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ABSTRACT

The differences in off-task behavior rates exhibited by kindergarten students during narrative and non-narrative-based social studies instruction was investigated. Off-task behavior was operationally defined and students were observed during eight different lessons. Four lessons employed story narrative picture books and four lessons used non-narrative prose texts. Off-task behaviors and time were recorded during the reading of the texts and during the discussions. A weighting function was calculated and used to determine the number of weighted off-task behaviors. The average weighted and unweighed off-task behavior rates for narrative and non-narrative texts were computed. Statistical analyses were performed on reading data, discussion data, and whole lesson data. Results indicated no significant statistical differences on the off-task behavior rate exhibited during instruction as a function of text type. Reading data, however, was statistically significant, where students exhibited more off-task behaviors during non-narrative read alouds than during narrative read alouds. (Contains 41 references, and 6 tables and 3 figures of data. Appendixes contain an eight-item annotated bibliography of books used; a list of discussion questions; and a data record sheet.) (Author/RS)

EFFECTS OF NARRATIVE LITERATURE ON OFF-TASK BEHAVIORS

The Effects of Narrative Literature on Off-Task Behaviors

During Kindergarten Social Studies Instruction

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Abstract

The differences in off-task behavior rates exhibited by kindergarten students during narrative- and non-narrative-based social studies instruction was investigated. Off-task behavior was operationally defined and students were observed during eight different lessons. Four lessons employed narrative texts and four lessons utilized non-narrative texts. Off-task behaviors and time were recorded during the reading of the texts and during the discussions. A weighting function was calculated and used to determine the number of weighted off-task behaviors. The average weighted and unweighted off-task behavior rates for narrative and non-narrative texts were computed. Statistical analyses were performed on reading data, discussion data and whole lesson data. The results indicate no significant statistical differences on the off-task behavior rate exhibited during instruction as a function of text type at a level of 0.05. Reading data was statistically significant at an 0.075 level, where students exhibited more off-task behaviors during non-narrative read alouds than during narrative read alouds.

The Effects of Narrative Literature on Off-Task Behaviors During Kindergarten Social Studies Instruction

In the current study, off-task behavior in kindergarten students was examined during narrative and non-narrative lessons. To determine the level of interest of these preliterate learners in social studies lessons on careers, off-task behaviors were tallied because off-task behaviors were believed to be an indicator of interest. Previous studies have examined the effects of narrative literature on recall ability, content acquisition and attitudes of upper elementary, middle and high school students. The current study looks at the effects narrative literature has on interest level, as measured by the frequency of off-task behaviors exhibited, in a primary classroom.

In recent years, numerous articles have been written on the value of using literature in social studies instruction (Guzzetti, Kowalinski and McGowan, 1992; McGowan and Guzzetti, 1991; McKinney and Jones, 1993; Smith and Johnson, 1993). The surge of research in this area comes in response to widespread criticism of traditional textbooks. Social studies texts have been described as dull, disjointed, lacking in meaning (Sewall, 1988), with banal content, colorless prose (Tyson and Woodward, 1989), and highly condensed information that leads to the rote memorization of dates, names and places (Naylor and Diem, 1987). With criticisms such as these, it is not surprising that many educators advocate the use of children's books to teach social studies. These proponents of literature-based instruction contend that using children's books helps teachers make positive connections between children and their experiences (Aronson, Galbo, Schulz, and Shawkey, 1996), provides variety (McGowan and Guzzetti, 1991), allows for greater comprehension and application of knowledge (Smith and Johnson, 1993) and holds the interest of a diverse student body (Gee and Olson, 1992).

The term narrative is defined by Webster's dictionary as a "recital of a story or event; a tale." Narrative literature refers to the relaying of a story or event in written form and includes children's literature, folk tales, biographies and autobiographies, children's

picture books and some children's tradebooks. Narrative literature can be fiction or non-fiction but it has to have a story grammar where there is a beginning, middle and an end. For the purposes of this study, biographies and folk tales have been excluded even though they can be written in narrative form. Story narrative is used exclusively for this study where readers can trace the main character through a beginning, middle and end. Specifically, story narrative picture books were employed as examples of story narrative text.

In presenting the findings of this study, a review of the literature advocating literature-based instruction is synthesized under four main advantages of narrative literature--interest, variety, comprehension, and relevance. Studies demonstrating efficacy of narrative texts with regards to attitudes, recall and content acquisition are then presented. The design of the study will be outlined and results will be reported. Next, a discussion will ensue surrounding the conclusions and implications drawn from the findings. Finally, directions for future studies will be suggested.

