

# Reading in the Content Areas

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## Quote Slip

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Abstract

This action research project examined the possible contributing factors leading to the stagnant or declining test scores within a suburban 6-8 middle school by surveying and interviewing administrators and teachers both within the school and the district. The surveys and interviews sought information regarding how reading comprehension is defined, what strategies are used to teach non-fiction reading comprehension in the middle school, how curriculum guides and district resources address non-fiction reading comprehension instruction, and what forms of professional development opportunities are available to teachers within the district. Analysis of data uncovered inconsistencies between the views of the faculty and administration in regards to the definition of non-fiction reading comprehension and the expectations of both teachers and administrators in implementing reading comprehension strategies within the content areas. Contrary to original beliefs, both teachers and administrators are aware of the district's deficiency in providing continuous professional development in the area of non-fiction reading comprehension for all content areas. In order to address concerns regarding slightly declining or stagnant test scores, a unified vision should be created supported by revised curriculum guides, content area resource guides, and in-district professional development.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The school district is a residential, suburban community in Monmouth County, New Jersey. Over one hundred and fifty years old, it was established primarily as a farming community. Less than fifteen years ago, this township serviced three thousand, eight hundred students from kindergarten through eighth grade. Today, the district contains an early learning center for pre-school handicapped and kindergarten students, five elementary schools (grades 1-5), and two middle schools (grades 6-8). Currently, it serves over 6,200 students throughout all the buildings. At the end of the eighth grade, the district feeds its eighth grade graduates into a regional high school district that not only services this particular town but also the surrounding towns.

This township has changed over the last two decades. Fifteen years ago, the district's ethnic make-up was predominantly white. In recent years, the community population has changed and grown. The last Census Bureau categorized the district ethnic make-up as: 84% white, 13% Asian, 2% African American, less than 1% American Indian, and less than 1% Pacific Islander. According to the Census Bureau, the median family income is a little over one hundred thousand dollars. Less than 15% of the population earns fifty thousand dollars or less per year. An astonishing 55% of the population earns one hundred thousand dollars or more. A smaller 13.5% of the population earns two hundred thousand dollars or more per year. Every district in the state is categorized into groups from A to J by the State Department of Education; A represents the least affluent districts, while J the most affluent districts. The district factor grouping is compiled from the local township taxes and state taxes combined. Although districts have been known to change from year to year based on the make-up of the community, our District Factor Grouping is an "I" District, comparable to school districts like Holmdel and

Middletown North. The more affluent on the District Factor Grouping scale, the less state aid the district receives. In the case of this town's public schools, sixty million of the seventy-five million dollar total operating budget is paid for by the local tax levy and revenue.

This particular middle school is the larger of the two middle schools in the district. Built in 1976, the original building included three separate wings designed to be independent of one another. Originally built for only seventh and eighth grade students, the building underwent an addition in 1998 to accommodate the growing community. In 2003 a second middle school was opened to relieve the overcrowding in the building. Since 2003, the building houses a little over twelve hundred students from grades six through eight. The middle school also boasts the largest professional staff in the district with over one hundred teachers and other professionals. The building contains two vice-principals, two nurses, three guidance counselors, an in-house child psychologist, and a three-person child study team. In essence, all of the students' needs are serviced within the building.

This middle school boasts a challenging curriculum for all students. Students receive instruction in core curricula made up of language arts, social studies, science, mathematics, Spanish or French, and physical education/health for all students' levels and abilities. In addition to the core subjects, students also choose from music, art, home arts, technology, and computer applications. The school also offers a myriad of after school activities such as Bridge Builders, Computers, Chess, Conflict Managers, Drama, Math, Music, Newspaper, Rebel2, Set Design, Student Council, Peer-to-Peer, and Yearbook clubs, as well as interscholastic sports. Many of the classes are also leveled to meet the educational needs of the students. Entrance into these classes is based on several criteria, one of which is standardized test scores. Students are offered a wide-range of activities to serve their needs and interests.

Each year students are tested by the state and district separately to ensure adequate progress. The state of New Jersey mandates all students take the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) to determine federal and state funding. This test is administered to all students in the state at the same time as per state guidelines. The state test is created, controlled and scored by the state. The benchmarks for proficiency are also pre-determined by the state. If the middle school does not meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), a chain reaction of events could lead to the eventual closing of the school.

This township's public schools also use a district-wide standardized assessment known as the Comprehensive Testing Program 4<sup>th</sup> Edition (CTP 4) to determine student placement and compare our students to other similar suburban districts. This local, district-wide test is used to place students in leveled curricular classes like the Gifted & Talented Program and the Honors Program available for language arts, science, math, and social studies.

We consider ourselves a micro-community within a community. The parents, community, faculty and students work well together and invest much time into helping our students succeed on these tests. The standardized tests chosen by the district help our schools judge academic success against similar schools. Although we met the benchmark for AYP as set by the State Department of Education for this year, when our school was compared to other districts and benchmarks on the CTP 4, as we have always done in the past, we were surprised to find a large gap in reading comprehension scores as compared to writing scores.

In conversation with other teachers, many asserted the same educational gap in their classrooms that was found in the standardized test scores. Teachers noted students' difficulties in reading for understanding particularly in non-fiction texts, as well as reading graphs, charts, and lab reports. All of these notations were found across the three grade levels in different

content areas. This has led us to inquire as to why our scores are not comparable to others. Reading comprehension is necessary to perform well in other content area classes like math, science, and social studies. Who is responsible for increasing these scores? Should not all content area teachers be responsible for teaching reading? Is reading not a required skill to perform well in all content areas?

### Problem Statement and Research Questions

It appears that many students in this suburban 6-8 middle school have difficulty reading and comprehending non-fiction texts. This is indicated by stagnant, or at some grade levels, slightly declining, reading comprehension scores on the district CTP 4 and NJASK. In addition, content area teachers have expressed concerns about students struggling with non-fiction materials including textbooks, magazines, lab reports, charts, and graphs. The purpose of this study is to examine the contributing factors leading to the stagnant or slightly declining test scores and to make appropriate recommendations to address this issue.

To address the problem statement, the following research questions will be explored:

- 1) How is reading comprehension is defined?
- 2) What strategies are used to teach reading comprehension in the middle school?
- 3) How do the reading comprehension strategies address fiction and non-fiction differently?
- 4) What forms of professional development opportunities are available to enhance the test scores in the district?



## Chapter Two: External Data Collection

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) has raised standards of teaching in the classroom, placing much pressure on all teachers to increase reading and mathematics scores on state standardized tests. Teachers of subject areas, such as science and social studies, have not been able to hide from the state mandates, but have, in fact, been placed on the front line with reading and math teachers. Reading comprehension strategies and mathematics can no longer be taught in isolation, but must be integrated into the lesson of every subject during the school day. When students are trained to use reading comprehension strategies in all subject areas they are able to better understand texts in that content and be more successful on standardized tests (Kinniburgh & Shaw, 2008). Kinniburgh and Shaw (2008) point out that, “According to the most recent 2005 report from the National Assessment of Education Progress, there has been no overall improvement in the area of science and no increase in reading at the proficient level at the end of Grade 8” (NCSE, 2005). Elementary teachers can work toward improving these statistics by incorporating reading comprehension strategies into science instruction. It is on the shoulders of the American public schools to raise their standards, allowing students the opportunity to have more success on standardized tests.

This middle school assesses their student population twice during the school year using two different standardized tests. The first is the Comprehensive Testing Program 4<sup>th</sup> Edition (CTP 4) which is administered to sixth and seventh grade students in March. The second is the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) which is administered at the end of April for seventh and eighth grade students and toward the end of May for sixth grade students. Both tests provide the school with information about the progress of our students. However, the CTP 4 also provides the national, suburban, and independent norms. The suburban norms are the

data that place us in district factor groups (DFG) that compare our scores to that of similar districts. The NJASK, however, simply provides a scaled score that shows if our students are proficient according to the state standards, but it does not compare our results to that of other schools.

District administered assessments, such as the IOWA Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), were once used in the absence of state mandated tests prior to NCLB for grades three, five, six, and seven; these grades were not formerly tested by the state. However, local standards have been raised as a result of NCLB and, consequently, district assessments have been forced to measure up. The CTP 4 test was chosen by this school district in 2004 to serve as a benchmark for student progress in grades three through seven, and as an indicator for student placement into leveled classes. Previously, this town's schools used the ITBS to assess student achievement. The school district opted to change the district standardized test to the CTP 4 test because, unlike the ITBS, it was able to compare our students' scores with other schools in our DFG. The CTP 4 is also able to give the schools more information about how their students are actually achieving in literacy and mathematics compared students in similar DFGs. With this information they can more accurately place students into higher level classes where appropriate, and determine where interventions are needed when students fail to meet benchmarks.

As described in the Educational Records Bureau (ERB) catalog, the CTP 4 test focuses on the assessment of reading, writing, and mathematics knowledge. Specifically, in the middle school, sixth and seventh grade students are tested in the areas of verbal reasoning, vocabulary, reading comprehension, writing mechanics, writing concepts and skills, quantitative reasoning, and mathematics. The test consists of multiple choice questions as well as the option for open-ended, also known as constructed response, questions in the topics of reading comprehension and

mathematics. The school district chose not to include written response questions in the CTP 4 tests that they administer; all questions that students complete are multiple choice. Although not all areas specifically test reading comprehension, sufficient reading comprehension skills are necessary to accurately follow directions and complete the various sections of the test.

The mission of NCLB is to ensure all students meet individual state standards by the 2013-2014 school year. However, the full range of achievement standards that must be met by the 2013-2014 school year does not exclude students with disabilities or English language learners. Palmer (2008) describes how states are required to show data to the state that is divided into subgroups of regular assessment with or without accommodations and alternative assessment. States must then adequately prepare reports at the student, school, district and state levels that show scores in order to determine school's and district's AYP. Additionally, under NCLB, parents are now afforded the right to transfer their child to another school if their school is not making AYP. This law also guarantees parents a yearly update on their child's progress by means of state required standardized testing, which was previously only offered in grades four and eight.

With the enactment of NCLB, states began to re-evaluate how they assess their students and initiate new local and federally mandated standardized tests. Since then, the testing process has been continuously evolving in order to meet the high standards of NCLB. Previously, the state of New Jersey mandated schools test their students in fourth grade with the Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA), eighth grade with the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA), and in eleventh grade with the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA). Now that NCLB has become a law, federal legislation requires schools to administer state standardized tests based on the Core Curriculum Content Standards to grades three through

eight and once in high school. The new tests are no longer known as ESPA and GEPA, but are now referred to as NJASK across all grade levels, with the exception of high school that remains HSPA.

Similar to the CTP 4, the NJASK test assesses reading, writing, and mathematics. The purpose of NJASK is to make a connection between the New Jersey State Core Curriculum Content Standards (NJCCCS) and the state given assessment, ensuring that students are properly learning the standards as set by the state. The language arts literacy component of the NJASK for grades six through eight requires students to demonstrate their abilities when working with text, analyzing/critiquing text, and generating text by means of multiple-choice questions, open-ended response questions, and multi-paragraph compositional responses. When students are asked to work with text, they are specifically required to demonstrate competency in the following areas: extrapolation of information/following directions, paraphrasing/vocabulary, recognition of a purpose for reading, recognition of central idea or theme, recognition of supporting details, and recognition of text organization. Analyzing text specifically asks students to demonstrate competency in making judgments, drawing conclusions, forming opinions, literary elements and textual conventions, prediction of tentative meanings, questioning, clarifying, and predicting. Finally, generating text asks students to write multi-paragraph responses to writing prompts. Students are given a speculative or text-based writing prompt to guide their composition and give scorers a clear demonstration of their writing skills according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Writing Frameworks. Such prompts include picture prompts and persuasive writing prompts. The prompts require students to make decisions, solve a problem, or write a story, activating prior knowledge to construct their written response. Compositions are then scored using the New Jersey Registered Holistic Scoring

Rubric that is provided to the students in the form of a checklist during the writing portion of the test. The multi-paragraph compositions are scored on a point scale of one to five in fifth grade, and one to six in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade, spotlighting the following points: content and organization, sentence construction, usage, and mechanics.

These high-stakes tests enforced by the laws of NCLB raise the standards of American public schools, but question the practices of experienced educators. The instructional practices that are supported by modern educational theorists and researchers are completely undermined by standardized tests and high-stakes assessments. In a position statement on high-stakes assessments in literacy, the International Reading Association (IRA) states that it is deeply concerned with the use of single test score evaluations that are used to make important educational decisions (1999). In its opinion, the central concern is that testing has become a means of controlling instruction as opposed to a way of gathering information to help students become better readers and learners. Standardized tests, no doubt, have important uses; however, when these tests are the sole factors of decision-making in a student's educational career and a school district's funding, they become dangerous high-stakes assessments. The IRA contends that testing is a vital part of good educational design in that it provides quick data on a student's performance. However, this data is not always reliable since tests are imperfect. Basing important decisions on limited and imperfect information can lead to judgments that can do harm to students and teachers; so, the IRA suggests seeking information from multiple sources to make decisions well-rounded and grounded. Since it appears that standardized testing is here to stay, our responsibility as educators must be to use the information gathered from the tests, the NJCCCS, and educational theories about reading comprehension and instruction to afford our students the maximum opportunity for success.

As educators, we realize that much research has been conducted in the area of reading instruction and the best practices reading teachers use in the literacy classrooms. However, before we assess the reading instruction that may be influencing the low reading comprehension scores on the aforementioned standardized tests, we feel it necessary to first survey theory about reading comprehension, including a working definition and foundational theories that may give us, as action researchers and educators, a better understanding of the issues we wish to assess and make recommendations.

