Incorporating Informational Text Within a First Grade Classroom

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Abstract

Most first graders in the United States spend less than four minutes on reading informational text within their classroom and less than 10% of the material offered is considered informational text. Common Core State Standards recommend that primary grade students need to be reading at least 50% of this type of genre. Since implementation, a focus has increased on how to incorporate informational text in the primary classroom to improve comprehension. This study took place within a first-grade classroom with 13 participants. During a six-week time span, three different teaching methods were used to measure student growth of comprehension with each method. Students were exposed to this genre using a topic of animals. The researcher spent one week using each of these three methods: independent read, teacher read aloud, and close reading. During the week, the participants were given support as they learned new vocabulary words, broke down reading passages, and engaged in discussions about the animals. At the conclusion of the week, an assessment was given to measure comprehension. The findings show that in the Close Read Method, students performed better. In the Close Read Method, more total knowledge was gained because the test scores were higher than the other two methods. This method showed the total correct over the two-week time frame of 316 out of a possible 338 points. In the Independent Read Method, test scores showed a total correct of 301 out of a possible 338, and the Read Aloud Method showed a total correct of 305 out of a possible 338.

Keywords: informational text, methods, comprehension

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Why does informational text draw so much attention in the educational world today? The ability to read and comprehend informational text plays a large role in one's success in academics, the workforce, and society. There are numerous factors involved in being a successful and literate student in the twenty-first century. Some of these factors include being able to successfully use technology to discover, assess, incorporate, and make use of information to solve problems. A large amount of information in today's world is communicated through informational text. Some examples of this may include, a brochure about a medical procedure, an explanation of new technology, or even a manual for operating a machine. As informational text is used and of importance in everyday life, it is necessary to develop students' ability in the subject (Li et al., 2017).

It is assumed that students in the early grades learn about informational text through exposure. Some scholars have even suggested that early exposure to informational text will increase their reading motivation, help them learn vocabulary, build plans that are relevant, and even improve students' understanding of science concepts. All of these benefits may lead to an increase in reading ability supporting the idea that informational text is an important part of a student's schooling and plays a big factor in academic success. (Li et al., 2017). Having students read informational text without teacher support or scaffolding will not support student independence and academic success.

The purpose of this study was to determine which method of teaching informational text is most effective in student comprehension and to decipher which style of teaching informational text is most effective and beneficial to students. By allowing students to have scaffolding and support while diving deeper into more challenging subject areas and knowledge, the best

opportunities for learning within the classroom will be achieved.

Two research questions guided this study:

1. How does incorporating informational text in daily instruction help students gain knowledge?

2. What is the most effective way to do so?

The study hypothesized that students will learn new material through exposure to different types of informational text. It was also hypothesized that students learn best when being taught this challenging text using the close reading method of teaching.

In the following literature review, the role of Common Core, text sets, close reading, reading independently and teacher read alouds in relation to informational text is being investigated. The variety of methods chosen each have their own benefits for teaching this challenging text. As students learn and read informational text, they are developing knowledge of their world around them. The more background knowledge they have and the more informational text they are exposed to, the stronger their comprehension skills are likely to be.

Common Core Changes with A Focus on Informational Text

When Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were implemented, the biggest shift for primary and intermediate grades was the shift in genre focus. While narrative genre was still of importance, a bigger focus was put on the impact of informational text. The K-5 CCSS recommend that students should be exposed to a complex, high-quality reading environment with a balance of literary and informational texts. Several studies have indicated that elementary students have less exposure to informational text. A pioneering study completed by Duke in 2000 showed that first graders in the United States only spent an average of 3.6 minutes on reading informational text in the classroom and only 9.8% of the reading materials available were informational text. When there is a neglect of informational text in the primary grades,

students are put at a disadvantage when they enter upper elementary grades. At that point in their educational career, there is an increased demand for reading and comprehending informational text (Li et al., 2017).

Teachers need to be conscious of what is expected by CCSS and adjust their curriculum to meet the needs as the newly published basal readers at that time may not have met the standards. Teachers that include more informational text through placement in classroom libraries, on classroom wall displays, and use throughout the classroom in activities have shown growth on standardized tests of decoding and word identification. The use of informational text can ignite a student's curiosity about the world around them which leads to an interest, and eventually, learned knowledge (Calo, 2011). The use of nonfiction and informational text motivates students' minds and ideas as they search for answers about their world around them (Palmer & Stewart, 2005).

In 2004, Duke researchers stated that all nonfiction text is not considered to necessarily be informational text just because it conveys information, whereas Marinak and Gambrell stated in 2008 that informational text can be typified as any material that is designed to convey any kind of information. Organizations also have different understandings of this term. Researchers began to realize the importance of this when researching informational text. The meaning of this term is not always used and interpreted in the same context across studies. Teachers need to be conscious of what is expected by CCSS and adjust their curriculum to meet the needs of their students.

In another study published in an article titled, *Informational Text and the Common Core: A Content Analysis of Three Basal Reading Programs (2014)*, three 4th grade basal reading textbooks were studied. The three textbooks were (1) Journeys, published by Houghton Mifflin

Harcourt (2) Treasures, published by Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, and (3) Reading Street, published by Pearson Scott Foresman. The findings of this study indicate that the frequency of a text selection shows that basal readers, compared to informational text selections, contain a larger number of literary text selections. The CCSS recommends 50% of text that students are exposed to should be informational genre. This study showed that basal readers only offer 31%, on average, of this type text selection. This only amounts to 16% of the number of pages overall.

These three, most widely used, commercialized reading series have an unbalanced amount of literacy versus informational text present. Principals, curriculum leaders, and teachers need to be aware of the amount of informational text that is present in their basal readers so they can use supplemental materials to meet the standards. "Examining the content of basal reading texts is one means of understanding the extent to which students are exposed to informational text during reading instruction" (Braker-Walters, 2014, p. 2).

Text Sets

Teaching with text sets allows teachers to monitor and create a learning environment that is differentiated. By providing text in this fashion, teachers are helping their students to explore concepts and deeper topics across subjects. By allowing students this choice, they begin to take ownership of their learning. Students are motivated when they take interest in a topic and are more opt to complete more challenging comprehension work. Students need to have successful reading opportunities throughout their schooling. Using text sets can help achieve that goal. In a study done by Fulmer and Telis in 2013, researchers found that motivation from readers was shaped by how the reader perceived the text. If they thought the text was too difficult, they were less likely to apply themselves. Along with motivation, it is important to offer challenging text with instructional scaffolds that will motivate the students to persevere through their reading. It

is important to provide both easier and more difficult texts to ensure students have positive and successful reading opportunities throughout the text sets. When encouraged in a positive way, text sets can provide students with many opportunities to learn and listen to new concepts and challenging vocabulary words which in turn increases word learning and comprehension (Strachan, 2014).

Researchers questioned whether students make greater improvement in using specific comprehension strategies after experiencing nonfiction as compared to fiction texts. They also challenged the effect of direct teaching of new word meanings and using context clues to define unknown words in the positive impact of student vocabulary development after experiencing nonfiction as compared to fiction. They continued to look at how student attitudes differ after reading nonfiction versus fiction text. In the article titled, *Utilizing Nonfiction Texts to Enhance Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary in Primary Grades (2015)*, two first grade classes and one second grade class were the participants in a quantitative study that used a repetitive design measure. Students aged in range from 6-8 years old and the study took place in two midwestern schools that had a percentage rate ranging from 52% to 81% of students receiving free and reduced lunch. In regards to race, all three classrooms had 88% of participants being white and 12% being African American. This study alternated every two weeks between fiction and non-fiction instruction. The study lasted for 8 weeks total.

This study used four data sources. First, teachers collected informal records in regards to the learning setting and participant involvement with reference to nonfiction to fiction text to pinpoint the quantitative data. Second, teachers scored student skills to understand techniques of determining importance, using background knowledge, and envision what they were reading. Third, teachers evaluated students' vocabulary development based on predetermined vocabulary

words from a reading passage. Last, students filled out a questionnaire in regards to their liking

of reading nonfiction/fiction passages. The finding showed that in regards to nonfiction text,

studies showed a drastic difference in results when compared to fiction in all three classrooms.

In regards to vocabulary development, the students in the first-grade classrooms showed

significant difference in nonfiction vocabulary meaning in comparison to fiction meaning.

Second grade students showed consistency in relation to vocabulary between fiction and non-

fiction. The teacher attributed this to the fact that the preselected vocab words were not

challenging enough and the students had just finished a unit on context clues.

The results of the student attitude survey showed that all students in first and second

grade enjoyed nonfiction more than fiction. They felt it was more engaging and they enjoyed the

higher level of content knowledge. In conclusion, the effects of implementing more nonfiction

showed an increase of comprehension score and development of vocabulary. Students were more

engaged and eager to learn content provided in nonfiction text. The more opportunities students

have with interacting with nonfiction text, the more they comprehend. "The authors highly

recommended that educators regularly incorporate nonfiction text into the reading curriculum

and explicitly teach students how to navigate informational text" (Kuhn et al., 2015, p. 295).

Teacher Read Alouds

One-way teachers are able to incorporate informational text in the classroom is to read it

aloud to students. When teachers read aloud from informational text, developing readers become

familiar with its style. Listening aloud to informational text can be a beneficial means for

building knowledge and developing readers are more likely to acquire knowledge from

informational text if their teacher has read it aloud to them.

Reading aloud is one of the most important interactions a primary teacher can provide for

a student. Reading aloud can build foundational skills, enhances vocabulary knowledge, and provides a model of expressive reading and fluency. Children can be exposed to rich themes, challenging concepts, and expansive vocabulary without being concerned with independent reading abilities. Read alouds expose students to a breadth of text types. Reading aloud plays a big part in instruction of informational text. Listening to the teacher read aloud and discussing nonfiction can activate the students' background knowledge and inspire them to learn more about topics. Read alouds do not have to be isolated events in the classroom but can extend across subjects and help expand a student's content, vocabulary and genre learning (Strachan, 2014). It has been known for many decades that knowledge influences reading comprehension.

