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# Students' Response in Terms of Motivation and Engagement with the Use of Informational and Nonfiction Texts

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August 2009


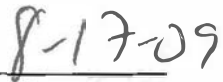
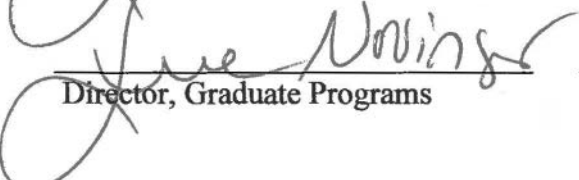

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Master of Science in Education: Childhood Literacy

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APPROVED BY:

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## Chapter 1

### *Introduction*

Student motivation and engagement for reading is a vital part of reading instruction, reading progress, and reading success throughout the students' lives. Students who are motivated and engaged in their reading, who are curious, and involved with reading, maintain long-term literacy learning (Leal & Kearney, 1997). However, all too often it seems, parents and teachers are hearing students complain about reading and displaying an overall negative attitude towards reading and its accompanying activities. Just a couple of months ago, during parent-teacher conferences, statements such as "he just doesn't like it" or "she will diligently do all of her homework until it comes to reading" were made by many of the parents of my third grade students. The students with whom I work are those in need of academic intervention services (AIS) for literacy and therefore struggle with reading and writing, some have been struggling for their entire school career thus far.

With all of the negativity surrounding reading and with the ever increasing demands from the state and school district placed on students despite their strengths and needs as readers and learners, it is imperative that something be done. Therefore, in an effort to increase student motivation and engagement around reading instruction, this research study was developed and sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do third –grade students enrolled in AIS services for literacy respond to the use of informational and nonfiction texts and trade books in AIS instruction?
2. How to third-grade students enrolled in AIS for literacy self-report about their motivation and engagement for reading and reading instruction when informational or nonfiction texts and trade books are used in AIS instruction?

This study is significant because it provides information on student motivation and engagement with nonfiction or informational text. Although there is research on the importance of using nonfiction and informational texts with students of all ages, there is limited research thus far on the motivation and engagement of students with these texts. This study also provided me valuable information as the literacy specialist in terms of continuing to explore and learn about the motivation and engagement of my students.

For the purpose of this study the following definitions were used:

1. Motivation and engagement were defined through the factors of personal interest, perceived competence, effort and importance, and value and usefulness (Self-determination theory, n.d.). The survey will take into consideration each of these factors for motivation and engagement.
2. Informational and nonfiction texts were defined as any book or text that presents true and accurate information. Included in this



definition are biographies, autobiographies, question and answer type books, books on certain topics that present information in a logical way with headings and chapters, books with indexes, glossaries, pictures, charts and graphs with captions, magazine articles, reference type books, and any other text that as stated above presents information that is true and accurate (Saul & Dieckman, 2005).

The research questions were be explored through the use of informational and nonfiction texts and trade books in the AIS classroom as well as through observation of student behavior during instruction using informational and nonfiction texts, responses to student surveys on their self-reported motivation and engagement, and responses to informal conversations between the myself and the students related to the texts, activities, observed behaviors, and responses to survey questions. The data collected was analyzed both qualitatively through the constant comparative method and quantitatively through assigning points to survey responses, using a Likert Scale. These methods allowed for student motivation and engagement to be considered from multiple sources and viewed from multiple dimensions, therefore creating triangulation.

## Chapter 2

### *Review of Literature*

While developing this study, I reviewed literature related to the topics of motivation and informational and nonfiction texts and trade books. With high stakes assessments and the push for certain programs to be used and new grants being offered and accepted by many school districts in the area, I am interested in motivation and engagement for students in terms of reading and the use of informational and nonfiction texts as a core part of instruction. In particular, I looked into what motivation is, factors that effect motivation, measuring motivation, the use of informational and nonfiction texts, comprehension of informational and nonfiction texts, and motivation and engagement for informational and nonfiction texts. All of the research has something valuable to offer in terms of motivation and engagement as well as the use of informational and nonfiction texts.

#### *Motivation*

When talking to teachers about their students or listening to teachers discuss their students in the faculty room during lunch, the factor of motivation is often brought up, but what is motivation and how do we as educators motivate our students to learn and be life long readers and thinkers? As reported in Lyons (2003), motivation is an inner drive that gives a person the incentive or encouragement to act in a certain way. In a classroom setting then, motivation for learning, in particular for reading, is a student's inner drive that gets them excited and into the task. There are two views of motivation that have been developed and explored, the cognitive view

and the sociocognitive view. The cognitive view states that motivation is “based on a individual’s learned beliefs about his worth and abilities, goals and expectations for success or failure, and the positive or negative feelings that result from self-evaluation” (p.78). The sociocognitive theorists believed that both internal and external social and contextual factors effect motivation (Lyons, 2003). It is through both of these theories of motivation that the two main types of motivation have emerged, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. According to Unrau and Schlackman (2006), students are mostly likely driven by a combination of both internal motivation and external motivation.

Intrinsic motivation is the type that many teachers strive for and desire for their students to possess. It is intrinsic motivation that gives students the drive to complete tasks and work diligently, with their best efforts put forth, simply because the student wants to complete the task and do well. Intrinsic motivation has no tangible consequence for the efforts given, but instead is completely driven by the person’s desire to behave in a certain way (Lyons, 2003).

Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is motivation that does have a tangible consequence. Someone who is motivated extrinsically is acting in a certain way because he/she desires the consequence that results from the certain behavior (Lyons, 2003). For example, in a classroom setting if a student is motivated extrinsically to complete a task or behave in a certain way, the student would be doing it for reward he/she would receive. This reward can range from a sticker, prize of some sort, free time, a star on the paper, a high grade on a report card, the teacher’s

approval or praise, a parent's approval or praise, or any other consequence that is tangible.

External motivation can also be noted in students in varying degrees or in different forms (Unrau & Schlackman, 2006). According to Unrau and Schlackman (2006), students can be externally motivated four different ways. The first way being through external regulation, which is the least autonomous or self-directed type of motivation. The second being introjected regulation where a student's motive and associated behavior are not fully held as one's own. Next, is identified regulation where the student values the goal and associated behavior as personally important but is still only motivated to reach the goal based on some type of tangible consequence. The final type of external motivation is integrated regulation which is the most autonomous external motivation yet still lacks internal enjoyment for the activity (Unrau & Schlackman, 2006).

### *Factors That Effect Motivation*

There are many factors that affect student motivation which must be taken into consideration. Some of these factors are students' perceived competence or their belief about their own abilities and skills, students' true ability, student choice, personal interest, characteristics of books such as the use of humor and exciting book covers, knowledge gained, who and where book suggestions come from, and who and where encouragement or source of motivation comes from. Also, motivation is affected by emotions.

Students' perceived competence or their perceived abilities at a given task affect their motivation for the given task, in this case in reading (Morgan & Fuchs, 2007). It has been shown that when students believe they are good at a given task, or in reading, that they will be much more likely to have high motivation for that given task than if their perceived abilities are lower. In one study, researchers reviewed the work and research of 15 previous studies to look for a possible relationship between competency beliefs and goal orientations. The researchers defined competency beliefs as how good one is at an activity and goal orientations as to whether and why students want to be good readers. Articles were chosen to be reviewed and studied that were peer reviewed only and that focused on the relationship between reading skills and a reading competency belief or a goal orientation. Longitudinal, cross-sectional, or control group studies were also part of the criteria for selection. Studies that were case studies or single-subject studies were eliminated. The results of the study or research review suggest that measures of young children's reading skills and their motivation to read correlate concurrently. Ten out of 11 studies suggest a bidirectional relationship between students' reading skills and their motivation to read, thus both affect each other equally. In other words, students who believe themselves to be poor readers, have lower motivation for reading than those who believe themselves to be good readers and students who have a lower motivation for reading, believe themselves to be poor readers, whereas students who believe themselves to be good readers have higher motivation for reading. The research review has also shown that few studies in the past have isolated the effects of possibly

confounding variables on the relationship between reading skill and motivation (Morgan & Fuchs, 2007)

Another study looked at early motivation and reading skill level with first graders' who experienced consistent failure at learning to read, as identified by their teachers (Morgan, D. Fuchs, Compton, Cordray & L. Fuchs, 2008). This study in a large metropolitan school district in the Southeast United States placed the students into three groups, highly skilled, low skilled non-responders, and low skilled non-responders who were given additional reading instruction through tutoring. The purpose of the study was to explore whether improving poor readers' word identification skills strengthens their self-reported motivation compared to their peers not making gains and whether teachers confirmed these differences. The results of the study indicated that students who were identified as low skilled non-responsive perceived reading as more difficult, perceived themselves as less competent readers, and had less positive attitudes towards reading than did the high skilled group. These differences among the groups held throughout the study. Results also showed that low skilled students differ greatly in their quantity and quality of intrinsic motivation compared to their high skilled peers. Students who were low skilled also used more task avoidance for reading activities and were reported by their teachers to read less frequently when time allowed for reading than their high skilled peers throughout the study. Although student reports showed both groups to practice reading in fairly equal amounts, teachers, as stated above, observed the high skilled students engaging in reading practice more often than the low skilled students. The results have been

determined to likely remain stable throughout time. Results also indicated that the students who were tutored did in fact have strengthened non-word and real-word reading skills. No improvement in these students' reading motivation or reading practice was revealed. Thus it was determined that later level of motivation or practice is best predicted by earlier level of motivation or practice rather than a student's earlier level of reading skill. In other words, students who are motivated and practice reading and reading skills at an early age are more likely to be motivated later in life to read, than if their abilities are high early on in life (Morgan, D. Fuchs, Compton, Cordray & L. Fuchs, 2008).

In addition, a study of 16 fourth grade students at a midsize city school in the southern United States, revealed how to really motivate these particular students to read (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006). The students were chosen randomly from six groupings that their English Language Arts teachers placed them in according to their demonstrated motivation to read and their level of reading. The groupings were as follows: Motivated Above-Grade Level, Motivated On-Grade Level, Motivated Below-Grade Level, Unmotivated Above-Grade Level, Unmotivated On-Grade Level, and Unmotivated Below-Grade Level. Three students from each grouping were then randomly selected to participate, except in the Unmotivated Above-Grade Level grouping where only one student was identified to be, therefore this one student was chosen to participate. Each child was then interviewed using the Conversational Profile by Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, and Mazzoni (as cited in Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006). This interview consists of 25 questions related to reading in

general as well as reading certain narrative and expository texts. Follow-up questions were also asked to provide greater understanding to student responses. The data were then organized and a comparative method was used to analyze the data. The results were organized into six different categories which revealed two or three main factors that motivated students to read in each of the six categories. The first category was narrative text which revealed that personal interest, characteristics of books such as humor and exciting book covers, and choice were the top three factors that motivated students to read narrative texts. The next category was expository text which revealed that the knowledge gained, choice, and personal interest were the top three factors that motivated students to read expository text. The category of reading in general showed characteristics of books and knowledge gained to be most valuable to students. The category of sources of book referrals showed students found most of their books at the school library, through teachers and family members, but most of all through their peers' recommendations. Looking into the category of sources of motivation revealed the most motivating sources to be family members, teachers, and the students themselves. The final category of the actions of the people motivating students to read showed that buying or giving children books, reading to children, and sharing books were the most motivating to students (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006). One limitation of this study is its small population that was surveyed and interviewed, therefore more research with a greater population would have to be completed in order to confirm that these results could be carried over to all or a majority students.



Emotion plays an important role in motivation. According to Lyons (2003), emotion and motivation can not be separated and are intertwined within brain processes. Therefore in order for a student to have motivation for a given task and to be successful basic needs, such as students feeling safe and comfortable, must be met first. To motivate a reluctant student, a teacher should be sure that the student feels comfortable in the environment, materials should be selected that are of interest to the student and are appropriate for the student, not too challenging, the student should feel as though the teacher has genuine interest in him or her and the teacher should anticipate any challenges that may arise in an effort to avoid any inappropriate behaviors from occurring (Lyons, 2003).

### *Measuring Motivation*

There are several factors that go into measuring motivation. According to, Self-determination theory (Self-determination theory, n.d.), the factors that go into measuring motivation are interest and enjoyment, perceived competence, effort and importance, pressure and tension, perceived choice, value and usefulness, and relatedness. These factors do not have to be taken into consideration all at once, and in fact it is suggested that they be looked at individually, or in small groups, depending on what is being studied and what the researchers' questions are related to motivation (Self-determination theory, n.d.). In order to collect information about student motivation surveys and interviews have been the data collection methods of choice for many of the research studies that I have reviewed.

In terms of collecting data, one thing to consider is students' ability to inform or make an accurate statement about their abilities. Research has shown that when asking students to make a statement about their own abilities, students below certain ages or grade levels may not be able to accurately state their own abilities (Bouffard, Markovits, Vezeau, Boisvert, & Dumas, 1998). A three year study examined how the cognitive development level of children affected their rating of their self-perception of their abilities. The study began when students were in fourth grade and ended when students completed sixth grade. The results showed that children in grades four and five had self-perceptions that were not as accurate as compared to their actual reading ability as children in sixth grade. In other words, children in sixth grade, both low and high in actual ability gave more accurate self-perceptions than the children, both high and low ability, in fourth and fifth grade. These results suggest that cognitive development does play a role in accurate self-perception in terms of the reading domain (Bouffard, Markovits, Vezeau, Boisvert, & Dumas, 1998).

