Effects of explicit reading comprehension strategy instruction on students’ reading comprehension and written summaries

Sarah A. Schindler

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.stritch.edu/etd
Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.stritch.edu/etd/129

This Graduate Field Experience is brought to you for free and open access by Stritch Shares. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master’s Theses, Capstones, and Projects by an authorized administrator of Stritch Shares. For more information, please contact smbagley@stritch.edu.
The Effects of Explicit Reading Comprehension Strategy Instruction on Students’ Reading Comprehension and Written Summaries

By

Sarah A. Schindler

A Graduate Field Experience
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts Literacy and ESL
At Cardinal Stritch University
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
This Graduate Field Experience
Has been approved for Cardinal Stritch University by
Ruth Hoenick

_____________________________________
(Advisor)

_____________________________________
(Date)
Abstract

The purpose of this action research study was to answer the question, “Does explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies and summary writing improve eighth grade ELLs’ nonfiction reading comprehension?” The participants were a group of 19 eighth grade English language learners in a language arts classroom in an urban charter school. The intervention took place over an eight-week period. During the first four weeks, students read nonfiction text without receiving explicit instruction in comprehension strategies. For the next four weeks, students were taught to use specific strategies to read and understand nonfiction text about World War II. The results were students showed improvement in their ability to understand nonfiction independently. The greatest improvement was their ability to write accurate summaries, further demonstrating the importance of connecting reading and writing activities in the classroom.
# Table of Contents

**Signature Page**  
2

**Abstract**  
3

**Table of Contents**  
4

**Chapter 1: Introduction**  
6

*Introduction*  
6

*Project Goal*  
7

*Description of School*  
7

*2010 Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam Results*  
9

*Student Population*  
11

*Summary of best Practices in Reading Comprehension Instruction*  
11

*Overview of Project*  
12

*Conclusion*  
14

**Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature**  
16

*Introduction*  
16

*Metacognition*  
17

*Fiction and Nonfiction Reading Comprehension Strategies*  
31

*Nonfiction/Informational Reading Comprehension Strategies*  
40

*Explicit Instruction in Summary Writing*  
54

*Conclusion*  
66

**Chapter 3: Procedures for the Study**  
68

*Introduction*  
68

*Sample Population*  
68
CHAPTER ONE

The ability to read and understand a variety of texts effectively is vital to students’ success both in school and after formal education is completed (Neufeld, 2005). If a student cannot comprehend grade-level text, participating and succeeding in school becomes increasingly difficult as the student gets older. In the elementary classroom, however, most texts studied are fiction (McTavish, 2008). Students are unfamiliar with the text structures and organization of nonfiction texts because of a lack of instruction in nonfiction reading comprehension strategies (Caldwell & Leslie, 2009). English language learners (ELLs) especially struggle with reading nonfiction texts because of the vocabulary demands and organizational patterns that may differ significantly from their native languages (Caldwell & Leslie, 2009). Furthermore, as students enter middle and high school, the educational demands of comprehending a variety of texts become even greater. Students are asked to read from textbooks for all content areas in middle and high school, and postsecondary education also includes a large majority of nonfiction. Research has noted, however, that strategies for comprehending a variety of texts are not being taught in the classroom on a regular basis (Alfassi, 2004; Scharlach, 2008). Middle school students in particular are lacking in adequate comprehension instruction when reading informational text in content area classes (Radcliffe, Caverly, Hand, & Franke, 2008). As students enter adulthood, the majority of reading done on a day to day basis is nonfiction text (Walter, 2004). Therefore, teachers have a responsibility to teach students to comprehend multiple genres of text, including both nonfiction (informational) and fiction. In the first section of this chapter, I discuss the context for the action research study including a description of the school, staffing information, the English as a second language (ESL) and programming models, and related decision-making procedures. The second section
describes the students who participated in the research project. The third section introduces student achievement results on the WKCE (Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam, 2010). The following section summarizes best practice research associated with the focus of the research study. The final section provides an overview of the action research project.

**Project Goal**

As students transition into high school, the focus of instruction shifts to content and skills. Research has shown that fewer reading comprehension strategies are taught in high school compared to middle and elementary school, even though research has also shown that strategy instruction is beneficial for developing students’ critical thinking (Alfassi, 2004). Teachers are not teaching reading comprehension according to best practice data, creating a large gap between research and practice (Radcliffe, Caverly, Hand, & Franke, 2008; Scharlach, 2008). The topic for my action research is the effect of explicit comprehension strategy instruction for nonfiction on the reading comprehension and summary writing of eighth grade English language learners. I will provide my students with instruction in these strategies so that they will become more metacognitive readers who can use these strategies effectively on their own. A secondary goal of my action research is to prepare my students for high school by explicitly teaching reading comprehension strategies to use when reading nonfiction and writing research papers as they enter high school.

**Description of School**

The school in which this research was carried out is an urban, public, charter school in Wisconsin. There are approximately 920 students in grades K-8. The kindergarten classes are located in one wing of the elementary school. The middle school, located in a separate building across the street, includes grades 5-8. Ninety six percent of students are Latino, and about 60
students receive special education. Around half of parents speak only Spanish, and the majority of students speak English as a second language. Additionally, 78% of students’ families qualify for free or reduced lunch, and student attendance rates are consistently around 96%. Most students who begin kindergarten at this school continue their education there through eighth grade. Very few students transfer both in and out of this school after kindergarten.

The education model of the school is a monolingual English program, but students take Spanish as a special class two or three times per week. Approximately 75 students in grades 1-7 receive English as a second language (ESL) pull-out instruction in small groups twice a week. Only five of these students are in the middle school. All students in the ESL program take the ACCESS (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners) Test (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment, 2011), but results are not shared with classroom teachers. The ESL teacher uses these results to make instructional decisions and transition students out of the ESL program.

Each grade level at the middle school contains three classes. The students are not separated into classes by ability. All students in each grade level at the middle school take the same classes with the same teachers. Although most of the students speak Spanish, many teachers do not. Approximately one-third of middle school teachers are bilingual. Two teaching assistants at the middle school, two of the three administrators, and both secretaries are bilingual in Spanish and English. Five of the teachers at the middle school have their master’s degree or are in the process of completing a graduate program.

Curriculum and programming decisions are made within an education committee comprised of experts from the community and the administrators for both the elementary and middle schools. Additionally, each elementary school teacher is assigned to two different
content area committees, and each middle school teacher is part of one or two committees according to their content areas. Teachers from each grade level (K3-8) are part of each committee, and each committee meets monthly to discuss curriculum planning, best practices, and troubleshooting of current issues. Teachers are encouraged to meet with their grade level teams about the discussions from the committee meetings. All teachers receive a copy of minutes from these meetings, regardless of grade level or content area, via e-mail. Teachers use the College Readiness Standards, Common Core State Standards, and Wisconsin State Standards to make instructional decisions.

The school has several programs designed to help students academically. All students are required to attend a five-week summer school, regardless of ability or academic performance, in order to prepare them for the upcoming academic year and avoid a loss of skills over the summer. The summer instruction includes an hour and 20 minutes each of math, reading, and science daily. Students who lack basic skills are required to stay after school three days per week for an after school tutoring program for one hour. Math and reading teachers staff these tutoring sessions to work on basic skill instruction and support in classroom activities. Parents of students who are not assigned to the after school tutoring program are encouraged to sign their students up for “Homework Help,” a one-hour after school session led by teachers for additional assistance on homework.

2010 Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) Results

The 2010 eighth grade students received mixed results on the WKCE (Table 1). Overall, the scores are high for the demographics of the school.
Table 1

2010 WKCE results in reading, science, and social studies for grade 8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Area</th>
<th>Minimal</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>58.1%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>54.1%</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2010)

The 2011 eighth grade students’ 2010 results are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

2010 WKCE results in reading for grade 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Area</th>
<th>Minimal</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2010)

Of the current eighth graders 90.9% earned Proficient or Advanced scores in the area of reading on the 2010 WKCE. Although the 2010 eighth graders reading scores were also high (89.2% of students earned Proficient or Advanced scores), their test results in science and social studies were much lower. Only 78.4% of students earned Proficient or Advanced scores in social studies, and only 73% of students earned Proficient or Advanced scores in science.

Compared to the reading scores, this percentage is quite low. Science and social studies classes are shaped around reading from textbooks in this school. These results show that students do not adequately comprehend the texts they read in the content areas. I am concerned about how my students will succeed when they enter high school. My secondary goal in this action research is to better prepare students for the amount of informational textbooks they will read and research papers they will write next year as they enter high school.
Student Population

I will study one of my three language arts classes (7 males and 12 females for a total of 19 students). Four of these students are very motivated readers, but one-third of the class is unmotivated and receives low grades in my classes due to an unwillingness to read the materials we cover in class. All of the students are of Latino decent. Three students in the class have been diagnosed as special education, but their data will not be included in the research study. This class is typical of the classes of students I teach.

Summary of Best Practices in Reading Comprehension Instruction

Both middle school students and English language learners require explicit instruction in reading comprehension for a variety of texts. Middle school students have a wide range of reading abilities and, therefore struggle with many different reading skills (Caldwell & Leslie, 2009). This wide range of abilities in the classroom often requires teachers to teach reading comprehension using a variety of methods and strategies. Best practice data states that explicit instruction in comprehension strategies and metacognition creates independent metacognitive readers who can adequately comprehend a variety of texts.

Research has also shown that students benefit from explicit instruction in comprehension strategies for a variety of texts (Allen & Hancock, 2008; Alfassi, 2004; Caldwell & Leslie, 2009; Irwin, 2007; May, 2011; Nelson & Manset-Williamson, 2006; Neufeld, 2005; Raphael & Au, 2005; Radcliffe, Caverly, Hand, & Franke, 2008; Scharlach, 2008). This instruction is most effective when designed using a gradual release of responsibility method (Lloyd, 2004; McTavish, 2008; Nelson & Manset-Williamson, 2006; Neufeld, 2005; Radcliffe, Caverly, Hand, & Franke, 2008). This method of scaffolding the instruction of a strategy is most effective
because control of the strategy is gradually transferred from teacher to student and the students have to verbalize how to use the strategy (Scharlach, 2008).

Another key aspect of successful reading comprehension is the metacognitive use of reading comprehension strategies (Allen & Hancock, 2008; Irwin, 2007; Lloyd, 2004; McTavish, 2008; Neufeld, 2005; Walter, 2004). In addition to learning strategies, students must know how and when to use them independently. Student need to independently use comprehension strategies while reading to effectively comprehend a variety of written materials.

Reading and writing are two interconnected processes and learners benefit from activities that integrate multiple language domains (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2006). Students greatly benefit from writing a summary about what they have read as an after-reading activity (Baleghizadeh & Babapour, 2011; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Faggella-Luby, Schumaker, & Deshler, 2007; Graham & Hebert, 2011; Neufeld, 2005; Rogevich & Perin, 2008). Explicit instruction in summary writing involves teaching students how to select main ideas and how to determine importance of facts in a text (Irwin, 2007). Students often struggle with writing summaries because nobody has shown them how to write using this structure (Duke & Pearson, 2002). Best practice teaching in reading comprehension involves explicit instruction in summarization.

**Overview of Project**

The topic for my action research is the effect of explicit instruction in comprehension strategies for nonfiction on the reading comprehension and summary writing of my eighth grade English language learner students. I will conduct my research over two four-week periods. As a pre and posttest, students will read a short nonfiction passage and then answer a series of comprehension questions at the beginning and end of each four-week period. For the first four weeks, I will not change my instruction. I will distribute nonfiction articles to my students, ask
them to read and take notes, and then I will assign a summary paragraph for each article. During the second four-week period, I will explicitly model and teach comprehension strategies and summary writing techniques. I will assess my students’ reading comprehension through their pre and posttest results and their written summaries (using a rubric I have designed) from the beginning of the eight weeks through the end.

During a unit on World War II, I will teach the students how to read a variety of nonfiction texts (Table 3) using explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies. Students will learn the purpose of each strategy and when to use each strategy to aid their reading comprehension. The chosen texts represent a variety of World War II topics and text features. Additionally, the texts represent a wide range of reading levels to accommodate all students in the diverse eighth grade sample classroom.

Table 3.

Texts to be used during WWII unit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Title</th>
<th>Author/Editor/Producer</th>
<th>Genre Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole Class Novel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplemental Nonfiction Texts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Parallel Journeys</em></td>
<td>Eleanor Ayer with Helen Waterford and Alfons Heck (1995)</td>
<td>Diary Entries, Nonfiction introductions to each entry with background information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>We Are Witnesses: Five Diaries of Teenagers who Died During the Holocaust</em></td>
<td>Jacob Boas (1995)</td>
<td>Diary entries arranged into sections by author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Surviving Hitler: A Boy in the Nazi Death Camps</em></td>
<td>Andrea Warren (2001)</td>
<td>Nonfiction with many photographs and captions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>World War II: The Events and their Impact on Real People</em></td>
<td>R.G. Grant (2008)</td>
<td>Nonfiction, photographs, diagrams, captions; DVD included</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I will use a gradual release of responsibility model to teach mastery of comprehension and summary writing strategies. I will teach students to monitor their comprehension, utilize comprehension breakdown strategies, attend to text features, determine importance, summarize text, use graphic organizers, activate background knowledge, make predictions, and make inferences. I will begin by introducing the strategy in a mini-lesson where I describe the purpose a given strategy. During a read-aloud of familiar text (a book the students have read in a previous unit), I will model the strategy while thinking aloud as I use the strategy. Students will practice the strategies in heterogeneous book club groups with their peers. I will assess students’ use of strategies through my observations during book club discussions and the work students complete to demonstrate their knowledge of the strategies.

Students will write summaries about nonfiction articles to show mastery of summarization skills. Again, using a gradual release of responsibility model, I will model summarizing for my students. I will teach them a specific method for writing a summary paragraph, and I will assess these summaries using a rubric I have created.

**Conclusion**

Through my explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies and written summarization, my students will gain a better understanding of how to use reading
comprehension strategies to read and understand a variety of texts. All students will become
more metacognitive of their reading, and struggling students will acquire strategies to help them
achieve greater reading proficiency. The English language learners will gain a better
understanding of the reading process to better understand the content of their textbooks. Explicit
instruction in reading comprehension strategies and written summarization will greatly benefit
all students in my eighth grade English language arts classroom, their high school classes next
year, and their education after high school. While this chapter covered the concepts of
background information regarding the study’s context and overview of the research project, the
next chapter will discuss best practice research in explicit comprehension instruction. This
research shows that best practice instruction in increasing the reading comprehension of students
involves explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies and summarization writing
using scaffolding. Research shows that students’ reading comprehension improves when
students receive explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies and written
summarization.
CHAPTER TWO

Introduction

I am the eighth grade English reading and writing teacher at an urban, charter school in the Midwest. Throughout my five years at this school, I have noticed a disconnection between reading comprehension instruction in the elementary grades and the middle school. In the younger grades, students are contained in one class, so the classroom teacher can easily teach comprehension strategies for reading a variety of genres. When our students enter sixth grade, however, there is a lack of explicit instruction in comprehension strategies for informational text. The reading teachers believe it is the responsibility of the content area teachers, and the content area teachers believe this instruction is the responsibility of the reading teachers. Either way, students are not getting the instruction that they need in preparation for their future education.

