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First Grade Teachers' Perspectives on Using Nonfiction Texts in Guided Reading and Read- Aloud Lessons

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First Grade Teachers' Perspectives on Using Nonfiction Texts in Guided Reading
and Read-Aloud Lessons

December, 2013

By Emily Sullivan

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degree of Master of Science in Education

Abstract

This research assessed first-grade teachers' perspectives on using nonfiction text during guided reading and read-aloud lessons. Three teachers were all surveyed, observed, interviewed, and their classroom libraries were inventoried. Later the study revealed teachers' perspectives on using nonfiction text. The findings showed there was a positive correlation between teachers' increase in confidence and their use of the texts, and that teachers who had a high number of nonfiction texts in their classrooms incorporated the texts more often. The research gave implications for student learning which were students benefit from being taught about nonfiction text structure and nonfiction text engages students. It is recommended that teachers require education on nonfiction text and students need to be engaged with nonfiction text.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The first-grade classroom is bustling with children as I walk in to observe Mrs. Lombardo (all names are pseudonyms). Mrs. Lombardo gathers the students and instructs them to sit on the floor in the large group learning area. The students sit in their assigned places on the brightly colored carpet as Mrs. Lombardo finds her seat in front of them. Once she gathers their attention, she explains that the students would be learning about sharks today. She asks them to close their eyes and think about sharks. She continues to instruct them to picture the sharks in their heads...what they look like, how they sound, their size, color, and shape. Then she asks the students to share their thoughts.

The students open their eyes, think about what they will say and raise their hands. Mrs. Lombardo states: "OK, boys and girls, now I would like you share what you were thinking about." Johnny eagerly raises his hand and says, "Sharks are so big, they scare me. They are so cool to look at!" Another child, Hannah, raises her hand and explains, "Sharks have sharp teeth. I love to watch them on the Discovery Channel, and they scare me too!" A few more children chime in, stating similar ideas.

Mrs. Lombardo refocuses the students' attention to her and explains that the students are going to listen to a read-aloud book about sharks. She explains that this book is nonfiction and she asks the students if they know what that means. Another student raises her hand and excitedly states, "It means it is about real stuff!" Mrs. Lombardo introduces the book to the students stating the title and author. She explains that the pictures in the book are photographs of real sharks. She begins to read aloud to the students and, after page two, asks questions regarding the sharks' teeth. A third student raises his hand, noticing that the teeth looked sharp. Mrs. Lombardo explains that the teeth are very sharp and there are several teeth in a shark's

mouth. Seventy-five percent of the way through the book, the author begins to explain the size and weight of sharks. The students continue to listen with amazement at their size, and the picture compares the size of the shark to a school bus.

In many of today's classrooms, literacy remains the most important aspect of a child's development, according to researchers, teachers, parents, and administrators. In 2010, Brozo explains that students and teachers are being held to a higher standard due to the new Common Core State Standards. The Common Core State Standards, focused largely on literacy, require students to have more encounters with a significant number of nonfiction texts. Current research studies provide assistance for teachers to develop an understanding of the importance of using nonfiction texts in early elementary classrooms (Gewertz, 2012). There continues to be a need for further research to determine teachers' perspectives regarding the use of nonfiction texts in guided reading and read-aloud lessons in early elementary classrooms. Through my research, my desire was to understand first-grade teachers' perspectives on using nonfiction texts in guided reading and read-aloud lessons and explores the reasons why teachers may or may not be using nonfiction texts.

Problem Statement

Beginning in Kindergarten, teachers are required by those who designed the state curriculum to incorporate nonfiction texts into their teaching practice. A current and historical trend regarding teacher beliefs of nonfiction was described by Gill (2009), who found that fictional stories were thought of as appropriate for young readers and nonfiction books were written for older readers in our classrooms. As a result of recent research, the number of nonfiction texts to be used should be increased in elementary classrooms (Gill). Gill found that

it was imperative for teachers to understand that nonfiction texts provide significant learning opportunities for students of all ages.

A second study in 2010, by Hedin and Conderman, indicated that teachers need to instruct students on how to read informational texts emphasizing features of the genre such as main ideas, definitions following key terms, definitions preceding key terms, and text enhancements. By emphasizing the features, the students are able to understand the text with more confidence. Teachers need to be taught how to instruct students using nonfiction texts. This will help students better comprehend the story and increase teachers' confidence in using nonfiction texts in the classroom.

Purpose of the Study

Recent research suggests that students benefit from an increase of nonfiction texts being used in the classroom. As students learn to read and understand the genre, they have an easier time comprehending nonfiction texts later in their education.

The purpose of this study is to understand teachers' perspectives. Teachers are now finding new ways of working with nonfiction texts in the elementary classroom as stated by Gill (2009), "because today's nonfiction children's books provide new ways to convey information, teachers need to learn new ways to share these books with children. The use of nonfiction picture books conveys information not only in the text, but also in the supplemental materials such as tables and dates" (p. 266). This quote helps set the purpose for my study by describing new ways nonfiction texts are bringing information to students today. My research on teachers' perspectives delves into their practices in read-aloud and guided reading lessons to provide an understanding of why teachers may or may not be incorporating nonfiction texts into their first-

grade classrooms. My goal was to determine first-grade teachers' perspectives on nonfiction texts and reasons why teachers may be limiting their use of nonfiction texts in their classroom. I asked what first-grade teachers' perspectives of nonfiction texts are in guided reading and read-aloud lessons.

Significance of the Problem

In schools across New York State, the Common Core Standards are requiring students to understand nonfiction texts and to have a substantial number of encounters with nonfiction texts at an early age. Mantzicopoulos and Patrick (2011) emphasized the use of picture books as essential to young children's learning and acquisition of knowledge and understanding of their world. Typically, fictional picture books are read to our young students, but nonfiction texts hold the same value in students' learning. Mantzicopoulos and Patrick noted that: "Teachers are less familiar with informational texts and report that their characteristics and demands are comparable to fiction" (p. 270). The significance of Mantzicopoulos and Patrick's research is looking at how the students can use and grasp nonfiction texts at an early age. It is important that as researchers, we look at how the standards are impacting what is being taught and teachers' knowledge base of the material.

Futhermore, researchers such as Brozo (2010) explained the influence of the Common Core Standards: "what's revolutionary about these new standards is they situate literacy and language development squarely within the content areas" (p. 147). In combination with the Common Core Standards and Response to Intervention practices, teachers are required to ensure content literacy learning for all students in tiers 1-3 (Brozo). The Response to Intervention provides guidelines to teachers which explain that "the awareness that content learning and

content literacy learning are inseparable” (Brozo, p. 148). Brozo emphasizes that teachers of all levels and grades are required to ensure that students are experiencing content literacy learning.

Another reason why this research holds significance is explained by Nell Duke (2010). Duke states that, “when teachers provide opportunities for children to read and write informational text, their learning improves” (p. 68). Duke found that fewer than 10% of texts in elementary classroom libraries were nonfiction, while fewer than 5% of elementary classroom wall displays referred to nonfiction texts. Duke’s research emphasizes the lack of nonfiction texts in the early elementary classroom, and with this being said, she also explains how teachers need to be taught how to use nonfiction texts in the early elementary class so that the deficit decreases.

Study Approach

For this research study I used a qualitative approach. I collected evidence from teachers about their perspectives of using nonfiction texts in the elementary classroom. Data were collected in five different ways: I conducted two observations, one interview, one survey, and inventoried the nonfiction texts in each teacher’s personal classroom library. I used a case study approach to analyze the data I collected. I found similar trends among the interviews, surveys, observations, and inventories to come to a conclusion about what first-grade teachers thought about nonfiction texts.