Two main theories related to the reading process contribute to our understanding of reading for comprehension and learning: reader response theory and schema. *Making Meaning with Texts* (2005), a selection of essays written by Louise Rosenblatt, explores the transactional theory of reading, also known as reader response theory, which was first introduced in her landmark text *Literature of Exploration* (1995). Rosenblatt still maintains that both the reader and text are essential in meaning-making during a literature experience. Meaning itself does not reside in a text, but instead it exists in the relationship of the reader to the text. Perhaps the most well-known components of the transactional theory are the two stances that a reader may assume during a literary experience. The efferent stance refers to literature as a body of knowledge from which a reader wishes to gain information, whereas the aesthetic stance views literature as the catalyst for potential literary experiences. The aesthetic stance is concerned with the feelings and attitudes that surround a particular reading moment; it is not concerned with the gain of knowledge for later use. Rosenblatt furthers this discussion by asserting that it is possible for readers to maintain an efferent/aesthetic continuum where different reading transactions are called upon during a single literary experience. In “The Transactional Theory of Reading and Writing,” Rosenblatt further elaborates on the aesthetic/efferent continuum. She equates the use

of the continuum to the metaphorical nature of *stream of consciousness* in which a reader selects which stance they will use predominantly while reading but then fluctuates within a transaction with a text. Rosenblatt argued that both thought and feeling during reading are legitimate components of a literary experience and interpretation (2004). The key is to create an active learning environment which affords students the opportunity to react critically and personally to whatever they read, regardless of the reading purpose.

Schema is the technical term used by cognitive theorists to describe how readers organize and store information in their heads. Schema reflects the personal experiences, conceptual understandings, attitudes, values, skills, and strategies a reader brings to a text (Vacca & Vacca, 2002). Schema activation is the mechanism by which readers access what they already know and match it to the information in the text. In effect, this process layers meaning on top of meaning that has already been established by personal experiences. Schema is often referred to as the building blocks of cognition since it represents the elaborate networks of information people use to make sense of new events, stimuli, and situations (2002). When a match occurs between a reader's prior knowledge and text material, schema can function in three ways (2002):

1. Schema can provide a framework for learning that allows a reader to seek and select information that is relevant to the reading purpose.
2. Schema can help a reader organize text information by integrating new information into old facilities which encourages the ability to retain and remember what one reads.
3. Schema helps readers to elaborate information which involves deeper levels of cognition where one evaluates and synthesizes information, asking "So what?".

These two theories set the stage for reading to be defined as an active process during which readers must work with text in an effort to explore and construct meaning. Reading is “a conversation, a give and take exchange between the reader and the text” (2002).

Keeping that in mind, reading comprehension must be an even more complex process which obviously involves more than just decoding words written or typed on a page.

Researchers and theorists in the early 1970’s began to view reading comprehension as a constructive process where the reader interacts with the text to form meaning (Tierney, 1990). Over the last 30 years, considerable research on what active, skilled readers do before, during and after they read has been done. For example, we know that good readers set a purpose before reading, use context clues to determine unfamiliar word meaning, ask questions of themselves throughout the process to check for understanding, and make connections to make the text personally meaningful. Readers bring with them certain abilities, prior knowledge, and personal experiences all of which affect their comprehension. In effect, good reading comprehension requires readers to think actively and interact with text in order to construct meaning (Durkin, 1993).

Comprehending text entails automatic implementation of a plethora of skills including decoding words, understanding vocabulary, relating words and concepts to one’s prior knowledge, making inferences, and making connections between and among texts, between the text and the reader, and between the text and the world. Good readers can find implicit information in texts, and they can also infer, summarize, synthesize, compare, and analyze. In short, skilled readers must employ many higher level cognitive strategies as they read.

Duke and Pearson (2002) assert that good readers follow patterns:

- Good readers are *active* readers.



- They have *clear goals* in mind for their reading and constantly *evaluate* if the text and their reading of that text is meeting their goals.
- Good readers *preview* the text before reading it, noting *text structure* and sections that might be of special use or interest to them.
- They frequently *make predictions* as they read and check their predictions as they read.
- Active readers are *selective* while they read. They choose what to read quickly or carefully, when to slow down, and when to reread.
- They *construct, revise, and question* the meanings they make as they read.
- They try to determine the meanings of *unfamiliar words and concepts* in the text by using context clues and other word-work strategies.
- Good readers draw on, compare, and integrate their *prior knowledge* with ideas in the text.
- They *monitor their own understanding* of their reading and adjust when necessary.
- They *evaluate* the quality of the text, both the writing style and the information provided.
- Good readers *read different texts differently*, depending on their purpose. For narrative texts, they pay close attention to characters, setting, and plot. For expository texts, good readers *summarize* the text, and revise those summaries as they gain new information or come to better understandings.
- Good readers process the text during reading, during short breaks from reading, and after reading has ended.

- Comprehending text ends up being *satisfying* and *productive* for good readers, although it is time-consuming and challenging.

Several definitions of reading comprehension can be found during various stages of research. However, the RAND group developed a working definition of reading comprehension that satisfies the research that proves that reading is more than just a simple cognitive process of decoding and remembering. The RAND Reading Study Group defined reading comprehension as “both extracting and constructing meaning from print” (Sweet and Snow, 2003). Further, RAND states that comprehension involves three elements: the reader, a text, and activity, all of which must be situated within the larger socio-cultural context for meaning-making. In short, readers bring with them certain abilities, knowledge, and experiences which inevitably affects their comprehension. The text itself may contain features that could help or hinder a reader’s ability to comprehend. And, finally, the activity refers to a reader’s purpose for reading and the processes that take place before, during, and after reading and the ensuing consequences as a result. To derive meaning from a text, readers must be able to use the cognitive strategies attributed to good readers so as to construct meaning beyond basic word recognition (Almasi, McKeown, & Beck, 1996).

After having a foundational understanding of what reading comprehension is, the topic of reading comprehension instruction seems the next logical step. While some students may have an innate sense of how to read and construct lasting meaning, most readers, especially those at the developmental stages and middle school levels, do not. Dating back to 1976, Tovey believed that reading comprehension strategies could not be taught, hence the basic Directed Reading Activity lessons that were prominent in schools through the 1980’s (Duffy, 2002). The lessons usually focused on literal questions that did not actually provide any instruction in

comprehending the deeper meaning and nuances of the text. Instead the focus was on understanding the text at the word and sentence structure level (Gambrell, Block, and Pressley, 2002). Durkin, in her landmark studies of reading comprehension that began in the late 1970's, defined reading comprehension instruction as "anything a teacher says or does to help children understand or work out the meaning of more than a single, isolated word." She found that although teachers readily assessed comprehension through recall questions after reading, they were not instructing their students on how to read for meaning and what to do if they had trouble while reading (1979).

In the National Reading Panel's (NRP) publication in 2000, reading comprehension instruction is said to now be guided by a cognitive conceptualization of reading. In the years that followed Durkin's research, other researchers began to focus on what good readers did while reading and then they designed instruction to teach less skilled readers those strategies (Gambrell et al, 2002). This was followed by four facets of reading comprehension research in the 1980's: 1) the need for and benefit of explicit teaching of reading comprehension strategies, 2) using prior knowledge to aid in comprehension, 3) how to engage students in metacognitive strategies, and 4) changing classroom instruction and teacher-student discourse to improve reading comprehension (Duffy, 2002).

The explicit teaching of reading strategies includes a teacher explaining and modeling a strategy, so that after guided practice, a student will be able to use the strategy independently while reading. In this mode of thinking, there is never a mastery of reading. Instead, teachers encourage the constant practice of strategies so that students can be successful in reading progressively difficult texts throughout their education and lives.

Further, research in schema theory examined how a reader's prior knowledge-base influences comprehension. Anderson and Pearson (1984) found that a reader's schema can strongly influence meaning-making with a text. However, when a reader has the necessary prior knowledge, comprehension may not occur unless that reader activates his or her schema. Hence, teachers must instruct readers on how to activate their prior knowledge before reading (Wong, 1985).

Next, metacognitive theory asserts that good readers are aware of their cognitive processes during reading. Since metacognition is thinking about one's thinking, good readers are aware of when things do not make sense and they are able to choose the strategy they need in order to make sensible meaning. When there is a break down in the reading process, a skilled reader knows what "fix-up strategy" to use and when to employ it (Duffy, 2002). These first three foci of research combine to create a balanced literacy program in which well-rounded readers are created (NRP, 2000). While early researchers concentrated on summarization, visualization, questioning, and predicting, more modern research and instructional theory adds making connections and using "fix-up strategies" to the repertoire as evidenced by the NRP's 2002 recommendations.

The final strand, classroom discourse, is guided by socio-cultural education theory that emphasizes social interaction's importance in knowledge construction. Vygotsky's theory (1978) states that cognitive development ultimately depends on social interaction with those that have more knowledge, which leads to learners being able to observe the cognitive processes of others as they construct meaning so that they too may employ the same processes in their own meaning-making. This relates back to Rosenblatt's transactional theory where each reader's interpretation of a text is unique and couched in his or her own experiences, while also being

enhanced through discussion with others. This strand encourages good classroom conversations which promote reflection and critical thinking so students are active participants in their own learning and teachers are facilitators of discussion. Questions posed by teachers and other students should be open-ended and focus on not just details implicit to the text. The discourse and questioning should lead students to utilize higher-level thinking so that they must work with each other to find meaning within texts.

Included within the general term of reading comprehension is the idea of content-area literacy, also referred to as adolescent literacy (Stevens, 2002) and academic literacy (Alvermann, 2002), which asserts that readers require specific skills and strategies for the different types of reading of different types of text. Content area reading not only asks students to understand what they read, but to also recall, apply, and synthesize that information within and across the curriculum. McKenna and Robinson define content-area literacy as “the ability to use reading and writing for the acquisition of new content in a given discipline” (1990). Researchers believe that reading comprehension skills can be applied across the curriculum spectrum, although some strategies are more easily adaptable and applied to content-area reading because of the nature and purpose of the reading. In short, content-area literacy is not teaching students *how* to read or write. Instead, it is showing that reading and writing are “tools that they use to think and learn with text in a given subject area...students need to know how to think with text in order to respond, discover, organize, retrieve, and elaborate on information and ideas they encounter in content learning situations” (Vacca & Vacca, 2002).

Many obstacles have been noted in the area of integrating reading instruction into content-area classrooms. The most documented obstacles seem to be lack of professional development for content area teachers in reading instruction, teachers’ reluctance to embrace

content area literacy, possibly because of the lack of professional development, and the compartmentalization of the subject areas in middle and high school classrooms. For a long time, teaching reading was regarded as a reading teacher's job. Even further, most secondary instructors believed students should have already been taught how to read during their elementary school years and assumed that primary reading instruction was enough to get them through the more complex texts they encounter in the secondary grades. Now, however, in light of high stakes testing, reading has become the focus of most classroom instruction, although the professional development to show content-area teachers how to effectively integrate reading instruction or the reinforcement of the instruction done in literacy classrooms is sorely lacking.

Even though universities and other educational facilities have programs in place to instruct teachers with theory and best practices in hopes of preparing them for their professions, teachers are never truly prepared for what they will encounter within the classroom. In the case of reading instruction in the classroom, not all teachers are taught the theory and best practices needed. When we consider the strategies necessary to teach reading comprehension, there are so many. To add, not every teaching program implements literacy strategies into their certification program.

Reading comprehension instruction is a complex process that requires extensive training and a deep understanding of the processes involved in reading comprehension (Duffy, 1993). Professional development is essential for teachers in the field to sharpen and apply their skills upon entering the profession. Of course, teachers who have been in the field practicing for several years still need the training to develop the skills necessary to teach reading comprehension. Many schools use basal readers that contain lessons to teach reading comprehension. However, few schools offer the understanding and explanation necessary to

implement reading comprehension instruction (Reutzel & Cooter, 1988). In essence, following the instruction manual does not always guarantee a complete, well-working finished product.

Schools cannot hold teachers accountable to teach reading because of their lack of preparation. The majority of middle school students are taught by teachers who are certified in elementary education or secondary education. There are few programs for middle-grade teachers to gain a specialized license or training specifically for the middle grade levels (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Many of the programs in universities and colleges are ill-prepared to supply teachers with the adequate training needed to teach reading in the middle school grades.

Professional development for reading comprehension instruction offered in schools is also ineffective because it does not use the correct approaches. Speck & Knipe refer to it as a “‘neglected or shallow component’ that explains the chronic failure of school reform” (2005). The traditional model is the service delivery model, also known as the training model. This one-time workshop model involves teachers attending a workshop led by an expert who delivers information that teachers are expected to put into practice. The difficulty with this model is that it expects teachers to change based on the transfer of knowledge. Teachers come into workshops with their own pre-conceived ideas and plans. Although some knowledge is transferred, teachers are passing their notions to their students rather than essential strategies. Workshops do not provide teachers with the necessary self-reflection opportunities (Dole, 2003). Instead, Dole (2003) provides the following guidelines for meaningful and effective professional development in reading comprehension strategies:

1. Design long-term efforts to provide teachers with several years of support and assistance.

2. Ensure that teachers are actively involved in professional development through study groups, observations, and individual choice about planned activities.
3. Provide teachers with a theoretical background of reading comprehension to build their own knowledge, to increase their motivation to learn, and to break down the divide between theory and practice.
4. Place concerted efforts of what students need to know to become successful comprehenders.
5. Create opportunities for teachers to see reading comprehension strategies in action, as well as provide teachers with feedback on their own instruction.

