Elementary Teachers' Sense of Self Efficacy and Professional Development Experiences of Teaching Informational Text

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ELEMENTARY TEACHERS’ SENSE OF SELF EFFICACY AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES OF TEACHING INFORMATIONAL TEXT

by

Mary Desiree Lee

Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2014
ABSTRACT

ELEMENTARY TEACHERS’ SENSE OF SELF EFFICACY AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES OF TEACHING INFORMATIONAL TEXT

by Mary Desiree Lee

December 2014

According to the International Reading Association, becoming a successful citizen in one’s career and personal life requires the use of literacy skills (International Reading Association, 1999). However, students in the United States have scored low on the literacy portions of the National Assessment of Educational Progress and the ACT prompting the National Governor’s Association to author a set of standards with a goal of providing students a balance between narrative and informational text (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Scores were below the national average in the southeastern region of the United States, most notably, Mississippi. Students in fourth grade were assessed using a 50% balance of literary and informational text and questions to support each. These results correlate with research that suggests not only are students reading less complex texts, the amount of informational text students in K-8 schools interact with comprises of only 7-15% of the overall reading demands (Yopp & Yopp, 2006). These circumstances have set students up for failure when they enter college. Implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) will bring a collaborative effort among teachers across all contents to instruct reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language. By fourth grade students should be interacting with a 50% balance of literary and informational text. While there has been much controversy over the implementation of the CCSS in
Mississippi, supported primarily by Senators Michael Watson and Chris McDaniel, the new Mississippi State Department Superintendent, Carey Wright, is committed to continuing implementation of the standards. As full implementation is approaching during the 2014-2015 school year, it is important that Mississippi’s teachers are prepared to teach students utilizing informational text in the primary grades where there has been an imbalance in the past. The purpose of this study was to examine the types of and amount of professional development opportunities that have been offered to teachers over the past twelve months and decide whether there was a correlation between current trainings and teachers’ efficacy when using informational text in the elementary classroom. Results indicated that a large portion of elementary teachers in Mississippi are not receiving any professional development on the topic of teaching informational text to elementary students. Of the few teachers who reported attending professional development on the topic, the amount of time spent was insufficient to properly train them in the instructional strategies and student engagement methods needed to successfully instruct students in this area.
The University of Southern Mississippi

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by

Mary Desiree Lee

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School of The University of Southern Mississippi in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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December 2014
DEDICATION

A project of this magnitude would not be possible without a strong support system. I would like to dedicate this project to my parents, Burl and Lynn Brewer, and my husband, Matthew Lee for the many sacrifices they have made in order for me to accomplish this goal. I’d also like to dedicate this project to my children, Curt and Jennoa. May they value education as much as their mother does and may they become lifelong learners.

This project is also dedicated to the past and present faculty of the East Central Schools in Jackson County, MS. Mr. Rucks Robinson, Mr. Tim Anderson, and Mr. Brad Stewart are pillars of the Hurley community who have led these teachers to teach skills to mastery in a way that leads students to deep understanding and application. As a student, they were my leaders, as a young adult they were my mentors, and as an educator they are still my mentors, but I also call them my friends. A great number of graduates from East Central High School have pursued a career in the field of education. They believed in us; now we believe in the next generation.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the dissertation chair, Dr. Rose Jones, and the other committee members, Dr. James Johnson, Dr. Ellen Ramp, Dr. Kelley Stricklin, and Dr. Hani Morgan for their advice and support throughout the duration of this project. I would especially like to thank Dr. Melony Hanson and Dr. Brittany Herrington for their guidance during the process, motivational words, and most of all their willingness to read and reread lending editing and revision support along the way. The process would have taken much longer without their expertise.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The International Reading Association maintains that becoming a successful citizen who executes job demands and manages one’s personal life requires the use of literacy skills (International Reading Association, 1999). In 2004, Farris, Fuhler, and Walther defined literacy as the ability to read and comprehend text in an assortment of formats and to be able to communicate through writing. Vacca and Vacca (2008) emphasized literacy skills as a key element in student achievement across all content areas, not isolated to reading and language arts.

Due to low test scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress and the ACT, the authors of the Common Core State Standards have included a goal for students to receive a better balance between narrative and informational text, also known as content area text (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010). Content area literacy is defined as a student’s ability to read and comprehend text across subjects. In 2002, Wood maintained that this term is generally associated with middle and high school students. In contrast, the term informational text is synonymous with text in the content areas in the primary grades (Moss, 2005). The main purpose of informational text is to deliver information about the natural or social world (Duke, 2000). Therefore, science and social studies texts are traditionally considered informational text. The need to understand and apply informational text is a daily task in secondary education settings, as well as in society in general (Kletzien & Dreher, 2004).
Background

The purpose of content area literacy is reading across content areas in order to learn (Swafford & Kallus, 2002). Content area literacy is not a new topic among educators. William S. Gray, American Educator and literacy advocate was an early proponent of literacy instruction across content areas for elementary and secondary students as early as 1925 (Selman, 2011). Even so, a focus on content area literacy in elementary grades has only increased since the birth of research that built the foundation for the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010).

When the National Governor’s Association began constructing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), the goal was clear: students need to be ready for college, career, and citizenship. This goal requires students to be literate. The 2011 National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) reading assessment illustrated a lack of literacy skills across the states. Only 32% of the fourth grade students tested nationally scored proficient or higher on the NAEP reading assessment, meaning that the remaining 68% of fourth graders tested nationally scored basic or below. Consequently, the percentage of proficient or higher scoring students in eighth grade was the same at 32% while 68% of eighth graders also scored basic or below (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2011).

Scores were below the national average in the southeastern region of the United States, most notably, Mississippi. Data from the 2011 NAEP reading assessments indicated only 22% of fourth grade students tested in Mississippi scored proficient or higher, therefore 78% of fourth grade students tested in Mississippi were not reading on a
proficient level. Mississippi’s fourth grade reading scores from 2011 do not show a significant change from 2009, indicative of no substantial growth over the two year period. Eighth grade students’ reading scores on the NAEP in 2009 resulted in a 1% growth as compared to 2007’s scores. However, this slight growth was followed by the 2011 eighth grade students’ reading scores which showed no significant growth from 2009. Data from the 2011 NAEP reading assessments indicated only 21% of eighth grade students tested in Mississippi scored proficient or higher, therefore 79% of eighth grade students tested in Mississippi were not reading on a proficient level. Staggering results such as these prompted researchers, policy makers, and stakeholders to examine the literacy curriculum requirements and make drastic changes to help our nation’s future leaders (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2011).

In order to understand and improve reading scores, it was necessary to study the types of text students were required to read and the tasks they were asked to perform on the NAEP. The fourth grade test balanced the amount of literary and informational text using 50% of both types and questions to support each. There was a 5% increase in the amount of informational text for eighth graders with the difference being a 5% decrease in the amount of literary text. However, research shows that literary and informational texts have not had this balance of instruction within classrooms across the United States (Duke, 2000). In addition, Duke (2000) also suggested less than 10% of text that students engage with in first grade classrooms is classified as informational. Other research that has been the foundation for CCSS included a report from ACT, Inc. in 2006. In this report, ACT, Inc. described the skills that distinguished students who met or surpassed the benchmark score of 21 in the reading section of the ACT college admissions exam
from students who did not meet it. The major skill that differentiated their performances was the student’s ability to answer questions about a complex text (ACT, 2006).

Research of college, careers, and citizenship has suggested that demands increased or held steady at a minimum over the past fifty years and text complexity in college textbooks has held steady or increased since 1962 (Stenner, Koons, & Swartz, in press). Hayes and Ward (1992) surveyed each scientific journal and magazine from 1930 to 1990 to determine word difficulty levels. It was determined that word difficulty continually increased in these journals and magazines throughout the sixty years. Many times scaffolding is not part of the college classroom as students are expected to read for understanding independently (Pritchard, Wilson, & Yamnitz, 2007). Because demands placed on college students often include reading journals, it is imperative for students to be prepared for this task upon graduation from high school with little to no scaffolding. Until the implementation of the CCSS, students have not been expected to independently read and comprehend complex text. According to Chall, Conard, and Harris (1977) and corroborated by Hayes, Wolfer, and Wolfe (1996), textbooks in K-12 have actually decreased in text complexity specifically in the areas of sentence length and vocabulary level over the past fifty years. Hayes et al. (1996) noted vocabulary levels in newspapers remained steady from 1963 to 1991, but only the Advanced Placement (AP) classes expected students to use textbooks matching vocabulary levels of the newspapers. More current research by Williamson (2006) noted a 350L (Lexile) gap between the difficulty level of twelfth grade texts and college level text. To illustrate the gap, it is more than the Lexile variance between 4th and 8th grade texts on the NAEP. While there are critics of
text complexity measurement (Mesmer, 2008), this number is indicative of a decline of
the text complexity students have engaged with in school since 1962.

Not only are students reading less complex texts, the amount of informational text
students in K-8 schools interact with comprises only 7-15% of the overall reading
demands (Yopp & Yopp, 2006). Students are learning to read using mostly narrative text,
which does not prepare them for the reading demands of college, career and citizenship.
During the small amount of time students spend reading informational texts, an enormous
amount of teacher scaffolding through discussions, partial passages, summaries, captions,
and other text features plays the main focus rather than a focus on the text. This positions
students to form habits of skimming and scanning to find specific information with no
cognitive ability to understand the text itself (National Governors Association Center for
Best Practices, 2010).

These circumstances have set our students up for failure when they enter college.
Wirt et al. (2004) reported that students who take remedial courses in college have a
lower graduation rate than those who do not take remedial courses. However, the gap in
text complexity expectations of twelfth grade and college warrants many students
needing those remedial courses in order to succeed in coursework (Wirt et al., 2004).

Implementation of the CCSS will bring a collaborative effort among teachers
across all contents to instruct reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language. In K-5,
these will be applicable to all subjects. The goal of CCSS writers is to parallel the
expectations NAEP has set forth by incrementally increasing the amount of informational
text; students interact with as they progress through school. By fourth grade students
should be balancing the amount of literary and informational text by engaging in 50% of
both types. The incremental increase for eighth graders is 45% literary and 55% informational, and by graduation students should be engaging with 30% literary and 70% informational text (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010).

While forty-five states including Mississippi have adopted the CCSS, there has been much controversy surrounding the topic. Full implementation is set for the 2014-2015 school year, however many school districts began implementing the standards during the 2011-2012 school year and have progressively gone forward with the implementation in preparation of full implementation. Of the fifty states and six United States Territories, Alaska, Minnesota, Nebraska, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, Texas, and Virginia have not adopted the CCSS (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Of the forty-five states that originally adopted the standards, Alabama’s state school board voted to rescind the agreement (Challen, 2013), Indiana has paused implementation for one year (Carden, 2013), and Pennsylvania paused implementation in May of 2013 (Murphy, 2013).

Mississippi formally adopted the CCSS in 2010 (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010) State senators Michael Watson of Pascagoula and Chris McDaniel of Laurel both serve on the state’s education committee and are members of the Mississippi Senate Conservative Coalition. The two senators have generated great opposition to the CCSS adoption in Mississippi among their constituents for several reasons: the senators claim the Mississippi Department of Education adopted the CCSS without as much as a notification to the state’s education committee; there is federal money tied to the adoption of the CCSS; the standards are lower than the standards that high performing states such as California, Indiana, and Massachusetts had in place prior
to the implementation of the CCSS; assessments are funded and approved by the federal government; the claim that the CCSS is a voluntary, state led initiative is arguable due to the fact that college entrance exams are going to be linked to the CCSS, which means students who have been home schooled or attended private school will not be prepared to compete for a position in a university; the standards are copyrighted, all of these reasons that Senator Watson has described do not allow for Mississippi to have any input in the education process of its students (Watson, 2014). Among the reasons cited by the Mississippi Senate Conservative Coalition and most notable to this research study is the complaint that as the CCSS increases the amount of informational text and decreases the amount of fictional text, Mississippi’s students will lose cultural identity. In a letter addressed to the former interim state superintendent of education, Lynn House, senators questioned the reduction of knowledge and impact of Mississippi writers such as Eudora Welty and William Faulkner in favor of teaching a student to read informational texts. The senators were requesting proof that this methodology would increase student reading and writing achievement (Mississippi Senate Conservative Coalition, 2013). Despite the efforts of republican Senators Watson and McDaniel, implementation has not been paused. Current State Superintendent of Education, Carey Wright, has spoken in favor of the CCSS stating in a recent speech at the Mississippi Economic Council’s Capital Day, “I am committed to continuing implementation of these standards” (Wright, 2013).

As the full implementation of the CCSS is approaching during the 2014-2015 school year, it is important that Mississippi’s teachers are prepared to teach students to read and understand informational text in the primary grades where there has been such an imbalance in the past. One of the most important factors in a child’s education is
his/her teacher. Research has indicated that students who have three to four effective teachers consecutively will far surpass students who have three to four ineffective teachers consecutively (Gordon, Kane, & Staiger, 2005). Ineffective teachers paired with a low socio-economic status are two situations that decrease the chance for student success. Students in Mississippi are already at an economic disadvantage in most cases. Seventy-two percent of Mississippi students tested on the NAEP in 2011 qualified for the national school lunch program (free and reduced lunches). Proper training for teachers will produce effective teachers, reducing the disadvantages of Mississippi students suffering from poverty (Jenkins & Agamba, 2013).

These students are also victims of a state education system that has traditionally scored below the national average on the NAEP as described earlier (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2011). Teacher beliefs are the main motive behind their planning, preparation and implementation of lessons in the classroom (Rotter, 1982). For example, Bandura (1977) reported that if a teacher believes she can impact a student’s learning, no matter the extenuating circumstances, then she will do more to guarantee the student is learning. A teacher’s sense of efficacy is a critical element in a successful classroom. In 2005 Tucker et al. agreed that efficacy is one of the most noteworthy characteristics of teachers associated with student achievement. In 2006, Grant also considered efficacy to be an important element of teacher retention rates as well.

Establishing teacher beliefs is a very general topic, therefore narrowing the scope to specific factors related to student achievement is essential. Teachers have many responsibilities, but instructional strategies used (Marzano, 2003; Marzano, Pickering, &
Pollock, 2001) and student engagement are skills regarded as critical components that have a positive impact on student achievement.

The instructional strategies a teacher uses are the intended actions and tasks chosen by the teacher to achieve certain goals (Gunning, 2008). Teachers constantly make decisions with regards to how material is presented to students, and what the students will do with the material. Effective teachers as well as veteran teachers usually use more instructional strategies than ineffective or novice teachers do (Gunning, 2008).

Student engagement is the degree to which a student is captivated by a topic (Guthrie, 1996). Major contributors to engagement level are motivation, abilities, and interest of the student (Guthrie, 1996). Educators take great interest in a student’s reading engagement because researchers such as Guthrie et al., (as cited in Baker, Dreher, & Guthrie, 2000) have claimed that engaged readers read often and with great focus. Furthermore, these students are usually immersed in the text and are cognitively observant of the concepts presented creating meaning. Studies have established that reading engagement is more highly correlated to student achievement than gender or socio-economic status (Guthrie, Schafer, & Huang, 2001; Kirsch et al., 2002). One can relate the idea of student engagement to Mihály Csíkszentmihályi’s theory of Flow which is defined as the cognitive operation of a person when fully engaged and feeling a sense of enjoyment in the process of an activity (Csíkszentmihalyi, 1990). In education, Flow is the idea that the student is able to see an activity as a singular action instead of a process of actions. Assignments that provide a slightly challenging experience for students lead to flow (Snyder & Lopez, 2007). Teachers can lead students to a state of Flow in reading by choosing quality texts of interest to students, expressing enthusiasm for reading and
developing the comprehension skills found in successful readers through meaningful learning experiences.

The use of informational text in the elementary classroom has come to the forefront of education as educators and policy makers seek to increase a student’s ability to graduate from high school with the competencies needed to be successful in college, career, and general citizenship. The need to increase the informational text demands have been highlighted in this background statement. Recognizing a teacher’s role implementing effective instructional strategies and influencing student engagement in the area of reading and understanding informational text is vital for student learning (Marzano, 2003; Marzano et al., 2001). Teacher efficacy regarding student engagement and instructional strategies can provide a valuable venue to explore the need for training opportunities in the area of informational text use in elementary classrooms.

Theoretical Framework

Since the implementation of No Child Left Behind, professional development for educators has been acknowledged as an important element of policies to enhance the use of the best practices in classrooms across the United States of America. Subsequently, there has been an increase of research to pinpoint features of effective professional development. A variety of resources have budgeted money toward the assessment of professional development programs. With a considerable amount of the federal and state budget being contributed to this effort, policy makers have requested evidence about the effects of professional development programs on the best practices in the classroom and student achievement (Ingvarson, Meiers, & Beavis, 2005).
Ingvarson et al. (2005) saw the need for a better way to evaluate professional
development programs than to hand out a survey as teachers exit the event. The
researchers noted the various types of professional development further solidifying the
need for a new way to evaluate professional development programs. Various types of
professional development that would benefit from a new evaluation system are more
complex long term development programs such as those embedded in schools which
provide teachers with a time release method of growing professionally, developing
curriculum support materials, and on-line learning.

Theory presented by Ingvarson et al. (2005) in their conceptual framework,
*Relationships Between Structure, Learning Processes and Impact of Professional
Development Programs*, can provide a framework for understanding the
interconnectedness of the main features of professional development programs. Ingvarson
(2002) makes the point that the capacity for learning should be built within in-service
programs, not within teacher preparation programs only.

Ingvarson et al. (2005) credited early research which identified critical features of
effective professional development programs as the backbone for a model comparing the
differences in effectiveness of various professional development programs. When
designing the conceptual framework, Ingvarson et al. (2005) identified four types of
impact that professional development programs can be credited: impact on teachers’
knowledge, practice, student learning, and teacher efficacy. Additionally, the model
included control variables, structural features, and active learning.

The control variables were defined as teacher gender, experience, school sector,
and school support for professional development. Structural features were defined as the
amount of contact hours and time span of the professional development program. Active learning was defined as a process by which teachers analyze their current teaching practices by the professional standards for good practice. Active learning also encompasses a teacher’s analysis of what their students are learning and what is appropriate learning for students of that age and context (Ingvarson et al., 2005). By providing professional development opportunities allowing teachers to interact and learn within the appropriate context, new teaching behaviors transfer into classroom practice (Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet, 2000; Harwell, 2003). Due to the interconnectedness of knowledge, practice, student learning and teacher efficacy, all of these components need to be considered when discussing effective professional development.