Rationale

Throughout the research study, I looked at teachers’ perspectives of nonfiction texts in guided reading and read-aloud in the first-grade classroom because I believe that nonfiction texts are important resources for our young readers. My experience in teaching has been early

elementary. I have taught kindergarten and first grade for four years. Throughout these teaching experiences I have seen and worked with teachers who are reluctant to use nonfiction text in their classrooms and I have been curious about this. Also, I have graded the new English Language Arts state test, and this has made me realize the importance of students being comfortable with nonfiction texts, as they encounter this genre during the majority of the tests. Ness (2011) influenced my decision to look more closely at nonfiction texts. Ness explains in his research that students of this age could not handle the complexity of informational texts because of the vocabulary. Teachers are required to provide early elementary students with a significant number of encounters with nonfiction texts, but are not provided with substantial research to help increase their confidence with using nonfiction texts in early elementary classrooms. The purpose of this study is to remedy that research gap.

Definitions of Terms

Throughout this study, it was important to define the terms: nonfiction text, guided reading, and Common Core State Standards.

- Nonfiction text use facts to describe people, places, things and events.
- The teaching approach called Guided Reading requires teachers to categorize their readers using benchmark assessments. The students are then grouped into temporary groups based on their instructional reading levels. Teachers work on a variety of skills in these groups including word solving, comprehension, and fluency. Teachers then instruct each group within their instructional leveled text and their progress is monitored to see if growth is occurring. (Fountas & Pinnell, 2011).

- The Common Core State Standards define the knowledge and skills students should master within grades K-12. (engageny.org/common-core)

Summary

Over the past few years, the classroom has changed considerably in its requirements for both teachers and students. In the area of reading, students are being asked to comprehend nonfiction texts in the early elementary classroom. Therefore, students 'exposure to nonfiction texts is fundamental. The purpose of this study is to look deeply into first-grade teachers' perspectives on using nonfiction texts. The research holds significance because nonfiction text is a prevalent part of the classroom. In my research, I was eager to discover how teachers are using nonfiction texts in guided reading and read-aloud and their perspectives on its use.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This research study explores first grade teachers' views on using nonfiction texts in their early elementary classrooms. Specifically, it focuses on how teachers view nonfiction texts during guided reading and read-aloud lessons and their perspectives of incorporating nonfiction texts into their classroom. This chapter reviews multiple researchers' findings involving the use of nonfiction texts in early elementary classrooms. The research presented has guided me to develop an understanding of how nonfiction texts are used in first-grade classrooms for guided reading and read-aloud, and teachers' perspectives on nonfiction texts.

The chapter is broken into three sections as follows: use of nonfiction texts in early elementary classrooms, use of nonfiction texts in Guided Reading and Read-Aloud lessons, and teachers' perspectives on nonfiction texts.

Use of Nonfiction Texts in Early Elementary Classrooms

In this section of the chapter, I discuss research that has shown how nonfiction texts have been used in early elementary classrooms. The research shows that learning standards presently in place in New York State require teachers to incorporate nonfiction texts.

In 2009, Gill conducted a study that considered what teachers need to know about nonfiction texts. Gill looked at nonfiction books individually and tried to find features that specifically appealed to early elementary children. The goal of the research was to relay to early elementary teachers the important features necessary to capture the minds and thinking of our youngest students. Gill examined nonfiction books available to students in the early elementary classroom and used for lessons. She looked for specific features about the texts that were unique to the genre and helped the students learn the material. Gill observed three specific features for

teachers to use and explain when introducing nonfiction texts in the classroom: the table of contents, highlighted and bold text, and tables. Gill discovered through research that early elementary students need to be taught explicitly about the specific text features. Student comprehension increased when they were taught about the specific features they came across in their reading. Gill's work provides a strong framework to help teachers understand the essential components they need to focus on when working with nonfiction text in the elementary classroom.

The elementary classroom is changing rapidly due to the recent adoption of Common Core State Standards. Specifically, the classroom is evolving its approach to use more nonfiction texts in the early elementary classroom. Brozo (2010) explored the new Common Core State Standards and explained that the standards have switched the focus in reading to incorporate more informational texts, explicitly incorporating nonfiction texts into math and science curriculum units. Brozo's designed his research study to look at the Common Core standards relative to what the teachers were doing in the classroom. Brozo observed classroom teachers who were beginning to incorporate the new standards and watched to understand how they were doing this. His goal in completing the study was to find crucial components teachers needed to meet in order for the students to comprehend and gather information from nonfiction texts. Brozo described that it is crucial to ensure three components when using nonfiction texts in early elementary classrooms; "instill awareness that content learning and content literacy learning are inseparable, premise the language arts curriculum on reading to learn, and increase print encounters and experiences with informational text" (p.148). Brozo found that it is essential that teachers and students understand that content literacy and content material are inseparable, and

that the new standards require teachers to combine content literacy and content materials in their classrooms so that students can meet the standards successfully.

Gewertz (2012) also explored the Common Core State Standards. Specifically, Gewertz researched school districts' frequency of using both fiction and nonfiction texts and reorganizing how much time is spent with each type of text (p.10). Gewertz explains that teachers are being mandated to incorporate nonfiction literature in their classrooms to link with the Common Core State Standards.

Preschool classrooms are changing because of the new standards occurring in the elementary classroom. Pentimonti, Zucker, Justice and Kaderavek (2010) researched the use of informational texts in eighty-four preschool classrooms during read-alouds. Pentimonti, et al., conducted the study evaluating eighty-four early childhood teachers who all participated in a thirty-week read-aloud study. The teachers were asked to keep a log of every book that was read aloud in their classroom. As part of the study, the teachers were given an informational trade book every week and encouraged to use the books in their read-aloud lessons. The researchers collected data by gathering the completed reading logs from the teachers. Next, the researchers began to analyze the data by calculating a percentage of the informational books read from each log. The eighty-four preschool teachers incorporated few informational texts. The findings illustrated the following; "82% of the text read was narrative, 13% was mixed genre, 4% was expository and 4% was other" (p. 211). Pentimonti, et al, expressed the importance of incorporating informational texts in early elementary classrooms because the quality of the genre helps provide a spring board for interactions and conversations between teachers and students. Teachers found that the students also were having meaningful conversations about nonfiction text when the teachers were using the text. Pentimonti, et al., explained that there are three

significant benefits when teachers are exposing young children to informational texts: “students benefit in language skills, knowledge about informational text structures, and content area knowledge” (p. 658). Vocabulary is a crucial part of understanding informational texts; by incorporating these texts at an early age, students are given the opportunity to learn and understand the vocabulary earlier. These benefits are believed to improve student achievement in content areas, which is essential as students increase in grade levels and the content area instruction becomes more relevant.

Teaching strategies are another element of applying nonfiction texts in the early elementary classroom. Suzanne Webster (2009) administered a study in which she examined the impact of instructional strategies on first-grade students. Webster studied a class of thirty first grade students and their teacher. Specifically, Webster took a close look at the instructional strategies that helped to increase content knowledge about a topic. The data collected consisted of observation field notes, interviews, and student work samples. Webster found that students benefited from teachers having the students activate their background knowledge on a topic before reading about it; this helped the students begin to think about a topic. Webster also discovered that students who learned difficult vocabulary words prior to reading were better able to focus on the context of the text when they began to read. Webster’s findings showed that the instructional strategy the teacher offered to students were teaching the students to make connections with their own realities to the informational text. Secondly, Webster taught the students to look back in the book, which helped them recall facts about the information read. Lastly, the teacher read aloud to the students, which helped the students increase their content knowledge, expand their vocabulary, and understand the text format, These strategies helped the students better navigate the text .

Use of Nonfiction in Guided Reading and Read-Aloud Lessons

In this section, I explore research centered on the use of nonfiction texts in guided reading and read-aloud lessons. This segment will explain the steps teachers take to guide their students through lessons using nonfiction texts.