A lack of meaningful professional development has a detrimental effect on the morale of teachers, thus negatively impacting students. Teachers who have a negative professional development experience feel unqualified and ineffective in teaching explicit reading instruction. If teachers are uncertain of the strategies, they may be encouraging the wrong strategies and/or incorrect information.

There are several goals for professional development in education. The first is the larger driving force in public school education. The institutional goal is to increase standardized test scores and encourage effective instruction. There are also more personal goals such as professional collaboration, reflective practice, and continuous inquiry (Vacca & Vacca, 2002). In our time of increased accountability, teachers understand the need for effective professional development that can be used to impart knowledge and skills to students. Best practices in professional development should produce not only new knowledge for teachers, but they should also integrate the appropriate methods of implementation of that knowledge (Joyce & Showers, 1995).



Based on our data collection, our action research will focus on assessing the theories and pedagogical strategies of reading comprehension instruction at this suburban 6-8 middle school and how these theories and practices compare to what is actually taking place in the classroom and on standardized tests.

## Chapter Three: Internal Data Collection

To start collecting our internal data, we first created a triangulation matrix in order to ensure that all of our research questions would be addressed by multiple data sources (see Appendix 1). After creating the matrix, we realized that we needed to first visit with our building administrator to discuss the process involved in surveying faculty, students, and administrators, as well as the types of data-collecting instruments we would be approved to use. We already had ideas about what we wanted, but we knew we would need to get approval from multiple sources in our district first. We also hoped that the school's district and state standardized test scores could be released to us for analysis. Since we have been very open about our research topic and since it has also become a district-wide focus, we were sure that our principal-mentor would be supportive of our efforts. Additionally, we believed that this topic and our research would provide the district with important information pertaining to a topic that is already of relevance.

We met with our building administrator one afternoon to inquire about previous research projects in the district and what types of data-collecting instruments the district would be open to allowing. She was very helpful and straightforward in her responses. She informed us that in the past, data-collecting instruments meant for students and parents were never approved by the district's Board of Education; the only time these are approved is if they are district created to serve the district. Past teacher-researchers needed to present their research and data-collecting instruments before the Board if they were meant to go to students or parents. We were strongly encouraged to only survey and interview teachers and administrators. We also wondered if it would be useful to include elementary teachers in our data collection. Again, she strongly discouraged us from doing this since it may give off the impression that we are collecting data to

place blame on lower grades. We found out that our surveys would need to be approved by the superintendent of schools before they were given out and that we would need prior approval from the district's curriculum director to obtain the standardized test results.

Now that we had an understanding of who we would be permitted to survey and interview, we started developing our instruments. After assessing our original research questions and the amount of teachers we would actually be able to reach, about sixty, we decided to create a survey using the Likert scale (see Appendix 2). Creating the actual questions for the survey was not too difficult since we based each question's topic on a strand of our research questions. Originally, our survey for teachers consisted of about twelve questions with a comment box for additional information. We also created a list of interview questions for administrators; we planned on interviewing our school principal, the district's curriculum director, and the content-area supervisors at a later date. We also planned on holding a focus group for some of the teachers who took the survey; we would create the questions for that discussion after reviewing and analyzing the survey results.

As part of the instrument development process, our graduate school colleagues held a peer review session where each of our data-collecting instruments was discussed and critiqued for clarity and efficacy. Once our critical friends had completed the job, we realized that a number of our questions were "loaded" with several different strands within one question. We decided to divide these questions to make them as simple as possible. This led us to create a new survey with seventeen questions. We also added an optional name line and a place for teachers to indicate their particular area of expertise. Our administrative interview questions were approved by our critical friends since explanation and follow-up questions are possible during an interview. The next step was to submit the instruments to our building principal who would then

forward them to the superintendent for final approval. Within the interim of waiting for approval, our building principal was informed that she needed to undergo surgery. This added an additional week to the wait time. After approximately two weeks, the language arts supervisor contacted us via e-mail to address some of the superintendent's concerns with the survey. The interview questions were approved (Appendix 3). We scheduled an interview with the supervisor that week to discuss the concerns.

During the meeting, we were informed that three of the questions on the survey contained language that had negative implications on the district. Who knew that the word "adequately" would evoke such strong emotion and trepidation? We readily removed the word because it would not have a detrimental impact on the type of information we would collect from the teachers. Additionally, she asked after conferencing with the superintendent, that one of the questions be completely stricken from the survey because of its possible negative implications on the school's language arts teachers. We realized that a separate question could be used to gather the same type of data with little alteration. We were asked to resubmit the survey after the changes had been made under the guise that it would be approved. Once we resubmitted, we received final approval within forty-eight hours (see Appendix 4).

In conjunction with our principal, we decided to send out an e-mail (see Appendix 5) to inform our colleagues of our undertaking. In the e-mail we stipulated that only content area teachers would be surveyed because of their direct relevance to our problem statement and research questions. We thought that perhaps a further investigation could be done if our initial results did not yield the quality of answers we desired. Once distributed, teachers had approximately five days to return the surveys. Of the fifty-nine teachers who received a survey, thirty-six participated. Although we were disappointed with the number of teachers who choose

not to participate, we feel that the thirty-six surveys will adequately convey the overall perceptions in the building. In addition, our district is in a tense non-contract year. Some teachers are reluctant to participate in any additional programs even though this was not district-based. This feeling was verbalized by several content-area teachers directly to us. Some teachers were willing to put their name on their survey and later were contacted to form a focus group comprised of nine teachers from various content areas. Prior to meeting with the focus group, we developed questions based on the survey data (see Appendix 6). We decided to focus on the questions relating to curriculum guides, competency in teaching reading comprehension skills, and professional development since those questions yielded the most inconsistencies and additional comments. At our hour long meeting held after school, we first presented the teachers with the results of the survey they completed. All of the teachers were forth-coming with questions and comments they had and gave information to further explain their answers on the survey. The results of the survey and the focus group discussion will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

The last piece of our data collection process was a series of interviews with school and district administrators. Held at different times and locations, we were able to easily schedule interviews with our principal, language arts supervisor, math and science supervisor, social studies supervisor, and the director of curriculum and instruction. We asked each participant the same eight questions which also led to follow-up questions on different topics. All of the interviewees were candid in their responses, each giving us “off the record” comments in regards to their personal response to the questions rather than their professional response. During our interview with the district curriculum director we also attained copies of the district and state standardized test score results for the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 sixth and seventh grade

students. She also gave us permission to borrow a district test booklet for both the sixth and seventh grade CTP 4 so that we could compare the scores with the types of questions posed by the test. The state is not as forthcoming with the testing material due to security standards. The results of the interviews and our analysis of the tests will be discussed further in the next chapter.

## Chapter Four: Analysis of Data

As indicated by our problem statement and our initial data collection, our students' reading comprehension scores, specifically related to non-fiction texts, have been stagnant at each grade level over the past two years. NJASK scores reported to the school from the state fail to break down the types of reading passages and questions asked of the middle school students. The data lumps together general topics such as reading and the writing of persuasive and expository texts to come up with one score and accompanying classifications of Advanced Proficient, Proficient, or Partially Proficient. In effect, analyzing this data available to us is not very helpful; the scores do not give a clear picture of a student's ability in reading non-fiction texts. The data does indicate that our school's clusters means, average scores compared to other districts in the state, are comparable to other school districts with our same DFG and are above the state mean (See Appendices 7a-7f).

More specific data can be drawn from the district-purchased standardized test, the CTP 4. The data provided to us by that company is broken down into similar clusters but then further separated into smaller strands classifying each question into a category like elicit information, inference, and analysis. Since we were privy to the results as well as the actual testing booklets, we were able to go into the sixth and seventh grade tests and separate the reading passages and accompanying questions ourselves. The test seems to have several more questions dedicated to reading non-fiction at both grade levels. The test results are presented by item and further broken down by student response percentages and item description (Appendices 8a-8c). The item description was instrumental in our analysis since it identifies the skill necessary to answer the questions correctly. We started by identifying the testing items of the non-fiction texts. We found that for the sixth and seventh grade tests, 24/37 questions and 22/37 questions were

dedicated to non-fiction respectively. For each grade level we first identified the questions within the non-fiction sections that a high percentage of students answered incorrectly. Next, we found that item in the testing booklet and analyzed the type of skill required to answer the questions correctly. For the sixth grade test, we found that students were not able to answer questions that require a variety of non-fiction reading skills such as using explicit information found in the text, double-process questions which require identification of descriptive details, cause and effect, compare and contrast, main idea identification, sequencing, drawing conclusions, and inferencing motive. The seventh grade results yielded fewer difficulties, but similar problems such as summarizing, using explicit information, analysis, inferencing, and identifying main idea. According to our external research, these skills are fundamental in reading and comprehending non-fiction texts. These basic skills are ones that could be and should be taught in every content area class if reading comprehension is actually taught. To further understand the students' difficulties, we felt we needed to survey teachers and their understanding of reading comprehension and what actually goes on within content area classrooms.

After teacher surveys were collected, we separated the surveys into three groups of teachers: content-area, language arts, and special education. We decided to identify teachers in this way so we could further explore their answers within the context of what they teach. We analyzed each question and graphed the results by teacher response and specialty (Appendices 9a-9p). For question one (Appendix 9a), we found that 33% of teachers surveyed feel strongly that they are familiar with the district's definition of reading comprehension, while 42% agreed. Interestingly, 14% do not feel that they are familiar with the district's definition of reading



comprehension and those teachers are all content-area teachers who primarily deal with non-fiction texts in their classrooms.

Accordingly, question 2 (Appendix 9b) revealed that 39% of those surveyed are familiar with different types of reading strategies for fiction texts, all of which were language arts and special education teachers. 14% of total teachers surveyed were unfamiliar with these strategies, all of which were content-area teachers. Of just content-area teachers surveyed, 47% were familiar, 24% were neutral, and 29% were unfamiliar. This question's results do make sense with what we know about how fiction is taught and tested within the district. Most fiction is read with either a language arts teacher or a special education teacher who teaches reading. Most content-area teachers rarely encounter fiction texts within their science, social studies, and math classes. However, this is not the area of concern.

Question three (Appendix 9c) surveyed teachers' familiarity with non-fiction reading strategies. Surprisingly, 72% of total teachers surveyed say they are familiar with different reading strategies for non-fiction comprehension, while 28% were unfamiliar. Of the teachers who identified they were familiar with non-fiction strategies, 50% were content-area teachers, 35% were language arts teachers, and 15% were special education teachers. This indicated to us that there are discrepancies between what teachers believe are non-fiction reading strategies and what the tests are actually testing as non-fiction comprehension. These discrepancies were further explored during our teacher focus group.

An overwhelming 75% of total teachers surveyed agree or strongly agree that every teacher is a reading teacher, while 17% were neutral, and 8% disagree for question four (Appendix 9d). Further comments revealed that those who answered disagree or strongly

disagree did so because they feel that every teacher *should* be a reading teacher but every teacher does not live up to this responsibility.

Question five (Appendix 9e) was very telling in regards to the teachers' confidence levels in teaching nonfiction reading comprehension strategies to students. 69% of total teachers are confident in their abilities. Of this group, 56% are language arts teachers, 24% are special education teachers, and 36% are content-area teachers. All teachers who answered that they were not confident in the teaching of non-fiction strategies were content-area teachers. This trend was furthered explored and became a central issue during our teacher focus group.

Parallel to our CTP 4 cluster analysis, only 50% of teachers surveyed feel confident in students' ability to use appropriate grade-level non-fiction reading comprehension strategies, while 20% do not feel confident (Appendix 9f). 30% of teachers felt neutral about this question, perhaps indicating that some students are and some students are not equipped with these skills; the skill levels of the children may be scattered according to class and level.

Question seven (Appendix 9g) surveyed teacher's perceptions of their ability to assess students' non-fiction reading comprehension skills. 61% of teachers surveyed feel they are familiar with the types of assessments that are appropriate for testing non-fiction reading comprehension skills. 13% say they are unfamiliar with appropriate assessments of these skills. It is surprising to us that while 61% feel confident and 50% feel students have the skills necessary, these skills are not translating over to the district standardized test which shows that some students do not have many or most of the necessary skills mastered. In addition, question eight (Appendix 9h) resulted in 61% of teachers agreeing that they are confident in using non-fiction reading comprehension assessments to inform and improve reading comprehension in their classrooms. Only 14% say they are not confident in using assessments, while 25% are

neutral. Again, these results are very surprising when compared to district standardized test results. It seems that teachers' perceptions are not matching reality in this case, especially when 72% agreed they are familiar with these strategies necessary to teach non-fiction reading comprehension. Does this mean teachers know the strategies but do not know how to implement them? This assertion is further explored and explained in the teacher focus group.

Overwhelmingly, 41% of teachers agree that their curriculum guides do not assist them in planning and teaching non-fiction reading comprehension and an additional 39% were neutral in this category (Appendix 9i). Even further, survey question ten (Appendix 9j) indicates that 42% of teachers surveyed do not believe they are provided with adequate resources to support non-fiction reading comprehension development in their classrooms. 31% were neutral on this topic. This seems to link to our earlier question about the discrepancies between what teachers know and how students perform and if they lie within the area of teachers not being confident with implementing what they know the students need since they do not have resources to assist them.

In conjunction with the aforementioned analysis that teachers do not feel that they have the resources to support them in teaching reading comprehension with non-fiction texts, question 11 (Appendix 9k) shows that 39% of teachers answered that their textbooks do not provide them with strategies to use while teaching non-fiction reading comprehension, while 38% believe their textbooks do help. Interestingly, the teachers that feel their textbooks are not helpful are mostly content-area teachers, while the teachers who disagree are equally split between all three groups. Approximately 25% of teachers surveyed felt neutral toward the helpfulness of their textbooks.

