



**2005/2006
ACTION
RESEARCH
PROJECT: BOYS
AND READING**



THE ACTION RESEARCH TEAM



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Why Action Research?

- Provides for evidence-based practice
(means of facilitating school improvement, student achievement & accountability)
- Formalises what teachers already do
- Site specific
- Promotes reflection & collaboration
- Cyclical
(ongoing process of reflection, planning & action)

Finding our research question

- Educational imperatives are demanding that critical thinking or higher order thinking should frame how we teach.
- Reading is not taught effectively enough.
- Boys are disengaged with, and underachieve in literacy; particularly reading literacy.
- Graphic novels provide visual stimulation.

The Research Question

How can graphic novels engage boys in school reading?



SO... WHAT IS A GRAPHIC NOVEL?

A graphic novel is an extended narrative that is told via sequential panels of artwork that may be accompanied by words.

Graphic novels are the big brother of comics. They tell a complete story, while comics are serialised.

Milestones

- Research Plan
- Data Collection
- Data Analysis
- Report Writing


Communication

- Initial meeting
- Email
- Blackboard

THE RESEARCH PLAN

Responsibilities

- Literature Review
- Methodology
- Higher Order Thinking
- Teaching Strategies



**What the
research says...**

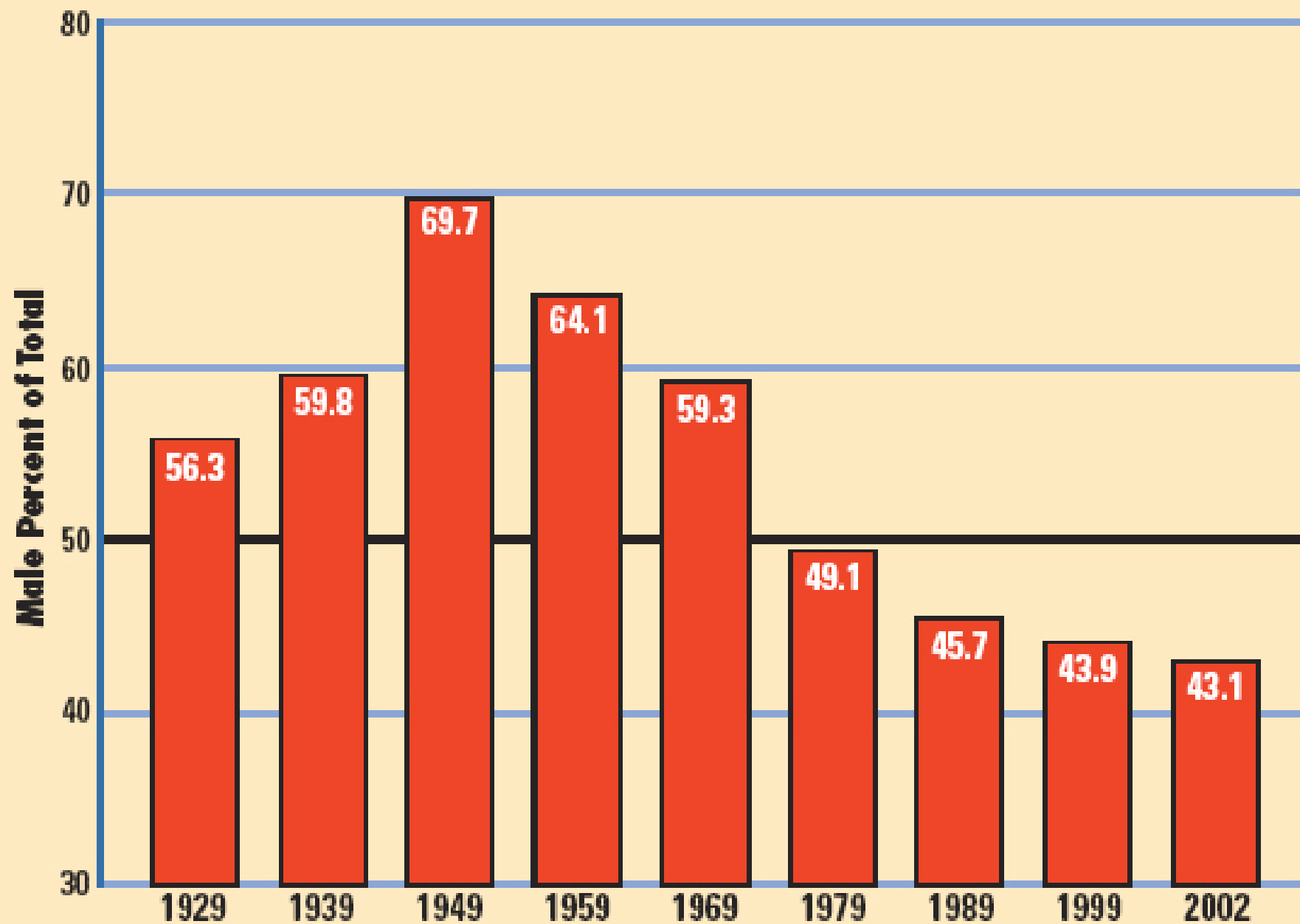
A Crisis in Reading?