The researchers Hedin and Conderman (2010) looked at ways teachers could help students have more effective experiences with nonfiction texts. The purpose of Hedin and Conderman's study was to find and describe some specific features of informational texts that young readers find challenging. As explained by Hedin and Conderman, teachers who plan to use nonfiction texts are encouraged to preview the texts to identify areas where children may have trouble, and find features in the texts that would increase students' comprehension of them

The study looked at sixth-grade students who have low reading achievement. The researchers identified obstacles that striving readers encounter. Those obstacles include understanding the purpose of reading, which means understanding the vocabulary and concepts regarding the topic; and the tendency of struggling students to abandon assigned reading because they find it difficult to complete. Hedin and Conderman offered strategies that help students navigate informational texts. They explained that teachers should teach students to identify the main idea by highlighting it after reading the passage, and they should explain to students that it is important to understand how the authors define key terms in nonfiction text. For example, teachers are encouraged to model how to re-read the sentence so that it begins with the key terms. This will help the students understand the vocabulary associated with the key terms (p.558). Teachers are also encouraged to have students practice these strategies so that they can encounter the text in multiple ways. These strategies are predominantly important when teaching

students to use nonfiction texts in guided reading lessons because the students need to improve their independence and develop their reading skills in order to understand nonfiction texts.

Gill (2009) discussed a process teachers should go through when selecting nonfiction texts for their students. There are three essential questions Gill explains are important for choosing nonfiction picture books: How engaging is the book visually? Is the book accurate? How engaging is the book to the students in terms of its writing style? Gill also emphasized the importance of sharing nonfiction picture books with young children. Gill explains that nonfiction picture books convey information not only in text but in the detailed pictures, graphs, charts, and photographs, which can be used by teachers to help students better understand the text. It is also crucial that students are exposed to the pictures, graphs, charts, and photographs so that they are familiar with them as they grow older and encounter them more frequently. This strategy can be beneficial for visual learners as stated by Gill, "these aspects tend to be visually appealing for young learners" (p.262).

Duke (2010) explained the importance of using nonfiction texts in guided reading and read-aloud lessons. Duke analyzed current reading instructional practices and noticed that the particular practices improved children's comprehension of informational texts. Duke also explained that students' comprehension of informational texts is increasing through being engaged in classroom read-alouds. Duke explained that students' comprehension increased when they participated in read-alouds with informational texts because the students were not navigating the texts. Duke explained that just like learning the structure of fiction texts, it is just as important for young children to learn the structure of nonfiction texts. Duke goes on to explain that reading informational texts and narrative texts aloud on a regular basis is effective for allowing early elementary students to understand the material at a young age. She also

explained that it was important and useful to use “real world text for real world reasons.” This allows students to read texts that are pertinent to life. For example Duke explains that if a student is researching a topic and is allowed to read about it in school, this increases their interest and knowledge regarding nonfiction texts. She also says that it is important to “foster reading motivation,” which includes incorporating students in classroom reading goal-setting, collaboration, and thematic units and projects (p. 70). The instructional practices explained by Duke have added great value in supporting informational reading development.

Duke (2000) also conducted a study where she observed twenty first-grade classrooms. Her goal was to describe instructional experiences first-grade students had with informational texts. In the classroom visits, Duke’s data collection evaluated print on the classroom walls, materials in the classroom library, and classroom activities that involved print. In this study, Duke discovered that there was an overall scarcity of informational texts in the first-grade classroom, with a mean of three-and-a-half minutes a day dedicated to informational texts. Duke also found that there was limited classroom materials on the wall related to informational texts. Twenty percent of the classroom library was devoted to informational books; the remainders of the books were fiction (Duke). When Duke spoke to teachers in the first-grade level about the findings, a common response was: “informational text is simply too hard, for young children” (p.68). This quote explains the teachers’ perspectives and the reason they had limited time spent on informational text in the classroom (p. 68).

Richgels (2002) conducted a study of the use of informational texts in kindergarten. He studied one kindergarten teacher and looked at how the teacher was using informational texts in the kindergarten classroom. Data were collected through classroom observations of the teacher. He found that in the classroom, the teacher used informational books during themed lessons,

specifically dinosaurs and hatching baby chicks. In the units, the teacher provided the students with both nonfiction and fiction books about chicks and dinosaurs. The teacher allowed the students to bring in their own books, as well. The teacher used the chosen informational books during read-aloud to help the students understand the vocabulary and how a nonfiction book is written. The teacher used informational texts paired with other text forms, such as narrative texts and other media. Richgels noticed that the teacher used other forms of informational texts including labels, signs, recipes, and posters (p.587). He also found that it was important to make the students' experiences with nonfiction texts functional. This was done by making daily weather reports using weather words that they were previously taught. While using the weather reports, they read nonfiction texts related to the weather reports. Richgels found that by using the informational texts, students started to write their own informational books about what they were learning. In conclusion, it was found that "informational texts were sources not only of content knowledge, but also knowledge about the workings of written language" (Richgels. p.594).

Bradley and Donovan conducted a study in 2010, which assessed students in a second-grade classroom about their knowledge of nonfiction texts. The study began by giving the students a blank book; they were asked to write about a topic using an informational text format. Bradley and Donovan wanted to see what the students knew about specific features of nonfiction texts, such as table of contents, headings, index, and pictures. In particular, they wanted to see if the students put these features into their writing. The results of the study showed that students were able to write their own informational books with the awareness of elements and features that are different from fiction books.

Within the classroom, the students' compositions varied greatly, but as a whole, each student had an understanding of the features of nonfiction texts. The majority of the students

understood that informational texts are factual, and headings are used to describe the text. However, the students' work samples lacked key elements, such as a table of contents, bold print, and vocabulary.

Bradley and Donovan advised the teacher to begin using focused read-aloud activities that incorporated nonfiction texts. The informational texts also were accompanied by discussions to help provide students with important language that described how informational books work. After the teachers participated in read-aloud instruction with informational texts, the students were assessed again to see how much growth they had made on writing and using nonfiction text features in their own writing. Bradley and Donovan found that there was student growth, but not all students' work changed dramatically from their first efforts. Students were able to show more features of informational text writing when writing their second books (Bradley & Donovan, p.251). The students incorporated bold print, vocabulary, and some used a table of contents (Bradley & Donovan). This study shows evidence that students who gain more experience with informational texts are able to understand and produce improved informational texts.

Teachers' Perspectives on Nonfiction Texts

The research in this section describes researchers' studies on teachers' perspectives of using nonfiction texts in the early elementary classroom during guided reading and read-aloud lessons.

As previously stated, Duke analyzed the use of nonfiction texts related to the teachers' perspectives of the texts. Duke's (2010) research took place in first-grade classrooms. She used 20 classrooms in the study. Duke interviewed the teachers, inventoried the classroom libraries,

and observed the classroom space as well as the time spent using informational texts during instruction. Duke concluded from her research that on averaged, 9.8% of the library collection contained nonfiction texts. In addition, 2.6% of the materials displayed on classroom walls referenced nonfiction materials and three-and-a-half minutes of daily classroom time was being dedicated to nonfiction text (p.45). Duke learned that teachers believed that informational reading was more difficult than fiction reading, as many stated this during interviews (Duke). These numbers revealed to Duke that teachers did not have a positive perspective on nonfiction texts and they did not value nonfiction texts as an asset in the first-grade classroom. As a result, students were not being exposed to nonfiction texts at an early age.

Hall and Sabey (2007) conducted interviews in their study, which revealed teachers' perspectives on nonfiction texts in the early elementary classroom. Hall and Sabey found that many teachers suggested that early preparation with informational texts can help decrease problems later in comprehending informational texts. Teachers also recommended that children read a wide range of genres during their primary grades. The teachers who were interviewed also expressed interest in being trained on using nonfiction texts (p. 266). Through the research, it was determined that teachers in this study valued nonfiction texts, but were unsure as to how to incorporate them in their early elementary classroom.

