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Research-Based Curriculum

TIME For Kids

Nonfiction Readers

Complete Supplemental Program

Based on Respected Research & Literature

The Importance of Nonfiction Reading

In our increasingly global and information-rich society, students need to be eager to learn, seek answers, and have the necessary skills to navigate the various informational texts they will come across in school, workplace, and everyday life. According to Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis in their book *Strategies That Work: Teaching Comprehension to Enhance Understanding* (2000), "Interesting authentic nonfiction fuels kids' curiosity, enticing them to read more, dig deeper, and search for answers to compelling questions."

However, additional research shows that very little time is spent in the classroom learning to navigate nonfiction text. In the article *3.6 Minutes per Day: The Scarcity of Informational Texts in First Grade* (2000), Nell Duke states, "The failure of schools in the U.S. to develop adequate informational reading and writing skills in many students has long been recognized. Some scholars have even linked these failures to larger deficiencies in achievement." The importance of learning to navigate nonfiction text is clear to many. Duke continues by stating, "Many scholars have suggested that providing more experience with informational texts in the early grades may help to mitigate the substantial difficulty many students have with this form of text in later schooling." Aside from the long-term goal of developing skilled readers, nonfiction text also has a role in standardized testing. Because students are most often tested on their ability to comprehend nonfiction text, it is important to provide readers with explicit instruction on the ways in which nonfiction is organized along with specific skills and strategies for comprehending nonfiction. In their article featured in *The Reading Teacher*, Ivey and Broaddus state that "reading nonfiction materials would increase students' depth of knowledge in content areas, and probably help students score higher on the standardized tests that are of such concern to teachers and administrators" (2000).

Nonfiction reading also has a prominent role in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for language arts. Some of the CCSS key points include the following:

- an interdisciplinary approach to literacy
- a wide, deep, and thoughtful engagement with high-quality informational text
- a progression in text complexity
- a focus on building rich content knowledge

Research to Practice
The Importance of Nonfiction Reading

TIME For Kids *Nonfiction Readers* is a supplemental nonfiction reading program that exposes readers to nonfiction texts and concepts. The program helps students develop nonfiction reading skills and strategies through the use of texts that appeal to their interests and instruction that provides ample opportunities to develop these skills to support deep comprehension of nonfiction texts. The texts were purposely developed to provide interesting information on topics pertinent and exciting to students. In addition, the content and photographs featured in each text are designed to encourage the students to read with heightened curiosity. This interest in the reading material has a potential for an increase in time spent on reading, which in turn can improve comprehension for readers of all levels.

Developing Essential Nonfiction Reading Skills

Teachers need access to quality and varied nonfiction readers in the classroom if they are to meet the challenge of providing differentiation to individual students with varying instructional needs. Anderson et al., in *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading* (1985), emphasize the importance of teaching reading skills needed specifically for understanding nonfiction texts.

In the report, the Commission highlights, "It is only common sense that children would be helped to make the transition to textbooks if early basal readers contained more high-quality nonfiction" (Anderson et al. 1985). Teachers need to be equipped with the appropriate instructional support resources to deliver quality curriculum, in addition to having access to the nonfiction readers. Duke asserts, "In addition to exposing young students to informational text, teachers must also teach them *how* to read it" (Duke 2000, 202–224). Students need to learn how to make sense of the written words as well as the organization within a nonfiction text. "There are essential literacy skills that affect reading, such as knowing how to search written material including graphics for critical information" (Pressley 2002). This skill and other nonfiction literacy skills are included in the lessons found in TIME For Kids *Nonfiction Readers*.

Intertextuality is the way that one text might draw on or resemble the characteristics of another, causing the reader of the texts to make links between them (Anstey and Bull 2006, 30). Students need to be able to integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words. They also need to be able to analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers 2010).

TIME For Kids *Nonfiction Readers* fulfills a need for exposing developing readers to increasingly complex nonfiction text and concepts. With the vibrant nonfiction books as the core, the program teaches specific nonfiction skills in addition to the key reading skills that are necessary for success in literacy.

TIME For Kids *Nonfiction Readers* provides vibrant full-color books on high-interest topics. Text features such as a table of contents, chapter titles, headings, captions, a glossary, an index, and italics and bold print are included as appropriate for the reading level. Moreover, with the use of photos, charts, and diagrams, the books expose students to graphic aids that enhance the reading experience and build visual literacy. The lesson plans provide explicit instruction in when, how, and why to access these features to improve comprehension.

