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# Qualitative Case Study of Read-Aloud Expository Text Strategies in Kindergarten Through Grade 2

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2015

Abstract

Qualitative Case Study of Read-Aloud Expository Text Strategies, Grades K-2

by

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MEdS Armstrong Atlantic State University, 2000

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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## Abstract

In an inner-city elementary school, students continue to lag in reading proficiency, and implementation of research-based, district-mandated teaching strategies is not well understood. The purpose of this case study was to explore teachers' perceptions of mandated, read-aloud expository text strategies in K-2 classrooms. The conceptual framework was Vygotsky's social constructivism model of learning, which envisions students learning by interacting with teachers and peers, in this case, using read-aloud strategies, until they become autonomous, expository readers. The research questions focused on benefits and challenges of the implementation of read-aloud expository text by K-2 teachers who were given a 5-year mandate by the school to use strategies of scaffolding, graphic organizers, think-alouds, and text talk. Data were gathered from 5 teachers who volunteered to participate and were trained in the strategies. Data collection included individual interviews, collaborating interviews, reflective journals, and field notes. Open coding and thematic analysis identified 6 themes of teacher perceptions, including benefits, situational strategies, explanations for use, challenges, support, and implementation. Throughout the data collection process, teachers suggested the use of Text Talk Kit materials. These kits, in use by other districts, may be beneficial to all teachers and may lead to social change by allowing teachers to access materials to better instruct all struggling readers, a benefit across all curricular areas and for all students.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my deceased parents, Mr. Joseph Ayoola Olatunde and Mrs. Modupe Victoria Olatunde. Both of you did all you could to prepare me for this great level of my career. Even though you did not wait to see this great dream come to pass, you laid the foundation. Thank you!

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## Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Reading is the most critical skill required for students to become successful in both college and the workplace (Hill, 2011). Despite efforts to improve students' reading proficiency to meet grade-level standards by using interactive expository text read-aloud strategies, the gap in reading achievement continues to separate students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds from other, more privileged students (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010; Hill, 2011). Teachers and students need research-based teaching pedagogy that will enhance the reading-on-grade-level (ROGL) proficiency among students in kindergarten to Grade 2 (K-2) and prepare them for success very early in their academic careers. Researchers have documented across the nation that interactive read-aloud expository text strategies do enhance students' reading proficiency (Hodges, 2011; Press, Henenbers, & Getman, 2011; Wiseman, 2011). Expository text also provides authentic literacy experiences for young children and motivates children to discover the world around them (Calo, 2011; Yopp & Yopp, 2012). However, children's exposure to expository texts in schools has been described as inadequate (Yopp & Yopp, 2012). Students in Grades 1, 2, and 3 have limited exposure to informational texts, and some students in K-2 are struggling with ROGL. Some researchers have posited that students' inadequate exposure to informational texts during literacy instruction can lead to lack of proficiency on standardized reading tests (Ness, 2011).

Interactive read-alouds are appropriate for various kinds of reading. The effects of reading aloud to students can be aesthetic, instructional, or both. Depending on the

teaching purpose and students' needs, teachers read aloud to their students in different ways. An interactive read-aloud style is evident when the teacher reads aloud and discusses the text with students while reading. The teacher shares authority in the discussion with students, allowing them to ask questions and lead discussion points just as the teacher does. In a performance read-aloud style, the teacher leads the text discussion before and after reading while focusing only on actually reading the text during the read-aloud. The third style of read-aloud involves only reading. The focus within this case study was on interactive read-aloud of expository text. The intent of the study was to explore interactive read-aloud and exploratory-text strategies from the perspectives of K-2 teachers. Section 2 contains detailed discussions of read-aloud and expository-text strategies.

### **Problem Statement**

A problem existed at Smart Elementary School (a pseudonym used to preserve anonymity) located in the southeastern United States. That problem, specifically, was that many second-grade students at Smart Elementary School (Smart ES) were reading below grade-level proficiency, as measured by students' Lexile scores. In 2009 and 2010, Smart ES had school proficiency averages of 54% and 53%, as indicated by the state's end-of-the-year Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) report. In addition, to prepare students for college readiness and future careers, the Council of Chief State School Officers of the National Governors Association mandated the teaching of expository texts in American Schools including the study site through the implementation of a Common Core curriculum of academic standards in language arts, reading, and mathematics

(National Governors Association, 2013; Rose, 2012; Rose, Schimke, & Education Commission of the States, 2012).

The goal of the American education system is to prepare students for college by the end of high school, as well as train them to be part of a future workforce that is highly literate and knowledgeable. The objective of this mission is achievable only when students can read proficiently and on grade level starting at an early age. Therefore, students who read below proficiency level and are not on grade level fall behind their peers and are vulnerable and in danger of dropping out of school after they reach high school age (National Governors Association, 2013). The challenge of meeting the standard set for reading proficiency caused 14 states and the District of Columbia to retain students in kindergarten through third grade based on their lack of reading proficiency (Rose, 2012; Rose et al., 2012). Governors and other state policy makers developed a comprehensive literacy curriculum that educators integrated into all content areas for kindergarten through Grade 3 to promote communication and language skills, and to facilitate the teaching of the mechanics of reading.

To ensure that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds with reading deficiencies received equitable opportunities, leaders at the Georgia State Department of Education collaborated with other agencies and teams in the department to ensure that all students could achieve ROGL by 2012 (National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP], as cited in Georgia Family Connection Partnership, 2010). State leaders and local stakeholders in the state in which the school site under study is located are collaborating in a 10-year initiative to close the literacy gap. Personnel in the Department of Human



Services are leading the action plan to improve students' reading on grade level by the end of Grade 3. One of the four strategic goals of the site district's accountability system is to improve students' academic achievement by increasing the percentage of students reading on grade level (ROGL) by the end of grade 2. Hence reading proficiency became the district strategic goal 1 to improve students' academic achievement.

In order to address this ROGL deficiency, Smart ES was part of a district- and statewide read-aloud initiative program sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2010). At the end of the SY 2011, the Scholastic Reading Inventory assessment was first administered district-wide to 2,846 second grade students (Board Accountability Committee Document, 2015). By May of 2011, baseline data for ROGL was set for the Smart ES District 2nd grade students using the Scholastic Reading Inventory (Board Accountability Committee Document, 2013). Smart ES schoolwide growth plans for the school years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 included scaffolding and interactive read-aloud expository-text strategies such as think-alouds, text talk, and graphic organizers. Students are tested each School Year (SY). For example, in the SY 2011, 57% of grade 2 students met the target objectives. By the SY 2012, 69% of Grade 2 students met the target objective while 69% met the target objective in the SY 2013. Smart ES District Board of Education assigned literacy coaches to the low-performing or struggling schools for the school year 2012-2013. After a full year of focus on reading skills in the district, gaps were still present in students' ROGL proficiency achievement (Few, 2012). For the SY 2014, the target set for Smart ES District reading objective was that by the end of the academic SY 2014, 90% of students in grade 2 would be reading on grade level.

However, as of the second benchmarking window in SY 2014-15, 48% of 2nd grade students in the district met the reading target score while 39% of 2<sup>nd</sup> graders at Smart ES met ROGL reading proficiency (Savannah-County Public School System, 2014). By the end of SY 2015-2016, Smart ES was identified as one of the 15 Impact Schools in the school district (Board Accountability Committee Document, 2015). Currently, Smart ES is listed as one of 15 struggling schools with second-grade reading proficiency below the district average. More than half of the second graders at Smart ES were reading below grade level. The ROGL deficiency continued to be a problem at Smart ES and in its school district.

At the school site, the problem affects primarily African Americans, economically disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities. Many factors could be contributing to this problem, including a lack of early interactions that foster early linguistic development among children from low-income households (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010). These children tend to have early health problems that impede or interfere with learning and to lack developmental, social, and emotional skills needed to function in a structured environment such as school. Teachers at low-performing schools are often not able to teach to high standards or impart basic skills with their shallow curriculum and inadequate teacher preparation and professional development (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010; Georgia Family Connection Partnership, 2010). In addition, Wolsey, Lapp, and Dow (2010) noted that reading proficiency could be individual and situational. Currently, according to the School District Board Accountability Committee

(BAC) Chevron Report Impact Schools (2015), Smart ES is one of 15 schools identified for additional support and intervention in order to improve academic achievement.

Considering the differences in students' skills and literacy capability with texts and tasks, Wolsey et al. (2010) contended that students could independently read some texts that are read in school, whereas others might be too challenging. Teaching informational content via text requires special instructional strategies due to the reading task involved. In addition, few researchers have explored how teachers conduct interactive read-alouds in classrooms and the potential benefit in terms of increasing students' reading level and reading comprehension (Delacruz, 2013).

Researchers such as Dreher and Zelinke (2010) and Sanacore and Palumbo (2009) noted a lack of skill in reading and comprehending informational or expository texts, which is a curriculum constraint that makes it difficult to expose students to various types of text. Furthermore, a lack of training in ways to use informational or expository texts for read-aloud purposes limits students' exposure to them. Researchers have undertaken few case studies of district-wide reading reforms focusing on a thorough system of evaluation, thoughtful reform efforts, and demonstrated success that would help to identify successful data-driven patterns (Musen, 2010). As a final point, training teachers across content areas has been a challenge within the American educational system (Adams, 2010). Many educators lack expertise concerning how to deliver the more advanced and harder-to-master reading strategies effectively; frequently, they also lack adequate time to meet important expectations for students' learning (Duke & Block, 2012). Due to a gap in reading proficiency among their K-2 students, the teachers at

Smart ES explored how to use interactive read-aloud and expository texts in their classrooms. The results derived from the case study may benefit not only the teachers and students at this particular school site, but also a much wider school community.

### **Nature of the Study**

Scholars have begun to outline the significance of expository text and strategic reading in relation to the current trends in education and current emphasis on assessment (Delacruz, 2013; Pilonieta, 2011). The focus of the study was on a contemporary phenomenon: interactive expository text read-aloud strategies. I conducted this qualitative case study to explore the beliefs of five K-2 teachers regarding the benefits and challenges of using interactive read-aloud expository texts in the classroom. In order to gather descriptive information, I used a qualitative case study design (Creswell, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Yin, 2014), which was appropriate for the study because the study involved collecting information about individuals and a group.

Rather than examining variances, as in a quantitative study, in this case study I explored the *how* and *why* research questions that can lead to explanations regarding human experiences. In an attempt to obtain thick, rich information, I used multiple data collection sources, including a self-assessment demographic questionnaire, individual and collaborative group interviews, reflective journals collected from teachers, and field notes (Smeyers, 2008; Woodside, 2010). A colleague, an educator with a doctorate reviewed the interview questions for clarity.

The participant teachers conducted a prior self-assessment of their beliefs according to a protocol used by Pentimonti and Justice (2008) in their research. I used

various sources as evidence in this case study to converge the sources of the data (Yin, 2014), beginning with interviewing the participating teachers both individually and as a group. I collected two reflective journals from each teacher. I took field notes as I conducted semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions at the convenience of the participants. For this study, I modified some of the methodological processes described in the literature review. For example, after collecting the data, I used triangulation in the data analysis process to corroborate the findings from the perspective of multiple sources (Yin, 2014). When a researcher uses convergent evidence, data triangulation is necessary to strengthen the construct validity of the case (Yin, 2014). The several sources served as evidence to support the accuracy of the participants' perspectives. Section 3 contains detailed information on the research methods.

The conceptual framework supporting the study included the contributions of social constructivist theorist Vygotsky (1978). The study may have a positive impact on social change by contributing to the literature on how to modify and implement effective interactive read-alouds that can increase students' reading proficiency. These findings have implications for the ways in which K-2 teachers at Smart Elementary School can develop and deliver interactive read-aloud expository text to enhance student learning. The findings also may encourage future researchers to identify other effective approaches to interactive read-aloud instruction. Analyzing early reading proficiency data will guide the efforts of the school district leaders to discover and address weaknesses in specific reading skills at a later time (Musen, 2010; Pentimonti & Justice, 2008). In this way,

teachers will be better able to identify the interventions necessary to help their struggling students read proficiently.

### **Research Questions**

The study was guided by two research questions that are following:

*Research Question 1 (RQ 1):* What are the perceptions of the teachers of K-2 students at Smart Elementary School regarding the read-aloud expository-text strategies used in their classrooms?

*Research Question 2 (RQ 2):* What do the teachers of K-2 students at Smart Elementary School perceive to be the challenges of implementing read-aloud expository text strategies in their classrooms?

The purpose of the first question was to understand the participants' beliefs about the benefits of read-aloud expository text. I conducted interviews to obtain the participants' responses to the question. During the interviews, I asked general and prompting questions to gain a better understanding of the participants' beliefs about the use of read-aloud expository text to enhance students' reading comprehension skills.

The purpose of the second question was to understand the challenges and various impediments faced by the teachers regarding the use of expository text during interactive read-alouds. I used a qualitative interview format to answer this question because it was easier for the teachers to talk about the challenges encountered in their classrooms. The open-ended interview questions required extensive responses, along with prompts from me, to clarify the answers (Gillham, 2000; Neuman & Roskos, 2012). Section 3 contains a more detailed discussion of the research methods.

I used the results to build upon strengths and seek effective pedagogical approaches to teaching that were evidence based. The results revealed that there was inconsistency across schoolwide read-aloud expository text instructional strategies. The rationale for conducting the study was to provide teachers with adequate resources that would help in increasing the teachers' knowledge and enabling them to better prepare students for acquiring skills of reading proficiency. Such an outcome would invariably impact the academic performance of students at Smart ES.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Research has supported read-aloud practices with curriculum structure and produced studies on teaching expository-text structures to children (Gillam, Fargo, & Robertson, 2009; Pentimonti, Zucker, Justice, & Kaderavek, 2010; Read, Reutzel, & Fawson, 2008). The purpose of the study was to identify the perceptions of K-2 teachers regarding the challenges and benefits of using read-aloud expository or informational text to improve students' reading proficiency. Specifically, this included teachers' planning and rationale for their actions of engaging students in interactive read-aloud strategies such as scaffolding, graphic organizers, think-aloud, and text talk.

The focus of the study was exploring teachers' perceptions of their interactive read-aloud expository text experiences and how teachers planned and prepared for instruction, particularly as they aligned with the Smart ES schoolwide plan and the district's academic accountability. I conducted interviews with five K-2 teachers to explore their rationale and descriptions of the interactive read-aloud expository text

strategies that they used. The interviews focused on the three selected schoolwide read-aloud instructional strategies: think-aloud, text talk, and graphic organizers.

The ultimate purpose of this study was to encourage teachers to share their insights with one another in a continuing collaborative community geared toward supporting students with expository read-aloud strategies. Through collaboration and reflection on their use of interactive expository-text read-alouds, teachers can further consider ways in which they can advance their students' comprehension or literacy skills. By building a collaborative community within their own school, the participating teachers might open a dialogue that could inform future pedagogy.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The basis of the conceptual framework undergirding this qualitative case study was the educational theory of social constructivism. Vygotsky's (1978) theory supported the intent of the study, which addressed the ways in which teachers teach and students learn. The rationale for this study developed from the idea of exploring teachers' instructional strategies and students' interactive learning. In this section, I explain how research was applied in the classroom.

#### **Vygotsky and Dialogue**

The main proponent of social constructivism was the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978). A crucial component of social constructivism is taking into account social interaction, including teacher-pupil, peer-peer, and simple human-to-human interaction where there is any exchange of meaning. In reference to intellectual development, the most valued catalyst is language. Social constructivists believe that



people's ability to articulate their own ideas comes from engaging in dialogue with more knowledgeable others, including peers, teachers, and parents. Indeed, social constructivists say that each individual's prior or current knowledge is the foundation of any contribution to meaning-making dialogue. The essence of human dialogue is in building and exchanging thoughts and ideas that take place during discussion (Pressley, Mohan, Raphael, & Fingeret, 2007). Vygotsky stated without reservation that learning is an active and constructive process. Through a teacher-organized series of dialogues, interactions, and discussions across the classroom of individual ideas, students learn to become autonomous learners, according to social constructivists (Yang & Wilson, 2006).

### **Scaffolding**

Teachers usually assume the role of knowledgeable others in formal learning situations. Teachers are the ultimate vehicle for stimulating engagement. But maintaining momentum on meaningful dialogue is required to develop understanding instead of banal conversation. *Scaffolding* refers to the structural design of this role (Pritchard, 2009). Pritchard described scaffolding as "the process of giving support to learners at the appropriate time and appropriate level of sophistication to meet the needs of the individual" (p. 25). Working collaboratively in pairs or small groups is one socially constructive approach to learning. When students receive scaffolding support, they become active participants in their learning.

Scaffolding is critical to effective and independent reading dispositions or habits. The read-aloud intervention may allow teachers to scaffold learning for students who lack

reading proficiency until they become autonomous readers. Constructivism and scaffolding formed the conceptual framework of the study.

During scaffolding, teachers gradually withdraw their assistance to encourage students to achieve mastery of the given tasks. An assumption is that after the withdrawal of support, students become independent, lifelong readers and active learners (Erickson, 2008). Vygotsky (1978) described this process as the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD). The ZPD is the place in one's mind that comes next (Vygotsky, 1978). In the ZPD, if learners have enough support, then they may be able to actually learn in the ZPD. The process of learning has several repetitive rounds of moving into a ZPD, developing understanding in the ZPD, and moving onto a new ZPD to learn more in. The intervention of others can assist in the process of passing through the ZPD. Teachers, as well as a range of other people or materials, can fulfill this role.

### **Educational Implications of Social Constructivism**

Vygotsky (1978) asserted that learning is an active and constructive process. Social constructivists examine the social and cultural influences on a child's learning and understanding imparted through language and other cultural artifacts (Ma, 2010). The concept of the ZPD refers to what a child can already do compared with what he or she can potentially do with the support of significant others. According to Ma (2010), interacting with others, including parents, peers, teachers, or any other knowledgeable people, provides support for individuals as they develop literacy skills and higher order thinking. While reading, readers listen to and make sense of the text in their own minds. Vygotsky described this process as *intermental dialogue*. Proficient readers construct

meaning from text using both intermental and intramental dialogue. As readers listen to an author's words, they construct their own meaning of the author's message.

*Intramental dialogue* occurs when readers construct meaning from text differently, depending on their individual purposes for reading, backgrounds, and states of mind. The read-aloud strategy can enhance students' understanding and meaning of text, which can then lead to the development of new cognitive structures (Trelease, 2006). Central to this concept is the discussion or dialogic approach to instruction. I used the principles of social constructivism to meet the need for providing both teachers and students at the school evidence-based findings on effective read-aloud instructional strategies that promote reading proficiency.

The framework of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2011) indicated that reading is an active and complex process that involves constructing meaning. As students progress in reading ability at different grade levels, they also move from learning to read to reading to learn. Constructing meaning from text is vital to students' academic success (Yukie, 2013). Interactive discussion complements meaning making with texts because meaning construction is dependent on social interaction and language (Vygotsky, 1978). Children need the opportunity to interact with their teachers to discuss the strategies that readers use to make meaning from text, as well as the strategies that writers use to convey meaning to readers (Cummins & Stallmeyer-Gerard, 2011). Students become lifelong readers when they use effective reading strategies (Miller & Veatch, 2010).

During interactive expository-text reading, students can connect reading to their interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences as they respond to the literature. In the classroom, students share their understanding, misconceptions, ideas, and interpretations of the text read. As they express their own ideas, they learn alternative views (Ma, 2010). Students then develop reflective skills and metacognition to construct knowledge and meaning from the text. The use of read-aloud expository text in this study may have enhanced social interactions and shared inquiry between adults and students. The essence of the study involved guiding students to develop meaning from text so they could become proficient and autonomous readers.

### **Operational Definitions**

*Comprehension*: “Deliberate efforts by a reader to better understand or remember what is being read” (Duke & Block, 2012, p. 60).

*Informational text*: Nonfiction books, also referred to as expository text, that contain facts and information, including books and texts in other formats such as magazines, newspapers, and online articles (Correia, 2011).

*Lexile*: Student performance on the SRI test is reported as a Lexile. The Lexile measure is a number followed by an *L* (e.g., 880L is 880 Lexile). The Lexile scale ranges from below 0L for beginning readers to above 1725L for advanced readers (Savannah-County Public School System, 2012b). A Lexile measure indicates valuable information about either an individual’s reading ability or the difficulty of a text. Higher Lexile measures represent a higher level of reading ability. Readers who score at or below 0L receive a designation of *beginning reader*. Educators can use Lexile measures to monitor

a reader's growth in reading ability over time. They can also use Lexiles to find books and articles at an appropriate level of difficulty and to determine how well a particular student is likely to comprehend a chosen text ("The Lexile Framework for Reading: What is a Lexile Measure?," n.d.).

*Proficient*: Student performance that meets the criterion established in the curriculum standards, as measured by a teacher or assessment; in the reading standards, teachers often pair *proficient* with *independent* to suggest successful student performance done without scaffolding; in the reading standards, the act of reading a text with comprehension (Common Core State Standards Initiative [CCSSI], 2011). The generated reports show students' individual growth as well as yearly growth at the classroom level (Savannah-County Public School System, 2012b). The NAEP (as cited in Georgia Family Connection Partnership, 2010) categorized four possible achievement levels as below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced. Researchers at NCES (2011) and Wilkins et al. (2012) also noted this classification.

*Reading on grade level (ROGL)*: Based on the new Gateway promotion process, as explained in Savannah-County Public School System (2012a), students are ROGL if they score 330L or higher at the end of second grade.

*Reading proficiency*: Early reading proficiency is a leading indicator commonly used by school district leaders to improve reading skills and instructional programs (Musen, 2010). Educators can use this tool to identify weak reading skills and improve literacy scores, especially among students struggling with literacy. Consequently, after elementary school teachers understand the different ways in which children learn to read,

they can begin to use varied strategies to develop children's reading skills and build their confidence.

*Scaffolding:* Derived from Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD. Pentimonti et al. (2010) defined scaffolding as "the process through which one provides support to learners so as to enable them to complete a task or activity that is beyond their independent capabilities" (p. 243).

*Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI):* The SRI is a research-based, computerized, adaptive reading assessment designed for students in Grades K-12 to measure students' levels of reading comprehension (Savannah-County Public School System, 2012b). School officials administer the standardized assessment three to five times over the school year. Each SRI administration involves posing multiple-choice context questions, including main idea, causality, inference, drawing conclusions, and generalization. The SRI questions are designed toward each student's reading ability. These assessments and tests measure student achievement on the state, national, program, and local mandated curricula to provide parents or guardians, teachers, administrators, the community, and staff with important information.

*Think-aloud:* Think-aloud is a critical strategy for reading comprehension whereby readers recognize and verbalize their thinking processes (Spranger, Sandral, & Ferrari, 2010).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations**

The study included several assumptions, limitations, and delimitations within its scope. This section focuses on the assumptions, limitations, scope, and delimitations of

the study. Research design and sample size can contribute to both the scope and delimitations of a research study.