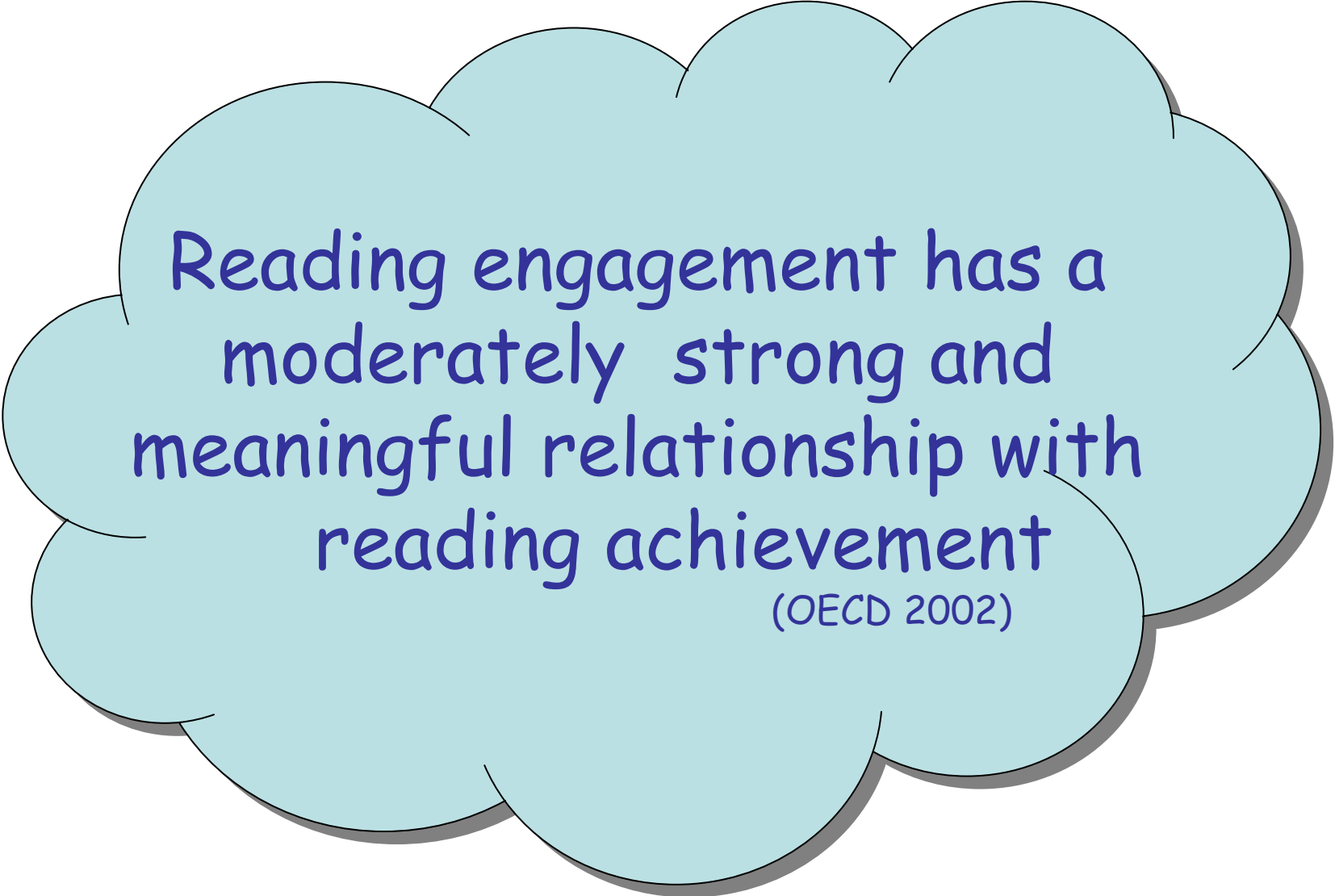
250 000 15 year olds: 31 countries

- Girls out-performed boys in literacy
- Boys 70 % more likely to read at a lower level than girls
- 46% of males read only "if they have to"
- 45% of males see reading as a "waste of time"

(PISA 2002, 2003)

Male Share of Higher Education Enrollments • 1929 to 2002





Reading engagement has a
moderately strong and
meaningful relationship with
reading achievement

(OECD 2002)

Description of engagement...

