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Examining the Impact of Art-Based Anchor Charts on Academic Achievement in Language Arts

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Walden University
2017

Abstract

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by

Kimberly Fontanez

MS, Walden University, 2011

BA, South Carolina State University, 2001

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Administrative Leadership for Teaching and Learning

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Abstract

The students at 2 middle schools in County SD, NHMS and WMS are not scoring on or above grade level on the information text portion of the English Language Arts (ELA) standardized SC Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (SCPASS) test given annually in South Carolina. The teachers developed and implemented art-based anchor charts to help close the achievement gap among the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students. There has been no formal exploration of the teachers' experiences regarding the use of anchor charts. Using the elements of problem-based learning as the theoretical framework, the purpose of this project study was to explore the teachers' experiences of art-based anchor charts on increasing students' comprehension on informational text. The research questions guiding this study examined the teachers' experiences and perceptions with using art-based anchor charts and the teachers' perceptions of which strategies are helpful in increasing comprehension on informational text. Using a single case study research design and purposeful sampling, 5 middle school teachers who used art-based anchor charts were interviewed. Open and axial coding were employed through transcribe interviews with iterative categorization to collapse the codes into themes then findings. The findings revealed that the anchor charts allowed for use of visuals, prior knowledge, art-based activities, and cooperative learning to create understanding and relevance to informational text comprehension which were effective for engaging and encouraging high-level performance for students. The findings from this study may be used to assist the teachers when developing and implementing art-based anchor charts and with helping students increase their reading comprehension on informational text.

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Dedication

The success in completing my doctoral study is due to the assistance I received throughout this process. I would like to take this time to reflect on family, friends, and co-workers who have supported and helped me throughout this period. I am thankful to God for the opportunity to have been surrounded by people who saw my passion for conducting this study and offered encouraging words to ensure I completed this task.

My sincere appreciation is offered to my husband, Angel Fontanez, Sr., whose words of encouragement kept me inspired and motivated as I worked to add this milestone to my educational career. The depth of love I have for "My Angel" is immeasurable. Thanks for always being my #1 Cheerleader.

I also dedicate my work to my 10-year old son, Angel Fontanez, Jr., who kept me working towards my doctorate. Providing him with a role model that speaks and shows him the importance of an education will hopefully inspire him to do the same.

I am forever indebted to my friend, Alvina Head for offering prayers that kept me optimistic.

I am grateful to my colleagues, Dr. Tara Davis, Dr. Kimberly Badger, and Dr. Dedra Wilson-Patrick, for inspiring words of wisdom.

I am extremely blessed to have friends, colleagues, and family members who were my constant source of strength as I embarked on this educational endeavor.

Acknowledgments

Ecclesiastes 3:1 King James Version (KJV) reads to everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven. Growing up with very young parents, one of whom did not complete high school motivated me to set goals and work until I attained them. The time has come, and one of my goals have been realized. I am the first member of my family to attain a Doctor of Education Degree in Administrative Leadership for Teaching and Learning.

Acknowledging that some goals are only obtained with the assistance of others, my deepest appreciation is extended to Dr. Alen Badal and Dr. Kim Nisbett for providing leadership, guidance, and support as he read my drafts numerous times to provide the suggestions necessary for me to complete my study. I acknowledge Dr. Ramo Lord for his wealth of knowledge, ideas, and method of inquiry that assisted me with ensuring all areas of my study were addressed in a scholarly manner.

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My sincere gratitude is further offered to the project study participants for the time they spent to ensure I collected the data necessary to complete my study.

It is a genuine pleasure to express my deep sense of appreciation to all who supported me the past 6 years. I, Dr. Kimberly Fontanez, cherish each of them for being a vital part of my village. To God be the glory!

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

South Carolina schools were ranked third, nationwide in the subject of reading comprehension, specifically in literary and informational text (Courrege, 2011). All names in this manuscript are pseudonyms, ensuring confidentiality was preserved for the selected district, school site, and study participants. According to South Carolina Department of Education (SC-DOE) 2015, the students were not mastering the comprehension of informational text. Although Courrege (2011) talked about literary and informational text, I focused on only informational text. At New Hope Middle School (NHMS), during the 2012-2013 school year, 66 students in the 6th grade were tested on the focus of informational texts. The test performance of 43.9% of these students showed weakness using informational texts. At Watkin Middle School (WHS), 109 students in the 6th grade were tested on the focus of informational texts. The test performance of 49.5% of these students showed weakness using informational texts (SC-DOE). At Hobbit Middle School (HMS), 73 students in the 6th grade were tested on the focus of informational texts. The test performance of 28.8% of these students showed weakness using informational texts (SC-DOE). At NHMS, WMS, and HMS, standardized test data revealed evidence of difficulties facilitating students' attainment of the minimum scores required to demonstrate grade-level academic achievement (S. Dugar, personal communication, May 2014). While below grade-level achievement is evident in all subjects at NHMS, WMS, and HMS, it is particularly problematic in reading (S. Dugar, personal communication).

The test results from the 2012-2015 school years on the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Reading test results for informational text at NHMS, WMS, and HMS revealed trends below the required achievement levels. Although the scores became better during the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years, they are still wavering, presenting a problem within the topic of informational text (SC-DOE, 2015). An average score of 20% or less is needed to attain a reasonable passing rate. More specifically, the NHMS, WMS, and HMS students' reading scores, especially addressing informational texts, have been identified as below standards over the past several years (S. Dugar, personal communication, May 2014). Informational text reading includes detailed facts, directions, or persuasion, relayed without a story-like format. Informational texts are becoming increasingly significant in today's classrooms (Bemiss, 2015). Informational text lessons enable young children to learn facts and details about the world around them, from both local and historical perspectives (Malock & Bomer, 2013).

According to Bemiss (2015), reading informational text is a foundational skill necessary for students to succeed in all learning throughout their formal education. When reading and discussing informational texts, children become sufficiently comfortable with the content to initiate inquiries and competent enough to entertain complex ideas (Belfatti, 2015). These skills are recognized as pertinent not only for success in education, but success in all life endeavors.

One of the academic goals at NHMS, WMS, and HMS is to enable all students to become productive members of society by ensuring their attainment of literacy standards by reading on or above grade level (County SD, 2013). According to County School

District's Disciplinary Literacy Model Mission (2015), the district needs to "improve student achievement through cross-content teacher partnerships and collaborative support systems, which utilize research-based instruction, data analysis, and ongoing professional development" (para 1). Language literacy is essential for attainment of this objective. English language literacy encompasses the ability to use and understand read, written, heard, and spoken words (Belfatti, 2015).

According to Bemiss (2015), reading is fundamental for literacy development. Language skills are essential tools for all learning; language skills enhance the lives of students (SC-DOE, 2015, p. 9). According to SC-DOE (2015), the "single goal of the state literacy plan is to raise achievement in reading and writing for all students in South Carolina" (p. 1). The state literacy plan defines college and career readiness expectations that encompass the essential skills all students are required to understand and demonstrate to successfully complete compulsory education (SC-DOE, 2015, p. 6). Students who are college and career ready graduate from high school demonstrating English language skill knowledge and competence at the level necessary to qualify for enrollment in college or participation in the workforce (SC-DOE, 2015).

The academic improvement plan adopted by the schools in County SD includes recommendations for the provision of extra or alternative instructional support using specific activities intended to promote students' learning. County SD (2013) "demonstrates an unwavering commitment to the educational community to embrace their responsibility for ensuring that each student at any level becomes a successful reader and writer" (p. 1). The goal of this approach was to provide challenging and

rewarding educational experiences that empower students with the understanding and skills necessary to compete and contribute to the contemporary global society. According to County SD, student success was attributed "to our emphasis on reading achievement, our early focus on Common Core State Standards, our collaborative approach to curriculum alignment, and school restructuring based on Making Middle Grades Work (MMGW)" (Subheading, para 2). Based on the MMGW principle, the art activity (e.g., anchor charts) were embedded within the instruction allowing students to practice habits of successful learning (Southern Regional Education Board, 2015, p. 2). Students use anchor charts in the classroom to help describe procedures, processes, and strategies with the use of illustrations, posting them in the classroom as a visual reference (Southern Regional Education Board, 2015).

The MMGW initiative prepared students for educational success by improving classroom practices. MMGW promoted 10 important practices that provide an objective and purpose to improve student achievement (Southern Regional Education Board [SREB]). The instructional approaches included highly rigorous, engaging classroom practices such as student-led learning activities, project-based or interactive lessons, with real-world applications (SREB, n.d.). MMGW instruction facilitates focus on literacy activities to foster reading achievement and cross-curricular success that will enable students to leave middle school prepared for high school success (SREB, n.d.). Centered on the tenets of MMGW, the introduction of the strategy (e.g., anchor charts) embedded within instruction would help advance learners' literacy success and generalized academic achievement. According to SREB (2015), anchor charts make it possible to

record strategies, processes, cues, and guidelines with the use of visuals. Teachers or students may record reading vocabulary, processes, procedures, and strategies that can help guide them through a reading unit.

I explored (a) an understanding of middle grade art-based anchor charts on the comprehension of informational text, (b) an interpretation of MAP test data, (c) recognition of areas learners are not succeeding, and (d) reading comprehension (i.e., informational text literacy) to bolster all academic success. The research rationale, evidence of the problem, literature reviewed summarizing relevant theory and prior studies, the theoretical background, the parameters of the study, and the anticipated significance of this work are all addressed within this first section of the doctoral project. The specific problem for this study explored what effects art-based anchor charts have on increasing comprehension on informational text.

Project-based learning (PBL) is now a requirement at NHMS, WMS, and HMS (County SD, 2013). The implementation of an art-based anchor chart was incorporated into the English Language Arts (ELA) classes. PBL is a style of learning where students learn about real-world problems usually in the form of projects and solve those problems collaboratively. PBL was implemented to support the role of informational texts in the reading curriculum. PBL can improve student learning when applied completely (David, 2008). Studied by advocates, students are better prepared for the workplace when learning about PBL (David, 2008).

Definition of the Problem

The students at three middle schools in County SD, NHMS, WMS, and HMS were not scoring on or above grade level on the information text portion of the ELA standardized SC Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (SCPASS) test given annually in South Carolina. The specific problem addressed in this study was to explore what effect art-based anchor charts have on increasing students' comprehension on informational text. There may be other schools in the district with similar problems; but, these are the faculty that meet often together for professional development purposes. The students' scores on the quarterly MAP tests are failing to meet the specified objectives for function on or above grade-level. The teachers at NHMS reported that informational text is a significant concept that the students are having difficulty understanding (S. Dugar, Personal communication, May 2014).

Within the selected school district, there are 10 middle schools. The middle schools are subgrouped as feeder schools for their local high school. This generally groups schools serving student populations with similar demographics. I selected ELA classes at three schools in the selected South Carolina school district. The research rationale includes documentation of the specific problem at NHMS. For all learners, failure to master this literacy skill has direct impact on learning progress in all content areas (Dugar, 2014).

The purpose of this project study was to examine the teachers' experiences of art-based anchor charts on increasing comprehension on informational text. According to McNeal (2012), the use of anchor charts with visuals unites learning and memory,

becoming an artifact of the learning experience (para 4). The art-based anchor charts strategy was chosen to aid students who earn more visually. Chaney (2011) reported, "When students' interest in reading is heightened they tend to exemplify better reading skills and excel academically" (p. 11).

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

To support the role of informational texts in the reading curriculum and to promote higher test scores in Reading Language Arts, art-based anchor charts were implemented to explore if they would help motivate and assist students with retaining information on the topic of informational texts. Failure to attain academic achievement objectives on informational texts on the MAP tests at three schools in County School District, NHMS, WHS, and HMS isnot limited to English/Language Arts (ELA) testing. However, the site data for reading and literacy clearly evidence the failure to foster sufficient, annual academic growth (SC-DOE, 2015). The faculty at NHMS, WHS, and HMS meet often together for planning purposes. The test results from the 2012-2015 school years on the MAPS Reading test results for Informational Text at NHMS, WHS, and HMS revealed trends below the required achievement levels.

The test results from the 2012-2015 school years on the MAPS Reading test results for Informational Text at NHMS (Table 1) revealed trends below the required achievement levels. Although the scores became better during the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years, they were still wavering, presenting a problem within the topic of informational text. An average score of 20% or less is needed to attain a reasonable

passing rate. Table 1 includes additional years to confirm the trend of low test scores for

3 consecutive years in informational text. The MAPS report indicated possible

interventional strategies including the use of additional project-based or hands-on

learning activities (Table 1).

Table 1

MAPS Informational Text Reading Scores Among NHMS Middle Grade Students

2012-2013			2013-2014		2014-2015	
Grade Tested	Students Tested	Weakness Using Informational Text	Students Tested	Weakness Using Informational Text	Students Tested	Weakness Using Informational Text
6th	66	43.9%	68	20.6%	56	30.4%
7th	79	31.6%	66	27.3%	64	18.8%
8th	74	25.7%	77	26%	67	28.4%

During the 2012-2013 school year at WHS, about 109 students in the 6th grade

were tested on the focus of informational texts. The test performance of 49.5% of these

students showed weakness using informational texts. In the 7th grade, 102 students were

tested; 46.1% showed weakness using informational texts. In the 8th grade, 99 students

were tested; 38.4% of these students were found to be weak using informational texts.

The test results from the 2012-2015 school years on the MAPS Reading test results for

Informational Text at WHS (Table 2) revealed trends below the desired achievement

levels. Although the scores became a little better during the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015

school years, they are still not where they need to be, presenting a problem within the

topic of informational text. An average score of 20% or less is needed to attain a

reasonable passing rate. Table 2 includes additional years to confirm the trend of low test

scores for three consecutive years in informational text. The MAPS report indicated

possible interventional strategies including the use of additional hands-on or project-

based learning activities (Table 2).

Table 2

MAPS Informational Text Reading Scores Among WMS Middle Grade Students

2012-2013			2013-2014		2014-2015	
Grade Tested	Students Tested	Weakness Using Informational Text	Students Tested	Weakness Using Informational Text	Students Tested	Weakness Using Informational Text
6th	109	49.5%	100	18%	107	23.4%
7th	102	46.1%	111	18%	103	26.2%
8th	99	38.4%	112	20.5%	111	21.6%

During the 2012-2013 school year at HMS, 73 students in the 6th grade were

tested on the focus of informational texts. The test performance of 28.8% of these

students showed weakness using informational texts. In the 7th grade, 69 students were

tested; 34.8% showed weakness using informational texts. In the 8th grade, 55 students

were tested; 30.9% of these students were found to be weak using informational texts.

Table 3 includes additional years to confirm the trend of low test scores for three

consecutive years in informational text. The test results from the 2012-2015 school years

on the MAPS Reading test results for Informational Text at HMS (Table 3) revealed

trends below the desired achievement levels. The percentage of low test scores from the

2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years were drastically going up by an average of 25%,

presenting a major problem within the topic of informational text. Based on 100% an

average score of 20% or less is needed to attain a reasonable passing rate. The MAPS

report indicated possible interventional strategies including the use of additional hands-on or project-based learning activities (Table 3).

Table 3

MAPS Informational Text Reading Scores Among HMS Middle Grade Students

2012-2013			2013-2014		2014-2015	
Grade Tested	Students Tested	Weakness Using Informational Text	Students Tested	Weakness Using Informational Text	Students Tested	Weakness Using Informational Text
6th	73	28.8%	85	24.7	35	40%
7th	69	34.8%	71	31%	46	50%
8th	55	30.9%	71	19.7%	30	60%

Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature

Geimer, Getz, Pochert, and Pullam (2000) reported that the solution to low achievement in ELA is the implementation of teaching strategies embracing Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Prior research comparing traditional teaching strategies to multiple intelligence strategies indicated increases in achievement among students taught using multiple intelligences strategies as an interventional approach (Geimer et al., 2000). Specifically, the students performed well when activities were combined with schoolwork or homework (Geimer et al., 2000).

The specific use of art-based anchor charts, for essential or supplemental learning, is not a new idea in theoretical or practical application. According to Gardner (as cited in Armstrong, 2013), individual intelligences or learning styles are brought together to achieve a variety of responsibilities, explain various problems, and demonstrate progress

in different areas. Gardner encouraged the implementation of art-based projects as one of many diverse, alternative teaching and learning strategies.

David (2008) stated that PBL is a unique way to teach students while developing critical thinking and problem solving skills through collaboration with others. PBL helps prepare students for the real-world (David, 2008). The main idea of PBL is that students learn better with the use of real-world problems that provoke thinking. The teacher facilitates while the students work and learn from the experience. According to David, PBL has been found to enhance the condition of student knowledge when compared to other instructional techniques.

The study site is among the many schools that embraced systemic change plans that included novel, but consistent quality instructional approaches. The MMGW program is one of many that addresses how the leaders lead, how their teachers teach, and how the learners learn. The use of art-based anchor charts in the classroom is a way to give students a consistent visual as they are learning concepts in ELA. Among the MMGW key practices is the importance on (a) classroom procedures that employ all students and (b) integration of literacy across the curriculum. MMGW specifically suggests:

1. Teachers employ various instructional strategies in order to engage students intellectually, emotionally, and behaviorally. Opportunities for students to apply skills and concepts to solve real-world problems.

2. Technology is used to expand student learning and engage them in active learning.

3.   Students experience numerous opportunities to utilize reading, writing and

presentation skills in the context of the field (SREB, 2010, pp. 15-20).

Definitions

Anchor charts: Student- or teacher-generated artistic representations of the

content read or learned. This served as a tool for processing and recalling the content

through visual cues. This approach is the foundation for the teaching and learning

strategy introduced in this study (Newman, 2010).

Informational texts: Nonnarrative and nonfictional reading passages laden with

facts, details, and specific information that learners are intended to recall and apply to

demonstrate understanding. Reading comprehension is critical for success understanding,

processing, recalling, and using these passages in all subject areas (Benedict, 2012).

Measures of Academic Progress (MAP): MAP is a computerized benchmark

assessment program that identifies students 'strengths and weaknesses that teachers use

to improve teaching and learning. It measures students' growth in mathematics, reading,

and language usage (Aiken County Public Schools, 2014). The MAP scores were used to

identify the specific academic problems and potential strategies for intervention at the

selected study sites.

Student-generated, art-based lessons: Within this study, the use of visual and

graphic arts within the informational texts reading lessons incorporated the students'

creation of their own anchor charts. This art-based strategy was intended to foster recall

of the details presented in the reading passages for application in other tasks. A specific

lesson outline has been developed for use by the educators in each of the middle school classes that were part of the research group adopting the art strategy.

Significance

The achievement gap has been an area of concern for several years (Education Week, 2011). Dowdy, Duncko, and Hartz (2011) stated that in order to help raise test scores in Reading Language Arts, art-based anchor charts should be implemented into the reading curriculum. When students are allowed to talk, paint, draw, and create, they willingly engage themselves into the reading curriculum. (Leigh, 2014). There are noted art strategies that have benefited students when implemented in reading. Leigh (2014) specifically explained how words are brought to life with the use of visual images. Kirkland and Manning (2011) found students' assessment scores increased with the implementation of arts education. There were important relationships found between the visual arts and thinking skills, reading and language skills, social skills, as well as the motivation to learn. According to Kirkland and Manning (2011), students' reading and writing skills improved when they received recognition regarding self-selected arts projects. The study site had the opportunity to consider the alternative approach of using art as a supplement to traditional instruction to advance learning.

Learning how reading language arts teachers perceive art-based anchor charts in their reading lessons provided insight and in-depth understanding of the learning experience of the individuals taking part in the study. The expected significance of the study was specific to the study site. The study site had the opportunity to consider the alternative approach of using art as a supplement to traditional instruction to advance

learning. This is a critical component for literacy and all subjects' learning. The findings of this study may become foundational for other schools, districts, and instructional programs. This study may become an example in the education field by which other locales can try similar methodology for students in all grades and subjects requiring informational text reading for comprehension.

Research Questions

A descriptive case study design was utilized to identify art-based anchor charts and/or teaching methods on informational text to increase 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students' comprehension. I examined the effect of art-based anchor charts on increasing comprehension on informational text. The study was specifically focused to concentrate on the following guiding research questions and subquestions:

What are teachers' perceptions of the use of art-based anchor charts to increase students' reading comprehension scores on informational texts?

Q1: What art-based instructional strategies are available in increasing reading comprehension scores in informational text?

Q2: What supplemental instructional material helps to increase reading comprehension in informational text?

Q3: What other instructional practices can help increase reading comprehension in informational text?

Review of the Literature

I searched many databases for literature. ERIC, Educational Research Complete, Education from SAGE, Google Scholar, and ProQuest Central were the databases I used

to gain a diverse perspective to conduct my study. The key terms I used for database searches were *art and literacy, art-based projects, project-based learning, motivating middle schoolers, benefits of the arts, reading and art, interdisciplinary approach, art and standardized tests, motivating through art,* and *teacher pedagogy.*

With ELA teachers' implementation of art-based anchor charts in the reading curriculum, they may help raise achievement evidenced in the students' standardized test scores in reading comprehension on reading informational texts. According to Hopper and Miller (2010), "all students in secondary schools can benefit from the integration of art related teaching strategies" (p. 3). Basic comprehension and recall are advanced by the use of mental imagery (Hibbing & Rankin, 2003). Whether the visuals are created by teachers, students, or professional graphics, the learner can be prompted or taught to use imagery to visualize events and comprehend relationships in text (Hibbing & Rankin, 2003). The literature reviewed herein encompasses the critical constructs of art and PBL activities and the requisite instructional adaptations to provide interdisciplinary education to advance educational achievement documented by standardized assessments.