In addition, another study looked at second graders and sixth graders in an effort to show the significance of early reading experiences and their effects on students' self-perceptions, reading attitudes, and overall achievement (Hogsten & Perogory, 1999). The theory behind this study or the significance it has on the topic of self-perception of reading is that as students get older, it is more likely that the self-perceptions of students who are below grade level will be lower than students who are at grade level. This was also speculated to be true for their reading attitudes.

The students who participated were from two rural Virginia school districts. The second grade sample consisted of 84 students, 24 below grade level readers and 60 on grade level readers. The sixth grade sample consisted of 71 students, 48 below grade level readers and 23 on grade level readers. The reading levels were provided by the classroom teachers. All students completed two questionnaires in a whole group classroom setting, for each classroom participating, taking approximately 25 minutes. The first questionnaire was used to measure students' attitudes towards three content areas, reading, math, and science. The second questionnaire was used to measure students' self-perceptions. The results showed that below grade level readers showed less positive attitudes in all areas surveyed and regardless of actual reading level, lower self-perceptions of reading were related to more negative attitudes towards reading. Reading attitudes and self-perception were overall more positive in second grade than in sixth grade (Hogsten & Perogory, 1999). These results are similar to the results from the previous study which indicated that students have a higher self-perception for their abilities when they are younger and less cognitively developed. Therefore, when measuring student self-perception it is important to take into consideration their cognitive levels and abilities. One way this can be done is through surveying students directly after they complete a task. A study of 198 first grade students considered how to effectively measure student self-perception or their perceived competence and self-efficacy towards literacy (Wilson & Trainin, 2007). The results of this study support the use of scenarios and hands-on literacy tasks prior to administering each motivation subscale when working with young children versus

using generalized self-concepts when responding to the questions. Students were also able to differentiate self-efficacy between reading, writing, and spelling, implying the hypothesis was correct and that as students receive feedback from their teacher and peers they form a more realistic and domain specific sense of self-efficacy. The results also showed a strong correlation between self-efficacy and perceived competence for literacy tasks (Wilson & Trainin, 2007).

Therefore, when students, especially those younger than sixth grade, are being asked about their motivation, engagement, attitudes, and abilities in reading, it is important to ask them directly after completing a given task, versus giving them generalized statements to respond to, without a concrete example or lesson to refer back to.

### *Informational and Nonfiction Texts*

In looking at student motivation and engagement for reading, two factors that play an important role are the type of book and the interest level involved with the book topic. One theory that has been developed around student motivation and engagement for reading and the types of texts that are used in classrooms, is that some students actually prefer nonfiction to fictional topics (Saul & Dieckman, 2005). With this idea in mind, an exploration of what are considered informational and nonfiction texts is needed.

The definition of informational text and nonfiction text varies among professionals. For example, Kletzien and Dreher (2004), describe informational texts as narrative, expository, or a combination of the two, as stated in Saul and Dieckman

(2005). Others believe that informational and nonfiction texts are words that describe the same thing and therefore can be used interchangeably. Still others believe that informational text is a type of nonfiction text such as reference books and books of a question and answer format. With varying definitions, it is important to know what types of books are considered informational and nonfiction, as more and more educators are being asked to use informational texts in their classrooms (Saul & Dieckman, 2005).

For the purpose of the current study, informational and nonfiction texts are terms that will be used interchangeably and mean any book or text that presents true and accurate information. Included in this definition are biographies, autobiographies, question and answer type books, books on certain topics that present information in a logical way with headings and chapters, books with indexes, glossaries, pictures, charts and graphs with captions, magazine articles, reference type books, and any other text that as stated above presents information that is true and accurate.

### *Using Informational and Nonfiction Texts*

Research suggests that the use of informational and nonfiction texts in classrooms is very low in comparison with fictional texts. It has been reported through various sources and methods for collecting data that informational or nonfiction texts are used in primary classrooms for less than 4 minutes a day and that some basal series use as little as 16% informational and nonfiction books (Kletzien & Dreher, 2004, p.1-9).

With the increasing pressure from high stakes assessments and No Child Left Behind, literacy instruction has received more money and time spent in schools in the United States than the content subjects and special area subjects. With this in mind, a there has been a call for collaboration among content area teachers and literacy specialists. The call for collaboration is needed in order for students to be prepared and proficient readers for various types of texts, including informational and nonfiction texts (Saul & Diechman, 2005).

Another key point to consider when choosing texts for classrooms and instruction is that students need to be able to read a wide range of informational and nonfiction texts, because most of what they read outside of the classroom and later in life as adults is informational and nonfiction (Kletzien & Dreher, 2004). For example, road signs, signs and information at stores, information on packages, instructions, directions, recipes, college text books, books on topics of interest or need such as travel guides, magazines, parenting books, and much more. Students must be able to read and comprehend a wide range of texts, in particular informational and nonfiction texts.

### *Comprehension of Informational and Nonfiction Texts*

In order for students to comprehend informational and nonfiction texts, strategies and tools must be used to teach comprehension. Such strategies include, but are not limited to, teaching text structure awareness, the use of graphic organizers, questioning techniques and strategies, making inferences, discovering cause and

effect relationships, making sound judgments based on the reading, and the use of many other before, during, and after reading comprehension strategies.

According to Dymock (2005), teaching students expository text structures can have a positive effect on reading comprehension. It is suggested that students be taught explicitly through a gradual release of responsibility approach, where instruction begins with the teacher modeling, then there is an opportunity for guided practice and feedback, and finally students have the opportunity to use the strategy or tool on their own. Diagrams, also referred to as graphic organizers, should be used to assist in comprehension by giving students a concrete method for seeing and understanding the structure of the text. Such diagrams may include webs, lists, sequential order charts, and compare and contrast matrix charts (Dymock, 2005).

The use of graphic organizers for comprehension of informational and nonfiction text is prevalent in many sources however, Janet Allen (2004) has created a flipchart of graphic organizers and strategies to use with students when reading informational and nonfiction texts. Allen (2004) believes that content area literacy can be an overwhelming experience for both students and teachers. Therefore she has researched several different strategies to use with students which incorporate a range of graphic organizers to help students to sort out the information they are learning and work on specific strategies while reading, such as inferring, questionings, and comparing and contrasting, to name a few.

Other ways to promote and enhance comprehension before, during, and after reading include, using post-it notes when reading to record thoughts and questions,

using highlighters, making notes on the sides of the text, making connections to self, other text and the world, using modeling, gradual release of responsibility, and think aloud methods, and discussion (Alvermann, Swafford & Montero, 2004).

### *Motivation, Engagement and Informational or Nonfiction Texts*

Through many research studies, it has been shown that students enjoy informational or nonfiction texts. According to Saul and Dieckman (2005), these types of texts appeal to students' curiosity and curiosity is a large factor in motivation. Informational and nonfiction texts allow for teachers to tap into students' interests and therefore are engaging to students. When students are able to participate in literature circles with nonfiction books, which are sometimes referred to as idea circles, students have been reported to have high motivation. This is due to the fact that students are able to work collaboratively with peers, reading and discussing a topic of interest. Students acquire a more in-depth understanding of the topic through the idea circles as well as high motivation (Dreher, 2003).

It has been found that many teachers and educational professionals believed that informational or nonfiction texts are too difficult for students to read and comprehend as well as boring for students. However, many also believe that informational and nonfiction texts are motivating and engaging for students and that when asked students prefer reading these types of texts compared to fictional texts (Saul & Dieckman, 2005). With this in mind, the current research study is aimed at exploring student self-reported motivation and engagement after the introduction and



use of informational and nonfiction texts and trade books into the academic intervention curriculum for reading, with third grade students.

## Chapter 3

### *Methods*

The purpose of this study was to explore student self-reported motivation and engagement with the use of informational and nonfiction texts and trade books. The study looked specifically at the use of informational and nonfiction texts and trade books in the academic intervention curriculum for reading, with third grade students in a rural school district. I determined through previous data analysis during an action research project aimed at determining how student self-reported motivation and their self-perceptions of their reading abilities compared, that these students reported to have relatively high motivation based on a survey of motivation for reading (Hundley, 2008). However, throughout the course of the school year, students were often heard complaining about reading and making statements about how much they dislike reading. Therefore this research study was designed to look further into the motivation and engagement of students and to incorporate informational and nonfiction texts in an attempt to tap into student interests and get them more involved and engaged during reading instruction. Data were collected through multiple measures including my own observations of students while participating in the reading and accompanying activities, a series of brief surveys which were given to each student participating at the conclusion of each text read and accompanying activities, as well as informal conversations or interviews to clarify or get further explanation of students' behaviors or responses to survey questions. Student work samples were also collected and used to gain additional information on

student engagement and motivation to complete the work or activities. In addition, I looked at my plans in terms of the type of text used and the activities that went along with the texts.

The questions that this study sought to answer were:

1. How do third –grade students enrolled in AIS services for literacy respond to the use of informational and nonfiction texts and trade books in AIS instruction?
2. How to third-grade students enrolled in AIS for literacy self-report about their motivation and engagement for reading and reading instruction when informational or nonfiction texts and trade books are used in AIS instruction?

### *Participant Selection and Research Environment*

The school district where this study took place is comprised of two buildings, an elementary building containing grades pre-kindergarten through fifth grade and a combined middle school/high school containing grades six through twelve. The school district is comprised of about 950-1,000 students total, and elementary building, where the study took place, had approximately 400 students total. According to the New York State report card (2008), the school district is in good standing for all academic areas.

At the time of the study, there were 70 third grade students enrolled in the district. Of the 70 third graders enrolled in the participating school district, 69 were Caucasian and one was African American. Seven of the 70 students had

Individualized Education Plans (IEP) for a range of disabilities, including speech and language, multiple disabilities, and other health impairments. In addition, two of the students had 504 plans for auditory processing delays, and required test modifications, such as separate location, extended time, and read aloud to an adult and/or the use of a whisper phone and other auditory devices. Fifteen of the third grade students were asked to participate in the study. One of the third grade students was being assessed for the possibility of an IEP starting the following school year, and another student was being assessed for auditory processing delays leading to a 504 plan. Both students received the documents by the conclusion of the school year and just shortly after the conclusion of this study. The students were asked to participate in the study based on the fact that these students were working with me and receiving academic intervention services (AIS) for literacy at the time of the study. In addition, the students who were asked to participate were not participating in specific reading interventions designated by the school district and reading department, therefore, were able to read books and texts chosen directly by me.

As the teacher-researcher, I had the unique opportunity to apply my findings directly to my work with my students. As I implemented the use of informational and nonfiction texts and trade books into my instruction I was able to use the feedback I received via my students' responses to the survey questions as well as the observations I made, to enhance my instruction in the future.

The students who participated in the study were the third grade students with whom I worked who struggle with reading and other aspects of literacy, living in a

rural community in western New York State. Of the 15 students who were asked to participate, 14 were Caucasian and one was African American. Five of the students asked to participate were girls and 10 were boys. This imbalance of girls and boys for the study was due to the fact that of the total 28 students with whom I worked for literacy intervention, 10 were girls and 18 were boys, therefore making the numbers uneven to start with. In addition, the imbalance of the number of boys and girls who participated was due to the fact that the students asked to participate were asked because their instruction was not specific and did not follow a guided program, but instead was chosen by me.

The students' abilities differed greatly. Reading levels among the third grade students enrolled in AIS ranged from beginning first grade to on-level third grade based on running records, classroom teacher observations and multiple assessments, both formal and informal. The students also differed greatly according to strengths and needs in terms of comprehension, fluency, word decoding and phonics skills. Since students were asked to participate in this study based on their enrollment in AIS for literacy as well as the fact that their instructional curriculum was not specified by the district or building intervention team, students with and without IEPs and 504 plans were included in the study. Four students who were asked to participate in the study had Individualized Education Plans (IEP) for speech and language delays or other health impairments, with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) targeted on the IEP. In addition, one student had a 504 plan for the use of a whisper phone while reading and taking tests, particularly reading tests, as well as for the use

of other auditory devices, due to issues with auditory processing. Just after the conclusion of this study, an additional student who participated in the study was given an IEP for a learning disability, particularly in math. This student was already receiving the modifications the IEP called for, prior to the official start of the IEP. The remaining 9 students who were asked to participate received no formal accommodations and modifications.

Due to the fact that I am the literacy specialist I saw the students for an average of 2-4 times a week for 20-30 minutes each for literacy instruction. Some students had additional individual sessions for more intense instruction in addition to their assigned group session. Overall the focus for AIS instruction was on comprehension and reinforcing strategies and skills that were taught whole group in the four third grade classrooms. Decoding was only taught explicitly in one group and fluency was worked on in mostly indirect ways with most groups.

Students were chosen to participate in AIS based on their end of the year Terra Nova test results, as well as their second grade classroom teachers' recommendation. Students were enrolled in AIS throughout the school year if the classroom teacher felt the student was in need of additional literacy support, if the parents requested additional support or if the student earned a score of two or below on the New York State English Language Arts exam taken in January. Students could also have been removed from the intervention services if both the literacy specialist working with the student and the classroom teacher agreed that the student had shown adequate progress and firmly believed the student could maintain the same

level of progress without the additional support. Students could also be released from AIS if they received a three or four as a score on the New York State English Language Arts exam taken in January. A couple of students started AIS instruction part way through the school year based on classroom teacher recommendation but no students were released during the school year.