Students:

- Show sustained behavioural involvement
- Select tasks at the border of their competencies
- Employ deeper processing strategies
- Initiate action
- Exert intense effort and concentration
- Show generally positive emotions, including enthusiasm, optimism, curiosity and interest

(Skinner & Belmont; Pinch & De Groot in Chapman 2003)

Why are boys disengaged?

Social constructs of masculinity:

- Reading is 'uncool', feminine
- Lack of male role models as readers

(Young & Brozo 2001; Booth 2002; Martino 2003)

Education system:

- Boys can and do read, but reject "in-school" reading as being unrelated to their needs and interests (Smith & Wilhelm 2002; Newkirk 2002)
- Schools ignore "new literacies" (Kress 2004)

Boys' reading interests...

- Boys' reading preferences are brain-based (Gurian 2002)
- Boys show a proclivity for abstract, stimulating, diverse and coded texts (Gurian 2002, pp.45-49)
- The visual is intensely important (Smith & Wilhelm 2002, p.152)
- Boys prefer to read comics, magazines and newspapers (PISA 2002)

HAVERFORD SCHOOL



Haverford School

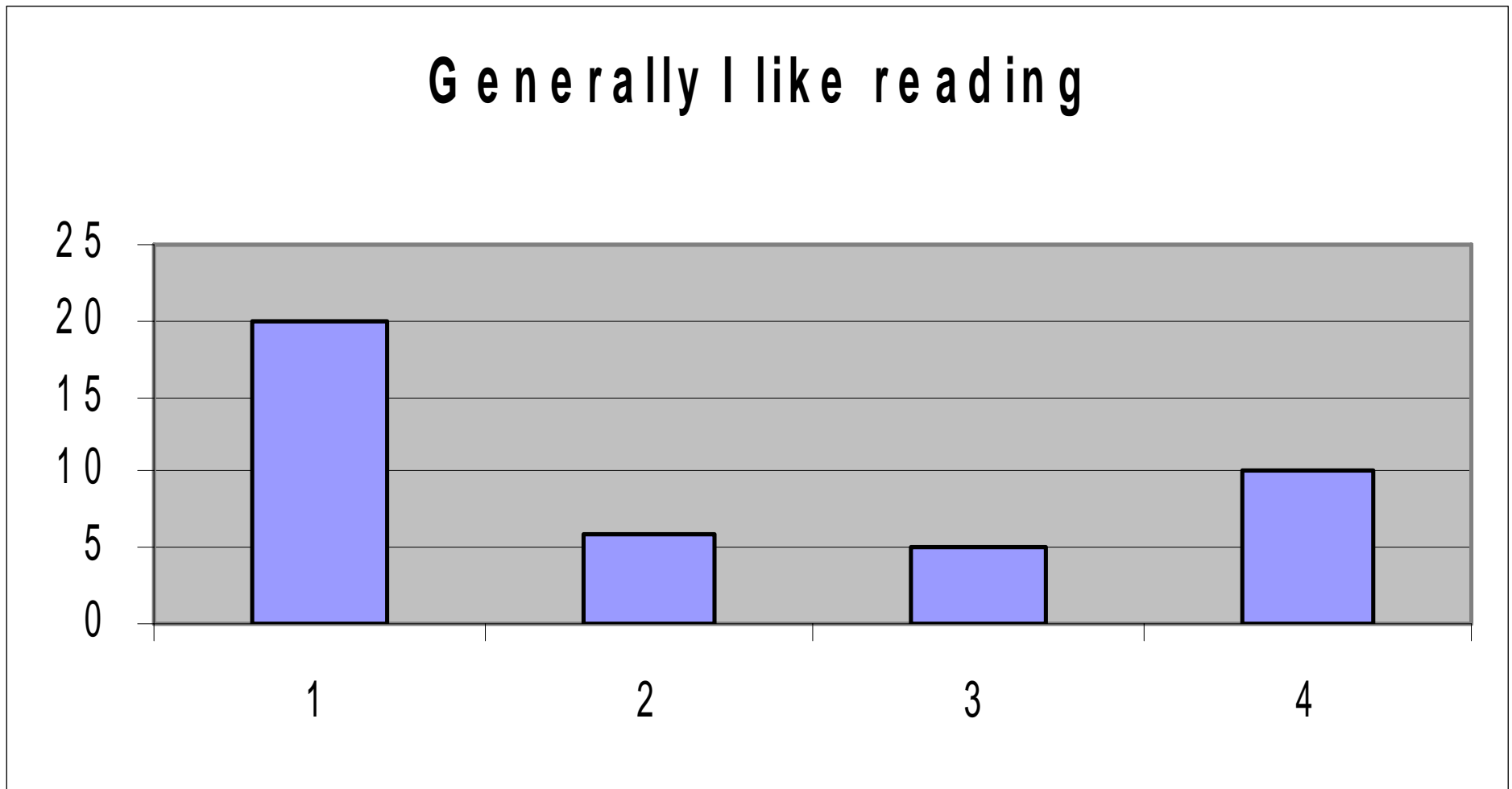
- **Largest Non-sectarian boys' school in U.S.**
- **K- 12 Boys**
- **Approximately 950 Students**
- **Located in suburb of Philadelphia**