Knowledge of a particular topic has a strong impact on what a reader understands and learns from their reading. When readers have a strong understanding of the knowledge of their reading, they are better able to make inferences. In an article titled, *Conceptual Coherence, Comprehension, and Vocabulary Acquisition: A Knowledge Effect?* Cervetti et al. (2016) questioned the impact of knowledge building through a set of texts. The findings of this research study show that when it came to topic knowledge, all the results supported the hypothesis that believed the students who read informational text related to their subject would have higher content knowledge than those who read unrelated informational text. The students also had impressive knowledge development. The students also gained more knowledge of key concept words and general academic words when reading informational text, as well as a better understanding and comprehension of the topic and text. "Undoubtedly, the most potentially important finding from this research regards the incidental acquisition of word knowledge during reading" (Cervetti et al., 2016, p.773).

This study concluded that vocabulary knowledge is a strong predictor of a student's

reading development. Students built better word knowledge because they have many more opportunities to read and comprehend words throughout text which led to better understanding. These results suggest that students can build more vocabulary development through conceptual coherence in reading than focusing on a range of text in a variety of subjects.

It is important to remember to provide opportunity for use of interactive read alouds also. Teachers need to stop frequently to ask listeners questions, make observations of their audience, and answer any questions the student may have. Proving this support will enable better comprehension of text. It is also wise for the teacher to make connections to the text as reading aloud. It may be text-to-text, text-to-self, or text-to-world (Trinkle, 2007). "Making these texts accessible to students not only in classroom libraries and displays but also through read-alouds and discussions, is a crucial first step" (Kuhn et al., 2015).

Close Reading and Rereads

As defined by Fisher and Frye (2014) in *Closely Reading Informational Texts in the Primary Grades*, close reading is "a careful and purposeful rereading of a complex text" (p. 223). The CCSS have brought new awareness to close reading and the importance of rereads to gain a deeper meaning and understanding of complex text. Close reading is a careful reread of complex text with purpose. Close reading of complex text should be used in the primary grades and instructional minutes should be spent on both stamina and strength. To be competitive in reading, readers need both of these. "Learning to effectively engage with text demands that teachers of reading create opportunities for students to make visible their thinking in a community of peers, interrogate text through accountable talk, and have access to rich cognitive strategies of knowledgeable others" (Mariage et al., 2019, p. 40).

Informational text has proven to be an excellent method for teaching students to reread

because of its large number of challenging words that require the students to use problem solving skills. When using rereads of complex text, teachers need to be available to provide support when the students require it. Such support may include relying on prior knowledge, dissecting words for meaning, being available for assistance with context clues and even presenting the reread orally prior to student viewing. All of these factors play a part in student success with informational text rereads (Hedin & Conderman, 2010).

The initial read should focus on paying close attention to the main idea and determining what the text says. In the second reading, the reader determines the author's purpose, how the text works, and the structure of the text. In the final read, the reader attempts to figure out what the text means, and it is during this stage that the reader is making connections with the text, forming judgments, and concentrating on their comprehension to better understand the meaning. Students across the grade levels should have multiple interactions with the same text (Fisher & Frey, 2014). "There has been relatively less attention focused on building the rich interactive dialogic apprenticeships that create the kinds of active, strategic, and close reading of more expert readers for early learners" (Mariage et al., 2019, p. 40).

CCSS have brought attention to close reading and the significant impact multiple readings can have in developing deeper meaning and interpretation of complex text. As noted in the article titled, "*Comprehension Instruction for Tier 2 Early Learners: A Scaffolded Apprenticeship for Close Reading of Informational Text*", the research completed by Mariage concluded that young struggling readers can become more expert readers with scaffolded support (Mariage et al, 2019). This was the first study known to examine close reading and strategy instruction used with Tier 2 interventions. This case study used a mixed-methods approach and began with a pretest followed by a post test. Data was gathered starting with a baseline and then

compared with two post intervention lessons after a thirteen-week intervention on comprehension. The subject of this study included five third grade struggling readers who were taught by a special education Tier 2 teacher. All subjects had a diverse ethnic background but received assistance through free and reduced lunch. The school in the study was located in a diverse suburban school in the Midwest. The interventions being tested in this study looked at effective reading comprehension instruction within three different areas. These include dialogic instruction, cognitive strategy instruction, and close reading.

There were four different types of data collected. The first was a measure of comprehension test. In this test, the teacher read aloud the directions, ten questions were asked after each passage, and points were assigned based on answers. In the annotation, student interaction from the text was collected from notes and questions that arose during the reading. This was scored by the total number of annotations and types. The third research questions looked at differences in the quality and quantity of responses from students during pre and post reading discussion. This was gathered by transcribing videotaped discussions. The fourth type of data collection was from the student validity measures. The students were asked to rate the strategy effectiveness for individual, group, and general enjoyment of using these strategies.

In the same study completed by Mariage, it was shown that in regards to reading comprehension, students were more successful at identifying the main idea at the post intervention passage by more than double. The students also greatly improved one or more levels on the standardized assessments. In the annotations, the students were all more eager to take notes and engage in the passages through interactive notetaking. There were less questions asked in the pre intervention passage with no follow-up questions. In the post intervention passage, there was more participation and longer discussion. In the social validity category, the teacher

noted that the close reading approach was beneficial to the students because the rereading of text allowed her students to take different passes through the text and approach it with different purposes.

Teachers need to have access to extra support so they are able to give students adequate tools to become more successful and comprehensive readers. Young struggling readers can learn to become better readers with scaffolded support from teachers and peers. "Teachers benefit when they have access to scaffolds to more confidently provide the direct, explicit, and strategic instruction within an apprenticeship process for struggling readers" (Mariage et al., 2019, p. 40).

Reading Independently

For years, educators have known that students who spend a large amount of time reading independently have advanced reading skills. They tend to have a more enriched vocabulary, enjoy reading, and are more proficient at it. This leads to their desire to read more which in turn helps them become better readers. Poor readers on the other hand tend to read less and give up because of the difficulty it provides them. "Having students read informational text without explicit instruction on how to read informational text may not contribute to students' reading performance" (Li et al., 2017, p.23). It has only been in the past decade that researchers have begun to uncover the truth. Studies are showing a great impact of not only the effects of how much a student reads but also what kind of text they read (Goodwin & Miller, 2012).

As examined in the research article titled, *Examining the Reading of Informational Text in 4th Grade Class and its Relation with Students' Reading Performance (2017),* a quantitative survey design study was performed. The study used information from a test called Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS 2011). This test was used because it gives a national and diversified sample which in turn could lead to policy recommendations. Some of

these diversified samples may include classroom text choices between short stories, chapter books, and informational text. Socioeconomic status also played a role in student performance. Those with higher status showed greater reading achievement compared to those with lower status, as well as female students having better reading performances than males. The study was investigated because there was limited and conflicting literature regarding understanding of the relationship between reading informational text and students reading performance.

Three findings came from this study. The first finding was that among the three types of informational text, textbook and nonfiction subject area books were the main type of informational text read by students in the sampled 4th grade class. The second finding was that longer fiction books that contained chapters were the primary literary text students read. Short stories were also read frequently. The third finding was that female students score significantly higher than male students. The study also found that teachers are challenged in teaching this type of text correctly because they're limited on time and resources such as professional development. Most informational text comes from textbooks rather than where the students interest lies.

Conclusion

When CCSS were implemented, a focus was placed on the importance of teaching informational text in the classroom. Research has been completed and studies have been shared on the most effective ways to provide our students with the skills and support they need to be successful at reading and comprehending informational text across subjects. We can provide this support through the use of text sets, teacher read alouds, close reading, and reading independently as effective ways to build skills in informational text. We need to provide our students with opportunities to learn about their world, build on their curiosities, and spark their interest all while providing a range of materials. By helping our students focus on the details of

nonfiction text, we are helping them become more active and strategic readers. "To quote a phrase from Inside Film magazine (2003), it's time for teachers to help their students get off the map and into the world" (Calo, 2011, p. 295).

Methods

In this research, data was collected using the quantitative method using a comparative design study to show comparison between three methods of teaching informational text in relation to the children's growth of comprehension. These three methods include: teacher read aloud, independent read, and close reading. The researcher collected data for a total of six weeks from first grade participants in the researcher's classroom during the spring semester of 2022. The following information details the participants, setting, data source and research materials, and data collection procedures.

Participants

The participants in this study were a group of thirteen students from a 1st grade classroom. These children ranged in age from 6-7 years old, were both male and female, and were all white. The school was a private school located in a metropolitan area that houses a large university located in east central Illinois. The parents of students at this school pay tuition for their children to attend. Most children from this school come from a two-parent household with two working parents who are able to provide an affluent lifestyle. None of the students in the study receive special education or supplemental services and there were no students with learning disabilities included in this group. All students had similar reading abilities. The study consisted of a large group of children that were chosen as a sample by convenience, meaning the teacher researcher chose those within the sample.

Setting

The study was conducted in a first-grade classroom. The school is a PreK-8 private Catholic school in central Illinois. This school was among 36 other elementary schools within this diocese, which collectively served 8,644 students. The school was located in a suburban town that housed a large university. Because of the large Asian population that attended the Graduate programs and taught at the university, the demographics of this school show a larger percentage of Asian students than in other schools within this diocese. The school enrollment was right around 400 students with two classrooms per grade level. According to the 2021-22 NCEA Data Bank School Summary Report, the school's population of 398 students is 84.7% White, 3.5% Black, 4.5% Asian, 2.7% Hispanic, and 7.3% two or more races. The school consists of 49% female students and 51% male students. None of the students receive free and reduced lunch and less than 1% of students have an IEP" (NCEA Data Bank School Summary Report, 2021-22). Most of the students at this school come from highly affluent, two parent homes with much out-of-school opportunity for learning and social growth.