After students were chosen to participate in the intervention services for literacy, students were grouped according to strengths and needs, reading levels, and classroom and pull-out schedules. Students who scored lowest on the Basic Reading Inventory (Johns, 1988) given at the beginning of the third grade school year and who were seen by their classroom teacher to need the most support were scheduled for intervention services three times a week for approximately 30 minutes each. Students who scored higher on the Basic Reading Inventory (Johns, 1988) were scheduled for two intervention services for approximately 30 minutes each. When looking at and using the scores from the Basic Reading Inventory (Johns, 1988), students' scores for both accuracy and in terms of independent level, instructional level, and frustration level as well as comprehension based on the comprehension check questions and the retelling, were looked at for AIS placement. Students were first grouped according to their grade level score according to their instructional level and then further grouped based on comprehension and specific strengths and needs. Therefore, students who scored closest to their grade level or highest were put into groups seen less often by me as compared to students who scored lower or further behind their grade level. Due to classroom schedules and pull-out services such as speech, physical therapy,

occupational therapy, and counseling, some sessions are slightly shorter than others, and ran 20-25 minutes versus 30 minutes. One group of students, who did not participate in the study, received instruction from a program called Triumphs (Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, 2007), which used a controlled vocabulary, hence their nonparticipation in the study. At different points throughout the school year, some students participated in interventions services individually, for 20-25 minutes 3-4 times a week. This was due to one student's behavior and social nature, and the other two students' high needs in literacy. Just before the study began, one student who was being serviced individually moved into a group setting due to great gains in literacy skills and strategies. A second student who received individual instruction for the majority of the school year also joined a group, due to his new medication that was able to be of great assistance in controlling his behavior. Therefore, at the time of the study only one student was being serviced individually. This student was not asked to participate in the study due to his specific and intense needs.

### *Instructional Methods for Study*

During the study, while informational and nonfiction books were used in the AIS classroom, students learned about and reviewed text structures, such as the index, appendices, the glossary, table of contents, graphs, charts, and using pictures with captions to learn more about what they were reading in the text part of the book. Students were also taught how to use different graphic organizers to sort through the information they were learning about from the text. For example, students used a KWL chart to make concrete what they knew about a topic before reading it, what



they wanted to know, and then what they learned after reading, including answering as many of their questions as possible. The books that I chose to use were ones that were available to me and that I believed students would be most interested in based on what I knew about their interests and our conversations throughout the school year. Books were also used to supplement what was being taught in their classrooms. For example, the students were reading and learning about Helen Keller in their classrooms. I found a book about Buddy, the first seeing-eye dog to read as a connection to their classroom reading and learning about Helen Keller and the idea of a person being blind.

At the start of the study, the students received a letter (Appendix A) to bring home to their parents or guardians which explained the research study, student confidentiality, and requested informed consent for their child to participate in the study as well as what would be asked of their child. Parents and guardians were asked to sign the letter of consent, put their child's name on the form, and return the form to me at school if they agreed to allow their child to participate in the study. Students had an explanation of the research study before the letter was sent home. Of the 15 letters of consent that were sent home, 14 of them were returned signed by a parent or guardian. When the letter was returned signed, the 14 students whose parents or guardians agreed to allow their child to participate were then given a written statement of assent (Appendix B) that was read aloud to the students. Students were asked to follow along while the statement was read aloud and then printed their name and date on the statement, if they agreed to participate in the study.

Student questions were answered as they arose during the signing of the assent. One of the fourteen students who filled out student assent asked to be removed from the study during the second week of the study, therefore all data from that student was destroyed and thirteen students actually participated in the study.

In order to ensure student confidentiality, all students who participated in the study were assigned a participant number. When surveys, interviews, work samples, observations, and field notes were given and recorded, the student numbers were used in place of their names. I was the only person who had access to the names that correspond to each of the numbers and the information will be destroyed when data analysis is complete.

#### *Data Collection*

Data were collected throughout instruction by keeping records of lesson plans and activities (Appendix C), recording observations, student surveys at the conclusion of each book and its accompanying activities, the collection of work samples, and informal conversations or interviews with students about the instruction, their behaviors that were observed, and their responses to survey questions.

Observations were recorded during each AIS instructional session that included at least one student who participated in the study. Observations were recorded on a double entry style form (Appendix D) in which one column was dedicated to direct observations and the second column was used to record my thoughts and questions about what was being observed, as well as for analysis later during the study. Direct observations included observations on what students said

related to the text and activities, how they reacted to the introduction of the informational or nonfiction text, off task behaviors such as looking around the room, playing with their pencils, talking during instruction or reading, and other behaviors that demonstrated that the students were off task. On task behaviors were also recorded such as students following with their fingers or eyes, students looking at me when giving instructions, and other behaviors that demonstrated students were on task. Students were referred to using their assigned number when observation notes were recorded.

Surveys (Appendix E) were given to the students at the conclusion of each informational or nonfiction text and its accompanying activities. The survey was based on the motivation and engagement factors of personal interest, perceived competence, effort and importance, and value and usefulness of the book and activity. The survey contained six questions that required the students to use a Likert Scale of one through five to rate their level of motivation and engagement for each of the six questions.

When the surveys were given, at the conclusion of an instructional session, students were told they could separate if they were more comfortable doing so prior to filling out each survey, so that other students could not see their responses. Students were also reminded to keep their eyes on their own survey since they were confidential, especially if the students chose not to separate. Students were given the survey with their assigned number on it, the date, and the text and activity just completed. Prior to taking the survey, I also reminded the students of the text and

activity that they were to be thinking about when filling out the survey. The statements were read aloud to the students, one at a time and were repeated based on need and student request. The second question which used the opposite number value compared with the other five questions was repeated and explained each time a survey was given due to student confusion and request for clarification. Students were reminded before each survey that their answers will be kept strictly confidential and that truthful and honest responses would be most helpful to the study. Students also participated in a discussion about confidentiality and honesty prior to the start of the study and data collection. This discussion defined the terms confidentiality and honesty in terms of the study and gave students the opportunity to ask questions about the study and their role in it for clarification, prior to the start of the collection of data.

Students also participated in informal conversations or interviews with me on an as needed basis. At times it was appropriate and necessary to ask students clarifying questions based on their behaviors and survey questions. When these situations arose, students were asked to stay back briefly for the informal conversations or students were asked a general question in their small group and responses from all students were recorded. The questions that were asked as well as student responses were recorded on notebook paper in my research journal.

Student work samples were also collected for each activity that required students to complete a worksheet or graphic organizer. When work samples were collected students' names were immediately removed and their participant number was recorded on the top of the work sample.

Data were collected each week for five weeks. Observations were collected throughout the five weeks and student surveys were given four times during the five week time period. Informal interviews took place on an as needed basis, about once or twice throughout the study, for each group or student.

### *Data Analysis*

The data was analyzed through a constant comparative method and started at the beginning of data collection. When I made observations and recorded my questions and thoughts these questions and thoughts were then used to further data collection by looking for further student behavior and asking students during informal conversations that related to the questions that I was asking through my observations.

I began to analyze the data by looking for patterns and common themes as they emerged from both observations and responses to survey questions. As the patterns emerged, charts were created to assist with the comprehension of the data and the overall analysis of the data. The patterns were those in behavior, responses to survey questions, and responses during the informal conversations. Data were analyzed until no new patterns or themes emerged.

Survey responses were not only used for finding patterns and common themes but also were quantified. Surveys were scored based on the responses given, and were out of 30 points, five points for each of the six questions. Survey questions, one and three through six were scored based on the number the students chose, according to Likert Scale, and question two was scored using the opposite value for the number chosen based on the Likert Scale. In other words, a rating of a one for survey

question two received five points and a rating of a five on survey question two received one point. The ratings in between followed, with a rating of two receiving four points, a rating of a three receiving three points, and a rating of a four receiving two points. This was because survey question two was worded in a negative manner, while the other five survey questions were worded positively. After surveys were scored and points were assigned, the mean and frequency of the individual scores for each of the five survey questions was calculated. The mean was also calculated for the entire survey, for each of the four surveys given. A frequency table as well as a table of the means was created.

The lesson plans were used in conjunction with the other data and were analyzed for type of nonfiction or informational text used, method of reading, such a read aloud, student shared reading, round robin style reading, partner reading, and independent reading, and type of activity completed with the reading of the text. This information was looked at with the students' behaviors and responses kept in mind in order to determine if any of the particular lessons students reported having higher motivation and engagement. Due to the small number of lessons being taught, there are some limitations with this part of the data analysis. However, it gives some sense of what types of nonfiction and informational texts and lessons and activities the students were motivated and engaged with.

Triangulation occurred as a result of multiple methods of data collection and analysis methods. This triangulation provided data and results that were both valid and reliable.

## Chapter 4

### *Findings*

The purpose of this study was to explore the interest, engagement and motivation levels of students when nonfiction or informational texts were used for instruction. The students who participated in the study were third grade students in a rural school district who were receiving additional literacy instruction through academic intervention services (AIS). Thirteen of the fifteen students who were asked to participate did so. The research questions that were explored and studied were as follows:

3. How do third –grade students enrolled in AIS services for literacy respond to the use of informational and nonfiction texts and trade books in AIS instruction?
4. How to third-grade students enrolled in AIS for literacy self-report about their motivation and engagement for reading and reading instruction when informational and nonfiction texts and trade books are used in AIS instruction?

After analyzing the data several themes and ideas emerged. Data were analyzed through many methods, such as pulling out themes and coding field notes, determining the score for each student’s survey each week as well as calculating the mean, and frequency of the responses to survey questions, looking through lesson plans and students work samples, and brief small group interviews with students.

While analyzing the field notes taken on students' observable behaviors as well as verbal statements and questions it was revealed that students' motivation and engagement was either high or low during the five-week instruction period, using informational and nonfiction texts. Students demonstrated high motivation and engagement through multiple means, such as the responses to the text itself, in terms of pictures, facts, and overall topic, as well as through questioning and comments related to the text and their responses to my questions and comments which were used as a scaffold for comprehension of the text. Students portrayed low levels of motivation and engagement through their verbal and physical concern for what their classmates and teacher were doing while they were receiving AIS, concern for the length of text, repeated statements of hunger, and off task behaviors during some of the group writing experiences.

The two major themes of high interest and engagement and low interest and engagement will be discussed. Within each of these themes the sub-categories or sub-themes will be presented in an effort to look more closely at each of the two themes.

### *High interest and engagement*

Students demonstrated high levels of interest and engagement through the pictures which supported the text, facts that were given throughout the text, and a general interest, noted through statements and behaviors, of the topic of the text. Students also demonstrated high levels of interest and engagement through their



questioning or curiosity as well as their responses to questions used for scaffolding of comprehension and overall participation in the reading and activities.

*Interest and engagement with pictures.* Throughout the study students showed a significant interest and engagement with the pictures within each given text. Prior to the start of each formal lesson students were given the opportunity to explore each text, as always, in order to get a feel for the text before beginning to read. Throughout the school years I typically gave the students a couple of minutes with a new text to just flip through on their own or we do a guided picture walk together.

The students' interest and engagement with the pictures during the study was shown mainly through statements students made about the pictures. For example, during the first day of the two day lesson in which students read a book on dinosaurs and as a group we created a KWL chart (Appendix F) on dinosaurs, students made several comments about the pictures in the book. Just as we completed the K and W parts of the chart and were about to start the reading, student number eight was flipping through the book and stated, "Dude, look at the teeth!" while pointing to a picture of a dinosaur in the book. He then asked if he could begin reading and he did so with the other students following along. As we continued reading and students took turns, student number eight began flipping through the pages of the book and said, "Look at that, look at the dinosaur's teeth, dude!" This behavior demonstrates the interest and engagement student number eight had with the pictures. Even though he was not following along with the rest of the group, student number eight was engaged with the text through the pictures.

Also demonstrating interest and engagement with the pictures student number ten spent several minutes flipping through the book on bears while the rest of the group members participated in a discussion about the topic prior to beginning to read. As the group and I discussed what we knew about bears and what we wanted to know about bears, and recorded this information on chart paper in a KWL chart, student number ten sat very quietly and flipped through the pages of the book. Through observation of his eye movement and focus, it was apparent that he was looking at the pictures. While this student was also not following along with the lesson as the student in the previous example, he was showing engagement with the pictures of the particular text.

During the two day compare and contrast lesson on polar bears versus grizzly bears students also demonstrated an interest and engagement with the pictures by making comments and asking to see my colored copy of the text versus their black and white copy in order to get a better look at the pictures, in particular the picture of a polar bear eating a very bloody seal. For example, student number seven was quoted as saying “can we see a picture of the polar bear eating?” As I held up the picture student number seven then asked “what’s the red stuff?” When I, along with the other four group members, responded by telling her it is blood, she shook her head and stuck out her tongue. This shows the student’s desire to look at my colored copy versus her own black and white copy. It is one of multiple times in one session that a student either asked to see the colored copy or picked it up to look at during the

whole group writing activity of filling out Venn diagram or while the group was discussing the reading.

During the lesson on polar bears and grizzly bears, students read and also followed along as I read aloud parts of two different pamphlets or brochures. One of the texts was about polar bears and the other about grizzly bears. Students had the opportunity to vote on which sections we read about such as hunting and gathering, behavior, habitat, information on the body parts of the bears, and breeding. After reading the same section for each bear we recorded on a Venn diagram (Appendix G) on the chart paper, the similarities and differences of the two bears. Students also recorded the information on their own copy of the Venn diagram. As mentioned above, students read from a black and white version of the text and had the opportunity to look at the pictures in color on the one colored copy that I had. Several times throughout the two day lesson, students asked to see the colored copy and even picked it up when we were recording information on the Venn diagram or while I was giving direct instruction or support to a particular student and the other students were waiting briefly for the lesson to continue. At the conclusion of the lesson one day I asked the students if they would like some time to just look at the texts, student number seven once again demonstrated her desire to look at the pictures by saying “yeah! The colored one?”. The students took turns looking at each text with a partner(s) and I gave them about two minutes for each text, making it a total of about four to five minutes of time to just look and have their own time with the texts. During this time students number four and five were actively engaged by whispering

and pointing to different parts of the texts. Student number two also asked to look at the colored copy at the conclusion of the lesson on both days, as did many other students who participated in the study.