Researchers have called for the inclusion of literature or "real books" as part of the instructional program in social studies (Guzzetti, et al., 1992; Sanacore, 1990; Wilson, 1988). Literature on this topic identifies reasons to include narratives in an instructional program. There are four areas where literature-based curriculum exceeds a traditional non-narrative textbook curriculum in terms of learning outcomes. These articles suggest that narrative literature is more interesting, offers more variety, is more easily comprehended than non-narrative text and provides a degree of relevance to young learners.

Wade (1990) believes that if texts are more interesting, students will be motivated to read and will consequently learn more. She postulates that the condition affecting text-based interest is the degree to which readers can relate personally to the characters and events. This condition elicits two types of interest--cognitive interest and emotional interest. Cognitive interest is affected by not only the cohesiveness of the text, but it is also a function of the reader's background knowledge. Kintsch (1980) cites that the text must

hang together and make sense to the reader. Kintsch (1980) also found that interest tends to be low with little or no background knowledge and increases as more is known. Emotional interest is aroused when events have a direct emotional impact and when stories invite vicarious experience in the reader (Wade, 1990). This is similar to the notion of character identification (Kintsch, 1980). Character identification and vicarious experiences, which increase text-based interest, can be enhanced by providing details (Wade, 1990). These details are the things that many non-narrative texts are lacking and that are inherent in the structure of story narrative.

Smith and Johnson (1993) also advocate the use of narrative text in instruction. They believe that using narrative texts as the primary reading materials in thematic units creates an atmosphere where students can be motivated to become an active participant in their learning. This will in turn improve attitudes towards learning which may encourage life-long learning. The reason narrative texts foster this type of environment of interest is because they are usually more intriguing and enjoyable than non-narrative textbooks. These literary works are composed by an author to tell a story or profile a personality (McGowan and Guzzetti, 1991). This story style (narrative) not only has a positive affect on the level of student interest in a text, but it also holds the interest of a diverse student body (Gee and Olson, 1992; Wade, 1990). Two teachers have been cited as having had positive experiences incorporating a literature-based approach to instruction. One remarked at being impressed with her students' enthusiasm for "real books" (Guzzetti, et al., 1992). Another educator, Smith (1995), believes that literature entertains and provides a wonderful context to explore and understand questions such as, "Who are we?" and "Why do we exist?" She found that literature also helps students recognize various views people hold in a context that provides entertainment and interest. Brozo and Tomlinson (1986) contend that narrative texts used skillfully can make the curriculum more palatable, comprehensible and memorable to learners.

Second, narrative texts also keep students engaged in text by providing variety. Story structures vary from author to author. Characters and problems change from book to book. This variety satisfies many different interests represented in a typical elementary classroom. It also allows students the opportunity to read materials consistent with their reading abilities (McGowan and Guzzetti, 1991). The variety of styles found in narrative story books keeps students engaged in text. These styles allow authors to inject humor, choose unusual settings and introduce distinctive artwork in the book (McGowan and Guzzetti, 1991). The distinctive flavor of each story book created by different literary elements provides a greater opportunity for the book to hit upon students' prior knowledge and promotes increased engagement in text. These elements will not only increase the likelihood that preliterate learners will pay attention to the teacher as she reads narrative text aloud, but will also increase the likelihood that students will be more attentive to the written text, itself. The things that make narrative text so varied and consequently make students pay attention more, are commonly missing from non-narrative textbooks. Keeping eyes on written text at a preliterate stage is beneficial for a myriad of reasons. Perhaps most importantly, early exposure to text and eyes on text predicts later reading success. Allington (1977) contends that poor readers are exposed to very little text. A study by Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985) found that eyes on extended text occupies less than seven minutes a day in elementary schools. These researchers demonstrate the importance of keeping students engaged in text, especially at an early age, because the level to which students are engaged can predict later achievement in reading. The features inherent to story narrative, such as pictures, unique characters and settings, and the use of humor, are all elements that provide variety in instruction and increase the likelihood of student engagement.