Data Source and Research Materials

The study used one instrument to collect data which consisted of a weekly comprehension assessment. The instrument and materials are as follow:

1. The weekly comprehension assessment was administered to each participant to measure comprehension.

2. A variety of informational text including leveled reader books and short reading passages was used.

The data instrument source was a weekly comprehension assessment that was created and administered by the teacher researcher (See Appendix A). A total of six assessments were given over the duration of the study. Each test consisted of one multiple choice question, three short

answer questions, one diagram question and eight cloze sentences. The data collected showed the comprehension knowledge gained after each method of teaching informational text was used.

These three methods included: teacher read aloud, student independent read, and close reading. The researcher scored each assessment by calculating the raw score and recording it each week. Data from this source will be used to answer the research question of the most effective way to incorporate informational text in daily instruction to help students gain knowledge.

Students used a variety of informational texts. These included leveled readers and short reading passages for the close reading method (See Appendix B). All topics of reading were on different animals. The leveled books were from the classroom library or downloaded from Reading A-Z. The reading passages were purchased from Teachers Pay Teachers which is a marketplace for original educational materials.

Procedures of Data Collection

Participants spent 30 minutes a day, three to four days a week, learning from the genre of informational text. They were introduced to a different type of animal each week using a different type of teaching method for informational text. These three methods were: teacher read aloud, student independent read, and close reading. Each method was used for two different weeks within the six-week time frame.

In the first and fourth weeks, the teacher read aloud method was used. On day one, the teacher researcher read aloud a story to the participants in a whole group setting. Participants did not have the physical book in their hands and could view the image from their desk within the classroom setting. The teacher researcher used a variation of pitch, tone, expression and eye contact as the story was being read aloud. As questions arose, the teacher researcher would

answer those orally. Comments were offered by the teacher researcher and the story was presented in a read aloud manner that was fluent and in an enjoyable manner. On day two, the teacher researcher collected facts that were learned the previous day by listing the facts on the smart board. On day three, a different story was read aloud to the students. The same procedure continued as was followed on day one. On day four, the teacher researcher reviewed new vocabulary words with the students as the students played a matching game with a peer for word review. On day five, the assessment was administered and scored by the teacher researcher.

In the second and fifth weeks, the independent read method was used. On day one, the teacher researcher provided a leveled reader for each participant during a small group setting of seven participants. Students completed a picture walk through the unfamiliar book to preview the pictures and familiarize the students with the story before introducing the text. Discussion followed and questions from participants were answered orally within the small group setting. On day two, students were given the same text and were asked to locate unfamiliar words. These words were gathered and listed on a large chart that was visual to the small group. Descriptions of each word were orally given. On day three, the students read the text independently. The teacher researcher was present to assist in unfamiliar words. On day four, the assessment was administered and scored by the teacher researcher.

In the third and sixth weeks, the close reading method was used. On the first read, students were given a small grid that included codes to use as they read independently (Appendix C). Without any prior instruction or discussion, the students read their first attempt. After completion of the read, the teacher researcher asked text dependent questions. On the second read, the teacher researcher introduced the topic and new words and then reread the text to the students. Students determined the key details in the text about the topic and retold the text in

their own words. On the third read, the students read the text independently or in pairs and answered additional text dependent comprehension questions. After completion of all three reads, the assessment was administered and scored by the teacher researcher. In the next section, the data analysis and results will be reported.

<div align="center">**Data Analysis and Results**</div>

Data was analyzed quantitatively using comparative design. Participants for this study were chosen from the researcher's 1st-grade classroom and aged in range from 6-7 years old. The researcher collected data for a six-week time frame using the raw scores of comprehension assessments. The scores were tabulated to Microsoft Excel. The teacher researcher compared the raw score of each participant's comprehension growth for each method of Teacher Read Aloud, Independent Read and Close Reading. Each method of informational text was taught for 2 nonconsecutive weeks.

Data Analysis

At the end of each week, the researcher collected data from assessments that were given to the participants. These assessments were read aloud to the participants and given as a whole group. All of the data collected from the assessments was organized and reported as raw scores on different graphs using Microsoft Excel. The first bar graph shows informational text in daily instruction over the course of 6 weeks and includes all raw data from each method each week. The following three graphs show a breakdown of each of the three methods showing the difference between the 2 nonconsecutive weeks. To display the results comparatively, a bar graph is shown next. To answer which of the three teaching methods was most effective, a bar graph containing all data is shown. To highlight the scores of the three teaching methods individually, three bar graphs follow.

Participants in the study were exposed to informational text through the study of six different animals using three different methods of teaching. Through the learning of new material, it was hypothesized that they would gain knowledge in the subject area. This is displayed in the bar graph mentioned previously. Additionally, it was hypothesized that participants would show the most growth in comprehension when being taught by the Close Reading Method of teaching. This is shown in the graph as well.

Results

Overall results show that incorporating informational text in daily instruction can help participants gain knowledge. The Independent Read Method showed the largest gain of all three methods tested. The Read Aloud Method was the second largest gain but was significantly lower than the Independent Read. Following close behind was the Close Read Method which showed the smallest gain but very similar to the gain of the Read Aloud Method.

When looking at the most effective methods, the Close Read Method had the highest scores for the 2-week span. The second most effective method was the Read Aloud Method which was very similar to the scores of the Independent Read Method.

Research Question One: Does Incorporating Informational Text in Daily Instruction Help Participants Gain Knowledge?

First, Figure 1 below shows all raw data that was collected over the course of 6 weeks using each of the three methods of teaching informational text. In the Read Aloud Method, 7 participants increased by a total of 9 points. These participants were numbers 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 13, and 14. There were 4 participants that decreased by a total of 6 points. These participants were numbers 5, 10, 11, and 12. Participants 8 and 9 stayed the same. In the Independent Read

Method, participants 2, 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 increased by a total of 20 points.

Participant 7 decreased by 1 point and participants 4, 5, and 9 showed no change in score. The

final method of Close Read showed that participants 6, 10, 13, and 14 scores increased by a total

of 5 points and participants 4, 8, and 9 decreased by 3 points. Participants 2, 3, 5, 7, 11, and 12

had scores that stayed the same. This was the method with the most scores in this particular area.

Figure 1

Raw Data Collection of Strategies for Teaching Three Methods of Informational Text
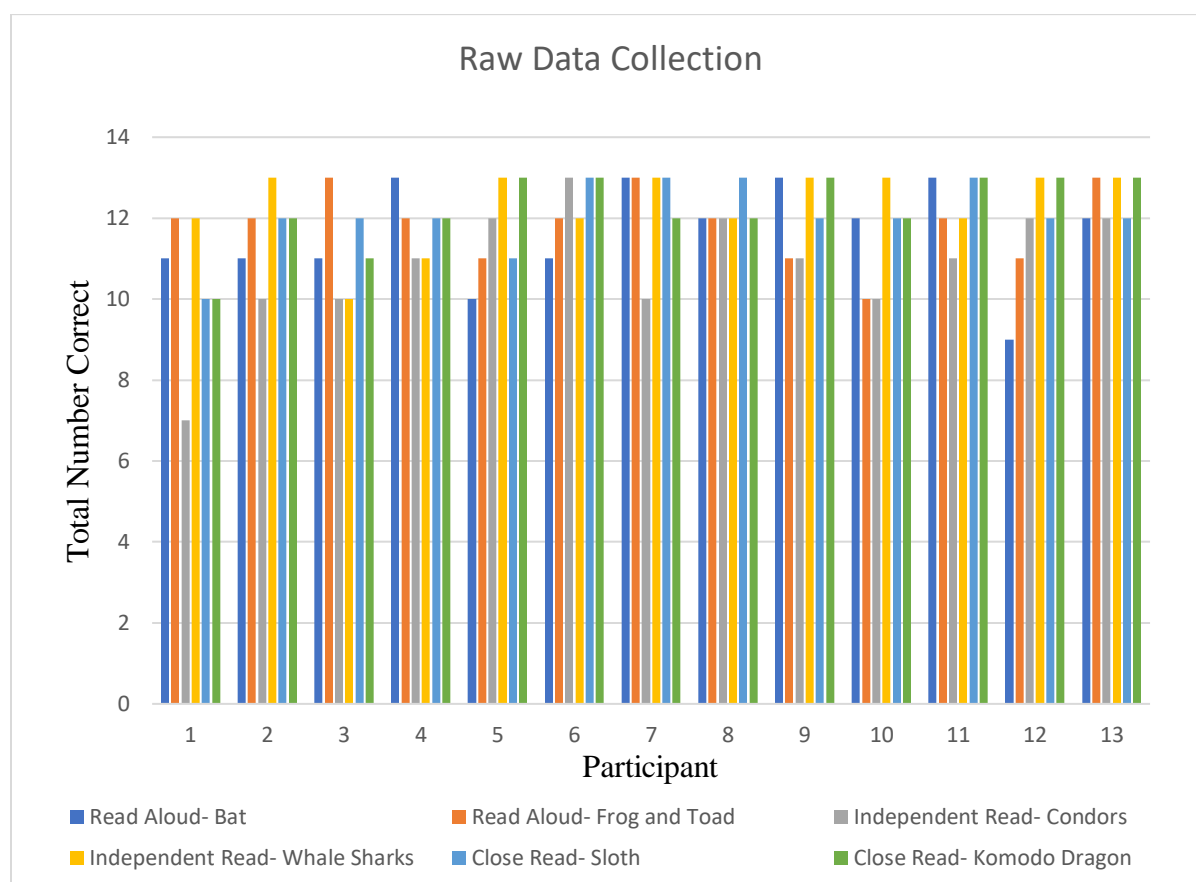
Next, Figure 2 below displays the raw scores for each week that the Read Aloud Method

was taught. The graph illustrates 3 more correct answers in the Read Aloud Method from the

first week of instruction to the second week. The total correct for the first week of the Read

Aloud Method of Bats was 151 out of a possible 169 points. The total correct the second week

for this same method with a subject of Frogs and Toads was 154 out of 169. Seven participants

had a total gain of 9 points. Participant 2, 3 ,6 ,7, and 14 gained 1 point, participant 4 and 13

gained 2 points each. Four participants had a loss of 6 points. Participants 5 and 12 both lost 1

point and participants 10 and 11 both lost 2 points. There were 2 participants that stayed the

same, those being participant 8 and 9. The highest score of week 1 was a perfect score of 13

from participants 5, 8, 10, and 12. The highest score of week 2 was also a perfect score of 13

from participants 4, 8, and 14.