When I began teaching reading in 2008, I integrated nonfiction materials in my classroom to teach summarization and current events. I noticed a lack of knowledge in some of the basics of reading nonfiction, and I fought with my students to get them to read these types of materials. Students did not have the background knowledge in strategies for reading nonfiction and had difficulties with finding the main ideas in a text. Because of similar struggles, the eighth grade social studies teacher has begun to require that students read the textbook in class because they will not complete the readings on their own. Students complain about the practice of reading textbooks and freely admit that they have never done so in the past because they do not see the importance of reading textbooks. As these students’ reading teacher, I know that getting my students to read is a struggle. However, I am driven to teach my students the value of reading and understanding all genres of text so that they are prepared for the private high schools 70% of my students attend.
Last school year, the administration began to require explicit instruction of comprehension strategies in the elementary school curriculum. The elementary school teachers in our program use Guided Reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996) to teach these strategies. However, the middle school teachers (grades 6, 7, and 8) do not have a curriculum to use to teach these strategies. We are told that we need to teach comprehension strategies, but we are given very little guidance for how to accomplish this task. Through my own research, I have learned the best practices to teach reading comprehension and have slowly integrated these practices in my classroom. Teaching these strategies for nonfiction, however, continues to be an area in which I would like to improve my instruction. My action research question is, “How does explicit instruction in comprehension strategies and summarization for nonfiction text improve middle school students’ reading comprehension and summary writing skills?” Research has shown that teachers can improve students’ reading comprehension and summarization through explicit instruction in metacognitive strategies, comprehension strategies for fiction/narrative text, comprehension strategies for nonfiction/informational text, and summary writing. I have reviewed related research in this chapter.

**Metacognition**

Metacognition refers to the idea of thinking about one’s thinking. In terms of reading comprehension, teaching students to think about their comprehension helps them to read more carefully and think as they process text. Lloyd (2004), Allen and Hancock (2008), and McTavish (2008) determined that teaching students to become more metacognitive can positively affect reading comprehension.

In this first summary Lloyd’s (2004) purpose was to integrate comprehension strategy instruction in the classroom in the research study, “Using Comprehension Strategies as a
Springboard for Student Talk.” Lloyd believed that students would use comprehension strategies to enrich their literature circle discussions. Lloyd investigated the effect of comprehension strategy instruction with an emphasis on asking questions in literature circle discussions and how this instruction encouraged students to actively participate in the comprehension of a text.

Lloyd (2004) cited Goudvis and Harvey’s (2000) seven main comprehension strategies as influential in teaching students to engage in literature circle discussions. Lloyd also cited the work of Babbitt (1996), who found that classroom talk during literature circles focused on completing role sheets for assignments. Babbitt stated that the role structure of literature circles helped to get the discussion started, but students needed to be taught to question the text in order to have deeper discussions. Lloyd wrote that Tovani (2000) found that adult book club discussions stemmed from the adults’ questions. Therefore, Lloyd believed that literature circles would be more influential if students were taught to ask questions of the text and each other.

Further research by Daniels (2002) found that teachers are moving away from the traditional literature circle role sheets towards using journals and response logs to assess student learning. Lloyd stated that these journals can be used as a record for students to record questions about what they are reading to be used later in literature circle discussions. Finally, Goudvis and Harvey stated that both teaching content and teaching process are essential for developing strong, independent readers. Therefore, Lloyd believed that students’ higher level thinking and reading comprehension would improve if literature circles focused on the strategy of asking questions to monitor comprehension of the text to shape discussions instead of focusing on traditional role sheets during literature circles.

Lloyd (2004) collaborated with a sixth-grade teacher in a self-contained classroom on the East coast over several months. The classroom contained 28 students of a variety of
backgrounds: Bulgarian, Vietnamese, Argentinian, Lebanese, Indian, Egyptian, Saudi Arabian, and American. Although they did not receive ESL services, many students did not speak English at home and were dominant in the first language (L1).

In order to collect data, Lloyd (2004) designed a literature circle encompassing five novels on the American Revolutionary War. Students chose from two novels, and then Lloyd grouped the students by these choices and their abilities. To build background knowledge, Lloyd led the class in discussions of war using pictures the students had created and their own prior knowledge of the topic. To assess the class’s discussions, Lloyd collected data through anecdotal notes during observations. Lloyd placed a tape recorder in the center of each literature circle both to keep the students on task and record observations more accurately. Lloyd listened to these tapes after school, and then Lloyd commented on the literature circles during class discussions of quality questions.

Lloyd (2004) used a gradual release of responsibility model to teach the strategy of questioning. She began by modeling questioning that genuinely portrayed her thinking during classroom read-alouds. The researcher did not allow students to answer her questions because the focus was on asking the questions, not answering them. After several days of modeling, Lloyd stopped reading and asked students to write questions in their reading logs. Afterwards, the class discussed the value of a good question and how a good question can help the reader understand the book better.

Lloyd (2004) then provided the class with guided reading and practice with a non-fiction text from their social studies class. Students worked in small groups to collect questions they had about the text as they read. Lloyd noticed that the questions were genuine because the text was unfamiliar to the students. Students determined that some questions require further research
and some can be answered by using text features, such as headings. Lloyd supported the students by teaching them to use context clues and root words for unknown vocabulary words.

Before the class began literature circles, Lloyd (2004) used a fish-bowl to demonstrate what a literature circle discussion should look like. Students read their chosen novels and recorded questions in their reading logs. Students were allowed to create their own schedules for finishing the book, and the students scheduled two days of independent reading between literature circle group meetings so that everyone could be prepared for the discussion. Lloyd also provided guidelines for the literature circles that were discussed before, during, and after the literature circles when needed. Groups were given 20-30 minutes to complete the discussion. Students could return to their desks to continue reading once they finished the discussion, but Lloyd noted that none of the groups finished before the scheduled time.

Lloyd (2004) found that students’ questions covered a variety of topics, and students said that asking questions made them more active readers. Having observed that even reluctant learners became actively involved in the group discussion, Lloyd reported that self-questioning helped the students see the value in the questioning process as a tool that good readers use to understand texts.

Lloyd stated the importance of avoiding the use of only one approach to teaching literacy. He or She wrote that a lot of emphasis is placed on standardized test results, but teachers must avoid teaching only strategies, which discourages students to talk critically about text. Lloyd suggested using comprehension strategies to help students talk about the text during literature circle discussions, thus enhancing their ability to think critically. It was further suggested that teachers use students’ response logs to monitor students’ use of comprehension strategies, and then reteach strategies that students are not using or using incorrectly.
Lloyd (2004) determined that explicitly teaching students to use the comprehension strategy of questioning can help them to become more metacognitive. Although Lloyd did not have the goal of metacognition when the researcher began the study, the researcher discovered how students can benefit from using metacognition when reading. In contrast, Allen and Hancock (2008) began their research with the goal of investigating metacognition as it relates to reading. However, Allen and Hancock also found that teaching students to be more metacognitive improves reading comprehension.

Allen and Hancock (2008) sought to investigate how to use metacognition and metacomprehension in reading comprehension instruction in the article, “Reading Comprehension Improvement with Individualized Cognitive Profiles and Metacognition.” Through their research, the authors investigated if readers’ comprehension would improve after examining their results on a test of cognitive abilities with an adult. Allen and Hancock examined students’ strengths and weaknesses in five cognitive abilities that readers use to comprehend text.

Allen and Hancock (2008) investigated research in the field of reading comprehension instruction to develop their theoretical framework. Research indicates that struggling readers monitor their comprehension very seldom, and five cognitive clusters relate to reading achievement: background knowledge, working memory, processing speed, short-term memory, and long-term retrieval. Therefore, Allen and Hancock concluded that reading comprehension can be improved if teachers instruct students to monitor their comprehension in relation to these five cognitive abilities. They hypothesized that giving students knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses in these five cognitive abilities would teach them to become metacognitive when reading. According to the authors, research in reading comprehension strategies states that a
gradual release of responsibility model is most beneficial for students; therefore, Allen and Hancock designed this research study around these best practice theories.

Allen and Hancock (2008) conducted their research study in an intermediate elementary school, grades 4-6, in rural Oregon. The demographics of the school were 88% White and 12% Latino, and 62% of the students qualified for free or reduced price lunch. Each class included a literature block for 90 minutes each day. Ten of the 15 classrooms in the school participated in the research study: four fourth grade classes, two fifth grade classes, and four sixth grade classes for a total of 196 subjects. Allen and Hancock randomly assigned each student to one of three experimental conditions: cognitive assessment only (control group); cognitive assessment and profile awareness (profile awareness group); or cognitive assessment, cognitive profile awareness, and metacognitive systematic inquiry (metacognitive systematic inquiry group).

Allen and Hancock (2008) assessed each student using the Woodcock-Johnson III test to assess the students’ cognitive abilities. After the assessment, the head author of the study reviewed these test results with the students in two the profile awareness group and the metacognitive systematic inquiry group using a self-created profile for four cognitive abilities: background knowledge, processing speed, working memory, and long-term retrieval fluency. The head author used a bar graph to define each student’s strengths and weaknesses on the assessment.

Allen and Hancock (2008) assessed the participants’ reading comprehension achievement using two assessments: the Oregon State Assessment for Reading and Literature (OSA) and the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory. The OSA is a standardized assessment students in grades 4-6 take each year in the state of Oregon. The OSA consists of a series of passages from a variety of genres followed by multiple choice questions. The Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory
Inventory is an assessment students take throughout the district in classrooms. The test consists of comprehension questions relating to a fiction or nonfiction passage that students answer orally. Students are not allowed to look back at the text when answering questions.

Allen and Hancock (2008) conducted this research study over 16 weeks in six phases. The first four phases occurred over the first three weeks of the study, Phase 5 lasted for 10 weeks, and Phase 6 occurred over the final three weeks of the study. Phase 1 was the selection of participating classrooms. The six participating teachers were flexible, cooperative, and had a high interest in improving student reading comprehension. The researchers assigned the students in these six classrooms to one of the three groups using a random number generator.

Phase 2 was the foundational testing of cognitive abilities. The senior author of this study assessed each student using the Woodcock-Johnson III cognitive tests of General Information, Visual Matching, Numbers Reversed, and Retrieval Fluency. In Phase 3, students completed pre-tests of reading comprehension. Students took the Oregon State Assessment in the computer lab with their literature teacher. The researchers obtained the test data from the school data base. All students also took the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory to assess their comprehension with the senior author of the study, teacher assistant, or the literature block teacher in a one-on-one setting.

The researchers gave the students in the cognitive profile awareness groups their results and explained the results in a 20-minute lesson during Phase 4 of the study. They used the same definitions of each cognitive cluster and explained how that cluster relates to reading comprehension for each student in the two groups. Students then wrote a definition of each cognitive cluster and a reflection of their profiles. Control group students did not receive this
information and were removed from the classroom during these lessons by the classroom teacher.

Phase 5 of the research study occurred over 10 weeks. The metacognitive systematic inquiry group was the only group of the three to participate in Phase 5. All students participating in the study read independently for 20 minutes in the literature block. At the end of 20 minutes, the teacher gave the students in the metacognitive systematic inquiry group one module on one of the four cognitive abilities to complete. The modules asked students to reflect on their use of one of the cognitive abilities during the independent reading for that day. Students also wrote a reflection to a writing prompt about one of the four cognitive abilities. All students in the study participated in the post-test reading comprehension assessments of Phase 6 in the final three weeks of the study.

Allen and Hancock (2008) found that the metacognitive systematic inquiry group made the most gains on the Oregon State Assessment. The metacognitive systematic inquiry group’s scores differed by a mean score of 3.37 from the control group’s post-test results. The profile awareness group’s post-test results differed from the control group’s results by a mean score of 2.64. The control group’s post-test results were .94 below their pre-test results. None of the post-test results on the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory differed significantly among the three groups.

Allen and Hancock (2008) concluded that exposing the students to their cognitive profiles correlated with gains in reading achievement. Students became better readers by reflecting on their thinking after reading. The authors also concluded that the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory did not sufficiently assess the gains made by the students because the results for this assessment are determined by grade level. Allen and Hancock concluded that 16 weeks
is not sufficient time for students to gain one grade level in reading achievement. According to Allen and Hancock, the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory is not sensitive enough to assess the gains students may make over a shortened period of time.

Allen and Hancock (2008) stated that the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory is not very valuable in the classroom because it is not very valid or reliable in terms of assessment. The authors suggest that more research is needed to make this assessment more useful in the classroom. Allen and Hancock also stated that this IRI would be more useful if the assessment measured reading comprehension in months or weeks instead of just years. Therefore, Allen and Hancock suggested that teachers use more than an informal reading inventory in the classroom to assess reading achievement. The authors found that the two assessments assessed different aspects of reading achievement, so it would be inappropriate for a classroom teacher to use only the results of only one assessment to shape reading instruction.

Finally, Allen and Hancock (2008) wrote that teachers can use assessments such as the Woodcock-Johnson III to improve reading achievement. The authors suggest that creating individual profiles for students and reviewing their results teaches students to think about their comprehension more carefully when reading. Finally, Allen and Hancock stressed the value of using such an assessment to define the connection between research and practice in the classroom.

Similar to Allen and Hancock (2008), McTavish’s (2008) purpose for the research study, “‘What were you thinking?’: The Use of Metacognitive Strategy During Engagement with Reading Narrative and Informational Genres” was to investigate metacognition. McTavish studied how one third grade student used metacognition to make decisions about comprehension strategy use.
McTavish (2008) wrote that metacognitive strategies should be taught using a gradual release of responsibility model where the teacher begins with explicit instruction, followed by modeling, guided practice, and independent use of the strategy. However, McTavish wrote that this type of instruction is not used in many classrooms. She wrote that many teachers only test for reading comprehension, so the teachers do not have an idea if students are using strategies correctly or at all when reading independently. McTavish believed that this disconnection between research and practice is hindering students’ reading comprehension. This case study was conducted to determine how one student used metacognitive strategies during oral readings of both narrative and expository texts.

McTavish (2008) used the theories of metacognition and constructivism to design the research study. McTavish cited the work of Baker and Brown (1984) who wrote that proficient readers use a variety of metacognitive strategies during reading. Additionally, Brown (1980) and Flavell (1979) found that less proficient readers are not as metacognitive as their proficient peers. Constructivism is the theory that readers have experiences that they can use to help make text comprehensible. Therefore, good readers think about their comprehension as they read and relate the text to previous experiences to construct understanding.

McTavish (2008) quoted research that demonstrates how seldom informational text is used in the elementary grades. Duke (2000) found that only 3.6 minutes per day were spent using informational text in a first grade classroom. McTavish believed that teachers need to provide their students with more opportunities to read informational text in the classroom so that students will develop these skills in preparation for textbook reading. Students in Grade 4 often experience a drop in reading achievement because of the increased demands to read and comprehend informational text. This research led McTavish to investigate the metacognitive
awareness of comprehension strategies used by the case study subject when reading both informational and narrative text.