Statement of the Problem

Recent national assessments have highlighted an area of deficiency in elementary classrooms, the ability to read and understand informational text. Mississippi, in particular, scored very poorly (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2011). The teachers in Mississippi need adequate training and support in order to meet the goals of the National Governor’s Association’s new set of Common Core State Standards. As teachers prepare for the full implementation and assessment of the CCSS, states and school districts must prepare teachers to implement best practices of using informational text in the primary grades. Effective professional development opportunities which allow for on-going peer collaboration within the proper context can be a way to increase teacher efficacy, thereby reducing the disadvantages of Mississippi students when reading and comprehending informational text (Ingvarson et al., 2005).
Teacher efficacy is the main motive behind planning, preparation and implementation of lessons in the classroom (Rotter, 1982). Two areas of teacher efficacy, instructional strategies used and student engagement, are regarded as critical components that have a positive impact on student achievement (Marzano, 2003; Marzano et al., 2001). A classroom teacher’s ability to implement effective instructional strategies and influence student engagement are critical components of student learning (Marzano, 2003; Marzano et al., 2001). Teacher efficacy regarding student engagement and instructional strategies can provide a valuable venue to explore the need for training opportunities in the area of informational text use in elementary classrooms.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the types of and amount of professional development opportunities that have been offered to teachers over the past twelve months and decide whether there is a correlation between current trainings and teachers’ efficacy when using informational text in the elementary classroom.

Research Questions

The study had six research questions and nine hypotheses:

Research Question 1: Does elementary teachers’ efficacy impact the use of informational text in the classroom?

H1: The use of informational text correlates significantly with overall teacher efficacy when teaching informational text.

H2: The use of informational text correlates significantly with teachers’ efficacy in student engagement when teaching informational text.
H₃: The use of informational text correlates significantly with teachers’ efficacy in instructional strategies when teaching with informational text.

Research Question 2: Does the amount of professional development events on the topic of informational text a teacher has participated in impact the use of informational text in the classroom?

H₄: The amount of professional development events on the topic of informational text correlates significantly with the use of informational text in the classroom.

Research Question 3: Does the amount of professional development events on the topic of informational text a teacher has participated in impact teachers’ efficacy when using informational text in the classroom?

H₅: The amount of professional development events on the topic of informational text correlates significantly with the overall teachers’ efficacy when teaching with informational text.

H₆: The amount of professional development events on the topic of informational text correlates significantly with teachers’ efficacy in student engagement when teaching with informational text.

H₇: The amount of professional development events on the topic of informational text correlates significantly with teachers’ efficacy in instructional strategies when teaching with informational text.

Research Question 4: Does on-going professional development on the topic of informational text a teacher has engaged in impact the use of informational text in the classroom?
H₈: On-going professional development on the topic of informational text correlates significantly with the use of informational text in the classroom.

Research Question 5: Does on-going professional development on the topic of informational text a teacher has engaged in impact overall teacher efficacy when teaching informational text?

H₀: On-going professional development on the topic of informational text correlates significantly with overall teacher efficacy when using informational text in the classroom.

Research Question 6: On average, how many hours of professional development opportunities have elementary teachers had on the topic of informational text over the past twelve months?

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

An understanding of extenuating factors that may impact validity and or limit the results of the study was useful so that measures can be taken to reduce the influence of these factors to increase statistical power and generalize ability to other populations (Gay, 1996). The limitations, delimitations and assumptions of this study are discussed below.

Limitations

Self-reported data and the use of teachers in Mississippi schools only were two major limitations that should be considered before interpreting the results of this study. Self-reported data is commonly a limitation of research because of the probability of incorrect responses (Gay, 1996). Uncontrollable effects such as inclement weather and bad days may influence participant responses. Participation in the study was also
voluntary therefore participants who declined a response could represent teachers who may be burned out, apathetic, or too busy to participate.

Delimitations

Participants of this study were limited to K-4 teachers in Mississippi schools. The schools were not randomly selected; consequently the sample may have excluded some groups. Also, the questionnaire was a one-time response. Effects such as a bad day may limit the study to teachers reacting to their temporary frustrations.

Assumptions

It was assumed that participants responded honestly and returned only one questionnaire.

Definition of Key Terms

Elementary Student- In this study, elementary student refers to a child enrolled in school between kindergarten and fourth grade.

Informational technology- In this study, informational technology is defined as any electronic texts used by students and teachers to learn about the natural or social world. Examples of informational technology are Wikipedia, Google Maps, Online Dictionaries, Web-quests, and e-mails.

Informational text- The main purpose of informational text is to deliver information about the natural or social world (Duke, 2000). Examples of informational text are *Time for Kids*, *National Geographic Kids* and most reference books such as encyclopedias and atlases (Duke & Bennett-Armistead, 2003). Some educators and researchers refer to informational text as expository text. These words are synonymous.
Instructional Strategies- The instructional strategies a teacher uses are the intended actions and tasks chosen by the teacher to achieve certain goals (Gunning, 2008). Teachers constantly make decisions with regards to how material is presented to students, and what the students will do with the material.

Nonfiction- Nonfiction text refers to text that is factual, however not all nonfiction is considered informational (Duke & Bennett-Armistead, 2003).

Professional Development- Learning opportunities available to teachers by schools, districts, or professional organizations. Examples of professional development are in-service training, conferences, webinars, professional learning communities, and teacher/mentor collaborations.

Quantitative study- A quantitative study is a research study that collects and interprets numerical data in order to describe, explain, and/or predict certain phenomena. Data is collected through reliable and valid instruments such as surveys, questionnaires, and/ or assessments. Statistics are used to analyze data and infer results (Field, 2013).

Student Engagement- Student engagement is the degree to which a student is captivated by a topic. Major contributors to engagement level are motivation, abilities, and interest of the student (Guthrie, 1996).

Teacher Efficacy- Bandura (1977) refers to self-efficacy as a teacher’s belief in his or her ability to “organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (pp. 2-3). A teacher with high self-efficacy believes that he or she has the ability to impact students’ learning producing a teacher who perseveres with no regard to challenging circumstances (Bandura, 1977).
Summary

Literacy is a skill needed to be successful across content areas. Students need to be able to read and comprehend text in order to read narrative texts, but the ability to read and understand text in science, social studies, and math is a major skill in preparing students to succeed in school, the workforce, and in life. The CCSS has done much work to balance the amount of text exposure students in the elementary grades will be getting as implementation takes place. Teacher preparation programs and professional development programs have traditionally focused on learning to read rather than reading to learn. Teachers must shift their focus to reflect the balance of learning to read and reading to learn in order to satisfy the requirements of the CCSS in their classrooms.

The purpose of this study was to examine the types of and amount of professional development opportunities that have been offered to teachers over the past twelve months and decide whether there was a correlation between current trainings and teachers’ efficacy when using informational text in the elementary classroom.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

An examination of research was imperative for one to understand the relationship of five major concepts: (a) informational text, (b) teacher efficacy, (c) professional development (d) instructional strategies, and (e) student engagement.

Introduction

Farris et al. (2004) defined literacy as the ability to read and comprehend text in an assortment of formats and to be able to communicate through writing. Content area literacy has recently gained steam for elementary instruction with the foundation for the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010). These standards were built on numerous research findings including student data that strongly suggests American students are failing in the area of reading and understanding informational text.

Scores of students in the southeastern region of the United States were below the national average. On the fourth grade NAEP, there was a balance in the amount of literary and informational text using 50% of both types and questions to support each. There is a 5% increase in the amount of informational text for eighth graders with the difference being a 5% decrease in the amount of literary text. However, research shows that literary and informational texts have not had this balance of instruction within classrooms across the United States. Implementation of the CCSS will bring a collaborative effort among teachers across all contents to instruct reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language. In K-5 these will be applicable to all subjects. The goal of CCSS writers is to parallel the expectations NAEP has set forth by incrementally
increasing the amount of informational text students interact with as they progress through school. By fourth grade, students should be balancing the amount of literary and informational text by engaging in 50% of both types (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010).

With the full implementation of the CCSS, it is important that teachers are prepared to teach students using informational text in the primary grades. Proper training will produce effective teachers, thereby reducing the disadvantages of Mississippi students suffering from poverty. Teacher beliefs are the main motivation of professional behavior (Rotter, 1982). Teachers have many responsibilities, but instructional strategies (Marzano, 2003; Marzano et al., 2001) used and student engagement are skills regarded as critical components that have a positive impact on student achievement. Vital for student learning is the teacher’s role implementing effective instructional strategies and influencing student engagement (Marzano, 2003; Marzano et al., 2001).

Informational Text

The purpose of informational text is to “communicate information about the natural or social world” (Duke, 2000, p. 205). Informational text is also commonly referred to as expository text, and is identified by the use of text features such as factual information, headings, subheadings, graphs, and charts (Sanacore, 1991). Informational text also follows a text structure, which refers to the way the text is organized: sequencing, compare and contrast, cause and effect, problem and solution, and description (Neufeld, 2005). In addition, headings and transitional words help the reader to identify which text structure the author used to organize the text.
Practice reading and comprehending informational text during the primary school years is an important foundational skill for students to experience success in reading in the secondary school years (Duke, 2010; Heider, 2009; Moss, 2003; Wood, 2002). Graesser, Golding, and Long (1991) agreed that comprehension of informational text is challenging for students. However, Pappas (1993) and Williams, Hall, and Lauer (2004) have suggested direct instruction in the area of text structure should be added to help primary students comprehend informational text.

As the Common Core State Standards Initiative becomes live in many states including Mississippi, the need for students to read and comprehend informational text at an earlier age is increasing. Duke (2004) stated, “We are surrounded by text whose primary purpose is to convey information about the natural or social world. Success in schooling, the workplace, and society depends on our ability to comprehend this material” (p. 40). The National Governor’s Association’s main drive to publish the CCSS agreed with Moss’s (2004) belief that comprehension of informational text is imperative if one is to be successful in school and in life.

In an effort to scaffold instruction in a way that allows students to understand content area text, teachers have provided students with summaries and concentrated on text features as a way to assist students (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010). This type of instruction fails to adequately prepare students to move content specific vocabulary, identified by Beck, Mckeown, and Kucan (2013) as Tier Three words, from reading and listening vocabulary to speaking and writing vocabulary. Students are receiving large portions of instructions of Tier One and Tier Two vocabulary. Beck et al. (2013) defined Tier One words as our everyday language and Tier
Two words as general academic words that can be found across contents. However, Tier Three words which are content specific words are words that are found within a specific field of study. The ability to apply these words in written and spoken language is a skill that primary students need in order to succeed in secondary courses (Duke, 2000; Gregg & Sekeres, 2006; Hall & Sabey, 2007; Moss, Leone, & Dipillo, 1997; Sanacore, 1991; Yopp & Yopp, 2006). Anderson and Freebody (1981) believed that one’s knowledge of words held a high correlation to one’s comprehension of text. Exposing students to informational text assists with vocabulary development of content specific words vital to comprehension (Moss, 2004). This leads to success with informational text in the secondary environment (Duke, 2000).

Beginning in 1983, Chall and Jacobs examined standardized test scores and determined socio-economic status to be an influence on some students’ scores. The researchers discovered a gap between two groups of students. Scores of students considered to be of low socio-economic status from grades two and three were compatible with scores from students’ of a higher socio-economic status from the same grades. However, when the researchers reached fourth grade the gap emerged, particularly in the area of vocabulary (Sanacore & Palumbo, 2009). The economically disadvantaged students’ scores began to decrease. The term fourth grade slump was used to describe this decrease in scores (Chall & Jacobs, 1983). Chall and Jacobs (1983) explained that students were moving from an era in third grade of learning to read to an era in fourth grade of reading to learn.

Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) offered a suggestion to answer the obvious question of why economically disadvantaged students experience a fourth grade slump.
The researchers believe students interact with an increasing amount of informational text beginning in fourth grade which highlights their deficiency in the area of reading to comprehend non-fiction text. Introducing students to a variety of genres paired with effective reading instruction with informational text in the primary grades are believed to be methods that decrease the fourth grade slump.

Sanacore and Palumbo (2009) offered a different suggestion to answer why the fourth grade slump exists. These researchers believed that students have not been able to find texts that meet their interests written on their independent reading level. The Accelerated Reader Program (AR), currently known as Renaissance Learning, is a widely known and popular reading program adopted by many schools as a supplement to the primary reading program. Critics of the program have suggested that AR lists may not include informational books which would meet a number of students’ interests and increase the amount of informational text students engage with on their independent reading level on a daily basis in the elementary classroom (Carter, 1996).

Reading various genres is another strategy that will help students thrive with a diverse text selection and alleviate the fourth grade slump. However, the lack of a variety of genres provided by the AR program may contribute to middle school students not retaining a motivation to read after having been through the program. Pavonetti, Brimmer, and Cipielewski, (2003) found that middle school students who used the AR program in elementary school did not continue reading avidly in middle school. Renninger (1992) stated that interest in “reading material has a positive impact on comprehension. Students with high interests in a topic are able to read more difficult material than an assessment would otherwise indicate” (p. 72).
Informational Technologies

The Internet and other informational technologies made their debut into classrooms more rapidly than books, television, or phones. The iPad, iPod, smart phone, smart board, e-reader, and other emerging technologies have been the new vehicles for informational text (Leu, O’Byrne, Zawilinski, McVerry, & Everett-Cacopardo, 2009). Educators working in today’s classrooms to reach the goals of the CCSS will not be able to move students forward without using informational text and other resources found online. A brief overview of the informational text standards will illustrate the expectations for student growth using informational technologies (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010).

First Grade

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.1.5 Know and use various text features (e.g., headings, tables of contents, glossaries, electronic menus, icons) to locate key facts or information in a text.

Second Grade

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.2.5 Know and use various text features (e.g., captions, bold print, subheadings, glossaries, indexes, electronic menus, icons) to locate key facts or information in a text efficiently.

Third Grade

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.5 Use text features and search tools (e.g., key words, sidebars, hyperlinks) to locate information relevant to a given topic efficiently.
Fourth Grade

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.7 Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, or interactive elements on Web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears.

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) has stated that learning through informational technology is an integral part of meeting the CCSS’ goal of preparing all students to be college and career ready by high school graduation. When teachers know how to utilize technology efficiently within the learning setting, students are set in an environment conducive for mastery of the CCSS. Technology is the most effective method for providing instruction and creating a learning environment that motivates and engages students to interact with informational text (International Society for Technology in Education, 2012).

Teacher Efficacy

To this point, the review of literature has focused on the lack of success primary students have had with informational text in the primary classroom eventually leading to deficits in secondary and higher education and/or career settings. This lack of success has been linked to the lack of informational text use in the primary grades. In order to reach the goal of CCSS for students to be ready for college, career, and life by the date of high school graduation, guidelines have been set forth for the amount of time elementary teachers need to spend instructing students using informational text. The integration of informational text should increase incrementally each year. By fourth grade, students should be reading an equal balance of narrative and informational text (National
Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010). Exploring a teacher’s sense of efficacy can be used to investigate reasons teachers have or have not been implementing certain practices, such as teaching with informational text. It is possible that by conducting such an investigation, a better understanding can be gained about the extent to which the overall efficacy of Mississippi’s elementary teachers when using informational text impacts its use in primary classrooms across the state. The following review of literature examines the definition of self-efficacy and its relation to teacher behavior.

According to Bandura (1982), self-efficacy refers to one’s perception of their ability to organize and carry out a planned action in order to execute the desired result. This belief system is a strong influential factor when making decisions about whether to carry out specific tasks and the level of effort spent persevering through challenging situations to complete the task (Bandura, 1986). Thought processes linked to goal oriented actions where one believes to have some control over the outcome is effected by their level of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986; Britner & Pajares, 2006). Self-efficacy is a future-oriented belief about the ability one has to produce a desired outcome. People with a high sense of self-efficacy examine the environment, choose the challenging setting, or create a new one. Therefore, this group represents a characteristic of people who are aware of their level of competence and are driven to action through their confidence in an ability to work in a variety of environments with varying demands (Usher & Pajares, 2008). Bandura’s (1997) more recent research regarding self-efficacy has noted that one judges their abilities based on four variables (a) emotional and physiological arousal (such as carrying out an action one has experienced previous success with), (b) verbal persuasion (such as confirmation from peers or supervisors), (c) vicarious experiences
(such as watching someone else model an action), and (d) mastery experiences (such as perceptions of previous experiences) (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010).

When relating self-efficacy to teachers, one may examine the definition of teacher self-efficacy (TSE). TSE is the self-assurance in one’s ability to carry out the actions to produce specific learning outcomes. According to this theory of self-efficacy, a teacher who believes he or she has the ability to produce student achievement in a certain area is likely to persevere through various challenges such as previous low student achievement, low socio-economic status, or discipline problems to help a student grow academically. According to Tucker et al. (2005), teachers’ sense of efficacy is found regularly on lists of important teacher characteristics contributing to student achievement. It is believed to be one of the most influential factors leading to the instructional strategies a teacher uses and student achievement (Chan, 2008). Research supporting Bandura’s (1982) self-efficacy theory is increasing rapidly supporting the idea that TSE beliefs are correlated to a teacher’s level of effort, the goals a teacher sets for his/her students, and the level of persistence in difficult circumstances (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009).

Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) have published several studies supporting evidence that teacher self-efficacy is correlated to many teaching and learning results, including instructional strategies used and attitude toward the profession (Klassen, Tze, Betts, & Gordon, 2011; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010) as well as student achievement (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007).

In contrast, researchers have illustrated one result of low teacher self-efficacy is ineffective teaching practices (Monteiro, Carrillo, & Aguaded, 2010). Bandura (1997) reported the lack of control over various factors could lead to high stress and apathy.
These teachers report obstacles in teaching leading to poor attitudes toward the profession (Betoret, 2009). Hoy and Spero (2005) report teachers with low teacher self-efficacy may also be more likely to react negatively to student behaviors as a classroom management strategy.

Professional Development

The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (1996) asserted in the report *What Matters Most: Teaching for America’s Future*, that teacher knowledge was imperative for student achievement. Funds allocated for teacher knowledge and abilities would increase student learning. To close the achievement gaps among students, improvement must happen in the classroom.

As the state of Mississippi prepares elementary teachers to effectively instruct primary students in the area of informational text, a theory of adult education may benefit administrators, educational consultants, and other professional development leaders who seek to provide training. In 1833, a German editor, Alexander Kapp, introduced the term *andragogy*, which refers to instructional strategies for adult learners (Reischmann, 2003). In 1970, Malcolm Knowles developed this term into a theory of adult education. As a point of reference, one can understand andragogy as a direct conflict with the learning theory of pedagogy. Pedagogy refers to the learning styles of children. It assumes that the student will learn something by just being informed. However, andragogy assumes several things about the learner’s needs: (a) rationale for why they need to learn subject matter, (b) has previous experiences to build knowledge upon, (c) involved in what and how they learn, (d) subject matter holds immediate relevance to their life, (e) subject matter will help them solve problems, (f) subject matter fulfills an internal motivation
rather than an external motivation. These ideas can be seen in many professional
development models today (Knowles, 1970).