The Process

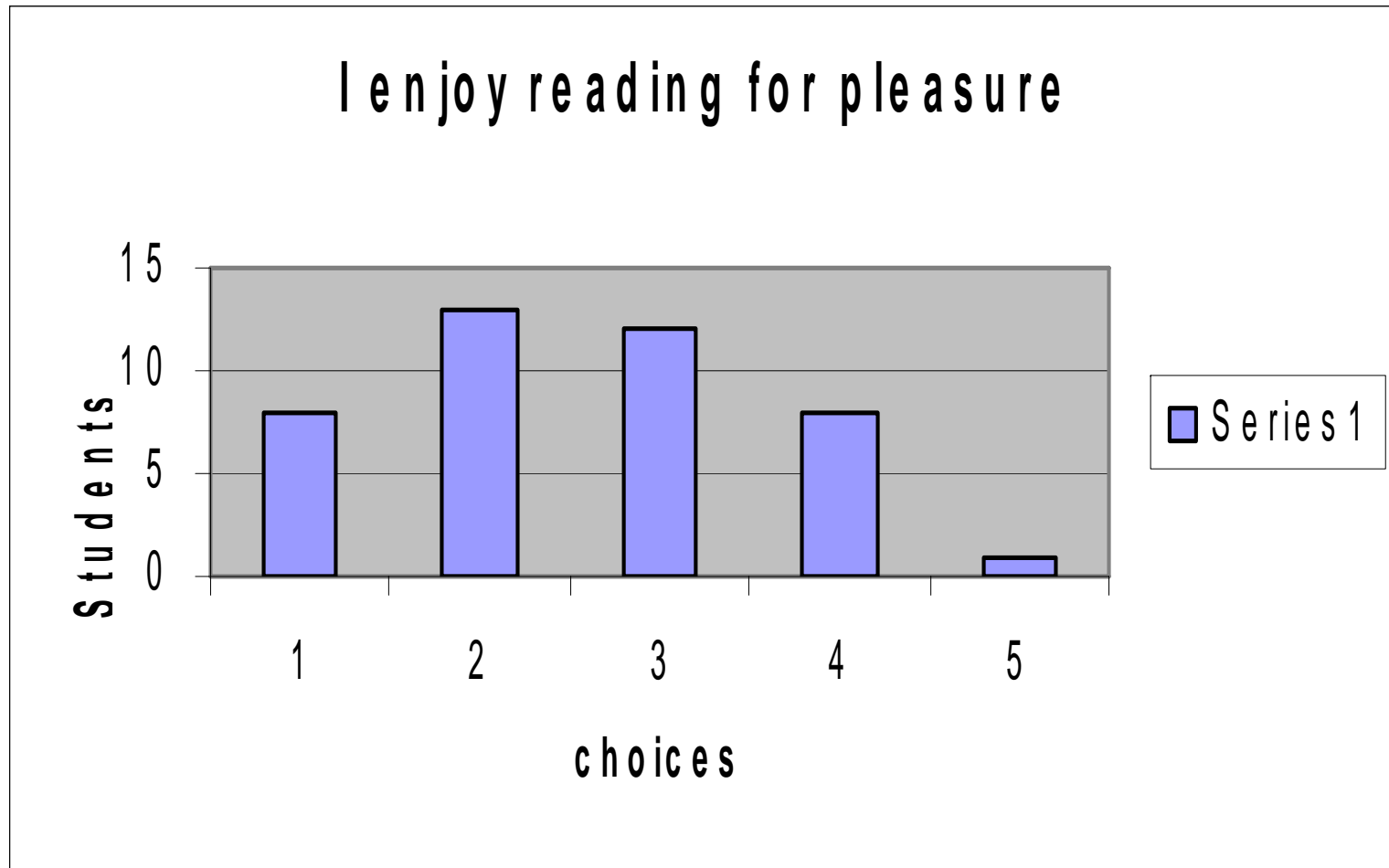
- **Stage 1: Haverford Boys and Reading**
- **Stage 2: Reading a Graphic Novel**
- **Stage 3: Creating a Graphic Novel**