The student chosen for the case study was a third grade female in Canada called Nicole (a pseudonym). McTavish (2008) wrote that Nicole lived in a middle-class neighborhood with both of her parents and an older brother. Nicole’s parents were college graduates and placed a lot of value on education. Nicole and her older brother got along very well and often played and read together. McTavish found that the adults in the home and Nicole’s brother often helped her with reading tasks.

McTavish (2008) used qualitative methods to collect data over two months during Nicole’s first term in third grade. The researcher observed Nicole’s reading practices both at her home and in the classroom while taking field notes; interviewed Nicole, her parents, and her teacher; collected reading and writing samples; and observed and noted the literacy practices and reading materials Nicole encountered both in her home and at school. Additionally, McTavish conducted a specific stimulated recall (SR) interview with Nicole, and then later transcribed the interview for analysis.

To analyze the date, McTavish (2008) examined the field notes, reading and writing artifacts, and transcripts of interviews for patterns and themes. McTavish sought to find out who Nicole was as a reader and learner through this data. The researcher also analyzed the videotapes of the SR interview for Nicole’s use of metacognitive strategies and grouped the instances into categories. Finally, McTavish analyzed Nicole’s retellings of the two texts during the SR interview.

All of McTavish’s (2008) interviews and observations were informal. McTavish visited Nicole’s home and took note of Nicole’s home environment. Nicole’s classroom teacher, Mrs.
Murphy, taught 12 reading strategies throughout the year, focusing on two reading strategies each month. During observation, Mrs. Murphy taught four strategies: accessing background knowledge, predicting, figuring out unknown words, and inferring/drawing conclusions. During an interview, Mrs. Murphy stated that Nicole was making satisfactory progress for a third grade student.

The stimulated recall (SR) interview consisted of two parts. In the first part, McTavish (2008) took Nicole to a vacant room near her classroom. McTavish displayed several narrative and informational books on a table and asked Nicole to pick one narrative and one informational text to read. All of the books were at Nicole’s instructional level, according to Mrs. Murphy. McTavish chose those books so that Nicole would need to use metacognitive strategies in order to understand them. For each book, Nicole was asked to read the book aloud and retell what the book was about at the end. McTavish asked Nicole one or two questions at the end of the retelling to clarify Nicole’s meaning and videotaped these readings to review later.

During the second part of the interview, McTavish (2008) rewound the tape and played Nicole’s reading back to her. As they watched the tape, McTavish asked Nicole structured, open-ended questions about what she was thinking or doing as she read various parts of each book. This portion of the interview was videotaped in order to review Nicole’s metacognition more carefully.

McTavish (2008) found that Nicole used several strategies during reading, but was only able to describe her use of one strategy the majority of the time. Nicole used the “figuring out unknown words” strategy most often in both the narrative and informational texts. Nicole used letter cues, word parts, picture cues, and context cues to figure out unknown words. The researcher noted that Nicole used the second strategy (predicting) often when reading the
narrative text, but did not use predictions with the informational text. However, McTavish wrote that making predictions for the informational text was difficult because of its structure.

Nicole used a third comprehension strategy, inferring/drawing conclusions, slightly more in the narrative text than in the informational text. McTavish observed that Nicole understood when she did not understand something in the informational text, but Nicole did not know how to fix her comprehension breakdown. Nicole used the fourth strategy, asking questions, well when reading the narrative text. Nicole was able to ask questions to monitor her comprehension and self-correct her errors. McTavish also observed that Nicole was able to access her background knowledge (a fifth strategy) well in both the narrative and informational texts. Finally, Nicole was able to use the strategy of extracting information from illustrations and photos well in the informational text, but the information Nicole extracted was not useful.

McTavish (2008) also analyzed Nicole’s retelling of each book. Nicole’s retelling of the narrative book included the main idea, the problem, an accurate retelling of events with some details, and organization and sequence. Nicole’s retelling of the informational text included a few key ideas and important details, little understanding of the order of the text, and a weak statement of the main idea of the book.

McTavish (2008) stated that Nicole used metacognitive strategies more effectively with the narrative text. Nicole used the same strategies for both texts, but did not know which strategies were more effective with informational text. Additionally, McTavish observed that Nicole did not know what to do when her use of the strategy did not help her comprehend the text. McTavish hypothesized that Nicole’s struggles with using metacognition were due to a lack of practice choosing which strategies to use for which text genres. McTavish explained that because Nicole struggled more with the vocabulary of the informational text, Nicole was left
with very little capacity to use strategies. Nicole was so focused on decoding the vocabulary that she was unable to use comprehension strategies effectively.

McTavish (2008) suggested that teachers give instruction regarding which strategies to use for different genres. McTavish stated that Nicole could use strategies; she just did not know when to use them effectively. Additionally, McTavish wrote that teaching students to use text features such as headings and indexes can aid their comprehension of informational text. McTavish concluded that explicit strategy instruction is useful for students, but it is not enough. McTavish suggested that teachers provide students with authentic learning opportunities in which to practice using reading comprehension strategies so that students become more metacognitive. McTavish stated that teaching students to monitor their comprehension while reading different genres will show them how using different strategies can help them to understand informational text across content areas.

All three research studies explained in the previous section used different methods, different participants, and different purposes for conducting the research. Lloyd (2004) worked with a six grade classroom to determine the effects of reading comprehension instruction, with a focus on questions, on students’ participation in literature circle discussions. Allen and Hancock (2008) examined the impact of individualized discussions regarding metacognitive strengths and weaknesses on the reading comprehension of the students in 10 fourth-sixth grade classrooms. McTavish (2008) conducted a case study of one student’s metacognitive use of comprehension strategies. All three studies determined that teaching students to be more metacognitive improves reading comprehension. When students can think about their thinking, students learn to be independent readers who know what to do when experiencing a comprehension breakdown. These studies also demonstrated that students often lack the metacognitive skills to choose which
comprehension strategies to use in a variety of contexts. Teaching students of all ages and abilities to be more metacognitive when reading can increase the students’ reading comprehension.

**Fiction and Nonfiction Reading Comprehension Strategies**

Many metacognitive comprehension strategies are useful for reading both fiction and nonfiction texts. Scharlach (2008) investigated the effectiveness of a framework she invented for these strategies called START. May (2011) studied one teacher’s instruction in two different sets of comprehension strategies, one of which was mandated by the state standardized assessment. Both studies investigated the effect of these strategies on students’ comprehension of fiction and nonfiction text.

Scharlach’s (2008) purpose in “START Comprehending: Students and Teachers Actively Reading Text” study was to investigate the effectiveness of a framework for teaching reading. She called this framework the START (Students and Teachers Actively Reading Texts) framework for reading comprehension strategy instruction. This framework was created in order to improve reading comprehension instruction in the classroom.

Research has shown that readers’ comprehension will improve if they are taught to use comprehension strategies. However, teachers often neglect comprehension strategy instruction because they do not know how to teach these strategies. Scharlach (2008) designed a reading framework to teach reading comprehension strategies because of this research. The author cites Kuhn and Dean’s (2004) definition of metacognition and describes the importance of teaching students to be metacognitive. Scharlach also cites Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory and states that teachers’ goal for students should be teaching them to be independent and self-sufficient learners.
This research study took place over five months in 40 sessions. Scharlach (2008) studied five third grade classrooms in one school in the southeastern United States. Prior to the study, all five of the classroom teachers were familiar with the eight reading comprehension strategies, but none of them explicitly taught the strategies during their reading lessons. Each classroom was randomly assigned to one of three groups: control, strategy-only (ST), and START. In the control group, the teacher and students made no changes to the regular classroom practices. During classroom read-alouds in the ST and START groups, the teacher modeled and scaffolded the eight comprehension strategies for the students three or four days per week for 20 minutes per day, for 40 sessions. The students in the START classrooms were taught to use self-monitoring comprehension sheets during their independent reading time. After the read-aloud portion of the lesson, all of the 81 total students read self-selected texts independently.

To collect data, Scharlach (2008) assessed the participants with the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Comprehension Tests (Forms S and T) for third grade both before and after the intervention. Additionally, the participants completed a questionnaire about their reading comprehension, use of comprehension strategies, and self-efficacy before and after the intervention. For analysis, Scharlach studied the three different groups’ data over the five months to see if there was a difference in gains among the groups. The author used a one-way analysis of variance to analyze the results, using instruction as the independent variable and reading comprehension scores as the dependent variable.

Scharlach (2008) designed specific reading instruction for three different groups in the study. The control group’s reading instruction was not any different than the instruction they received before the study. The teacher did not instruct the students in reading comprehension strategies. In the strategy-only (ST) group and the START group, the teacher modeled and
taught reading comprehension strategies explicitly. The instruction began with a classroom read-
aloud in which the teacher introduced and modeled the comprehension strategy. The teacher
then provided scaffolding during the read-aloud to encourage their use of the comprehension
strategies. Eight comprehension strategies were taught to the participants: predicting/inferring,
visualizing, making connections, questioning, determining main idea, summarizing, checking
predictions, and making judgments. The teacher used Think Alouds to model the strategy during
the introduction, and then the teacher would scaffold the students to use the strategy themselves.

After nine sessions, the teacher had introduced each of the strategies and scaffolded the
students’ use of the reading strategies during the read-alouds. During independent reading, the
instruction between the ST and START groups differed. In the control group and ST group,
students read self-selected texts independently as usual. In the START groups, students
completed a graphic organizer called, “ART of Comprehension” to record their comprehension
as they read. The sheet included a labeled square for each strategy and a question to guide the
reader to use the strategy accurately. The reader recorded his/her thinking on a sticky note
during reading, and then the reader affixed the sticky note to the appropriate square on the sheet.
Teachers of the START groups first modeled how to complete the graphic organizer. After the
introduction of all eight comprehension strategies, students were asked to complete their own
ART of Comprehension sheet in the tenth session. Students in the START groups used these
sheets to monitor their comprehension throughout the rest of the sessions.

Scharlach (2008) found that all readers regardless of ability level improved their reading
comprehension over the five months. The students from the START classrooms improved
significantly more than the students in the ST and control groups on the reading comprehension
assessment. These students made an average gain of nine months by the end of the study
compared to a gain of three months in the ST classrooms and a one month loss in the control group. Scharlach’s results show the effectiveness of using the ART of Comprehension sheet in the classroom to help students monitor their comprehension and use of strategies during independent reading of choice material.

One result that surprised the author and teachers in the START group was the increase in the reading comprehension scores of the students that were reading above grade level before the study. These students averaged a gain of one year and four months, whereas the advanced students in the ST classroom did not achieve any gains and the students in the control group lost one year in their comprehension scores. The author and teachers of these students were encouraged by the fact that even advanced students’ comprehension improved when using the ART of Comprehension sheet.

On the student questionnaire, students in the START classroom had more positive feelings about reading and rated themselves as better readers by the end of the intervention. All students in the study were unable to describe what they do while they are reading on the initial questionnaire. At the end of the intervention, students in the START group answered that they used comprehension strategies while reading and even used the names of the strategies in their responses. The students in the START groups became more metacognitive and understood the value of using the comprehension strategies.

The teachers of the students in the ST and START classrooms also reported success in their observations of the students after the intervention. These teachers reported improved student attitudes toward reading and more engagement during teacher read-alouds. The participants’ parents informally reported during conversations with the teacher that these students often talked about reading and using comprehension strategies at home.
Scharlach’s (2008) results showed the benefits of explicitly teaching reading comprehension strategies for all students. The results of this study showed that all students can improve their reading comprehension by learning how to use strategies to improve their reading. Scharlach stated that the START framework was easy to implement and met the diverse needs of students. Because the students in the study read self-selected texts, the students were motivated to read and learned how to use the comprehension strategies accurately on their own. Teaching students to use reading comprehension strategies will improve their comprehension regardless of ability level.

Both Scharlach’s (2008) and May’s (2011) research participants were third grade students, and both researchers investigated similar sets of comprehension strategies. The two studies both investigated the effect of explicit instruction in the following reading comprehension strategies: predicting, inferring, making connections, questioning, determining the main idea, and summarizing. In May’s study, the teacher was also required to teach a set of comprehension strategies mandated by the state standardized tests. May investigated this teacher’s instruction in comprehension strategies as it compared to the teacher’s goal of culturally relevant teaching.

May (2011) sought to answer two research questions in the research study, “Situating Strategies: An Examination of Comprehension Strategy Instruction in One Upper Elementary Classroom Oriented toward Culturally Relevant Teaching.” The researcher wanted to investigate the appearance of comprehension strategy instruction and the interaction between strategy instruction and culturally relevant teaching in the classroom. She describes the effect of two different sets of comprehension strategies on one teacher’s goal of culturally relevant teaching.

May (2011) believed culturally relevant teaching and strategic comprehension instruction have potential to teach students to read effectively and develop critical thinking. The researcher
designed her study around the theories of Ladson-Billings (1995) who wrote that each individual comes to a learning task with a certain set of beliefs and knowledge that affect their understanding of the world. This culturally relevant teaching pedagogy centers around this belief that respecting and honoring culture in the classroom helps students to develop their critical consciousness.

Additionally, May (2011) studied the work of researchers who stated the benefits of teaching reading comprehension strategies through a constructivist point of view. Research has shown that strategies are a tool readers use to make meaning from text, not the desired result of reading. May believed that reading comprehension strategy instruction could be linked to culturally relevant pedagogy in order to develop critical consciousness in readers.

May (2011) studied the third and fourth grade classrooms of Gail Harris (a pseudonym) over two years. These two classrooms were made up of two different groups of students over the two years (one group per school year), but the same classroom teacher. The school was located in the center of a working class neighborhood. Most of the residents of the neighborhood identified themselves as Latino/a, many others identified themselves as African American, and a very small percentage identified themselves as European American. Harris’s classroom represented almost the same demographics of the neighborhood, except for a slightly smaller Latino/a population because of the bilingual classrooms in the school.

May (2011) collected data over two consecutive school years in one teacher’s third/fourth grade classroom. May’s role in the class was a participant observer. The researcher visited Harris’s classroom twice per week for anywhere from one to three hours each visit. May’s focus during the observations was on classroom interactions related to literacy and culturally relevant teaching. The researcher took field notes; audio recordings and video recordings; teacher,
student, and student teacher interviews; and artifacts of student work and teacher planning resources. To analyze the data, May used a constant comparative analysis.

As the classroom teacher taught reading, May (2011) took notes on the strategies taught to analyze Harris’s instruction and found that Harris taught two different sets of comprehension strategies. The first set of comprehension strategies included making connections, questioning, visualizing/inferring, determining importance, and synthesizing. Harris learned these strategies from reading professional resource books. The second set of comprehension strategies were from the state reading standards. These strategies included word meanings, word meanings in context, follow passage organization, main thought, answer specific text-based questions, text-based questions with paraphrase, draw inferences, literary devices, and author’s purpose. May stated that the second set of strategies resembled Davis’s (1944) nine skills of comprehension, but May chose to call them strategies in the study because that is what the teacher, Harris, called them in class.