### **Assumptions**

I assumed various postulations in the study to be true, but these were not empirically verified. First, I assumed that early childhood teachers (Grades K-2) at Smart Elementary School used the school-wide reading strategies as stated in the school improvement plan. Second, I assumed that the teachers at Smart Elementary School used effective science-based reading tools that could enhance ROGL. A third assumption was that the participating teachers would be willing to cooperate during classroom observations and interviews. I also assumed that prospective participants would participate in the school and district read-aloud programs. Finally, I assumed that the participants would answer the interview questions honestly and openly.

I brought certain biases to the study because of my years of teaching experience on the school site and at the second grade level. I acknowledged that these biases might shape my perceptions, understanding, and interpretation of the data. I strived to be objective. I believe that my research in this field will deepen my own knowledge of read-aloud expository-text instruction. Teachers play a major role in structuring the classroom language environment. A general assumption is that K-2 teachers are not biased or selective in making book choices. However, many teachers have biases regarding racial or ethnic language abilities and the background influences on their elementary school students, which may justify individual differences in book choices in classroom libraries (Corrigan, 2010). I decided to be open-minded throughout the research process.

Another assumption was that the participating teachers would have implemented read-aloud expository-text instruction in their classrooms. Still another assumption was that all the participants would be certified teachers who would volunteer to participate in the study. All the assumptions were verified in the study. A final assumption was that the teachers would be honest in presenting their conceptions regarding their own reading practices and the ways they approached instructional tasks that involved read-alouds in their classrooms.

### **Limitations**

A qualitative approach to research can include cross-sectional and longitudinal methods with structured interviews to collect and generalize data from a sample to a target population (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2014). However, because of the small sample size in the study, I was not able to generalize the results (Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2014). In addition, the findings from convenience sampling or purposeful sampling are not generalizable to other target populations because of sampling bias (Castillo, 2009; Creswell, 2009). I do not intend to generalize the findings; instead, I intend to describe the perceptions of the benefits and challenges of five teachers using the read-aloud expository-text instructional strategies to enhance the reading comprehension of K-2 students.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

This study's scope included examining the read-aloud perceptions of one small group of K-2 teachers at one elementary school in the nation. A delimitation within the study was the small purposeful sample at Smart ES in the southeastern United States.



The small sample narrowed the scope and consisted of five K-2 teachers at one elementary school. SES was chosen as the site of this research because it was one of five inner-city elementary schools selected by district leaders to participate in the district's reading initiative program, so Smart ES would have had a strong focus on reading at the time this research was in the field. Because I was not attempting to generalize the results but rather to gain information, the teachers at Smart ES were the only ones selected to participate in this research.

### **Significance of the Study**

Read-aloud expository text is significant in teaching and learning in the sense that the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS, 2010) specify that children should acquire competencies with informational text beginning in kindergarten. Informational text-processing skills are a requirement in the language arts curriculum standards. Informational or expository text serves as a powerful indicator of the importance of improving students' comprehension from early childhood.

The ability to comprehend and apply a variety of genres is a 21<sup>st</sup>-century global skill. Rowe (2012) explained, "To be literate in the information age, students not only need to be knowledgeable, but they also need literacy skills in a variety of genres" (p. 4). Rowe further expressed that complex and demanding skills are necessary to compete in the global economy. Therefore, to perform efficiently in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century, students need to possess skills that will enable them to locate, understand, and use informational text. In relation to the study, teachers must have skills in the instructional format they select to improve the literacy experiences of their students in the classroom. Some literacy

formats may be beneficial in one context; other formats may be more useful for different instructional purposes (Lapp et al., 2009). The opportunity to read appropriate text is central to improving the proficiency of readers who struggle with some texts. As Rowe noted, “Thus early literacy instruction should move beyond typical storybook reading and begin to expose children to the informational text genre” (p. 4). It is important to expose young children to various kinds of texts in order to improve their literacy across genres.

A study of teachers’ read-aloud practices conducted by Pentimonti et al. (2010) indicated that only 4% of books read aloud were expository. The more students have exposure to different genres through classroom instruction, the better their achievements will be (Rowe, 2012). Likewise, a lack of exposure to a variety of reading materials will negatively affect students’ academic achievements (Pilonieta, 2011).

Additionally, many researchers have suggested that the diet of text that children consume should include an increased amount of expository text so that the child knows how to read them well. Expository text and strategic reading become even increasingly important when one considers the current emphasis on assessing reading achievement. This case study was significant in the sense that it identified the notion of scaffolding strategies. The current study contributes to the literature on how to prepare and implement an effective, interactive, and informational text read-aloud that will result in increased reading proficiency for students (Pilonieta, 2011). When teachers feel confident in their knowledge base, then they feel comfortable in exploring and implementing new instructional techniques (Pilonieta, 2011). Learning more about read-

aloud informational or expository text will help teachers expand the possibilities of this instructional time.

### **Positive Social Change**

This research study supports the mission statement of the College of Education and Leadership at Walden University. The conceptual framework promotes leadership and social change through teaching and lifelong learning (“What Is the Richard Riley College,” 2011). As a lifelong learner, I acquired evidence-based reading research, as well as developed effective read-aloud teaching strategies that may enhance reading proficiency in the classroom. As a scholar-practitioner, it is my intention to use the study to promote a positive environment that will encourage professional articulation among teachers in the areas of effective reading instruction.

The findings from the study may provide teachers with opportunities to collaborate with colleagues as they identify and share effective research-based instructional strategies that will enhance students’ reading proficiency at Smart ES and beyond. I intended to address the local problem by provoking teachers to reflect and to understand the challenges that will stimulate and improve read-aloud instructional strategies at Smart Elementary School. As I explored this critical local, state, and national educational issue, I used the results to inform best practices at the inner-city school. As I reflected on read-aloud expository-text practices in the classroom and analyzed the perceptions of the teachers who worked at the school, I hoped that following the completion of this study, a meaningful relationship would develop among the K-2 teachers that would contribute to improving student learning. As Mohr et al. (2004)

noted, teacher-researchers have the potential to affect educational decisions that extend beyond their classrooms, schools, and districts and can ultimately benefit society.

### **Summary**

The problem at the school under study was that students were reading below grade level. To address this reading deficiency, faculty at the school developed a schoolwide growth plan for SY 2011-2012, SY 2012-2013, and the subsequent school years. The development plan included interactive read-alouds across grade levels, scaffolding, expository or informational texts, higher order thinking skills, and organizational skills. A number of studies have shown that interactive read-aloud expository text may be able to prepare students for success in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century.

I identified the challenges and benefits of interactive read-aloud expository text that a sample of five teachers reported having encountered. To provide adequate answers to the research questions guiding the study, I used Yin's (2014) approach to case study research and Creswell's (2014) qualitative data analysis procedures. A colleague, an educator with a doctorate peer reviewed the interview questions for clarity. I transcribed and coded the responses to the interview questions to generate descriptions of the participants' perspectives. I then converged the coded data to find patterns and generate themes. The next section, Section 2, contains a review of pertinent literature, while Section 3 includes a detailed description of the research methods chosen for the qualitative case study. The last 2 sections, section 4 describes the result and findings of the data collected and section 5 provides a summary report of the study.

## Section 2: Review of the Literature

### Introduction

This section contains a comprehensive, but not exhaustive, review of current literature on interactive read-aloud expository-text instructional strategies. The organization of the section is as follows: (a) brief overview of the literature, (b) teachers' perceptions or beliefs, (c) a conceptual framework, (d) scaffolding, (e) read-alouds, (f) expository- and informational-text reading, (g) instructional strategies, (h) think-aloud strategies, (i) text talk, and (j) graphic organizer strategies. Reviewed studies pertain mostly to kindergarten through Grade 2. The section concludes with a summary and conclusions based on the literature.

Several strategies received consideration as I compiled the sources for this literature review. In this research, the terms *expository text* and *informational text* are interchangeable. I searched electronic databases, Web engines, and digital collections such as Academic Search Complete, EBSCO, dissertations and theses, Encyclopedias and Handbooks, Google search, and education databases including ERIC, Education Research Complete, Teacher Reference Center, and Education from SAGE using the key words *read-alouds*, *read aloud*, *interactive read aloud*, *expository text*, *informational text*, *elementary*, *comprehension*, *reading proficiency*, *scaffolding*, *text talk*, *graphic organizers*, *Common Core curriculum*, *teachers' perceptions*, *teachers' beliefs*, *instructional strategies*, and *think aloud*. I also used the bibliographies of articles and dissertations to search for additional literature and reviewed peer-reviewed articles. Other places searched were books on theories of education, Walden University Library,

local libraries, and various university libraries in Georgia. I searched Teacher Reference Center with an emphasis on works published between 2009 and 2014.

### **Conceptual Framework: Scaffolding and Learning**

Teachers need great skill in assessing and then advantageously working within each student's ZPD. Teachers need to use a range of scaffolding supports to differentiate instruction. Scaffolds are beneficial to children who might need different levels of support to participate in read-alouds. Using a teacher research strategy, Eshach, Dor-Ziderman, and Arbel (2011) explored scaffolding strategies used by kindergarten teachers during science activities. These researchers provided descriptions of how teachers can use the scaffolding scheme effectively to analyze scientific activities even at the kindergarten level. The essence of the study involved identifying scaffolding strategies to enhance teachers' exposure to the importance of such strategies at the kindergarten level. These researchers also provided educators with skills or knowledge concerning how to implement scaffolding effectively in their own classrooms. The data in this observational study indicated that the teachers used both cognitive and affective scaffolding strategies. The findings also indicated that the kindergarteners were successful in performing difficult tasks during the scientific activities due to the teacher's scaffolding. Eshach et al. concluded that exposing and conceptualizing scaffolding strategies enhances kindergarten teachers' pedagogical content knowledge.

### **Conceptual Framework: Scaffolding and Learning**

Scaffolding is a fundamental concept and teacher practice, according to theorists in social constructivism. In its everyday, real-world meaning, *scaffolding* refers to a

temporary support structure that surrounds a building under construction so that the building stays up until the builders think it is sturdy enough to stand on its own. At this point, the builders remove the scaffolding, and the building remains strong and stable. In classrooms, this means that the teacher erects structures such as diagrams, manipulatives, and vocabulary to support students' learning of ideas, and as they become strong enough learners, the teacher takes the scaffolding down bit by bit.

Scaffolding links to what Vygotsky (1978) referred to as the learners' ZPD. Buildings are built all the way up, then torn all the way down. In contrast, ideas are built up in a zone of knowledge development (i.e., ZPD) and taken down as the zone of their learning advances. For example, for students to develop into proficient readers, they must have time to experience instruction that models the strategies used by proficient readers with a wide array of texts—and their path toward becoming a fluent reader will include multiple zones that have to be developed (Wolsey et al., 2010). The zone of proximal development is the place proximal, or near, to where current learning needs to be scaffolded.

Teachers need great skill in assessing and then advantageously working within each student's ZPD. Teachers need to use a range of scaffolding supports to differentiate instruction. Scaffolds are beneficial to children who might need different levels of support to participate in read-alouds. Using a teacher research strategy, Eshach, Dor-Zideman, and Arbel (2011) explored scaffolding strategies used by kindergarten teachers during science activities. These researchers provided descriptions of how teachers can use the scaffolding scheme effectively to analyze scientific activities even at the kindergarten

level. The essence of conducting the study was to identify scaffolding strategies to enhance teachers' exposure to the importance of such strategies at the kindergarten level. These researchers also provided educators with skills or knowledge concerning how to implement scaffolding effectively in their own classrooms. The data in this observational study indicated that the teachers used both cognitive and affective scaffolding strategies. The findings also indicated that the kindergarteners were successful in performing difficult tasks during the scientific activities due to the teacher's scaffolding. Eshach et al. concluded that exposing and conceptualizing scaffolding strategies enhances kindergarten teachers' pedagogical content knowledge.

Wiseman (2011) used ethnographic enquiry among kindergarten students in an urban elementary school. The teacher-researcher used the teachers' approach to facilitate rich interaction in the classroom as students read and constructed meaning together from stories. Analysis of the transcripts and field notes showed that teachers and peers actively modeled and scaffolded comprehension strategies. They engaged readers and cultivated a community of learners. The participants benefited from the study.

In a case study, Pentimonti and Justice (2008) examined teachers' use of six scaffolding strategies within a single whole-class read-aloud session. The study included five female European American preschool teachers working in a rural region of a Midwestern state. Their teaching experience ranged from 9 to 18 years; the participating students' ages were between 10 months and 4 years. The first objective of Pentimonti and Justice was to determine the extent to which the preschool teachers implemented six specific types of scaffolding strategies in their classrooms. The second objective was to



determine the extent to which the teachers' self-report on scaffolding implementation matched the observed use. The researchers used both direct and indirect assessments to gather information. In February of the academic year, Pentimonti and Justice (2008) collected and analyzed a read-aloud session for each of the five teachers in their study. Each session involved the teachers reading one assigned book to students in a whole-group setting in their various classrooms. The videotaped read-aloud sessions subsequently underwent coding in a laboratory setting to document teachers' use of the six scaffolding strategies they were working with.

In contrast to Pentimonti and Justice's (2008) one observation, Renwick (2008) used read-aloud book discussions to help students in Grade 3 to express their views on contemporary social issues. The study involved a small sample of 24 students from two Grade 3 classrooms and two Grade 3 teachers. Classroom observations lasted 60 to 90 minutes. In addition, two teachers completed a self-report: one at the beginning (a demographic report) and the other at the completion (a reflective report) of the study. Instruments were students' and teachers' reflection forms, student focus groups, classroom observations and notes, students' writing samples, and audio tape-recorded interviews with the teachers.

In a similar article on scaffolding, Scharlach (2008) described a longitudinal experimental study. He used multiple read-aloud strategies with the children in order to determine if the framework was truly effective. It was designed to model and scaffold the use of metacognitive reading comprehension strategies with students in Grade 3. Scharlach went on to another study where he used eight comprehension strategies in the

longitudinal experimental study: (a) predicting and inferring, (b) visualizing, (c) making connections, (d) questioning, (e) determining the main idea, (f) summarizing, (g) checking predictions, and (h) making predictions. Students in the experimental classrooms had an average gain of 1 year 4 months in reading comprehension more than the control classroom. During this study, the teachers gradually withdrew scaffolding as their students became independent learners (Scharlach, 2008). However, the students in the control classroom had a loss of 1 year in reading comprehension. Many of the students in the control classroom performed worse on the posttest than they did on the pretest. Results indicated that using strategies such as modeling and scaffolding was effective in enhancing the reading comprehension skills of all students.

Maloch and Beutel (2010) indicated that teachers' participation and scaffolding contributed to an interactive discussion that gave the students opportunities to engage in a dialogic conversation around and with text. Maloch and Beutel's study extended the studies of Oyler (1996) and Sipe (2000) on interactive read-alouds. The findings support the conceptual sociocultural framework of the study, also supported by Vygotsky (1978) and others.

### **Teachers' Perceptions and Beliefs**

Language teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and understanding of teaching and learning play an important role in both classroom practices and professional growth (Kuzborska, 2011). However, "there is less research in relation to teacher beliefs" (Rubie-Davies, Flint, & McDonald, 2012, p. 270). Teachers' perceptions are critical to teaching and learning because the beliefs that teachers hold influence their thoughts and

their instructional decisions, which affect student outcome (Woolfolk Hoy, Hoy, & Davis, 2009).

In New Zealand, Rubie-Davies et al. (2012) conducted a quantitative study with 68 teachers to analyze the interrelationships between teacher characteristics of gender and teaching experience, school contextual variables (socioeconomic level of school and class level), and three teacher socio-psychological factors. Specifically, the teacher socio-psychological variables focused on class-level teacher expectations, teacher efficacy, and teacher goal orientation. The analysis of the teachers' questionnaire showed that teacher beliefs, teacher characteristics, and school culture affect instructional behaviors in the classroom. The instructional decisions that teachers make influence the learning experiences they plan for students and students' opportunity to learn. Similarly, Boggs and Szabo (2009) confirmed that classroom teachers are the most important factor in the teaching and learning process, finding that the following factors affected teachers' classrooms: (a) students' behavior problems, (b) testing and testing preparation requirements that decrease time for instruction, (c) meetings to discuss administrative duties that limit instructional planning, (d) increased teacher stress levels, and (e) increased time spent on administrative duties away from instruction (p. 144).

Language teachers' beliefs and perceptions of teaching and learning play a critical role in their classroom practices and in their professional growth. Kuzborska (2011) conducted a case study using an evaluative interpretative paradigm to examine the relationship between the beliefs of eight teachers and their practices in the teaching of reading to advanced English learners in a Lithuanian university. The results showed that

links exist among teachers' beliefs, practices, and research. Teachers' beliefs influence their goals, procedures, materials, classroom interaction patterns, roles, students, and schools (p. 102). The study concluded that student achievement is gained through improved teacher instruction (Kuzborska, 2011).

In another study, Ness (2011) explored K-5 teachers' use of and attitudes toward a wide variety of informational text in their classrooms. The descriptive study took place among 318 K-5 teachers over an 8-month period. The participants' provided open-ended responses. The cross tabulation of all the responses indicated the following obstacles: (a) instructional time constraints, (b) lack of resources, (c) curricular limitation, and (d) disengaged readers (Ness, 2011, p. 43). The participating teachers also expressed their beliefs about the challenges of informational text, citing (a) vocabulary, (b) background knowledge, and (c) text structure. The results indicated several possible explanations for the scarcity of informational text in elementary classrooms.

Teachers' beliefs are not likely to exist in isolation (Rubie-Davies et al., 2012). Rubie-Davies et al. (2012) and Woolfolk Hoy et al. (2009) concluded that teacher beliefs, teacher characteristics, and school contextual variables can result in differences in teacher instructional practices. Teachers' perceptions can also result in differing classroom climates. According to Rubie-Davies et al., teachers may alter their instructional practices depending on school contextual variables such as the socioeconomic level of the school, teaching experience, and gender.

Pentimonti and Justice (2008) addressed the problem of scaffolding strategies. Many teachers use scaffolding strategies disproportionately in their classrooms. In

videotaped classroom observations conducted to explore teachers' perspectives on scaffolding, both researchers observed and recorded that the teachers used varying types of scaffolding strategies disproportionately during read-aloud interactions. During the study, the researchers noted that teachers used mostly low-support strategies instead of high-support strategies. However, a majority of teachers self-reported using high-support scaffolding strategies in their recent whole-group read-aloud interactions. Therefore, Pentimonti and Justice (2008) concluded that teachers' self-reported data did not correlate with classroom observations. The results showed that teachers' perceptions of their use of scaffolding were different from observed behavior, as the teachers believed that they were using high-support strategies but were not doing so. The implication of teachers' perceptions and beliefs for the current study is that if teachers' beliefs have a profound influence on classroom practices, as research indicated, then an understanding of this relationship between teacher perceived behavior and teacher actual behavior is important for improving pedagogical approaches and successfully preparing and implementing informational or expository text in the classroom. Teachers' beliefs, perceptions, behaviors, and use of language influence children's behaviors in the classroom (Shidler, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, as each teacher has a critical impact on the teaching and learning process, it is necessary to explore the benefits and challenges of interactive read-aloud expository text in the classroom from teachers' perspectives.

### **Read-Aloud Strategies**

The NCES (2011) framework indicated reading as an active and complex process that involves constructing meaning. As students progress in reading ability at different grade levels, they also move from learning to read to reading to learn. The intent of the study was to support the use of existing research in reading comprehension strategies relevant to read-aloud expository or informational text to develop strategies that would enhance grade-level reading comprehension and reading proficiency. This effective pedagogical approach is scientifically based and can challenge academic content to ensure that it complies with the No Child Left Behind Act (2002).

The focus of the current study was the use of interactive read-aloud expository text. Researchers have studied evidence-based reading using teacher read-alouds in the classroom and have documented the benefits of interactive read-aloud experiences (Meller, Richardson, & Hatch, 2009). Meller et al. (2009) defined *read-alouds* as planned oral reading of children's books. During read-aloud activities, students process and construct meaning from texts that would otherwise be too challenging to comprehend (Trelease, 2006).

Different approaches to classroom read-alouds are available. Teachers sometimes use read-alouds for pure reading enjoyment and do not interrupt with instruction. Read-alouds promote language and literacy development by supporting interactions between and among students and teachers regarding text (Hoffman, 2011). Delacruz (2013) supported the inclusion of read-aloud sessions in kindergarten as an essential and valuable literacy experience.

Teachers use read-alouds to enhance word choice, sentence structure, and story development in student writing. When teachers used interactive read-alouds with some second-grade students, the students constructed meaning from the discussion and acquired richer language. Students' writing improved as well (Gabaldon, 2013). Students can visually construct meanings from viewing photographs or other images found in children's texts.

Students acquire reading strategies that they can use during their independent reading (Meller et al., 2009). Meller et al. (2009) highlighted six steps for teachers to use in planning and implementing effective read-alouds. The steps are selecting a book, previewing the book, developing critical questions to use during the read-aloud and posting them in the book, conducting a mini lesson to activate children's prior knowledge, taking a picture walk, and reading the story while stopping to discuss questions (Meller et al., 2009).

However, a traditional read-aloud involves a two-step process (Delacruz, 2013; Press et al., 2011). First, the teacher reads to the students while students listen attentively. Second, after the reading, the teacher guides the discussion. A traditional read-aloud strategy involves the teacher reading to the students while they listen. Traditional read-alouds involve encouraging discussion after the reading is complete, whereas interactive read-alouds involve promoting dialogue throughout the lesson. Methods of reading aloud designed by researchers have shown positive results in preschool and elementary classroom settings (Correia, 2011). Teachers who employed some research-based systematic strategies appeared to be more productive in their read-

aloud activities. However, many teachers are not aware of the literature that explains read-aloud methods. Therefore, educators continue to seek new knowledge about ways to expand read-alouds for instructional purposes. Teacher action research empowers teachers to use any method of research to gauge or measure their effectiveness in their own classrooms (DeVoogd, 2009).

Cunningham (2009) asserted that interactive read-alouds enhance comprehension using oral language activities, listening comprehension, and text-based discussion. The qualitative, collaborative case study included a sample of teachers in Grades 1, 2, and 3 who used read-alouds to engage students in critical literacy. Cunningham used the model of portraiture to explore and describe the lived experiences of seven participants from four elementary schools in New York City. Cunningham conducted the study in naturalistic environments and used multiple data collection methods that facilitated the triangulation of the data. Multiple qualitative data collection tools used in Cunningham's study included observations, interviews, and collaborative conversations that were similar to focus groups. The qualitative, collaborative case study involved an educational transformation that generated ideas for teaching and learning. Teachers and students benefited from the study.

Researchers have focused on the importance of the read-aloud approach on students in the United States who are struggling with reading, including students for whom English is a second language (Greenawalt, 2010; Yopp & Yopp, 2012). Convergence of evidence indicated reading to students in general is effective, and it is



important that researchers continue to study reading aloud for effective practices (DeVoogd, 2009). Researchers have focused on student participation, talk, and texts.