Figure 2

Raw Data Collection of Read Aloud Method
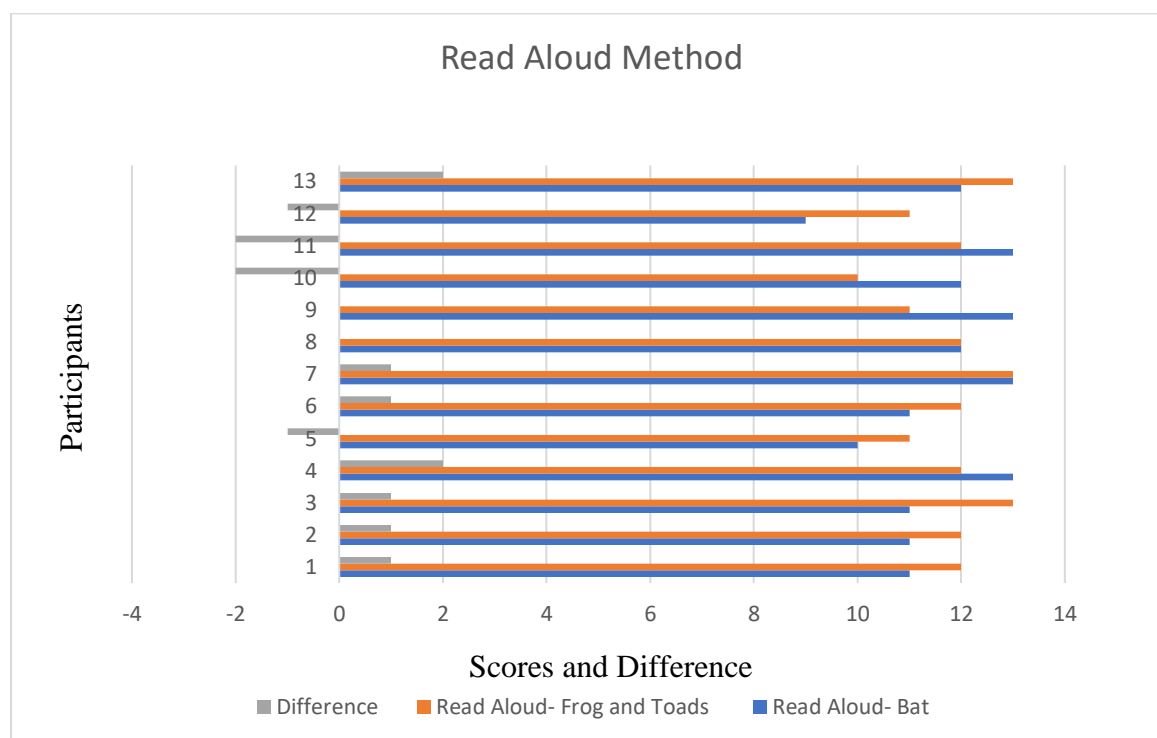
Next, Figure 3 below displays the raw scores for each week that the Independent Read

Method was taught. The graph illustrates 19 more correct answers in the Independent Read

Method from the first week of instruction to the second week. The total correct for the first week

of the Independent Read Method of Condors was 141 out of a possible 169 points. The total

correct the second week for this same method with a subject of Whale Sharks was 160 out of 169. There were 9 participants that had a total gain of 20 points. Participant 6, 12, 13, and 14 gained 1 point, participant 10 gained 2 points, participant 3, 8, and 11 gained 3 points and participant 2 gained 5 points. Participant 7 had a loss of 1 point. There were 3 participants that stayed the same, those being participant 4,5 and 9. This was the largest gain of all three methods with a cumulative score of 19 points. The highest score of week 1 was a perfect score of 13 from participant 7. The highest score of week 2 was also a perfect score of 13 from participants 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, and 14.

Figure 3

Raw Data Collection of Independent Read Method
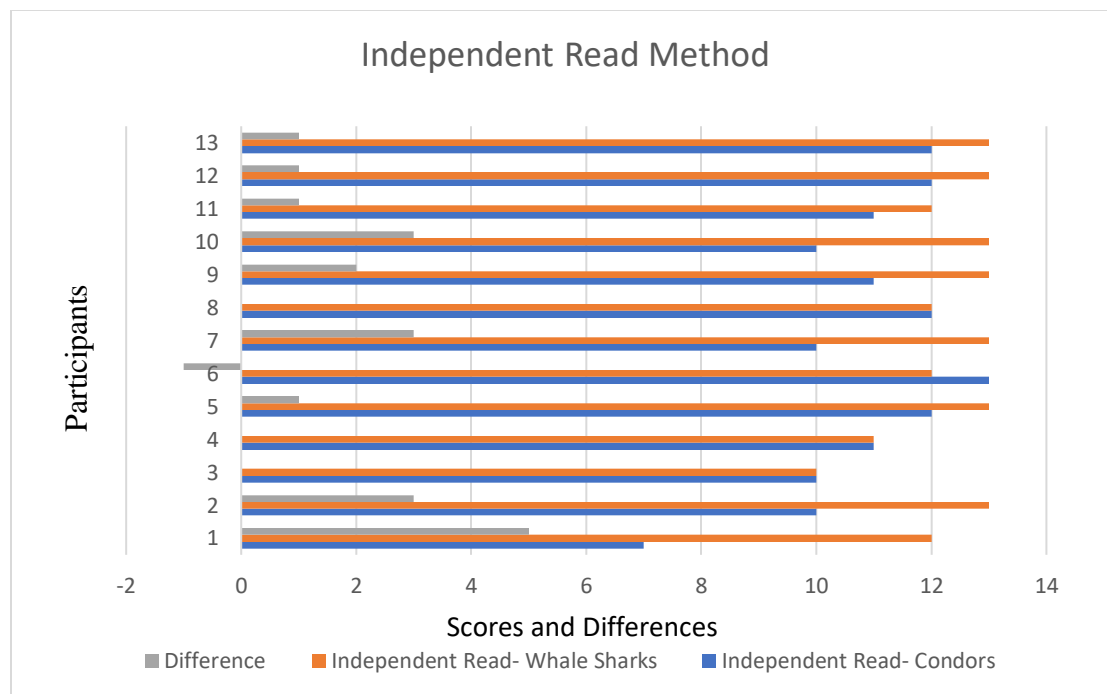
Finally, Figure 4 represents the raw scores for each week that the Close Read Method was taught. The graph illustrates 2 more correct answers in the Close Read Method from the first week of instruction to the second week. The total correct for the first week of the Close Read Method of Sloth was 157 out of a possible 169 points. The total correct the second week for this

same method with a subject of Komodo Dragons was 159 out of 169. There were 4 participants

who had a total gain of 20 points. Participant 10, 13, and 14 gained 1 point and participant 6

gained 2 points. Participants 4, 8, and 9 all had a loss of 1 point. There were 6 participants that

stayed the same, those being participant 2, 3, 5, 7, 11, and 12. This was the smallest gain of all

three methods with a cumulative score of only 2 points. The highest score of week 1 was a

perfect score of 13 from participants 7, 8, 9, and 12. The highest score of week 2 was also a

perfect score of 13 from participants 6, 7, 10, 12, 13, and 14. The lowest score from the test for

both weeks came from participant 2 with a score of 10.

Figure 4

Raw Data Collection of Close Read Method
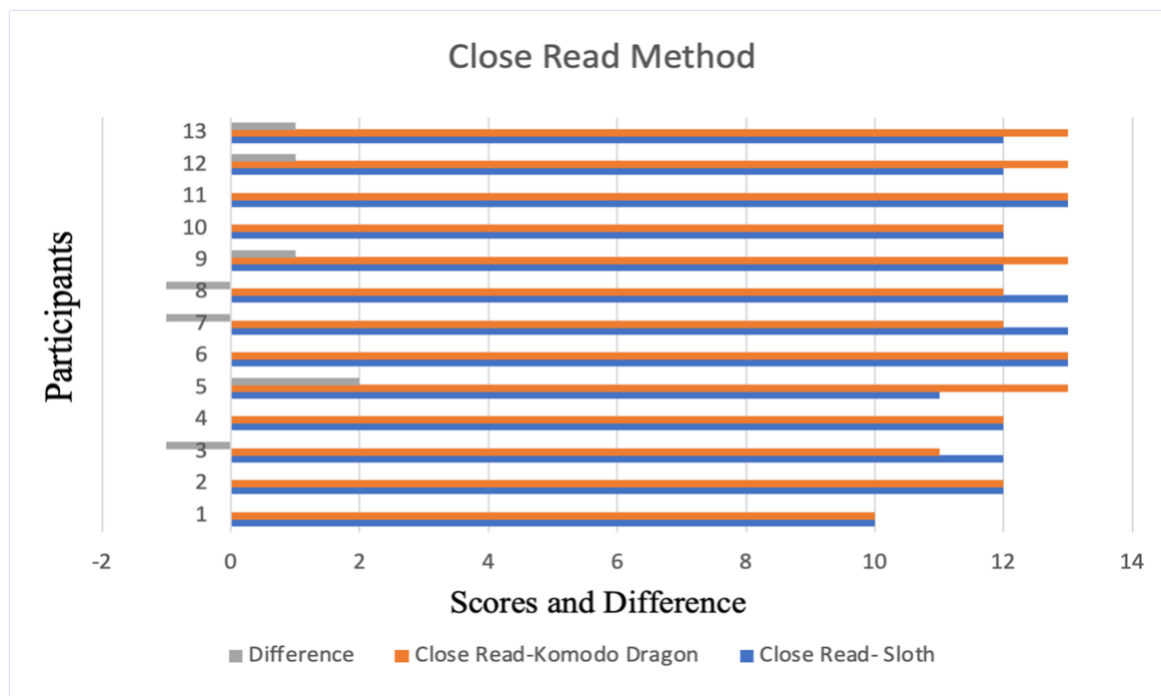
When comparing the results of scores from week 1 to week 2 of each method, Figure 5

shows the overall difference between week 1 and week 2. Close Reading Method scores were

157 for week 1 of Sloth and 159 for week 2 of Komodo Dragons with a difference of 2 points.