Theoretical Base/Conceptual Framework

Dewey (Frank, 2017) often looked at learning as being active. His theory was that children came to school to explore and should participate in real-world PBL tasks and challenges. The progressive movement, advanced by Dewey's education philosophy generated the development of experiential education programs as experiments (Frank, para 16). PBL is now a requirement at NHMS, WMS, and HMS (County SD, 2013). The implementation of art-based anchor charts was incorporated into the ELA classes. Dewey

believed that children's sensory and motor skills responded to self-guided activities in three separate phases:

Phase 1: *Problematic situation*, a situation where natural or chronic reactions of the human living being to the earth are lacking for the continuation of progressing movement in quest for the satisfaction of necessities and goals.

Phase 2: *Isolation* of *the data*, which defines the parameters within which the recreation of the starting circumstance must be tended to.

Phase 3: *Reflective*, the intellectual components of request (thoughts, suppositions, speculations, and so forth.) are engaged as theoretical answers for the beginning hindrance of the hazardous circumstance, the ramifications of which are sought after in theory (Dewey, as cited by Frank, 2017).

Several authors identified a relationship between PBL and success in reading. (Gooch & Saine, 2011; Shiraz & Saine 2014; Wu et al., 2013). The infusion of visual arts through the use of PBL activities were found to enhance literacy skills in the classroom. The art-infused middle school curriculum used students' preexisting knowledge and experiences to actively engage them in learning. Students became more motivated to write when visual images and projects were implemented. Students are learning more than just how to read and write, they are learning how to think critically, analyze, and interpret information. Project-based material may be effective for engaging students in learning processes as a result of ever changing curriculum, attention should be placed on the integration of the arts.

Many teaching tools were found to be instrumental in improving student understanding of literacy. For example, in a single lesson, students learned about the Pop Art Movement and then discussed the different parts of speech (Gooch & Saine, 2011). Similarly, PBL was found to be a creative teaching tool that improves students' literacy skills. Students' innovative performance enhanced significantly when introduced using a PBL task (Gooch & Saine, 2011). Since creativity is a global focus, China coordinated approaches for creative thinking and problem solving to their national curriculum. Students' creativity was fostered with the use of art, science, technology, and math activities (Wu et al., 2013). In a common story, there was a connection between the use of project-based activities and students' reading comprehension.

Projects are one option that encourage students to learn in a PBL environment. English as a Foreign Language students were randomly separated into two experimental groups (Shiraz & Saine, 2014). One group was receiving English language instruction, focusing on project-based instruction while the other was a control group whom received instruction in communicative language teaching approach. One experimental group made four wall magazines while the other made four wall newspapers (Shiraz & Saine, 2014). The results from a multiple-choice test on reading comprehension indicated that students' comprehension abilities increased when participating in project-based activities. The existing PBL findings indicated the need for more in-depth study that focus on specific types of PBL as well as the students' subsequent achievement on assessments. Such research would make it possible to identify ways that can help raise standardized test scores in Reading (Shiraz & Saine, 2014).

Although PBL was implemented well in earlier stories, the experiences of teachers who implemented PBL at a middle school in eastern China differed (Zhenyu, 2012). Teachers who taught 6th and 7th grades participated in classroom observations, interviews, and workshop audios. There were barriers identified regarding how faithfully the teachers implemented PBL (Zhenyu, 2012). The blame for failed implementation was placed on the lack of computers, libraries, evaluation framework for understudies and schools, resistance of educators, and terrible administration from school pioneers. The approaches conflicted with students' habitual ways of learning (Zhenyu, 2012). Although teachers introduced unique and diverse learning experiences, it was revealed that they struggled with the roles they were expected to adopt and how to effectively facilitate students' projects (Zhenyu, 2012).

Literacy Instruction Using Arts

Many authors conducted studies on how the arts was incorporated into literacy (Dowdy et al., 2011; Gilbert & Fink, 2013; Kirkland & Manning, 2011). It was found that students' assessment scores increased with the implementation of arts education. There were important relationships found between the visual arts and literacy and verbal skills, thinking skills, social skills, and also the inspiration to learn. Students' reading and writing skills improved when they received recognition regarding self-selected arts projects. Six areas were identified to have benefited from arts education. Specifically, the improvements were evident in reading and verbal abilities, mathematic skills, thinking abilities, social abilities, inspiration to learn, and positive school condition (Kirkland & Manning, 2011). Similarly, visual expressions exposure helped to enhance reading skills.

Comic strips and comic books were utilized to help connect students in the literacy process. Storylines from comic books were easier because the artwork aided comprehension. The students were motivated to read the comic books (Dowdy et al., 2011). Comic books enhanced the literacy lesson by combining pictures with text that students found appealing. When readers connect with the art in comic strips, they bring the characters to life, which also aids literacy (Dowdy et al., 2011). Students' critical thinking skills were improved by reading and creating comic books. They could utilize the images and words to make meaning with the text (Dowdy et al., 2011). It was documented that using visual art was a way to advance students' literacy skills. Students became better writers when exposed to visual literacy instruction. Students viewed and comprehended the images when used alongside multiple narratives. The use of still images (e.g., websites, magazines, newspapers, print on clothing, and images in textbooks) increased students' engagement and participation in classroom discussions. The composition of magazine covers were specifically used to encourage students to ask questions and critique what they see. Students examined the images critically, which was an excellent way to engage them in literacy and their learning (Gilbert & Fink, 2013).

It was noted that art integration was important to literacy. The intention was to impact the students' overall academic success. A K-5 art specialist in Georgia explored the connections between the language arts and expressive arts curriculum (Newland, 2013). The focus was placed on four themes: visualization, visual idioms, narrative, and metaphor (Newland, 2013). When teaching visualization, students were read a book and then had to draw what they thought was the most important part of the story (Newland,

2013). Idioms were taught using literature (Newland, 2013). The students illustrated what the idiom said, instead of what it meant (Newland, 2013). When teaching about narratives, the students verbally responded to artwork, created original artwork, and wrote a narrative about the art. Finally, metaphors were taught by allowing students to listen to and analyze music (Newland, 2013). The unit ended with students creating their own personal metaphor as art (Newland, 2013). Connecting art and literature enabled students to practice language arts skills and include more detail in their art (Newland, 2013). In a similar study by Albert, Dooley, and Flint (2012), literacy and the arts have a connection. A kindergarten student who drew a picture every Friday as an end-of-week activity sparked interests from his teachers. The student, Dominic, not only demonstrated drawing skill, but offered knowledge about soccer. Dominic's teachers drew information from his picture to create a curriculum. The teachers used visual arts as a tool to support children like Dominic who tell stories through their artwork. Children's drawings and its influence on their education and writing skills was examined in detail. Teachers recognized and based on the abilities or languages that the kindergarten children conveyed to the class. Children gained the ability to draw or make marks on paper and the ability to use oral dialect, setting the groundwork for the writing process (Albert et al., 2012).

Interdisciplinary Approach

It was noted that art activities helped students mature academically. In an exploratory qualitative investigation, secondary students who were highly artistic were observed within visual art programs that were intended to better accommodate the

students' learning needs. The findings showed that the art-related activities aided in student growth (Visconti, 2012). Through the creation of art, students developed skills in critical thinking, overcoming challenges, transferability of abilities, broadening local and world associations, and natural and societal concerns. The findings proved art was an important and meaningful tool for educators to use (Visconti, 2012). Curriculum developers must recognize the importance of diversified in strong educational practices (Visconti, 2012). In addition to art activities, art integration could transform education (Marshall, 2014). In order to provide instruction aligned with the new standards and initiatives, general education is now focused on the way young people learn. Art integration benefits teaching and learning by bringing in artistic thinking, processing, and creativity (Marshall, 2014). As students demonstrate understanding of core concepts through an art form, they enhance their comprehension. Integration also connects discipline areas by emphasizing the investigation processes and skills common to all learning. This enables students to visualize how subjects work together, which is transdisciplinary practice. Integration is important for fostering visualization and recall (Marshall, 2014).

In a similar story, art teachers who connect art creation with the lives and interests of the students, understand the importance of personal connection for recall and application of new learning were supported. Art education focuses on skill-building and addressing identified academic concerns, to use the art activity to promote specific learning gains. As art budgets shrink, art teachers need to find ways to integrate the arts into core academic instruction. Interdisciplinary studies support art making because art

reinforces what students already know and facilitates processing of the content students are actively learning (Eubanks, 2012). The same as Eubanks, it was learned that art helped develop content connections in core subjects. Arts integration is revealing positive effects in the learning among disadvantaged student populations. New York City schools have successfully integrated Common Core aligned tasks. Students who are economically disadvantaged, English language learners, or classified disabled, thrive in classrooms where arts integrated learning is used. When art is integrated into the core curriculum, students are required to utilize high-order thinking skills to increase additional understanding. When art standards are combined with the core curriculum, students form cognitive relationships (Robinson, 2012).

Art-infused education holds tremendous promise for student achievement associated with core curriculum. Interdisciplinary units helped students succeed in core content areas, specifically in literacy (Loimer, 2011). Visual and performing arts have been implanted into dialect expressions, math, science, and history courses to accommodate the developmental needs of early adolescents (Lorimer, 2011). Interdisciplinary arts education was explored in middle level classrooms that serve diverse students. Infusing the arts on a regular basis within core classes provides rich, relevant, and engaging learning experiences (Lorimer, 2011). Simultaneously, this learning approach empowers and transforms students who are living below the poverty line (Lorimer, 2011). Art education was found to be beneficial for students' course grades. Teachers and staff from elementary, secondary, and higher education institutions from the eastern part of the United States are in their ninth year integrating arts into core

subjects (Vitulli et al., 2013). The purpose of the expansion grant for Arts in Education (AiE) is to efficiently incorporate the arts within classrooms by using visual art, theater, and dance to communicate ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies. Throughout the past decade, the results specified that arts integration can increase students' standardized test results (Vitulli et al., 2013). The arts provide an alternative way for students to gain an understanding of concepts. Failure to integrate the arts is tantamount to depriving students of their tools for learning. The arts give opportunities for students to integrate and apply their personal experiences, information, and interests. The fact that arts integration has been so successful in the past suggests that these findings provide a solid interdisciplinary approach for learning and synthesizing new skills (Vitulli et al., 2013).

Arts Integration and Standardized Tests

When students were active in the performing art, they were more successful in the future (Engdahl, 2012). The East Bay Center for the Performing Arts in Richmond, California used arts education to help students become successful on standardized tests. The faculty fostered content connections between various art forms, including dance and acting (Engdahl, 2012). The performing arts engage the students. They are empowered to imagine and create a vision for themselves through discipline and rigorous training. The low-income multicultural neighborhood not only provides the students with a venue to express themselves, but also provides disadvantaged students a chance to be more successful later in high school (Engdahl, 2012). Related, Anne Arundel County Public Schools increased 6th and 7th grade student achievement on the Maryland State

Assessment by 20% (Engdahl, 2012). The integration was executed positively and improved its implementation of the arts.The model was recommended to teachers across every content area, incorporating broad professional development opportunities. It was revealed that employing the arts integration model clearly correlates with 77% decrease in behavioral referrals, and generally positive change in school climate as well as enhanced student achievement on statewide assessments (Snyder, Klos, & Grey-Hawkins, 2014).

Various Art Disciplines

It was noted that an involvement in various art disciplines helped to close the achievement gap. The arts were found to be beneficial to student success because students can use it to make connections to other subjects. After studying the components of the educational curriculum, the arts were found to be a vital part (Rosier & Tyler, 2014). The more students participate in the arts, the more complex their artwork becomes of the connection. Art and thought work together which makes art a critical component of education. It was revealed through surveys that 93% of Americans believe art contributes to a well-rounded education. Art programs facilitate critical thinking skills that are relevant in other subject areas as well (Rosier & Tyler, 2014). In a similar study, new findings have developed in brain research and cognitive development, embracing art and using it as a tool for retaining the details within core content areas (Smith, 2014). Students involved in the arts, test scores increased in math, literacy, cognitive skills, critical thinking, and verbal skills. Before the findings, there was pressures to raise test scores. Many art classes were cancelled and positions have been closed, to dedicate more

time to focus on reading and math (Smith, 2014). Art programs are creating a foundation and helping to close the gap that has left many students behind (Smith, 2014). Art is being incorporated into core classes, adding hands-on instruction with impressive results. Arts education has been made a priority in New York City in an effort to connect students to the different cultures (Smith, 2014). Likewise, through the use of various art disciplines, students perform better in academics.

Art and science must be integrated so as to help develop students who are competent of creative participation in a science-dominated society (Root-Bernstein, 2013). When students are engaged in the arts, it allows them to excel in scientific discovery and innovation (Root-Bernstein, 2013). Important interactions occur when students are in an art-infused curriculum. Observation, visual thinking, the skill to notice and create patterns, and manipulative abilities are competences that develop in arts and crafts. Not only did students who possess these skills perform better in writing, math and on standardized tests, it also enhanced their scientific ability (Root-Bernstein, 2013). A similar study found that using art was a great way to develop students' STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) skills (Plonczak, & Zwirn, 2015). Middle school teachers use art as a baseline in building the core curriculum in hope that students will understand core concepts better. The art-infused curriculum added to advance discoveries, incremental developments, and recent thinking (Plonczak, & Zwirn, 2015).

Arts Fostering Motivation

Authors associated a relationship between art implementation and motivation in students. Students were found to be motivated through art integration (Holdren, 2012; (Rhinne, Gregory, & Yarmolinskaya, 2011). Researchers explored the application of visual arts as an evaluation for reading understanding (Holdren, 2012). Students were exposed to the arts while developing their reading skills. Visual arts projects were used to engage students in higher level reading comprehension skills (Holdren, 2012). Visual arts integration is effective in constructing meaning from texts. The student-generated artwork revealed what a student may or may not comprehend about a text. A work of art reveals critical thinking skills. Students who have knowledge in the arts usually have advanced level thinking and problem-solving abilities (Holdren, 2012).

Rhinne, Gregory, and Yarmolinskaya (2011) noted that students were able to gain knowledge with the use of motivational strategies. Art advocates believe that the K-12 curriculum should devote some time to arts education (Rhinne et al., 2011). Art advocates' opinions are mixed since some feel that arts instruction help students succeed while others believe that students will only succeed in non-arts domains. Evidence found noted that students surpassed their peers academically when they participated in the arts (Rhinne et al., 2011). What the students gain from the arts may help them to be successful academically. Incorporating artistic activities in other core areas may be applicable in improving long-term memory of contrast. Although teachers may increase retention by having students study, artistic activities offer a more effective way that motivates students to learn (Rhinne et al., 2011).

Awogbade (2013) added that art is a source that helps to motivate students. Awogbade's focus was on how inspiration can enhance the condition of workmanship in Nigeria as it identifies with understudies' enthusiasm for primary and secondary. Lack of interest in art as students grow older has been a concern of teachers. Children have a tendency to lose interest in education because of insufficient art materials, shortage of art teachers, and lack of motivation. Once the art teachers use an in-depth approach to teaching, students will gain motivation that will give them a sense of accomplishment (Awogbade, 2013). By motivating students with physical things and status and not solely by the excitement provided by exploration and discovery, may allow students to become enthusiastic about creating art. When teachers show love and excitement in art, then the students will also take it seriously (Awogbade, 2013). Garrett (2013) discovered that students learned better when there is more engagement. Oklahoma State University teachers have integrated art into their teaching. Artistic activities were being taught in an effort to enhance engagement. With art integrated lessons, students were able to use verbal and nonverbal creative methods to challenge and enhance their understanding. Thirty arts-integrated courses were designed with many being team-taught. Students made works of art and wrote reflective papers, critiquing their works of art instead of writing conventional research papers (Garrett, 2013).

Afterschool Art Programs

There was also relationship between afterschool art programs and improvement in academics. Art, in or out of school could make a difference. Emmaus United Afterschool and Family Literacy Center for Refugees in Albany which is a college service-learning

program devoted their time developing English as a Second Language (ESL) afterschool

classes for 62 children refugees that focused on afterschool classes in art, poetry, life

skills, and music. Washington (2011) explored the idea that art performance can

transform a child's life through academic engagement. The afterschool art program's

purpose was to encourage critical reflection as students developed an understanding of

the deep meaning, symbols, and personal consequences of paintings. The program

uncovered new ways to address community problems. These findings suggested that

afterschool art programs are also important in helping students academically

(Washington, 2011). A more recent study highlighted how an Australian community arts

program engaged at-risk students in art. Led by an artist, the visual arts curriculum was

created for children who faced mental health and social issues (Brown & Jeanneret,

2015). Established by a community-based youth arts academy, the program aimed to

foster education and training. Art training, with the chance to work together with a

professional artist was highlighted throughout the program. The program was found to be

effective in allowing opportunities to connect with others with relationship-building,

facilitated through art exercise. (Brown & Jeanneret, 2015). Teacher candidates tested

prescribed teaching methods at an afterschool community arts program for underserved

children. The teachers worked with the students in out-of-school and university settings.

Students connected academic classroom knowledge to real-world experience using the

arts, increasing their awareness of the social aspect of teaching and leading them to

question traditional classroom practices. A qualitative action research study determined

that promotion of education was a collaborative volunteer project in which teacher

candidates valued underserved children completely within an atmosphere that defined

them beyond grades, disciplines, and bell schedule (Briggs & McHenry, 2013).

Art and Writing

There is a relationship between writing and the arts. For example, art was found to

be able to enhance students' writing skills. Visual art helped students when writing

biographies, because it helps engage the student and advance their retention of the

detailed information (O'Loughlin, 2011). Literacy development was enhanced through

the implementation of visual art in reading. Students learned about writing their

biographies through exploring biographical information and the art of two well-known

artists (O'Loughlin, 2011). When integrating visual art and literacy, picture-books with

illustrations, websites, biographies of artists, and original works of art were all used as

texts sets when building the curriculum (O'Loughlin, 2011). The relationship between

writing and the arts using a qualitative study was evident as art helped students to write.

Second grade students were given picture-books to read aloud (Leigh, 2012). Students

manipulated drawings to imagine their idea in three diverse ways: the bubble hook, the

zoom hook, and the group hook. The bubble hook allowed the students to draw speech

inside of bubbles. The zoom hook permitted the students to draw aerial, close up, and

distant views, while the group hook gave the students a chance to organize pictures into

sections (Leigh, 2012). The visual hooks helped to create a visual interest for the students

and serve as a form of visual note taking. Students used the Elements of Art to think

about the story by using line, color, and space. Each month, students would self-select

one drawing or visual response from their journal that they wanted to talk about in-depth. Students would then write about their illustrations (Leigh, 2012).

Similarly, photography was found to be the best way to teach informational writing. The combination helps students develop linguistic and visual competencies. As a visual art medium, photography allows students to organize pictures and writings to communicate actual or imagined stories. Creating a composition from pictures through words can have an influential influence on students' motivation and knowledge. As students use their photos as incentives for informational writing, they become the professionals and therefore will be able to inhale life into numerous subjects that captivate, gratify, and are meaningful to them (Lilly & Fields, 2014). Through arts-integrated writing, Mexican students would learn to appreciate their own heritages and the heritages of others (Bresciano, 2012). After implementing an afterschool writing program for third through fifth grade students, Bresciano (2012) discovered a way to teach creative writing through the integration of the arts. In addition to arts integration, an international component was proposed to ensure success since the school's population was diverse. Angelina, a student from Guatemala, was embarrassed and did not want to be singled out as Mayan. She was included in the hope that the experience would make her more confident. After partnering with a group of Habla students, and innovative organization, Bresciano moved on the lessons. The students engaged in written exchanges, creating the content for a website that would showcase their work. Most of the writing was centered on art activities that included the students' daily lives. Not only were the students creating art, they were also teaching others as well about their

backgrounds. Students wrote about their art in their native language as well as in correct English. Students' art and writings were published online and read by their peers. International collaboration combined with arts integration and writing is an effective tool in motivating students to do their best work (Bresciano, 2012).

Reading Achievement Gap and Informational Texts

A few authors noted the reading achievement gaps in informational texts in regards to middle school students. Through mind mapping strategies, 5th and 6th grade students improved when processing informational texts. Three tests were administered to middle school students from Belgium (Merchie & Van Keer, 2013). They were evaluated on the impact of mind mapping strategies. Children begin spending more time learning from texts between the ages of 11-13 (Merchie & Van Keer, 2013). There was a need to support and engage the students in the learning process by implementing mind mapping which is an organizational learning strategy. It was revealed that by connecting images to words and using color is an effective way to stimulate creativity (Merchie & Van Keer, 2013). In a similar study, different kinds of informational texts that are utilized in secondary classrooms were examined. The three texts types were argument/persuasion, exposition, and procedural text (Watkins & Liang, 2014). The Common Core State Standards emphasized the utilization of informational text throughout all content areas by increasing the extent of this text type on evaluations. These standards exemplify literacy skills that students should execute across all core areas utilizing literacy and informational text together (Watkins & Liang, 2014). Exposure and distribution to informational text is helpful in improving students' comprehension skills. Watkins and

Liang (2014) found that expository texts were the most popular form of informational text and should be the only path to enhancing students' literacy abilities. Information was placed on the importance of nonfiction texts in the ELA classroom. Watkins and Liang sought richer ways to accomplish this work using different strategies. It was discovered that English teachers initially used newspapers and magazine articles on subjects of teen interests which framed teaching. Teachers can design informational reading curricula most powerfully by embedding a critical literacy approach. As such, Lloyd and Wertsch (2016) infused the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in informational texts with aspects of critical literacy instruction: (a) reading nontraditional texts, or absent narratives; (b) teaching reading strategies that question authority; and (c) offering students choice in self-directed research or creation of counter texts. It was learned that students' motivation to read and think deeply about their reading improved when the text has real-world relevance.