Comprehension is another area for which narrative text proves to be quite effective in instruction. Students acquire more concepts and have a greater understanding of those concepts through literature-based instruction than through traditional non-narrative

approaches (Guzzetti, et al., 1992). Because students are familiar with this story structure, this familiarity with narrative texts allows for greater comprehension and application of knowledge (Smith and Johnson, 1993). This is especially relevant in younger students. Poissant, Chalifoux, Bourque, Ziarko and Litowski (1991) cited that Meyer (1979) has argued that the skill to comprehend an informative text is not fully mastered before grade nine, but young children have internalized the schemata necessary to comprehend narratives. However, the age at which children start to internalize the structure of information text has yet to be determined. A review conducted by Armbruster and Armstrong (1992) drew similar conclusions. They found that younger and less proficient readers are less able to successfully and spontaneously execute search tasks with non-narrative information text than are older and more proficient readers.

Narrative structure affords greater likelihood of information transference (Lynch-Brown, 1990). Researchers contend that literature generates an environment where children are encouraged to think independently, critically and constructively (Tooze and Krone, 1955). Children are also presented with opportunities to refine literal and inferential comprehension skills in a literature-based classroom (Dunthorn and Woods, 1993). Numerous social studies educators cite that reading and listening to literature enhances children's understanding of ages past by introducing historical characters in real settings (Dunthorn and Woods, 1993; Johnson, 1925). Because this interdependence is part of a story format with which students are already comfortable, new concepts introduced through narrative form are more easily acquired (Dunthorn and Woods, 1993; McGowan and Guzzetti, 1991; Wong and Calfee, 1988). Students who fully grasp and understand new concepts in a concrete manner are better able to transfer and apply these concrete concepts to more abstract concepts. This transference can also occur across disciplines.

The structure of non-narrative text does not allow for easy comprehension or the transference of information because these texts teach knowledge primarily through isolated skill exercises. Skills learned in isolation are difficult to transfer to other disciplines,

especially for younger children. Traditional non-narrative social studies texts are criticized as containing too many facts presented in a list-like organization (Hurd, 1970; Wong and Calfee, 1988). Texts attempt to cover too much breadth in not enough depth and operate on the assumption that students know unrealistic amounts of background information (Alleman and Brophy, 1996; Beck and McKeown, 1988). Narrative texts, however, encourage knowledge acquisition through authentic activities involving natural skill acquisition (Alleman and Brophy, 1996). This naturalness allows children to apply the skills to many different situations. The comprehensibility of narrative texts allows for greater learning, thus making narrative texts a viable alternative or supplement to traditional non-narrative social studies texts.

Finally, narrative texts also create a more relevant, personal and individualized learning approach (Smith and Johnson, 1993). They help students link concepts together in meaningful ways. When students develop concepts in a meaningful manner, learning makes more sense (Aronson, et al., 1996). Narrative books also provide a relevant and familiar framework upon which successful learning is dependent. Numerous researchers believe prior knowledge is essential to text comprehension (Alverman, Smith and Readance, 1985; Dunthorn and Woods, 1993; Hillerich, 1987; Marr and Gromley, 1982; McGowan and Guzzetti, 1991; Shanahan, 1989; Smith and Johnson, 1993). Children's prior knowledge provides a foundation upon which new concepts can be built and understood. Tapping into this knowledge and making learning relevant to students' personal experiences will facilitate the assimilation of concepts with existing ones in meaningful ways. Incorporating narrative literature into instructional practices helps teachers make these positive connections between children and their experiences (Aronson, et al., 1996). Narrative books often utilize young protagonists. This provides a context of prior knowledge with which children can identify and thus begin to understand more complex knowledge (Hillerich, 1987; Shanahan, 1989). Story narratives also provide typical real-world examples of concepts that students find familiar. This familiarity assists

children in linking previously learned concepts to new concepts (McGowan and Guzzetti, 1991). Smith (1995) contends that it is imperative that students gain access to story narratives that have characters who deal with life in believable ways. Literature provides a relevant approach to social studies curriculum and should be used to build upon and correct prior knowledge in classrooms (Dunthorn and Woods, 1993).

Now that the four strengths of narrative based instruction have been presented, I want to discuss the articles examining the effectiveness of narrative texts in content instruction. There have been numerous articles advocating the use of narrative literature in content areas, as well as practical articles on how to do it. Unfortunately, the articles examining the efficacy of a literature-based approach are scarce. Within those articles that do examine the effects of literature as an instructional tool in social studies curriculum, most examine attitudes, recall and content acquisition of students found at the upper elementary, middle school and secondary grades. For my purposes, I was interested in the effects of narrative texts at the primary level, specifically kindergarten.

