

Using Informational Books to Build
Background Knowledge & Vocabulary

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What We Know from Research about Sharing Informational Books with Young Children

“When parents read informational books to their children, the book discussion talk of both parents and children contained more comments and greater vocabulary diversity.”

-Price, vanKleeck, and Huberty (2009)

Children learn language from information book read alouds

- Expose children to language at higher levels of cognitive demand.
- Frequent repetition of the topical theme.
- Timeless verbs (e.g., “Ants carry sand,” as opposed to “Ants carried sand.”)
- Specialized vocabulary (thorax, colony).
- Description of attributes/components (e.g., “Ants have six legs”).

Children learn content from informational book read alouds

- The vocabulary diversity in information books is greater than in storybooks.
- When parents and children share books that include features of print, such as speech balloons, labels within pictures, and/or letters or words in isolation or highlighted using color, size, and font:
 - children were much more likely to focus their gaze on them, or to gaze longer at the illustrations that included them.
 - children made offered more print-related comments and questions.

Young children enjoy reading nonfiction texts.

- Young children often choose nonfiction texts on their own.
- Both boys and girls at make choices that include nonfiction.

Benefits of Reading Informational Books Aloud to Students Include...

- ✓ Developing students’ familiarity with the sound of informational text, which positively affects their later writing abilities.
- ✓ Increasing students’ background knowledge and vocabulary.
- ✓ Increasing students’ comprehension.
- ✓ Fostering students’ critical thinking skills as they compare and contrast information from books on the same topic.
- ✓ Sparking curiosity and desire to learn about the world.
- ✓ Helping students identify with people different from themselves.

GOAL 3

Demonstrate interest in and understanding of informational text.

LEARNING STANDARD A¹⁰

Recognize key ideas and details in nonfiction text.

Preschool Benchmarks

3.A.ECa With teacher assistance, ask and answer questions about details in a nonfiction book.

3.A.ECb With teacher assistance, retell detail(s) about main topic in a nonfiction book.

Example Performance Descriptors

EXPLORING	DEVELOPING	BUILDING
With teacher assistance, look at the pictures or text in a nonfiction book.	With teacher assistance, ask and answer simple questions about the pictures or text in a nonfiction book.	With teacher assistance, look at pictures in an informational book to find an answer to a question (e.g., looking to see what a tadpole looks like and how it is different from a frog).
With teacher assistance, identify one important fact in a nonfiction book heard read aloud.	With teacher assistance, identify more than one important fact from a nonfiction book heard read aloud.	With teacher assistance, recall important facts from a nonfiction book heard read aloud.

LEARNING STANDARD B¹¹

Recognize features of nonfiction books.

Preschool Benchmarks

3.B.ECa With teacher assistance, identify basic similarities and differences in pictures and information found in two texts on the same topic.

Example Performance Descriptors

EXPLORING	DEVELOPING	BUILDING
With teacher assistance, talk about how the pictures in two books about the same topic are alike and different (e.g., noticing that photographs are used in one book and drawings in another book on the same topic).	With teacher assistance, talk about how the facts in two books about the same topic are alike and different (e.g., in two books about construction vehicles, notice that one includes two kinds of dump trucks).	With teacher assistance, talk about how the pictures and facts in two books about the same topic are alike and different (e.g., in two books about birds, notice that they both have many birds with red beaks and show different kinds of nests).

From: Common Core State Standards, K-2

Informational Text: Key Ideas and Details	
College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standard 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.	
Grade	Grade-Specific Standard
Kindergarten	With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
Grade 1	Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
Grade 2	Ask and answer such questions as <i>who</i> , <i>what</i> , <i>where</i> , <i>when</i> , <i>why</i> , and <i>how</i> to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.
Informational Text: Key Ideas and Details	
CCR Anchor Standard 2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.	
Grade	Grade-Specific Standard
Kindergarten	With prompting and support, identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.
Grade 1	Identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.
Grade 2	Identify the main topic of a multiparagraph text as well as the focus of specific paragraphs within the text.
Informational Text: Key Ideas and Details	
CCR Anchor Standard 3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.	
Grade	Grade-Specific Standard
Kindergarten	With prompting and support, describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text.
Grade 1	Describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text.
Grade 2	Describe the connection between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text.