Art and Other 21ˢᵗ Century Skills

There was also a relationship found between 21st century skills and art (Buczynski, Ireland, & Reed, 2012; Grushka 2011; Unrath & Mudd, 2011). Images are becoming the primary means of communication and are easily accessible to core teachers. Art teachers have been found to be equally as important as core subject teachers (Grushka, 2011). Since reading has become a vital skill to the 21st century, art has become an important aspect of the classroom learning. Art skills represent insights into new ways that enable students to understand concepts that are necessary for them to be

successful. Students are gaining literacy learning practices with the use of combined art concepts that are allowing them to develop a deeper understanding (Grushka, 2011).

Art developed students to exist effectively in the 21st century. The way visual arts and natural sciences rely on one another was explored. By combining both art and science, different abilities developed that permit middle school students training with 21st century skills. Students develop abilities such as communication, problem-solving, self-management, and systems thinking (Buczynski et al., 2012). The school's art teacher at Seabury Hall was recruited by Science teachers at a Grades 6-12 college prep academy to implement basic art lessons during science classes (Buczynski et al., 2012). Students were able to successfully apply the fundamentals of art and science together in order to refine their understanding of science content. Students also used their imaginations to create a children's book. By using complex subject matter in order to achieve a greater sense of science through art (Buczynski et al., 2012). It was noted that teachers need to change and equip themselves to the lives and learning styles of the 21st century students. There is a need for visual arts education in the new generation. Even though there is knowledge of the effects of the new practices in education, most remain the same. Art educators are the key to the convergence and should lead the charge in the transformation that follows. Through engagement, the needs of the 21st century learner is met with the use of quality art programs. Formal education is fundamental. Society emerges from farmers to factory workers, to knowledge workers, and to creators, art teachers recognize the importance of ideas that are elemental to our practice. These findings suggest that art-

related activities are valuable when preparing students for the 21st century (Unrath &
Mudd, 2011).

Need for More Evidence

      Baker (2012) and Cooper (20110 noted that there was a lack of evidence between
academic achievement in students and art-related activities. For example, it was revealed
that there was not any sufficient amount of data to determine that students performed
better academically when participating in art activities. High-stakes assessment results for
8th grade students participating in music or visual arts courses and those students not
participating in arts courses were compared. Scores of students receiving visual arts and
music instruction were compared to those that were not enrolled in the arts. Although
Barker found a lack of evidence supporting increased test scores in middle level English
and math, where students that were enrolled in music performed significantly better. Arts
instruction must be enforced in order for students to get a complete, successful, and
significant education. The arts should be included in the middle school curriculum
(Barker, 2012).

      The arts were also found to be an integral part of the 21st century student. Barker
(2012) learned that more research needed to be conducted to address how arts education
influences thinking and creativity, and attributes associated with success, such as
engagement, motivation, focus, and persistence. Cooper (2011) learned that the art
studies enhance reading and math test scores. Arts education allow students to tap into
their undiscovered talents, rounding out their education. Art is an effective tool in fixing
some of the educational challenges in today's schools. Art may help high school and

elementary school students become successful, adding support to their learning. Although these findings suggest that art education is a valuable tool, there is no proof stating that there is further research needed (Cooper, 2011).

Implications

The findings from this study contribute to a positive academic change at the school site by helping local educators determine possible factors that may influence students' motivation and understanding of learning concepts. While the findings cannot be wide-spread to other locations, populations, or stages, this study can be replicated to confirm the usability of the same methods in other schools. The literature reviewed provided strong evidence that these approaches would benefit students' learning and general achievement in reliable, consistent, and measurable ways. Eutsler (2013) determined the importance of arts education and arts implementation for "the critical thinking skills development of students" (p. 24). The MAP data helped ELA teachers implement the proper instructional practices to help increase students' comprehension on informational texts. Low achieving students gained the opportunity to learn reading concepts via different teaching techniques, which was easier for them to comprehend. High achieving students gained insight that assisted them in expanding their existing knowledge to long-term memory and applying the high-order thinking skills to rigorous challenges.

Summary

In order for the selected schools to empower all students to perform well on standardized tests specifically addressing informational texts in reading, visual art

activities should be implemented in Reading and ELA classes (Kirkland & Manning, 2011). As a Title I school in South Carolina, all students are expected to be given a reasonable, equal, and important chance to gain a high-quality education. Issues with literacy are not only a local and district problem; the literacy issues, specifically failure to acquire grade-level appropriate informational text reading skills, are evident at the state and national level.

South Carolina's Governor Haley is mandating a statewide focus on reading in an effort to help raise test scores in Reading. Data were collected within the study with the use of questionnaires and data analysis. The data collected helped determine how ELA teachers perceive the use of art-based anchor charts on increasing comprehension on informational text. Findings from the data helped uncover the reasons that prompted students' motivation and the understanding of reading concepts. This study helped to document the direct impact of the use of art activities to enhance reading of informational texts, as evidenced by the students' achievement on standardized tests.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the teachers' experiences of art-based anchor charts on increasing comprehension on informational text. The case study research was conducted in the general, 6th, 7th, and 8th grade reading classes in one South Carolina's County School District (CSD). CSD serves a predominantly Title I population (i.e., County SD, 2013). Cross-curricular instruction specifically bringing self-generated writing into the middle school art classroom has proven to be effective for advancing literacy (Bryan, 2014).

Research Questions

This qualitative case study was used to examine art-based anchor charts that may help increase comprehension on informational text within sixth, seventh, and eighth grade ELA classes. The study was specifically focused to address the following research question and subquestions:

What are teachers' perceptions of the use of art-based anchor charts to increase students' reading comprehension scores on informational texts?

Q1: What art-based instructional strategies are available in increasing reading comprehension scores in informational text?

Q2: What supplemental instructional material helps to increase reading comprehension in informational text?

Q3: What other instructional practices can help increase reading comprehension in informational text?

The sections of this chapter include an explanation of the selected study design, the context and art-based anchor charts used in the study, the specific methods for data assemblage and analysis, and the measures adopted for ethical security of the participants. The participant selection originated from the specific application of art-based anchor charts that was for reading informational text lessons in 6th, 7th, and 8th grade classes in the three middle schools of a South Carolina school district. To explore teachers' experiences of art-based anchor charts on increasing comprehension on informational text, data were collected to document the participants' perspectives of the material.

Description of Research Design

The qualitative study involved the application of case study research (CSR) design. According to Creswell (2007),

> Case study research is a qualitative approach wherein the investigator investigates a bounded procedure (case) or several bounded procedures (cases) over time, within detailed, thorough data collection involving various sources of evidence (for example, observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes. (p. 73)

> Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes. (p. 73)

A case study requires exploration of an issue through descriptions gathered from individuals involved in or exposed to a specific situation (Creswell, 2007). As described by Yin (2014), CSR facilitates the qualitative investigation of trends and specific situations, as experienced by the individuals exposed to the specific circumstances. Case studies rely on multiperspective analyses incorporating the views of the involved, as well as other relevant groups (e.g., stakeholders; Yin, 2013). Case studies also rely on the interaction between the different groups and their views or experiences (Yin, 2013). This study plan specifically sought to examine the teachers' experiences of art-based anchor charts on increasing comprehension on informational text. The applications of CSR, as proposed by Yin (2013), relevant to this study's design encompassed a description of the experience and outcomes from using the art-based anchor charts.

In this study, the circumstance or focus was exploration of art-based anchor charts with in-text; solicitation for other tool(s) and practice(s) that provided results of teachers' perceptions of the effects of art-based anchor charts. The population being served included two 6th grade, two 7th grade, and two 8th grade Title I South Carolina middle schools, in CSD. Additional detail about these schools and the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students were provided with the data. A line graph was created to provide a visual of the data.

Yin (2013) defined the single, embedded case study design as one that allows for comparison despite the sample size, which is limited. In this study, the five units of analysis was the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade ELA teachers who used the art-based anchor charts. To clarify, a single case, composed of all of the teachers of the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade ELA

classes in two middle schools within the selected South Carolina school district was included in this study.

The objective of this case study approach was to use both primary and secondary data collection strategies to triangulate and verify the findings. I used the observation protocol, document analysis of student work, and held interviews to obtain three sources of data for triangulation, stemming from my subjects. The sources that were used included field notes, interviews, and review of student data. The primary data included the teachers' experiences and reflections reported as responses to open-ended questions regarding their use of the interventional art-based anchor charts for the informational text lessons. The teachers' experiences of the efficacy of the student-generated anchor chart was compared to the level of learning attained with the use of the interviews. During the interviews, teachers provided useful data about the effectiveness of the utilization of art-based anchor charts in their class. The student-generated, art-based anchor charts, measurably assessed the effect of the use of the art practice in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade ELA classes. Literature was the secondary data that were utilized as a guide explaining the results and making a connection while providing an overview of past studies. Using the primary and secondary data, this case study facilitated the determination of art-based anchor charts that helped to increase comprehension within ELA lessons addressing informational texts reading literacy among the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. Based on Yin's (2013) expectations of data triangulation, the use of several sources of evidence allowed me to address a wide range of historical and

behavioral issues. I examined the teachers' expereinces of art-based anchor charts on increasing comprehension on informational text.

Yin (2013) described the purpose of CSR to contribute to our knowledge of an individual, group, or organization, associated with specific social or politically-related phenomena. CSR helps investigators discover and understand complex experiences via data collection. The CSR approach enabled the data to uncover the strategies and understandings of the influences involved in learning and developing informational text literacy when using art-based anchor charts. The data helped to reveal whether the teachers believe it is possible to improve the problem associated with informational text reading by implementing the tested art-based anchor charts (i.e., art-centered learning activities). The focus was the teachers' experiences with and perceptions of the art-based anchor charts used for informational text literacy.

According to Yin (2013), case study researchers work toward testing whether an educational method or concept makes a difference for individuals Evaluating whether the art-based anchor charts were perceived by the teachers as effective for the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students was the express purpose of this study. The arts-based anchor charts provided assistance for teachers to develop their perceptions of its effectiveness towards increasing comprehension on informational text. These data were collected to provide an opportunity for teachers to provide valid points when noting their experiences.

Prior to selecting the single embedded CSR design, the research approaches considered were narrative inquiry, ethnographic study, and mixed-methods design. The main emphasis of a narrative inquiry approach is to investigate the life of an individual

(Creswell, 2012). According to Yin (2014), an ethnographic design would focus on the description and analysis of a cultural group's beliefs, patterns of behavior, and language, carried out over a particular time period. Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010) stated that mixed methods research would focus on both the teachers' perceptions as qualitative data and the statistical analysis of the students' tests as quantitative data, this is effective for a study with a larger sample. While these all generate great detail and insight, they were inappropriate for the specific exploration of the beliefs held by the small group of professionals and their perceptions of the unit test data as evidence of the students' ability to learn from informational text using the art-based anchor charts.

CSR, as defined by Yin (2013), enabled this project to be used as a single embedded case study, which facilitated comparing and contrasting the art-based anchor charts for increasing sixth, seventh, and eighth graders' comprehension on informational text. Yin indicated that CSR design accommodates the search for specific outcomes. This study was justified by a lack of understanding of art-based anchor charts' effect on the comprehension of informational text. (SC-DOE, 2015). The research approach identified was suitable to explore and generate themes about impact on the students' performance in ELA when using art-based anchor charts to increase sixth, seventh, and eighth graders' comprehension on informational text. The themes and ratings, collected from the lessons, helped advance the understanding of the impact of the approaches when using instructional tools in ELA. It is the most common design as well as proving a wide scope and sequence for data collection. According to Lodico et al. (2010), case studies "focus

on small groups or individuals within a group and document that group's or individual's

experience in a specific setting" (p. 15).

I elaborated on the common themes drawn from the experiences reported by the

teachers. This qualitative data approach enabled the teachers to document their individual

experiences while developing awareness of the impact of using the art-based anchor

charts. The data gathered from the teachers included open-ended question answers. The

multiple format approach fostered reflection, elicited genuine unprompted responses, as

well as converted the teachers' experiences to a scaled rating format, which facilitated

comparisons. The diverse data formats enabled me to make generalizations about the

findings and generate a specific report regarding the teachers' experiences and utilization

of practical and instructional tools of any differences in the students' achievement levels.

Any reoccurring patterns in the qualitative data was grouped into categories and coded as

themes. The common and unique themes provided information and insight that made it

possible to develop an appropriate professional plan to encourage the use of practice

strategies, if it is found to benefit the students' reading comprehension achievement

reading informational texts. As Yin (2013) explained, the purpose of the primary data

collection and comparison of multiple perceptions enhances CSR because it enhances

data credibility.

To assess the impact of the instructional approach in a measurable and verifiable

way, the students' anchor charts are considered artifacts (Yin, 2013). This was done to

determine whether there was participation in informational text literacy. As a secondary

source of data, the teachers were asked to consider the artifacts to determine whether the

instructional approach had impacted the students' informational text literacy. Finally, the teachers were asked whether these data impacted his or her individual perceptions of using the art-based anchor charts.

The goals identified for this project encompassed generating an awareness of teachers' experiences of art-based anchor charts on increasing comprehension on informational text. This is one part of the triangulation, necessary in CSR design. To advance the reliability and applicability of the CSR findings, several triangulation approaches were used in this study.

Participants

It was vital to choose members who knew about the research problem exhibited for this study. Case study design relies on the inclusion of individuals who have been exposed to a specific situation, condition, or phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). "Qualitative researchers select their participants based on their characteristics and knowledge as they relate to the research questions being investigated" (Lodico et al., 2010, p. 140). Comparatively, Yin (2013) described the participant selection or inclusion process for CSR as the selection of the cases most directly involved in implementing the curriculum and applying the varied instructional approaches.

As a single case, the included ELA teachers provided in-depth information and insights regarding their experiences of the effect of art-based anchor charts on increasing comprehension on informational text. The teachers' experiences of the strategic intervention and artifacts from the students' learning was the focus of the CSR. The teachers are experts in their content area and in the instruction of middle grade students.

The teachers all had at least 3 years of experience in the classroom. Their insights and reflections assisted in exploring the use of anchor chart lessons and other approaches in the ELA classroom. I made sure that all teacher participants were familiar with the concept of integrating art-based instructional strategies within their curriculum in the classroom by first explaining what art-based anchor charts consisted of. The specific lesson plan for the informational text reading includes the students' creation of an anchor chart, something the teachers used in other contexts.

Criteria for Selecting Participants

All participant groups, the teachers who use the art-based anchor charts, were identified as purposeful samples. While the teachers were experts in the area they taught, they were the included experts because they were the teachers of the accessible district's 6th, 7th, and 8th grade reading classes. The students were enrolled in the ELA classes by random assignment, prior to the inception of this study. No methods were employed by me to influence these groups. I did not implement or teach any strategies to the students.

Participant Description

For this study, the educator participants were certified and proficient in teaching ELA classes in sixth through eighth grades with experience ranging from 3-20 years. There were about two teachers per grade level that participated in the study totaling five participants. Each participant was enthusiastically teaching at the study site during the period of the study. It is standard in a qualitative research to examine a small number of people because a researcher can supply a detailed image of the information provided by

participants. Cases that have 30 participants, for example, can become unmanageable and result in superficial perspectives.

Within the selected school district, there were 10 schools. The middle schools were sub-grouped as feeder schools for their local high school. This generally groups schools serving student populations with similar demographics. I had limited access to the ELA classes at two schools in the selected South Carolina school district. All of these middle schools had one teacher per grade level who taught ELA; all of these 6th, 7th, and 8th grade ELA teachers were encouraged to take part in the study.

County SD (2013) adopted the Middle School Literacy Model that suggests that the use of student-generated, anchor charts aid in student achievement. In order to maintain a common classroom environment, teachers must establish rituals and routines for anchor charts (County SD, 2013). A random inclusion process was used to select the teacher at each school who would be adopting the instructional practices. The determining factor was the response sequence. All groups of teachers were considered part of the single case study and were asked to reflect on the instructional strategy used, the student artifacts, as well as any impact on his or her perceptions of the use of the art-based anchor charts.

Gaining Access to Participants

In order to conduct the study, approval was required by the school district. Once approval was obtained from Walden University's Institution Review Board (IRB), a duplicate of the proposition was submitted with the application demand to the District's Research and Accountability Department. Once approval was received from the district, a

meeting was requested with the school administrators. Confirmation from the site administrators enabled me to contact the teachers. The teachers were contacted to initiate the participant selection process, followed by a group meeting for the overview of the study and the gathering of data.

To initiate these processes, an invitation was e-mailed to the teachers. This included a request for participation that outlined the study process, participant expectations, conditions of voluntary and anonymous participation, and provision of my contact information. This document was the informed consent document included in Appendix A. Once a response had been received agreeing to participate from each volunteer, a conference was arranged with the designated teacher participants to answer any questions or apprehensions about the study. At the conclusion of the research, an e-mail was delivered to all the ELA teachers express thanks for their involvement in the study.

The district required a letter to be mailed home to the parents describing the instructional activity and the anonymous data report that was provided to me (Appendix B). The student test data were reported to me without any personal identifiers. Similar to other tested instructional approaches, the site and district had the right to review the student data to determine the effectiveness of the approaches adopted. The students did not engage to ask for feedback about the new instructional approach. For these reasons, the parents were not required to provide express written consent for their student to be involved in the study process.

Establishing a Researcher-Participant Relationship

I attempted to build a mutual relationship with the participants so to establish understanding and trust throughout the study process. According to Lodico et al. (2010), generally researchers assure confidentiality to the participants of their studies. Because the participants control the quantity of information revealed, it was essential to start a good working relationship. Confirming that the participants understood the motivation, purpose, and procedure of the study was significant. This enhanced the teachers' accuracy and ability to set aside biases during the reflection questionnaire. I encouraged the participants to share how they implemented art in the classroom so that I could improve and increase strategies.

Protection of Participants Rights

Safeguarding the confidentiality of all participants is a basic ethical concern. Lodico et al. (2010) suggested that participants be protected from both physical and emotional harm. Gaining consent from the participants and safeguarding participants' confidentiality is a concern for researchers. To protect participants' rights, I offered each volunteer participant with a duplicate of an informed consent document that described full information about the purpose of the study.

Full revelation of the study's purpose and goal of the interview was examined. The participants were also informed about the use of secondary documents pertaining to this study (e.g., lesson details). Any information obtained from the participants was labeled using pseudonyms or alphanumeric codes to protect his or her identity. Each student was identified according to a participant number. Actual names or other personal

identifiers were not used so to safeguard the rights and privacy of the participants and protect the minor children.

Sampling and Permission

Numerous forms of permission were needed to conduct this study. Specifically, the confirmation and consent to perform the study was secured from the university's IRB. The district and the middle school administrators provided written consent for both access and the use of the grounded theory procedures in the classroom. Finally, the teachers provided individual consent to be involved in the study and completed the reflections and other data collection. However, the parents' consent was not needed because the students were not direct contributors in the study. The artifacts were gathered anonymously, preserving the students' rights and protections.

For this study each 6th, 7th, and 8th grade ELA teacher served as human subjects. Questionnaires with open-ended reflections and closed-ended rating scales were utilized to establish how the teachers perceived the usage of art-based anchor charts on increasing comprehension on informational text. I contacted the IRB to ensure that the ethicality of the work was considered and approved. Letters of consent were retrieved from the district office, the site administrator(s), and the participating ELA teachers within the school. Refer to appendices for copies of the documentation for consent.

Assumptions

The following assumptions accompany the study:

1. Teachers properly implemented the strategies/project.

2. Students completed an anchor chart based on an informational text.

3.   Teachers answered all questions thoroughly and truthfully during their

interview.

I analyzed the teachers' experiences on the effects of art-based anchor charts on

increasing comprehension on informational text based on observations, interview

questions, and anchor charts.

According to Gillham (2000), a researcher should start with a descriptive

observation: the setting, the people, activities, events, and apparent feelings. In this study,

the ELA teachers did not usually incorporate art-based anchor charts within their daily

instruction for any subject. This dynamic enabled the instructional strategy to function

without high risk of any prejudices.

Data Collection Procedures

Upon obtaining approval from the IRB, I initiated the study plan. First, I met with

all the ELA teachers to explain the procedures. The teachers were given a mini-

questionnaire to document their perceptions of the protocol for using the art-based anchor

charts in the classroom, in general, and specifically within the informational text reading

lessons (Appendix C). The teachers were also given the format for their reflection on

student learning to be used after each informational text lesson (Appendix D).

Opportunity to review and discuss the art-based anchor charts were provided to

the teachers who implemented it to ensure consistency and that all questions were

addressed by me. I documented and summarized any small group sessions of this type.

The CSR data were limited to questionnaires with reflections on both the methods of

instruction and the students' lesson artifacts (i.e., anchor charts). Finally, a data review

was conducted with all the study participants, providing the opportunity for reflection based on the data collected..

Data Collection

The teachers observed the students' progress as well as their motivation to complete the art-based anchor charts within the informational text lessons. According to Yin (2014), a researcher has the opportunity to triangulate the evidence and increase the credibility of the findings with patterns of evidence. The data collected in this study included the teachers' completion of an interview and reflection format including both open-ended and closed-ended questions (Appendix D). Yin (2003) asserted that the case study research is not restricted to a solitary source of data; reliable case studies profit from having various sources of evidence.