May (2011) wrote that Harris arranged her strategy instruction into thematic and inquiry units typically in science or social studies. Harris’s goals for her students were to teach reading as a meaning-making process and develop critical readers. May noted that Harris’s instruction utilized a reader’s workshop approach with embedded thematic units. Harris emphasized meaning-making, student choice, and questioning in strategy instruction. All thematic units related to specific cultural groups and a big idea to direct the students’ questions. Harris encouraged students to ask questions during her classroom read-alouds. Harris believed that students would become more engaged in the text if encouraged and allowed to ask questions and talk about the text.
May (2011) observed that Harris used the principles of culturally relevant teaching in a variety of ways when teaching comprehension strategies, including encouragement to connect the texts to students’ own lives and background knowledge. The researcher wrote that Harris’s acceptance of students’ knowledge encouraged them to discuss the texts further. Harris also used her teaching of the comprehension strategies to design future classroom units. For example, Harris’s students showed an interest in Vietnam after reading *The Lotus Seed* by Sherry Garland, which takes place in Vietnam. She used her students’ interest to design a unit of study around this topic while simultaneously teaching comprehension strategies.

May (2011) noted that Harris struggled with connecting students’ prior knowledge and interests when teaching the strategies from the state standards. The lessons from the state standards were focused on using the strategy correctly and not on making meaning from the text. The purpose of the state standard strategy lessons was on finding the right answer to a series of questions, so students were discouraged from connecting the text to their own lives. Therefore, Harris struggled with connecting the strategies with thematic topics.

May (2011) concluded that Harris’s students excelled in using and learning the first set of comprehension strategies. The students benefitted from connecting what they read to their own lives and excelled in higher level thinking. With the second set of comprehension strategies, May noted that it was more difficult for Harris to connect these strategies to the principles of culturally relevant teaching. Because the goal of the state standard comprehension strategies was to demonstrate the students’ abilities to use the strategies on a test, the strategies did not lend themselves to connections in the students’ lives, which is the root of culturally relevant pedagogy. The author noted that Harris struggled with connecting the second set of comprehension strategies to her students’ lives using culturally relevant teaching.
May (2011) concluded that comprehension strategies do provide an avenue for teachers to use culturally relevant pedagogy. Teachers can use strategy instruction to connect to students’ lives and build inquiry into other thematic units of study, which can develop their cultural competence and critical consciousness, key aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy. However, May stated a need for more research in the field of how teachers can use culture in the classroom to enhance learning. She expressed concerns that many teachers may only teach the strategies specified by the state standards and do not do their own research into what comprehension strategies benefit critical thinking and culturally relevant instruction, as Harris did in her classroom. May also stressed a need for more research into how many teachers instruct research-based strategies in addition to their regular classroom instruction. According to the author, research-based strategies lend themselves better to culturally relevant teaching, but many teachers focus instead on the state mandated strategies. Research is needed in the statistics around these numbers and to demonstrate how beneficial culturally relevant teaching can be when teaching reading.

Although Scharlach’s (2008) research and May’s (2011) research did not investigate the exact same students, the results of both studies were similar. Both studies determined that explicitly teaching reading comprehension strategies to third grade students increases reading comprehension of both fiction and nonfiction texts. Scharlach stated that all of the students in the study, regardless of ability level, showed improvements in their reading comprehension. The students in Scharlach’s study learned to be more metacognitive when using reading comprehension strategies. Although May’s purpose for the research study differed from Scharlach’s purpose, May also noted reading comprehension gains in the research study. The participants learned to use reading comprehension strategies to improve their comprehension and
benefitted from connecting the texts to their own lives. The culturally relevant pedagogy of the participant teacher in May’s study aided the students’ comprehension and helped them to see the value of using comprehension strategies to understand texts. Both research studies provided best practice data for the explicit instruction of reading comprehension strategies for fiction and nonfiction texts.

**Non-Fiction/Informational Reading Comprehension Strategies**

Research has shown that nonfiction text is not used as often as fiction text in the classroom (Alfassi, 2004). Therefore, students’ comprehension of expository materials is lacking in many schools and grade levels. Nelson and Manset-Williamson (2006), Radcliffe, Caverly, Hand, and Franke (2008), and Alfassi examined the effect of explicit instruction in comprehension strategies for informational texts in a variety of contexts.

Nelson and Manset-Williamson (2006) conducted this research study, “The Impact of Explicit, Self-Regulatory Reading Comprehension Strategy Instruction of the Reading-Specific Self-Efficacy, Attributions, and Affect of Students with Reading Disabilities” to determine which of two reading interventions is more beneficial for students with reading disabilities. One intervention emphasized a guided reading approach, and the other was an explicit comprehension intervention.

The authors’ theoretical framework centered on the research of Calsyn and Kenny (1977) and Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, and Baker (2001). Nelson and Manset-Williamson sought to find out how best to increase the control-related beliefs and motivation of students with reading disabilities. Calsyn and Kenny developed the self-enhancement and skill development models, which assume that students’ motivational issues must be worked on separately from their academic issues. Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, and Baker concluded that explicitly teaching reading
comprehension strategies will improve the reading comprehension of students with reading disabilities. Nelson and Manset-Williamson found that no studies examined which reading intervention was most effective for students with reading disabilities, which is why these authors conducted this particular research study.

The sample group of 20 students ranged from 9-14 years of age. Fifteen of the students were male, five females, and 17 White students and three African American students. To be a participant in the group, the students had to have reading levels at least two grade levels below their current placements and reading fluency below 3.5 grade level. The intervention took place over five weeks (four additional days were used for pre and post testing), four days a week, for one hour each day. Nelson and Manset-Williamson did not state where the study took place.

Before the intervention began, the authors assessed the participants’ reading self-efficacy, ability to attribute their reading ability to strategy use, and motivation towards reading. Nelson and Manset-Williamson (2006) used a variety of assessment measures for these pre-tests, which were administered by a group of instructors. The authors used the Schunk and Rice instrument to measure self-efficacy. Nelson developed a four-scenario questionnaire to assess students’ reading attributions to strategy use. Students answered how important using strategies was to being successful in each scenario. Students took a modified version of the Positive and Negative Affect Scale for Children to measure their reading affect. At the end of the study, the instructors administered an oral retell test, which was scored based on whether or not the student gave the correct main idea and the quality of the response, the comprehension subtest on the Woodcock-Johnson, and a 12-question multiple choice test based on an expository text.

The group of 10 instructors received one hour of training in administering the tests and practiced administration in pairs. All interventions were conducted on a one-on-one basis, and a
principal investigator observed the instructors at least twice during the interventions to ensure that the instructors were accurately teaching the content correctly. Each intervention session for all of the participants, regardless of intervention type, included instruction in phonological awareness (15 minutes), comprehension instruction (30 minutes), and fluency (10 minutes). Decoding was embedded in the comprehension portion of the intervention, in which the students read high interest/low-readability expository text or books about topics that interested them.

In the first sessions of the guided reading interventions, the instructors modeled the strategies (including prediction, summarization, and question generation), and in the middle and final sessions, the instructors provided the students with guided practice. The authors of the study structured the sessions in that way under the assumption that the students would eventually internalize the strategies after being exposed to the instructors’ models and guided practice. All of the strategies were presented to the students simultaneously.

Nelson and Manset-Williamson (2006) structured the explicit comprehension intervention very differently. Each session began with direct instruction in a strategy and giving the student a purpose and value for using that particular strategy when reading. The design of the explicit comprehension intervention was to gradually transfer control of the strategy from instructor to student. Instructors explicitly taught the students to self-monitor while reading so the students would learn when to use which strategy. Instructors taught new strategies using a specific procedure: direct explanation, modeling, collaborative practice, and independent practice. When the students used the strategy during independent practice, the instructors gave students explicit feedback using comments.

The participants in the explicit comprehension group outperformed the participants in the guided reading group on two of the reading comprehension measures of the posttest. The
students in the guided reading group had higher beliefs about their reading self-efficacy. However, the students in the explicit reading group learned to attribute their reading success or failure to their use or misuse of reading strategies. These students blamed their reading failures on the fact that they were not using a strategy correctly or did not use a strategy at all, whereas the participants in the guided reading group overestimated their reading abilities. The authors of the study did not find any statistical difference between either of the groups from the pretest to the posttest.

The most significant conclusion of the study was the difference in the students’ reading self-efficacy. Nelson and Manset-Williamson (2006) concluded that students with reading disabilities have unrealistic perceptions of their reading self-efficacy. The authors concluded that students with reading disabilities, who the authors found often overestimated their reading abilities, do not understand that their difficulties with reading are because they are not using strategies correctly. The authors believed that that was why the students in the explicit comprehension group’s self-efficacy decreased by the end of the study. The students became much more metacognitive, which Nelson and Manset-Williamson state is what students with reading disabilities lack. The participants in the explicit comprehension group became aware of the cause of their difficulty with reading, so they perceived themselves as poorer readers by the end of the intervention than they thought they were before the intervention. Neither of the groups made significant gains in their reading comprehension, but the explicit comprehension group did improve slightly.

Nelson and Manset-Williamson (2006) stated that educators must be aware of the reading self-efficacy of their students with reading disabilities. The authors stated that the fact that many of these students are unaware of their skills leads them to lose motivation when struggling to
read. Nelson and Manset-Williamson stated that teachers will improve the reading comprehension of students if teachers teach comprehension strategies explicitly. Students with learning disabilities can improve their reading by learning how to use specific comprehension strategies. Finally, the authors stated a need for more research in the use of reading attribution instruments that include more reading successes and failures so that the instrument becomes more reliable.


Radcliffe, Caverly, Hand, and Franke’s (2008) purpose of the research study, “Improving Reading in a Middle School Science Classroom” was to investigate a new reading strategy for content area reading called PLAN (Predict, Locate, Add, and Note). The authors sought to investigate how Mrs. Lee, the teacher in the study, changed her instruction of textbook reading as she learned more about the PLAN strategy, how effective PLAN was in teaching science to middle school students, how students perceived their use of the PLAN strategy, and how the teacher’s confidence changed as she implemented the PLAN strategy.

The authors’ theoretical framework stems from several studies documenting the need for more explicit instruction in teaching reading strategies for informational text. A major finding that the authors used to base this study was that of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (2002). The AAAS reported that science teachers avoid assigning textbook reading because the textbooks do not align with the standards very well. Additionally, the authors agree with the work of Haury (2000) who suggested that science teachers teach students to ask questions when reading textbooks among other reading strategies. Based on this
research, the authors of the study designed their research to investigate how content area teachers can effectively teach strategies to study reading material. The authors stated that PLAN is an effective strategy to use with middle school students.

The study took place in a school located near Austin, Texas. The sample group included two sixth grade science classrooms for a total of 50 students. The teacher, Mrs. Lee, had 30 years of teaching experience and a master’s degree in education. Each day, she taught five science classes. Two classes were used in the study so that one class could serve as a control group. The control group was comprised of 27 students (63% male): 11 White, 13 Hispanic, and 3 African American students. The treatment group, the class using the PLAN strategy, was comprised of 23 students (43% male): 14 White, 8 Hispanic, and 1 African American student.

Two classes were chosen for the study so that one class could function as a control group in comparison to the class in which Mrs. Lee taught the PLAN strategy. The researchers administered two science comprehension assessments to the students as pretests and two as posttests. During Mrs. Lee’s instruction, the researchers observed her, took field notes, and videotaped her class. Mrs. Lee completed nearly identical questionnaires and interviews about her beliefs in teaching science through reading and her students’ abilities before and after the study. Additionally, the students took tests from the textbook after Mrs. Lee’s instruction to assess their comprehension of the material. Mrs. Lee also gave the students a reading strategy checklist to complete in order to assess whether they used any particular strategy or not when reading their textbooks. To analyze the data, the researchers used computer software called Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), and then they reviewed and discussed the information from Mrs. Lee’s interviews to arrive at a consensus.
Radcliffe et al. (2008) designed this study with three phases. The first phase was preparation, in which Mrs. Lee received explicit instruction in teaching the PLAN strategy by the researchers. During the implementation phase, Radcliffe interviewed Mrs. Lee, and then met weekly with Mrs. Lee for two months for a total of more than 15 hours. The purpose of these interviews was to discuss how to teach the PLAN strategy and the potential challenges of teaching reading strategies to middle school students. Mrs. Lee used four steps to teach the PLAN strategy. Mrs. Lee introduced the strategy, modeled how to create a concept map, guided the students in creating concept maps in small groups, and supervised the students as they created concept maps based on their reading individually. Hand videotaped Mrs. Lee during the implementation phase.

During adaptation, the final phase of the study, Mrs. Lee did not meet with any of the researchers. Instead, Mrs. Lee concentrated on implementing the PLAN strategy into her lessons and encouraging the students to use PLAN by emphasizing its value. At the end of implementation, Radcliffe interviewed Mrs. Lee again to assess her perceptions of the study.

Radcliffe et al. (2008) found that Mrs. Lee definitely changed her instruction through the use of PLAN in her science classroom. Mrs. Lee reported that the treatment group’s beliefs about textbook reading became more positive. She stated that the students understood the strategy and how the strategy would help them understand their content reading better. Before the study, Mrs. Lee would play an audiotape of the textbook reading for the students to listen to while following along, or she would ask them to read the material silently. The students reported that they enjoyed the PLAN strategy, and it made sense to them.

The researchers also found that the PLAN strategy was effective in helping Mrs. Lee’s students learn science content and improved the students’ perceptions of their reading ability.
Upon analyzing the comprehension test scores, the researchers found that the treatment group’s posttest results outscored the control group’s posttest results by a mean of 16.1 points. On the reading checklist, the treatment group’s results on the posttest outscored the control group’s results, even though the two group’s scores on the pretests were not statistically different. These results were also shown on Mrs. Lee’s responses in her interviews, who reported that the students became more enthusiastic about reading and more knowledgeable about science content. Mrs. Lee also reported that all students improved their textbook reading, regardless of ability, and the most struggling readers showed a large improvement.

Finally, the researchers found that Mrs. Lee viewed using the PLAN strategy positively in her science classes by the end of the study. Mrs. Lee was enthusiastic about how well her students used the PLAN strategy, and she predicted that she would use it in her classes in the future. Mrs. Lee stated that her students’ self-esteem increased, and they gained more confidence in their reading abilities. Three months after the completion of the study, the researchers assessed the students again. The researchers found that after using the PLAN strategy for three months, the treatment group’s posttest scores on the reading strategy checklist indicated that they used additional reading strategies when they read.

Radcliffe et al. (2008) stated in the beginning of the article that more research was needed to investigate the effectiveness of strategies for reading in the content areas, which was their main purpose for this study. The authors stated that future studies in this subject might use equivalent groups and several teachers over six months to assess the effectiveness of the PLAN strategy even further. They suggest that teachers need to thoroughly research and receive instruction in teaching complex reading strategies such as PLAN in order to teach students to use these strategies effectively.
Clearly, nonfiction reading strategies benefit middle school students, as demonstrated in the research of Radcliffe et al. (2008). High school students can also benefit from this explicit strategy instruction for nonfiction texts. Alfassi’s (2004) research article, “Reading to Learn: Effects of Combined Strategy Instruction on High School Students” studied two large groups of high school students. Alfassi investigated the effect that explicit comprehension strategy instruction can have on students’ reading comprehension in both language arts and other content areas.

