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Students' Reading Interests Impact on Reading Comprehension Abilities

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Abstract

This study aimed to see if there was a correlation between a student's interest in either fiction or nonfiction books and his/her ability to comprehend. The study was conducted by a classroom teacher and took place over a three-week period with eight students. The students and their parents were questioned about what kinds of books interest them. Additionally, the teacher collected information on what kind of books the students took out of the library and the students' overall exposure to both types of texts. The students' interests were calculated and then compared to their comprehension abilities on both fictional and nonfictional texts. The study found that students are able to better comprehend nonfiction texts regardless of their interests.

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Abstract

This study aimed to see if there was a correlation between a student's interest in either fiction or nonfiction books and his/her ability to comprehend. The study was conducted by a classroom teacher and took place over a three-week period with eight students. The students and their parents were questioned about what kinds of books interest them. Additionally, the teacher collected information on what kind of books the students took out of the library and the students' overall exposure to both types of texts. The students' interests were calculated and then compared to their comprehension abilities on both fictional and nonfictional texts. The study found that students are able to better comprehend nonfiction texts regardless of their interests.

Students' Reading Interests Impact on Reading Comprehension Abilities

Within education there has been a large push to include more nonfiction texts into literacy instruction. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) mandate that all students, grades prekindergarten through twelfth grade, read informational texts. Additionally, the CCSS expect students to be able to determine what the text says explicitly, make logical inferences, and draw conclusions from the text. Duke (2010) stated that a child's ability to read an informational text is arguably more important than ever before. As a current kindergarten teacher, I understand the importance of integrating more nonfiction texts into my literacy instruction in order to meet the CCSS. I also believe it is important to have a balance between both fiction and nonfiction texts in my literacy instruction. It is important for students to be able to read and comprehend from both varieties of text. Both fiction and nonfiction texts need to be read to students as read alouds, as a shared reading experience, and available for them to read at their individual and independent level.

Lastly, it is important that teachers are reading both types of texts because students have different interests. Gill (2009) found that fictional stories were thought to be more appropriate for young children. However, just as students prefer different types of sports, they also prefer different types of texts. All students come to school with different interests because of their exposure at home and within their communities. Throughout this study I explored if students' interests influence their ability to comprehend. Clay, a New Zealand educator, has done a great deal of research on emergent literacy skills. As a kindergarten teacher, I closely follow her work. Clay's (1975) studies indicated that children know a great deal about reading and writing before they come to school, and they are able to experiment with and apply their knowledge in various ways. My research studied not only student interests but their exposure to different type's

literature before and during their schooling. This topic needed to be explored because we are doing an injustice to students who strongly like nonfiction texts but are only assessed on fiction texts. Belloni and Jongma's (1978) study stated that "students comprehend better when they are interested in what they are reading" (p. 107). A student's motivation and interest may play a role in their comprehension abilities. This study focused on students' comprehension abilities and the connection between their reading interests. Additionally, this study helped teachers differentiate instruction and assessment.

The research in this field is limited. Research was done on this topic in the 1970s but minimal research has been done since. Until currently, with CCSS in place teachers, parents, and principals are starting to take more of an interest in nonfiction, including students reading abilities and comprehending abilities. Studies are now being done of students' interest of nonfiction and their abilities of nonfiction. Topping (2015) investigated both topics. Topping studied comprehension in preferred books. Similarly, to Topping, Correeia (2011) closely examined students' interests in both fictional and nonfictional texts. Another study conducted was by Baker al et. (2011) in which they studied students' abilities with nonfictional texts.

Such studies are important because like Duke and Kays (1998) stated in the cleverly entitled article "Can I say 'Once Upon a Time?'" teachers need to determine "what young children actually know, and can learn, about the language of these reputedly-difficult texts" (p. 295) before they decide that students are more interested in and are only able to read fictional texts. Fictional texts are still very important and valuable in all grade levels but they are no longer deemed more important than nonfiction. This study continues to build upon the work of previous researchers and gain a better understanding of not only students' interests in nonfiction but their ability to comprehend such texts the way the CCSS expects them to. Additionally, this

study will examine what the students' knowledge is about nonfictional texts to ensure the data presented is accurate.

This study aimed to determine how students' interests influence their abilities to comprehend different types of the text. This study focused on fiction vs. nonfiction texts. Children's interests guide may their motivation when leaning. Belloni and Jongsma's (1978) study stated that "students comprehend better when they are interested in what they are reading" (p. 107). This study used multiple methods in order to look at the relationship between students' interests and comprehension abilities. The methods used were conversations and discussions with the students, questionnaires for teachers and parents, observations of students reading, and independent reading assessments. This information was used and analyzed in order to see what students' preferences are, whether fiction or nonfiction, and how it affects their abilities to comprehend both types of text. This study found that kindergarteners were unable to express in words why they liked a specific type of text. Other data was used to determine a child's favorite type of text in order to compare it to their comprehension abilities. Kindergarteners have minimal knowledge and little understanding of their personal interests. The students were unaware of how their interests influenced their comprehension abilities; so it is important for teachers to find this connection. Additionally, that data and findings show that there is a lack of resources and materials for students and teachers to use to teach about nonfiction. Most importantly, this study showed that students have the ability to comprehend nonfictional texts.

Theoretical Framework

Understanding how a student's interest and exposure to literacy affects their understanding of literacy, is imperative in order for teachers to teach and assess students appropriately. To understand how a child learns to read and comprehend the information they are

reading, we as teachers need to understand how they interact with print first. Linguistic theorists discuss the importance of obtaining information through acquisition and through formal learning instruction. All students entering school have different experiences interacting with print.

Gee (1996) is a linguistic theorist who states that reading is the ability to interpret print, thus a student's ability to comprehend and infer about the print they are reading. Gee defines a student's primary discourse is what they acquire at home. It is the previously taught or acquired literacy skills they have learned from their parents or the community around them. A student's primary discourse will influence his/her literacy abilities at school (secondary discourse). Within their primary discourse students will acquire different ideas of language, interests, and background information. Discourses are defined by Gee as a "socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, and of acting" (p. 537)

Critical theory addresses the social and cultural backgrounds children bring with them when they come to school, and involves an understanding of the inequalities of certain groups in acquiring literacy (Freire, 1985; Gee, 1996). While this study will not examine the cultural aspect it will influence the students in the study. Goodman (1984) also refers to literacy events as interactions with their culture in which children "grow curious and form hypotheses about their functions and purposes" (p.102). Children will experience literacy everyday regardless if they are holding a book. Literacy is reading, writing, speaking, and listening. It is important to remember all of those avenues of learning. Goodman (1984) affirmed that it is important to remember that children's development of literacy grows out of their experiences, and the views and attitudes toward literacy that they encounter as they interact with texts and adults. All students acquire literacy in a variety of ways due to their exposure. Similar to Goodman, Otto (2004) understands that students enter their schooling with different exposures. Based on the

research of Otto is it apparent that the oral language students hear directly influences their understanding of written language. For younger students, this introduction to language and conversation with adults and stories listen to will influence their ability to understand written language. Otto suggests that “oral language provides the basis on which knowledge of written language is acquired” (p. 18), therefore students are able to use their oral language knowledge to read and comprehend information.

Gee (1996) stated that reading is more than just reading the letter names on the page. Reading is about phonics and phonemic awareness as well. The goal when reading is to be able to comprehend, infer and make connections. In order to have any comprehension abilities students need to be able to read the words understand the language of those words. Freeman and Freeman (2004) are linguistic theorists who understand that human language is a complex theory, which involves all forms on literacy, such as reading and speaking and listening. The English language is made up of different sounds such as long and short vowel sounds. Students need to understand these sounds in order to read. Similar to Gee (1996), Freeman and Freeman (2004) also agrees that “speech production and comprehension are so complex that they need to be acquired not learned” (p. 22). This idea of acquiring speech and comprehension relates to the theory that students come to school with skills already acquired before entering formal schooling.

A definition of literacy similar to Gee’s (1996) and Otto’s (2004), is Freebody and Luke’s (1990) in which they identify four main roles needed in order to be a successfully literate person. The four roles are the following: code breaker (being able to read the text’s symbols), text participant (understanding what they text means), text analyst (making connections), and text user (using the information in a correct way). Again, this theory explains that complexity of

literacy skills and knowledge. Culture will affect a student's understanding and application of these roles when reading different types of texts. Each individual student will use different background knowledge to make meaning of texts.

In addition to the cultural influence on a student's comprehension abilities each student if have different exposure to actual print. Student's interaction with print prior to reading is called emergent literacy. Emergent literacy skills can start as early as birth and is the interaction that children have with print and adults. These "pre-reading skills" consist of retelling known stories, reading from left to right, book handling skills, reading pictures to make meaning from text, etc. These are skills students need to acquire before being able to comprehend texts while reading independently. A student's ability to read with accuracy and fluency will also impact their ability to comprehend both fiction and nonfiction texts.

This literature is based upon the theory of socio-cultural theory. The socio-cultural theory, which is defined as where the child is an active member of a constantly changing community of learners where knowledge is constructed by cultural systems and learning is both formal and informal (Larson & Marsh, 2005). Larson and Marsh (2005) highlight the importance of literacy as "constantly changing" as a reflection of time period in history and cultural experiences of those involved. Students are constantly changing, the exposure students have to different types of genre is constantly changing and the requirements for literacy instruction is constantly changing. Additionally, the way in which literacy is understood and the way it is taught in the classroom are changeable and fluctuate over time (Larson & Marsh, 2005). This theory reinforces the current study because so much of a child's knowledge comes from their surroundings and the people and places in their environments. This theory reinforces the current study because so much of a child's knowledge comes from their surroundings and the people and

places in their environments. Students' interests are always changing therefore, if the hypothesis of this study is correct student's abilities to comprehend will be forever changing.

Research Question

Given that students come to school with different experiences and interests, this action research projects asks, what is the relationship between students' interest in fiction or nonfiction texts and reading comprehension?

Literature Review

In order to create a significant action research study, it is essential for the researcher to have a deep understanding of prior research on the given topic. Through the following literature review, three themes and one subtheme will be shown and studied. Through the themes, this literature review will explain how students interact and respond to a specific type of text, nonfiction. The first theme being examined is the process and strategies teachers use to teach nonfiction. Within this theme it is also important to note the presents of nonfiction texts in the classroom. In a child's life, the parents are usually the first to expose them to nonfiction text. However, after the initial exposure, teachers hold the responsibility of nurturing the young child's understanding and excitement in regards to nonfiction texts. The second theme, is built on the first, and will discuss students' interest in regards to reading nonfiction texts. Within this theme, both age level and gender will be discussed, as it is vital to understand a child's interest and motivation to read to be a successful teacher. The final theme within this literature review is examining students' actual ability to comprehend and read nonfiction texts. In order to fully understand a student's ability to comprehend nonfiction texts, this theme will have a subtheme in regards to a teacher's understanding of nonfiction. In order to teach, teachers need to understand their perceptions, in addition to teachers needing to understand their students' interest and

abilities. Teachers seem to have limited information on nonfiction texts. Teachers need to understand the nonfiction material they are presenting and teaching.

