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The LeafLIT

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Nonfiction Reading and Writing

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Stop and think for a moment about all the reading you have done in the past twenty-four hours. If you were to make a list of these reading materials, it might include: the newspaper, your email, a recipe for last night's dinner, lesson plans, a romance novel, your latest cell phone bill, a bedtime story to your child, the manual for your new vacuum cleaner, etc. Now, if you were to highlight all the texts that are nonfiction, or informational, would you be surprised to find that most of the reading you do is informational? Research shows that the average American today spends 94% of their reading in informational sources. That's the 'real-life' factor. Now consider this: the reading comprehension sub-tests in today's standardized assessments average 60 – 80% informational passages. With these statistics in mind, are you adequately preparing your students for the nonfiction reading experiences they will encounter in *and* out of school? Does your instruction reflect the importance of informational text in daily life?

Linda Hoyt said, "We must increase the volume of informational reading to more closely match the demands of our world and the content of today's standardized tests." How can we do this? Here are some suggestions:

Approaching Informational Texts: Finding a Path through the Text

1. Share a collection of informational texts, such as newspapers, recipe books, a car manual, travel brochures, or a resource book with a table of contents.
2. Think aloud through each of these kinds of informational texts to make it clear that you start with a purpose—that you have a reason to read the material.
3. Set the stage for exploration. Make a reading plan that includes:
 - Our purpose for reading...
 - We already know... about this topic
 - We will begin reading this text by...
 - Then we will...
 - Next we will...
 - We learned...
4. Build an expectation that print is supposed to make sense.
5. Extend this activity by placing the materials in a center for further exploration.

FICTION · NONFICTION · FICTION

Teach Students the Differences between Reading Fiction and Nonfiction

To help your students understand the differences between fiction and non-fiction, pair books on the same topic and discuss them, pointing out specific behaviors we demonstrate when we read fiction (start at the front of the book and read straight through to the end; expect that the work will contain the elements of a story; expect the work to be untrue, etc) and specific behaviors we demonstrate when we read nonfiction (can choose to read only part of the text; have the option of starting at the front of the book, the back, or somewhere in between; expect information that is true and accurate). Begin with simple books that are clearly defined as either fiction or nonfiction, and then move to books that blur the line.

--Kristo & Bamford

Explicitly teach Nonfiction Text Features

When students know *how* to use nonfiction features they are able to take additional meaning from them, rather than viewing them as a disruption to the flow of the text. In addition, knowing how to use nonfiction features will help students *integrate* this information with that provided by the text.

Nonfiction Text Features Include:	
Headings Table of contents Types of print Diagrams Glossary Index Titles Maps Close-ups	Photographs Captions Labels Charts Tables Comparisons Cutaways Bullets Graphs



--Kristo & Bamford

Teach Nonfiction Text Structures

Identifying the text structure will promote students' understanding and retention. Is the author comparing life on the frontier with life in the cities? Is the text describing the physical characteristics of carnivorous dinosaurs?

Nonfiction Text Structures
Compare and Contrast Sequence Problem/Solution Description Cause and Effect

--Kristo & Bamford

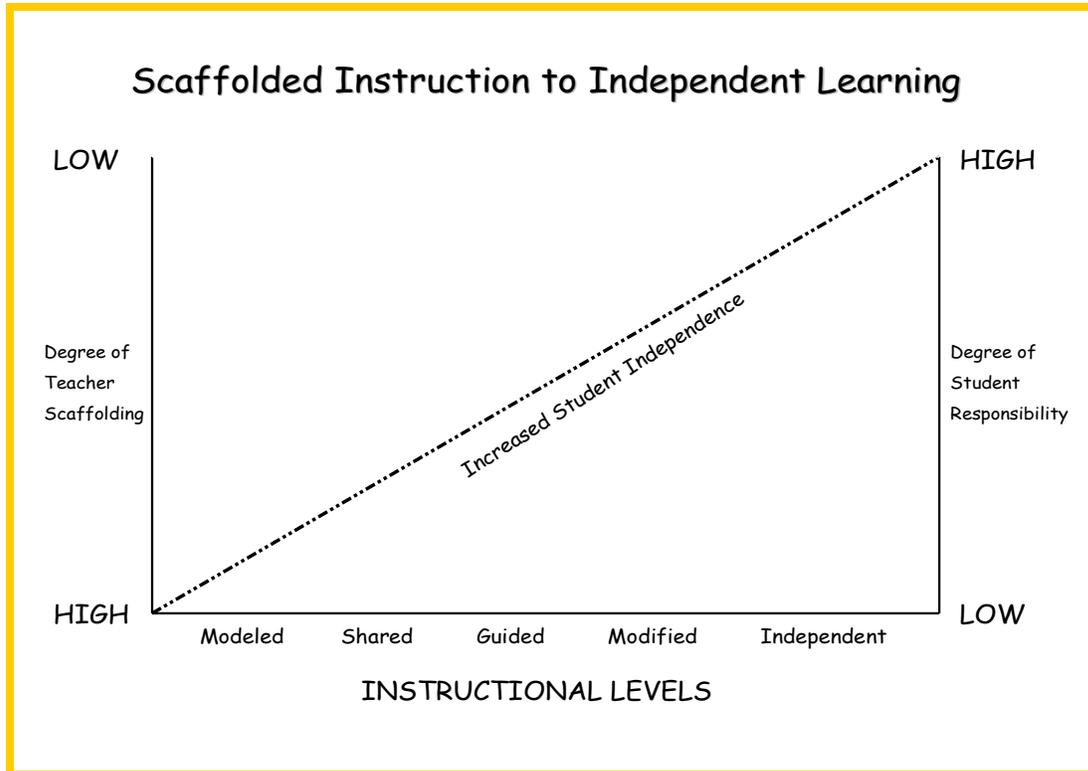
Use a Balanced Literacy Framework to Approach and Teach Nonfiction in the Classroom

The Gradual Release of Responsibility Model scaffolds instruction and learning from a high degree of teacher support and low degree of student responsibility to a low degree of teacher support and high degree of student responsibility. The Balanced Literacy Framework includes modeled instruction, shared instruction, guided instruction, and independent practice. This is just good teaching practices based on the "I'll show you, let's do it together, now you try on your own" philosophy.

FICTION

NONFICTION

FICTION



--Kristo & Bamford

Nonfiction Inquiry: Using Real Reading and Writing to Explore the World

1. Share your own passion and wonder about the real world.
2. Surround kids with compelling nonfiction of every type and form.
3. Match the reading to the writing.
4. Emphasize short text for nonfiction reading and writing instruction and practice.
5. Engage in the inquiry process yourself.
6. Build in long blocks of time for nonfiction.

--Stephanie Harvey

The benefits of teaching nonfiction are far-reaching. When you explicitly teach nonfiction reading and writing strategies, you are able to meet the needs of students with a range of reading levels and interests, develop and expand vocabulary, teach literacy in the content areas, and open the door to classroom (and beyond) research and inquiry.