

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF INFORMATIONAL TEXT REPRESENTATION AND
STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION IN SELECTED FIRST GRADE CLASSROOMS

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ABSTRACT

Nancy Fordham, Advisor

The purpose of this study was to answer the three part research question which asked, "What types of informational resources do first grade teachers in a local county provide in their classroom libraries, how often do they require their students to use or refer to these informational materials to complete an assignment, and what instructional activities and strategies do first grade teachers use involving informational text? Surveys were sent to 58 first grade teachers in a northwest Ohio county. Of the 58 surveys sent out, 29 of the surveys (50%) were returned. Questions on the survey asked participants to indicate informational text resources available in their classroom libraries, strategies and activities they use regarding informational text, and frequency of informational text use within these instructional activities.

Results for research question one indicated that trade books were found to be the most frequently represented informational source as the majority of the first grade classroom libraries contained them. Newspapers and brochures were the least represented informational text resources found in first grade classroom libraries.

Results for the second part of the research question indicated that the majority of the participants in the study provided daily opportunities for their students to read informational text during independent reading time. Also, the participants indicated that their students were asked to complete assignments requiring an informational text source on a monthly basis.

The most prevalent informational text strategies used in first grade classrooms were think-alouds, demonstrations and experiments to explain a concept, and modeling questioning strategies while reading. The strategy used the least was modeling how to skim and scan for important information with only a small percentage of participants marking this response.

Dedicated to all of the special people in my life.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Because of our fast-paced society, educators are relentlessly searching for the most effective ways to prepare their students to succeed in school and throughout their lives. This success is largely dependent upon students' ability to read and comprehend what they are being taught. Unfortunately, many students do not possess the skills needed to read efficiently and effectively to gather crucial information. In fact, an alarming number of American students have weak informational reading and writing skills (Applebee, Langer, Mullis, Latham, & Gentile, 1994). Since reading serves as the foundation for all other subjects, we must consider how we can better prepare today's and tomorrow's readers. Perhaps the only way to keep up with the complexity of our changing world is to expose students to an abundance of informational materials as early in their schooling as possible.

Recent research indicates that the availability of and access to informational materials is limited in the primary grades (Duke, 2000). Moss, Leone, and Dipillo (1997) state, "If today's students are to survive in the Information Age, then it is imperative that they develop greater familiarity with an understanding of expository text" (p. 418). Continual emphasis on fiction in the primary grades may be contributing to problems students have when the type of text is switched to informational as they progress through schooling. After all, "Over 85% of the reading and writing we do as adults is non-fiction, yet most of the reading and writing in K-3 classrooms is fiction or personal narrative" (Stead, 2002). Students need to be exposed to the purposes and benefits that informational literacy offers. To be considered effective teachers of literacy instruction, new and innovative ways to enhance students' informational reading skills must be developed in the primary classroom. Duke (2004a) suggests that effective teachers of early literacy diversify informational text in the following three areas: libraries, print

environment, and instructional activities. By showing students how to use real-world resources, teachers can model the importance of integrating and implementing informational literacy sources and strategies.

Statement of the Problem

According to Duke (2004b), “One study of 20 first grade classrooms found that on average, informational text constituted less than 10% of classroom libraries” (p. 40). In addition to providing informational materials in the primary classroom, studies show that teachers are not requiring their students to work with informational text on a regular basis. In fact, “The study of first grade classrooms showed that students spent an average of only 3.6 minutes a day interacting with informational text--even less in low socio-economic status schools” (p. 40). If primary teachers are not setting aside time for or providing access to materials containing informational text, then primary students will not have the familiarity they need with this genre as it becomes more prevalent in their educational careers and daily lives.

While increasing time and access to a variety of informational material is necessary, primary teachers should capitalize on meaningful and engaging activities to correspond with this genre. Not only should teachers provide students with access to informational materials to ensure familiarity, but they should also provide opportunities to work with informational text to increase motivation. According to Moss, Leone, and Dipillo (1997), teachers are failing to take advantage of the fascination that interesting facts may hold for their students. Many teachers assume that informational text is too difficult for primary students who may become overwhelmed with facts. Therefore, teachers need to model strategies showing students how to extract the important information from nonfiction texts. Although providing different types of informational materials will help expose students to an abundance of facts, teachers cannot assume that emergent readers

know how to gather information. Students may be lacking the necessary experiences and background knowledge required to interpret this type of text. Research indicates that teaching multiple strategies for reading informational text is important to support students with diverse needs and abilities (Pages, 2003).

Research Question

While several studies have shown evidence as to why informational literacy is important in the primary grades (Doiron, 1994; Duke, 2000), little research has been done in Ohio examining how primary grade teachers are promoting exposure and instruction relevant to this type of text in their classrooms. For this study, first grade teachers were surveyed to determine what instructional opportunities and activities they provided related to informational text in their classrooms. The research questions posed were as follows: (1) What types of informational resources do first grade teachers in a local county provide in their classroom libraries? (2) How often do they require their students to use or refer to these informational materials to complete an assignment? and (3) What instructional activities and strategies do first grade teachers use involving informational text? A survey was sent to all first grade teachers in public elementary schools in a local county regarding the research questions posed above.

Justification

For years, educators have been unsure as to why so many students show a decline in reading progress as they move from grade-to-grade. Researchers have paid particular attention to fourth grade students because it is here where they are required to spend more time working with informational text. Some educational researchers have associated the “fourth grade slump” in overall literacy achievement with problems based on a student’s inability to read informational materials (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990). Lack of exposure may be related to this decline in

reading progression as students advance through school. Overall academic achievement relies heavily on informational text, especially “when many standardized tests include a great deal of nonfiction” (Bennett-Armistead & Duke, 2004, p. 2).

As previously stated, many educators are not providing access to informational resources in their classroom libraries and print environments. The lack of exposure is especially concerning when studies show that children actually prefer nonfiction to fiction. “Many children prefer nonfiction to fiction; their insatiable curiosity about the world is fueled by nonfiction books” (Galda & Cullinan, 2002, p. 253). By capitalizing on their students’ preferences for informational text reading selections, teachers can help motivate their students to read informational books. “Even the very young enjoy looking at real objects and animals found in information books” (Donovan, Milewicz, & Smolkin, 2003, p. 32). Evidence from several studies shows that emerging readers enjoy making connections to real-world experiences through their reading (Guillaume 1998; Harvey 2002). “Informational texts can capitalize on children’s interests and lead them to be more purposeful and active readers” (Yopp & Yopp, 2000, p. 411). Therefore, research continues to show that informational literacy needs to play a more dominant role in primary classroom reading instruction (Dorion, 1994).

Definition of Terms

This section defines the key terminology presented in this study:

1. Informational text: A type of non-fiction text used to convey information about the natural or social world using particular linguistic features such as headings and technical vocabulary (Duke, 2004a). “Common features of informational text include presentation and repetition of a topic or theme; description of attributes and characteristic events; comparative/contrastive and classificatory structure; technical vocabulary; realistic illustrations

and photographs; labels and graphics; navigational aids such as indexes, page numbers, and headings; and various graphical devices such as diagrams, tables, and charts” (Duke & Bennett-Armistead, 2003, p. 17).

2. Expository text: “Writing that is designed to explain or provide information.” (Gunning, 2005, p. 327).

3. Nonfiction books: Informational texts that explain a subject.

4. Emergent Literacy: Emergent Literacy consists of the reading and writing behaviors that evolve from children’s earliest experiences and that gradually grow into conventional literacy (Gunning, 2005).

5. Early literacy: “Early literacy suggests that the child already has some knowledge of reading and writing, whereas emergent literacy might suggest that the child is merely on the verge of acquiring this knowledge” (Gunning, 2005, p. 86).

6. Classroom library or book corner: For this study, the classroom library or book corner will be regarded as the collection of reading materials on display for student access.

7. Genre: “An established class or category of artistic composition or literature” (Ohio Department of Education, 2001, p. 302).

8. Primary grades: For this study, primary grades will refer to Kindergarten, first, second, and third grades.

9. Content Area Reading: Reading pertaining to one of the following subject areas: Math, Social Studies, Language Arts, and Science.

10. Shared Reading: An instructional activity in which the teacher reads aloud a text, which has been enlarged via big book format and/or overhead transparencies. Students can see the text, its features, and appropriately modeled strategies during this experience (Hoyt, 2002).

11. Prior Knowledge: “Knowing that stems from previous experience” (Ohio Department of Education, 2001, p. 306)

12. Text Structure: “An author’s method of organizing a text (e.g. sequencing, compare and contrast, cause and effect, or problem solving)” (Ohio Department of Education, 2001 p. 308).

13. Text Features: “Organizers of written materials such as indexes, prefaces, appendices, definitional footnotes, sidebars, tables of contents, illustrations or photographs” (Ohio Department of Education, 2001, p. 308).

14. Literature Circles: Students are placed in small groups and assigned roles for participation in discussions about the text.

15. Idea Circles: “Groups of 3-6 students meet for in-depth discussion of a text or texts” (Duke, 2004a, Slide 31).

16. Collaborative Strategic Reading Teams: Students work in small cooperative groups and are assigned specific roles while applying four comprehension strategies to their learning (Duke, 2004a).