In addition, artifacts from the lessons may be gathered. This included, but is not limited to samples of the anchor charts and student commentary. Since the data were collected from two different schools, each report was presented by dividing it into text segments. A central phenomenon was described based on each individual school.

Each step took 1 week, after which time was allotted for more planning and reflection. The students were assessed with a Progress Page (Appendix E) to determine visual arts' influence on their reading skills. Teachers completed a Progress Page, noting how each student's motivation and daily practice was affecting their daily classwork. All of the students started answering additional questions correctly after everyday practice. Students' scores were based on ability and memory. A summary report of the results was shared with stakeholders through faculty meetings and newsletters.

Data Analysis

After collecting the data from narrative questionnaires, and other academic artifacts, the data were analyzed and interpreted to explore the teachers' experiences regarding the effects on academic achievement when art-based anchor charts were implemented within the ELA class. The use of multiple ongoing analysis approaches facilitated focus on the teachers' experiences of the art-based anchor charts on increasing comprehension on informational text. Within the case study research design, it often becomes necessary to perform data collection and analysis simultaneously; this is unlike most other research methods (Yin, 2004). Specifically, a continuous spiral analysis approach was implemented. Merriam (2002) explained that this is unique to qualitative studies, which avails opportunity for adjustment of the data collection methodology if there is need to clarify emergent themes with additional details or evidence. Data saturation was achieved through the use of interviews. I asked multiple participants the same questions in order to assist in achieving data saturation. The interviews elicited a number of perspectives on the topic. When no new information was being obtained and the data was repetitive, then data saturation was complete.

Creswell (2012) also described qualitative data analysis as an organized process that provides responses to the research questions. The results obtained from the data made it possible for the study's guiding research question and the three subquestions to be answered, which can be found under "Synthesis of Primary Sources" (p. 555). The data are presented in thematic tables, achievement trend graphs, and direct quote narratives formats to display each of the data types and the synthesized findings. Samples

of the students' anchor charts was also included. In addition to the summary report generated for the later sections of this project, a data presentation was prepared for the district. To prepare and present this, I analyzed each of the data types as described herein.

Teachers' Experiences

The primary data in this study were comprised of narratives and short reflections documented by the teachers. The teachers' direct responses were presented in narrative and tabular formats to display both the themes and rating scores from the educators who used the art-based anchor charts for the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade ELA classes' informational text reading lessons.

Open-Ended Queries

The content was culled from the 10 open-ended queries that the teachers completed after each informational-text reading lesson taught within the research timeline. The teachers answered the questionnaire whether the art-based anchor charts were used in the lesson or not. The data were organized based on the questionnaire item topic and the research question it addresses. An inductive reasoning method was utilized when analyzing the data for this study. The inductive reasoning method allowed the researcher to use observations to create an image of the phenomenon that is being examined (Lodico et al., 2010).

According to Lodico et al. (2010), an investigator collects data, searching for patterns or themes in order to develop generalizations from the analysis. More specifically, the aforementioned continuous spiral analysis approach was utilized to classify common and unique themes throughout the teachers' responses. Coding

processes, as defined by Creswell (2012), was used to identify meaningful units of words (i.e., brief phrases or sentences) that addressed the questions asked. I developed codes from the open-ended responses by dividing the redundant or broad content into specific, common themes. These were identified as emergent themes, which were defined by Creswell as linking concepts which are closely related in meaning into categories.

The responses were grouped based on related topics evident in the content. The topic addressed in the content was identified as a theme. Related themes were grouped to answer the questionnaire items as well as the guiding research questions for this study. These themes the five participants in this study cited were visuals, prior knowledge, art-based activities, and cooperative learning as the ELA   instructional strategies they feel confident in teaching since they saw improvement in students' motivation as well as being effective for assisting 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students in improving their proficiency in informational text., This allowed me to report the teachers' perceptions and insights regarding the use of art-based anchor charts on increasing comprehension on informational text. With these common emergent themes, it was possible to derive definitions and provide examples from the teachers' responses. The definitions were drawn from prior research and literature and the participating teachers' responses. These data were presented in tabular formats or as direct quotes from the teachers in Figure 1. In addition, the teachers opted to provide examples of the students' work to explain a problem, solution, or other insight regarding the practices and problems encountered when teaching informational text reading to middle school students.

Student Artifacts

The secondary source of data in this study included other artifacts from the lessons (e.g., anchor chart examples and student comments). These data were drawn from classes using the art-based anchor charts. The data from the student groups were compared in tabular or graphical formats. Students generated an anchor chart using tabular formats, such as tables, columns and/or a graphical format with the use of pictures or writing, both adding a visual.

Comparative methods were used to produce graphic representations of the student data in Figure 1. According to Lodico et al. (2010), graphing data are an approach to understand the information to measure relationships. A graphic report of the data trends made it doable to compare the pre and posttest, enabling the teachers to assess the effects of the art-based anchor charts and the benefits or gains attained by the students. The relationship considered herein was the effect of the approach on the students' posttest scores for informational text reading lessons.

Final Data Review

After gathering the data, teachers were brought together for a single interview session. This session was used to present and gather respondent verification regarding the identified themes. Respondent verification is a member-checking process defined by Creswell (2012) as a process intended to verify and elicit any other details that might clarify the data regarding the perceptions of the participants.

The final data report was summatively and confidentially reported and provided to the stakeholders. Stakeholders included the administrators at the study site and district

level and the teachers throughout the district. This provided the opportunity for the

educators to initiate professional dialog and consider the implications for future

instructional integration.

Validity and Reliability

According to Bradford (2003), the reliability and validity of the case study

method is uncertain. Data was collected in order to determine the stability and quality of

the qualitative data. However, there was no solitary, coherent group of validity and

reliability assessments for each research stage in case study research (Bradford, 2003).

Reliability

Creswell (2012) stressed the importance of establishing reliability when

conducting qualitative studies. Accuracy and credibility of the data were important for

determining whether the findings were accurate and appropriate to consider for

application to other times, locales, or populations. Lodico et al. (2010) revealed that

qualitative researchers make an effort to share findings with the participants and "other

professionals through journals, reports, Web sites, and formal and informal meetings" (p.

267). However, it is imperative to recognize that CSR applies to the single group

involved in the study (Yin, 2013). It is possible that the results may possibly even be

generalizable to the additional students in the school, other grade levels, or future classes

with the same teachers. For these reasons, qualitative researchers are advised to consider

the reliability and conformability of their findings (Creswell, 2012).

The aforementioned approaches for triangulation and member checking were

pertinent for this qualitative data to be considered reliable. Both approaches served as

methods for cross-checking the findings, themes, and any other derivations drawn from the data. Using the recommendations of Creswell (2012), to ensure accuracy of the descriptions and avoid bias, I used member checking to verify the findings with the participants and ensured the themes were accurate representations of their perspectives.

Validity

Lodico et al. (2010) defined external validity as the extent to which findings are generalizable. The findings of this study were unique to the teachers and students involved. The data and the conclusions cannot be generalized to other grades, teachers, locales, or times. To ensure that the study can be replicated in another setting, I provided detailed descriptions of how the data was collected and analyzed (Creswell 2012). External validity was impacted by recognizing that the researcher was the primary instrument of the qualitative study.

Researcher Bias

I was the primary tool for the study's development, collection, and analysis. My beliefs had influence throughout the study, its development, execution of the study plans, analysis of the data, and extraction of implications for future uses. My potential for bias, and the conditions of the research including assumptions, transparencies, limitations, were carefully documented. I planned the information process and content carefully before data collection to enable coherent and consistent data collection procedures. This aided the reader with developing greater understanding regarding the potential influences on the procedures and outcomes of the study.

Role of the Researcher

Yin (2014) indicated that a researcher must bring a strong sense of ethics to the research. The researcher for this investigation is presently a middle school art teacher. I have 15 years of experience as an art teacher and 4 years of experience at this school site. Due to the specialized academic instructional support and collaboration with the ELA teachers, I have had many experiences with all of the teachers at the school addressing the provision of learning support for the students. I attended many of the same professional staff development trainings provided by the district through the years and site for reading instruction. To conduct the study in an ethical manner, the normal classroom instruction was not disrupted. The interviews were completed at the teachers' convenience, preferably after school. I collaborated with all the stakeholders and adhered to the protocol standards delineated by the IRB.

Summary

Careful preparation, well planned schedules for conducting interviews and observations, adequate time to analyze data, and thoughtfulness for participants, amounts for a good qualitative research. The way toward translating the information is work concentrated; sufficient time was allocated to play out this task (Creswell, 2012). Data were gathered from face-to-face interviews, audio recordings, observations, and lesson plans to address the research question: What are teachers' perceptions of the use of art-based anchor charts to increase students' reading comprehension scores on informational texts?

Engaging in the interview protocol, observing teachers, listening to the audio recordings, and reviewing lesson plans provided me with an in-depth perspective on the participants' answers. They stated visuals, prior-knowledge, cooperative learning, and art-based activities are the most effective instructional strategies when using art-based anchor charts they use for assisting 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students with improving their proficiency on the PASS test. Teachers who use art-based anchor charts may be able help students improve their comprehension on informational text. Using art-based anchor charts ensure that teachers stay up-to-date on current research that convey a technique to assist students having problems learning to comprehend informational text. Because the rich descriptions helped me find connections and common themes in my case study, the administrators from the local Title I middle schools may use the findings to develop policies and plan effective PD for teachers to increase student achievement.

In Section 3, I present recommendations with art-based anchor chart ideas from my study's findings to assist the school principals and staff with making decisions relative to improving ELA teachers' pedagogy for teaching informational text. I also included in Section 3, the basis for the project genre, an analysis of literature relative to the issue studied, and an explanation of why this genre was appropriate for addressing the problem stated in my qualitative study. The project, roles and responsibilities for persons involved in the project, and social implications are also included.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The future of students' success in ELA is dependent upon teachers' abilities to use art-based instructional strategies to establish a learning environment that provides a quality education for all students. Scholars have proposed several art-based instructional strategies for teachers to help students increase their comprehension in informational text reading (Gooch & Saine 2011, Shiraz, Saine, & Zhenyu 2012). Anchor charts, used as an instructional tactic, have been known to be successful for increasing student achievement (Hibbing & Rankin, 2003).

My goal for this research study was to gain an understanding of what effects art-based anchor charts have on increasing comprehension on informational text. I collected data based on the participants' responses during the interviews and from observations, document analysis of student work, and lesson plans, I decided to develop my dissertation as part of this project. In it, I drew from the project study and literature review to outline recommendations for addressing this problem.

Project's Description and Goals

The results from my study provided me with a perspective on the naturalistic school settings associated with the art-based anchor chart strategy the participants identified as effective for improving students' performance in comprehension on informational text reading. Teachers are challenged to use effective art-based anchor charts as an instructional strategy to improve students' performance. This was determined when student success was attributed to emphasis on reading achievement (County SD,

2013). Gaining an understanding of the art-based instructional strategy ELA teachers used at these Title I schools is significant in assisting students with improving their performance on standardized tests. I selected an art-based anchor chart as an impactful context to address the effect art-based anchor charts have on increasing comprehension on informational text. I will provide these recommendations to the principal of the school. The policy recommendation included recommendations for art-based instructional strategies that teachers can use to enhance students' performance.

After I observed the art-based instructional strategies the participants used, examined the responses from the interviews, and reviewed their lesson plans, I determined that the findings are also applicable for other teachers to use when working with students experiencing difficulty comprehending informational text. All participants stated that students were more motivated in the lesson when art was implemented. I collected data from numerous sources, which permitted me to triangulate the data to ensure validity of my study. My first process was to focus on increasing and implementing the art-based anchor chart strategy to improve performance on standardized tests.

My second process was to present recommendations to stakeholders at the research site. My third goal was to review teachers' lesson plans and observe them as they integrate art-based anchor charts to increase students' comprehension on informational text. The principal will share the results from the study with the staff of the local Title I schools, the Title I coordinator, the district's art coordinator, and other stakeholders responsible for making decisions relative to school improvement.

Rationale

I designed the dissertation to determine if art-based instructional strategies will be shown to be effective in informational text reading because of students' interests in the arts. My rationale for presenting this dissertation is to provide ELA teachers with suggestions to assist 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students with increasing comprehension on informational text. The dissertation was designed for ELA teachers to make decisions that would affect a positive change in increasing comprehension on students' achievement on informational text.

Project Genre Rationale

The problem I addressed in this study concerned ELA teachers at two local Title I middle schools in a rural region of South Carolina who had been scoring very low on the informational text portion of the MAP test for the past 5 years. I used a descriptive case study design to gain understanding into a specific problem or redraw a generalization (Stake, 1995). According to the Center on Education Policy (CEP), gaps in students' achievement test scores depend upon race, gender, income, and ethnicity (Cooper, 2011). Rosenshine (2012) stated that teachers must utilize different instructional strategies to enhance students' performance because students enter their classrooms with varying learning styles and dissimilar levels of academic abilities.

In this case study, my purpose was to gain a detailed understanding of teachers' experiences of art-based anchor charts on increasing comprehension on informational text. Integration is important for fostering visualization and recall (Marshall, 2014). Lilly

(2014) stated that supplementing creation through words with structure through pictures can powerfully affect student inspiration and learning.

As the sole researcher for this case study, I will share my findings with the principal of the study sites. The project genre is appropriate because the results from the case study may assist the principal and other stakeholders with making important educational decisions regarding curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Scotten (2011) reported that policy recommendations are used to convince policymakers that there is evidence to confirm that changes in current policy and practices are necessary to improve students' performance.

Creswell (2012) stated that when a researcher describes the findings of the research study to the educational community, the researcher should provide an executive outline of the characteristics of the study along with the research findings and conclusions. Because my objective was to recommend art-based anchor charts instructional strategies to increase comprehension on informational text, a policy recommendation was the appropriate genre for my study. A professional development plan was more suitable for my study than an evaluation report, policy plan or a curriculum plan because the five participants communicated that the art-based instructional strategy they used proved to be effective for increasing their students' performance in the reading of informational text.

A curriculum plan is an option; however, a curriculum plan was not appropriate for my study. Aston and Renshaw (2014) stated that developing a curriculum plan for ELA would be useful but also create a lack of clarity during the assessment period.

Because district personnel decide the content, sequencing, and materials plans for all middle schools, the plans designed by members of the district's staff may not include decisions necessary to assist the Title 1 schools in my study with its problem of students' very low comprehension scores on informational text reading. Based on the data from the interview protocol, observation protocol, lesson plans, and audio recordings, I determined that a curriculum plan was not appropriate for my study.

Although it is true that effective PD can be beneficial for increasing students' performance, the data from the study I conducted at two local Title 1 middle schools did not coincide with the need for more PD. All five teachers emphasized that the instructional strategy being used had proven to be effective for increasing students' comprehension skills with informational text. Shumack and Forde (2011) stated that the purpose of PD was to assist teachers with improving their knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Since a dissertation provides various stakeholders background information, reasoning, and recommended actions to solve the problem of increasing middle school students' comprehension on informational text, I removed PD from consideration for an appropriate project to address the issue.

Lastly, an evaluation report was not appropriate because it did not coincide with the results from the data analysis. The reason of my study was to examine the teachers' experiences of art-based anchor charts on increasing comprehension on informational text. I determined that a policy recommendation is the most suitable project genre for my study. Scotten (2011) reported that a policy paper incorporates a presentation of the issue,

foundation of the present approach, investigation of the issue encompassing the arrangement, a portrayal of option strategies, and suggestions for solving the issues.

The art-based anchor charts were appropriate for this case study since the information pertaining to the problem, research question, literature review, and data analysis from the research I conducted has the potential to improve 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students' comprehension on informational text. The manuscript was valuable because I defined the problem, provided viable solutions, and listed responsibilities for all persons involved.

Review of the Literature

Search Strategy

Saturation for the literature review resulted from my search of databases for peer-reviewed articles found in the area of education. ERIC, Educational Research Complete, Education from SAGE, Google Scholar, and ProQuest Central were the databases I used to gain a diverse perspective to conduct my study. The key terms I used for database searches were *art and literacy, art-based projects, project-based learning, motivating middle schoolers, benefits of the arts, reading and art, interdisciplinary approach, art and standardized tests, motivating through art,* and *teacher pedagogy.*

Teachers in this study are employed by a public school district which uses art-based instructional strategies that are effective in preparing students to advance in a global society. To prepare the next generation of American students to engage in the technical workplace, teachers are required to successfully teach informational text reading to all children. According to County School District's Disciplinary Literacy

Model Mission (2015), the district needs to "improve student achievement through cross-content teacher partnerships and collaborative support systems, which utilize research-based instruction, data analysis, and ongoing professional development" (para 1). Consequently, I used this information as the driving force for challenging teachers to enhance the quality of art-based instructional strategies used to teach 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students at the study sites.

Common Themes

The findings in this dissertation focused on the in-depth investigation of the phenomena in a naturalistic setting where inquiries are guided by questions of how and why, as suggested by Yin (1994). Tomljenovic (2015) reported that teachers need to identify effective interactive approaches to provide all students a solid foundation upon which to expand their understanding of visual arts. The pressures of receiving failing grades in reading and writing and failing to meet unrealizable standards was brought by the No Child Left Behind Act (Newkirk, 2016). Oglan (2015) reported that teachers have made use of anchor charts as an instructional and learning strategy in their classrooms, helping students learn and represent key ideas.

Because the data from this study indicated that 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students have not shown improvement on the MAP information text portion of the test from 2010-2014, the use of project-based activities in teaching and learning is necessary to assist these students with improving their performance in informational text reading (David, 2008). Teachers who use Gardner's multiple intelligences theory have the potential to transfer their focus from transmitting knowledge to teaching students to construct knowledge with

an interventional approach that perform various tasks, solve various problems, and progress in numerous domains when teaching informational text. In doing so, 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students have the capability to utilize their academic strength to improve their comprehension with informational text reading.

During the interview protocol, the five participants in this study cited visuals, prior knowledge, art-based activities, and cooperative learning as the ELA instructional strategies they feel confident in teaching since they saw improvement in students' motivation. Teacher efficacy is an individual's judgment of their capabilities to accomplish certain levels of performance since that individual's way of thinking, feeling, and behaving directly affects his or her ability to become an effective teacher (Bandura, 1977). According to the participants, using visuals, prior knowledge, art-based activities, and cooperative learning to create understanding and relevance were effective for engaging and encouraging high-level performance for students.

The participants also communicated that the aforementioned strategies have produced great results on benchmark assessments, quizzes, and unit tests. Hattie (2012) stated there was a developing body of research confirming that the strategies teachers used had an important effect on student success regardless of the students' external circumstances. Kyndt et al. (2013) reported that cooperative learning has proven to have definite effects on student achievement, mindsets, and perceptions. Cooperative learning has proven to promote student achievement in ELA because students are able to identify misconceptions about skills they do not understand and interrelate with each other to successfully improve their ability to increase their performance in ELA (Essien, 2015).

Participant 1 stated, "Using art-based anchor charts as an instructional strategy brought about positive changes in student achievement, improved intergroup relations, and it appealed to visual learners."

Engaging students in art-based activities at the primary and elementary levels has the potential to improve students' performance in ELA throughout middle and high school. David (2008) stated that PBL is a unique approach to educate students while developing critical thinking and problem solving skills through collaboration with others. Biggs and Tang (2011) reported that conceptual changes take place when students work collaboratively and dialogue with others. Students who engage in art related lessons elicit activities that shape, elaborate, and deepen their understanding of the proficiencies being taught.

Teachers in the United States are challenged by current education reforms to engage in research-based instructional teaching strategies known to enhance learning for all students' (McDonald, Kazemi, & Kavanagh, 2013). It was documented that using visual art was a great way to advance students' literacy skills. Students became better writers when exposed to visual literacy instruction (Dowdy et al., 2011). Students viewed and comprehended the images when used alongside multiple narratives.

One of the five participants had an art related degree in architectural design. Two of the five participants in this study consistently implement art-based activities into their lessons. PBL was found to be a creative teaching tool that improved students' literacy skills. Students' innovative performance enhanced significantly when introduced using a PBL task. Because creativity is a global focus, China integrated creative thinking

education and creative problem-solving methods to their national curriculum. Students' creativity was fostered with the use of art, science, technology, and math activities (Wu et al., 2013).

Like PBL, the instructional strategies teachers used to teach informational text influence the lives of their students. Teachers make decisions relative to the instructional strategies they use based on their content knowledge, self-efficacy, experiences, values, and pedagogy. Parmigiani (2012) stated teachers who focus on students' conceptual understanding and make the necessary adjustments to use instructional strategies assist with improving student learning.

The five participants referenced Participant 4's success with implementing art-based anchor charts as an instructional strategy for increasing students' performance. Since the teachers experienced the academic benefits of the art-based lesson, integrating art-based activities into their lesson plans has the potential to engage more students, improve classroom morale, and increase attitudes toward learning (Fortin, 2013).

The participants listed visual images as an effective strategy for increasing students' performance in ELA. Wang, Michael, and David (2015) stated that imagery is an effective intervention that can improve student motivation and reading comprehension. For instance, visual imagery training is a type of intricate processing where the reader produces additional material that correlates to the topic of the text. The teachers revealed the following: (a) positive effects were found with students' learning of informational text comprehension and art, (b) making connections and recalling information, (c) slower learners taking an effective part in their learning, and (d)

students' informational text comprehension skills showed positive gains when paired

with students of varying abilities (Tsuei, 2012). I was informed by one of the participants

because she noticed a remarkable difference in her students' performance when the

artistically or visually learners were given the opportunity to shine by creating the anchor

charts or posters. As an art teacher, this information was great and encouraging to hear

since I've always noticed an increase in student motivation when creating art projects.