Numerous researchers have studied various models of professional development
attempting to present the most effective method. Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1989)
presented five models of staff development: individually-guided staff development,
observation/assessment, inquiry, involvement in a development/improvement process,
and training. Individually-guided staff development provided a means for teachers to
plan and track activities that supported personal knowledge. The observation/assessment
model offered teachers unbiased facts and response concerning classroom performance.
The inquiry model obligated teachers to pinpoint an area of instructional concern, gather
data, and modify their instruction based on analysis of those data. When teachers became
active in a development/improvement process to solve problems, the teachers developed
curriculum, designed programs, and engaged in a school improvement process. The most
common, the training model, required teachers to acquire knowledge or skills through
individual or group instruction. Invarson, Meiers, and Beavis (2005) studied four
professional development programs. The researchers discovered teacher self-efficacy was
affected by the variable of active learning within the professional development program
in three of the four programs. This finding suggested that active learning has a universal
and multiplicative influence on factors that increase teachers’ self-confidence and
capability to meet student needs rather than on making changes to teaching practices
alone. Currently, Garret (2011) has responded to standards that required teachers to
transform current beliefs and practices. The process began with an evaluation of current
instructional practices. In a case study, Garrett led teachers in an examination of learning
processes and instructional practices. The process and practices were categorized in writing and reviewed through peer coaching. Garrett reported job-embedded collaboration and peer coaching proved beneficial to the participants through implementation of ongoing reflection, instruction, knowledge, and professional growth. Garrett (2011) recommended to administrators a professional development program that provided collegial support to improve classroom instruction.

Since the publication of the report *What Matters Most: Teaching for America’s Future* by the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (2006), many federal and state funds have been allocated for professional development in order to ensure that teachers know and are using the research-based best practices for their field. Based on this review of professional development, effective professional development includes professional learning opportunities that are task oriented, sustained, and embedded.

*Teacher Efficacy and Professional Development*

Karimi (2011) reported that although the importance of teacher efficacy has been researched and reported, there is a small amount of research conducted on the increase of teacher efficacy. Therefore, he studied the opportunity educators have of using professional development to increase teacher efficacy. Karimi’s quantitative study used the “Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale” to measure the efficacy levels of two groups of English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers. The groups represented an experimental group and a control group. Pre-tests, post-tests and delayed post-tests were conducted. The results of the self-efficacy pre-test resulted in no significant difference between the experimental and control groups. The experimental group received three 16-session
courses which included five professional development models which included: In-service Training, Fellow Observation/Assessment, development/Improvement Process, Mentoring, and Study Groups. The post-tests and delayed post-tests of the experimental and control groups resulted in a significant increase in the efficacy scores of the experimental group, indicating that the professional development experience had increased their efficacy level when teaching English as a Foreign language.

In a different study of the impact of professional development on teacher-efficacy, Overbaugh and Lu (2008) investigated the impact professional development (PD) had on self-efficacy based on PD program funded by a federal grant which provided a selection of instructional technology integration courses to K-12 teachers. The goal of the PD was to train teachers to effectively incorporate technology into elementary and secondary instruction. Moreover, the researchers studied the varying effects these courses had on teachers’ self-efficacy within differing demographics. There were 377 participants who completed the study which involved a pre-survey, the professional development, a post-test, and a follow-up survey. Results indicated an increase in participants’ confidence and competence in technology integration. Results further indicated no statistically significant difference of efficacy among varying demographics. The study was triangulated by interviews with study participants. The qualitative data confirmed the results of the quantitative data that there was an increase in self-efficacy in the area of technology integration as a result of professional development on the topic.

Instructional Strategies and Student Engagement

The instructional strategies a teacher uses are critical to the execution of effective teaching (Marzano, 2003). Gunning (2008) defines an instructional strategy as the
specific method the teacher uses to instruct students. This section of the literature review outlines research about the effects of instructional strategies on student achievement, and provides research-suggested instructional strategies that teachers should utilize when teaching with informational text in the elementary classroom.

Duthie (1994) and Webster (2009) found that when teachers increased the exposure to informational text and incorporated explicit instruction, adolescent learners could successfully read and understand informational text. Madeline Hunter developed a model of explicit instruction for teachers called the Instructional Theory Into Practice model (Stallings, Robbins, Prebrey, & Scott, 1986). This model is the guide that many teachers use to provide explicit instruction across all content areas. The model consists of seven steps that should be followed for each unit of study, but not necessarily each lesson. According to Hunter, teachers should provide student motivation through an anticipatory set, state the learning objective to students, provide direct instruction, check for understanding, and allow for guided practice followed by independent practice and closure. Stallings et al. (1986) studied the impact of teachers’ use of the model on student achievement and found a significant increase in student engagement in reading, among other findings.

Choosing and implementing effective instructional strategies that promote motivation in reading allows teachers to have a positive impact on student achievement. Guthrie et al. (2006) identified several instructional strategies aimed at increasing motivation and student engagement. These strategies include setting reading goals, student choice of texts, tasks, and partners, and exposing students to a wide variety of interesting topics. Guthrie et al. (2006) also stated teachers should build relationships
with students. Students who feel like their teacher cares about them are more intrinsically motivated than students who do not, while extrinsic motivation increases through reward systems. Lastly, the importance teachers place on mastery goals leads students to read critically (Guthrie et al., 2006).

According to Dymock (2005), upper elementary teachers have not always provided scaffolded instruction and reading strategies. However, struggling students are not typically equipped with the most effective comprehension strategies and few are able to use self-regulated strategies effectively enough to make them successful readers. This section of the literature review highlights several research based instructional strategies for use with students struggling to understand informational text.

It is traditional practice for teachers to ask students questions about a text without ever actually asking students to retell what was read. However, in college, career and everyday life situations, readers read and then retell to someone else as a means of passing information. If someone asks questions it is usually in response to something within the conversation (Caldwell & Leslie, 2013). The Common Core State Standards address both a student’s ability to retell informational text and summarize informational text (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010). Retelling is the prerequisite to forming a coherent summary of the information (Moss, 2006). It may be practiced in the primary grades orally, visually or in written form, (Neufeld, 2005) while the written summary is a skill students in upper grades are expected to master. General topic knowledge, text structure, and modeling through read-alouds are effective instructional strategies for teaching retelling of informational text. In addition instruction should focus on both written and oral strategies such as graphic organizers which lead to
meaningful discussion and rereading text should be encouraged and supported (Caldwell & Leslie, 2013).

Experienced readers automatically take steps toward comprehension without consciously thinking about the process. Emergent and/or struggling readers need direct instruction in order for these cognitive processes to occur. Experienced readers often anticipate what might be covered by a text about a topic based on prior knowledge about the topic and about the structure of informational text. One way teachers can lead students to do this is by providing an anticipation guide or expectation grid. This serves two purposes: activating prior knowledge, and setting expectations for the content, which become the structure for recalling information (Caldwell & Leslie, 2013).

Teachers looking for tools to use during instruction of informational text structures can use the Expository Idea Map. Using the text’s pattern of organization helps students recall information in a logical order. Primary grade students use the description, sequence, and compare and contrast maps often when reading informational text, while upper grade students also utilize the problem/solution and cause/effect maps. Once filled in, students can use the maps as a tool to retell the information in a presentation to a peer or group or as a prewriting map for a written summary (Caldwell & Leslie, 2013).

Emergent readers and students who struggle to read and understand informational text often times will label the main idea as the first sentence in the paragraph with/without reading the text(Caldwell & Leslie, 2013). A main idea map is a graphic organizer that aids students in the process of identifying the stated main idea or writing the implied main idea (Jennings, Caldwell, & Lerner, 2010). This tool leads readers to
identify the topic first which in many content area text books comes in the form of a heading or subheading, and therefore is quite easy for readers to identify.

Mason, Meadan, Hedin, and Corso (2006) described a comprehension strategy to aid struggling readers with informational texts. The strategy is called TWA, an acronym for Think before reading, Think While reading and think After reading. During the T part of the strategy students are to think about the author’s purpose, what you know and what you want to learn. During the W part of the strategy students are taught to think about reading, speed, linking knowledge, and rereading parts. During the A part of the strategy, students are taught to think about the main idea, summarizing, and what they learned. The authors mapped out the scaffolding method for this strategy, and suggested helping students memorize the nine steps to the model (but provide them with a chart to check off steps until they do). As an extension, offering extra time to practice with a peer, setting goals, and planning texts specifically so that students practice with simple text structures proved beneficial as well, and positive reinforcement “rocket” charts helped students progress through the steps.

Students in grade 3-6 experience a great comprehension difficulty when reading informational text deeply enough to absorb all the information. Many times this happens because of a lack of direct instruction in the comprehension area. Students need explicit instruction in text structure awareness. Dymock (2005) indicated that expository text types can be placed in two categories: texts that describe and texts that are affected by time. Dymock outlined the CORE model for teaching students how to comprehend expository text. CORE is an acronym for Connect, Organize, Reflect and Extend. Connecting students to the text involves activating their prior knowledge about a topic
and the text structure used to organize the text. Organizing the information presented in the text using graphic organizers helps students to simplify the information presented and helps students “see” the text structure. When students Reflect on the text, it provides a nice review of the material and recap of the decisions they made about the text structures as the lesson closes. As an Extension of the lesson, students transfer the knowledge and/or text structure by comparing and contrasting the text to other expository texts. The researcher outlined several text structures such as the list, web, matrix, and string patterns that students commonly see in primary grades, and then she offered an example of a graphic organizer for each of those structures.

Bluestein’s (2010) goal was to inform teachers of ways to bridge the gap between struggling readers and expository texts by scaffolding instruction of common text features in three specific genres: biography, journalistic text, and informational text/textbook. The author suggested that teachers introduce students to biography first since it is narrative and sequential in nature, but also contains text features similar to a textbook. She also noted that biographies still contain settings and characters like fictional works. Bluestein endorsed Weekly Reader and Time for Kids as “first” journalistic text because they are written on the interest levels of students. The sections are brief and have many graphics. Text is also supported by captions and subheadings. Finally teachers can introduce students to the textbook genre. Remembering to lead students through a preview of the chapter is key to full comprehension. Students should take time to explore titles, headings, subheadings, illustration, captions, graphs, charts, timelines, bolded words, summaries and end of section questions before diving into the text. In conclusion Bluestein (2010) stated, “By providing our struggling readers the
opportunity to dive head first into experiencing how to determine importance in
nonfiction texts, as their teachers we afford them invaluable instructional experiences that
will serve to deepen and expand their understanding of what they need” (p. 600).

While the previous strategies provide multiple ways teachers can use direct
instruction to help students gain self-regulated strategies, technology is another method
today’s children may find highly motivating. Technology is an instant motivator as well
as an area in which students are expected to become proficient. Montelongo and Herter
(2010) reported that teachers are beginning to use technology to teach science by
replacing some paper-pencil activities with activities that students can complete using a
word-processing program such as Microsoft Word. One activity discussed in the article is
the revised sentence completion activity. In this activity, students manipulate graphic
organizers within the word processor to note key ideas. The features of the technology
allow students to cut and paste or move text boxes until they are satisfied with the
progression of their graphic. The author stated students can utilize the functions under the
review tab such as spelling and grammar, research, dictionary, and thesaurus to find word
meanings.

**Questioning Techniques**

As stated previously, retelling is an important part of understanding informational
text, but the difference between remembering and understanding a text is worth
examining. When teachers ask students questions about a text, they may not remember
the information needed to answer the question correctly. However, one should not judge
a reader’s ability by that alone. A student may very well be able to understand the text
and retrieve information for questions upon prompting by being allowed to access the
text (Caldwell & Leslie, 2013). When asking students questions, teachers need an understanding of the various types of questions. The lowest level of questioning is the literal question which requires recall of information only (Applegate, Quinn, & Applegate, 2002). Memory questions at this level are looking for definitions of the 5 W’s: Who? What? Where? When? Why? Ciardello (1998) defined convergent thinking which is parallel to Applegate, Quinn, and Applegate’s (2002) memory questions. Convergent thinking questions often begin with phrases like why, how and in what ways. Readers are led to explain reasons for phenomena or events, describe relationships among people, events, or things, and compare/contrast information. These type questions are low level and are sometimes found by looking for clue words in the text such as because or by drawing on previous experience. The second level of questioning is the inferential question which requires the skill of making inferences. Making an inference uses the reader’s prior knowledge in conjunction with new information found in the text to answer the question. The reader is asked to explain motive, solve problems, or make predictions (Applegate et al., 2002). Ciardello (1998) defined these type questions as divergent thinking. Questions of this level usually begin with words such as imagine, predict, suppose, if…then, how might and what might happen if (Caldwell & Leslie, 2013). Ciardello (1998) defined the highest level of questions as evaluative thinking. These questions ask the reader to analyze, justify, or judge. Often, evaluative thinking asks the reader their opinion about a given topic.

Adolescent readers and English Language Learners are often unaware of the varying levels of question types or how to cognitively process information in a way that is conducive to answering these questions. Direct instruction of the question stems and
scaffolding students’ activities greatly increase students’ success when answering questions about informational text at all levels (Caldwell & Leslie, 2013). For students to become successful readers of informational texts, a familiarity with “Question Answer Relationships” as defined by Raphael (1982, 1986) is useful. Raphael teaches students that the answers to questions can be found in one of two places: in the book or in their head. Teachers can use posters with visual cues such as an open book for questions that are in the book. If the answers are in the book, one must decide if the question’s answer is right there on the page or if the reader must think about it and search for the answer by putting parts of the text together to generate the answer.

Teaching students to generate questions while reading informational text is one way to self-monitor comprehension (Caldwell & Leslie, 2013). Lubliner (2004) described how a teacher can use a traditional read aloud to teach students how to self-generate questions. In this method, students use cue cards as a reminder of the cognitive process when thinking about what the author is saying, finding the main idea, generating questions and considering possible answers. The goal for good readers is that they become actively engaged with the text rather than just passively accepting information. Teachers may give students a list of content free questions that can be used with any informational text as a way to ensure students are self-monitoring comprehension as they learn to generate content specific questions. Examples of these type questions are, “What is the topic of this section? What are the most important ideas? What did I learn? What surprised me? What are some words that I have learned? How is this different from what I already knew? How is this connected to me?” (Caldwell & Leslie, 2013, p. 231).
Among other instructional strategies for helping students answer questions, is the importance of looking back in the text to find answers to questions. Students sometimes see this as “cheating” because they are not allowed to use books on tests, but good readers always consult the text in order to find evidence to support answers to questions. When one teaches students to look back for answers to questions, it is helpful to structure the questions in a way that ties back to the text structure (Caldwell & Leslie, 2013).

Student engagement is defined by Guthrie (1996) as a combination of internal and external motivational factors, learning strategies, and instructional activities a student uses during a learning experience. According to Kelly and Clausen-Grace (2009), teachers should promote a student’s engagement in reading beginning in primary grades. It should be noted that the goals of CCSS designate an engagement in reading should include informational text (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010). Because the ability to read and comprehend informational text is imperative for today’s student to be successful in grade school, college, and life, an in depth look reading engagement is warranted.

Guthrie et al. (2004) described an engaged reader as one who enjoys books, monitors comprehension, can hold a sustained amount of time reading, and is not easily distracted by movement and noise around him. The engaged reader reads for personal pleasure for over an hour a day, enjoys discussing the text in detail or just in general, has a wide variety of topics of interest and forms opinions from the knowledge gained. Cognitive processes such as a reader’s ability to understand not only literal, but inferential text as well, text to text connections, comprehension strategies, and schema are critical factors along with internal motivation that allow a student to be an engaged
reader. Repeated opportunities to allow these cognitive practices encourage deep comprehension (Guthrie et al., 2001). Moreover, motivational factors should not be dismissed as these are the critical components in incorporating a reader’s interests and reading efficacy (Bell & McCallum, 2008). Interestingly, Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) found that an increase in internal motivation raised reading engagement. This increase suggests that motivation is an important component when engaging students with text (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997).

According to Guthrie et al., (2001) and Kirsch et al., (2002), there is a high correlation between the two factors of student engagement in reading and student achievement. In a study of nine-year-old students, readers who were highly engaged exhibited more student achievement than less engaged readers regardless of differences in socio-economic status. The illustration of student engagement having a high correlation to student achievement can also be observed through a study conducted by Guthrie and Schafer (as cited in Baker et al., 2000). The researchers found that despite girls having higher reading scores historically, highly engaged boys exhibited more student achievement than less engaged girls.

According to Duke (2010), student engagement is important across all content areas. Using the instructional strategies previously mentioned, teachers can affect the level of student engagement when reading informational text. The literature includes other ways to engage students with informational text. Von Rembow (2006) suggested allowing students to have book choices and when appropriate be able to choose a topic of interest to read about. Cooperative group work within the classroom and across a geographic area via network connections are both ways of engaging students with
informational text, as well. The use of trade-books, magazines, informational technology, and newspapers can break the monotony of textbook use for students, thereby increasing student engagement (Von Rembow, 2006).

Morrison and Wlodarczyk (2009) emphasized the need for quality conversations which help students make connections to self, other texts, and the world around them. The questioning strategies outlined previously help facilitate these conversations (Caldwell & Leslie, 2013).

The instructional strategies described previously will lead to student engagement in the classroom. The ultimate goal of student engagement is student achievement, a student’s ability to read and understand informational text. Marzano (2003) reported that student motivation had a statistically significant positive impact on student achievement. His report illustrated the higher the level of motivation, the higher the student achievement scores. For this reason, student engagement is imperative for readers to be able to successfully read and understand informational text.

Summary

This review of literature has given the basis for the purpose of this study. Detailed within the review was the definition and purpose of informational text at the elementary level. The mandate to increase the amount of informational text primary students interact with during elementary years was reflected through literature supporting the gaps American students have had on recent NAEP assessments. A thorough examination of self-efficacy in regards to a teacher’s professional behavior was given as well. The next portion of the review reflected the importance of effective professional development in order to train and support teachers in a time where the standards are shifting our
classrooms from a predominantly narrative based learning environment to an environment rich with informational text summoning students to find topics of interests, generate questions, and seek to read and understand informational text. The final sections of the review outlined the importance of instructional strategies teachers use, as well as providing a description of several research based strategies teachers can use to engage students, thereby increasing student achievement.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLGY

Overview

Elementary education has focused on literacy in the United States being *reading to learn* which has led to an overwhelming amount of narrative text engagement. This has been beneficial as students have worked on word recognition, fluency and comprehension of narrative text. However, this emphasis has caused a *fourth grade slump* when students are exposed to an increase in informational text. Struggles surface due to the lack of instruction of content vocabulary, text features, text structures, think alouds modeling the processes good readers use while reading informational text and other research-based strategies for best practices when teaching with informational text. This slump continues to intensify as students enter secondary education and college settings, causing students to be ill-prepared for the demands of college, career, and life reading skills. As teachers are faced with the task of preparing students for success in reading by increasing the amount of informational text, efficacy levels are likely to decrease if effective professional development models are not implemented to support teachers (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990). Bandura (1977) noted that teacher efficacy has a great impact on a teacher’s behaviors in the classroom. This notion is corroborated by Ashton and Webb’s (1986) position that levels of efficacy correlate to student achievement.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between teacher efficacy and the use of informational text in the elementary classroom and its correlation to teacher participation in the types and amount of professional development on the topic
of informational text. Recent national assessments have identified a gap in the literacy ability of students to read and understand informational text, and particularly Mississippi students have shown a drastic deficit. Effective professional development of teachers can help alleviate this instructional gap. The study was based on the theoretical model of evaluating professional development programs developed by Ingvarson, Meiers, and Beavis (2005). The model identified four types of impact that professional development programs can be credited: impact on teachers’ knowledge, practice, student learning, and teacher efficacy. A quantitative study that explores professional development opportunities, teacher efficacy, and use of informational text provided vital information needed on this topic for the purpose of encouraging administrators and professional development leaders to increase the amount of on-going training within the context of the classroom to support teachers in an effort to better prepare students for college, career and life literacy skills.