Strategies to Teach Nonfiction

Throughout the literature many different strategies were found affect when teaching nonfiction to students. Likewise there were many different definitions of nonfiction. Here, Duke's (2000) definition of nonfiction text will be used-

text written with the primary purpose of conveying information about the natural and social world (typically from someone presumed to be more knowledgeable on the subject to someone presumed to be less so) and having particular text features to accomplish this purpose. (p. 205)

It is also important to note that the terms nonfiction, informational and expository text will be used interchangeably.

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) require the use and instruction of nonfiction texts. Maloch and Bomer, (2013) stated that "CCSS and other state standards (such as those in Texas) purport to prepare students for college and career, and in that pursuit, they insist that young children focus heavily on informational texts than they have done in the past" (p.441); based on the emphasis that informational texts are used in later years. The CCSS stress the importance of learning about nonfictional texts throughout all grades, kindergarten through twelfth. Nonfiction texts help children develop the literacy skills they need to read and write informational texts in later grades (Duke, 2007; McMaster et al., 2014; Kristo & Bamford, 2004; Gill, 2009). Students need to understand nonfiction because it builds within their schooling. Additionally, nonfictional texts help students connect to the real world and the immediate community around them. Connecting the words on a page to real-life experience motivate children, especially for

struggling readers or those who had a high level of interest in informational text (Gallo & Ness, 2013). If taught correctly, nonfictional texts can be used to engage students. When teaching it is important to engage students with real world reasons as to why it is important for them to read nonfiction texts (Maloch & Bomer, 2013).

Teaching nonfiction is no easy task. There are many different strategies and approaches used to teach nonfiction texts. It is important to remember that “comprehension is genre specific; to make sense of texts, readers employ comprehension strategies in particular ways for particular types of text” (Maloch & Bomer, 2013b, p. 206). Teachers need to be aware of the type of text and type of instruction they are teaching to students. McMaster et al. (2015) also agrees stating “comprehension tasks are highly text-dependent, requiring a literal understanding of the text” (p. 29). Such strategies include, creating authentic opportunities to read nonfiction texts, explicit instruction, shared and interactive read alouds and discussion, and inquiry based instruction (Correia, 2011; Duke & Kays, 1998; Gill, 2009; Maloch & Bomer, 2013; Foster, 2014; Martin & Kragler, 2012; Marinak & Gambrell, 2008; McMaster et al, 2015; Strachan, 2015)

Creating authentic learning opportunities helps connect students to real world experiences and it also makes learning more engaging. An authentic learning activity is defined by Maloch and Bomer (2013) as

- a) a reading and writing of textual types or genres, that occur outside of learning-to-read-and-write context and purpose, and b) reading and writing those texts of the purpose for which they are read or written outside of learning-to-read-and-write context and purpose.
- (p. 443)

Such as texts would include newspapers, magazines, or simply books relating to topics that students are interested in. This type of learning allows students to connect with their own

curiosities (Mucherah & Herendeen, 2013). Teachers should use authentic learning opportunities to teach children about nonfiction. Using this strategy first teaches children that nonfiction is all around them and is needed to succeed later in life. Additionally, creating authentic learning opportunities will connect home and school because students will start to notice this type of text outside of the classroom. These practices allow students to engage with texts in meaningful ways (Foster, 2014).

A read aloud is a common practice used amongst elementary school teachers. It has been found to be a successful strategy for teaching. Maloch and Bomer (2013) found that reading aloud and “engaging students of any age in sustained, productive discussion can lead to growth in comprehension, engagement, and content learning” (p. 444). A traditional read aloud is a term used when a teacher simply reads a story to students. Barrentine (1996) developed the phrase *interactive read-aloud*, which is described as an instructional conversation in which the teacher poses questions throughout the reading “that enhance meaning construction and also show how one makes sense of text” (p. 36). While a teacher is asking questions and modeling for the students, this practice also allows student the chance to inquire about the text they are hearing. This practice allows students the chance to think, wonder, and ask questions about the text. An interactive read aloud moves away from a traditional practice where the teachers asks a question expecting a specific answer to a model where students “spontaneously offer up their own responses, observations, and questions” (Maloch & Bomer, 2013, p.444). This practice allows students to interact with nonfiction texts and seek out more information that they want to learn about. This inquiry based approach “creates a community of learners who ask questions, seek answers and collaborate with each other to promote better understanding” (Foster, 2014, p. 7). While teachers’ play an active role in this model of teaching, “students are encouraged to

verbally interact with the text, their peers, and the teacher as they work on construct meaning with a shared text” (Maloch & Bomer, 2013, p. 444). An interactive read aloud falls under the category of reciprocal teaching. The study by Topping (2015) comprehension was developed through

instructional practices such as making transparent for students what it meant to synthesize such texts, engaging students in interactive read-alouds of such texts, and developing think-aloud mini-lessons. Over the course of a school year, the majority of the students enhanced their ability to synthesize main ideas and to develop their thinking. (p.359)

In addition to thinking about and acquiring information from the nonfiction read alouds, listening to these stories allows students to understand the structure and language of nonfiction texts. A study conducted by Duke and Kays (1998) found that kindergartens showed more skill with the distinct linguistic features of informational books after three months of daily interactive read alouds. Furthermore, the students had “fast-developing knowledge of information book language” (p. 295) and begun to use more technical vocabulary “(words that are relatively specialized, strongly related to the topical theme, and unlikely to occur in children’s everyday speech)” (p. 310). Read alouds allow students to connect the new language they are hearing with pictures or ask questions to gain a better understanding.

A read aloud also provides a teacher the opportunity to model for the students. This interactive framework allows students to hear both the language and structure of nonfiction texts (Moss, 2005). While listening to the teacher read the students are gathering information on how to read informational texts and how to comprehend. The students are able to hear the fluency skills and follow the teacher navigate through the text. Also, Martin and Kragler (2012) suggested that teachers use read alouds to model thinking out loud. The study done by Martin

and Kragler also demonstrated comprehension strategies through modeling. In the study there were four puppets used to represent different strategies (Princess Storyteller, who summarized [retelling] the story; Quincy Questioner; Clara Clarifier; and the Wizard, who made predications). Teaching strategies such as these help engage young learners. Since nonfiction texts are considered difficult to teach and understand it is important that teachers are actively engaging students in learning. Maloch and Bomer (2013) stated that combining interactive read alouds and discussion helps students to strengthen their understanding of nonfiction text by providing them an opportunity to actively construct knowledge and to deepen their understanding. Similarly, Duke and Kays (1998) not only deepened their understanding of nonfiction texts but they applied their new knowledge to discussions and writing practices.

Overall, students' respond well to informational texts as read alouds. Read alouds help students learn about genre knowledge (Maloch & Bomer, 2013), making connections, building comprehension, and building on their prior knowledge. Nonfictional texts help students in multiple areas. While research proves a read aloud to be an affective model for teaching about nonfiction, "research also suggests that due to the perception that informational text is difficult, teachers often read non-fiction read aloud rather than instructing students in comprehension" (Marinak & Gambrell, 2008, p.75).

In addition to open ended and discussion based instruction students also need explicit instruction (Marinak & Gambrell, 2008; Foster, 2014; Cervetti, Bravo, Hiebert, Pearson, Jaynes, 2009). Students need strategies to help them navigate through nonfiction texts, comprehend and retell, and understand the complex terminology. Marinak and Gambrell (2008) stated that "students require direct instruction in order to comprehend informational text structures" (p. 75). The term used to direct instruction is often "explicit". Explicit is defined as "being clear-being

precise in explaining what something means or how something works” (Maloch & Bomer, 2013, p. 445)

Graphic organizers are one strategy used to help students comprehend nonfiction texts. Graphic organizers are a tool that can help students visualize, organize, and construct meaning from the text they are listening to or reading from (Foster, 2014). Graphic organizers can be used during a read aloud, guided reading groups or for individual use. Graphic organizers can be used with words and/or pictures depending on the grade level. Another strategy similar to graphic organizers are KWL charts. KWL stands for “what students know”, “what students wonder” and “what students learned”. Both of these strategies are common practices. While these strategies were found to be common and successful models, one study by Paquette, Fello, and Jalongo (2007) found many misconceptions come from using a KWL chart. A KWL chart is a great strategy to show what students know before, during and after reading. However, this study by Paquette, Fello, and Jalongo on jellyfish found that with younger students the “know portion” was more what they thought they knew. Therefore, a new strategy was used to ensure there were no misconceptions. The new strategy used from this study was Talking Drawings, originally developed by McConnell (1993). This strategy was used to help students focus their ideas about unknown concepts. Talking Drawings are a strategy suggested to use because when introducing science and social study topics teacher found that young students had many misconceptions and preconceived ideas (Paquette, Fello, & Jalongo, 2007; Cervetti, Bravo, Hiebert, Pearson, Jaynes, 2009). Talking Drawings help students mold their knowledge. In Talking Drawings, students are asked to create mental pictures of topics they will be studying, and then actually draw their mental image. This strategy is used to assess the students pre-understanding, it proves to be beneficial for both the teacher and the student. The students then recreate, modify, or completely

change their drawings for their post-learning (Paquette, Fello, & Jalongo, 2007). The next important part of this strategy is allowing students the opportunity to share, both their original thoughts and their new acquired knowledge. This strategy also allows students' comprehension skills to build systemically (Paquette, Fello, & Jalongo, 2007). The verbal interaction allows students learning to grow and scaffold. This strategy allows students to develop their own understanding and be inquirers (Paquette, Fello, & Jalongo, 2007; Maloch & Bomer, 2013).

Talking Drawings allow students to demonstrate “the contrast between the first pre-learning drawing and the post-learning drawing” (Paquette, Fello, & Jalongo, 2007, p. 66), but there is still a need for even more explicit instruction where students are given the information. Students need explicit instruction when learning more difficult features of nonfiction texts. Narrative texts have a predictable story structure; however, nonfiction texts usually do not (Marinak & Gambrell, 2008). Nonfiction texts do have a text structure. Text structures are the “manner in which information in the text is organized for presentation” (Marinak & Gambrell, 2008, p.78). It is important for students to develop an understanding of this new form of organization. Marinak and Gambrell (2008) stated that there are normally five elements found in text structures;

the authors purpose, to provide information about the topic, major idea(s), the key points the author wants the reader to understand, supporting details, the information that supports and clarifies the major ideas, aids, the variety of pictorial, graphic, typographic, and structural representations used to convey information, and vocabulary, technical words that are needed for full understanding of the text. (p. 77)

Vocabulary words are normally taught explicitly and in isolation. Hall, Sabey, and McClellan (2005) discussed teaching vocabulary words in isolation, possibly through an organizer or whole

group instruction but then finding them with the texts. Most explicitly taught information is easy to put into a graphic organizer. Similar to Foster (2014), Marinak and Gambrell (2008) recommend using that strategy to understand text structures. Additionally, “text structure awareness has also been linked to accurate recall and retelling” (p. 78). Graphic organizers help students organize the information from the text, comprehend the information, and retell what they learned.