The studies examining the effects literature has on students' attitudes towards social studies, by and large, show that narrative literature does not significantly affect attitudes. Kimmel (1973) investigated fifth-grade students' attitudes towards several countries after reading children's books. He found that no change in students' attitudes occurred. Brandhorst (1973) also reported that attitudes towards selected concepts were not affected by reading historical fiction in students in 10th- and 11th-grades. Kovalcik (1979) found that fifth-grade children's attitudes towards social studies did not change after being exposed to children's literature. A lengthy study conducted by Kemp (1989), found that after a 10-week period of children's literature exposure, fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students' attitudes were not significantly affected. A study by Guzzetti, et al. (1992) also reported no significant gains in attitudes towards reading or social studies after a unit, utilizing children's literature, was implemented on China. As measured on a pre-test, Guzzetti, et al. found that students had positive attitudes towards reading and negative

attitudes towards social studies. On the posttest, these researchers found that students' attitudes had not changed. They account for the lack of differential gains in attitudes by stating that since students' attitudes towards reading on a pre-test were very positive, there could not be significant gains on a posttest because there was not much room for improvement of attitudes. Guzzetti, et al. also contend that the students in the experimental group did not view the unit on China as a social studies unit because a traditional social studies textbook was not used; therefore, the students demonstrated negative attitudes towards social studies on the posttest, as well. This accounts for the non-significant gain in social studies attitudes.

In the studies that examine the effects of narrative literature on recall of information, narrative texts were found to elicit greater recall than those of a non-narrative nature. Poissant, et al. (1991) found that narrative text elicits a longer recall compared to informative text and that the recall of the narrative text undergoes less change than the recall of the informative text. One reason for longer recall from narrative texts is because students find narrative texts more interesting and are therefore likely to allocate more attention to that which they deem interesting. Anderson, Shirley, Wilson and Fielding (1984) found that third- and fourth-graders allocated more attention to interesting sentences and recalled those sentences better than uninteresting ones. Renninger and Wozniak (1985) found that differential attention towards interesting objects and subsequent recall ability begins at an early age. They found that three- and four-year olds are much more likely to shift their attention to interesting objects in their peripheral visual field than to non-interesting objects. These youngsters were also more likely to recognize and recall interesting objects as compared to uninteresting objects. Wade (1990) also found that interest was a better predictor of recall than was structural importance for both poor and skilled readers; for both immediate and delayed recall. Wade contends that passages that contain more lively, personal and dramatic passages, commonly found in narrative texts, are considered more interesting. In addition, only in narrative texts were interest and importance found to be

highly related. Hidi, Baird, and Hildyard (1982) found no relationship between interest and importance in expository texts; subjects rated few ideas as interesting at all. Narrative texts are repeatedly ranked as more interesting and objects ranked as interesting elicit differential attention. This attention subsequently affects recall ability in readers and listeners.

Finally, studies examining the efficacy of narrative texts on content acquisition are equivocal. Guzzetti, et al. (1992) found that sixth-grade students who were taught a unit on China using children's books showed significant differences in concept acquisition than those students taught with a traditional, non-narrative textbook approach. Howe (1990) reported that fifth-grade students who read historical fiction selections scored significantly higher on a measure of achievement than a control group. McKinney and Jones (1993) believe that children who are taught with children's books may learn more because more content can be included in a book than in a unit in a traditional textbook. Kovalcik (1979) examined the use of tradebooks (often written in narrative form) and textbooks (almost always written in non-narrative form) to teach the American Revolution. He concluded that students in the control group, using the textbook, scored significantly higher on achievement tests than the experimental group. Cunningham and Gall (1990) investigated the effects narrative and expository materials had on high school achievement. They found that the two groups did not differ significantly on the achievement measure. In summary, the effects of narrative texts on attitudes was not significant; the effects on recall was positive; and the effects on content acquisition and achievement were somewhat ambiguous.