Research Questions

The study had six research questions and nine hypotheses:

Research Question 1: Does elementary teachers’ efficacy impact the use of informational text in the classroom?

H₁: The use of informational text correlates significantly with overall teacher efficacy when teaching informational text.

H₂: The use of informational text correlates significantly with teachers’ efficacy in student engagement when teaching informational text.

H₃: The use of informational text correlates significantly with teachers’ efficacy in instructional strategies when teaching with informational text.
Research Question 2: Does the amount of professional development events on the topic of informational text a teacher has engaged in impact the use of informational text in the classroom?

\( H_4: \) The amount of professional development events on the topic of informational text correlates significantly with the use of informational text in the classroom.

Research Question 3: Does the amount of professional development events on the topic of informational text a teacher has engaged in impact teachers’ efficacy when using informational text in the classroom?

\( H_5: \) The amount of professional development events on the topic of informational text correlates significantly with the overall teachers’ efficacy when teaching with informational text.

\( H_6: \) The amount of professional development events on the topic of informational text correlates significantly with teachers’ efficacy in student engagement when teaching with informational text.

\( H_7: \) The amount of professional development events on the topic of informational text correlates significantly with teachers’ efficacy in instructional strategies when teaching with informational text.

Research Question 4: Does on-going professional development on the topic of informational text a teacher has engaged in impact the use of informational text in the classroom?

\( H_8: \) On-going professional development on the topic of informational text correlates significantly with the use of informational text in the classroom.
Research Question 5: Does on-going professional development on the topic of informational text a teacher has engaged in impact overall teacher efficacy when teaching informational text?

H₀: On-going professional development on the topic of informational text correlates significantly with overall teacher efficacy when using informational text in the classroom.

Research Question 6: On average, how many hours of professional development opportunities have elementary teachers had on the topic of informational text over the past twelve months?

Research Design

The research questions were answered using a quantitative study with self-reported data from a survey (Appendix A). Participants completed the survey via the Survey Monkey software and the researcher utilized the SPSS software to analyze the data. The survey measured seven variables: (a) teachers’ overall sense of efficacy (which included a combination of instructional strategies and student engagement) with informational text, (b) teachers’ sense of efficacy for student engagement with informational text, (c) teachers’ sense of efficacy for instructional strategies with informational text (d) use of informational text (e) amount of professional development events participated in on the topic of informational text and (f) information about the on-going professional development experiences and (g) number of hours of professional development events participated in on the topic of informational text.
Participants

The population studied was kindergarten through fourth grade elementary teachers in Mississippi. Participants were certified teachers who were teaching in various schools within the state. The researcher designed a purposive sample because a true random sample is nearly impossible in educational research (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). A purposive sample is defined as a “process of selecting a sample that is believed to be representative of a given population” (Gay et al., 2009, p. 134). The researcher attempted to get a representative sample by surveying teachers at schools with various socio-economic statuses, racial demographics, and locations (urban, suburban, and rural). The schools were chosen based on their location and willingness to participate. All of the kindergarten through fourth grade teachers at the chosen schools were asked to participate in the study.

Data Collection

Upon receiving permission from district superintendents at the chosen schools (see Appendix B), the researcher contacted building principals to obtain permission for data collection. After a sufficient number of principals were obtained, the researcher submitted a proposal to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at The University of Southern Mississippi for permission to proceed with the study (see Appendix C). After IRB approval (see Appendix D), the researcher utilized the online survey program, Survey Monkey, to distribute surveys to elementary schools in the state of Mississippi. An informed consent form was e-mailed to principals to include in distribution with the survey link for teachers (see Appendix E). By completing and submitting the survey, the teacher consented to participation in the research study. After the set submission date, the
researcher analyzed the data using the SPSS software. A minimum of fifty participants was needed in order to obtain 75% power to detect the relationship with .05 level and medium effect; however the researcher attempted to collect data on more participants.

Instrumentation

The data collection methodology used in this survey of Mississippi teachers was an electronic survey. After a review of literature on the topics of teacher-efficacy, professional development, and informational text use in elementary schools, the researcher designed a survey. The completed survey consisted of thirty-three items, six which collected demographic data and twenty-seven which collected data measuring professional development opportunities, self-efficacy, and use of informational text.

The survey was then given to a panel of experts in order to obtain face validity and content validity. Feedback was obtained via an expert packet (see Appendix F) from seven experts who ranged from eighteen to forty-six combined years of elementary teaching, administration and college teaching experiences in elementary education. The experts also all had at least a masters’ degree and four of the seven held a National Board’s Certification. After receiving feedback about the questionnaire, the researcher made necessary changes to the questionnaire: (a) addition of a question about multimedia trainings to the professional development portion, (b) addition of specific teaching strategies added to the self-efficacy portion, (c) modification with original author’s permission which changed reference books to informational technology, and (d) a modification of directions to check answers in the first three sections rather than circle answers. The directions for the fourth section remained the same.
After obtaining IRB approval, the researcher completed a pilot study in order to gain proper reliability measures on the instrument. The researcher solicited certified teachers of third-fifth grade from one school to complete the questionnaire. The researcher attended a faculty meeting in order to give an oral presentation of the pilot study (see Appendix G). Teachers were then given an informed consent form (see Appendix H) and a hard copy of the survey. As teachers completed the survey, the instruments were returned confidentially into a box for collection by the researcher after the meeting. Approximately thirty participants were included in the pilot study. The researcher conducted validity and reliability tests from the completed surveys. The researcher also considered all comments from the participants to determine if any changes should be made, but no changes were made to the document.

The researcher then contacted the building principals of the schools who agreed to participate by e-mail. The e-mail (see Appendix I) contained a link to survey monkey where the instrument could be found for those teachers who chose to participate in the study.

The questionnaire that was used in this quantitative research study consisted of two parts: an informed consent form and a researcher designed survey. The survey was broken into the four sections: demographics, professional development, self-efficacy, and use of informational text.

*Part One: Informed Consent Letter*

The first section of the questionnaire was a researcher-designed informed consent letter. The letter to participants explained the purpose of the study, directions for completing and returning the questionnaire, and contact information in case the
participant had questions about the study. The letter also contained information about the IRB approval, a statement about participant protection, and ways to contact IRB if needed. Teachers agreed to participate in this study by submitting the electronic response no later than two weeks after distribution.

*Part Two: Teachers’ Opportunity for Growth: Informational Text Instrument*

*Demographics Section.* In order to collect data on the participants, a researcher-designed demographic questionnaire was included. Participants were asked to provide gender, race, highest degree of education, National Board certification status, years teaching in a public school setting, and current classification of teaching setting. After the data was collected, frequency measures were used to describe the participants.

*Professional Development Opportunities Section.* Crafting of the Professional Development Opportunities section was guided by the *Teachers’ Opportunity to Learn Survey* used in a research study of mathematics teachers conducted by Akiba (2012). Permission to use the survey for guidance was obtained through an e-mail (see Appendix J). Items in this section asked participants to give information about the types and amounts of professional development participated in over the past twelve months pertaining to the topic of information text use. There were thirteen items including questions such as the following, “How many hours of professional development on the topic of informational text have you participated in over the past 12 months?” and “How many multi-media training events have you attended in the past 12 months on the topic of informational text?”

The amount of professional development events participants have engaged in over the past twelve months (item # 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, and 19), on-going professional
development (#15, 16, 17, and 18) and the number of hours spent in professional development on the topic of informational text over the past twelve months (item # 11) were variables the researcher was interested in measuring with the second section. The researcher used the set of thirteen questions with mixed response choices. Six of the questions used a Likert scale, four questions gave two response options such as a “yes” or “no” and one question asked participants to choose an interval of time. Data was analyzed by running Pearson Correlations for the items which used the likert-type scale, the yes/no questions and time intervals were reported as descriptives.

*Self-Efficacy.* The Self-Efficacy portion of the questionnaire was developed with guidance from the Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale created by Tschann-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2005). Items in this section asked participants to give information about their beliefs about their ability to use informational text in the classroom, engage students using informational text, and apply instructional strategies to assist various students while using informational text. There were nine items including questions such as the following: “When considering book features such as book cover, topic or content, illustrations, organization, and font size and type, to what extent are you able to select quality informational text for your students?” and “To what extent can you help your students understand informational text using strategies such as the following: introducing tier 2 vocabulary, holding predictive discussions, setting a purpose for reading, and summarizing the text?”

Overall teacher efficacy when teaching informational text (item # 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28), teachers’ efficacy in student engagement when teaching informational text (item #24, 25, and 26), and teacher’s efficacy in instructional strategies
when teaching with informational text (item # 22, 27, and 28) were variables the researcher was investigating in the third section. The researcher used the set of 9 Likert-scale items to measure these variables. Data was analyzed by running Pearson Correlations.

Use of Informational Text. The Use of Informational Text portion of the questionnaire was borrowed with permission (Appendix K) from a recent dissertation study (Selman, 2011). Selman created the frequency instrument to measure the amount of narrative and informational texts used by teachers in an educational week. The types of texts were defined informational based on the research of Duke and Bennett-Armistead (2004), Sanacore (1991), and the Panel of Experts and the Focus Group used for the study.

Only the items pertaining to informational text were used in the current study. Items in this section asked teachers to “Consider the teaching materials you used in the previous five days of school for instructional purposes with a majority of your students. Approximately how many times did you use the following materials over the course of those five school days? Please indicate the amount by circling one number below for each item.” Among the various types of informational texts, one modification was made with permission from Selman concerning reference materials.

The original frequency instrument stated:

Reference books (e.g. Encyclopedia, Atlas, Dictionary, Maps, Alphabet Books)

Due to modernization needs, the following item replaced the former:

Informational Technology (e.g. Wikipedia, Google Maps, Online Dictionaries, Webquests, E-mails)
The researcher used the 5 Likert scale items in the fourth section to investigate the variable, use of informational text in the classroom (item #29, 30, 31, 32, and 33). Data was analyzed by running Pearson Correlations.

Summary

Recent national assessments have highlighted the inability of elementary students to read and understand informational text. As teachers prepare for the full implementation and assessment of the Common Core State Standards, administration and professional development leaders must prepare teachers to implement best practices of using informational text in the primary grades.

Teacher beliefs are the driving force behind a teacher’s planning and implementation in the classroom. Effective professional development opportunities which allow for on-going peer collaboration within the proper context can be a way to increase teacher efficacy. A quantitative research that investigates teachers’ beliefs about informational text in relation to the amount and types of professional development engaged in over the past twelve months on the topic of informational text was needed to provide beneficial information to administrators and professional development coordinators who will be leading teachers facing the daunting task of providing effective instruction and engaging students with informational text in the primary grades.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the types and amount of professional development opportunities that have been offered to teachers over the past twelve months and decide whether there is a correlation between current trainings and teachers’ efficacy when using informational text in the elementary classroom. The quantitative study used a researcher-designed survey distributed through the Survey Monkey online software. This chapter presents the results of the pilot study followed by the results of the dissertation study in the following order: pilot study of researcher-developed survey, reliability results of the instrument, introduction of the dissertation study, demographics of participants, descriptive statistics of all items on the instrument, a discussion of the research questions and hypotheses, and is concluded by a summary.

Pilot Study of Researcher-Developed Instrument

There were five variables in this study. Three variables involved efficacy with informational text, one variable concerned the use of informational text, and the last one concerned professional development. The three variables concerning efficacy and informational text were overall efficacy in teaching informational text, teacher efficacy in instructional strategies while teaching informational text, and teacher efficacy in student engagement while teaching informational text. The last two variables were the use of informational text and the amount of professional development events a teacher has been involved in over the past twelve months.

Data were collected using a four page survey with 34 items. The survey consisted of six questions about the participant’s demographics, thirteen items concerning
professional development opportunities, ten questions about the participant’s self-efficacy when using informational text and four items about the types of informational text used in the classroom. The superintendent of a school district in the south-eastern part of the state granted permission to conduct the pilot study at an elementary school within his district. The researcher attended a faculty meeting, gave an oral presentation of the study including information about potential risks, inconveniences, and discomforts subjects were likely to experience. The risks to participants were minimal, but included the possibility of feeling anxiety about sharing personal practices. The risks were minimalized by participation being completely voluntary and anonymous. The researcher also disclosed possible benefits to teachers, which included the attainment of teaching strategies, methods, tools, and resources to enhance personal practices when teaching students using informational texts. The researcher asked for any questions, and when there were no questions, the researcher proceeded to give the participants a consent form with information about whom to contact should they want more information about the study. Participants took approximately 10-15 minutes to fill out the survey and returned it to the designated box.

Reliability Results of the Pilot Study

The first section of the survey was a demographics section asking participants to describe themselves based on the following characteristics: gender, race, highest degree of education, National Board Certification, teaching experience, and classification of current teaching setting. Following the demographics section, participants answered thirteen questions about professional development opportunities over the past twelve months. The third section asked participants to respond to nine questions on a Likert type
scale about their self-efficacy when using informational text, with zero indicating *Not at all* and four indicating *Large extent/amount*. The last question of the self-efficacy section listed ten research-based instructional strategies. Participants were to select all that applied to their current teaching practices. There was also a fill in the blank response for *Other instructional strategies*. The fourth section of the survey asked participants to consider the teaching materials utilized in their classrooms and indicate the amount of times these materials were used over the previous five days. The following sections describe reliability results of the instrument when pilot tested.

The 34-item survey had the following reliability scores: .84 for overall teacher efficacy, .80 for teacher efficacy of student engagement, .85 for teacher efficacy of instructional strategies, and .73 for professional development. Cronbach alphas are greater than .70, which is considered sufficient (Henson, 2001; Nunnaly, 1978; Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightman, 1991).

**Introduction of the Dissertation Study**

Data were collected using an electronic survey consisting of 34 items. The survey consisted of six questions about the participant’s demographics, thirteen items concerning professional development opportunities, ten questions about the participant’s self-efficacy when using informational text and four items about the types of informational text used in the classroom. Permission was sought from approximately 60 school districts across Mississippi representing a variety of socio-economic statuses and racial demographics. However, only eight superintendents responded with permission to survey elementary teachers from their respective districts. The survey link was sent to principals of the twenty-four schools from those eight districts across Mississippi.
Participating schools represented a population with a predominantly low socio-economic status, but with various racial demographics and a wide range of test scores. The exact response rate is unknown due to the anonymity of an online survey. The researcher offered a distribution incentive to the principals in an effort to increase the amount of recipients receiving the survey link. The incentive was entry of the principal’s name in a drawing for a $50.00 Visa gift card upon e-mail response confirming the link had been sent to the kindergarten-fourth grade teachers employed at their respective schools. Only two principals responded to the distribution incentive. One could speculate the response rate based on the number of kindergarten-fourth grade teachers represented in those two schools on their school website. Another option for response rate speculation would be to calculate the percentage based on the total number of kindergarten-fourth grade teachers currently reflected on all school websites to which the survey link was sent. For both options, one would be assuming the websites are current, and for the second option, the assumption is made that all twenty-four principals forwarded the survey link to teachers. For these reasons, the researcher was uncertain of a how many surveys were distributed and therefore cannot calculate a correct response rate.

Demographics

Based on the demographics section of the survey, participants were predominately female (97.1%), Caucasian (89.7%), and a small majority had only a Bachelor’s degree (51.5%) with only a 5.9% difference between teachers with a Bachelor’s degree and teachers with a Master’s degree (45.6%). A large majority of the teachers did not hold a National Board Certification (88.2%). Years’ experience was almost equal among the 0-5 (22.1%), 6-10 (20.6%), 11-15 (20.6%), and 20+ (20.6%) ranges with the largest
difference being a smaller group of teachers who had 16-20 (16.2\%) years’ experience. The largest portion of teachers (22.5\%) identified their setting to be a general education setting. The majority of the responding teachers identified themselves as first grade teachers (10.1\%) with a lower number of kindergarten, second grade, third grade and fourth grade teachers responding. An equal number of teachers identified themselves as teachers of the following subjects: Language Arts (5.8\%), Math (5.8\%), and Social Studies (5.8\%), with Science (5.1\%) being identified a small percentage less than the former. See Table 1 for more specific demographic information.

Table 1

*Characteristics of Participants*

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<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
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</table>

Descriptive Statistics

Following the demographics section, participants answered thirteen questions about professional development opportunities over the past twelve months. The next section asked participants to respond to nine questions on a Likert type scale about their self-efficacy when using informational text, with zero indicating *Not at all* and four indicating *Large extent/amount*. The last question listed ten research-based instructional strategies. Participants were to select all that applied to their current teaching practices. There was also a fill in the blank response for *Other instructional strategies*. The last section of the survey asked participants to consider the teaching materials utilized in their
classrooms and indicate the amount of times these materials were used over the previous five days. The following sections describe the results for the five variables of the study: amount of professional development, overall teacher efficacy, efficacy of instructional strategies, efficacy of student engagement, and use of informational text. Results showed \( n = 59 \) for the variable professional development and \( n = 57 \) for the all other variables: overall teacher efficacy, efficacy of instructional strategies, efficacy of student engagement, and use of informational text. Means and standard deviations for each of the variables were calculated. Results indicate overall participants have not had much, if any, professional development on the topic of informational text over the past twelve months. Teachers surveyed do not have a very high overall self-efficacy when using informational text in the elementary classroom, and the efficacy levels drop even lower in the areas of instructional strategies and student engagement when asked about using informational text in the elementary classroom. Results also indicated teachers are using something other than informational text the majority of the time in their classrooms. See Table 2 for more specific information.

Table 2

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Strategies</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>8.46</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Engagement</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>7.44</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Informational Text</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>13.88</td>
<td>5.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note: The items for the variable of professional development were scored on a six point Likert-type scale where minimum = 0, maximum = 29. The items for the variable overall teacher efficacy were scored on a five point Likert-type scale where minimum = 0, maximum = 36. The items for the variables instructional strategies and student engagement were scored on a five point Likert-type scale where minimum = 0, maximum = 12. The items for the variable use of informational text were scored on a six point Likert-type scale where minimum 0, maximum = 25.

Item numbers 7, 8, 9, and 10 organized the category amount of professional development opportunities on the survey. Descriptive statistics for this category are presented in Table 3. Means for the 4 items ranged from .49 to 1.53 and standard deviations ranged from 1.36 to 1.91. Results of these questions indicated neither school districts nor other organizations across the state of Mississippi are offering or promoting many, if any, professional development events on the topic of informational text in the elementary classroom. Therefore, few teachers had attended any professional development events on the topic of informational text in the elementary classroom over the past twelve months.

Table 3

Descriptives: Amount of Professional Development Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N7: How many professional development events have been offered within your district on the topic of informational text over the past 12 months?</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N8: How many professional development events have you attended within your district on the topic of informational text over the past 12 months?</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N9 How many professional development events are you aware of that have been offered outside your district on the topic of informational text over the past 12 months?</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N10 How many professional development events have you attended outside your district on the topic of informational text over the past 12 months?</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The items for the variable amount of professional development were scored on a six point Likert-type scale where minimum=0, maximum =5.