Alfassi (2004) conducted a study of two different groups of high school students to determine the effectiveness of a reading intervention delivered by teachers in the regular classroom setting. In the first experiment, Alfassi conducted small-scale research to determine if incorporating a large-scale reading intervention in the language arts classroom is more effective than using literacy only instruction to teach comprehension to high school students. Alfassi’s second experiment incorporated large-scale research to examine the effect of content area teachers’ combined strategy instruction on students’ abilities to answer different types of questions.

Alfassi (2004) wrote that most high school instruction, where students are expected to learn from reading, focuses on content and skills instead of strategies for reading comprehension. Research shows that less than 7% of students in grades 4, 8, and 12 received advanced scores in the field of reading on standardized assessments (as cited in Alfassi, 2004). However, research also indicates that students’ comprehension and memory of texts can be increased through instructional interventions. Therefore, Alfassi hypothesized that such interventions can be used at the high school level to increase the reading comprehension of high school students in both English language arts class and in the content areas.
The sample in Experiment 1 included 49 freshman students in two heterogeneous English classes. The school was in a largely middle-class suburban area in the Midwest. Alfassi (2004) randomly assigned each class to one of two groups. The experimental group contained 29 students, and the control group contained 20 students. Both groups mainstream students performed within the 45th percentile and above on a standardized reading test administered prior to the intervention. The teachers of each group were similar in training and experience, and each teacher participated in a six hour strategy instruction training conducted by the administration.

Alfassi (2004) conducted the second experiment in the same school as the first, but within content area classrooms (science, arts, social studies, and mathematics). The intervention occurred over 20 class sessions and included 277 sophomore students. Each session contained 20 minutes of content instruction, which included the combined strategy intervention. All participants received the same instruction.

All students completed a reading comprehension assessment in Experiment 1. The students read eight expository passages of 400-600 words each from ninth grade textbooks. After reading, Alfassi (2004) gave the students a comprehension test of 10 short-answer questions. The test contained three types of questions: text-explicit, text-implicit, and script-implicit. The students also completed the Gates-MacGintie Reading Comprehension Test. Students read 11 short passages of a variety of genres from 60-130 words each. Afterwards, the students answered several multiple-choice questions designed to assess the students’ understanding of details and vocabulary knowledge.

The participants in Experiment 2 completed reading comprehension assessments that consisted of four expository reading passages of 250-400 words from 10th grade content area materials. After students read the passage, Alfassi (2004) gave them a comprehension test of 10
short-answer comprehension questions. In both experiments, two independent raters scored the student responses on these assessments.

To teach the reading comprehension strategies in the intervention, Alfassi (2004) used two models of instruction: reciprocal teaching and direct explanation. In reciprocal teaching, comprehension is taught through explicit modeling of four strategies: questioning, summarizing, clarifying meaning, and predicting. The teacher models a strategy for a small group, and then students lead the practice of the strategy in sessions following the teacher’s model. Eventually, all control of comprehension strategies is given to the students. Direct explanation consists of a teacher’s explicit description of a strategy, modeling the strategy, thinking aloud about the strategy, and providing scaffolding during guided practice of the strategy.

Alfassi’s (2004) first experiment consisted of three phases. In the pretesting phase, students completed the two reading comprehension assessments mentioned earlier. During the second phase, students completed the intervention. The teachers required students to complete weekly vocabulary tests, read a minimum of 50 pages each week, and write reading responses. Students in the control group did not learn reading comprehension strategies and did not practice using them. The intervention contained three stages: direct instruction, guided practice, and reciprocal teaching-group sharing.

Teachers taught comprehension strategies for the first 20 minutes of the 90 minute language arts course to the experimental group for 20 sessions. The texts used were part of the regular course materials. After the explicit instruction, the teacher continued to model comprehension strategies for the remainder of the class. Throughout Stage 2 of the intervention, students practiced using the strategies. For the first two days, the students practiced writing questions while the teacher completed the other three strategies. Over the next two days,
students were responsible for an additional strategy and the teacher only completed two. By the end of the phase, students used all four comprehension strategies independently. During Stage 3, students worked in small groups to discuss the texts, taking turns being the leader of the discussion by modeling the four comprehension strategies. At the end of the session, the students answered 10 comprehension questions written by the teacher.

Phase 3 of the intervention occurred after the 20 intervention sessions. During maintenance post intervention, students spent two days reading and answering questions related to four reading assessment passages used in the intervention. The classroom teacher administered these assessments.

The content area teachers in Experiment 2 received the same six hour strategy instruction training as the teachers in Experiment 1. Experiment 2 consisted of the same three phases as Experiment 1: pretesting, intervention, and maintenance post intervention. During pretesting, the students completed the four passage reading assessment mentioned earlier. Intervention began during the third week of school and continued for 20 days during each of the four 90 minute class periods. Texts used during the intervention were part of the content area curriculum, such as textbooks, related articles, and lab reports. Students read both narrative and informational texts in their content area classes, but used informational texts more often.

The intervention was conducted during the first 20 minutes of the class, but the teachers continued to model the reading strategies throughout the remainder of the class. Administration supported these teachers and required them to turn in lesson plans. At the end of each session, students completed a reading assessment passage with questions. During maintenance post intervention, students spent two days reading and answering questions related to the reading passages from the intervention.
Alfassi (2004) noted a significant difference in the reading assessment results between the experimental and control groups in Experiment 1. On the standardized reading assessment, the experimental group’s performance improved and the control group’s scores decreased. Both group’s scores improved on the reading assessment passages, but the experimental group’s performance improved at a greater rate. Alfassi concluded that students’ reading comprehension will improve when students are taught to use comprehension strategies in an English language arts class.

Alfassi (2004) noted that students’ comprehension of implicit questions improved significantly from the pretest to the posttest in Experiment 2. The comprehension scores for explicit questions improved as well, but not as dramatically. Alfassi also compared the comprehension scores of students with high prior knowledge of the reading passages and low prior knowledge. Students who had less prior knowledge of the passage appeared to benefit more from the combined strategy instruction. However, the assessment results also indicated that the intervention improved students’ abilities to relate prior knowledge to text.

Alfassi (2004) concluded that these findings support the use of combined strategy instruction in high school English language arts classes and content area classes. Additionally, Alfassi’s study demonstrated the effect that prior knowledge can have on reading comprehension. Depending on a reader’s prior knowledge, he or she will use different strategies to comprehend the text. The researcher stated that teachers can greatly increase students’ reading comprehension by activating prior knowledge. Furthermore, Alfassi discussed the importance of explicit strategy instruction on the use of reading comprehension strategies. The researcher wrote that combined strategy instruction is a practical method for teaching reading comprehension strategies in all content areas.
All three research studies in this section concluded that a gradual release of responsibility model is the most effective for teaching reading comprehension strategies. Research has shown that scaffolded instruction with teacher modeling and guided practice is the most beneficial for teaching reading comprehension strategies. In the Nelson and Manset-Williamson (2006) study, the authors concluded that the explicit comprehension instruction was more effective. The explicit comprehension group outperformed the guided reading group on two of the three posttest assessments, which the authors note was significant. Radcliffe, Caverly, Hand, and Franke (2008) determined that PLAN was an effective strategy for teaching students to read informational text in science class. The teacher, Mrs. Lee, reported improved student knowledge of science concepts from their science texts. The treatment group’s perceptions of their ability to comprehend textbooks also improved by the end of the study. Mrs. Lee was so impressed with the treatment group’s gains that she taught the PLAN strategy to her other classes after the conclusion of the study.

Finally, Alfassi (2004) noted that high school students’ reading comprehension improved through explicit nonfiction strategy instruction. Even though several teachers taught the strategies, students in both experimental groups showed gains in their reading comprehension. In language arts class, the experimental group showed a statistically significant increase on the standardized reading assessment. In the content areas, the participants’ comprehension of implicit questions improved by the end of the research study. Clearly, all students, regardless of age or ability level, can increase their ability to comprehend nonfiction text through explicit instruction in comprehension strategies.
Explicit Instruction in Summary Writing

Reading comprehension strategy instruction is vital to creating careful, metacognitive readers. An additional strategy to improve students’ expository reading comprehension is to explicitly teach students the importance of writing about what is read. Writing and reading are two interconnected processes. Therefore, best practice instruction in these domains of language includes writing about what a student has read in order to more effectively learn the information. Through researching the reading and writing connection in a variety of student populations, Faggella-Luby, Schumaker, and Deshler (2007); Baleghizadeh and Babapour (2011); Rogevich and Perin (2008); and Graham and Hebert (2011) found that writing summaries after reading is an effective strategy to increase students’ comprehension of text and retention of information.

Teachers are asked to teach a wide range of students within the same classroom. In the language arts class, several domains of language need to be taught within a short amount of time. To mediate this struggle, Faggella-Luby, Schumaker, and Deshler (2007) studied the effect of the Embedded Story-Structure (ESS) Routine on the reading comprehension of ninth grade students. The authors stated the need for increased comprehension instruction at the secondary level. The ESS Routine was created to fulfill the need for explicit instruction in comprehension strategies for heterogeneous groups of older students. Faggella-Luby, Schumaker, and Deshler sought to investigate how the use of reading comprehension strategies, and knowledge of reading comprehension strategies, literary devices, and summary writing improved through explicit instruction in the ESS routine.

Faggella-Luby, Schumaker, and Deshler (2007) stated the need for evidence-based reading comprehension instruction in the classroom. The authors cited the work of Kintsch (2004), who stated that the aim of reading comprehension instruction is to create students who
use the processed used by lifelong readers (as cited in Faggella-Luby, Schumaker, & Deshler, 2007). Kintsch wrote that knowledge of text structure increases reading comprehension, and teachers can help students to improve comprehension by teaching genre-specific text structures. Additionally, the authors cited several research studies in the effect of text structure awareness on reading comprehension, and each study showed that teaching text structure increases reading comprehension. However, Faggella-Luby, Schumaker, and Deshler (2007) saw gaps in the research in working with heterogeneous populations including students with learning disabilities (LD), and combining multiple strategies into one set of strategies to teach within the same unit. These strategies including text structure, strategy use, and written summaries. Therefore, the authors sought to investigate the effectiveness of one such package of strategies, the ESS Routine.

Faggella-Luby, Schumaker, and Deshler (2007) worked with 79 incoming freshman students enrolled in a summer school program for at-risk students in the southeastern United States. The students’ participation in the program was determined by their scores on the EXPLORE (ACT, 2012) test in reading or mathematics taken the previous spring. Fourteen students in the group had been diagnosed with a learning disability (LD).

Faggella-Luby, Schumaker, and Deshler (2007) randomly placed the participants into one of two groups: a group who received instruction in the ESS routine and a group who received instruction in comprehension skills (CSI).

Faggella-Luby, Schumaker, and Deshler (2007) conducted their research over nine days for a total of 17 hours of instruction (90 minutes on Days 1 and 9, 120 minutes on Days 2-8). All participants took a series of assessments throughout the process to assess their skills. Both groups took a strategy-use test on Day 1 (pretest), on Day 5 (progress test), on Day 9 (posttest),
and 8 weeks later to determine maintenance. The strategy-use test assessed students’ ability to use the ESS strategies. Students took a knowledge test to assess their knowledge of the ESS strategies and literary terms. Additionally, participants completed a unit comprehension test to determine their retention of information from the nine texts read. Finally, students completed a satisfaction survey to evaluate their opinion of the instruction. Students completed all assessments as both a pretest and posttest.

The instructor (first author, Faggella-Luby) worked with both groups and provided all instruction. The instructor taught the strategies for both groups using a gradual release of responsibility, beginning with direct instruction and modeling, and then decreasing scaffolds until students worked on the strategies independently. The participants read nine texts during the instruction (eight short stories and one folktale). Each piece was 9-18 pages long with lexile scores ranging from 600L to 1220L.

Both groups were taught three different reading comprehension strategies. The ESS group was taught self-questioning (prereading), story structure analysis (during reading), and summary writing (after reading). The instructor provided students with a graphic organizer with guiding questions and a story pyramid to scaffold their use of the strategies as they read the texts. The instructor provided a four-sentence framework for the summaries so that students would know exactly how to write about what they read.

The CSI group learned three different strategies: LINCS vocabulary strategy (prereading), Question-Answer Relationships (during reading), and semantic summary mapping (after reading). The students in the CSI group also received a graphic organizer to use when reading called the CSI organizer. Throughout the instruction, both groups worked in cooperative groups and received immediate feedback from the instructor on their use of the strategies.
Faggella-Luby, Schumaker, and Deshler (2007) found that the ESS group (including students with LD) showed gains on the strategy-use test. The ESS group also out-performed the CSI group on the knowledge test and the unit reading comprehension test. The two groups did not show any statistically significant difference in their responses on the satisfaction survey.

Faggella-Luby, Schumaker, and Deshler (2007) sought to investigate if story-structure components could be taught to heterogeneous groups to increase the reading comprehension and strategy of the students regardless of ability. The authors wrote that with the ESS routine, teachers can provide whole-class instruction that will benefit every student, including high-achievers. Teaching three elements of story structure (in this case self-questioning, story structure analysis, and summary writing) simultaneously strengthened instruction in reading comprehension. Faggella-Luby, Schumaker, and Deshler’s study suggests a connection between students’ use of ESS strategies and an increase in reading comprehension. Furthermore, all students responded positively to the instruction, which demonstrates the effectiveness of the ESS routine instruction for heterogeneous classes.

Although the summary writing was not a major focus of Faggella-Luby, Schumaker, and Deshler’s (2007) work, their research showed that summarizing was a useful strategy for students to use in order to increase the reading comprehension and retention of information from the text. Summarizing is an important tool to use when comprehending text, as Baleghizadeh and Babapour (2011) learned through the research study, “Writing to Read: A Meta-Analysis of the Impact of Writing and Writing Instruction on Reading.”

Baleghizadeh and Babapour (2011) sought to investigate the effectiveness of writing summaries on the reading comprehension of English as a foreign language students (EFL). The
authors’ purpose was to answer the question, “Does summary writing have any effect on the reading comprehension and recall of EFL students?” (p. 45).

Baleghizadeh and Babapour (2011) based their research on the findings of several other researchers. Langan (1992) stated the value of using summarizing to improve reading comprehension (as cited in Baleghizadeh & Babapour, 2011). Summarizing text forces the reader to slow down and carefully choose information to include in the summary. The authors also cited the research of Holt and Vacca (1984) who stated that reading and writing are interconnected processes and that using writing to increase reading comprehension is beneficial for English learners.