Text maps, writing guides, and summary patterns, provide a variety of methods to guide comprehension (Moss, 2005). Two types of text maps are compare and contrast text maps and informational text maps. Text maps are visual representations of both the important concepts from the text and the informational text structure. It helps students understand what they read and how they obtained the information. An informational text map is a type of organizer to help organize the five elements found in nonfiction texts, in order to provide a framework for comprehension (Marinak & Gambrell, 2008). Writing and Reading go hand in hand so it is common for teachers to use writing to help students understand what they have read. Writing guides also help students scaffold information. The last strategy recommended from Marinak and Gambrell (2008) is summary patterns, also known as a story or text frame. All of these strategies help students understand text structure and make the texts framework more predictable. While this information is usually taught explicitly, Maloch and Bomer (2008) also stated that it was beneficial for students to participate in conversations about nonfiction texts features and structures.

In addition to understanding the story line or structure of the text, students need to be able to understand the vocabulary within the texts. Teaching vocabulary is a strategy used to help students' comprehension because students need to understand and become familiar with

“academic language necessary to read and respond to informational texts” (Marinak & Gambrell, 2008, p. 77). Students need explicit instruction on what specific words mean, as stated before these words can be taught in a graphic organizer or through whole group instruction. Studies have found conflicting reports on the use of explicit instruction. Duke (2000) reported a lack of research that focused on whether or not using explicit instruction helped students understanding of nonfiction texts. Similarly, this literature review has found the same. Maloch and Bomer (2008) found that explicit nonfiction instruction comprehension instruction is less beneficial when given in isolation, unless is it “emerged in response to students’ needs as they engaged together in the reading and writing of such texts” (p. 446) Additionally, Maloch (2008) concluded that

Student’s learning about informational texts occur through their daily participation, across classroom contexts, and in informational textual practices, under the guidance of a teacher who both supports their participation and strategically alerts students to key features and understanding about these texts. (p. 354)

Both the work of Maloch (2008) and the work of Maloch and Bomer (2013) found explicit instruction only beneficial if it was in response to a student’s immediate need. Both studies found the nonfiction texts should be taught through an inquiry based method. The work of Williams and colleagues (2005) demonstrated that explicit instruction can lead to a better understanding of particular text structures, similar to the work of Foster (2014). It is clear through these studies that teaching nonfiction is just as complex as reading nonfiction. Othman (2010) noted that teachers must teach strategies that students can utilize on a consistent basis in order to help students gain an understanding of how and when to use the certain strategies.

One of the challenges found through the studies was finding appropriate and quality nonfiction texts to read aloud and allow students to read independently. The topic on nonfiction text is on the rise, but “the need to include nonfiction text instruction in the primary classrooms is not a new idea; however, researchers are finding a connection between comprehension and nonfiction text instruction” (Foster, 2014, p. 1). The lack of nonfiction texts seemed to be an obstacle throughout all teaching strategies and approaches. Maloch and Bomer (2013b) stated that students need to explore all kinds of texts in order to understand text structures and comprehend. However, studies are finding that students are not getting enough exposure to these types of text. The lack of exposure is the number one reason students are having difficult time comprehending nonfiction. Similarly, Marinak and Gambrell (2008) argue that a “lack of informational text experience, little teacher modeling, and minimal explicit instruction contribute to comprehension difficulty when reading informational text” (p.76). So the question now is, why don't teachers include more nonfiction text in their classrooms?

While teaching preference is significant reason nonfiction texts are not included that will be discussed in the third theme. Through these studies the main reason nonfiction texts are not found in classroom is because the texts were not quality texts (Baker et al., 2011, Duke, 2000b; Duke and Kays, 1998; Foster, 2014; Gill, 2009). Teachers need to find well designed books. Gill (2009) suggested considering three features when choosing nonfictions texts. The three features are visual emphasis, accuracy, and engaging writing. Good nonfiction books are “clear and coherent” (Gill, 2009, p. 264) It is important that the information being presented to students is clear, accurate and engaging, in order to help their comprehension abilities. Maloch and Bomer (2013) stated that “perhaps the most important step in growing young children's knowledge,

understanding, and use of informational texts is making these texts available and accessible to them” (p.442).

Influences on Reading Choices

Rogowsky, Calhoun, and Tallal (2014) stated that there is an importance of evaluating students' learning styles and developing instructional methods that teach to specific learning styles. Students learning styles have gained much support over the years. Something else that is starting to gain support is student interests. That is why inquiry base learning is having such an impact on instructional practices. Through the first theme it was found that students need a balanced literacy diet (Maloch & Bomer, 2013) But what is not so clear is if students prefer to read both nonfiction and fiction texts. Teachers need to understand students' interests and learning preferences to enhance their instruction. Belloni and Jongsma's (1978) study stated that “students comprehend better when they are interested in what they are reading” (p. 107) and stated there was very little difference between boys' and girls' performance. This section of the literature review will examine what more recent studies say about students' interests in relation to their comprehension abilities and reading.

Early on in a child's educational career there is a goal to give them “a lasting positive attitude towards reading and writing” (Merisuo-Storm, 2006, p. 111). As mentioned earlier children can develop an interest in reading before entering school. Merisou-Storm stated that “when home provides a rich reading environment that includes books and magazines, and when parents read to their children frequently, the children are likely to adopt a positive attitude” (p. 111). Once students enter school it is important for teachers to continue to create a positive and rich literacy environment. A goal of reading instruction should be to bring students and books together in such a way that students will choose reading as a recreational activity and fully

engage them. Today's students are influenced in many ways. Mohr (2006) stated that although teachers and parents have many opportunities to share quality books with children, their peers are the most influential factor on a student's reading interests. Other factors that influence reading interests are, the media, the appearance of the book, the length of the book, and the topic of the book influence their reading preferences (Mohr, 2006).

Students seem to choose books for many different reasons. Nonfiction books seem to really connect to students' interests. A study by Gallo and Ness (2013) simply asked students why they decided to choose certain books. Many of their responses explained why they love nonfiction texts. In response to genre preference, one student explained that she enjoyed reading nonfiction because she liked to read real books. In response to interest, a student exclaimed that nonfiction books are very interesting and they tell about something. All of the students seemed to have a desire to learn, and that is why they chose nonfiction texts. Likewise, Oldfather (1993) stated that students like to control their learning, and feel empowered; students who feel empowered make "choices about what to learn and how to learn, thus, they became personally invested and connected in their literacy activities" (p. 673). Such choice relates back to an inquiry base learning approach to teaching nonfiction.

A student's interest and love of learning is a huge deciding factor in regards to his/her reading attitude and book selections. Another factor that influences reading choices is gender. There seems to be this notion that boys prefer to read nonfiction texts and girls prefer to read fictional stories. Mohr (2006) stated that "in general, girls have been shown to read more than boys, perform better on reading tests than boys, and prefer stories with female protagonists, with boys preferring to read about male characters" (p. 84). The study found that girls have a greater range of interest and more abilities when it came to comprehension. Also, Mohr (2006) found

that more boys prefer nonfiction, particularly sports, science, and history information. Boys seem to stick to one genre or story type. Both Mohr (2006) and Merisuo-Storm (2006) found that boys are more apt than girls to closely guard the gendered boundaries of their reading, and girls cross gender boundaries more freely than boys. With influence from their peer's boys choose their books more closely. Boys discover early, aided by the influence of peers, that one book is a "girl book" and another is a "boy book" (Merisuo-Storm,(2006). Similarly, Mohr (2006) argues that gender differences are influenced culturally rather than inherited. In other words, parents do not classify books when introducing them to their children but other outside sources influence a child's perception of a book.

While Merisuo-Storm (2006) indicated that "Boys prefer texts that have a purpose: getting information, making things, and helping others" (p. 113); the study also recognized that both boys and girls enjoy nonfiction texts over fiction. Their study indicated that 96% of boys chose nonfiction and 69% of girls chose nonfiction as well. This statistic still enhances the idea that boys prefer nonfiction over girls, but includes that girls also enjoy reading nonfictional texts more than fictional. A study of kindergarteners by Correia (2011) found that "as a group, the children chose nonfiction or informational texts over fiction 14 out of 19 weeks" (p. 102). These books were chosen during independent reading time and during library. The study by Mohr (2006) was very similar, because within this study first graders reading preferences were examined. Additionally, the study found that students preferred nonfiction. Mohr discovered that 159 out 190 students prefer to read nonfiction picture books. Both of these studies focused on primary reading preferences. Correia (2011) found that each week more boys than girls selected nonfiction texts, "in fact 50% or more of the boys chose nonfiction for 15 out of 19 weeks" (p. 102). But both studies found that regardless of gender students seem to prefer nonfictional books

better. Both of these studies were mostly best on teacher observation. On the other hand, Cervetti, Bravo, Hiebert, Pearson, and Jaynes (2009) and Baker et al. (2011) found that girls and boys did not differ significantly on reading preferences because of the genre. Young students seem to enjoy nonfiction texts better regardless of their gender. Mucherah and Herendeen (2013) found no significant gender difference in reading motivation.

While gender seemed to play a little role in student interests their age level seems to play a larger role. As students get older, the motivation to read, regardless of the genre, influences their comprehension abilities. That is why it is so “crucial to develop both positive attitudes to reading and reading confidence at a young age” (McGeown et al., 2015, p.392) so students grow with a love of reading. There seems to be a decrease in reading interest as students get older and move on to later grades. Consistently, Mucherah and Herendeen (2013) also found a decrease in interest as students get older.

Topping (2015) found that “in early grades, children are reading very difficult books with a high degree of success” (p. 372) with motivation driving their reading abilities. The study conducted by Topping found that younger students were more engaged in reading and had more positive reading attitudes. Students enjoyed reading all different kinds of books when they were in younger grades, such as primary than they did not older grades, such as middle school and high school. As students enter middle school then tend to find reading in general less interesting, in part because they find less materials that interest them. Foster (2014) also found in her study of primary and secondary students, while most students enjoy reading there is a decrease in their reading interests as students get older. Primary students seemed more engaged with reading in general than older students. Likewise, Applegate and Applegate (2010) also found that elementary school students were more engaged and motivated compared to middle school

students. Most studies found that engagement decreased as the students age increased. On the other hand, Mucherah and Herendeen (2013) found no age difference in motivation and reading abilities.

