiveness practices into a more prevalent status norm. Wide spread use of fine forgiveness

practices in district school libraries will reinforce equal and equitable access of information for

all students.

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Appendix A: IRB Decision Letter

ST. CLOUD STATE
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Institutional Review Board (IRB)

720 4th Avenue South AS 210, St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498

Name: Jacquelyn Ward

Email: jsward@stcloudstate.edu

IRB PROTOCOL DETERMINATION:
Exempt Review

Project Title: Feasability of Implementing Fine-Forgiveness Program in Public School District Libraries

Advisor Kristen Carlson

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol to conduct research involving human subjects. Your project has been: **APPROVED**

Please note the following important information concerning IRB projects:

- The principal investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of participants in this project. Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB as soon as possible (ex. research related injuries, harmful outcomes, significant withdrawal of subject population, etc.).

- For expedited or full board review, the principal investigator must submit a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated on this letter to report conclusion of the research or request an extension.

-Exempt review only requires the submission of a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated in this letter if an extension of time is needed.

- Approved consent forms display the official IRB stamp which documents approval and expiration dates. If a renewal is requested and approved, new consent forms will be officially stamped and reflect the new approval and expiration dates.

- The principal investigator must seek approval for any changes to the study (ex. research design, consent process, survey/interview instruments, funding source, etc.). The IRB reserves the right to review the research at any time.

If we can be of further assistance, feel free to contact the IRB at 320-308-4932 or email ResearchNow@stcloudstate.edu and please reference the SCSU IRB number when corresponding.

IRB Chair:

Dr. Benjamin Witts
Associate Professor- Applied Behavior Analysis
Department of Community Psychology,Counseling, and Family Therapy

IRB Institutional Official:

Dr. Latha Ramakrishnan
Interim Associate Provost for Research
Dean of Graduate Studies

OFFICE USE ONLY

SCSU IRB# 1915 - 2462	**Type:** Exempt Review	**Today's Date:** 8/7/2019
1st Year Approval Date:	**2nd Year Approval Date:**	**3rd Year Approval Date:**
1st Year Expiration Date:	**2nd Year Expiration Date:**	**3rd Year Expiration Date:**

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

720 4th Avenue South MC 204K, St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498

Continuing Review / Final Report

Principal Investigator: **Jacquelyn Ward**

Co-Investigator:

Project Title: **Feasability of Implementing Fine-Forgiveness Program in Public School District Libraries**

If the project has been completed (no longer collecting data on human subjects) please indicate your projects status under Final Report and complete questions 1 through 5. If you have completed collecting data on human subjects but continue to analyze the data, as long as no new data is being obtained, your project would be considered completed.

If the project has not been completed (you are collecting data on human subjects) please indicate the status of your project under Continuing Review/Project Continuation and answer questions 1 through 5.

Final Report
    __x__ The Project has been completed.
    _____ Project has not and will not be conducted. Explain:

Continuing Review/Project Continuation
    _____ Data collection continues with enrolled participants.
    _____ Participant recruitment continues following approved IRB protocol.

    Have any changes been made to your research project (changes in subject recruitment, informed consent documents, design, methodology, procedures, etc.) since it was approved by the IRB?
    _____ No
    _____ Yes, explain:

Final Report and Continuing Review/Project Continuation, please answer the following:

1. How many participants have participated in your study __26_____

2. Have any adverse events (complaints, unexpected reactions, discomfort, or problems) occurred during this research project
    __x__ No
    _____ Yes, explain:

3. Have any participants withdrawn from the research, either voluntarily or at the researcher's request?
    __x__ No
    _____ Yes, explain:

4. Has any new information been identified that may affect the willingness of subjects to participate in this research project?
    __x__ No
    _____ Yes, explain:

5. Have any changes been made to your research project (changes in subject recruitment, informed consent documents, design, methodology, and procedures, etc.) since it was approved by the IRB?
    __x__ No
    _____ Yes, explain:

_____   _____
Principal Investigator's Signature   Date   10-14-19

SCSU IRB#: 1915 - 2462

Appendix B: Survey Cover Letter Email

September 22, 2019

Dear Library Media Specialist

I am working on my master's degree at St. Cloud State University. For my culminating project, I am researching the feasibility of implementing fine forgiveness programs in public school library systems, specifically the Anoka Hennepin School District. Because you are a media specialist in our school district, I am inviting you to participate in a research study by asking you to complete the attached questionnaire.