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of narrative literature on social studies instruction in kindergarten. This study sought to determine what type of material, narrative or non-narrative, was more effective for engaging kindergarten students in teaching social studies skills in terms of off-task behaviors. No studies were found that investigated the effects and uses of narrative texts in a kindergarten setting. There are also few studies that examine the effects of narrative texts on off-task behaviors as an indicator

of interest. The age of kindergartners does not allow them to rate which they deem more interesting or important in a valid manner. Testing specifically for content acquisition was thought to be difficult because most kindergartners operate at a pre-literate stage. They also do not possess the ability to free-write. An oral test where student responses were marked for them by the experimenter was thought to add a dimension of unreliability because of experimenter bias. An attitudinal pre- and post-assessment was considered to be susceptible to subject bias in that children at this young age have a strong desire to please. Their abilities to verbalize and defend their choices are not present in a form which would allow for validity. Recall of text could have been easily measured but, at this young age, students do not yet possess the ability to differentiate between relevant and irrelevant information when conducting search tasks for information. This inability would have been further complicated by using story narratives where the author's goal is to help readers remember what happened to the character and how the character progresses during the course of the book, rather than the factual information that is usually presented as sidelights in a book.

This study solely desires to examine the effects that story narratives have on the frequency of off-task behaviors during kindergarten social studies instruction. First, I believe that kindergartners will exhibit more off-task behaviors during the reading of non-narrative texts than narratives texts (Null hypothesis: There will be no difference in the number of off-task behaviors during the reading of non-narrative and narrative texts). Secondly, the number off-task behaviors will be greater during the discussion session that follows the reading aloud of a non-narrative book as compared to a story narrative book (Null hypothesis: There will be no difference in the number of off-task behaviors during the discussion session that follows the reading of non-narrative and narrative texts). Finally, the net effect of instruction that utilizes story narratives will be that students will display less off-task behaviors during this type of instruction than during instruction that utilizes non-narrative texts (Null hypothesis: There will be no difference in the number of

off-task behaviors displayed by kindergarten students during social studies instruction utilizing story narratives than non-narrative texts).

Method

Participants

A class of seventeen kindergarten students from a public school in central Virginia was used for this study. There were seven girls and ten boys in this class. These students were from predominantly middle to upper class neighborhoods. It was an instructional level class made up of bright and charming students. The children were participating involuntarily because, in order to keep results valid, they needed to be blind participants. They were not compensated for their participation. One kindergarten student was an autistic boy and was included in the data. One child was not included in the data because she has very special needs. She is being tested and observed for a diagnosis of William's Syndrome, which cites intense and pervasive off-task behavior as a characteristic. Furthermore, her attendance is very erratic. Because of her extreme off-task behavior and the inconsistency of her school attendance, data was not collected for her because it would have had profound affects on the validity and reliability of the results. Therefore, only 16 students were used for data collection.

The classroom teacher was a female who had been teaching for nine years. She had taught kindergarten for the past three years. Data was not collected on her, but she was a part of the study in that she read the books to the children. She was a voluntary participant in this study, knowing the topic of this study. She was compensated in the form of a stipend for her participation in this study.

Study Measures

This study measured the number of off-task behaviors during the reading of a text and during the discussion session that followed the read-aloud. Off-task behaviors were defined as 1) eyes off text; 2) talking during lesson when not acknowledged by teacher; and 3) playing with some object in a distracting manner (i.e. shoelaces, paper scraps,

classmates' hair, small toys, etc.). These behaviors were only recorded if they were pervasive, meaning that a student exhibited a described behavior for 10 seconds. This study did not record off-task behaviors that were fleeting. The pervasiveness of the behavior was thought to mean that the behavior was interfering with the student's ability to attend to the lesson and the text because the student was not listening to the text or discussion.

Materials

Eight books were used (see Appendix A for annotated bibliography). Four books were written using a story narrative structure and four books were written in non-narrative prose. This study was a part of a career and community helpers social studies unit and each book addressed a different career. The books were selected with a kindergarten audience in mind and were appropriate for the thinking and reasoning skills kindergartners possess.

Since the number of off-task behaviors during instruction was counted, a clock or watch with a second hand was used in order to keep accurate time of lessons and to record data at set time intervals. A data record sheet was designed to record data in an efficient and reliable manner (see Appendix B).

Procedure

The unit on careers and community helpers was two weeks in duration. Immediately after lunch (12:50-1:10 p.m.), this class had an afternoon circle time, during which the lessons were taught with the use of the pre-selected books. The books were read and the discussion was led by the classroom teacher at this time for eight days on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays (on Wednesdays the class was in music at this time). The type of text alternated each day between narrative and non-narrative, starting with non-narrative on day one. The structure of each lesson was the same. The teacher read the book aloud and then asked three questions during the discussion that followed the read aloud. Her involvement in keeping students on-task was minimal unless the behavior became disruptive to her reading or to other students. At this time, she quickly got the off-

task student's attention focused back on the lesson and resumed the reading or discussion. These questions for discussion were scripted prior to the unit implementation. Each of the three questions was asked after every book. They addressed recall, valuing and comparison thinking level skills (see Appendix C for the questions used during discussion).