STAGE ONE: The Survey

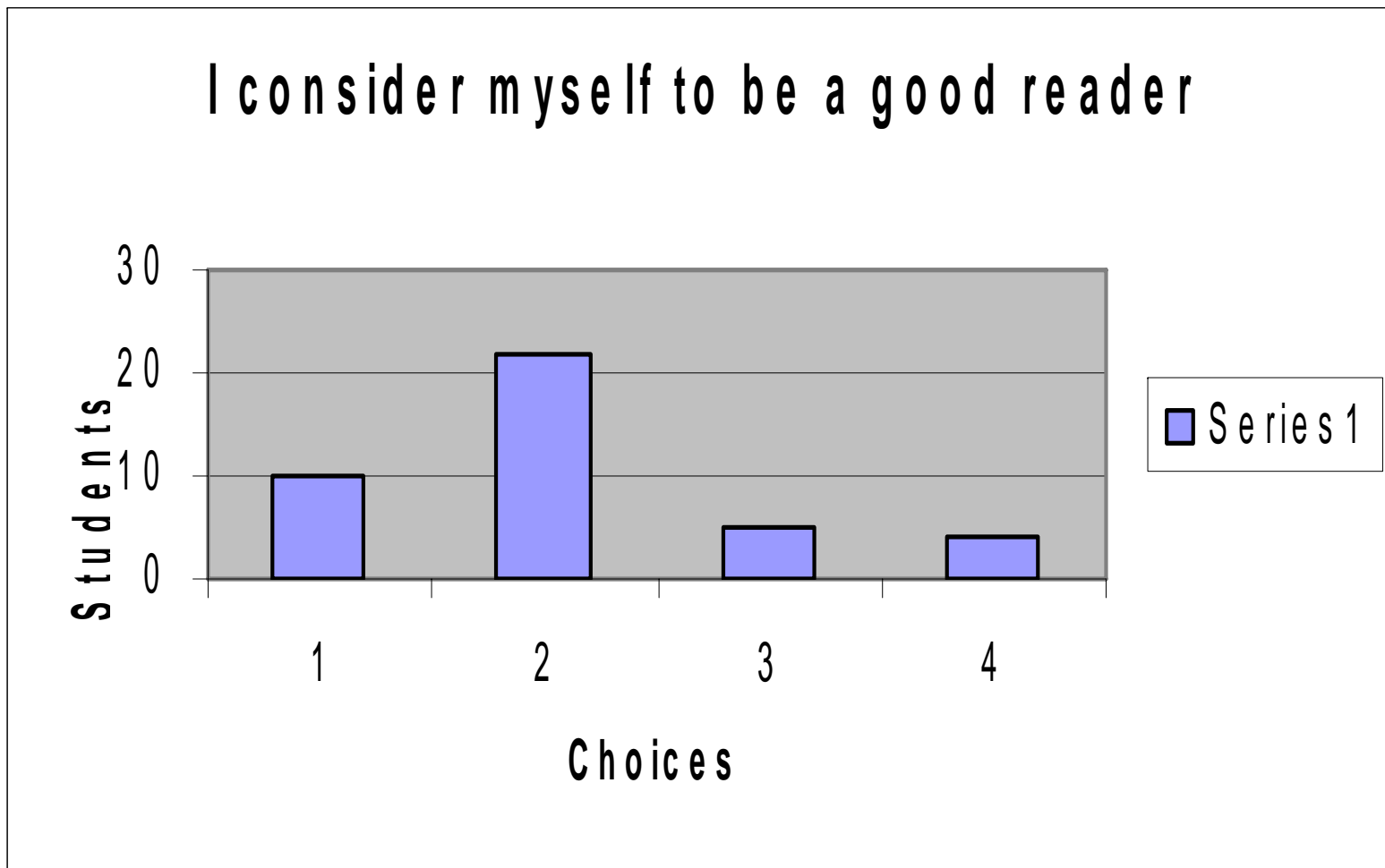
(1) Strongly Agree (2) Agree (3) Undecided
(4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree



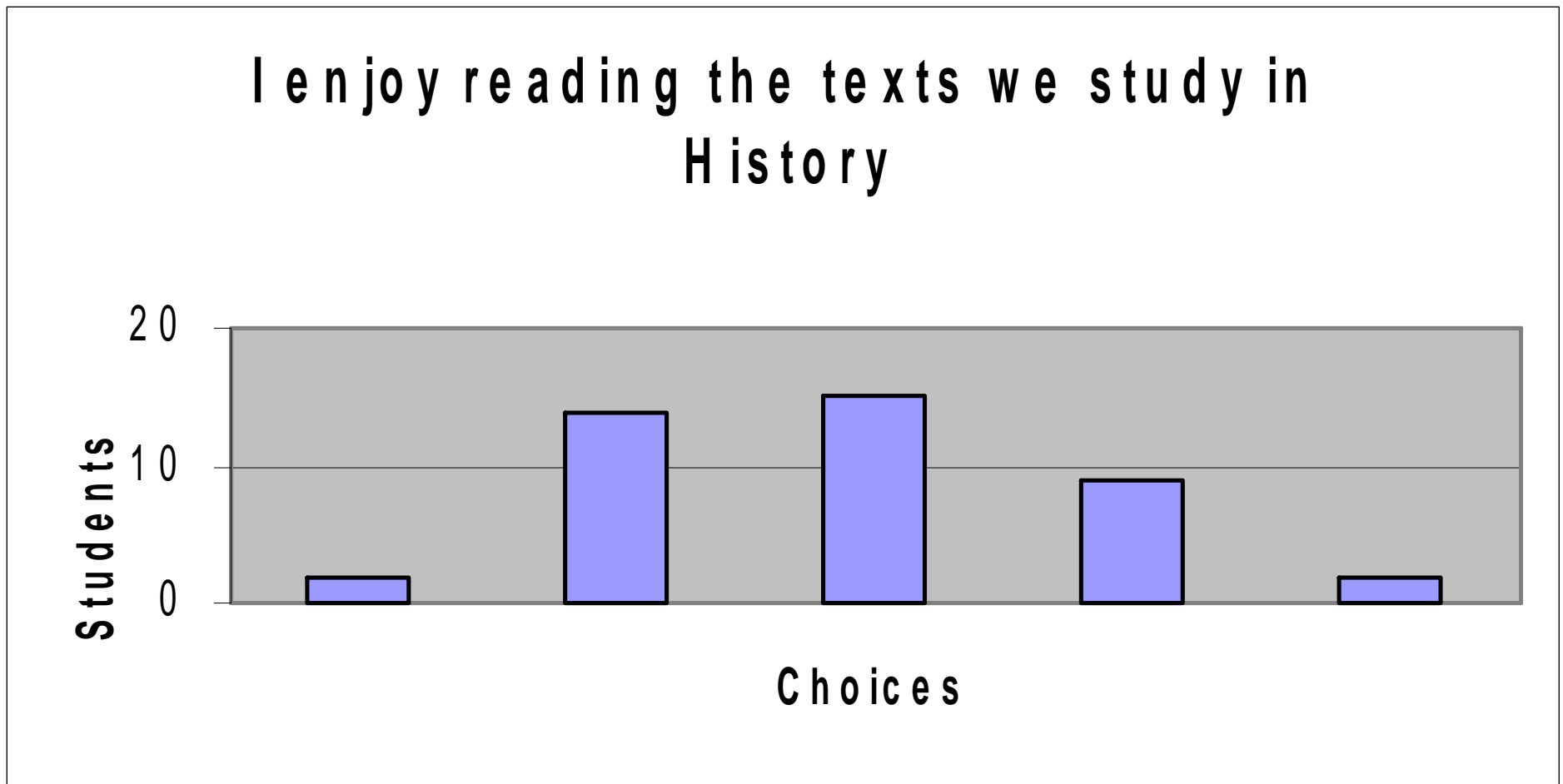
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Stage 2: *The "Assigned" Reading*



Stage 3: Hindu Graphic Novels



BARKER COLLEGE



Research Context...