Independent Read Method scores were 141 for week 1 of Condors and 160 for week 2 of Whale

Sharks with a difference of 19 points. Read Aloud Method scores were 151 for week 1 of Bats

and 154 for week 2 of Frogs and Toads with a difference of 3 points.

Figure 5

Overall Difference of Each Week of All Three Methods
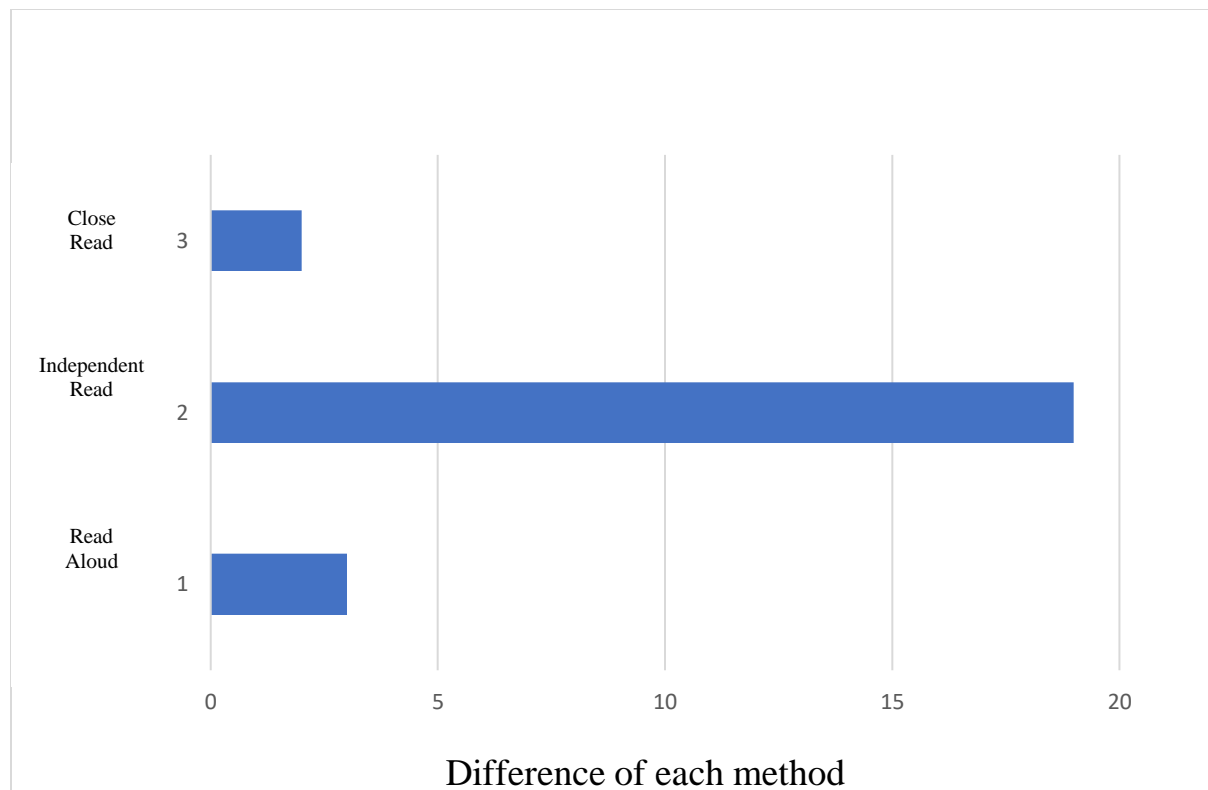
Research Question Two: Of the Three Teaching Methods Used to Teach Informational

Text, Which One is the Most Effective?

First, Figure 6 below shows the effectiveness of each of the three methods for teaching

Informational Text. These three methods include Read Aloud, Independent Read, and Close

Read. As seen in the bar graph, each of the three different methods were taught for 2

nonconsecutive weeks and each week had a different subject matter. The results for the Read

Aloud Method with a subject of Bats was 151 and the total for Frogs and Toads was 154. The

total points for the Read Aloud Method were 305. The results for the Independent Read Method with a subject of Condors was 141 and the total for Whale Sharks was 160. The total points for the Independent Read Method was 301 points. The results for the Close Read Method with a subject of Sloths was 157 and the total for Komodo Dragons was 159. The total points for the Close Read Method was 316 points. The graph also shows a total for each method collectively.

Figure 6

Effectiveness of All Three Teaching Methods
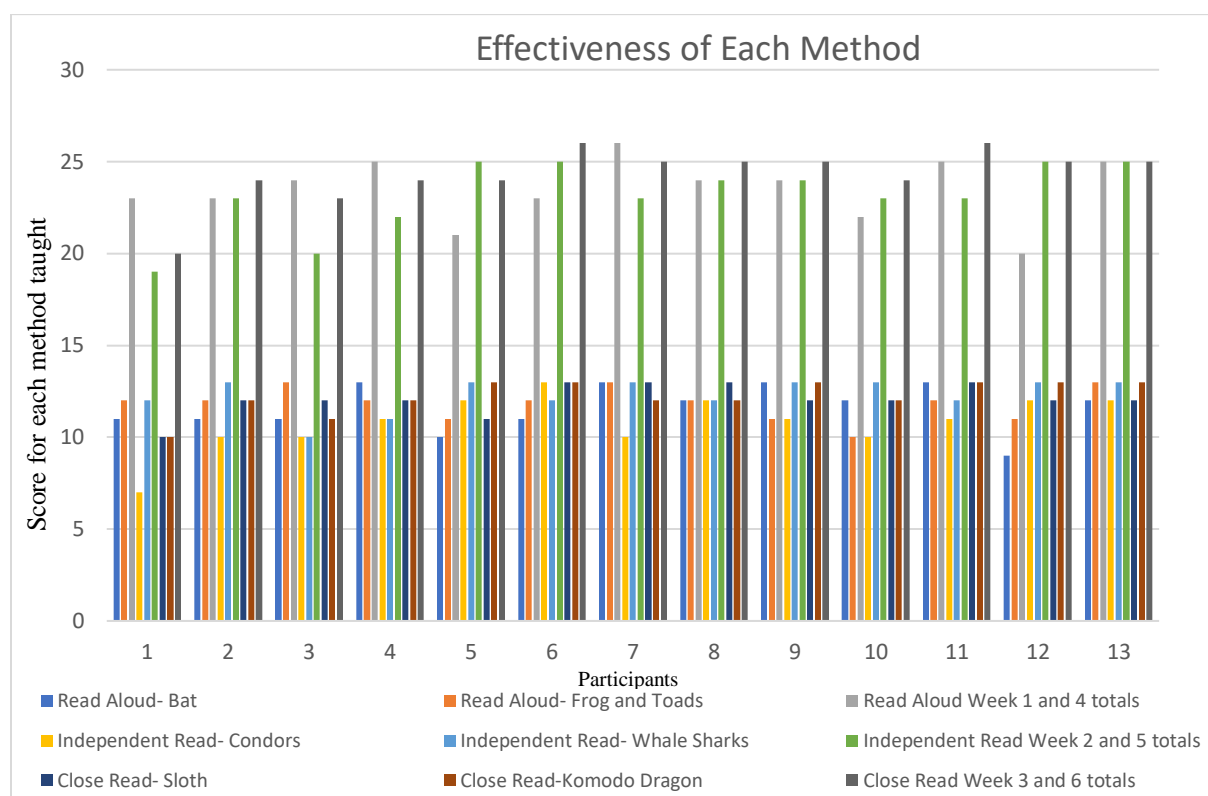
Next, Figure 7 displays the results of the effectiveness of the Close Read method. This method had the highest score for the 2 weeks it was taught. The week that Sloths were taught had a total score of 157 and the week that Komodo Dragons were taught had a total score of 159. The graph shows that the total correct over the 2-week time frame was 316 out of a possible 338

points. The only 2 participants to have a perfect score on both tests were participants number 7 and 12.