Text structure in nonfiction texts is very important for students to understand the meaning of the text. Books in this program are designed with a variety of text structures, including sequence, cause and effect, problem and solution, description, and compare and contrast. Each lesson focuses on two of the following key nonfiction skills or strategies: activating prior knowledge, questioning, determining importance, monitoring comprehension, drawing inferences, synthesizing information, and visualizing.

Key Reading Skills

Word recognition, academic vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency are key reading skills needed to build a strong literacy foundation in the early grades. In *Beginning Reading Instruction: The Rest of the Story from Research* (2002), Michael Pressley describes the key considerations necessary when developing an effective reading program. Pressley states that instruction featuring strong connections between literature and concept learning increases academic curiosity and engagement in areas such as science as well as use of comprehension skills. TIME For Kids *Nonfiction Readers* includes texts that address content area themes from science, social studies, and mathematics.

Word Recognition

"[W]ord study instruction provide[s] an opportunity to teach children that there are systematic relationships between letters and sounds, that written words are composed of letter patterns that represent the sounds of spoken words, and that recognizing words quickly and accurately is a way of obtaining meaning from what is read" (Linan-Thompson and Vaughn 2007).

Academic Vocabulary

Research has shown that vocabulary development is vital to understanding nonfiction text. In their article *Put Reading First* (2001), Armbruster and Osborn state, "Direct instruction helps students learn difficult words, such as words that represent complex concepts that are not part of the students' everyday experiences. Direct instruction of vocabulary relevant to a given text leads to better reading comprehension."

Comprehension

The *Put Reading First* document clearly defines reading comprehension as "the reason for reading." Students must move beyond word recognition and decoding to understanding the text being read. "Comprehension is the hoped-for end, not rapid reading" (Wolf 2005). According to the Report of the National Reading Panel, *Teaching Children to Read* (2000), "The rationale for the explicit teaching of comprehension skills is that comprehension can be improved by teaching students to use specific cognitive strategies or to reason strategically when they encounter barriers to understanding what they are reading."

Fluency

Timothy Rasinski defines fluency as "the ability to accurately and effortlessly decode the written words and then to give meaning to those words through appropriate phrasing and oral expression of the words" (2006). Fluency is now seen as directly affecting reading comprehension (Kuhn and Stahl 2000). However, becoming a fluent reader is a skill that develops gradually and requires practice. Repeated reading with a different purpose each time supports the rapid development of fluency in young children (Rasinski 2004). Also, the use of poetry "provides opportunities in fluent, phrased reading" (Fountas and Pinnell 2001).

The Reading–Writing Connection

The connection between reading and writing has been clearly established. According to Gay Su Pinnell in the article *Success of Children at Risk in a Program that Combines Writing and Reading* (1988), "As children read and write, they make the connections that form their basic understandings about both.... There is ample evidence to suggest that the processes are inseparable and that teachers should examine pedagogy in the light of these interrelationships."

Word Recognition

TIME For Kids *Nonfiction Readers* lessons include progressive word study instruction with the goal of improving reading comprehension at all reading levels. Each lesson incorporates engaging word study activities to promote word recognition and directly affect comprehension. The lessons include, but are not limited to, instruction on sound-symbol relationships, phonemes, onset and rime, high-frequency words, word endings, word families, syllabication, and word roots.

Academic Vocabulary

Academic vocabulary instruction is a key component in TIME For Kids *Nonfiction Readers*. Each lesson plan includes an introduction of key academic vocabulary from the book. This section provides opportunities for teachers to introduce new vocabulary prior to reading the book to build students' conceptual understanding of words that are central to the book's theme. These instructional activities address multiple learning styles and promote deeper knowledge of the selected words. Additional opportunities for vocabulary development, such as cloze activities and concept maps, are offered in the student activity pages and in the accompanying interactiv-ebooks.

Comprehension

Each lesson plan specifically identifies comprehension skills to be taught and provides an opportunity to practice the learned skills at the end of the lesson. This product was designed to include multiple opportunities for students to engage with the text. The Comprehension section of each lesson plan includes introducing the book by developing background knowledge, reading the book, stimulating discussion, and integrating cross-curricular connections while specifically focusing on developing comprehension skills that help students understand the text. The end of each lesson includes a comprehension check activity.