The participants for the study were 50 Iranian intermediate female students with an average age of 18. These women were members of two classes studying English at the Iran Language Institute in Urmia, Iran. The second author, Babapour, taught these students six texts over a three week period, twice a week for two hours each class session for a total of 12 hours. The authors split the students into two groups: an experimental group and a comparison group. Both groups read the same six texts, but the experimental group was taught how to write summaries and wrote a summary of each text after reading. The comparison group did not write after reading; they discussed the material in class. Both after-reading activities lasted for an average of 18 minutes. After the final session, both groups took a 20-question multiple-choice test about the material from the six texts they read in class for a posttest.

Baleghizadeh and Babapour (2011) found that the experimental group scored higher on the posttest with an average score of 15.84, compared to the comparison group whose scores averaged 12.16. The authors stated that the participants who wrote summaries after reading showed greater comprehension and recall of information from the texts. Writing summaries
improved the participants’ reading comprehension because writing supports the students’ understanding of the text.

Baleghizadeh and Babapour (2011) stated that reading and writing are very closely related; therefore, forming connections between students’ reading and writing can improve recall and comprehension. The authors also wrote that writing about what is read can help students improve long-term retrieval of text. Additionally, written work seems to benefit students more than oral discussion when comprehending text. The authors state the importance of explicitly teaching students how to write summaries. Simply telling students to write a summary is not enough to help them increase their reading comprehension through written work.

Baleghizadeh and Babapour (2011) concluded that explicit instruction in summary writing is valuable for the reading comprehension of EFL students. Summary writing is also beneficial for students with behavior disorders. Rogevich and Perin (2008) investigated the effectiveness of an intensive reading intervention on the reading comprehension of male students diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and behavior disorders (BD) in a residential facility. The authors researched if the students with ADHD showed the same gains in reading achievement as students without ADHD and studied the gains made throughout the course of the reading intervention.

Rogevich and Perin (2008) based their study on research in the field of BD/ADHD and academic achievement. The authors cited the work of Rapport, Scanlan, and Denney (1999) who wrote that ADHD affects both the development of academic skills and academic functioning of students (as cited in Rogevich & Perin, 2008). Rogevich and Perin wrote that students with ADHD are at a disadvantage because they cannot meet classroom etiquette expectations, such as sitting still and keeping quiet to be successful. The authors stated that although research exists in
the field of the effects of ADHD/BD on academic performance, research is lacking in which self-
monitoring strategies for this population and the most effective instructional techniques.

Additionally, the authors designed their study almost exclusively around the work of
Mason (2004) who developed a strategy for improving reading comprehension called TWA.
TWA is an acronym for Thinking before reading, While reading, and After reading. Mason
(2004) found that TWA was more effective than reciprocal questioning (RQ) for third and fourth
grade students. Mason et al. (2006) revamped TWA to include written instead of oral
summarization, called TWA with written summarization, or TWA-WS (as cited in Rogevich &
Perin, 2008). Rogevich and Perin (2008) used the TWA-WS strategy to design the reading
intervention used in the study.

Rogevich and Perin (2008) collected data at a residential treatment facility in the
northeastern United States. The facility offered two programs for males, 10 to 18 years old: a
short-term program (1-2 months) or a longer-term treatment program. All participants in the
study were part of the long-term program. The participants were 63 young males, 13 to 16 years
old. All participants had previously been diagnosed with BD, ADHD, or a combination (31
students had been diagnosed with both BD and ADHD). Rogevich and Perin chose students for
the study whose IQ levels ranged from 75-107 with a mean of 88.9. The mean reading level for
the group was 5th grade, and the students’ grade level placements ranged from 7th to 10th grade.
35% of the students were Caucasian, 41% were African American, and 24% were Hispanic. All
students were from a low socioeconomic status background, and all had been found guilty of
crimes such as theft, assault, and sexual abuse.

Rogevich and Perin (2008) put the students in four groups for the study: BD students who
received the intervention, BD and ADHD students who received the intervention, BD students
who received typical instruction and BD and ADHD students who received typical instruction.

Before beginning the instruction, each student took the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests and a written summarization pretest. During the instruction, Rogevich, the instructor, met with the participants for eight sessions in small groups of three or four students. If a student was absent, Rogevich met with him to make up the lesson. Throughout the lessons, all students read 13 passages (12 from a fourth-grade science textbook and one from a fourth-grade social studies textbook) each of approximately 300 words.

The five intervention lessons lasted for 45 minutes each. Each lesson followed a structure of gradual release of responsibility and modeling. The instructor began by introducing the strategy by describing what students had to do and explaining the value of using the strategy when reading. Throughout the following lessons, the instructor continued to model and scaffold the participants’ learning through repeating steps and providing the students with immediate feedback on their written summaries. After each reading, students wrote a summary about the text, which the instructor modeled. Summaries were scored using a rubric with a 0, 1, 2 scale.

In the comparison groups, participants read the same texts and completed the same tasks. However, students were not taught to use metacognitive strategies when reading nor were the participants given explicit instruction in how to write an effective summary. Students read the texts individually, participated in a brief group discussion, and wrote the summary. In contrast to the intervention groups, the comparison groups took tests from the teacher’s edition about the text after writing the summary.

Rogevich and Perin (2008) found that both groups who received the intervention instruction showed significant gains from the pretest to the posttest. The groups who received traditional instruction showed slight gains of a few points between the pre and posttests, but
nothing significant. Rogevich and Perin also stated that the participants’ reactions to the intervention were very positive. The participants found the intervention useful and could comprehend text more thoroughly. The authors stated that their findings corroborated with the findings of Mason et al. (2006) who found that explicit instruction in summary writing contributed to writing better summaries (as cited in Rogevich & Perin, 2008). Additionally, Rogevich and Perin noted that both students without and with ADHD showed gains from the TWA-WS instruction. However, the authors also stated that the groups with ADHD did not show as significant gains when they completed near transfer and far transfer summary tasks. Rogevich and Perin wrote that the students with ADHD showed less-significant gains on the transfer activities because transfer of knowledge requires students to use higher-level thinking skills that are difficult for students with ADHD.

Rogevich and Perin (2008) stated the value of teaching TWA-WS to all students regardless of ability or disorder. The results from the intervention showed that both students without and with ADHD showed gains from learning the TWA-WS strategy. Rogevich and Perin also wrote of the need for further research in the instruction of students with ADHD and BD. Although all students showed gains, Rogevich and Perin mentioned that more information is needed to assess why students showed these gains. Furthermore, research in female students with BD and ADHD is lacking, so future research should include interventions with female students as well as males.

Rogevich and Perin (2008) focused on the comprehension of expository text with struggling readers in order to determine the most effective practices for reading comprehension instruction. Similarly, Graham and Hebert (2011) sought to investigate the effective instruction in writing and reading. These researchers conducted a meta-analysis of current research
regarding the connection between reading instruction and writing instruction. The authors hypothesized that writing could be used to improve students’ reading comprehension. Graham and Hebert designed the research study to determine if writing about what a student has read increases reading comprehension, if writing supports reading skills, and if increasing the amount of writing a student completes improves their reading.

Graham and Hebert (2011) began by stating the importance of a solid foundation in reading and writing skills. The authors cited three theoretical frameworks to demonstrate the importance of reading and writing. Fitzgerald and Shanahan’s (2000) functional view of reading-writing connections states that writing about text increases comprehension by forcing the writer to be concise, organized, reflective, involved with the text, and changing the language to avoid plagiarism (as cited in Graham & Hebert, 2011). Fitzgerald and Shanahan’s shared knowledge view of reading-writing connections states that reading and writing are interconnected processes that work together to form meaning (as cited in Graham & Hebert, 2011). Finally, Tierney and Shanahan’s (1991) rhetorical relations view of reading-writing connections states that reading and writing are used for communication; therefore, writers become better communicators through writing and reading practice (as cited in Graham & Hebert, 2011). To sum up, Graham and Hebert believed that writing and reading were very similar and hypothesized that writing about what one has read will improve reading comprehension.

Graham and Hebert (2011) analyzed a number of studies that researched the effect of writing instruction on reading. To be included in the analysis, studies had to meet a number of criteria. Studies had to be published in English, include a sample group in grades 2-12, be an experimental or quasi-experimental study, include activities where students are writing about
what they read, and contain statistics to compare with other studies. The authors searched four electronic databases to gather studies: ERIC, PsychINFO, Educational Abstracts, and ProQuest. Additionally, Graham and Hebert sifted through printed publications as well, including *Journal of Literacy*, *Research in the Teaching of Writing*, and *Reading Research Quarterly*. The authors collected 752 articles, and 95 of the articles met the criteria for the analysis.

Graham and Hebert (2011) sorted the research articles into groups based on the research questions developed by the authors that the question answered. Articles were sorted into three groups: studies that demonstrated an increase in reading comprehension, studies that discussed the effect of writing instruction on reading comprehension, and studies that improved the number of opportunities for student writing. Graham and Hebert measured the effect of writing on reading comprehension in all of these studies.

Graham and Hebert (2011) found that students’ reading comprehension generally increased when students wrote about the material they read. Of the studies that answered Question 1, 68% used expository text. Thirty-four percent of the studies involved middle school students, and 41% involved high school students. The increases of comprehension in the studies were overall statistically significant and noteworthy. All studies that involved writing activities such as summary writing, note taking, and generating/responding to questions showed positive results.

Graham and Hebert (2001) determined that explicitly teaching students how to write increased reading skills. The Question 2 studies included students in grades 1-7 in the language arts classroom. All studies in the Question 2 category showed positive results, especially when the writing instruction involved syntax or spelling instruction.
Graham and Hebert (2011) found that all studies in the Question 3 category indicated that an increase in writing improved students’ reading comprehension. However, all studies in Question 3 involved students in grades 1-6 in language arts classes. Therefore, conclusions cannot be drawn about older students based on the research from this analysis.

Through this meta-analysis, Graham and Hebert (2011) concluded that writing instruction positively affects reading skills and comprehension. However, the authors noted that the quality of research was lacking. Few studies focused on older students and reading and writing in the content areas. The majority of studies included in the meta-analysis involved students in the younger grades in language arts classes. Additionally, many of the studies lacked details, such as the amount of time devoted to the instruction. Graham and Hebert stated the need for more research in the connection between reading and writing instruction and the wide variety of techniques teachers can use to increase the amount of writing about what is read in the classroom.

Integrating explicit writing instruction with reading instruction is clearly beneficial for a wide variety of learners. Faggella-Luby, Schumaker, and Deshler (2007) determined that a wide variety of secondary learners can benefit from explicit instruction in comprehension strategies and summary writing. Baleghizadeh and Babapour (2011) found that students learning English as a foreign language showed an increase in understanding when asked to summarize what was read. Rogevich and Perin (2008) concluded that struggling readers with BD and ADHD also benefit from explicit instruction in comprehension strategies and summary writing. Finally, Graham and Hebert (2011) analyzed 95 experiments and came to the same conclusion—writing about what one has read increases comprehension and retention. Writing and reading are clearly
connected processes, and, with explicit instruction, learners’ skills will increase in either domain with practice in the other.

**Conclusion**

The above research has shown that teachers can improve students’ reading comprehension through the use of explicit instruction in metacognitive comprehension strategies for both fiction and nonfiction text. Explicit instruction, including a gradual release of responsibility model, is the most effective method for comprehension strategy instruction and summary writing instruction. In terms of my action research question, “How does explicit instruction in comprehension strategies and summary writing for nonfiction text improve middle school students’ reading comprehension?” best practice data indicates that explicit instruction in comprehension strategies and summary writing is beneficial for students of all ages and abilities. Research has shown that teachers are beginning to instruct students in comprehension strategies for fiction text more and more; however, there is a lack of instruction in comprehension strategies for nonfiction and when to use which strategies. Additionally, teachers are requiring research papers and written summaries without any kind of instruction before asking students to complete these tasks. In my own observations, the area of comprehension instruction for nonfiction text remains debatable in that teachers are unsure of who is responsible for this instruction. Content area teachers believe it is the responsibility of reading teachers, and reading teachers believe this instruction is the responsibility of content area teachers. Regardless, the data exists that students are not receiving the instruction they require in order to successfully comprehend and summarize informational texts. Effective reading instruction includes the explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies and summary writing for nonfiction text.
While this chapter reviewed research related to best practices in comprehension instruction, the next chapter will address the procedures for my research study.
CHAPTER THREE

Introduction

The purpose of this action research study was to determine how explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies and summary writing can affect students’ reading comprehension of nonfiction text. Over eight weeks, I taught a reading unit on the book *Night* by Elie Wiesel (2006). During this time, I focused my reading instruction on strategies for understanding nonfiction, with a focus on background knowledge, content vocabulary, reading comprehension strategies, and summary writing. My research decisions were based largely on the work of Scharlach (2008) and Hindin, Morocco, and Aguilar (2001) who stated that reading comprehension instruction is most effective when students read a wide variety of texts and use the reading comprehension strategies immediately following instruction in their own reading and writing. This chapter begins with a description of the sample population used in the research study.

Sample Population

The sample group was one section of my eighth grade language arts class. The class was taught within an 86-minute block every school day. Within the class, students received two grades: writing and reading. The sample group consisted of 19 students, ages 13-14, 7 males, and 12 females. The majority of students have been attending the school since K4, one student began attending in third grade, and another began attending the previous school year as a seventh grader. All students were of Hispanic origin and half of them spoke both Spanish and English fluently. The middle school had no official program for English language learners (ELLs), so no students in the class were identified as ELLs. Two students in the class received services for special education, but they were not included in the study. Grades and ability levels within the
class varied greatly, the highest reading level being a Lexile (MetaMetrics, 2012) range of 1204-1354, a twelfth grade level equivalent, and the lowest a Lexile range of 725-875, a sixth grade equivalent. Fifty-three percent of the sample group scored Proficient on the WKCE reading assessment in 2012, and 47% scored Advanced on the 2012 WKCE reading assessment. Achievement levels also varied across the class, which was typical of eighth grade students at this school.

The preceding section described the sample population used in the research study. The following section will detail the procedures used during the eight-week reading unit.

Procedures

This research study took place over eight weeks in my language arts classroom: the first four weeks before spring break and the second four weeks after spring break. During the first four-week period, I taught the students background information that they needed to better understand the classroom novel we read, *Night* by Elie Wiesel (2006). To do this, students read a variety of nonfiction articles from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. As they read these articles, I taught them strategies for highlighting the text and determining the main ideas. I created a poster of guidelines to follow when highlighting text and had the students copy down the information for their reading notes. Each student received a copy of the first article, “World War II in Europe” from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Students each had a copy so they could see exactly what I was reading and what I was highlighting in front of them as I modeled. The first step in the highlighting instruction was to number the paragraphs. I did this so that students would know exactly which paragraph I was working on as I modeled. To begin the modeling, I read the title and told students to highlight it. I then read the first paragraph aloud, very slowly. When I was finished, I used a Think Aloud to explain my thinking.
process about choosing what information to highlight in the first paragraph. Once I made my decision, I told students what to highlight. I circulated the room and made sure that each student highlighted the proper information. I repeated this process for the remainder of the article. As I reached the middle of the article, I asked students for suggestions of what to highlight. I told them any information that tells us about the 5 Ws (Who, What, When, Where, Why) was important.