Read-aloud expository text is not only for primary students. Preschool and kindergarten students can participate actively and benefit from reading informational text (Correia, 2011; Pentimonti, Zucker, Justice, & Kaderavek 2010). The Common Core State Standards are rigorous (Kaiser & Kaiser, 2012) therefore educators are mandated to seek ways to integrate pedagogy efficiently in the classroom to facilitate students' mastery of essential reading skills. Kaiser and Kaiser highlighted five steps that teachers can use to enhance students' literacy skills in the content areas so they can reach their ZPD. These instructional strategies involved text structure, close reading (modeling), writing about reading, teaching comprehension strategies explicitly, and integrating pedagogy. Through scaffolding, younger students can comprehend read aloud expository text.

### **Reading Expository or Informational Text and Connection to the Research Study**

The focus of the current study is interactive read-alouds of expository text. Studies on expository-text comprehension are lacking. This section contains a review of relevant current research and other literature supporting the argument that read-aloud expository-text strategies improve the reading proficiency and understanding of expository texts of K-2 children. Interest in informational book use across elementary grade levels has grown progressively (Bradley & Donovan, 2010); informational text can be found in other formats such as magazines, newspapers, and online articles (Correia, 2011). Akhondi, Malayeri, and Samad (2011) and the Common Core State Standards

(National Governors Association, 2010) emphasized that expository-text reading is critical as a foundation for college and workplace readiness. The NAEP (2009) reading framework involved a high and increasing proportion of informational text on its assessment as students moved through school and into career placement. The framework included a mandate in which teachers of students in kindergarten to Grade 5 had to use 50% informational texts across the school day, with the percentage increasing to 70% in high school (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

Analyses of classroom reading materials revealed that the majority of the books read in the classroom setting were stories (Reid Lyon & Weiser, 2009; Yopp & Yopp, 2012). Although primary teachers often read aloud to their students, they rarely read informational texts to them (Heisey & Kucan, 2010). Few researchers have focused on teaching expository-text structure to young children as a way to improve their comprehension of informational texts. Pilonieta (2011) noted that inadequate exposure to a variety of texts could be detrimental to students' academic achievement.

In a content area analysis study, Pentimonti et al. (2010) explored the types of genres that teachers read aloud to early childhood students noting some of the challenges confronting early childhood teachers in implementing informational texts in the classroom. The study involved randomly selecting 733 titles from early childhood teachers' reading logs and conducting an in-depth investigation of the content using a content analysis approach. The result of the content area analysis indicated prevalent categories of topics teachers emphasize. Pentimonti et al. (2010) reported, "This content

area analysis revealed that some dominant categories align with prevailing topics emphasized in the teachers' state standards, but other important content areas were infrequently targeted with read alouds" (p. 661).

However, teachers did not frequently select other important content areas to read aloud. Even when teachers read informational genres, they used mixed genres. In addition, reading teachers failed to select books that fully targeted content areas. The implication of the study was that teachers seldom used informational text in the classroom. Narrative texts dominate early childhood read-alouds, but teachers must increase the use of informational texts in early childhood classes to enhance literacy and language development of young learners. Early childhood educators and reading teachers should find a balance of both informational and narrative genres in their selection of read-alouds. It is critical to select texts that target a full range of content area topics, particularly those that are critical in the local state standards. Pentimonti et. al.(2010) concluded that students achievement is evident, when teachers included high-quality informational texts when reading to the youngest learners. Researchers found that students' achievement in math and science improved.

Similar to Pentimonti et.al was Yopp and Yopp (2012) who examined the proportion of informational text read in schools to preschool through Grade 3. Yopp and Yopp (2012) analyzed their study as follows: "Using Duke and Bennett-Armistead's (2003) framework as a guide, we categorized read-alouds as informational if they met the criteria discussed previously" (p. 482). However, instead of using a random sample of

book titles as in Pentimonti et al. (2010). Yopp and Yopp (2012) categorized and classified the titles:

Titles were obtained from 1,144 teachers who worked in 13 school districts or regions, largely in the southwestern United States and ranging from large urban areas to smaller rural districts in the southwestern United States, ranging from large urban areas to small rural districts, to provide the titles of books read in their classrooms, resulting in a sample size of 1,487 books (p. 482).

The study showed that out of the 1, 487 titles collected and categorized 100 were informational texts. Minimal amount of informational text are being read in school to children. Even though, “Their primary purpose is to convey information about the natural or social world and they make use of distinctive text structures, features, and language” (Yopp & Yopp, p. 482). However, Yopp and Yopp (2012) “overall analysis revealed that teachers read narratives more than any other type of text” (p. 482).

Yopp and Yopp (2012) recommended optimizing Informational text rich environment that will expose children to, “Informational text provides important opportunities to expose children “to the concepts, vocabulary, and discourse of different disciplines”(p. 484). Both researchers believed that “raising teachers’ awareness of the genre’s importance, the scarcity of informational texts in early childhood settings, and the narrow content focus of the informational books that are shared through read alouds is a first step” (Yopp & Yopp, 2012, p. 484)

Their analysis raised the participating teachers’ awareness of the importance of the informational text genre. It pointed toward the likely paucity of informational texts

used in early childhood settings. Because so few topics were shared in read-alouds, it also pointed to a narrow content focus of the informational books. Many researchers have suggested that reading and comprehending expository text will prepare students for career and job readiness in the global workplace (Akhondi et al., 2011; CCSSI, 2010; Delacruz, 2013; Maloch & Bomer, 2013; NEAP, as cited in Georgia Family Connection Partnership, 2010; Ness, 2011; Pilonieta, 2011; Yopp & Yopp, 2012). These researchers maintained that using interactive read-aloud expository-text strategies would enhance reading proficiency and enable students to comprehend expository text.

In another study, Read et al. (2008) noted the lack of studies on the use of expository text among young children as a way to improve their comprehension of informational text. Read et al. conducted a study on the ways to use well-structured expository trade book titles to teach text structure to 128 randomly assigned, struggling readers in Grade 2 in ten intact classrooms in three New York City public schools. They concluded that comprehension of text, including the structure of text, was challenging to the classroom teachers and the students, but using instruction in expository-text structure with struggling readers in Grade 2 was effective. The students learned to transfer what they had learned to the comprehension of novel texts. Read et al. concluded that text structure provides an effective strategy for promoting expository-text comprehension among normally developing readers in Grade 2.

Jitendra, Burgess, and Gajria (2011) used cognitive strategy instruction to improve expository-text comprehension of students with learning disabilities. Jitendra et al. identified the challenges of using textbooks and other instructional materials in the

classroom. Using cognitive strategies, Jitendra et al. (2011) shared a common goal with Read et al.'s (2008) goal, which was to “teach students how to interact with the content so that learning becomes more deliberate, self-directed, and self-regulated” (Jitendra et al., 2011, p. 136). In essence, scaffolding, facilitating, and modeling are steps involved in guiding students to attain the ZPD. Researchers in both studies showed that every child could benefit from reading and studying text structure in well-structured texts.

In an attempt to fill a gap in understanding current trends regarding the use of instructional text in the classroom, Ness (2011) conducted a descriptive qualitative study on teachers' use of and attitudes toward informational text in K-5 classrooms. The objectives of the study were (a) to understand the frequency with which K-5 teachers used informational text in their routine classroom instruction, (b) to assess the percentage of informational texts in classroom libraries, and (c) to explore teachers' attitudes about informational texts. The descriptive study took place over a period of 8 months among 318 K-5 teachers in six states. The findings indicated that K-5 teachers incorporated informational text into both their daily instruction and their classroom libraries. However, the results of the study indicated that teachers provided more informational texts in the upper grades than in primary grades.

Using a mixed method, Ness (2011) shared the teachers' beliefs about the benefits of informational text: (a) building new knowledge, (b) building literacy skills and readiness for content-specific texts, and (c) building motivation. The teachers' affirmed that the challenges were (a) vocabulary, (b) background knowledge, and (c) text structure. In addition, the obstacles preventing the inclusion of informational text in K-5

were (a) instructional time constraints, (b) lack of quality resources, (c) curricular limitations, and (d) disengaged readers.

The work of Delacruz (2013) was similar to Ness's (2011) study. In a mixed-methods study, Delacruz reported the benefits of conducting interactive read-alouds and the ways teachers can do it effectively in their classrooms. The quantitative aspect of the study involved comparing statistical Developmental Reading Assessment 2 (DRA2) data collected from the two participating schools while the qualitative section involved exploring how K-2 teachers planned and prepared for interactive read-alouds in their school. Delacruz coded the teachers' interviews using Rubin and Rubin's (2005) concept of sorting and summarizing and used member checking to establish validity. The result of the study supported the effective use of interactive read-aloud instruction with K-2 students. The results indicated that teachers planned for and conducted interactive read-alouds using state standards, selected a comprehension focus, and integrated interactive read-alouds in the content areas.

The nation's governors and education commissioners, through their representative organizations the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), developed many expectations for teaching and learning reading in schools. The CCSSI (2011) specified that preparation for reading complex informational text should start in the very earliest elementary school grades, including kindergarten. By the end of Grade 2, students should be able to read and comprehend informational text, including content subjects and technical texts, and in Grades 2 and 3, students should be able to read proficiently despite text complexity with necessary

scaffolding provided. Students should read widely and deeply from among a broad range of high-quality and increasingly challenging literary and informational texts. Students should also be able to construct effective arguments and convey multifaceted information. In essence, the curriculum should produce self-directed, independent, and constructivist learners.

Balancing the reading of literature with the reading of informational texts, including texts relevant to content subjects such as history, social studies, and science, as well as technical subjects, has increased students' reading proficiency (NCES, 2011; Santoro, Chard, Howard, & Baker, 2008). Santoro et al. (2008) focused on enhancing comprehension and content knowledge of science and social studies during read-aloud sessions in Grade 1 classrooms and employed scaffolding and modeling as methods of interaction during interactive read-aloud classes. The study included principles for selecting text for the read-aloud as well as strategies for interactive discussion before, during, and after reading the text. The basis of the student scores was their retellings of the texts read to them before and after the study. The results showed that students in the group that had read both expository and narrative texts about either science or social studies themes provided longer and richer retellings than the control group. Santoro et al. (2008) recommended the framework for at-risk and average-achieving students and provided a list of expository texts. The core component of my study is interactive read-aloud expository text.

Using a teacher action practice research, Calo (2011) used multiple interviews and observations to highlight the literacy practices of two Grade 2 teachers in their



classrooms. The two teachers used different but complementary instructions to enhance students' independent informational text comprehension about the world around them. In this paradigm, both teachers believed that expository text enabled their students to learn about their world. Students made connections between literacy and content. By using informational text, learning was made simple and significant to the students.

Students at the elementary level often face complex or high-level informational texts. Maloch (2008) conducted a qualitative case study to examine the uses of informational texts in an ethnically diverse Grade 2 classroom and the ways in which the teacher used scaffolding to enhance students' developing understanding of informational text. Maloch and Beutel (2010) conducted their study with Grade 2 students drawn from surrounding working-class and low-income neighborhoods. The sample included 11 Hispanic American, two African American, and two European American students. Data were obtained from observations through videotaping or audio tape-recording in the classroom (1-3 days per week on average) and included interviews with the teacher and students, as well as artifacts (e.g., lesson plans, teacher's notes, student work, examples of students' writing, and classroom assessments of students). Teaching text structure in combination with other strategies positively affected the Grade 2 students' acquisition of content knowledge from the text. The social context between adults and children, along with the quality of conversation embedded within the read-aloud experience, is critical to young children's cognitive development of literacy skills (Maloch & Beutel, 2010). Maloch and Beutel considered two aspects of interactive read-aloud text in their qualitative study: fictional and informational.

Due to the complexity in understanding the internal and external features of expository text, Bluestein (2010) created a bridge to expository-text comprehension for struggling readers. Bluestein noted that students at the elementary level lack the understanding for unlocking complex or high-level informational texts at the early stages of learning. To address this issue, Bluestein discussed three strategies to unlock text feature in expository text for struggling students and recommended scaffolding instructions of the most common features of three genres of nonfiction: biography, journalism, and textbooks.

A number of literacy tasks in elementary school classrooms require students to process information visually or aurally. Aural processing occurs during read-aloud activities that require students to listen and comprehend a text read by others (Wolsey et al., 2010). Informational text could serve as an avenue for inquiry when used in the Grade 2 classroom and as a valuable method for scaffolding genre knowledge (Bradley & Donovan, 2010; Maloch, 2008). In Maloch's (2008) study, the teacher was very good at engaging her learners and providing necessary scaffolding when using informational text with her students. The teacher did not use direct instruction. Instead, the teacher used form of interactive discussion where students were required and encouraged to provide information from the informational text. The teacher facilitated learning by having meaningful conversations about informational text features. These discussions allowed the students to draw on their own experiences. Students were to question, respond to questions posed by their teacher, and make sense of ideas in the text.

Santoro et al. (2008) evaluated the effectiveness of three primary areas of read-alouds by creating opportunities to teach expository, or informational, text structure. In the Grade 1 setting, Santoro et al. incorporated instructions to improve comprehension skills and strategies, enhance vocabulary knowledge, and introduce science and social studies content. Expository text is more effective when used with complex organizational patterns such as compare and contrast or cause and effect. Text selection based upon students' interests can promote active, engaging discussions about text in the classroom. The result indicated that enhancing read-alouds with comprehension strategies and text-based discussions made a positive difference in students' performance. In addition, the students demonstrated higher levels of comprehension in text-based discussions.

In the Santoro et al. (2008) study, at-risk and average students also benefited from the read aloud expository-text. There were no differences in comprehension and vocabulary between at-risk and average-achieving students in classrooms where teachers used the curriculum. In addition, using expository text enhanced the students' articulation skills.

### **Instructional Strategies**

Teachers need to identify how to select and use the most appropriate instructional strategies for students to become proficient with expository text (Miller & Veatch, 2010). Ofodu (2012) noted instructional strategies are "techniques, methods, and skills utilized by teachers in the teaching and learning process" (p. 79). Teaching reading must go beyond traditional drills to develop isolated skills. It must go beyond using word

decoding as the critical element in the meaning-making process. Teachers must master the subject matter and use effective methods of delivery to convey the content. Struggling readers should learn multiple strategies that support their learning through an individualized learning instructional framework (Brown, 2008). Teachers need to identify how to select and use the most appropriate instructional strategies for students to become proficient with expository text (Miller & Veatch, 2010). The teacher action report included five research-based strategies in the classroom to enhance students' comprehension, and the results supported the use of multiple strategies in the classroom. Corrigan's (2010) comprehension strategies were similar to Dymock and Nicholson's (2010). Dymock and Nicholson (2010) noted five key comprehension strategies: (a) activating background knowledge, (b) questioning, (c) analyzing text structure, (d) creating mental images, and (e) summarizing (p. 167). Dymock and Nicholson implied in this Hi 5 model that strategies 3 and 4 supported the use of text talk, think-alouds, and graphic organizers as also reflected in what I used in this dissertation research. Students' ability to create a mental image of the text being read, or being able to visualize how texts are structured enhances reading comprehension.

The strength of Read et al.'s (2008) study was its use of multiple instructional strategies such as text structure instruction in conjunction with graphic organizers. Effective teachers need to have a multitude of strategies in their arsenal to teach students how to become engaged and proficient readers (Erickson, 2008; Ofodu, 2012). Teachers of students in the primary grades seldom use instructional strategies that positively enhance the students' language and literacy development. Assessment-driven

instructional approaches enhance the content connection by deepening the comprehension of new information when integrating science, social science, math, and other subject-area texts with read-alouds among young readers (Cummins & Stallmeyer-Gerard, 2011). During read-alouds, students can acquire effective comprehension skills by using oral language activities, listening comprehension, and text-based discussion. Balancing pedagogy and content knowledge is critical to developing reading proficiency (Reid Lyon & Weiser, 2009). Teachers must have strong skills using reading processes that correlate with and contribute to reading proficiency and integrate them into teaching. However, policies requiring evidence-based reading instruction have yet to achieve their goals (Reid Lyon & Weiser, 2009).

Wolsey et al. (2010) used a descriptive study to explore teacher perspectives on current reading practices, including their grouping practices and reading formats during literacy tasks. The study took place in a large Western metropolitan area among 43 primary-grade teachers and 19 upper-elementary teachers in urban and suburban settings. Survey questionnaires explored the teachers' perspectives on reading activities in primary and upper-elementary grades. The study showed that the elementary teachers in metropolitan areas used a variety of approaches to enhance reading in their classrooms (Wolsey et al., 2010). In addition, the use of read-aloud formats reflected teachers' choices. Unlike the traditional read-aloud, the teachers scaffolded reading experiences, with students sharing the task by reading along with the teacher at times. The collection of demographic data from Wolsey et al.'s (2010) study was suitable within my study as a guide for my own experiences during classroom observation of teachers.

### **Think-Aloud Strategy**

Reading is a strategic process wherein proficient readers become metacognitively alert, active problem solvers as they attempt to construct meaning out of the text read (Spranger et al., 2010). Reading comprehension requires the integration of linguistic and cognitive processes. Think-alouds are detailed processes of making one's private thinking public by showing students how they are constructing meaning. During think-alouds, teachers model so that the students can see and hear how proficient readers first determine what is important while synthesizing, and then compose written responses that reveal synthesis. Gillam et al. (2009) reiterated the importance of using the think-aloud strategy to examine comprehension performance and develop interventions.

The researchers examined the kind of explicit and implicit statements generated by school-age children with and without language impairments during reading comprehension of expository text and identified the relationship of these statements to comprehension performance. The study's results indicated that the students' ability to paraphrase passages closely related to measures of expository-text comprehension. The researchers claimed that students who paraphrased accurately tended to perform better on measures of comprehension. However, no one has processed the use of verbal protocol analysis to examine strategic processing with expository text among adults and children with language impairments. No relationship existed between verbal-protocol analysis and comprehension processes. Nonetheless, Gillam et al. established the importance of think-alouds in the classroom, noting comprehension is a complex task that involves the use of different processes. The think-aloud strategy is one of the most widely used read-

aloud comprehension strategies. Read-aloud enables teachers to assess students' thoughts and listen to them. Spranger et al. (2010) wrote, "Student think-alouds are an effective assessment tool that provide a window into students' thinking" (p. 33).

### **Text Talk Strategy**

Expository texts contain various text features that present important text contents that students must read to comprehend fully. Kelley and Clausen-Grace (2010) posited, "Strategies help learners to organize information, reflect on a topic, and learn" (p. 191). They stated that interactive read-alouds, along with informational text, could enhance students' ability to synthesize ideas and retain facts and ideas. Kelley and Clausen-Grace described how to use what they called a text feature walk with students. The results indicated that one of three groups who did a text feature walk before writing predictions, reading, and completing review questions, had the highest average score. The next two groups who both did not use the text feature walk scored very low. So low that the control group actually scored worse than the other treatment group. The implication was that students who participated in the text feature walk were able to make better predictions and learn more from reading the text. Text features help readers to locate and organize information in text.

International studies conducted by Reichenberg (2008) over a 20-year period also indicated that the use of various classroom instructions in comprehension, including text talk, could increase students' comprehension skills markedly. However, teachers seldom teach students how to read actively. Students' development of reading proficiency is dependent, in large part, on their teachers' knowledge and instructional skills.

Reichenberg (2008) explored the ways in which teachers and students talked about expository texts in the classroom and to what extent structured text talk affected teachers' and students' talk about expository text. The study took place in Sweden with 60 students and six female teachers from five classes in three schools. In Reichenberg's study, teachers decreased their factual questions and increased their inference and half-open questions. Following the teachers' modeling, the students became models to other students and analyzed text independently. Observed also were changes in students' answers. Both good and poor readers interacted actively with the text during reading. They were able to discuss complicated issues. Dealing with complex expository text in the course of reading might be particularly effective for poor readers because it can scaffold their comprehension processes by providing wider opportunities for them. Even though the study included 17-year-old students in a vocational center outside the United States, the teachers' instructional strategy is modifiable for use in kindergarten to Grade 2 in the United States as well.

Akhondi et al. (2011) examined the structural elements in expository text and related teaching strategies. Because structural elements in expository text vary, it is critical to teach students various components of expository text throughout the school year. Text organization indicates an author's writing style of the content. Akhondi et al. explained that text features include the components of a story or such informational features as the table of contents, index, glossary, headings, bold words, sidebars, pictures and captions, and labeled diagrams. Three effective factors that affect text comprehension are text features, text organization, and text content.



Akhondi et al. (2011) observed that reading expository text increases students' awareness of text structure and leads to reading proficiency. Most expository text contains structural elements that facilitate reading proficiency. Text features can guide readers to locate and organize information in the text. The ability to identify and analyze these text structures in expository text enables readers to comprehend the text more easily and retain the information longer. The most critical steps in teaching text structure to students is the teacher's knowledge of various text structures of expository text, including signal words, phrases, appropriate graphic organizers, and the teacher's modeling of the procedures. Similar to Ness (2011) and Akhondi et al. (2011) reiterated interactive read-aloud instructional procedures. Teachers can use the following recommended procedures: (a) introducing text structures in proper order, beginning with description and ending with compare-and-contrast, (b) working on one text structure at a time for 3 to 4 weeks, (c) using short passages for the text structure, (d) highlighting and emphasizing the signal words and phrases in each text, (e) helping students to locate clues in the text, (f) allowing students to use organizers to create a better image of the passage, (g) allowing students to transfer skills or learning by using incomplete graphic organizers, and (h) allowing students to use blank organizers independently to identify signal words and phrases as clues for recognizing the rhetorical structure of the text (Akhondi et al., 2011, p. 370).

### **Graphic Organizer Strategy**

In addition to scaffolding, teachers can use graphic organizers strategically to promote reading comprehension. Graphic organizers include pictures, diagrams, charts,

or other visual representations of the content and meaning of the text. These visual representations can “depict the setting, initiating event, problem, goal of the main character, and solution, as well as how these elements relate to one another” (Barrett-Mynes, Moran, & Tegano, 2010, p. 2).

In a teacher action research study, teachers played a major role in developing reading comprehension strategies that enhance expository-text structure awareness among students (Timms, 2013). Timms (2013) outlined five possible text structures for expository text: description, sequence of events, cause and effect, compare and contrast, and problem and solution. Five important tips to increasing effective use of graphic organizers in the classrooms are (a) match organizer to the specific text features, (b) scaffold student learning on how best to understand specific text structures and features, (c) introduce graphic organizers to assist in comprehension through an enormous range of graphic organizers, (d) have students use colored pens or pencils to personalize work and stimulate memory and the brain, and (e) provide blank sheets and graphic organizers in different sizes to accommodate young students’ large handwriting. These steps can help reluctant readers and students who have difficulty articulating their ideas to demonstrate their knowledge via images rather than text. Timms (2013) recommended colored paper, rather than glossy white, for students with dyslexia. In addition, Timms (2013) recommended collaborative learning to alleviate stress.