It is important to remember that regardless of the age or gender, motivation drives reading skills. When students are interested in reading they normally perform better on comprehension and read more (McGeown, et al., 2015, Topping, 2015). Student interest drives engagement. Cervetti, Bravo, Hiebert, Pearson, and Jaynes (2009) found that students who chose nonfiction texts said “that they preferred the text because it gave new information” (p. 504). The students enjoyed learning from reading. Martin and Kragler (2012) Correia (2011), Mohr (2006), Bozack and Salvaggio (2013) found that nonfiction is preferred at times because it can be motivating and strengthens their inquiring skills. Nonfiction texts intrigue students because they are able to learn new information or connect with a certain personal interest. Martin and Kragler (2012) found that students like when their personal experiences support the topic they are reading. Each child in a classroom needs to be seen as the individual that they are with individual interests that drive their reading attitude.

Merisuo-Storm (2006) identified that “children’s books regarded by adults as quality books do not always correspond to children’s taste” (p. 112). Therefore, it is important for teachers to understand students’ interests. In most classrooms, teachers or curriculum usually control the materials and texts that are read to the students or are available for students to read independently. Beach (2005) conducted a study to see if students actually read the text that adults recommend. The study hypothesized that students and adults would enjoy and overlap in book preferences approximately 50 % of the time. This hypothesis was formed around the thought that children are influenced by adults. In some cases, it is true that adults influence

reading choices, however as Mohr (2006) concluded most students are influenced by their peers. Peers tend to have the greatest influence. There were many different books selected for the study by Beach (2005), such books included Caldecott and Newberry medals book selections, *Children's Choice* books, and The American Library Association's (ALA) Notable Children's Books. The ALA books are books selected by a committee of adult librarians, and the Children's Choice books are selected by children themselves. Surprisingly, the study found that students and adults do not choose the same books at least 50% of the time. In closing, the study believed "it is important to acknowledge that while adults and children do diverge in their opinions of what constitutes a "best" book of the year, neither opinion should be deemed irrelevant or unimportant" (Beach 2005, p. 35). Teachers understand the types of texts and materials that need to be taught to students because of curriculum needs, so it is important to continue to teach those types of books. However, it is also important to take into consideration the types of books that students enjoy to read and infuse them into instruction.

Little, McCoach and Reis (2014) found that often, "schools tend to focus on bringing as many students as possible up to a minimum standard, rather than on enriching the experience of students reading" (p. 385). If teachers spent more time learning about students' interests, it would likely increase their reading skills and comprehension abilities. In addition, "providing students with real world reasons for engaging with informational texts [is] the most significant factor in improving their reading and writing of these texts" (p. 443), and students want to read books that connect to their real life. Mucherah and Herendeen (2013) and Correia (2011) found that curiosity is one of the main reasons students read books. Therefore, teachers should be using the background information and relationship they have with students to meet their interests as well as trying to meet academic demands.

Understanding Student Abilities with Nonfiction

A growing body of research reveals that young students can be successful with informational text (Gallo & Ness, 2013). However, nonfictional texts are considered to be difficult for readers, regardless if they are struggling, young or even meeting benchmark requirements. Most teachers believe that nonfiction texts are difficult for students to understand while reading due to their text structures and complex language. In reality, this idea of difficulty is a misconception, as stated before most students tend to enjoy reading nonfiction texts and are able to comprehend the information because it is something that interests them. Nonfiction texts allow students to build upon their background knowledge (Gallo & Ness, 2013). Nonfiction texts serve as a way for students to connect their previous understanding. Maloch and Bomer (2013b) agreed that nonfictional texts allow students to learn about the world around them and build content knowledge that will affect their future sense making skills. In other words, nonfictional texts connect to their previous knowledge and give them new knowledge to help them understand later texts. Additionally, these texts allow students to take ownership in their learning and be inquirers. Nonfictional texts allow students to comprehend and construct meaning in a different ways than fictional texts allow.

The teaching strategies examined earlier in this literature review demonstrate how proper teaching brings out students' natural abilities. Strachan (2015) found that

During interactive read-alouds, teachers scaffold children's sense making and support their learning of new concepts through direct instruction; asking questions before, during, and after reading; helping children make connections between the book and their own lives or world; and extending children's responses. Concepts collaboratively discussed

over time through multiple read-alouds become internalized for children as they make the knowledge their own and integrate it within their existing framework. (p. 209)

It is very important for teachers to understand students' abilities. Now equipped with proper ways to teach nonfiction, teachers need to understand how well students are actually able comprehend and make meaning from texts. Kragler, Martin, and Schreier (2015) stated that "readers' have an understanding of the metacognitive variables of learning: what readers know about their own cognition and how to construct meaning" (p. 446). Students are able to apply their learning strategies to nonfiction texts. In addition, learners understand that they have many tools (strategies learned) at their disposal. Learners then use those tools to problem-solve deliberately and they understand that they are in control. (Kragler, Martin, & Schreier, 2015). As students' progress through the years it is important to continue to teach strategies and help students' comprehension knowledge grow. In doing so, young children will be able to make decisions about the text as they read (Kragler, Martin, & Schreier, 2015). Their abilities will continue to grow as they do, as long as strategies are continuously taught and practiced within the classroom.

Nonfictional texts are usually written to teach someone something. Most students indicated that they choose certain books because they enjoy learning about something new. Correia (2011) found that students who choose to read nonfiction did for the purpose to learning. One kindergartener from the study wrote "I like stories about butterflies, because I learn about them" (p. 103) providing her understanding of nonfiction. In addition to understanding the definition of nonfiction students need understand that comprehending nonfiction involves specific strategies. Martin and Kragler (2012) found that students have the ability to monitor their own understanding, with "nonfiction texts playing an important role in the development of

strategic monitoring and self-regulating behaviors while reading” (p. 151). When prepared to comprehend nonfiction students’ abilities will flourish. Kragler, Martin and Schreier (2015) found that readers monitor their understanding of printed text by the use of strategies.

Once taught comprehension strategies many students are aware of how to use them. This process, is the ability to think about your reading and self-monitor for comprehension, is referred to as metacognition (Othman, 2010). Students are able to think about the strategies they learned and apply them accordingly. Metacognition also means that individuals have the ability to think and adjust their own thinking based on the situation at hand. Even at the youngest age students are able to use different tools to help them read and comprehend texts and “when strategies are used successfully, children tend to use them again” (Martin & Kragler, 2012, p. 142). Children will find their own way to make sense of the stories they are reading. As Othman (2010) connects, metacognitive strategies allow readers to not only read through selections, but to more importantly problem solve, master the content, and engage in higher order thinking activities. The study by Martin and Kragler (2012) examined kindergarten students and they found that some of the children focused on the use of one strategy, whereas others used a variety of strategies to understand the stories. Either way students were able to figure out the texts using the tools that they have learned. The students were able to use multiple forms of literacy to understand the texts and explain their learning. Early readers may share what is known about a topic while reading and use pictures and visual cues to self-regulate their understanding of the print (Martin & Kragler, 2012). Even the youngest of readers are able to strategies to comprehend a text. Martin and Kragler’s study results “revealed that the children were developing the ability to reflect on themselves as learners and use self-monitoring to understand the story. Retellings were more detailed, questions were asked when clarification was needed,

and predictions were logical” (p. 143). The most important piece of evidence from this study came from a questionnaire. One of the questions was, Did you have a problem reading nonfiction and 81.8% of the students said no, while 18.2% said yes (Martin & Kragler, 2015). These students were very aware of their abilities when reading the nonfiction texts. Within the students’ responses they indicated that they considered themselves “readers” while interacting with these books and did not recognize that they were having any trouble reading nonfiction. This study indicated that the students were “using monitoring and self-regulating strategies while reading, the children were using more strategies to construct meaning of the nonfiction texts” (Marin & Kragler, 2012, p. 105). The students were able to use strategies and tried harder to use certain strategies so they were able to comprehend the nonfiction texts.

Duke and Kays (1998) indicated that young children are capable of making sense of and crafting information when given the opportunity; however, they also stated that children write what they read and if they read (or hear) a lot of stories, they will be better at composing fictional stories rather than informational. This theory connects to the amount of exposure to nonfiction texts. While students have the ability to understand and respond to nonfiction the limited exposure then limits their abilities. The study by Duke and Kays found that after three months of exposure to nonfictional texts the students’ knowledge of language grew; “these young children pronounced more timeless verb constructions, more generic noun constructions, more repetition of topical theme, more characteristic informational book openings, more classificatory structures, and more comparative/contrastive structures” (p. 306). In such a short time, students became more familiar with the language used in nonfiction and applied it to their thinking, reading and also their writing. Marinak and Gambrell (2008) agree with Duke and Kays (1998) that an

interaction with different types of language allows students learn vocabulary and strengthen their nonfictional schemas.

Additionally, it is important to remember that a child's interest can strengthen his/her abilities and vice-versa. Topping (2015) Children can read harder books when they find them of high interest. Students will push their reading abilities if they are enjoying what they are reading. Topping also stated that high motivation can overcome high readability, but low motivation demands low readability. Just as nonfiction and fiction needs to be balanced within the classroom, texts pertaining to students' interests need to be balanced within the classroom. If the research states that children are able to read very difficult books with a high degree of success when it relates to their interest teachers should be including those types of texts in their classroom. Kragler, Martin, and Schreier (2015) believed that learners are aware of what they know about a topic and what they do not know, therefore if they want to learn more about a specific topic they will push their abilities to learn more. Having books in the classroom that interest students will not only affect their abilities to read but it will influence their love to read. Mucherah and Herendeen (2013) also found that students' motivation can affect their performance in different areas.

Teachers understanding of nonfiction.

Teachers seem to have a misunderstanding of how to teach nonfiction. Fictional texts have taken center stage in the classroom because "for years, fictional stories were thought to be more appropriate for young children" (Gill, 2009, p. 260). For years teachers have been more comfortable using fictional texts. Research suggests that due to this perception that informational texts are difficult, teachers often only read nonfiction aloud rather than constructing students in comprehension strategies (Marinak & Gambrell, 2008). While read alouds are an effective

strategy to teach about nonfiction, it is important to note that they are only effective when the read aloud is interactive. On the other hand, “when surveyed, educators of young children admitted that they were comfortable using story narratives and seldom used expository texts” with their students (Hall, Sabey, & McClellan, 2005, p. 214). Teachers had a difficult time stepping out of their comfort zone. Furthermore, “many teachers appear to be unsure of how to help children deal with expository texts” (Hall, Sabey, & McClellan, 2005, p. 214), thus leading to the lack of comprehension of the texts. Within that study of primary students, the teachers were nervous to use nonfiction at all. Some of their concerns were how to alter expository texts for young children, how to support children’s comprehension through oral and visual means, and teach children to productively work with the specific text structures. If teachers themselves had more confidence in their abilities as teachers, they would use nonfiction more often. Hall, Sabey, and McClellan stated that this “neglect of expository texts in primary grades may be a major contributor to the prevalent decline in reading achievement after third grade” (p. 212). This literature review examined how to teach nonfiction comprehension, students’ interests in nonfiction and their abilities in hope that teachers will be more at ease when it comes to teaching nonfiction texts to students. The more exposure teachers have to nonfiction, the better they will be at teaching specific comprehension strategies to students; and it will help alleviate some of the comprehension difficulties children may face (Hall, Sabey, & McClellan, 2005). The more exposure students have to nonfiction texts the better they will be at reading and comprehending this form of text. There are many forms of nonfiction texts to select from, just like fictional texts. Maloch and Bomer (2013b) explained the different types of texts,

inside of fiction, for example, exist multiple genres, including fantasy, historical fiction, and realistic fiction, to name a few, inside of nonfiction, you find narratively structured

genres like biography and historical narrative; you also find genres structured by exposition, like arguments, explanations, and articles packed with facts (which often get called “informational writing”). (p. 207)

All these different types of texts can be used in the classroom to connect with students' interests and abilities. Teachers need more awareness of the different types of texts that they are able to use within the classroom. Not all nonfiction texts read like a text book and more books are being published for young readers. Nonfictional texts can be appropriate for students at all age levels. Maloch and Bomer (2013b) recommend that teachers try not to get “bogged down in the terms used inside of the CCSS, but to focus instead on the range of text types included inside the standards” (p. 209).