Richgels, who was mentioned in a previous section, encouraged the teacher to try to use nonfiction texts more frequently in her classroom. Prior to the teacher using the texts, Richgels taught the teacher about specific principles that should be followed when using informational text in kindergarten. The principles that the teacher used in the study were making the experience with the text functional for the students and using informational text with other informational media (p.590). The teachers used the text and the strategies offered by Richgels

and were interviewed periodically over the course of the study to understand how their views may have changed. Richgels discovered that the teachers' confidence with the use of informational texts increased as the teacher used them more in the classroom. The teachers felt more comfortable with the texts and could implement the strategies. He explained that the teachers felt they had resources to use in terms of teaching the material to the early elementary students, which encouraged them to use the texts more often (p. 593). Richgels also found that teachers thought that informational texts were not only a source of content, but also helpful for students to learn the written format of nonfiction texts. Understanding the written format helped the students comprehend and handle the text with more confidence. Overall, Richgel's study was beneficial for both the teachers and the students in their use and understanding of informational texts.

Mantzicopoulos and Patrick (2011) looked at teachers' concerns regarding informational science books. The researchers interviewed five early elementary teachers, asking the teachers about their thoughts and concerns specifically about informational science books. They found that teachers believed informational books would be less interesting for young children than fiction, and more interesting for boys, but less interesting for girls, to read. Once the books were read in the classrooms with the students, Mantzicopoulos and Patrick found that both genders expressed interest in the science informational books. Young boys and girls expressed equal interest in reading expository texts, regardless of the topic. The study shows that the interest level of nonfiction text is not dependent on a student's gender.

Summary

This chapter summarizes researchers' beliefs using nonfiction texts in guided reading and read-aloud lessons, teachers' perspectives of nonfiction texts and the use of nonfiction texts in the early elementary classroom. The literature reviewed shows that overall, teachers felt more confident using nonfiction texts in their classroom when they participated in training and when they were given resources to help in their understanding of how to use nonfiction text in the early elementary classroom.

Students increased their understanding of text features when they were given the opportunity to experience nonfiction texts. The teachers found that it was beneficial for the students to learn about the texts from an early age as it made the transition to the upper level grades easier for them. The teachers also found that there was a benefit to using nonfiction text regardless of gender in the classroom, since both genders learned from the material.

Chapter 3: Methods and Procedures

The main purpose of this qualitative research study was to investigate first-grade teachers' perspectives on using nonfiction text during guided reading and read-aloud lessons. The purpose is also to understand why teachers may or may not be using nonfiction texts in their classrooms. In chapter three, I will discuss the methods and procedures of the study. The methods and procedures will include the participants, the main question, procedures, and the data collection methods I have used. I will also address the ways I analyze the data and describe the limitations this study may have.

Research Question

During the eight -week study, I focused on the following question: What are the teachers' perspectives on nonfiction texts being used in guided reading lessons and read-alouds in first grade?

Participants

I originally asked six teachers to participate in the research study by asking them to complete a survey. I then chose three participants from the surveys that were completed. The teachers selected for this study were all from one school in a small suburb of Buffalo, N.Y. The teachers' experience spans from ten to twenty years of service, and all are tenured teachers in the district. The teachers are all white females, and all are currently first-grade teachers, although they all have taught other grade levels in the past.

I selected my participants purposefully, with the expectation to gain insight into the teachers' perspectives regarding nonfiction texts being used during guided reading and read-

aloud lessons. The teachers who participated in this study were not teachers with whom I had worked directly in my classroom. The teachers all had students who were in all three RTI tiers due to their reading and math scores. Students in tiers 2 and 3 were pulled out for interventions in reading and math. All three teachers received their Master's degree in General Education.

Context of the Study

I conducted this study in a suburban elementary school in western New York. The population of the community is middle class. The average household income for the district was \$43,000 (publicschoolreview.com). The school services 648 elementary students from pre-K to 5th grade (publicschoolreview.com). The school employs 56 teachers. Forty-two percent of the elementary students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. In the school, 48% of students are girls and 52% are boys. The student to teacher ratio is 11:1. The school connects well with the community. The parents are encouraged to be involved in the education of their children. The demographics of the student population for the district are 1 percent Asian, 6 percent Hispanic, 26 percent Black, and 62 percent white/Caucasian (publicschoolreview.com).

Procedures of the Study

This study was conducted over eight weeks during January, February, and March of 2013. I observed the three teachers during guided reading and read-aloud activities and conducted afterschool interviews. During the first week, I collected surveys and chose three participants. During the second week of the study, I spent time interviewing the three teachers. Each interview consisted of similar questions that were asked in the survey, but the teachers were able to elaborate on their responses.

During weeks three through eight, I spent 20-30 minutes observing the classrooms during guided reading and read-aloud times. I conducted two observations for each teacher. I also collected inventory information on the teachers' classroom libraries. During the inventories, I looked for nonfiction texts that were readily available for students to read and that were on their reading levels. Then, I looked at how many nonfiction texts the teacher had available for three months' worth of read-aloud material. When I conducted the observations, I looked at how the teachers used the nonfiction texts in the classroom. I observed each teacher's ability and confidence in using the nonfiction texts and what elements the teacher focused on in the lesson. Data were collected for each teacher by conducting a survey, two observations, one interview, and an inventory was taken of each teacher's classroom library. Each teacher has twenty-two students in her classroom.

During the interviews, I focused my attention on asking each teacher how she used nonfiction texts and why she used nonfiction texts at certain times. I asked the teachers for their thoughts about the use of nonfiction texts and how they felt about the importance of using nonfiction texts in the primary grades. The interviews ranged between 20-30 minutes. While investigating the teachers' classroom libraries, I focused my attention on the number of read-aloud texts they planned over a three-month period of time, and which were nonfiction compares to those that were classified as fiction. I also looked at the number of nonfiction texts versus fiction texts that were available for students at their independent reading levels.

My Positionality as the Researcher

I am a 26- year-old Caucasian female living in Western New York. I grew up in a middle- class family in a suburb of Rochester, New York. I completed my undergraduate studies

at Canisius College, receiving my Bachelor of Science in Childhood Inclusive Education and Health Science. I hold New York State initial certificates in elementary education (grades one through six) and students with disabilities (grades one through six). I am currently pursuing my Master's Degree in literacy education. When my degree is completed, I will be certified in literacy birth-grade six.

Currently, I am a special education and consultant teacher for kindergarten and first grade in the suburban elementary school where I conducted the study. I teach kindergarten and first grade students who have an individualized education program (IEP). This is my second year teaching in this school and in this school district.

My educational philosophy is based around literacy. I believe that literacy is a fundamental part of a child's education. When students have a strong basis for literacy they are able to learn and grow. I believe that students need to be taught how to use many different types of genres such as nonfiction, poetry, environmental print, and fiction. I believe that it is important to engage students in reading informational texts. My philosophy is aligned with Bradley and Donovan's (2010) research. They discuss the importance that reading informational texts has on engagement in discussions and understanding genre features. Students need to be immersed in this type of text from an early age as they will be exposed to it on menus at restaurants, reading recipes in cookbooks, following instructions to assemble furniture, reading about new places to explore, current events, and just learning about our world.

Data Collection and Analysis

I collected data for this research study through the use of surveys, interviews with observations of elementary teachers, and an inventory of the teachers' classrooms libraries.

Through my analysis of the data collected, I found patterns between the teachers' use of nonfiction text during guided reading and read-aloud lessons.

Survey.

Six surveys were distributed with the teacher's consent packet and returned to me upon completion. The survey questions were centered on how teachers use nonfiction texts in the classroom, their confidence with nonfiction texts, and what their beliefs are when using the texts. I then used the surveys to look for similarities across the three teachers.