Questions 12 and 13 both focus on teachers' understanding of how non-fiction reading comprehension is assessed on the NJASK and the CTP 4 respectively (Appendices 9l and 9m). An overwhelming majority of teachers believe they understand how non-fiction reading

comprehension is assessed on both standardized tests. For the NJASK, 64% of teachers believe they have a good understanding and for the CTP 4 66% feel the same. These teachers are a part of each of the three groups of teachers surveyed. Surprisingly, a good number of teachers also feel that they do not understand how these two tests measure non-fiction reading comprehension: 25% on the NJASK and 33% on the CTP 4. Although more teachers feel they do understand, there is an obvious divide amongst the staff. If teachers do not fully understand how the tests measure reading comprehension, how can they be expected to teach the students the necessary skills to be prepared for such an assessment? Further, how can teachers then use the data these tests provide to inform their instruction without the knowledge of what these tests are actually measuring?

Although many teachers believe they understand how the standardized tests measure non-fiction reading comprehension skills, teachers are not as confident in how the district uses the test results to shape the curriculum (Appendix 9n). 47% of teachers surveyed felt they did not have a strong grasp on how the district uses test scores to shape curriculum, while only 23% did. The teachers who felt they did not have a strong grasp were a mix of content-area, language arts, and special education teachers. 31% of teachers were neutral to this question which raises concerns because a neutral stance still does not denote strong familiarity with the topic.

The final questions of the survey asked teachers to reflect on the professional development opportunities provided to them by the district (Appendix 9p) and those that have been personally sought out (Appendix 9o). 47% of teachers surveyed have sought out professional development to enhance their teaching of non-fiction reading comprehension, while 25% admit that they really haven't done so. On the other hand, 64% of teachers feel that the district does not provide an adequate amount of professional development opportunities in this

instructional area. Only 6 % of the all the teachers surveyed agreed that the district provides adequate professional development in teaching non-fiction reading comprehension. This 6% consisted of content-area teachers and special education teachers; not one language arts teacher agreed that professional development to teach non-fiction reading strategies was adequately provided.

After tabulating the results of the teachers' surveys, we decided to use the results to create focus group questions (Appendix 6). We called upon those teachers who indicated on their surveys that they would be interested in meeting with us to further discuss their answers and thoughts on the different topics presented. Teachers were reminded that their responses would be a part of the research, but that as participants they would remain anonymous. Through our focus group discussions, we found an overall lack of consistency and coherence among what different content area teachers understand as the district's definition of reading comprehension, how the standardized test scores influence and drive instruction within the district, and about what a content area teacher's responsibility is in teaching these non-fiction reading comprehension skills.

In general, teachers felt that the standardized test scores are somewhat of a mystery in how they are used for anything outside of student placements within math, language arts, and seminar classes. Even teachers who have participated in curriculum writing said they did not ever consult test results to assess the curriculum or adjust it in terms of the areas of concern as indicated by the NJASK and CTP 4. Further, the scores are not usually released to the content-area teachers unless specifically requested by them. Therefore, they wondered how they would ever have the opportunity to adjust their own teaching in accordance with test results. Math teachers especially voiced they did not really understand, nor was it ever explained to them, how

non-fiction reading can even be taught within their curriculum. They know that overall reading comprehension scores affect a student's math placement, but they do not really feel like they have ever had a hand in teaching those skills. Social studies and science teachers felt they are kept out of the loop since they believe administrators are not consistent with their explanations and expectations. All content-area teachers present were adamant in their concerns regarding the lack of support in providing the teachers with the strategies and resources necessary to teach reading comprehension effectively. Language arts teachers voiced concerns that they sometimes feel burdened with the task of taking on the responsibility of coaching other teachers in this area. They feel that even though it is their area of expertise, they do not have the time and specific content knowledge to apply what they know to the science and social studies curriculums. All teachers wondered why there is not more consistency among the subject areas in regards to how to teach non-fiction reading comprehension, especially if all teachers are supposed to be reading teachers.

To further this discussion, we asked teachers what types of strategies they try to use within their classrooms while reading non-fiction texts like textbook chapters, charts, maps, and magazine articles. All of the teachers exhibited some knowledge of basic reading comprehension activities including pre-reading, pre-teaching vocabulary, summarizing, outlining, and inferential questioning. While these activities are great to anticipate or review what is to be read, teachers did not really show knowledge of how to implement the activities to instruct students how to read texts or to engage the students in metacognition, thinking about they are thinking while reading. After language arts teachers shared their strategies, the other content area teachers felt quite frustrated because they do not feel like they know how to properly infuse these methods into their instruction not only because their pre-service training

focused on subject-area content and not reading skills, but also because they feel that they are not supported by their curriculum, textbooks, or supervisors in this way.

Furthermore, all of the teachers voiced clear feelings of frustration, confusion, and uneasiness, especially about lack of in-house professional development and resource materials available to assist in meeting the demands that are currently being placed at the forefront of the district's instructional improvement plans. They understand there have been few attempts at professional development, but feel that there is still a lack of direction, continuity, and follow-through when it comes to district professional support and development. The basic consensus was that the resources present within the district are not sufficient to help teach the teachers so that they in turn can instruct the students. Other teachers pointed out that some of the newer textbooks do have support materials with them; however, not all teachers are comfortable utilizing them. At this point, one of the language arts teachers shared that there are many teacher-resources within the building who are never given the time to help their colleagues. They wondered why the district does not take advantage of the wonderful personnel resources available within their own buildings- actual "expert" teachers, not books or support materials.

All in all, the focus group was successful in further explaining the frustration that was voiced through some of the teachers' answers on the surveys. What is apparent is the lack of consistency and coherence within and among the different subject areas in regards to the teaching of non-fiction reading comprehension strategies.

The administrative interviews further substantiated the concerns presented within the teacher interviews and teacher focus group. Each of the five administrators interviewed gave a very different rendition of the district's definition of reading comprehension and stated very different guiding philosophies for what the district's reading comprehension instruction is based

upon. Some pointed out specific programs, such as Four Blocks, currently used to teach reading in the elementary schools while others cited philosophies such as Balanced Literacy, to explain what guides reading comprehension within the district. Not one administrator cited any specific guiding philosophies for what influences the teaching of reading in middle school. Many different strategies and skills were mentioned in regards to what is expected to be implemented, but even those skills were inconsistent. However, each administrator felt that all teachers should be responsible for teaching reading comprehension.

Additionally, the content area supervisors who were interviewed stated they believe that the language arts supervisor is the one who should mandate the guiding philosophies for non-fiction reading in the content areas. Four out of five administrators felt that the curriculum guides do not support teachers in their instruction of non-fiction reading strategies. When asked about the district and state standardized testing, all interviewees agreed that the test results are used to assess if students are meeting district goals and the results give administration areas to focus on for improvement, but the results have not been used to directly assess or modify curriculum or instruction until now. Unanimously, each administrator acknowledged the need for more professional development to assist all content-area teachers in this endeavor which directly parallels the needs expressed by the teachers who participated in the surveys and focus group.

All in all, these methods of gathering data from within the school district provided us with valuable information which will assist us in making recommendations on how to unify the district's philosophy of how to teach non-fiction reading comprehension strategies, the expectations of administrators and teachers, and the instruction that occurs within all content area classrooms.



## Chapter Five: Recommendations

First and foremost, in order to begin to address the concerns associated with reading across the content areas, all members of the learning community must be willing to take part in the creation of a unified vision as it affects all. This vision should standardize the district's philosophy of non-fiction reading comprehension instruction and establish the responsibilities of all participants including administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Furthermore, this vision should be the guiding philosophy for what shapes the addition of instructional strategies to each content-area's curriculum guide. These additions will not warrant the rewriting of curriculum but merely the inclusion to include strategies which are linked to the areas of study already in place. These revised and enhanced curriculum guides will serve as an important resource for teachers who need direction and reinforcement in the teaching of non-fiction reading comprehension strategies.

Next, administrators and teachers should work together to create teacher resource binders for each content area which can serve as quick reference guides with recommended strategies and accompanying lesson planning tools such as graphic organizers. Committees of content area, special education, and language arts teachers should be formed so that a common language for non-fiction reading comprehension instruction can be established. From there, each committee would create a resource binder specific to a content area utilizing the common language and integrating appropriate reading strategies.

Finally, to support the district's initiatives and the teachers' adoption of this plan, professional development must be instituted on a regular basis. This professional development must be consistent with the district goals and it must address the needs of the teachers. This support can come from within the district by utilizing the professional development institute

already in place which encourages teachers to teach other teachers. Additionally, creating a program where master teachers are identified in each content-area and giving them time to work collaboratively to create lessons to share with their colleagues would prove beneficial to the entire district. Utilizing the teacher-resources already within the district promotes a positive school culture where all community members are valued for their expertise and perseverance. One in-service day prior to the start of the school year should be devoted to educating teachers in how to properly utilize test scores. Team teachers should receive, analyze, and synthesize district and state testing data for their new students. This will help them to identify weaknesses and create plans of action specifically tailored to their students' needs while aligning the plan to the district's vision.

We believe that the execution of these recommendations will help to address the slightly declining and/or stagnant reading comprehension test scores within the middle school. By first creating a coherent vision and then inspiring teachers to fulfill that vision, teaching and learning become symbiotic and achievement will follow suit.

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APPENDIX I  
Triangulation Matrix

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	DATA SOURCE #1	DATA SOURCE #2	DATA SOURCE #3
How reading comprehension is defined?	Teacher Survey	Teacher Focus Group	Administration Interviews
What strategies are used to teach reading comprehension in the Marlboro Middle School?	Teacher Survey	Teacher Focus Group	Administration Interviews
How do the reading comprehension strategies address fiction and non-fiction differently?	Teacher Focus Group	Administration Interviews	Standardized Test Results
What forms of professional development opportunities are available to enhance the test scores in the district?	Teacher Survey	Teacher Focus Group	Administration Interviews

APPENDIX 2

**Teacher Survey**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ (optional)

*Please check:* Content Area Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Language Arts Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Special Education Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

<b>strongly disagree</b>	<b>disagree</b>	<b>neutral</b>	<b>agree</b>	<b>strongly agree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

Please circle the number that best corresponds with the statement below:	
1. I am familiar with the district's definition of reading comprehension.	1 2 3 4 5
2. I am familiar with different types of reading strategies for fiction reading.	1 2 3 4 5
3. I am familiar with different reading strategies for non-fiction reading.	1 2 3 4 5
4. I believe that every teacher is a reading teacher.	1 2 3 4 5
5. I am confident in my abilities to teach my students non-fiction reading comprehension strategies.	1 2 3 4 5
6. Students are able to use appropriate non-fiction reading comprehension strategies for my grade level and content area.	1 2 3 4 5
7. I am familiar with appropriate classroom assessments which test students' reading comprehension skills with non-fiction texts.	1 2 3 4 5

8. I am confident with using non-fiction reading comprehension assessments to inform and improve reading comprehension in my classroom.	1 2 3 4 5
9. My curriculum guide assists me in planning/teaching non-fiction reading comprehension strategies.	1 2 3 4 5
10. Resources are provided to me by the district to support reading comprehension development in non-fiction.	1 2 3 4 5
11. My textbook provides me with non-fiction reading comprehension strategies.	1 2 3 4 5
12. I understand how non-fiction reading comprehension is assessed on the NJASK.	1 2 3 4 5
13. I understand how non-fiction reading comprehension is assessed on the CTP-4.	1 2 3 4 5
14. I am familiar with how the district uses test results to shape curriculum.	1 2 3 4 5
15. I have sought out professional development training to enhance my teaching of non-fiction reading comprehension.	1 2 3 4 5
16. The district has provided an adequate amount of opportunities for professional development training for teaching non-fiction reading comprehension.	1 2 3 4 5

Additional comments:



APPENDIX 3

Administration Interview Questions

1. How is reading comprehension defined in our district?
2. What are the guiding philosophies of our district's reading instruction?
3. Who is responsible for teaching reading comprehension?
4. Are there specific reading comprehension strategies that middle school teachers are expected to implement?
5. How do content area curriculum guides guide reading comprehension?
6. How is standardized test data used to assess our students and programs?
7. What types of professional development are offered in district?
8. Do you see a need for more professional development in reading instruction? If so, why and what type?

APPENDIX 4  
Final Approval E-Mail

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (School Principal)  
**Sent:** Monday, March 09, 2009 12:36 PM  
**To:** JoAnn Cilmi; Lauren Kolanovic; Tara Mole  
**Subject:** FW: action research survey

[Superintendent] approved your survey as revised.  
[Principal]

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (Superintendent)  
**Sent:** Monday, March 09, 2009 12:31 PM  
**To:** (Principal)  
**Cc:** (Supervisor); (Director of Curriculum)  
**Subject:** RE: action research survey

Thank you for taking the time to check with us about the survey. It may be sent out as revised in consultation with [Supervisor].

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (Principal)  
**Sent:** Monday, March 09, 2009 11:26 AM  
**To:** (Superintendent)  
**Subject:** FW: action research survey

[Superintendent],  
[Supervisor] met with the ladies and has given her approval for the attached revised survey. Please review it and let me know if it is ok with you for distribution to the middle school staff.

(Principal)

APPENDIX 5

E-mail sent to Middle School staff

Hello! As many of you know, Lauren, Tara, and myself are in our final semester of graduate school for a masters program in educational leadership. Part of our studies is to conduct an action research project within our school. Our topic is reading across the content areas.