- Anglican day/ boarding school
- Northern fringes of Sydney, Australia
- 2000 students
- Years 3-9 boys
- Years 10-12 co-educational
- A reading culture

Research Plan...

- Baseline data- reading attitudes and habits
- Traditional text
- Background on GN conventions and characteristics
- Graphic Novel

Methodology...

Primarily qualitative:

- Journals (teachers/ students)
- Key informant interviews (teachers)
- Focus groups (students)
- Classroom observations
- Field notes/ photography
- Surveys

Findings:

Reading attitudes and habits...

The sample consisted of:

- avid readers
- reluctant readers
- competent readers
- struggling readers
- engaged readers
- disengaged readers

Responses to the traditional text...

‘When we read the Macbeth scenes, the language was very unusual, difficult to read. It was like I was illiterate! I constantly missed and incorrectly read words. Almost everybody did.’

‘Studying Shakespeare is awesome... like the language he uses and stuff, it kind of goes beyond the story. I mean using normal words you can only say so much.’

Response to the GN...



Enhanced comprehension...

‘The graphics were extremely detailed and painted vivid images which enabled the reader to understand the Shakespearean language better.’

‘You can see facial expressions and body movements. You can see all this other stuff that portrays emotions.’

Created pace; showed relationships...

‘It explained like the fear of Duncan... it was good without the words. I reckon the words would have spoilt it... was fast... if it had words it would slow everything down.’

‘And like how Lady Macbeth dominated Macbeth... she was on top and there was bottom, lower shots of the camera so she looked really tall and fierce.’

Enhanced higher order thinking

‘Pictures can give you an idea of the artist’s interpretation of the play. Although you might not agree with it, you still have a starting point you can develop into your own theory and elaborate on.’

Conclusions...

- GNs engaged boys cognitively, behaviourally and affectively
- GNs engaged boys who were previously disengaged with school reading
- GNs engaged boys who were previously engaged with school reading
- GNs are not a universal panacea for reading disengagement, but have shown their potential to address boys' reading needs and interests

ST JOHN'S COLLEGE



St John's College

- **Anglican Boys' school, day boys and boarders**
- **K- 12 Boys plus VIth Form (Cambridge A Levels)**
- **Approximately 1100 Students**
- **Located in Houghton, Johannesburg**

RESEARCH QUESTION

PLANNING

DATA COLLECTION

PRE/POST TESTING

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD

FOCUS GROUPS

TEACHER INTERVIEWS

CRITICAL FRIEND CONCEPT

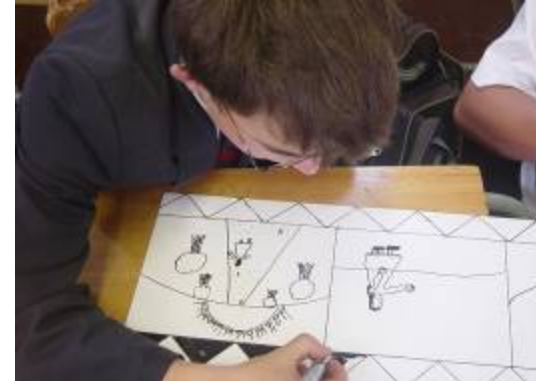
REFLECTIVE JOURNALS

FEEDBACK / REFINE / REVISE





FINDINGS



Brighton Grammar School



Brighton Grammar School

- **Anglican Day School**
- **K- 12 Boys**
- **Enrolment of 1200 Students**
- **Located middle/ wealthy income bayside suburb in Melbourne**
- **Focused on developing a well rounded boy capable of achieving success in academic, extra curricular and cultural pursuits**
- **Strategic Planning**



Methodology

- **Participant Observation**
- **Interviews**
 - **Informal Conversational**
 - **Key Informant**
- **Photography**