*Interest and engagement with facts.* While reviewing the field notes from the study, it became apparent that students were interested in specific facts that were presented in the different texts read and discussed. An example of this was during the two day lesson using a book on dinosaurs in which the students took turns reading and as a group we completed a KWL chart on the chart paper for the topic of dinosaurs. During these lessons the students stopped reading or interrupted the reading to comment on specific facts from the text. Just after reading about the size of a dinosaur who was comparable to the size of a chicken, student number eight exclaimed, “man, I could pick it up!”, with a smile on his face. As we stopped reading to discuss the size of this particular dinosaur, student number eleven responded with “whoa!” Another student in a different group, student number thirteen, responded in the same manner to the same fact, the size of this particular dinosaur.

Not only were students interested and engaged with facts read about and discussed during the dinosaur book, but also with facts read about and discussed during the book on Buddy the first seeing-eye dog as well as the other two texts. While reading the book about Buddy, the first seeing-eye dog students commented on the dates in the book. When a date of an event was mentioned I usually stopped the reading to discuss how long ago the event took place, as many of the students, being

third graders, needed this discussion in order to understand exactly how long ago the events took place. Several students such as student number one and student number nine made comments as to how long ago the events took place. Both students number twelve and thirteen asked if they could figure out how long ago an event took place as a date was being read. I gave the students time to get out a piece of scrap paper and figure out the math problem. Student number twelve did not have a piece of scrap paper with him so instead of having him get a piece of paper from my paper tray, I gave him a dry erase marker and he solved the problem on the white board. When finished student number thirteen exclaimed "I got it, I got it, can I say it?" I asked him to wait for student number twelve to finish; he groaned but waited for student number twelve. When they were both done they compared their answers with each other and then me to be sure they solved correctly. Student number twelve then said "wow that was a long time ago. I wonder when the one [school for the blind] in Batavia opened?" I told him I did not know but that we could look it up later if he would like and we continued with the reading. These examples of interest with the dates of events demonstrate and interest and engagement with specific facts.

Also apparent through observation was how quickly many of the students came up with facts or ideas that they learned to add to the two different KWL charts that we completed as a group, throughout the study. Often students had their hands up and had to wait their turn to share what they learned, which were facts presented in the texts. For example, during one of the lessons using the dinosaur text when the students completed a group KWL chart to share their knowledge and discoveries,

students number twelve and thirteen both shared their own ideas simultaneously and then had to wait for one of the students to write down his idea before the second student could record his on the chart paper. This happened in other groups as well.

*Interest and engagement with the general topic.* Students demonstrated interest and engagement through their general interest in the topics of the texts. Students were noted as commenting on the overall theme of the text or topic throughout the study. For example, while introducing the text on Buddy, the first seeing-eye dog, student number seven blurted out “oh, I love dogs!” She then continued to show her enthusiasm for the topic by participating in a group discussion, through sharing ideas and things she remembered from reading about Helen Keller in her classroom, as well as ask for questions for clarification when needed.

In addition I had originally planned to read a question and answer type book on butterflies and caterpillars where the students would be able to guess whether a statement given was true or false and then turned the page to see if they were correct and read about the idea. When the day of this lesson came about, students in the first group told me their classroom teacher has the same book and that they read it the previous week with her. Therefore, I had to think on my feet and grab another nonfiction text to read instead. As I looked on my shelf my eyes went immediately towards a book on bears. I knew we had already read about bears but it was the first nonfiction or informational text my eyes came to. I said to the two students in the group, “what do you think about bears?” and received the response from student

number eight of “yeah!” and student number eleven, “yes!”, both with smiles on their faces.

When beginning the book on dinosaurs, student number eleven is quoted as calling out, “Yay! Dinosaurs.” Student number eight then responded to student number eleven by saying “I don’t like this book. I have it and don’t like it.” Later I learned that student number eight has never read the book at home, despite owning a copy and became very involved in the lesson through asking to read and reacting positively to the pictures as well as the facts. Within the same lesson, after we discuss as a group what we know and what we want to know about dinosaurs and I tell the students we are going to get started reading, student number eleven expressed his eagerness to read and get started by saying, “yeah!” All students then volunteered to be the first to read the dinosaur book that day.

At the conclusion of the collection of data, I briefly reviewed, or ran down the list of texts and activities that we completed as part of the study, and then asked each student in the small group setting to tell me if they had a favorite and which it was and why. Eleven out of the 13 students reported the book on Buddy, the first seeing-eye dog to be their favorite text. When asked why many of them told me it was because they like dogs and that dogs are their favorite animal. Students also commented that they thought it was fun to read about a dog that helps people, demonstrating an interest in the general topic of the dog and his role in society. The two students who reported favorites other than the book on Buddy, stated the reasons of “I liked the bear stuff the best because we can learn about bears” and “Dinosaurs, I

like learning about dinosaurs because I never got to see a real one” as reasons why they were most interested in the texts that they reported being interested in. These examples, show a general interest in the topics as well as in the facts, as students reported to both be interested in the topic of Buddy, bears, dinosaurs as well as what they learned, which would be considered facts.

*Interest and engagement through participation.* Throughout the study, students demonstrated high levels of interest and engagement through their participation during the various lessons. Participation included students expressing the desire to read as well as their participation in discussions and activities. All of the previous examples demonstrate participation during the lessons; however in this section I will look specifically at participation through reading, discussions, and activities.

With the exception of a couple of students during a lesson or two, most students expressed the desire to read aloud the texts to one another. For instructional purposes that fit the needs of the students within the study, the texts were read aloud together, usually with the students taking turns reading. I used a variety of round robin type reading, such as students taking turns by going around the table each reading a page or two and popcorn style reading where students called on each other to be the next reader, in any order. I also did popcorn style by calling on the students myself in a random order. All students were asked to read multiple times during each lesson and no student expressed the desire to not read at all. Students have been



reading aloud with each other either in round robin styles or partner readings all school year and therefore were used to this method.

An example of the desire to read was shown when beginning the book on dinosaurs. After discussing and recording what the students knew and wanted to know about dinosaurs, I asked the students in this group who would like to read first and all four students in the group responded with “me!” I chose a student who does not always volunteer to begin and just as the student began reading student number eight asked, “can I read next? I wanna read.” This type of behavior was observed throughout the study each time the opportunity to read was presented. At one point the entire lesson was interrupted as students twelve and thirteen began arguing over who read first the last time and therefore who would be able to read first this time. The argument was not meant to point fingers or become angry with each other but was simply a discussion between the two students in an effort to be fair. One interpretation of this type of behavior is that it exhibits interest and engagement with the text through the desire to participate in reading. Another interpretation could be the desire to please or the desire to be the first to do something. Students could have also expressed interest in reading because they wanted to show me that they enjoy reading, especially if they knew I was studying their reading habits and reactions to the texts we were reading. Often times students just want to be the first to do something, as many of my students argue over who will go first when playing a game. Although many interpretations are possible, due to the enthusiasm with smiling faces and hands raised up high, I believe that the behaviors discussed here

were directed more towards the students' overall desire to read as well as their desire to learn more about the topics that the texts covered.

The lessons were often scaffolded so that we stopped as a group to discuss what was just read. All students were observed participating in the discussions through making comments, asking questions, or responding to my questions. Students also made connections to their own lives as we read and discussed topics and ideas. For example, as we discussed where certain bears live and used the map in one of the texts to identify which types of bears live near us, student number eleven shared his connection of hearing on the news about a bear being spotted in Buffalo a few months ago, and then commented on the type of bear it may have been, based on the map in the book.

In addition, when reading the book about Buddy the first seeing-eye dog, student number twelve made a connection to his life and community by posing this thought, "I wonder when the one [school for the blind] in Batavia opened?" This was stated after the two students in the group figured out how long ago the first school for the blind in America was started. They did this by using the date given in the book and completing a subtraction problem independently and then sharing together and discussing the date and how long ago it was. This entire discussion around the date of the first school for the blind in America was prompted by the students and the decision to set up a subtraction problem to find the answer was made by the students as well. By forming and sharing appropriate connections to their lives and

community that related to the topic of the book, students showed their interest and engagement with the text.

Students showed interest and engagement with certain activities that we completed. It became apparent very quickly that students enjoyed completing the group KWL charts when they had the opportunity to actually write on the charts themselves, as many of them asked to do. For time sake, I always wrote the K and W ideas on the chart and then at the conclusion of the lesson for the particular day each student was able to write what he/she learned on the L part of the chart, as well as choose the color of the marker that he/she used. With the exception of two occasions, each student always had an idea to share for each part of the chart, without much time being taken to think. One of the occasions when a student did not have an idea to share with the group for the KWL chart was during the first day of the two day lesson using the dinosaur text. The student did not have an idea for what he wanted to know or learned without probing and prompting several times by me. This was due to the fact that the student claimed to have the book at home and therefore knew everything that was in it. Since the student had read the book previously at home, I asked him to share something he thought was interesting versus something he learned when we had the closing discussion for the day and completed the learned section of the KWL chart. With some reluctance the student looked back through the book and chose something he thought was interesting. The student was a bit reluctant because he had difficulty understanding the difference between something he learned and something he found interesting. I explained to him the difference and that something he already

knows can still be interesting, which proved to be a difficult concept as I had to find several ways to explain the idea. After I was able to successfully explain the concept, he was more willing to share ideas and found an idea from the book to share within a minute or two. The student was not reluctant because he did not like the book or because he was being rude, but because he did not think there was anything new to learn or to share and had difficulty with the concept of interesting that I was trying to explain. The student was actually quoted early in the lesson as saying “I have this book at home. I like it.”

After completing the reading on Buddy the first seeing-eye dog, students were asked to make a poem about Buddy by filling in a word or phrase about Buddy for each letter of his name (Appendix H). The students were given a sheet of paper with Buddy’s name going vertically down the left hand side of the paper with a blank line following each letter of his name. The line was used for the students to fill in the word or phrase describing Buddy, starting with each of the letters in his name. We worked together to brainstorm ideas and then the students went to work on their own, with my assistance as needed, as well as the thoughts and ideas of their group members as needed. The brainstorming included the students and me making a list of words or phrases that began with each of the letters in Buddy’s name. The words and phrases all had to be about Buddy or a way of describing Buddy. I recorded the words and phrases on the white board for students to refer to when completing their own poem on Buddy. All of the students completed the poem and shared their poem with their group members. None of the students responded negatively to either

writing the poem or sharing the poem with their group members. One student, student eight, did have difficulty coming up with words or phrases to use because he wanted to use different ones than we had brainstormed. I spent some extra time working with him to go through the words on the board and also help him to brainstorm other words. After a couple of minutes of working with him and encouraging him to do his best to complete the poem, he was able to complete it within the same time frame as the other students in the group who had been working all along. He also shared his poem with out complaining or responding negatively.

The last lesson that was included in the study was reading the book about bears and then completing the word scramble with words from the book related to bears (Appendix I). This activity appeared to be quite a hit, as I observed students making statements expressing their eagerness to complete the word scramble. For example, when the word scramble was being introduced, student number twelve interrupted my directions by saying “nice!” with a smile on his face. While working independently on the word scramble, student number two expressed his enthusiasm with the activity by calling out “ahhh haa” with a smile on his face, when figuring out some of the words. Similar responses to the word scramble were observed from all of the students which showed interest and engagement with the activity.

*Interest and engagement through questioning and curiosity.* Throughout the field notes I noted that students often asked questions and demonstrated a general curiosity about the topic or specific facts from the texts. One such example was during the reading of the book about Buddy the first seeing-eye dog. During one of

my small group lessons in which student number one and student number two were present, both students began asking questions about losing one of the five senses. As I explained how the other four senses are typically more heightened if you are born with no eye-sight or deaf, the students continued to ask questions and respond to my explanation so that it became a small discussion. One of the students then asked if it was possible to have no sense of touch, at which point I shared what I could remember about a television special I had seen a couple years back on a young girl who was born without the sense of touch. The students appeared to be fascinated with the story and continued to ask questions to learn more and for clarification purposes. This example demonstrates interest and engagement with the concept or topic being read about through the students' questions and curiosity, which even led us to a discussion on a related topic.

While reading the two pamphlets or brochures on the bears students also asked questions while reading. The most common question was about the picture on the pamphlet about the polar bear where a polar bear is eating a seal and there is blood all over the dead seal and the ice. The students were interested in why there was so much blood and how could it not bother the bear to eat such a bloody animal.

Students were also interested in the other two texts by asking questions about dinosaurs and bears throughout the reading that were added to the KWL charts that were completed as a group for each of the two lessons. During the different readings we often stopped for discussion and students would ask questions or make responses to something we were discussing. An example of this was when students were

reading the book on dinosaurs. Student number twelve turned a page in the book so that we could continue reading, and while looking at the picture he asked “oh, what are these?” Before we began reading on that page we all stopped to look at what student number twelve pointed out, gave ideas, and then read to find out if our ideas were correct and what the significance of the picture actually was. At other times students stopped to ask questions, such as how big a dinosaur was or what certain dinosaurs ate or other thoughts related the topic. These ideas were either discussed at the time or added to our KWL chart for discussion later.