In Slovenia, Ropič and Aberšek (2012) used an experiment to assess how a Web graphic organizer influenced the science literacy curriculum among 8- to 9-year-old students. The experiment took place over a 5-month period. Using comparisons, Ropič

and Aberšek used experimental and control groups to provide and monitor the effectiveness of web graphic organizers, based on the text structure, to support the understanding of the explicatory text in the science textbook. Ropič and Aberšek observed a positive result after 5 months of systematic introduction of graphic organizers for visualizing residual knowledge and to record newly acquired knowledge. The students developed awareness of the text structure and applied it to their personal reading.

Özmen (2011) took a different approach by using graphic organizers as an instructional strategy for teaching reading comprehension among students in special education in an elementary school. The study involved comparing the effectiveness of using graphic organizers to recall information by comparing and contrasting text before and after reading. Özmen concluded that both presentations were effective for the students and presented three factors that aided comprehension:

The blank organizer aided comprehension because (a) it allowed the participants to focus on the information in the text, (b) the already completed organizer would benefit the students who are physically disabled with limited ability to recall, and (c) having students fill out the graphic organizer after reading was an effective comprehension strategy because it helped students visualize the information. (p. 30)

In all, Özmen found that graphic organizers aid in information recall.

Another means to meet the needs of all students during reading is using leveled graphic organizers (McMackin & Witherell, 2010). Teachers match students to the leveled graphic organizer they can complete independently. With tiered instruction,

organizers ranging from simple to more complex can help to achieve the same instructional goal among students. Tiered graphic organizers are planning tools that students can use to achieve their targeted goal. The organizers could be in the form of taking notes during or after reading. Tiered graphic organizers support differentiation of the process because they guide learners to access contents or knowledge from different ways and varying degrees. Organizers serve as the planning stage or brainstorming step for the end goal or product made. Considering Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD and instruction, the complexity of a task increases from one level to the next for students to progress while remaining within their ZPD and using tiered graphic organizers. For a successful differentiation, teachers need to match students to a leveled organizer so they can achieve their goals.

Specific skills are necessary to help less-experienced readers unpack the information presented within the complexities of text and graphics in modern books (Coleman & McTigue, 2013). Visuals in science textbooks can be challenging for students to comprehend. Coleman and McTigue (2013) used teacher observation and teacher self-reports to describe how teachers positively unpacked the information contained in the graphics of science books. Coleman and McTigue (2013) described how three G2 teachers used graphic analysis to guide their students to find answers to their questions and to develop skills on how to approach the graphics of science in general.

### **Conclusions Drawn Based on the Literature Review**

Skills in informational or expository text are critical to communicating ideas in a global economy (Rowe, 2012). However, research indicates that teachers are not

adequately preparing preschool and early elementary school students for informational text comprehension. A review of current literature indicated that read-aloud informational or expository text bestowed authentic literacy experiences on children, especially in the K-2 age group (Yopp & Yopp, 2012). Cunningham (2009) and other experts such as Akhondi et al. (2011), CCSSI (2010), NEAP (as cited in Georgia Family Connection Partnership, 2010), and Pilonieta (2011) identified read aloud interactive expository text as a critical tool to building reading success. Other researchers, including Read et al. (2008), Maloch (2008), Brown (2008), and Wolsey et al. (2010) noted that using multiple interactive reading strategies enabled students to understand expository text and to read proficiently. However, Pentimonti and Justice (2008), Yopp and Yopp (2012), and Reichenberg (2008) pointed out that teachers use expository texts too sparingly in the classroom and that even those teachers who use expository-text strategies do not seem to know enough to teach explicitly how to use such texts so that students can fully understand what they are reading.

Interactive read-alouds are effective strategies to develop efficiency in reading expository text. The current Common Core Standards require greater inclusion of expository text across all grade levels and content areas. The review of the literature revealed that teachers can teach expository text to students at the primary level to enhance their reading comprehension.

The aforementioned reading strategies, notably read-alouds of expository text, have shown great success in developing reading comprehension and facilitating learning. Review of the related literature provided clear evidence that interactive read aloud

expository-text have implications for practice. Scaffolding, graphic organizers, think-alouds, and text talk, which are four collaborative reading strategies, provide a clear set of procedures to guide teachers in translating research into practice to improve reading proficiency among students in the K-2 age range. Section 3 contains details of the research methods used in the study.

### Section 3: Research Method

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of K-2 teachers regarding read-aloud expository-text instructional practices in their classrooms. I sought to describe how teachers implemented read-aloud expository-text strategies in their classrooms. School district leaders implemented read-aloud practices as part of a district-wide school-improvement plan in five inner-city schools, including Smart ES, which was the site of the study. The study was important because the recently adopted Common Core curriculum reading standards in U.S. schools require that all students, including K-2 children, read more expository text. In addition, according to the School District Board Accountability Committee (BAC) Chevron Report Impact Schools (2015), Smart ES was one of the 11 schools identified for additional support and intervention in order to improve academic achievement.

I conducted a qualitative case study because it was the most suitable method for gathering useful information about individual teachers' perspectives. A quantitative study would involve measuring rather than exploring how educators at SES and the school district used read-aloud expository-text practices to prepare K-2 students for ROGL proficiency requirements. Because my goal was to explore teacher perceptions rather than measure them in some way, an in-depth qualitative approach was optimal.

This section contains a description of the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data. A rationale for my selection of the case study approach precedes explanations of why I rejected other research methods. The section also contains a

description of the research questions and study location. Discussion includes ethical measures, including recruitment of the participants, my role as the researcher, data collection processes and analysis protocols, steps taken to ensure validity and trustworthiness of the data, and the protection of the participants' rights.

### **Research Design**

I selected a case study method to explore the perceptions of K-2 teachers about read-aloud expository-text instructional strategies used in their classrooms. The school district leaders at the selected site implemented read-aloud expository-text strategies to enhance the reading proficiency of children in some inner-city classrooms. Following a qualitative research design allowed me to gather in-depth information by interacting with the participants (Creswell, 2009).

I considered three other research methods (Creswell, 2009; Yin 2014) before selecting a qualitative approach. I considered a quantitative design, which I deemed inappropriate for the study because it involved assigning numeric values to behaviors, thoughts, or attitudes (VanderStoep & Johnston, 2009). Quantitative research is theory oriented and involves examining relationships among variables by using statistical procedures to analyze numbers (Creswell, 2009). The rationale for conducting a qualitative case study was that it allowed me to describe the *how* of a phenomenon without measuring any behaviors (Stake, 2010; Yin, 2014). Therefore, I considered the qualitative approach optimal for the study. Unlike in quantitative studies, my intent was not to present hypotheses, conduct experiments, or analyze information through statistical means; rather, my aim was to describe a phenomenon. Whereas researchers conducting



quantitative studies could show the general effectiveness of a teaching method, researchers conducting qualitative studies would describe, in great detail, approaches to professional practice. Educators can replicate the findings in their classrooms (DeVoogd, 2009).

I also considered a mixed-methods approach, which is usually a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, to address the phenomenon (Cowan, 2012), but the qualitative aspect of a mixed-methods approach focuses on processes rather than outcomes (VanderStoep & Johnston, 2009). Although Cowan (2012) and VanderStoep and Johnston (2009) recommended using a mixed-methods approach to offset the limitations of either qualitative or quantitative methods alone, Yin (2014) recommended a case study approach because it can facilitate an in-depth investigation of a phenomenon within a real-life context. It was my intent to explore the meaning of the phenomenon from the participants' perspectives (Creswell & Clark, 2007) rather than to focus on numeric measures. Therefore, I rejected the mixed-methods approach. I intended to obtain the perceptions of the reading teachers at Smart Elementary School as they described and made sense of their classroom experiences, not to measure their responses objectively.

Considering the research questions set forth in the study, I selected a qualitative case study as the most appropriate approach. VanderStoep and Johnston (2009) described qualitative research as an interpretation of people's experiences. Creswell (2014) suggested the use of "open-ended questions, emerging approaches, text or image data" (p. 18) as some of the methods for qualitative data collection. A self-assessment

demographics questionnaire, individual and collaborative group interviews, reflective journals, and field notes were used as data collection tools.

### **Case Study Methodology**

Yin (2014) supported using a case study when exploring contemporary events because researchers cannot manipulate the relevant behaviors. Identifying the *how* or *why* of a phenomenon is the focus of case study questions. Case study research requires a variety of techniques to gather “context-rich detailed information about a single group or issue” (Bott, 2007, p. 69). Interviewing and keeping field notes of my interactions with the teachers from the inner-city elementary school ensured that I would be able to triangulate the three data sources and gain a rich understanding of the context. The use of multiple sources such as audio-recorded classroom observations, field notes, interviews, and demographic responses enhanced the in-depth perceptions and the validity of the research method (Yin, 2014).

In case studies, researchers sometimes use direct observation of the participants to collect information about individuals or groups (Smeyers, 2008). I conducted the study to ascertain the perspectives of K-2 teachers in an inner-city school, all of whom had implemented read-aloud expository-text strategies as a reading intervention in their classrooms. Even though a limitation of the study was the inclusion of only one inner-city elementary school, the results might advance understanding regarding the implementation of read-alouds of expository text as an instructional strategy of the Common Core curriculum.

### **Restatement of the Research Questions**

The study included two research questions that are following:

*Research Question 1 (RQ 1):* What are the perceptions of the teachers of K-2 students at Smart Elementary School regarding the read-aloud expository-text strategies used in their classrooms?

*Research Question 2 (RQ 2):* What do the teachers of K-2 students at Smart Elementary School perceive to be the challenges of implementing read-aloud expository text strategies in their classrooms?

### **Context for the Study**

#### **Case Study Setting**

This case study was conducted in one of the five inner-city elementary schools located in the southeastern part of one school district in the southeastern United States. For this research, the study school was deidentified. Pseudonyms were used to safeguard personal and private information collected during the study of the five K-2 teachers who volunteered to participate in this study. The teachers were given the same initial as their grade to make it easier for other readers and me to follow the results. The kindergarten teachers are referred to as Kathie and Kallie. The first grade teachers are Frankie and Fallie. The second grade teacher is Shantel. These five K-2 teachers participated in all research activities.

A pseudonym, Smart Elementary School, has been used for the study site to preserve anonymity. Smart ES is a Title I school with 397 students from prekindergarten to Grade 5. In an interview, the principal of the school indicated that 98.65% of the

students receive a free or reduced-price lunch. In addition, 42% of the students are homeless, and the majority of students live less than 1.5 miles from the school. In January 2015, Smart ES relocated from its old site to a new, modern school facility that includes 36 prekindergarten through fifth grade classrooms, an art room, a music room, a computer lab, a media center, and a 6,000-square-foot gymnasium. Primary stakeholders of Smart ES include students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and members of the local community, including the parents, teachers, principal, and local board of education. The study school benefits from a Medical Allied Health collaboration partnership with Mercer University School of Medicine and South University, all of which are located in the southeast.

Despite capital improvements, students at Smart ES continue to experience ROGL deficiency. To address this ROGL deficiency, Smart ES was part of a district- and statewide read-aloud initiative program sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2010) and is currently identified as one of the 11 Impact Schools in the school district (Board Accountability Committee Document, 2015).

### **Justification for the Population**

Students of Smart ES have greater home and community disadvantages than students in other public schools in the studied district. According to the school principal of the study school, Smart ES is a particularly high-poverty urban school with a large proportion of students already reading below grade level by the time of school entry. In order to address the problem of the ROGL proficiency gap, K-2 teachers in the district's five inner city schools were mandated to participate in the district and statewide read-

aloud initiative program sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2010). In addition, within the past 5 years, interactive expository read-aloud instruction has been a requirement for K-2 students (CCSSI, 2011). Therefore, the K-2 teachers at Smart ES continued to participate in the Grade-Level Reading Initiative Program to improve K-2 students' reading deficiency. Also, the Smart ES reading improvement plan included interactive read-aloud expository text instructional strategies such as scaffolding, graphic organizers, think-alouds, and text talk. Smart ES district continued to pursue the ROGL Initiatives. According to the Executive Summary Report for SY 2013-2014, District Accountability Plan Goal 1, Objective A focused on increasing the percentage of students who were reading on grade level by the end of Grades 2, 4, and 7 as measured by SRI scores (District Accountability System, 2013-2014). The district target for SY 2014-2015 was to have at least 90% of students reading on grade level. However, Smart ES continued to experience a reading proficiency gap until SY 2014-2015.

Currently, Smart ES is one of the 11 identified Impact Schools in the school district (Board Accountability Committee Document, 2015). The school's goal was to improve students' achievement and growth as measured by SRI by reducing the percentage of students below reading proficiency by 10% from May 2014 to May 2015. It was my intent as the researcher to explore the benefits and challenges of read-aloud expository text instructional strategies from the perspectives of kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers at Smart ES. In this context, I purposefully chose to explore this contemporary phenomenon in the real-world environment as defined by Creswell (2012).

### **Justification for Sample**

Purposeful sampling was also used to select the five K-2 teacher participants for this qualitative case study. For the study, the sample was both purposeful and convenient because the purpose of the study was to describe teachers' perspectives. I decided to conduct a deep level of inquiry by exploring the perceptions of the K-2 teachers who were mandated to use ROGL initiative program in their instructional practices. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study, purposeful sampling was chosen for the study. An invitation to participate was sent to K-2 teachers at the studied school, and only the teachers who participated in the ROGL program were asked to participate. Criteria for teacher participation included years of teaching service at Smart Elementary School, participation in the K-2 Reading on Grade Level read-aloud program, and working on the Grade K-2 team (Appendix C).

Initially, the targeted sample was all of the 12 kindergarten through Second grade teachers based on mandated participation in the school and district ROGL initiative program. However, based on the selection protocol, only five K-2 teacher participants met the criteria to participate in the study. I selected any teachers who completed and returned the self-assessment questionnaire and consent form (Appendices C, E), which I disseminated to all K-2 teachers by hand at each grade level meeting. Lichtman (2010) and Bott (2007) claimed that samples in a study could be a single unit and small as one individual or as large as an entire school.

Therefore, for the study, the anticipated sample was purposeful and convenient because the purpose of the study was to describe teachers' perspectives, not to test the

result or implications of a treatment or hypotheses regarding effectiveness (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The self-assessment demographic information collected included participants' pseudonyms, grade taught, years of teaching experience, preferred available time, and preferred location for meeting (Appendix G). The participants met the requirements of being state-certified early childhood educators (No Child Left Behind Act, 2002) who had at least three years of teaching experience. Hays and Singh (2012) supported Creswell's (2012) recommendation to have samples of three to five participants in case studies. Table 1 is used to present demographic information collected for this research study.

I selected any teachers who completed and returned the self- assessment questionnaire and consent form (Appendices C, E), which I had disseminated to all K-2 teachers by hand during the grade level meeting. Small, nonrandom samples are a recommendation for qualitative studies (Creswell, 2012; VanderStoep & Johnston, 2009). Case study sample sizes can range from one to more than 30 participants (Woodside, 2010). Therefore, the number of people targeted for the sample dropped from 12 to five K-2 teachers. I still had access to a reasonable number of willing participants to participate in the case study. In addition, no participant was mandated to participate in the study. The five teacher participants who volunteered to participate in the study signed and hand delivered the content letter to me.

Participants were willing to participate in an in-depth, one-on-one private interview and collaborative group interview. During the study, participants kept a daily reflective journal of read-aloud expository text instructions in their classroom for 5 days.

Participants had the choice of submitting two of the reflective journals to me. In essence, this purposive sample of K-2 teachers allowed me to collect rich and authentic information from the participants in their natural setting.

Table 1

*Participant Demographics*

| Teacher name<br>(pseudonym) | Grade taught | Years of<br>teaching<br>experience<br>at Smart<br>Elementary | Available time<br>for meeting | Preferred<br>location for<br>meeting |
|-----------------------------|--------------|--|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Kathie                      | K            | 13   | After school                  | Classroom                            |
| Kate                        | K            | 22   | After school                  | Classroom                            |
| Fallie                      | 1            | 6  | After school                  | Classroom                            |
| Frenchie                    | 1            | 5.5  | After school                  | Classroom                            |
| Shantel                     | 2            | 4  | After school                  | Classroom                            |

During the recruitment of prospective participants through grade team meetings, some K-2 teachers expressed in person that they had not taught for 3 years at Smart Elementary School in response to the letter of invitation. Therefore, they did not respond to the demographic questionnaire or sign the consent form. As a reminder to the reader, for ease of identification I assigned all teachers pseudonyms with the beginning letter sound matching that of their grade level: Kathie and Kate (kindergarten teacher



participants' pseudonyms); Fallie and Frenchie (first grade teacher participants' pseudonyms); and Shantel (second grade teacher participant's pseudonym).

As the above table shows, all participants who volunteered were kindergarten through second grades teachers. Two of the participants were kindergarten teachers, while two were first grade teachers, and one was a second grade teacher. Other K through 2 teachers expressed that they were not aware of the implementation of any school-wide reading strategies probably because they just joined the school staff. All the data collected were used to explore the teachers' beliefs, implementations, and the challenges of using read-aloud expository text in K-2 classrooms.

### **Measures for the Ethical Protection of Human Subjects**

Ethical procedures as established by Walden University's research protocol were followed. In order to maintain proper measures in caring for the rights of all the participants, I satisfactorily completed the national Institute of Health human research protection course. I received the approval to conduct the research from the Institutional Review Board at Walden University (IRB). My approval number was 08-20-14-00052854. This process was a prerequisite to guarantee that the method used to conduct the research activity was a minor liability to the teachers in the study. Additionally, the IRB assured that no ethical issues would violate the rights of the participant in the research process.

The participants' information was not linked or shared with anyone and only I, had access to the raw data. The language in the content form was stated to avoid confusion. My colleague, an educator with a doctoral degree and experience, peer-

reviewed the interview questions for clarity. No transcripts were identified by the participant's name. There were no major foreseeable risks or anticipated discomforts with either the interviews or document collections. The probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research were not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life. However, all participants were given the option to answer only questions they felt comfortable answering during the interviews. The research objectives were communicated in the consent letters and participants are reassured before interview that their information will be kept in the filing cabinet in the teacher's classroom and I only would have access to the password. The information would be transferred later to my house where it will be locked in a fire proof locked filing cabinet during the study and for a period of 5 years after the study. Participants will have the opportunity to discuss their concerns with me.

### **Procedure for Gaining Access to Participants**

After receiving the authorization to conduct the research from the Institutional Review Board of Walden University (IRB), I secured access to the research site by seeking the approval of the gatekeepers, including the principal and the district school superintendent (Creswell, 2012). No participants were contacted or data collected prior to receiving IRB approval. With permission from the principal, I attended K-2 grade level meetings to share my research with them and to recruit participants.

At the meeting, I provided information about the study to the grade-level teachers. I introduced myself as a researcher and briefly shared my interest in an interactive read-aloud expository-text study. After the briefing, each teacher received a packet. The

packet included the introductory letter, letter of invitation to participate in the study (Appendix B), a self-assessment demographic questionnaire (Appendix C), and consent form (Appendix E). The participants were informed that if they were willing to participate in the study, they should return the signed consent form and the completed self-assessment demographic questionnaire form to me. All participants were informed through a consent form that participation and completion of the study is voluntary and that their confidentiality, identity, and any information they share would be protected (Appendix E). Consent forms and self-assessment demographic form were distributed to all the K-12 teachers at the grade level meetings. All forms were completed and returned in a sealed envelope provided to the participants. Envelopes were either hand delivered or dropped in the researcher's mailbox. Completion of the forms indicated participant's willingness to take part in the study. In addition, participants received a countersigned consent form by hand deliver for their personal records. All participants were informed through a consent form that participation and completion of the study was voluntary and that their confidentiality, identity, and any information they shared would be protected (Appendix E).

### **Role of the Researcher**

Most importantly, my ultimate goal as a teacher researcher was to improve the lives of students by always seeking to discover better and more effective ways of implementing teaching and learning. Using research based read aloud strategies has been successful for me as a teacher. I was a second grade teacher in the research site school. I was an employee of the district with 14 years of teaching experience. I chose the location

because of my interest in teacher action research and using data to improve the local school practices. As a teacher researcher, I wanted to use relevant information about teaching and learning in the actual classrooms and apply it to my school environment. An important part of this was to come to interviews legitimately curious about learning the meanings that each of the five kindergarten through second grade teachers perceived about the benefits and challenges of interactive expository text instructional strategies. Their perceptions were the goal and it was important that I tried to understand each participants' ideas without imposing my own. This was especially important as I was a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher, with knowledge of the reading strategies. This knowledge helped me to interpret the teachers' meanings, but it also could mean that I could think they said one thing, when they meant another. To guard against this I frequently probed them for more information. My connections to the research problem justified the use of qualitative research case study approach as explained by Janestick (2011). However, my personal biases were minimal because I did not have supervisory authority over the teachers. In order to avoid biased or conflict data report, I utilized multiple strategies of validity that will ensure reader confidence in the accuracy of the findings as suggested by Creswell (2012). The multiple strategies included, triangulation, member checking, researcher's reflection, corroboration of data, and peer review.

### **Method of Establishing Researcher-Participant Relationships**

Having served as a second grade teacher for eight years at the selected research site, I have established a professional relationship with members of the school's instructional who were employed at the site during the time. I was familiar with the

second grade contents and curriculum. Although, I worked with some of the teacher participant K-2 in different capacities in the school such as 21st Century after school program, Summer School, and School Late Duty while gathering data I did not experience any conflicts or challenges that could have negatively impacted previously established professional relationship.

At the time of recruitment some of the participants were aware of the researcher's teaching role, and the following measures were taken to separate the researcher's dual roles and minimize perceived coercion to participate. As a colleague involved in study, participants were reminded that as a facilitator I was not in a position of authority or reporting, allowing participation in the study without retribution. Prospective participants may withdraw consent in order to decline participating in this study. Additionally, the amount of time to conduct the investigation could limit responses to the study. However, the interview allowed for a rich dialog as participants interacted and discussed diverse opinions and ideas. The self-report bias answers to interview questions may have threatened the validity and reliability of the study. However, individual participant member checked the transcribed transcripts in order to make sure that there was no bias in the data analysis.

At the recruiting, during the kindergarten through second grade planning meeting, I provided information about the study to the grade-level teachers. I introduced myself as a researcher and briefly shared my interest in an interactive read-aloud expository-text study. After the briefing, each teacher received a packet. The packet included the introductory letter, letter of invitation to participate in the study (Appendix B), a self-

assessment demographic questionnaire (Appendix C), and consent form (Appendix E). The participants were informed that if they were willing to participate in the study, they should return the signed consent form and the completed self-assessment demographic questionnaire form to me. The participants were instructed to either hand-deliver the packet to me or place it in an agreed-upon safe place for my subsequent retrieval. Once I received the information, participants received a countersigned consent form for their personal records. Then I followed up with the participants to schedule interview sessions.

