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# Preservice Teacher Efficacy to Teach Informational Text Comprehension Through Literature Circles

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Abstract

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MA, Idaho State University, 2009

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Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Preservice teachers in an elementary education teacher preparation program are tasked with teaching informational text comprehension through literature circles during a literacy field experience. The problem addressed is that even after receiving explicit classroom instruction on this topic, preservice teachers expressed apprehension and self-doubt and may not have the self-efficacy to effectively teach informational text comprehension. The purpose of this project study was to explore preservice teachers perceived self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension. This study was grounded in a constructivist paradigm centered on Bandura's concept of self-efficacy. The research questions concerned preservice teachers perceived self-efficacy to teach informational text using the literature circle format and their perceptions of support and resources that are needed when teaching informational text comprehension. Data collection for this qualitative case study consisted of semi-structured, individual interviews with nine preservice teachers who were previously enrolled in the literacy field experience. Thematic analysis with a priori and in vivo coding was used to analyze data. Based on the study's findings, recommendations were made for possible changes to the university's teacher preparation literacy methods classes and literacy field experiences. This project study may promote positive social change by informing teacher education program faculty and administrators about the need for implementation of additional supports to increase or sustain preservice teacher perceptions of self-efficacy. Higher self-efficacy may bolster preservice teachers' motivation, commitment, and classroom performance as well as student outcomes.

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Dedication

To my husband, children, and parents who continually support me (and often join me) in the literal and figurative mountains I choose to climb in life.  Because of them, I never walk the journeys of life alone.

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Thank you, Dr. Caldwell, and Dr. Williams for seeing value in my research topic and believing in the importance of the research, especially, when I doubted.  Thank you, also, for the feedback and insight that pushed me to dig deeper and work harder to improve and complete my writing and finish this journey.

I am also grateful to my colleagues who cheered me on during the dissertation writing process.  Their frequent inquiries about my progress, words of encouragement and advice buoyed me up when frustration and discouragement began to creep in.

Finally, I am forever grateful to my husband, Jeremy, whose patience, encouragement, support, belief in me, praise, and sometimes, his gentle nudge, enabled me to accomplish one of the most challenging mountains I've climbed, thus far.  Of the many literal mountains I've climbed, Jeremy's support of this figurative mountain, means the most to me.  I cannot say enough how grateful I am to Jeremy's sacrifice in supporting me in this endeavor.

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**Introduction**

The ability to read and comprehend complex informational text and then synthesize information from a variety of informational text genres are college and career readiness skills taught beginning in kindergarten (Chlapana, 2016; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices [NGA Center] and Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2010; Zimmermann & Reed, 2020). The emphasis on informational text instruction as introduced by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS, 2010) caused an unparalleled change for U.S. educators, including preservice teachers in teacher education programs (NGA Center and CCSSO, 2010; Young & Goering, 2018). In-service teachers have expressed uncertainty in teaching informational texts comprehension strategies (Asikcan et al., 2018; Reutzel et al., 2016).

This problem is visible at the local level. Many preservice teachers at a local university expressed uncertainty of how to teach informational text comprehension during a literacy field experience and may not have the self-efficacy to do so, according to one of the preservice teachers. The problem under investigation in this study is that preservice teachers enrolled in the elementary education teacher preparation program at a university located in the Northwest United States are tasked with teaching informational text comprehension through literature circles and may lack the self-efficacy to do so. Preservice teachers enrolled in the 7-week literacy field experience met at local elementary schools 4 days a week for 2.5 hours each day. Mentor teachers assigned preservice teachers small groups of three to six children with similar reading abilities.

Preservice teachers were responsible for providing reading instruction, as assigned by the mentor teacher during a daily, 30-minute reading block, which is referred to as "reading group time."

Although preservice teachers in this teacher education program were explicitly taught how to structure literature circles along with specific strategies to teach informational text, they expressed apprehension and self-doubt upon entering the literacy field experience where they were required to use literature circles to teach informational text comprehension. A preservice teacher stated that literature circles "were stressful at times when I felt as though I didn't know what I was supposed to be doing with the informational text." This sentiment has also been expressed by preservice teachers in other universities. Researchers have found that uncertainty in teaching informational text comprehension is significantly related to self-efficacy in literacy instruction (Begum & Hamzah, 2018).

Ciampa and Gallagher (2018) noted that preservice teacher self-efficacy in literacy instruction often decreases in literacy field experiences. This finding was reflected in comments from the project site's preservice teachers while in a literacy field experience. One preservice teacher stated, "I felt like I was prepared to teach literature circles after taking Lit 2. Any doubts that I had were not because I was unprepared…I have a fear that I won't be good enough for students and that they'll struggle."

Research indicates that teachers have higher self-efficacy when they feel confident in the use of effective instructional strategies (Accardo et al., 2017). Preservice teachers were also found to have high self-efficacy in their ability to teach literacy after

taking literacy methods courses that included instruction on effective instructional strategies (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2018). This confidence in literacy instruction from both in-service and preservice teachers does not appear to transfer to literacy instruction of informational text comprehension as many teachers have expressed uncertainty in teaching informational texts comprehension strategies (Asikcan et al., 2018; Reutzel et al., 2016). A preservice teacher at the project site stated, "My mentor teacher gave me two different Weekly Reader magazines and asked me to teach a lesson using the magazines.  I remember learning about teaching informational text, but I just don't know what to do."

In one study, researchers found that self-efficacy in one's teaching abilities affected teacher performance in the classroom, which in turn, affected student academic achievement and predicted professional success (Malmir & Mohammadi, 2018). Reflecting the importance of self-efficacy, Miller et al. (2018) stated that preservice teacher self-efficacy for teaching literacy needs to be addressed by teacher preparation programs because, while in these programs, preservice teachers can be positively influenced to build capacity for persistence and resilience. In other research, the learning aspects of programs, which provide supportive classroom teaching experiences, were found to increase preservice teacher self-efficacy beliefs (Berg & Smith, 2018). It follows that understanding preservice teacher self-efficacy beliefs to teach literacy can help leaders of teacher education programs to provide experiences that build teacher self-efficacy (Clark & Newberry, 2019).

An increased focus on teaching students in kindergarten through Grade 12 how to read and comprehend informational and expository texts came about when the CCSS were introduced (NGA Center and CCSSO, 2010). The CCSS state that complex informational texts support the development of knowledge in content areas including science and social studies and support critical and analytic thinking (NGA Center and CCSSO, 2010). In response to the call for an increased focus on reading rigorous and complex informational and expository texts, educational leaders developed and aligned the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies (National Council for the Social Studies, 2017) and the Next Generation Science Standards (Next Generation Science Standards, 2013) to the CCSS literacy standards. The C3 standards call for students to use literacy skills to develop and plan questions and inquiries, evaluate sources, and communicate conclusions (National Council for the Social Studies, 2017). The Next Generation Science Standards (2013) require students to synthesize complex information and know how to read and interpret text features such as diagrams and charts contained in informational science text.

The implementation of new standards has caused teachers to rethink their instructional strategies to include a focus on informational text reading and comprehension strategies that challenge students to use texts to support analytical thinking (Nowell, 2017). In one study, a teacher stated, "I'm trying to be not so content driven, because it's not just content anymore—it's about the why" (Nowell, 2017, p. 68). The teacher added, "I've been teaching more analyzing and thinking skills, more primary

source documents, and teaching my students to write an argument, using evidence to support their opinion" (Nowell, 2017, p. 68).

To achieve the rigorous CCSS, social studies, and science literacy standards, teachers are rethinking traditional methods of literacy instruction to move students beyond the use of generic literacy strategies and reading to recall facts (Carlson, 2015). Literature circles are an example of an instructional method that is being repurposed and restructured to include informational and expository text. Though traditionally used with literary text, literature circles have been found to improve comprehension skills, participation, motivation, discussion, oral proficiency, and writing skills (Elhess & Egbert, 2015). Educators can adapt literature circles to teach information text comprehension as outlined by the CCSS (NGA Center and CCSSO, 2010).

Literature circles engage students in independently reading and examining text and then joining with a group of peers to discuss the text (Maher, 2018). Barone and Barone (2016) found that  as students engage with informational text within literature circles, students learn to use text evidence such as facts and vocabulary, to discuss the text and support responses about the topic. The use of literature circles to increase student reading comprehension through dialogue with peers aligns to Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory and provides interactive, open-ended dialogue, and social interaction which, researchers conclude, students enjoy (Young & Mohr, 2018).

The lack of knowledge regarding preservice teachers' self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension through literature circles signifies a gap in practice between existing research and current practice, which I attempted to address in this study.

The complexities of literacy instruction of informational text comprehension and the need to engage students in grappling with complex text, as required by educational standards, has caused a shift in literacy instruction (Nowell, 2017). This shift has caused uncertainty among in-service and preservice teachers that may affect teacher self-efficacy (Asikcan et al., 2018; Begum & Hamzah, 2018; Reutzel et al., 2016).

## Rationale

Literature reflects that teaching informational text comprehension is a challenge for both in-service and preservice elementary school teachers (Begum & Hamzah, 2018). In-service and preservice teachers have restructured literacy instructional approaches to comply with U.S. educational policy mandates that students attain reading skills necessary to read and comprehend challenging informational text (Carlson, 2015; NGA Center and CCSSO, 2010). This shift in literacy instructional practice has caused uncertainty among preservice teachers and may lead to low perceived self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension (Accardo et al., 2017; Nowell, 2017). In the following subsection, I present evidence of the problem of preservice teacher self-efficacy to teach informational text through literature circles. I also substantiate the need for conducting the study. This discussion is followed by an introduction to the problem through a review of literature.

### Evidence of the Problem in the Local Setting

Preservice teachers at this local university are tasked with teaching informational test comprehension through literature circles during a literacy field experience. The perception of self-efficacy of preservice teachers to teach informational text, especially

through literature circles, is in question. Exploring the experiences and perceptions of these preservice teachers may inform future instructional practice in teacher education programs at the university level.

Preservice teacher self-efficacy in literacy instruction is a concern in the field of education (Helfrich & Clark, 2016) and in the local setting. Specifically, self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension with literature circles is a concern in the local setting. One preservice teacher at the site spoke of challenges faced while teaching informational text within the literacy field experience, stating that "teaching informational text is really confusing." Another preservice teacher, also in the literacy field experience, stated, "The kids are really bored. I don't know how to engage them when we just read through the book." Statements such as these have led local university instructors in the teacher education program to wonder if other preservice teachers harbor similar attitudes toward teaching informational text comprehension. The concern about preservice teachers' self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension is supported by Begum and Hamzah (2018), who noted that higher self-efficacy is associated with higher student academic achievement

Informational text comprehension instructional strategies and literacy circle structures are explicitly taught within a literacy methods course at the local university. The literacy methods course is a degree requirement for all elementary education, special education, and early childhood special education majors. Approximately 270 preservice teachers take the literacy methods course each school year. After taking the literacy methods course, preservice teachers can enroll in the literacy field experience. During the

literacy field experience, preservice teachers teach literacy skills, including informational text comprehension to small groups of children ranging from kindergarten through fourth grade.

During the literacy methods course preservice teachers are taught specific procedures for teaching informational text comprehension. Some of these approaches include monitoring comprehension; activating, connecting, and building background knowledge; questioning, visualizing, making inferences about the text, determining importance in text; and summarizing and synthesizing information. Preservice teachers are also specifically taught about informational text structures and text features such as side bars, captions, diagrams, graphs, headings, pictures, and labels. Regardless of this explicit instruction in teaching informational text comprehension, in-service teachers who mentor preservice teachers during the literacy field experience stated that the preservice teachers do not appear to know how to teach informational text comprehension. One mentor teacher stated,

> Preservice teachers need to learn to read each page in its entirety. Asking questions will also help students gain more information from the little details. What more information do we gather from the chart? Why are the parts of the diagram labeled? What does the caption teach us?"

Local university instructors did not have a clear understanding of how preservice teachers perceive their ability to teach informational text comprehension. This was a concern considering the large number of preservice teachers who pass through the university's teacher education program and provide literacy instruction within the

community. Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) found that teacher efficacy is related not only to student outcomes, but also to student motivation and self-efficacy. Teacher self-efficacy also influences the teacher's persistence, confidence, effectiveness, enthusiasm, commitment, and instructional behavior (Clark & Newberry, 2019; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

**Evidence of the Problem in the Literature**

The challenge of teaching informational text comprehension does not exist at the local university alone. Begum and Hamzah (2018) found that this issue influences preservice and in-service teacher self-efficacy (). Educational researchers emphasize the importance of introducing the genre of informational text early in the reading experience (Goering & Young, 2018).The implementation of the CCSS, which emphasizes disciplinary literacy skills and increasing the amount of informational text children read, required a shift in instructional practice, for some teachers, to explicitly address informational text across the curriculum, according to Gleeson and D'Souza (2016). Goering and Young also found that many teachers need to provide additional instruction in informational text comprehension to children as young as kindergarten and may even need to learn new instructional strategies to implement informational text instruction.

Diego-Medrano et al. (2016) found that preservice teachers at a 4-year university had difficulty applying reading comprehension strategies for informational text in literature circles. Preservice teachers in the study resorted to fiction text comprehension strategies to teach informational text comprehension and failed to teach readers skills to approach a variety of complex text structures to comprehend informational text.

Similarly, Deeney (2016) found that preservice teachers tend to understand the importance of social learning through engaging students in discussions about text yet struggle to engage students in discussion beyond basic retrieval of text details and to connect background knowledge to the text.

The challenges both in-service and preservice teachers face in teaching informational text comprehension suggest a need to determine if the skills being taught in the teacher preparation programs support the self-efficacy of preservice teachers to teach informational text instruction. The purpose of this study was to understand preservice teachers' perceived self-efficacy in literacy instruction of informational text comprehension through literature circles. In reviewing the literature, I found no research on the self-efficacy of preservice teachers to teach informational text comprehension using the literature circle format. Therefore, this study was important in revealing the self-efficacy of preservice teachers.

## Definition of Terms

The following terms are essential to this study:

*Informational text*: Books and other texts written as nonfiction for the purpose of conveying information (Duke, 2000). These include "books about history, social studies, science, and the arts…technical texts, including directions, forms, and information displayed in graphs, charts, or maps… [and] digital sources on a range of topics" (NGA Center and CCSSO, 2010, p. 31).

*In-service teacher*: Practicing classroom teachers (Deeney, 2016).

*Literature circles*: A reading comprehension instructional strategy that involves "student-led discussion groups that to engage in authentic conversations that include a variety of comprehension approaches such as determining main ideas, making comparisons and connections, using cause-and-effect relationships" (Diego-Medrano, et al., 2016, p. 57).

*Mentor teacher*: "Practicing classroom teachers [who] offer practical experience and the opportunity to bring together all that has been learned (e.g. classroom management, assessment, instructional strategies, etc.) in a real classroom setting" (McGee, 2019, p. 23).

*Preservice teacher*: One who is in the process of becoming a teacher (Koellner & Greenblatt, 2018)

*Self-efficacy*: One's beliefs about their ability to influence life events and create change through their actions. (1977; Tugsbaatar, 2021).

*Teacher education*: Initial teacher training that includes "pedagogical approaches, subject content knowledge and professional experience" (Curtis, et al., 2019, p. 77).

*Teacher efficacy*: The extent to which teachers believe that they can affect student performance (Helfrich & Clark, 2016)

*Text comprehension*: The ability to understand what is being read when reading is uninhibited by reading fluency, accuracy, and reading rate (Uysal & Bilge, 2018).

## Significance of the Study

The findings from this study provide an understanding of preservice teachers' self-efficacy to teach information text comprehension through literature circles. Although

preservice teachers are currently taught informational text comprehension strategies, they may not have the self-efficacy to effectively apply those strategies. Researchers suggest that though preservice teachers develop literacy instruction skills in their teacher education programs, they may not have the dispositions and preparatory experiences needed to be effective teachers (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). This finding was evidenced as a mentor teacher at the project site observed challenges students had when teaching informational text comprehension. The mentor teacher stated the following:

> Preservice teachers often skip the headings, charts, and diagrams. I have also wished the preservice teachers knew how to do a picture walk.  Taking time to discuss the photos, or pictures in expository text will help the students understanding of vocabulary, etc., better."

Clark and Newberry (2019) suggest that university classroom learning experiences alone may not provide the training needed for preservice teachers to develop the instruction skills necessary to develop self-efficacy in teaching. Mastery experiences, or hands-on teaching opportunities are also needed so preservice teachers can apply their skills in a supportive environment and thus increase self-efficacy in literacy instruction (Clark & Newberry, 2019). Batista and Boone (2015) found that preservice teachers who have opportunities to practice applying teaching skills in a university setting have increased confidence that may transfer to the classroom setting.

Results of this study may inform educational leaders about changes they can make regarding how informational text comprehension strategies are taught to preservice teachers. Miller et al. (2018) found that preservice teachers expressed low self-efficacy in

teaching literacy when they were expected to know how to implement teaching strategies taught in a literacy methods course but had not seen modeled in a classroom. Preservice teachers in Miller et al.'s study reported an increase in self-efficacy to teach literacy after seeing literacy instructional strategies modeled in a classroom. Understanding students' self-efficacy to apply informational text comprehension strategies may enable educational leaders to develop instructional methods that model literacy instructional strategies and then provide preservice teachers opportunities to practice and apply the instructional strategies before teaching in a practicum setting.

The use of literature circles as a medium for information text comprehension instruction may increase as preservice teachers gain more self-efficacy. An increased understanding of the resources needed to support preservice teachers tasked with teaching informational text comprehension through literature circles may also influence changes in teacher preparation programs. Hikida et al. (2019) reported that preservice teachers clearly benefit from instruction in reading processes and increased opportunities to teach in classroom settings. Prospective changes in teacher preparation programs may increase preservice teacher self-efficacy with increased instruction in reading methods along with increased opportunities to teach informational text comprehension in literature circles in classroom settings. Social change may occur as teacher preparation programs alter instructional practices that build preservice teacher self-efficacy (Clark & Newberry, 2019) to teach informational text comprehension with the use of literature circles.

**Research Questions**

I developed the research questions (RQs) to explore preservice teachers'
perceived self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension through literature
circles and to determine what support preservice teachers perceive is needed to teach
informational text comprehension.

RQ1: How do preservice teachers perceive their self-efficacy when tasked with
informational text instruction through literature circles?

RQ2: What resources or support do preservice teachers perceive they need when
tasked with informational text instruction through literature circles, course work, or
school curriculum?

**Review of the Literature**

In this section, I review literature related to the project study. The literature
review provides a critical review of current (2015–2020) peer-reviewed research on
preservice teacher self-efficacy related to teaching informational text comprehension
through literature circles. The conceptual framework that underpinned the study is
presented along with current research themes that emerged from the review of the
literature. I also discuss the challenges, strengths, and weaknesses of the literature
reviewed. Finally, the purpose of the project study, supported by the review of literature,
is stated.