Data was collected and recorded on a data record sheet. The duration and the number of off-task behaviors were recorded during both the read aloud part of the lesson and the discussion part of the lesson. A simple frequency count was taken and recorded as tallies on the record sheet. The observer recorded the number of off-task behaviors in accordance with the above definition in 15 second intervals. After the read aloud, the frequency count of off-task behaviors started over during the discussion session. The time of each part of the lesson was noted as well and recorded to the nearest 15 second interval.

Data analysis

Reading of text. The off-task behavior was characterized by the average off-task behavior rate. Computing the average off-task behavior rate consists of finding the average of the measured daily weighted off-task behavior rates for a given text type, narrative or non-narrative. It was presumed that off-task behavior is sensitive to the length of the lesson, due to the short attention span of children of this age. As time increases it is expected that the number of off-task behaviors will increase proportionally, regardless of activity. For example one off-task behavior during a seven minute time period has a rate of 1/7. Three off-task behaviors occurring over a 21 minute time period also has a behavior rate of 1/7, however these rates are not really equivalent. Thus a time dependent weighting function was introduced to account for the increase in "background" off -task behaviors with time, and a weighted off-task behavior rate was found. It should be noted that further work is needed to provide a precise weighting function for background, or natural, off-task behaviors; however, for this research it was conservatively assumed that no "extra" off-task behaviors would occur for the first five minutes of an activity, and that after five minutes the "extra" off-task behaviors per off-task behavior would increase linearly at a

rate of (1/15) "extra" behaviors per behavior per minute. The equation for background off-task behavior is thus;

$eb(t) = t/15 + 2/3.$

The weighting function is defined so that the following identity will hold;

$eb(t) * wf(t) = 1.$

Therefore our weighting function becomes;

$wf(t) = 1/eb(t) = 1 / (t/15 + 2/3).$

After determining the number of weighted off-task behaviors for each day, the daily weighted off-task behavior rates were found by dividing the number of weighted off-task behaviors by the reading time on a given day for each day of the unit. The daily unweighted off-task behavior rates were computed by dividing the number of raw off-task behaviors by the reading time on a given day for each day of the unit. Then the average weighted off-task behavior rates for were found for each text type, narrative and non-narrative, by summing the daily weighted off-task behavior rates and dividing by the number of days. In this study each text was read on four different days, therefore the sum of the daily weighted off-task behavior rates was divided by four. The unweighted average off-task behavior rate was computed in a similar manner and compared to the weighted rate for the purposes of characterizing the effect of the weighting function. A statistical analysis was performed only on the weighted data.

Discussion. The number of off-task behaviors during the discussion that followed the text read aloud, as well as the duration of the discussion were recorded. Analysis of these data was executed in the same manner as the data from the read aloud section of the lesson. Because the discussion followed the reading, the total time of lesson (reading time and discussion time), rather than solely the time of discussion, was used to find the weighting factor to compute the weighted off-task behaviors. The daily weighted off-task behavior rates were found by dividing the number of weighted off-task behaviors by discussion time on a given day. The daily unweighted off-task behavior rates were

computed by dividing the number of unweighted off-task behaviors by the time of the discussion. Then the unweighted and weighted average off-task behavior rates were computed to determine the effect of the weighting factor. The weighted average off-task behavior rate was found by summing the daily weighted off-task behavior rates during discussion and dividing by the number of days. The unweighted average off-task behavior rate was found in a similar manner. The weighted and unweighted off-task behavior rates were found for both narrative and non-narrative discussions. A statistical analysis was performed on the weighted average off-task behavior rates for narrative and non-narrative discussions to determine whether or not narrative and non-narrative discussions differ significantly in terms of off-task behaviors.

Whole lesson. Off-task behavior rates were also computed for the entire lesson. The number of off-task behaviors during the reading and discussion sections of the lesson were summed. The total lesson time was computed by summing the time of the read aloud and the time of the discussion. The number of weighted off-task behaviors were found for each lesson using the total time to determine the weighting factor. Then the daily weighted and unweighted off-task behavior rates were computed in a manner similar to the way I found the reading and discussion daily rates. With this data, the weighted average off-task behavior rates for each type of text during the whole lesson were found by dividing the sum of daily weighted off-task behavior rates by the number of days. The unweighted average off-task behavior rate was computed as well, using the same method in order to illustrate the effects of the weighting factor. The weighted average off-task behavior rates for narrative and non-narrative lessons were analyzed statistically to determine if a statistical difference existed between the two types of lessons.