Teachers need to take a cue from their students' interests and abilities to support and guide their instruction. Hall, Sabey, and McClellan (2005) reiterate that only reason students may have more difficulty reading nonfictional texts, “may be the result from, controlled sources such as availability of well-written texts, limited exposure to expository texts, and teachers' lack of familiarity with expository text instruction” (p. 212). Students are capable to reading and understanding nonfictional texts, they just need proper exposure and instruction to these types of texts.

Conclusion

Students need many different strategies, materials, and instructions in order to fluently read and comprehend nonfictional texts. There is no question that nonfiction texts are more complex than fictional stories due to their academic vocabulary and text structure. However, it is vital for students to be able to read nonfictional texts and construct meaning in order to be college and career ready. Most importantly students need to be exposed to and taught about

nonfictional texts in the primary grades. Students as young as kindergarten should be learning about and from nonfiction texts. Throughout these studies it was found that students as young as kindergarten are able to comprehend such texts and more importantly enjoy read them.

Applegate and Applegate (2010) found that motivated readers read more and attained higher academic achievement. These studies found that motivation and interest in a text can be a leading factor on students' abilities to able to comprehend.

These studies also found that teachers need to be aware of student's interests and abilities. Teachers involved in early literacy instruction need to be aware of the relationship emerging between these factors and the importance of developing and promoting both cognitive and affective aspects of reading (McGeown et al., 2015). It is so important incorporate multiple strategies to read all learners. With the growing pressure of students, teachers would benefit even more from engaging them within their own learning rather than settling on old practices such as mostly using fictional stories. Teachers need to set aside the common misconceptions about nonfiction in order to help today's students. This research has found that students are capable of understanding nonfiction and learning from it, nonfiction is available in a variety of forms and reading levels, and students genuinely enjoy learning about and from nonfictional texts. On the other hand, more research should be done on how tightly students' interests affect their comprehension.

Method

Context

This study takes place in a primary school, kindergarten through second grade, in Upstate New York. The school has six classrooms at each of the three grade levels, as well as two classrooms for pre-kindergarten. According to the New York State Report Card there are 334 in

the school and 42% of those are eligible for free lunch and 12% are eligible for reduced lunch. With 206 students being White, 53 Hispanic and 49 African American, only 8% of the students have limited English proficiency (NYS Report Card). Seven percent of the student population are classified as having disabilities. Students' annual attendance rates are steady at 95%. The school uses a balanced literacy approach and emphasizes critical thinking. There are programs in place that encourage reading at home, positive behaviors in school and supports for social and emotional development. The school is in the final stages of authorization to become an International Baccalaureate school. The school currently implemented the Primary Years Program to ensure the students are globally aware.

The community is one of the largest suburbs of the county. The district has one high school, two intermediate or middle schools and two primary schools. The area is also very recognizable for families to reside. About 90% of the people residing in this community have lived here for more than a year, speaking to the stability of the town; 63% of the households are families and only 31% live alone (U.S. Census Bureau). Eighty-seven percent of the population is White, 7.7% African American, 6.2% Hispanic or Latino, and the remainder are Asian, multiple races, or American Indian (U.S. Census Bureau). The median income for this area is about \$64,000 (U.S. Census Bureau).

The study takes place in a kindergarten classroom. There are currently 22 students within the class, who are either five or six years old. None of the students have a disability. There is one student who receives Tier 3 Response to Intervention in literacy and six students who receive Tier 2 Response to Intervention in literacy. There are 11 girls and 11 boys in the classroom. Ten of the 22 students are Caucasian, five African American students, four Hispanic students and three biracial students. The teacher of the classroom is a first year teacher. She is a 26-year-old,

Caucasian female. Additionally, she is currently enrolled in Graduate school. There is also a volunteer who comes in Monday through Thursday to assist the teacher and students with everyday tasks. The volunteer is an elderly Hispanic woman, who is fluent in Spanish and English.

Participants

The study will use 10 kindergarten students from the primary school. There are five girls and five boys. There is a range of beginning readers to emergent readers. All of the students are in the same class and have been given pseudonyms for the purpose of this study. Five kindergarten teachers answered questionnaires and eight parents answered questionnaires as well.

Students

The first student who participated in this study was Becky. She is five years old. Before kindergarten she attended preschool. She lives at home with her mother, father, older brother and new baby brother. She is currently meeting grade level standards and reading at a level B. She loves animals and enjoys learning.

Hayden is another participant in this study. She is five years old. She lives with her mother and older brother. She is meeting grade level expectations and reading at a level B.

Rachel is six years old. She is an only child and lives at home with her mother and father. She attended preschool before entering kindergarten. She is currently exceeding all grade level expectations. She is reading at a level G. She loves learning and participates often in class.

Next is Nicole, she is six years old. She lives at home with her mother and her older brother. She attended preschool before entering kindergarten. She is currently meeting grade level expectations and reading at a level D.

Don is also reading at a level D. He is five years old. He attended daycare before entering kindergarten. He lives at home with his mom, dad, and baby brother.

Evan is six years old. He did not attend preschool prior to entering kindergarten. His parents are divorced and he lives with his mother and older brother. He is currently meeting grade level expectations and reading at a level B.

Anthony is five years old. He did not attend preschool before entering kindergarten. He is currently below in writing, but meeting all other grade level standards. He is reading at a level B. Anthony is a very energetic boy. He receives the reduced lunch price. Anthony lives with his mother, father and two older siblings.

Ryan was the last participant in this study. He is five years old. He did not attend preschool before entering kindergarten. He is currently reading at a level B. He is below grade level standards concerning phonics, writing, and phonemic awareness. Ryan is receiving Academic Intervention Services. He lives at home with his mother, father and two older brother.

Teachers

The first teacher is Tessa. She has taught kindergarten for the past eight years. She has 20 students in her classroom. Three of the students in her classroom qualify for special education services. She has been a teacher for the past 15 years; before teaching kindergarten she taught first and third grade. She has always taught in the current district. She is married with two children in college.

The next teacher is Ashley. She is 29 years old. This year is her second year teaching kindergarten in the current district. She has 23 students in her classroom; of that seven are English as New Language Learners (ENL). She taught preschool and kindergarten for three years at a nearby Catholic school.

Sarah is a long-term substitute in the district. This position is her first teaching job. She has 22 students in her classroom. She has a master's in literacy and psychology. She is 30 years old.

Lindsey is a new to the district this year. This is also her first year teaching kindergarten. She has 22 students in her classroom. She has also taught third and first grade. She took time off from work to raise a family. She is married with four children.

Parents

There were eight students in this study and all of their parents participated through a short questionnaire (Appendix A). Parent names were not included on the questionnaires sent home but the child's name was recorded in order to indicate who the information was on.

Researcher Stance

Currently, I am a graduate student at St. John Fisher College completing my final coursework for a Master's degree in Literacy Education, Birth through Sixth Grade. I presently have a Bachelor's degree in Childhood Education and Special Education Grades Birth through Sixth. I am a first year kindergarten teacher and the actual teacher in this study. However, as the researcher for this study, I acted as a passive observer, meaning that while I was not involved in any instruction or teaching of any new concepts, I did observe and record how children reacted to the different parts of the study (Mills, 2014). Because I approached this study as a researcher hoping to discover students' beliefs without teacher input, I felt it was best to remain passive and simply observe. In doing so, I will be able to observe students during whole group, small group, one-on-one and independently. While I am the teacher who administered the reading assessments, I did so without influencing the student responses.

Method

The first part of the study will focus on observations. I will observe the students as they read independently and take books out of the library. Using a class list, I will record whether the students are reading fiction or nonfiction books. Data will be collected for three weeks. I will collect information from the library three times. I will observe students choosing books in the classroom twice a week for three times, for a total of six times, in order to record their reading interests. In addition, I will observe students during read alouds and track the students' participation and engagement. I will read one nonfiction and one fiction book.

The second part of my student will involve some involvement on my part. I will informally interview my students through conversations. I will ask students to choose a book; they will be given a choice between fiction and nonfiction. I will then ask students why they choose that book.

During the last part of my study students will be completing individual reading record assessments. This assessment will be individual and at their independent reading level. Students will read and answer comprehension questions on a fiction and nonfiction book. Having students read at their independent level will help correlate their preference and comprehension abilities.

Additionally, I will send home surveys (Appendix A) to parents to gain an understanding of what kind of books students have at home. I am doing this to see if this influences their preferences and to see what kind of exposure they have to different genres of books. I will also give questionnaires (Appendix B) to the other kindergarten teachers to see what kinds of books they are reading to their students, what kind of exposure to different genres are present in their classrooms and what their perceptions are on student interests and comprehension abilities.

Quality and Credibility of Research

Many times, during action research study, the trustworthiness and validity is called into

question. Guba (1981) believes that trustworthiness can be established by addressing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Mills, 2014).

The first measure for trustworthiness in research is credibility. Mills (2014) explains, "The credibility of the study refers to the researcher's ability to take into account the complexities that present themselves in a study and to deal with patterns that are not easily explained" (p. 115). In other words, researchers need to take into account that data does not always perfectly align in expected ways, for there are many unforeseeable factors. Therefore, I will practice triangulation, in order to compare a variety of data sources in order to cross-check data (Mills, 2014). Additionally, I am participating in peer debriefing meetings. According to Mills, peer debriefing is defined as "the opportunity to test growing insights through interactions with other professionals -somebody who is willing and able to help us reflect on our own situations" (p. 115). Throughout my data collection and analysis of the research, I will meet with a critical colleague to discuss what I have learned and reflect on the collected information.

The second measure of trustworthiness is transferability. Mills (2014) defines transferability as, "the researcher's belief that everything is context-bound" (p. 117). To guarantee that honest and trustworthy data is found, I collected data by using video and audio recordings, detailed note taking and student artifacts. The detailed data, notes and artifacts were able to show the ability of transfer in different contexts. Also, the discussions of data show how this study can be translated to other situations.