*Time Spent in Professional Development*

The researcher was also interested in knowing the average amount of *time* Mississippi elementary teachers have spent in professional development on the topic of informational text, however the answer scale for item eleven on the survey was not set up to calculate an average. Instead, the researcher could report the number of teachers that identify a range of hours spent in professional development on the topic of informational text over the past twelve months. Results indicated almost half of the number of total participants who responded to this question have not attended any professional development on the topic of informational text in the past twelve months. The majority of the teachers who had attended professional development on the topic of informational text identified having attended the minimal range of one to five hours of professional development on the topic of informational text over the past twelve months. This information can be found in Table 4.
Table 4

*Descriptives: Time Spent in Professional Development*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Spent in Professional Development</th>
<th>n=55</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 hours</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>47.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 hours</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 hours</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 hours</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 hours</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20+ hours</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9.09%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Types of Professional Development*

Although not included as variables, one of the purposes of the study was to examine the *types of professional development* also. Results indicated less than half of the participants reported being informed about any educational conferences on the topic of informational text over the past twelve months, therefore the majority of participants have not attended educational conferences on the topic of informational text over the past twelve months. A few items in the *Professional Development* section of the survey contained follow-up questions in order to gain a deeper understanding of the types and amounts of professional development elementary teachers have had on the topic of informational text over the past twelve months. The first follow up question was item number fourteen which asked participants whom identified having gone to a professional conference on the topic of informational text in item number thirteen to identify how they
were informed about the event. Seventeen participants responded; fourteen reported their school district posted or promoted the conference, one reported a friend or colleague told them about it, and two reported finding the information on a website.

Approximately 21% of the teachers surveyed reported participating in on-going professional development on the topic of informational text. The second follow up question was item number sixteen which followed up on number fifteen. Participants whom answered yes on number fifteen were asked an open-ended question about the time span of the on-going professional development they are or have been involved in over the past twelve months. There were fifteen responses total, but only nine of which adequately answered the questions. Valid responses ranged from days to three years.

A majority of the teachers surveyed are collaborating with other teachers about how to use informational text in the classroom. The third follow up question was item number 18 which asked participants whom answered “yes” to number seventeen to identify if their collaboration was mandatory or voluntary. Forty-two participants responded. Eleven claimed the collaboration was mandatory, while thirty-seven identified with voluntary collaboration. Table 5, 6, and 7 provide information about the questions that targeted types of professional development and specific information about the responses.
Table 5

*Descriptives: Types of Professional Development*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N12: Has your school district posted/promoted educational conferences on the topic of informational text over the past 12 months?</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>32.14</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>67.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N15: Did /Are you participate(ing) in on-going professional development on the topic of informational text?</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20.69</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>79.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N17: Over the past 12 months, have you collaborated with other teachers on the topic of informational text?</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>73.68</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6

*Descriptives: Responses to Item 13*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N13: How many professional conferences have you attended on the topic of informational text over the past 12 months?</th>
<th>n=58</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>84.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7

*Descriptives: Responses to Item 19*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>58.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Self-Efficacy: Instructional Strategies

Item numbers twenty-two, twenty-seven, and twenty-eight asked teachers about self-efficacy beliefs concerning instructional strategies for teaching with informational text. Teachers responded on a Likert-type scale with zero indicating *Not at all* and five indicating *Large amount/extent*. Results indicated the majority of participants rated their efficacy level in the middle of the scale ranging from “some” to “large extent” when asked about helping students understand informational text using the strategies: Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary, holding predictive discussions, setting a purpose for reading, summarizing the text, holding class discussions about genre elements, features, organizational structure, and graphic organizers to teach text structure based on informational text. Descriptive statistics for this category are presented in Table 8.
Means for the three items ranged from 2.73 to 3.15 and standard deviations ranged from .87 to 1.21.

Table 8

**Descriptives: Self-Efficacy Beliefs about Instructional Strategies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N22: To what extent can you help your students understand informational text using strategies such as the following? (Introducing Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary, holding predictive discussions, setting a purpose for reading, and summarizing the text)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N27: To what extent do you feel capable of holding class discussions about genre elements, features, and organizational structure based on informational text?</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N28: To what extent do you feel capable of using graphic organizers to teach text structure based on informational text?</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The items for the variable instructional strategies were scored on a six point Likert-type scale where minimum=0, maximum =4.

Item number twenty-nine was a multiple response question meaning teachers should check all answers applicable to their personal teaching practice. The question asked, “Which of the following instructional strategies have you used when teaching informational text to your students? A total of fifty-five participants responded. Results indicated the majority of participants’ model what good readers do through read-alouds, set a purpose for reading, hold predictive discussions, give explicit instruction of question and answer relationships, provide opportunities for peer interaction with the content of the text, provide explicit instruction of question and answer relationships and text structure, and introduce Tier 2 vocabulary. Instructional strategies that are less frequented in the classroom are explicit instruction of how to generate questions while reading.
informational text, and introducing tier 3 vocabulary. The last option was an open-ended, “Other” but received no responses. Frequencies are reported in Table 9.

Table 9

*Frequencies: Item Twenty-Nine*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tier 2 vocabulary</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>61.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 3 vocabulary</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>36.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predictive discussions</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>70.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting a purpose for reading</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>85.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit instruction of graphic organizers (such as an anticipation guide or expectation grid) to use for summarizing the text</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>63.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit instruction on text structure</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>61.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeling what good readers do through read-alouds</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>94.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing opportunities for peer interaction with the content of the text</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>67.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit instruction of question and answer relationships</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>69.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit instruction of how to generate questions while reading informational text</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>47.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Self-Efficacy: Student Engagement**

Using the same Likert-type scale as the instructional strategy question stems, item numbers twenty and twenty-one and twenty-three through twenty-six asked teachers about self-efficacy beliefs concerning student engagement when teaching with informational text. Results indicated the majority of participants rated their efficacy level as having a moderate ability to engage students using informational text. This includes, but is not limited to, the ability to choose texts that interests students at first glance of the
cover, topic, illustrations, organization, and font size. Also of note when engaging students are the abilities to choose text that is complex for students, promote close reading, and support readers/learners of varying abilities. Descriptive statistics for this category are presented in Table 10. Means for the six items ranged from 2.32 to 2.82, and standard deviations ranged from 1.11 to 1.34.

Table 10

Descriptives: Self-Efficacy Beliefs about Student Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N20: When considering book features such as book cover, topic or content, illustrations, organization, and font size and type, to what extent are you able to select quality informational text for your students?</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N21: When considering vocabulary, Bloom’s Taxonomy or Webb’s Depth of Knowledge, length and level, and familiarity to the students, to what extent can you choose informational text that is considered complex text for your students?</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N23: When teaching informational text, what level is your ability to write question stems for close reading?</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N24: When teaching informational text, how much can you do to support struggling readers in a way that leads them to read and understand informational text?</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N25: When teaching informational text, how much can you do to support advanced learners to analyze, synthesize, and respond to informational text?</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N26: To what extent do you feel capable of using the following strategies to scaffold instruction for ESL students when teaching informational text? (Providing explicit instruction on text structure, modeling what good readers do, providing opportunities to interact with the text, and providing opportunities for peer interaction with the content of the text)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The items for the variable student engagement were scored on a six point Likert-type scale where minimum=0, maximum =4.
Use of Informational Text

Items thirty through thirty-four used a scale of zero to five or more (5+) and asked participants to consider the teaching materials used in the previous five days of school for instructional purposes with the majority of their students and approximate how many times the identified materials were used. Results indicated Science/Social Studies/ Math related trade books, textbooks, passages, and/or big books are used more than any other type of informational text with informational charts, graphs, graphic organizers, and/or posters being used almost as much of the time. Informational Technology, informative magazines, newspapers, and/or photos/captions, informative poems, song lyrics, rhymes, and riddles are not used as much to engage students with informational text in the elementary classroom. Descriptives for these items are in Table 11.

Table 11

Descriptives: Use of Informational Text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N30: Science/Social Studies/ Math related trade books, textbooks,</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>passages, and/or big books (teacher or professionally generated)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N31: Informational Technology (e.g. Wikipedia, Google Maps,</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Dictionaries, Webquests, E-mails)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N32: Informative Magazines, Newspapers, and/or photos/captions</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g. Zoobooks, Weekly Reader, Scholastic News, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N3: Informative poems, song lyrics, rhymes, riddles (e.g. with</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>factual information on weather, animals, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N34: Informational charts, graphs, graphic organizers, and/or</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>posters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study was guided by six research questions with nine total hypotheses. The following section details each research question and corresponding hypotheses. Pearson Correlations were completed and the results of each are detailed in this section.

Research Question 1: *Does elementary teachers’ efficacy impact the use of informational text in the classroom?*

Three hypotheses correspond with research question one. The first hypothesis (H₁) stated, *The use of informational text correlates significantly with overall teacher efficacy when teaching informational text.* Pearson Correlations indicate that this hypothesis is accepted and statistically significant: \( r = 0.374, p = 0.004 \) These data show participants who reported having a higher overall self-efficacy use more informational text in the classroom, while teachers who self-reported a lower overall self-efficacy use less informational text in the classroom.

The next hypothesis (H₂) stated, *The use of informational text correlates significantly with teachers’ efficacy in student engagement when teaching informational text.* Pearson Correlations indicate data for this hypothesis were statistically significant at the .05 level: \( r = 0.341, p = 0.01 \) and therefore the hypothesis is accepted. These data show participants who reported having a higher self-efficacy in the area of student engagement when using informational text use more informational text in the classroom, while teachers with self-reported lower self-efficacy when using informational text in the area of student engagement use less informational text in the classroom.
The third and final hypothesis (H₃) stated, The use of informational text correlates significantly with teachers’ efficacy in instructional strategies when teaching with informational text. Similar to the previous two hypotheses, the hypothesis is accepted, with Pearson Correlations indicating a statistically significant correspondence at the .05 level: (r=.290, p=.029). These data show participants who reported having a higher self-efficacy in the area of instructional strategies when using informational text use more informational text in the classroom, while teachers with a self-reported lower self-efficacy in the area of instructional strategies when using informational text use less informational text in the classroom.

Research Question 2: Does the amount of professional development events on the topic of informational text a teacher has engaged in impact the use of informational text in the classroom?

One hypothesis corresponded to research question two. The hypothesis (H₄) stated, The amount of professional development events on the topic of informational text correlates significantly with the use of informational text in the classroom. Pearson Correlations indicate data for this hypothesis were statistically significant at the .001 level: (r=.417, p=.001), therefore the hypothesis was accepted. These data show participants who reported attending professional development on the topic of informational text over the past twelve months use informational text in the classroom while participants who have not attended professional development on the topic of informational text over the past twelve months do not use informational text in the classroom.
Research Question 3: Does the amount of professional development events on the topic of informational text a teacher has engaged in impact teachers’ efficacy when using informational text in the classroom?

Three hypotheses correspond to research question three. The first hypothesis (H₅) stated, *The amount of professional development events on the topic of informational text correlates significantly with the overall teachers’ efficacy when teaching with informational text.* Pearson Correlations were used to determine the relationship and the hypothesis was accepted as data for this hypothesis were statistically significant at the .01 level: (r=.572, p<.01). These data show participants who attended professional development events on the topic of informational text over the past twelve months have a higher overall teacher efficacy level than participants who have not attended professional development events on the topic of informational text.

The second hypothesis stated (H₆) stated, *The amount of professional development events on the topic of informational text correlates significantly with teachers’ efficacy in student engagement when teaching with informational text.* Pearson Correlations indicated a statistically significant correlation at the .05 level: (r=.430, p=.046). The hypothesis is accepted. These data show participants who attended professional development events on the topic of informational text over the past twelve months have a higher teacher efficacy level in the area of student engagement when teaching with informational text than participants who have not attended professional development events on the topic of informational text.

The third hypothesis (H₇) stated, *The amount of professional development events on the topic of informational text correlates significantly with teachers’ efficacy in*
instructional strategies when teaching with informational text. The hypothesis is accepted, as Pearson correlations indicate a significant correlation at the .05 level: 
\( r = .545, p = .009 \). These data show participants who attended professional development events on the topic of informational text over the past twelve months have a higher teacher efficacy level in the area of instructional strategies when teaching with informational text than participants who have not attended professional development events on the topic of informational text.

Research Question 4: Does on-going professional development on the topic of informational text a teacher has engaged in impact the use of informational text in the classroom?

One hypothesis corresponded to research question four. The hypothesis (H₈) stated, \textit{On-going professional development on the topic of informational text correlates significantly with the use of informational text in the classroom.} The researcher neither rejects nor accepts the hypothesis (\( t(55) = 1.804, p = 0.09 \)). The answer scale for item fifteen on the survey is a yes/no question which refers to whether the teacher has/is or has/is not participating in on-going professional development. In order to analyze a correlation between on-going professional development on the topic of informational text and use of informational text in the classroom, follow up questions within the self-efficacy portion of the survey are needed to determine use of informational text among participants who have had professional development on said topic. As the survey is, there was no difference between participants that responded yes and participants that responded no, therefore there is no impact.
Research Question 5: Does on-going professional development on the topic of informational text a teacher has engaged in impact overall teacher efficacy when teaching informational text?

One hypothesis corresponded with research question five. The hypothesis (H₀) stated, *On-going professional development on the topic of informational text correlates significantly with overall teacher efficacy when using informational text in the classroom.*

The researcher neither rejects nor accepts the hypothesis (t(55) = 1.106, p=0.28). There was no difference between participants that responded yes to on-going professional development on the topic of informational text and participants that responded no, therefore there is no impact.

Research Question 6: On average, how many hours of professional development opportunities have elementary teachers had on the topic of informational text over the past twelve months?

The answer scale for item eleven on the survey refers to the number of hours participants have spent in professional development on the topic of informational text over the past twelve months. However, the response scale was not set up to calculate an average. Instead, the researcher can report the number of teachers that identify a range of hours spent in professional development on the topic of informational text over the past twelve months. Refer back to Table 4 for this information.

Summary

This chapter presented the results of this quantitative study. Results indicated that seven of the nine hypotheses were accepted and statistically significant and two of the nine hypotheses were neither accepted nor rejected. Based on the results from this study,
the majority of elementary teachers surveyed across the state of Mississippi had not received professional development in the area of using informational text in the elementary classroom over the past twelve months. However, of those surveyed, teachers who had attended professional development on the topic of informational text in the elementary classroom have a higher overall self-efficacy when teaching informational text, as well as a higher self-efficacy when engaging students with informational text and a higher self-efficacy when using instructional strategies to teach informational text. The following chapter discusses implications for policy and practice as instruction balances the amount of literary and informational text students interact with as well as future research opportunities.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

Students in the southeastern part of the United States, most notably students in Mississippi have scored below the national average, on literacy portions of the National Assessment of Educational Progress and the ACT. Regardless of the genre students have been accustomed to in the classroom, fourth graders were assessed using a combination of text consisting of 50% literary and 50% informational text. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) should correct this by requiring a balance of the two genres in the elementary classroom by fourth grade. Despite controversy over the CCSS, it is expected to reach full implementation in the 2014-2015 school year. It will be important for Mississippi’s teachers to be prepared for instruction using informational text in elementary where an imbalance has occurred in the past. The purpose of this study was to examine the types of and amount of professional development opportunities that have been offered to teachers over the past twelve months and decide whether there is a correlation between current trainings and teachers’ efficacy when using informational text in the elementary classroom. This chapter discusses the findings, conclusions, implications of the present study, and recommendations for teachers, administrators, and school districts.

Summary of the Study

Recent student achievement tests have reported a lack of ability to comprehend and respond to informational text in students of all grade levels across the United States, with the worst deficit in Mississippi (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2011). Implementation of the Common Core State Standards will require teachers to
begin teaching with informational text in kindergarten and balance the amount of literary and informational texts students interact with by fourth grade. Teacher efficacy has been linked to student achievement; therefore, it was beneficial to study the current level of teacher efficacy in the area of informational text within elementary teachers across the state of Mississippi. Karimi (2011) informed educators and researchers that while the importance of teacher efficacy has been studied and reported, there is little research conducted on the increase of teacher efficacy. Therefore, he studied the opportunity educators have of using professional development to increase teacher efficacy. The results of his study were that efficacy scores of the experimental group which received professional development on the topic of teaching English as a foreign language had increased, which indicated that professional development increases teacher efficacy. The current study sought to determine what teachers’ efficacy levels are currently when teaching informational text in the elementary classroom in relation to the amount and types of professional development they have had on the topic over the past twelve months.

**Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The study was guided by the following six research questions and nine hypotheses.

Research Question 1: Does elementary teachers’ efficacy impact the use of informational text in the classroom?

H1: The use of informational text correlates significantly with overall teacher efficacy when teaching informational text.
H2: The use of informational text correlates significantly with teachers’ efficacy in student engagement when teaching informational text.

H3: The use of informational text correlates significantly with teachers’ efficacy in instructional strategies when teaching with informational text.

Research Question 2: Does the amount of professional development events on the topic of informational text a teacher has participated in impact the use of informational text in the classroom?

H4: The amount of professional development events on the topic of informational text correlates significantly with the use of informational text in the classroom.

Research Question 3: Does the amount of professional development events on the topic of informational text a teacher has participated in impact teachers’ efficacy when using informational text in the classroom?

H5: The amount of professional development events on the topic of informational text correlates significantly with the overall teachers’ efficacy when teaching with informational text.

H6: The amount of professional development events on the topic of informational text correlates significantly with teachers’ efficacy in student engagement when teaching with informational text.

H7: The amount of professional development events on the topic of informational text correlates significantly with teachers’ efficacy in instructional strategies when teaching with informational text.
Research Question 4: Does on-going professional development on the topic of informational text a teacher has engaged in impact the use of informational text in the classroom?

H₈: On-going professional development on the topic of informational text correlates significantly with the use of informational text in the classroom.

Research Question 5: Does on-going professional development on the topic of informational text a teacher has engaged in impact overall teacher efficacy when teaching informational text?

H₀: On-going professional development on the topic of informational text correlates significantly with overall teacher efficacy when using informational text in the classroom.

Research Question 6: On average, how many hours of professional development opportunities have elementary teachers had on the topic of informational text over the past twelve months?

Participants studied were kindergarten through fourth grade teachers employed in public school districts across the state of Mississippi. Due to the anonymity of an online survey, it is unknown how many schools or districts were represented, however the survey link was sent to principals of twenty-four schools representing seven school districts. These school districts represented a variety of regions, socio-economic statuses, and levels of achievement. Participants were predominately female, Caucasian, general education teachers with self-contained classrooms. Varieties of years of experience were represented while a large majority identified having only a Bachelor’s degree and did not
hold a National Board Certification. Although not targeted, the majority of respondents taught first grade.