I used the following databases to obtain research: Education Source, SAGE
Journals, ERIC, EBSCO Academic Search Complete, ProQuest One Academic, and
Google Scholar. Search terms used to locate relevant and recent literature included

*literacy*, *preservice teacher*, *self-efficacy*, *teacher and teaching self-efficacy*, *literacy instruction*, *informational text*, *literature circles*, *reading comprehension*, and *informational text comprehension*. Four themes were uncovered in the review: self-efficacy, preservice teacher self-efficacy in literacy instruction, informational text instruction, and literature circles. These themes underpinned the conceptual framework of this study and are the foundational concepts for the RQs. The framework and RQs informed the investigation of the quality of preservice teachers' efficacy to teach informational text. The qualitative nature of the study also shaped the interview format and study questions that were asked of participating preservice teachers.

A search for teacher self-efficacy revealed research in self-efficacy to teach a variety of content areas including literacy instruction. Further research in self-efficacy in literacy instruction yielded literature on reading comprehension including comprehension of informational text. I often found literature on preservice teacher self-efficacy when researching teaching self-efficacy.

Drawing from the literature, I explain how self-efficacy relates to the level of effectiveness of literacy instruction in both in-service and preservice teachers. I also discuss research on preservice teacher perceived self-efficacy to teach literacy based on training and learning experiences in teacher preparation programs. The literature supports the need for informational text instruction and methods of effective informational text instruction Limited, and less current, literature (e.g., Daniels, 1994 & Daniels, 2002) was available on the use of literature circles as a means of informational text instruction, but the literature does explain the benefits of the use of literature circles to engage students in

deep understanding of text through meaningful, authentic conversations with peers. The investigation of preservice teachers perceived self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension through literature circles provided an understanding of potential changes that could be made to teacher education programs to better support preservice teachers and enhance their self-efficacy to teach literacy, specifically informational text through literature circles.

**The Conceptual Framework**

Bandura (1997) posited, through his social cognitive theory, that self-efficacy can be defined as "beliefs in one's capacity to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). This theory suggests that personal beliefs about one's ability to accomplish a task significantly affect the outcome of the task and whether one will persist in accomplishing the task (Clark & Newberry, 2019). Bandura (1977) proposed that individuals' belief in their ability to accomplish a task is a more powerful motivator than their actual ability. Self-efficacy influences personal motivation, persistence, effort, coping behaviors, and resilience when faced with setbacks (Bandura, 1977). The agentic perspective of Bandura's social cognitive theory suggests that people contribute to life circumstances and that agency is a foundation to all motivation and actions. Personal agency influences self-efficacy and the belief that people  can produce desired affects and create change through their actions (Bandura, 1977).

Teacher self-efficacy became an interest in research when the Rand Corporation sponsored a study by Armor et al. (1976) showing that teachers who believed they could significantly influence student motivation and learning outcomes tended to have higher

student reading achievement (see also Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). This finding

supported research by Rotter (1966), who found that a person's belief in individual ability

versus chance influenced performance and achievement. Later research on the effects of

teacher self-efficacy indicated links between teachers' perceived abilities and student

literacy achievement (Varghese et al., 2016). Using the Teacher Self-Efficacy

Questionnaire (Bandura, 1997), researchers found a positive correlation between

teachers' self-efficacy and gains in preschool children's print awareness (Guo et al.,

2010). A positive relationship was also found between teacher efficacy and literacy gains

in fifth-grade students (Guo et al., 2012). Teachers with high self-efficacy tend to create

high quality learning environments, are more supportive of students' instructional needs,

have more effective classroom management, and are more likely to take risks and persist

in challenging teaching situations (Hoy & Davis, 2005; Varghese et al., 2016).

Foundational research in self-efficacy has influenced the teacher self-efficacy

theory developed by Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998). The teacher self-efficacy theory

combined conceptual theories of teacher self-efficacy and proposed that self-efficacy is

related to the teaching task and its context (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). This theory

states that teachers tend to feel more efficacious when teaching content that is familiar

and when teaching in a familiar setting (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). The teacher self-

efficacy theory builds on Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory that self-efficacy

increases through mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, and social persuasion.

Positive self-efficacy is increased as teachers participate in successful teaching

experiences within familiar teaching tasks and contexts, observe other teacher's

instructional practices, and receive performance feedback (see Bandura, 1997;

Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Varghese et al., 2016).

This personal belief and judgment of a teacher's ability, or sense of self-efficacy,

affects student motivation, effort, classroom behavior, and achievement (Tschannen-

Moran & Hoy, 2001). A teacher's self-efficacy beliefs also affect the teacher's efforts in

planning, organization, goal setting, acceptance of new ideas and instructional methods,

and ability to assist struggling students, along with the teacher's enthusiasm and

commitment to teaching (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Teacher self-efficacy is a

powerful determinant of a teacher's motivation for all aspects of effective teaching,

classroom performance, and student outcomes (Ashton, 1984).

**Review of the Broader Problem**

***Preservice Teacher Self Efficacy to Teach Informational Text Through Literature***

***Circles***

Currently, teacher self-efficacy is considered a fundamental and even vital aspect

of teaching (Begum & Hamzah, 2018). A meta-analysis of 40 years of research on

teacher-self efficacy showed positive links between teacher-self efficacy and student

academic achievement, quality of classroom instruction, and teacher psychological well-

being (Zee & Koomen, 2016). Further research corroborates these findings showing that

mastery-oriented instructional approaches and instruction focused on "creativity,

understanding, and meaningfulness" (p. 38) were used more often by teachers with high

levels of self-efficacy while teachers with low self-efficacy tended to employ

performance oriented instructional strategies (Poulou et al., 2019). In addition, teacher

self-efficacy was linked to teacher engagement and job satisfaction (Granziera & Perera, 2019).

      **Preservice Teacher Self-Efficacy.** Studies on teacher self-efficacy have expanded to include preservice teacher efficacy and the role teacher preparation programs play in building and influencing preservice teacher self-efficacy. Learning to teach is a developmental process that is supported, initially, through teacher preparation courses and teaching field experiences that shape preservice teachers' perceptions of teaching (Naylor et al., 2015). Experiences during the teacher preparation program, including supervisor's feedback and the use of practical examples within methods courses, contribute to preservice teachers' instructional self-efficacy (Jutti et al., 2018). Sharp et al. (2016) reported that both academic and experiential learning are required to build high self-efficacy in preservice teachers.

      Opportunities to apply learning to teaching situations during the teacher education program have been found to increase preservice teacher self-efficacy (Vignoli et al., 2018). Pfitzner-Eden (2016) also found that teaching experiences during the teacher education program positively contribute to preservice teacher self-efficacy. In another study, students in a teacher education program reported a desire for increased practice opportunities to increase teaching skills and teacher self-efficacy (Wilks et al., 2019). In addition, Ma and Cavanagh (2018) found that preservice teachers reported the lack of teaching experience contributed to their lower levels of teacher self-efficacy.

      Pfitzner-Eden (2016) reported that preservice teacher self-efficacy declined during the first year in the teacher education program yet increased as students neared the

end of the program. Similarly, Berg and Smith (2018) measured preservice teachers' self-efficacy belief prior to and immediately after a final practicum experience and found that self-efficacy beliefs increased after the practicum experience. These findings support that preservice teachers benefit from teaching experiences during the teacher education program and that learning to teach is a developmental process (Naylor et al., 2015)

**Preservice Teacher Self-Efficacy in Literacy Instruction.** Although researchers studying in-service and preservice teacher self-efficacy have commonly focused across grade levels and subject areas, they are increasingly exploring constructs of teacher and preservice teacher efficacy in specific contexts (Vignoli, et al., 2018). Findings show that in-service teachers reported self-efficacy in areas such as student engagement and classroom management, but these factors do not equate to efficacy in literacy instruction or student academic gains in literacy (Lih & bin Ismail, 2019). Likewise, high efficacy for literacy instruction does not always equate to efficacy in student engagement and classroom management (Lih & bin Ismail, 2019).

Research findings indicate that the self-efficacy of preservice teachers is an important contributor to effective literacy instruction (Gündogmus, 2018); which has led to an increased research focus on factors that affect preservice teacher efficacy in literacy instruction. Lipp and Helfrich (2016) found that paired coursework and field experience are two factors that contribute to preservice teacher efficacy for literacy instruction. Self-efficacy was found to increase as preservice teachers had opportunities to design and implement best practices in literacy instruction (Lipp & Helfrich, 2016). Miller, et al., (2018) also found that preservice teachers felt more efficacious in literacy instruction

when field experiences were integrated with modeling, reflection, and instructional

pedagogy within a literacy methods course. Helfrich and Clark (2016) added to this

research as preservice teachers reported high self-efficacy to teach literacy after taking

literacy methods courses. Also, self-efficacy in literacy instruction was found to be higher

in preservice teachers who had multiple classroom teaching experiences and multiple

specialized literacy methods courses (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2018). A review of the

literature on preservice teacher self-efficacy and self-efficacy for literacy instruction

suggests a strong correlation between classroom teaching experiences and preservice

teacher self-efficacy.

*Informational Text Instruction Through Literature Circles*

**Informational Text Instruction.** The introduction of the CCSS placed a renewed and

increased focus on teaching students to read and comprehend more complex text

including informational text (NGA Center and CCSSO, 2010). Informational text can be

defined as "text written with the primary purpose of conveying information about the

natural and social world and having particular text features to accomplish this purpose"

(Duke, 2000, p. 205). Incorporating nonfiction text into reading instruction helps students

understand complex problems, analyze data, think logically, and comprehend information

(Thomas, 2015). Informational text instruction has not typically been a focus in reading

instruction in primary grades (Schugar & Dreher, 2017). Without exposure to and

instruction in reading informational text students may be unprepared to meet the reading

challenges associated with upper grade and college level textbooks and informational

texts associated with the workplace (Schugar & Dreher, 2017).

For students to attain the increased literacy expectations set forth in the CCSS, specifically relating to informational text reading and comprehension, generic literacy strategies will no longer suffice to enable students to access complex informational text (Carlson, 2015). Reading informational text requires more cognitive effort than reading literary text and therefore requires different approaches in reading comprehension instructional strategies (Kraal, et al., 2019).  Additionally, a significant shift in curriculum and instruction is needed to meet higher reading expectations (Fisher & Frey, 2016).

Adjusting literacy instruction to teach complex, informational text also requires a shift in thinking and mindset for most teachers, as works of literature have most commonly been the standard for teaching reading in the early grades (Goering & Young, 2018). This adjustment in reading instruction from literary to informational text includes a different emphasis on comprehension instruction; an emphasis which moves beyond reading instruction focused on the acquisition of rate, accuracy, and prosody as the main contributors to reading comprehension (Uysal & Bilge, 2018). Fisher and Frey (2015) reported that teaching complex informational text requires updating literacy instruction by modeling features of text complexity, disciplinary thinking, word solving and comprehension strategies.

**Informational Text Instruction at the Elementary Level.**  The effectiveness of informational text instruction varies significantly from teacher to teacher (Rojas, et al., 2019).  Rojas, et al., (2019) found that effective teachers model a variety of strategies to support both literacy and inferential comprehension of informational text while less

effective teachers tend to focus instruction on gleaning literal comprehension and provide

few opportunities for discussion where students can consolidate knowledge and

understanding. Deeney (2016) found both preservice and in-service teachers using

discussion techniques to support student development of informational text

comprehension. In an analysis of the types of text ideas targeted within informational

texts, the comprehension demands of the text for students, and levels of questions to

promote higher level thinking, both preservice and in-service teachers were found to

focus informational text discussion primarily on students' background knowledge

(Deeney, 2016). Inservice teachers who modeled strategies to access complex,

informational text and moved beyond students' background knowledge found student

reading comprehension increased (Fisher & Frey, 2015). In-service teachers tended to

use background knowledge to scaffold deeper understanding of the text to support

comprehension than did preservice teachers (Deeney,2016). Both in-service teachers and

preservice teacher explanations of text did not focus on modeling text comprehension

strategies or allow students to grapple with challenging text ideas (Deeney,2016).

 Ciullo, et al., (2016) also found that in-service teachers mainly focused on basic

level informational text reading strategies. In contrast, teachers that model specific

informational text comprehension strategies and intentionally engage students in higher

level thinking and analysis of informational text found that students were able to transfer

reading comprehension skills to other texts (Hardini, et al., 2018). Preservice and in-

service teachers' perceptions of the purpose and importance of informational text reading

and comprehension influence the use of either transmissive or transactional methods of

informational text instruction which may influence informational text instruction (Oliveira, 2015).

**Literature Circles for Informational Text Comprehension.** Literature circles, or book clubs, is a reading strategy that provide a structure to engage heterogeneous groups of students in collaborative conversations about literature (Herrera & Kidwell, 2018). Seminal research on the effects of using a literature, or book study, format as a means of engaging students in meaningful conversations and increasing reading comprehension aligns to Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory that student reading comprehension and understanding is strengthened through dialogue. Eeds and Wells (1989) proposed that teachers promote inquiry in literature and provide opportunities for children to engage in grand conversations about literature.

Eeds and Wells (1989) established a literature study group with the goal of exploring how children's conversations would unfold when children were given the opportunity to discuss a book each had read. Eeds and Wells (1989) found that children were able to articulate meaning derived from the text, share personal connections made while reading the text, engage in collaborative conversations with peers, and change points of view when alternate opinions were expressed. Sharing personal experiences related to the text while participating in conversations about literature with a group of peers was found to help students make connections to the text and increase comprehension (Foreman-Peck, 1985).

Harvey Daniels introduced a literature circle format in 1994, that is considered the traditional method of using literature circles (Herrera & Kidwell, 2018). This

instructional method includes providing roles for students to assume while reading the text (Daniels, 1994). Specific roles, or jobs, students take on during the literature circle provide instructional support by limiting the student's focus while reading the text and serve to initiate conversations (Daniels, 1994). Further recommendations have been made regarding the structure of literature circles, which promote open discussions without the restrictions created when students are required to assume a role or job, during the literature circle process (Evans, 2002). Other recommendations include removing the teacher from the discussion to allow more authentic conversations between students (Peterson, 2016). Regardless of the structure, participation in literature circles tends to engage students in meaningful conversations and discussions that encourage deeper thinking about text than do simple prompts or text-based questions (Fisher & Frey, 2016).

Literature circles traditionally centered on fiction but, Daniels (2002) promoted the use of literature circles to explore informational text and integrate the curriculum. Barone and Barone (2016) found that applying the literature circle format to investigate nonfiction text engaged reluctant readers, integrated literacy into the content areas, and supported the acquisition of content knowledge and close reading of text as students engaged in dialogic conversations about the text. Exploring informational text through literature circles engages students in analyzing cause and effect, synthesizing information, generalizing, questioning, visualizing, and determining the main idea of the text (Diego-Medrano et al., 2016). Belfatti (2015) found that engaging in dialogic discussion about informational text during literature circles stretched the limits of understanding and generated inquiries which lead to conceptual understanding.

Cooper (2019) described book clubs, a form of literature circles, as not only useful for improving reading comprehension and language acquisition but as a method of blending technical skills, which are needed for informational text comprehension, with social skills to create collaborative and collective learning. Literature circles and book clubs also provide a medium for collaborative research, debating to construct a meaningful critique the world and advocate for social change (Jocius & Shealy, 2018).

### *Preservice Teacher Self-Efficacy to Teach Informational Text*

The shift in instructional practice from a traditional focus on fiction as the main types of text used for comprehension instruction to instruction of comprehension with nonfiction, or informational texts, not only affects how in-service teachers approach reading instruction, but also requires a shift in how preservice teachers are trained in informational text instruction (Gleeson & D'Souza, 2016). Understanding how preservice teachers approach literacy instruction, including informational text instruction, is important in supporting the development of teacher preparation programs in producing teachers with high self-efficacy in literacy instruction (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2018). Preservice teachers with high levels of preparation in literacy instruction perceived themselves to be knowledgeable and capable in literacy instruction which led to high levels of self-efficacy (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2018). However, high ratings of self-efficacy, regardless of high levels of preparation, do not equate to high measures of actual teaching competence (Barr et al., 2016). Deeney (2016) found that preservice teacher informational text instruction tended to focus on engaging students in discussions about background knowledge and experience. Preservice teachers failed to direct students back

to the text to clarify misunderstanding and promote deeper engagement with text (Deeney, 2016). Lohfink and Adler (2017) support this finding with research that found that preservice teachers showed a surface level understanding for how to teach informational text comprehension strategies. Preservice teachers tended to explain challenging concepts occurring in the text rather than modeling comprehension strategies and directing students to learn from the text (Deeney, 2016). Researchers have focused on both preservice teacher self-efficacy for literacy instruction and on preservice teacher instruction of informational text comprehension. However, in the review of literature, no research was found on preservice teacher self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension.

## Implications

This study has implications for a teacher education program at a university in northwest US and for how preservice teachers are trained to teach informational text comprehension which may increase preservice teacher self-efficacy. Researchers indicated a need to better understand instruction of informational text comprehension () and preservice teachers' self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension (Deeney, 2016; Gündogmus, 2018; Lipp & Helfrich, 2016; Lohfink & Adler, 2017).  Preservice teachers in a literacy field experience expressed concern about a perceived lack of skill in teaching informational text comprehension and in using literature circles. This study may contribute to existing research on methods of teaching informational text comprehension and begin to fill the gap in understanding preservice teacher efficacy to teach informational text.

Individual, semi-structured interviews with preservice teachers previously enrolled in the literacy practicum field experience yielded information on preservice teachers' perceived self-efficacy beliefs to teach informational text comprehension through literature circles. Interviews also produced information on how prepared preservice teachers feel to use the literature circle structure to teach informational text comprehension. Lohfink and Adler (2017) found that preservice teachers showed a surface level understanding for how to teach informational text comprehension strategies. This limited understanding of reading comprehension instructional strategies may lead to low perceptions of self-efficacy (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2018). It is important to know preservice teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy in informational text instruction to improve teacher preparation programs in the development of preservice teacher self-efficacy in literacy instruction.

Although interest in the study's findings reside on a small, local scale, this study may yield interest beyond the realm of the university at the project site. Other teacher preparation programs may have a need for increasing preservice teacher self-efficacy in teaching informational text. Results of this study may inform universities of gaps in instructional practice in teacher preparation programs which may lead to improvements in instructional practices.

Based on the study's findings, the project deliverable for this study includes recommendations for potential changes to the university's teacher preparation literacy methods courses. The recommendations include a summary and background information of the existing problem with suggestions that include a curriculum plan with proposed

changes to the literacy methods courses. Additionally, results from this study may generate discussion on the self-efficacy of preservice teachers. Discussion may lead to the implementation of additional supports to increase or sustain preservice teacher perceptions of self-efficacy.

## Summary

An increased focus on informational text comprehension has caused teachers to re-evaluate their reading comprehension instruction (Nowell, 2017). This shift in reading instruction has also caused a change in how preservice teachers are being prepared to teach informational text comprehension, according to a professor at the project site. Changes have been made in teacher education programs to train preservice teachers to teach informational text comprehension. However, preservice teachers at a local university expressed uncertainty and a perceived lack of self-efficacy in informational text instruction and expressed even greater personal doubts in teaching informational text instruction through the use of literature circles.