The Common Core Standards emphasize...

- Building broad knowledge
- Listening and learning
- Interdisciplinary approach
 - Read Alouds & Discussion
 - Literature
 - Informational Text
- **Grade-to-grade progression of knowledge**

For example...

The Human Body

Preschool

Basic body parts

- *My First Body Board Book* by Dorling Kindersley
- *Body* by Dorling Kindersley
- *Body Parts* by Bev Schumacher
- *Where's Baby's Belly Button?* by Karen Katz
- *Toes, Ears, and Nose: A Lift-the-Flap Book* by Marion Bauer & Karen Katz
- *Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes* by Annie Kubler
- *Eyes, Nose, Fingers, and Toes; A First book All About You* by Judy Hindley

Kindergarten

The five senses and associated body parts

- * *My Five Senses* by Alike
- * *Hearing* by Maria Rius
- * *Sight* by Maria Rius
- * *Smell* by Maria Rius
- * *Taste* by Maria Rius
- * *Touch* by Maria Rius

Taking care of your body

- * *My Amazing Body: A First Look at Health & Fitness* by Pat Thomas

- * *Get Up and Go!* By Nancy Carlson
- * *Go Wash Up* by Doering Tourville
- * *Sleep* by Paul Showers
- * *Fuel the Body* by Doering Tourville

Grade One

Introduction to systems of the human body and body parts

- * *Under Your Skin: Your Amazing Body* by Mick Manning
- * *Me and My Amazing Body* by Joan Sweeny
- * *The Human Body* by Gallimard Jeunesse
- * *The Busy Body Book* by Lizzy Rockwell
- * *First Encyclopedia of the Human Body* by Fiona Chandler

Taking care of your body: Germs, diseases, and preventing illness

- * *Germs Make Me Sick* by Marilyn Berger
- * *Tiny Life on Your Body* by Christine Taylor-Butler
- * *Germ Stories* by Arthur Kornberg
- * *All About Scabs* by Genichiro Yagu

Grades Two & Three

Digestive and excretory systems

- * *What Happens to a Hamburger* by Paul Showers
- * *The Digestive System* by Rebecca Johnston
- The Digestive System* by Kristin Petrie

Taking care of your body: Healthy eating and nutrition

- * *Good Enough to Eat* by Lizzy Rockwell
- * *Showdown at the Food Pyramid* by Rex Barron

Muscular, skeletal, and nervous systems

- * *The Mighty Muscular and Skeletal Systems* (Crabtree Pub.)
- * *Muscles* by Seymour Simon
- * *Bones* by Seymour Simon
- * *The Astonishing Nervous System* (Crabtree Pub.)
- * *The Nervous System* by Joelle Riley

Using Informational Text with Young Children

- **Prepare children for the read aloud experience**
 - Tap into children's background knowledge about the topic
 - Preview text
 - Set a purpose for reading
- **Guide children's listening**
 - Help children learn how informational books are read
 - Recognize and utilize text features
 - Determine important ideas
 - Use pictures
 - Help children build understanding while you read
 - Teach and reinforce meanings of new words
 - Connect text to self
 - Make and confirm predictions
 - Visualize
 - Ask questions
 - Give and support opinions
 - Draw and support conclusions
 - Determine cause and effect
 - Distinguish between fantasy and fact
- **Facilitate connections**
 - Use the text to make interdisciplinary connections
 - Engage in shared and independent writing and drawing experiences
 - Use technology to discover and share information
 - Read additional texts, comparing and contrasting information in each
 - Pair fiction and nonfiction
 - Explore related knowledge and concepts in science, social studies, math, etc.
 - Link to art, music, movement and/or drama

Suggested Informational Books for Children in the Preschool & Primary Years

Ajmera, Maya; Derstine, Elise Hofer; and Pon, Cynthia. (2012). *What We Wear: Dressing Up Around the World*. Charlesbridge.