Analysis

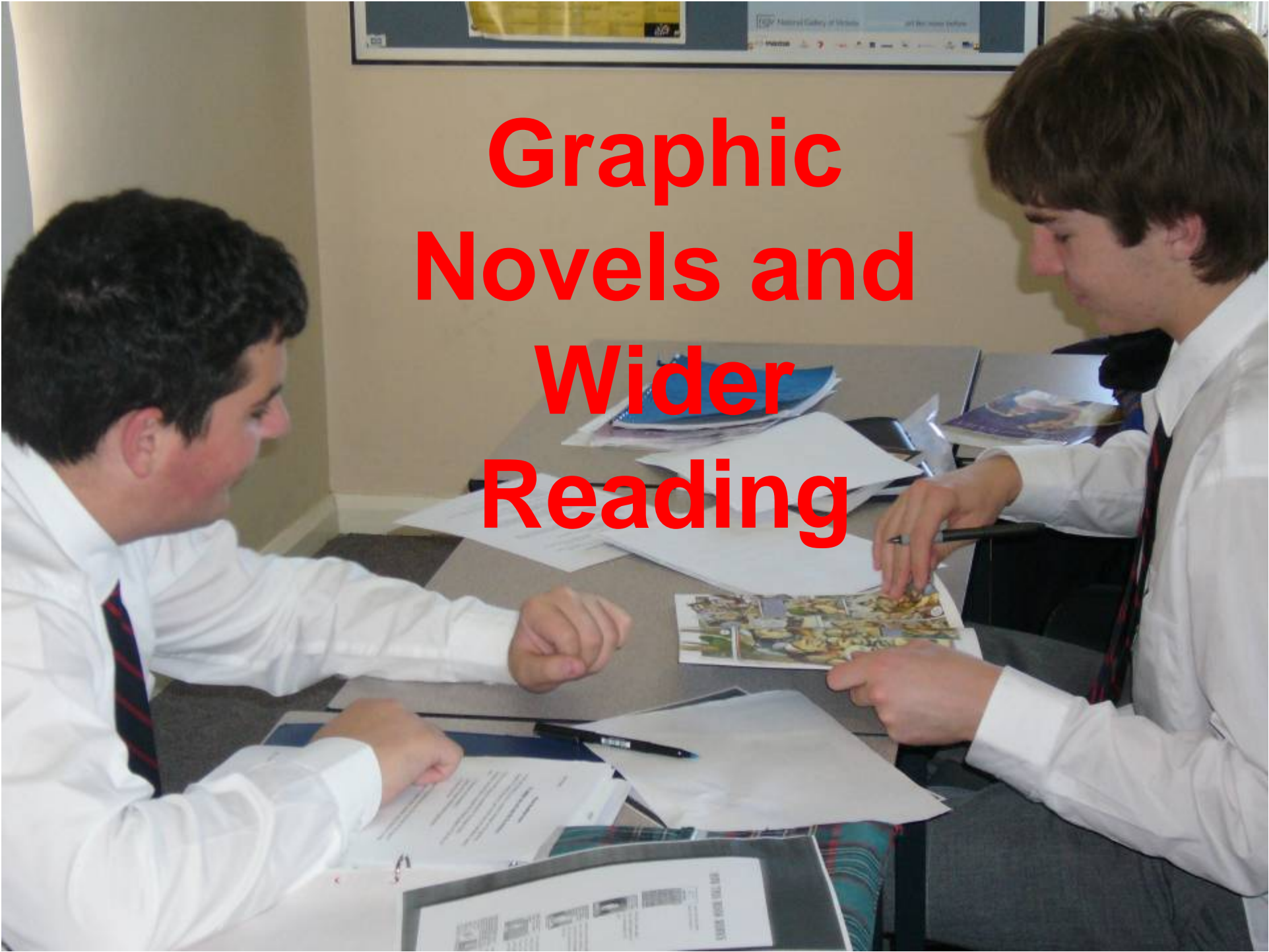
- **Researcher Journal**
- **Categorizing Data**
- **Emergent themes**

Writing the Report

- **Ethnographic in style**
- **Capturing the culture**
- **Impressionist Tales**
- **Descriptive vignettes**

Graphic Novels and Macbeth

- **Use of Graphic Novel conventions to reinterpret the text**
- **Challenged both academically weak and strong students**
- **Stronger comprehension and analysis of the text**
- **Graphic Novels [and their conventions] an effective way to engage students in reading traditional set texts**

A photograph of two young men in white shirts and ties sitting at a desk. They are looking at a graphic novel page spread on the desk. The desk is cluttered with papers, a pen, and other documents. In the background, there is a computer monitor displaying a website. The text 'Graphic Novels and Wider Reading' is overlaid in large red font in the center of the image.

Graphic Novels and Wider Reading

Graphic Novels in Wider Reading

- **Use of Graphic Novel to respond to wider reading texts**
- **The process of creating a movie preview challenged all students**
- **Students engaged in responding to their reading**
- **Graphic novels lack the culturally perceived academic rigor**