Reading Workshop Book Selection Procedure and Students’ Evaluation of Books

My classes follow a Nancie Atwell type of Reading Workshop approach but I use the following procedure:

1. We begin the semester with a class book that the whole class reads. (month one)

2. We then read group books- Students are in groups (3-5 students). They will read and discuss the same novel. Anywhere from 3-7 different books are being read in each class depending on the size of the class and the varied interests of the students. My rule is that there must be at least three students to form a group. If more than six students want to read the same book, we usually form two groups for that book. (month two and three)

3. During the last month of the semester we read individually chosen books- Students read self- selected books on their own and they present five minute book talks rather than have literature discussions.

4. Students who finish their book early always have the option of reading another book on their own for extra credit and 3-4 students in each class usually do that.

5. A final procedure I follow at the end of the semester is having the students evaluate the books they read. This helps you learn what kind of books students like. (see page 2)

Note: When I compile all the data from their evaluations, I do not find that the individually chosen books get the highest reviews. Usually it is the group books that receive the highest overall ratings. I believe this may be true because a significant number (30-50%) of students do not really know what they want to read. In general, they choose better books when you give them a group of books to choose from. When left entirely on their own to chose a book, they don’t always find their independently chosen book to be their favorite book. The lower the level of the reading course, the more likely it is that students need more suggestion and direction when choosing their books.