### *Low interest and engagement*

Students not only demonstrated high levels of interest and engagement but also low levels of interest and engagement with the different informational or nonfiction texts. Low levels of interest and engagement were documented through field note observations, responses to survey questions and brief informal interviews. When coding low levels of interest and engagement through field notes I looked at students’ comments and questions that did not fit with the lesson or topic. I also looked at behaviors that showed students were not focused on the lesson, such as playing with their pencil boxes or slouching back in their seats with wandering eyes, versus following along. In this section I will discuss the three main types of low levels of interest and engagement. The three types are concerns for the length of the text, concerns for what was happening elsewhere, and off task behavior during whole group writing and copying of group responses from chart paper onto their own paper.

*Concerns for the length of the text.* Students often paid close attention to the length of the texts that we read. This was a common theme that I noted mentally throughout the school year. However, throughout the field notes taken during this study it was recorded several times how students made comments about the length of the text, often in a negative manner. For example, while reading “Buddy the First Seeing-Eye dog” student number nine began flipping through the book while we were reading and verbalized the fact that the book was long and we would be starting chapter five soon. Although the actual statement that was made could sound neutral, with the student’s tone of voice and sigh, it was apparent that he was a bit overwhelmed with the length of the text. Up to this point in the school year although the students read novels and other longer texts with their classroom teacher, as a whole class, we had never read a book as long and with as many words on each page as the Buddy book in AIS.

Student number eight was also quoted as asking, “Oh man, this is long. Are we going to read the whole thing?” with a scowl on his face. Making this statement also showed that this student was concerned about the length of the text in a negative manner. Several other students were noted as flipping through the book about Buddy, and either making a comment or having an expression that showed they were concerned about the length, such as eyes popping out of their heads or frowning.

A counterexample, of concern for the length of the text was when student number four voiced her concern for finishing the text, in this case the Buddy book as well. She was worried that we had too much left to read since it was such a long



book to finish the following time we met. This showed concern for the length of the text, but in a more neutral or possibly even positive manner. The Buddy book was around 50 pages in length, as were the dinosaur and bear books. However, the Buddy book had chapters and most pages had full text or a picture with text around it, whereas the other two books had larger print, larger spaces between the lines of the text, and more pictures, which left room for only about one to five sentences on a page. Although there were not enough texts used to make this conclusion, it appeared as though texts that had smaller words and not as many pictures gave the students more concern for the length of the text as compared to the texts with larger print and pictures on each page, despite the fact that all three of the books were approximately 50 pages in length.

Another behavior that was seen often during the study was students flipping through the texts while others took their turn reading or when we were having a discussion about the text or topic. It remains unclear as to the real reason that students were participating in this behavior. Some possible reasons could be to look for upcoming pictures or sections of a book or to check how many pages were left in the book. The number of pages left in the book could be a concern either because the student was enjoying the text and did not want it to come to an end or because the student wanted the text to come to an end soon. The true reason remains unknown, as I did not stop the flow of the lesson itself to ask the students why they were participating in a particular behavior at a certain time. Students could also have been

flipping through the pages of the book out of boredom or due to diagnosed attention issues, which would include three of the students who participated in the study.

*Concerns for what was happening elsewhere.* As discussed previously, I am a reading specialist and work with several different groups of students in need of academic intervention services (AIS) for reading. My instruction and support is both push-in and pull-out, but mainly pull-out. Therefore, students leave their classrooms at their designated time to see me and spend 20-30 minutes working with me each time or session. While they are with me their classrooms continue to function and students miss certain things. The classroom teachers do their best to plan reinforcement lessons such as vocabulary review while the students are out of the classroom, so the students are not missing new instruction and ideas. Depending on what is missed and the particular classroom teacher, they may make up what they miss later in the day or the classroom teacher may deem it to be not necessary to make up the lesson or activity. Lesson and activities that are missed in the classroom are usually not made up if the topic or idea was a literacy skill or strategy that I worked with the students on in the small group setting during AIS. This was often the case because I worked closely with the classroom teachers when planning. Therefore, students did not tend to have make-up work to complete when they returned to the classroom. Even though students were told throughout the school year and then reassured they would have time to finish work missed in the classroom or would be exempt from the work, certain students remained very conscious of what

they were missing, whether it was work, snack, or free-time, and this concern could interrupt the AIS lesson at times.

Multiple times during the course of data collection I recorded that student number twelve was worried about possibly missing snack. While he expressed concern for missing snack, student number thirteen joined in on this worry. I told them that as always if they are having snack in their classrooms when it is time to come see me they can bring the snack with them. Both students were pleased with this, however the following time we met student number twelve commented on how he forgot his snack that day and was hungry. Student number thirteen then turned around and looked at the clock and then said how he wished he was in the classroom because they were might be eating their snack and that he was also hungry.

Also demonstrating concern for activities out of the reading room, was when student number seven came in a couple of minutes late to a group and interrupted the lesson to share that the chicks in the classroom were beginning to hatch and that the rest of the class was watching. This statement caused the entire group to stop and comment or ask questions, getting us off topic for a couple of minutes, as we discussed the eggs and chicks, until I pulled them back in.

Student number nine went to speech class each week after one of the two sessions he had with me and one particular week he turned his head around approximately every 2-3 minutes to look at the clock as well as remind me at least four times that he had speech at two o'clock. The same student expressed extreme concern and asked multiple times during a different lesson about taking an

Accelerated Reader quiz that he was unable to take the day before due to a different related service pull-out that he had. Accelerated Reader is a computer program that allows students to login and take a 5-10 question quiz on a book they read in order to earn points. The points are then used to buy prizes at the school store once every two months, set up by the reading department. The student's concern for missing an opportunity to take an Accelerated Reader quiz showed the student's concern for what he could be doing if he was not participating in intervention reading services with me or with the related service the day before when the class was in the computer lab.

Students' concern for what they were missing while working with me, what they could be doing if they were not with me, and what time they would be done with me so they could go to their next activity shows that the students were at least partially disengaged with the lesson. While students may or may not have enjoyed what we were doing and participated in the lesson or activity, the fact that they stopped the flow of the lesson or interrupted to make comments about what was going on elsewhere shows that students have lower levels of engagement and interest in the lesson at least for the times when making the comments or statements.

*Off task behaviors during whole group writing and copying written ideas.*

Each of the four lessons that were taught during the course of this study had a writing component to it. The writing components were mainly copying the ideas of the group members onto their own paper, observing me writing group ideas on chart paper, or creating their own piece to share with the group after brainstorming ideas as

a group. The first lesson on comparing and contrasting polar bears and grizzly bears required the students to follow along with a Venn diagram on the large chart paper that I was filling in with their ideas, and copy the ideas onto their own version of the Venn diagram. One of the reasons for this activity was that students were working on comparing and contrasting in their classrooms that week and would be required to fill out a Venn diagram on the weekly ELA assessment. I wanted to be sure students had the opportunity to not only see what the diagram looked like but complete their own as a scaffold in preparation for the weekly ELA assessment.

The dinosaur lesson had the students follow along with a KWL chart to record what they know about dinosaurs prior to reading the text, what they would like to know about dinosaurs and hope will be answered in the text, and then what they learned about dinosaurs, including answering as many of their questions as possible at the conclusion of the text. Two of the four groups of students were required to fill out their own KWL charts as well, and the other two groups were asked to follow along with mine, on the chart paper, only. This difference was due to the students' abilities, strengths, and needs and was part of differentiating the lesson.

At the conclusion of the Buddy book, on the first seeing-eye dog, I had the students write a poem about Buddy. As a group we brainstormed words and phrases describing Buddy the dog starting with each letter of his name and then students worked independently for the most part filling in the poem to describe Buddy. During this activity students were engaged and demonstrated engagement by all participating in brainstorming words or phrases, some students more enthusiastically

than others, but all were involved as well as all students were involved in writing their own poems and making them unique, despite the fact that many of them used the words from the brainstormed list (Appendix J). As discussed previously, one student did show some frustration with this activity and had difficulty starting the activity but with my assistance and encouragement he was able to get started and successfully complete the activity.

Lastly, while reading the bear book, students followed along with my chart paper version of a KWL and each gave their ideas to write on the chart. All students had the opportunity to write their own L idea on the chart paper, with their choice of marker color. For time sake, I wrote the ideas under the K and the W each day of the lesson. Students did not complete their own KWL chart, as I was more concerned during this lesson on the sharing of ideas than practicing copying skills.

Students showed disengagement with many of the writing portions of the lesson by participating in off task behaviors, talking, or just not writing when it was their responsibility to copy the information onto their own personal chart. One such occurrence was when student number six began talking about her allergies when copying information from the KWL on dinosaurs. During the same lesson, student number seven informed the group that she got two puppies while we were recording ideas on the KWL. By looking at work samples, students number three and six stopped copying all together and left most of the W and L sections of the chart blank (Appendix K). These examples show their disengagement or lack of motivation with the writing portion of the lesson. The students did participate in coming up with ideas

for writing but lacked the interest to actually complete the writing they were asked to or tried to multitask by sharing ideas from their lives outside of school while writing. These examples are of copying the responses from all group members including themselves. Students participated in the discussion and shared ideas to include on the chart paper but were not engaged with copying the ideas onto their own paper. This activity or task of copying, while not particularly engaging for students or for anyone, is a task that must be done due to the fact that starting in fourth grade the teachers require the students to begin to take notes and copy notes from the board. Therefore, copying ideas is done in preparation for note taking the following year. Students showed disengagement with copying as well as following along while I wrote ideas on the chart paper. Students did show engagement and were eager to participate in writing ideas on the chart paper, when I allowed them to do the writing, especially when they were able to choose their own marker color. Students number twelve and thirteen particularly enjoyed this opportunity. They both asked on each occasion that we used the chart paper if they could write and when one student was stuck on the spelling of a word I asked the other student to help, which got both of them involved and up at the chart paper writing their responses together with me taking more of a backseat.

During more than one of writing portions of the different lessons I observed student number nine, as well as some of the other students flipping through the pages of the text. While it could be that they were looking for information, it appeared that they were just looking at the pictures. This assumption was made based on the length

of time they spent on each page and the direction of their gaze while looking at the pages in the texts. While flipping through the pages of a text shows interest and engagement with the text, it demonstrates disengagement with the focus of the lesson at that point, which was sharing ideas and recording the ideas either as a group or as a group and individually. Student number twelve, as well as other students who could reach my marker basket with ease, were also observed to be playing with the markers by picking them up and dropping them back into the basket. This behavior was addressed as the noise it made was distracting to me as the teacher and other students in the group.

A counterexample of this idea of disengagement and lack of interest in writing was during the Buddy writing activity, where all but one student was noted as getting right to work and writing their ideas from our discussion to create their poem. Multiple students did ask for help with brainstorming and coming up with different words to use than the words that we originally brainstormed, however they all were on task during the activity and all conversation revolved around the activity. The one student who was not completely on task complained that it was hard and required more independent direction and assistance to complete the activity. Many students also did complete their own versions of the Venn diagram and KWL charts, it was just a few that did not but their disengagement or lack of participation in the copying of ideas is important to note for the study.

### *Survey results*



As described in the methods section students answered the same six survey questions at the conclusion of each of the four lessons using informational or nonfiction texts. The questions were aimed at student engagement and interest with the lesson and accompanying activities. Students were asked to rate their agreement with each of the six statements on the survey using a Likert scale. The responses of one through 5 were available to be chosen. A response of a five meant that students strongly agreed with the statement and a response of a one meant that students strongly disagreed with the statement. Therefore a response of a three was neutral, a response of a four was agreed and a response of a two was disagreed. All but question two was stated so that the students' response of a five meant the most interest and engagement. Question number two was worded negatively which meant that in order to show that the student was highly engaged and interested, the student would have to of chosen a response of one. Therefore each response for each question was assigned a point value based on the level of engagement or interest it showed. For questions one, three, four, five, and six, the point value was the same number the response was. For example, a response of a one was assigned one point; a response of a two was assigned two points and so on. For question number two the points were opposite the response number. In this case a response of a one received five points; a response of a two received four points, and so on. For each student the points were added and then the responses were looked at as a whole group.

Based on survey data, students reported to be overall strongly interested and engaged by informational and nonfiction texts by responding to the survey question

with 74% of the responses receiving five points. The chart below (chart 1) shows the percentages of responses for all of the surveys combined based on the number of responses for each point value for each question. It is apparent that overall students reported being interested and engaged with the different informational and nonfiction texts.

Chart 1

	1 point	2 points	3 points	4 points	5 points
<b>Question 1:</b> I enjoyed doing this activity very much.	0	1	1	3	47
<b>Question 2:</b> This activity did not hold my attention.	1	1	8	6	36
<b>Question 3:</b> I would describe this activity as very interesting.	3	0	10	4	35
<b>Question 4:</b> I think I am pretty good at this activity.	2	0	10	5	35
<b>Question 5:</b> I put my best effort into this activity.	0	1	3	5	43
<b>Question 6:</b> I believe this activity could be of some value to me.	2	3	5	7	35
Total	8	6	37	30	231
Percentage	2.6%	1.9%	11.9%	9.6%	74%

While looking at the mean value (chart 2), using the points assigned, for each of the six survey questions, it is also apparent that students were overall interested

and engaged with the texts with all questions receiving no less than a mean response of 4.31 out of 5. Questions number one and five received higher responses reporting high levels of interest and engagement than the other four questions. Question one stated “I enjoyed doing this activity very much” and question five stated “I put my best effort into this activity”.