Findings and Conclusions

This section discusses the findings and conclusions of the research questions and their implications. Overall, results from seven of the nine statistical tests were statistically significant, and this section discusses the possible reasons for the results. This section is organized in six sections Use of Informational Text and Efficacy in Teaching Informational Text, Use of Informational Text and Professional Development, Efficacy in Teaching Informational Text and Professional Development, Use of Informational Text and On-Going Professional Development, Efficacy in Teaching Informational Text and On-Going Professional Development, and Amount of Professional Development. The conclusions are embedded within the findings; recommendations are discussed in the succeeding section.

Use of Informational Text and Efficacy in Teaching Informational Text

The purpose of the first research question was to determine if a teacher’s efficacy impacts the use of informational text in the classroom. The hypotheses stated that the use of informational text correlates significantly with overall teacher efficacy, teachers’ efficacy in student engagement, and teachers’ efficacy in instructional strategies when teaching with informational text. Results indicated that in all three cases, teachers’ efficacy does impact the use of informational text in the classroom.

The majority of participants reported having a moderate amount of efficacy of student engagement and instructional strategies when teaching informational text. However, when comparing the two variables, the correlation was slightly higher in the
area of student engagement. While teachers would benefit from additional training in both areas, results indicate that teachers need more assistance in instructional strategies with informational text. Supporting struggling readers, advanced learners, and ESL students through research based instructional strategies is discussed in the Recommendations section of this chapter.

The overall findings of research question one suggested teachers are comfortable teaching informational texts. Based on the research of Ashton and Webb (1986), the results of this research question should imply that because of teachers’ moderate sense of efficacy in teaching with informational text, student achievement levels should be moderately high. However, results from recent assessments (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2011) suggested otherwise. While participants of this study reported a moderate sense of efficacy teaching informational text, participants of a recent study of teachers from the same region were surveyed in a comparison of efficacy between narrative and informational text and reported a higher efficacy level when teaching narrative text than informational text (Selman, 2011). Contradictory findings could be the result of a misunderstanding of terminology on the survey. For example, when asked about the use of instructional strategies: predictive discussions, setting a purpose for reading, explicit instruction of graphic organizers, explicit instruction of text structure, modeling what good readers do through read-alouds, providing opportunities for peer interaction with content of the text, explicit instruction of question and answer relationships, and explicit instruction of how to generate questions, teachers may have responded higher levels of efficacy due to the use of these strategies with narrative texts. Another reason for contradictory results may be due to the integration of the Common
Core State Standards. Even though mandatory implementation is not required until the 2014-2015 school year, many districts have begun implementing the standards in their daily teaching practices. As teachers have begun using informational text more, they may feel a greater confidence in this area. However, the level of efficacy must not deter the need for professional development in the area of informational texts for elementary teachers. Informational text is a different genre than narrative text, and therefore should be taught differently (Moss, 2004). Due to the contradiction of a previous study exploring a similar population, more research is needed in this area.

**Efficacy in Teaching Informational Text and Professional Development**

The purpose of research question two was to determine if the amount of professional development impacts the use of informational text in the classroom. The hypotheses stated that the amount of professional development events on the topic of informational text correlates significantly with the use of informational text in the classroom. Results indicated the amount of professional development on the topic of informational text impacts the amount of informational text elementary teachers use in the classroom.

The majority of participants reported having participated in no professional development events on the topic of professional development. Of the few participants that reported having attended professional development events, professional conferences and multimedia experiences were the types of events attended. Teachers reported that the conferences attended were promoted by their districts. Moreover, an overwhelming majority report that they have collaborated with other teachers voluntarily on the topic.
The overall findings of research question one suggests teachers need training in the area of using informational text with elementary students. Professional development opportunities are rare, and many teachers find their training by collaborating with other teachers voluntarily. Teachers have been employed with the task of teaching elementary students how to read, understand, and respond to informational text in a variety of ways (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010). According to Knowles’ theory of andragogy, the teachers are prepared to absorb the training needed to help them be successful in this area. They meet the criteria for adult learners’ needs: (a) rationale for why they need to learn subject matter, (b) previous experiences to build knowledge upon, (c) involved in what and how they learn, (d) subject matter holds immediate relevance to their life, (e) subject matter will help them solve problems, (f) subject matter fulfills an internal motivation rather than an external motivation (Knowles, 1970). An effective professional development model will be discussed in the Recommendations section.

Efficacy in Informational Text and Professional Development

The third research question sought to determine if the amount of professional development impacts teachers’ efficacy with informational text. The hypotheses stated that the amount of professional development correlates significantly with overall teachers’ efficacy, teachers’ efficacy in student engagement and instructional strategies. Results indicated that in all three cases professional development does correlate to teacher efficacy.

Participants who reported having attended professional development on the topic of informational text in the classroom over the past twelve months have a higher overall
teacher efficacy and a higher efficacy level with both instructional strategies and student engagement with informational text than participants who have not attended professional development events on the topic of informational text.

In a comparison of the two variables, student engagement and instructional strategies to the amount of professional development, the correlation was slightly higher in the area of student engagement. Overall, findings from research question three suggests that teachers would benefit from training in both areas; however more support is needed in the area of instructional strategies to use when teaching with informational text.

*Use of Informational Text, Efficacy in Teaching Informational Text, and On-Going Professional Development*

The purpose of research question four was to determine if teachers who have participated in on-going professional development on the topic of informational text report using more informational text in the classroom than those who have not participated in on-going professional development on the topic. The purpose of research question five was to determine if teachers who have participated in on-going professional development on the topic of informational text have a higher efficacy level than those who have not participated in on-going professional development on the topic. Results indicated that follow up questions within the self-efficacy portion of the survey are needed to determine use of informational text and overall efficacy among participants who have had on-going professional development on said topic. In the current study there is no impact between the variables.

Research by Invarson, Meiers, and Beavis (2005) stated teacher-efficacy was affected by the variable of active learning. Research by Garret (2011) reported job-
embedded collaboration and peer coaching proved beneficial to the participants through implementation of ongoing reflection, instruction, knowledge and professional growth. Effective professional development includes professional learning opportunities that are task oriented, sustained and embedded. Due to the significance of the variable of ongoing professional development and the current finding, more research is needed in order to answer these research questions.

Amount of Professional Development.

The purpose of research question six was to find an average amount of hours teachers have spent in professional development on the topic of informational text over the past twelve months. Results indicate the majority of teachers surveyed have participated in no hours of professional development on the topic of informational text and of those who have participated in professional development on the topic of informational text have only had 1-5 hours in the past twelve months. Overall findings suggested that elementary teachers need an increased amount of professional development on the topic of informational text.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Based on the results of the present study, elementary teachers in Mississippi have not received professional development on the topic of informational text over the past twelve months. According to the timeline for implementing CCSS, teachers will be expected to teach using informational text during the 2014-2015 school year with no prior training on how to effectively engage students or which research-based instructional strategies to use when teaching informational text. Teachers have begun collaborating voluntarily on the subject which provides a surface level implication of the need for
training before even looking at student achievement data. However, data driven decisions are the mechanism by which to change policy, and therefore the previous scores from NAEP makes the case for needed professional development in the area of teaching informational text to elementary students (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2011). Professional development needs to incorporate research-based instructional strategies and ways to engage students, but should also include a component by which teachers can adequately learn content knowledge needed to hold class discussions, plan effective learning activities, and assess student products accurately. Results from this study hold three benefits: (a) inform the Mississippi Department of Education, consultant companies, professional development coordinators, and school and district administrators of needed professional development, (b) inform teachers and curriculum directors of research-based instructional strategies to use when teaching informational text, and (c) inform teachers of ways to engage students with informational text. Components of an effective professional development model should include an emphasis on four ideas: embedded, sustained professional development on the topic of teaching informational text to elementary students, engaging students with informational text, and research-based instructional strategies.

*Embedded, Sustained Professional Development on the Topic of Teaching Informational Text to Elementary Students*

It is recommended that teachers be involved in embedded, sustained professional development on the topic of teaching informational text to elementary students. Such a model would permit teachers to focus on what students should learn and be able to do and how to troubleshoot when problems arise. Emphasis should be placed on research-based
knowledge about how students learn and should include time for teachers to look at student products collaboratively and compare the product to the expectations for student growth set forth in the current curriculum. Professional development facilitators should lead teachers to reflect on their teaching practices in comparison to national teaching standards. As teachers identify what the students should know and be able to do, they should plan learning activities that would lead students to master those objectives. Teachers should go into their classrooms free to try new instructional strategies before following up with lead teachers, instructional coaches, and/or professional development facilitators for reflection about what worked and what needs to be changed to be more effective within their classrooms. Throughout this process, teachers would benefit from team building activities that would help teachers open up about their personal teaching practices in order to gain feedback from peers.

*Engaging Students with Informational Text*

Duthie (1994) and Sunanon Webster (2009) found that when teachers increased the exposure to informational text and incorporated explicit instruction, adolescent learners could successfully read and understand informational text. Madeline Hunter developed a model of explicit instruction for teachers called the Instructional Theory into Practice model (Stallings et al., 1986). This model is the guide that many teachers use to provide explicit instruction across all content areas. The model consists of seven steps that should be followed for each unit of study, but not necessarily each lesson. According to Hunter, teachers should provide student motivation through an anticipatory set, state the learning objective to students, provide direct instruction, check for understanding, and allow for guided practice followed by independent practice and closure. Stallings et al.
(1986) studied the impact of teachers’ use of the model on student achievement and found a significant increase in student engagement in reading among other findings. It is recommended that teachers use Hunter’s model of explicit instruction when using informational text in the classroom.

Choosing and implementing effective instructional strategies that promote motivation in reading allows teachers to have a positive impact on student achievement. It is recommended that teachers use the instructional strategies identified by Guthrie et al., (2006) which are aimed at increasing motivation and student engagement. These strategies include setting reading goals, student choice of texts, tasks, and partners, and exposing students to a wide variety of interesting topics. Teachers should also build relationships with students. Students, who feel like their teacher cares about them, are more intrinsically motivated than students who do not, while extrinsic motivation increases through reward systems. Lastly, the importance teachers place on mastery goals leads students to read critically.

While the previous strategies provide ways teachers can use instruction to help engage and motivate students with informational text, it is also recommended that teachers not overlook the most obvious source for informational text and a large motivator for students: technology. Technology is an instant motivator as well as an area in which students are expected to become proficient. Montelongo and Herter, (2010) reported that teachers are beginning to use technology to teach science by replacing some paper-pencil activities with activities that students can complete using a word-processing program such as Microsoft Word. One activity discussed in the article is the adapted sentence completion activity. In this activity, students manipulate graphic organizers
within the word processor to note key ideas. The features of the technology allow students to cut and paste or move text boxes until they are satisfied with the progression of their graphic. The author stated students can utilize the functions under the review tab such as spelling and grammar, research, dictionary, and thesaurus to find word meanings.

Another version of the strategy is the adapted sentence completion activity online. This version of the activity provides more scaffolding which provides the student a limited method of presenting their answers within text boxes. However, they have the infinite use of web resources to gather information as well as immediate feedback. This version allows the opportunity for students to learn within their interests as they search for answers and “stumble” upon other learning opportunities. The researchers concluded by stating that technology encourages students in the 21st century to fully engage in their potential to learn.

*Research-based Instructional Strategies*

The instructional strategies a teacher uses are critical to the execution of effective teaching (Marzano, 2003). Gunning (2008) defines an instructional strategy as the specific method the teacher uses to instruct students. This section provides research-based instructional strategies that teachers should utilize when teaching with informational text in the elementary classroom.

*Question Types and Generating Questions.* When teachers ask students questions about a text, they may not remember the information needed to answer the question correctly. A student may be able to understand the text and retrieve information for questions upon prompting by being allowed to access the text (Caldwell & Leslie, 2013). When asking students questions, teachers need an understanding of the various types of questions. This
section illustrates questioning techniques teachers should focus on when using informational text.

The lowest level of questioning is the literal question which requires recall of information only (Applegate et al., 2002). These memory questions are looking for definitions of the 5 W’s: Who? What? Where? When? Why? Ciardello (1998) defined convergent thinking which is parallel to Applegate, Quinn, and Applegate’s memory questions. Convergent thinking questions often begin with phrases like why, how and in what ways. Readers are led to explain reasons for phenomena or events, describe relationships among people, events, or things, and compare/contrast information. These type questions are low level and are sometimes found by looking for clue words in the text such as “because” or by drawing on previous experience. The second level of questioning is the inferential question which requires the skill of making inferences. Making an inference uses the reader’s prior knowledge in conjunction with new information found in the text to answer the question. The reader is asked to explain motive, solve problems, or make predictions (Applegate et al., 2002). Ciardello (1998) defined these type questions as divergent thinking. These questions usually begin with words such as: imagine, predict, suppose, if…then, how might and what might happen if (Caldwell & Leslie, 2013). Ciardello (1998) defined the highest level of questions as evaluative thinking. These questions ask the reader to analyze, justify, or judge. Often, evaluative thinking asks the reader their opinion about a given topic.

Adolescent readers and English Language Learners are often unaware of the varying levels of question types or how to cognitively process information in a way that is conducive to answering these questions. Direct instruction of the question stems and
scaffolding students’ activities greatly increase students’ success when answering questions about informational text at all levels (Caldwell & Leslie, 2013). Students need to become familiar with Question Answer Relationships as defined by Raphael (1982, 1986). Raphael teaches students that the answers to questions can be found in one of two places: in the book or in their head. Teachers can use posters with visual cues such as an open book for questions that are in the book. If the answers are in the book, one must decide if the question’s answer is right there on the page or if the reader must think about it and search for the answer by putting parts of the text together to generate the answer. It is recommended that teachers scaffold instruction by using shorter text with right there questions and eventually moving to longer text with think and search questions. Using the shorter texts, teachers should model how to label questions, locate, and generate answers before transferring the responsibility gradually to students (Caldwell & Leslie, 2013).

Teaching students to generate questions during reading is one way to self-monitor comprehension (Caldwell & Leslie, 2013). Lubliner (2004) described how a teacher can use a traditional read aloud to teach students how to self-generate questions. In this method, students use cue cards as a reminder of the cognitive process when thinking about what the author is saying, finding the main idea, generating questions, and considering possible answers. It is recommended that the teacher model generating questions by thinking aloud while reading a small text. When students understand the process, they should move into cooperative groups. The group leader should read a passage, identify the main idea, and pose a question. The group should then answer the question. This is followed by another leader completing the process until all members have had a turn. It is recommended that teachers give students a list of content free
questions that can be used with any informational text as a way to ensure students are self-monitoring comprehension as they learn to generate content specific questions. Examples of these type questions are: “What is the topic of this section? What are the most important ideas? What did I learn? What surprised me? What are some words that I have learned? How is this different from what I already knew? How is this connected to me?” (Caldwell & Leslie, 2013, p. 231).

The first level of the multi-leveled comprehension strategy Swanson, Edmonds, Hairrell, Vaughn, and Simmons (2011) offered is to preview the important proper nouns found in the expository text and afford students the opportunity to become familiar with the meaning of these proper nouns before asking them to read them in the context. After word work, teachers should give students a clear, but concise verbal summary of the text. Next teachers should lead students to preview the text by drawing attention to titles, subheadings, illustrations, captions, charts, graphs, and tables. Following the preview, teachers assist students in writing three types of questions about what they want to learn, (a) right there questions, (b) putting it together questions, and (c) making connections questions. Teachers were encouraged to scaffold this portion explicitly by modeling and providing guided practice and feedback before releasing students to generate questions of their own. Next, students begin reading to get the “gist” by identifying the most important “who?” and “what?” the text is about in order to write a 10-word sentence. They are taught to use a graphic organizer to bring all their “gist” statements together to write a summary of the text. Swanson et al. (2011) emphasized the importance of only teaching one of these strategies at a time before releasing them to use the multi-step strategy alone. The process takes about six weeks to implement.
Among other instructional strategies for helping students answer questions, is the importance of looking back in the text to find answers to questions. It is recommended that when teaching students to look back for answers, questions should be structured in a way that ties back to the text structure (Caldwell & Leslie, 2013).

**Retelling.** It is traditional practice for teachers to ask students questions about a text without ever actually asking students to retell what was read. However, in college, career and everyday life situations, readers read and then retell to someone else as a means of passing information. If someone asks questions it is usually in response to something within the conversation (Caldwell & Leslie, 2013). The Common Core State Standards address both a student’s ability to retell informational text and summarize informational text (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010). Retelling is the prerequisite to forming a coherent summary of the information (Moss, 2006). It may be practiced in the primary grades orally, visually, or in written form, (Neufeld, 2005) while the written summary is a skill students in upper grades are expected to master. A good retell of informational text should incorporate several things: accuracy, sequence, and coherence. Other aspects of a retelling evaluators may take note of is the length of the retelling and whether the main ideas are supported by details. However, there are no set guidelines for an evaluator to determine across the board what a retelling should or should not be (Caldwell & Leslie, 2013). Teachers seeking to use instructional strategies leading to effective retelling of informational text should focus on the following: general topic knowledge, text structure, and modeling through read-alouds. In addition, instruction should focus on both written and oral strategies such as graphic
organizers which lead to meaningful discussion, and rereading text should be encouraged and supported (Caldwell & Leslie, 2013).

*Graphic Organizers.* Experienced readers automatically take steps toward comprehension without consciously thinking about the process. Emergent and/or struggling readers need direct instruction in order for these cognitive processes to occur. Experienced readers often anticipate what might be covered by a text about a topic based on prior knowledge about the topic and about the structure of informational text. One way teachers can lead students to do this is by providing an anticipation guide or expectation grid. This serves two purposes: activating prior knowledge and setting expectations for the content which becomes the structure for recalling information. Teachers may choose to publish these guides on a smart board, chart paper, transparency or any other method available. By choosing a topic familiar to students such as a famous person, type of plant, animal or historical event, students can pinpoint categories of information they can anticipate reading about in a text about that topic. Instruction should be scaffolded by allowing students to brainstorm about personal topics such as pets, favorite foods, or vacations. Once students identify characteristics of these topics, the characteristics can be grouped into categories such as appearance, habitat, diet, etc. After the teacher and students have completed this task with familiar topics, the teacher should introduce the topic of the reading selection, and help students build an expectation guide for it. As students read, it is imperative to stop and fill in pertinent information where it belongs on the graphic organizer (Caldwell & Leslie, 2013).

Teachers looking for tools to use during instruction of informational text structures can use the Expository Idea Map. Using the text’s pattern of organization helps
students recall information in a logical order. The map is a series of rectangles joined by lines or arrows depending on the structure. Teachers can scaffold instruction by choosing several familiar texts with various text structures to model filling in the maps. Differentiation may involve the teacher choosing the map students are expected to use and filling in various rectangles which guides students through the text. When the teacher feels confident in releasing responsibility to the students, readers are able to choose which structure best fits the text and fill in the information during or after reading. It is possible that different students may choose different maps for the same text based on patterns the individual reader observes and chooses to use to organize the information. Primary grade students use the description, sequence, and compare/contrast maps often when reading informational text, while upper grade students also utilize the problem/solution and cause/effect maps. After the maps are filled in, students can use them as a tool to retell the information in a presentation to a peer or group or as a prewriting map for a written summary (Caldwell & Leslie, 2013).