Dependability is the third component of trustworthiness. Mills (2014) defines research dependability as "the stability of the data" (p. 116). Which is shown through the triangulation of the methods to show strength in the data. The data is detailed from start to finish, with

overlapping methods in order to ensure “the weakness of one is compensated by the strength of another” (Mills, 2014, p. 116).

A final component is confirmability. Confirmability can be defined as the “neutrality or objectivity of the data that has been collected” (Mills, 2014, p. 116). There were multiple sources of data collected in order to cross-check all data collected. Within this study, I will be cross-checking several types of data such as observations, field notes, audio-recordings, student work, questionnaires, and assessments. With credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability ensured, the study will be trustworthy and valid.

Informed Consent and Protecting the Rights of the Participants

Prior to conducting this research study, I needed to ask for permission from the parents of each of the students involved in this study as they were under the age of 18. Each parent received a permission form which clearly indicated the purpose of the study and my request of their son or daughter's participation. Within the permission letter, I asked each parent for a signature of permission to continue with the research. Also, each adult participant signed a consent form, which made sure that each participant understood the study and the risks and benefits. No assent forms were needed in this study, as participants were too young and are unable to read or write, but I asked each child for verbal assent. In this study all of the names of participants have been replaced with pseudonyms to guarantee privacy and the rights of the participants. In addition to ensuring participant privacy, any identifying marks are taken from any artifacts.

Data Collection

In order to collect data with many and accurate results, I used the following sources: active observation, informal interviews, student work, checklists, and questionnaires. Throughout the data collection I recorded all conversations with students in order to provide me with exact

transcript. An iPad was used to record both audio and video. Using recordings and checklists helped me organize the information. The students interested were tally to record how many times students showed an interest in either fiction or nonfiction.

There are two student work samples. The one sample is a writing sample on student interest. The students completed a worksheet on which type of book they like better. During this time, I was actively participating in a conversation with the students. The students also completed a reading assessment on both fiction and nonfiction to gather information on their comprehension abilities. Both of these will be recorded.

Lastly, questionnaires were used. I sent home questionnaires to parents to gain an understanding of what kinds of books are read at home and I gave a questionnaire to the teachers to gain a better understanding of what kinds of books are read at school. The teachers also completed a section on their perception of student comprehension abilities. (Appendix A and B) Afterwards, this data was analyzed to see the influence on student interests.

Data Analysis

After collecting five pieces of qualitative data, I looked to see where there were commonalities or differences amongst them. The qualitative data consisted of the student interviews about fiction and nonfiction reading preferences, student written responses, book preferences from the library, and the parent and teacher questionnaires. The data was first organized by form and typed out into transcripts to easily read and see across the data of what was similar or different. Additionally, I tallied students' responses and interests in order to compare the data to their comprehension abilities. From there I started to develop themes based on what was continually showing up. I focused my thought process for developing themes on how students understood nonfiction and fictional texts in relation to their abilities to comprehend

these texts. I had hopes that coding the data this way would present a clear path to the correlation between preference and comprehension.

Firstly, the student discussions and interviews were coded based on the commonalities and differences that they each revealed. I first focused on students understanding of the definition of fiction and nonfiction. While most students seemed to have a clear understanding of the definition when asked in isolation, some students struggle to then apply that knowledge to reading. This information was then compared to the data found through the parent and teacher questionnaires and the students' written responses. The data was triangulated, which helped in guiding the coding of the data, showing what children are exposed to as far as text genres clearly influences their work.

Secondly, the discussions, teacher and parent interviews, and checklists used throughout the study were coded and analyzed by the similarities or differences that appeared. The comments the students often made pertained to stories of their own experiences by making text-to-self connections. Students often made connections to stories that were not relevant to research at hand. Furthermore, children at this age level show to have very similar thought processes, which was shown in the data through the commonalities of student work, interviews, and discussions. The questionnaires found that multiple factors influence students' preferences in reading.

The students' interests and preferences needed to be compared to reading and comprehension abilities in order to answer this research question. Therefore, the qualitative research collected was two Fountas and Pinnell Running Reading Assessments. The Running Reading Records used were at the students' independent reading level in order to evaluate their comprehension on both fiction and nonfiction texts. The students' independent reading level was

used in hope the students would be able to read fluently. This data was then analyzed based on all the components of the Running Reading Record, such as, accuracy rate, self-correction ratio, fluency, and comprehension. The students' comprehension abilities on both fiction and nonfiction were compared to students' interests data.

Findings and Discussion

The findings from this study were drawn from data, which includes informal interviews, questionnaires, monitoring of book selections, and student work samples. The goal of this study was to discover if a child's interest over fiction or nonfiction text played a role in a student's ability to comprehend both types of text. Within the data collected there were themes that emerged amongst them. Throughout the data it became clear that children in kindergarten have difficulty defining fiction and nonfiction. Therefore, the students were unable to choose a favorite type of text. The students' inability to define their favorite type of text, left a lot of data that needed to be interpreted and analyzed. The second theme founded was outside influences can greatly influence a child's reading preferences and abilities. This theme was found through the teacher interviews, parent interviews, student work, and student interviews. The students' personal experiences, the exposure to both fiction and nonfiction, and others seemed to greatly influence a child's personal preference in fiction and nonfiction. The third and final theme was how all reading abilities and skills also influence comprehension abilities. The hypothesis of this study was that students' interests will impact their ability to comprehend texts, whether fiction or nonfiction. However, the data collected through the Fountas and Pinnell Running Reading Records found that many factors influence a student's ability to comprehend a text, including vocabulary, fluency rate, and self-correction ability. Additionally, through student interviews and

student work the students also expressed reasoning as to why it was easier to read specific types of texts.

A Child's Interest in Fiction and Nonfiction

Most students are exposed to both nonfiction and fictional texts before entering school but the definitions are not given until they enter kindergarten. Throughout the data it was found that students still struggle with the definition of fiction and nonfiction. Due to the age of the students and their misconceptions data was also collected on the books the students took out of the library during three visits. This data was collected to get a better grasp on the students' interests in either fiction or nonfiction. Table 1 below shows students' book selections from the library over a week three period. Students are allowed to choose books from the library freely and independently.

Table 1
Book Selection from Library

Student Name	Type of Text		
Anthony	No book	No book	No book
Hayden	No book	Fiction	Fiction
Becky	Nonfiction	Nonfiction	Nonfiction
Evan	Fiction	Nonfiction	Fiction
Don	Fiction	Nonfiction	Fiction
Ryan	No book	Fiction	Fiction
Natalie	Nonfiction	Nonfiction	Nonfiction
Rachel	Fiction	Fiction	Fiction

According the library data 11 of the books chosen were fiction and eight of the books chosen were nonfiction. This data is similar to the work of Correia (2011) where she found that

“as a group, the children chose nonfiction or informational texts over fiction 14 out of 19 weeks” (p. 102). This current study was only three weeks long but it also found that students chose more nonfiction texts from the library. Unfortunately, Anthony was unable to take books out of the library because he has an overdue book. Likewise, Hayden and Ryan were unable to take books out one week due to overdue books. From the data collected from the library it is clear to see that Rachel, Ryan, and Hayden prefer fiction, Becky and Natalie prefer nonfiction, and Don and Evan enjoy both.

The data from the library shows Rachel's love for fiction books. She checked out the books: Pinkalicious, The Cat and the Hat, and If You Give a Mouse a Cookie. Rachel chose very popular picture books. Pinkalicious is a favorite amongst young girls, The Cat and the Hat is a classic book and If You Give a Mouse a Cookie is a well-known book at this time. During Rachel's interview she said “I like to read cool books” (personal communications, 2016). This statement could be interrupted that Rachel likes to read books that are well-known or new. Rachel also said that she likes to read “books that are funny,” all of these books have fun loving and make believe story lines.

Ryan also likes fiction books. He chose fiction books from the library he chose two book fictional books about Legos. Ryan loves to play with Legos in class and whenever it is his turn to share in class he always shares about the newest Lego toy he got. Bozack and Salvaggio (2013) found that students like to read and discuss books that relate to their personal interest at the time. Ryan's favorite type of toy at the moment influences his favorite type of book.

Hayden also chose fiction books from the library. Hayden chose a Sofia the First book and the book Pinkalicious. Sofia the First is a television show from the Disney Channel and again Pinkalicious is a popular children's book. Hayden enjoys reading books with girl

characters. When asked why she chose the book *Pinkalicious* she said “I like pink and it is pretty” (personal communications, 2016).

Becky and Natalie both chose nonfiction books all three times. Their stories are always about living things. The girls are often in the nonfiction section of the library together looking at different animal books. Becky took out three books from the PebbleGo series. She took out the books entitled, Wolfs, Flamingos, and Spiders. Natalie also took about the book Flamingos. Natalie's other two books choices were about ladybugs for two weeks in a row. The girls seem to enjoy looking at the real life pictures. During a conversation with myself Becky stated that “[she] likes to seem real animals because they are cool and not fake” (personal communications, 2016). The girls' interest in learning about animals proves their interest in nonfiction books.

Both Don and Evan showed an interest in both kinds of books. They both choose two fictional books and two nonfictional books. Don took a nonfiction books on dinosaurs, the fiction books, Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus and Peanut Butter and Jellyfish. Evan took out a nonfiction book on volcanos and the fiction books, Yo! Yes and a Pete the Cat book. The boys did not pick books for specific reasons. Each time Evan was asked why he picked a book he said “I don't know” (personal communications, 2016). On the other hand, Evan told his parents “I prefer to read nonfiction because I like to learn about real life” (Parent Questionnaire, 2016). Evan interest in real life shows as he chose a nonfiction book on volcanos. Duke and Kays (1998) said that nonfiction books help relate to students' present interests. Clearly, Evan understands the definition of nonfiction, but he frequently changes his favorite type of text. He told his parents he enjoys nonfiction best, yet chose a fiction book two out of three times from the library and he chose fiction during the interview. Evan seems to show an interest in both types of text. Don's answers were limited as well. He said that he chose the book about dinosaurs

because “[he] likes T-Rex” and he choose Don’t Let a Pigeon Drive the Bus “because it is so funny” (personal communication, 2016).

The next table is the same library information but organized by gender. Merisuo-Storm (2006) found that “children discover early, aided by the influence of peers, that one book is a ‘girl book’ and another a ‘boy book’” (p. 113). Therefore, Table 2 broke looked at the library results by gender and interest in fiction or nonfiction.

Table 2
Gender Interest in Fiction or Nonfiction

<i>Boys</i>		<i>Girls</i>	
Fiction	Nonfiction	Fiction	Nonfiction
75%	25%	55%	45%

The above, Table 2, shows the percentage of fiction and nonfiction books taken out of the library by both boys and girls. The table shows that 75% of the books taken out of the library by boys were fiction books and only 25% were nonfiction. The table also shows that 55% of the books that girls chose were nonfiction books and 45% were fiction. This data disagrees with the findings from Merisuo-Storm (2006). Merisuo-Storm found that boys preferred nonfiction and girls did not. Additionally, Merisuo-Storm found that girls are more likely to take risks when reading, girls are more willing to choose a book regardless if it is considered a “girls book or boys book.” The girls in this study almost evening chose between fiction and nonfiction; they chose books from Pinkalicious to books about spiders. This study does not match with the study done by Correia (2011). In her study each week, more boys than girls chose nonfiction.