Figure 7

Effectiveness of Close Read Method
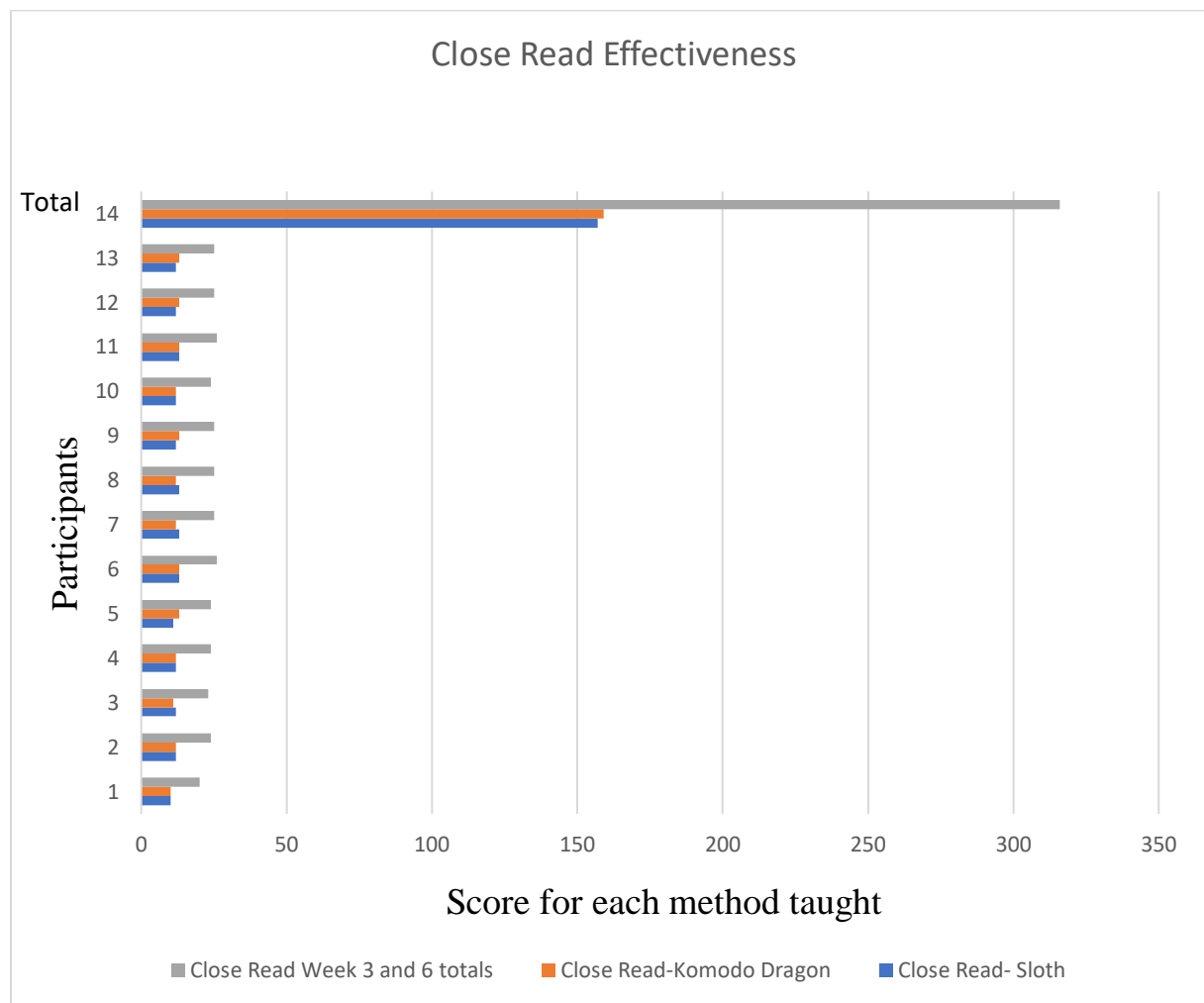
Similarly, Figure 8 illustrates the effectiveness of the Read Aloud Method. This method is shown as being the second most effective teaching method when teaching informational text. Over the 2-week time frame, the total number of points correct with this method was 305 out of the possible 338 points. The only participant to have a perfect score on both tests was participant number 8.

Figure 8

Effectiveness of Read Aloud Method
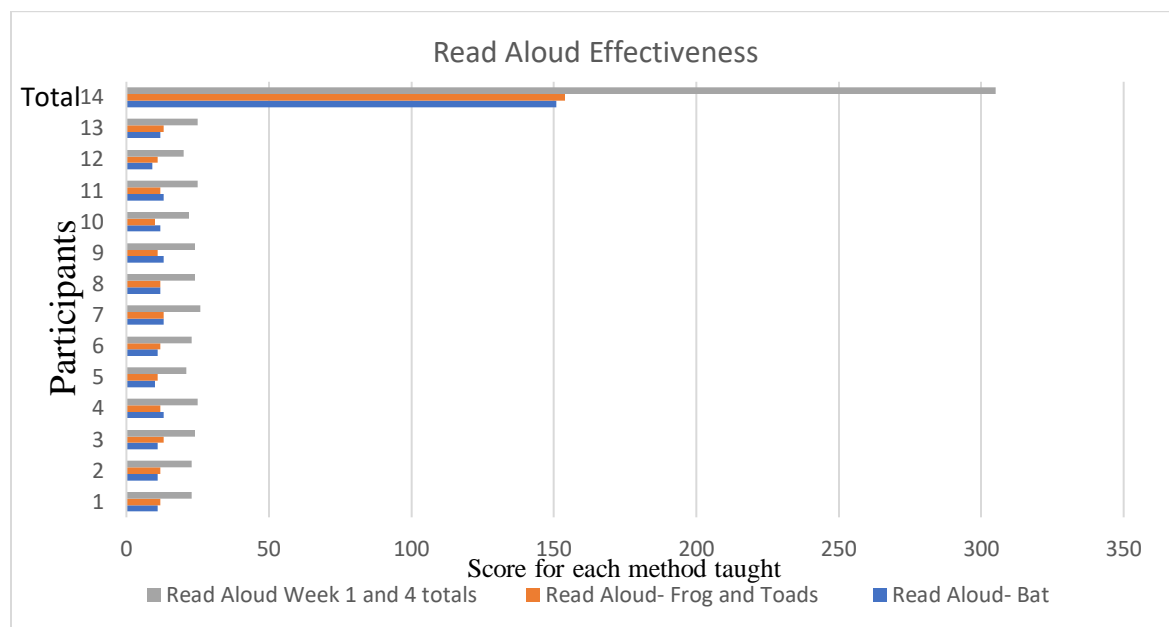
Last, Figure 9 shows that Independent Read was the least effective method that was compared in this study. The total correct with this method over the 2-week time frame was 301 out of the possible 338 points. No participants had a perfect score on either test.

Figure 9

Effectiveness of Independent Read Method

Overall, participants were exposed to informational text using three different teaching strategies. Each method was taught over a 2-week nonconsecutive time frame. Incorporating this genre of text into the 1st-grade classroom helped the participants gain knowledge in the subject of animals. Based on the data, the Close Reading Method was the most effective method for teaching informational text with the highest score of 316 out of 338 possible points followed by the Read Aloud Method with a total score of 305 points out of 338. Independent Read Method was the least effective with a total score of 301 out of 338 possible points.

<div align="center">**Findings, Implications, Limitations**</div>

Findings

The first purpose of the study was to find out the effect of comprehension on new material taught to first grade participants by using three different methods of teaching. These three different methods are: Read Aloud, Independent Read, and Close Read. The research question that drove this purpose focused on whether incorporating informational text in daily instruction helped participants gain knowledge. The study hypothesized that students will learn new material through exposure to different types of informational text in the classroom. The study concluded that all three methods showed an overall increase in knowledge. When combining all points for each method, the Close Read Method showed an overall difference of 2 points, the Independent Read Method showed an overall difference of 19 points and the Read Aloud Method showed an overall difference of 3 points. Concluding that all methods showed an overall increase in knowledge.

The second purpose of the study was to determine which type of informational text was most effective in participants comprehension. The research question that drove this purpose focused on three teaching methods used to teach informational text. The study hypothesized that

students will learn this challenging text best when being taught by the Close Read Method of teaching. The study concluded that the Close Read Method was most effective because it showed the highest scores. Even though it had the smallest gain between week 1 and week 2, it had the highest scores overall.

Implication

Teachers are always searching to find the best teaching methods for their students and the most effective way to help students gain knowledge in subject matter. Specifically, as teachers try to educate students on this challenging genre, it is important for teachers to find the best method for instruction of informational text. By utilizing different strategies, students will have a better understanding of what they have learned and read. They will build a strong base of background knowledge in their subject and be able to understand challenging vocabulary and unfamiliar words within the text.

The results of this study showed that the Close Reading Method was the most effective method for teaching students to read and understand the difficult genre of informational text. The purpose of this method is to encourage students to read with a purpose while paying attention to details. By allowing this, students will show growth in vocabulary development, a deeper comprehension of text and encourage higher order of thinking skills all while strengthening their reading skills. As the students dive into multiple reads of the same text, they are becoming engaged by marking the text using text codes, highlighting vocabulary words while also determining key details and summarizing and making connections to the text. As students are retelling the text in their own words or reading with a partner, they are diving deeper into the text which allows them to better understand and comprehend the text.

To further support the research shown in the effectiveness of the Close Read Method for instruction of informational text, teachers' support and scaffolding is very evident and important in this method. Scaffolding allows students to read more challenging text than they could without the teacher's assistance. The teacher will also support the students as they develop their new skills and break down unfamiliar words or ideas into more manageable information.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was that the animals chosen for each week's reading and lesson were not consistent in familiarity or background knowledge. While some animals were more familiar, such as bats and frogs, others were more unknown, such as condors or Komodo dragons. Because of this, children had a substantial difference in the level of background knowledge each week. This may have played a role in the outcome of the scores on the assessments. The overall gain of knowledge was greatest in the Independent Read Method which could be the result of the base knowledge of whale sharks was stronger than that of condors. Students scored higher on the assessment of whale sharks which made for a greater difference in gain. The Close Read Method showed the smallest gain which could be because both animals taught during those weeks were unfamiliar which may be why the gain was minimal. Even though the gain was minimal, the scores indicated a greater knowledge of Komodo dragons and sloths which were taught using the Close Read Method.

<div align="center">

Reflection and Action Plan

</div>

Reflection

All students come to school with different experiences and background knowledge. This plays a big part in how they grow and learn new skills and information. Early in the study, the researcher realized that allowing a participant to build on previous knowledge brought even more

understanding to a topic, specifically when it came to reading challenging genres such as informational text. The more a participant knew about a topic, the easier it was for that participant to read it, understand it and comprehend the material. As they became more competent in their ability to understand this text, they became more confident in choosing this text to read.

Teaching informational text to primary aged students is a challenging task that requires time spent on preparation of materials and plans. The researcher realized that it is important to stop and ask questions as participants read, encouraging them to discuss main ideas or connections, and allowing them to spend time diving into the text prior to reading. Locating unfamiliar words or phrases as well as using graphic organizers also allowed the participant to comprehend the text better.

As the researcher taught informational text within the classroom, it was important to understand that some participants may experience frustrations or become overwhelmed or discouraged because of the difficulty this text can bring on. Without assistance, they will not have the understanding they need to be successful. It is important to support and provide scaffolding with all students to reduce the negative effects this challenging text can have on their success.

Action Plan

The researcher plans on implementing all methods of teaching informational text within the classroom. When using the Close Read Method, the researcher will provide students with the same scaffolding and supportive strategies that were used in the study.