Chart 2: Mean points for each question:

<b>Question 1:</b> I enjoyed doing this activity very much.	4.85 points
<b>Question 2:</b> This activity did not hold my attention.	4.38 points
<b>Question 3:</b> I would describe this activity as very interesting.	4.32 points
<b>Question 4:</b> I think I am pretty good at this activity.	4.38 points
<b>Question 5:</b> I put my best effort into this activity.	4.74 points
<b>Question 6:</b> I believe this activity could be of some value to me.	4.36 points

Chart 3 shows the overall mean for each of the four surveys, in essence, each of the four lessons and activities. The overall mean, based on the number of points assigned to each question or statement on the survey, was calculated. While all surveys had a mean of 26.08 or higher out of a possible 30, survey number three had a noticeably higher mean than the other three with a mean of 28.23. Survey number three was based on the text “Buddy the First Seeing-Eye Dog” and the survey responses were consistent with the informal small group interview results in which 11 out of the 13 students stated this text as their favorite of the four texts read during the course of the study.

Chart 3

Survey	Mean
1: Polar bears and Grizzly bears and Venn diagram	26.07
2: Dinosaurs and KWL	26.85
3: Buddy, the First Seeing-eye Dog and poem	28.23
4: Bears, KWL, and word scramble	27.54
Overall Mean	27.17

Based on the results of the study, it appears that students were interested and engaged overall with the actual task of reading and discussions but were disengaged more often with the writing and copying tasks and when concerned about scheduling and time frames that were not actually part of the lesson. Therefore students showed general engagement with reading nonfiction and informational texts themselves, and less engagement during follow-up activities. This idea will be explored further in chapter five.

Based on survey results, observations of students, work samples, and responses to informal interview questions, I came to the conclusion that overall students were interested and engaged with the informational and nonfiction texts presented to them throughout the course of the study.

## Chapter 5

### *Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations*

#### *Summary and Conclusion*

The results of this study suggest that overall, third grade students in a rural community in western New York State, receiving academic intervention services (AIS) for literacy are interested and engaged when nonfiction or informational texts are used for instructional purposes. I was able to make this conclusion after thorough analysis of the data collected throughout the study. Data included observations or field notes taken on student behavior during the instruction related to this study, student responses to survey questions given after each text and its accompanying activities throughout the study, brief small group informal interviews, student work samples, and my lesson plans for the groups of students who participated in the study.

The results of this study are consistent with much of the literature surrounding nonfiction and informational texts and student motivation. For example, Dreher (2003) discussed the motivating aspects of nonfiction and informational texts getting students more involved in reading through these types of texts. When students are reading about something that interests them and that they can learn from, they are more motivated to read and participate in reading activities. Dreher (2003) also stated that students are naturally curious and that nonfiction and informational texts tap into this curiosity and help to get students motivated to read in order to learn and find out answers to their questions and curiosities. Moss and Hendershot (2002) also found in their research on student selection of nonfiction texts, that students were asking more

questions and making “I wonder” statements when reading nonfiction texts. This coincides with Dreher (2003) and my own findings during my research in which I found students to be asking questions and eager to find out answers through reading and discussing.

In answering my two research questions, third-grade students enrolled in AIS for literacy responded in positive and negative ways as well as neutral ways when being instructed using nonfiction or informational texts. I have made this conclusion based on the verbal responses and statements students made during instruction when the nonfiction or informational texts were used, as well as their observable behaviors. Their responses to the surveys and informal interview questions, as well as their work samples were also used in making this conclusion. Although students responded in a variety of ways, it is clear when looking at the data collected that students responded in more positive ways than negative ways. For example, in just looking at the survey data (see charts 1, 2, and 3 in chapter four) students rated their thoughts and feelings towards the nonfiction or informational texts with 83.6% of their responses considered positive, 11.9% of their responses considered neutral, and 4.5% of their responses considered negative. Therefore, I was able to conclude that overall students reported to be interested, motivated, and engaged with the nonfiction and informational texts used for instruction during the study.

During an informal interview all students were asked in a small group setting which of the four texts used during the study they each enjoyed the most and which they each enjoyed the least and why. Eleven out of the 13 students who participated

in the study reported that the third text that was read on Buddy the seeing-eye dog was their favorite. This book as mentioned and discussed previously in chapter four, was a narrative style text which may or may not have had anything to do with the reason it was so popular with the students. All of the students who reported this text to be their favorite gave reasons related to the topic of the book. According to Edmunds and Bauserman (2006), students are motivated and engaged with reading based on several different factors. Two of those factors are personal interest and characteristics of books. In accordance with Edmunds and Bauserman's (2006) finding, the students who participated in my study, demonstrated motivation and engagement for reading based on personal interest towards the topic of dogs and possibly the characteristics of books.

I also noted through my analysis that students followed along with the text while other students read aloud, asked questions, participated in discussions and activities, as well as showed interested in the pictures and the learning of new facts and the overall topic that the texts were about. These behaviors demonstrated a high level of interest and engagement for the nonfiction or informational texts that were part of the study and are discussed further in the recommendations for future instruction.

My analysis also showed that at times students were off task during instruction, particularly during whole group writing activities, except when the students themselves were allowed to write on the chart paper. In analysis of my observation notes I also found that students were concerned for events occurring



outside the AIS classroom as well as the length of the texts that were read during instruction. They were particularly concerned for the length of the one text that was broken into chapters and had approximately one picture per chapter, versus one picture per page as was the format for the other two books that were read as part of the study. The differences in text features and the role that this played in the study for students relates to Edmunds and Bauserman (2006) and their idea that the characteristics of texts play an important role in student interest and motivation for reading. These factors were seen as negative or points in the instruction where students had lower levels of interest, engagement, and motivation. Interestingly, the book that students showed concern for the length was also the same book that 11 out of the 13 students participating in the study reported to be their favorite text. This contrast of student response has led me to believe that although a text is lengthy, the students will enjoy the text and become engaged in the text if it broken down into manageable sections when reading it, discussed thoroughly, and is a topic of interest to the students. Had the lengthier book been on a different topic the students may not have been as interested. Research by Moss and Hendershot (2002) as well as Edmunds and Bauserman (2006) both suggest that the topic of the text relates directly to the interest and engagement the students have with the text, which was shown in my study through the students' reactions to the Buddy book regardless of the length of the text. The teaching revolved around the text was scaffolded, as mentioned previously, to fit the needs of the students and provided the students with reassurance that the book was one that they could read without much difficulty. I also believe that

the lively discussions that occurred around the book and topic in general aided in capturing the students attention and interest which out weighed their negative feelings towards the length of the text when responding to the informal interview question.

Work samples collected from the students for each of the texts showed that in all but one case with two students, the students completed the work as required of them. Two students did not complete a specific writing or copying task given to them during one lesson. This lesson involved me recording our ideas onto a chart paper version of a KWL and the students copying the information onto their own version of the KWL chart. These two students were in the same group but not sitting next to each other and were not observed to be participating in any specific off task behavior. When I collected the KWL charts to view, the two students had less than half of the information filled in. They did have plenty of time to fill in all of the information, as the other three group members submitted completed charts. This shows that the two students were not motivated, engaged, or interested with at least this aspect of the lesson, specifically copying information from the chart paper onto their own copy, as the students appear to have not found this meaningful. Fletcher (2006) discussed the idea of a “flow zone” or an “engagement zone”, which is a time when a student is completely engaged with an activity and they do not seem to notice anything else going on around them. It is clear from the collection of work samples that these two students were not completely engaged in the activity of recording the information I was writing on the chart paper onto their own paper. In thinking about the idea of the “flow zone” or the “engagement zone” these two students would benefit from an

activity that allows them to enter into one of these zones. Writing activities that may be more engaging or meaningful are discussed in the recommendations for future instruction.

### *Limitations*

This study has some limitations that must be addressed and that could have played a role in the results that were seen. Although not a limitation itself, but the purpose of this study, the fact that I was acting as not only the researcher but also the students' AIS teacher allows for some limitations to stem from this situation. For example, the students were able to closely observe me observing and recording their behavior and statements. While I do typically record notes on student responses and strengths and needs of each lesson, I do not usually write as much as I did during my research study and this needs to be recognized as a possible limitation. Also with being the students' teacher they may have censored their responses to my questions, both the informal interview questions as well as the survey questions. Students may have not wanted to disappoint me in saying that they disliked a particular, or all, the texts we read or they may have not enjoyed a text as well as they reported on their surveys. The truth to their responses will never be able to be determined due to the fact that I was the solo researcher for this study.

Another limitation to this study was the fact that it was completed over a relatively short period of time and only included four different texts. The study was completed over a five week period of time but due to conflicts with the school calendar and my schedule changes due to many end-of-the-year activities and

holidays, I was only able to use four texts for instruction. I initially planned to read and work with one text a week, which would have made five texts total but the third text, on Buddy the first seeing-eye dog, took longer for us to read and discuss than I had thought it would. Therefore, the book on Buddy took two weeks of instruction.

The texts originally planned also included five different types, one was a pamphlet or brochure type on two different bears where the students compared and contrasted the bears. The pamphlet or brochures were comprised of different sections with headings that the students chose to read as a group as well as a picture for each of the sections. The second text planned was a short informational text on dinosaurs which gave many facts throughout the book. This book included at least one picture on each page and large print with spaces between lines. The third text planned had more of a story line to it or a narrative type text and was about Buddy, the first seeing-eye dog. This book was broken into chapters, had full pages of texts with no spaces between lines, and about one picture per chapter. The fourth text that was planned and then not used was a book on caterpillars and butterflies. This book was brightly colored, had pictures on every page, and was set-up in an interactive fashion. Students read a statement on one page about caterpillars or butterflies, predicted whether the statement was true or false, and then turned the page to see if they were correct and read a paragraph explaining the answer and giving more details about it. This text was not read during the study because on the day it was introduced to the first group of students I discovered that the classroom teacher had the same book and had read it with them the week before. Therefore, I quickly went to my bookshelf,

scanned the titles, and the first nonfiction text that I found was on bears. I asked the two students in the group if they wanted to read about bears today and both of them eagerly said yes. As a result, a book on bears very similar to the style of the book on dinosaurs was read. The fifth text that was initially planned to be used for instruction was a text from the National Geographic website on firefighters. This text would have been read as a group and then summarized into a paragraph in an interactive group writing experience. The text was not used however, because of end of the year schedule changes that interfered with my instructional time with many of the students, as well as the fact that the Buddy book was read and discussed over two weeks versus the one week that was originally planned. If there had been more time in the school year to continue with the study, I would have found more texts that were similar and different in style to read with the students in order to get a better idea of how students would respond to the different styles of the nonfiction or informational texts. In using more texts I would ultimately be able to collect more data overall and as a result have stronger conclusions.

In addition, another limitation to the study is that the survey questions themselves were difficult to comprehend for some of the students. Each of the four times the survey was given at least one student, from each of the four instructional groups of students who participated in the study, asked for the statements to be clarified. This was especially true for the second statement which was the one that was written negatively and stated “this activity did not hold my attention”. If the students responded by circling the choice of “not at all true”, then the students

reported to be highly interested and engaged with the particular text and the maximum points were given for the response. The students overall had a very difficult time understanding the style of the question, being stated in a negative manner, and each time asked me for help in understanding which number to circle to say they were able to pay attention or not pay attention. Due to the fact that I had to rephrase the statements or make it clear as to which number to circle if they wanted to say they agreed or disagreed, the survey set-up could be considered a limitation. Although I tried to use the same words and phrases and to explain the statements the same way to each group I can not be certain that all students heard the exact same explanation for each of the statements, as well as the fact that if the students did not ask for help understanding the survey statements, they did not get any help. Without help understanding the statements students who thought they knew what they were doing or who were too shy to ask for help, may have not responded accurately. As with any survey, especially one on reading given by the students' reading teacher could pose issues with truthful answers. This needs to be kept in mind when analyzing the data and determining its significance.

With the limitations and weaknesses of the study in mind, I have concluded that overall the students who participated in this study were interested in, engaged and motivated with the informational and nonfiction texts used for instruction in AIS during the course of the study.

*Recommendations for the classroom*

The results of the study show that the students who participated in the study were overall interested and engaged with the informational and nonfiction texts used for instruction. Therefore as a teacher-researcher who researched my own choice of materials, and instructional methods to some extent, in conjunction with student interest, engagement, and motivation, I would use this information to plan for future instruction.

Many of my students claimed to dislike reading; even those who participated in the study were heard at other times, and at times in my own classroom, complaining about reading. Therefore with keeping the results of the study in mind, as well as the research of Dreher (2003) discussed previously, I would start to incorporate more informational and nonfiction texts into my classroom and instruction. The week after I stopped collecting data I did a nonfiction or informational lesson with one of the groups of students who participated in the study. The students chose a sport they enjoyed and together we read mini-biographies on players of the sport. While reading we stopped to discuss and together created a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the sports players. This activity although not part of the study also had the students interested and engaged based on their volunteering to read, comments, and overall participation. This is one example of how I was able to use the results from the study to plan for future instruction.

In the up-coming school year I will use my results from this study to plan for instruction for my new students. At the beginning of the school year as well as throughout the school year I will take note of student interests and use them as much

as possible in my planning and instruction. With student interests in mind I will be able to pick out nonfiction or informational texts to use for instruction that also tap into their interests and therefore encourage active participation and engagement with the instruction. This idea of interest in nonfiction or informational texts and an increase in motivation to read these types of texts, relates to what Moss and Hendershot (2002), reported in their study on sixth grader's selection of nonfiction texts in which at the conclusion of their study, "some students explained that nonfiction had become their favorite form of reading." (p. 16). Sixth grade students who were involved in their study also went on to state that they were interested in nonfiction or informational texts when the topic is one of interest to them. Therefore, through both my study and the study conducted by Moss and Hendershot (2002), students demonstrated an interest in the general topics of the texts and explained that the topic was important for interest and engagement with the text.