*Comprehension Strategies.* Emergent readers and students who struggle to read and understand informational text often times will label the main idea as the first sentence in the paragraph with/without reading the text. It has been taught for many years that the main idea is most often the first sentence of a paragraph (Caldwell & Leslie, 2013); therefore, students gather this information not only from teachers, but from any parent, guardian, or tutor who attempts to help the student identify the main idea of the text. However, the main idea is not always the first sentence in the paragraph, and sometimes the main idea is not stated at all; it’s implied. Klingner, Morrison, and Eppolito (2011) stated identifying the main idea “involves identifying the single most important idea in a
section of text” (p. 234). Therefore, it is recommended a main idea map is used (Jennings et al, 2010). This tool leads readers to identify the topic first, which in many content area text books comes in the form of a heading or subheading, and, therefore, is quite easy for readers to identify. In cases where the topic is not found in the heading or subheading, students can locate the subject of most of the sentences and find the commonality to be the topic of the passage. After locating the topic, students should fill in the details, and lastly, the main idea can be identified or written (Caldwell & Leslie, 2013). This can be scaffolded through teacher modeling before a gradual release, allowing students to start with small passages and eventually growing to an entire lesson in a textbook or an entire informational trade book.

Another strategy recommended for use with struggling and emergent readers is a comprehension strategy described by Mason et al. (2006). The strategy is called TWA, an acronym for Think before reading, Think While reading, and think After reading. During the T part of the strategy students are to think about the author’s purpose, what they know and what they want to learn. During the W part of the strategy students are taught to think about reading, speed, linking knowledge, and rereading parts. During the A part of the strategy, students are taught to think about the main idea, summarizing, and what they learned. The authors mapped out the scaffolding method for this strategy, and suggested helping students memorize the nine steps to the model (but provides them with a chart to check off steps until they do). As an extension, offering extra time to practice with a peer, setting goals, and planning texts specifically so that students practice with simple text structures proved beneficial as well, and positive reinforcement “rocket” charts helped students progress through the steps.
Students in grade 3-6 experience a great comprehension difficulty when reading informational text deeply enough to absorb all the information. Many times this happens because of a lack of direct instruction in the comprehension area. It is recommended that teachers provide explicit instruction in text structure awareness. Dymock (2005) provided one such way to provide this explicit text structure instruction by stating expository text types can be placed in two categories: texts that describe and texts that are affected by time. The researcher outlined the CORE model for teaching students how to comprehend expository text. CORE is an acronym for Connect, Organize, Reflect and Extend. Connecting students to the text involves activating their prior knowledge about a topic and the text structure used to organize the text. Organizing the information presented in the text using graphic organizers helps students to simplify the information presented and helps students “see” the text structure. When students Reflect on the text, it provides a nice review of the material and recap of the decisions they made about the text structures as the lesson closes. As an Extension of the lesson, students transfer the knowledge and/or text structure by comparing and contrasting the text to other expository texts. Dymock (2005) defined several text structures such as the list, web, matrix, and string patterns that students commonly see in primary grades, and then she offered an example of a graphic organizer for each of those structures.

Bluestein (2010) informed teachers of ways to bridge the gap between struggling readers and expository texts by scaffolding instruction of common text features in three specific genres: biography, journalistic text, and informational text/textbook. It is recommended that teachers introduce students to biography first since it is narrative and sequential in nature, but also contains text features similar to a textbook. She also noted
that biographies still contain settings and characters like fictional works. Bluestein endorsed *Weekly Reader* and *Time for Kids* as “first” journalistic text because they are written on the interest levels of students. The sections are brief and have many graphics. Text is also supported by captions and subheadings. Finally teachers can introduce students to the textbook genre. Remembering to lead students through a preview of the chapter is key to full comprehension. Students should take time to explore titles, headings, subheadings, illustration, captions, graphs, charts, timelines, bolded words, summaries, and end of section questions before diving into the text. In conclusion, Bluestein stated, “By providing our struggling readers the opportunity to dive head first into experiencing how to determine importance in nonfiction texts, as their teachers, we afford them invaluable instructional experiences that will serve to deepen and expand their understanding of what they need.”

**Conclusions for Recommendations**

Based on the results of the present study, elementary teachers are receiving little to no professional development on the topic of informational text. As the Common Core State Standards are implemented, teachers will be expected to use more informational text in the classroom than has been used in the past in order to meet the requirements. Teachers need training through on-going professional development on the topic of using informational text in order to choose quality texts to engage students and employ effective instructional strategies which teach students how to read and understand informational text. When given the correct types and amounts of professional development, teachers can be held accountable for moving students from a deficit in reading and understanding informational text to preparation. Teachers would benefit from
a sustained-embedded professional development model that would allow them to collaborate, teach, reflect, revise and build upon current best practices for teaching informational text. Professional development should include research-based strategies for teaching elementary students how to read, comprehend, and respond to informational text using all three tiers of vocabulary, various text structures, and modes of delivery whether through physical text or informational technologies. When teachers are involved in such a process it is likely that teacher efficacy, student exposure to informational text, and student achievement levels will increase.

Future Research

Due to the inability to answer research question three and six from the current study, future research should use a revised form of the survey which would include follow up questions within the self-efficacy portion of the survey to determine use of informational text among participants who have had professional development on informational text over the past twelve months, and an hourly scale that would allow the researcher to pinpoint an average number of hours spent in professional development on the topic of informational text, rather than a range of hours.

In order to increase the validity of research question one, future research should include qualitative research methods: interviews, observations and examination of student work to verify the use of instructional strategies with informational text rather than narrative text.

Because the model of effective professional development includes an important role of teacher support staff for planning, implementing, and reflecting upon best practices, future research should focus on how districts are utilizing instructional support
staff such as lead teachers, instructional coaches, educational consultants, and professional development facilitators.

Summary

Recent assessment results have shown a deficit in the area of reading, understanding and responding to informational text across the United States, but especially in Mississippi. Mississippi’s elementary teachers will be expected to implement the Common Core State Standards beginning in the 2014-2015 school year. Implementation will incorporate informational text in earlier grades and with a higher frequency than previously required. Results of this study indicated that teachers are not currently receiving the necessary professional development to support this demand. In order to ensure student success with informational text, it is important for teachers to receive effective training on this topic.
APPENDIX A

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Teachers Opportunity for Growth: Informational Text

Informational is defined as text with the primary purpose of informing the reader about the natural or social world around them (i.e. texts pertaining to science and social studies). For the purpose of this survey, the terms non-fiction text, informational text, and content area text are synonymous. Please answer the questions in reference to each type of text as it applies to your training and/or teaching experience.

Directions: This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of teacher beliefs and perspectives when teaching informational text. Please indicate your response by checking the blank preceding your intended answer.

Demographics

1. What is your gender? ( ) Male ( ) Female
2. What is your race? ( ) Caucasian ( ) African American ( ) Hispanic ( ) Other
3. What is your highest degree of education? ( ) Bachelor ( ) Master ( ) Specialist ( ) Doctoral
4. Are you a National Board Certified teacher? ( ) Yes ( ) No
5. How many years have you been teaching in a public school setting? ( ) 0-5 years ( ) 6-10 years ( ) 11-15 years ( ) 16-20 years ( ) 20+ years
6. What is the current classification of your teaching setting? (Check all that apply) ( ) General Education ( ) Kindergarten ( ) Language Arts ( ) Special Education ( ) First Grade ( ) Math ( ) Self Contained ( ) Second Grade ( ) Science ( ) Departmentalized ( ) Third Grade ( ) Social Studies ( ) Fourth Grade

Professional Development Opportunities

7. How many professional development events have been offered within your district on the topic of informational text over the past 12 months? ( ) None ( ) 1 ( ) 2 ( ) 3 ( ) 4 ( ) 5 or more
8. How many professional development events have you attended within your district on the topic of informational text over the past 12 months? ( ) None ( ) 1 ( ) 2 ( ) 3 ( ) 4 ( ) 5 or more
9. How many professional development events are you aware of that have been offered outside your district on the topic of informational text over the past 12 months?
10. How many professional development events have you attended outside your district on the topic of informational text over the past 12 months?
   ( ) None ( ) 1 ( ) 2 ( ) 3 ( ) 4 ( ) 5 or more

11. How many hours of professional development on the topic of informational text have you participated in over the past 12 months?
   ( ) None ( ) 1-5 ( ) 6-10 ( ) 11-15 ( ) 16-20 ( ) 20 or more

12. Has your school district posted/promoted educational conferences on the topic of informational text over the past 12 months?
   ( ) Yes ( ) No

13. How many professional conferences have you attended on the topic of informational text over the past 12 months?
   ( ) None ( ) 1 ( ) 2 ( ) 3 ( ) 4 ( ) 5 or more

14. How did you hear about this professional conference?
   ( ) My school district posted/promoted it.
   ( ) A professional teacher’s organization posted/promoted it.
   ( ) A friend or colleague told me about it.
   ( ) I found out about it through a website.
   ( ) Other

15. Did /Are you participate(ing) in on-going professional development on the topic of informational text?
   ( ) Yes ( ) No

16. What was/is the time span of this professional development?
   ____________________________

17. Over the past 12 months, have you collaborated with other teachers on the topic of informational text?
   ( ) Yes ( ) No

18. Was the collaboration mandatory or voluntary?
   ( ) Mandatory ( ) Voluntary

19. How many multi-media training events have you attended in the past 12 months on the topic of informational text? (multi-media can be defined as online webinars or any other online training to include video training.)
   ( ) None ( ) 1 ( ) 2 ( ) 3 ( ) 4 ( ) 5 or more

Self-Efficacy

Scale: 0= Not at all  1=Little  2= Some  3= Moderate extent/amount 4= Large extent/amount

20. When considering book features such as book cover, topic or content, illustrations, organization, and font size and type, to what extent are you able to select quality informational text for your students?
   ( ) 0 ( ) 1 ( ) 2 ( ) 3 ( ) 4
21. When considering vocabulary, Bloom’s Taxonomy or Webb’s Depth of Knowledge, length and level, and familiarity to the students, to what extent can you choose informational text that is considered complex text for your students?
   ( ) 0  ( ) 1  ( ) 2  ( ) 3  ( ) 4

22. To what extent can you help your students understand informational text using strategies such as the following? (Introducing Tier 2 vocabulary, holding predictive discussions, setting a purpose for reading, and summarizing the text)
   ( ) 0  ( ) 1  ( ) 2  ( ) 3  ( ) 4

23. When teaching informational text, what level is your ability to write question stems for close reading?
   ( ) 0  ( ) 1  ( ) 2  ( ) 3  ( ) 4

24. When teaching informational text, how much can you do to support struggling readers in a way that leads them to read and understand informational text?
   ( ) 0  ( ) 1  ( ) 2  ( ) 3  ( ) 4

25. When teaching informational text, how much can you do to support advanced learners to analyze, synthesize, and respond to informational text?
   ( ) 0  ( ) 1  ( ) 2  ( ) 3  ( ) 4

26. To what extent do you feel capable of using the following strategies to scaffold instruction for ESL students when teaching informational text? (Providing explicit instruction on text structure, modeling what good readers do, providing opportunities to interact with the text, and providing opportunities for peer interaction with the content of the text)
   ( ) 0  ( ) 1  ( ) 2  ( ) 3  ( ) 4

27. To what extent do you feel capable of holding class discussions about genre elements, features, and organizational structure based on informational text?
   ( ) 0  ( ) 1  ( ) 2  ( ) 3  ( ) 4

28. To what extent do you feel capable of using graphic organizers to teach text structure based on informational text?
   ( ) 0  ( ) 1  ( ) 2  ( ) 3  ( ) 4

Use of Informational Text

Consider the teaching materials you used the previous five days of school for instructional purposes with a majority of your students. Approximately how many times did you use the following materials over the course of those five school days? Please indicate the amount by circling one number below for each item.

<p>| 29. Science/Social Studies/ Math related trade books, textbooks, passages, and/or big books (teacher or professionally generated) | 0 1 2 3 4 5+ |
| 30. Informational Technology (e.g. Wikipedia, Google Maps, Online Dictionaries, Webquests, E-mails) | 0 1 2 3 4 5+ |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31. Informative Magazines, Newspapers, and/or photos/captions (e.g. Zoobooks, Weekly Reader, Scholastic News, etc.)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Informative poems, song lyrics, rhymes, riddles (e.g. with factual info on weather, animals, etc.)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Informational charts, graphs, graphic organizers, and/or posters</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
February 26, 2014

Ms. Mary Desiree Lee  
Doctoral Student  
The University of Southern Mississippi  
7975 Revolutionary Road  
Grand Bay, AL 36541

Dear Ms. Lee:

You have my permission to contact building level administrators for authorization to participate in your study on teachers’ sense of self efficacy and professional development experiences using informational text in the elementary classroom. I have enclosed a list of schools and contact information.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

Sincerely,

Enclosure

cc: Principals
March 4, 2014

Ms. Mary Desiree Lee
7975 Revolutionary Rd.
Grand Bay, AL 36541

Dear Ms. Lee:

Thank you for your letter regarding School District teachers participating in your dissertation study. Permission is granted for School District teachers to participate.

Please let me know if any additional information is needed.

Sincerely,
March 4, 2014

Mary Desiree Lee
7975 Revolutionary Road
Grand Bay, AL 36541

RE: Permission to Conduct Study

Dear Ms. Lee:

Please be advised that your request to conduct a study in the elementary schools in the County School District has been approved. If any additional information is needed, please contact me at the above number. Thank you for the interest in conducting a study in our school district.

Sincerely,
February 18, 2014

I, [Redacted], give Mary Deirce Lee permission to conduct her dissertation survey, Teachers Opportunity for Growth: Informational Text, with Kindergarten-Fourth grade teachers in my district. I understand the study will not be conducted until approval has been granted from the Institutional Review Board at The University of Southern Mississippi, and that the teachers are in no way obligated to participate in the study. I further understand that teachers may withdraw from participation in the study at any time with no fear of penalty.
February 28, 2014

Ms. Mary Desirée Lee
975 Revolutionary Rd.
Grand Bay, AL 36541

Dear Ms. Lee,

I would like to provide this letter of approval for Ms. Mary D. Lee to begin her dissertation studies with the [Redacted] County Public School District; however, you should make contact with Mr. [Redacted], Principal, [Redacted] Elementary School, as you can email him at [Redacted].

The [Redacted] County Public School District is a district that embodies the teaching/learning process and we want to commend you on your chosen field, a field that is a prelude to all other fields.

Thank you for your interest in the [Redacted] County Public School District and if you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at the number(s) listed below.

Sincerely,

[Redacted]
March 3, 2014

Ms. Mary Desiree Lee
7975 Revolutionary Rd.
Grandy Bay, AL 36541

Dear Ms. Lee:

I am in receipt of your letter requesting to conduct a survey of elementary teachers within the [redacted] School District.

Please be advised that I approve you conducting said survey within our District in regard to your dissertation studies.

If you need additional information, please let me know.

Sincerely,
DATE: March 3, 2014

TO: Ms. Mary Desiree Lee

RE: Dissertation

I have my permission to conduct your study on elementary schools in our district. The Kindergarten-fourth grade teachers should be able to help you on your survey.
March 3, 2014

Dear Ms. Lee,

[Redacted] is willing to allow our teachers to participate in your dissertation study. We look forward to future correspondence regarding the survey.

Sincerely,
APPENDIX C

IRB APPLICATION

# Human Subjects Research Application Form

## Section 1: Investigator Information

**Project Title:** ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' SENSE OF SELF Efficacy AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXperiences OF TEACHING INFORMATIONAL TEXT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal Investigator: Mary Desiree Lee</th>
<th>Phone: 251-296-4188</th>
<th>USM Email: <a href="mailto:d.lee@eagles.usm.edu">d.lee@eagles.usm.edu</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Campus ID:</strong> W416186</td>
<td><strong>College:</strong> Education and Psychology</td>
<td><strong>Department:</strong> Curriculum and Instruction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Purpose (check one):**
- [ ] Undergraduate project
- [ ] Graduate project
- [x] Faculty or staff research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Research Advisor (if applicable)</th>
<th>Funding Agency/Sponsor (if applicable)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name:</strong> Dr. Rose Jones</td>
<td><strong>Organization:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phone:</strong> 601-266-5283</td>
<td><strong>USM Email:</strong> <a href="mailto:rose.jones@usm.edu">rose.jones@usm.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **List USM affiliated investigators:**
  - Mary Desiree Lee
  - Rose Jones
  - J.T. Johnson

- **List all Non-USM affiliated investigators:**

**If other individuals will be involved in data collection, describe their role and their training:**

**Describe your expertise and qualifications related to this research:**

---

Use this form to apply for IRB review. IRB approval is required before human subjects research can begin.

- Before completing this form, review the information included on the sample consent forms and FAQ section of the IRB website: [http://www.usm.edu/research/institutional-review-board](http://www.usm.edu/research/institutional-review-board).
- Department chairs and, if applicable, research advisors must review the completed form and provide authorization where indicated.
- Department chairs must submit completed versions of this form with all necessary authorizations to irb@usm.edu using their Southern Miss email address.
**SECTION 2: RESEARCH PROCEDURES**

Briefly describe the project and its goal(s) in two to three paragraphs.

The purpose of this study is to examine the types of and amount of professional development opportunities that have been offered to teachers over the past twelve months and decide whether there is a correlation between current trainings and teachers' efficacy when using informational text in the elementary classroom.

The first goal of this research project is aimed at piloting a researcher designed survey. A pilot test of the instrument will be used to ensure internal consistency and as a guide for revisions of items left blank or misunderstood. The second goal is to follow the pilot study by using the researcher designed survey in a doctoral dissertation research project.

Are any of the subjects under 18 years of age?

| ☐ Yes | ☑ No |

*Note: Parental consent is required for participants under the age of 18.*

Describe subject population, number of subjects to be included, and criteria for selection.

For Pilot Study: The number of subjects will be no less than 30 and no more than 50 total. The age range varies from no younger than 21 to no older than 75 years of age. The subject population will include teachers employed by the Jackson County School District. These participants have been chosen because they are educators of students in a Mississippi public school district who are implementing the Common Core State Standards. Participants will be currently employed and teaching at the school in which the survey is being distributed. Participation in the study will be voluntary; the recruitment process of the study will be through a face-to-face invitation. Participants will not be excluded because of race, gender, socioeconomic status or religion.

For Dissertation Research: The number of subjects will be no less than 50 and no more than 500 total. The age range varies from no younger than 21 to no older than 75 years of age. The subject population will include teachers employed by public school districts in the state of Mississippi. These participants have been chosen because they are educators of students in a Mississippi public school district who are implementing the Common Core State Standards. Participants will be currently employed and teaching at the school in which the survey is being distributed. Participation in the study will be voluntary; the recruitment process of the study will be through an e-mail invitation. Participants will not be excluded because of race, gender, socioeconomic status or religion.

How will participants be recruited?

- ☐ Class announcement
- ☐ Oral Announcement
- ☑ E-mail announcement
- ☐ Advertising Agency
- ☐ Television, Radio or Newspaper ad
- ☐ Other (explain): For the pilot study, teachers will receive an oral announcement. The e-mail announcement will take place for the dissertation research.