Member checking took place within 24 hours after the interviews were conducted. By allowing the participants to check over the data, the credibility of data was obtained and the chance of misconception was minimized. Even though, I conducted the study on my immediate work setting, I did not experience hardship during the data collection process. Participants were less anxious. The participants' attitudes were noted in my field note (see Appendix). In order to avoid biased or compromised report, multiple strategies of validity were utilized to create reader confidence in the accuracy of the findings as suggested by Creswell (2012).

### **Data Collection Procedures**

I scheduled data collection after I obtained permission to conduct the study from the IRB of Walden University. For ease of identification I assigned all teachers pseudonyms with the beginning letter sound matching that of their grade level. Specifically, Kathie and Kate (kindergarten teacher participants pseudonyms); Fallie and Frenchie (first grade teacher participants pseudonyms); Shantel (Second grade teacher participant pseudonyms).

I completed the letter of cooperation (Appendix A) with the district superintendent and the principal of the school where the study took place. Then, I began data collection. In a case study, researchers can use a variety of data collection procedures to collect detailed information. Yin (2014) highlighted the following six major sources of data: (a) documentation, (b) archival records, (c) interviews, (d) direct observations, (e) participant observation, and (f) physical artifacts. To address my two research questions, I used three methods of data collection: interviews, both individual and as a collaborative group, (Appendix F; Appendix G), Teachers' Reflective Journals (Appendix H), and field notes. Table 1 illustrates the research questions driving this study and the data collection process.

Table 2

*The Data Collection Process*

| Research questions  | Individual interview | Reflective journal | Collaborative interview | Researcher's field notes |
|---|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| RQ1: What are the perceptions of the teachers of K-2 students at Smart Elementary School regarding the read-aloud expository-text strategies used in their classrooms?        | X                    | X                  |                         | X                        |
| RQ2: What do the teachers of K-2 students at Smart Elementary School perceive to be the challenges of implementing read-aloud expository-text strategies in their classrooms? |                      | X                  | X                       | X                        |

As Table 1 indicates, Research Question 1 was answered by collecting data via individual interviews, reflective journals, and field notes. Research question 2 was answered by collecting data via a group (collaborative) interview, reflective journal, and field notes. Data was collected in four stages, which took four weeks total. These four weeks or phases are described in detail in the next paragraphs.

**Phase 1 (First Week)**

Following the receipt of the approval to collect data from the IRB, I recruited participants for the study. During Phase 1 of the study, I sought permission from K-2 grade chairpersons to attend their planning meeting. At the meeting, I provided information about the study to the grade-level teachers. I introduced myself as a researcher and briefly shared my interest in an interactive read-aloud expository-text



study. After the briefing, each teacher received a packet. The packet included the introductory letter, letter of invitation to participate in the study (Appendix B), a self-assessment demographic questionnaire (Appendix C), and consent form (Appendix E). The participants were informed that if they were willing to participate in the study, they should return the signed consent form and the completed self-assessment demographic questionnaire form to me. The participants were instructed to either hand-deliver the packet to me or place it in an agreed-upon safe place for my subsequent retrieval. Once I received the information, participants received a countersigned consent form for their personal records. Then I followed up with the participants to schedule an interview time.

### **Phase 2 (Second Week)**

During Phase 2, I conducted individual interviews (Appendix F). Interviews are an important source of case study evidence. Interviews in a case study are unstructured, guided conversations (Yin, 2014). The most widely used qualitative data collection tool was the interview. Qualitative interviewing methods might include engaging the participants in conversations through structured or semi structured interviews, focus groups, indepth interviews, casual interviews, or online interviews (Lichtman, 2010). The study involved fully exploring the participating teachers' perspectives of read-aloud expository-text instruction. Short case study interviews were preferable for the study. The essence of this formal meeting was for the researcher to be able to capture an interviewee's own perceptions and own sense of meaning (Yin, 2014).

The participants participated in individual interviews at a secure private location at the time most convenient for them within the school setting. I ensured that all

interviews followed the same format for each interviewee (Appendices F). All interview questions were reviewed for clarity by a colleague and educator with doctorate.

The focus of the first individual interviews was on the teachers' perceptions of read-aloud expository text instructional strategies. The duration of the interview was 45-60 minutes. Because according to Rubin and Rubin (2012), transcribing interviews "forces you to pay attention to what the interviewee said and helps you prepare for the next interview" (p. 204), after each interview, I immediately transcribed it and shared the transcription with the interviewee to obtain immediate feedback about the effectiveness of certain questions, shape the direction of future observations, and provide the opportunity to discover gaps in the data that I might be able to rectify immediately.

Transcripts were examined by interviewees to ensure accuracy. By allowing the participants to check over the data, the credibility of data was raised and the chance of error was minimized. Each participant was instructed to edit any missing or incorrect information. I also used field notes to capture natural events during the interviews (Dana and Silva, 2012; Ness, 2011; Delacruz, 2013; and Akhondi et al., 2011). Researcher's field notes are the most common component of a database (Yin, 2014). During research, researchers use field notes to capture actions during observations (Dana & Silva, 2011). Other field notes may be the result of interviews or document analysis (Yin, 2014). Many of my field notes involved recording events that took place during the individual and collaborative interviews.

**Phase 3 (Third Week)**

During the third week of data collection, I collected each teacher participant's structured reflective journals (Appendix H). Each participant wrote reflections on any two expository lessons taught in their classrooms. Each participating teacher kept a reflective journal of a 20-25-minute read aloud expository-text lesson taught in class for a week. Participants submitted any two of the reflective journals to me. Participants used the following guiding prompts to write the daily reflective journal. Reflective journals were used to capture the participants' thoughts processes regarding their instructional actions, decisions, and evaluation of the lesson.

**Phase 4 (Third Week)**

Collaborative interviews are group interviews (Appendix G). Cowan (2012) and Creswell (2014) described interactive interviews as social interactions between interviewers and interviewees that facilitate opportunities to articulate and engage in open dialogue. Creswell and Clark (2011) suggested conducting on-site interviews to explore a more in-depth understanding of participants' opinions and beliefs. The group interview allowed for a rich dialogue as participants interacted and discussed diverse opinions and ideas. Questions were constructed to invite a group discussion; they encouraged the interviewees to elaborate on their challenges in implementing the school-wide, selected read-aloud expository text strategies at SES. The interview also asked for suggestions to improve read-aloud expository-text instruction (Appendix F; Appendix G).

Upon the completion of the interview, I made arrangements for member checking of the data. I transcribed the interview within 24 hours after the interview took place.

Each participant received a copy of the transcript to check. Member checking for accuracy by individual participants was important in order to make sure that there was no error in the transcript. By allowing the participants to check over the data, the credibility of data was raised and the chance of misconception was minimized. Each participant added or deleted any missing or incorrect information.

### **Data Storage**

One of the principles of data collection as outlined by Yin (2014) was creating a case study database. This principle concerns the organization and documentation of the data collected. I have preserved all the materials collected from the field daily in a portfolio contained in a locked file drawer to which only I have access. I gradually created a case study database that contains all the data collected, including the field notes that I organized, categorized, completed, and scanned to ensure they are available to access later. The scanned data is in a retrievable form. Data was placed on a flash drive purposely designated for the storage of data collected during the study. The flash drive also contained the scanned copies of all handwritten documents in PDF form. By storing the data in this way, primary and secondary files of documents will be readily retrievable for later inspection or perusal (Yin, 2014). The flash drive was placed in a sealed envelope and locked in a secure, fireproof cabinet in my house. Only I have access to the cabinet's lock. This document will be secured for 5 years according to Walden University's requirement.

### **Data Analysis**

This section presents the steps involved in analyzing the data. All data was transcribed at each collection. I read through all the data to have a general sense of the information. Then, I started recording general ideas. I began detailed content analysis with a coding process. I made an interpretation or meaning of the data. Data was coded by line analysis based on emergent and/or pre-determined major themes (selected, school-wide instructional strategies such as scaffolding, think-aloud, text features/structure, and graphic organizers). Demographic information, including years teaching, was recorded.

I sorted and analyzed field notes and teachers' reflective journals on a daily basis. Field notes and journals were organized, categorized, completed, and available for later access (Yin, 2014). I reread field notes and journals to develop themes through inductive reasoning. As suggested by Corbin and Strauss (2008), I used a coding system to analyze and identify patterns and themes emerging from the data. Throughout the data collection process, I revisited the research questions and the selected, school-wide instructional strategies to ensure the methods employed lead to answers for each guiding question (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Data was labeled, compared, and coded into themes. Finally, I compared and coded the data collected in the collective interviews, reflective journals, and field notes into themes.

### **Validity**

Validity and reliability ensure the trustworthiness of a study. Jackson (2011) noted, "Validity refers to whether a measure is truthful or genuine" (p. 71). For a test to

be valid, it must be reliable, and it must measure what researchers intend they will measure each time they use it. The language in the content letter was well stated to avoid confusion. A colleague, an educator with a doctoral degree, peer-reviewed the interview questions for clarity. I used multiple strategies in the qualitative case study. Researchers can use two or more methods of data collection in the study of human behavior to compare the many sources of evidence to determine the accuracy of the phenomenon with methodological triangulation (Coleman & Briggs, 2002).

According to Woodside (2010), case study research is “an inquiry that focuses on describing, understanding, predicting, and controlling the individual” (p. 1). Creswell (2012) supported the use of multiple strategies for several reasons, validity being one of them. First, I used multiple research tools to validate any biases resulting from conducting backyard research. Second, collecting data through diverse strategies of inquiry or with multiple tools provided a robust accounting from multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2012). I, therefore, analyzed, examined, and constantly compared collected data and categorized each. Similar findings from multiple sources of data confirmed the accuracy, trustworthiness, and validity of the collected information. Multiple data sources allowed me to triangulate the findings. Member checking was used as part of triangulation which helped to identify and verify emergent themes, as well as discover discrepant cases.

### **Summary**

In this section, I explained the design and the research methods used for the study. The section also contained discussions of the rationale for conducting qualitative

research, including research tradition; detailed information about the researcher's role; and the need to secure permission to conduct the study, obtain the participants' consent, provide protection for human subjects, and ensure the confidentiality of their identities and information. I also explained the data collection and data analysis procedures in detail. Section 4 contains the results and findings of the study. Conclusions were drawn based on the findings and offer recommendations for practical application and future research.

## Section 4: Results and Findings

### **Introduction**

Teachers are challenged by the urge to adequately meet the needs of students who display reading deficiency in elementary schools. The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions of K-2 teachers regarding the challenges and benefits of using read-aloud expository or informational text to improve K-2 students' reading proficiency. Specifically, the study included teachers' planning and rationale for their actions of engaging students in expository text interactive read-aloud strategies, specifically the four mandated at this school: scaffolding, graphic organizers, think-aloud, and text talk. These four strategies were enforced by the Smart ES along with the school district-mandated read aloud initiative program organized for the five inner city schools in the district. The motivation for this study developed from both my personal experiences and the literature on teaching reading skills, which confirmed the necessity of implementing interactive read-aloud expository-text strategies in order to enhance reading proficiency in schools.

### **Process of Generating, Gathering of Data**

I recruited the participants in September 2014, during the prospective teachers' grade level team meetings. Individual demographic reports were collected on the participants using Self-Assessment Demographics Questionnaires (see Appendix C). I collected data using both direct and indirect data collection. The data collection tools included demographic questionnaire, individual interviews, collaborative interviews, teachers' reflective journals, and my field notes. These 5 data sources were used to



present the findings under each item. I used the interview protocol written in the individual guiding questions to ask questions during the interviews (see Appendix F). In preparation for individual interviews, participants were provided with individual guiding questions (see Appendix F) related to Research Question 1. A similar process was used during the collaborative interview. Each participant was also provided with interview prompts for the collaborative interview guiding participants' responses to Research Question 2 (see Appendix G). The interview guiding questions provided structure for the data collection.

Participants used the guiding prompts outlined in the reflective journal prompt to write the daily reflective journal (see Appendix H). Reflective journals were used to capture the participants' thought processes regarding their instructional actions, decisions, and evaluation of lessons. For easy monitoring of data, I developed a summary log of the data collection (see Appendix I). The summary also helped to ensure the accuracy of the data collected.

Researchers' field notes are the most common component of a database (Yin, 2014). I used field notes to record events that took place during face-to-face individual and collaborative interviews. Field notes capture natural events during interviews (Akhondi et al., 2011; Delacruz, 2013; Ness, 2011).

### **Systems Used for Keeping Track of Data**

After each interview, I debriefed myself using a researcher's log to record what thoughts and ideas occurred to me during the interview. My handwritten field notes were simple descriptions of events on index cards. Later, I digitally scanned the cards, put the

images into a Word document, and electronically stored them along with the other data. on my password protected computer. The cards were destroyed.

I preserved all the materials collected from the field each day in a portfolio contained in a locked file drawer to which only I have access. I gradually created a case study database that contained all the data collected, including the field notes that I organized, categorized, completed, and scanned to ensure that they would be available to access later. The scanned data were in a retrievable form. I placed data on a flash drive designated for the storage of data collected during the study. The flash drive also contained the scanned copies of all handwritten documents in PDF form. In this way, primary and secondary files of documents will be readily retrievable for later inspection or perusal (Yin, 2014). I placed the flash drive in a sealed envelope and locked it in a secure, fireproof cabinet in my home. Only I have access to the cabinet and its lock. This document will be secured for 5 years, according to Walden University's requirement. The transcripts will be destroyed after 5 years.

### **Data Analysis**

Data from interview transcripts, the five teachers' reflective journals, and field notes were analyzed to determine the perceptions of benefits and challenges held by the K-2 teachers from Smart ES. According to Yin (2014), data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or recombining evidence to produce empirically based findings. After reading through each interview, I transcribed it and then reread the transcription of each interview several times. While reading each transcript, I wrote notes, listed ideas, and looked for certain vocabulary that each

individual participant used. I looked for information that answered the research questions. I compared the responses describing common experiences, then combined the responses in order to discern patterns in the information.

Creswell (2014) suggested that data analysis should begin with a coding process. As I read the interview responses, I identified codes based on the patterns through the systematic analysis and constant comparison of data sets. Then I conceptualized and labeled the data by the phenomena and then gave each phenomenon a color code (Table 3). Rubin and Rubin (2011) suggested that color-coding each section based on codes is the beginning step in analysis. As I color-coded each interview into sections and identified codes, five themes emerged in the data. Color-coding and highlighting text allowed me to visualize the data so that I could reexamine the data at a later date (Hatch, 2010). The coded interview responses were kept in a Microsoft Word document in a tabular form. I made a copy of the coded data and then cut out the color-coded sections. I sorted and labeled the coded data into themes according to topics. I reexamined each theme to ensure that everything in the theme related to the label. I made changes as needed, which included combining or deleting themes.

After the interview transcripts were coded and themes were recognized under each research question, I shared the findings with the participants as a form of member checking. The practice of sharing the findings with the participants ensured that the interpretation accurately reflected the participants' perspectives. I analyzed the data collected during the interviews using open coding. The predetermined codes and each assigned color code that I used as a starting point of analysis can be found in Table 3.

Next, I used Microsoft Word to sort and create a document for each common code. I then analyzed the interview responses for each code and prepared a summary of key terms and ideas.

Table 3

*Qualitative Analysis Codes*

| Code description                      | Color for code |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| Perception of implementation          | Yellow         |
| Perceptions of benefits               | Purple         |
| Perceptions of situational strategies | Aqua           |
| Perception of explanations for use    | Green          |
| Perceptions of challenges             | Red            |
| Perceptions of needs for support      | Gray           |

### **Results and Findings**

Two major research questions were used to identify the participants' perspectives and challenges regarding read-aloud expository text in kindergarten through Grade 2 at Smart Elementary School:

*Research Question 1 (RQ 1):* What are the perceptions of the teachers of K-2 students at Smart Elementary School regarding the read-aloud expository-text strategies used in their classrooms?

*Research Question 2 (RQ 2):* What do the teachers of K-2 students at Smart Elementary School perceive to be the challenges of implementing read-aloud expository-text strategies in their classrooms?

The most obvious theme that became apparent while coding the interview transcripts are discussed in this section (see Table 4). The following section presents analysis of the information gathered from interviews, reflective journals, and group interviews with the five participants. Qualitative individual interviews provided rich data that was supported by the findings of the collaborative interviews, the reflective journals, and field notes. For each of the themes there is an explanation regarding their emergence from the data. All interviews, reflective journals, collaborative interview and field notes were used to develop a cross-case analyses of the teachers' perceptions and challenges with using expository text read-aloud strategies.

When coding the data, six central themes emerged from the interview data: (a) teachers' perceptions of implementing of read-aloud expository text, (b) teachers' perceptions on benefits (c) teachers' perceptions on situational strategies (d) teachers' perceptions on explanations for use (e) teachers' read-aloud challenges, and (f) teachers' needs for support (see Table 4).

Table 4

*Derived Themes*

| Six main themes of teachers' perception | Research questions |
|---|--------------------|
|   | RQ1                |
| 1. Implementation                       | Subquestion 1      |
| 2. Teachers' benefits                   | Subquestion 2      |
| 3. Situational strategies               | Subquestion 3      |
| 4. Explanation for use                  | Subquestion 4      |
| 5. Challenges                           | Subquestion 5      |
| 6. Support                              | RQ2                |

**Findings**

The next section includes the discussion, beginning with research sub-question 1. I then described each theme. This is repeated until all themes are listed and explained. In the following section, I also discussed each theme and provided supporting evidence for its relevance in this study with supporting evidence for each theme I found. In this section, I discussed and provided support for each theme that emerged.

*Research Question 1 (RQ 1):* What are the perceptions of the teachers of K-2 teachers at Smart ES regarding the read-aloud expository-text strategies used in their classrooms?

**Theme 1: Teachers' Perceptions of Implementation**

This section provides detailed examples of teachers' perceptions about the implementation of read-aloud expository-text instructional strategies by K-2 teacher participants in their classrooms. Data analyzed for this theme were individual interview, teacher reflective journal, and relevant parts of the collaborative interview and researcher's field note.

**Individual interview.** All five participants interviewed for this study claimed to implement read-aloud expository text every day and for different reasons in their classrooms. Kathie, Fallie, and Shantel claimed that the read-aloud expository text was mandatory with the implementation of the Common Core curriculum in all American Schools (CCSS, 2010). Kathie also reflected positively on the previous school year when the strategies were enforced through bi-weekly data collection of when and what strategies teachers had used. This was part of the enforcement effort as the school wide reading intervention by the administrators and principals. Kathie expressed, “I do read-aloud all the time.” The participant also implemented the strategies in other subject areas.

Kate used read-aloud expository text to guide units of study in the kindergarten class. Fallie used a lot of read-aloud expository texts with her first grades during science and social studies times to help understand the concepts. Similarly, Frenchie infused read-aloud expository-text instructional strategies throughout multiple subject areas within the classroom.” Finally, Shantel reiterated, “with the implementation of the Common Core in American schools, the integration of expository-text is mandatory. I cannot but integrate expository-text into all content areas using interactive read alouds.”

**Teachers’ reflective journal.** The participants’ reflective journal supported the participants’ perceptions of the implementation of read-aloud expository text strategies in their classrooms. Each teacher participant selected two reflections out of their one week lesson reflection on read aloud expository text lessons implemented. Kathie’s journal reflected social lesson taught utilizing read aloud expository text strategy. Kathie had a three-day lesson on the Statue of Liberty using KQLI chart organizer. In another

reflective journal, Kate utilized text talk and scaffolding when he read a nonfiction book entitled *Winter's Tail: How One Little Dolphin Learned to Swim* by Craig Hatkoff, Juliana Hatkoff, and Isabella Hatkoff during one of the class reading sessions. Fallie wrote in her journal, "I used scaffolding and text talk when the class read about a historical figure- Thomas Jefferson." Similarly, Frenchie also utilized read-aloud expository-text strategies during a social studies lesson. Finally, Shantel implemented read aloud expository text when she taught.

**Collaborative interviews.** Theme 1 was personal. During the individual interview each participant self-reported how read-aloud expository text instruction was implemented in their classroom. Hence, there was no data to support this theme from the collaborative interview.

It is evident from the finding in theme 1 that there is a curricular rationale for the implementation of read aloud-expository text instruction by the teacher participants. Participants were mandated by the state and federal government to implement the reading strategies. Theme 1 also revealed that that teachers approach the classroom with different perspectives and knowledge of read aloud expository text instruction.

## **Theme 2: Teachers' Perceptions of Benefits**

All the participants claimed that there are benefits for implementing read aloud expository text their various classrooms.

**Individual interview.** Kathie and Kate, kindergarten teachers used read aloud expository text to guide Common Core units of study. Kate said, "It is through read-aloud expository text instructional strategies that her students acquire and retain content



knowledge and content specific abilities. Fallie used the expository reading strategies to help students understand science and social study concepts. Compared to the past curriculum used in schools, Fallie liked the Common Core unit better. The first grade teacher said that Common Core has the suggested book along with the unit, unlike when teachers had to create their own unit. The participant further expressed that think aloud and pair share strategies build stronger reading comprehension foundation.

**Teachers' reflective journal.** Findings in this section are based on what the participants wrote in their reflective journals. Kathie included in her journal that the lesson was very effective. With scaffolding, students connected the story to life. Kate wrote that her kindergarten were excited and motivated when she used the KQLI chart to teach the Statue of Liberty. Fallie included in her journal that the strategies used in her lesson also prepare a solid foundation of understanding that enable her students further comprehend expository texts. To Frenchie, read aloud expository texts are vital to her first grade students to fully understand text and build comprehension skills. Lastly, Shantel claimed in her journal that her second grade found Frayer organizer useful because they are visual learners. And she wrote, "When my students can write and or draw representations of information, they tend to retain the knowledge better. Above all, the participants' reflections claimed that the lessons were successful. All the participants expressed that students were active and participatory in the lessons.

**Collaborative interview.** During collaborative interview few responses were made concerning the benefits of expository text. Kathie claimed that she used read aloud strategies to hold students' attention. Kate claimed the she also used think-aloud and text

talk strategies. Kate believed students acquire and retain content knowledge and content specific abilities through read-aloud expository text instructional strategies. Fallie perceived that read aloud expository text is research based, it makes content learning easy and helps students' comprehension. To be specific, Fallie found text talk research based and good for both children who can read and cannot read fluently. Shantel expressed that many of the second grade students are interested in the expository text because it is real life. Specifically, the four square model-Frayer Model is used to provoke students' thought about new concept during think-aloud. Students utilized the visual to describe the meaning of a word or concept.

### **Theme 3: Teachers' Perception of Situational Strategies**

It was difficult to identify the most used or least used strategies among the strategies under investigation. The data collection tools did not measure frequencies. Teacher participants were inconsistent in their responses above, and below. Therefore, this section discussed situational strategies used among the participants. Those that participants felt were best for their particular situation.