Fluency

Fluency is specifically developed throughout the lessons through the use of poetry, repeated readings, and audio support. A poem related to the book is included in each lesson plan with the goal of supporting fluency development. The lessons feature multiple opportunities for students to engage in repeated readings of the text. The professional recordings of the books and poems on the Audio CD provide a model of fluent reading and support fluency development. They also engage auditory learners and recognize the diverse learning styles in the interest of promoting language and literacy development.

The Reading-Writing Connection

This product was designed to provide students with an opportunity to write about their reading. Each lesson plan features shared writing experiences before, during, and after reading. These exercises are an extension of the Focus Objectives for each lesson. In addition, each lesson provides students with an independent writing opportunity that aids in comprehension of the core concepts presented within the text.

Gradual Release of Responsibility as a Model of Instruction

Students need the opportunity to work toward independence and confidence in their reading capabilities. This process is referred to as the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model (Pearson and Gallagher 1983). Teachers begin by giving direct instruction for a certain reading strategy. They model the strategy and then provide multiple opportunities for students to practice using that strategy. The students are offered guidance and then transition to the independent practice of the strategy while reading in a new situation. "Engaged reading is strategic and conceptual as well as motivated and intentional" (Guthrie and Wigfield 2000).

Research to Practice
Gradual Release of Responsibility as a Model of Instruction

This product was designed to provide students with appropriate support to ensure the successful transfer of nonfiction reading skills from guided practice to independent application. Each lesson in TIME For Kids *Nonfiction Readers* follows this well-known model with the overall goal of producing students who are independent, self-motivated readers access to a wide range of texts.

The Active Reading Process

Many students think of reading as a passive activity, especially if they struggle with gaining meaning from reading text. However, research points to reading as an active process. Good readers are very active when they read (Pressley 2001). They often instinctively engage in active thinking strategies throughout reading in order to gain comprehension. The explicit instruction of comprehension strategies, the guidance in support of metacognition, and the gradual release of responsibility are all served through the before, during, and after reading activities in this program. "Content-area teachers can easily optimize the use of reading materials with students by utilizing the three-part framework of the reading process to facilitate learning. Effective teachers break reading assignments into three comprehension-building steps: before reading, during reading, and after reading" (Pressley 2002).

Research to Practice
The Active Reading Process

This product was designed to engage students before, during, and after reading the text. Each lesson provides students with an opportunity to engage with the text in multiple ways, allowing students to exhibit comprehension verbally and through writing about their reading.

Benefits of Leveled Reading

"Students often hold negative attitudes about reading because of dull textbooks or being forced to read" (Bean 2000). Teaching reading can be a complex task because of these negative attitudes, as well as students' varying reading abilities and levels of English proficiency. According to Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell, in their book *Teaching for Comprehending and Fluency: Thinking, Talking and Writing About Reading, K–8 (2006)*, "The 'level' of a text … has everything to do with successful processing and the growth of readers' system for strategic actions. A text that is too difficult does not give the reader the opportunity to learn how to read better." Providing students with texts at their appropriate reading level is vital to their achievement.

TIME Nonfiction Readers

Research to Practice
Benefits of Leveled Reading

TIME For Kids *Nonfiction Readers* kits contain sets of leveled books for teachers to use in reading instruction. The program is offered for a variety of reading levels including: Emergent, Upper Emergent, Early Fluent, Early Fluent Plus, Fluent, and Fluent Plus. The sets of books included are correlated to traditional leveling systems and designed to appeal to a wide range of student interests and reading levels.

Intermediate Students and Nonfiction Text Challenges

Students in intermediate grades and beyond find themselves immersed in content area texts that present many reading challenges. Students need to be able to tackle any challenging vocabulary, text structures, and challenging nonfiction content. Time For Kids *Nonfiction Readers* give students the opportunity to learn critical reading strategies and skills that they can put to use in any nonfiction text. The amount of nonfiction students are expected to read and comprehend well in grades 4 and up increases dramatically from the primary grades. The concepts and text complexity become more difficult as well. Students who read at 4.0–5.9 reading levels demonstrate specific needs that are addressed in the Time For Kids *Nonfiction Readers* series. Students from a range of ages and grade levels will find the books engaging and appropriate—from younger advanced readers to intermediate students (grades 4–6), as well as struggling adolescent readers in grades 6–12.