We have placed a teacher survey for our project in the mailboxes of all content-area teachers. We are hoping that many of you will take about 3-5 minutes to complete the survey to aide us in our research. We ask that surveys be completed and placed in one of our mailboxes (Mole, Kolanovic, or Cilmi) by Friday at 2:30 pm. Names on the surveys are optional--if you do put your name, we may ask you at a later date to participate in a very brief post-interview to get more ideas from you. We only ask that you make sure to check off if you are a content area teacher, a literacy teacher, or a special education teacher so that we can calculate our data accurately.

We hope to get close to 100% participation so that we may have a great deal of data to work with and so that we can make the best recommendations possible in our research paper. We really appreciate your time and cooperation! Thank you!

APPENDIX 6  
Focus Group Questions

1. What type of support would you like from the district to support you in teaching reading comprehension?
2. Have you ever been privy to the CTP 4 and NJASK data to help you understand what is expected of you and how that information may be used to drive instruction?
3. What is your understanding of the district's definition of reading comprehension in your content area?
4. What is your understanding of your responsibility in the teaching of reading comprehension in your content area?
5. What types of strategies do you use to teach non-fiction reading comprehension in your content area?
6. What hinders your confidence in teaching non-fiction reading comprehension strategies?
7. What do you see as the foremost problem in students' non-fiction reading ability?
8. What do you need to be more confident in assessing students' non-fiction reading ability in your content area?
9. What would be helpful to add to your curriculum guides to help you teach non-fiction reading comprehension strategies?
10. Is there anything at all present to help you in your curriculum guides for your content area?
11. How does the district professionally support you to teach reading comprehension?
12. Have you been provided books and/or professional development opportunities inside or outside the district?
13. How does your textbook provide you with help in teaching non-fiction reading comprehension strategies?

APPENDIX 7a  
NJASK 2007 Results

New Jersey Statewide Testing System  
Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment  
Cluster Means<sup>1</sup>

Test Date: March 2007  
CYCLE II  
COUNTY:  
DISTRICT:  
SCHOOL:

School



Language Arts Literacy	JUST PROFICIENT MEAN <sup>2</sup>	SCHOOL NCAM	DISTRICT MEAN	DFG I MEAN	STATE MEAN
<b>Clusters</b>					
<b>1. Writing<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>9.2</b>				
Total Students <sup>4</sup>		11.3	11.0	10.7	9.9
General Education		11.6	12.3	11.0	10.4
Special Education		7.6	8.2	9.0	7.0
Limited English Proficient <sup>5</sup>		10.0	10.0	9.0	7.8
Current LEP			10.5	8.7	7.2
Former LEP		10.0	9.5	10.0	9.1
Title I				9.3	8.8
<b>2. Reading (26)<sup>6</sup></b>	<b>29.3</b>				
Total Students <sup>4</sup>		24.7	24.6	24.8	22.5
General Education		25.5	26.3	25.6	23.8
Special Education		14.5	17.9	20.2	17.2
Limited English Proficient <sup>5</sup>		20.0	23.5	19.6	16.1
Current LEP			26.0	18.8	14.7
Former LEP		24.0	21.0	22.2	19.3
Title I				19.6	18.9
<b>3. Interpreting Text (14)<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>8.0</b>				
Total Students <sup>4</sup>		11.0	10.9	11.0	9.9
General Education		11.3	11.2	11.3	10.5
Special Education		7.5	8.0	8.0	7.6
Limited English Proficient <sup>5</sup>		10.0	9.5	8.5	7.0
Current LEP			10.5	8.2	6.4
Former LEP		10.0	8.5	9.6	8.3
Title I				8.3	8.2
<b>4. Analyzing/Critiquing Text (13)<sup>8</sup></b>	<b>11.5</b>				
Total Students <sup>4</sup>		13.7	13.7	13.8	12.6
General Education		14.1	14.1	14.3	13.3
Special Education		8.9	9.9	11.3	9.7
Limited English Proficient <sup>5</sup>		14.0	14.0	11.1	9.1
Current LEP			15.5	10.6	8.5
Former LEP		14.0	12.5	12.6	10.9
Title I				11.5	10.7

<sup>1</sup> Refers to total raw score points (0-600)  
<sup>2</sup> Cluster Proficient Means: students who took large print, Braille, and alternate forms as well as students coded as visual  
<sup>3</sup> Just Proficient Means are calculated raw score means for students whose scale score is 500.  
<sup>4</sup> Students appear in each applicable category, but they are included in Total Students only once.  
<sup>5</sup> Includes students coded as LEP or Former LEP.

APPENDIX 7b  
NJASK 2007 Results

TEST DATE: MARCH 2007  
REPORT PRINTED: 7/27/2007  
CYCLE II

**New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge  
Cluster Means for Students with Valid Scale Scores  
Grade 6 - Language Arts Literacy**



COUNTY:  
DISTRICT:  
SCHOOL:

	SCHOOL MEAN	DISTRICT MEAN	DFG 1 MEAN	STATE MEAN	TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE	JUST PROFICIENT MEAN <sup>2</sup>
<b>Writing</b>					12	5.1
Total Students <sup>1</sup>	6.6	6.9	6.6	6.9		
General Education <sup>4</sup>	6.0	7.1	6.0	6.3		
Special Education	4.1	4.5	4.6	4.3		
Limited English Proficient <sup>5</sup>	6.0	5.3	5.5	4.6		
Current LEP	0.0	5.0	5.2	4.1		
Former LEP	6.0	6.0	6.3	5.5		
<b>Reading</b>					36	15.9
Total Students <sup>1</sup>	21.3	21.3	21.0	18.6		
General Education <sup>4</sup>	21.8	21.8	21.8	19.7		
Special Education	16.9	16.8	16.5	13.9		
Limited English Proficient <sup>5</sup>	20.0	17.0	15.8	12.0		
Current LEP	0.0	14.0	15.0	11.6		
Former LEP	22.0	23.0	16.1	14.9		
<b>Working with Text</b>					15	6.5
Total Students <sup>1</sup>	8.9	9.0	9.0	7.8		
General Education <sup>4</sup>	8.1	9.3	9.4	8.3		
Special Education	5.6	6.2	6.3	5.7		
Limited English Proficient <sup>5</sup>	10.0	6.7	6.3	5.1		
Current LEP	0.0	5.0	6.0	4.7		
Former LEP	10.0	10.0	7.1	5.8		
<b>Analyzing Text</b>					21	9.7
Total Students <sup>1</sup>	12.4	12.3	12.0	10.8		
General Education <sup>4</sup>	12.6	12.5	12.5	11.4		
Special Education	10.5	8.6	9.7	8.2		
Limited English Proficient <sup>5</sup>	13.0	10.3	9.5	7.6		
Current LEP	0.0	9.0	9.0	6.2		
Former LEP	13.0	13.0	10.9	9.1		

<sup>1</sup> Excludes students coded VolG, APA, LEP Exempt, Not Present, or students who were not scored on the full set of regular items.

<sup>2</sup> The numbers in this column are the statewide raw score means for students who scored on the test.

<sup>3</sup> Students are included in Total Students only once, but they appear in all other categories that apply.

<sup>4</sup> Includes students coded Former LEP who are not Special Education.

<sup>5</sup> Includes students coded Current and Former LEP.

APPENDIX 7c  
NJASK 2007 Results

TEST DATE: MARCH 2007  
REPORT PRINTED: 7/27/2007  
CYCLE II

**New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge  
Cluster Means for Students with Valid Scale Scores  
Grade 7 - Language Arts Literacy**



COUNTY:  
DISTRICT:  
SCHOOL:

	SCHOOL MEAN	DISTRICT MEAN	DFGI MEAN	STATE MEAN	TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE	JUST PROFICIENT MEAN <sup>2</sup>
<b>Writing</b>						
Total Students <sup>3</sup>	6.7	5.7	5.6	5.9	12	4.8
General Education <sup>4</sup>	6.9	5.9	6.9	5.8		
Special Education	4.0	4.7	5.0	4.2		
Limited English Proficient <sup>5</sup>	5.5	5.5	5.1	4.1		
Current LEP	5.0	5.0	4.9	3.8		
Former LEP	5.3	5.3	5.0	5.3		
<b>Reading</b>						
Total Students <sup>3</sup>	21.2	21.4	21.6	19.1	36	15.2
General Education <sup>4</sup>	21.0	22.0	22.4	20.3		
Special Education	16.4	16.3	16.9	14.2		
Limited English Proficient <sup>5</sup>	19.0	19.0	18.7	12.9		
Current LEP	18.0	18.3	16.1	11.7		
Former LEP	19.3	19.3	18.4	15.7		
<b>Working with Text</b>						
Total Students <sup>3</sup>	9.0	9.9	10.0	8.5	13	6.9
General Education <sup>4</sup>	10.1	10.1	10.4	9.3		
Special Education	7.4	7.4	7.8	6.6		
Limited English Proficient <sup>5</sup>	7.6	7.8	7.9	5.9		
Current LEP	6.0	6.0	7.2	5.4		
Former LEP	8.5	8.3	9.7	7.0		
<b>Analyzing Text</b>						
Total Students <sup>3</sup>	11.4	11.5	11.6	10.3	23	8.3
General Education <sup>4</sup>	11.7	11.8	12.0	10.9		
Special Education	8.9	8.9	9.0	7.7		
Limited English Proficient <sup>5</sup>	11.3	11.3	8.1	7.0		
Current LEP	12.0	12.0	9.9	6.3		
Former LEP	11.0	11.0	8.8	6.7		

<sup>1</sup> Excludes students coded Void, N/A, LEP Exempt, Not Present, or students who were not scored on the full set of regular items.

<sup>2</sup> The numbers in this column are the statewide raw score means for students whose scale score is 200.

<sup>3</sup> Students are included in Total Students only once, but they appear in all other categories that apply.

<sup>4</sup> Includes students coded Former LEP who are not Special Education.

<sup>5</sup> Includes students coded Current and Former LEP.

APPENDIX 7d  
NJASK 2008 Results

TEST DATE: Spring 2008  
REPORT PRINTED: 8/12/2009  
CYCLE II

**New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge  
Cluster Means for Students with Valid Scale Scores<sup>1</sup>  
Grade 6 - Language Arts Literacy**



COUNTY:  
DISTRICT:  
SCHOOL:

	SCHOOL MEAN	DISTRICT MEAN	DFG I MEAN	STATE MEAN	TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE	JUST PROFICIENT MEAN <sup>2</sup>
<b>Writing</b>						
Total Students <sup>3</sup>	8.6	9.4	9.0	8.2	8	8.0
General Education <sup>4</sup>	8.9	9.9	9.3	8.9		
Special Education	6.4	6.5	6.9	6.1		
Limited English Proficient <sup>5</sup>	10.6	7.4	7.2	6.7		
Current LEP	0.0	3.2	6.6	6.2		
Former LEP	10.6	4.2	6.6	7.6		
<b>Persuasive</b>					12	5.2
Total Students <sup>3</sup>	6.6	6.2	3.8	5.4		
General Education <sup>4</sup>	6.7	6.4	6.2	5.7		
Special Education	4.1	4.1	4.4	3.3		
Limited English Proficient <sup>5</sup>	7.0	5.0	4.6	4.4		
Current LEP	0.0	2.0	4.1	4.0		
Former LEP	7.0	7.0	5.6	5.7		
<b>Speculative</b>					6	2.6
Total Students <sup>3</sup>	3.7	3.2	3.1	2.8		
General Education <sup>4</sup>	3.2	3.3	3.2	2.8		
Special Education	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.2		
Limited English Proficient <sup>5</sup>	3.5	2.4	2.5	2.3		
Current LEP	0.0	1.2	2.4	2.2		
Former LEP	3.6	3.2	3.3	2.6		
<b>Reading</b>						
Total Students <sup>3</sup>	38.9	37.6	37.5	38.6	60	33.8
General Education <sup>4</sup>	38.9	38.7	38.5	38.5		
Special Education	27.9	28.9	28.2	26.1		
Limited English Proficient <sup>5</sup>	38.0	23.6	23.6	24.4		
Current LEP	0.0	10.5	26.1	25.2		
Former LEP	38.0	32.3	31.8	27.8		
<b>Working with Text</b>						
Total Students <sup>3</sup>	16.0	15.8	15.9	14.2	24	14.1
General Education <sup>4</sup>	16.6	16.4	16.4	14.8		
Special Education	12.0	10.6	12.2	10.6		
Limited English Proficient <sup>5</sup>	17.0	9.8	12.0	13.2		
Current LEP	0.0	4.8	11.2	9.2		
Former LEP	14.0	13.0	14.7	11.6		
<b>Analyzing Text</b>						
Total Students <sup>3</sup>	22.6	21.7	21.7	19.3	36	19.5
General Education <sup>4</sup>	23.2	22.4	22.6	20.5		
Special Education	16.8	15.0	17.0	14.6		
Limited English Proficient <sup>5</sup>	22.0	14.0	13.0	14.1		
Current LEP	0.0	6.0	15.1	12.3		
Former LEP	22.0	18.3	20.1	16.3		

<sup>1</sup> Excludes students who did not receive a scale score based on the full set of regular items in this content area.  
<sup>2</sup> The numbers in this column are the statewide raw score means for students whose scale scores are 200-2200.  
<sup>3</sup> Students are included in Total Students only once, but they appear in all other categories that apply.  
<sup>4</sup> Includes students coded Former LEP and are not Special Education.  
<sup>5</sup> Includes students coded Current and Former LEP.