The library data wasn’t the only data used to figure out the students reading preference. Many classroom observations and student interviews were used to gain a better understanding of the student’s preference. Table 3 was created from a short interview with the students. The students were shown two books, the nonfiction book entitled, Sleep Bear, and the fiction book

entitled, Bear Can't Sleep. The students were asked to choose which book they would rather read and why, the results are as follows.

Table 3
Student's Book Choices

Boys		Girls	
Fiction	Nonfiction	Fiction	Nonfiction
25%	75%	50%	50%

The data in Table 3 show differences in the boys reading preferences but similarities in the girls reading preferences. This table shows that girls chose equally between the fiction book and the nonfiction book. This table shows that only one boy chose the fiction book while the rest chose the nonfiction book. According to this table all students enjoy reading nonfiction texts, but the boys seem to prefer them more. The information in this table is similar to the study conducted by Mohr (2006) because that study also found that all students enjoy nonfiction but boys do more. Likewise, both this study and that of Mohr found that boys are more likely bound by gender than girls. This is demonstrated here by the girls equally choosing both types of books and the boys mostly choosing nonfiction. Overall the data collected on students' interests show that both girls and boys alike enjoy nonfiction texts better.

Outside Influences Projected onto Reading Preferences

Students who are very young tend to allow many outside resources influence their own responses. When children are young most of what they use to create a response is their background knowledge. Throughout the data, students used their background knowledge and the influence of others to create their responses. The student interviews were conducted as students were choosing between two books; one book was a fictional book entitled Bear Can't Sleep and a nonfiction book entitled Bear Sleep. Often time the students' responses related to themselves.

Table 4 below shows which book the students chose when asked to choose between a nonfiction book about bears and a fiction book about bears. Each child was asked which book they would like to read and why. Additionally, the students were also asked which book was the nonfiction book.

Table 4

Student chose fiction or nonfiction

Name of Student	Type of text
Anthony	Nonfiction
Hayden	Fiction
Becky	Nonfiction
Evan	Nonfiction
Don	Nonfiction
Ryan	Fiction
Natalie	Nonfiction
Rachel	Fiction

Table 4 shows that students chose the nonfiction book more than they chose the fiction book. Five out of eight students chose the nonfiction book. The students chose a book by pointing to the one they would rather read. Correia (2011) stated “I was convinced that kindergartener preferred fiction, even though much of the research cited children’s preferences for the content of informational books over narrative text, given that they are provided with quality options in both genres” (p. 101). This study then gave students quality book choices and found that the research holds true, more students chose the nonfictional book.

While students were choosing books they were asked numerous questions to get a better understanding as to why they selected the book. When asked why she chose a book Becky said “I like it so much.” (personal communications, 2016). Which is surprising because these books haven’t been read to the students. She did also say “I like bears.” (personal communication,

2016) this statement could relate to the last implying that she likes this book because she likes bears. Additionally, Hayden struggled to choose just one book because she “likes both books” (personal communications, 2016). At first, she tried to pick both books because she liked them both. When asked again, she decided on the fiction book because “the bear is cute and she likes the other animals on the cover” (personal communication, 2016). Both Hayden and Becky stated a likeness for the books because of the animals on the cover. As found earlier, Becky enjoys to learn about real animals this is probably why she chose the nonfiction book about bears. Hayden chose the fiction book because of the “cute animals” before she stated that she likes books that are “pretty.” Hayden chose the fiction book because the cover was colorful, animated and appealing. The students made connections with the bears on the covers of the books in order to make their selections.

Likewise, Natalie chose the nonfictional book because she “just likes bears so much” (personal communication, 2016), she was interested in reading about real bears. Natalie said that she wanted to read the nonfiction book because “she likes to read about bears.” Similarly, Anthony chose the nonfictional book because he wanted to learn about real bears, Anthony said that he “wants to learn about the real bear in this book” as he pointed to the nonfiction book. The students’ interests in bears, the cover, the other animals on the cover, and the words in the title influenced the students’ choices.

The brief interviews also showed how students own experiences influence their decisions. Ryan stated that he wanted to read the fiction book entitled Bear Can’t Sleep because he “could not fall asleep last night” (personal communications, 2016). His inability to fall asleep but him relate to the words in the title of the fictional book. This statement provides proof that sometimes personal connects influence our choices. Both books were about bears and sleeping, however the

fiction book had the word 'can't' in the title and that connected the Ryan's inability to fall asleep the night before. The titled helped connect Ryan to the story. Readers like to connect to what they are reading and see themselves in the stories (Bozack & Salvaggio, 2013, Belloni & Jongma 1978, Oldfather, 1993, Mohr, 2006).

All the students were able to make text-to-self connections when choosing books. They selected books based on their own interests or feeling at the time. Furthermore, this data showed that students are influenced by many factors when choosing books, such as the title, the cover, the characters, and the genre. These interviews are very similar to the study by Gallo and Ness (2013). All interviews started with the same, the titles were read to the students and then they were asked which book do you want to read? All eight students were interviewed. Their answers varied greatly because of their personal interests.

In addition to the student interviews there were also parent and teacher interviews. These interviews examined the exposure the students have to different types of texts and the adults' perceptions of student interests. The questionnaires for parents (appendix A) consisted of four questions. Three out of four of the questions were for parents and then last was a question for their children. The final question instructed parents to ask their child if they prefer to read fiction or nonfiction texts and why.

The results of the questionnaire are resulted in the table below (Table 5).

Table 5
Questionnaire Results of Student Response

<i>Boys</i>		<i>Girls</i>	
Fiction	Nonfiction	Fiction	Nonfiction
25%	75%	50%	50%

The results from Table 5 indicated the same results from table 3. Three out of the eight students choose nonfiction. The parents asked their children what kind of books they liked and why. The parents recorded their children's' responses. Natalie's parents indicated that she likes to read "fake and real" books. Therefore, Natalie stated her interest in both fiction and nonfiction books. When Ryan's parents asked him what kind of books he liked he said "I like nonfiction, because I do not like when animals talk in stories. Similarly, When Becky's parents asked her why she liked nonfiction she said "I do not like when bears talk in stories." Becky likes to learn and read about real animals. The students who chose nonfiction indicated that they like to learn real facts from books. Nonfiction books are interesting to students basically they are learning new facts.

Throughout the parent questionnaires it was also found that 88% of households mostly read fiction at home because they have more fictional texts at home. Similarly, the research found that students are more exposed to fiction within the classroom as well. However, this does not mean that students do not take interest in nonfiction or that they are unable to understand nonfiction. This data was then compared to the teacher questionnaires (Appendix B). Four teachers completed the questionnaires. The second question asked what types of texts they have more of in their classroom, the teachers could circle either fiction or nonfiction. All of the teachers circled that they have and use more fiction in the classroom due to limited nonfiction resources. Ashley said "Fiction is what I have most available in my classroom." Maloch and Bomer (2013b) found that many teachers have limited nonfictional texts at their disposal. In connection, one student stated that she "likes the stories we read with Miss O'Flynn" (personal communications, 2016) and also indicated she likes fiction books. Therefore, creating a connection that she hears fictional stories in the classroom and that is why she likes them best.

Sarah said she uses “fiction to teach students about reading strategies and comprehension because it is what is available in my room.” Likewise, Lindsey said she uses “fiction for read alouds because that is what is available and easy to match to specific lessons.” While all of the teachers indicated that fiction is available and convenient to use during instruction, they all understand that students enjoy both fiction and nonfiction. Lindsey said her students like nonfiction best because “they like to hear true information about things in their world, especially animals.” While outside influences can reflect on a students’ personal interest it does not always dictate the outcome. Students’ preference will continue to grow as their understanding of different types of texts developments and background knowledge strengthens. As students get older they will have a better understanding of their personal preference.

Reading Skills Influence on Comprehension

The research question of this study was focused on students’ comprehension in comparison to their interests in fiction and nonfiction. Most of the data collected focused on the students’ interests because as stated students struggled to choose a favorite kind of book. The final part of the study focused on students’ comprehension abilities. The results from the Fountas and Pinnell Running Reading Records were compared to students’ responses and the interest data.

The students read two passages and answered comprehension questions immediately following. There was one fiction passage and one nonfiction passage. The students chose which passage they wanted to read first but ultimately read them both. The students read passages at their independent reading level. Therefore, Rachel read level G passages, Natalie and Don read level D passages, and the other five students read level B passages. The students read at their independent level with hopes the vocabulary and fluency would not inhibit with their

comprehension abilities. However, the data found that in addition to interests, reading skills greatly interfered with comprehension abilities.

The students were presented the titles of the books and told what type of text they were. The students then selected the book they wanted to read first as another way to gather insight into their interests when reading. Table 6 shows what books the students first based upon gender. The table is then compared to the other tables throughout the study.

Table 5
Books Chosen at Time of Assessment

Boys		Girls	
Fiction	Nonfiction	Fiction	Nonfiction
50%	50%	25%	75%

The above table displays that students in general chose to read the nonfiction text first. Seventy-five percent of the girls chose to read the nonfiction book first. The boys equally selected between the fiction and nonfiction text.

Don and Natalie both read level D passages, Don chose to read the fiction text first, it was entitled The Nice Little House. Don's accuracy rate was 98% and his fluency score was 3/3 however, when reading he misread the word 'skunk' as 'squirrel.' This mistake completely changed the meaning of the story. In order to be able to fully comprehend, Don's mistake was corrected. It was clear that as Don was reading he was using the picture clues to read the words of the animals. Don answered all within the text questions correctly, but Don was unable to inference beyond the words written on the pages because of his misconception of the type of animal. While Don gathered a lot of information from the text he was unable to grasp why the animals left the house because he was unable to read the word skunk, the vocabulary proved to interfere with his comprehension abilities. Don was able to read the nonfictional text Our Teacher Mr. Brown with 100% accuracy and in return was able to comprehend with 100%

percent accuracy. Don's success in the nonfiction text may be related to his interest in nonfiction. Don shows an interest in both types of text but does seem to favor nonfiction, according to Table 4. While answering the comprehension questions Don made a connection to the text by saying "I do this in school too!" (personal communications, 2016). Don was able to make a personal connection the story. While reading he looked at picture clues to read words like write, read, stories, etc. these are words that are not sight words in kindergarten but frequently displayed in classroom. Foster (2008) found that students develop schemas and those schemas grow as they read and learn. Don was able to build upon and pull from this schema about school in order to help himself read the text. Don was able to build upon his background knowledge and interest in school to comprehend the nonfiction text.