As students worked with their peers to increase their performance in ELA, the

five participants also engaged in weekly instructional collaboration to improve teacher

quality and the methods they used to increase student achievement. During the interview

protocol, the participants in this study stated they met every Tuesday with the curriculum

coordinator, assistant principal, principal, and their colleagues to discuss the reading

instructional strategies they used. The participants engaged in conversations to gather

information about the reading instructional strategies each teacher found to be effective

for increasing student achievement. Interviews were synthesized by first identifying

underlying themes and later aligning the notes into a chart for uncomplicated reading.

While observing classes and analyzing the data, it was very evident that the art-based

anchor chart had a positive effect on students' performance. Many students cheered as

they heard what the objective of the day was.

Implementation

In this dissertation, I summarized the data from the project study and made

recommendations to the principal of the Title I schools where the study was conducted

under Limitations and Recommendations. Details listed in the dissertation offers realistic

suggestions and art-based instructional strategies to address students' low comprehension scores on informational text reading. These suggestions have the potential to reduce the achievement gap and enhance the teachers' pedagogy using the art-based anchor charts found to be effective for increasing comprehension on informational text.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

To implement the strategies in this dissertation, I suggested that the principal and district personnel work collaboratively to make a commitment to comply with the information to assist ELA students' with improving their low achievement in ELA. According to Rattan, Savani, Chugh, and Dweck (2015), students in the United States ranked poorly among their peers globally, and it is crucial for the United States to transform its educational system to improve the students' educational success regardless of race, gender, and upbringing. It is also important for the principal to schedule time with the curriculum coordinator, assistant principal, and ELA coach to discuss the findings from the research study to assist with increasing ELA students' comprehension on informational text.

The school leaders and district personnel can use the results from the case study to organize PD to assist the school's staff with learning to implement the art-based anchor charts to build a culture of creativity, team work, communication, and critical thinking skills. It is important for the principal and district personnel to work together since the students' academic ability to succeed is contingent upon the positive academic mindsets of educators willing to assist with improving struggling students' grades. (Stephens, Hamedani, & Destin, 2014; Walton & Cohen, 2011).

The school's administrative staff and art teacher can use the findings to align the art-based anchor charts with the grade level standards. The Title I coordinator will help to ensure funding is available to carry out the plans in the dissertation. The curriculum coordinator and art teacher will serve as potential resources by providing additional support to other staff members as they implement the art-based anchor charts to promote positive learning environments. Good, Rattan, and Dweck (2012) reported that students are more prone to feel a sense of belonging and begin working toward improving their status on standardized tests when their academic environment incorporate strategies relating to their growth mindsets. During the weekly meetings, the curriculum coordinator and art teacher will collaborate with ELA teachers to discuss the art-based instructional strategies the participants cited as effective for increasing comprehension on informational text.

Potential Barriers

The problem in this study has been ongoing for the past 5 years, and the principal agreed for me to serve as the sole researcher for this case study. I sought to gain an understanding of ELA teachers' experiences of art-based anchor charts on increasing comprehension on informational text. One of the main determining factors in a dissertation being accepted is the strength of the argument that I present (American University, n. d.).

Potential Barrier 1

Because of time constraints, some of the teachers may not be receptive to implementing the art-based anchor charts although they are knowledgeable that the

school's performance in ELA has been extremely low as documented by the school's report card (SCDOE, 2014). To solve this problem, the school's principal may initiate an early morning tutorial session or an extended-day program to offer extra additional instruction before or after school if funding permits (Vaughn, Wanzek, Murray, & Roberts, 2012).

Potential Barrier 2

Teachers may reject having to implement additional strategies since they are accustomed and comfortable with teaching their way. To solve this problem, teachers are encouraged to implement the art-based anchor chart instructional strategy until their self-efficacy improves. Peer-coaches or mentors can assist teachers who may experience difficulty implementing the strategy. The principal can also provide time for teachers to observe their colleagues who are implementing the strategy successfully. Teachers should work to improve the education system in the United States to enhance national economic growth, social welfare, and global competitiveness for all students (Council of Economic Advisors, 2015).

Potential Barrier 3

Teachers may lack knowledge of ELA standards and skills to empower students to increase their performance on the MAP test. If funding is available, the principal can provide PD to enhance teacher's pedagogy for innovative practices. Lorimer (2016) stated that effective PD has the potential to increase teachers' knowledge in visual arts for teaching. Teachers have an opportunity to engage in free courses offered by the district. Teachers can attend art implementation conferences. Another potential solution for

Barrier 3 is to contact the district's art coordinator to find PD opportunities that relate to the objectives in the dissertation that do not require funding.

Knowing this, I made sure that the information in the dissertation was credible, reasonable, and easily achievable for the staff of the Title I schools in my study. I wrote this document to inform the principal and the district personnel that implementing art-based anchor charts have the potential to enhance the teachers' informational text knowledge for increasing comprehension on informational text. Lingenfelter (2011) stated that researchers should create effective policy recommendations so the issues being addressed are realistic and attainable.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

The dissertation I created for this qualitative case study reflects the study's results and includes that art-based anchor charts are supported by the literature review. I included equitable learning opportunities so teachers can implement art-based anchor charts to assist 6th, 7th, and 8th students at local Title 1 schools in the rural area of the United States with increasing their performance on the MAP test. Equitable learning opportunities came in the form of art-based materials and an engaging lesson. Certain literature instructional strategies had success in advancing learning opportunities for students from various environments (Mitton-Kukner, Munroe, & Graham, 2015).

One of the mission statements of the local Title 1 schools where my study was conducted states that the school fosters academic achievement through innovative teaching practices. In other words, the staff vows to work as a unit to establish high expectations for all students using many different instructional strategies. I developed the

dissertation to give the school's administrators an example of the art-based anchor charts

the five participants cited as being effective for gaining an understanding of ELA

teachers' experiences of art-based anchor charts on increasing comprehension on

informational text. I created the dissertation to provide both the administrators and

teachers with an opportunity to work collectively to implement the strategy listed in the

document. Little (2012) stated schools experience success with student achievement

when stakeholders collaborate on explicit goals for instructional practice and student

learning.

The results from this dissertation will be given to the school's principal once

approval is granted from Walden University. I will meet with the various school

principals to explain that I aligned the dissertation with the schools' improvement plan.

The alignment supported the school's plan to implement a strategy to help bring test

scores up in ELA. The schools' principal may collaborate with the assistant principal,

curriculum coordinator, and art teacher to develop a proposal outlining the potential

changes to present to the Title I coordinator. The dissertation documents the suggestions

for increasing comprehension on informational text. The principal, assistant principal,

and curriculum coordinator may devise a plan and timeline for implementing the

strategies in the dissertation once the Title I coordinator reviews and approves the plan.

This project involves participants from the district-level and the local Title I schools

where I conducted the research.

Using the data from the project study, I developed a project plan to address the

problem at the local Title I schools in the rural area of the United States. I suggest that a

pilot test be conducted. The pilot test was used to verify the usefulness of the art-based

anchor chart strategy in improving students' performance on informational text reading.

The pilot test will continue for 1 year. The principal will make decisions regarding the

teachers and classes that will participate in the pilot study. All participants will engage in

PD prior to and during the pilot testing process.

Students' informational text data will be analyzed and specific standards denoting

areas of weaknesses will be identified. Formative assessments, in the form of benchmark

tests, will be analyzed to monitor the progress of the art-based anchor charts during the

pilot test. The principal, assistant principal, and curriculum coordinator will observe and

evaluate the teachers' use of the art-based anchor charts. If the results of the pilot test

indicate that the objectives in the policy recommendation are beneficial, ELA teachers in

Grades 6-8 will implement the plan during the next school term.

Prior to implementing the art-based anchor charts in Grades 6-8 during Year 2, the

principal will schedule a meeting with parents to inform them of the policy changes. The

principal will schedule PD to involve all ELA teachers in the Title 1 schools. Monitoring

and evaluating the effectiveness of implementing the art-based anchor charts will be

ongoing utilizing the criteria from the pilot study. During Year 2, teachers will follow a

similar format as defined in the pilot testing phase. The district's ELA coordinator,

assistant principal, the school's curriculum coordinator, and art teacher will collaborate to

ensure the standards, curriculum, and textbooks for all grade levels are aligned with each

strategy being taught by teachers in all grade levels.

During Year 3, teachers will continue to implement the strategies and will implement the revised changes made during Year 2. The principal, assistant principal, and curriculum coordinator will consistently observe and monitor teachers' use of the art-based anchor charts to determine the effectiveness of the strategies on 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students' performance on the MAP test. The policy will be modified constructed on the data that are gathered.

 Teachers participating in the pilot test will complete a survey administered by the district's Title I coordinator. The data collected from the surveys revealed teachers' opinions about the effectiveness of the art-based anchor charts in addressing the low achievement of students on informational text reading. To strengthen the credibility and transferability of this pilot study, the qualitative data gathered from the five participants have the opportunity to guide future qualitative studies and be triangulated with quantitative data to gain a better understanding of the affect implementing the art-based anchor charts have on students' achievement (Eisenhardt, 2012).

Roles and Responsibilities

I am responsible for writing and delivering the position paper to the school's principal. I included the responsibilities of others associated with carrying out the suggestions written in the policy recommendation. Below is a discussion of the various roles and responsibilities.

Principal

The principal is responsible for the following: (a) creating a proposal using the data from the research study to present to the Title 1 coordinator, (b) explaining the

professional development to teachers and parents, (c) arranging meetings with the

district's ELA coordinator, assistant principal, curriculum coordinator, and art teacher to

create a plan and timeline for implementing the pilot study, (d) organize PD opportunities

for teachers, (e) provide resources and support for teachers during the pilot study, (f)

observe and monitor the art-based anchor charts being used, (g) engage in conversation

with teachers regarding the data collected from the observations, and (h) collect and

analyze the data from the teachers' surveys.

Teachers

Teachers are responsible for the following: (a) writing lesson plans that includes

the art-based anchor charts, (b) instructing students using the art-based anchor charts

written in their lesson plans, (c) participating in PD, (d) engaging in collaborative

discourse with colleagues, curriculum coordinator, and art teacher to create a project-

based inviting classrooms where all students' needs are addressed, (e) seeking assistance

if needed, and (f) completing surveys.

Title I Coordinator

The Title I Coordinator is responsible for meeting with the principal to make a

decision on the professional development plan. The Title I coordinator is also responsible

for ensuring the funds are allocated correctly, if necessary, and administering the survey.

District ELA Coordinator

The district's ELA coordinator is responsible for meeting with the school's

assistant principal, curriculum coordinator, and art teacher to ensure the standards,

curriculum, and textbooks for all grade levels are aligned with the strategies being taught.

The district's ELA coordinator is also responsible developing a survey to determine teachers' perceptions concerning the effectiveness of the art-based anchor charts used to improve sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students' comprehension on informational text reading.

Parents

Parents should support the teachers and the objectives outlined in the professional development plan. Parents are stakeholders and their support of teachers can influence the students' achievement on informational text.

Conducting a pilot test at the Title I schools is crucial since the principal has the opportunity to select a group of teachers to participate in the pilot study to acquire some early results about the effectiveness of the study before full implementation occurs.

Project Evaluation

Evaluating the project is significant because the findings can assist teachers with identifying students' areas of weaknesses and addressing the problems immediately. The findings from the evaluations may also lead to creating recommendations for improving the objectives in the project. The purpose of my research study was to examine the teacher's experiences of art-based anchor charts on increasing comprehension on informational text. Formative and summative standardized assessments are recommended to assess how the criteria found in the dissertation affect the students' performances.

Formative evaluations allow teachers to provide constant feedback as they monitor students' learning. Formative evaluations also assisted teachers with improving their pedagogy and self-efficacy by reflecting on the manner in which the skills are

presented. Formative evaluations will occur during the implementation of the project because formative assessments combine cognition, social, and cultural theories to propel self-regulated strategies that encourages students to engage in lifelong learning (Clark, 2012). Formative evaluations, in the form of benchmark assessments, will be administered quarterly to monitor teachers' pedagogy with implementing visuals, prior knowledge, art-based activities, and cooperative learning strategies. Using formative assessments to evaluate students' informational text performance will guide teachers' practice by developing self-regulated learners and improving students' ability to achieve success (Clark, 2012).

Summative assessments are also important to this study because teachers are able to compare students' data from unit and benchmark tests. The information will be used to modify each teacher's method of teaching. Summative evaluations are significant for because this type of evaluation verifies the effectiveness of the strategies used to increase students' comprehension on informational text. The results of a summative evaluation will be confirmable.

The data for my study were collected using a qualitative research design. I used qualitative data to increase the validity of the evaluation process. Teachers completed a survey created by an art teacher. The principal, assistant principal, curriculum coordinator, and art teacher will use the data to revise the techniques for implementing the art-based anchor charts. Teachers completed the survey inserting pros and cons concerning the challenges and successes they encountered while implementing the art-based anchor chart.

Using the findings from the surveys, the teachers were able to discuss their experiences of art-based anchor charts on increasing comprehension on informational text. The district's ELA coordinator, Title I coordinator, principal, and assistant principal may use the findings to make decisions on possible alternatives and revisions to the actions found in the policy recommendation to increase the chance of attaining success for the following years.

The goal of my study was to explore what effects art-based anchor charts have on increasing comprehension on informational text. Since all teachers must complete annual Goals Based Evaluations (GBE), the principal and staff can develop outcome-based goals to include a statement that pertained to increasing students' performance in ELA. The teachers can convert the recommendations listed in the position paper into measureable goals to meet their annual GBE goals. The teachers can collaborate to design goals that will enhance teachers' pedagogy and self-efficacy while implementing the art-based anchor chart, increasing students' comprehension on informational text.

My overall goal of the project evaluation plan was to examine the teachers' experiences of art-based anchor charts on increasing comprehension on informational text. The rationale behind the project evaluation is to determine if the project will do precisely what the policy intended it to do. The evaluation measures are used to monitor the teachers' progress. Adjustments will be made to the new policy according to the evidence collected from Year 1. The principal and staff at the study sites can use the data to assist with meeting the established objectives. The principal and staff can use the results from the summative evaluations to steer them in the right direction for making

positive decisions regarding the future implementation of the project. Discussing the overall evaluation goals to stakeholders provides the principal with an avenue to engage in effective communication to convey the benefits of the research study that I conducted.

Implications for Social Change

Local Community

Based on the data analysis, the results from my study have implications for positive social changes since exposure to art-based anchor chart instructional strategies are known to increase students' ELA performance. The research findings can be used by the staff of the research site to develop policies and practices to improve the teachers' abilities to enhance their self-efficacy for teaching 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students. Incorporating visuals, prior knowledge, art-based activities, and cooperative learning to increase 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students' comprehension on informational text may enhance collaboration among colleagues, improve teacher content knowledge, and increase students' ownership of learning.

The first implication focuses on ELA teachers and the art-based anchor charts they use to increase students' comprehension on informational text. Since 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students have not made significant gains on the MAP test during the past 5 years, the art-based anchor charts the teachers use are important for improving student achievement. The second implication addresses the data I collected from the participants. From the art-based anchor chart, the participants overwhelmingly identified visuals, prior knowledge, art-based activities, and cooperative learning as effective strategies for teaching students having problems comprehending informational text skills. Using the

aforementioned instructional strategies could prove beneficial for improving 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students' abilities to comprehend informational text content relevant for competing in a global society. Providing PD opportunities may assist teachers with improving their self-efficacy to influence the students' level of proficiency.

 The suggestions I made in the dissertation have the potential to promote continuing assessments of the project to determine the effect the project has on 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students' performance. Because the information found in the literature review validates that a reading achievement gap exists, using art-based anchor charts can increase the teachers' project-based relevant pedagogy and led to a reduction in this gap by offering teachers other methods for teaching 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students at the two schools.

 The ELA education 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students receive are directly related to higher-paid occupations and the lifestyle they have that can help strengthen their communities. Parents are seeking equitable educational opportunities for their children. This is why the art-based anchor chart strategy ELA teachers use to teach 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students is significant. The strategies ELA teachers use play an important role in 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students' future educational and economic success (Friend, Hunter, & Fletcher, 2011; McGee, 2015). If the objectives in the policy recommendations report are executed successfully, the teachers' pedagogy will improve and the students' achievement in ELA will increase. The improvements can affect instructional programs of other grade levels and content areas. Using the suggestions in the dissertation report can assist educators in the local districts in the rural region of the United States with

identifying and addressing problems associated with the art-based instructional strategy their teachers use.

Larger Community

Walden University is an advocate for positive social change. The university is home to a various community of career professionals who are afforded the opportunity to engage in a learning environment with others in an effort to transform themselves as scholar-practitioners to effect positive social change in a global society (Walden University, 2013). Likewise, the dissertation, I presented, lists ideas and suggestions for enhancing teachers' pedagogical experiences and students' abilities to increase their performance on informational text.

In the project plan, I included explicit strategies for educators and policymakers to use to improve teachers' pedagogy to foster quality ELA instruction for students. The dissertation report provides art-based anchor chart instructional strategies necessary to address the strategies ELA teachers used at the research sites. Social changes in ELA can be shared worldwide because of the advances made in technology.

Social changes can develop a shared understanding to promote basic values to improve school quality and enhance relationships among educators, students, families, and community members. Although I conducted the study at two schools in a rural region of the United States, the findings I outlined in the dissertation can be shared with educators in other districts to assist teachers with implementing the art-based anchor charts that has the potential to increase student growth in their school districts.

As more teachers strive to increase their ability to promote students' learning, their levels of confidence may strengthen their ideology for increasing students' informational text achievement abilities. Because teacher accountability systems are based on students' performance, enhancing students' performance in ELA has the possibility of narrowing the achievement gap in education. The professional development plan I wrote provides educators outside of the rural region of the United States with the opportunity to replicate the project plan according to the specific needs of their student population.

Conclusion

For the past 5 years, 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students had not met academic standards as measured by the MAP ELA test on informational text. To try to resolve this problem, I conducted a qualitative descriptive case study at two middle schools in a Title I to understand the art-based anchor charts ELA teachers used to assist 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students with improving their comprehension on informational text reading. The study I conducted was based on Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Gardner (as cited in Armstrong, 2013) encouraged the implementation of art-based projects as one of many diverse, alternative teaching and learning strategies.

Teachers are challenged to examine art-based instructional strategies to increase students' comprehension on informational text because 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students continue to score lower than their peers on the informational text portion of the ELA MAP test, Based on the findings of this study, I outlined the steps in a professional development plan to convince the school's principal to implement the art-based anchor charts the five participants from the study sites cited as being effective for increasing 6th,

7th, and 8th grade students' performance on informational text. I also included suggestions for evaluating the data in the professional development plan along with possible solutions to solve the problem associated with the very low achievement of 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students in ELA.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

At the local Title I middle schools located in the rural region of the southern United States, the MAP test scores for 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students had not increased for the past 5 years. The principals verified that the problem exist; but, no evidence was available to confirm why 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students continued to perform poorly on the informational text portion of the MAP test. For this reason, I conducted a case study at two local schools in the rural region of the southern United States to address the problem of 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students' low academic proficiency, as measured by the MAP ELA test.

Discussion

In an effort to solve the problem of 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students' low academic proficiency, I worked closely with five teachers employed at the study sites to collect data pertaining to the problem. Using the data collected and the analysis of the current literature, I developed a dissertation. My data analysis results are below.

In Section 4, I reflected on the process I used to develop my project study. My reflections include the strengths and limitations I encountered while addressing the problem. My views on the knowledge I gained pertaining to scholarship, project development, and leadership are also included. The challenges I encountered while conducting the study and the manner in which I was impacted while serving as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer are explained. I offered an evaluation of the learning experience relative to the implications, applications, and directions for

addressing the strategies ELA teachers use. Finally, I concluded with

implications for further research.

Data Analysis Results

I conducted a qualitative case study to gain an understanding of the art-based

anchor chart strategies ELA teachers used. The research question was posted to collect

data to allow for an examination of the teachers' experiences and perceptions with using

art-based anchor charts and perceptions of which strategies may be helpful in increasing

comprehension on informational text comprehension at two local Title I schools in the

rural region of the southern United States. The conceptual framework for my study was

based on Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. The interview questions I formulated

yield similar responses from each participant.

Data Collection

Purposeful sampling was used, which involved, five ELA participants containing

information about the art-based anchor charts being used at the local schools. I conducted

the interviews over a 2-week period; an audio recorder was used to capture the responses.

The iPad I used was locked and stored in my file cabinet in my home office. Only I had

access to my home office. Immediately following each interview, I transcribed the field

notes and listed the art-based anchor chart instructional strategy each participant used.

The responses the participants gave are not altered or edited.

I used triangulation and member checking to ensure credibility. Bush (2007)

stated that triangulation is the examination of at least two methodologies or cross-

checking of various sorts of information keeping in mind the end goal to set up exactness

and enhance legitimacy. I used data triangulation to confirm the accuracy of the information collected from the interview protocol, observation protocol, lesson plans, and audio recordings to gain a precise understanding of the phenomena. Creswell (2009) stated all participants' transcripts are reviewed to get an understanding of each participant's response. I transcribed the data and compared the participants' responses with the field notes taken during the observations, audio recordings, and lesson plans.