APPENDIX 7e  
NJASK 2008 Results

TEST DATE: Spring 2008  
REPORT PRINTED: 9/12/2008  
CYCLE 11

New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge  
Cluster Means for Students with Valid Scale Scores  
Grade 7 - Language Arts Literacy



COUNTY:  
DISTRICT:  
SCHOOL:

	SCHOOL MEAN	DISTRICT MEAN	DFG 1 MEAN	STATE MEAN	TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE	JUST PROFICIENT MEAN >
<b>Writing</b>						
Total Students >	10.0	10.1	9.4	8.9	15	8.0
General Education >	10.2	10.3	10.2	9.5		
Special Education	7.2	7.6	7.7	6.7		
Limited English Proficient >	0.0	7.5	6.5	7.0		
Current LEP	0.0	7.5	6.3	6.6		
Former LEP	0.0	0.0	9.7	7.6		
<b>Persuasive</b>						
Total Students >	6.7	6.7	6.6	5.9	12	5.3
General Education >	6.5	6.9	6.3	5.3		
Special Education	4.7	5.0	5.3	4.0		
Limited English Proficient >	0.0	5.0	5.3	4.6		
Current LEP	0.0	5.0	5.2	4.0		
Former LEP	3.0	3.0	6.3	5.2		
<b>Speculative</b>						
Total Students >	3.5	3.4	3.2	3.0	6	2.7
General Education >	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.1		
Special Education	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.4		
Limited English Proficient >	0.0	2.5	2.6	2.7		
Current LEP	0.0	2.5	2.8	2.3		
Former LEP	0.0	0.0	3.7	2.6		
<b>Reading</b>						
Total Students >	38.9	38.8	38.8	34.9	60	31.0
General Education >	38.8	38.8	40.4	35.7		
Special Education	26.9	26.9	30.1	26.9		
Limited English Proficient >	0.0	23.5	31.3	26.2		
Current LEP	0.0	23.5	29.9	24.9		
Former LEP	0.0	0.0	35.0	25.7		
<b>Working with Text</b>						
Total Students >	17.4	17.3	17.6	16.5	26	13.5
General Education >	17.4	17.8	19.2	16.4		
Special Education	12.9	11.9	13.1	11.1		
Limited English Proficient >	0.0	17.0	13.6	11.2		
Current LEP	0.0	17.0	12.9	10.4		
Former LEP	0.0	0.0	15.7	12.6		
<b>Analyzing Text</b>						
Total Students >	21.5	21.3	21.4	19.0	30	17.5
General Education >	22.0	21.9	22.2	20.3		
Special Education	16.8	16.3	17.1	14.0		
Limited English Proficient >	0.0	12.5	17.7	13.0		
Current LEP	0.0	12.5	17.1	14.7		
Former LEP	0.0	0.0	15.3	16.6		

1 Excludes students who did not receive a scale score based on the full set of regular items in this content area.  
 2 The numbers in this column are the statewide raw score means for students whose scale scores > 200.  
 3 Students are included in Total Students only once, but may appear in all other categories that apply.  
 4 Includes students coded Former LEP who are not Special Education.  
 5 Includes students coded Current and Former LEP.

APPENDIX 7f  
NJASK 2008 Results

TEST DATE: Spring 2008  
REPORT PRINTED: 03/23/2008  
CYCLE: J

New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge  
Cluster Means for Students with Valid Scale Scores  
Grade 8 - Language Arts Literacy



COUNTY: \_\_\_\_\_  
DISTRICT: \_\_\_\_\_  
SCHOOL: \_\_\_\_\_

	SCHOOL MEAN	DISTRICT MEAN	DFG I MEAN	STATE MEAN	TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE	JUST PROFICIENT MEAN *
<b>Writing</b>						
Total Students †					15	9.2
General Education †	11.3	11.5	11.2	10.3		
Special Education †	11.2	11.9	11.5	10.8		
Special Education ‡	6.5	9.7	8.3	8.0		
Limited English Proficient §	0.0	11.2	6.0	3.7		
Current LEP ¶	0.0	0.0	8.8	7.4		
Former LEP ¶	0.0	11.3	6.7	9.4		
<b>Persuasive</b>						
Total Students †					12	5.0
General Education †	7.8	7.7	7.4	6.8		
Special Education †	8.0	7.9	7.8	7.2		
Special Education ‡	5.3	5.8	6.0	5.1		
Limited English Proficient §	0.0	7.3	6.0	5.3		
Current LEP ¶	0.0	0.0	5.8	4.9		
Former LEP ¶	0.0	7.3	6.5	5.3		
<b>Speculative</b>						
Total Students †					6	3.2
General Education †	3.9	3.9	3.8	3.5		
Special Education †	3.9	3.9	3.5	3.6		
Special Education ‡	3.2	3.2	3.0	3.4		
Limited English Proficient §	0.0	4.0	3.0	2.7		
Current LEP ¶	0.0	2.0	3.0	2.6		
Former LEP ¶	0.0	4.0	3.7	3.1		
<b>Reading</b>						
Total Students †					60	32.3
General Education †	42.6	42.9	42.9	39.4		
Special Education †	45.6	44.1	44.1	41.3		
Special Education ‡	31.1	33.2	35.7	31.3		
Limited English Proficient §	0.0	41.3	33.8	29.9		
Current LEP ¶	0.0	0.0	32.9	27.7		
Former LEP ¶	0.0	41.3	35.8	34.2		
<b>Working with Text</b>						
Total Students †					30	17.4
General Education †	22.8	22.3	22.5	20.9		
Special Education †	23.4	23.5	23.5	21.8		
Special Education ‡	16.4	17.5	18.6	16.2		
Limited English Proficient §	0.0	22.2	17.9	15.8		
Current LEP ¶	0.0	0.0	17.4	14.7		
Former LEP ¶	0.0	22.2	19.5	18.0		
<b>Analyzing Text</b>						
Total Students †					30	15.9
General Education †	19.8	20.0	20.0	18.5		
Special Education †	20.3	20.5	20.6	19.4		
Special Education ‡	14.7	15.7	16.9	14.7		
Limited English Proficient §	0.0	15.7	15.3	14.1		
Current LEP ¶	0.0	0.0	13.5	11.1		
Former LEP ¶	0.0	15.7	17.2	15.2		

\* Excludes students who did not receive a scale score based on the full set of regular items in this content area.  
 † The numbers in this column are the statewide raw score means for students whose scale score is 200.  
 ‡ Students are included in Total Students only when, but they appear in all other categories that apply.  
 § Indicates students coded Former LEP who are not Special Education.  
 ¶ Includes students coded Current and Former LEP.

APPENDIX 8a  
CTP 4 Results 2008

Item Analysis by School Report  
CTP 4 Grade 6 Spring 2008

Test Date: 03/15/2008

Grade: 6

Based on a maximum 363 selected students.

School:

District:

Subtest	Item	Correct	Score	Responses in Percent					Item Description	
				Omni	Multi	A	B	C		D
Reading Comprehension	1	0.47	72.0	0	0	5	14	7	74	Explicit Info. Answer who/what/where/when/why/how.
Reading Comprehension	2	0.37	51.0	0	0	10	6	28	53	Inference. Inferences about motive or author's intent.
Reading Comprehension	3	0.55	80.0	1	0	60	15	5	12	Analysis. Recognize cause-and-effect relationships.
Reading Comprehension	4	0.43	60.0	0	0	7	4	80	11	Analysis. Recognize cause-and-effect relationships.
Reading Comprehension	5	0.36	53.0	0	0	7	18	53	22	Explicit Info. Use explicit info. to ID main idea.
Reading Comprehension	6	0.36	50.0	0	0	1	21	13	65	Explicit Info. Use explicit info. to ID main idea.
Reading Comprehension	7	0.27	32.0	0	0	82	5	3	6	Inference. Use implicit info. to answer questions.
Reading Comprehension	8	0.37	50.0	0	0	8	2	89	1	Explicit Info. Understand connect. between pieces of info.
Reading Comprehension	9	0.38	43.0	0	0	3	93	3	1	Inference. Determine whether info. is fact or opinion.
Reading Comprehension	10	0.32	50.0	0	0	2	37	60	1	Explicit Info. Understand connect. between pieces of info.
Reading Comprehension	11	0.47	73.0	0	0	2	11	73	10	Analysis. Recognize cause-and-effect relationships.
Reading Comprehension	12	0.30	40.0	0	0	5	10	10	40	Inference. Use explicit info. to answer questions.
Reading Comprehension	13	0.41	56.0	0	0	26	60	8	17	Inference. Use implicit info. to answer questions.
Reading Comprehension	14	0.15	42.0	0	0	12	42	43	4	Explicit Info. Use explicit info. to ID main idea.
Reading Comprehension	15	0.54	71.0	0	0	5	16	71	10	Inference. Inferences about motive or author's intent.
Reading Comprehension	16	0.50	63.0	0	0	17	28	3	53	Analysis. Combine pieces of info. into whole or cat.
Reading Comprehension	17	0.34	46.0	0	0	6	75	12	8	Explicit Info. Use explicit info. to ID main idea.
Reading Comprehension	18	0.43	70.0	0	0	3	4	70	23	Explicit Info. Answer who/what/where/when/why/how.
Reading Comprehension	19	0.46	64.0	0	0	21	64	4	3	Explicit Info. Understand connect. between pieces of info.
Reading Comprehension	20	0.29	70.0	0	0	3	24	70	4	Inference. Inferences about motive or author's intent.
Reading Comprehension	21	0.47	70.0	0	0	12	10	8	70	Analysis. Recognize cause-and-effect relationships.
Reading Comprehension	22	0.39	68.0	0	0	8	88	3	2	Inference. Determine whether info. is fact or opinion.
Reading Comprehension	23	0.36	51.0	0	0	19	35	31	15	Analysis. Compare/contrast charac., events, places, etc.
Reading Comprehension	24	0.49	77.0	0	0	12	77	8	5	Inference. Inferences about motive or author's intent.
Reading Comprehension	25	0.41	63.0	0	0	83	4	5	5	Explicit Info. Answer who/what/where/when/why/how.
Reading Comprehension	26	0.48	46.0	0	0	45	13	13	9	Analysis. Recognize cause-and-effect relationships.
Reading Comprehension	27	0.36	56.0	0	0	20	56	13	6	Inference. Inferences about motive or author's intent.
Reading Comprehension	28	0.40	57.0	0	0	1	57	19	18	Explicit Info. Use explicit info. to ID main idea.
Reading Comprehension	29	0.44	67.0	0	0	11	1	1	87	Analysis. Compare/contrast charac., events, places, etc.
Reading Comprehension	30	0.57	59.0	0	0	59	3	3	29	Inference. Use implicit info. to answer questions.
Reading Comprehension	31	0.22	60.0	0	0	0	80	5	14	Inference. Use implicit info. to answer questions.
Reading Comprehension	32	0.30	70.0	1	0	70	10	9	10	Explicit Info. Use explicit info. to ID main idea.
Reading Comprehension	33	0.47	47.0	0	0	13	15	6	47	Analysis. Recognize cause and effect relationships.
Reading Comprehension	34	0.30	77.0	1	0	77	6	2	14	Explicit Info. Answer who/what/where/when/why/how.
Reading Comprehension	35	0.61	82.0	1	0	12	3	82	2	Explicit Info. Answer who/what/where/when/why/how.
Reading Comprehension	36	0.55	58.0	1	0	10	58	9	27	Analysis. Combine pieces of info. into whole or cat.
Reading Comprehension	37	0.43	77.0	1	0	11	5	77	8	Inference. Uses implicit info. to answer questions.

APPENDIX 8b  
CTP 4 Results 2008

Item Analysis by School Report  
CTP 4 Grade 7 Spring 2008

Test Date: 03/15/2008

Grade: 7

School:

District:

Based on a maximum of 68 selected students.