When choosing texts to use, the overall appearance of the text should be taken into consideration. While the famous quote of not judging a book by its cover is often used for many different contexts, it was apparent in the research of Moss (as cited in Saul & Dieckman, 2005) that the writing style or type as well as the design of the text influences how students respond to nonfiction or informational texts. This directly relates to the fact that the majority of my students who participated in my study responded positively to the illustrations and pictures in the different texts as well as the narrative writing style of the book about Buddy. Keeping this in mind for future instruction I will be sure to expose students to a wide range of texts and text



designs but note ones that are more engaging for the students and work towards getting them motivated and interested in texts based on their features or designs. For example, I could help a student choose a book to read independently based on its writing style, layout, use of visuals, and other areas of design as well as topic, in order to promote motivation and interest with the text in an independent reading experience. Texts that are less inviting for students but still good books or texts to use may be the ones we read as a whole group or during guided reading. Therefore students are still being exposed to a variety of texts with different writing styles and designs and can develop an understanding that appearance is not the main factor that goes into a good book, but also become motivated and engaged in texts that fit their needs in terms of writing style and design. Some students may enjoy nonfiction texts with charts and graphs and other may enjoy ones with chapters or diagrams.

It is also important to keep students engaged during the writing or copying of information from my chart paper to their individual papers for these portions of the lessons. With this in mind I can work towards activities that allow students to write their own ideas or choose from our brainstormed list, such as the Buddy poem. The Buddy poem kept the students engaged and interested in what they were doing. Also, allowing the students to write on the chart paper themselves kept them involved and interested in the lesson or activity. The fact that I am aware now that many of my students have difficulty staying on task and focused during writing, or more so the copying, portions of the lessons will allow me to look into my instructional methods

and activities and work on keeping the students focused throughout the entire lesson versus just parts of the lesson.

The majority of the students that I work with are males and this will continue next year as well. Research by Fletcher (2006), states that boys are less likely than girls to enjoy and be engaged with writing in general for several reasons, but are specifically not interested as a rule of thumb in writing narrative pieces. He suggests using the genres of cartoons, sports writing, sports commentary, creative nonfiction, fantasy, science fiction, writing movie and TV scripts, horror, graphic novels, and comic books. He also concluded that boys prefer writing nonfiction to personal narrative, poetry, and fiction, when asked which of the four they prefer during a study he conducted. With these ideas in mind I can work with my students to create writing pieces that are of more interest to them. I can not only have students create written pieces in these genre's but also demonstrate their comprehension of a text we read by responding through a more creative writing activity such as one of the genres listed above. For example, after reading the pamphlets on polar bears and grizzly bears, instead of creating the Venn diagram together, students could have created a comic strip or a creative nonfiction piece to share what they learned about polar bears and grizzly bears and how they are alike and different. These choices of activities may be more engaging for students, particularly a group of boys.

The graphic organizers such as the KWL charts and the Venn diagram were used primarily to assist with comprehension by creating a visual for the students' ideas. According to Borgia and Owles (n.d.), the use of graphic organizers and

acrostic poems for the organization of thoughts during the reading of nonfiction and informational texts are two strategies or tools to use to promote reading engagement. The idea is that the students are interacting with each other while participating in these activities and are given the chance for creative thinking which increases motivation (Borgia & Owles, n.d.). In the future I will continue to use graphic organizers and other tools or strategies to have the students interact with each other and create a visual for comprehension. Based on the results of my study and the research reviewed, I believe that it is the way in which the visuals are created that matters in terms of motivation and engagement versus what the visuals are. For example, due to the fact that I had the students copying down the information from the chart paper onto their own copy of the graphic organizer the students were not as engaged as they could have been had I formatted the lesson differently. In some cases I allowed the students the opportunity to write on the chart paper which they enjoyed. In the future I may have them work in partners to complete a visual of their thinking to then share with each other. After explicated modeling of a strategy or comprehension skill and how I would go about putting my own thinking on paper in various ways, students may also be allowed to choose their own way of representing their thinking and learning and then share their thoughts with their group members. Allowing the students to be more social with their learning as well as choose a way of representing their thinking and learning to share with their group members will work towards giving the students more ownership for their thinking and learning and increase their motivation and engagement (Havey & Goudvis, 2006).

Since students were asked to copy the notes or information I wrote on the chart paper on to their own paper, the students should have been informed about the purpose of this task. One reason I had the students participate in this task was to practice the skill of copying notes for fourth grade. Another reason for having them copy the Venn diagram, during the first week of instruction related to my study, was because they would be asked to complete their own Venn diagram on their weekly ELA assessment at the end of the week. The idea was a scaffolded approach in that as the year progressed students were held accountable for more and more and my instruction was modified accordingly. At the beginning of the school year students watch me record our thoughts and ideas before being responsible for recording and/or copying the information themselves. This coincided with the fact that as the school year progressed, the requirements for the weekly ELA exam went from choosing multiple choice answers for questions to having to fill out parts of a graphic organizer and in essence demonstrating a stronger knowledge of the skill or strategy by pulling ideas out of the reading versus choosing from four choices. My instruction was aimed at not only practicing for copying notes in fourth grade but also in using the idea that if the students wrote on their own paper they would have a deeper or better understanding than if they simply watched me write their ideas on the chart paper. As discussed throughout all of my teacher training and educational courses, giving students the purpose for the lesson or activity affords them the opportunity to truly understand why they are being asked to participate in certain lessons and activities. Also, reviewed in the article by Fullerton (2001), a purpose for the lesson or activity

needs to set with the students in order to increase motivation for the lesson or activity. The students, especially those who did not finish copying the information from the KWL chart onto their own paper, may have lacked the motivation and interest to do this due to their lack of understanding of the purpose. This lack of understanding of the purpose was my fault for not explaining to the students why I was having them copy the information. If the students had been told and it was explained to them that they would be responsible for copying notes to later study from, for tests in fourth grade, as well as the fact that they were going to be responsible for completing a similar chart on their own on the weekly ELA assessment, they may have been more interested and motivated to complete the copying. Typically I tell the students why we are completing a particular lesson or activity, but explaining to them why they were copying information was forgotten in my explanation this time.

While the main purpose of my role of the literacy specialist is to focus on reading comprehension, fluency, and decoding, as defined by my district, there are some ways in which I could work towards making my comprehension instruction more meaningful to the students. For example, during my anticipatory sets I could create tasks for students to complete that relate more to real life experiences and that would get the students using the comprehension strategy or skill in a real life context. After the students use the strategy or skill in a real life example, it can be brought into their reading, which is the ultimate goal.

One idea for accomplishing this could be an activity that I used this past school year when introducing the comprehension strategy of making an inference.

The students had been working on and struggling with making inferences in their classrooms so I used my resources to come up with an activity to help them relate making inferences to real life. Using an idea from Harvey and Goudvis (2000), I wrote feeling or emotion words on index cards, one word per index card, and each student had a turn to pick a card from the pile and give the rest of the group members clues as to what the feeling word was. The clues could not be a synonym but had to be examples of when a person would feel the emotion on the index card. The clues were then used by the other group members to guess or infer the feeling on the card. This activity allowed for students to use real life examples to make inferences by making connections to their own lives and emotions. After we played this game we talked about making inferences and I read aloud a story to the students while we practiced using clues from the book to make inferences. This anchor lesson for making inferences or anticipatory set for the lesson that day was then used as a reminder to students later on and throughout the school year as we practiced making inferences to help with reading comprehension. This activity was more authentic for the students because real life situations were included that the students could connect to and the students had a discussion versus filling out a chart with information.

In an effort to help students learn how to take or practice taking notes, students could take notes during a nature walk on what they see, hear, smell and other observations as part of a study on the environment or a particular aspect of the environment. Before the nature walk the teacher would model note taking and the importance of writing down only the important information as well as ways of using

short-hand writing to get the idea down on paper without taking a great deal of time and missing the next observation. This task would be authentic if the students were learning about the environment or a certain aspect of the environment and were going to be using their notes for future work within the unit of study. Students could also authentically use compare and contrast, another comprehension strategy, when sharing their observation notes with each other. Students would have the opportunity to explore how the same thing may be viewed differently or the same by different classmates. This example of taking notes would be practice for the following school year when they would need to take notes for studying, but gives the students a meaningful purpose to the activity as a whole.

In addition, although not pertaining to the instruction and nonfiction and informational texts, something to look into in the future may be the idea of the push-in versus pull-out models for AIS instruction. Marston (1996), concluded in his study on the differences in teacher satisfaction as well as student performance when students are taught in full inclusion settings, a full pull-out setting such as a self-contained classroom, or in a combined approach where students are included in the general education classroom and pulled-out for support as needed, that both teacher satisfaction and student performance were higher when the combined approach was used. With this study in mind, the use of the current pull-out model of AIS instruction that I use with my students would be the most effective. However, I noted throughout the study in my field notes and discussed in the results section that students were often concerned about what they were missing in the classroom or what

they could be doing if they were not participating in AIS instruction in my room. Although students were allowed to bring their snack if the class was eating, were given time to complete or make up any work they missed while with me, and I worked closely with the classroom teachers to pull-out the students during times that were better than others, students still became anxious or felt the need to talk about what they were missing or what they could be doing if they were not in my classroom. One time this was especially apparent was when student number seven came in a few minutes late and interrupted the lesson to share that the baby chicks were beginning to hatch and that she was watching with the class and that the class was still watching. Interestingly, what this student did not realize was that when I went over to get her and saw that the class was watching the baby chicks I asked the teacher to give her a few minutes to watch and then send her over. As an adult I understand that I would also rather be watching the baby chicks and that watching chicks hatch could be a once in a lifetime opportunity for some children. Therefore, I wanted her to have time to see this before coming to AIS. The student however, still sounded disappointed to be leaving the classroom when she knew what was still going on over there. I believe this is one major issue with the pull-out model of AIS instruction. No matter how hard the teachers may try to work around all the different aspects of the school day and different situations, students will always be missing time from the classroom. This affects each student differently, some do not even seem to notice, some love to get pulled from the classroom, and others get



disappointed when leaving the classroom, especially if they are participating in something in the classroom that they enjoy.

According to a study by Anderson (2006), in which two high school students were pull-out once a week during their social studies class by a special education teacher to work on reading comprehension in relation to social studies, this pull-out instruction had no impact in the two students' reading comprehension. It was further determined that the two students did not transfer their skills learned in the small pull-out group to either their social studies class or their science class activities, readings, and discussions. The researcher who was also the special education teacher, along with the two content area teachers concluded that the special education teacher, along with the two students, should have remained in the classroom the entire time and when appropriate students could break into groups within the classroom to accommodate student needs. The teachers discussed using a reciprocal teaching format within the classroom in the future. This study directly relates to the lack of transfer that I, as well as the classroom teachers, see with my own students. Not only are students not transferring from my room to the classroom and vice versa but also from classroom activities to comprehension quizzes and weekly ELA assessments within the same classroom.

In the future I would like to work to make some of the AIS instruction a push-in model in order to avoid students missing what is going on in the classroom as well as to assist with the transferring of skills and strategies. Although students are explicitly told that they are doing the same thing in my room as they are in their

classroom and vice versa, they often do not transfer their skills and strategies. In working with the classroom teachers to push-in more, we can break the students into groups as needed to accommodate their needs. This would also help in eliminating the need for re-teaching students lessons they missed when out for AIS as well as student concern for what they were missing in the classroom while out working with me. In eliminating student concern, more focus could be directed towards the lesson. I am not sure how it would work to use a push-in model for AIS but it is something to consider and to think about, even if one of the two or three pull-out sessions a week could be in the classroom as a push-in. This would also have to be discussed with the principal and other school administrators as the current model of AIS used within the district is mainly pull-out.

#### *Recommendations for future research*

Through my study, I was able to answer the questions I had intended to which were specifically related to the use of nonfiction and informational texts for AIS instruction with third grade students in a rural school district. However, this study also has left some questions that could be further explored as well as aspects that could be looked into further to gain additional information from the students.

In order to gain additional information from the students, as mentioned previously, the study could span a longer time period. Although not conducive to this study due to the fast approaching end of the school year, if the same study was carried out over a longer period of time more texts could be used and the data could be stronger.

Also in expanding on this study, in order to make the study relative to students in other school districts and grade levels, more participants could be included. These participants could be from various locations and include a wide range of strengths and needs, as well as race, and ethnicities, and other factors that would allow for a more diverse population.

The topics that were used for this study were based on the texts that I had available to me to use as well as student interest. Prior to beginning the instruction for this study I informally asked students what nonfiction topics they enjoyed. The common theme for all of the students who were asked to participate in the study was animals. Other topics mentioned were sports, dance, and certain famous people. Due to the fact that all students mentioned animals, usually by listing certain animals, and that I had access to a variety of animal texts I chose to read all animal texts. It would be interesting to see how students respond to texts that are nonfiction and informational but are not about animals or to see how students responded to different types of animal texts, as it was noted through the informal group interview that 11 out of the 13 students said they enjoyed the text with the seeing-eye dog the most. These would be questions to look into for future research. One theme could be chosen to look into further or the researcher could use a variety of texts in each of multiple themes and then compare and contrast student responses to these different topics or themes.