**Individual interview.** During the individual interview, the kindergarten teachers expressed that they did not use any organizers with the kindergarten students. Kathie expressed, "I use a lot of organizers (cheaters) to teach reading skills. The kindergarten teacher participant also scaffold think-aloud. Kate explained that students utilize think aloud and scaffold to acquire and retain content knowledge and content specific abilities. Fallie responded, "Pulling out vocabulary words and using think-aloud, and pair share are

a few strategies that are used during read alouds.” Frenchie used text talk strategies to teach nonfiction texts. And Shantel used Frayer Model organizer.

**Teachers’ reflective journals.** Kathie listed the following as all the read-aloud expository text strategies used in her kindergarten class: Use of prior knowledge, think-aloud, KQLI (Know Question Learner Illustrated) chart, and visual display. During the lesson, Kathie observed that visual display was most effective while the most challenging strategy was the questioning section on the graphic organizer. It was very hard for the students to come up with questions, she explained. Therefore, Kathie did a think-aloud model on how to come up with logical questions. Kate wrote one reflection using read aloud expository text and the other reflection using fiction text. The fiction text was not included in this data. In the expository text lesson, Kate used text talk strategy.

In Fallie’s reflective journal, read aloud expository text strategies list were: pictures, graphic organizers, acting out words, and games. The most effective out of the strategies were word games and acting out the words. The most challenging was graphic organizers. Fallie felt that the students were so young and they lack strong writing skills. Frenchie used a series of text talk in addition to other learned read aloud strategies from the district professional learning. Frenchie listed many strategies but she wrote, “Of the strategies listed, the think-aloud strategies are the most effective. This week, the biggest challenge with first grade was independent completion of organizer. Finally, Shantel listed all the following as read-aloud expository text used with second grade students: visual displays, think-aloud using higher-order thinking questions, graphic organizers,

and links to fictional texts, self and world. In the journal, Shantel indicated using graphic organizers to teach vocabulary as very effective and challenging.

**Collaborative interview.** Kathie used “Words Their Way” frequently to support read aloud expository text strategies. Other strategies used were drawing/labeling, think peer, and Pair Share. Kathie used a lot of organizers (cheaters) with reading skills. Open-ended questions was the least successful. Kathie believed that answering open ended questions involve higher order thinking skills. She further explained, “any time a student has to use higher- order thinking skills, difficulty arises. Using higher-order thinking strategies are hard for kindergarteners because they are beginning to learn how to read.” Kate found think-aloud most useful with her kindergarten. She used scaffolding, to provoke the students’ thoughts.

Kate expressed, “most children do not know how to process their thoughts or make inferences.” Kate seldom used organizers with her kindergarten students. She explained, “The least successful read-aloud strategy used in my class was the Organizers. Students struggle with organizing their ideas or thoughts.” In Fallie’s first grade class, think-aloud is the least successful. Fallie explained, “think-aloud for my first grade is very challenging. The cognition is not there.” Fallie believed that think-aloud is age inappropriate to her first grade students. The strategy most used and successful was text talk. Using text talk in Fallie’s class makes the expository text real-world participatory.

In Frenchie’s first grade class, think-aloud during text talk was most used and successful. Participants uses multiple learning styles and modalities. Frenchie explained, “due to the demand of most logical thinking and lack of logical thinking skills on the part

of my students, I use think-aloud strategy.” The least strategy used in Frenchie’s class was Organizers due to lack of time. Frenchie said, “It takes a longer time for my students to complete their chart.” In second grade, the most successful strategy was using the Frayer Model to teach vocabulary, text feature to identify headings, side bars, captions, and diagrams. Shantel found the four-square Frayer model useful in provoking students’ thought about new concept during think about and to describe the meaning of a word.

Table 5

*Strategies, Resources, and Content Areas for Expository Text Read-Alouds*

| Strategies  | KG Kathie   | KG Kate   | 1 <sup>st</sup> Fallie   | 1 <sup>st</sup> Frenchie   | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Shantel   |
|---|---|---|--|--|---|
| Text talk   | None  | Text talk   | Text talk  | Text talk (frequently used)  | None  |
| Think-aloud   | Think aloud   | Think aloud   | Think aloud  | Think aloud (most effective in the reflective journal)   | Think aloud (reflective journal)  |
| Scaffolding   | Scaffolding   | Scaffolding   | Scaffolding  | Scaffolding  | None  |
| Organizers  | Organizer<br>KQLI(Know<br>Question Learned<br>Illustration)<br>Drawing<br>Labeling                | Visual display  | Organizers<br>KWL Chart<br>Drawing<br>Vocabulary word<br>chart   | Organizers<br>Foldables<br>Venn diagrams<br>Visual displays  | Organizer<br>Frayer model<br>Visual displays  |
| Others:<br>Strategies that<br>were used to<br>support<br>expository text<br>read-alouds | Think Peer<br>Pair Share<br>“Words Their Ways”<br>Higher order<br>thinking through<br>questioning | Prior knowledge<br>questioning  | Questioning<br>Pair share<br>Field trips<br>Real word<br>participation<br>Acting out<br>Words<br>Games | Relational<br>situation<br>Multistep thinking<br>Strategy<br>Prior knowledge<br>Word games<br>Gesture<br>Acting<br>Out/modeling<br>Repetition<br>Links to fictional<br>stories | Higher order -thinking<br>questions<br>Links to fictional texts,<br>self, and world                       |
| Resources   | Magazines   | Books from the<br>school library<br>resources<br>Personal book<br>collections | Magazine<br>CC books<br>Text talk kit<br>“Explaining<br>Reading” book<br>Teachers blog                 | Health magazines<br>Scholastic texts<br>Text talk kit  | Nonfiction<br>Online articles<br><a href="http://www.tumblebooks.com">www.tumblebooks.com</a><br>Bookflix |
| Content areas<br>implemented in<br>reflective<br>journals                               | All content Areas<br>Science  | Science units<br>Social study   | Science<br>Social study  | All content areas<br>Social studies  | All content areas<br>Science  |

*Note.* Abbreviations include KG for Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> for first grade, and 2<sup>nd</sup> for second grade.

#### **Theme 4: Teachers' Perceptions of Explanations for Use**

Teacher participants expressed various reasons for using the selected read aloud expository text strategies in their classrooms. Findings in this section were generated from Individual interviews, collaborative interview, and Teacher Reflective Journal.

**Individual interview.** Kathie used read aloud expository text strategies to guide units of study. Participants also discussed what some other teachers perceived about implementing expository text strategy. Kathie expressed that some kindergarten teachers perceived that think-aloud strategy and the other expository text with the kindergartens are difficult for the students to comprehend due to lack of deep reading or in-depth reading in kindergarten. However, Kate claimed that some teachers believe that read-aloud expository text helps kindergarten by pulling books to kindergarten. Kate further explained, "It makes it easier to pull in our social studies and science curriculum. In addition, some teachers perceived that students learn how important it is to read and think about the features in the text. According to Fallie, "some teachers express that many students lack the background knowledge and are unable to connect while Frenchie stated, "Most teachers feel that it is necessary to use expository-text read-alouds but often find it difficult to fit in with so many demands on the teacher in the modern classroom." Above all, Shantel felt that teachers enjoy using expository text during read-aloud time because it exposes students to high-interest text which leads to higher levels of comprehension.

**Teachers' reflective journal.** Kathie used the selected strategies in her lesson because she found them to be effective with the type of class that she had. The strategies

were very engaging and the students seemed to like it and stayed on task. Kate stated that the strategy used enabled the kindergarten make connection to real life. According to Frenchie read aloud expository are vital to the students fully understanding text and building comprehension skills. Fallie explained “I create experience for the students that allow them to build background knowledge of the subject matter.” Frenchie also claimed that think aloud helps students learn how to think and eventually how to communicate their thinking through writing. Shantel claimed that the use of organizer was helpful to the second grade students because they are primarily visual learners. They tend to retain knowledge better when they write and draw representations of information.

**Collaborative interview.** Kathie responded, “Think aloud and scaffolding help students internalize the words. Kate responded that scaffolding is used to support her students’ learning. It is through read aloud expository text that students retain content knowledge and content specific abilities. Fallie claimed that text talk has been found to be a very useful resource to teaching reading in her class. Participant further explained that the kit includes books and lesson plans. And she said, “It helps keep me organized and prepare for lessons.” Frenchie claimed teaching in a manner that reaches multiple learning styles and modalities (see multiple strategies used in figure 5).

Shantel believed that Frayer Model is the most successful strategy to teach vocabulary. The participant further claimed that the graphical organizer is used for word analysis and vocabulary building. Shantel also feel that “teachers enjoy using expository text during read aloud time because it exposes students to high interest text which leads to higher levels comprehension. Finally, Shantel stated, “Students build vocabulary,

improve listening skills, reading comprehension abilities, and improve attitudes toward reading.”

### **Theme 5: Teachers’ Perception of Challenges**

Though beneficial to students’ learning, the implementations of read aloud expository text at Smart ES was found to be challenging to the participants.

**Individual interviews.** Kathie reported that some teachers believe that think-aloud strategy and the use of other expository text with the kindergarten are difficult to comprehend due to lack of foundation skills or in-depth reading in kindergarten. Fallie believed that the challenges were due to lack of background knowledge and students’ inability to connect to many subjects that are discussed during the read-alouds expository text lessons. Participant also explained lack of resources that allow students to gain those experiences on the part of the teachers. However, Frenchie reiterated that most teachers feel that it is necessary to use expository text read alouds but often found it difficult to fit in due to lack of time and teacher accountability. Another challenge discussed was text difficulty. Fallie believed that some of the Common Core texts are too difficult to teach for the students’ schema. For example reading ‘The Wiz of Oz to the first grade students was very challenging. Frenchie also claimed that some teachers do not actually use the strategies or teach vocabulary in isolation. In contrast to all, Shantel felt that teachers enjoyed using expository text during reading.

**Teachers’ reflective journals.** To Kathie, Questioning section of the graphic organizer was the most challenging. It was very difficult for the students to come with questions. Kate did not express any challenges during this interview. Fallie wrote in her



journal, “Because my students are so young, they lack strong writing skills, some graphic organizers that require a lot of writing can become very difficult. “This week, background knowledge was the biggest challenge for my class.” Participants further explained that the informational text was hard to understand because the students were unfamiliar with the writing organizers. The biggest challenge during the lesson according to Frenchie was independent completion of graphic organizers. In first grade, handwriting is always a limitation and students need a lot of guidance filling in the organizers by themselves.

**Collaborative interview.** According to Kathie, “Sometimes finding resources or books is very challenging because our school library does not have the books needed. Many kindergarten students do not have preschool skills. And she said, “Kindergarten teachers too do not have the text talk kit.” Kate had this to say, “Students’ abilities are very challenging most especially in our community or neighboring school. Student disengaged was also challenging to the teachers. Shantel reiterated, in my classroom this week, maintaining student focus was a challenge with most seven to eight year old students. Having students be involved in creating the diagram and organizers kept them involved and focused. Fallie reiterated lack of adequate teaching time due to other responsibilities that teachers are made to be accountable for. Frenchie stated, “It is very challenging to fit in all that you have to teach into the limited scheduled time. Another challenge facing Frenchie was unlimited resources in the library. Shantel complained, “Some students have problems in completing their assignments independently due to

their reading deficiencies.” In terms of resources, Shantel also claimed, “No second grade teachers had the text talk training or the kit.”

Resources and students’ prior knowledge were also found to be challenging. Frenchie was surprised to find out in her class that many of the students have never seen a picture of a horse. Likewise, Kate also discovered that one of the students had no knowledge of the park. A student has not been to the park. Fallie also reiterated, “Most of the students lack foundational skills.” Frenchie also express that the students come with a lot of deficits. Kate, in support, stated, “Many parents’ deficit, due to lack of education affect the assignments given to the children.” Fallie, argue that the students in the school environment are not exposed to things that are multicultural. According to Shantel, many parents do not have time to take their child to visit places because of monetary Difficulty and poverty among some families,

Frenchie, “Community and culture have a lot to do with the problems facing the teachers in the classrooms. Shantel, “Intelligent conversation is very challenging to the students. To be specific, in my classroom this week, “Maintaining student focus is usually a challenge with most seven to eight year old students. Having students involved in creating the diagram and organizers kept them involved and focused. Kate, “The content of the curriculum is very challenging to the extent that some parents expressed inability to assist students with needs or homework.”

### **Theme 6: Teachers’ Perceptions of Support**

Participants expressed some suggestions to support the successful implementation of read aloud expository text strategies at Smart ES.

**Individual interview.** There were no individual responses to support this theme.

**Teacher reflective journal.** There were no responses to match the theme.

**Collaborative interview.** Kate wished Smart ES would purchase text talk kit for second grade and upper class teachers. Kate had text talk training but did not get the kit. She could not use text talk like she wanted due to lack of resources that go with the kit. Fallie suggests school-wide training on text talk strategy and poverty simulation training for the teachers teaching in the neighboring schools. Poverty simulation workshop will enlighten those teachers among us who never taught in the inner city school. It will enlighten them more about the school culture and the students' background. Frenchie suggested creating school wide initiative professional learning would be very beneficial. I mean the faculty and staff should participate in read-aloud expository text instructional strategies training. Participant also suggested a school review of the school-wide reading strategies. Frenchie urged the school administrator to plan workshop for the teachers. Participant also suggested overall blanket expectation. To be specific, teachers can share strategies found to be useful in the class with other teachers. School administrator are also encouraged to compile the strategies. Shantel also proposed that teachers develop a library of resources including activities, lesson plans, and lesson plan template. In addition, Frenchie recommends teachers to observe other veteran teachers. In support, Shantel suggested veteran teachers learn from the new teachers as well. Finally, Shantel proposed professional training in text talk to the second grade teachers.

## **Result Summary**

The result of the study is summarized in Table 5 including an overview of each teacher's strategies, resources, and content areas. The result showed that participants varied in the selection and implementations of read aloud expository text strategies. The implementation varied from grade level and individual teachers. Perceptions of individual participants are reflected in the way read aloud expository text is being implemented in K-2 grades reading classrooms at Smart ES.

### **Summary of Analysis Methods**

This qualitative case study focused on the teachers perceptions of read-aloud expository-text strategies in kindergarten through Grade 2 at Smart Elementary School. It is evidenced that Smart Elementary School teachers and administrators were mandated to utilize the following read-aloud expository-text strategies to improve students' reading proficiencies: (a) scaffolding, (b) graphic organizers, (c) think-aloud, and (d) text talk (i.e., exposing the features or structure of informational text). The district expected teachers to integrate the strategies into all other content areas in the classroom. Four data collection tools were used in this study to explore the teachers' perceptions and challenges in implementing read-aloud expository-text strategies in kindergarten through Grade 2. Individual interviews, teachers' reflective journals, collaborative interviews, and researcher's field notes were analyzed to describe findings.

### **Evidence of Data Quality**

The following strategies were utilized to facilitate accuracy of data collection: Triangulation of data, member checking, researcher's reflection and corroboration of

data, and peer review. In this study, I utilized multiple tools including both individual and collaborative interviews, collected items such as teacher participants' reflective journal and researcher's field notes.

Data was collected through multiple tools including reviewing a final copy of the research report enable participants to review or comment. Participants were given a 24 hour window - Member checking of the data including examination of transcribed transcripts by individual participants will be performed in order to make sure that there was is no bias in the data analysis. Member checking took place within 24 hours after the interviews are conducted. By allowing the participants to check over the data, the credibility of data was ensured and the chance of misconception was minimized. An ongoing dialogue regarding my interpretations of the participants' perspectives provided accuracy of the data.

Researcher's reflection and corroboration of data was also used to facilitate accuracy of data collection. Peer reviewer checked for wordings of the interview questions and clarity. I compared each transcript with their interview scripts.

Information on the consent form was explained to participants and questions were answered. This information included the purpose of the study, how the data collection process would affect the participants, what was expected of them, the voluntary nature of the study in addition to the right to withdraw at any time without repercussions, and a guarantee of the confidentiality of each participant's identity and information. Participants were also able to view and amend transcripts from their interviews, also known as member checking. In order to ensure data quality and address

validity as well as minimize bias and error, eight primary strategies were used in order to check the accuracy of the findings. These included (a) triangulation, (b) member checking, (c) using rich, thick descriptions, (d) bias, (e) discrepant information, (f) prolonged time, and (g) peer debriefing, and (h) the reflexive journal (Joungtrakul, Sheehan, Kaneko, Klinhom, & Wongprasith, 2012, p.116).

Otherwise, biases can potentially affect the result of a study. The researcher worked at the school site as a Grade 2 teacher and participated in the school-wide reading program. In Section 3 of this study, under Researcher's Role, any such researcher bias was articulated in order to create an open-minded, honest, and credible description that readers can identify with (Creswell, 2013). The risk of conducting a study by a researcher on the research site or backyard study leads to compromises in the researcher's ability to disclose information.

First, triangulation of data was accomplished through multiple tools, including individual and group interviews. Triangulation of data was used from different sources in order to "ensure that the case study had rendered the participants' perspective accurately (Yin, 2014, p. 122). Collected items include participants' reflective journals and researcher's field notes. Researcher's reflection and corroboration of data will be used to facilitate accuracy of data collection.

### **Member Checking**

Member checking of the data including examination of transcribed transcripts by individual participants in order to make sure that there was no bias in the data analysis. Member checking of the transcripts accuracy took place within 24 hours after the

interviews were conducted. By allowing the participants to check over the data, the credibility of data were raised and the chance of misconception will be minimized. An ongoing dialogue regarding my interpretations of the participants' perspectives provided accuracy of the data.

The four forms of data analyzed out of the five data used were individual interviews, collaborative interview, teachers' reflective journals, and researcher's field notes. Using four forms of data collection allowed the researcher to gather a valid assessment of participants' perspectives regarding read-aloud expository text. Furthermore, when each means of data collection returned the same information, I was confident that themes found were a true indicator of the participants' perspectives. The significant themes found within the data were shared with participants. This was done in order to ensure the accuracy of the account. Participants were asked to member check the findings for their correctness. What did they say? Did you make any changes? What exactly did you give to them?

Another means of increasing quality was to use thick, rich data. With this type of description, readers transfer information to other settings because of possible connected or shared characteristics. Descriptive language supported participants' responses recounting specific events that occurred during read-aloud expository-text strategies. Direct quotes and excerpts are incorporated, enabling readers to feel transported to the setting.

In order to maintain quality of data, I put aside any personal feelings regarding read-aloud expository text while analyzing data, and only reported the information

provided by the participants. Finally, a colleague not connected to the study served as peer reviewer in order to determine whether bias was indicated at any point in time a peer reviewer checked for clarity and wording of the interview questions whether bias was indicated at any point in time.

### **Discrepant Cases**

The use of discrepant information enhances data quality. The reality of life determines that people hold multiple perspectives. I used data triangulation including gathering data at various times, in different places, and with particular people to help ensure accuracy of result (Creswell, 2012). I interviewed teachers from three different grade levels (Kindergarten, First, Second). All perspectives and possibilities were discussed in the research findings due to the fact that some participants had differing perceptions on the same topic. A prolonged period of one month was spent in the school setting in order to collect accurate information.

### **Summary**

This section focused on the qualitative process of gathering, generating, and recording the data, the tracking of the data, the findings, and analysis of the data. The analysis revealed six themes reflecting the participants' perspectives and challenges of read aloud expository text: (a) Integration of read-aloud expository text, (b) teachers' common perceptions or views; (c) most- or least-used strategies, (d) explanations for the selection or use (e) read-aloud challenges, and (f) teacher needs for support. I used direct quotes from the participants to support the findings in this section. In Section 5, the interpretation of these findings, conclusions, and recommendations will be discussed.



## Section 5: Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusion

### **Introduction**

Researchers (e.g., Hodges, 2011; Press, Henenbers, & Getman, 2011; Wiseman, 2011) have confirmed across the nation that interactive read-aloud expository-text strategies enhance students' reading proficiency. Research has demonstrated that students' inadequate exposure to informational texts during literacy instruction can lead to lack of proficiency in standardized reading tests (Georgia Family Connection Partnership, 2010; Ness, 2011; Schimke & Education Commission of the States, 2012). In addition, some researchers have explored how teachers conduct interactive read-alouds in classrooms and the potential benefit in terms of increasing students' reading level and reading comprehension (Delacruz, 2013). There has not been any research conducted on read-aloud expository text instructional strategies at Smart ES, which is mandated to use these strategies. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to articulate to the school leaders and administrators the teachers' perceptions of benefits and challenges of implementing read-aloud expository text in the district and, especially, in the inner city school.

In order to know how to provide teachers with necessary support to improve read-aloud expository text strategies, school leaders would benefit from understanding teachers' perceptions and the challenges of implementing read-aloud expository text in the district. School leaders need to find ways in which they can provide teachers with the necessary tools to help them effectively assist students with becoming skilled in reading. The purpose of this study was to elucidate teachers' perceptions of the strategies, in order

to increase understanding of teachers' experience with the strategies and ultimately improve teachers' effective use of strategies.

In this study, I explored the expository reading instructional practices of a small group of five K-2 teachers at Smart Elementary School. This study focused on identifying the perceptions of K-2 teachers regarding the benefits and challenges of implementing read-aloud expository text to improve students' reading proficiency.

The research questions guiding this research were the following:

1. What are the perceptions of the teachers of K-2 students at Smart Elementary School regarding the read-aloud expository-text strategies used in their classrooms?
2. What do the teachers of K-2 students at Smart Elementary School perceive are the main challenges of implementing read-aloud expository text strategies in their classrooms?

The purpose of the first question was to understand the participants' beliefs about the benefits of read-aloud expository text. The intent of the second question was to understand the challenges and various impediments faced by the teachers regarding the implementation of expository text during interactive read-alouds. These questions were answered through information gathered from five separate sources: (a) self-report demographic questionnaire, (b) individual interviews, (c) collaborative interview, (d) teachers' reflective journals, and (e) researcher's field notes.

To answer *research question 1*, I developed five questions for the individual interviews (Appendix F). To answer *research question 2*, I developed eight guiding

interview questions and eight subquestions (Appendix G). The total of 21 questions were designed to encourage the interviewees to elaborate on their perceptions on benefits and challenges in implementing the schoolwide selected read-aloud expository text strategies at Smart Elementary School. Findings included that some of the common strategies teachers used while engaging students in interactive read-aloud expository text were scaffolding, graphic organizers, think aloud, and text talk.

To provide adequate answers to the research questions, I used Yin's (2014) approach to case study research and Creswell's (2014) qualitative data analysis procedures. A colleague, an educator with a doctorate, reviewed the interview questions for clarity. I transcribed the responses to the interview questions then coded them. I then converged the coded data to find patterns and identify emergent themes. I identified the teachers' perspectives, benefits, and challenges of interactive read-aloud expository text that a sample of five teachers reported having encountered.

The interpretation and discussion of each of the six themes are shared in the next six sections. The analysis revealed a total of six themes, with a subgroup of four themes and a subgroup of two themes reflecting the participants' perspectives and challenges of read-aloud expository text. The first four themes were related to the benefits and teachers' perceptions of read-aloud expository text strategies. The last two themes were related to challenges along with teachers' perceptions of those challenges as well as teacher suggestions and recommendations. The identified themes are: (a) perception of implementation of read-aloud expository text, (b) teachers' common perceptions or

views; (c) perception of situational strategies, (d) explanations for the use (e) read-aloud challenges, and (f) teacher needs for support.

The data analysis showed that the teachers actively engaged the students in several read-aloud expository text instructional strategies. All participants believed that their students benefitted from the selected instructional reading strategies. However, the participants believed that other teachers in the school experienced challenges in implementing the schoolwide read-aloud expository text strategies in their classrooms. Therefore, the sample participant made some recommendations for support to the school on behalf of other teachers at Smart ES. In the following subsection, I discuss the interpretation of the findings.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

Upon assessing the data as a whole, it is apparent that the participants in the sample all valued read-aloud expository text instructional strategies. All participants implemented and engaged students in read-aloud expository text strategies and engaged them in activities with a variety of materials. The primary challenges they faced were limited time, limited resources, students lacking background to understand expository text, and the school's cultural environment. The support the teacher participants suggested for the school district to implement included the text talk workshop and poverty simulation for all grade level teachers at Smart ES. The participants believed that a workshop on poverty simulation would enlighten the teachers at Smart ES regarding students' lack of background skills and the school's cultural environment. In the following section, I interpret the findings in terms of each of the six main themes from

this study: implementation, read-aloud expository strategies, situational strategies, explanation for use, challenges, and support.

As a reminder to the reader, the teacher pseudonyms were assigned with the beginning letter or letter sound of each pseudonym representing the grade level of the teacher for easy access to each participant's responses by the researcher (e.g., Kathie and Kate [kindergarten teacher participants' pseudonyms]; Fallie and Frenchie [first grade teacher participants' pseudonyms]; and Shantel [second grade teacher participant's pseudonym]).

### **Themes From the Study**

**Theme 1: Teachers' perceptions of implementation.** Results from all data collection tools indicated that participants implemented read-aloud expository text strategies in their various classrooms. The read-aloud expository text used varied in terms of time used and at grade level used. For example, Kathie said, "I do read-aloud all the time." Kate expressed, "I used read-aloud expository text to guide units of study." Fallie explained, "We use a lot of read-aloud expository texts during science and social studies times to help the students understand the concepts." Frenchie claimed, "Read-aloud expository-text instructional strategies are infused throughout multiple subject areas within my classroom." Finally, Shantel also stated regarding read-alouds that "with the implementation of the Common Core in American schools, the integration of expository-text is mandatory." Participants' reported beliefs were based on responses from individual interviews and participants' reflective journals. However, the findings did not

establish a clear understanding of the frequency of the implementation of the strategies under investigation.

In addition, there were some inconsistencies in the teachers' implementation of particular variations of the read aloud strategies. For example one participant, a kindergarten teacher, used mixed texts in the reflective journal as an evidence of implementing read aloud expository text strategies in her classroom. Instead of writing reports on two lessons taught using two expository texts, Kathie used one fiction and one expository text. Also, unlike other participants, Shantel, the second grade teacher reported utilizing only Frayer Model organizer during the individual interview and in the reflective journal. Shantel did not express using any other of the strategies at any other time in her classroom during data collection. There was not enough evidence that the participant implemented think aloud, scaffolding, or text talk in the classroom. It seems as if there was not enough evidence from both participants that indicate consistent implementation of the reading strategy under investigation. Therefore, for future study, I recommend classroom observations that will enable researcher explore *how* teachers implement the school wide strategies.

**Theme 2: Perceptions of benefits.** Some literature has indicated various perceptions for optimal implementation of read aloud expository text in the classrooms. Read aloud expository text strategies when used with young learners were beneficial. Students' achievement increased in math and science (Pentimonti, Zucker, Justice, & Kaderavek, 2010; Kuzborska, 2011; NCES, 2011). Balancing the reading of literature with the reading of informational texts, including texts relevant to content subjects such

as history, social studies, and science, as well as technical subjects, has increased students' reading proficiency.

In this study, participants shared both positive and negative perceptions of read aloud expository text instructional strategies. Two participants expressed that read-aloud expository text exposes students to high-interest text, which leads to higher levels of comprehension. Three participants also believed that students build vocabulary and improve listening skills, reading comprehension abilities, and attitudes toward reading. Teacher's reflective journals indicated that three teacher participants felt that through scaffolding and teacher modeling of think-aloud, students learn to read and think about the features in the text and comprehend it more fully. The kindergarten teacher participants also stated that scaffolding and think-aloud strategies made the teaching and learning of social studies and science curriculum easier, because the strategies were used to guide units of study. Two of the participants claimed that it is through read-aloud expository-text instructional strategies that students acquire and retain content knowledge and content-specific abilities.

Explicit teacher perceptions were not the only resources used to ascertain teacher-perceived value of read aloud strategies. Researcher's field note indicated participants' positive attitude when they expressed their beliefs in the implementation of read aloud expository text in their classrooms. Fallie's and Frechie's (First grade teacher participants), nonverbal communication cues, including vocal tone facial expressions, and body movement during the individual interview were indicative of excitement about the use and benefits of read aloud expository text instructional strategies. Both first-

grade teacher participants shared their text talk kits and other expository text materials with me. Frenchie was proud to share how she labeled some informational texts based on reading skills and themes for easy access during teaching. With smiles and excitement, Fallie pulled out the text talk kit box. She shared with me the text talk teacher manual along with the reading texts. The attitude and confidence expressed by the teacher participants as they expressed the benefit of the strategies under investigation reiterate those expressed by other scholars (Pilonieta, 2011). When teachers feel confident in their knowledge base, they will feel comfortable in exploring and implementing new instructional techniques.

Other benefits of read aloud expository text strategies were expressed by the participants during the interview portion of data collection. Participants expressed benefit as it relates to differentiation of teaching among students. Three of the participants believed that the integration of the strategies can help build stronger foundations for reading. Fallie noted, “Text Talk is research based. It is good for children who can read or cannot read fluently because the kit is leveled in A, B, C order.” Fallie further explained that text talk kit supports differentiation in the classrooms. Kathie felt that kindergarteners are exposed to more books during interactive read-aloud expository text. Katie commented that when Smart ES enforced the implementation of read-aloud expository text as mandated by the Common Core curriculum in all American schools. Smart school state benchmark report improved. Therefore, future study needs to explore the reasons for the continued gap in the school’s current reading benchmark result as



indicated by SRI report if the teachers implemented the school wide read aloud expository text strategies.

**Theme 3: Perceptions of situational strategies.** Perceptions regarding read aloud expository text strategies varied in terms of the different situations in which the strategies were used including different grades, different teachers, and even different students as two classes from the same grade level can be very different. In each case, the teacher selected and adapted strategies according to what they, the teacher, felt would be most effective. This findings is similar to Rubie-Davies et al.(2012) finding that argues that teachers may alter their instructional practices depending on school contextual variables such as the socioeconomic level of the school, teaching experience, and gender. In this study, teachers differ in classroom climates base on different strategies used in the different grades.

Kindergarten and first-grade teacher participants felt that think aloud and graphic organizers were age-inappropriate because students lacked cognitive skills, background skills, and lack of support from parents. For example, Kathie explained, “Using higher-order thinking strategies is hard for kindergarteners because they are beginning to learn how to read.” The finding is in conflict with the Common Core Curriculum policy which specified that preparation for reading complex informational text should start in the very earliest elementary school grades, including kindergarten (CCSSI, 2011).

In this study, the use of organizer as a read aloud expository text strategy was the least used among the teacher participants, as stated during individual interview. Fallie and

Frenchie believed that their students struggled with organizing their ideas or thoughts. The only second grade teacher participant mostly utilized Frayer organizer with her students. The participants' belief was in conflict with research findings. Researchers have found that organizers are beneficial to reading comprehension (Barrett-Mynes, Moran, & Tegano, 2010).

**Theme 4: Perceptions of explanation for Use.** The majority of the participants expressed some positive and negative perceptions for the use of read-aloud expository text in kindergarten through second grade. For example, during the individual interview, kindergarten teacher, Kate, explained that read-aloud expository texts are used in kindergarten to pull in social studies and science curriculum. However, another kindergarten teacher participant, Kathie, expressed that think-aloud strategy and the use of other expository text with the kindergarten students are difficult for the students to comprehend because students learn foundation skills in kindergarten, and are not yet cognitively ready for higher comprehension. In this study, the participants' beliefs did not support the findings of Correia, (2011); Pentimonti et al., (2010) which confirmed that read aloud expository text strategies could be taught successfully in kindergarten. The researchers further argued that preschool and kindergarten students can participate actively and benefit from reading informational text.

Above all, second-grade teacher Shantel believed that teachers enjoy using expository text during read-aloud time because it exposes students to high-interest text which leads to higher levels of comprehension. This belief coincides with the findings of Kelley and Clausen-Grace (2010) which confirmed that interactive read-alouds, along

with informational text, could enhance students' ability to synthesize ideas and retain facts and ideas. In summary, all the participants expressed that the use of read aloud expository text strategies were critical.

**Theme 5: Perceptions on challenges.** The findings from this study suggested that despite the positive beliefs and benefits expressed by teachers concerning the implementation of read-aloud expository text in the classrooms, some challenges remain that impacted the implementation of the strategies under study in the classroom. During both individual and collaborative interviews, several challenges such as “limited time,” “limited resources,” “students lacking background to understand expository text,” and “the school’s cultural environment” were reported by the participants. This findings reiterate those found by other scholars (Ness, 2011) where teachers find similar challenges.

During the individual interviews, the first grade teacher participants expressed the belief that there were some challenges in the effective use of read aloud expository text in the classroom. Lack of time and experience on the part of the teacher, and lack of background knowledge on the part of the students were perceived to impact the implementation of the selected strategies in the classroom. Additionally, during the collaborative interview, the teacher participants discussed lack of other resources in the school, such as teaching tools, books, and training, which would aid them in implementing read aloud expository text strategies. The foundational concepts underlying this study, from Vygotsky (1978), explained that teachers' beliefs, perceptions, behaviors, and use of language influence children's behaviors in the classroom. Other

researchers, Akhondi et al. (2011), also emphasized that reading expository text increases students' awareness of text structure and leads to reading proficiency which was the long term goal of this study or expectant goal of this case study.

During the collaborative interviews, teacher participants also discussed the challenges children bring to school. All the participants were discouraged and frustrated with the cultural environment of the school and how it challenged the effective implementation of read-aloud expository-text strategies in the classroom. Participants candidly shared how students' background, school environment, lack of support from parents, and students' disengagement in the classroom challenged teachers' ability to effectively implement read-aloud expository text in their classrooms. To this effect, Fallie, first grade teacher recommended poverty simulation workshop for all teachers at Smart ES to better understand the school cultural environment of their students.

**Theme 6: Perceptions of need for support.** All the participants expressed various suggestions for teacher support at Smart ES. In this study, four of the five teacher participants reported that they had Text Talk training with the school district. However, during the individual interview, Kate and Katie complained that they had text talk training but did not have Text Talk kits. The participants express support from the school from all teachers at Smart ES. Kate said, "I am suggesting that the school will provide school-wide training in text talk and purchase Text Talk kit for all the teachers." Fallie also suggested Text Talk training to other teachers in the school who have not had the training. In addition, Fallie recommended poverty simulation workshop for Smart Elementary School teachers so that teachers can understand their students' background

and cultural environment of the school which were expressed as challenges to the implementation of strategies under investigation. Another participant, Frenchie, also recommended Text Talk training and scholastic reading resources for teachers to use to teach expository literature. Finally, Shantel suggested online support such as Tumble books and Bookflix for teachers. The findings revealed that teacher participants believed that read aloud expository text are beneficial to students learning and had specific experiences and tools that they would recommend to others, despite the challenges. Therefore, participants felt concerned about other teachers' instructional practices with the implementation of read aloud expository text at Smart ES.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Positive social change is anticipated at Smart ES and its district as I articulate to the school leaders and administrators the teachers' perceptions of benefits and challenges when implementing read-aloud expository text strategies in this inner city school. As a result, the school administrators may seek ways in which they can provide teachers with the necessary tools and experiences that will enable improved implementation of the reading strategies. The research findings on teachers' perspectives on read aloud expository text strategies could be used by Smart ES to improve on and develop practices that assist not only kindergarten through second grade teachers, but the entire school staff and neighboring elementary schools.

The ultimate potential benefits would be positive changes in the students' reading proficiency. Educational teaching practices including reading proficiency is a critical component in effecting positive changes as it facilitates upward social mobility,

particularly for minorities. Policies and practices that can assist the inner-city school students to become proficient readers and boost up the SRI scores will indicate social change. I hope that this research is one small step toward that realization. When students possess skills that will enable them to locate, understand, and use informational text then they may become productive citizens in the twenty-first century.

Smart ES may not develop the support and practices that the findings of this research suggest. The findings do also point to positive use of the expository text strategies, even if it is limited for two of the teachers, the other teachers used the strategies extensively. This is especially true of the first grade teachers who had professional development in Text Talk and kit materials to support implementation. Furthermore, discussing and being made more aware of their practices may also enhance the capability of Kindergarten through second grade teachers to provide students with the kind of literacy environment that will assist them in the early acquisition of reading proficiency skills. In summary, the interviews and reflective journal work may have had a positive effect on the participants of the study and they documented positive use of the reading strategies. The research also pointed to gaps in practice and suggestions for improvement that the school district will be interested to hear, as read-aloud strategies are a priority for them.

### **Dissemination of Results**

Results will be disseminated in several different ways to the participants and the stakeholders. First, results in the form of the dissertation will be shared with the school principal and the superintendent of Smart ES. A brief report will be sent by email to

teachers and leaders in the district that includes the benefits and challenges of read-aloud expository-text instructional strategies. The report will include the following: (a) all the participants used, liked, and felt that strategies were effective and research based; (b) strategies under study were used all day across the curriculum science, social studies, and language arts; (c) teachers used variety of strategies including text talk and scaffolding which were the most used read aloud strategies; (d) some teachers used a smaller number of strategies; and (e) there was discussion about the age appropriateness of certain strategies that may need clarification. The least used strategies were think aloud and organizers. Finally, the researcher will disseminate the result of the study to the participants in small group during grade level meetings as indicated on the letter of consent.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Additional information in the report will include that the participants believed that read aloud expository text instructional strategies were beneficial to students and that they would use them even without the mandatory implementation by the Common Core Curriculum and the enforcement by the Smart ES principals. However, participants suggested that Smart ES could: (a) provide more support for her teachers in implementing read aloud expository text school wide; (b) train all teachers in text talk and provide text talk materials for teachers; (c) enhance teachers' beliefs about students' background and cultural environment by providing poverty simulation training to all teachers at Smart ES.

There will be some findings not shared in the brief report. To be specific, second grade teachers need more support with read aloud expository text strategies. Only one out of four 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers met the requirements to participate in this study. All tools utilized in data collection indicated that Shantel implemented only one strategy out of the four strategies under investigations. In addition, during collaborative interview, second grade teacher participant, Shantel remarked, “No second grade teachers had the text talk training or the kit.” Shantel also hoped that second-grade teachers can have the Text Talk training, too.

With reference to the teacher participant’s response, I first recommend exploring second grade teachers’ self-efficacy in the implementation of read aloud expository text strategies. Second, I also recommend peer coaching to the school administrator for professional development. Peer coaching is an effective tool for colleagues to utilize to support each other's skills (Jewett & MacPhee, 2012). It is also a way for teachers to benefit from observing their colleagues in action. This process will enable second grade teachers the opportunity to learn or reinforce the read aloud strategies under investigation. Peer coaches seek research based strategies to share during faculty meetings.

I can also remind and reinvigorate the idea of sharing each teacher’s own read aloud expository text examples, including student work, with their colleagues during grade level meetings. In this study, kindergarten through first grades did not utilize think aloud and organizer strategies, although the literature indicated successful implementation among younger children (Pentimonti, Zucker, Justice, & Kaderavek,



2010). While these teachers may be correct that their students struggle significantly with these strategies, it may also be that these teachers may need additional tools and experiences to support their use of these strategies.

In summary the school is doing a good job of infusing expository text read-aloud strategies in their school and they still have some work to do. It is necessary for school leaders and administrators to understand teachers' perceptions and the challenges of implementing read-aloud expository text in the district and, especially, in the inner city school. Schools need to find ways in which they can provide teachers with the necessary tools to help them effectively assist students to be skilled in reading proficiency. This study is one step toward helping the participants at Smart ES implement expository reading strategies effectively.

### **Recommendations for Future Study**

In this study, I explored the perspectives of K-2 classroom teachers on the benefits and challenges encountered in one school site within the district where the researcher worked. Although the case study approach was quite in-depth, there were only 5 participants, rendering the results not generalizable. My first recommendation would be to amplify this study with more than 5 participants. Therefore, future research with all the Kindergarten through second grade teachers' in one school or all five elementary schools in the school district for their perspectives on read aloud expository text strategies is highly recommended. In addition, future study on teachers efficacy in the implementation of the strategies under investigation at Smart ES is recommended based on the participants' comment on the past benchmark report of the students when the

school administrator enforced the strategies. In addition, teachers' years of teaching experience as it affects the implementation of expository text could be also be explored in the future.

Furthermore, due to the challenges presented by the school culture and level of student disengagement at Smart ES, it is recommended that this study is duplicated. In addition, it could be duplicated in a modified way to gain the perspectives of the parents of K-2 grades. Finally, if findings of this study indicated that K-2 teachers implemented read aloud exploratory strategies in their classrooms and Smart ES continued experiencing a gap in reading proficiency then future studies on exploring what account for the gap in the reading proficiency of Smart ES and how to bridge the reading proficiency are highly recommended.

### **Reflections of the Researcher**

I have my own perceptions of interactive read-aloud expository-text instructional strategies within my classroom. I believe that in most schools, elementary teachers are not proactive participants in curricular and instructional decision making. I care about the students and teachers, and I want teachers to be more proactive and have an opportunity to share their perceptions as teacher practitioners. This study has illuminated for me many of the challenges faced by teachers at Smart ES, which may be shared by other teachers in the same or similar districts and schools. I was surprised by the variety of implementation strategies employed by the teachers, and equally surprised that not all approaches were considered as having equal value. I was also surprised at the frustration expressed by these teachers due to the lack of support they feel they receive in order to do

their jobs adequately. There is no simple solution for this, but steps can be made to ameliorate this frustration so that teachers bring less of it into their classrooms. On the other hand, I am invigorated by the excitement expressed by these teachers for the new strategies, and I am eager to employ these strategies and recommend them to others.

### **Conclusion**

All of the participants sampled in this study believed that they implemented read aloud expository text instructional strategies into the content areas in their classrooms. The participants reported the benefits of read aloud expository text among kindergarten through second grade classrooms. Additionally, the beliefs expressed by the participants revealed the challenges impacting the effective use of read-aloud expository text instructional strategies and needs for support for the school in the form of training and materials for all the teachers. However, the findings of teachers' implementation of strategies under investigation may not be generalized due to sample size. In addition, findings did not indicate frequencies of implementation of the strategies. Teacher's perception of implementation was based upon the responses given by the participants during the interviews and the teacher reflective journals.

However, this study has created awareness of the teachers' perceptions on benefits, and challenges of read-aloud expository-text instructional strategies at Smart Elementary School. The data collected indicates how crucial it is that teachers engage in positive dialogue and become proactive in education decisions. By collaborating to reflect on their use of interactive read-aloud expository text, teachers can further consider ways in which they can advance their students' reading proficiency or literacy skills. By

building a collaborative community within their own school, the participating teachers might open a dialogue that could inform future pedagogy. This can lead to increased understanding within the school site by fellow teachers, administration, and the district personnel regarding what is modeled in order to support teachers when implementing reading strategies. In essence, the intent of this study was to explore and inform educators, stakeholders (including school leaders), and administrators about teachers' perspectives so that changes can be made if necessary. The participants' beliefs of implementation reflected the work of Kuzborska (2011) which explained the importance of how teachers' beliefs on instructions, impact teaching and learning. It is necessary for school leaders and administrators to understand teachers' perceptions and the challenges of implementing read-aloud expository text in the district and, especially, in the inner city school. Schools need to find ways in which they can provide teachers with the necessary tools to help them effectively assist students to be proficient readers.

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## Appendix A: Letter of Cooperation

August 1, 2014

Dear Principal:

I am currently a doctoral candidate at Walden University working toward my Educational Doctorate Degree with a Specialization in Teacher Leadership. As such, I am planning a study titled Read-aloud Expository-text, focusing on pedagogical strategies that enhance reading proficiency among students from kindergarten to Grade 2. I would like your permission to have kindergarten, first-, and second-grade teachers at this school participate in my study of teaching read-aloud expository text in their classrooms.

Upon agreement to participate in this voluntary study, reading teachers will be asked to:

- Complete a self-assessment demographics questionnaire, which should take 15-20 minutes to complete.
- Participate in at least two interviews with the researcher (an individual and a collaborative group interview).
- Participants will submit a reflective journal on read-aloud expository-text instruction in the classroom.
- The interviews will be scheduled to last 60 minutes maximum at a time.
- The interviews will take place in the school setting: Smart ES
- Participants will choose time and place of meeting for interview.
- The participating teacher will be provided with a copy of the transcribed interview to verify accuracy of intent and meaning of the questions discussed.
- You and all participating teachers will receive a final copy of the research paper upon its completion. With your permission, I will obtain letters of consent from each teacher who agrees to participate. The letter of consent will make it clear that participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time without penalty. All identifying information will be kept strictly confidential.

Sincerely,

Mary Adeyemo

## Appendix B: Invitation Letter to Participants

August 1, 2014

Dear kindergarten, first-, and second-grade colleagues:

You are invited to take part in a research study related to interactive read-aloud and information/expository text. The study is titled “Read-Aloud Expository-text Strategies in Kindergarten through Grade 2.” You have been invited to participate in this voluntary study because you have been a partaker in the read-aloud. I am currently a doctoral candidate at Walden University working toward my Educational Doctorate Degree with a Specialization in Teacher Leadership. As such, I am planning a study focusing on Read-Aloud Expository-text, a pedagogical strategies that enhance reading proficiency among students from kindergarten to grade 2. The purpose of this study is to explore kindergarten through second-grade teachers’ perceptions of teaching read-aloud expository-text instruction as a way of enhancing reading proficiency in their students. Also included in the packet that you are collecting today are a consent form and self-assessment demographic questionnaire. The consent form contains detailed background description of study, procedures of the study, risks, benefits, and confidentiality. The researcher, Mary Adeyemo, will be reiterating background description, procedures of the study, risks, benefits, and confidentiality during each interview. I hope you come and find out more of this great opportunity and become part of this study.

Sincerely,

Mary O. Adeyemo, Walden University Doctoral Candidate,

Teacher Leadership Education Program - [mary.adeyemo@waldenu.edu](mailto:mary.adeyemo@waldenu.edu)



## Appendix D: Self-Assessment Demographic Questionnaire

*Participant Demographics*

| Teacher name<br>(pseudonym) | Grade<br>taught | Years of teaching<br>experience at the<br>Smart Elementary | Available<br>time for<br>meeting | Preferred<br>location for<br>meeting |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|--|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Kathie                      | K               | 13 years   | after school                     | classroom                            |
| Kate                        | K               | 22 years   | after school                     | classroom                            |
| Fallie                      | 1               | 6 years  | after school                     | classroom                            |
| Frenchie                    | 1               | 5.5 years  | after school                     | classroom                            |
| Shantel                     | 2               | 4 years  | after school                     | classroom                            |

### Appendix E: Sample Consent Form for Participant

You are invited to take part in a research study of teacher perception of the teaching strategies used during interactive expository-text read-alouds from K-2. The researcher is inviting K-2 teachers who are participating in the district's read-aloud intervention program to be in the study. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to participate. This information will also be explained to you verbally, in addition to the written form. This study is being conducted by a researcher named \_\_\_\_\_, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. You may already know the researcher as a second-grade teacher, but this study is separate from that role.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore K-2 teachers' perceptions of teaching read-aloud expository text as a way of enhancing reading proficiency in their students.  
Procedures:

Upon agreement to participate in this study, reading teachers will be asked to:

- Complete a self-assessment demographics questionnaire, which should take 15-20 minutes to complete.
- Participate in two face-to-face interactive interviews with the researcher (an individual and a collaborative group interview).
- The interviews will be scheduled to last 45-60 minutes maximum at a time.
- Participants will submit a reflective journal on read-aloud expository-text instruction in the classroom.
- The interviews will take place in the school setting—Smart Elementary School.
- Participants will choose time and place of meeting for interview around the school.
- The participating teacher will be provided with a copy of the transcribed interview to member check and verify accuracy of intent and meaning to the questions discussed.

#### Member Checking/Credibility:

After each interview, you will be provided with a transcribed summary of the interview, along with my interpretation of your responses, so that you can check the accuracy of my understanding of your intent and meaning. Please read carefully and check for any discrepancies of intent. At this time, you can make any corrections or additions you deem necessary. Please feel free to write in the space provided below each of your responses. Upon the completion of study, I will provide you with a final copy of the results section of my paper.

#### Reiterate Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation is entirely voluntary. Should you decide not to participate, your decision will be respected. No one at Smart Elementary School will treat you differently if you decide not to be part of this study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. If you feel stressed or uncomfortable during the study, you may stop at any time without penalty. You may choose not to answer any questions that you feel are too personal or that you do not wish to answer. You may choose to participate in a videotape-recorded interview.

#### Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

The risks with participating in the study are minimal. Risks might include some minor discomfort in answering questions about your work experience during interviews or being tape-recorded during interview. In addition, time may be an important factor for you; thus, you may feel added stress with participating in the study. Being in this study will not pose risks to your safety or well-being. The expected outcome of this study will be the determination of what teachers believe to be necessary to enhance the reading proficiency of K-2 students under the school improvement plan. Ultimately, this study could point to areas that need more research and design, resulting in project redesign to address the problem. You could possibly find participation beneficial to your teaching. Your voluntary participation will be contributing to further research and inquiry into teaching strategies for read-aloud expository text, which may have an impact on students' performance on SRI/ROGL or reading proficiency. You may stop participation in the study at any time, or you may choose not to answer certain questions without any negative consequences to you.

#### Compensation:

No compensation will be provided for participating in this study. Nor will you be penalized in any way for not participating or withdrawing from the study.

#### Confidentiality:

Any information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purpose outside this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or any other identifying information



when reporting the results of the study. Data will be kept secure by the researcher for a period of 5 years after completion of the study, as required by the university. Information will be kept in a secure fireproof filing cabinet. I will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel that I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date of consent

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F: Individual Guiding Question (RQ 1)

(all questions may not be used)

## Opening

Ms./Mrs./Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, I appreciate your volunteering to participate in this interview. The purpose of this study is to explore how teachers feel or perceive the implementation of read-aloud instructional strategies to enhance reading proficiency. All information shared in this interview is confidential. A pseudonym for all participants will be used in the study. If you do not feel comfortable answering a question, you may skip it.

As mentioned in the consent form, the interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes. I will be taking notes at the interview as well. Is this process still okay with you?

Do you have any questions or concerns before we start?

RQ 1. What are the perceptions of the teachers of K-G 2 students at Smart Elementary School regarding the read-aloud expository-text strategies used in their classrooms?

## Individual Interview Guiding Questions for RQ 1

1. Would you explain how you integrate the schoolwide selected read-aloud instructional strategies into your read-aloud expository text?
2. Would you explain what philosophy teachers hold with respect to the teaching and use of expository text during read-aloud in the elementary school?
3. What strategies from among the schoolwide read-aloud strategies seem most or, conversely, least successful with your class? Why?
4. How comfortable are you with the selected schoolwide read-aloud strategies?

5. Which of these strategies: books, library resources, magazines, workshops, handouts, or journals do you use frequently to support read-aloud expository text strategies?

Why?

## Appendix G: Collaborative Group Interview Guiding Questions for RQ 2

## Opening

Ms./Mrs./Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, I appreciate your

volunteering to participate in this interview. The purpose of this study is to explore the challenges of implementing read-aloud expository text in the classroom. All information shared in this interview is confidential. A pseudonym for all participants will be used in the study. If you do not feel comfortable answering a question you may skip it. As mentioned in the consent form, the interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes.

## Research Question 2

RQ 2. What do the teachers of K-G 2 students at Smart Elementary School perceive to be the challenges of implementing read-aloud expository-text strategies in their classrooms?

## Group Interview Guiding Questions for RQ 2

1. What are the challenges encountered in the selection of time, textbook, or activities for read-aloud expository text?
2. What do you find puzzling about the students' comprehension skills during read-aloud expository text?
3. Explain how the read-aloud expository text affects other major content areas such as math, science, and social studies.
4. Discuss the effects of read-aloud expository text on students' reading comprehension.
5. Discuss how you promote positive interaction during read-aloud expository text.

6. Discuss which strategies from the schoolwide read-aloud strategies are your favorites and why.
7. Which strategies, if any, have you supplemented in your read-aloud expository text and why?
8. Discuss what your school does to address any challenges faced with using read-aloud expository text.

#### Subquestions for Collaborative Group Interview

(not all questions may be used)

1. How is read-aloud expository-text strategy used in the elementary classrooms?
  2. Describe the use of expository texts during read-aloud.
  3. What is the major reading comprehension strategy employed during read-aloud?
  4. Explain how often you teach read-aloud expository text in isolation of other content.
  5. Explain how the classroom read-aloud expository text affects what the students read in the classroom or outside the classroom.
  6. Explain how students' comprehension is followed up after read-aloud expository-text instruction.
  7. Describe the planning or preparation for a read-aloud expository-text session.
  8. What happens when read-aloud expository text is implemented in the classroom?
- Credibility:

Thank you for participating in the interview. Your participation will remain confidential. You will receive a copy of the interview transcript that I interpreted to ensure the interview was recorded properly within 24 hours. Please read the transcript carefully to check for any discrepancies or misinterpretations of ideas. In case you

observe any omission or additional information, please make necessary corrections in the spaces provided below each of your responses. When the checking is complete, place the transcript in an envelope, sealed, and place in my mailbox or hand-deliver to me. If I do not hear from you within 48 hours, I will consider that approval to use my interpretations of the interview to be used in my research.

## Appendix H: Reflective Journal Prompts

Each participating teacher will keep a reflective journal of a 20-25-minute read aloud expository-text lesson taught in class for a week. Participants will submit any two of the reflective journals to the researcher. Participants will use the following guiding prompts to write the daily reflective journal.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ (pseudonym)

Grade Level \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Lesson Topic/Content Area \_\_\_\_\_

Goal/Lesson Objective \_\_\_\_\_

Read-aloud expository-text instructional strategy(ies) used \_\_\_\_\_

1. Explain what happened before, during, and after the lesson.
2. Why do I think things happened that way?
3. Why was this significant to me?
4. What have I learned?
5. How can I improve learning for all my students?
6. What else can I do to help students make connections to prior knowledge?
7. Was the lesson goal accomplished? Explain.
8. If not, is there a better way to accomplish this goal?

## Appendix I: Sample Data Collection Log

| <i>Step</i>   | <i>Date</i> | <i>Duration</i>   | <i>Exact Location</i>                          | <i>Communication Format</i> |
|---|-------------|-------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| <i>Step 1</i>   |             |                   | Walden University                              | E-mail                      |
| <i>Step 2</i>   |             | 2 weeks           | District County Public School System           | E-mail                      |
| <i>Step 3</i>   |             | 1 week (2-3 days) | Walden University                              | E-mail                      |
| <i>Data Collection: Phase 1: (first week) Sept. 3-5, 2014</i> |             | 20 minutes        | Smart Elementary Classroom/Grade Level Meeting | Hand-delivered              |
| <i>Phase 1: (first week) Sept. 3-5, 2014</i>                  |             | 1 week            |  |                             |



|   |  |        |                         |                       |
|---|--|--------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
|   | provided information about the study to the grade level teachers. I distributed the interview package to the potential participants.   |        |                         |                       |
| <i>Phase 2:<br/>(second week)<br/>Individual Interview,<br/>Sept. 8-12,<br/>2014</i>          | I met with the five teachers who volunteered to participate in the study individually after school for interview<br>K-participant 1<br>K-participant 2<br>Grd 1-participant 1<br>Grd 1-participant 2<br>Grd. 2-participant 1   | 1 week | Smart Elementary School | One-on-one            |
| <i>Phase 3:<br/>(third week):<br/>Sept. 15-19, 2014<br/>Collection of Reflective Journals</i> | Collection of reflective journals. Each teacher wrote reflections on two lessons taught using read-aloud expository text this week. Participants selected their day and lesson to be taught this week. Teacher participant used the reflective journal template provided to record their reflections. Each participant submitted completed journal to me. I transferred the interview to Microsoft Word, printed it out, and gave it back to participants to read and verify within 1-2 days of interview. | 5 days | Smart Elementary School | Hand delivered e-mail |

|                                       |  |       |                         |                        |
|---------------------------------------|--|-------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| <i>Phase 4<br/>(fourth<br/>week):</i> | Collaborative Group Interview (see Appendix G).  | 1 day | Smart Elementary School | Researcher's classroom |
| <i>Sept. 24,<br/>25-26, 2014</i>      | <p>The focus of the collaborative interview was to allow participants to elaborate on their challenges in implementing read-aloud expository-text strategies at Smart Elementary School. The interviewee also expressed suggestions to improve read-aloud expository text.</p> <p>I conducted one collaborative interview a day this week. The five participants and the researcher met in the PLC room of the school. The researcher used the Collaborative Group Interview Guide (Appendix G) during the interview. By allowing the participants to check over the data, the credibility of data was raised and the chance of misconception was minimized. Each participant was asked to</p> |       |                         |                        |

add any missing or delete additional or wrong information. I also instructed the participants to write in the spaces provided below each response. Participants were asked to respond accordingly within 24 hours.

## Appendix J: Samples of Data Coding

*Individual Interview Transcription Data Analysis*

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of the teachers of K-2 students at Smart Elementary School regarding the read-aloud expository-text strategies used in their classrooms?

| Individual Interview Questions   | Kathie  | Kate  | Fallie   | Frenchie   | Shantel   |
|--|---|---|--|--|---|
| <i>Describe the integration of schoolwide selected read-aloud instructional strategies with the use of read-aloud expository text.</i> | <p>I do read-aloud all the time. I do read-aloud using expository text throughout the day.</p> <p>I integrate read-aloud expository-text instructional strategies into other subject areas.</p> <p>Strategies/<br/>Activities:<br/>Drawing/<br/>Labeling<br/>Think<br/>Peer/Pair/</p> | <p>I integrate read-aloud expository-text strategies into social studies and science text. I used read-aloud expository text to guide units of study. I use Think-aloud and Text Talk strategies. It is through read-aloud expository-text instructional strategies that students</p> | <p>We use a lot of read-aloud expository texts during science and social studies times to help the students understand the concepts. Using read-aloud expository text is now easier than in the past because Common Core has the suggested books to use along with the unit. It is better now than then when we had to create our own unit. As</p> | <p>Read-aloud expository-text instructional strategies are infused throughout multiple subject areas within my classroom.</p> <p>I use Text Talk strategies to teach nonfiction texts. Word walls, vocabulary cards, and differ-</p> | <p>In my second-grade classroom, I use expository-texts in all content areas. With the implementation of the Common Core in American schools, the integration of expository-text is mandatory. I cannot but integrate expository-text into all content areas using interactive read alouds.</p> |

|                              |  |   |   |   |                                  |
|------------------------------|--|---|---|---|----------------------------------|
|                              | <p>Share. I use a lot of Organizers (cheaters) with reading skills. I use read-aloud expository text to introduce, predict and summarize content. I also model Think-aloud. I scaffold Think-aloud. In kindergarten we use anthologies. We select a book, preview the book. However with the implementation of the Common Core, things are better. Units are already put together including textbooks, strategies, and other teaching resources. The texts are used to guide units of study.</p> | <p>acquire and retain content knowledge and content-specific abilities. This is done by thinking aloud and scaffolding . I pulled books from the School Library Resources and my classroom book collections .</p> | <p>a grade level, we choose one topic from selected texts and compare it with another text (compare and contrast-comparisons/ integration-selected vocabulary/ higher-order thinking through questioning to recall what is being taught. I use a lot of Organizers.</p> <p>Pulling out vocabulary words and using Think-aloud, and pair share are a few strategies that are used during read-alouds. They are worthy of building stronger foundation.</p> | <p>entiated texts are also used to enhance expository-text read-alouds.</p> |                                  |
| <i>Explain a common view</i> | Some kindergarten teachers   | Some teachers believe   | Some teachers express that many students  | Most teachers feel that it  | I feel that teachers enjoy using |

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| <p><i>teachers express with respect to the teaching and use of expository text during read-alouds in the elementary school.</i></p> | <p>express that Think-aloud strategy and the use of other expository text with the kindergartens are difficult for the students to comprehend. The teachers believe that “there is no deep reading or in-depth reading going on in kindergarten. We teach the foundation skills in kindergarten.”</p> | <p>that students learn to read and think about the features in the text and comprehend more fully through scaffolding and teacher modeling of Think-aloud. Some teachers believe that read-aloud expository text helps kindergarten by pulling books to kindergarten. It makes it easier to pull in our social studies and science curriculum. Some teachers also believe that students</p> | <p>lack the background knowledge and are unable to connect to many subjects that are discussed during read-alouds. In addition, some teachers often lack the resources that allow students to gain those experiences so that they are able to be successful when learning new material. Lack of adequate teaching time due to other responsibilities that teachers are made to be accountable for: Progress Monitoring students with Diebel RTI, and MClassText difficulty; difficulty of the text is another concern. Some of the</p> | <p>is necessary to use expository text read-alouds but often find it difficult to fit in with so many demands on the teacher in the modern classroom (lack of time). Some teachers believe that since science overlaps ELA then the integration of ELA/Mak e up for the deficit in all subject areas. Some teachers do not actually use the strategies or some teach vocabular</p> | <p>expository text during read-aloud time because it exposes students to high-interest text which leads to higher levels of comprehension. Some teachers also believe that students build vocabulary, improve listening skills, reading comprehension abilities, and improve attitudes toward reading.</p> |
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|  |   | learn how vital it is to read and think about the features in the text. They make better predictions, anticipate their learning, and comprehend more fully. | Common Core texts are too difficult to teach to the students (schema). For example: the text to be read in first grade—The Wiz of Oz—the graphics, for example, the cutting of the hand was inappropriate for 6- or 7-year-olds. However, I teach vocabulary words and scaffold; we go on field trips, creating the experience. | y in isolation.  |  |
| <i>What strategies from among the schoolwide read-aloud strategies seem most or, conversely, least successful with your class? Explain your selected</i> | I use a lot of organizers (cheaters) to teach reading skills such as predictions and synonyms. I model Think-aloud. I use “Words Their Ways” with vocabulary words. We give the vocabulary words to the | Kindergarten struggles with Text Talk most especially relating the text to the real life. Think-aloud is the most useful. Most children do not know         | The least successful would be: Think-aloud. Age inappropriate: Think-aloud for my first grade is very challenging. The cognition is not there. They are not ready for the strategy Thinking is difficult for  | Lecture style instruction fails to reach students where their needs are. I must work to teach in a manner that reaches multiple learning | Most successful strategies include using the Frayer Model to teach vocabulary, text feature to identify headings, side bars, captions, diagrams, etc. The Frayer Model can be used to teach content vocabulary at any grade level. |

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| <p><i>strategies.</i></p> | <p>children and use them in sentences daily. This act or step helps students to internalize the words. I also use lots of magazines since students cannot read. Using open-ended questions was the least successful with my class. Any time a student has to use higher-order thinking skills, difficulty arises. Using higher-order thinking strategies are hard for kindergarteners because they are beginning to learn how to read.</p> | <p>how to process their thoughts or make inferences. But through scaffolding, I provoke their thoughts. The least successful read-aloud strategy used in my class was the Organizers. It does not help as much. Students struggle with organizing their ideas or thoughts.</p> | <p>the students at this age. We teach the foundational skills. No in-depth skills. We therefore make the expository/informational text real-world participation. Strategy most used and successful was Text Talk/Prediction strategies/summarization/Vocabulary Pair sharing/Materials. We use lots of magazine since the students cannot read fluently.</p> | <p>styles and modalities. Due to the demand of most logical thinking and lack of logical thinking skills on the part of my students, I use Think-aloud strategy. I use Text Talk, Relational Situation, Multisteps thinking strategy. I pull vocabulary words from the text. Sometimes I stick vocabulary words on the book. I integrate words into writing as I engage students with read-aloud text.</p> | <p>The Frayer Model is a graphical organizer used for word analysis and vocabulary building. The four-square model provokes students' thought about new concept during think about and describes the meaning of a word or concept using visuals. The Frayer Model is a strategy that can be used to teach content vocabulary at any grade level.</p> |
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|   |   |  |  | The least strategy that I use in my class is Organizers due to lack of time. It takes a longer time for my students to complete their chart.   |  |
| <i>Which of the selected schoolwide read-aloud strategies and materials including books, library resources, magazines, workshops, handouts, or journals are used frequently to support read-aloud expository-text strategies?</i> | I use the following strategies and activities: to support read-aloud expository text in my class: Drawing/ Labeling/ Think/ Peer/Pair/Share. I use "Words Their Way" frequently to support read-aloud expository-text strategies. | I use Think-aloud with mostly Library Resources and the texts in my classroom. Even though my school did not organize any read-aloud workshop for the teachers, I did workshop in read-aloud Text Talk during summer | The program Text Talk and the workshops I had with the school district have been very helpful. I have attended Text Talk read-aloud Workshop in 2010 with the District when I worked for the ROGL Summer Reading (Professional Development and also 5 Pillars (2010-12) and 6 + 1 Traits of Writing). Text Talk kit has about 20 | The program Text Talk and the workshops we have had in school have been very helpful. Text Talk is the most frequently used strategy in my class. Text Talk Five Pillars of Reading Wilson Phonics ROGL Visual | I use organizers to support expository-text read-aloud often with my students. Primarily nonfiction books are used for read-alouds. Occasionally, online articles were used to increase learning for selected topics of study. My students are exposed to varying genres so that they can be prepared for the real world and not the world of fantasy. Using |

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|  |  | <p>2013 when I participated on the ROGL (District Program).</p> | <p>books with Teacher's Manual and comprehension tests on the books read. During 1<sup>st</sup> grade level meeting, we the teachers meet and share ideas and strategies. I use "Explaining Reading-A Resource for Teaching Concepts, Skills, and Strategies" by Gerald G. Duffy (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) 2009. I also read Teachers' blog to get more guidelines</p> | <p>Displays Acting Out/Modeling Thinking-Aloud using Higher-Order Thinking Questions / Graphic Organizers/ Foldables/ Venn Diagrams/ Prior Knowledge Evaluation/ and Word Games Gestures. I had Text Talk Workshop with the School District ROGL summer program. Integrated into the kit include higher-Order thinking Package kit with read-aloud</p> | <p>expository materials add variety to the students' reading interest as well as increase their interest in reading. This strategy will enable their reading fascination to go beyond comics and fictions, to articles, commentaries, and even blogs.</p> |
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|  |   |   |   | texts--I use health magazines during health lessons.  |  |
| <i>Provide explanation s for the use of these selected strategies and include suggestions for recommended materials.</i> | I make the expository/informational text reading real- world or participatory. I use “Words Their Way” because it helps students to recognize words and their meanings in texts and helps them focus their attention on making meaning. My school does not have a Text Talk kit for every teacher. I recommend a Text Talk kit for every teacher. | The selected strategies– Think-aloud and Text Talk– are research based. My students struggle with communication and thinking process. Think-aloud enables students to process their thoughts and share ideas. I do not have any Text Talk kits. I am suggesting that the school will provide schoolwide training in Text Talk and | The Text Talk program has been a resource that I have found very useful. It includes books and lesson plans. It helps keep me organized and prepare for lessons. The workshops gave me new ideas to introduce to my class. It also gave me the opportunity to work with my co-workers and exchange ideas about successful strategies that can be used in the classroom. Text Talk is research based. It is good for children who can read and | The above strategies mentioned are fun and engaging. They enable me to reach students on multiple levels, involve students in higher-order thinking skills, and allow accommodation and differentiation in my teaching. Scholastic offers a plethora of reading resources for teachers to use to teach expository literature. | Strategies are research based and engaging to students. The Frayer Model is a vocabulary building graphic organizer that prompts students to think about and describe the meaning of unfamiliar words or concepts. With the use of the model, the target word is defined, characteristics are identified along with examples and non-examples. Use of the Frayer Model provided students an opportunity to explain and elaborate their understanding of a target word or concept. The strategies |

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|  |  | <p>purchase Text Talk kits for all the teachers.</p> | <p>cannot read fluently. The kit is leveled in A, B, C order.</p> <p>Suggestions:<br/>School can provide more Text Talk training and Kits for other teachers. I also recommend "Poverty Simulation" workshop for my school so that the teachers can understand the children's background. When the teachers understand the students' background then they can identify appropriate teaching strategies to use with the students so that they can be successful.</p> | <p>I also recommend Text Talk training for the teachers.</p> | <p>encourage visual connection and critical thinking. They can be used in other content areas. I suggest the following online text such as <a href="http://www.tumblebooks.com">www.tumblebooks.com</a> and Bookflix. Both sites and Bookflix.</p> |
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