Arlon, Penelope and Gordon-Harris, Tony. (2013). *Emergency Vehicles*. Scholastic.

Arlon, Penelope and Gordon-Harris, Tony. (2012). *Farm*. Scholastic.

Arlon, Penelope and Gordon-Harris, Tony. (2012). *See Me Grow*. Scholastic.

Arlon, Penelope and Gordon-Harris, Tony. (2012). *Penguins*. Scholastic.

Arlon, Penelope and Gordon-Harris, Tony. (2013). *Puppies and Kittens*. Scholastic.

Aston, Diana Hutts and Long, Sylvia. (2012). *A Rock is Lively*. Chronicle Books.

Antle, Bhagavan “Doc” with Feldman, Thea. (2011). *Suryia & Roscoe: The True Story of an Unlikely Friendship*. Henry Holt and Company.

Baby Animals: At Night. (2012). Kingfisher

Baby Animals: At the Zoo. (2012). Kingfisher.

Baby Animals: In the Forest. (2012). Kingfisher.

Baby Animals: In Grasslands. (2012). Kingfisher.

Baby Animals: In the Jungle. (2012). Kingfisher.

Baby Animals: In the Sea. (2012). Kingfisher.

Baby Animals: In the Snow. (2012). Kingfisher.

Baby Animals: In the Wild. (2012). Kingfisher.

Baby Animals: On the Farm. (2012). Kingfisher.

Baby Animals: Pets. (2012). Kingfisher.

Baines, Becky (2008). *A Den Is a Bed for a Bear: A Book about Hibernation.* National Geographic Society.

Baines, Becky (2008). *What Did One Elephant Say to the Other? A Book about Communication.* National Geographic Society.

Baines, Becky (2009). *What Is In That Egg? A Book about Life Cycles.* National Geographic Society.

Barner, Bob (2010). *Bears, Bears, Bears.* Chronicle Books.

Barth, April. (2009). *Centimeter and Meter.* Benchmark Education Company.

Bauer, Marion & Katz, Karen. (2003). *Toes, Ears, and Nose: A Lift-the-Flap Book.* Little Simon Publishing.

Berkes, Marianne. (2013). *What's in the Garden?* Dawn Publications.

Bingham, Caroline. (2003). *Whales & Dolphins.* Dorling Kindersley Limited.

Bradley, Kimberly Brubaker. (2001). *Pop! A Book About Bubbles.* HarperCollins.

Buckley, Carol. (2009). *Tarra & Bella: The Elephant and Dog Who Became Best Friends.* G.P. Putnam's Sons.

Bullard, Lisa (2006). *Loud and Quiet: an Animal Opposites Book.* Capstone Press

Callery, Sean. (2012). *I Wonder Why: There's a Hole in the Sky.* Kingfisher.

Callery, Sean. (2011). *Life Cycles: Grassland.* Kingfisher.

Callery, Sean. (2011). *Life Cycles: Ocean.* Kingfisher.

Callery, Sean. (2011). *Life Cycles: Polar Lands.* Kingfisher.

Canivares, Susan and Chanko, Pamela. (2000). *Aquarium.* Scholastic.

Canizares, Susan and Berger, Samantha. (2000). *Restaurant.* Scholastic.

Cantrell, Charlie and Wagner, Rachel. (2011). *A Friend for Einstein.* Disney Hyperion.

Carney, Elizabeth. (2011). *Cats vs. Dogs.* National Geographic Society.

Castor, Debra. (2009). *Animals in their Habitats.* Benchmark Education Company.