Another question that could be researched further is whether the type of nonfiction or informational text used has an impact on student responses. As

discussed previously all but two students reported the book on Buddy the first seeing-eye dog to be their favorite out of the four texts read during the study. When asked why they stated reasons such as their love of dogs and the fact that Buddy helped people. One thing different about this text compared to the other three used during the study was that this particular text presented the information in a narrative or storyline nature versus strictly giving facts. Students read a story about Buddy, not paragraph after paragraph giving facts about Buddy, as with the other three texts on the different topics. Future research could include looking into the type of nonfiction or informational text and student reactions or responses to each of the different types. As Edmunds and Bauserman (2006) concluded, characteristics of books or texts was one of the factors they found to effect motivation for reading. Therefore in expanding on both my study and their study, student reactions and thoughts around particular types or characteristics of nonfiction and informational books could be looked into further.

Based on the data that I collected during this study, third grade students in a rural school district receiving AIS instruction for literacy were interested, engaged and motivated with the use of informational or nonfiction texts for instructional purposes.

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**Appendix A: Letter to parents/guardians with consent form**



March 16, 2009

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I am currently completing my thesis at The College at Brockport on students' self-reported motivation and engagement for reading when informational or nonfiction texts are used in the classroom.

I would like to ask your permission to survey your child on his or her reading motivation and engagement approximately once a week for a six to eight week period of time. I will also take notes on my observations of your child's behaviors in terms of engagement during lessons and activities involved around informational or nonfiction texts and ask your child follow-up questions to responses on the surveys or their behaviors I observe. Student work will be collected to be reviewed as well. All names will be removed immediately upon collecting the work samples.

All information collected will be kept strictly confidential and will be used solely for the purpose of completing my thesis. At any time if you wish for your child to stop participating through responding to the surveys or my collection of observations and field notes and possible follow-up questions, please inform me of your wishes and I will stop collecting information from your child.

Your child's participation in this thesis project is greatly appreciated and will not effect his or her grade or take away from instruction.

Please read and complete the second page of this letter and return it to school with your child by **Friday, April 24, 2009**. If you have any questions or concerns do not hesitate to contact me at

Thank you,

Miss Hundley

## Consent for Observation, Surveying, and Interviewing of Student

The purpose of this research project is to explore students' self-reported motivation and engagement for reading when informational or nonfiction texts are used in the classroom. The person conducting this research is a graduate student at SUNY Brockport. If you agree to have your child participate in this research study, your child will be observed during periods of literacy instruction during his/her AIS group as well as responding to brief surveys and informal interview questions. Work samples will also be collected with student names removed.

In order for your child to participate in this study, your informed consent is required. You are being asked to make a decision whether or not to allow your child to participate in the project. If you would like for your child to participate in the project, and agree with the statements below, please sign your name in the space provided at the end. You may change your mind at any time and your child may leave the study without any penalty, even after the study has begun.

I understand that:

- a. My child's participation is voluntary and he/she has the right to refuse to answer any questions.
- b. My child's confidentiality is guaranteed. His/her name will not be recorded in observation notes, on surveys, or on interview notes. There will be no way to connect my child to the observations, surveys, or interviews. If any publication results from this research, he/she would not be identified by name. Results will be given through the use of pseudonyms, so neither the participants nor the school can be identified.
- c. There will be no anticipated personal risks or benefits because of participation in this project.
- d. The researcher will be observing my child's behaviors during instruction using informational or nonfiction texts for approximately 30 minutes, 2-3 times a week.
- e. My child will complete a six question, written survey, given by the researcher, sharing his/her motivation and engagement during instruction in the AIS classroom approximately once a week. The survey will take approximately five minutes each time it is given.
- f. My child will be asked informal interview questions, by the researcher, through a casual conversation approximately once every two weeks.
- g. My child's work will be collected and his/her name will be removed permanently immediately upon collection.
- h. The results will be used for the completion of a thesis paper by the primary researcher.
- i. Data from the observations, surveys, and interviews will be kept in a locked filing cabinet by the researcher. Data and consent forms will be destroyed by shredding when the data analysis has been completed.

I understand the information provided in this form and agree to allow my child to participate as a participant in this study. I am 18 years of age or older. I have read and understand the

above statements. All my questions about my child's participation in this study have been answered to my satisfaction.

If you have any questions, you may contact:

Primary Researcher  
Melissa Hundley  
Graduate Student, SUNY Brockport

Thesis Advisor  
Dr. Sue Novinger  
SUNY Brockport

Signature of Parent: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B: Student Assent**

Statement of Assent  
To Be Read to Third Grade Students

Many of you know that I am going to school at night to continue learning about being a teacher. I am doing a project on how students think and feel about informational or nonfiction books. I am going to be using more books that are informational or nonfiction for our lessons and activities. While we are working I will be taking notes about what I see and hear and will be giving you a short survey to take about once a week to tell me what you are thinking about and feeling towards what we are doing in group. I will also ask you some questions at times to better understand how you are thinking and feeling. I am going to be collecting some of your work too.

Your parent or guardian has given me permission for you to take part in this study but it is up to you to decide if you would like to. If you would like to participate in my study, but change your mind later, you can tell me and I will stop taking notes about you and stop giving you the surveys. I will not use your name on anything that I collect for my study, and I will not share any of the information with anyone.

If you would like to participate in my study, write your name and date on the lines below.

Thank you very much,

Miss Hundley

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix C: Lesson Plans**

**Week One: Compare and contrast with grizzly and polar bears**

**Day One:**

- Review the concept of compare and contrast and a Venn diagram
- Introduce the two texts- one on grizzly bears and the other on polar bears
- Allow students a few minutes to look at the texts and together decide on which section to read first
- Take turns reading, alternating between grizzly bear and polar bear in order to read the same section for each and compare
- At the conclusion of each section, compare and contrast the facts learned and fill in the Venn diagram accordingly- on the chart paper and students fill in their independent copy
- Read and discuss, filling in the chart for the remainder of the lesson
- Wrap-up by reviewing the concept of compare and contrast and previewing which sections are left to read next time

**Day Two:**

- Review the Venn diagram on grizzly bears and polar bears
- Continue to take turns reading, as well as read aloud by me
- Continue to fill out the Venn diagram- both chart paper and individual copy
- Wrap-up by reviewing the concept of compare and contrast and discussing what we all learned by reading about the two different bears

**Week Two: Author's Purpose with Dinosaurs**

**Day One:**

- Ask students what they know about dinosaurs and begin filling out the KWL on chart paper. Students copy onto their own version of the KWL
- List questions students and I have about dinosaurs
- Take turns reading the book while discussing throughout and adding to the KWL chart, as more questions arise or questions are answered
- Have each student and I share one idea learned today and record on the KWL chart, both the chart paper version and individual version

**Day Two:**

- Review the KWL and text from day one
- Finish reading and discussing the text

- Each student and I share an idea to add to the L section of the KWL chart, both the chart paper version and individual version
- Review and have students list the three reasons an author writes (persuade, inform, entertain)
- Together decide what the author's purpose was for the dinosaur book and list reasons why

### **Week Three and Four: Predictions with "Budding the First Seeing-Eye Dog"**

3-4 day lesson depending on the group and schedule changes

- Build background by discussing what it means to be blind and deaf as well as drawing on what is being learned in the classrooms about Helen Keller.
- Take turns reading the book while stopping to discuss throughout
- Read aloud as seen appropriate
- Record predictions on the white board
- At the conclusion of the book brainstorm words and phrases about Buddy to then write Buddy poems

### **Week Five: Bears**

1-2 day lesson depending on the group and schedule changes

- Ask students what they know about bears and begin filling out the KWL on chart paper
- List questions students and I have about bears
- Take turns reading the book while discussing throughout and adding to the KWL chart, as more questions arise or questions are answered
- Have each student and I share one idea learned today and record on the KWL chart, both the chart paper version and individual version



**Appendix D: Observation/field Notes Form**

Observation/Field Notes

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Book and Lesson/Activity: \_\_\_\_\_

Participants Present: \_\_\_\_\_

Observations	Thoughts, Questions, Interpretations

## Appendix E: Student Survey

Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Book and Activity: \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle the number, for each statement, that best tells how you feel about the book and activity that went along with the book.

1. I enjoyed doing this activity very much.

1	2	3	4	5
not at all true		somewhat true		very true

2. This activity did not hold my attention.

1	2	3	4	5
not at all true		somewhat true		very true

3. I would describe this activity as very interesting.

1	2	3	4	5
not at all true		somewhat true		very true

4. I think I am pretty good at this activity.

1	2	3	4	5
not at all true		somewhat true		very true

5. I put my best effort into this activity.

1	2	3	4	5
not at all true		somewhat true		very true

6. I believe this activity could be of some value to me.

1	2	3	4	5
not at all true		somewhat true		very true

## Appendix F: KWL Chart

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

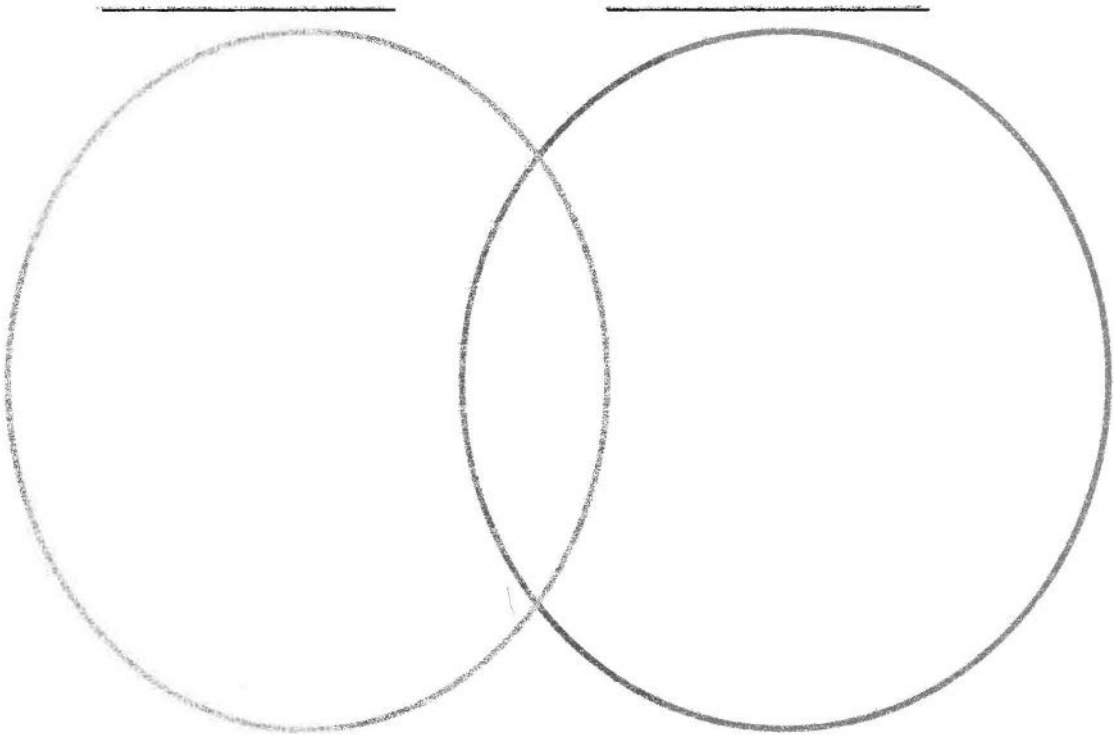
Book: \_\_\_\_\_

K	W	L

## Appendix G: Venn diagram

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Book: \_\_\_\_\_





## Appendix H: Buddy Poem

B

---

U

---

D

---

D

---

Y

---

by: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix I: Word Scramble Sample**

Student  
2

Name [Redacted]

5/29/09

Unscramble the letters to find the words in our

# Big Brown Bear Anagram



**Word List:** berries, black, brown, claws, cub, forest, Grizzly, hibernate, honey, Panda

- gilryzz      grizzly
- abeehinrt    hibernate
- beeirrs      berries
- bnorw        brown
- aadnp        panda
- bcu            cub
- acisw        claws
- Abckl        black
- ehnoy        honey
- eforst        forest

**Appendix J: Buddy Poem Student Samples**

Student 1

B est friend

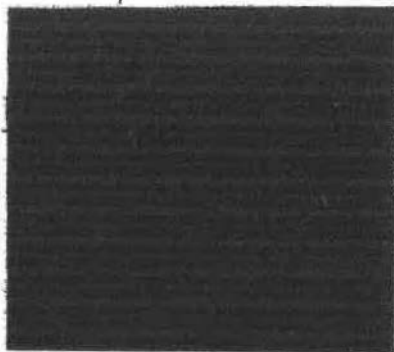
U se feed

D iffren + type of dog

D ark

Y out of fish

by:



Student 4

**B** rave Dog

**U** nusual Dog

**D** ifferent Dog

**D** elightful Dog

**Y** oung Dog

by: 

1/19/09

**Appendix K: KWL Samples- Students three and six**



Student  
3



Date:

5/5/09

Book:

K	W	L
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are extinct.</li> <li>• The are so scary</li> <li>• They were a live along time ago (B.C.)</li> <li>• They fight with each other</li> <li>• There are many different kinds T-REX</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did they live</li> <li>• Why do they seem so scary and mean</li> <li>• How tall do they get</li> </ul>	<p>Anatosaurs had 2000 Teeth</p>

Student  
No



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Book:

Dino

K	W	L
Extinct Many kinds Lived in BC T-Rex	Do eat plants last living Dino	