Likewise, Nicole did well on both the fiction and nonfiction texts. She was able to read the fiction text with 100% accuracy and comprehension. Surprisingly, Natalie's accuracy rate was 96% when reading the nonfictional text but her comprehension was still 100%. The data continuously showed that she had an interest in nonfiction, however this assessment data proves that she is able to comprehend both types of text easily.

Rachel is reading above her grade level. She has great sight word knowledge but usually struggles with comprehension. For the study she read two passages at a level G. Rachel chose to read the fictional passage, Bedtime for Nick, first. Rachel had one error, and one self-correction, making her accuracy rate 99% with great fluency. According to the Fountas and Pinnell Assessment, Rachel provided limited comprehension during the comprehension conversation. Next, she read Bubbles, the nonfiction text. Again, she was able to read with 99% accuracy rate and great fluency. During the comprehension conversation Rachel displayed satisfactory comprehension with a score of 70%. This data is surprising because of all the students

interviewed Rachel showed the least interest in nonfiction, but she did better comprehending the nonfiction text over the fiction. While reading Rachel made connections to the story about bubbles, by saying “I like to blow bubbles”. She also laughed when the little boy was blowing bubbles in his milk and said “I get in trouble when I do that, it is not proper.” Rachel may have been able to better understand the nonfiction text because she had similar experiences in her life. McMaster et al (2015) stated that “comprehension tasks are highly text-dependent, requiring a literal understanding of the text; on the other end, comprehension tasks are text independent, requiring background knowledge beyond the text” (p. 29); in this case Rachel used both her background knowledge and the text to comprehend it well. When reading the fiction text, she did not have any personal comments, she just read the text straight through.

The next five students, Anthony, Becky, Hayden, Evan, Ryan all read the level B passages. The fiction text was entitled My Little Dog and the nonfiction was entitled Playing. All of the students but Evan chose to read the nonfiction text first. Compared to the books the students checked out of the library and Table 4, Anthony and Becky both continued to choose nonfiction. Unlike the above data Evan previously chose nonfiction. Ryan and Hayden both chose fiction first but now selected the nonfiction text. Most of the students continue to show an interest in both types of texts, except for Becky and Anthony who seem to have a clear interest in nonfiction.

The table below shows the students' scores on the comprehension conversation from the Fountas and Pinnell Assessment. Table 6 shows the results of all eight students' comprehension scores. The score is out of seven points. Fountas and Pinnell refer to the comprehension assessment as a comprehension conversation, where the teacher prompts the student to tell the teacher about the passage they just read. The score consists of three points available for within

the text questions, three points for beyond the texts questions, and one additional point for any additional understanding. The final point is up to teacher discretion.

Table 6

Assessment Results

Student Name	Fiction Comprehension Score	Nonfiction Comprehension Score
Rachel	57%	71%
Don	86%	100%
Natalie	100%	100%
Evan	57%	86%
Becky	71%	86%
Hayden	86%	86%
Anthony	86%	86%
Ryan	71%	86%

All of the students received a score of 6/7 on the nonfiction comprehension conversation. But their scores varied on the fiction comprehension from four to six out of seven. All of the students who were reading at a level B seem to struggle with sight word knowledge and this greatly impacted their abilities to read with accuracy and fluently in result inhibited their ability to comprehend the texts fully. All of the students were unfamiliar with the word 'with'. This word was in both passages and needed to be taught first for the students to be able to understand the passages.

In addition to the sight word knowledge other factors influenced the students' ability read and comprehend the texts. Ryan used pictures to help read unknown words such as truck and airplane. He looked at the picture clues in order to figure out the words. Likewise, Hayden and Anthony used picture clues to read the words truck, airplane and doll. At first Hayden said babydoll, then reread and realized the word started with a /d/ and corrected the word to doll. In

kindergarten students are taught basic CVC words and common sight words, similar to the Dolch words. Otherwise students are taught skills in order to help them read unknown words. The students were taught to look at the beginning sound of the word and the picture in order to read the unknown word. Another strategy students are taught is to reread the sentence in order to ensure it makes sense. Ryan often reread while reading in order to self-monitor his reading. The students in this study used many strategies to read the texts. Martin and Kragler (2012) found that some students “focus on the use of one strategy, whereas others used a variety of strategies to understand the stories” (p. 142). The children in this study used many strategies in order to read the task and comprehend it. Likewise, Martin and Kragler also found that students look at reading as a problem solving task. Self-monitoring is a strategy needed and used to read and comprehend, students in this study proved that their reading skills allow them to comprehend the passages.

The students did well with comprehension, especially the nonfiction. The students demonstrate that they are capable of reading nonfiction text and understanding it. The research of Gallo and Ness (2013) agrees with this research that young students can be successful with informational text. In this study it was found that the nonfiction texts were actually easier to read for these students. The students accuracy rates were higher on the nonfiction and according to Table 6 their ability to comprehend and infer were greater on the nonfiction.

The data collected indicated that students do have the ability to read and comprehend nonfiction texts. The data showed a correlation between students' interests and students' comprehension abilities but it was not completely clear. Overall the data showed that all of the students enjoyed nonfiction. All of the students were able to comprehend nonfiction better than fiction. All of the students were able to make personal connections when reading nonfiction. The

data definitely showed that students enjoy to read nonfictional texts, and those types of texts should be more available for students within the classroom and at home.

Implications and Conclusions

The data from this study was limited but did demonstrate a correlation between students' interests and comprehension abilities. The first implication of this study focused on the students' ability to define fiction and nonfiction. In kindergarten, teachers are given the responsibility of teaching the young students the difference between a fictional text and a nonfiction text. This study indicated that there is more of a need to infuse the definitions into instruction. In order for students to decide a favorite type of text they need to understand the definition of each type. It is important for students and teachers to understand their interests to help guide instruction.

Teachers understand that specific types of texts and materials that need to be taught to students because of curriculum needs, so it is important to continue to teach those types of books.

However, it is also important to take into consideration the types of books that students enjoy to read and infuse them into instruction. Little, McCoach and Reis (2014) found that often, "schools tend to focus on bringing as many students as possible up to a minimum standard, rather than on enriching the experience of students reading" (p. 385). If teachers spent more time learning about students' interests, it would likely increase their reading skills and comprehension abilities.

On a surprising note, another implication from the data also found that teachers amongst the kindergarten team are struggling to teach about and use nonfictional texts because of the lack of resources. Similarly, Duke (2000) found that the lack of resources is the number one reason students are having difficulty with nonfictional texts. The less resources the teachers have the less exposure the students have to the structure of a nonfictional text. Teachers and parents alike in this study stated that they frequently read more fictional texts because that is what they own.

Regardless of the amount of exposure the students the final implication of this study showed an ability to comprehend both types of texts, but above all, nonfiction. Martin and Kragler (2012) found that students have the ability to monitor their own understanding, with “nonfiction texts playing an important role in the development of strategic monitoring and self-regulating behaviors while reading” (p. 151). The students in this study were more successful with the nonfictional texts because they were able to monitor their own learning. The students used reading strategies and their personal ideas and experience in order to make sense of and comprehend the texts.

This study aimed to determine how students' interests influence their abilities to comprehend different types of the text. This study focused on fiction vs. nonfiction texts. Children's interests guide may their motivation when leaning. Belloni and Jongma's (1978) study stated that “students comprehend better when they are interested in what they are reading” (p. 107). This study used multiple methods in order to look at the relationship between students interests and comprehension abilities. The methods used were, conversations and discussions with the students, questionnaires for teachers and parents, observations of students reading, and independent reading assessments. This information was used and analyzed in order to see what students preferences are, whether fiction or nonfiction, and how it affects their abilities to comprehend both types of text. This study found that kindergarteners were unable to express in words why they liked a specific type of text. Other data was used to determine a child's favorite type of text in order to compare it to their comprehension abilities. Kindergarteners have minimal knowledge and little understanding of their personal interests. The students were unaware of how their interests influenced their comprehension abilities; so it is important for teachers to find this connection. Additionally, that data and findings show that there is a lack of

resources and materials for students and teachers to use to teach about nonfiction. Most importantly, this study showed that students have the ability to comprehend nonfictional texts. Additionally, that data and findings show that there is a lack of resources and materials for students and teachers to use to teach about nonfiction. Most importantly, this study showed that students have the ability to comprehend nonfictional texts.

This study does require future research. This study was done on the youngest of learners; it makes one wonder what this research would look like in upper elementary grades, middle schools and high schools. The age of the children was one of the limitations of this study. Although, the results were interesting and the participants were hard working, they were young with little experiences and had difficulty understanding the vague questions being asked. It is possible that children who are a little bit older would have different responses because of their experiences or enhanced background knowledge. Another question to rise from the data is what are students in other classrooms interests and comprehension abilities? Does the teacher and her instruction affect a student's interests and/or comprehension abilities?

The study resulted in many limitations. It was a limitation that there were eight children and eight parents who were able to participate. The lack of the participation from parents and students provided very little information for the questionnaires and minimal information for the study with the children. If this study were to be conducted again I would recommend using more students and also students from other classes and grades. This small amount of data left a less desirable amount to interpret. A third limitation would be the time allotted for the study. There was only three weeks to complete this study. The time limitation allowed less time to have one on one conversations with the students to collect ample data. The final limitation to this study was the amount of data actually collected. A lot of time was spent trying to understand the

students interests in fiction and nonfiction, however it was found that the students did not completely understand their interests. Therefore, it would have been more productive to just observe the students reading choices and record. This method of data collection would have allowed more time to assess the students' comprehension abilities.

In conclusion, this research action found that students are capable of comprehending all types of texts regardless of their personal interests. The research did not present a direct correlation between interests and comprehension. This study, among others, have shown the importance of including all types of texts within the classroom and at home to help explain children's interests and understanding of types of text.

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Appendix A

Dear parents,

We are studying about fiction and nonfiction books. We also call them story books and learn about the world books. At this point students should understand the difference between the two. For homework please complete the following survey with your child. **Please return to school on Monday.** Thank you.

Yours in learning,
Miss O'Flynn



Please circle one of the following answers.

1. At home we mostly read...
 - Fiction
 - Nonfiction

2. At home we have more...
 - Fiction
 - Nonfiction

3. I think my child prefers to read...
 - Fiction
 - Nonfiction

3b. Why?

4. After asking my child they stated that they prefer to read...
 - Fiction
 - Nonfiction

4b. Why?



Appendix B**Teacher Survey**

Please circle one of the following answers.

1. I personally prefer to read....
 - a. Fiction
 - b. Nonfiction

2. In my classroom I have more _____ books.
 - a. Fiction
 - b. Nonfiction

3. I believe my students prefer to read...
 - a. Fiction
 - b. Nonfiction

- 2b. Why?

4. I usually read _____ aloud to students.
 - a. Fiction
 - b. Nonfiction

- 4b. Why?

5. I usually use _____ to teach about comprehension.
 - a. Fiction
 - b. Nonfiction

- 5b. Why?

6. I usually use _____ to teach reading strategies.
 - a. Fiction
 - b. Nonfiction

6b. Why?