The questionnaire consists of 16 questions and should take 5-10 minutes to complete. There is no anticipated risk to participation. Anonymity cannot be guaranteed as the survey is being sent only to media specialists in the Anoka Hennepin School District and the possibility of identifying answers may be high. Individual responses, however, will be kept confidential. A summary of the results will be made available to others. Completion and submission of the questionnaire will imply your willingness to participate in this study.

Thank you, in advance, for taking a few minutes to assist me in my educational research. Data collected will help determine the feasibility of implementing fine forgiveness in a public-school district. A link to the summary of this study will be available to all participants. If you would like access to the summary, please simply respond to this email as a request. If you have any other questions or would like more information, please email me at jacquelyn.ward@ahschools.us or my SCSU advisor, Kristen Carlson at kmcarlson@stcloudstate.edu.

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with St. Cloud State University, or the researcher.

Please complete and submit the questionnaire by **Friday, September 27**.

I truly appreciate your time and cooperation.
Sincerely,

Jacki Ward
Anoka Middle School for the Arts
Washington Campus
jacquelyn.ward@ahschools.us
763-506-4605

Appendix C: Survey Questionnaire

Library Fine Survey

Exploring the feasibility of implementing fine forgiveness programs in school libraries.

1. Level of school where you are currently employed as a Media Specialist:
Check all that apply.

☐ Pre-K

☐ Kindergarten

☐ Elementary

☐ Middle School

☐ High School

☐ Other: _____

2. Number of students served by your school library:
Mark only one oval.

◯ 0 - 99

◯ 100 - 499

◯ 500 - 999

◯ 1,000 - 1,499

◯ 1,500 - 1,999

◯ 2,000 or more

3. Approximate number of student-circulating materials in your school library collection:
Mark only one oval.

◯ 0 - 999

◯ 1,000 - 4,999

◯ 5,000 - 9,999

◯ 10,000 - 14,999

◯ 15,000 or more

4. Approximate percent of students who qualify for free/reduced lunch in your school:
Mark only one oval.

◯ 0 - 20%

◯ 21 - 40%

◯ 41 - 60%

◯ 61 - 80%

◯ 81 - 100%

5. Reasons that student library accounts are assessed a fine/fee in your school library:
Check all that apply.

- [ ] Overdue Materials
- [ ] Damaged Materials
- [ ] Lost Materials
- [ ] Other: _____

6. Who assesses fines to student library accounts?
Check all that apply.

- [ ] Myself, the Media Specialist
- [ ] Media Paraprofessional
- [ ] Adult Volunteer
- [ ] Student Worker
- [ ] Classroom Teacher
- [ ] Building Administrator
- [ ] Other: _____

7. Does your building administration support assessment of library fines?
Check all that apply.

- [ ] Yes, they do support assessing fines for late or damaged library materials.
- [ ] I am not sure what they would think of library fine assessment.
- [ ] No, they do not support assessment of library fines.

8. To what extent does your building administration support your waiving of library fines?
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does Not Support	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Completely Supports

9. How familiar are you with fine forgiveness programs?
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unfamiliar	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Quite Familiar

10. How willing are you to try a fine forgiveness program?
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Quite willing

Please select "yes" or "no", followed by an explanation.

11. Would you ever waive a fine from a student library account?
Mark only one oval.

( ) Yes

( ) No

12. For what reason(s) might you waive a fine from a student library account?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

13. Have you ever implemented a fine forgiveness program in your school (such as Read it Down or Work it Off)?
Mark only one oval.

( ) Yes

( ) No

14, If yes, please describe the program. If no, please describe the reason.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

15. Is there a situation in which you would be unwilling to waive a fine/fee from a student library account?
Mark only one oval.

( ) Yes

( ) No

16. For what situation(s) would you be unwilling to waive a fine/fee from a student library account?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix D: Survey Results

1. Level of school where you are currently employed as a media specialist:

Elementary	15
Middle School	6
High School	5

2. Number of students served by your school library:

0-99	0
100-499	5
500-999	8
1000-1499	5
1500-2000	3
2000+	5

3. Approximate percent of students who qualify for free/reduced lunch in your school:

0-20%	6
21-40%	11
41-60%	7
61-80%	2
81-100%	0

4. How familiar are you with fine forgiveness programs?

Somewhat/Very	18
Neutral	3
Little/None	5

5. How willing are you to try a fine forgiveness program?

Somewhat/Very	17

| Neutral | 8 |
| Little/None | 1 |

6. Have you ever implemented a fine forgiveness program in your school?

| Yes | 10 |
| No | 16 |