Interview.

The interview mirrored the survey. The teachers were asked questions similar to those asked in the survey. I asked for more information about examples of ways they use nonfiction texts in their first-grade classroom setting. From the interview, I analyzed the data looking for characteristics that were similar across all three subjects regarding their use of nonfiction texts. The questions were also focused around their confidence in using nonfiction texts in the classroom.

Observation.

I conducted two observations for each teacher I interviewed. One observation occurred during read-aloud and one during guided reading. I used a worksheet that I created to document the observations. The rubric was in table format, with two columns. One column was used to record the teacher's actions, and the other column was to record student reaction during the observation. I noted how the teacher introduced the nonfiction texts, as well as what the teacher did throughout the lesson to keep the students engaged and continue to teach about the text. I

then noted the activities that followed the text, and how the teacher connected the text to other parts of curriculum. I also observed the students' familiarity with the text and how confident they were navigating the text.

Inventory of classroom library.

During the inventory of the teachers' classroom libraries, I counted all the books available for students to read at their independent level and the numbers of nonfiction and fiction texts that were available. I then reviewed the read-aloud texts that the teachers were using during a three-month period of time and counted the nonfiction and fiction texts. This data assisted me in understanding the teachers' perspectives on nonfiction texts in first grade.

Week one.

A survey and consent letter was distributed to all the first-grade teachers in the district. The teachers were asked to complete the survey and return it to me. The teachers who sent back the survey and consent letter were put into a pool of candidates, and three participants were then chosen at random. The three teachers were notified via email that they were selected to participate in the research study.

Week two.

Week two was spent debriefing the teachers on the study design and purpose, possible expectations and time-frame for the remaining four weeks. I explained the need for all of us to communicate frequently to ensure that our study design was aligned. At the end of the week, I began interviewing the teachers.

Weeks three through eight.

During weeks three through eight, I completed classroom observations with the participating teachers. I conducted two classroom observations for each teacher. I also completed the classroom library inventories for each teacher during these weeks.

Criteria of Trustworthiness

I was firm in my goal to make the findings of my research study reliable by following procedures that are ethical and free from any biases. I used prolonged engagement throughout the eight-week study by constantly observing and interviewing the participants. I engaged in persistent observation by studying the classroom during guided reading lessons and read-aloud lessons as a non-participant. I ensured trustworthiness through the use of multiple sources of data: interviews with ten teachers and eight observations of three teachers. My triangulation of data sources enabled me to find specific patterns and themes regarding the teachers' perspectives and practices. The data collected from interviews, inventories and observations made the study valid and reliable because the data was from multiple sources. The common themes I discovered throughout the data analysis process were reflective of the data that I collected from the teachers I observed and interviewed.

After collecting all of my data, I conducted member checks with the teachers in order to check the accuracy of my findings. This is important because it enabled the participants to correct any misinterpretations I may have made during the analysis.

Summary

This chapter explains the process I used to complete my eight-week research study. My research consisted of having three participating teachers. I explained in this section my role as the researcher. The participants were chosen at random from the surveys completed in the first week. I explained the data that would be collected by the interview, observation, and inventory.

Chapter Four: Results

In this chapter I will present each teacher's case study. The purpose of this study was to investigate first grade teachers' perspectives on using nonfiction texts during guided reading and read-alouds. The three teachers studied all taught first grade in a suburban school in Western New York. I explored the use of nonfiction texts in the first-grade classroom during read-alouds and guided reading lessons.

My investigation began by surveying six first-grade teachers and randomly choosing three teachers. I then conducted two observations, one classroom library inventory and one interview with each of the three teachers. During my observations with the teachers, I focused my attention on the text the teacher was using, how the teachers introduced the nonfiction text to the students, and the students' reactions to the text.

My research question was, What are first grade teachers' perspectives on using nonfiction texts during guided reading and read-alouds in first grade? This chapter is organized by subject. I will explain my findings from each teacher who participated in my study based on an analysis of each teacher's observations, inventory, interview and survey. I identified the teachers by letter rather by name to maintain their anonymity. These case studies helped me address my research question. I will discuss each teacher and the findings.

Figure 4.2 shows the three subjects involved in the study. They are referred to as Teacher A, Teacher B, and Teacher C. The figure shows the number of years of experience of each of the study participants and the reading levels of the students in each teacher's class.

Figure 4.1 Participant Information

Teacher	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C
Years of experience	24	20	15
Student reading level assessed with the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment	Levels: C-J	Levels: B-K	Levels: A-J

Teacher A

Teacher A has been a teacher for 24 years. She taught second grade for 13 years and then moved to first grade. Teacher A has a classroom of first-grade students and their reading levels are between C and J according to the Fountas and Pinnell benchmark assessment. Below are three sections in which I describe the analysis of Teacher A's observations, survey, interview, and inventory.

Teacher A values nonfiction texts.

Through the observations, inventory, survey and interview, I was able to conclude that Teacher A values nonfiction texts. Below I will describe different pieces of evidence that shows that she values nonfiction texts.

As described in her survey, Teacher A uses nonfiction texts in less than half of her guided reading and read-aloud lessons per week. Teacher A explained that nonfiction texts are extremely important, as she stated in the comment section, "I believe students should read nonfiction text to build vocabulary and understanding through all subjects." This quote shows that she values nonfiction texts throughout all subject areas. On the survey, Teacher A also

explained that she believes students are interested in nonfiction texts, as she stated; “especially boys, they prefer nonfiction text, but all children are interested in it”.

Teacher A explained in the survey that her confidence with nonfiction texts is high, and that she really enjoys teaching with nonfiction text as it “enhances her lessons”. Due to her high level of confidence, she values nonfiction texts.

During Teacher A’s second observation, I was able to see that she values nonfiction texts. She demonstrated her mastery of nonfiction texts when she spent time teaching the students how to navigate the text to find information. She had the students use the table of contents to find information.

The figure below is evidence from the inventory that Teacher A values nonfiction texts. The first figure shows that she has 40 nonfiction texts and 160 fiction texts available to students at their individual reading levels. The second figure shows the number of nonfiction and fiction texts that the teacher has for three months of read-aloud texts. In conclusion, Teacher A had 33% of nonfiction texts in the classroom available for the students in both read-aloud books, and 25% of her guided reading books were nonfiction. Teacher A had more nonfiction books at the students’ individual reading level than nonfiction read-aloud texts.

Figure 4.2 Inventory of Classroom Library

Teacher	# of nonfiction texts	# of fiction texts
Teacher A	40	160

Figure 4.3 Inventory of Three Months of Read- Aloud Library

Teacher	# of nonfiction texts	# of fiction texts
Teacher A	10	33

Teacher A uses nonfiction texts to support the rest of curriculum.

I observed Teacher A twice. When I observed in her classroom, I sat toward the back corner of the classroom. In the first observation, the students sat on the carpet in the front of the room where they gathered for a read-aloud. This was a routine that the students were used to. The goal of the read-aloud was to calm the students after the excitement of lunch, and to use the time to discuss and read nonfiction texts about the topics being studied in science, social studies, and math. The teacher chose a nonfiction book about dimes, as the students were beginning to learn money in math. Teacher A engaged the students by asking them to put their “math brains” on before they began the math lesson. She did this to help the students begin to think in math terms. She explicitly stated; “Today we are going to read a nonfiction text about dimes”. She then set the purpose for their learning as she stated; “Today in our math lesson we are going to

be learning about dimes so I thought this would be a good way to get our money brains working and think about characteristics that dimes have”.

She then passed out large, laminated dimes to the students, and asked them to just look at them. Then, she asked the students to put the dimes in their laps and she began to read. Teacher A displayed her use of direct instruction as she stopped after each page and the students would look on their laminated dimes for the particular characteristics that were being described in the book. The students showed interest and were able to recall facts about the dimes after the read-aloud, which led into the math lesson that was going to be taught.