Though literature circles have traditionally been used with fiction text, the literature circle format is more frequently being used to integrate curriculum and engage students in reading informational text (Barone & Barone, 2016). Research has shown positive effects of using literature circles to teach informational text comprehension (Nikolajeva, 2014; Varelas & Pappas, 2013; Wilfong, 2009). However, little research has been done investigating preservice teachers' self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension through literature circles. There is also limited research on supports preservice teacher perceive they need to effectively teach informational text

comprehension through literature circles. This lack of research along with the identified

gaps in local practice served as evidence for this study.

The purpose of this study was to investigate preservice teachers perceived self-

efficacy to teach informational text comprehension through literature circles. The

problem and the purpose of the study are explained in detail in section 1. Terms that are

necessary for understanding the nature and purpose of the study are listed and defined. A

review of the literature describes the conceptual framework and self-efficacy theory that

guided this study.

The review of literature examined seminal and current, relevant literature

associated with the problem in this study. Themes that emerged from the review of

literature include self-efficacy, preservice teachers' self-efficacy to teach literacy

including informational text, informational text instruction, and the use of literature

circles to teach informational text comprehension. Section 1 concludes with a description

of the implications this study may have on teacher education programs. The next section

contains an explanation of the methodology of this study. A discussion on the benefits of

using qualitative methodology for collecting data is presented along with information

about the study participants, the data collection process, interview procedures, data

analysis, and limitations of the study.

Section 2: Methodology

**Introduction**

Section 2 contains a description of the methodology of this qualitative, descriptive case study. I selected a qualitative design to identify the beliefs and perceptions of preservice teachers related to their efficacy to teach informational text comprehension through literature circles. Data were gathered for this descriptive case study by conducting semi-structured interviews with preservice teachers at a local university. The following research questions informed the creation of questions I used to interview preservice teachers in the study:

RQ1: How do preservice teachers perceive their self-efficacy when tasked with informational text instruction through literature circles?

RQ2: What resources or support do preservice teacher perceive they need when tasked with informational text instruction through literature circles, course work, and school curriculum?

This section contains an explanation of why a qualitative case study was a logical research and design approach to this study. I explain my use of purposeful sampling for participant selection. Access to participants at the local university site, the establishment of a relationship between research and participants, and the measures used to ensure the protection of participants are discussed. Data collection instruments are described along with the data analysis procedures I used to yield findings concerning preservice teachers' perceived self-efficacy to teach informational text through literature circles.

**Qualitative Research Design and Approach**

After considering other options, I concluded that a qualitative, case study approach was an appropriate methodology and logical research design to gather information on participants' perceptions of self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension. Qualitative research encompasses analyzing data gathered from observations of social interactions and experiences occurring in natural settings, to discover meaning in patterns of behavior and meanings people associate with actions, beliefs, decisions, and values (Aspers & Corte, 2019; Babbie, 2017; Levitt et al., 2018;). A case study researcher investigates a social phenomenon through in-depth collection of data over time, focusing on commonalities or particularities about the object or situation (the case) being studied (Hyett et al., 2014; Merriam, 2017).

In this study, the case was preservice teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy to teach informational text with the literature circle format. I heeded the social constructivist tenet elaborated by Stake (1995) and Merriam (2009) that observations and interactions that occur in a physical space aid in the construction of an understanding of the particularities of a study. In conducting this qualitative case study, I attempted to understand the meanings preservice teachers associated with actions, beliefs, decisions, and values (see Babbie, 2017).

The case study participants were a small group of preservice teachers previously enrolled in one semester of a literacy field experience at a local university. As Babbie (2017) noted, participant interviews provide qualitative data for in-depth analysis. The case study methodology was an appropriate method to investigate preservice teachers'

self-efficacy for informational text instruction. The following is a brief discussion of

other qualitative designs that were less suited to this case study methodology.

**Ethnography**

Ethnography is a form of qualitative research methodology where the researcher

seeks to create a detailed and comprehensive description of social phenomena (Babbie,

2017). Ethnography is exploratory in that ethnographers enter the naturalistic social

setting to observe social interactions without a hypothesis or specific RQs (Reeves et al.,

2013). They derive RQs from the rich descriptions they gather through the observation

and study of the social phenomenon (Reeves et al., 2013). This study did not fit the

criteria for the use of ethnographic methodology as the purpose of this study was not

exploratory in nature. This study did not center on exploring social interactions of

preservice teachers within the literacy field experience. Furthermore, I based the

participant interviews on answering the RQs , which is contrary to the methodology of

ethnography research.

**Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory is an approach to qualitative research in which the researcher

creates a theory after the collection and analysis of data (Babbie, 2017). Theories are

foundationally grounded in data that are systematically gathered and analyzed (Noble &

Mitchell, 2016). An iterative process of analyzing data is used to create codes for

categorizing data that lead to the creation of a hypothesis or theory to explain a

phenomenon (Tie et al., 2019). This study did not align to the ground theory approach

because a new theory was not derived from the analysis of data. Instead, I evaluated

preservice teacher knowledge of literacy instructional pedagogy and perceived self-efficacy.

**Participatory Action Research**

Participatory action research is a type of qualitative methodology in which the researcher involves participants in the purpose and procedures of the study (Babbie, 2017). It involves the investigation of a local problem where those affected participate in researching the phenomenon and take action to solve the problem (Hocevar, 2018). Participatory action research did not align well as the methodology for this study because the participants did not contribute to the development, execution, or outcomes of this study.

I also considered but opted against using quantitative research methods for this study. Quantitative research methods focus on mathematical and statistical data analysis to explain phenomenon (Babbie, 2010; Creswell, 2013). Surveys, polls, and questionnaires are common tools used to gather numerical data for quantitative analysis (Babbie, 2010; Creswell, 2013). Traditionally, a large sample size is needed for quantitative studies to provide enough data points to achieve information saturation to sufficiently explain a phenomenon (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I did not gather numerical data for this study, making quantitative methodology ineffectual. Numerical data would not provide the rich information gathered through individual interviews. Additionally, the small sample size of this study permitted a rigorous and thorough examination of data to answer the RQs (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

In this qualitative case study, the use of individual, semi-structured interviews provided insight into preservice teachers' perceived self-efficacy for teaching informational text through the literature circle format. Interviews allowed participants to discuss issues and challenges they faced when asked to teach informational text during the literacy field experience. Interview questions prompted participants to evaluate levels of perceived self-efficacy along with resources or support needed to effectively design and deliver informational text instruction. The interview format of data collection provided a deeper, more individualized understanding of preservice teachers' thoughts, feelings, and experiences related to teaching informational text in the literacy field experience setting (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

<div align="center">**Participants**</div>

**Criteria for Selecting Participants**

I used purposive sampling to select study participants who met the inclusion criteria for the study. Purposive sampling is a type of nonprobability sampling that allows the researcher to select participants who will be most representative of the phenomena under evaluation (Babbie, 2017). Participants for this study were selected from preservice teachers enrolled in the teacher education program at the local university. Purposive sampling criteria used to select nine study participants included the following:

- Participants must have completed the literacy field experience within the two years of the study interview timeframe and received a passing grade in the course.

- Participants must have taught informational text reading and comprehension skills to small groups of kindergarten through fifth grade students during enrollment in the literacy field experience.

- Participants must have taken and passed the comprehensive literacy methods courses.

**Justification for Number of Participants**

The sample size in qualitative research remains at the discretion of the researcher as there are no specific rules, only guidelines, for determining the sample size (van Rijnsoever, 2017). However, the sample size needs to be large enough to reach theoretical saturation, or the point at which little or no new information emerges from additional information or from the analysis of data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Guest et al., 2020). I estimated that theoretical saturation would be reached with eight to 12 participants by framing interview questions to promote thoughtful and meaningful insight. Fewer participants are needed if large, meaningful amounts of data can be collected (Vasileiou et al., 2018).

**Establishing a Researcher-Participant Relationship**

Establishing a relationship of trust with research participants is a crucial component in the data collection process of qualitative studies (Råheim et al., 2016). I am currently a faculty member in the College of Teacher Education at the study site and teach three courses that participants take as part of the teacher education program. Both students and professor have multiple opportunities to interact within the university setting. These interactions are professional and interpersonal which served to create a

working relationship of trust between both parties. Nurturing relationships with participants in naturally occurring settings, such as the university campus, encouraged feedback from participants' unique perspectives that may have influenced the direction of the study (see Anderson & Henry, 2020).

Although my relationship with the participants had the potential to affect the study, positive relationships of trust and respect allowed for deeper understanding of the data and more candid interview responses (see Pinnegar & Quiles-Fernández, 2018). The participants were my previous students: preservice teachers formerly enrolled in the literacy field experience course and literacy methods courses in a teacher education program at a local university. All information gathered during the study had no effect on participant standing in the university's teacher education program. All participants had already received final course grades. I had no further input regarding students' performance and/or continuance in the teacher education program.

The small number of preservice teachers enrolled in the literacy field experience enabled frequent one-on-one conversations and opportunities to build trust between the participants and myself as the course instructor. Because the course was finished, and grades submitted before an invitation to participate in the study was extended, preservice teachers were ensured that participation in the study would not affect the grade received for the course. I assured all individuals interested in engaging in the study that participation in it would have no effect on future course outcomes within the teacher education program. At this point in the teacher education program, students have taken

all courses taught by me. I believe that this aided in assuring participants of no future recriminations against them for what was said during the study interviews.

**Protection of Participants' Rights**

I took measures to ensure the protection of participants' rights, including confidentiality, informed consent, and protection from harm. Rubin and Rubin (2012) stated that ensuring research participants come to no harm is at the core of the research relationship between the researcher and participants. One aspect of ensuring no harm is that of "just and fair distribution of research benefits and burdens" (Aguilera et al., 2020, p. 5). The researcher must take precautionary measures to ensure against unjust burdens being placed on the participant, including emotional burdens and anxiety caused by participating in the study (Aguilera et al., 2020; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Participants' rights include but are not limited to time to decide to participate without pressure from researchers, refusal to participate in the study, ability to leave the study at any time, full disclosure about the purpose, risks, benefits, and costs of the study, confidentiality, access to information collected, a copy of the consent form, and the ability to ask questions before, during and after the study (Research Participants' Rights and Responsibilities, n.d.). Fully informing participants of all aspects of participation in the study lead to proper informed consent, which was an essential aspect of participation in the research study and was the responsibility of the researcher (Vyas et al., 2020). I emailed a consent form to study participants which fully disclosed the nature and purpose of the study, participant roles and responsibilities, and the use of study results. The

consent form also provided information about participants rights, including the right to withdrawal from the study at any time without repercussions of any kind.

Confidentiality and privacy are other ethical considerations in ensuring protection of participants' rights (Sanjari et al., 2014). No identifying information was disclosed in the study. Personal identifying information that does not support the research purpose and questions was not gathered. Limited demographic information was gathered to protect participants identities. Participants' contact information was kept confidential and identities were protected using pseudonyms. Additionally, names of schools, school districts, mentor teachers, principals, and children who participants referred to during the interview were assigned pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of participants. Interviews were recorded through Zoom video technology and all videos were deleted from the researcher's laptop after the Zoom videos were transcribed. Participants were given a pseudo name of Preservice Teacher (PST)-A, PST-B, etc., to protect participant identity and confidentiality. Interview transcriptions and all communication between participants and the researcher were stored on a password protected laptop.

## Data Collection

Data for this study was derived from semi-structured, individual interviews of preservice teachers enrolled in the Teacher Education program at a local university. Interviews allow for deep, individualized understanding of preservice teachers perceived self-efficacy and resources needed for teaching informational text, as thoughts and opinions are candidly expressed (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Interviews also provided a

systematic approach to gather data. I prepared sequential questions to guide the interview conversations. However, semi-structured interview protocol allowed for deviations from the consecutive questions which provided flexibility to ask follow-up and clarifying questions to key ideas (see Babbie, 2010; Varier et al., 2017). Qualitative data collection began after approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board and approval from the local university's Institutional Review Board.

**Interviews**

Semi-structured, individual interviews served as the primary source of data in answering the research questions. Using the semi-structured interview model allowed me to address specific, yet open-ended questions, and ask follow-up questions as needed (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The responsive interview model was followed as I asked follow-up questions to gain a deep understanding of interviewee experiences teaching informational text using the literature circle format (see Rahman & Shiddike, 2020). An interview protocol was developed to guide each interview, support the reliability of the interviews, and improve the quality of data gained from the interviews (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The study's focus, research questions, framework and information gained from the review of literature supported the development of the interview protocol. The interview protocol can be found in appendix C.

Individual interviews were scheduled for 30 to 45-minute blocks of time and took place remotely through Zoom technology in a private office on the university campus. Remote interviews enabled distant participants taking university classes through remote

learning to participate in the study. Remote interviews also respected appropriate social distancing protocols mandated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participants were contacted through email to arrange interview times. Emails were also used to share Zoom meeting links and communicate about logistical issues in scheduling the interview meeting. Participant confidentiality was maintained by using a password protected email account on the researcher's personal laptop. Pseudo names were assigned to participants and email addresses. This helped to ensure participant confidentiality.

**Sufficiency of Data Collection**

Interview questions addressed participants perceived self-efficacy to teach informational text, factors that influenced self-efficacy including modeling received during the literacy field experience, and the integration of training in literacy instructional methods received in literacy methods courses. Ciampa and Gallagher (2018) found that preservice teachers with high levels of preparation in literacy instruction tend to have high levels of perceived self-efficacy. This finding led to the development of interview questions that addressed participants' perceived levels of preparation in literacy instruction.

Questions were also asked to gain information about participants' experiences teaching informational text using literature circles. Participants were asked about the structure of the reading groups, constraints imposed by the mentor teachers, training received from mentor teachers, methods used to teach informational text, materials used, and successes and challenges faced when teaching informational text in literature circles.

This wide range of questions ensured the breadth and depth needed to establish sufficiency of data needed to answer the research questions.

**Process for How Data was Generated, Gathered, and Recorded**

A research log, in the form of an Excel spreadsheet, was kept which tracked correspondence with participants, interview schedules, participant consent form and member-checking responses. All interviews were held through Zoom video conferencing to ensure appropriate social distancing protocols. Each Zoom meeting was recorded through Zoom technology, with participant consent. Recording the interviews allowed each interview to be fully captured while allowing me to be completely engaged in the interview conversation. Each interview was transcribed through Zoom's speech to text technology. Transcribed interviews were formatted into Word documents which were stored in password protected files on my computer. Zoom video recordings and transcribed interviews were saved on my password protected my laptop. The Zoom video recordings were deleted from my laptop after each recording was transcribed.

Member checking occurred as the participants reviewed a copy of the transcription and verified accuracy. This method of qualify control aided in assuring participants' interview responses were accurately recorded and represented (Harper & Cole, 2012). Follow up emails were sent to receive input from participants concerning the accuracy of the Zoom meeting transcript. Participants were invited to add to or make clarifying changes to the transcripts as deemed necessary. Participants were also given the right to recall any or all input from the Zoom interview and interview transcriptions and leave the research project at any time.

**Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants**

Gaining access to participants required following the local university's procedures for involving university students in research studies by gaining approval from the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Approval from Walden University's IRB was also acquired before participants were approached. Institutional recommendation boards regulate studies involving human subjects and seek to protect participants from unethical treatment and harm (Bakerson et al., 2015). The first step to attaining IRB approval to invite local university students to participate in this study, was to register the study with the local university's IRB. This involved completing an online form fully detailing the purpose of the study, research questions, how data would be collected, and a description of participant involvement in the study. The application was reviewed, and additional clarifying information was provided when requested. A letter of interest requesting university IRB approval is in Appendix C. IRB approval from the local university completed the Walden University IRB approval application. With final IRB approval from both the local university and Walden I was read to move forward with participant selection.

Preservice teachers who had taken the literacy field experience from the winter, spring and fall semesters in 2020 were invited join the study through an email invitation. The letter of invitation is included in Appendix D. The list of potential participants was obtained from the university's College of Teacher Education department head. Inviting preservice teachers from the previous three semesters to participate ensured that theoretical saturation was reached with 8 to 12 participants (van Rijnsoever, 2017).

Interviewing preservice teachers within at least three semesters of the conclusion of the literacy field experience course was an ideal time, as experiences were mostly current in the minds of participants. Also, preservice teachers did not have additional training or experiences teaching informational text during this time frame. Final student grades for the literacy field experience course were submitted before the email invitation to participate in the study was sent, limiting participant hesitation to participate for fear of negative consequences with course grade.

Participants were selected after an analysis of responses to questions asked in the invitation to participate email. Selection questions include: What semester did you take the literacy practicum (ED346E)? What grade level(s) did you teach informational text in? What setting did you teach informational text in: remote/online or face-to-face? No additional data was gathered that would generate study findings or influence study results. A pool of at least five additional participants was kept in reserve in the event a participant withdrew from the study.

**Role of the Researcher**

My role, as was explained to participants, was strictly that of a researcher. Previous interactions with participants as their university professor may have led to conflict in collecting valid data as my previous experiences with participants may have shaped the findings and outcomes of the study (Berger, 2013). To improve the validity of the data collection, I mentally set aside my role of university professor and fully engaged in the interviews as a researcher. Participants were informed that data collected was for

the purposes of the study and was not affiliated with the university's teacher education program.

A potential for bias existed as I moved from the role of university professor to researcher. Galdas (2017) defined bias in qualitative research as any influence that may distort study results. Biases associated with my alternate role and association to participants as their professor may have included my understanding of what currently takes place during the literacy field experience. Previous observations and evaluations of study participants during the literacy field experience, allowed me to see how informational text was being taught. This background knowledge may have created bias during the interviews and in my interpretation of the interviews  Another potential bias was my opinion of the participants based on their performance in my classes. This background knowledge was set aside to obtain an unbiased account of participants' experiences during the literacy field experience.

One method to limit bias in qualitative research is through reflexivity.  Palaganas et al., (2017) described reflexivity as the attention the researcher pays to the role of researcher during a study. Goldstein, (2017) stated that the influence of bias can be reduced and the accuracy of the study enhanced through the use of the reflexive practice of critical and conscientious self-evaluation. I guarded against potential bias by using critical and conscientious self-evaluation to examine personal biases, experiences, and beliefs that may have influenced the data analysis I (see Galdas, 2017).

**Data Analysis**

A qualitative approach was used to collect and analyze data to address the study problem and research questions. Qualitative research, involving data collection in the form of interviews, tasks the researcher with finding meaning, themes, and relationships within the data (Babbie, 2017). A deep analysis of the data allowed me to find answers to research questions (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The thematic analysis method was used to analyze qualitative data gathered during this study. A thematic analysis is a method to identify, analyze, organize, describe and report the themes identified within the data (Nowell et al., 2017).

The thematic analysis method of searching qualitative data for repeating patterns then describing data by creating codes and interpretive themes was used to analyze interview transcripts (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). This analysis consisted of coding interview transcripts. Coding involves giving a word or short phrase to transcribed interview responses to create explanations of meaning and is an iterating process that requires repeated analysis to fully capture the themes of meaning within the data (Elliott, 2018; Saldana, 2016).

Coding consisted of a thematic analysis which was conducted in four cycles of coding. Each coding cycle involved descriptive, in vivo and a priori coding to provide accurate codes for each data set. Descriptive coding allowed me to assign labels, usually as short phrases, to summarize the basic topic of a transcribed passage (see Saldana, 2016). Descriptive labels helped with categorizing themes and topics. In vivo coding was used as I identify words and phrases from the participants own language to code data

(Saldana, 2016). This allowed for a more accurate interpretation of meaning and representation of data as the participants' voices were honored. A priori coding was also used to organize data with  pre-determined codes which were derived from research and interview questions (see Stuckey, 2018). Both a priori and emergent coding were used to ensure a complete analysis of data and to fully capture the essence of meaning intended by participants (Elliott, 2018).

During the first cycle of coding, I copied the transcribed interview data from the Microsoft Word document into a codebook created with an Excel spreadsheet. Data was organized in the codebook by each participant's response in numeric question order. Interview questions were the headings for the columns in the codebook spreadsheet and participant pseudo names were the headings for each row.  This allowed each response to be clearly visible in side-by-side columns to easily identify similar words and phrases.  I highlighted text with different colors to specific answers to each question and consolidate data. The color identification code was documented in the codebook Excel spreadsheet to clearly identify the meaning of each color. I also inserted comments along the way as codes and themes develop through the coding process.

The first coding cycle involved identifying participant responses to questions. During the second coding cycle, I focused on creating labels for data. Axial coding was used for the third and fourth cycles of coding engaged to create categories from the labels and describe how categories and sub-categories related (see Saldana, 2016). I then copied and pasted labels from the third and fourth coding cycles to another Excel spreadsheet. Labels were analyzed and sorted by color codes into categories of information. Category

headings were created from words and phrases within the color-coded data. Categories developed from axial coding led to the development of themes that served to answer the RQs.

**Evidence of Quality**

Triangulation is a method of ensuring validity by analyzing data from multiple perspectives and was used to assure accuracy and credibility of the findings (Fusch, et al., 2018). Triangulation of data involved analyzing different sources of information to determine findings (Fusch, et al., 2018). Sources of information in data triangulation can include participants, social groups, community members or others. Data triangulation in this study included an analysis of interview data from nine preservice teachers previously enrolled in the literacy field experience to find similar perspectives and emerging themes.

Member checking was also used to ensure credibility and accuracy of findings. Member checking is a form of feedback where participants review and comment on data transcripts and interpretations to ensure intended meanings are accurately represented (Varpio et al., 2017). A member check eliminated errors of misrepresentation and contradictions between the participant's intended meanings and the researcher's interpretations (Varpio et al., 2017). I included member checking during the interviews by restating or summarizing statements made by participants. Participants had the opportunity to restate and clarify misunderstood information. A second form of member checking took place after the data analysis. Participants received an email of the data analysis and were asked to review and critically analyze the accuracy of the analysis and findings.

All participants had an opportunity to refute findings if a discrepancy was found between the participants' intended meaning and my interpretation of meaning. My biases or preconceived notions may have caused a discrepancy by forcing data into incorrect categories. Member checking helped eliminate this type of discrepancy. When a discrepancy occurred, I talked with the participant to clarify the misunderstanding. Efforts were made to ensure an accurate representation of the collected data was portrayed.

## Data Analysis Results

The qualitative approach of interviewing participants was used as the data collection methodology to address the identified problem and research questions in this study. Qualitative research is a method used to understand how people perceive and make sense of lived experiences (Marks & Yardley, 2004). Semi-structured, one-on-one interviews were used to create social encounters where I collaborated with participants to discuss the literacy field experience and reflect on instructional practices, feelings and thoughts related to teaching informational text through literature circles (see Rapley, 2004).

Data collection began after approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB; Approval No. 01-13-21-0726950) and IRB approval from the local university (IRB Approval No. F20-010). An email was sent to the 98 preservice teachers who took the literacy field experience course in 2020. The email letter of invitation explained the nature of the research and invited interested participants to reply to the email and supply answers to the following questions:

- What semester did you take the literacy practicum (ED346E)?

- What grade level(s) of students did you teach informational text to?

- What setting did you teach informational text in: remote or at an elementary school?

Thirty-two people responded to the initial email. Respondent's names and responses to the three questions from the letter of invitation were recorded on an Excel spreadsheet. A consent form was sent through email and served to inform and screen respondents. The consent form stated that participants must have taken and passed the literacy methods and literacy field experience courses.  Qualifying participants were asked to reply to the email with "I consent" indicating agreement to the terms of the study and that qualifications were met. Two respondents did not qualify to participate because they did not pass the literacy field experience course. Nine respondents replied to the email consent form saying they met the qualifications and agreedto participate in the study. When each consent email was received the date of consent was added to the spreadsheet and an email was sent to schedule the interview. Participant responses to emails with their availability and agreed upon interview dates were also recorded on the spreadsheet.

All interviews took place virtually through Zoom to ensure safety during the Covid-19 pandemic. Zoom interviews took place in a private office to ensure confidentiality. Interviews lasted between 30-45 minutes, with one  interview lasting 60 minutes. The interview protocol (Appendix B) was used to guide the interviews and each participant was asked the same questions. The semi-structured nature of the interviews

allowed for follow up and clarifying questions do be asked during each interview. Some participant responses veered off topic so additional questions were asked to guide the conversation back to the focus of the interview.

Each interview was video recorded and automatically transcribed through Zoom technology. Zoom video recordings were deleted after each interview transcription was saved on a secure, password protected computer. Each transcript was read and compared to notes taken during the interviews to ensure accuracy of the transcription. Participant's names were removed from the interview transcriptions and replaced with pseudonyms (Preservice Teacher (PST)-A, PST-B, PST-C, etc.) to ensure confidentiality. Participants received an email copy of the interview transcript and were asked to read the transcript and reply to the email with changes or additional comments to the questions. Participants were asked to reply with "no changes" if no amendments to the transcript needed to be made. Each participant replied to the email with "no changes" indicating the transcript correctly portrayed their responses to interview questions.

A qualitative data analysis, which is a method for systematically assigning meaning to the qualitative data, was completed for each interview (see Schreier, 2014). The analysis began by reducing the amount of material collected from each interview to the aspects that related to the research problem and questions through the process of categorizing the data (see Schreier, 2014). I created an Excel spread sheet with each interview question listed as a column heading to create categories to organize the data. Responses to interview questions were listed under each question category. Arranging

interview responses this way created an efficient, and organized structure to analyze each participant's response to interview questions and identify similar words and phrases.

During the first coding cycle words and phrases where color-coded within each participant's response to precisely identify answers to each question.  I added additional columns to the spread sheet next to each question column to aid in the second coding cycle. Color-coded words and phrases identified in the first coding cycle were analyzed during the second coding cycle. Words and phrases were summarized through in vivo and a priori coding words and were recorded in the new columns next to participant's responses to each question.

During the third coding cycle, I followed a thematic approach to identify, represent, and summarize data from in the first and second coding cycles. (see Nishishiba et al., 2014).  A new spread sheet was created that included columns with interview questions as headers and the in vivo and a priori summaries of each participant's response to interview questions listed under the column headings. This further reduced the amount of material to analyze and allowed me to focus on identifying common themes (see Schreier, 2014). Color-coding was used to identify emerging themes from the consolidated data. Each theme was assigned a color and words and phrases were color coded according to the theme.

During the fourth coding cycle I add additional columns to the spread sheet. Columns were labeled with color-coded theme headings. Color-coded words and phrases were sorted into appropriate columns matching the color-coded column heading. This provided a clear, concise, visual overview of each theme with supporting evidence and

enabled me to  clearly define and create concise themes. Four categories emerged from the thematic data analysis: strategies, challenges, literature circles, and supports for increased self-efficacy. An additional table was created in a Word document (Appendix E) identifying four themes with supporting words and phrases.  The four identified themes are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Summary of Themes*

| Theme | Description |
|---|---|
| 1 | Strategies used to teach informational text during the literacy field experience |
| 2 | Challenges teaching informational text during the literacy field experience |
| 3 | Experience with and understanding of literature circles |
| 4 | Supports for increased self-efficacy to teach informational text through literature circles |

**Discussion of Findings**

The RQs that guided this study helped my focus on identifying how preservice teachers perceive their self-efficacy when tasked with informational text instruction through literature circles and the resources or support preservice teachers perceive they need when tasked with informational text instruction through literature circles. The interview protocol developed for this study included comprehensive questions which I asked during each participant interview to attain high-quality data. Participants' responses to questions provided data which generated an in-depth understanding necessary to thoroughly address the research questions.

***Research Question 1***

Through RQ1, I sought to identify how preservice teachers perceive their self-efficacy when tasked with informational text instruction through literature circles. Interview questions from the interview protocol asked each participant to discuss their confidence to teach informational text through literature circles. Responses ranged from "fairly confident," and "moderately confident," to "pretty confident," and "highly confident." Table 2 includes a summary of participant responses related to individual self-efficacy.

**Table 2**

*Summary of Participant Self-Efficacy Responses*

| Participant | Evaluation of individual self-efficacy |
| --- | --- |
| PST-A | "I feel pretty confident to do it." |
| PST-B | "I feel pretty confident." |
| PST-C | "I feel confident in my ability to teach." |
| PST-D | "I would definitely need practice, but I feel like I could do it. But then again, I'm pretty confident in my ability to teach." |
| PST-E | "On a scale of one to 10, it is most likely a seven." |
| PST-F | "I'd say it feel like moderately confidently." |
| PST-G | "I feel after that practicum I feel very confident in teaching informational text with literature circles." |
| PST-H | "I would say fairly confident. I know there are more things that I need to improve on." |
| PST-I | "I feel confident in myself." |

Participants explained their personal evaluations of self-efficacy by responding to the follow up question: What factors do you feel influence your self-efficacy rating? Why?  Most participants cited having the experience to practice teaching informational text a factor that influenced self-efficacy ratings. PST A stated, "Just being able to experience it and use it with actual students, I think, really helped."  PST-B explained the rating by saying, "I feel pretty confident especially now, having had that in-classroom experience with students working in groups." One participant voluntarily rated personal self-efficacy to teach informational text on a scale of one to ten, then explained the rating. PST-E said, "One a scale of one to ten it is most likely a seven because I use a lot of connection to text, as well as background knowledge for students to actually gain as much understanding as possible."

Several participants specifically expressed confidence in teaching informational text, while fewer participants referred to literature circles when discussing confidence to teach informational text. PST-A stated, "I feel pretty confident in my ability to do it. I think that I've learned, I've had that experience with using informational texts and I know what to do with it and what to do to make kids want to be able to read it and how to get them interested in it." PST-B said, "I feel strong with that area because I had the experience of being able to apply the lessons at the same time that I was learning to teach informational text." PST-I said, "I feel confident in myself when teaching informational texts. Something that I've learned about is having discussions and asking questions and getting them engaged in thinking for themselves."

Only two participants discussed teaching informational text through literature circles. PST-C said, "I don't feel like I've been trained about literature circles, but I feel confident in my ability to teach. So, I feel like after being trained on it, I don't feel like it would be hard or difficult." PST-E said, "I feel after that practicum I feel very confident in teaching informational text with literature circles, and I also feel confident in doing that, whether it's in person or over zoom. I didn't think I would be able to accomplish both in one practicum. I learned a lot more than I thought I would, like in teaching literature circles with informational texts, of all things. It was great!"

Although participants expressed generally high self-efficacy, challenges in teaching informational text were also discussed. Some participants stated a challenge in teaching informational text was keeping students engaged. PST-A said, "It was really hard to keep them interested in what we were doing, and so I had to figure out how to do that. I never really quite got it, but I think that by having them read the informational texts that helped them keep them on task." PST-C said, "So the part that was kind of hard when it came to teaching the informational text was when someone would be bored. Which, I don't blame them for you know if they're bored then it's probably my fault." PST-I stated, "I would struggle to get children to participate."

### Research Question 2

Through RQ2, I sought to identify resources or supports preservice teachers perceive they need to teach informational text instruction through literature circles. Participants were asked what they felt was needed to improve their self-efficacy rating. An overwhelming response from all participants was that they felt more experience

teaching informational text would increase their self-efficacy. PST-C said, "I think that, even though I'm confident, I can absolutely, every day always improve. So, just the more instruction that I take on, and the more practice that I get, and the more learning that I do in the future, I think, the better I'll be as a teacher and the more confident I will be as a teacher." PST-F said, "I had more opportunity to teach then I would feel more confident." PST-G stated, "I would say more exposure to teaching and teaching situations."

Additionally, participants stated a need for a deeper understanding of informational text and teaching strategies for designing informational text instruction. PST-E said, "I need more strategies for dissecting the text to see what lies underneath and understanding the text fluidly to assure that you can discuss it properly. I feel like just understanding it and then properly dissecting it is needed." PST-H said, "Maybe more specifics on what to focus on when creating the informational text instruction."

A follow up question asked what materials, resources, classes, support, etc., preservice teachers feel would increase their self-efficacy to teach informational text using the literature circle format. Participants again stated a need for deeper understanding of informational text along with additional strategies and resources for teaching informational text. Specifically, preservice teachers A, B, G, and F stated that being exposed to more informational text and resources would be helpful. PST-G stated a need for, "More resources for how to keep children engaged with informational texts," while PST-I said that, "A class that just focuses on teaching informational texts would be helpful."

Other participants discussed a need for additional instruction in teaching with literature circles. PST-C said, "I think, maybe trying it like as a student in college classes, like a small literature circle unit, or something like that. Because I think knowing how to do it as a student makes it a lot easier to do it as a teacher, especially the professors going over the steps that they're taking as they're leading the literature circles." PST-D stated, "I wish I would have had a really good example of someone teach a literature circle."

**Overview of Themes**

A thematic analysis of interview transcripts was used to organize, analyze, and identify themes within the data (Nowell et al., 2017). I used descriptive, in vivo, and a priori coding methods within the thematic data analysis to summarize, categorize, label, and code data to capture the essence of participant responses to interview questions and create themes to address the research questions (Elliott, 2018; Saldana, 2016; Stuckey, 2018). Through the in-depth data analysis, I uncovered four themes which served to answer the research questions: informational text instructional strategies, challenges teaching informational text comprehension, experience with, and understanding of literature circles, and supports for increased self-efficacy.

*Theme 1: Informational Text Instructional Strategies*

In response to questions asked about strategies for teaching informational text comprehension, preservice teachers were found to have learned and used a variety of informational text instructional strategies. Participants were asked to reflect on informational text instructional strategies learned in literacy methods courses, modeled by mentors, and used during the literacy field experience. Their responses to methods of

informational text instruction learned during literacy methods courses included: asking questions, making connections with the text, including students interests in the lesson design, teaching different aspects of informational text including text features, teaching tiered vocabulary words, dissecting informational text, and selecting text appropriate to learners reading abilities and interests.

When asked what instructional methods were used to teach informational text comprehension during the literacy field experience, PST-A stated that informational text to help children connect to concepts and the setting in fictional text and to make connections to children's interests. PST-B used instructions from the teacher's manual to teach questioning, pausing within the text, predicting maps, worksheets with comprehension questions, retelling main ideas, used background knowledge to connect to informational text. Other participants created charts to compare and contrast information gleaned from informational text. Still other participants used questioning strategies to generate discussion during reading, used summarizing strategies, taught informational text features and vocabulary words, and created projects about the informational text topics being read.

Only one participant referred to using the literature circle format to teach informational text comprehension. PST-I stated that the literature circle format of giving individual students specific jobs to focus on while reading, engaged students in the reading and helped students comprehend the informational text.  This participant also stated that allowing choice of literature circle jobs added to student engagement.

*Theme 2: Challenges Teaching Informational Text Comprehension*

This theme developed as participants spoke frequently during the interviews of challenges faced when teaching informational text comprehension during the literacy field experience. One interview question I asked specifically focused on challenges teaching informational text comprehension.  PST-D stated:

I definitely have never done it before so that always makes it a little challenging teaching informational text. I'm more about the storyline so it was definitely interesting trying to teach something that didn't interest my students…It was hard coming up with an activity instead of going through just as a whole bunch of questions and just have them sit there and just feel like you're interrogating trying to find a purpose to the questions was hard.

Other participants also spoke of challenges with engaging students in reading and comprehending informational text. Challenges included engaging students in reading informational text, knowing questions to ask to generate thinking, ensuring student understanding of the info text, and knowing how and what strategies to use to teach informational text comprehension. PST-A stated, "It was really hard to like keep them interested in what we were doing, and so I had to figure out how to do that. I never really quite got it, but I think that by having them read the informational texts that helped them keep them on task."

*Theme 3: Experience With, and Understanding of, Literature Circles*

This theme emerged as participants explained understandings of literature circles and experiences using literature circles. Despite expressing confidence in teaching

informational text comprehension with literature circles, participants had varied

understandings of what literature circles are, how to use them to teach informational text

comprehension, and instruction provided in teacher education methods courses.

Responses about participants' understanding of literature circles included that literature

circles are helpful to allow students to discuss what they have read, literature circles help

children learn to love to read, and enable sharing different perspectives within the group.

PST-D stated that with literature circles and book clubs, "You definitely get to know the

book better as you're engaging in it versus just passively talking about it or reading it."

When asked about instruction received from teacher education courses on

literature circles, participant responses included that different literacy circle structures

were taught and that literature circles were practiced in literacy methods courses. PST-G

said:

> I did learn a lot about the book clubs and why that's effective and literature circles
>
> and how those are different things. I learned how to put kids into groups based on
>
> their reading levels. There were times, where we could put students together to
>
> kind of collaborate and talk with each other.

Other participants stated that literature circles were not taught in literacy methods

courses and that they did not know how to teach with a literature circle. PST-D said, "I

can't remember talking about literature circles and I don't feel like I've ever been given

explicit instruction in it (teaching with literature circles). Other participants also

expressed not being taught about literature circle instruction in teacher education literacy

methods courses. PST-E said:

Pretty much I can't remember learning about them. I don't think I've learned much about book clubs, I think, or literature circles. I can't remember a time that we've gone over that in class. I feel like I've seen one done, like a children's classroom having a little like book club and you sit together, but I don't think I've ever been taught how to do one. We've talked a lot about writing conferences, but not necessarily like reading groups."

Only one participant expressed a specific and clear understanding of literature circles. PST-I explained literature circles as having roles or jobs that students engage in while reading informational text. This participant also addressed the power of student choice of text and role or job, the effectiveness of using jobs to engage students, and how literature circles were used during the literacy field experience.

### *Theme 4: Supports for Increased Self-Efficacy*

Theme 4 emerged as participants discussed experiences during the literacy field experience and as questions relating to self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension through literature circles were asked. Most every participant stated that additional teaching practice and experiences would increase self-efficacy in all aspects of teaching, but specifically in teaching informational text with literature circles. PST-A also expressed a need to gain a greater understanding of informational text before being able to proficiently teach informational text. Although participants discussed having learned and used a variety of informational text comprehension instructional strategies, most participants felt a need for additional instruction and resources to design lessons using instructional strategies to teach informational text and to engage students. PST-E

stated a need to, "Know how you can encourage them (students) to participate in reading non-fiction text." PST-B stated a desire to share lesson plans with other preservice teachers in the literacy field experience course to generate teaching ideas.

Participants also expressed a desire for further instruction on literature circles to increase self-efficacy to teach with literature circles.  PST-C stated:

I think, maybe trying a small literature circle as a student in college classes, or something like that because I think knowing how to do it as a student makes it a lot easier to do it as a teacher. Especially if the teachers go over the steps that they're taking as they're leading the literature circles.

Another participant expressed the same desire in how to learn about teaching with literature circles. PST-D said:

I wish I would have had a really good example of someone doing a really good, where we could be in the classroom watching someone teach a literature circle. Because in the practicum, we have no time to do that. It's a very short course and you're just thrown in and you learn as you go, which is great, but you don't really get to see what a really good, effective literature circle looks like.

Although participant responses to interview questions indicate moderate to high levels of self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension through literature circles, supports are still needed to increase self-efficacy. Participants indicated a need for additional teaching practice and experiences, greater understanding of informational text, further instruction on planning instruction and instructional strategies to teach informational text, and instruction in using literature circles.

**Discrepant Cases**

A natural inclination when analyzing data is to look for commonalities rather than discrepancies, or examples of data that do not fit emergent patterns (Booth et al., 2013). Failing to identify discrepant cases allows for errors in reasoning and missed opportunities to evaluate alternative explanations (Booth et al., 2013; Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). I looked for discrepant cases during the data analysis process of this research. No evidence of discrepant cases was found. Additionally, no adverse findings, outliers, or data inconsistent data were found that would alter findings of the study.

**Data Validation**

Validation, or verification of data, included checking and confirming to be certain data was reported and represented accurately. The validation of data includes using mechanisms such member checks, categorizing, triangulation and negative case analysis to establish trustworthiness and rigor during the research process (Morse et al., 2002). I used a systematic approach during the qualitative data gathering process which helped to ensure the trustworthiness and rigor of the data collected. An interview protocol (Appendix B) was developed and followed during each interview. Following the protocol ensured validation of data as interviews followed the systematic outline of the protocol and ensured each interview stayed on topic.

Member checking served to verify data throughout the data gathering process to ensure the accuracy of the representation of participant interview responses (Harper & Cole, 2012). Clarifying questions were asked during the interview process and answers to questions were restated to ensure accuracy in understanding and recording participant

responses. Transcripts of interviews were emailed to participants for additional member checking, which served to validate data. No edits and requests for changes were made from participants after reviewing interview transcripts.

Triangulation of data also served to validate data. The process of data triangulation involved analyzing each data source by comparing participant responses to interview questions for similarities or variances in data (Fusch et al., 2018). Data were recorded in an Excel document where participant responses to interview questions were copied and pasted directly from the interview transcripts. Responses were catalogued and organized by question and participant response which enabled me to systematically approach to the data analysis and triangulation process.

**Data Analysis Summary**

The problem addressed in this study is that local university instructors did not have a clear understanding of how preservice teachers perceive their ability to teach informational text comprehension. This was a concern because preservice teachers are tasked with teaching informational text comprehension during a literacy field experience as part of the teacher education program at the local university. Teacher self-efficacy is related to and influences the teacher's persistence, confidence, effectiveness, enthusiasm, commitment, and instructional behavior, which is a key factor in the development of effective preservice teachers (Clark & Newberry, 2019; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Clark and Newberry (2019) found that when teacher education programs understand preservice teacher self-efficacy beliefs to teach, literacy experiences can be provided that build self-efficacy.

Teaching informational text comprehension is a challenge that exists among both preservice and in-service teachers and was found to influence self-efficacy (Begum & Hamzah, 2018). Preservice teachers had difficulty applying informational text reading comprehension strategies in literature circles and were found to resort to fiction text comprehension strategies (Diego-Medrano et al., 2016). Preservice teachers also failed to teach skills, such as text structure, to help readers access complex informational text and struggled to engage students in discussions beyond basic retrieval of text details (Deeney, 2016). These challenges led to the research questions that were investigated during this study:

RQ1: How do preservice teachers perceive their self-efficacy when tasked with informational text instruction through literature circles?

RQ2: What resources or support do preservice teacher perceive they need when tasked with informational text instruction through literature circles, course work and school curriculum?

An analysis of data collected from individual interviews with preservice teachers at the local university provided an understanding of preservice teachers perceived self-efficacy to teach informational text through literature circles. Preservice teachers expressed moderate to high levels of confidence in their abilities to teach informational text through literature circles, especially after teaching informational text during the literacy field experience. This finding aligns with the conceptual framework of this study and the teacher self-efficacy theory. The teacher self-efficacy theory builds on Bandura's social cognitive theory that teacher self-efficacy increases through mastery experiences

(Bandura, 1997). Study participants stated self-efficacy increased as a result of
participation in the literacy field experience. This finding aligns with previous research
on self-efficacy which states that self-efficacy increases as teachers participate in
successful teaching and receive performance feedback (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-
Moran et al., 1998; Varghese, et al., 2016).

However, a deeper analysis of the data revealed that preservice teachers have
varied understandings of what literature circles are and how to teach informational text.
Only one of the 9 study participants used the literature circle structure when teaching
informational text. Study participants expressed challenges faced when teaching
informational text comprehension including a lack of instructional strategies specific to
teaching informational text comprehension even though a variety of instructional
methods were found to be used to teach informational text comprehension, including
instructional strategies taught in literacy methods courses.  Challenges identified when
teaching informational text include questioning, engaging students in reading
informational text, discussions about the text, and knowing a variety of strategies to
increase comprehension. This finding corroborates previous research findings which state
that preservice teachers struggled to engage students in discussions beyond basic retrieval
of text details (Deeney, 2016).

The challenges study participants named served to answer the second RQ of
identifying resources or supports needed to increase self-efficacy to teach informational
text comprehension through literature circles. All participants expressed a desire for more
teaching experiences within the teacher preparation program to practice informational

text instruction. Participants also stated a need for deeper, more explicit  instruction, during literacy methods courses, on teaching informational text and on using literature circles. Multiple participants stated a desire to learn from watching university professors and mentor teachers model teaching informational text through literature circles. This finding aligns to previous research that supports the development of preservice teacher self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Varghese et al., 2016). Study participants concluded that additional classroom instruction and teaching experience is needed to increase self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension through literature circles.

## Project Description

Research study results were analyzed to determine methods to address the problem of increasing preservice teacher self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension through literature circles. Four themes emerged from the data analysis: strategies, challenges, experience, supports. These themes provide a foundational structure for the development of a comprehensive curriculum plan to increase preservice teacher skills in teaching informational text comprehension. The curriculum plan includes learning goals and outcomes along with detailed units and lessons for a 9-week course in teaching informational text comprehension through literature circles. The curriculum plan addresses the concerns voiced by preservice teacher study participants and follows best practices identified in current research. The curriculum plan can be used in teacher preparation program literacy methods courses to strengthen preservice teacher capacity to

teach informational text comprehension through literature circles and increase self-efficacy.

Section 3 contains an outline of the project developed to address the findings of the study. This section includes a detailed description of the project and a rational for the project along with review of current literature that supports the development of the project. A plan for evaluating and measuring the effectiveness of the project is also included in Section 3. The project was developed to address the problem researched in the study is a comprehensive, 9-week curriculum plan. The curriculum plan includes in-depth, explicit instruction of, and practice in, teaching informational text through literature circles. The curriculum plan project focuses on increasing preservice teacher self-efficacy to teach informational text through literature circles by addressing needs identified by preservice teacher study participants.

Section 3: The Project

**Introduction**

A lack of understanding of preservice teachers perceived self-efficacy to teach informational text through literature circles and supports needed to increase preservice teacher self-efficacy is a problem at a local university. Study results showed that although participants reported moderate to high levels of self-efficacy, they had inconsistent understandings of teaching informational text through literature circles. This inconsistency revealed a need for increased explicit instruction of strategies to teach informational text and opportunities teaching with literature circles.

Study participants expressed a need for additional instruction and practice teaching informational text through literature circles. Participants also expressed a need for additional resources and training on how to implement teaching resources into lesson planning for teaching informational text. I developed the project based on study findings. It includes a focus on explicit classroom instruction and practice designing and delivering informational text instruction through literature circles.

The goal of the study project was to provide the local university's teacher education program with a comprehensive, 9-week curriculum plan that increased preservice teachers' skills and perceived self-efficacy to teach informational text through literature circles. I developed the project with a focus on explicit instruction, modeling, and practice. These must be at the center of teacher education programs so that preservice teachers know and are able to implement effective methods of helping students learn (Loewenberg-Ball & Forzani, 2009).

Section 3 includes a rationale for the development of a 9-week curriculum plan and a literature review supporting the instructional design of the curriculum plan. The literature review also includes the learning theories and research that support the content of the project. A fully detailed description of the project including resources, existing supports, potential barriers and solutions to barriers, a timetable for implementation, and the roles and responsibilities of learners is included. A project evaluation plan is also included. I fully detail learning outcomes, formative and summative learner assessments, and overall evaluation goals in the project evaluation plan. Finally, Section 3 includes discussion of the project study's potential implications for social change.

## Rationale

Preservice teachers at the local university who participated in the study reported moderate to high levels of self-efficacy to teach informational text through literature circles. However, findings revealed that study participants had varied and often inaccurate understandings of how to teach informational text through literature circles. Study participants indicated a need for additional classroom instruction in designing informational text instruction, modeling of instructional strategies, and teaching experience to increase self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension through literature circles.

McKenney et al. (2015) stated that within teacher preparation programs, little time is devoted to training preservice teachers to design instruction beyond basic lesson planning. This often leaves preservice teachers unprepared to design and deliver effective instruction (Hicks & Bose, 2019). Study participants validated this finding through

responses to study interview questions, as an area of need for increased instruction in literacy methods courses within the teacher education program at the local university.

Teacher education programs also need to include examples of expert teachers modeling instructional strategies and highlighting components of high-quality instruction that are seamlessly embedded and often unidentifiable to novice teachers (Monte-Sano et al., 2017). Preservice teachers should be given opportunities to practice specific instructional strategies and teaching scenarios and be provided feedback on the implementation of instructional strategies (Monte-Sano et al., 2017). Growth in understanding and skills in the implementation of strategies is gained as preservice teachers are provided specific feedback and opportunities to reflect on teaching experiences within methods courses.

I designed a 9-week curriculum plan to address the needs of preservice teachers to increase their skill and self-efficacy to teach informational text through literature circles. The curriculum plan addressed issues relative to the design and teaching of informational text through literature circles, explicit modeling of instructional strategies and literature circles, application of learning with performance feedback, evaluation, and reflection. The curriculum plan was designed for implementation in literacy methods courses within the teacher education program at the local university. A focus on adult learning strategies of a collaborative, learner-centered and problem-centered curriculum design approach, as the preferred learning style of preservice teachers, was the focus of the instructional design of the curriculum plan (see Sahin, 2020).

**Review of the Literature**

The purpose of this section is to provide a scholarly review of current research on curriculum development for preservice teacher education coupled with methods of effective instruction for adult learners. I discuss theories of adult learning. In addition, I review the framework for adult learning I selected as the foundation to support the methods of instruction selected and outlined in the curriculum plan.

**Strategy Used for Searching the Literature**

The literature review focuses on curriculum development within teacher education programs to increase preservice teacher understanding of teaching informational text through literature circles. A thorough review of literature related to curriculum development in teacher education programs, preparing preservice teachers to teach informational text, and literature circles was the strategy used to conduct this literature review.

Databases used to locate peer-reviewed articles published within the past 5 years included EBSCOhost, SAGE Journals, Education Source, and ERIC. Terms used in searches relating to curriculum development included *adult education*, *adult learning theories*, *andragogy*, *student learning framework, motivation in learning*, *engagement*, *curriculum design*, *curriculum development in teacher education*, *informational text*, *instruction strategies*, *literature circles*, *informational text through literature circles*, and *preservice teacher literacy instruction.* Additional terms used in the search included *modeling instruction*, *scaffolded instruction*, *gradual release of responsibility*, *assessing adult learners*, *curriculum assessment*, *assessing adult learners*, and *mentoring.*

I identified themes during the literature review relating to curriculum development to increase preservice teachers' understanding of teaching informational text through literature circles. Identified themes include frameworks for adult learning, learning through modeling and application, and teaching informational text instructional strategies with literature circles.

**Frameworks for Adult Learning**

Understanding and implementing instructional practices that increase student engagement and learning are essential components of course design (Ornelles et al., 2019). Like all learners, adult learners in higher education learn best when motivated to do so (Sogunro, 2015). Courses that motivate learners need to include considerations of adult learner's autonomy, or self-directedness as, "interests, beliefs, and personal goals can influence (learner's) desire to initiate and persist when faced with thought provoking topics or tasks," (Ornelles et al., 2019, p. 551). Lopez Brown (2017) found that 21st century adult learner needs opportunities to engage in real-world problems and situations to provide a context for learning. Sahin (2020) found that preservice teachers preferred learner- and problem-centered methods of instruction that develop problem solving skills necessary for 21st century learners. This type of student engagement strategy provides a strong motivation for learners as opportunities to apply learning are integrated within the learning process (Dernova, 2015).

An understanding of the need to design curriculum for adult learners with a focus on student motivation and engagement led to the adoption of two frameworks to guide the study project. These were the adult learning theory and the framework of student

engagement. I used these for the instructional design of the curriculum plan to increase preservice teacher understanding of and skills in teaching informational text through literature circles.

### *Adult Learning Theory*

The adult learning theory, or andragogy, as described by Knowles (1975) is the science of helping adults know how to learn. Andragogy can be summarized by six aspects of adult learning: (a) the learner's need to know, (b) the learner's self-concept, (c) the learner's prior experiences, (d) the learner's readiness to learn, (e) the learner's orientation, or state of mind, and (f) the learner's motivation to learn (Ornelles et al., 2019). Three aspects of andragogy described by Knowles (1981) that define the adult learner and that informed the development of this project state that adult learners

- refer to, connect, and use past experiences as resources for learning

- are motivated to learn when learning is associated with current life roles

- seek immediate application of learning

These components of andragogy suggest that adult learners are most successful and motivated to learn when learning is presented in engaging contexts where learning is connected to prior experiences and applied to current experiences (Knowles et al., 2015).

### *Student Engagement Framework*

Kahu (2013) proposed a conceptual framework that views "student engagement as a psycho-social process, influenced by institutional and personal factors embedded within a wider social context, (and which) integrates the sociocultural perspective with the psychological and behavioral (perspectives)" (p. 768). This conceptual framework of

student engagement suggests that structural and psychosocial influences within the university culture, policies, curriculum, teaching, support, and workload influence student engagement (Kahu, 2013). However, student structural and psychosocial influences including background, family, life-load, motivation skills, identify, and self-efficacy also influence student engagement (Kahu, 2013). Kahu's conceptual framework of engagement posits that the combined influences of university and student structural and psychosocial factors are antecedents of student engagement that influence student affect (enthusiasm, interest, and belonging), cognition (deep learning and self-regulation), and behavior (time and effort, interaction, and participation).

Consequences of student engagement within this framework include proximal and distal outcomes. Proximal, or immediate, consequences include academic (learning and achievement) and social (satisfaction and well-being) outcomes (Kahu, 2013). Future, or distal, academic, and social consequences are also included in the framework of student engagement. Distal academic outcomes include retention, work success and lifelong learning and future social outcomes of student engagement include citizenship and personal growth (Kahu, 2013).

The conceptual framework of student engagement is supported by McKie (2019) who found that much of engagement is influenced by antecedents outside of the classroom, both for the student and the teacher. A refined conceptual framework for student engagement added an educational interface which revised the student engagement influences of affect, cognition, and behavior, by adding self-efficacy, emotions, belonging, and well-being (Kahu & Nelson, 2018). The revision adds additional

understanding to factors that influence the relationship between students and the university in addition to student skills, background, and motivation, all of which influence student engagement (Kahu & Nelson, 2018). The framework of student engagement aligns with the adult learning theory as both frameworks propose that students engage emotionally when learning is linked to interests, life experiences, and future goals (Kahu et al., 2015).

**Learning Through Modeling and Application**

Hurlbut and Krutka (2020) acknowledged the differences between learning about teaching and growing as a teacher, stating that each are very different processes and that growing as a teacher requires practice. Peercy and Troyan (2017) stated the importance of, and a need for teacher preparation programs to provide preservice teachers the experiences of teaching as an integral component of teacher training. Practice-based teacher education practices offer learning experiences to support preservice teachers in growing as a teacher (Hurlbut & Krutka, 2020).

Pearson and Gallagher (1983) described a method of teaching centered on the gradual release of responsibility (GRR) from teacher-centered instruction and demonstration to teacher-supported practice, and finally to learner-centered implementation of instruction. The GRR model for learning begins with the teacher doing the work of performing or demonstrating the task or strategy while the students observe (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). The teacher then shifts the work of learning to the students who assume full responsibility of completing the task (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983).

Duke and Pearson (2008) refer to the teacher's work of instruction as modeling or demonstration. Pearson and Gallagher's work on the GRR model was influenced by Wood et al. (1976) and Vygotsky's (1978) work on scaffolding instruction. Scaffolding is a method of instruction where a more expert learner supports a novice learner to complete a task the novice learner would otherwise be unable to accomplish independently (Wood et al., 1976).

Webb et al. (2019) described GRR as a continuum and a cycle of learning with multiple entry points along the way as instruction focuses on observation, assessment, and decision making throughout the instructional process. GRR provides a flexible framework for responsive teaching where explicit instruction, guided practice, and independent practice are implemented throughout the learning experience as observations and formative assessments guide decision making during instruction (Webb et al., 2019).

The scaffolded routine of the GRR, which provides learning through modeling and practice, is an effective instructional method to provide preservice teachers with concrete examples of literacy instruction that can be transferred directly to real-world classrooms (Zipke et al., 2019).  Miller et al. (2018) stated that preservice teacher effectiveness in literacy instruction improved within the classroom practicum experience after the professor explicitly modeled literacy lessons and instructional strategies. Preservice teachers expressed greater confidence in teaching and an eagerness to try new teaching strategies after mentors and professors modeled strategies (Zipke et al., 2019). Matheson-Mitchell and Reid (2017) found that through modeling and practice preservice teachers experienced "a significant shift from a practice focus on the self, to a more

explicit focus on the relationship to learners; from 'being' a teacher to 'doing' teaching"

(p. 53). Henning-Smith (2018) found that modeling instruction and explicitly

communicating the thinking behind the teaching, or making thinking visible, is an

integral component of the GRR in teacher training as instructors and preservice teachers

to enter the GRR continuum in any capacity.

**Informational Text Comprehension Instruction**

The purpose of informational text is to inform the reader about the natural world

by utilizing a variety of text features such as a table of content, glossaries, bolded words

and definitions, captions, chart, graphs, illustrations, and photographs (Duke & Bennett-

Armistead, 2003). A variety of text structures and organizational patterns are components

of informational text that differ from narrative text such as sequence, cause-effect, and

compare-contrast (Carnahan & Williamson, 2016). These differences from narrative text

make reading and comprehending informational text more challenging, as readers are

required to use comprehension strategies beyond a familiar story structure involving

characters, setting, and plot, especially for readers who struggle to recall and organizing

facts while reading (Otaiba et al., 2018).

A lack of understanding of the complex vocabulary, text features and structures of

informational text may lead to failed comprehension and meaning making during reading

(Hall, 2007; Novalita, 2019). Additionally, young children have limited conceptual

understandings of how the world works, limited vocabulary, and limited experiences with

science concepts and text structures which may add to decreased text comprehension

(Hoffman et al., 2015).

Sustained, scaffolded, reading comprehension instruction and practice is needed for readers to develop a deep understanding of text (Brevik, 2019). Systematic and explicit instruction of informational text comprehension strategies need to be included in reading comprehension instruction (Carnahan & Williamson, 2016). The National Reading Panel Report (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) stated that, "The rationale for the explicit teaching of comprehension skills is that comprehension can be improved by teaching students to use specific cognitive strategies or to reason strategically when they encounter barriers to understanding what they are reading" (p. 14). The objective for educators is to use explicit instruction to teach reading comprehension strategies with the goal of developing, "students into strategic readers who consciously and independently use strategies to overcome comprehension problems" (Brevik, 2019, p. 2306).

Explicit instruction on informational text comprehension should include explaining, modeling and guiding students in the application of reading strategies which lead to independent reading (Afflerbach et al., 2008). While research has yet to reveal the ideal number of reading strategies to be taught, research on reading comprehension instruction indicates that strategy instruction can improve reading comprehension and specific strategies should be taught and applied to increase reading comprehension, including comprehension of informational text (Brevik, 2019). Nearly two decades of reading comprehension research consistently points to strategies such as monitoring comprehension (meta-cognition), activating, connecting, and building background knowledge, questioning, visualizing, inferring, determining importance in text, and

summarizing (Duke & Pearson, 2008; Harvey & Goudvis, 2017; Zimmermann & Reed, 2020). Additionally, analyzing text structure and identifying text features are strategies that may improve reading comprehension of informational text (Zimmermann & Reed, 2020).

While explicit strategy instruction is an important part of supporting readers in developing reading comprehension skills, Brevik (2019) stated that explicitly learning about reading comprehension strategies does not move students toward independent reading, rather using strategies as part of daily practice increases reading abilities. Students need multiple exposures to reading strategies and multiple opportunities to practice and apply the strategies in independent reading situations (Ankrum et al., 2016). Applying reading comprehension strategies must become part of students' daily learning within the classroom especially when reading independently (Pearson & Cervetti, 2017).

Socially collaborative interactions and learning activities that provide opportunities for students to engage in reading tasks that require application of reading strategies, is key in learning to read, developing as a reader, and enhancing content knowledge found in informational text (Ankrum et al., 2016; Irawati, 2016).  Using literature circles to provide opportunities to practice strategies and develop comprehension skills is one method that also engages students in reading objectively to collaboratively discuss and critically think about text (Bennett et al., 2016; Irawati, 2016). Young and Mohr (2018) found that "literature circles are an authentic means for literacy development that students typically enjoy" (p. 1).

Daniels (2002) stated that literature circles, including high quality fiction and non-fiction texts should be a part literacy instruction and school textbooks not usually are not written in a way that is conducive to the meaningful and engaging discussions of a successful literature circle. Informational text needs to include, "content that is important or engaging, people we can care about, a narrative structure or chronological line, places we can visualize, danger conflicts, risks, or choices, value, moral, ethical, or political dimensions, some ideas that reasonable people can debate, dispute, or disagree about" (Daniels, 2002, p. 11). The careful selection of text for use within literature circles can increase students' ability to ask and answer higher order thinking questions, enhance student conversations, and increase reading comprehension (Daniels, 2002; Peterson, 2016).

Utilizing literature circles in teacher education courses is an effective instructional method to engaged preservice teachers in learning course material, but to also provide a model for authentic, student-focused learning that preservice teachers can implement in future literacy instruction (Aytan, 2018; Dogan et al., 2020). When literature circles were used in teacher education courses, preservice teachers reported an increased ability to capture details within the text, improve vocabulary skills, and gain different perspectives (Aytan, 2018). Shaw (2017) reported that using literature circles in teacher education courses provided opportunities for preservice teachers to develop critical thinking skills and take on leadership roles in the implementation of the literature circle model. Additionally, the use of literature circles provided preservice teachers experience learning through social interactions with peers thinking critically about texts, while gaining

valuable understandings and skills in teaching literacy (Bennett et al., 2016). Current recommendations for the structure of literature circles promote less restrictive methods that promote open discussions (Young & Mohr, 2018). This current structure of literature circles provides preservice teachers a variety of experiences with the application of literacy instructional strategies which serve to promote positive views of reading and literacy instruction (Dogan et al., 2020).

## Project Description

The project (Appendix A) is a curriculum plan aimed at increasing preservice teacher self-efficacy to teach informational text through literature circles. I developed the 9-week curriculum plan based on needs expressed by preservice teachers during the data collection process. Preservice teachers communicated a need for explicit instruction, modeling, and practice in teaching informational text comprehension. I designed the curriculum plan to enhance a current literacy methods course at the local university and engage preservice teachers in actively learning and applying strategies for informational text comprehension instruction.

### Potential Resources and Existing Supports

The project was designed to be implemented within the context of a literacy methods course within the teacher education program at a local university. The literacy methods course is required for all elementary education, early childhood special education, and special education majors. Implementing the project within a pre-stablished, required course is a resource to improve   the training preservice teacher need and may increase their self-efficacy to teach informational text within literature circles.

The local university allocated resources specifically to the literacy methods course including professors to teach the course, text-book requirements for students enrolled in the course, classroom and remote/online technology and technology support.

Another potential resource is the state, preservice teacher literacy standards and assessments. The state board of education leaders created accreditation mandates to require that the local university show evidence of teaching state literacy standards, which include informational text comprehension (Idaho State Department of Education, n.d.). This requirement is met as preservice teachers take and pass literacy assessments administered by the state department of education. Passage of the state literacy tests is also a measure of preservice competency in literacy instruction. The local university places high importance on the passage rate of the state literacy assessments as a data point for accreditation. This focus of importance serves to support the development of curriculum to increase student learning within the teacher education program.

**Potential Barriers and Solutions to Barriers**

While the state literacy assessments are potential resources, the requirements from the state department of education and a focus on teaching standards geared toward passing a high-stakes assessment may also be a barrier. The focus on directing instruction toward an assessment and covering all standards addressed on the assessment, may supersede the increased focus of and instructional time dedicated to informational text comprehension instruction that the curriculum plan requires.

A potential solution to this challenge is to design the literacy methods course in a way that incorporates instructor modeling and student application of literacy instructional

strategies, including the use of literature circles, throughout all aspects of the course. Preservice teachers may benefit from explicit instruction, modeling, and opportunities to continually practice instructional techniques in all aspects of literacy instruction, including instruction of informational text comprehension (Matheson-Mitchell & Reid, 2017; Zipke et al., 2019).

**Implementation and Timetable**

The project will be integrated within an existing literacy methods course during a fourteen-week semester at the local university. The literacy methods course is offered in each of the three, fourteen-week semesters within the local universities academic school year. Three university professors each teach one section of the literacy methods course. However, I will first implement the project in the literacy methods course that I teach. This will allow me to revise the project as needed before full implementation in each section of the literacy methods courses the following semester.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

I assumed the role of identifying a problem, collecting, and analyzing data to determine causes and potential solutions to the problem, and developing a comprehensive curriculum plan to address the needs expressed by preservice teachers to address the problem. The problem identified was a lack of understanding of preservice teachers' self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension through literature circles. Through the data collection and analysis process I found  that preservice teachers do not fully understand how to teach informational text comprehension or literature circles. Preservice teachers expressed high levels of self-efficacy in teaching informational text

comprehension despite a lack of understanding of instructional strategies. Based on

research findings, I assumed responsibility for developing a curriculum plan to teach

informational text comprehension strategies through literature circles within an existing

literacy methods course at the local university.

I also assumed responsibility for communicating research findings with the

teacher education department leaders and literacy professors at the local university.

Ensuring all stake holders understand preservice teacher perspectives, self-efficacy, and

educational needs is vital to the success of the implementation of the project. After

communicating with stake holders and ensuring all understand the purpose of the project,

I will take on the role of providing professional development to assist university

professors in the implementation of the curriculum plan within all sections of the literacy

methods course offered at the local university. At that point, literacy professors will be

responsible for creating change within the teacher education department by implementing

the project. The researcher will remain engaged with the implementation to coach, assist,

and collaborate with literacy professors to adjust the curriculum plan as challenges arise

and more efficient instructional methods become apparent.

<div align="center">**Project Evaluation Plan**</div>

**Evaluation Format**

I developed this project to address two conclusions derived from the analysis of

data. First, preservice teachers lack an understanding of how to teach informational text

comprehension using literature circles. Next, preservice teachers expressed high levels of

self-efficacy in teaching informational text comprehension through literature circles

despite a lack of understanding of instructional strategies. Two forms of evaluation are needed to address the effectiveness of the curriculum plan. First, an outcomes-based assessment of preservice teacher understanding of instructional strategies for teaching informational text comprehension through literature circles is needed. This serves to evaluate the effectiveness of the instructional strategies outlined in the curriculum plan and implanted within the literacy methods course. Next, a summative evaluation of preservice teachers' self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension through literature circles is needed to evaluate the influence of the curriculum plan on preservice teacher self-efficacy.

**Justification for Selected Evaluations**

*Outcomes-Based Assessment*

An outcomes-based assessment will be used to assess preservice teacher understanding of informational text comprehension strategies through literature circles. Outcomes originated from state standards for literacy teacher certification that the local university is required to evidence for teacher preparation program approval and accountability (Idaho State Department of Education, n.d.). The assessment requires preservice teachers to create a curricular unit that outlines the lessons and instructional activities designed to meet learning goals and outcomes of teaching informational text comprehension (Cunningham, 2009; Tan-Sisman, 2021).  Preservice teachers will create curricular unit during the literacy methods course.  The curricular unit will serve as a common assessment used by all professors teaching the literacy methods course (see Bailey et al., 2014). A rubric will be used to evaluate the curricular units and will provide

continuity in the curricular unit assignment requirements and evaluation (see Brookhart,

2013). The curricular unit rubric will align to selected state literacy standards for teacher

certification as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*State Literacy Standards for Initial Certification of Professional School Personnel*

| Standard number | State literacy standards |
|---|---|
| 3(f) | The teacher creates an inclusive literacy-learning environment that contextualizes curriculum instruction across content areas and helps students participate actively in their own learning. |
| 3(g) | The teacher facilitates effective student collaboration that provides authentic opportunities for the use of social, academic, and domain specific language. |
| 4(d) | The teacher understands the key concepts of literacy components and their interconnections as delineated in the Idaho Content Standards to include but may not be limited to; Reading (Reading for Literature, Reading for Informational Text, and Reading Foundational Skills) based on grade level appropriateness and the developmental needs of student(s) being addressed, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language |
| 5(a) | The teacher understands specific literacy skills required for success in different content areas. |
| 5(b) | The teacher understands research-based strategies that lead to students becoming independent, critical, and strategic readers, writers, speakers, and listeners across content areas. |
| 5(c) | The teacher understands how to design literacy instruction to promote active participation and collaboration. |
| 6(h) | The teacher designs a range of authentic literacy assessments that demonstrate an understanding of how learners develop and that address interpretive, critical, and evaluative abilities. |
| 6(i) | The teacher actively engages students in analyzing their own data, assessing their progress, and setting personal literacy goals. |
| 7(b) | The teacher uses knowledge of theory, research, and practice in literacy to plan standards-based, coherent, and relevant learning experiences using a range of different texts (e.g., across genres, periods, forms, authors, cultures, various forms of media) and instructional strategies that are motivating and accessible to all students, including English learners, |

students with exceptional needs, students from diverse language and
learning backgrounds, and struggling literacy learners.

*Formative and Summative Assessments*

An evaluation of preservice teacher perceived self-efficacy to teach informational

text comprehension through literature circles after receiving explicit instruction,

modeling, and practice provided through the curriculum plan is most accurately measured

in an authentic teaching situation. Preservice teachers need opportunities to implement

instructional strategies in authentic teaching situations to evaluate perceived self-efficacy

to teach informational text comprehension through literature circles (Clark & Newberry,

2019). A survey of preservice teachers perceived self-efficacy given before and after

completing the literacy field experience will serve as a measure of the effectiveness of the

implementation of the curriculum plan within the literacy methods course, in influencing

self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension through literature circles.

**Outcomes and Evaluation of the Project**

The purpose of the project is to increase preservice teacher understanding of

informational text comprehension strategies to increase preservice teacher self-efficacy to

teach informational text comprehension through literature circles. Specific instructional

outcomes identified what preservice teachers will learn from the project (Danielson et al.,

2009). Outcomes of the project are that preservice teachers will learn:

- Key components of literacy and the specific literacy skills required for reading

  and comprehending informational text.

- Research-based instructional strategies to design explicit instruction to increase student ability to apply reading processes and strategies which facilitate comprehension of informational text.

- How to plan authentic learning experiences that promote independent and critical reading skills and facilitate active participation and collaboration to enhance comprehension of informational texts.

- Characteristics of informational text and text structures and recognizes the importance of using a variety of texts and formats to enhance student comprehension and match text complexity and structure to reader and task.

- How to create an inclusive literacy-learning environment that integrates curriculum instruction across content areas and helps students participate actively in their own learning.

- How to design authentic literacy assessments that demonstrate an understanding of how learners develop and that actively engages students in analyzing their own data, assessing their progress, and setting personal literacy goals.

An evaluation of the curriculum plan will determine the effectiveness of the project in increasing preservice teachers' understanding of informational text comprehension strategies to increase preservice teacher self-efficacy. The curriculum plan evaluation includes a review of rubrics used to evaluate the informational text comprehension curricular units created by preservice teachers during the literacy methods course. An evaluation of data collected from the rubrics provides evidence of preservice

teachers' ability to apply learning to design informational text comprehension instruction.

Preservice teacher performance serves as an indicator of the effectiveness of the project

in increasing preservice teacher understanding of informational text comprehension

strategies.  A review of data collected from the survey of preservice teachers perceived

self-efficacy given before and after completing the literacy field experience also serves to

evaluate the effectiveness of the project. Adjustments to the curriculum plan will be made

after a review of curricular unit rubrics and self-efficacy survey data.

**Description of the Key Stakeholders**

Key stakeholders in this study are those involved in the teacher education

program at the local university including university instructors and administration,

literacy field experience supervisors, preservice teachers, and mentor teachers (see

Swars-Auslander et al., 2021). University professors will implement the project to train

preservice teachers in methods of literacy instruction. University administrators will

assume responsibility for meeting state teacher preparation standards within the teacher

preparation program including the literacy methods course. Literacy field experience

supervisors will evaluate preservice teacher performance in teaching literacy and

administered the self-efficacy survey. Mentor teachers play a key role in the development

of preservice teacher self-efficacy through coaching and supporting preservice teachers in

designing and implementing informational text comprehension instruction during the

field experience (Chizhik et al., 2018).

Training preservice teachers is the focus of all instructional efforts therefore,

preservice teachers are the primary stakeholders in the implementation of the project. The

design and implementation of the curriculum must meet the needs of preservice teachers (Sahin, 2020). The data collected from the study revealed that the needs of preservice teachers at the local university include greater instruction, modeling, and practice of informational text comprehension instructional strategies and teaching with literature circles. The project design and evaluation focus on improving the literacy methods course to meet needs identified by preservice teachers as primary stake holders.

## Project Implications

Data derived from this study align with findings from previous studies which indicated uncertainty and low teacher self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension (Asikcan et al., 2018; Reutzel et al., 2016). These findings provide a rational for the development of the project which provides in-depth instruction of informational text comprehension strategies for preservice teachers and support the need for a shift in literacy instruction for preservice teachers (Goering & Young, 2018).

### Larger Context

The project derived from this study has potential to influence how informational text comprehension strategies are taught within teacher preparation programs. A literacy methods course that contains a strong emphasis on informational text comprehension instruction may increase preservice teacher self-efficacy to teach informational text (Begum & Hamzah, 2018). Higher preservice teacher self-efficacy leads to increased student learning and academic achievement, which is the ultimate focus of all instruction (Begum & Hamzah, 2018).

**Local Community**

The project is important for local stakeholders as changes are made to the literacy methods course taught at the local university. Along with an increased understanding of how to teach informational text comprehension and self-efficacy to do so, more preservice teachers at the local university may pass the state literacy assessment which satisfies the state comprehensive literacy requirement for teacher certification (Idaho State Department of Education, n.d.). An increased passage rate may lead to a greater number of graduates from the teacher education program at the local university and a potential increase of teachers seeking jobs within the local community.

Most importantly, changes to instructional methods may lead to improvements in application of learning as preservice teachers instruct children in the literacy field experience and later as in-service teachers in classrooms of their own. This cycle of improved instruction, beginning with local university professors may lead to increased reading comprehension in children, which is the ultimate goal and purpose of all literacy instruction (Fernandes et al., 2018)

## Conclusion

The overall goal of this project is to increase preservice teacher understanding of informational text comprehension instructional strategies to improve preservice teacher self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension through literature circles. Section 3 described the development of the project including the learning theories that framed the project and a review of literature to support the theories and methods utilized in the project. The project outcomes, evaluation, and implications for social change are also

included in Section 3. Section 4 contains a description of the project strengths and

limitations, recommendations for alternative approaches, along with researcher

reflections on scholarship, project development, leadership and change, and the

importance of the work. Implications, applications, and directions for future research are

also discussed in Section 4.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

**Introduction**

I begin Section 4 by analyzing the project strengths and limitations. I then reflect on my experience of engaging in the roles of scholar, project developer, and advocate for social change. A discussion of my personal learning and growth that took place as a result of the research experience is also included. Section 4 concludes with a discussion on the importance, implications, and applications of the work along with directions for future research.

**Project Strengths and Limitations**

Preservice teacher perceived self-efficacy and influence in the classroom are influenced by an understanding of and ability to teach informational text comprehension (Malmir & Mohammadi, 2018). To effectively teach informational text comprehension, preservice teachers need explicit instruction, modeling, and practice implementing instructional strategies (Afflerbach et al., 2008; Brevik, 2019). Therefore, it is critical that literacy methods courses in teacher education programs include a specific focus on informational text comprehension instructional strategies.

A strength of the proposed curriculum plan is the integration of explicit instruction, teacher modeling, and student practice of instructional strategies. Providing opportunities for preservice teachers to learn instructional strategies, observe the implementation of the strategies, and then apply the strategies in practice scenarios promotes positive views of reading and literacy instruction (Dogan et al., 2020). Furthermore, with a curriculum plan, professors may dedicate more time to teaching

informational text comprehension instructional strategies within the literacy methods courses. When all course instructors implement the curriculum map, all preservice teachers will receive in-depth training of informational text comprehension instructional strategies regardless of the professor teaching the literacy methods course.

Ideally, all university professors teaching the literacy methods course will fully implement the curriculum plan. However, while university professors are required to teach state teacher preparation standards, professors use professional judgment on how courses will be taught. Though professors will have the curriculum plan, they are not required to implement the plan within literacy methods courses. This is a limitation of the project. The degree of implementation of the curriculum plan across all sections of the literacy methods course may affect the amounts of instruction, modeling, and practice preservice teachers receive in teaching informational text comprehension.

## Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

This project study addresses preservice teachers' self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension. The study revealed that though preservice teachers at the local university expressed confidence to teach informational text comprehension, they would benefit from more explicit instruction, modeling, and practice of instructional strategies for teaching informational text comprehension. Participants stated that this would increase their perceived self-efficacy. The development of a curriculum plan is one method to address preservice teacher needs. Two alternative approaches are recommended based on the work of this study.

One alternative approach to addressing the problem of this study is to work collaboratively with the local school district to provide professional development to the in-service teachers who mentor preservice students in the literacy field experience. Kang (2021) found that mentor teachers best support preservice teacher development by modeling instructional strategies, supporting the preservice teacher in experimenting with designing and implementing lessons and instructional strategies, and providing explicit feedback. Professional development that is ongoing, supportive of the implementation of new practices, models new concepts, and engages teachers in practicing concepts is most effective in increasing teacher capacity (Gulamhussein, 2013). By working collaboratively, leaders of the local school district and the local university could develop a mentoring program that more effectively contributes to the development of preservice teachers' self-efficacy.

Another alternative approach is to create a professional learning community (PLC) with university professors teaching literacy methods courses in the teacher education program. A PLC consists of "collaborative teams of educators who work interdependently to achieve common goals while holding each other mutually accountable" (Riggins & Knowles, 2020, p. 48). University professors could participate in a PLC to address the problem in the study and work collaboratively to create and implement instructional strategies for teaching informational text comprehension. DuFour et al. (2016) developed four focus questions to guide PLC meetings and curriculum development.  Questions include

- What is essential that the students learn?

- How will the team know if the students have learned the information?

- How will the team respond if the students do not learn?

- How will the team respond when students already know the information?

The PLC approach would unite professors with a focus on improving teaching to ensure students learning essential skills (Bailey & Jakicic, 2019). Through continuous process of inquiry, reflection, and action, university professors could positively influence preservice teacher self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension (Riggins & Knowles, 2020).

**Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change Analysis of Self as a Scholar**

Before beginning this doctoral process, I did not view myself as a scholar, especially because synonyms for "scholar" include "researcher," "intellectual," and "academic." School has always been easy for me, but few academic assignments have ever required me to engage at the scholarly, research level that this doctoral program has required. My approach to learning and schooling had to shift from simply doing assignments to pass a course to doing the work of research. The work of research included identifying a problem, researching the problem to justify and validate the need to study the problem, and then identifying and developing a potential solution to the problem.

As I engaged in the research process, the work became my own. The identified research problem was one that had personal meaning because of the work I do at the local university. This sense of ownership and the idea that my work was going to make a

difference to the students I teach excited and inspired me continue moving forward. Many research studies I read had direct application to courses I taught. I found myself growing academically and professionally as I became highly literate on the topics of preservice teacher self-efficacy, informational text instruction, and teaching with literature circles. The research I engaged in influenced the literacy methods courses I teach. My courses became more rigorous, in-depth, and applicable to current instructional practices. Although I still do not describe myself as an intellectual or academic, I can say with confidence that I am a researcher and scholar.

**Analysis of Self as a Project Developer**

In my work as a university professor in the teacher education program at the local university, I am often engaged in designing and developing course curriculum. My work experience influenced the design of this study project and the relative ease of the project design. Typically, my work with course design is strongly influenced by program, university, and state mandates. Although required mandates were integrated into the development of this study project, a larger focus was on the university students who will be affected by this project. This is a major shift in thinking about, planning, and designing courses in comparison to previous course design work I have been involved in.

During the data collection process, the preservice teachers I interviewed (all former students of mine) provided valuable feedback that will influence my teaching. I felt vulnerable during the interviews because student insights, though not directed specifically at me, were reflective of what I had taught them and the effectiveness of my course design and instructional methods. Data indicated that there are improvements that

I can make to better prepare my students to teach informational text comprehension and to increase student self-efficacy. My biggest take-away from the development of this project is that student voice matters and that I need to continually seek feedback from the students to improve my teaching.

**Leadership and Change**

After finishing my master's degree, I received a call from a university recruiter about beginning a doctoral program. At that time, most education doctoral programs focused on educational leadership. To me, leadership meant working at the administrative level within a school district, which I had no desire to do. The university recruiter attempted to convince me that because I had a graduate degree in the field of education, I was a leader. I have since learned that I mistook educational management for educational leadership. Connolly et al. (2019) clarified the difference stating that educational management consists of ensuring that the day-to-day functions of an educational institution function properly. Educational leadership is the ability to influence others to achieve goals and bring about change (Connolly et al., 2019).

The doctoral journey has been one of enlightenment as my understanding of educational leadership has shifted from being a pawn in a system to trusting myself as a leader with potential to influence change. The coursework, research, and writing involved in earning a doctoral degree have given me confidence I did not think I had as I have found validation and respect from others. With that earned respect that comes from completing a doctoral program, I feel a great sense of responsibility to be an educational leader and share what I know. I now have a platform to use to initiate change within the

teacher education program and will use that platform to influence instructional practices to create stronger preservice teacher self-efficacy.

## Reflection on Importance of the Work

Part of my work as a professor in the teacher education program at the local university is to design courses to prepare preservice teachers to teach literacy. The dean of the teacher education program at the local university stated that multiple factors influence course design including alignment to state and national teacher preparation standards, literacy standards, and university accreditation standards and expectations. Learning activities, assignments, resources, and assessments need to align to the multiple standards. Other factors that should be considered in course design are beliefs about student learning and engagement, instructional preferences, and how personal perspectives and lived experiences may influence instructional decisions. Course alignment and sequence with other courses in the teacher preparation program and the effect of the course workload on students also need to be considered when designing a course. In all of this, the end goal is student learning.

During this research process, I had the opportunity to interview former students about the literacy courses I designed and taught, including the literacy methods courses and the literacy field experience. Despite the careful thought put into course outcomes, learning activities, homework assignments, and student assessments, one consideration I failed to include was student perspectives. Nearly all the participants I interviewed stated that they would like the literacy methods courses to include more explicit instruction, modeling, and practice opportunities in literacy instructional strategies, especially in

teaching informational text. This information was extremely informative to me. In earlier iterations of the literacy methods courses, I included time during the course for students to practice teaching the instructional strategies. While students practiced, I observed and provided explicit feedback on student performance. Due to time constraints, I eliminated the student practice time from the course design. Without the feedback from the students interviewed for this study, I would not know the importance and the effects of explicit instruction, modeling, and practice during a course.

The results of this study revealed that though students perform well on course assignments and assessments, they may not feel confident and prepared to teach literacy, specifically informational text comprehension. This project is important in understanding preservice teacher perspectives of how literacy courses within the teacher education program prepare them to teach literacy, including informational text comprehension, and influence self-efficacy.

**Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research**

**Potential Implications for Positive Social Change**

This study focused on identifying preservice teacher perceived self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension through literature circles. Although teaching informational text comprehension was the focus of study, the greater takeaway is that a preservice teacher's perceived self-efficacy is a powerful indicator of success as a teacher (see Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Self-efficacy influences all aspects of teaching including motivation, commitment, classroom performance, and student outcomes (Ashton, 1984; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

Study participants indicated that greater explicit teaching of instructional strategies, modeling, and opportunities to practice the instructional strategies would influence self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension. One could posit that the same method of explicit instruction, modeling, and practice of any topic, concept, or instructional strategy would influence positive self-efficacy in preservice teachers. Simply increasing preservice teachers' self-efficacy to teach has the potential for an sizable impact for positive social change. A teacher with high self-efficacy to teach will be more motivated to perform well in all aspects of teaching, which will positively affect student academic achievement (Malmir & Mohammadi, 2018). This study and project may lead to changes within the teacher education program at the local university that could potentially serve to create greater self-efficacy in the preservice teachers enrolled.

**Application of Research and Study Project**

The study project is a curriculum plan to increase instruction of informational text comprehension strategies within the literacy methods course at the local university. An increased and explicit focus on training preservice teachers to teach informational text comprehension may serve to increase preservice teacher perceived self-efficacy to teach informational text. Preservice teachers at the local university may be better prepared to meet the requirements of the literacy field experience when tasked with teaching informational text comprehension through literature circles. The research and study project can be directly applied or adapted to most any teacher education course where increased attention and focus on teaching informational text comprehension is being requested. The method of providing explicit instruction, modeling, and practice to

increase preservice teacher self-efficacy has application in most any teacher education course.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

While the focus of this study was on preservice teachers perceived self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension, further research in other areas of preservice self-efficacy is needed. Further research is also needed in preservice teachers' ability to maintain high self-efficacy when applying teaching skills during field experiences. Preservice teacher self-efficacy is a contributing factor to teacher effectiveness, engagement, and job satisfaction (Granziera & Perera, 2019; Tschannen-Moran, & Johnson, 2011). Frazier et al. (2019) found that self-efficacy to teach is a contributing factor in the current teacher shortage. Findings from this study align with previous research which states that though preservice teachers expressed high levels of self-efficacy to teach, confidence faded when placed in actual teaching situations. Research to increase preservice self-efficacy beyond the university classroom may contribute to teacher retention.

<div align="center">

**Conclusion**

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The increased focus on informational text comprehension brought about by the CCSS caused a shift in reading comprehension instruction for in-service teachers and within teacher preparation programs (Goering & Young, 2018; NGA Center and CCSSO, 2010). Though the local university adjusted literacy methods courses to include a stronger focus on instructional strategies for teaching informational text comprehension, preservice teachers in the literacy field experience expressed uncertainty in teaching

informational text comprehension through literature circles and may not have the self-efficacy to do so. This led to the need to understand preservice teacher self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension through literature circles to make potential changes to literacy methods courses in the teacher education program at the local university.

Study findings indicate that preservice teachers have generally high levels of perceived self-efficacy yet lack understanding of how to teach informational text comprehension. Study participants revealed a need for more explicit instruction on how to teach informational text and literature circles. Participants expressed higher self-efficacy to implement specific instructional strategies after seeing the strategies modeled. Participants expressed greater confidence in teaching after having opportunities to practice the instructional strategy within a literacy methods course. Changes in teacher preparation literacy methods courses, including explicit instruction, modeling, and practice of literacy instructional strategies, may increase preservice teacher self-efficacy to teach informational text comprehension through literature circles.

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Appendix A: The Project

9-Week Unit on Informational Text Comprehension Instruction

Within a Literacy Methods Course

## **Unit Outcomes**

Preservice teachers will:

1.  Demonstrate knowledge of the key components of literacy and the specific literacy skills required for reading and comprehending informational text. (Idaho Literacy Standards: 4d, 5a, 7b)

2.  Apply knowledge of research-based instructional strategies to design explicit instruction to increase student ability to apply reading processes and strategies which facilitate comprehension of informational text. (Idaho Literacy Standards: 4d, 5a, 5b,

3.  Plan authentic learning experiences that promote independent and critical reading skills and facilitate active participation and collaboration to enhance comprehension of informational texts.  (Idaho Literacy Standards: 5a, 5b, 5c, 7b)

4.  Demonstrate knowledge of the characteristics of informational text and text structures and recognizes the importance of using a variety of texts and formats to enhance student comprehension and match text complexity and structure to reader and task. (Idaho Literacy Standards: 4d, 7b)

5.  Design authentic literacy assessments that demonstrate an understanding of how learners develop and that actively engages students in analyzing their own data, assessing their progress, and setting personal literacy goals. (Idaho Literacy Standards: 6h, 6i)

## **Unit Textbooks:**

Brownlie, F. (2019). *Grand conversations, thoughtful responses: a unique approach to literature circles*. Portage & Main Press.

Harvey, S., & Goudvis, A. (2017). *Strategies that work: teaching comprehension for understanding, engagement, and building knowledge, K-8*. Stenhouse Publishers, Pembroke Publishers.

9-Week Unit Instructional Calendar for Informational Text Comprehension Instruction

| Session | Class Discussion Topic | Prepare for Class | Assignments Due |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Week 1: Reading Comprehension: The Foundation of Meaning** *Strengthening Reading Comprehension by Responding to Text through Writing and Discussion* | | | |
| A | Reading Comprehension: Reading is Thinking<br><br>Introduction to Literature Circles | **Read:** Strategies that Work (STW) pgs. 3-12 Grand Conversations (GC) Chapter 1<br><br>**Do:** Reading Reflection #1 to prepare for group discussion | Reading Reflection #1 |
| B | Reading Comprehension: Reading is Strategic<br><br>Responding to Text Through Literature Circle Discussions | **Read:**<br>STW pgs. 13-24<br>GC    Chapter 2<br>**Do:** Reading Reflection #2 to prepare for group discussion | Reading Reflection #2 |
| C | Reading Comprehension: Comprehension at the Core: building Knowledge Through Thinking-Intensive Reading<br><br>Responding to Text Through Literature Circle Discussions and Writing | **Read:**<br>STW pgs. 25-38<br>GC    Chapter 3<br>**Do:** Reading Reflection #3 to prepare for group discussion | Reading Reflection #3 |
| **Week 2: Reading Comprehension:** *Assessment and Instructional Practices* | | | |
| A | Assessing Comprehension: Teaching with the End in Mind<br><br>Where does reading comprehension assessment fit within literature circles? | **Read:**<br>STW pgs. 66-69<br>GC    Chapter 4<br><br>**Do:** Reading Reflection #4 to prepare for group discussion | Reading Reflection #4 |

| B | Effective Comprehension Instruction:  Teaching, Tone, and Assessment<br><br>Instructional Practices for Teaching Comprehension | **Read:** STW pgs. 57-65<br><br>**Do:** Reading Reflection #5 to prepare for group discussion | Reading Reflection #5 |
|---|---|---|---|
| C | Instructional Practices for Teaching Comprehension<br><br>Practical Application: Teaching comprehension instructional practices | **Read:** STW pgs. 73-85<br><br>**Do:** Prepare to teach a lesson on a comprehension instructional practice from STW pgs. 76-79. | Lesson Plan #1<br><br>Develop a lesson plan on one comprehension instructional practice from STW pgs. 76-79 |
| | **Week 3:  Introduction to Informational Text and Content Area Literacy**<br>*Moving Beyond Character, Setting, and Plot* | | |
| A | What is informational text and content area literacy? | **Read:** STW pgs. 235-240<br><br>**Do:** Reading Reflection #6 to prepare for group discussion | Reading Reflection #6 |
| B | Informational Text Features<br><br>Instructional strategies for teaching text features in the classroom. | **Read:**  Text Features pgs. 1-6<br><br>**Do:** Text Feature Needs Assessment | Text Feature Needs Assessment Text Features pg. 15<br><br>Use the Text Feature Needs Assessment worksheet in Appendix B (page 15) to analyze this article: Great White Sharks |
| C | Informational Text Structures<br><br>Instructional strategies for teaching text structures in the classroom. | **View:**  Informational Text Structures<br><br>**Read:** Text Structure Examples | |

| | Week 4:  Informational Text Comprehension Strategies *Monitoring Comprehension - The Inner Conversation* | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| A | **Strategy Introduction and Modeling**<br><br>Why and how do we teach students to monitor their comprehension?<br><br>What does this look like in the classroom?<br><br>How do students apply this strategy to informational text and within literature circles? | **Read:**<br>STW pgs. 87- 104<br>GC   Chapter 5<br><br>**Do:** Reading Reflection #7 to prepare for group discussion | Reading Reflection #7 |
| B | **Strategy Modeling and Guided Practice** | **Do:** Review strategy instructional methods to practice in class.<br><br>Begin working on Lesson Plan #2 | |
| C | **Strategy Application**<br><br>Teach a strategy lesson | **Do:** Prepare to teach a lesson on monitoring comprehension from STW Chapter 7 | Lesson Plan #2 STW Chapter 7: Monitoring Comprehension |
| | Week 5:  Informational Text Comprehension Strategies *Activating, Connecting, and Building - Why Background Knowledge Matters* | | |
| A | **Strategy Introduction and Modeling**<br><br>Why and how do we teach students to activate background knowledge and build connections?<br><br>What does this look like in the classroom?<br><br>How do students apply this strategy to informational text and within literature circles? | **Read:**<br>STW pgs. 105-124<br>GC   Chapter 6<br><br>**Do:** Reading Reflection #8 to prepare for group discussion | Reading Reflection #8 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| B | **Strategy Modeling and Guided Practice** | **Do:** Review strategy instructional methods to practice in class. Begin working on Lesson Plan #3 | |
| C | **Strategy Application** Teach a strategy lesson | **Do:** Prepare to teach a lesson on activating background knowledge and making connections to the text from a strategy in STW chapter 8 | Lesson Plan #3 STW Chapter 8: Activating, Connecting, and Building Background Knowledge |
| | **Week 6:  Informational Text Comprehension Strategies** *Questioning: The Strategy that Propels Readers Forward* | | |
| A | **Strategy Introduction and Modeling** How do we teach students to ask questions that lead to deeper comprehension that propels conversations? What does this look like in the classroom? How do students apply this strategy to informational text and within literature circles? | **Read:** STW pgs. 125-150 GC   Chapter 7 **Do:** Reading Reflection #9 to prepare for group discussion | Reading Reflection #9 |
| B | **Strategy Modeling and Guided Practice** | **Do:** Review strategy instructional methods to practice in class. Begin working on Lesson Plan #4 | |
| C | **Strategy Application** Teach a strategy lesson | **Do:** Prepare to teach a lesson on questioning from a strategy in STW chapter 9 | Lesson Plan #4 STW Chapter 9: Questioning |

| Week 7: Informational Text Comprehension Strategies *Visualizing and Inferring: Making What's Implicit Explicit* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| A | **Strategy Introduction and Modeling** What is visualizing and inferring? How do we teach students to make inferences about text to increase comprehension? How do students apply this strategy to informational text and within literature circles? | **Read:** STW pgs. 151-184 GC   Chapter 8 **Do:** Reading Reflection #10 to prepare for group discussion | Reading Reflection #10 |
| B | **Strategy Modeling and Guided Practice** | **Do:** Review strategy instructional methods to practice in class. Begin working on Lesson Plan #5 | |
| C | **Strategy Application** Teach a strategy mini lesson | Do: Prepare to teach a mini lesson on questioning from a strategy in STW Chapter 10 | Lesson Plan #5 STW Chapter 10: Visualizing and Inferring |
| Week 8: Informational Text Comprehension Strategies *Determining Importance in Text: The Non-Fiction Connection* | | | |
| A | **Strategy Introduction and Modeling** How do we teach students to know what is most important when reading informational text? How do students apply this strategy within literature circles? | **Read:** STW pgs. 184-210 GC    Chapter 9 **Do:** Reading Reflection #11 to prepare for group discussion | Reading Reflection #11 |
| B | **Strategy Modeling and Guided Practice** | **Do:** Review strategy instructional methods to practice in class. Begin working on Lesson Plan #6 | |

| | Strategy Application | **Do:** Prepare to teach a lesson on questioning from a strategy in STW Chapter 11 | Lesson Plan #6 STW Chapter 11: Determining Importance |
|---|---|---|---|
| C | Teach a strategy lesson | | |

| | **Week 9: Informational Text Comprehension Strategies** | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *Summarizing and Synthesizing Information: The Evolution of Thought* | | |
| A | **Strategy Introduction and Modeling**<br><br>How do we teach students to know summarize and synthesize information?<br><br>How do students apply this strategy within a literature circle? | **Read:** STW pgs. 184-210<br><br>**Do:** Reading Reflection #12 to prepare for group discussion | Reading Reflection #12 |
| B | **Strategy Modeling and Guided Practice** | **Do:** Review strategy instructional methods to practice in class.<br><br>Begin working on Lesson Plan #7 | |
| C | **Put it all together:** Summarize and Synthesize: Teaching Informational Text Comprehension through Literature Circles | **Do:** Prepare to discuss your learning and understanding of teaching informational text through literature circles. | Lesson Plan #7 STW Chapter 12: Summarizing and Synthesizing Information |

Unit Alignment Matrix

| Unit Outcomes (UO) Aligned to Idaho Literacy Standards (ILS) for Teacher Certification | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Demonstrate knowledge of the key components of literacy and the specific literacy skills required for reading and comprehending informational text. (ILS: 4d, 5a, 7b) <br> 2. Apply knowledge of research-based instructional strategies to design explicit instruction to increase student ability to apply reading processes and strategies which facilitate comprehension of informational text. (ILS: 4d, 5a, 5b, <br> 3. Plan authentic learning experiences that promote independent and critical reading skills and facilitate active participation and collaboration to enhance comprehension of informational texts.  (ILS: 5a, 5b, 5c, 7b) <br> 4. Demonstrate knowledge of the characteristics of informational text and text structures and recognizes the importance of using a variety of texts and formats to enhance student comprehension and match text complexity and structure to reader and task. (ILS: 4d, 7b) <br> 5. Design authentic literacy assessments that demonstrate an understanding of how learners develop and that actively engages students in analyzing their own data, assessing their progress, and setting personal literacy goals. (ILS: 6h, 6i) | | | | |
| **Instructional Week** | **Week Objectives** [UO Alignment] | **Assessments** [Week Objectives] | **Materials** | **Instructor Notes** |
| **Week 1:** Reading Comprehension: The Foundation of Meaning <br><br> *Strengthening Reading Comprehension by Responding to Text through writing and Discussion* | 1. Explain key components of reading comprehension. (UO 1) <br> 2. Differentiate between active and passive learning in reading comprehension. (UO 1, 2) <br> 3. Explain methods to engage students in responding to text. (UO 1, 2, 3) <br> 4. Design questions and conversation prompts to engage literature circle participants in | Reading Reflections #1, #2, #3 (WO 1, 2, 3, 4) <br><br> Literature Circle Evaluation and Critique (WO 2, 3) <br><br> Conversation Questions and Prompts Design (WO 4) | Strategies that Work (STW) <br><br> Grand Conversations (GC) <br><br> Short Stories: A Tent in Agony <br><br> The Selfish Giant <br><br> Literature Circle Role Cards (GC) | Explicitly model effective teaching practices and comprehension strategies by using the Think a Loud Method (STW p. 76) <br><br> Teach, model, and practice literature circle roles and effective methods of utilizing the literature circle structure <br><br> Show videos of literature circles in action |

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| | conversations about texts. (UO 1, 2, 3, 5) | | | Engage students in participating in literature circles and provide explicit feedback during guided practice<br><br>Use the Conversation Questions and Prompts Design Assignment to Stimulate Conversation within Practice Literature Circles |
| **Week 2:** Reading Comprehension: *Assessment and Instructional Practices* | 1. Identify authentic assessment strategies. (UO 2, 5)<br>2. Identify instructional practices for teaching reading comprehension (UO 1, 2, 3)<br>3. Design and teach a comprehension strategies lesson (UO 1, 2, 3, 5) | Reading Reflections #4, #5 (WO 1, 2)<br><br>Lesson Plan #1 (WO 1, 2, 3)<br><br>Lesson Teaching Evaluation (WO 1, 2) | Strategies that Work<br><br>Grand Conversations<br><br>Lesson Plan Rubric<br><br>Lesson Teaching Peer Feedback Form | Explicitly model effective teaching practices and comprehension strategies<br><br>Teach, model and provide guided practice in assessment design<br><br>Show videos of authentic assessment and reading comprehension strategies |
| **Week 3:** Introduction to | 1. Explain and identify | Reading Reflection #6 | Strategies that Work | Explicitly teach differences |

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| Informational Text and Content Area Literacy *Moving Beyond Character, Setting, and Plot* | components of informational text including text features and text structures. (UO 1, 4) 2. Demonstrate ability to match reader to text. (UO 2, 4) 3. Describe instructional strategies for teaching text features and text structure (UO 2, 4) | (WO 1, 3) <br><br> Text Feature Needs Assessment (WO 1) <br><br> Case Study Analysis: Matching Reader to Text (WO 2) | Websites: <br><br> Text Features <br><br> Informational Text Structures <br><br> Text Structure Examples <br><br> Text Feature Needs Assessment Text Features pg. 15 <br><br> Needs Assessment worksheet in Appendix B (page 15) to analyze this article: Great White Sharks | between text features and text structures. <br><br> Model effective instructional practices for teaching text features and text structures. <br><br> Reader case study to match reader to text |
| **Week 4:** Informational Text Comprehension Strategies: <br><br> *Monitoring Comprehension - The Inner Conversation* | 1. Describe the reading comprehension strategy of monitoring comprehension. (UO 1, 2) 2. Apply monitoring comprehension strategy to informational text. (1, 2, 3, 5) 3. Design and teach a strategies lesson | Reading Reflection #7 (WO 1) <br><br> Lesson Plan #2 (WO 1, 2, 3) <br><br> Lesson Teaching Evaluation (WO 1) <br><br> Literature Circle Participation | Strategies that Work <br><br> Grand Conversations <br><br> Lesson Plan Rubric <br><br> Lesson Teaching Peer Feedback Form <br><br> Literature Circle Participation | Explicitly model effective teaching practices and comprehension strategies <br><br> Teach, model and provide guided practice in apply strategy in a literature circle format |

| | using informational text (UO 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) <br> 4. Apply informational text comprehension strategy within a literature circle. (UO 1, 2, 3) | Evaluation (WO 1, 4) | Evaluation Form | Show videos of monitoring comprehension strategy |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Week 5:** <br> Informational Text Comprehension Strategies: <br><br> *Activating, Connecting, and Building - Why Background Knowledge Matters* | 1. Describe the reading comprehension strategy of activating, connecting, and building background knowledge. (UO 1, 2) <br> 2. Apply background knowledge comprehension strategy to informational text. (1, 2, 3, 5) <br> 3. Design and teach a strategies lesson using informational text (UO 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) <br> 4. Apply informational text comprehension strategy within a literature circle. (UO 1, 2, 3) | Reading Reflection #8 (WO 1) <br><br> Lesson Plan #3 (WO 1, 2, 3) <br><br> Lesson Teaching Evaluation (WO 1) <br><br> Literature Circle Participation Evaluation (WO 1, 4) | Strategies that Work <br><br> Grand Conversations <br><br> Lesson Plan Rubric <br><br> Lesson Teaching Peer Feedback Form <br><br> Literature Circle Participation Evaluation Form | Explicitly model effective teaching practices and comprehension strategies <br><br> Teach, model and provide guided practice in apply strategy in a literature circle format <br> Show videos of applying background information to enhance comprehension |

| **Week 6:** Informational Text Comprehension Strategies: <br><br> *Questioning: The Strategy that Propels Readers Forward* | 1. Describe the reading comprehension strategy of questioning. (UO 1, 2) <br> 2. Apply questioning comprehension strategy to informational text. (1, 2, 3, 5) <br> 3. Design and teach a strategies lesson using informational text (UO 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) <br> 4. Apply questioning strategy within a literature circle. (UO 1, 2, 3) | Reading Reflection #9 (WO 1) <br><br> Lesson Plan #4 (WO 1, 2, 3) <br><br> Lesson Teaching Evaluation (WO 1) <br><br> Literature Circle Participation Evaluation (WO 1, 4) | Strategies that Work <br><br> Grand Conversations <br><br> Lesson Plan Rubric <br><br> Lesson Teaching Peer Feedback Form <br><br> Literature Circle Participation Evaluation Form | Explicitly model effective teaching practices and comprehension strategies <br><br> Teach, model and provide guided practice in apply strategy in a literature circle format <br><br> Show videos of applying the questioning strategies to enhance comprehension |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Week 7:** Informational Text Comprehension Strategies: <br><br> *Visualizing and Inferring: Making What's Implicit Explicit* | 1. Describe the reading comprehension strategy of visualizing and inferring (UO 1, 2) <br> 2. Apply visualizing and inferring comprehension strategies to informational text. (1, 2, 3, 5) <br> 3. Design and teach a strategies lesson using | Reading Reflection #10 (WO 1) <br><br> Lesson Plan #5 (WO 1, 2, 3) <br><br> Lesson Teaching Evaluation (WO 1) <br><br> Literature Circle Participation Evaluation (WO 1, 4) | Strategies that Work <br><br> Grand Conversations <br><br> Lesson Plan Rubric <br><br> Lesson Teaching Peer Feedback Form <br><br> Literature Circle Participation Evaluation Form | Explicitly model effective teaching practices and comprehension strategies <br><br> Teach, model and provide guided practice in apply strategy in a literature circle format <br><br> Show videos of applying the visualizing and |

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| | informational text (UO 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)<br>4. Apply visualizing and inferring strategies within a literature circle. (UO 1, 2, 3) | | | inferring strategies to enhance comprehension |
| **Week 8:** Informational Text Comprehension Strategies:<br><br>*Determining Importance in Text: The Non-Fiction Connection* | 1. Describe the reading comprehension strategy of visualizing and inferring (UO 1, 2)<br>2. Apply the determining importance comprehension strategy to informational text. (1, 2, 3, 5)<br>3. Design and teach a strategies lesson using informational text (UO 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)<br>4. Apply the determining importance strategy within a literature circle. (UO 1, 2, 3) | Reading Reflection #10 (WO 1)<br><br>Lesson Plan #5 (WO 1, 2, 3)<br><br>Lesson Teaching Evaluation (WO 1)<br><br>Literature Circle Participation Evaluation (WO 1, 4) | Strategies that Work<br><br>Grand Conversations<br><br>Lesson Plan Rubric<br><br>Lesson Teaching Peer Feedback Form<br><br>Literature Circle Participation Evaluation Form | Explicitly model effective teaching practices and comprehension strategies<br><br>Teach, model and provide guided practice in apply strategy in a literature circle format<br><br>Show videos of applying the determining importance strategies to enhance comprehension |
| **Week 9:** Informational Text Comprehension Strategies: | 1. Describe the reading comprehension strategies of summarizing and | Reading Reflection #10 (WO 1)<br><br>Lesson Plan #5 (WO 1, 2, 3) | Strategies that Work<br><br>Grand Conversations | Explicitly model effective teaching practices and comprehension strategies |

| | | | Lesson Plan Rubric | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Summarizing and Synthesizing Information: The Evolution of Thought* | synthesizing (UO 1, 2) 2. Apply the summarizing and synthesizing comprehension strategies to informational text. (1, 2, 3, 5) 3. Design and teach a strategies lesson using informational text (UO 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) 4. Apply the determining importance strategy within a literature circle. (UO 1, 2, 3) | Lesson Teaching Evaluation (WO 1)  Literature Circle Participation Evaluation (WO 1, 4) | Lesson Teaching Peer Feedback Form  Literature Circle Participation Evaluation Form | Teach, model and provide guided practice in apply strategy in a literature circle format  Show videos of applying the summarizing and synthesizing strategies to enhance comprehension |

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Interviewee:

Interviewer:    Amy J. Clark
Date of Interview:
Time of Interview:
Interview Zoom Meeting ID:
Description of Study:

You have been asked to participate in a research study to develop understanding of preservice teachers' self-efficacy in teaching informational text through literature circles, and resources or support needed to teach informational text.

You were selected to participate in this study because of your recent experience teaching informational text during the literacy field experience course (ED346E) and will be asked questions relating to your teaching experiences during the course.  Questions will also be asked about instruction received during the literacy methods courses on teaching informational text and literature circles.  Results of this study may serve to make changes to literacy methods courses in teacher preparation programs.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time.  Your participation will not affect your course grades or your standing in the Teacher Education Program, as stated in the Consent Form.  There is no compensation for participating in this study.  However, you will receive a $10 e-gift card from Amazon as an expression of gratitude for your participation.

As the Consent Form stated and per our agreement, this Zoom interview will be recorded.  Once the interview is transcribed all identifying information will be deleted from the transcript and the Zoom recording will be deleted from my laptop to keep your comments and identity anonymous.  You will receive an emailed copy of the transcript to review to ensure the transcript accurately captures your thoughts and provide any additional or follow-up feedback.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview Questions:

1.  When did you complete the ED344, the literacy practicum?

2.  What grade(s) did you teach during the literacy practicum?

3. What setting did you teach in: remote or face to face?

4. Describe the reading group(s) you taught.

   a. How many students were in the literature circle/reading group?

   b. How long were literature circles/reading groups each day?

   c. How many weeks did you teach the literature circle/reading group?

   d. What texts were you assigned to teach?

   e. How much time were you given to teach the text?

   f. What type of reading group instruction did you receive from the mentor teacher?

   g. Where materials, resources or instructions from the reading curriculum provided to support informational text instruction? If yes, please describe.

   h. What other materials were you given to assist in teaching reading groups?

   i. Were learning objectives provided by the mentor or within the text?

   j. Describe methods used to teach informational text.

   k. How much liberty were you given to design literature circle lessons?

   l. How much liberty were you given in how the literature circle was structured?

   m. What other challenges did you face when teaching informational texts?

   n. What challenges did you face when teaching informational text with the literature circle format?

5. What instruction have you received from teacher education courses on teaching informational text?

6. What instruction have you received from teacher education courses on reading group instruction, literature circles, book clubs?

7. What instruction have you received from teacher education courses on teaching informational text within a reading group? Using the literature circle or book club format?

8. Self-efficacy is your perceived ability to accomplish a task or influence results. How confident do you feel in your ability to teach informational text through literature circles?

9. What factors do you feel influence your self-efficacy/teaching confidence? Why?

10. What do you feel is needed to improve your self-efficacy rating?  Why?

11. What materials, resources, classes, support, etc. do you feel would increase your self-efficacy to teach informational text using the literature circle format?


Thank you for participating in this study.  The transcript of this interview will be emailed

to you within the next two days along with the e-gift card from Amazon.

Thank you for your time.

Appendix C: Letter of Interest for University IRB Approval


Amy J. Clark
[Physical address redacted]
[Email address redacted]

October 12, 2020

Brigham Young University Idaho
Institutional Review Board
525 S. Center St.
Rexburg, ID  83460


Dear BYUI IRB Committee,

This letter is in request for approval to involve Brigham Young University Idaho students in doctoral research.  I am studying preservice teacher self-efficacy to teach informational text through literature circles.  Preservice teachers are asked to teach informational text comprehension to children in local elementary schools.  BYUI students have expressed anxiety and a lack of confidence in how to teach informational text even though they receive explicit instruction in this area of teaching.  The research questions that will be address are:

> RQ1:  How do preservice teachers perceive their self-efficacy when tasked with informational text instruction through literature circles?

> RQ2:  What resources or support do preservice teacher perceive they need when tasked with informational text instruction through literature circles, course work and school curriculum?

BYUI students in the Teacher Education programs are the desired participants for this study.  Study participants will be selected from students who have successfully passed and received final grades for ED344: Comprehensive Literacy I, ED345: Comprehensive Literacy II, and ED346E: Literacy Practicum; all of which are courses I currently teach. Participants will only be students who I no longer teach and who I no longer have influence over, specifically concerning grades or standing within the program.

Personal, semi-structured interviews will take place through Zoom meetings to ensure social distancing protocols are met.  Confidentiality will be maintained by securing meeting recordings with password protection, pseudo names, and secure files on my password protected computer.

Outcomes of this study will influence how informational text instruction is taught to preservice teachers within the Teacher Education program at BYUI. Please review the online IRB approval request form previously submitted for full details regarding this study. I thank you for your time and consideration of this study approval.

Sincerely,
Amy J. Clark
BYUI Faculty
Department of Teacher Education

Appendix D: Letter of Invitation to Participate in the Study

Dear Teacher Candidate,

Congratulations on your recent completion of ED346E: Literacy Practicum.  Your hard work and efforts to successfully complete the literacy practicum are appreciated and applauded.

A study is being conducted over the next couple months to investigate preservice teacher self-efficacy in teaching informational text through literature circles.  If you had the opportunity to teach informational text, you are invited to participate in this study. Should you choose to participate, you will be involved in a 30 to 45 minute, personal, semi-structured, audio-recorded interview through a Zoom meeting with Amy Clark to talk about your experiences teaching informational text during the literacy practicum. The information you provide will enable university faculty to enhance teaching to better prepare preservice teachers in informational text instruction through literature circles.

Please respond to this email by answering the following questions if you are interested in participating in the study.

What semester did you take the literacy practicum (ED346E)?
What grade level(s) of students did you teach informational text to?
What setting did you teach informational text in: remote or at an elementary school?


Thank you,
Amy Clark
Doctoral Student, Walden University

Appendix E: Identified Codes

| Strategies Used to Teach Informational Text | Challenges Teaching Informational Text | Experience and Understanding of Literature circles | Supports to Increase Self-Efficacy |
|---|---|---|---|
| Used informational text to connect to concepts/setting in fiction text and make connections to children's interests | Including more reading into lessons | Book clubs are helpful to allow students to discuss what they've read | More instruction on informational texts and literature circles |
| Used instructions from the teachers manual to teach questioning, pausing within the text, predicting maps, worksheets with comprehension questions, retelling main ideas | Engaging students in reading informational text | Practiced literature circle in class | An additional class on teaching informational texts |
|  | Ensuring understanding of the info text | Did not learn about lit circles | Practice with literatures circles in methods classes with teacher modeling |
|  | Knowing questions to ask to generate thinking | Not much instruction on literature circles |  |
|  | Assessing learning during informational text instruction | No explicit instruction on literature circles | More exposure to teaching situations |
| Used background knowledge to connect to informational text | Connecting reading to real life | Help children learn to love to read, sharing different perspectives within the group | More strategies and help designing info text instruction |
|  | Knowing how to teach info text |  | More resources for teaching informational text |
| Let children interact with the book rather than lecturing | Generating activities associated with info text to engage students | Received resource with specific literature circle roles or jobs | Engagement strategies for teaching informational text |
| Used  KWL chart | Purpose to the questions being asked | Power of student choice of text |  |
| Compare/contrast strategy | Digging deeper into meaning of informational text | Effectiveness of using jobs to engage students | Need a good example of someone teaching a literature circle |
| Discussion during reading |  |  |  |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Used repeated reading for fluency of informational text | Choosing the right text to engage the child | Learned different literacy circle structures | More exposure to informational texts |
| Created projects about the info text topics being read | Using strategies to help the child understand the text | | Help dissecting and understanding informational text |
| Taught text features | | | |
| Children summarized each page after it was read | | | |
| Found appropriate texts - not too challenging, based on children's interests | | | |
| Drawing info learned | | | |
| Taking notes while reading | | | |
| Focused on vocabulary words within the informational text | | | |