As students became more proficient with highlighting, I taught them how to skim the articles as they searched only for main ideas. I taught them to read headings, bold words, and the first and last sentence of the paragraph to determine if the information was important enough to highlight. I emphasized that it was up to them as the reader to make decisions about what information was the most important based on their purpose for reading. For example, when we read the article titled “Auschwitz” from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, students determined their purpose for reading was to gain background information about this concentration camp. We talked about what information they would be looking for before they read so that skimming was purposeful.

Before reading articles, I chose content vocabulary to post on the board to help students to understand the information. I gave each student a copy of a glossary from Oprah.com with vocabulary from the book *Night*. Students looked these words up in the glossary, used dictionaries, or used background knowledge to define the terms as a class before reading the articles.

As the reading of articles continued, students wrote summaries about what they read. During the first four week session, I did not teach students a method for writing the summary. I told them, “Now that you’ve highlighted the main ideas, write a summary of the article using
those main ideas.” I assessed two of these summaries using the rubric: one summary at the beginning of the first four weeks and one summary at the end of the first four weeks.

The second four-week period was structured similarly; however there was a stronger emphasis on explicit teaching of comprehension strategies. I added to students’ knowledge of World War II topics by providing them with more background information from other nonfiction articles, films, and prior knowledge activation. Students continued to read, highlight, and summarize these articles. During this time, I taught them an explicit method for writing a summary paragraph from Maureen Auman’s (2002) Step Up to Writing manual. The summary method involves four steps: writing a clear topic sentence in three parts, rewriting the topic sentence as a complete sentence, listing 4-7 facts from the article, and writing those facts into complete sentences. Students’ summaries prior to instruction were very lengthy, so I used a specific method to teach them to summarize more effectively. I scaffolded this instruction with modeling and guided practice in the classroom.

I began by reading the article with the students and highlighted the main ideas. Each step in the summary process was modeled before students were asked to complete it with a partner or on their own. On the first day, I modeled how to write the topic sentence (which Auman calls a Burrito Topic Sentence) and had students write four additional topic sentences using this style on the same article. The next day, I told them Step 2, which is to write the sentence as a real sentence without using the three-fold graphic organizer used for the Burrito Topic Sentence in Step 1. The following day, I modeled how to complete Step 3, the Fact Outline. I taught students to choose the most pertinent details from the article and to list them using few words on the outline, so I did this as I modeled choosing two facts. Students worked with a partner to select three more facts to include in the summary from the article. The final day, I wrote the
summary using the Fact Outline, which is Step 4 of the process. I used Think Alouds to show the students exactly how to rewrite the words from the outline into sentences for the summary. This process was repeated once more, but instead of modeling, students completed writing the summaries on a different nonfiction article with a partner. Finally, students summarized another article on their own.

Additionally, I taught my students the different organizational models that authors of nonfiction use in text. I provided examples of these text structures and taught students how to use their understanding of these structures to structure their understanding and summary writing. I used articles the students had already read to study the organizational structure. I wanted students to focus on the organization, not the meaning of the text, so I chose articles they had already read to accomplish this goal. Text structures included chronological order, cause and effect, and definitions-examples (Irwin, 2007). All instruction was geared towards helping students with research projects they completed after the intervention in their social studies class. The next section describes the methods used to collect data during the research study.

Data Collection

To collect data, I assessed the students using pretests and posttests. At the beginning of the first four week session of the research study, I gave the students a short nonfiction article to read and asked them to complete a ten question quiz after reading (Pretest 1). Students took this same assessment at the end of the first four weeks (Posttest 1). After spring break, I taught the students how to read nonfiction more explicitly. Before I began the instruction for the next four weeks, I gave students a similar assessment where they read a different nonfiction article and completed a different 10-question quiz (Pretest 2). Students took the same quiz at the end of the research study to assess their reading comprehension growth (Posttest 2).
Before and after each four-week session, I also assessed the sample group’s ability to summarize what they had read. I asked students to write a summary of a nonfiction article. During the first four weeks, I did not teach students strategies for reading nonfiction or summarizing text. I told them, “Read this article and then write a summary.” I assessed students’ summaries using a rubric I made that is similar to rubrics I have used with these students throughout the year. The rubric assesses three of the 6+1 Traits of Writing (Culham, 2003): Ideas, Organization, and Sentence Fluency. The assessment results and summary rubrics determined what gains students made. To assess the effectiveness of the intervention, I analyzed the differences in their scores on these assessments before and after the intervention.

In addition to these formal assessments, I assessed the students’ progress informally by collecting and reviewing the notes they took while reading nonfiction, both on separate graphic organizers and in the margins of the articles they read. Students used a What-I-Know Chart (Irwin, 2007) to reflect on their background knowledge before reading, record new information learned while reading, and analyze their understanding after reading the material by asking one or two questions they still had about the topic. I asked the students to write informal summaries as well that I did not assess using the rubric. I read these summaries to check the students’ progress as I continued my instruction.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have discussed the sample population, procedures, and data collection methods using during an eight-week period in my eighth grade language arts class to teach reading comprehension strategies for nonfiction text. The first four weeks of the intervention involved instruction in how to choose main ideas from text. The second four weeks integrated explicit instruction in summary writing and text features of different organizational styles of text.
During the entire eight weeks, I taught content vocabulary for the reading of nonfiction text about the Holocaust and the book *Night* by Elie Wiesel (2006). All instruction was given using a gradual release of responsibility model, where I began the lesson by explaining the activity, modeling the process, and providing the students with guided practice before they completed any work on their own. To assess the effectiveness of the instruction, I studied the results of two pretests and two posttests and the change in students’ written summaries throughout the instruction. While this chapter discussed the sample, procedures, and data collection during an eight-week reading unit, Chapter Four discusses and presents the results of that data collection.
CHAPTER FOUR

Introduction

The purpose of the research and the specific intervention was to determine the effectiveness of explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies for nonfiction text on the reading comprehension and summary writing of 19 middle school English language learners (ELLs). Within the course of the intervention, I taught students to select main ideas from the text, recognize a variety of organizational structures in nonfiction text, define vocabulary using context clues, and to summarize what they read through reading a variety of articles from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s Holocaust Encyclopedia during a unit on the book *Night* by Elie Wiesel (2006).

Students took two types of assessments to measure their growth throughout the intervention. The first assessment was a 10-question comprehension quiz on a short reading passage. Students took two versions of this assessment, one as a pre and post-test during the first four weeks of the intervention, and the other was a pre and post-test during the second four weeks of the intervention. Pretest 1 and Posttest 1 were identical (Appendix A) and Pretest 2 and Posttest 2 were identical (Appendix B). The two forms of the pre and posttests used an article of similar readability and the same number of short answer and multiple choice questions. For the second set of tests, I assessed four of the students’ summary paragraphs using a rubric I created (Appendix C). Students wrote many more summaries during the intervention, however I assessed one from each student at four different stages of the intervention: Summary 1 (prior to first four-week session), Summary 2 (after the first four-week session), Summary 3 (prior to the second four-week session), and Summary 4 (after the second four-week session). All articles the students summarized were from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s Holocaust
Encyclopedia. The following section details the students’ achievement data on the reading comprehension assessments throughout the intervention.

**Reading Comprehension Results**

The following graph (Figure 1) compares the students’ results on the comprehension quiz on the initial quiz (before beginning the intervention) and the final quiz (at the end of the eight-week intervention session).

---

**Figure 1. Reading Comprehension Quiz Result Comparison: Beginning to End of Intervention**

Eleven of the 19 students showed improvement on their reading comprehension, ranging from 10-20 percent higher scores. Two students showed no improvement, receiving the same score on the initial assessment and the final assessment. Six students received lower scores on the final assessment, ranging from 5-30 percent lower on the final assessment than the initial. Table 4 contains a further breakdown of the students’ scores on the comprehension quiz. Every student’s score is represented on each of the four comprehension assessments. Students’ scores
are coded by color based on how their Posttest 2 score compared to their Pretest 1 score. Green represents an increase, yellow represents no change, and pink represents a decrease.

Table 4

*Student Scores (in % Correct) on all Comprehension Assessments during the Intervention*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student #</th>
<th>Pretest 1</th>
<th>Posttest 1</th>
<th>Pretest 2</th>
<th>Posttest 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of students’ scores on the reading comprehension assessments increased by the end of the intervention. Seven students received perfect scores on the final assessment. One of the seven students had a perfect score on the pre and posttest. The next section details the students’ achievement on the written summary paragraph assessments.

**Summary Writing Results**

The second assessment I used to measure the effectiveness of the instructional intervention was a series of summary paragraphs written by each student. Each student wrote 10
different summary paragraphs; however, I used four summaries to assess their growth throughout the intervention at four different stages: Summary 1 (before the intervention), Summary 2 (after the first four week session), Summary 3 (before the second four weeks), Summary 4 (at the end of the eight-week intervention). To assess the summaries, I created a rubric (Appendix C) to give each paragraph a score out of 35 points. The rubric assessed the summaries using three of Culham’s (2003) 6+1 traits: Ideas, Organization, and Sentence Fluency. The trait of Ideas accounted for 20/35 points, Organization for 10/35 points, and Sentence Fluency for 5/35 points. Figure 2 is a bar graph comparing each student’s scores from before and after the eight-week intervention.

![Figure 2. Summary Paragraph Rubric Scores: Beginning to End of Intervention](image)

Twelve of the 19 students showed improvement from the beginning to the end of the intervention with scores ranging from 2-11% increase, with a mode of 3%. Two students’ scores showed no change, and 5 students’ scores decreased, with a range of 3-9% decrease. Table 5 shows every student’s score on each of the four summary paragraph assessments. The articles
used for the summaries were all of similar readability from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s Holocaust Encyclopedia. The articles were chosen based on what background information the students would need to better understand the book *Night* by Elie Wiesel (2006). The following articles were summarized by students during the intervention: “World War II in Europe” (Summary 1), “Nazi Propaganda” (Summary 2), “The United States and the Holocaust” (Summary 3), and “Displaced Persons” (Summary 4). Green represents an increase, yellow represents no change, and pink represents a decrease.

Table 5

*Student Scores (in % Correct) on all Summary Assessments during the Intervention*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student #</th>
<th>Summary 1</th>
<th>Summary 2</th>
<th>Summary 3</th>
<th>Summary 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of students’ summaries showed improvement by the end of the eight-week intervention, with 12 of the 19 students, or 64% showing an increase on the summary score.
Two students showed no change, and 5 students’ scores decreased from the initial summary assessment.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have displayed the data I collected during the eight-week intervention period. The nineteen students involved in the intervention completed two different assessments to measure the effectiveness of the instruction. The first type of assessment was a reading comprehension quiz. Students read a short article from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s Holocaust Encyclopedia and completed a 10-question comprehension quiz. Students completed the reading comprehension assessment four times: once prior to the intervention (Pretest 1), another after four weeks of regular instruction (Posttest 1), once prior to the second four-week session (Pretest 2), and a final assessment at the end of the intervention (Posttest 2). Pretest 1 and Posttest 1 were identical, and Pretest 2 and Posttest 2 were identical. The second assessment was a series of summary paragraphs written at the same intervals as the reading comprehension quizzes. I scored these summaries using a rubric I created (Appendix C) to assess three of Culham’s (2003) 6+1 Traits: Ideas, Organization, and Sentence Fluency. The majority of students showed gains from the beginning to the end of the intervention: 68% of students showed improvement on the reading comprehension assessment and 63% of students showed improvement on the written summary paragraph assessment. While this chapter discussed the data collected to measure the effectiveness of the instruction during an eight-week reading unit, Chapter Five discusses and presents conclusions drawn from this data.
CHAPTER FIVE

Introduction

The purpose of this action research was to determine the effectiveness of an instructional intervention in reading comprehension strategies for nonfiction reading comprehension in eighth grade English language learners (ELLs). The research question was, “Does explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies and summary writing improve eighth grade ELLs’ nonfiction reading comprehension?” The instructional intervention discussed within the previous chapters consisted of two four-week instructional periods. By the end of the complete eight weeks, my students were much more competent and confident in their reading and summary writing of nonfiction texts. In this concluding chapter I discuss the connections in my research to existing research and the Common Core State Standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012), an explanation of my results, the strengths and limitations of the research study, and my recommendations for future research in the field of nonfiction reading comprehension instruction. The first section explains connections between my own research and existing research in the field of reading comprehension instruction.

Connections to Existing Research and Common core State Standards

Before beginning my study I examined other research related to reading comprehension. As I developed Chapter 2, I read and summarized research studies in the fields of reading comprehension and writing instruction. The research can be categorized into four main areas: metacognition, fiction and nonfiction reading comprehension strategies, nonfiction/informational text reading comprehension strategies, and explicit instruction in summary writing. I used this research as the basis for the design of my own research study. The work of Alfassi (2004), Allen and Hancock (2008), Lloyd (2004), McTavish (2008), Radcliffe, Caverly, Hand and Franke
(2008) and Scarlach (2008) all stated that scaffolded instruction is most appropriate and effective for reading comprehension. All of my instruction in reading comprehension strategies followed the same model. I found that my students became independent much more quickly because I scaffolded my instruction with a balance of explicit instruction, modeling, and guided practice.

Metacognition was a major goal of mine throughout the intervention. I wanted my students to no longer rely only on me or another teacher to gain knowledge about any particular topic. I wanted them to actively seek out information in other sources if they were curious about a subject. McTavish (2008) noted that the student in the research study was able to competently use reading comprehension strategies when reading fiction text, but could not use the same strategies in nonfiction text. Additionally, McTavish and Allen and Hancock (2008) stated that students in their research studies became better readers when they learned to reflect on their own thinking, as also seen in the research of Nelson and Manset-Williamson (2006). Therefore, I used scaffolding to teach my students to be more metacognitive and independent when reading nonfiction text.

May (2011) and Scharlach (2008) researched explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies for both fiction and nonfiction texts. Both authors concluded that explicit reading comprehension strategy instruction improved students’ reading. Like other authors before them, both May and Scharlach used a reader’s workshop approach/scaffolding to explicitly teach reading comprehension strategies within their separate research studies. May also encouraged students to connect the reading material to their own lives and to use their background knowledge to better understand the material, as also seen in the research of Alfassi (2004). May and Scharlach agree that explicitly teaching reading comprehension strategies to students increases their reading comprehension of both fiction and nonfiction text.
Whereas the authors mentioned in the previous section studied reading comprehension instruction for both fiction and nonfiction texts, Alfassi (2004); Nelson and Manset-Williamson (2006); and Radcliffe, Caverly, Hand, and Franke (2008) studied reading comprehension instruction exclusively for nonfiction text. Like May (2011) and Scharlach (2008), these authors found that explicit instruction in reading comprehension instruction will improve students’ reading comprehension. These authors also used a gradual release of responsibility model in their research studies as well, further demonstrating the effectiveness of this instructional method.