Process of Themes

I reviewed the participants' responses from the interview protocol, the field notes from the observation protocol, along with the lesson plans, and audio recordings to determine the similarities and differences. I synthesized the data into common themes to elicit information to understand the teachers' experiences of art-based anchor charts on increasing comprehension on informational text. I aligned the themes to the research question and subquestions to ensure that the data were trustworthy. I was able to decipher the themes from one another as a result of the informational text comprehension and art-based anchor charts, being directly related to the interview questions and Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences.

I compared the data from the lesson plans, audio recordings, interview transcripts, and observations to validate the findings. I used brackets and circled specific quotes together with inspecting and sorting out the shading coded shared traits in every reaction and question from the transcript to distinguish the subjects, as recommended by Creswell (2012). The themes derive from the evidence the participants provided as the art-based anchor chart strategy necessary to assist 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students with increasing

their achievement on the informational text portion of the PASS test. By comparing the data, I obtained information that complemented each another. The data provided me with an understanding of the teachers' experiences of art-based anchor charts on increasing comprehension on informational text. I found visuals, prior knowledge, cooperative learning, and art-based activities to be the most used instructional strategies the participants conveyed as being effective for assisting 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students improve their proficiency in informational text.

Synthesis of Primary Sources

Another means of ensuring credibility is the utilization of member checking. Creswell (2012) stated validating the results is important because it help to determine the accuracy or credibility of the findings. Participants in the study reviewed the transcribed interview and summaries to ensure that my personal views were not included.

The data were verified by each participant after they were transcribed. Trustworthiness was achieved when the participants validated that the transcribed data, categories, and themes I listed were free of errors. Merriam (2009) stated that the use of member checks is vital to validating the data and discovering any biases that the researcher may have because it helps to "rule out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on" (p. 217). I presented the themes that emerged from the data in Figure 1.
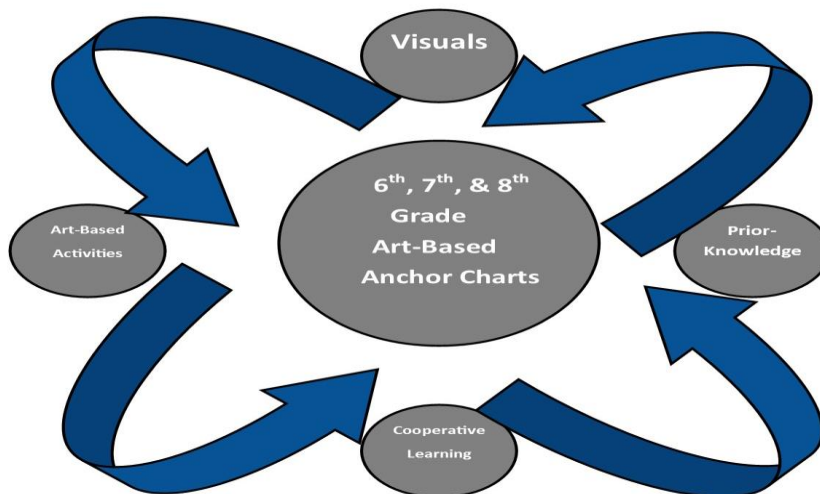
Figure 1. An understanding of the participants' art-based anchor chart instructional strategies.

Figure 1 reveals the instructional strategies that the participants stated as being effective in improving 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students' performance on informational text reading. The level of duplication in the participants' responses to the interview protocol brought validity to the information they provided. Because the purpose of this study was to examine the teachers' experiences of art-based anchor charts on increasing comprehension on informational text, the data collected revealed a consistency in the responses given by the participants. Of the various strategies used, all five participants acknowledged visuals (images, pictures), prior-knowledge, art-based activities (anchor charts), and cooperative learning (problem solving with three-four students) as the

instructional strategies they found effective for improving 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students'

performance on informational text reading.

I asked the participants to expound on Question 3 to communicate what were

some strengths of the art-based anchor charts and their answers were as follows.

Participant 3 said,

> My students enjoy using art-based projects to complete activities with their peers
>
> on A Long Walk to Water as a competition. I have a hard time getting them to
>
> stop working. I no longer teach without thinking about implemented an art-based
>
> project. My students read and test on informational text several times a year. All
>
> informational text assignments, teacher-generated notes, and study guides are
>
> posted on onto anchor charts. Students who were absent can keep up with the
>
> class by retrieving the information using the art-based anchor charts that are
>
> hanging in the classroom. My students' summative test scores increased since the
>
> first test was administered in the fall.
>
> Similar to Participant 3's response, Participant 4 stated,
>
> The visuals the students added from the informational text have improved their
>
> test scores immensely. We completed the lesson with an art-based anchor chart. I
>
> saw my students being more motivated to read and participate in creating the
>
> chart. During the first part of class, we reviewed the article the students had to
>
> read about. I taught my students to comprehend informational text to increase
>
> their knowledge. The students enjoyed taking passages from the informational
>
> text and placing it onto the anchor chart, adding a visual. I have seen an increase

in my students' performance in ELA this year. I can honestly attribute this to the lessons being taught using the art-based anchor charts since this is the only strategy that I have added.

Participant 1 said,

I love monitoring the art-based anchor chart project when cooperative learning is involved. Listening to students share various ideas for illustrating the informational text was rewarding. Listening to the students' responses told me if I needed to review a skill or if the students understood the procedures. I always asked myself, what went well? Which activities would I use the next time I taught this skill? What didn't work? What steps do I need to change to make learning more effective the next time I teach or re-teach this skill? What steps did my students understand and what steps are still vague? How can I strengthen the understanding of the more challenging skills with my struggling students?

Question 6 asked the participants how they felt implementing the informational art-based anchor charts when compared to other strategies. All participants referenced analyzing test scores, item analysis, analyzing student artifacts from completed anchor charts, and questions asked during instruction helped them reflect to adjust lesson plans to promote understanding of informational text comprehension skills. Participant 5 also said,

I reflect on "my day" every day. I know where our school is as far as the school's report card, I know I have to work extra hard to be innovative to help increase my 6th grade students understanding of informational text. That is why our faculty

meetings are so important. The educators work together to plan lessons and discuss the effectiveness of different ELA reading strategies and skills being taught. Usually, I teach the students to break up informational text passages in order to work on their comprehension skills. I have come to realize that the students prefer creating art which seem to help them make meaningful connections. Learning from each other is so important. Several of us conduct our personal PD by watching each other teach. Teachers that implement art have always amazed me. We take notes and revise them to fit our students. Because we are serious about our students learning, we work closely together to do whatever we can to teach skills using the best strategies we know so our students will be successful. Each teacher list the strategies they found to be effective for teaching each standard.

I found visuals, prior- knowledge, cooperative learning, and art-based activities to be the most used instructional strategies the participants conveyed as being effective for assisting 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students improve their proficiency in informational text. The quality of instruction teachers disseminate is significant for increasing students' performance (Cobb & Jackson, 2011; Schmidt, 2012). I present interview Questions 1-4 and the participants' condensed responses in Figure 2.
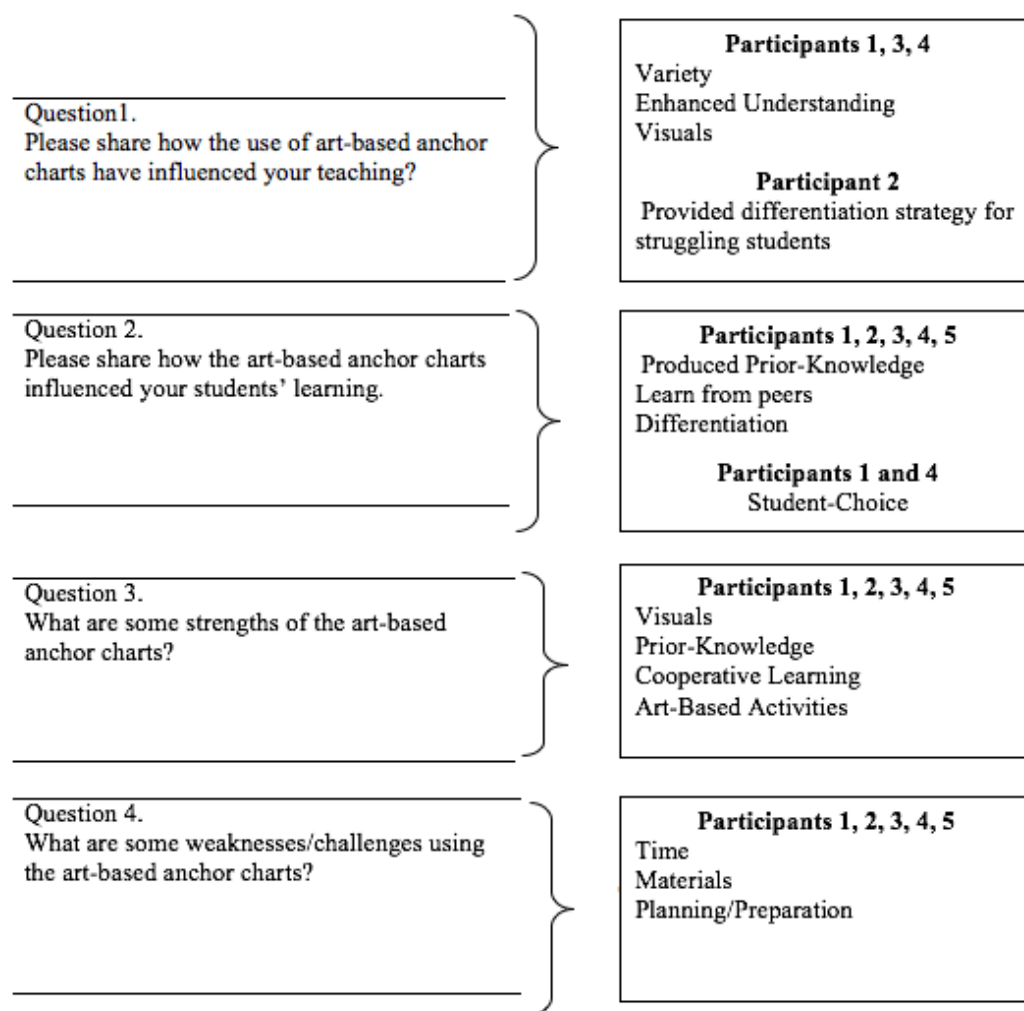
Question1.
Please share how the use of art-based anchor
charts have influenced your teaching?

Participants 1, 3, 4
Variety
Enhanced Understanding
Visuals

Participant 2
Provided differentiation strategy for
struggling students

Question 2.
Please share how the art-based anchor charts
influenced your students' learning.

Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Produced Prior-Knowledge
Learn from peers
Differentiation

Participants 1 and 4
Student-Choice

Question 3.
What are some strengths of the art-based
anchor charts?

Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Visuals
Prior-Knowledge
Cooperative Learning
Art-Based Activities

Question 4.
What are some weaknesses/challenges using
the art-based anchor charts?

Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Time
Materials
Planning/Preparation

Figure 2. Interview questions and participants' condensed responses.

Observations were vital to my study because I was able to see the manner in

which the art-based anchor charts were used and document each participant's behavior in

the natural setting. By using a self-designed observation protocol, I maintained

consistency when evaluating each participant's performance in order to increase the

reliability of the results (Lodico et al., 2010). I collected and compared the data from

listening to interview recordings, repeatedly reading and then color-coding interview and

observation transcripts, and reviewing lesson plans to generate themes. In Figure 2, a few

interview questions were broken down into similar themes and responses that were stated by the participants. Many of the participants shared similar answers to each of the eleven interview questions.

During her interview, Participant 1 said, "Research has shown that engaging students in the art-based anchor chart process increases their attention and focus, encourages them to practice higher-level critical thinking skills, and encourages significant learning experiences." Participant 1 elaborated that since critical thinking differs from student-to-student because of each student's specific experiences, students may have a different strategy for retaining and comprehending literature. In this way, students can make connections with pictures.

I also observed Participant 2 monitoring and listening to ensure the information the students disseminated during the art-based setting in her class was correct. I observed Participants 1 and 2 using the art-based anchor chart project a few times during the 2-week period. The participants seemed very confident in the strategy as they implemented it into their classroom.

While observing another class, I noticed that Participant 3 used differentiated instruction to assess students' knowledge of identifying text structures. Participant 3 monitored as the tiered groups completed assignments using visuals, prior-knowledge, cooperative learning, and art-based activities. The tiered groups in this class were identified as Conquerors, Winners, and Champions. The Conquerors completed the project by focusing on cause and effect, the Winners created their anchor chart on chronological order, while the Champions focused on compare and contrast. The students

worked with peer partners and the teacher reminded the students to apply the visuals along with the participant's notes to complete an assignment, first in their notebook and later on the anchor chart. Participant 3 monitored and provided assistance when it was necessary.

Participants 4 and 5 used their class time to add to their lesson. After modeling several techniques for identifying text structures, the teacher assigned peer partners to complete the assignment. The participants activated their students' prior-knowledge by reviewing from the week before. The participants reviewed each question, and the answers were discussed. Participant 4 addressed questions when students responded incorrectly by giving the thumbs down signal. Participant 4 illustrated the technique necessary to answer the question correctly. Both groups of students created an art-based anchor chart based on the noted information.

I observed the participants and documented how they constructed their knowledge of teaching informational text. I classified and categorized the collected data. After each observation, I reviewed all notes to determine if the teachers used any of the criteria outlined in the anchor chart and current literature as being effective for improving 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students' achievement. In the observation protocol, I compared what I saw and heard in the classroom to the information I read in each participant's lesson plans and recorded during the interview protocol.

While the information was fresh in my mind, I immediately analyzed the data after each observation. The field notes are in a sealed envelope locked in a personal file cabinet in my home that is only accessible to me. Descriptive field notes were used to

describe the activities that were observed in the setting (Creswell, 2012). The reflective

field notes allowed me to analyze my thoughts while assisting me throughout the

process(Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I observed the five participants two times for 2 weeks

using the observation protocol that I developed.

I observed each participant for an entire class period that lasted 60 minutes. The

observations that occurred over the 2-week period resulted in a sufficient amount of data

to substantiate an accurate account of the art-based anchor chart each teacher offered as

being effective for assisting 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students with increasing their

performance on the PASS test (Creswell, 2012). I presented the anchor charts the

students created Figure 3.
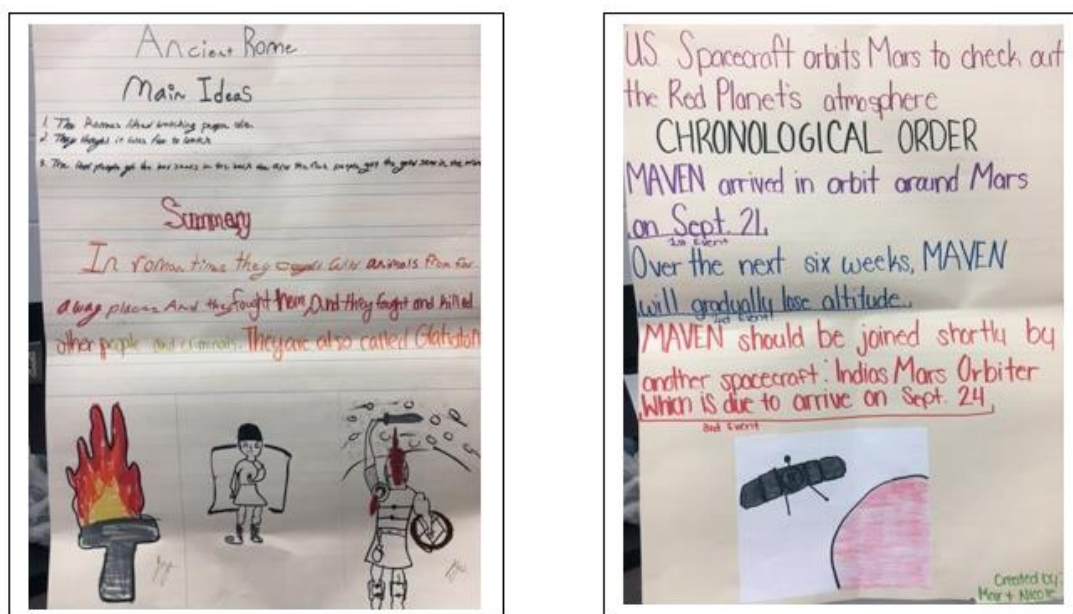
Figure 3. Anchor charts.

Conclusion

Databases were saturated and studies from several countries with various methodologies were included to ensure that the dissertation I developed presents a realistic picture of the problem that was studied. Themes were evident as participants started giving similar answers to the interview questions. Each theme or word that was stated more than once was underlined to note repetition. A weak code was assigned if a theme was mentioned in one to three interviews (red mark). The themes that developed from the interviews were visuals, prior-knowledge, art-based activities, and cooperative learning as the instructional strategies they found effective for improving 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students' performance on informational text reading. A moderate code was assigned if it was present in four to six interviews (green mark). A strong code (yellow mark) was assigned if the theme was present in seven or all of the interviews. I continued with the coding until saturation was achieved and no new codes established. The codes were all colored coordinated in order to be analyzed easily.

The repetition of answers were validated by the five interview participants during the member- checking process. The answers the participants listed was using visuals, prior knowledge, art-based activities, and cooperative learning as effective instructional strategies ELA teachers could use to improve 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students' performance in informational text reading. Data saturation was attained by determining common links that related to the eleven research questions. Data saturation is attained when no new information was added. (Mason, 2010). If data saturation was not met with five participants, then the results of the study would have been inconclusive. Two questions

that focused on strengths and weakness of the art-based anchor chart provided responses pertaining to art-based anchor charts being a great and effective instructional strategy but planning and project time was an issue.

Developing my dissertation demanded numerous hours of reading, collecting and analyzing data pertaining to qualitative research, identifying art-based anchor charts, and recognizing art-based strategies relevant pedagogy to develop a viable solution for increasing comprehension on informational text. The focus of the instructional coach PD was to provide training related to the art-based anchor charts teachers use to present a variety of informational text techniques necessary to increase 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students' performance on the MAP test. Farr (2011) stated that it is not necessary to employ persons from outside agencies with exorbitant price tags to render professional development services. My research is developed using the in-service and instructional coach pilot study because this strategy has the potential to produce the best results possible at the local Title I schools at the study sites. Engaging in PD using a plan known to combat educational issues is an important component of education.

The purpose of this study was to examine the teachers' experiences of art-based anchor charts on increasing comprehension on informational text. In other words, ELA teachers would receive additional professional development on the use of art-based anchor charts in order to enhance their pedagogy of the implementation of art in ELA. Learning to implement art-based anchor charts known to be effective for assisting sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students with increasing their performance on the informational portion of the MAP test is crucial for the students, school, and community. It is of utmost

importance for school leaders to indulge in conducting educational research in primary and elementary schools to discover art-based anchor charts that are known to successfully improve teachers' pedagogy to assist with increasing comprehension on informational text.

Strengths in Addressing the Problem

I selected a descriptive case study to conduct research of two Title I middle schools located in a rural region of the southern United States to analyze the problem of low achievement among sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students on the informational text portion of the MAP test. I selected a case study design because the data may yield an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and give meaning to the situation and possibly influence policy, practice, and future research in the field studied (Merriam, 2009). I identified many strengths to find a solution to combat the problem of low achievement among 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students at the study site. My examination of a variety of peer-reviewed articles is the first strength of the study. Since the problem that I addressed remains a topic of interests in education nationally and internationally, locating a viable solution is important. The principals' desire to resolve the problem of low achievement among 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students' comprehension on informational text strengthened the need for me to conduct my case study. Researching this problem and finding a solution will not only aid in improving student achievement, but will also serve as meaningful learning and motivation in informational text reading (Fisch & Chenelle, 2016).

The plan I developed for this study was another strength of my research study. Learning how the ELA Teachers perceive the use of art-based anchor charts in their classroom is helpful to the school's development of instructional strategies that may help standardized test scores. The dissertation focuses specifically on the teachers' pedagogy for creating artistically responsive classrooms using art-based anchor chart strategies and planning to improve 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students' comprehension on informational text. Lingenfelter (2011) stated that schools produce meaningful results when the multifaceted nature of educational problems is met with educators who create multifaceted solutions. Suggesting PD that employs an ELA coach is known to produce excellent test results on the MAP test, according to the five participants, supports the suggestions in my dissertation paper. The dissertation was based on the evidence found in the literature and collected data from the five participants.

The in-service instructional coach plan excludes the need for additional funds to hire a facilitator for the PD. This PD addresses several factors that are needed for the local Title I school teachers to revise their previous strategies to accomplish the goal of increasing 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students' comprehension on informational text. Riggsbee, Malone, and Straus (2012) maintained that PD should provide teachers with the knowledge to create a sound understanding of the skills presented in their classrooms.

The final strength is the impact the scheduled weekly curriculum meetings had on strengthening the plan led by the grade level chairperson. Meeting with their colleagues weekly to create lesson plans using the strategies learned from the PD creates opportunities for teachers to learn from one another and to collaborate together within the

grade level. The art-based anchor chart instructional strategies teachers use must be compatible with 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students' learning styles in order to enhance teachers' pedagogy, establish an environment that is artistically inviting, and increase student achievement to ensure success.

The literature presents ideas that prove beneficial for identifying the benefits, barriers, and solutions for resolving the problem associated with 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students' low achievement on informational text. Using various databases to obtain peer-reviewed articles and books pertinent to the case study, guarantee that my dissertation presents a valid account of the data collected. I included the literature review, data, findings, and suggestions in the professional development plan so the strategies can be implemented immediately. Neither additional funds nor personnel are required to accomplish the goals that I have established. The results from this study may serve as a guide for further research for other schools experiencing similar issues.