Being a first-grade teacher and knowing the importance of teaching children to read, the researcher plans on sharing the study and strategies with not only the co-teacher in the building,

but also with the teachers a grade above and below. The researcher will also share results with

the building principal as well as the reading interventionist in hopes that they could use the study

to encourage these same methods for teaching this type of text.

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Appendix A

Animal Quiz

Name: _____ **Date**: _____

This week I learned about this animal:

_____

Use the words below to fill in the blanks.

water	land	air
bigger	smaller	could
could not	hair/fur	feathers
dry scales	soft, moist skin	scales

This animal lives in/on _____.

This animal is _____ than me.

This animal _____ be a pet.

This animal has _____ covering its body.

Choose the correct answer:

To get away from its predator, this animal would:
_____

This animal eats _____ to survive.

This animal needs food and water to survive?
A.   True
B.   False

Write one new "fancy" word that you learned:

_____

Draw a picture and label the part your animal uses to defend itself.

Please list three facts about the animal.

1._____

_____

_____
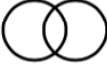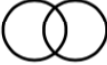
2._____

_____

_____

3._____

_____

_____

Appendix B

| Type of Animal	Animal	Book Level	Method	Where was the book found	Week
Mammal	Sloth		Close Reading	TPT purchase	3
Mammal	Bats	2 different books with the same title: Bats. Book 1: Lexile Level: 690L Book 2: Lexile Level: 510L	Read Aloud	Classroom Library	1
Bird	Condors	Level H, S, Y	Independent reading	Reading A-Z	2
Reptile	Komodo Dragon	Level I, Q, X	Close Reading	Reading A-Z	6
Amphibian	Frogs and Toads	Level M	Read Aloud	Reading A-Z	4
Fish	Whale Sharks: Giant Fish	Level I, R	Independent Reading	Reading A-Z	5

Appendix C

TEXT CODES	
_____	Important Word
⬭	Unknown Word
⬭⬭	Text Connection
✳	Important Part
?	I'm Confused
!	I'm Surprised
+	I Agree
—	I disagree

TEXT CODES	
_____	Important Word
⬭	Unknown Word
⬭⬭	Text Connection
✳	Important Part
?	I'm Confused
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TEXT CODES	
_____	Important Word
⬭	Unknown Word
⬭⬭	Text Connection
✳	Important Part
?	I'm Confused
!	I'm Surprised
+	I Agree
—	I disagree

Appendix D
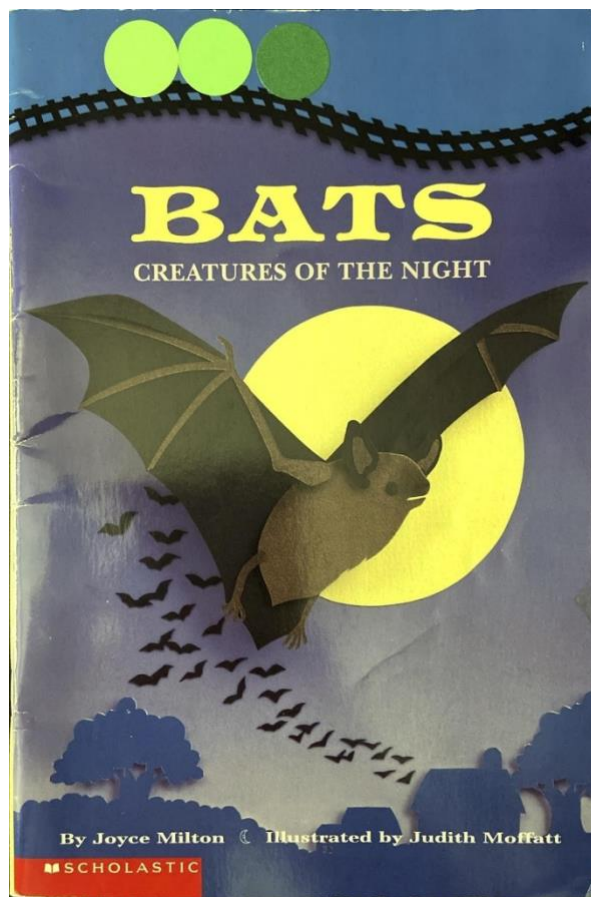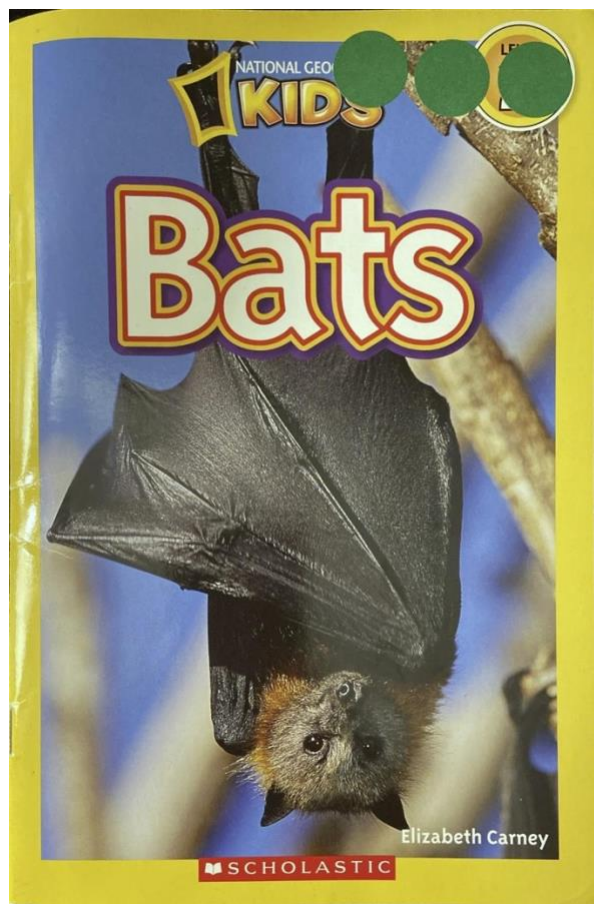
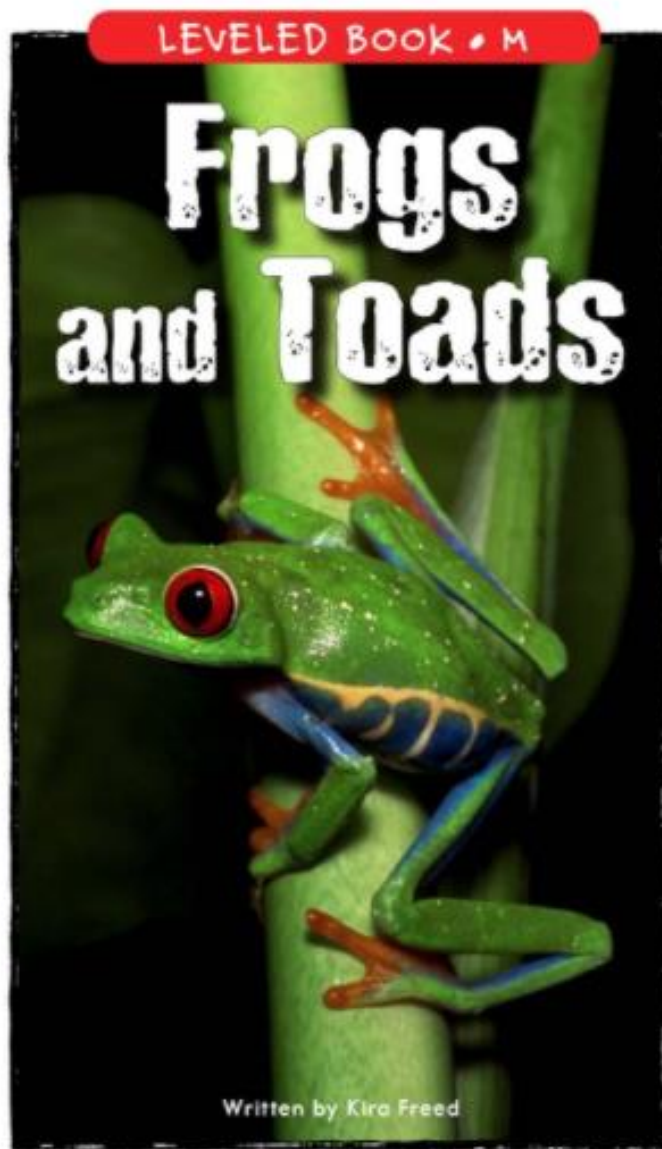**Appendix E**
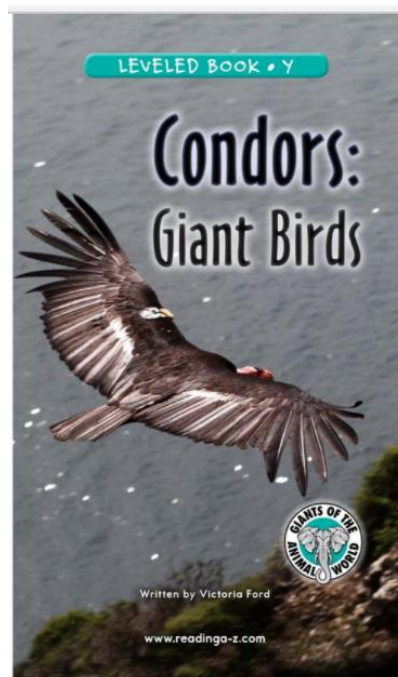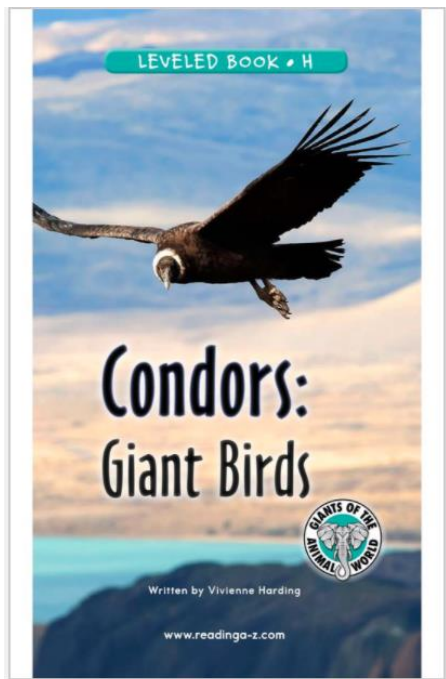
Appendix F

Name _____

Sloths

By Brenda Hochstatter

Sloths spend most of their life hanging from trees in the rainforest. These cute creatures make their home in the treetops called a **canopy**. There are two types of sloths. The two-toed sloth is **nocturnal** or awake at night and the three-toed is awake during the day. These mammals are mostly **herbivores** and like to eat leaves, fruit and twigs. The word "sloth" means slow feet. Sloths move very slow and sleep about ten hours every day. Sloths are great swimmers and climbers. They have sharp **claws**, round heads, and tiny ears. The sloth's long claws are great for reaching food, but make it hard for them to walk. This is why they spend most of their time in trees. Their fur can be black, brown or grey. Many sloths also have **algae** growing on their fur with moths and insects living in it. This helps them **camouflage** in the trees. Sloths have one baby at a time that stays close and rides on its mother.

Sloth – Passage

Appendix G

LEVELED BOOK • M

Frogs and Toads

Written by Kira Freed

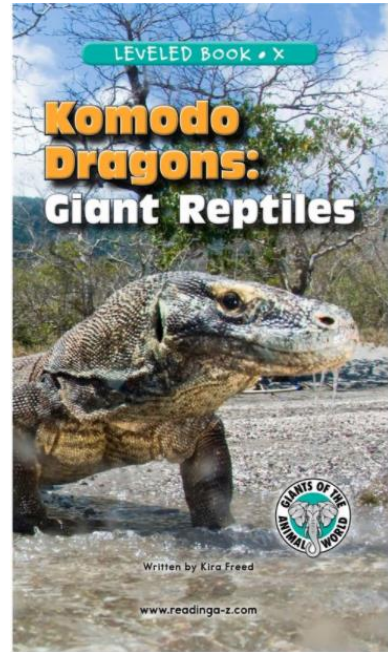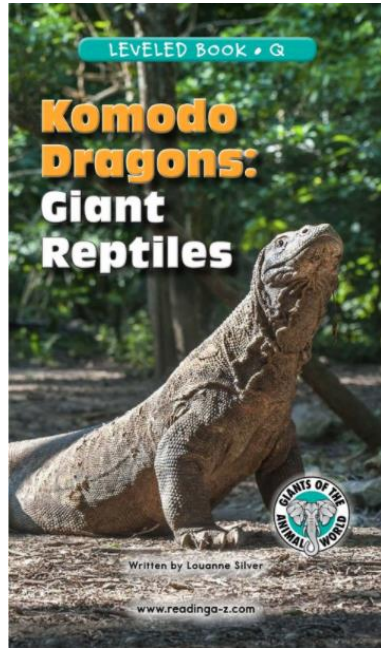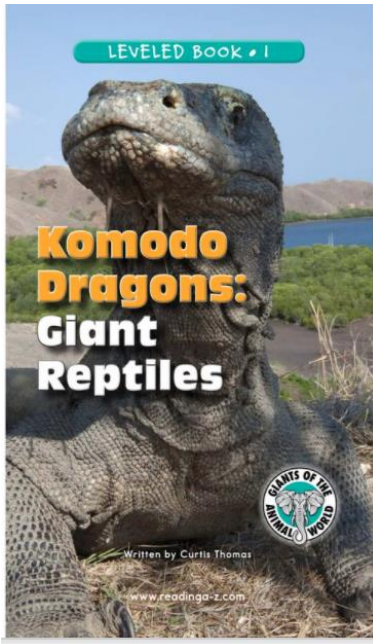www.readinga-z.com

Appendix H
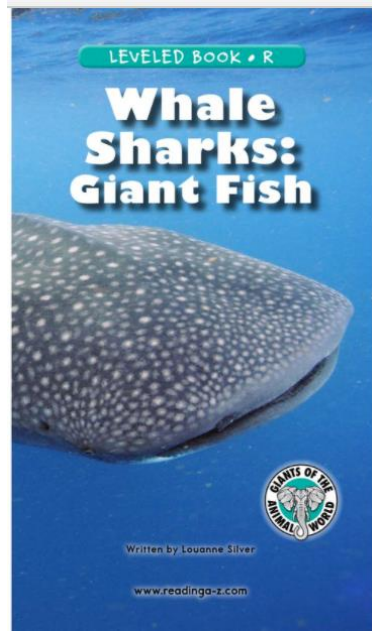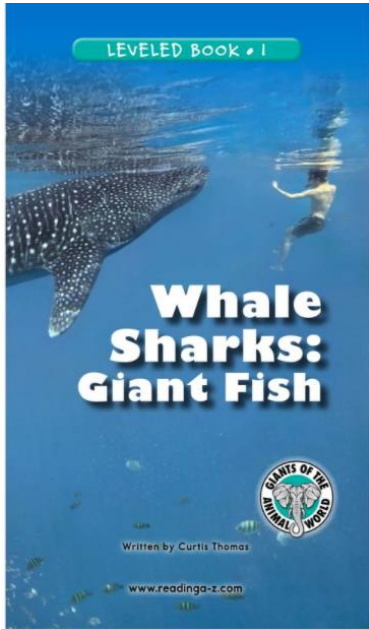
Appendix I

Appendix J

IRB 22-013

Jennifer L Smith <jlsmith@eiu.edu>
Tue 2/1/2022 8:54 AM
To: Lynn M Yonce <lmyonce@eiu.edu>
Cc: Sham'ah Md-Yunus <smdyunus@eiu.edu>
February 1, 2022

Lynn Yonce
Sham'ah Md-Yunus
Teaching, Learning, and Foundations

Dear Lynn,

Thank you for submitting the research protocol titled, "Incorporating Informational Text Within a First Grade Classroom" for review by the Eastern Illinois University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has reviewed this research protocol and effective 2/1/2022, has certified this protocol meets the federal regulations exemption criteria for human subjects research. The protocol has been given the IRB number 22-013. You are approved to proceed with your study.

The classification of this protocol as exempt is valid only for the research activities and subjects described in the above named protocol. IRB policy requires that any proposed changes to this protocol must be reported to, and approved by, the IRB before being implemented. You are also required to inform the IRB immediately of any problems encountered that could adversely affect the health or welfare of the subjects in this study. Please contact me, or the Compliance Coordinator at 581-8576, in the event of an emergency. All correspondence should be sent to:

Institutional Review Board
c/o Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
Telephone: 217-581-8576
Fax: 217-581-7181
Email: eiuirb@eiu.edu

Thank you for your cooperation, and the best of success with your research.

John Bickford, Chairperson
Institutional Review Board
Telephone: 217-581-7881
Email: jbickford@eiu.edu

Appendix K

Dear Parents/Guardians:

As part of my current graduate work in Curriculum and Instruction at Eastern Illinois University, I am conducting an Action Research project in my classroom. This 6-week research study is a requirement to fulfill my master's degree course work.

Your child is invited to participate in a research study conducted by myself, Lynn Yonce, and Dr. Sham'ah Md-Yunus, from the Curriculum and Instruction, Teaching Learning Foundations department at Eastern Illinois University. Your child's participation in this study is entirely voluntary and your child will not be penalized if you choose for them not to participate. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

The purpose of this study is to determine which type of informational text is most effective in student comprehension. In addition, this study is to find out the effect of comprehension on new material taught using three different methods of teaching.

I will be incorporating the informational text activities over a six-week period for approximately 30 minutes a day. I will be teaching about six different types of animals using three different teaching methods over the course of the study. Your child will be given an assessment at the end of each week. This assessment will measure the comprehension growth from each of the three different methods and compare to find out which method of teaching informational text produces the best understanding and comprehension from the students.

There is very minimal risk involved with your child in this research study. Your child will still be learning the appropriate subject matter for grade level expectations. They may benefit by having greater enrichment in the specific subject by exposure to new educational methods, and the results may show the effectiveness of a new knowledge for informational text in the classroom.

The data will be kept confidential and stored on a password protected computer. All student scoring and assessment results will be kept confidential. Each student will be assigned a number which will be used for comparison purposes and reporting instead of names. Hard copies of work completed by your child and all participants will be scanned and placed in an electronic file on the same password protected computer. Any data collected from children who formally withdraw from the study will be removed and the data will be destroyed three years after this study is completed.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. If you decide for your child to participate in this study, you have the right to withdraw your child at any time without consequences of any kind. There is no penalty for withdrawing your child from the study.

I have been granted by the school to conduct this research project in my classroom.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please feel free to contact:

Lynn Yonce   Dr. Sham'ah Md-Yunus
Tel: (217) 359-4114   2203 Buzzard Hall
Email: lyonce@stmatt.net   Eastern Illinois University
                                              Tel: (217) 581-5728
                                              smdyunus@eiu.edu

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board
Eastern Illinois University
600 Lincoln Ave.
Charleston, IL 61920
Telephone: (217) 581-8576
E-mail: eiuirb@eiu.edu

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

Thank you,

Mrs. Lynn Yonce

Appendix L

1307 Lincolnshire Drive • Champaign, IL 61821 • 217.359.4114

Friday, January 14, 2022

Dear Institutional Review Board Members,

As principal of St. Matthew Catholic School, I approve the appropriateness of Lynn Yonce's project study titled *Incorporating Informational Text Within a First Grade Classroom.* Mrs. Yonce discussed the components of the study as well as the expected outcomes. The project is age appropriate as first grade teachers work to increase student's comprehension by successfully utilizing informational text. Conducting the project at St. Matthew Catholic School is very feasible and should be completed before the end of the semester. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Michelle Biggs
Principal

"St. Matthew Catholic School's mission is to educate the whole student by Christ centered formation in a Catholic environment, leading them to do God's will in this world so as to be with Him in the next."