The TIME For Kids *Nonfiction Readers* program offers students at this level the following nonfiction text support:

- engaging nonfiction that becomes increasingly more challenging through the levels
- strategies for studying text organization and employing graphic organizers for better comprehension
- strategies for using nonfiction text features across text connections
- strategies for unlocking and understanding vocabulary and concepts in nonfiction texts.

Differentiating by Specific Needs

Today's classrooms are filled with students of varying backgrounds, reading abilities, levels of English proficiency, and learning styles. Furthermore, teaching reading is not about merely passing on a set of skills that can be memorized or replicated by students. "Learning to read is a complex process. Most children learn to read and continue to grow in their mastery of this process. However, there continues to be a group of children for whom learning to read is a struggle" (Quatroche 1999). In the present educational climate of high stakes and accountability, teachers are expected to effectively create instructional activities that address varied student needs. TIME For Kids *Nonfiction Readers* takes these issues into account and includes a concentrated focus on differentiated instruction. Each lesson plan includes a variety of instructional strategies to reach students who are not yet achieving their potential, those who are learning English, and those who have successfully moved beyond mastery of the standards, as well as those who are performing on level.

Below-Grade-Level Students

"Developing readers cannot be expected to simply 'pick up' substantial vocabulary knowledge exclusively through reading exposure without guidance. Specifically, teachers must design tasks that will increase the effectiveness of vocabulary learning through reading practice" (Feldman and Kinsella 2005). Without making adjustments in instruction, struggling readers quickly disengage and do not actively participate in the reading process. Struggling readers need teachers who can make in-process instruction adjustments while continually analyzing student learning (Klenk and Kibby 2000).

Above-Grade-Level Students

"The ultimate goal of teaching is the development of a self-regulated learner—a student with the capacity to guide and monitor his own learning on different tasks for different purposes" (Dorn and Soffos 2005). Students performing above grade level have the metacognitive ability to apply new concepts and vocabulary to independent work quickly and effectively; however, they sometimes face the risk of boredom in the classroom, if not challenged. Research has shown that students need to be pushed just beyond their independent levels for real learning to take place (Csikszentmihalyi 1990).

English Language Learners

Classrooms that support the literacy development of English language learners include students engaged in meaningful activities, as well as cognitively demanding content, while the teacher scaffolds content to ensure that students will learn successfully (Diaz-Rico and Weed 2002). Instructional activities should be developmentally appropriate, promote active learning, and create a language-rich environment.

It is important to preteach the words critical to understanding a text so that students are provided with a variety of ways to learn, remember, and use the words (Echevarria et al. 2004). To best achieve this goal, English language learners need context-embedded activities that acquaint them with the necessary and most central words for comprehension of the content. "Direct instruction helps students learn difficult words, such as words that represent complex concepts that are not part of the students' everyday experiences. Direct instruction of vocabulary relevant to a given text leads to better reading comprehension" (Armbruster et al. 2003).

Below-Grade-Level Students

Throughout every lesson in TIME For Kids *Nonfiction Readers*, there is rich support for below-grade-level students, allowing teachers to best meet the needs of these students. There are a variety of opportunities (such as hands-on activities, charts, and other visual aids) for students to access the content in different ways before, during and after reading the selection. A deep study of words through the Word Work and Vocabulary sections can boost skills needed to access and comprehend text. The reading portion of the lessons provides explicit activities for developing oral language. Cooperative group work and the gradual release of responsibility model both support students in building responsibility for their own learning.

Above-Grade-Level Students

TIME For Kids *Nonfiction Readers* offers a variety of ways to challenge students who are exceeding the learning expectations. The flexible design of the lessons allows teachers to modify the instruction (focusing more or less on various sections) to best meet students' needs. The lessons also provide multiple opportunities for students to work together in pairs, thus facilitating student-led learning opportunities, and allowing students to be a model for other students. Differentiated writing activities and cross-curricular connections offer additional opportunities to challenge students and extend learning.