Subtest	Item	Correl.	Score	Responses in Percent					Item Description	
				Omit/Null	A	B	C	D		E
Reading Comprehension	1	0.43	51.0	0	0	13	10	17	61	Explicit Info. Answer who/what/where/when.
Reading Comprehension	2	0.27	41.0	1	0	25	21	41	12	Inference. Use implicit info. to answer questions.
Reading Comprehension	3	0.28	50.0	1	0	25	5	50	19	Explicit Info. Answer why/how.
Reading Comprehension	4	0.25	56.0	0	0	58	18	22	2	Explicit Info. Answer who/what/where/when.
Reading Comprehension	5	0.11	58.0	0	0	21	55	15	10	Analysis. Compare/contrast charac., events, places, etc.
Reading Comprehension	6	0.26	56.0	0	0	6	14	56	24	Explicit Info. Use explicit info. to ID main idea.
Reading Comprehension	7	0.24	61.0	0	0	2	61	4	4	Analysis. Use info. to ID motives/behaviors of charac.
Reading Comprehension	8	0.28	51.0	0	0	5	17	61	17	Inference. Use implicit info. to make predictions/concl.
Reading Comprehension	9	0.21	90.0	0	0	6	4	3	80	Inference. Use implicit info. to answer questions.
Reading Comprehension	10	0.26	61.0	0	0	81	5	2	11	Explicit Info. Use explicit info. to ID main idea.
Reading Comprehension	11	0.25	52.0	0	0	4	82	5	10	Explicit Info. Use explicit info. to ID main idea.
Reading Comprehension	12	0.48	70.0	1	0	4	70	14	13	Inference. Use implicit info. to answer questions.
Reading Comprehension	13	0.40	64.0	0	0	29	5	64	6	Explicit Info. Answer who/what/where/when.
Reading Comprehension	14	0.18	36.0	0	0	58	15	6	11	Inference. Use implicit info. to answer questions.
Reading Comprehension	15	0.31	57.0	0	0	14	3	28	67	Explicit Info. Use explicit info. to ID main idea.
Reading Comprehension	16	0.41	60.0	0	0	2	10	80	7	Inference. Use implicit info. to make predictions/concl.
Reading Comprehension	17	0.31	64.0	0	0	7	10	4	84	Inference. Use implicit info. to make predictions/concl.
Reading Comprehension	18	0.42	74.0	0	0	4	74	14	6	Analysis. Use info. to ID motives/behaviors of charac.
Reading Comprehension	19	0.35	57.0	0	0	57	14	16	10	Explicit Info. Use explicit info. to ID main idea.
Reading Comprehension	20	0.45	64.0	0	0	5	4	84	4	Explicit Info. Use explicit info. to ID main idea.
Reading Comprehension	21	0.51	75.0	0	0	6	75	6	13	Analysis. Combine pieces of info. into whole or cat.
Reading Comprehension	22	0.54	67.0	0	0	2	13	3	82	Inference. Use implicit info. to answer questions.
Reading Comprehension	23	0.32	64.0	0	0	4	84	4	9	Analysis. Combine pieces of info. into whole or cat.
Reading Comprehension	24	0.28	60.0	1	0	10	11	60	19	Explicit Info. Answer who/what/where/when.
Reading Comprehension	25	0.57	76.0	0	0	11	8	5	76	Analysis. Use info. to ID motives/behaviors of charac.
Reading Comprehension	26	0.50	61.0	0	0	31	14	4	61	Explicit Info. Use explicit info. to ID main idea.
Reading Comprehension	27	0.25	50.0	1	0	8	11	30	50	Inference. Use implicit info. to make predictions/concl.
Reading Comprehension	28	0.32	56.0	0	0	20	50	18	4	Analysis. Use info. to ID motives/behaviors of charac.
Reading Comprehension	29	0.18	60.0	1	0	17	15	59	1	Analysis. Use info. to ID motives/behaviors of charac.
Reading Comprehension	30	0.45	64.0	1	0	13	64	8	11	Inference. Use implicit info. to answer questions.
Reading Comprehension	31	0.43	60.0	1	0	59	6	12	15	Inference. Use implicit info. to make predictions/concl.
Reading Comprehension	32	0.38	69.0	1	0	7	69	16	7	Explicit Info. Use explicit info. to ID main idea.
Reading Comprehension	33	0.35	49.0	1	0	24	18	49	9	Inference. Use implicit info. to make predictions/concl.
Reading Comprehension	34	0.43	64.0	1	0	64	15	17	6	Explicit Info. Use explicit info. to ID main idea.
Reading Comprehension	35	0.44	55.0	1	0	55	10	8	26	Analysis. Compare/contrast charac., events, places, etc.
Reading Comprehension	36	0.32	61.0	1	0	8	16	61	11	Explicit Info. Answer why/how.
Reading Comprehension	37	0.40	60.0	1	0	16	15	11	58	Analysis. Combine pieces of info. into whole or cat.

APPENDIX 8c  
CTP 4 Results 2008

**School Objectives Summary Report**  
**CTP 4 Grade 6 Spring 2008**

Test Date: 05/15/2008

Objective/Strand	Maximum Points	School Averages Based on 363 Students		District Averages Based on 747 Students	
		Percent Correct	Number Correct	Percent Correct	Number Correct
READING COMP.	37	60	24.8	65	24.2
Explicit Info.	14	69	9.8	67	9.4
Inference	13	60	7.9	68	8.9
Analysis	10	60	6.0	60	6.0

**School Objectives Summary Report**  
**CTP 4 Grade 7 Spring 2008**

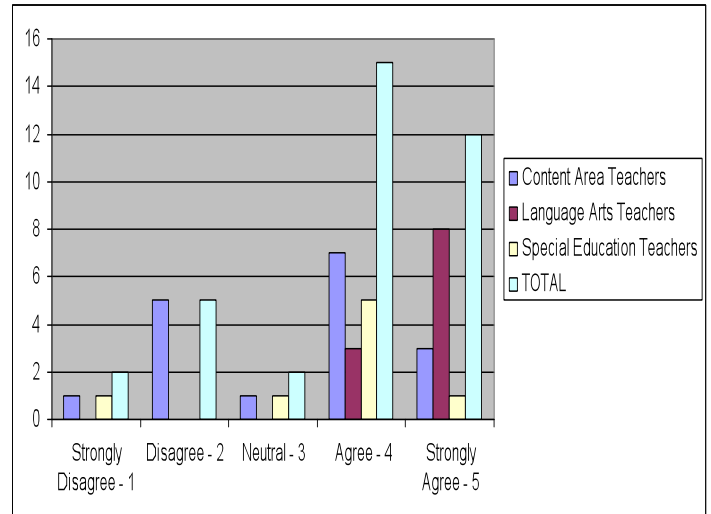
Test Date: 05/15/2008

Objective/Strand	Maximum Points	School Averages Based on 368 Students		District Averages Based on 685 Students	
		Percent Correct	Number Correct	Percent Correct	Number Correct
READING COMP.	37	66	24.8	67	24.8
Explicit Info.	15	63	9.5	64	9.7
Inference	12	66	8.0	67	8.0
Analysis	10	66	6.6	69	6.9

Teacher Survey Data  
Appendix 9a

1. I am familiar with the district's definition of reading comprehension.

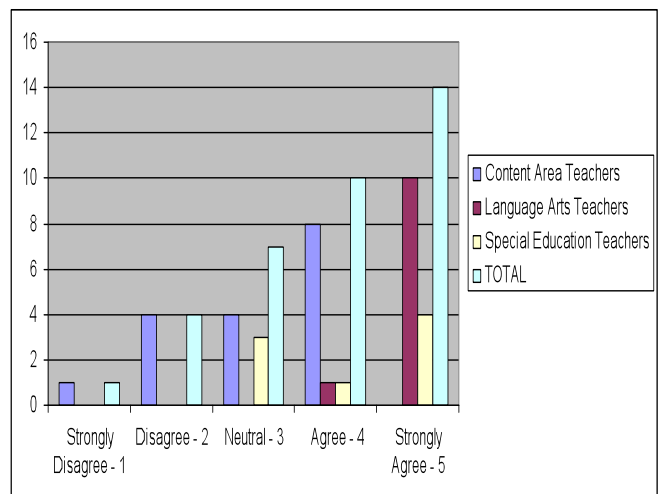
	Content Area Teachers	Language Arts Teachers	Special Education Teachers	TOTAL
<b>Strongly Disagree - 1</b>	1	0	1	2
<b>Disagree - 2</b>	5	0	0	5
<b>Neutral - 3</b>	1	0	1	2
<b>Agree - 4</b>	7	3	5	15
<b>Strongly Agree - 5</b>	3	8	1	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>36</b>



Appendix 9b

2. I am familiar with the different types of reading strategies for fiction reading.

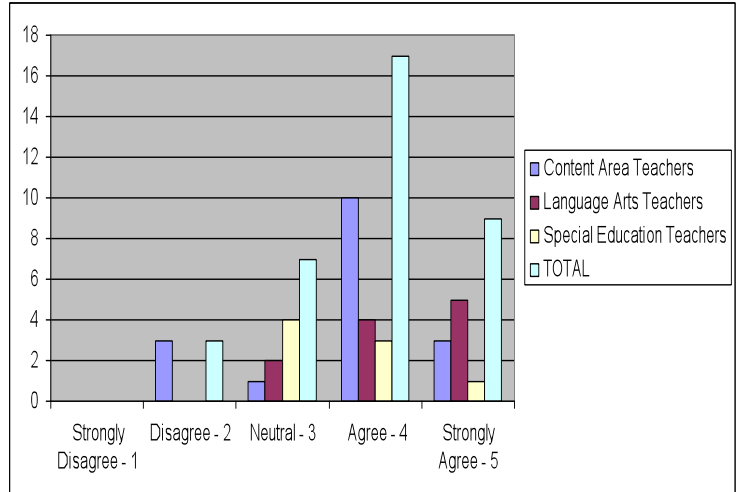
	Content Area Teachers	Language Arts Teachers	Special Education Teachers	TOTAL
<b>Strongly Disagree - 1</b>	1	0	0	1
<b>Disagree - 2</b>	4	0	0	4
<b>Neutral - 3</b>	4	0	3	7
<b>Agree - 4</b>	8	1	1	10
<b>Strongly Agree - 5</b>	0	10	4	14
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>36</b>



Appendix 9c

3. I am familiar with different reading strategies for non-fiction reading.

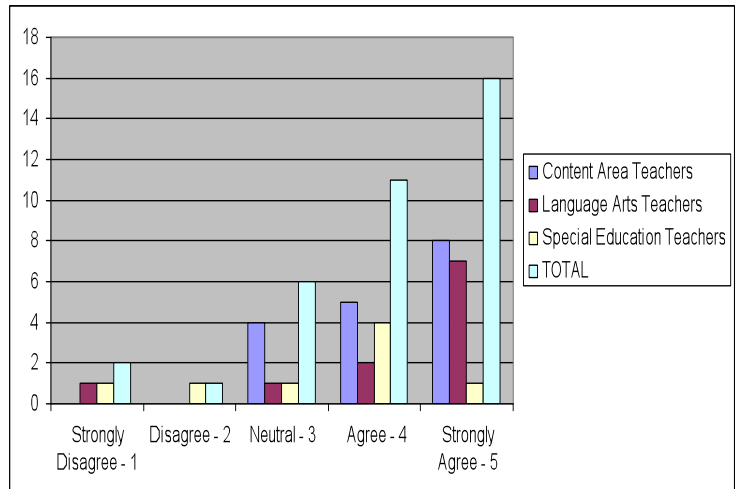
	Content Area Teachers	Language Arts Teachers	Special Education Teachers	TOTAL
<b>Strongly Disagree - 1</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Disagree - 2</b>	3	0	0	3
<b>Neutral - 3</b>	1	2	4	7
<b>Agree - 4</b>	10	4	3	17
<b>Strongly Agree - 5</b>	3	5	1	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>36</b>



Appendix 9d

4. I believe that every teacher is a reading teacher.

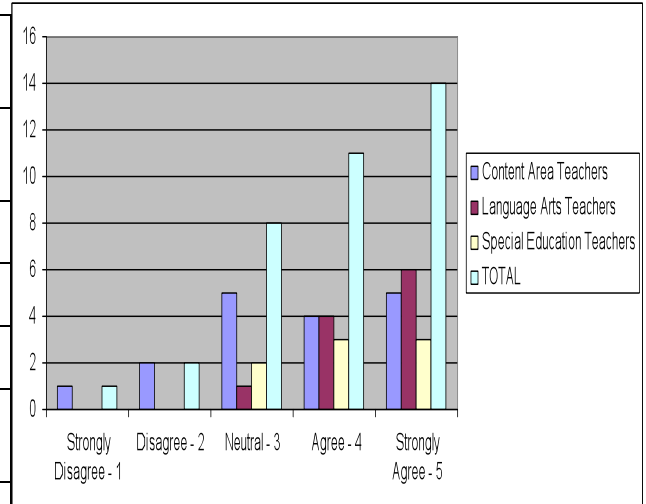
	Content Area Teachers	Language Arts Teachers	Special Education Teachers	TOTAL
<b>Strongly Disagree - 1</b>	0	1	1	2
<b>Disagree - 2</b>	0	0	1	1
<b>Neutral - 3</b>	4	1	1	6
<b>Agree - 4</b>	5	2	4	11
<b>Strongly Agree - 5</b>	8	7	1	16
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>36</b>



Appendix 9e

5. I am confident in my abilities to teach my students non-fiction reading comprehension strategies.

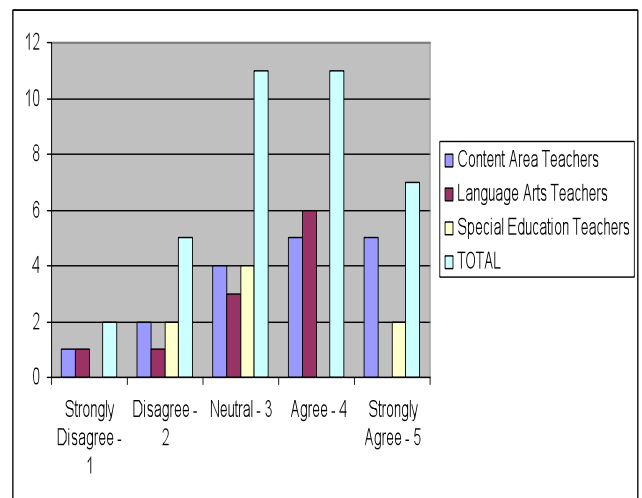
	Content Area Teachers	Language Arts Teachers	Special Education Teachers	TOTAL
<b>Strongly Disagree - 1</b>	1	0	0	1
<b>Disagree - 2</b>	2	0	0	2
<b>Neutral - 3</b>	5	1	2	8
<b>Agree - 4</b>	4	4	3	11
<b>Strongly Agree - 5</b>	5	6	3	14
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>36</b>



Appendix 9f

6. Students are able to use appropriate non-fiction reading comprehension strategies for my grade level and content area.

