

THE IMPACT OF CHOICE DURING A FREE POP-UP BOOK FAIR

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Does choosing a book add value beyond simply receiving one?



THE QUESTION

- At a free Page by Page pop-up fair in Miami, about 2,000 donated books were arranged by age and genre.
- Children could take as many as they could carry. Their repeated question was: “How many can I take?”



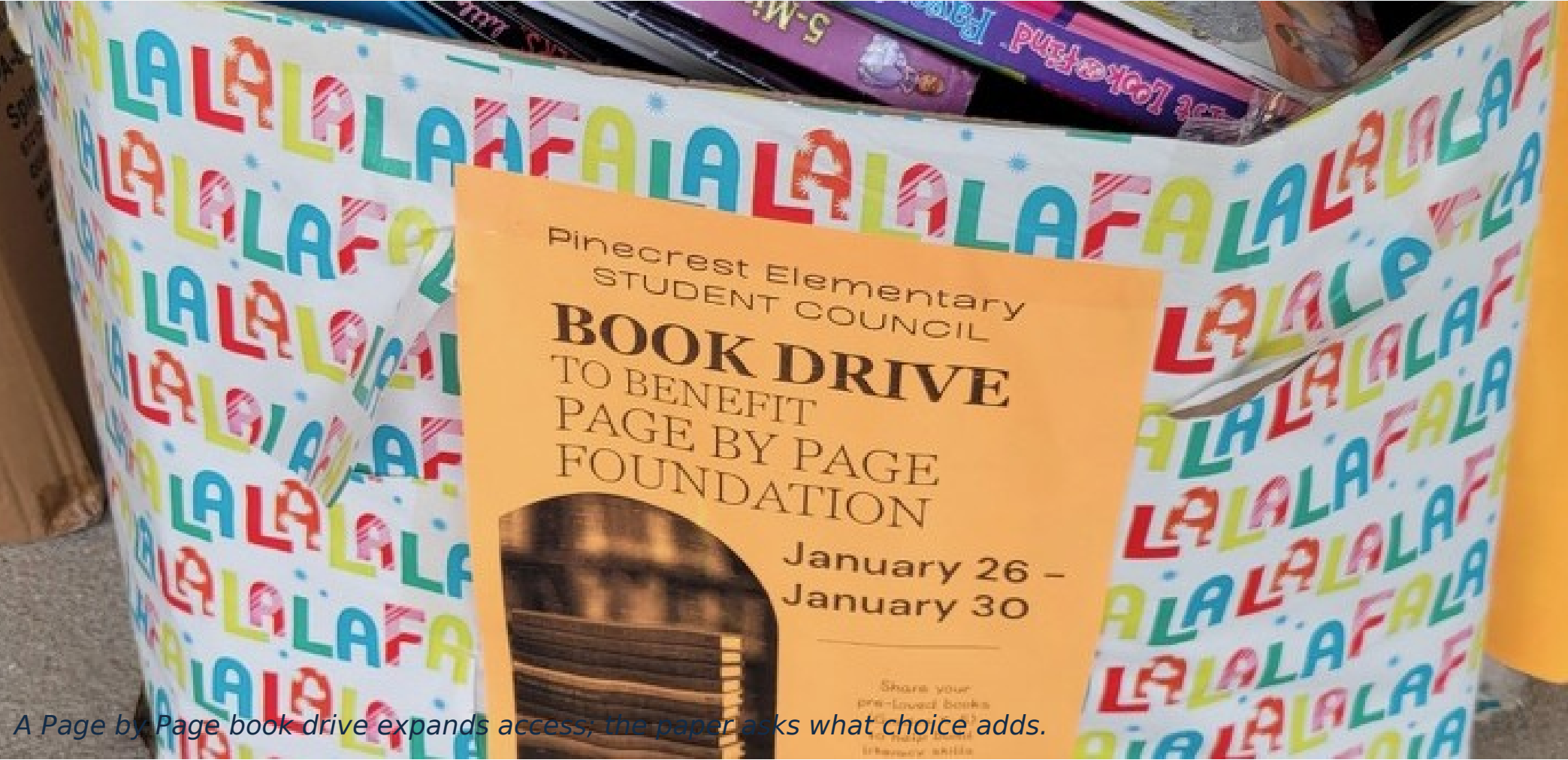
ACCESS TO PRINT

- Neuman & Celano [1] documented major differences in children’s print environments.
- Poorest comparison: ~1 age-appropriate title for every 300 children.

1 : 300 Scarcity limits access AND selection.

METHOD

- Narrative review, not a systematic review.
- Evidence selected on print access, autonomy/choice, intrinsic motivation, and summer reading.
- Limits: no formal protocol; unpublished literature not sought; selection may favor the author’s argument.



A Page by Page book drive expands access; this book drive shows what choice adds.

WHY CHOICE MAY MATTER

- Self-Determination Theory: autonomy means experiencing an action as self-endorsed rather than imposed.
- Gambrell [3]: ~80% of students named a self-chosen book as the book they most enjoyed.

d = .30
intrinsic motivation

d = .55
effect for children

3-5
options: largest effect

FLORIDA SUMMER-READING EVIDENCE

- Allington et al. [6]: 852 students received 12 self-selected books for three summers; 478 received none.
- Treatment students scored higher on the state reading test (p = .015; effect size = .14).
- For the poorest students, the effect was about .21.
- Critical limit: access and choice changed together. so choice

SELF-SELECTED BOOKS

852 students

NO BOOKS

478 students

WHAT THE EVIDENCE SUGGESTS

- Experimental research suggests choice can increase intrinsic motivation.
- The effect reported by Patall et al. [5] was larger for children than adults.
- Field evidence supports self-selected books, but does not yet



KEY IDEA

Access gives a child a book. Choice gives the child ownership of the decision.

DESIGNING A FAIR AROUND CHOICE

- These are hypotheses to test, not established best practices.
- Sort books by age and genre to create manageable options.
- Avoid prepacked bags when possible.
- Give each child an empty bag and preserve the final decision.



ORGANIZE THE OPTIONS.
PRESERVE THE DECISION.

PROPOSED NEXT STUDY

Randomly divide children from the same schools into three groups. Hold the number, reading level, and genres constant between Groups 2 and 3

GROUP 1

NO BOOKS

GROUP 2

ADULT-SELECTED

GROUP 3

CHILD-SELECTED

Measure reading scores the next spring AND how many books each child actually opens.

CONCLUSION

- Access and choice are different components, but field interventions usually deliver them together.
- Choice appears meaningful for motivation, especially for children.
- Removing the price makes books available; preserving choice



“The children were not asking permission to have a book. They were asking permission to decide.”

- Christopher Page

SELECTED REFERENCES

- [1] Neuman & Celano (2001), Reading Research Quarterly.
- [2] Deci & Ryan (2000), Psychological Inquiry.
- [3] Gambrell (1996), The Reading Teacher.
- [5] Patall, Cooper & Robinson (2008), Psychological Bulletin.
- [6] Allington et al. (2010), Reading Psychology.