In the interview with Teacher A, I was able to gather evidence that she provides nonfiction texts to support the rest of curriculum. Teacher A explained that the lessons in which she decides to incorporate these texts depends on the topic, due to the difficulty of finding books that are related to what she is teaching and that are also aligned with the state standards. When asked why she chooses to use nonfiction texts during guided reading and read-aloud lessons, she stated that guided reading time allows for the most flexibility regarding instruction, and she can choose topics more freely and align with other subjects, as noted in the observation when she read the book All About Dimes.

Overall this section of chapter four explains how Teacher A provides nonfiction text to support the rest of curriculum. The items described were used from the survey, interview, and observations.

Teacher A provides direct instruction.

Through the observations, inventory, interview, and survey, I was able to find evidence that Teacher A provides direct instruction regarding nonfiction texts. In the interview with

Teacher A, she explained that she does find some aspects of nonfiction texts difficult to teach, such as some of the more difficult text features like italicized or bold text. She went on to explain that with increased exposure and explicit instruction with these features, students become more comfortable with the text.

During my first observation of Teacher A, I was able to find evidence that she provided direct instruction about nonfiction texts. When she used the All about Dimes book, she asked the students what nonfiction meant and the students were able to answer the question correctly. She continued to explain, “Today on our math lesson, we are going to be learning about dimes so I thought this would be a good way to get our money brains working and thinking about characteristics that dimes have”. Teacher A explicitly explains to the students how to think about characteristics of dimes.

The second observation that I did with Teacher A was during a twenty-five minute guided reading lesson. I was sitting a couple of feet away from the kidney-shaped table where four students and one teacher were sitting. The instruction was being given at a Fountas and Pinnell level E, using the nonfiction book Camping Out. Teacher A explained to the students, “We are reading this book for a second time. Can anyone recall information that they learned from this book the other day?” The students pondered the question and gave some information that they remembered from the other day. The students recalled facts, such as items that campers need to bring and what they use to sleep in.

Teacher A then reviewed that the book was a nonfiction book about camping and explained that there are specific text features, including the table of contents and highlighted text. The teacher had the students find the table of contents and to begin to practice using it. The

students were asked to open the book to the table of contents. Next, Teacher A modeled how to navigate the book by using the table of contents. Then, she explained “When we use the table of contents, it helps us find where a particular part is in the book. For example, if we are looking for what food to bring camping, we would look at the table of contents under food and we would see that it would be on page 5. Now, everyone open to page 5. Do we see information about food on this page?” The teacher then asked the students to practice navigating the table of contents by telling them to find particular parts in the story. For instance, she had them find highlighted text. The students were able to follow the directions and complete the task. This observation shows that she provides direct instruction to the students regarding nonfiction.

Teacher B

Teacher B has taught for 20 years. She has been in first grade the entire 20 years. She has taught in two different school districts. According to the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment, Teacher B’s students’ reading levels at the time for the research were between levels B through K.

Teacher B values nonfiction texts.

From evidence that I gathered from the teacher survey, interview, observation, and inventory, I was able to conclude that Teacher B values nonfiction texts. Specifically, from the survey I found that Teacher B uses nonfiction texts in less than half of her lessons. She stated; “I try to incorporate nonfiction text in my guided reading lessons one time a week”. From the survey she also explained that she believes nonfiction texts are very important because students are asked to read and interpret informational text when they reach upper level grades and in higher education. She explained that incorporating nonfiction texts is now part of the standards

and teachers are being asked to familiarize themselves with the texts and the standards to help meet students' needs. In the survey, she also explained that she recognizes that there are important aspects of nonfiction texts that students in first grade need to know how to use. She also understands that in upper-level grades, the students are exposed to more nonfiction texts and are required to read and comprehend the texts independently.

In my interview with Teacher B, she expressed interest in using nonfiction texts more often, which shows that she values the text. She also spoke about how the Common Core State Standards are very important, bringing new expectations for the teachers to incorporate nonfiction texts into their classrooms. Teacher B explained that she knows students should be exposed to nonfiction texts in the first-grade classroom. She also stated that she is more willing to use nonfiction texts with higher-level students in her classroom because she thinks that they have the background knowledge to comprehend the material.

The inventory of Teacher B's classroom library and three months of read-aloud material shows that she values nonfiction texts, as she had 44% nonfiction texts and 45% nonfiction texts available for read-aloud material. The figure below shows the number of books for both read-aloud and her classroom library.

Figure 4.4 Inventory of the Classroom Library

Teacher	# of nonfiction texts	# of fiction texts
Teacher B	32	73

Figure 4.5 Inventory of Three Months of Read-Aloud Texts

Teacher	# of nonfiction texts	# of fiction texts
Teacher B	15	33

Teacher B uses nonfiction texts across curriculum

This section of chapter four explains evidence that shows that Teacher B uses nonfiction texts across curriculum. She explained that she focuses on using nonfiction texts during more than half of her read-aloud sessions. She explained, “During read-aloud lessons, I try to incorporate science and social studies. I am using nonfiction text to do this because it helps give students the content that they need to meet the standards but they are also receiving literature-based activities in doing this.”

During the interview with Teacher B, she explained that she tends to focus on using nonfiction texts for guided reading lessons because she is able to focus her instruction to the group. She believes it is easier to target the students’ needs because they are in a small group. She also finds that in guided reading, it is easier to focus her attention on content because she chooses the books. She often tries to incorporate social studies and science in guided reading lessons.

During both observations with Teacher B, I was able to gather evidence to show that she uses nonfiction texts across curriculum. The first observation I did with Teacher B was during a

guided reading lesson with four first-grade students at a level E according to Fountas and Pinnell. I was sitting behind two students at the kidney-shaped table. Teacher B began her lesson by asking the students what they knew about fireflies, and if they had ever seen one. Teacher B, using the iPad, then showed a YouTube video of a firefly. Next, Teacher B introduced the book about fireflies by reviewing what the students already knew. She told the students the purpose of reading the book was to find facts about fireflies. Before reading, Teacher B went through the vocabulary in the book, which included words that explained parts of the fireflies' bodies, and where they live.

The students then choral read the story while Teacher B checked for understanding by asking questions about what they were reading. She called on all students equally when checking for understanding. When the students were finished reading the text, they were asked to go back and find a fact that they had read in the text. The students shared the facts they found aloud, one at a time. Then, they talked about the fact in more detail. Next, students participated in a shared writing activity using the facts that they had found. The students put their facts into their own words and dictated them to the teacher, who wrote them out on chart paper. The students then read the completed piece together in a choral read.

The second observation I did with Teacher B was during a read-aloud of the book Winter in the Wild. The students were sitting on the floor in the classroom in the whole group area while I was sitting toward the back corner. The teacher introduced the book by explaining that animals behave differently in the winter. She asked if anyone knew what animals do in the winter. A student raised his hand and explained that some animals hibernate. The teacher explained what hibernation was and why animals have to hibernate, then she began reading.

The book went through a several different animals. The students were captivated by the snowshoe hare because it changes color in the winter. Some of the students enjoyed looking closely at the pictures of the different animals. The students also learned how the animals eat during the time of hibernation. Through the two observations, survey, and interview with Teacher B, it is clear that she uses nonfiction texts across all of curriculum.

Teacher B's confidence impacts her use of nonfiction texts.

This section of chapter four explains how Teacher B's confidence with using nonfiction texts impacts how she uses it and how often she uses it. Teacher B explained that her confidence in reading nonfiction texts is lower. To help increase her confidence and prepare her for questions that may be asked by her students, she tends to research the topic before reading so that she is prepared for questions that may come up in discussions. In the survey, Teacher B shows that her perception of nonfiction texts is that they are important, but that she struggles with her confidence in using them.