English Language Learners

TIME For Kids *Nonfiction Readers* offers robust support in each lesson for meeting the specific needs of English language learners. Each lesson is driven by a language objective that is specifically chosen to maximize learning through language acquisition, vocabulary awareness, and word knowledge. Text-specific high-frequency words are introduced at the beginning of each lesson in order to build word recognition and fluency. A wide range of vocabulary development activities to assist in teaching vocabulary words that are specific to the text content and are necessary for comprehending the text are included. Throughout the reading portion of the lesson, sentence frames are provided to encourage oral language responses that support students in communicating their learning. The poems included in the lessons are ideal for building fluency and vocabulary. The Audio CD includes professional recordings of the books and poems which provide a powerful model for fluency, pronunciation, pacing, and expression. Fluency is also supported in the interactiv-ebooks through the embedded audio recordings.

Quality Assessment Guides Instruction

"Monitoring and record keeping provide the critical information needed to make decisions about the student's future instruction" (National Center for Learning Disabilities 2006, 5). The ability to properly diagnose and monitor students' reading progress is imperative in reading intervention programs. Noted researcher Yetta Goodman found that listening to a recording of oral reading with a student and discussing the student's errors with him or her is a good way to confirm the teacher's inferences about a student's skills and make the student aware of strategies the student may be using (Goodman 1996). Dr. Rasinski, in conjunction with Dr. Hoffman, also found that short oral reading assessments can be used to develop fluency (Rasinski 2004). They state, "oral reading allows students and teachers to observe, examine, reflect on, and respond to a reader's actual real time reading." Short fluency probes are also effective reading assessment measures (Rasinski 2003). Baker and Brown note, "If the child is aware of what is needed to perform effectively, then it is possible for him to take steps to meet the demand of a learning situation more effectively" (1980).

Research to Practice
Quality Assessment Guides Instruction

TIME For Kids *Nonfiction Readers* offers multiple assessment opportunities for teachers to use before, during, and after reading to help with instructional decisions:

Series placement test. This placement tool can be used to place students within the program by identifying the most appropriate kit for their reading level.

Oral reading record for each book. The oral reading records offer a highly detailed picture of students' reading strengths and weaknesses. This assessment includes a column for recording reader cues, which allows teachers to identify cues that have been mastered and those the student is not using. This progress monitoring benefits the students by giving them the information to set goals for mastery and offers teachers useful information to make instructional decisions.

Multiple-choice test for each book. This allows for an immediate measure of comprehension, providing summative assessment data at the end of a lesson.

Informal assessment opportunities. These are embedded throughout the lessons to identify where teachers can observe students' reading behaviors and skills. This data can help guide future instructional decisions.

Home-School Connections

Current research places a strong emphasis on the importance of bridging a child's literate life at school with his or her literate life at home. In a literature review involving 70 studies about parent involvement, Carter (2002) not only found a positive correlation between parent involvement and overall student achievement, but also noted a specific improvement in literacy skills when parents became involved at home (2002). Although this research emphasizes the importance of parental involvement, experiences with all types of caregivers can be beneficial.

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Research to Practice
Home-School Connections

It is important to provide information and ideas to families about *how* to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning. TIME For Kids *Nonfiction Readers* includes a Parent Tips booklet that teachers can share with parents and families to foster their capacity for building literacy skills at home. To facilitate ongoing reading practice, the Teacher Resource CD includes digital versions of the books, which can be printed and replicated for students to take home.

Using Technology in the Classroom

In recent years, technology use in the classroom has become widespread at all grade levels. In fact, a recent study by the U.S. Department of Education found that 75 percent or more of America's students were in school with access to computers in classrooms or in labs (Mitchell, Bakia, and Yang 2007). Educators are challenged with preparing students for a more technologically advanced world.

Extensive research has been conducted over the years to determine how important and effective technology is for student performance and achievement. Instructional technology has been attributed to the following positive gains:

- increasing student achievement
- improving higher-order thinking skills and problem-solving abilities
- enhancing student motivation and engagement
- improving students' abilities to work collaboratively (White, Ringstaff, and Kelley 2002)

Research to Practice
Using Technology in the Classroom

TIME For Kids *Nonfiction Readers* features a variety of resources for integrating technology into literacy instruction. The Audio CD includes recordings of the books and poems to support fluency practice. The interactiv-ebooks enhance instruction and the reading experience through meaningful tools for interacting with the text, embedded audio and videos, and purposeful activities. The Assessment DVD offers assessments in multiple formats for flexibility and ease of use. And finally, the Teacher Resource CD provides digital files for integrating the technology resources in the classroom.

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