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. One limitation was that the sample concentrated only on first grade teachers found in elementary schools throughout northwest Ohio. The schools in the county surveyed are predominately rural. Therefore, it did not adequately represent suburban and urban elementary schools. Also, the study was limited to first grade teachers. Other primary teachers in this county may have effective informational literacy programs, but were not represented in the study or the results. In addition, some first grade teachers did not return the survey; therefore, the intended sample may not be accurately

represented. Another limitation was that no followup surveys were sent out because the surveys were anonymous. Also, some teachers may have had an incomplete understanding of the terms for the questions because not all of the terms were defined. Furthermore, self-reporting was a limitation because participants may have supplied answers that they thought were correct, rather than their actual beliefs or practices.

CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

For many years, educators have sought ways to improve reading comprehension as a means of boosting their students' overall academic achievement, which relies heavily on reading and writing informational text. Therefore, the need to provide effective strategy instruction in reading informational texts is apparent. According to statistics, almost half of the U.S. population possesses poor reading skills (Levy, 1993). Furthermore, most of these adults cannot find relevant information, decode meanings of important words, or use context cues while reading a text if any prior knowledge is required of them. Research indicates that a person's inability to comprehend informational texts as he or she progresses through school and throughout his or her life may be due to the lack of exposure in the primary grades (Duke, 2000; Harvey, 2002; Moss, et al., 1997; Yopp & Yopp, 2000). According to Duke (2003a), "Education researchers and teaching professionals are increasingly realizing that using informational text in the primary classroom is a key to student success on standardized tests, in later schooling, and beyond" (p. 23).

This chapter serves as a review of the research showing the scarcity of informational texts in primary classrooms, particularly first grade. It will discuss each component of the research questions posed in chapter one based on previous studies completed by educational professionals. The research questions posed are as follows: (1) What types of informational resources do first grade teachers in a particular county provide in their classroom libraries? (2) How often do they require their students to use or refer to these informational materials to complete an assignment? and (3) What instructional activities and strategies do first grade teachers use involving informational text? The review of research includes studies of classroom libraries, print environments, and instructional strategies and activities involving informational text.

Informational Text in Classroom Libraries

According to Yopp and Yopp (2000), informational books should “constitute a significant portion of the classroom library” so they can be easily accessed by the students for instructional activities (p. 413). Similarly, Stead (2002) believes that young children need to be provided with a multitude of resources in a classroom library, and informational text should be represented within them. “Thus, rooms stocked with varied nonfiction books and print materials allow learners to engage in purposeful communication that is contextually embedded” (Guillaume, 1998, p. 480). Harvey (2002) expands on this notion by stating: “When I walk into a non-fiction room, I know it. It’s rarely quiet, because readers can’t sit still when they read about the gleaming, razor-sharp teeth of the great white shark or the day-to-day risks of the Underground Railroad Conductor” (p. 15).

Providing access to a variety of informational materials in a first grade classroom library is one way to increase students’ familiarity with this genre (Dreher, 1998; Duke, 2000). According to Yopp and Yopp (2000), “Teachers should incorporate informational trade books and other non-fiction materials as they teach children how to read” (p. 413). Research shows that many teachers have been trained in textbook use and struggle with changing their curriculum to integrate new sources (Bennett-Armistead & Duke 2004). Pappas (1991) observes that many teachers do make an attempt to move away from solely using a basal series for their reading instruction. However, Pappas is quick to point out that “these literature-based programs consist entirely of fiction; and therefore they, too, are playing out this ‘narrative as primary’ notion in their curriculum and pedagogy” (p. 450).

Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Allington, Block, Morrow, Tracey, Baker, Brooks, Cronin, Nelson, and Woo (2001) completed a study concerning effective first-grade literacy

instruction. The sample for the study was based on 30 first-grade classrooms from “upstate New York (three school districts, six classrooms); Madison, Wisconsin (two schools, four classrooms); the Dallas-Fort Worth area (four school districts, eight classrooms) and northern California (two school districts, four classrooms)” (p. 39). At each of these school districts, local school personnel were asked to identify two teachers who were viewed as “outstanding in promoting student literacy achievement in the opinion of school officials” (p. 39). The researchers identified the teaching behaviors and characteristics of the five most effective first grade teachers in their study. Results indicated that the most effective first grade teachers provided leveled books including a variety of genres and a reading corner with a wide selection of books. Bennett-Armistead and Duke (2004) further explain the importance of including a wide selection of texts by stating, “We need to reflect the rich diversity of texts read outside of classrooms within our classroom walls” (p. 1).

Hartman (2002) finds that providing informational trade books in the classroom helps present familiar things in new ways, challenges readers to activate thinking, encourages curiosity and exploration, and connects the readers to the real world. Dreher (1998) finds that providing a variety of informational materials provides children with the motivation to read the material displayed, as well as similar works.

Using non-fiction trade books as one type of informational text in the primary classroom will help motivate even the most reluctant readers (Livingston, Kurkjian, Young, & Pringle, 2004; Moss, 2004). According to Hartman (2002), “Nonfiction books help students feel, see, and know in ways that no textbook can” (p. 2). In addition, nonfiction books involving informational text can serve as a “rich resource for universal learning” by providing critical information needed to survive in today’s changing world. (Livingston et al., p. 582).

According to Livingston et al. (2004), nonfiction, informational text, and content area reading have been overlooked in content area classrooms. Therefore, children are not provided with opportunities to select, read, and interact with informational material. McElmeel (2000) states, “Helping readers learn to select informational books along with the usual picture books, we can help to provide the inspiration that will encourage these readers to aspire to know more” (p. 6). Pages (2003) believes that primary teachers can inspire their children to know more if they encourage them to read about their interests. Pairing textbooks with additional sources will help encompass a wide variety of factual information (Moss, 2004; Yopp & Yopp, 2000).

According to Yopp and Yopp (2000), “Informational materials--including trade books, textbooks, magazines and newspapers, and multi-media materials--can be incorporated into a primary-grade literacy program in a variety of ways” (p. 413). Gulliaume (1998) outlined a variety of texts for the primary-grade content area library. In addition to textbooks, other kinds of print such as trade books, newspapers, interactive software, and magazines were suggested. Duke (2004b) reports that teachers can help demonstrate that the classroom library is a place where students can gain valuable information by filling it with books on topics that young children enjoy reading.

Teachers can encourage students to select books in the classroom library by including a collection of magazines that reflect students’ interests. In addition, primary grade teachers can help students locate information on the web and in newspapers by providing full access to these forms of literature. Pages (2003) believes that children naturally ask intriguing questions which require them to search a variety of sources including encyclopedias, informational websites, and trade books in order to find the answers. Similarly, Guillaume (1998) states, “Exposure to an

abundance of informational resources provides young students with the valuable opportunity to read for the purpose of learning about their world and to answer their questions” (p.485).

Informational texts are scarce in many primary grade classrooms (Duke, 2004a; Walker, Kragler, Martin, & Arnett, 2003). Studies show that many primary grade teachers provide a limited selection of books in their classroom libraries, including only a small portion of informational text (Duke, 2000; Harvey, 2002). Failing to provide informational texts in the classroom library is especially alarming when “book publishers and authors continue to produce a wide range of quality informational books for young children” (Kays & Duke, 1998, p. 53).

Harvey (2002) discovered that she and a group of teachers ignored authentic nonfiction reading, writing, and research in their classrooms. After conducting an audit of the books in their classroom libraries, Harvey discovered that over 80% of the books were fiction. In addition, the small proportion of nonfiction books in their libraries was primarily used for reference. Harvey concluded that more nonfiction is needed in the primary classroom so students can “read it, appreciate it, learn from it, and write it more authentically” (p. 15).

Duke (2003a) points out that early exposure to informational text will put children in a position to comprehend and understand future encounters with informational texts on important tests. She discovered that if primary grade teachers do not provide informational texts in their classrooms, children are unaware that this genre can be a means for obtaining crucial information throughout their schooling. According to Livingston et al. (2004), “While irresistible high-quality informational books appropriate to use across grade levels are being published, many students do not have sufficient access to, instruction with, or exposure to them” (p. 582). Palmer and Stewart (2003) found similar results in their study when they asked a group of first grade

students whether or not their teachers used informational books in the classroom. Some of the first graders responded that their teachers used “mostly make believe” (p. 45).

Stead (2002) studied the classroom libraries of a group of teachers in Connecticut to find the proportion of informational text represented in the classroom libraries. He concluded that many primary teachers have a limited selection of informational texts. Stead found that of the 3,000 books in one teacher’s classroom, only 20% were nonfiction. Furthermore, most of those books represented only one type of non-fiction: descriptive books about different types of animals. Some additional nonfiction genres that should be made available to students include instructional books, books on scientific explanations, and persuasive texts.

Similarly, Duke (2000) completed a study on informational text representation in first grade classroom libraries. The sample consisted of 30 first grade classes from 30 elementary schools located throughout the Greater Boston Metropolitan Area. The districts were selected at random; however, particular interest was paid to schools with low-Socio Economic Status (SES) students. For each of the first grade classrooms selected, Duke (2000) concluded, “Teachers had approximately 18.2 years of teaching experience (low SES: 15.1, high SES: 21.2). Particular attention was paid to how many years these teachers taught in a first grade classroom. These results showed that the teachers had 10.4 years experience teaching first grade (low-SES: 8.3, high-SES: 12.4)” on average (p. 209).

The classrooms were visited for four full days and descriptive notes were taken on the print materials found in these classroom libraries. The sample included any books or magazines available for the class to look at or use. Duke’s (2000) samples “did not include any textbooks, basal readers, school library books, or other materials kept in individual students’ desks and available only to that individual student” (p. 210). A total of 18,393 books and magazines were

counted throughout the study with 12,160 of them coded according to genre. Duke (2000) concluded that informational text constituted 10.83% of classroom libraries in high-SES districts, whereas it constituted only 4.89% of classroom libraries in low-SES districts.

Instruction and Time Involving Informational Text

Statistics indicate that first grade teachers are spending very little time with informational text during the school day (Duke, 2000; Hartman, 2002). Duke studied the amount of time spent on written language activities involving informational text: Information was recorded for specials such as recess and art. However, particular attention was paid to the time spent on regular class activities. Duke recorded the type of activity and length of written language activity involving informational texts

Observations were made for 79 school days. A second researcher spent approximately 1,220 minutes of total school time and 860 minutes of class time focusing on the amount of instructional time spent using informational text during these visits. Duke (2000) concluded that only 3.6 minutes a day was spent with informational texts during classroom written language activities. Hoyt (2002) recommends that teachers revise their schedules “to increase the amount of time students spend actually reading and writing in a wide range of informational genres” (p. 9).

To prepare students for lifelong learning, teachers must recognize that reading for information is crucial to their overall success in school (Dorion, 1994; Duke, 2004b; Ogle, 2003; Yopp & Yopp, 2000). Dorion believes that early success with informational literacy “can develop only if we include the reading of information as part of the overall goal of reading for pleasure” (p. 618). Studies show that the best results for reading success begin with capitalizing

on students' interests and creating connections to real-life topics. (Duke, 2004a; Duthie, 1994; Granowsky, 2004; Moss, 2004).

Caswell's and Duke's (1998) case study involving two struggling readers uncovered results indicating that informational text can draw in and interest even the most reluctant readers. By exploring real-world topics that interested them such as space and dinosaurs, the researchers found that both of the male students were able to read more deeply and retain the necessary information found in the text. Both students appeared to make progress in their reading abilities over the study because they were allowed to choose the non-fiction topics. Therefore, providing numerous opportunities for informational text in a classroom can motivate both resistant readers and boys to become interested in reading.

According to a study concerning effective first-grade literacy instruction, the most effective teachers provide a positive, reinforcing, and cooperative learning environment where "students have the opportunity to read material that is interesting to them" (Pressley, et al. 2001, p. 53). Hartman (2002) states, "If you want to motivate a reluctant first grader to read more, find a path into literature that fits the child's interests and experiences" (p. 3). Perhaps this path is through nonfiction books, as studies show that many first grade students prefer to read informational books (Duthie, 1994; Granowsky, 2004; Richgels, 2002).

Although research indicates that many young children choose non-fiction/non-narrative informational text as their favorite type of book, there are many teachers who choose to read a fictional text during read-aloud time (Duke, 2003; Yopp & Yopp, 2000). Yopp and Yopp conducted an informal survey of 126 primary-grade teachers. Evidence from the survey indicated that only a small proportion of informational text was represented in read-alouds in many

primary classrooms. Yopp's and Yopp's sample suggested "only 14% of the materials teachers reported reading on a given day were informational in nature" (p. 411).

Palmer and Stewart (2003) conducted a qualitative study focusing on first, second, and third grade classrooms at an elementary school located in the Pacific Northwest. The study explored primary grade classrooms to determine how teachers and students used nonfiction trade books. By studying the Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) time for 20 minutes each day, Palmer and Stewart examined books in each classroom and talked with teachers and children. They interviewed 31 children including 13 boys and 18 girls in grades one through three, asking the subjects to look through book piles and select two books they might want to read.

Based on their observations, 63% of the books students chose were non-fiction. Palmer and Stewart (2003) also asked students why they selected the books they did. Students' reasons included: "they were interested in the topic, or familiar with it, the topic was something they could 'learn about'; or the book was real" (p. 44). Evidence from the study indicated that many primary students selected nonfiction trade books involving informational text. One first grade student became "so engrossed in a book from the pile about the Nez Perce people that she responded to our questions only if we asked her directly" (p. 44).

Informational literature such as nonfiction trade books may serve as a means for helping students to become more purposeful and active readers (Caswell & Duke, 1998). Similarly, Einstein (2003) states, "Nonfiction can help students learn to read purposefully and actively, to develop strategies, to interact directly with a text while exploring new people and places, investigating new ideas about the world around them" (p. 1). Guillaume (1998) suggests creating classroom reading experiences involving informational texts such as nonfiction to build knowledge for future reading experiences. Similarly, Yopp and Yopp (2000) state, "Early

classroom experiences with informational texts help children build the background knowledge they will need in order to experience success with future reading materials” (p. 411). Therefore, young children build a solid foundation for reading informational text as they build upon early experiences with this genre.

Pappas (1991) believes that young children can comprehend informational texts if they are provided with opportunities to interact with this genre. She concluded that many of the students in her study were able to successfully retell information and compare stories to informational texts. She interviewed 13 children, including six boys and seven girls, to find that a majority of the children preferred the information books after being exposed to them. According to Pappas, the study demonstrates the need for early exposure to informational text, so students have the opportunity to become comfortable with the book language this genre offers.

Lack of exposure to informational text during the school day may be contributing to students’ inability to comprehend this genre (Duke, 2000; Duthie, 1994). Moline (1995) believes, “If we spend most of our day reading stories with students and asking them to read or write stories, we are telling our students that most of what they will read in everyday life will be stories” (p. 5). Perhaps, the lack of time spent on informational text may be due to the fact that many teachers believe that “children cannot or do not like to read nonfiction materials” (Yopp & Yopp, 2000, p. 411).

Duthie (1994) found that many first grade students lacked appreciation for “nonfiction as a genre” because they weren’t provided with nonfiction reading and writing experiences during the school day. Once she provided the students with multiple experiences involving informational books, many of the first grade students demonstrated an increased familiarity with this type of text. For some of these students, nonfiction became their favorite genre.

Informational text is a type of nonfiction with particular linguistic features and vocabulary (Duke & Bennett-Armistead, 2003). Duthie stresses the importance of using nonfiction text such as informational text during instruction by stating: “The reading and writing of nonfiction has a place in studies across the curriculum, even for children in the primary grades” (p. 588).

Futhermore, Pages (2003) believes that the inability to read informational text can hinder a child’s development of information literacy skills and strategies crucial to lifelong learning tasks.

According to Ogle (2003), there is a need for teachers to provide classroom activities involving informational text. Ogle believes that students must be provided with instruction on how to “navigate the new combination of visual and verbal content” found throughout informational texts because this material is especially challenging for emergent readers (p. 7). Duke (2004b) states, “Success in schooling, the workplace, and society depends on our ability to comprehend this material” (p. 40). However, Duke (2000) suggests that many students continue to experience difficulty comprehending this genre throughout their schooling because they are not provided with adequate exposure.

Instructional Strategies and Activities Involving Informational Text

Along with the notion of providing informational text in first grade classrooms, libraries, and print environments, it is important to create instructional activities that will help students comprehend this genre as well (Dorion, 1994; Duke, 2004a, Harvey, 2002). Kays and Duke (1998) state, “Providing elementary students with lots of experience in reading, writing and listening to informational text will pay off in big dividends when students have to deal with these kinds of texts in later schooling” (p. 52).

Surveys and experimental research indicate that many students demonstrate a lack of proficiency in basic information-seeking tasks (Symons & Pressley, 1993). The inability to

understand and extract information from a text may be due to the fact that many students are unclear as to what they are expected to do with the information once it is presented to them (Doiron, 1994). Hartman (2002) states,

As educators, our job is not to forget; it is to remember what it's like for a kindergartner, fourth grader, or middle-schooler to learn how to manage information, and to then help them learn to do it better and better, so that one day when they have burned through a day's supply of information they will have done it in a way that was almost an afterthought. (p. 2)

Pages (2003) found that many students lacked the necessary skills and strategies needed to read expository text found in informational books. She found that their frustration with navigating this type of text largely affected their confidence and overall attitude toward reading. The factors that greatly affected student success with expository text included several instructional behaviors. Therefore, Pages outlined a variety of strategies to support student success with expository text. Teaching skills and strategies within contextual approaches, providing children with concrete reasons to read expository text, using authentic, well-written texts, and engaging children in processes to help them discover what real readers do are some just ways teachers can facilitate children's success with informational books.

To prepare students to understand informational text during school and throughout their lives, teachers at all levels should develop their students' ability to effectively discover, access, and read for information (Doiron, 1994; Duke, 2003; Guillaume, 1998). Providing students with a multitude of experiences involving informational text in the early years of schooling will help "increase motivation, build important comprehension skills and lay the ground work for students to grow into confident, purposeful readers" (Duke, 2004b, p. 43). Caswell and Duke (1998)

provided evidence in their study that young children are capable of understanding informational text if they are provided with ample opportunities to do so.

There are many ways early childhood educators can incorporate informational text into their classroom activities to help students understand and comprehend this genre (Doiron, 1994; Duke 2003; Harvey, 2002; Hoyt 2002; Yopp & Yopp, 2000). Early exposure to informational text through classroom experiences will help build students' background knowledge required to comprehend more difficult texts later in their schooling (Caswell & Duke, 1998). The following is a summary of the ways primary grade teachers can offer instructional strategies and activities for immersing students in nonfiction and informational texts.

Read-Alouds

One way to incorporate informational books into a successful first grade literacy program would be to use these texts as read-alouds (Doiron, 1994; Duke, 2004a; Guillaume, 1998; McElmeel, 2000; Yopp & Yopp, 2000). Kays and Duke (1998) found that children can learn simply from hearing informational books read aloud in the primary classroom. Using informational text as read-alouds helps build vocabulary, knowledge of text features, questioning skills, and language (Duke, 2003a; Hoyt, 2002; Yopp & Yopp, 2000). Guillaume (1998) states,

An adult's enthusiastic oral reading can have a mighty influence on children in developing a listening vocabulary, a recognition for the cadence of the language, and an appreciation for the powerful meanings that print can convey. (p. 479)

Duke (2003a) suggests some tips for choosing informational read-alouds for the primary grade classroom. These include selecting informational books that challenge the students, hold their interest, promote discussions, and dazzle them with photographs, illustrations, and graphs. Once the book is selected, primary grade teachers can help children develop an understanding of

informational text by pointing out signals and aids that the author or publisher uses throughout the text to support their learning (Pages, 2003).

Duke (2003a) believes that the key to successful read-alouds relies on the amount of time teachers spend talking about the text. For example, Duke studied one first grade teacher who regularly stopped to ask questions and clarify ideas with her students. After the teacher modeled these strategies, the first grade students began actively engaging in the classroom discussion by offering comments and asking questions. Duke finds that first grade teachers can promote similar discussions by previewing the text, making connections outside the text, using lower and higher level questions, exploring opportunities to learn new words, and being responsive to student comments and contributions to classroom discussions.

Oyler and Barry (1996) decided to use informational text as read-alouds in their classrooms. They were investigating their students' prior knowledge about the text. By documenting several interactions, they discovered the various ways students navigated the texts during read-aloud time designated strictly for informational books. The study showed that reading aloud informational text gave many students the opportunity to make connections with a variety of other texts. Moreover, informational text can be coupled with other texts during read-alouds by connecting the reading material to what the students already know (Duke, 2003a).

By modeling how to use the text features in an informational book, the students will “learn basic vocabulary and concepts that will serve as a foundation for subsequent growth in the content areas” as well (Granowsky, 2004, p. 56). Taberski (2001) believes that teachers should adjust their instruction to include the elements involved in reading an informational text. Pointing out the table of contents, index, glossary, boldface headings, and captions during read-alouds are valuable instructional activities (Harvey, 2002; Hoyt, 2002; Taberski, 2001). These

features are important for primary students to know, especially when they begin appearing on statewide tests and applications for future educational endeavors.

Hoyt (2002) believes that “read aloud time is the perfect time to point out the text features” found throughout an informational text (p. 13). Also, Gunning (2005) suggests that primary teachers require their students to search through the tables of contents and indices to find relevant information about the text. Hoyt finds that displaying a poster with a list of the text features students should look for when reading an informational text is one way to support reading development. Furthermore, by pointing out special features in an informational book, teachers are showing their students how to recognize the organizational structures such as cue words and text patterns (Tompkins, 2003).

According to Dorion (1994), fiction may be the dominant choice during read-alouds because many teachers and students find it intriguing to read and listen to. By the same token, Dorion points out that nonfiction is becoming more appealing to many teachers because students “are naturally curious, with a great of thirst to know about the world around them” (p. 618). Dorion (1994) and Hoyt (2002) stress the importance of using both fiction and nonfiction during read-alouds.

Primary teachers should complete at least two read-alouds a day, including one fiction and one non-fiction text (Dorion, 1994; Hoyt, 2002; Taberski, 2001). By pairing the two genres, Dorion finds that students have an opportunity to develop a schema for both fiction and non-fiction forms. In addition, Taberski finds that once the books are read aloud, the teacher can begin discussing “genre specific topics such as the ways fiction and nonfiction texts are organized” (n. p.).

Hoyt (2002) and Taberski (2001) find that children are able to draw comparisons between nonfiction and fiction genres by listing the differences as the teacher models how to complete the task. Taberski suggests displaying and referencing a chart comparing fiction and non-fiction writers during read-aloud time and throughout the school year. Through the integration of fiction and nonfiction books, students can identify the patterns unique to each and the relationships between them. Furthermore, Dorion (1994) states, “The same reasons for providing children with a rich read-aloud experience based on fiction hold true for including a balance of nonfiction material in the read-aloud program” (p. 623).

Shared Reading

According to Hoyt (2002), “Just as we try to be reflective in balancing fiction and nonfiction in our read-alouds, the same need and opportunity exists during shared text experiences” (p. 19). There are many advantages to using informational text supports during shared reading experiences because students get a chance to actually see the text, its features, and appropriately modeled strategies. Engaging in shared text experiences provides an opportunity to model the essential skills and strategies needed to read and comprehend informational text (Hoyt).

Informational text can be incorporated into a primary literacy program through the shared book experience in a variety of ways (Hoyt, 2002; Scott, 1994). Hoyt finds using informational big books and providing overhead transparencies to be effective teacher supports during the shared reading experience. By using informational big books, students are able to clearly “see the text, strategies for using picture clues, boldface headings, titles, captions, and other textual features” (p. 19). In addition, using transparencies made from pages found in informational

books is another visual support teachers can use to help build students' awareness of important text features.

Scott (1994) "includes at least one non-fiction book each day" during the shared book experiences in her first grade classroom. She mentions possible extensions for sharing non-fiction books involving informational text. Reading the book into a tape recorder and then making the tape available in the listening center is one way to stimulate the children's interest in the text. Creating a class-made big book is another way to engage students in choral readings and lessons on conventions of print. Using drama to enhance the information learned and extracting words from the text for a vocabulary study are some additional activities first grade teachers can use in their classrooms during the shared reading experience. Based on the results of the study, Scott concluded, "Shared book experiences can emphasize the immense pleasure that can be gleaned from books, both fiction and non-fiction" (p. 677). Furthermore, Hoyt (2002) states, "Shared text opportunities in which students are explicitly shown how to move through a text or how to extract meaning will have a powerful carryover to independent and content area reading" (p. 23).

Independent Reading

Class discussions and independent reading of informational text should be incorporated throughout the school day (Duthie, 1994; Hoyt, 2002; Yopp & Yopp, 2000). According to Yopp and Yopp, informational texts provide students "with exposure to a variety of text structures and features, helping to mitigate the fourth-grade slump when reading materials and requirements shift" (p. 412). Dreher (1998) believes that teachers must increase children's exposure to informational text by encouraging students to read nonfiction materials during independent reading time. According to Hoyt, "In our wonderings about informational texts and the

importance of providing extensive and intensive experiences with a range of informational forms, independent reading of informational texts must be a part of our plan” (p. 28).

Nonetheless, many primary grade teachers require students to read informational texts strictly to answer questions to complete assignments (Duke, 2004b).

Although it is important to provide students with assignments involving informational text, young children should be given opportunities to engage with this type of text for authentic reasons (Dorion, 1994). Duke (2004b) expands on this point by stating, “Young students working to comprehend informational text for authentic purposes look noticeably different from those reading it simply because the teacher assigned it” (p. 42).

Primary teachers should provide frequent opportunities for students to read informational text for authentic purposes (Duke 2000; Richgels, 2002). According to Doiron (1994), teachers can help students feel that reading for information can be enjoyable by providing “rich meaningful experiences” (p. 621). Hoyt (2002) suggests that teachers provide their students with grocery store bags to collect books, magazines, and brochures on their favorite topics. By creating these “bedside stands,” she believes that young children maintain an interest in reading informational text because they have access to some of their favorite materials. Furthermore, “As with all literacy-learning experiences, those that use informational text will be more successful when students see how they serve purposes in their everyday lives” (p. 588). Relating instructional topics to current news and student interests are two ways that students will see the value of informational text in their daily lives.

A number of studies have shown that when students are interested in what they are reading, their reading development rate increases (Duke, 2000). “Educators are discovering something that children have known for a long time--reading for information can be fun”

(Doiron, 1994, p. 618). Granowsky (2004) discusses the benefits of using informational books with young readers: "I've found that kids reach out for "real-life books such as these, their eyes wide with excitement over the photos and information to be gained" (p. 56). Doiron reports that children become bored with informational text because they do know what they are supposed to do with the data once it is presented to them.

According to Duke (2004b), there are several strategies teachers can use to motivate students to read informational texts for their own pleasure during independent reading. Some of these strategies include creating situations where students select topics for reading and writing that they find interesting (Duke). Once the students make their choices, Hoyt (2002) believes that teachers must ask themselves: "Are we spending enough time reading so they can get involved with their topics?" (p. 28). Teachers can encourage students to read to find the information they are looking for through mini-lessons and logs (Hoyt). She suggests that the teacher use a record-keeping form before assigning independent reading tasks. The form should have the date, text feature, reading strategy, and text used for mini-lesson. A mini-lesson focuses on a specific skill that students are held accountable for actively applying in their own reading. Hoyt believes that "the mini-lesson sets a standard with a demonstration of how a good reader interacts with informational texts, selects a variety of informational forms, or uses meaning-seeking strategies while reading" (p. 28).

Hoyt (2002) finds that many teachers have trouble keeping their students' attention during independent reading. Dreher (1998) outlined suggestions for encouraging students to stay attuned to non-fiction materials during independent reading. One of these suggestions includes creating a record-keeping form so students can keep track of the book they have read and "feel a sense of accomplishment" (p. 415).

Duke (2004b) believes that teachers can maintain student interest and arouse curiosity by displaying corresponding props as well as demonstrating various experiments dealing with the topic. In addition, Doiron (1994) believes that conducting demonstrations and experiments as well as dramatizing events helps students “tap into their prior knowledge” (p. 622). Hoyt (2002) suggests other ways such as displaying a wide range of reading materials, creating special places for students to keep their books, and providing the students with their own bags “to extend their stamina for reading” (p. 30). As mentioned earlier, the bags are used to collect favorite books, magazines, and newspapers to use during independent reading.

Guided Reading

Another way to incorporate informational text into a primary literacy program involves selecting this genre for guided reading (Duke, 2004a). “Using informational books in a guided reading program for the primary grades may help students overcome the ‘fourth grade slump’ later on” (Granowsky, 2004, p. 56). Hoyt (2002) believes that primary teachers should provide emergent readers with numerous opportunities to read about the real world during guided reading. More importantly, Hoyt suggests that “at least 50%” of guided reading selections should be informational” (p. 8). Once the appropriately leveled text is selected for a guided reading group, then a teacher can begin to implement strategies for comprehending the text (Hoyt). These strategies should be modeled carefully by the teacher in small, cooperative groups, remedial situations, and one-on-one instruction (Einstein, 2003).

Hoyt (2002) discusses several ways a reader can understand the role of informational text during guided reading by providing a variety of concepts that primary teachers can use in their classroom. One way would be to have students participate in an informational book sort. Students are asked to sort the books according to text structure. The books may be sorted

according to books that involve comparisons, books that tell how to do something, books that describe what something is or looks like, and books that show the passage of time (Hoyt). When the students sort books according to text structure, they are utilizing key strategies for understanding informational text format and features.

Hoyt (2002) suggests that teachers focus on some of the following literacy skills to support guided reading of informational text during class instructional activities: making connections, locating information, visualizing, finding key words, supporting details, cause/effect, compare and contrast, and predicting and verifying predictions. Modeling these concepts during the guided reading experience will help alleviate difficulties as students experience more difficult texts throughout their schooling (Yopp & Yopp, 2000).

Hoyt (2002) believes that navigational strategies such as skimming and scanning are key concepts in teaching critical reading strategies for informational text. She finds that using newspapers in a primary literacy program is one way to ensure that students utilize essential reading strategies. She recommends using newspapers to have students learn how to scan for photographs and titles and shift from column to column. Hoyt states, “I find that kindergarten and first grade students pick up amazing amounts of information from studying the pictures, asking questions, and then interacting with the articles themselves” (p. 179). Hoyt suggests using a checklist for assessing informational text strategies with a newspaper. The checklist should include statements about whether or not the reader used photographs and captions, recognized columns while reading, and shifted navigational strategies to match the purpose for reading.

Harvey (2002), likewise, encourages teachers to model navigational strategies, which allow students to understand that they can get information from captions, photographs, charts, and maps. By constructing a two-column classroom chart, Harvey believes that teachers can

enhance their students' understanding of informational text by pointing out important text features. Some of the features that should be identified when reading an informational text as suggested by Harvey include bold print words, captions, headings, subheadings, distribution maps, and the table of contents.

Literature Circles

An additional activity to use with informational text during primary reading instruction involves creating literature circles (Duke, 2004a; Stein & Beed, 2004).

According to Hoyt (2002), "When literature circle structures are connected to informational texts, students have the benefit of a social structure they love, the shared thinking of their peers, and deepened content knowledge" (p. 220). Kays and Duke (1998) suggest that informational books are "among the best-loved books in the classroom and are especially popular for paired and grouped reading" (p. 52). Hoyt (2002) finds that literature circles help stimulate discussions, clarify ideas, and validate procedures.

Informational text can be incorporated into literature circles. Author studies, for example, can be presented in a literature circle format (Hoyt, 2002). Doiron (1994) suggests that teachers draw attention to the authors of the book by pointing out "concepts related to recognizing styles, consistent formats, specific language to specific subjects, the arguments, and point of view" (p. 622). Hoyt finds providing time to discuss the attributes of the author's style is one way to get students to notice different types of features as they read. Hoyt lays out the format for a chart pertaining to changes in visual style and layout. Examples of headings on the chart include the title, author, and observation of craft.

Stien and Beed (2004) studied the ways literature circles can engage students for reading fiction and non-fiction by connecting the two genres during small group instruction. The first

literature circle activity required students to assume roles pertaining to characters found in biographies. The researchers circulated and observed five different groups and found that many students put themselves in the main characters' position, engaged in stimulating discussions, and stayed focused on their assigned tasks. The second literature circle activity involved using a variety of non-fiction texts where students would "tab a page with a sticky note and write an interesting comment or question on the note" (p. 516). Here again, "Excitement and comprehension continued to flourish during non-fiction literature circle conversations" (p. 516). By connecting fiction and non-fiction text through literature circles, Stien and Beed concluded that many students enjoyed learning with non-fiction, becoming active participants during small group instruction.

Hoyt (2002) believes that literature circles can enhance a child's understanding of an informational text if teachers provide a clear-cut purpose for using this instructional activity in their classrooms. Hoyt believes that demonstrations in which small groups engage in discussions while other groups observe their interactions help students gain proficiency in their assigned tasks. Yopp and Yopp (2000) suggest using informational text "as the literature of reading instruction" by creating small groups to research a topic and then turn it over to expert groups to share it with the class (p. 413).

Also, when students spend time "thinking aloud" and making lists of important informational text questions, they are more likely to engage in successful strategic reading behavior (Hoyt, 2002). When teachers use a wide variety of texts such as newspapers, magazines, textbooks, resource books, students build their knowledge of text features. Thus, Hoyt finds that students are prepared to discuss key points in their reading and make necessary adjustments to their work when they are exposed to a variety of informational materials.

Likewise, Duke (2004a) suggests using small, cooperative groups to establish two-researched-based practices, idea circles and collaborative strategic teams, which can be implemented during guided reading instruction. According to Duke, idea circles consist of 3-6 students who meet to discuss text features and self-determined goals. In collaborative strategic reading teams the teacher designates specific roles to students, which they fulfill before, during, and after reading a selection. This practice has elements of reciprocal teaching as students work together to apply four comprehension strategies: preview, click and clunk, get the gist, and wrap it up.

Summary

Research indicates that there are several literacy purposes that informational text fulfills in a primary grade classroom (Duke, 2004b; Hartman 2002; Harvey, 2002, Hoyt, 2002; Kays & Duke, 1998; Pappas, 1991; Yopp & Yopp, 2000). These purposes include providing opportunities for students to engage in strategic reading behavior by increasing their awareness of the unique text features, realistic photographs, and navigational aids that informational text offers. Also, many students prefer informational text, and capitalizing on their interests often supports reading development (Duke, 2000). These purposes can be accomplished by providing young children with exposure and access to informational text in the classroom library and print environments (Duke, 2004b).

In addition, to achieve the overall goal of incorporating informational literacy into daily instruction, first grade teachers should implement instructional activities such as read-alouds, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, and literature circles involving informational text. Within these activities, primary teachers can foster informational literacy skills by teaching students to use reading strategies such as questioning, visualizing, predicting,

and skimming and scanning for important information. These strategies can be modeled through the use of author studies, think-alouds, demonstrations, and experiments (Hoyt, 2002).

Also, teachers can help students locate text features, find relevant information, and distinguish between different genres. According to Duke (2000), many first graders teachers do not provide their students with opportunities to read informational text despite the fact that informational literacy is critical to future success. Many first grade teachers are not providing this exposure when some young children actually prefer reading informational text (Duke, 1999; Duthie, 1994; Granowsky, 2004; Richgels, 2002). According to Pressley et al. (2001), “Excellent first-grade teaching requires well-informed teachers who routinely identify children’s instructional needs and offer targeted lessons that foster development” (p. 39). Thus, “If we, as educators, are to prepare students for lifelong learning, then early introduction and analysis of nonfiction as a genre is a necessary piece of that preparation” (Duthie, 1994, p. 594). Creating daily activities in which students have the opportunity to interact with informational text are critical to ensure future reading success.

CHAPTER III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to answer the three-part research question that asked (1) What types of informational resources do first grade teachers in a local county in Ohio provide in their classroom libraries? (2) How often do they require their students to use or refer to these informational materials to complete an assignment? and (3) What instructional activities and strategies do first grade teachers use involving informational text? Throughout the remainder of this chapter, the methodology of the study will be described and the implementation of the study and follow-up procedures will be explained in further detail.

Methods

Research Design

A survey incorporating the three-part research question posed above was designed for data collection to gather quantitative statistics. For this study, the researcher utilized survey research incorporating purposeful sampling to target the intended participants. The survey was mailed to the first grade teachers in public elementary schools located in a local county. The teachers were asked to complete the survey based on their current teaching practices dealing with informational text. The survey was modified according to the suggestions made by a measurement expert after the proposal meeting. Once the appropriate corrections were made, the survey was approved for use and mailed to the sample population previously described.

Participants

The following is a brief summary outlining the demographics concerning the participants in this study. First grade teachers currently teaching in elementary schools located in a local county were asked to take part in this study. Surveys were sent to every elementary school located in the county along with a cover letter. For this particular study, nine public school

districts were selected. Each teacher identified for this study was given a number to ensure confidentiality. Letters were sent to regular classroom first grade teachers. Names and addresses of the first grade teachers were found using the school's website. The participants in the study were instructed to complete a questionnaire containing items related to the research questions posed for this study. Finally, the participants returned the questionnaire by placing it in a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Instrumentation

A survey intended to gather quantitative data was developed to address the three-part research question posed for this study (see Appendix A). The three questions were (1) What types of informational resources do first grade teachers in a local county in Ohio provide in their classroom libraries? (2) How often do they require their students to use or refer to these informational materials to complete an assignment?, and (3) What instructional activities and strategies do first grade teachers use involving informational text?

The first two survey questions focused on demographic information about the teachers including gender and years of teaching experience. Next, the survey questions asked first grade teachers to indicate what types of informational resources they currently had in their classrooms. Some of the targeted resources for classroom libraries included informational magazines, trade books, brochures, newspapers, and non-book sources such as cassettes, videos, and CDROMS. The survey explained the material that represents informational text. Participants were asked to select from a list all of the resources currently found in their classroom libraries.

To determine the amount of informational text in these teachers' classrooms, they were asked in the next portion of the survey to designate a percentage reflecting their estimate of this amount. For research question two, the participants were asked how often they require their

students to use informational text to complete an assignment. The next question asked how often they provided opportunities for their students to read informational text other than a textbook.

The remaining questions on the survey generated quantitative responses based on the participants' current instructional practices involving informational text. This portion of the survey focused on research question three. Participants were asked to check the activities and strategies they used in their classroom to ensure their students' success with informational text. First, they identified the activities they used during their designated informational text instruction time. These activities included shared reading, guided reading, read-alouds, literature circles, and computer use. Second, they explained how they used this activity by checking the strategies taught during the instructional component. These strategies included modeling think-alouds, pairing non-fiction and fiction texts, demonstrations and experiments to explain a concept, modeling appropriate use of graphic features, modeling navigational strategies, and conducting author studies.

Procedures

Once the revisions as suggested by my thesis committee members were made to the survey, the forms were sent to the Human Subjects Board at Bowling Green State University for the approval to implement this study with the targeted subjects. Following approval of the study, the information regarding the targeted elementary schools was gathered. By looking at the Ohio Department of Education's website, the addresses for the public elementary schools in the county were gathered. In addition, labels were made for each of the schools, along with a self-addressed stamped envelope. Participants were asked to fill out the survey and return it within a two-week time frame.

After the approval from the Human Subjects Board and the preparation of test material was completed, approximately 58 copies of the survey with an attached cover letter were sent. Copies of the cover letter and the survey were included with the self-addressed stamped envelope and were sent directly to the all first grade teachers in the county.

Data Collection

The surveys were mailed during the first week of March. The letter attached to the questionnaire explained to the participants what they needed to do if they chose to take part in the study. Participants were given approximately two weeks to return the completed survey. There were no follow-up procedures asking non-respondents/respondents to revisit the results of the study because the questionnaire was truly anonymous. Once the surveys were returned, the quantitative information gathered from research questions one, two, and three was analyzed by using a comprehensive statistics program as suggested by a statistics expert. The percentages regarding the representation of informational text in classroom libraries and on classroom walls were interpreted so findings could be reported. Research questions three and eight yielded quantitative results for the questions that asked the participants to “check all that apply.” The information supplied in the survey was entered into the statistical program as soon as it was received to eliminate any chance of misplacement.

Data Analysis

A designated statistical program indicated a frequency count for quantitative data gathered from all research questions. The questions regarding the percentage of informational text representation in classroom libraries yielded quantitative results. To find frequencies and percentages, descriptive statistics were used to calculate these results. The statements could be counted and summarized by implementing this procedure. SPSS was used to interpret the

quantitative data gathered. The data were analyzed and recorded based on the number of individuals who agreed to take part in this study.

Summary

The goal of this study was to compile data concerning informational text use in first grade classrooms in a local county by asking participants to respond to a survey dealing with a three-part research question: (1) What types of informational resources do first grade teachers in a local county provide in their classroom libraries? (2) How often do they require their students to use or refer to these informational materials to complete an assignment? and (3) What instructional activities and strategies do first grade teachers use involving informational text? Survey items were developed around the questions posed above.

CHAPTER IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This study was designed to survey first grade teachers in public elementary schools in a local county in Ohio to determine what types of informational resources they provide in their classroom libraries, how often they require their students to use or refer to these informational materials to complete an assignment, and what instructional activities and strategies they use involving informational text. Fifty-eight surveys were mailed to nine public elementary schools. Of the 58 surveys sent out, 29 (50%) were returned. Once all of the surveys were returned, the data were entered into the SPSS statistics program with the assistance of a measurement expert.

This chapter concentrates on the results found from analyzing and synthesizing the data from the surveys returned. The questions on the survey were categorized according to the results for each of the three parts of the research question.

Demographic Results

Survey questions 1 and 2 asked the participants to fill out demographic information. Of the 29 first grade teachers participating in the study, 100% of them were female. First grade teaching experience averaged 10.31 years ($SD=6.56$).

Research Question One

The first part of the research question asked, “What types of informational materials do first grade teachers in a local county in Ohio provide in their classroom libraries? Data from survey questions 3 and 4 was used to address this research question. Table 1 presents the frequencies and percentages by the various informational material types, while Figure 1 provides a graphic comparison of these types. Trade books were found to be the most frequently represented informational source as 96.9% of the first grade classroom libraries contained them.

Newspapers (37.9%) and brochures (20.7%) were the least represented informational text resources found in first grade classroom libraries.

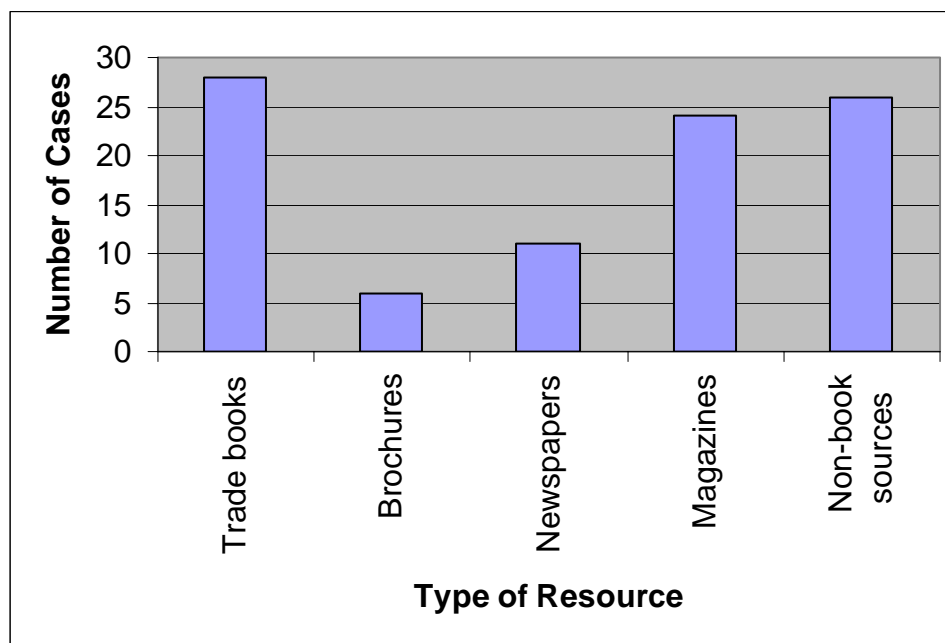
Table 1

Representation of Informational Resources in Classroom Libraries

Informational Resource	Frequency	% of Teachers
Trade books	28	96.6
Brochures	6	20.7
Newspapers	11	37.9
Magazines	24	82.8
Non-book sources (cassettes/videos/CDROMS)	26	89.7

Figure 1

Informational Text Resources in First Grade Classroom Libraries



When asked to designate a percentage showing the representation of informational text resources currently accessible in their classroom libraries, five participants indicated that their classroom libraries contained 1%-25% informational text resources. Sixteen of the 29 participants stated that their classroom libraries contained 26%-49% informational text resources. Seven first grade teachers expressed that their classroom libraries had 50-74% informational text resources. Finally, 1 out of the 29 participants stated that her classroom library had 75%-100% informational text resources.

Research Question Two

The second part of the research question asked, “How often do first grade teachers in a local county require their students to use or refer to informational resources to complete an assignment.” This research question was answered by survey questions 5, 6, and 7. The majority of participants (55.2%) indicated that they require students to use informational text on a monthly basis, while 37.9% require this type of text on a weekly basis (see Table 2).

Table 2

Frequency and Percent of Teachers Requiring Use of Informational Text to Complete an Assignment

Requiring Use of Informational Text to Complete an Assignment	Frequency	% of Teachers
Never	1	3.4
Monthly	16	55.2
Weekly	11	37.9
Daily	1	3.4

When asked how often they provide their students opportunities to read informational text other than a textbook, the majority of participants (n=21, 72.4%) reported that they do so on a daily basis.

Table 3

Opportunities to Read Informational Text

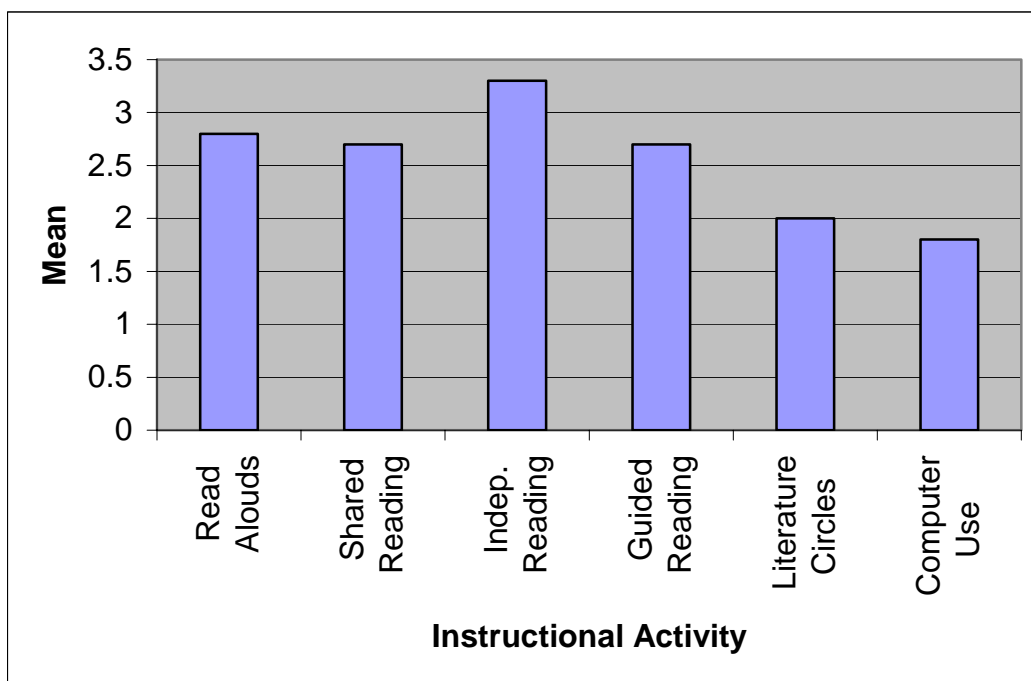
Providing Opportunities to Read Informational Text	Frequency	% of teachers
Never	0	0
Monthly	4	13.8
Weekly	4	13.8
Daily	21	72.4

Participants also designated how often they use informational text in the following instructional activities: read-alouds, shared reading, independent reading, guided reading, literature circles, and computer use. Independent reading with informational text was found to be the most frequently used activity with 62.1% of the participants using it on a daily basis. Guided reading with informational text was found to be the second most frequently used as 26 of the participants use it on a weekly and monthly basis. Read-alouds were also common with 18 of 29 teachers reporting that they used informational text during read-alouds on a weekly basis. Of the 29 participants, 13 said they use informational text during shared reading on a monthly basis. Of the 29 participants, 13 of them indicated that they never use informational text during literature circles, and 14 of the 29 participants said they never use informational text during computer

time. The mean distribution for each of the choices is listed in figure 2 with the following coded responses: never =1, monthly=2, weekly=3, and daily=4.

Figure 2

Frequency of Informational Text Use During Instructional Activities



Research Question Three

The third research question asked, “What instructional strategies and activities do first grade teachers in a local county use involving informational text?” Participants were asked to check all of the strategies they currently use in their classroom. These strategies are represented in figure 3 below and include think-alouds (A), pairing fiction and nonfiction texts (B), demonstrations and experiments to explain a concept (C), modeling appropriate use of navigational features (D), modeling how to skim and scan for important information (E), modeling questioning strategies while reading (F), and author studies (G). Figure 3 shows that the most frequently used strategies using informational text include think-alouds, demonstrations

and experiments to explain a concept, and modeling questioning strategies while reading with 25 of the 29 participants indicating their use.

Figure 3

Use of Informational Text Strategies

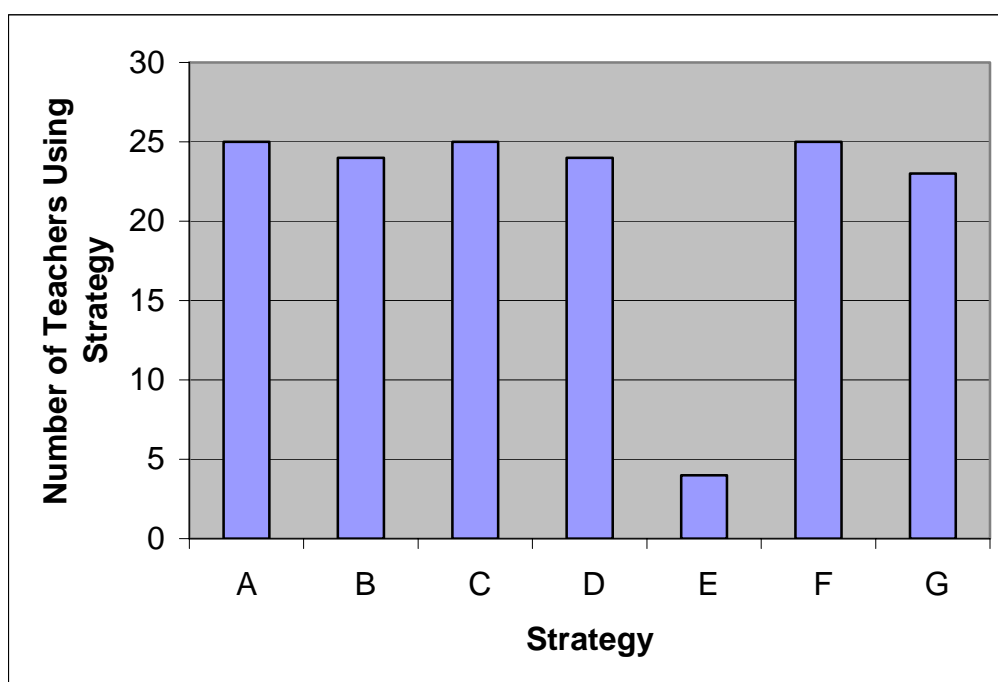


Table 4 shows the percentage of participants using each informational text strategy. The strategies used most often were think-alouds, demonstrations and experiments to explain a concept, and modeling questioning strategies while reading with 25 of the 29 participants marking these choices. Modeling how to skim and scan for information was the least used technique as only four participants indicated its use.

Table 4

Representation of Informational Test Strategies and Usage

Informational Text Strategy	Frequency	% of Teachers
A. Think-alouds	25	86.2
B. Pairing fiction and nonfiction texts	24	82.8
C. Demonstrations and experiments to explain a concept	25	86.2
D. Modeling appropriate use of navigational features	24	82.8
E. Modeling how to skim and scan for important information	4	13.8
F. Modeling questioning strategies while reading	25	13.8
G. Author Studies	23	79.3

Discussion of Results

Once the eight-question survey was returned, demographic and quantitative data were examined for the 29 participants in the informational text study. Three research questions were addressed in this study: What types of informational resources do first grade teachers in a local county in Ohio provide in their classroom libraries?, How often do they require their students to use or refer to these informational materials to complete an assignment?, and What instructional activities and strategies do they use involving informational text?

Research question 1 was addressed by survey questions 3 and 4. Results indicate that the majority of teachers had trade books (28 out of 29), magazines (24 out of 29), and non-book sources (26 out of 29) in their classroom libraries. In addition, the majority of participants' classroom libraries consisted of less than 50% informational text. Of the 29 teachers, 16 of them marked that their libraries contained 26%-49% informational text.

Research question 2 was addressed with survey questions 5, 6, and 7. When asked how often first grade teachers require their students to use informational text to complete an assignment, 16 of the 29 participants said they do it on a monthly basis. Of the 29 participants, 21 stated that they provide daily opportunities for their students to interact with informational text other than a textbook. When asked how often they use informational text during their instructional activities, participants indicated that informational text was used for independent reading on a daily basis. For read-alouds, shared reading, and guided reading participants used informational text on a weekly basis. Use of informational text during literature circles and computer time was used on a monthly basis.

Research question 3 was addressed with survey question 8. Survey question 8 asked participants to check all of the strategies they currently use to support the teaching of informational text. The most prevalent informational text strategies used in first grade classrooms were think-alouds, demonstrations and experiments to explain a concept, and modeling questioning strategies while reading. The strategy used the least was modeling how to skim and scan for important information with four out of the 29 participants marking this response.

Summary

This chapter explained the quantitative results gathered through the use of an eight-item survey. Results from survey question one indicate that the majority of the participants' classroom libraries had less than 50% informational text. The most prevalent instructional activity regarding use of informational text was independent reading. In addition, the majority of participants lacked informational text resources such as brochures and newspapers in their libraries. The strategy used the least was modeling how to skim and scan for information.

CHAPTER V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this descriptive study was to answer the three-part research question: “What types of informational resources do first grade teachers in a local county in Ohio provide in their classroom libraries?, How often do they require their students to use or refer to these informational materials to complete an assignment?, and What instructional activities and strategies do they use involving informational text?” This chapter will discuss the results of the study and the conclusions that were drawn from each of the research questions posed above. In addition, this chapter will provide future recommendations for first grade teachers based on data analysis and related research findings.

Summary

The study focused on informational text resources available in first grade classroom libraries. The survey was mailed to the first grade teachers in public elementary schools located in a local county in northwest Ohio. Participants indicated that trade books were the most frequently represented informational text source in their classroom libraries with 28 of the 29 participants indicating their use. An important fact found in the results of this study was that 72.4% of the participants had less than 50% informational text resources in their classroom libraries.

When asked how often they allow their students to read informational text other than a textbook, the majority of the participants (72.4%) reported that they provide daily opportunities. When asked how often they require their students to use informational text to complete an assignment, the majority of the participants (55.2%) indicated “monthly.”

A majority of the participants indicated that they use informational text for independent reading on a daily basis. Using informational text during read-alouds was also common, with 62% of the participants responding that they use it on a weekly basis.

The most commonly used strategies by the participants in this study were think-alouds, demonstrations and experiments, and modeling questioning strategies while reading. The most surprising statistic found in the study was that only four participants indicated they model how to skim and scan for information.

Conclusions

Most participants in this study indicated that their classroom libraries contain informational trade books. However 72.4% reported percentages below 50%, which is less than the recommended amount (Hoyt, 2002). The fact that the majority of the participants' classroom libraries contain less than the recommended balance of fiction to informational text suggests that they are unfamiliar with the wealth of informational text resources currently available. Although the participants indicated they had informational text resources, their libraries did not have a diverse and adequate amount of informational text. Hartman (2002) believes that informational trade books challenge readers to activate their thinking and connect to the real world. Along with trade books, Yopp and Yopp (2000) believe that informational text should be represented through a multitude of sources such as magazines, newspapers, brochures, and multimedia materials. However, in this study, only 20.7% of the participants indicated that they have brochures in their classroom libraries, and only 37.9% indicated they have newspapers. Therefore, it can be concluded that their classroom libraries were not stocked with a diversity of informational text resources. It is possible that the participants may not know the importance of including a variety of resources in their libraries to arouse curiosity and increase motivation for

learning. In addition, they may not be aware of the variety of informational text resources children enjoy reading, and they perhaps assume that newspapers and brochures are too difficult.

Other studies confirm that many primary grade teachers include only a small portion of informational texts in their classroom libraries (Duke, 2000; Harvey, 2002). Palmer and Stewart (2003) found comparable results in their study when they asked a group of first grade students what types of books their teachers have in their classroom libraries. Some of the students responded with “mostly make believe” (p. 45). Overall, teachers in this study may underestimate the importance of informational text in the primary grades.

Dorion (1994) and Duke (2004b) suggest providing a multitude of opportunities to read informational text for authentic reasons. However, the survey instrument used in this study did not ask what types of texts, activities, or instruction the participants used during independent reading. Most of the teachers indicated that they provide daily opportunities for their students to read informational text materials beyond the class textbooks. The survey did not ask the participants to indicate what kinds of opportunities they offer or whether they involved purposeful instruction. As Duke points out, students reading informational text for authentic reasons look different from those reading informational text strictly to complete an assignment.

To achieve the overall goal of incorporating informational literacy into daily instruction, research shows that teachers should implement instructional activities such as read-alouds, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, and literature circles involving informational text (Hoyt, 2002). Most of the participants reported they use informational text for read-alouds and guided reading. However, the majority indicated they used it on a weekly basis, while Hoyt (2002) suggests using informational text for read-alouds on a daily basis. Hoyt (2002) and Taberski (2001) believe that primary teachers should complete at least two read-

alouds a day, including one fiction and one nonfiction text. It is possible that the participants in the study may be reading fiction books for most of their read alouds and only touching on informational text occasionally throughout the year.

The majority of the participants reported that they used a variety of strategies including think-alouds, demonstrations, and experiments to explain a concept, modeling questioning strategies while reading, pairing fiction and nonfiction texts, and modeling appropriate use of navigation features in their classrooms for increasing their students' comprehension and understanding of informational text. However, because these strategies were not defined or explained on the survey instrument, teachers' interpretation of their meanings may have varied thus, impacted responses.

Only 13.8% of the participants reported that they model to their students how to skim and scan for important information. Hoyt (2002) believes that navigational strategies such as skimming and scanning are key concepts in teaching important reading strategies for comprehending informational text. Therefore, this is one crucial reading strategy for understanding informational text that was virtually ignored. While the reasons are unclear, one can speculate that teachers neglect this strategy because they assume it is necessary only in the upper grades, when lengthy texts are introduced.

Recommendations

Teacher Practice

One of the major findings of the study was that the majority of the participants should gather more informational text resources for their classrooms besides textbooks and trade books. Gathering additional sources from libraries, recreation and city offices, and home such as brochures and newspapers would be cost efficient and valuable for the first grade classroom.

Also, adding a multitude of informational text resources to the classroom library would increase access and exposure to the unique features of informational text.

The majority of the participants indicated using informational text during a variety of instructional activities. However, providing corresponding strategies for these instructional activities is one improvement that first grade teachers need to make. Based on the results of the study, only a small percentage of teachers showed their students how to skim and scan for information. This strategy is especially important for standardized tests. Hoyt (2002) recommends using newspapers to help students learn how to scan for key features such as photographs and titles by shifting from column to column. In addition, she suggests providing a checklist with statements about whether or not the reader shifted navigational strategies to match their purpose for reading.

Several of the participants indicated that they use informational text for read-alouds on a weekly basis. However, according to Hoyt, it is suggested that primary teachers use informational text for read-alouds on a daily basis. Selecting books for read-alouds that hold interest and promote discussion is one way to increase exposure to informational text features at an early age (Duke, 2003a).

With more results showing the limited availability of informational resources and use of corresponding strategies, it is imperative that teachers increase time with and access to informational text. In addition, primary teachers should provide opportunities to point out the unique features of informational text. Understanding how to navigate through the text will help students gain confidence in reading this genre. To be effective teachers of literacy, teachers should capitalize on meaningful and engaging activities to support informational literary

instruction. Early exposure to informational text will put young children in a position to comprehend and understand future encounters with this genre (Duke, 2003a).

Future Research

This study represented only first grade teachers in public elementary schools in a rural county in northwest Ohio. Researchers could look at other counties in Ohio and use a similar research design to find additional data on the topic. The data gathered from surveying teachers in other counties in Ohio could be used to make comparisons regarding informational text representation and strategy implementation in first grade classrooms.

A variety of studies could be conducted to find additional data on this topic. Investigating students' views and opinions of the instructional materials, activities, and strategies used in their classrooms would yield more in-depth data on this topic. Student responses could be tallied and scored to determine their interests regarding informational text. According to Pressley et. al (2001), the most effective first grade literacy instruction occurs when teachers provide opportunities for students to read material they find interesting.

Questions regarding effective informational reading and writing activities could be added to the questionnaire. Questions with rating scales could be included on the survey to determine how teachers feel about the effectiveness of their instructional activities and strategies. Therefore, the data could be used to find a discrepancy between strategies being used in first grade classrooms versus strategies suggested by experts on the topic.

Research indicates that there are several literacy purposes that informational texts fulfill in a primary grade classroom (Duke 2003a; Hoyt 2002; Duthie, 1994; Hartman, 2002). It capitalizes on student interest and supports early reading development by allowing students to engage in strategic reading behavior. Because the majority of reading and writing we do is non-

fiction, it is imperative that students are exposed to informational text as early in their schooling as possible (Duke, 2003a). Providing daily opportunities to read and discover informational text is critical to ensuring future reading success.

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APPENDIX A.
SURVEY SENT TO PARTICIPANTS

Informational Text Survey

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. As you read through the questions, please answer them as honestly and thoroughly as possible. For this particular study, informational text represents material that contains repetition of a topic or theme, realistic photographs and illustrations, technical vocabulary, labels and captions, graphical devices, and navigational aids.

1. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
2. How many years teaching experience do you have at the first grade level? _____
3. What types of informational resources (excluding textbooks) are currently accessible in your classroom library? Check all that apply.
 - ☐ Trade books
 - ☐ Brochures
 - ☐ Newspapers
 - ☐ Magazines
 - ☐ Non-book sources (cassettes/videos/CDROMS)
 - ☐ Other _____
4. Of the books in your classroom library, what percentage of your collection is informational text?
 - ☐ 1%-25% ☐ 26%-49% ☐ 50%-74% ☐ 75%-100%
5. How often do you require your students to use informational text to complete an assignment?
 - ☐ Never ☐ Monthly ☐ Weekly ☐ Daily
6. How often do you provide opportunities for your students to read informational text other than a textbook?
 - ☐ Never ☐ Monthly ☐ Weekly ☐ Daily
7. How often do you use informational text in the following instructional activities?

Read-Alouds	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly	<input type="checkbox"/> Daily
Shared Reading	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly	<input type="checkbox"/> Daily
Independent Reading	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly	<input type="checkbox"/> Daily
Guided Reading	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly	<input type="checkbox"/> Daily
Literature Circles	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly	<input type="checkbox"/> Daily
Computer Use	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly	<input type="checkbox"/> Daily
8. Which of the following strategies do you use within the instructional activities listed above? Check all that apply.
 - ☐ Think alouds
 - ☐ Pairing fiction and non-fiction texts
 - ☐ Demonstrations and experiments to explain a concept
 - ☐ Modeling appropriate use of navigational features (index, glossaries, bold face headings, captions)
 - ☐ Modeling how to skim and scan for information
 - ☐ Modeling questioning strategies while reading
 - ☐ Author studies