

Eight Factors for SSR Success

(from The SSR Handbook)

1. **Access** – trade books, magazines, comics, newspapers, and other reading materials were provided directly to the students in a variety of ways instead of requiring the students to bring something from home to read.
2. **Appeal** – reading materials are sufficiently interesting and provocative enough for students to want to read them. A crucial element is self-selection.
3. **Conducive Environment** – large percentage of successful programs utilized traditional classroom settings and simply built in the element of uninterrupted and silent reading time.
4. **Encouragement** – includes, but is not limited to, teachers sharing and discussing books, adult modeling of reading while students read, parent involvement (newsletters and reading with kids at home), and students sharing “the good parts” of books with other students (book talk). Extrinsic encouragement, e.g. points, prizes, rewards, are not recommended
5. **Staff Training** – must go beyond simply providing quiet time to read in school. Needs to focus on motivating teachers to learn strategies for linking students with books, highlighting the importance of having all of the participating adults “buy into” the concept of free reading.
6. **Non-accountability** – students should be able to read freely without an emphasis on assessment of comprehension or reading growth. Students should be to put books down when they are not interesting enough and select new ones (an authentic practice adults engage in when they are bored). Although “comprehension tasks” should be avoided, successful programs do include *follow-up activities* when students finish reading.
7. **Follow-up Activities** – typically, follow-up activities are interactive in nature. They often include the use of art and music. Follow-up activities include, but are not limited to, drawing or writing about story themes, constructing individual or group murals, making their own books, performing scenes from a book, oral reading, puppetry, science experiments, or simply discussing their books with others.
8. **Distributed Time to Read** – in general, students need between 15 to 30 minutes to read. In 97% of the successful cases, students were offered SSR at least twice per week (distributed time). Less successful programs often offered longer times to read, but on a monthly, bi-monthly, bi-weekly, or weekly basis (massed time or all at once).

***Note:** *Research from the National Reading Plan about SSR has been misquoted and misinterpreted.*