For adult subjects, how will you verify that individuals are over 18?

- ☐ Survey or interview
- ☐ No adults will be participating in this research
- ☑ Other (explain): Participants will be certified teachers employed in public schools in Mississippi.

Indicate consent procedures (check all that apply):

- ☑ Oral presentation
- ☐ Information letter
- ☑ Short Consent Form
- ☑ Long Consent Form
- ☐ Assent form (children or subjects with disabilities)
- ☐ Request for waiver of consent
- ☐ Not applicable

Detail procedures for obtaining participants' consent or justify request for waiver.

The first section of the questionnaire will be a researcher-designed informed consent letter. The letter to participants will explain the purpose of the study, directions for completing and returning the questionnaire, and
contact information in case the participant had questions about the study. The letter will also contain information about the IRB approval, a statement about participant protection, and ways to contact IRB if needed. Teachers will agree to participate in this study by submitting the electronic response no later than two weeks after distribution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many interactions will be required with each subject?</th>
<th>Maximum length of each interaction:</th>
<th>Where will interactions take place? (check all that apply):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ 1</td>
<td>□ Less than 10 minutes</td>
<td>□ On campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ 2 - 3</td>
<td>□ Less than an hour</td>
<td>□ Off campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ 4 - 9</td>
<td>□ Less than three hours</td>
<td>□ Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ 10 or more</td>
<td>□ Three or more</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ No direct interaction with subjects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indicate means of data collection (check all that apply).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Interview</th>
<th>Questionnaire or survey</th>
<th>Audio or video recording</th>
<th>Behavioral Observation</th>
<th>Focus Group Inquiry</th>
<th>Other (explain below).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Do any of the following apply to your study?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of human biological samples</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of physical exercise</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical examinations or procedures</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of drugs or biological products</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Give a step by step explanation of human subjects data collection procedures.

For the Pilot Study: The procedures for this project include distributing the survey to teachers of grades Kindergarten- Fourth Grade employed in public schools in the state of Mississippi. Participants will be asked to answer a survey containing four sections: Demographics, Professional Development, Self-Efficacy and Teacher Use. The survey has 30 questions total (See Appendix C). After they complete the survey, participation is complete. Taking the survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes.

The researcher will ask building principals for permission to attend a faculty meeting to distribute surveys, give instructions, allow 15-20 minutes for completion, and collection. This will be completed from the date of IRB approval to twelve months from that date.

For Dissertation Research: The researcher will ask district superintendents and building principals for permission to e-mail all K-4 teachers within their district/school a link to the survey and ask for voluntary participation.

The procedures include distributing the survey to teachers of grades Kindergarten- Fourth Grade employed in public schools in the state of Mississippi via the Survey Monkey Software. Participants will be asked to answer a survey containing four sections: Demographics, Professional Development, Self-Efficacy and Teacher Use. The survey has 30 questions total (See Appendix C). After they complete the survey, participation is complete. Taking the survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes. This will be completed from the date of IRB approval to twelve months from that date.

Does your research involve only the collection of anonymous data?

□ Yes □ No

Note: 'Anonymous' means that investigators cannot associate the data with individual subjects and vice versa. Electronic surveys must be conducted via websites that do not link responses to e-mail addresses or other identifiers. Personal interviews are not anonymous.

Does your research involve sensitive information?

□ Yes □ No

Note: Sensitive information may include (but is not limited to) information about sexual activity, drug usage, criminal behavior, financial or medical data, and religious views.

Does your research involve hidden video or audio recordings or deception?

□ Yes □ No

Note: Deception includes any information or procedure that misleads a subject intentionally.

SECTION 3: RISKS AND BENEFITS

[Table for risks and benefits]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicate all potentially vulnerable subjects involved in the study.</th>
<th>Detail the methods that will be employed to protect vulnerable subjects.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Children ☐ Mentally ill patients</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Nursing home patients ☐ Pregnant females</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Prisoners ☐ HIV positive individuals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Other ☐ Not applicable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If your research involves prisoners, explain how it is directly relevant to prisoners or the prison system (check all that apply):
- ☐ the causes and/or effects of incarceration
- ☐ the process of incarceration
- ☐ prisoners as institutional structures
- ☐ the conditions of prisoners or prisoners
- ☐ procedures for improving the wellbeing of prisoners
- ☐ other (explain):

Note: All research involving prisoners requires compliance with federal regulations pertaining to biomedical and behavioral research involving prisoners as listed in 45 CFR Subpart C. Research must be directly relevant to prisoners or prisoners (e.g. the effects of incarceration, criminal behavior, prison infrastructures, etc.). Completion of the CITI Research with Prisoners Module is also required.

How will you maintain confidentiality?
- ☐ Anonymous data
- ☐ Electronic data will be password protected
- ☐ Physical data will be locked in a file drawer
- ☐ Public/non-confidential data
- ☐ Other (explain):

Describe final disposition of data.

For both the Pilot Study and the Dissertation Research: The surveys will be kept up to three years for completion of dissertation process. After three years, the surveys will be destroyed by the researcher.

Describe potential risks, inconveniences, or discomforts subjects are likely to experience (check all that apply):
- ☐ Physical
- ☐ Psychological
- ☐ Financial
- ☐ Occupational
- ☐ Legal
- ☐ Social
- ☐ Other

Describe the methods that will be employed to mitigate any potential risks, inconveniences or discomforts.

The researcher will reassure participants of the anonymity and confidentiality of their participation and responses.

Describe any potential benefits subjects may gain as a result of participation.

For both the Pilot Study and the Dissertation Research: The potential benefits for elementary teachers in Mississippi include attainment of teaching strategies, methods, tools and resources to enhance personal practices when teaching students using informational texts.

List all incentives subjects will receive for their participation.

None

Note: If class credit will be given for participation, describe what other options exist for nonparticipants to receive the same credit.

If individuals are unwilling or unable to complete their participation, how will their incentives be distributed?
- ☐ They will still receive all incentives.
- ☐ They will be informed that they will receive no incentives.
- ☐ They will receive partial incentives (explain):

SECTION 4: CHECKLIST AND AUTHORIZATION
The following documents must be attached to this form:

☐ CITI Common Course Certificate
☐ CITI IRB Course Certificate
☐ Research proposal approval from dissertation or thesis committee (if applicable)
☐ Study recruitment documents (if applicable)
☐ Survey questions (if applicable)
☐ Permission letter from external organization participating in the project (if applicable) on official letterhead
☐ Assent form for minors (if applicable)
☐ Consent forms (long or short if applicable) and any related documents (such as an oral script or information letter)
☐ Letter to parents (if applicable)

Instructions for Attaching Documents:

1) Place the cursor where you want the attachment to appear.
2) Select the "Insert" tab at the top of MS Word.
3) Select "Object," located on the far right of the tool bar (PC) or the bottom of the list (MAC)
4) Select the "Create from File" tab and check the box that states "Display as Icon."
5) Browse to the location of your document, and double click on it.
6) Repeat these steps for each document to be attached.

Note for Mac Users: Word for MAC is unable to attach .pdf files, so you will have to first save the CITI certificates or any other .pdf files you intend to attach as a .doc or .rtf file before attaching them. There are several ways to accomplish this. You may use Adobe to open the file and then select "File" and "Save as" and change the file type to an .rtf or .doc format. Alternatively, you may also download or create your own .pdf to .doc application.

Instructions for Authorization:

1) Type your name and date in the appropriate box.
2) Graduate students should email the form to their advisors, who should add their name and then send it to department chairs for review. Department chairs should add their name and send the finalized form with all required authorizations to rb@usm.edu.

By typing my name below, I acknowledge that I have read, understood, and approve of the information contained herein.

Mary Desires Lee
Primary Investigator
March 6, 2014
Date

Student Advisor (If applicable)

Date

Department Chair

Date
APPENDIX D

IRB APPROVAL

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Phone: 601.266.5997 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/research/institutional-review-board

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26.111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the “Adverse Effect Report Form”.
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months. Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 14031902
PROJECT TITLE: Elementary Teachers’ Sense of Self Efficacy and Professional Development Experiences of Teaching Informational Text
PROJECT TYPE: New Project
RESEARCHER(S): Mary Desiree Lee
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education & Psychology
DEPARTMENT: Curriculum, Instruction and Special Education
FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: N/A
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Exempt Review Approval
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 04/21/2014 to 04/20/2015

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board
APPENDIX E

AUTHORIZATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT

Participant’s Name ___________________________________

Information about the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the types of and amount of professional development opportunities that have been offered to teachers over the past twelve months and decide whether there is a correlation between current trainings and teachers’ efficacy when using informational text in the elementary classroom.

The procedures include distributing the survey to Kindergarten- Fourth grade teachers via Survey Monkey Software. Participants will be asked to answer a survey containing four sections: Demographics, Professional Development, Self-Efficacy and Teacher Use. The survey has 34 questions total. After participants complete the survey, participation is complete. Taking the survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes.

The potential benefits for elementary teachers in Mississippi include attainment of teaching strategies, methods, tools and resources to enhance personal practices when teaching students using informational text.

The risks, inconveniences and/or discomfort to teachers are minimal, but include the possibility of feelings of anxiety about sharing personal practices and use of time to complete the survey.

Questions concerning the research, at any time during or after the project, should be directed to Desiree Lee at 251-295-4168 or Dr. J.T. Johnson at 601-266-5040. This project and this consent form have been reviewed by the Human Subjects protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive # 5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820.

Consent to Participate

Consent is given to participate in the research project entitled Teachers’ Opportunity for Growth: Informational Text by completing the online survey. This form is for your records. All procedures and/or investigations to be followed and their purpose including any experimental procedures, were explained by Mary Desiree Lee. Information was given about all benefits, risks, inconveniences, or discomforts that might be expected. The opportunity to ask questions regarding the research and procedures was given.

Participation in the project is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. All personal information is strictly confidential, and no names will be disclosed. Any new information that develops during the project will be provided if that information may affect the willingness to continue participation in the project.

_________________________ ______________________
Signature of participant Date

_________________________ ______________________
Mary Desiree Lee Date

Signature of person explaining the study Date
Dear Expert Panel,
Thank you for assisting me in the development of the “Teachers’ Opportunity for Growth: Informational Text” questionnaire. Your input is very important to the validation process of the instrument for my dissertation.

Please complete the following information about yourself so that I can describe the characteristics of the panel members.

Current position:__________________________________________________________

Years of teaching experience in grades K-4: __________

Years of teaching experience at the college/university level: __________

Years of administration experience in a K-4 school: __________

Years of consulting experience in K-4 schools: __________

Highest degree earned: Bachelors    Masters    Specialist    Doctoral

National Board Certified:    Yes    No

Thank you for your time,
Desiree Lee
Doctoral Candidate
The University of Southern Mississippi
Department of Curriculum, Instruction, and Special Education
Validity Questionnaire

Please rate the attached instrument based on the following information:

1. Does the survey contain language that can be understood by primary teachers?

2. Does this survey address specific and appropriate issues in the statements, as it relates to obtaining information regarding professional development opportunities on the topic of informational text?

3. Does this survey address specific and appropriate issues in the statements, as it relates to obtaining information regarding teacher use of informational text?

4. Are there any questions that you would exclude from the survey?

5. Are there any other statements that you would include that are not part of the instrument?

6. Please make any other comments or suggestions about the survey below.
APPENDIX G

ORAL PRESENTATION OF PILOT STUDY

**Purpose:** The goal of this research project is aimed at piloting a researcher designed survey to be used in dissertation. A pilot test of this instrument will be used to ensure internal consistency and as a guide for revisions of items left blank or misunderstood.

**Description of Study:** The procedures for this project include distributing the survey to teachers of grades Kindergarten- Fourth Grade employed in public schools in the state of Mississippi. Participants will be asked to answer a survey containing four sections: Demographics, Professional Development, Self-Efficacy and Teacher Use. The survey has 30 questions total (See Appendix B). After they complete the survey, participation is complete. Taking the survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes.

The researcher will ask building principals for permission to attend a faculty meeting to distribute surveys, give instructions, allow 15-20 minutes for completion, and collection. This will be completed from the date of IRB approval to nine months from that date.

**Risks:** The risks to teachers are minimal, but include the possibility of feelings of anxiety about sharing personal practices. These risks will be minimalized by the participation being completely voluntary. The researcher will also reassure participants of the anonymity and confidentiality of their participation and responses.

**Benefits:** The potential benefits for elementary teachers in Mississippi include attainment of teaching strategies, methods, tools and resources to enhance personal practices when teaching students using informational text.

**Confidentiality:** Pseudonyms will be used for all locations and no documents will contain personal identification information.

Data will be kept on the researcher’s laptop computer under a password protected document, kept at the researcher’s house. Only the researcher’s dissertation committee will have access at the researcher’s discretion.

**Participant’s Assurance:** This project and this consent form have been reviewed by the Human Subjects protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive # 5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820. Any questions about the research should be directed to Mary Desiree Lee at 251-295-4168.
APPENDIX H

AUTHORIZATION TO PARTICIPATE IN PILOT STUDY

Participant’s Name ____________________________________

Consent is hereby given to participate in the research project entitled Teachers’ Opportunity for Growth: Informational Text, A Pilot Study of Instruments. All procedures and/or investigations to be followed and their purpose including any experimental procedures, were explained by Mary Desiree Lee. Information was given about all benefits, risks, inconveniences, or discomforts that might be expected. The opportunity to ask questions regarding the research and procedures was given. Participation in the project is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. All personal information is strictly confidential, and no names will be disclosed. Any new information that develops during the project will be provided if that information may affect the willingness to continue participation in the project. Questions concerning the research, at any time during or after the project, should be directed to Desiree Lee at 251-295-4168 or Dr. J.T. Johnson at 601-266-5040. This project and this consent form have been reviewed by the Human Subjects protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive # 5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820.

A copy of this form will be given to the participant.

______________________________ Date
Signature of participant

______________________________ Date
Signature of person explaining the study
APPENDIX I

E-MAIL TO PRINCIPALS

Principals,
My name is Desiree Lee. I am a doctoral student at USM completing my dissertation. I am attaching a permission letter from Superintendent (name) giving permission to ask elementary teachers in the district to voluntarily fill out a survey.

I'm also attaching a consent form for their records with information and contacts concerning the survey if they should want more information.

I'm requesting that you forward the survey link below along with the consent form to your Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, and Fourth grade teachers only. Please inform them there is a 2 week time frame in which to complete the survey. Data will be analyzed May 14, 2014.

Survey Link:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NJZNFJT

Distribution Incentive: For your time and effort assisting with this process, your name will be entered in a drawing for a $50.00 Visa gift card. This is a small study, so your chances for receiving the gift card are great! Once you've distributed the survey link and consent form to your teachers, please respond to this e-mail in order to be included in the drawing. Thank you so much for your support of this process.

Sincerely,

Desiree Lee, M.Ed.
Graduate Assistant
The University of Southern Mississippi
Curriculum, Instruction, and Special Education
118 College Drive # 5057
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Phone 251-295-4168
APPENDIX J

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO DEVELOP QUESTIONS WITH INSPIRATION AND GUIDANCE FROM INSTRUMENT

Dr. Akiba,

My name is Desiree Lee and I’m a doctoral candidate in Curriculum, Instruction, and Special Education at The University of Southern Mississippi. My dissertation research will investigate elementary teachers’ sense of efficacy relating to the use of informational texts in the classroom and the significance of a correlation between the amount and types of professional development they’ve participated in over the past 12 months. In searching for an instrument to use, I found your Teachers’ Opportunity to Learn (TOTL) Survey. I would like to request permission develop questions with inspiration and guidance from your instrument. Specifically, I would like to change words in your statements so that they focus on professional development experiences on the topic of informational text and elementary teachers rather than math professional development in the middle school setting. The following are questions I wrote with inspiration and guidance from your instrument.

1. How many professional development events have been offered within your district on the topic of informational text over the past 12 months?
   ( ) None   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5 or more

2. How many professional development events have you attended within your district on the topic of informational text over the past 12 months?
   ( ) None   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5 or more

3. How many professional development events are you aware of that have been offered outside your district on the topic of informational text over the past 12 months?
   ( ) None   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5 or more

4. How many professional development events have you attended outside your district on the topic of informational text over the past 12 months?
   ( ) None   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5 or more

5. How many hours of professional development on the topic of informational text have you participated in over the past 12 months?
   ( ) None   ( ) 1-5   ( ) 6-10   ( ) 11-15   ( ) 16-20   ( ) 20 or more

6. Has your school district posted/promoted educational conferences on the topic of informational text over the past 12 months?
   ( ) Yes   ( ) No
7. How many professional conferences have you attended on the topic of informational text over the past 12 months?

( ) None  ( ) 1  ( ) 2  ( ) 3  ( ) 4  ( ) 5 or more

8. How did you hear about this professional conference?

( ) My school district posted/promoted it.

( ) A professional teacher’s organization posted/promoted it.

( ) A friend or colleague told me about it.

( ) I found out about it through a website.

( ) Other ____________________________________________

9. Did /Are you participating in on-going professional development on the topic of informational text?

( ) Yes  ( ) No

10. What was/is the time span of this professional development? ________________

11. Over the past 12 months, have you collaborated with other teachers on the topic of informational text?

( ) Yes  ( ) No

12. Was the collaboration mandatory or voluntary?

( ) Mandatory  ( ) Voluntary

19. How many multi-media training events have you attended in the past 12 months on the topic of informational text? (multi-media can be defined as online webinars or any other online training to include video training.)

( ) None  ( ) 1  ( ) 2  ( ) 3  ( ) 4  ( ) 5 or more
May I have your permission to alter your questions and use it in my dissertation study? Also, if I decide to collect data via a website such as Survey Monkey, may I have your permission for that as well? I would be glad to share any results I find with you.

Thank you,

Desiree Lee, M.Ed.

Mary, your questions look very different from my survey, so there is no need for you to obtain my permission.

You can simply state that you developed your items based on the professional development literature and existing surveys including mine. Best of luck with your dissertation research!

Motoko
APPENDIX K

PERMISSION TO MODIFY QUESTIONS

Permission to modify
3 messages

Mary Lee <d.lee@eagles.usm.edu>
To: Christine Selman <christineselman12@yahoo.com>

Christine,
On the informational text portion of the "Teacher Use" section of your survey that you previously granted permission to use, I'd like to modernize one of the items.

Item states:
Reference Books (e.g. Encyclopedia, Atlas, Dictionary, Maps, Alphabet Books)

Revised:
Informational Technology (e.g. Wikipedia, Google Maps, Online Dictionaries, Webquests, E-mails)

Would you consider granting permission to revise this item?

Desiree Lee, M.Ed.

Christine Selman <christineselman12@yahoo.com>
To: Mary Lee <d.lee@eagles.usm.edu>

Sure, that's fine to revise the item as stated below.

Christine Selman

Mary Lee <d.lee@eagles.usm.edu>
To: Christine Selman <christineselman12@yahoo.com>

Thank you!
REFERENCES