In the interview with Teacher B, she explained that she tends to find it overwhelming to use nonfiction texts in the classroom. She tends to struggle with integrating the texts regularly into her instruction. Teacher B explained that she will sporadically put nonfiction texts into her instruction. Teacher B stated that some weeks her plans contain no nonfiction texts, while the following weeks she will use it for several days.

Additionally, Teacher B expressed that she feels overwhelmed when planning to use nonfiction texts because she is not confident with what features to focus on when using the texts. She also struggles with deciding whether to use the texts as a guide for her instruction or as a simple read-aloud.

Through the evidence collected above regarding Teacher B's confidence, it is clear that her confidence with the text impacts her use of the texts with her first-grade class.

Teacher C

Teacher C has been teaching for 15 years. She taught kindergarten for three years and then has spent the last twelve years in first grade. When the research began in her classroom, her students' reading levels were between levels A through J according to the Fountas and Pinnell benchmark assessment.

Teacher C's confidence and knowledge with nonfiction texts affect her use of nonfiction texts.

In this section of chapter four, I looked at the third teacher who participated in the research. I concluded that Teacher C's confidence and knowledge with nonfiction texts affected her use of it. In the survey, Teacher C showed little confidence and use of nonfiction texts in the classroom. She stated that she uses nonfiction texts in less than half of her lessons, but is aware of the need of nonfiction texts in the classroom. She also explained that she was "somewhat" confident in reading and using nonfiction texts depending on what the subject is. She tries to do research on different topics that she is introducing to the students, as this helps her increase her confidence in using the texts. Teacher C also explained that during guided reading, she does not use that many nonfiction texts with her lower reading groups because she doesn't feel that the students will have adequate background knowledge to be interested in the texts.

During the observation with Teacher C, I was able to see how she used nonfiction texts. The teacher introduced the text and had the students talk about what they knew about Martin Luther King prior to reading the book. Then, Teacher C explained to the students the use of bold

print in the text, what it meant, and how to read it. The students practiced reading the bold text to find the definition of “bold text.” The students then were asked to choral read the text together. Teacher C stopped them after each page to check for comprehension. The teacher asked them questions regarding the page and had them paraphrase what was happening in the text.

A student posed a question about one of the pictures, asking how many kids Martin Luther King had. The teacher did not know the answer and, therefore, told the students that she would look for the answer on the Internet. She proceeded to walk over to the computer to look it up and then provided the students with the answer, emphasizing that sometimes reading nonfiction texts makes us ask questions. She also explained that as teachers we do not always know everything, and it is important for us to ask questions and find the answers.

The second observation I did was during a read-aloud lesson. The students were sitting on the floor in the large group floor area of the classroom. Teacher C used a nonfiction text about penguins which focused on different kinds of penguins and their physical attributes. Teacher C began the book introduction by activating the students' prior knowledge about penguins. She also referenced the Scholastic News article they had read the day before. This helped the students gather additional background information. While she began reading, Teacher C would pause after each page to summarize the important facts that were read. She emphasized the pictures to describe what was occurring in the book. When she began to explain that the penguins live in Antarctica, the students asked where Antarctica was. She then used the globe to show the students. This helped create a strong visual which supported the text.

Lastly, I reviewed Teacher C's inventory of her classroom library and was able to see the correlation between her confidence and number of nonfiction texts available to the students.

Below is the figure showing the number of nonfiction texts available to students in the classroom library and the second figure is of the number of nonfiction text available to students in three months of read-aloud books.

Figure 4.6 Inventory of Teacher C Classroom Libraries

Teacher	# of nonfiction texts	# of fiction texts
Teacher C	23	85

Figure 4.7 Inventory of Teacher C Three Months of Read-Aloud Texts

Teacher	# of nonfiction texts	# of fiction texts
Teacher C	8	30

The inventory for Teacher C showed that she had 27% nonfiction texts in the read-aloud library and 27% nonfiction texts, this shows that she had the lowest percentage of nonfiction text in her classroom.

Teacher C understands the importance of nonfiction texts.

Through the observations, survey and interview, I gathered evidence to show that Teacher C understands the importance of using nonfiction texts. From the survey, Teacher C wrote, "I know I need to do more. We do not have as many nonfiction books available and the reading series that we use has four fiction stories to one nonfiction story per unit." Teacher C feels there is a lack of resources available for the students and herself to use to help incorporate nonfiction texts in the early elementary classroom.

During the interview, Teacher C explained that she uses nonfiction text twice per week in the classroom, mainly during guided reading, an introduction to math, science, or social study lessons. She explained that the easiest time to use nonfiction texts is during guided reading because the students are at their own reading levels and she can work with this genre at their levels.

During the interview, I inquired what Teacher C thought about the importance it holds for students to be exposed to nonfiction texts at an early age. She explained that she thought it was very important that they were exposed to nonfiction texts. In regards to students' exposure at a young age, she stated, "With the increased Common Core State Standards that require students to read nonfiction texts, the students need to know how to navigate nonfiction texts and learn to read them. When they reach upper grade levels, they need to be equipped with these skills."

Teacher C also explained that she values using nonfiction texts because she believes that it will help students as they grow academically. She continued to explain that the hardest part of reading and using nonfiction texts is that the students tend to ask more questions and she is not always prepared with the answers, although she tries to research beforehand so she has the correct content of what she is teaching.

Teacher C feels there is little interest in nonfiction texts with early elementary children.

In the survey, Teacher C explained that she believes that read-alouds should be done for pleasure so she leans towards using fictional texts during this time since she thinks her students enjoy that more. Her use of nonfiction texts is primarily to begin a lesson in science, social studies, and sometimes in math. In the interview, I asked why she doesn't use nonfiction texts

very often in read-alouds; she stated that she tends to keep away from using it during read-alouds as she wants this time to be a time of relaxation and pleasure.

Analysis of the Three Teachers

This section of chapter four provides an analysis of the results collected, broken down by conclusions drawn from analysis of the teachers' results.

The teachers were all aware that nonfiction texts are important to use in their instruction.

While interviewing the teachers about their attitude toward using nonfiction texts in the classroom, all three teachers were able to state that they understood the importance of using nonfiction texts, especially now that the new Common Core State Standards have been implemented. All teachers understood that the students would primarily be reading nonfiction texts in the upper level grades. Through the observation done with Teacher A, she was aware of the importance of using nonfiction texts and demonstrated her knowledge of it, using it to introduce the money math unit. Teacher A indicated that she understands the importance of using nonfiction text to provide nonfiction literacy instruction in different curricula.

In Teacher B's read-aloud lesson, she used the text as a way to engage the students in the current season of winter. This shows that she uses nonfiction text as simply a read-aloud activity and not as a guide for her instruction in other subjects. Teacher B also explained in her interview that reading nonfiction text to early elementary students is vital. She explained that it provides students with great content knowledge as well as an understanding of how the genre is written.

In Teacher C's interview, she explained that although her use of nonfiction texts is less, she still is aware of its importance. During the first lesson I observed with Teacher C, it was

clear that she valued nonfiction texts. She was teaching a Social Studies unit about Martin Luther King and incorporated a nonfiction text about him into her guided reading lesson with a small group.

The teachers all used nonfiction texts in their guided reading lessons.

Each teacher explained in the interview that they use nonfiction texts in guided reading lessons. They do not use them every day for guided reading, but they try to incorporate them into the lessons when they can. The teachers used the nonfiction text to support their teaching in the classroom and they typically tried to utilize them in the guided reading lessons.

Teacher A showed her confidence in using a nonfiction text during the observed guided reading lesson. The teacher was able to show the students different features about the text. The students responded positively, and they were able to produce their own nonfiction texts about the topic in a shared writing activity.