Cowcher, Helen. (2011). *Desert Elephants.* Farrar Strauss Giroux.

Dickmann, Nancy (2011). *Jobs on a Farm*. Heinemann/Raintree Publishers.

Dickmann, Nancy (2011). *Seasons on a Farm*. Heinemann/Raintree Publishers.

Dickmann, Nancy (2011). *Food from Farms*. Heinemann/Raintree Publishers.

Esbaum, Jill (2009). *Apples for Everyone*. National Geographic Society.

Esbaum, Jill (2010). *Everything Spring*. National Geographic Society.

Esbaum, Jill (2009). *Seed, Sprout, Pumpkin, Pie*. National Geographic Society.

Esbaum, Jill (2010). *Winter Wonderland*. National Geographic Society.

Feldman, Thea. (2012). *Jobs People Do*. Kingfisher.

Fern, Tracey. (2012). *Barnum's Bones*. Margaret Ferguson Books.

Ferris, Jeri Chase. (2012). *Noah Webster & His Words*. Houghton Mifflin Company.

Flynn, Sarah Wassner (2011). *Baby Animal Pop!* National Geographic Society.

Frank, Matthew. (2009). *Needs Past and Present*. Benchmark Education Company.

Gaff, Jackie. (2012). *I Wonder Why: The Sahara is Cold at Night*. Kingfisher.

Galvin, Laura Gates. (2007). *Alphabet of Ocean Animals*. Soundprints.

Gifford, Clive. (2011). *Explorers: Things That Go*. Kingfisher.

Goldstone, Bruce. (2012). *Awesome Autumn*. Henry Holt and Company.

Goldsmith, Mike and Garlick, Mark A. (2012). *Universe: Journey into Deep Space*. Kingfisher.

Himmelman, John. (2013). *Noisy Bug Sing-Along*. Dawn Publications.

Hindley, Judy (2002). *Eyes, Nose, Fingers, and Toes; A First book All About You*. Candlewick Publishing.

Hughes, Catherine D. (2010). *First Big Book of Animals*. National Geographic Society.

Hughes, Catherine D. (2011). *First Big Book of Dinosaurs*. National Geographic Society.

Hughes, Catherine D. (2012). *First Big Book of Space*. National Geographic Society.

Hulbert, Laura. (2011). *Who Has These Feet?* Henry Holt & Company.

Hulbert, Laura. (2012). *Who Has This Tail?* Henry Holt and Company.

Jacobs, Pat. (2012). *I Wonder Why: Pirates Wore Earrings*. Kingfisher.

Jenkins, Steve (2004). *Actual Size*. Houghton-Mifflin.

Jenkins, Steve (2007). *Dogs and Cats*. Houghton Mifflin Company.

Jenkins, Steve (2006). *Move!* Houghton-Mifflin.

Jenkins, Steve and Page, Robin (2013). *My First Day*. Houghton Mifflin Books for Children..

Jenkins, Steve and Page, Robin (2003). *What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?* Houghton-Mifflin.

Jeunesse, Gallimar and Valat, Pierre-Marie. (2010). *Water*. Moonlight Publishing.

Johnson, Jinny. (2011). *Explorers: Insects and Creepy-Crawlies*. Kingfisher.

Joubert, Beverly and Dereck. *Little Kids' African Animal Book*. National Geographic Society, 2011.

Joubert, Beverly and Dereck. (2011). *African Animal Alphabet*. National Geographic Society.

Katz, Karen (2000). *Where Is Baby's Belly Button?* Little Simon Publishing.

Kerby, Johanna. (2010). *Little Pink Pup*. G.P. Putnam's Sons.

Kindersley, Dorling (2010). *Body* (Board Book). DK Publishing.

Kindersley, Dorling (2004). *My First Body Board Book*. DK Publishing.

Kvatum, Lia. (2012). *Saving Yasha: The Incredible True Story of an Adopted Moon Bear*. National Geographic Society.