Limitations and Recommendations

Although I followed the five steps for collecting data and the six steps for analyzing the data for this case study, several limitations relative to the project study are noted. The first limitation is that data collection lasted only 3 weeks. Other useful information pertaining to the art-based anchor chart instructional strategies ELA teachers use may have been attained if the time devoted for observing the participants were extended beyond 3 weeks.

Two other concerns that may limit the opportunity to generalize my conclusions to a larger population are the geographic and socioeconomic specificity of my study site,

and my focus on just one core subject. To resolve these limitations, subsequent researchers could conduct a mix-method study that involves all students enrolled in the district. Researchers may also conduct research in other subject areas.

The principals could modify the weekly curriculum meetings to allow all staff members to collaborate with their colleagues who participated in the first two PD. Enabling teachers to collaborate during a common planning time establishes a routine for planning creative activities using the art-based anchor chart strategies identified as being effective in the literature. Engaging in extensive PD that focuses on enhancing teachers' pedagogical practices is significant for increasing students' ELA achievement.

Recommendations for Addressing the Problem Differently

In the narrative, I suggested implementing a pilot study using the art-based anchor charts cited as being effective for improving 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students' performance on the MAP test. I conducted a qualitative descriptive case study to explore what effects art-based anchor charts have on increasing comprehension on informational text. In the dissertation, I suggested that the staff participate in the in-service and instructional coach PD model to assist with increasing 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students' ELA achievement. An alternative approach to address the problem of low achievement is to have the entire staff participate in on-going PD. Professional development is relevant when facilitators address teachers' specific needs and concerns by connecting their daily responsibilities to the learning experience (Linder, 2011). Teachers benefit from engaging in on-going PD when the principal listens to their concerns, provides meaningful feedback, and offers continuous support (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012; Lutrick & Szabo, 2012).

Another alternative approach a researcher may use to address the problem of low achievement among 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students with informational text is the mixed method research design. Collecting numerical data from the students' MAP scores and conducting a longitudinal study, where the researcher has an opportunity to interview the same teachers over a specific period to determine the changes and experiences that occur, could assist the principal in making a constructive decision to revise the current policy. The mixed method approach could reveal a more complete understanding of the effects art-based anchor charts have on increasing comprehension on informational text.

An ethnographic study of middle school students can also be used to address the problem of low achievement. An ethnographic case study can be conducted to determine the effects parental involvement has on middle school students' academic achievement. Reading practices have improved the way in which young students understand reading and component skills that support the continuation of reading and reading comprehension (Douglas & Albro, 2014). An ethnographic study paints a portrait of a group and may show the essence of a culture and its unique complexities, its interactions, and its setting (Lodico et al., 2010).

Scholarship

The opportunity to conduct this study to reveal art-based anchor chart strategies found to be effective in the literature was an arduous but rewarding task for me. Simpson, Meurer, and Braza (2012) defined academic scholarship as acquiring new knowledge through the process of research. The strategies I learned while attending the residency in Atlanta, GA in 2013, enhanced my ability to read and understand peer-reviewed articles

to find the information relative to my study. Being able to decipher pertinent information to gain the understanding necessary to interpret its relevancy was challenging yet, worthwhile.

Reading multiple-scores of peer-reviewed articles to ascertain the manner in which they were composed helped me construct the format for my dissertation. As I reflected on the process of writing and rewriting to convey the precise thoughts pertaining to my case study, I acknowledge that my writing has improved immensely. My ability to engage in effective scholarly writing is due to the assistance of my doctoral chair and other professors at Walden University. What I learned has equipped me to develop an explicit dissertation that contains research-based suggestions to resolve the problem related to 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students' comprehension on informational text.

Leadership and Change

The participants in my case study offered a list of art-based strategies they found to be effective for supporting their students' abilities to perform well on formative assessments. The participants expressed a desire to continue to use instructional strategies that will increase students' achievement in ELA and improve their schools' ratings. To foster teachers' pedagogy in schools, the data from recent studies in the form of teacher collaboration, trust, and transformational leadership must be present or utilized to understand the relationship between the project-based dimensions of professional learning and the instructional strategies teachers use to increase students' learning (Beverborg, Sleegers, & van Veen, 2015).

The rapport I developed with the participants allowed me to gain knowledge of the respect, belief, and trust the teachers had for each other. As a result, I assumed the role of a leader to develop a professional development plan that may lead to improvements in 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students' performance on the informational portion of the MAP test. Recognizing that teachers have the knowledge to inspire and encourage each other, I created a professional development plan based on the five participants' support of the ELA coach.

The viewpoints from the five participants motivated me to develop a plan that could provide the staff with a well-known facilitator who uses art-based instructional strategies known to improve students' learning. The professional development plan is a model for change that can be used in the district where the Title I schools are located as well as other districts in the surrounding areas. Holmes, Clement, and Albright (2013) stated that being a leader of educational change is a complex task that challenges leaders to embrace alternative methods to build school-level capacity to sustain positive improvement for teachers and students.

The previous courses I enrolled in at Walden University advised that I disregard personal assumptions and beliefs I may have had to ensure that I develop a plan that is beneficial to the teachers and students at the research site. If this professional development plan proves to be valuable, partial credit may be awarded to me for the leadership role I took to develop a plan strictly for the teachers and students to the local Title I schools located in a rural region of the United States.

<div align="center">

Self-Analysis

</div>

Reflective Analysis of Self as a Scholar

   The professional knowledge I gained throughout this doctoral process has given me a better appreciation for the need to stay abreast of the issues that plague schools. Acquiring this knowledge enables me to conduct research studies that are relevant for leading my school in a positive direction. As a scholar, I encountered challenges once I began delving into the literature pertaining to my research topic since 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students have scored significantly lower for the past 5 years on the informational text portion of the MAP text, as reported in the Section 1 literature review. The new information I learned improved my ability to critically analyze these articles and other texts in order to develop the foundation for my study.

   An important lesson I learned while completing my case study is being a scholar is a lifetime endeavor. Because of this, I will continue to be an advocate for social change. Because theories, problems, policies, and people change, my mindset regarding issues pertaining to education and the manner in which I approach resolutions must change also. To remain cognizant of the current trends in education, I will continue to delve in the scholarship process.

Reflective Analysis as a Practitioner

   As a practitioner and an advocate of social change, I believe that it is advantageous for me to reflect on past decisions in order to make responsible resolutions to solve future issues. Being able to identify the learning needs relative to specific issues

and pursuing opportunities to find art-based resolutions helps me foster collegiality and collaboration with my peers.

Although my experience as a practitioner has strengthen my aspirations to be the best educator my students and colleagues will encounter, I desire to continue to examine the teachers' experiences of art-based anchor charts on increasing comprehension on informational text. The ability to reflect on my experience as a practitioner is important as it increases my capacity to think creatively, imaginatively, and critically to make practical decisions that are beneficial to my colleagues and our students. The knowledge I gained permits me to think more rationally about assuming responsibility for the educational suggestions I will offer in the future.

Reflective Analysis as a Policy Evaluator and Project Developer

Conducting my research at schools with a principal whose desire is to have the problem of low achievement among 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students addressed gives me the opportunity to work with five participants to develop my project. The ability to create a practical professional development plan is advantageous since the suggestions I give can assist teachers in other districts with providing their students with art-based instructional strategies to improve their performance in ELA.

To analyze my role as a project developer, I reflected on my roles as a researcher, scholar practitioner, and author. To develop my dissertation, I studied previous research and the findings that resulted from conducting a case study. I wrote a professional development plan that contains a course of action with positive solutions for effectively

combating the problem of 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students' comprehension on informational text at the research sites.

Suggestions for implementing future policies are based on the transcribed and analyzed data from the participants' interviews, observation protocol, audio recordings, and lesson plans. As the evaluator, I compiled relevant data obtained from peer-reviewed journals to enhance the dissertation. My roles as a policy evaluator and project developer were challenging; but, I overcame the obstacles by reviewing other project studies, position papers, the course's guidelines and rubrics to ensure my understanding of the process.

Reflections on the Importance of the Work

The professional development plan I created includes a variety of art-based instructional strategies known to be effective in the literature for increasing students' achievement. The dissertation is extremely important to the Title I schools because a study has never been conducted to determine why 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students scored low on the MAP test for 5 consecutive years. Exposing middle school students to instruction that constantly focused on diverse content will positively contribute to increasing students' achievement (Ottmar, Konold, Berry, Grissmer, & Cameron, 2014).

The suggestions I gave in the plan may have the potential to improve teachers' pedagogy, improve students' performance in ELA, and may employ school-based instructional coaches to combat problems that may arise in the future. This dissertation is also important because it lists the teachers' experiences of art-based anchor charts on

increasing comprehension on informational text in the district where the study was

conducted.

Implications and Applications

The staff of the Title I schools at the study sites are challenged to find a solution

to a problem that has concerned our nation for many years. The knowledge I have

acquired as a scholar, practitioner, project developer, and evaluator will be used to assist

ELA teachers with learning to conduct research pertaining to the importance of learning

ELS and the potential the knowledge has for propelling them to be excellent scholars and

leaders. The information I have learned also enables me to assist my colleagues by

offering art-based anchor charts instructional strategies to create an environment that is

conducive for all students to learn.

Following the suggestions in the dissertation can assist teachers with providing

students with multiple opportunities to be involved in the learning process by offering an

easy-to-implement strategy and various techniques for problem solving. Encouraging my

colleagues to become instructional coaches is important since they will acquire the

knowledge to offer ideas that may optimize the students' performance on the

informational portion of the MAP test.

The purpose of this study was to examine the teachers' experiences of art-based

anchor charts on increasing comprehension on informational text, it is equally as

important that the genre I selected augment teachers' pedagogy to enhance all students

learning to prevent ELA difficulties before they become problematic. This case study

recommends teachers use project-based relevant pedagogy and real-world activities since

sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students will be able to construct their own understanding and knowledge by reflecting on personal experiences. Adapting and adjusting lessons on the basis of the evolving needs of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students will give these students an opportunity to increase their performance on the MAP test, decrease the achievement gap, and compete with their peers in a global society.

This study is also significant to school leaders and the district's staff because closing the achievement gap among 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students will aid in meeting growth goals that have been established for this group. If the principals witness the success that this project is created to bring, other administrators may be interested in implementing the in-service instructional coach PD plan to decrease the ELA achievement gaps that exists among students at their schools.

Implications for Social Change and Directions for Future Research

Implications for Social Change

The students' scores on the quarterly MAP tests are failing to meet the specified objectives for function on or above grade-level. Since 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students lagged considerably when it comes to informational text reading, school leaders may benefit from implementing art-based anchor charts known to be effective to increase 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students' achievement on the MAP test.

Based on my findings and the cited research from the literature review, implications for social change include strategies for employing instructional coaches to work with teachers to construct ideas, strategies, and actions to increase student

achievement. Instructional coaches can be instrumental in assisting teachers with creating activities relevant to the real world. The findings I reported from this study have the potential to improve teachers' pedagogy in ELA and initiate positive social gains. Using school-based instructional coaches to assist teachers with transforming the way they teach informational text reading is crucial since students' intellectual aptitude and achievement not only affect their academic performance in elementary school but also directly affects students' future aspirations, college majors, and occupational choices. The implications for social change depicted in my study aligns with Walden University's views that positive social change occur through the development of principle, knowledgeable, and ethical scholar practitioners.

School-based instructional coaches can assist the teaching staff at the research site to develop reflective practices that lead teachers to analyze the effectiveness of their own instruction (Cobb & Jackson, 2011). Constant use of art-based anchor charts has the potential to improve students' ELA performance on state-wide and international assessments. Implications for social change may occur if teachers communicate effectively and work collaboratively to create educational opportunities for diverse learners to reach proficiency levels in ELA. The findings from this study may better position the teachers when developing and implementing art-based anchor charts and with helping students increase their reading comprehension on informational text. If failed, students will continue scoring low on informational text comprehension.

Directions for Future Research

To obtain another perspective of the low ELA achievement of 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students, future researchers could conduct a mixed-method or quantitative study. The mixed-methods approach would involve collecting qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative study would be conducted using a survey to determine the students' perception of the informational text strategies teachers use and the effect the strategies have on increasing their comprehension on informational text. Gaining an in-depth understanding of the students' perceptions will give teachers an idea of how to revise their lesson plans to include the summary from the data analysis. The data from the study may convey the strategies the teachers use that are effective and not effective for increasing students' achievement in ELA. The students' perceptions may be used as a strategy to motivate and enhance the teaching and learning process. The perceptions and experiences may help guide teachers to implement the arts-based anchor charts more often.

Popham (2013) stated that the best way to improve students' achievement and classroom practice was for teachers to administer formative assessments. Such research could illustrate the effectiveness of each assessment. Future researchers could verify if the data analysis supported the information identified. Future researchers may also decide if the findings extend their understanding of the connections between the necessities of using art-based anchor charts to increase students' performance. Implementing art-based anchor chart practices in ELA may contribute to achievement of students since there is a

logical premise that teacher knowledge "directly and positively affects classroom practice" and subsequently student achievement (Smith & Esch, 2012, p. 2).

Conclusion

Databases were saturated and studies from several countries with various methodologies were included to ensure that the dissertation I developed presents a realistic picture of the problem that was studied. Developing my dissertation demanded numerous hours of reading, collecting and analyzing data pertaining to qualitative research, identifying art-based anchor charts, and recognizing art-based strategies relevant pedagogy to develop a viable solution for increasing comprehension on informational text.

The focus of the instructional coach PD is to provide training related to the art-based anchor charts teachers use to present a variety of informational text techniques necessary to increase sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students' performance on the MAP test. Farr (2011) stated that it is not necessary to employ persons from outside agencies with exorbitant price tags to render professional development services. My research was developed using the art-based anchor chart study because this strategy has the potential to produce the best results possible at the local Title I schools at the study sites. Engaging in PD using a plan known to combat PBL is an important component of education.

The purpose of the pilot study was to recommend the implementation of PD in the form of the in-service and instructional coach model to assist ELA teachers with increasing their art-based pedagogy. In other words, ELA teachers will received additional professional development on the use of art-based anchor charts in order to

enhance their pedagogy of the implementation of art in ELA. Learning to implement art-based anchor charts known to be effective for assisting sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students with increasing their performance on the informational portion of the MAP test is crucial for the students, school, and community. It is of utmost importance for school leaders to indulge in conducting educational research in primary and elementary schools to discover art-based anchor charts that are known to successfully improve teachers' pedagogy to assist with increasing comprehension on informational text.

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Appendix A: Professional Development Plan

Examining the Impact of Art-Based Anchor Charts on

Academic Achievement in Language Arts

by

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Introduction

Improving students' knowledge of informational text to address the under achievement of America's students is a concern that has consistently plagued school districts. The information I obtained from the literature review in Section I strongly suggests teachers across the nation use art-based instructional strategies to assist students with improving their performance on standardized tests. It is important for teachers to assist students with improving their performance in informational text since the reading foundation students receive or do not receive has a profound effect on their performance in middle and high school. I conducted a qualitative case study to explore what effects art-based anchor charts have on increasing students' comprehension on informational text. The study is an educational phenomenon occurring at two local Title I middle schools located in the rural region of the southern United States.

My case study focused on sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students and their low proficiency levels on the informational portion of the PASS test for five consecutive years. According to Howard Gardner, individual intelligences or learning styles are "invoked and combined to carry out different tasks, solve diverse problems, and progress in various domains" (Gardner, as cited in Armstrong, 2013). Gardner encourages the implementation of art-based projects as one of many diverse, alternative teaching and learning strategies. Based on the findings from my case study, I developed a professional development plan.

This professional development plan I developed focuses on the art-based anchor strategies English Language Arts (ELA) teachers used. The professional development

plan addresses the importance of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students acquiring a solid foundation in reading, reviews on the current research-based reading instructional strategies used to increase student achievement, and outlines recommendations to assist the principal and staff at the study site with making the necessary changes to assist students with increasing their performance on the informational portion of the PASS test. The plan recommendation:

- provides a summary of federal and state policies regarding student achievement in informational text reading and the expectations for local Title I school

- explains the case study and research findings related to the recommendations suggested to assist teachers with revising their instructional strategies

- provides explicit recommendations to achieve positive solutions using the art-based anchor charts found to be effective from the literature

Background

Since teachers play a significant role in providing students with opportunities to learn reading, the strategies they use may result in all students performing successfully. Although federal and state officials are adamant about school districts being accountable for the academic success of every student, Job and Coleman (2016) reported that teachers have been focusing on fiction rather than nonfiction texts or informational texts.

Although many factors may contribute to the achievement gap and the low achievement of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students at the study site, the art-based instructional strategies ELA teachers used is the focus of my case study. Informational text should surpass levels of narrative texts accounting for 55% and 70% of texts in

grades 8 and 12 (Liebfreund, 2017). Students are reading more informational text from middle school to secondary school. Therefore, gaining an understanding of the strategies ELA teachers use to teach informational text comprehension skills may help improve sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students' performance on the PASS test.

The problem at the study site is that the academic proficiency of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students had been very low for the past five years as measured by the PASS test on informational text reading. Since school leaders use students' test results as a determining factor to document knowledge of concepts learned, teachers should engage in effective planning and use art-based anchor charts to meet the needs of all students. Lloyd and Wertsch (2016) stated teachers can design informational reading curricula most powerfully by embedding a critical literacy approach that foregrounds social justice in both the selection of texts and literacy practices with which we ask students to engage. By doing this, students are more engaged in informational text reading when there is a critical literacy approach such as art-based anchor charts. The art-based anchor instructional strategies I listed in the professional development plan may prompt the schools' principal to provide ongoing PD to ensure sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students' performance on informational text comprehension improves.

Laws and Guidance for South Carolina Schools

The NCLB Act (2002) was established to address the problems associated with the achievement gap (U.S. DOE, 2014). To accomplish this goal, the NCLB Act (2002) required Title I schools to employ highly qualified teachers for ELA classes. To comply with the policy, classroom teachers, instructional coaches, district leaders, higher

education faculty, and educators developed the South Carolina College-and-Career Ready

Standards for ELA. The South Carolina College-and-Career Ready document establishes

clear, rigorous, and logical standards to help teachers prepare students to compete in a

global society, engage in a career path that leads directly to the workforce, or enroll in

post-secondary institutions.

Since the schools at the study sites are a Title I school, the principal and staff are

obligated to ensure all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a

high-quality education. To bring about this change, school districts must employ teachers

who are prepared and trained to engage students using a curriculum that is aligned with

challenging state academic standards and high-quality assessments.

Definition of Key Terms

I have used the following terms throughout the professional development plan.

Instructional coaching: An on-site facilitator who models effective instructional

techniques and provides constructive feedback to teachers implementing the strategies to

foster student achievement (Kretlow, Cooke, & Wood, 2012).

In-service: In-service for this plan was a form of professional development used to

improve teachers' self-efficacy to assist with increasing student achievement (Kretlow,

Cooke, & Wood, 2012).

Professional development (PD): Coordinated training in a specific content area that

focuses on teaching practices to foster teacher learning by engaging in active tasks, such

as curriculum design, enactment, and reflection. (Hill, Beisiegel, & Jacob, 2013). The

professional development for this professional development plan came in the form of an in-service and instructional coaching.

Self-efficacy: The belief in one's abilities to accomplish desired outcomes (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009).

Case Study and Literature Review

To develop a meaningful professional development plan, the literature I reviewed for my case study came from diverse perspectives I found using Walden University Library to access databases including Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), ProQuest, Google Scholar, and SAGE Journals. The key terms I used for database searches were instructional coaching, in-service, professional development (PD), and self-efficacy. These terms were selected because they are used consistently during faculty meetings and professional development. The case study I conducted at two local Title I schools located in the rural southern region of the U.S. was performed to answer the following research question, "What are teachers' perceptions of the use of art-based anchor charts to increase students' reading comprehension scores on informational texts?"

After collecting data from interviews, observations, lesson plans, and audio recordings, the participants listed using visuals, prior knowledge, art-based activities, and cooperative learning as effective instructional strategies ELA teachers could use to improve sixth, seventh, and eight grade students' performance in informational text reading. For my study, data analysis included data triangulation and coding to identify common themes to answer the research question and enhance the credibility of the study.

The purpose of this study is to examine the teachers' experiences of art-based anchor charts on increasing comprehension on informational text. According toCervetti & Hiebert, 2015 and Watkins & Liang, 2014, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students score significantly lower on tests because they do not have enough exposure (Cervetti, & Hiebert, 2015; Watkins, & Liang, 2014)). Gaining an insight into this study phenomenon may increase 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students' performance on the informational text portion of the PASS test. It is important that sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students acquire a solid foundation in informational text reading to reach a level of proficiency to not only pass standardized test but to graduate and become a catalyst for initiating positive social changes in their communities.

This professional development plan I developed is a practical plan that provides the principals and staff at the study sites with suggestions to assist with the problem associated with sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students' low achievement on the informational text portion of the PASS test. This dissertation offers the principals and staff a contextual understanding of the art-based anchor chart instructional strategies proven effective for improving sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students' performance in informational text. The literature review and the information the five participants shared pertaining to the instructional strategies they found to be effective for meeting the educational needs of low-achieving children supports the suggestions I cited in the professional development plan. The key findings that I revealed from my study may solve the problem of low achievement among sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students at the study sites.