Teacher B showed that during guided reading, she was able to use the text. Also she relayed the importance of finding facts while reading nonfiction text. Teacher C used nonfiction text during guided reading in the lesson that was observed. Although Teacher C does not use nonfiction texts regularly in guided reading, she used it for the observation and showed understanding of what needed to be taught for the students to gain understanding of the text.

The majority of the teachers felt more comfortable using nonfiction texts in guided reading.

The teachers all explained that they were more comfortable using nonfiction texts in guided reading opposed to read-alouds. The teachers thought the students responded well to nonfiction texts in guided reading. Teacher A explained that she can target students' needs when using nonfiction texts in guided reading. Teacher B expressed that it was easier for her to plan

for using nonfiction texts during guided reading because she could meet the students at their instruction level and work in a small group. Teacher C, however, did not feel comfortable with using nonfiction texts during guided reading. She instead preferred to use nonfiction texts during read-aloud lessons. Overall, nonfiction texts were used consistently with the three teachers that participated in the study.

Summary

Chapter four summarizes the data captured from the three teachers that I surveyed, interviewed, observed, and inventoried their classroom libraries. The results were cross-analyzed to identify themes common to all the subjects. I summarized each teacher's experience as a case study addressing my research question.

Chapter Five: Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

The focus of this eight-week research study was based on researching first grade teachers' perspectives on using nonfiction texts in guided reading and read-aloud lessons. I conducted my study in a suburban elementary school in Western New York. The participants of this study were three first-grade teachers. They participated in a survey, two classroom observations during guided reading and read-alouds, an interview, and an inventory of the classroom library. Through these activities, I was able to understand the teachers' perspectives on using nonfiction texts in the first-grade classroom. I have learned from these teachers, and I am now able to develop my own ideas about how I can incorporate nonfiction texts with my primary age students. I realize that there are additional subjects that I would like to research in the future, such as how to incorporate nonfiction literacy into early childhood education.

Conclusions

Based on the case studies I have outlined in chapter four, I am able to make several conclusions related to my research question: What are teachers' perspectives on nonfiction texts being used in guided reading lessons and read-alouds in first grade?

Teacher confidence in using nonfiction texts may determine the number of times the teacher will use nonfiction texts.

Teacher A used nonfiction texts with ease and confidence. She was able to show the students the different text features and used the nonfiction text confidently in the read-aloud observation. She gave the students hands-on materials to assist in understanding the topic covered. Teacher A and B used nonfiction texts the most and their confidence is the highest, based on observations and the interview. It was clear during the interview that Teacher C is not comfortable with using nonfiction texts. She has a negative perspective and she struggles when

students ask questions while reading. Teacher A and Teacher B used nonfiction texts in both guided reading and read-aloud lessons, whereas Teacher C used nonfiction texts primarily in high-level guided reading group lessons opposed to guided reading. She did not feel confident in using nonfiction texts in guided reading lessons. She was more confident in using nonfiction texts during read-aloud lessons. Mantizcopoulos and Patrick presented that teachers typically have a thin understanding of and comfort with nonfiction texts and this, in turn, will “have implications for teacher practices” (Mantizcopoulos and Patrick, 2011, p.271). Two out of the three teachers in my research study had confidence in using nonfiction texts, while the third teacher did not, which impacted her use of the text.

Teachers with a high number of nonfiction texts in their classrooms seem to incorporate those texts often.

When looking at the interviews and inventories that I did with the three teachers it was apparent that the number of texts available to students in the classroom had a correlation with how often the teachers used the text. Teacher A had 25% nonfiction text in her classroom library and 33% in her read-aloud collection. Teacher B had 44% nonfiction text in her classroom library and 45% in her read-aloud collection. In contrast, Teacher C had 27% nonfiction text in her classroom library and 27% in her read-aloud collection. The numbers show that Teacher C had fewer nonfiction texts than the other two teachers. From the research, it was clear that Teacher C used nonfiction texts less as she explained in her interview and survey. Therefore, there is a correlation between using nonfiction texts and having nonfiction texts available in the classroom.

Implications for Student Learning

In this section of chapter five I will explain implications for student learning. The information stated in this section relates to research collected during the eight-week research study. I analyzed the data collected and then used the information to identify implications for student learning in the future.

Nonfiction texts engage students.

Through the observations, it was clear that the students seemed to enjoy the nonfiction texts presented to them. The students asked and answered questions during all three observations of guided reading lessons, which shows that they were engaged. The students completed hands-on activities with teacher A during her observation. Teacher C used nonfiction text in her read-aloud observation, which was another way the students were engaged with the text. As Webster (2009) explained, it seemed that reading aloud to the students helped the students increase their content knowledge, expand their vocabulary, understand the text format, eventually helping the students to better navigate the text. In all three of the observations, the students were engaged in reading nonfiction texts. Mantzopoulos and Patrick (2011) researched boys' and girls' interest level using science-related picture books, they found that, "young boys and girls expressed comparable interest in reading different expository text" (p. 271). From past research and information collected in current research, it is proven that students are engaged in nonfiction texts.

Students positively benefit from being taught about nonfiction text structure.

Gill (2009) discovered through research that early elementary students need to be taught explicitly about the specific text features of nonfiction texts. Student comprehension increased when they were taught about the specific features they came across in their reading. From all

three teachers' results, it was clear that the students benefited from the content and information that was given to them through nonfiction texts.

Recommendations

In this section of chapter five, I will explain two recommendations that I have for teachers and school districts. Based on this completed research, the recommendations are regarding how to incorporate nonfiction text more effectively in the early elementary classroom.

Teachers require education in using nonfiction texts.

Teachers themselves need to feel confident in planning and using nonfiction in their classrooms. Therefore, they will need professional development, which includes suggested texts, activities for guided practice, and independent activities. Time allotted for grade-level planning during the school day and the opportunity to observe other teachers also would be beneficial.

I will ensure that I continuously monitor updates to literacy strategies involving nonfiction texts and will increase the exposure my young students have with this genre. Additionally, I will increase the amount of time I use nonfiction in the classroom and will teach text features so that my students can apply them in other content areas. I will balance my independent reading library with nonfiction books that will appeal to both genders.

Students need to be engaged in nonfiction texts in the elementary classroom.

While conducting my research, I have been developing my own perspective and conclusions on using nonfiction texts in the elementary classroom. I firmly believe that young children should be exposed to nonfiction texts on a regular basis. Understanding this text and how to navigate it will help them in real work experiences as well as being academically

prepared for higher level education. When reviewing past research, it was recommended “first that children read widely during the primary grades, experiencing a variety of texts beyond easy, familiar narratives” (Hall & Sabey, 2007, p. 261).

Summary

Chapter five has three sections. I explained the conclusions, implications for student learning, and recommendations based on the data that were collected and explained in Chapter Four. I found that teachers' confidence with nonfiction texts had a direct correlation to their use of nonfiction texts. Also, I concluded that teachers who had a high number of nonfiction texts in their classroom libraries may tend to use it more often. Based on the data collected, I was able to create implications for further student learning. The implications that I developed were that nonfiction text engages students of all ages and genders. Also, students positively benefit from being taught about nonfiction text structure, as discovered through the observations of the three teachers. Lastly, I made recommendations for future educators. Teachers need to be taught how to use nonfiction texts and students need to be engaged in using nonfiction text in elementary classrooms. The conclusions, implications, and recommendations answer my research question which is: What are First Grade Teachers' Perspectives on Using Nonfiction Text in Guided Reading and Read-Aloud lessons? Based on the research collected, I have found that the three teachers recruited for the study all had different perspectives on using nonfiction texts in their first-grade classroom. All of the teachers found value in using nonfiction texts but differed on their experience and comfort levels with the texts. The research has allowed me to understand how teachers are currently using nonfiction texts in their first grade classrooms. It has also revealed that teachers approach the classroom with different perspectives and knowledge of nonfiction texts.

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