	Content Area Teachers	Language Arts Teachers	Special Education Teachers	TOTAL
<b>Strongly Disagree - 1</b>	1	1	0	2
<b>Disagree - 2</b>	2	1	2	5
<b>Neutral - 3</b>	4	3	4	11
<b>Agree - 4</b>	5	6	0	11
<b>Strongly Agree - 5</b>	5	0	2	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>36</b>

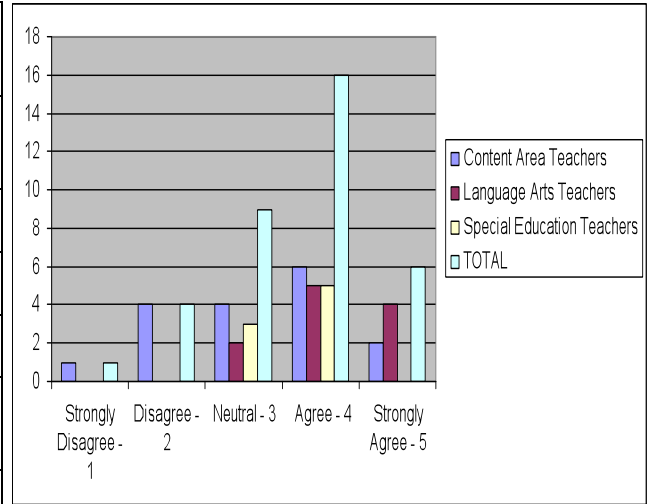




Appendix 9g

7. I am familiar with appropriate classroom assessments which tests students' reading comprehension skills with non-fiction texts.

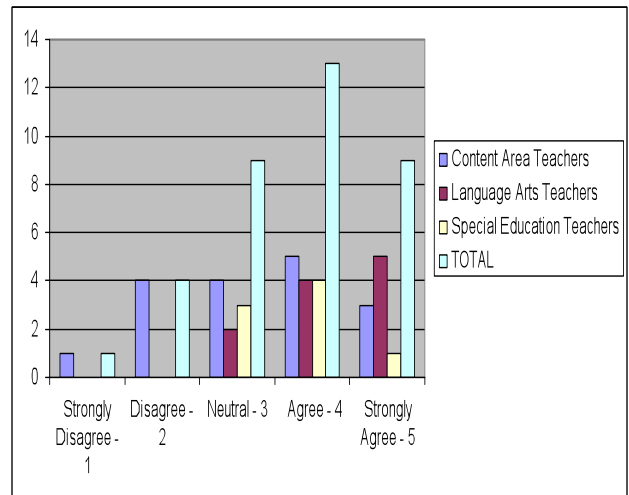
	Content Area Teachers	Language Arts Teachers	Special Education Teachers	TOTAL
<b>Strongly Disagree - 1</b>	1	0	0	1
<b>Disagree - 2</b>	4	0	0	4
<b>Neutral - 3</b>	4	2	3	9
<b>Agree - 4</b>	6	5	5	16
<b>Strongly Agree - 5</b>	2	4	0	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>36</b>



Appendix 9h

8. I am confident with using non-fiction reading comprehension assessments to inform and improve reading comprehension in my classroom.

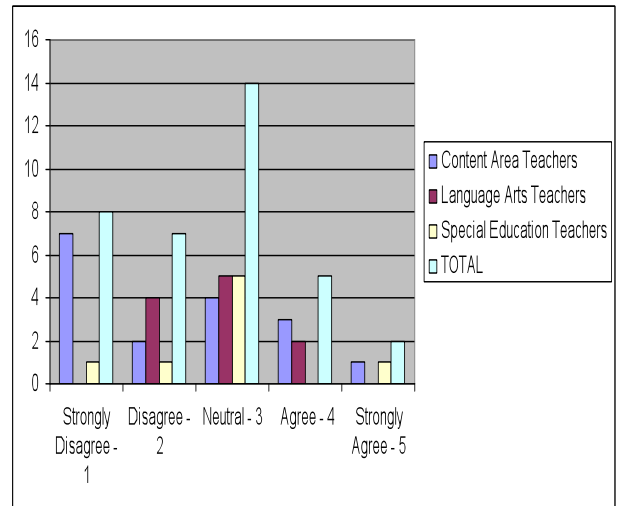
	Content Area Teachers	Language Arts Teachers	Special Education Teachers	TOTAL
<b>Strongly Disagree - 1</b>	1	0	0	1
<b>Disagree - 2</b>	4	0	0	4
<b>Neutral - 3</b>	4	2	3	9
<b>Agree - 4</b>	5	4	4	13
<b>Strongly Agree - 5</b>	3	5	1	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>36</b>



Appendix 9i

9. My curriculum guide assists me in planning/teaching non-fiction reading comprehension strategies.

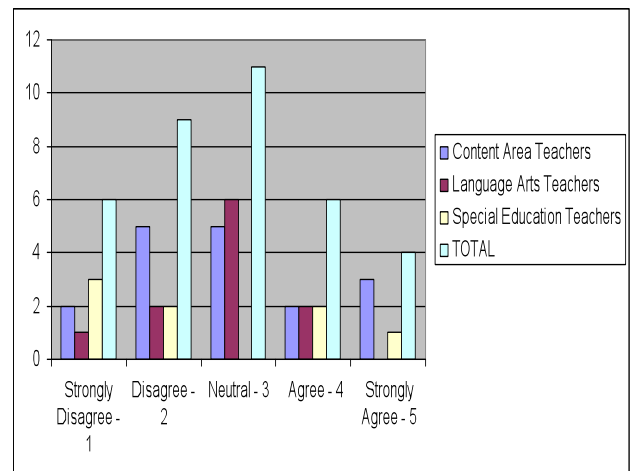
	Content Area Teachers	Language Arts Teachers	Special Education Teachers	TOTAL
<b>Strongly Disagree - 1</b>	7	0	1	8
<b>Disagree - 2</b>	2	4	1	7
<b>Neutral - 3</b>	4	5	5	14
<b>Agree - 4</b>	3	2	0	5
<b>Strongly Agree - 5</b>	1	0	1	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>36</b>



Appendix 9j

10. Resources are provided to me by the district to support reading comprehension development in non-fiction.

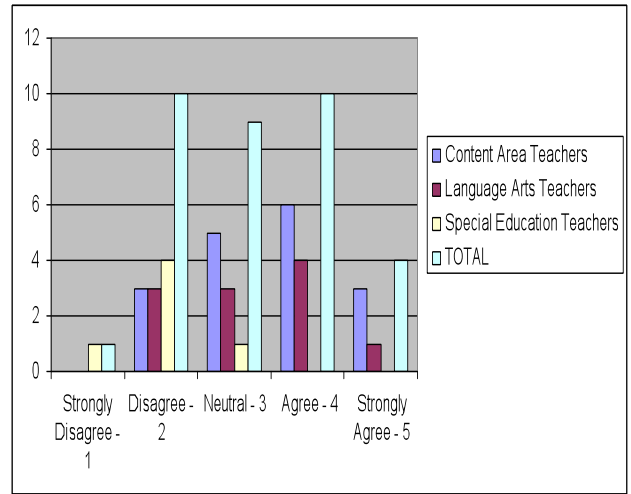
	Content Area Teachers	Language Arts Teachers	Special Education Teachers	TOTAL
<b>Strongly Disagree - 1</b>	2	1	3	6
<b>Disagree - 2</b>	5	2	2	9
<b>Neutral - 3</b>	5	6	0	11
<b>Agree - 4</b>	2	2	2	6
<b>Strongly Agree - 5</b>	3	0	1	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>36</b>



Appendix 9k

11. My textbook provides me with non-fiction reading comprehension strategies.

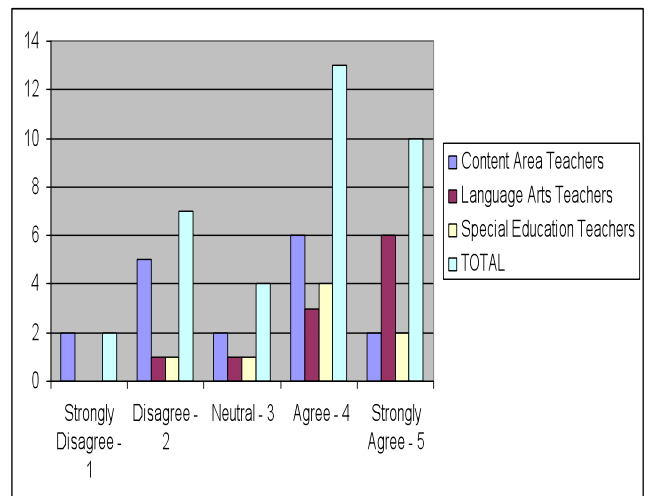
	Content Area Teachers	Language Arts Teachers	Special Education Teachers	TOTAL
<b>Strongly Disagree - 1</b>	0	0	1	1
<b>Disagree - 2</b>	3	3	4	10
<b>Neutral - 3</b>	5	3	1	9
<b>Agree - 4</b>	6	4	0	10
<b>Strongly Agree - 5</b>	3	1	0	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>34</b>



Appendix 9l

12. I understand how non-fiction reading comprehension is assessed on the NJASK.

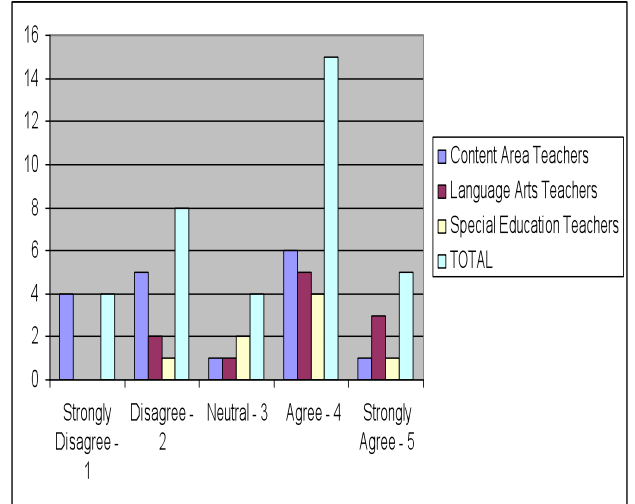
	Content Area Teachers	Language Arts Teachers	Special Education Teachers	TOTAL
<b>Strongly Disagree - 1</b>	2	0	0	2
<b>Disagree - 2</b>	5	1	1	7
<b>Neutral - 3</b>	2	1	1	4
<b>Agree - 4</b>	6	3	4	13
<b>Strongly Agree - 5</b>	2	6	2	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>36</b>



Appendix 9m

13. I understand how non-fiction reading comprehension is assessed on the CTP-4.

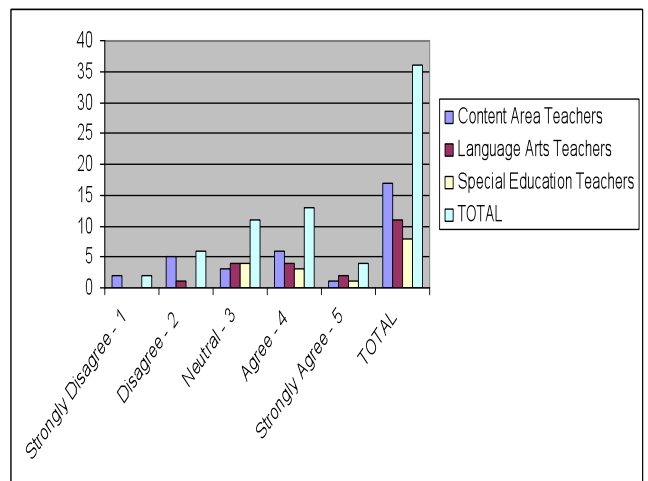
	Content Area Teachers	Language Arts Teachers	Special Education Teachers	TOTAL
<b>Strongly Disagree - 1</b>	4	0	0	4
<b>Disagree - 2</b>	5	2	1	8
<b>Neutral - 3</b>	1	1	2	4
<b>Agree - 4</b>	6	5	4	15
<b>Strongly Agree - 5</b>	1	3	1	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>36</b>



Appendix 9n

14. I am familiar with how the district uses test results to shape curriculum.

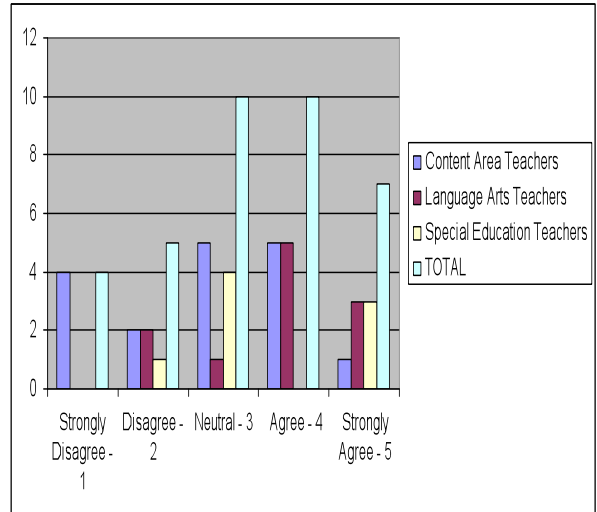
	Content Area Teachers	Language Arts Teachers	Special Education Teachers	TOTAL
<b>Strongly Disagree - 1</b>	2	0	0	2
<b>Disagree - 2</b>	5	1	0	6
<b>Neutral - 3</b>	3	4	4	11
<b>Agree - 4</b>	6	4	3	13
<b>Strongly Agree - 5</b>	1	2	1	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>36</b>



Appendix 9o

15. I have sought out professional development training to enhance my teaching of non-fiction reading comprehension.

	Content Area Teachers	Language Arts Teachers	Special Education Teachers	TOTAL
Strongly Disagree - 1	4	0	0	4
Disagree - 2	2	2	1	5
Neutral - 3	5	1	4	10
Agree - 4	5	5	0	10
Strongly Agree - 5	1	3	3	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>36</b>



Appendix 9p

16. The district has provided an adequate amount of opportunities for professional development training for teaching non-fiction reading comprehension.

	Content Area Teachers	Language Arts Teachers	Special Education Teachers	TOTAL
Strongly Disagree - 1	4	2	3	9
Disagree - 2	7	5	2	14
Neutral - 3	5	4	2	11
Agree - 4	1	0	1	2
Strongly Agree - 5	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>36</b>