The professional development plan lists suggestions that may result in increasing sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students' achievement since reading is significant for personal and professional growth. If the problem of low achievement persists, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students will be limited in career choices related to reading, journalism, education, and language art fields since these occupations require knowledge of reading (Turner, 2016).

With that said, students who are placed in classes where teachers consistently incorporate multiple teaching strategies have the ability to use techniques specific to their learning style to assist them with performing successfully on tests (Van de Walle, Karp, & Bay-Williams, 2013). According to Gawlik, Kearney, Addonizio, and Laplante-Sosnowsky (2012), measuring a teacher's competence is complex, but students' test scores show a great correlation with what students learn better than any other measurement.

Rationale

The role teachers play in students' informational text learning and achievement is very important. The most recent federal legislation requires the use of practices found effective by rigorous scientific research (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004; No Child Left Behind Act [NCLB], 2008). Kretlow, Cooke, and Wood (2012) maintained that it was crucial for teachers to increase their use of art-based anchor chart practices in classrooms and ensure the strategies were implemented accurately. The goal of my professional development plan is to provide ELA teachers with strategies to address the low achievement of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students on the

informational text portion of the PASS test. While teaching sixth, seventh, and eighth grade informational text comprehension skills, teachers must analyze scores from informational text quizzes, district benchmarks, and unit tests to determine the effectiveness of the strategies they used.

The professional development plan was developed to provide ELA teachers with art-based anchor chart instructional strategies that may strengthen their pedagogy. Santoro, Baker, Fien, Smith, & Chard, 2016) confirmed that teaching informational text is a complex subject that requires a teacher to be knowledgeable and capable of using a variety of reading comprehension strategies to promote student learning. Welner and Mathis (2015) agreed that school leaders across the nation must engage in serious dialogue to utilize evidence-based strategies that have the potential to improve students' opportunities to increase achievement. Welner and Mathis (2015) confirmed that leaders, policymakers in district offices, state and federal legislatures, and state and federal departments of education should also be held accountable if they fail to provide teachers the necessary support to improve student learning. Since reading is used in day-to-day operations, Parenti (2016) described teachers using informational text teaching as best practices for fostering students' talents using digital images and utilizing them as a motivating resource and aid for adequately supporting and enhancing retellings of text.

Collaboration

Collaborating with colleagues can be valuable for helping teachers understand any misconceptions they may have regarding students' learning styles. Collaborating may result in teachers making effective decisions to revise their lesson plans to include

instructional strategies to produce positive gains in achievement. Martin, Buelow, Hoffman (2015) agreed that teachers should collaborate on a daily basis. Juntunen (2014) suggested that teachers who go through the process of development and acquire skills that would better them as a teacher. The time teachers spend collaborating may result in producing positive changes for improving sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students' performance on the PASS test.

Collaborating with teachers to align similar standards could provide students with an opportunity to understand a skill from two different perspectives. Collaboration is also significant because teachers get an opportunity to delve into conversations to understand what and how others teach specific concepts. Since teachers' backgrounds and qualifications varies, it is important for school leaders to provide time for collaboration. English, Science, and Math teachers should collaborate to maximize student learning and reinforce similar concepts (Stohlmann, Moore, & Roehrig, 2012).

Engaging in this type of professional dialogue is helpful to teachers because they may understand better "how" and "why" students of diverse backgrounds process knowledge differently. Goddard, Miller, Larson, Goddard, Madsen, and Schroeder (2010) agreed that collaboration is productive among teachers when the school's leader is an instructional leader who monitors classroom instruction and share leadership with teachers.

The responses the participants gave during the interview protocol substantiate my ideas pertaining to the effectiveness of collaborating. The participants emphasized that the weekly curriculum meetings were productive and beneficial for networking, engaging

in discourse that involved modeling art-based anchor chart instructional strategies, and collaborating to create creative lesson plans that were relevant to each student's learning style. The principals' willingness to provide time for the teachers at the study site to collaborate may result in optimizing the school's success. Bruce-Davis, Gubbins, Gilson, Villanueva, Foreman, and Rubenstein (2014) affirmed that school leaders who support their faculty help establish a sense of community.

Art-Based Instructional Strategies

Federal and state officials expect school districts to be accountable for the academic success of every student and demand that the achievement gap within sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students is closed (Voight, Hanson, O'malley, & Adekanye 2015). The problem I address in my professional development plan is the low achievement of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students at two local Title I schools located in rural region of the southern United States.

Using peer-reviewed professional literature and documenting previous research that has been conducted successfully to improve sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students' achievement in informational text supports the suggestions in my professional development plan. Several research studies show that there are specific strategies used during informational text instruction that have been successful in improving learning opportunities for children from a range of backgrounds (Boaler & Humphreys, 2005; Norton, 2006; Pfannkuch, 2011; Stephan & Akyuz, 2012).

To assist sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students with improving their achievement on the PASS test, it is important for teachers to engage in project-based

relevant pedagogy. The NCES indicated that sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students represent 628 of the nation's public schools on an instructional level (Maxwell, 2014). According to Kane, Taylor, Tyler, and Wooten (2011), student academic achievement is tied directly to effective teaching. Based upon the data from my study, the participants communicated that using visuals, prior knowledge, art-based activities, and cooperative learning were effective instructional strategies that have produced positive gains in their students' test scores.

School leaders expect their staff to be proficient educators who work to achieve significant academic growth among all students. Burke (2013) said to accomplish this goal, teachers need to learn how to convert theory into practice. Although Kretlow, Cooke, and Wood (2012) confirmed that PD is one of the most practical ways schools use to train teachers in learning to implement art-based practices. My professional development plan suggests in-service and instructional coaching as a viable solution to support ELA teachers with improving sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students' performance in informational text.

Since the staff of the local Title I schools collaborate on a weekly basis, I have suggested implementing a pilot study using the in-service and instructional coaching support plan to assist ELA teachers. Instructional coaches facilitate majority of the meetings within the school district. Temple and Reynolds (2015) stated that since budget constraints limit school districts from expanding education programming, innovative methods to assist teachers with improving students' performance on the informational text portion of the PASS test are necessary. Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, and Shapley

(2007) conducted a research study to determine if training teachers using in-service and instructional coaching PD would improve teacher practice and student achievement with the use of art-based anchor charts. The researchers revealed that this plan was effective for increasing teachers' pedagogy and improving students' achievement (Yoon et al., 2007). Using the in-service and instructional coaching PD to assist teachers with improving students' achievement is well documented in Kretlow and Bartholomew's (2010) research, which found 13 studies that, revealed in-service and instructional coaching effectively promoted increased accuracy with three research-based strategies that were aligned to current PD literature.

I chose the in-service and instructional coaching plan because the staff convenes every Tuesday to discuss issues related to academics, and the strategies I listed in my professional development plan could be implemented at no cost to the school. Additional time is not necessary to implement this pilot study. I suggest that the principal select one specific grade level and employ the assistance of the ELA coach to serve as the instructional coach since teachers observe her weekly. An instructional coach is an on-site facilitator who models effective instructional techniques and provides constructive feedback to teachers implementing the strategies to foster student achievement (Kretlow, Cooke, & Wood, 2012).

Academic Achievement

The problem I address in my professional development plan focuses on sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students' low proficiency on the PASS test for the past 5 years. Hiebert and Morris (2012) affirmed for historical and cultural reasons, school districts

across the nation have consistently pursued the task of improving teaching by finding measure to improve the methods teachers use to teach. Previous studies were conducted and found that art education was found to be beneficial for students' course grades (Lorimer, 201; Kirkland and Manning, 2011).

Teachers can no longer continue teaching sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students using antiquated ideologies. Consistently using conventional methods to teach sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students will not provide these students the opportunity they deserve to improve their performance on the informational portion of the PASS test. The plan I outlined in my professional development plan gives prudent suggestions to assist teachers with ideas to aid in teaching all students more effectively.

Using the suggestions I outlined may improve teachers' methods and increase their pedagogy for teaching sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. Rosenshine (2012) stated that students come to school with various learning abilities and style, and teachers must utilize different research-based instructional strategies to meet their academic needs. According to Clements and Sarma (2014) when teachers expect students to perform certain levels because of various reasons, students tend to perform at the levels the teachers set for them. Therefore, teachers can begin assisting students with improving their academic achievement on the PASS test by setting high expectations for the levels with which they are working.

Providing teachers with art-based anchor charts necessary to improve their pedagogy aids them in improving the learning opportunities available to sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. Hiebert and Morris (2012) stated that educators, university

leaders, and policy makers may improve teaching by revising the requirements for all students majoring in education and equip teachers already employed with art-based anchor charts known to be effective in the literature to implement in classrooms.

Since the U.S. educational system is multilingual and multicultural, using art-based anchor charts is crucial for teachers to create an atmosphere of learning that supports academic success to convey their belief in their students' ability to increase their performance on the informational text portion of the PASS test. My professional development plan provides teachers with suggestions to engage in art-based anchor charts instructional strategies relevant to the teaching necessary for improving sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students' opportunity to improve academically. Gardner encourages the implementation of art-based projects as one of many diverse, alternative teaching and learning strategies (Gardner, as cited in Armstrong, 2013).

Becoming an artistic relevant educator enables teachers to become a catalyst for assisting sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students with increasing their knowledge to perform successfully on the informational text portion of the PASS test. Some form of PD is beneficial for teachers to become project-based relevant educators. To rejuvenate the nation's education system, PD must focus on improving teachers' ability to learn and teach utilizing methods that teachers learn best (Petrie & McGee, 2012). To affect student achievement positively, PD should be continuous and methodical (Sappington, Pacha, & Baker, 2012).

Professional Development for Pilot Study

I suggest that a pilot study be conducted at the Title I schools located in the rural region of the southern United States. The purpose of the pilot study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies listed in my professional development plan. The administrative staff should pilot the in-service and instructional coaching PD model for 3 years. ELA teachers will participate in the pilot study during the first year. The teachers participating in the in-service and instructional coaching PD will observe the school's ELA coach for 55 minutes weekly in an effort to learn how to implement the strategies necessary to create project-based proficient classrooms. All lessons will be recorded.

The participants will use the data from the recordings to enhance their pedagogy. The participants will work collaboratively with the school's curriculum coordinator, ELA coach, and colleagues to create art-based anchor chart instructional lesson plans using the suggestions listed in the professional development plan. The principal, assistant principal, curriculum coordinator, and ELA coach will observe, monitor, and evaluate the teachers to determine the effectiveness of the pilot study. The ELA coach will offer ongoing support and feedback to the participants. Kretlow, Cooke, and Wood (2012) stated teachers rated instructional coaching more helpful for improving teachers' pedagogy than engaging in a one-day PD or meeting with a facilitator after school.

The feedback given by the ELA coach along with the data from the teachers' interviews will be analyzed to make improvements and recommend actionable ideas on how these strategies might be revised to make them more effective during year two. Then, the principals could ensure that the entire staff engage in the learning process to

promote a more successful ELA program. The pilot study implementation plan and

timeline I developed was presented in Figure 3.

Initiatives and Activities	Persons Responsible	Resources	Indicator of Monitoring
Analyze data from 2017 PASS test Instructional Framework Select and contact teachers to participate in the in-service and instructional coaching PD.	(1) Principal (2) Assistant Principal (3) District's ELA Coordinator (4) ELA Coach (5) Curriculum Coordinator (6) 6-8 Grade-Level Chairpersons	Curriculum Alignment Document	Field notes and agenda Planner
Administer, score, and analyze Placement test	6th-8th Grade Teachers	Placement Test Identify areas of Weaknesses	Placement Test Data Analysis Report
Promote evidence based differentiated instructional pedagogy and art-based anchor chart instructional strategies. Observe, monitor, and evaluate PD Participants using strategies.	School's ELA Coach PD Participants (1) Principal (2) Assistant Principal (3) ELA Coach (4) Curriculum Coordinator	Lesson Plans The PD participants will observe the ELA coach teach informational text comprehension skills utilizing using visuals, prior knowledge, art-based activities, and cooperative learning	Unit Tests Benchmark Test Technology Assessments PASS Tests Lesson Plans District's Observation Document Audio recorder
Create survey Administer survey Analyze data from survey	District's ELA Coordinator Title I Coordinator (1) Principal (2) Assistant Principal (3) ELA Coach (4) Curriculum Coordinator	Survey	District's ELA Coordinator Title I Coordinator
Revise recommendation of Professional development plan using data from survey	(1) Principal (2) Assistant Principal (3) ELA Coach (4) Curriculum Coordinator (5) PD Participants	Professional Development Plan	Survey Results Revised Professional Development Recommendation Plan

Figure 3. In-Service and Instructional Coaching ELA PD Plan

Since one of the mission statements of the local Title 1 schools where my study was conducted states that the school fosters academic achievement through innovative teaching practices, instructional methodologies aligned to the PASS standards was significant. During year 2, ELA teachers will participate in the pilot study since the former sixth, seventh, or eighth grade students who participated in the pilot study initially will enroll in their classes. The teachers at the study will continue with the in-service and instructional coaching ELA PD timeline outlined in Figure 3. Prior to the beginning of the new school term, the following are suggested:

(1) If necessary, review and discuss the revised professional development plan according

to the findings from the survey data.

(2) Analyze students' 2018 PASS data to identify areas of weaknesses.

(3) Meet with ELA teachers to review the criteria for the PD.

(4) Permit ELA teachers and the ELA coach to present their ideas regarding the pilot

study.

(5) Discuss sixth, seventh, and eighth grade concerns and respond to questions.

(6) Observe, monitor, and evaluate sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teachers as they use the research-based anchor charts.

(7) Continue to offer support to sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teachers.

(8) Create new surveys based on the findings and suggestions.

(9) Administer and analyze the data from the surveys.

(10) Revise the suggestions in the professional development plan, if necessary.

During year 3, ELA teachers will participate in the pilot study and will initially enroll in their classes. Continue with the in-service and instructional coaching PD. Prior to the beginning of the new school term, the following are suggested:

(1) If necessary, review and discuss the revised professional development plan according

to the findings from the survey data.

(2) Analyze students' 2019 PASS data to identify areas of weaknesses.

(3) Meet with ELA teachers to review the criteria for the PD.

(4) Permit ELA teachers along with the ELA coach to discuss the successes

and challenges of implementing the art-based anchor charts.

(5) Discuss sixth, seventh, and eighth grade concerns and respond to questions.

(6) Observe, monitor, and evaluate sixth, seventh, and eighth grade participants as

they use the art-based anchor charts.

(7) Continue to offer support to ELA teachers.

(8) Create a new survey based on previous findings and suggestions.

(9) Administer and analyze data from the surveys.

(10) Revise professional development plan, if necessary.

After examining and discussing the results from the surveys, the principals may use the information to ensure that the entire staff will participate in the in-service and instructional coaching PD. In this way, sixth through eighth grade teachers will also be able to implement the art-based anchor charts to students at an early age.

Conclusion

The professional development plan I developed is a plan in which teachers at the local Title I schools located in the rural region of the southern United States have the opportunity to implement art-based anchor charts to enhance sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students' performance on the PASS test. The suggestions I outlined in the pilot study is based on Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences for the purpose of providing the staff at the study site with the necessary information required to establish project-based relevant classrooms.

The in-service and instructional coach PD plan I developed reflects the extensive literature search I engaged in to create a professional development plan with practical suggestions. Following the suggestions could result in teachers improving their pedagogy to create project-based relative class rooms. Teachers will also be able to validate each student's project and work to successfully prepare sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students for college and career readiness. The principal's decision to include the entire staff in the in-service and instructional coaching PD has the potential to evoke positive changes in the educational inequalities among sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students to produce scholars at the study site who are capable of competing locally, nationally, and internationally.

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Appendix B: Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study of Examining the Impact of Art-Based Anchor Charts on Academic Achievement in Language Arts You were invited to the study because (a) you are a certified teacher, and (b) may be willing to share the experiences, opinions, and incidents of the use of instructional tools on increasing ELA test scores on the concept of informational text. This consent form is essential to this study because it gives you an opportunity to ensure that you fully understand this study before making a decision to take a part in the study. No additional recruitment text will be used. I am Kimberly Fontanez, a doctoral student from Walden University and the sole researcher who will be conducting this study. You may be acquainted with the me since I am a middle school visual arts teacher in your district. There is no conflict of interest since this study is separate from that role. Please review the information below:
 Background Information: The purpose of this study is to collect interviewed data from teachers who have experienced a problem with attaining the minimum scores required to demonstrate grade-level academic achievement themes on the concept of informational text in ELA.
 Procedures: If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following: (1) engage in 2 interviews (initial and closing) that may be recorded and may last approximately 30 minutes to an hour. During the interview, you will discuss your experiences as an English Language Arts Teacher. You may skip questions that you feel are too personal or makes you feel uncomfortable. (2) permit the researcher to conduct 2 classroom observations to collect data on the instructional strategies (anchor charts) being used to teach informational text. The observations will be conducted during an entire class period, 45 min. to an hour. (3) provide the researcher with lesson plans via email before the observations are conducted. (4) transcript review and/or member checking will be by email. If the review of the summaries isn't done at the time of review, then the researcher will schedule a date, time, and a mutually agreed upon place to review the data collected from the interviews and observations to check for accuracy. The time to review the transcript and/or member checking may take 2-3 hours.

Here are some sample questions: • What are some strengths of the art-based anchor charts? • What are some weaknesses/challenges using the art-based anchor charts? • What change did you notice in students' motivation to participate in the activity?
 Voluntary Nature of the Study: Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that I will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the study. You will not be treated differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind during the study. If you feel stressed during the study you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal. When the researcher is already known to the participant,
declining or discontinuing will not negatively impact the participant's relationship with the researcher or the participants access to services.

 Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study: Participation is voluntary and at any time during the participation in study, you may terminate your participation at any time. You may refuse to answer any questions. The benefits of participation may be increased understanding for yourself and other teachers who are, have, or will explore the use of instructional strategies in ELA when teaching informational text. The risks are similar to that of a job interview, such as being tired, frustration, etc.

Compensation: None

Confidentiality: Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study. All information will be kept in a locked drawer and after 5 years will be destroyed.

Contacts and Questions: You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via 910.280.8699 or kfontanez@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368 ext. 3121210). Walden University's approval number for this study is 09-23-16-0201521 and it expires on September 22, 2017.

Obtaining Your Consent: If you feel you understand the study well enough to make a decision about it, please indicate your consent by replying to this email with the words, "I consent."

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

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.
Printed Name of Participant   _____

Date of consent   _____

Participant's Signature   _____
Researcher's Signature   _____

Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Legally, an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically.

Appendix C: Parental Information Letter

April 12, 2015

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Examining the Impact of Art-Based Instructional Strategies on

Academic Achievement in Language Arts

I am writing to you about the research I am conducting as part of my Doctoral Study at Walden University.

I am interested in finding out more about what instructional practices may help increase ELA test scores in comprehension on informational text.

I have approached the school your child attends and explained the purpose of the study, and the school has kindly agreed to distribute these letters to you.

Please read the information sheet attached to this letter. You will see that my research involves the teaching of students during normal lessons and there will be no direct contact with any of the children. I hope therefore that you will agree to your child being involved in my research.

If you have any further questions about the research, please contact me at kfontanez@acpsd.net. If you have any concerns about the research please contact my principal at sdugar@acpsd.net.

If you would prefer that your child does not take part, please sign and return the form enclosed.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Kimberly Fontanez

Appendix D: Informational Text Art-Based Reading Lesson

Informational Text Structures

1. The teacher will introduce the current unit to the class with focus on informational text.
2. The students will read the informational text independently.
3. Independently, the students will use poster board/chart paper to outline **Cause & Effect**, **Problem & Solution**, **Compare & Contrast**, and **Chronological Order.**
4. The students will then write a description of each of the criteria with the use of the chosen informational text.
5. (**Practice Strategy**) After the description has been completed, the students will draw a detailed picture with color (Color Pencils) under the written description.

EXAMPLE
Text Structures
(Name of Text)

Cause & Effect-Description

> **ART INTEGRATION/ILLUSTRATION**

Problem & Solution-Description

> **ART INTEGRATION/ILLUSTRATION**

Compare & Contrast- Description

> **ART INTEGRATION/ILLUSTRATION**

Chronological Order- Description

> **ART INTEGRATION/ILLUSTRATION**

Appendix E: Interview Questions

Lessons Using Art-Based Anchor Charts

Please be specific:

1. Please share how the use of art-based anchor charts have influenced your

   teaching?

2. Please share how the art-based anchor charts influenced your students' learning.

3. What are some strengths of the art-based anchor charts?

4. What are some weaknesses/challenges using the art-based anchor charts?

5. Please explain improvements you suggest for using the art-based anchor charts.

6. How did you feel implementing the informational art-based anchor charts when

   compared to other strategies?

7. What have you found to be the best instructional tools when teaching a unit on

   informational texts?

8. In what ways would you change the lesson to be more beneficial, considering

   other tools that you've found successful?

9. What other strategies do you feel are helpful in increasing achievement in reading

   informational text?

10. What change did you notice in students' motivation to participate in the activity?

11. What other questions would you like me to consider that I did not ask?

Appendix F: Progress Page

Teacher _____ **Date** _____
School _____ **Grade/Level** _____
Class period/time of class: _____
Topic or topics: _____
Name of Informational Text:

_____

Purpose (objectives):

Materials Used (teacher-made, manufactured, district or department-developed; characterization of materials):

Art-Based Instructional Strategy Used: Content; nature of activity, what are students doing, what is the teacher doing; interactions.

Student Grouping _____ **Duration** _____

Motivation of Students: Are the students motivated during the activity? List some general actions of students. Are the students excited about the project?

Additional Comments: