

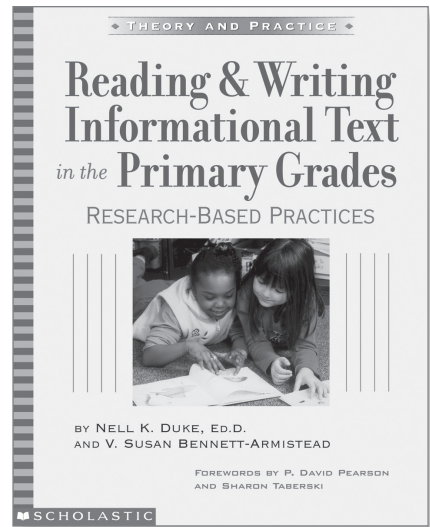


A Study Guide for
***Reading & Writing
Informational Text in the
Primary Grades***

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FOREWORD by P. DAVID PEARSON & SHARON TABERSKI



This Study Guide can be used as a vehicle for discussion, an exchange of ideas as well as a resource for generating ideas and practices you can carry out with your students.

The Guide is organized using two components:

1. Thinking About Your Practice which provides questions to ponder before you begin *Reading & Writing Informational Text in the Primary Grades*;
2. Guidelines for your Study Groups including:
 - a. A short Synopsis of each chapter;
 - b. A quote or excerpt to React To, followed by questions to Discuss.
 - c. Take Action, which provides you with activities you can try in your classroom and then discuss in your next Study Group.

Thinking About Your Practice

You may wish to use the following questions to begin your discussion before you begin *Reading & Writing Informational Text in the Primary Grades*

How do you currently use informational text in your classroom?

- How often do you use an informational text for a read aloud?
- How often do you use an informational text for shared reading?

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- How often do your students engage in meaningful discussions before, during, or after a read aloud or shared reading of an informational text?
 - How often do your students use informational texts as models for writing?
 - Do students have adequate opportunities to independently read informational texts?
 - What strategies do you use to teach comprehension of informational texts?

What resources do you have/use to support the use of informational texts in your classroom?

- How extensive is your classroom library?
- What percentage of your library is narrative, informational or other genres?
- How do you use your classroom walls and other surfaces to represent informational genres?
- What daily activities do you use that involve print?

How do you currently assess students' comprehension of informational text?

- Do you ever use retelling as a means of assessing students' reading of informational text?
- What scales or rubrics do you use to evaluate children's retellings?
- How often do you ask students to write or draw their response to a text?
- How often do you assess students' comprehension of an informational text?
- What do you use most often for assessment?
- How do you document growth in comprehension of informational text?

Chapter 10 – Yes, Start Here!!!

Professional Discussions and Development

Exploring Informational Text in Study Groups and Other Activities With Colleagues

Overview

Although this is the last chapter in the book, we recommend that you read it first. In this chapter you will learn about research on teacher professional development. You will also learn more about the value of study groups as well as guidelines for forming your own study group. Also included in this chapter are suggestions for actions you can take with your study groups. We encourage you to try these along with other suggestions found in this guide.

React to:

“Research has shown that conversations teachers have with one another around their practice can lead to creative and inventive transformations in the classroom. Building collaborative relationships with colleagues empowers teachers to change the culture of their classrooms.” Page 232

Discuss

- What motivates you to explore new ways of teaching?
- Why did you decide to use this book as a basis for your Study Group?

Take Action

Select one of the actions on pages 236–237 to start with your Study Group.

Chapter 1: Why Include Informational Text in the Primary Classroom?

A Research-Based Rationale

Overview

In Chapter 1 you learn the difference between informational text and nonfiction. You will also learn the purpose, features, and format of informational text. The authors explain the value of informational text in the primary classroom.

React to:

“If we include more informational text in early schooling, we put children in a better position to handle the reading and writing demands of their later schooling. We would like to see a day when children “read to learn” and “learn to read” from the earliest days of schools and throughout their school careers.” Page 20

Discuss

- What do you believe are the benefits of having students read and write informational text?
- What are the reading preferences of your students? How do you ascertain this information?
- How do you use this knowledge of your students’ reading preferences in helping them learn to read and write?

Take Action:

- Take a survey of your instructional materials as well as books in your classroom library. How many informational books are you using? How many are in your room?
- Start collecting informational text that you can use to teach reading and writing to your students.

Once you have decided to do more reading and writing of information text, send a letter home to parents to inform them. You may want to use the sample letter found on page 27 as a guide when writing your own letter.

Chapter 2: A Framework for Weaving Informational Texts Into the Primary Classroom

The Early Project

Overview

In Chapter 2 you will learn why the authors recommend a framework for including a greater variety of texts, including more informational texts, in the primary classroom. This framework, called the genre-diversification framework, happens in three areas of the classroom: in print on the walls and other surfaces; among books and other materials in the library; and with daily activities that involve print. You will also learn about the three categories of text found in the framework: narrative texts, informational texts, and other kinds of text, such as poetry and bibliography. The authors then provide details about the three classroom areas and the three text categories

Respond

“Some teachers have thought about diversifying genre by focusing on a single genre for a period of time, then moving to another genre, then another, and so on. For examples, a teacher might spend a month on fairy tales, then a month on a concept book, and so on. Think twice about this approach.” Page 33

Discuss

- What is your reaction to the genre-diversification framework? Is it workable in your classroom?
- What impact do you think this framework will have on your daily literacy activities, such as read aloud and other print activities?
- If you incorporate this framework, how will students benefit?

Take Action:

- Look at your instructional materials and classroom library once again. Classify your materials into narrative, informational, and other. Do you have diversity within each category? What are you lacking? Start exploring the school library to help you diversify.
- Review the Criteria for Selecting Informational Text found on pages 38–39. Use these guidelines as you survey the materials you have in your classroom.

Chapter 3: Shared Reading and Read Aloud

Developing Language, World Knowledge, and Comprehension with Informational Text

Overview

In Chapter 3 the authors discuss the research on informational text read aloud. They also describe how one teacher uses read aloud and shared reading in her classroom and provide some suggestions for great books to use. You will learn how to select informational text for both read aloud and shared reading. You will also learn three research-based instructional strategies to use with read aloud and shared reading.

React to:

“My philosophy is that all kids can learn and you just have to find a way to reach them, and so I think this (reading informational text)...showed me another way to reach some kids who otherwise might not be interested” Page 51

Discuss

- How do you know what students are learning from your read aloud and shared readings?
- Discuss the types of evidence you see and hear that let you know your students are learning.
- What criteria do you use when selecting books to use for read aloud and shared reading?
- How does having students make different types of connections (text to text, text to self, text to world) enhance their understanding of a text?

Take Action

- The authors presented three strategies to help guide talk: E-T-A, Instructional Conversation, and Think Aloud. Select one to try with your students. Be prepared to discuss the lesson during your next Study Group.

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- Conduct research. On page 43, the authors suggest reading a text more than once. Try reading a text just once and check for students recall. Then, read a text several times and check for student recall. Compare the results. Do students recall more or less material from text read more than once?
 - The authors presented a list of great books for read aloud and shared reading. As a group, add to the list. During each Study Group, bring in samples of great books to add to the list. Be prepared to read aloud a segment of the book and to tell what features make it a great book.

Chapter 4: Guided Reading

Scaffolding Reading Development With Informational Text

Overview

In Chapter 4 you will learn how to use informational text during guided reading. The authors provide an overview of research on informational text guided reading. They also describe how one teacher uses informational text during guided reading. You will also learn ideas for grouping students and three research-based instructional strategies for use in guided reading.

React to:

“Regardless of the activity, excellent organization and management is also key. Excellent organization and management is supported by research on exemplary teachers. For example, Michael Pressley and colleagues (2001) found that in the classrooms of the most effective literacy teachers, 90 percent of the students were engaged over 90 percent of the time!” Page 78

Discuss

- When working with guided reading groups, the students you are not working with have to be engaged. Are your students engaged over 90 percent of the time? In Carrie’s classroom (page 78) she uses a chart so students know what to do while she works with guided reading groups. What organizational tools do you use so that your students are engaged while you are working with your guided reading groups?
- Think about the way you group students. What criteria do you use? How often do your groups change? Compare the methods you use for grouping with those provided by the authors.
- What are your favorite books or other materials to use during guided reading? Why?

Take Action:

- The authors point out that you do not always have to use books for guided reading. You can use parts of a book, a magazine or newspaper, and much more. Go on a search for materials to use during guided reading. You might want to start with a topic in mind and go on an Internet search. Bring in the results of your search to your next Study Group and be prepared to share them.
- Try one of the three strategies presented in this chapter: Reciprocal Teaching, CSR, and Idea Circles. During your next Study Group, discuss how this strategy helped your students' comprehension.

Chapter 5: Independent Reading

Motivating Children to Read Informational Text in School and at Home

Overview

In Chapter 5 you will learn about the research on independent reading of informational text. You will also see how one teacher encouraged students to reading independently. The authors also provide three research-based practices for independent reading. In addition, they explain ways to assess how deeply students are processing texts during independent reading.

React to:

“In recent years, however, some theorists and researchers, have questioned independent reading’s effectiveness in improving literacy achievement.” Page 101

Discuss

- What evidence do you have that engaging in independent reading is beneficial for students?
- How do you build in time for independent reading in your classroom? Do you have a set of procedures or guidelines? If so, what are they? How are they working? Are you willing to try something different? See the Take Action step below.
- What read-aloud books do you currently use that get students more deeply involved with independent reading? Share them with the group.

Take Action:

- Try the Independent but Interactive Reading approach described on pages 107–108. Allow students to form small groups, listen to tapes, or discuss books with you. Evaluate how this approach worked compared to how you usually have students do independent reading. Are there advantages or disadvantages to having students engage in independent reading in this way?

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- The authors suggested three instructional strategies for independent reading: Repeated Reading, Creating Incentives, and Offering Books on Tape. Try one of these strategies and evaluate their impact on your students' independent reading.
 - How do you assess your students' independent reading? Use one of the evaluations found on pages 122–123. Or, have your students do review writing in order to evaluate their reading.

Chapter 6: Writing

Teaching Children to Compose Informational Text

Overview

In this chapter you will learn three research-based principles for developing children's informational writing. You will also learn the research related to informational writing in the primary grades and how two teachers include informational writing in their classrooms.

React to:

“The impulse toward research and nonfiction writing needs to be nurtured during the early childhood years. If children in the primary grades were examining, drawing, measuring, mulling over, and investigating milk pods or the blueprint of a building (or whatever else they brought in), this would provide a foundation for nonfiction writing. Out of what comes to school in children's pockets and backpacks, out of what they see and wonder about and poke into, their nonfiction writing emerges.” Page 138

Discuss

- How often do your students engage in informational writing? What do they write about? What books do you use as models for their informational writing?
- What is the process you use to teach information writing? How do you build time in to your schedule for teaching writing? How often are students engaged in writing? How do you publish or celebrate their writing?

Take Action:

- Engage students in “Innovations.” Select a text that has a clear pattern and organization to use as a framework. Read the text with your class. Help the class identify the pattern and organization found in the text. Have the children write their own version of the text—their own innovation. Display their innovations.
- Review the list of Informational Text Authors. Select one of the authors for your students to study. Many of these authors have their own websites. Check out an author's website and then

gather books by the author to read to your students. Use these books and the information on the website to talk about the author's work.

Chapter 7: Content Area Reading

Using Informational Text to Build Children's Knowledge of the World Around Them

Overview

In this chapter you will learn how to ensure that your content area teaching is exciting and productive. You will learn about the research related to using informational text in the content area. The authors describe how several teachers have used informational text in content area classes. The authors also discuss some special considerations for locating and selecting books and provide you with three research-based instructional strategies for using information text in content instruction.

React to:

“Every study we have encountered indicates that using trade books in this way has a positive impact on children’s learning—specifically, on their content area learning, literacy learning, motivation, or some combination of these. Although most of these studies were conducted with upper-elementary students, there is every reason to think that using informational trade books in content area instruction benefits younger students as well.” Page 180

Discuss

- In what ways do you incorporate Informational Text into your content area classes? What subject areas are the easiest to incorporate informational texts in? Which are the most difficult? Why?
- When selecting informational texts, which criteria do you use for finding just the right text?
- Content area vocabulary is often difficult for students. What are your most successful strategies for teaching vocabulary?

Take Action:

- Select one of the strategies for Organizing Information found on pages 188–190. Try it with your students. Evaluate your students learning that resulted from using this strategy. Share samples of your students’ work with the Study Group.

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- Build a photo display of your use of informational text in the content areas. On pages 196–197, the authors provide pictures with descriptions of how one teacher uses informational texts during an owl unit. Do the same with a unit of your own. Share it with your group.

Chapter 8: The Classroom Environment

Integrating Informational Text in the Print-Rich Environment

Overview

In an earlier chapter you learned that the genre-diversification framework calls for including substantial amounts of informational texts in not only classroom activities but also on classroom walls, other surfaces, and in classroom libraries. In this chapter, the focus is on the classroom environment. You will learn about the research related to the importance of the print environment and informational text in that environment and how several teachers have incorporated informational texts in their classroom environments. The authors also provide three research-based ways to incorporate informational texts into your environment.

React to:

“Having an environment that supports your work is key.” Page 218

Discuss

- How does your classroom environment support your work?
- What are the things in your classroom that provide your students with opportunities to learn?
- What do you do to help increase your children’s awareness of the print environment?

Take Action:

- In an earlier chapter you were asked to survey your classroom library. Make this a project that involves all your students. In addition to the suggestions found on page 212 to build a better classroom library, ask your students their opinion of the classroom library. What would they like more of? Is there a way to arrange the library differently that would help them use it more?
- Create a dramatic play area. Decide on a theme or themes. Raid your own closets and storage areas for props. Then add the appropriate informational texts and let your students start having fun!

Chapter 9: Challenges of Using Informational Text

Finding Ways to Deal With Them

Overview

In this chapter you will learn about the challenges common to many teachers in trying to incorporate informational texts in their classrooms. You will also learn how some teachers deal with these challenges. Finally, the authors discuss some important considerations and implications for changing practice.

React to:

“I just think that people get used to doing things a certain way and it’s hard to change.”
Page 225

Discuss

- In order to incorporate informational text into your curriculum, you had to find the time and energy to diversify genres. What are some of the strategies you have used to do this?
- What do you still feel unsure about? How can working together as a group help you incorporate informational text into your classroom?

Take Action:

- In your Study Group, share your resources. Share titles of read alouds, copies of articles you found on the Internet, books you’ve read, and lessons you’ve tried.
- Celebrate your successes. Make a list of all the ways you have incorporated informational texts in your classroom. Share your lists with the member of the Study Group. Have a party and celebrate all the ways you have changed! Enjoy!