Laroche, Giles. (2011). *If You Lived Here*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Lawler, Janet (2013). *Ocean Counting*. National Geographic Little Kids.

Look & Learn: Count! (2011). National Geographic Society.

Look & Learn: Match! (2011). National Geographic Society.

Look & Learn: Same and Different. (2012). National Geographic Society.

Macdonald, Fiona. (2012). *I Wonder Why: Romans Wore Togas*. Kingfisher.

Markle, Sandra (2009). *How Many Baby Pandas?* Walker Publishing Company.

Markle, Sandra (2013). *What if You Had Animal Teeth?* Scholastic.

Marsh, Laura. (2010). *Great Migrations: Butterflies*. National Geographic Society.

Marsh, Laura. (2010). *Great Migrations: Elephants*. National Geographic Society.

Marsh, Laura. (2012). *Halloween*. National Geographic Society.

Marsh, Laura. (2011). *Spiders*. National Geographic Society.

McNamara, Margaret. (2009). *The Life Cycle of a Butterfly*. Benchmark Education Company.

Maybaum, Hilary. (2012). *Night and Day*. Benchmark Education Company.

Mitton, Tony and Parker, Ant. (2010). *Fantastic Forest*. Kingfisher.

National Geographic Society (2011). *Match!* National Geographic Society.

Owen, Ann (2004). *Delivering Your Mail: A Book About Mail Carriers*. Picture Window Books, A Capstone Publisher.

Pinborough, Jan. (2013). *Miss Moore Thought Otherwise*. Houghton Mifflin Books for Children.

Pinnington, Andrea and Gordon-Harris, Tory. (2012). *Animal Babies*. Scholastic.

Piven, Hanoch. (2009). *What Cats Are Made Of*. Ginee Seo Books.

Pittau, F. and Gervais, B. (2011). *Count 123*. National Geographic Society.

Ryder, Joanne. (2009). *Panda Kindergarten*. Collins.

Sayre, April Pulley. (2011). *Rah, Rah, Radishes*. Beach Lane Books.

Schumacher, Bev (2006). *Body Parts*. Learning Props Publishing.

Shields, Amy. (2011). *First Big Book of Why*. National Geographic Society.

Shores, Erica L. (2011). *How to Make Bubbles*. Capstone Press.

Shores, Lori (2011). *How to Make Slime*. Capstone Press.

Sill, Catherine. (2013). *About Birds: A Guide for Children*. Peachtree.

Sill, Catherine. (2012). *About Habitats: Oceans*. Peachtree.

Sill, Catherine. (2011). *About Hummingbirds*. Peachtree.

Stewart, Melissa. (2012). *A Place for Bats*. Peachtree.

Stewart, Melissa. (2013). *A Place for Turtles*. Peachtree.

Stewart, Melissa. (2011). *Deadliest Animals*. National Geographic Society.

Stewart, Melissa. (2012). *Titanic*. National Geographic Society.

Steele, Philip. (2012). *I Wonder Why: Countries Fly Flags*. Kingfisher.

Scott, Carole. (2011). *Explorers: Stars and Planets*. Kingfisher.

Taylor, Barbara. (2012). *I Wonder Why: Zippers Have Teeth*. Kingfisher.

Thimmes, Catherine. (2011). *Friends: True Stories of Extraordinary Animal Friendships*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Torrise, Cathy. (2011). *A Healthy Day*. Abrams & Company.

Torrise, Cathy. (2009). *Before It Gets to the Store*. Abrams & Company.

Torrise, Cathy. (2009). *Families Are Special*. Abrams & Company.

Torrise, Cathy. (2009). *From Here to There*. Abrams & Company.

Torrise, Cathy. (2009). *Long Ago and Now*. Abrams & Company.

Torrisi, Cathy. (2009). *My Community*. Abrams & Company.

Weber, Belinda. (2011). *Reptiles*. Kingfisher.