The final area included in my research for Chapter 2 was explicit instruction in summary writing. Baleghizadeh and Babapour (2011); Faggella-Luby, Schumaker, and Deshler (2007); Graham and Hebert (2011); and Rogevich and Perin (2008) researched the connection between reading and writing a summary after reading with diverse populations. All authors concluded that explicit writing instruction along with instruction in reading is incredibly beneficial for a variety of student populations. These authors found instruction was lacking in connecting reading and writing activities; however, the teaching these authors provided in combined reading and summarizing activities was highly beneficial for increasing students’ comprehension of nonfiction text. Clearly, reading and writing are interconnected processes, and these authors concluded that teachers should strive to provide students with activities integrating these two domains of language as frequently as possible.

My research study satisfies several of the Common Core State Standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012) for eighth grade English language arts. First, several of the Reading Standards for Informational Text 6-12 (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012) were integrated within my research study. Because my instruction focused on reading
informational text, several of these standards apply to my research study. Furthermore, several of the Writing Standards 6-12 (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012) apply to my research study because of the amount of informational text my students wrote. My students researched several sources and practiced writing about main ideas of texts, thus satisfying many of the Common Core State Standards for English language arts. While the preceding section summarized existing research in the field of reading comprehension instruction for nonfiction texts and discussed the connection between my research and the Common Core State Standards, the following section explains the results of my own research in the field of reading comprehension instruction for nonfiction text.

**Explanation of Results**

From the beginning to the end of the intervention, 58% of the sample group showed improvement on the reading comprehension assessment. This appeared to be a wonderful improvement. Overall the conclusions of this study produced positive results. When looking at the data present in chapter four, several factors influenced the students’ growth.

First, each pretest was given before students began any instruction. Pretest 1 was taken by students at the very beginning of the unit, so students had only their background knowledge about the topic (for Pretest 1 and Posttest 1, “Ghettos”) from previous instruction. Students approached the topic without very much knowledge at all. Pretest 2 was taken by students the Monday after Spring Break. Students had a week off of school between the two four-week sessions, so students might have lost some knowledge before Pretest 2. In the case of both pretests, students did not have much preparation in the topic because of a lack of background knowledge or an extended school break. The fact that students were able to approach the topics with little background knowledge helped me to better shape my instruction based around their
scores. Students’ scores on the assessments showed me truly how much they learned, which was encouraging.

Second, the fact that students took the identical form of the assessment for each posttest as they had already completed for the pretest might have affected their scores. Students had already seen the material and taken the same quiz once before, so it makes sense that their scores would increase. As previously stated, students who refer back to their background knowledge when appropriate are more effective readers, as stated in the research of May (2011) and Scharlach (2008). My students may have improved on the reading assessment posttests because they have gained sufficient background knowledge to better comprehend the articles. This improvement is valid because it demonstrates the importance of background knowledge through the data. My students’ reading comprehension of the articles improved because they had the necessary background information to comprehend what they read.

Finally, students received explicit instruction in selecting main ideas from nonfiction text between each pre and posttest. I taught my students to read more carefully during the intervention. I showed them how to select only the important details as relevant by teaching them to refer back to the topic of the article and their purpose for reading. I believe my students’ scores on the reading comprehension assessments improved because I taught them how to read nonfiction text explicitly. Additionally, with each article my students read about the Holocaust, they gained more background information about the topics of each reading assessment article (Ghettos and Death Marches). Through reading the book Night (Wiesel, 2006), students experienced what Elie Wiesel went through in the ghettos before he was deported to Auschwitz and the death march he and his father were forced to take at the end of the war. My students
gained background knowledge about each topic before the posttests, so the fact that their scores increased on each assessment was expected.

There was an improvement on the scores of the summary assessment throughout the study. To begin, 64% of the students showed improved scores on the final summary. I believe this occurred for three reasons. First, I designed the rubric used to assess the summaries based on the final product I expected my students to write at the end of the intervention. Therefore, most students received low scores on Summary 1. However, all of my students received relatively high scores on their subsequent summary paragraphs. The lowest score on any summary paragraph among all of the students was 74%, which is still well above half of the points. Even so, the student who received a 74% (Student 13) received a 93% on his or her next summary. This 19-point increase demonstrates that the rubric was designed to assess summaries the students wrote at the end of the intervention.

Second, my students have received very little instruction in reading nonfiction text in the past. In the school where I teach, there has been a lot of new staff working with this particular group of students. Through this intervention, my students learned exactly how to approach nonfiction text by establishing a purpose for reading and thinking about what they already know about the topic. My students told me frequently how much they were learning and became less discouraged when I asked them to read and understand nonfiction text, which demonstrates the effectiveness of the intervention.

Finally, the explicitness of the intervention was clearly the factor that influenced my students’ growth the most. I received complaints that they were tired of completing the same task so many times in a row. I modeled each step of the summary process so thoroughly that the majority of students had no problem completing the summaries on their own. Because I
explained what I wanted them to do, modeled the strategy, and provided independent practice, my students were able to write summaries very quickly using only the main ideas from the text—an activity they greatly struggled with before the intervention. These three factors caused significant growth for many of the students by the end of the intervention.

In addition to the sample group’s quantitative gains, I observed many informal qualitative gains as well. As previously stated, I noticed a change in my students’ behaviors and attitudes after the eight-week instructional intervention. Students were not as negative towards reading nonfiction text and knew exactly how to approach the material, similar to the sample group in the research study of Radcliffe, Caverly, Hand, and Franke (2008). After the instructional intervention, my students wrote a World War II research paper on a topic of their choice. My students approached this task with more confidence than before the intervention and were able to summarize the main ideas thoroughly. I observed my students using the strategies I taught them during the intervention to complete their research without being reminded to do so. Students used the highlighting techniques and summarization strategies to effectively write these research papers. Clearly, explicitly teaching my students to read and summarize nonfiction text was very beneficial for their reading and writing habits. While the preceding section analyzed the results of the intervention, the following section discusses the strengths and limitations of my research study.

**Strengths and Limitations**

This study had both strengths and weaknesses. One of the major strengths was that I used two kinds of assessments to measure my students’ growth. I measured their reading comprehension ability and their writing skills through their summary paragraphs. Instead of
measuring my students’ growth in one domain of language, I measured their growth in two: reading and writing.

Additionally, I used scaffolding to teach all of the reading comprehension skills within the intervention. Instead of lecturing about the skill I wanted my students to learn and expecting them to learn, I used what the majority of authors from my research in Chapter 2 stated was the best method of instruction for reading comprehension: a gradual release of responsibility model (Alfassi, 2004; Allen & Hancock, 2008; Lloyd, 2004; McTavish, 2008; Radcliffe, Caverly, Hand & Franke, 2008; Scarlach, 2008). McTavish noted a disconnection between research and practice of many teachers; therefore, I designed my research study based on what existing research states is the best method for teaching reading comprehension.

A final strength of this research study is the fact that I studied students’ reading comprehension of nonfiction text within the context of reading class. Many other studies use a sample population from a content area class, including Radcliffe, Caverly, Hand, and Franke (2008). While this makes sense given that the majority of nonfiction reading that students do is within the content areas, I found that my students took my instruction more seriously because they perceived I was teaching them how to read better as a primary goal and the content learned from the texts was a secondary goal. Within content areas, I believe students simply want to learn the material and do not care about how well they are reading independently. Students see content area reading as a necessity only to learn what will be on a future test. Within my intervention session, my students were motivated to complete the tasks because they knew that I, as their language arts teacher, wanted them to learn these reading comprehension strategies for their own benefit, not to pass a test. Teaching them to read nonfiction within the reading class was more motivating for my students than learning the same strategies from their content area
teachers. My students also learned to transfer these skills to their content area classes. Their social studies teacher also assessed their World War II research papers and commented on how thorough their writing was. She told me that she could tell the students’ reading was improving because she did not have to help them understand the text as much. This intervention was effective in helping my students develop nonfiction reading comprehension strategies.

Although my research study had numerous strengths, several limitations can also be observed from the study. First of all, I was unable to determine whether the instructional intervention or the background knowledge students gained was a larger contributing factor to their growth on the reading comprehension assessments. Students could have improved more on the posttests simply because they had learned so much about the material through their reading of other articles and the classroom novel.

Second, the rubric I designed (Appendix 3) was missing some criteria of a summary paragraph. I designed the rubric before asking my students to write any summaries, which I later discovered was not effective. After reading Summary 1, I realized my students were writing about far too many unnecessary details and not even paraphrasing the information. Students were copying many words and phrases directly out of the article, but I did not put this criterion on the rubric. Additionally, several students were rewording every sentence of the article in order to summarize it. However, I did not have criteria on my rubric to deduct points when students were writing too much information. The scores students received on the rubric were misleading because I did not have criteria on the rubric to assess some of the major weaknesses of the students’ summary paragraphs. While the preceding section discussed the strengths and limitations of the research study, the following are my recommendations and suggestions for future research in the field of nonfiction reading comprehension instruction.
**Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on my own research, I have several recommendations for future research in the field of nonfiction reading comprehension instruction. Future research in this field might focus on how best to integrate explicit teaching of comprehension strategies for nonfiction within a school system. For example, in my current school placement, there is a constant argument over whose job it is to teach nonfiction reading comprehension strategies. Content area teachers believe it is the reading teachers; responsibility because it is reading, and reading teachers believe that content area teachers need to provide reading instruction because it is their content. Further research into the best way to accomplish this goal would be extremely beneficial to settling this disagreement.

Secondly, I recommend further research into the importance of connecting research to practice for teachers. Many teachers make instructional decisions based solely on what they think is right for the students. While intuition is also very valuable when making instructional decisions, I find that teaching without basing decisions on research is a form of “reinventing the wheel.” Research on how to integrate more research-based teaching into the average classroom would show many teachers why such instruction is the best for students.

Third, future research in the field of nonfiction reading comprehension instruction might make several changes to my own research design. Primarily, I would structure the research differently by including a control classroom. As previously stated, I was unable to determine whether my explicit instruction in comprehension strategies or the students’ increased background knowledge was the cause of their reading comprehension growth. With the inclusion of a control classroom, future researchers could determine which factor has the largest impact on the reading comprehension growth of such a population.
Finally, I would make changes when designing a rubric to assess the writing of students included in such a research study. Future studies could have students do a prewriting activity to gauge their ability to compose a structured type of writing as summary paragraphs. Researchers could use the prewriting to shape a rubric that could better assess the students’ writing growth. I originally believed that my background as their language arts teacher was enough, but I often found myself wishing I could make changes to the rubric to more effectively assess my students’ writing. Future researchers in the field of connecting writing to reading comprehension would benefit from integrating a prewriting activity before designing rubrics to assess student writing.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have summarized my completed action research study. Through basing my study on existing research, I learned the value of research-based instruction. My students learned the importance of being metacognitive when reading nonfiction text, as well as strategies to help them better understand such material. By explicitly teaching learners to write summary paragraphs, students discovered how to select only the most important details focusing on main ideas instead of insignificant facts. Basing my research on that of already published authors, my study had several strengths, including the use of scaffolding and several methods for assessing the growth of my students. The limitations include the lack of a control group and an ambiguous rubric for assessing the sample group’s summaries. Future research is recommended. Overall the outcomes of this study were successful. In reflecting on this work I believe explicitly teaching nonfiction reading comprehension strategies through research-based methods is beneficial for eighth grade English language learners.

As a result of my research, my future teaching will change significantly. Having completed a Master’s Program with hopes of becoming an educational leader, I will share what I
have learned about reading comprehension with my colleagues during in-service meetings throughout the year. Through this master’s degree program, I have become a lot more confident in my teaching and ability to make educational decisions based on research. In the future, I will continue to include explicit instruction in nonfiction reading comprehension strategies. In fact, I am going to move this instruction to the beginning of the year so that my students can benefit even further throughout the school year. As previously stated, the argument in my school exists about which department is responsible for teaching nonfiction reading strategies. With the background I have gained through this intervention, I will be responsible for this instruction. I learned the importance of scaffolding and being explicit with my instruction, which will shape my teaching practices for the remainder of my career. With the background I have gained through this master’s degree program, the reading comprehension of my current and future students will continue to improve throughout my teaching career.
References

ACT Inc. (2012). EXPLORE. Iowa City, IA: ACT.


Appendices

Appendix A

Pretest 1 and Posttest 1

After you have read the article, “Ghettos” from The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, answer the following questions

1. Define the term, “ghetto.”

2. How were ghettos used during World War II?

3. How many ghettos were established by the Nazis during World War II?
   A. 200
   B. 500
   C. 1000
   D. 2000

4. How long did each ghetto exist until it was destroyed?
   A. A few days
   B. A few months
   C. A few years
   D. The amount of time varied for each ghetto.

5. The three types of ghettos were:
   A. Large, medium, small
   B. Closed, open, destruction
   C. Closed, open, quarantine
   D. Closed, open, transportation

6. Where was the largest ghetto located?

7. Why did the Nazis destroy ghettos during Hitler’s “Final Solution”? 

8. Define “Jewish councils.”

9. What were two ways in which Jews inside ghettos resisted the restrictions placed on them in the ghettos?

10. What type of ghettos was used in Hungary?
Appendix B

Pretest 2 and Posttest 2

After you have read the article, “Death Marches” from The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, answer the following questions:

1. Define the term “death marches.”

2. What did the Soviets do when they liberated prisoners from Majdaneck concentration camp?

3. Why did the SS (Nazis) evacuate the concentration camps?
   A. The SS did not want live prisoners to be captured and tell what they went through to their enemies.
   B. The SS thought they needed prisoners to continue producing goods.
   C. The SS thought they could use prisoners as hostages to bargain at the end of the war to ensure the survival of Nazis.
   D. All of the above.

4. How were the evacuations carried out by the SS?
   E. By plane, by train, or on foot
   F. By train, by ship, or on foot
   G. By plane, by ship, or on foot
   H. By plane, by train, or by automobile

5. Who originated the term “death march”?

6. Why were these evacuations called, “death marches”?

7. List two ways that prisoners died during death marches.

8. Define the term “liberated.”

9. What date is called, “V-E Day” in Europe?
   E. May 5, 1944
   F. November 21, 1944
   G. March 25, 1945
   H. May 8, 1945
   I. What is the significance of “V-E Day” in Europe?
## Summary Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>71% D-</th>
<th>75% D+</th>
<th>83% C+</th>
<th>92% B+</th>
<th>100% A+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideas</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic sentence does not accurately describe main idea</td>
<td>15 pts.</td>
<td>16 pts.</td>
<td>17 pts.</td>
<td>18 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic sentence does not follow format</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description about topic is not included</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Details are not included</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many unnecessary details</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many facts are not accurate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Organization** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| Order of ideas does not make sense and is not easy to follow | 7 pts. | 7 pts. | 8 pts. | 9 pts. | 10 pts. |
| Middle only | | | | | |

| **Sentence Fluency** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| Most sentences are all the same length | 3 pts. | 4 pts. | 4 pts. | 4.5 pts. | 5 pts. |
| Most sentences begin in the same way and are repetitive | | | | | |

Comments: ____________________________

Total: _______________________ /35 pts.