Results

Reading Data

The reading data was analyzed using a two-tailed t-test with an alpha level at 0.05, the alpha level generally used by researchers in determining whether a significant difference

exists. A significant difference found at an alpha level of 0.05 means that there is only a five percent chance or less that the researcher has made inaccurate findings; rejecting the null hypothesis when the null hypothesis is actually true. The weighted average off-task behavior rate during reading of narrative texts was compared to the weighted average off-task behavior rate during the reading of non-narrative texts. These scores were computed from the raw data using a weighting factor (See Table 1 and Table 2). The time during the reading was used to compute the weighting factor. The weighted daily off-task behavior rates were found and averaged over four days for both narrative and non-narrative texts to determine an average off-task behavior rate. The unweighted average off-task behavior rate was computed as well. The unweighted and weighted average off-task behavior rates for narrative and non-narrative texts are depicted in Figure 1. For a two-tailed t-test at the 0.05 level of significance with three degrees of freedom, a significant t-value was found to equal ± 3.182 ($t_{.05}(3) = \pm 3.182$). The value computed for this data was $t = -2.7564$, therefore, at this level of significance, there was no statistical difference. This means that we cannot reject the null hypothesis, which states that the number of off-task behaviors during narrative reading and the number of off-task behaviors during non-narrative reading will be the same, at this strict significance level. Therefore, the hypothesis, that stated there would be more off-task behaviors exhibited during non-narrative read alouds than during narrative read alouds, was not supported. However, this does not necessarily mean that no difference exists with regard to the reading of these two types of texts on off-task behaviors. Because the weighted off task behavior rates' t-value fell between a significance level of 0.05 and 0.10, I ran an analysis of the unweighted data. Although the unweighted data is not a reliable nor accurate representation of the findings, I was interested in examining the effects of the weighting factor. For the unweighted data, $t = 3.082$. This was still not statistically significant at an alpha value of 0.05, but the unweighted data's t-value was closer to being statistically significant at an alpha level of 0.05. An explanation of why the data produced these results will be discussed.

Discussion Data

The discussion data was analyzed using a two-tailed t-test with an alpha level at 0.05. The weighted average off-task behavior rate during discussions after reading narrative texts was compared to the weighted average off-task behavior rate during discussions after the reading of non-narrative texts. These scores were computed from the raw data using a weighting factor (See Table 3 and Table 4). The weighting factor for discussions was computed from the total lesson time rather than just the time of the discussion because the discussions followed the reading part of the lesson. The weighted daily off-task behavior rate was found using the discussion time and averaged over four days for both narrative and non-narrative texts to give us an average off-task behavior rate. The unweighted average off-task behavior rate was computed as well. The unweighted and weighted off-task behavior rates for narrative and non-narrative texts are compared pictorially in Figure 2. For a two-tailed t-test at the 0.05 level of significance with three degrees of freedom, $t = \pm 3.182$. The value computed for this data was $t = -0.6943$, therefore, at this level of significance, there was no statistical difference. This means that we cannot reject the null hypothesis, which states that the number of off-task behaviors during narrative discussions and the number of off-task behaviors during non-narrative discussions will be the same. No support was found for the hypothesis that states that there will be more off-task behaviors exhibited during discussions following non-narrative read alouds than exhibited during discussions following narrative read alouds. Because the t-value computed on these data is much smaller than the significant t-value, I can say confidently that no difference exists between the number of off-task behaviors during narrative versus non-narrative discussions. A t-test was run on the unweighted data and $t = -1.140$. Again, this is far from being statistically significant at an alpha level of 0.05, meaning that no difference exists between narrative and non-narrative discussions.

Whole Lesson Data

The whole lesson data was analyzed using a two-tailed t-test with an alpha level at 0.05. The weighted average off-task behavior rate for the narrative lessons was compared to the weighted average off-task behavior rate during the non-narrative lessons. These scores were computed from the raw data using a weighting factor (See Table 5 and Table 6). The weighting factor for whole lessons was computed from the total lesson time (reading time summed with discussion time). The weighted daily off-task behavior rate was found using the lesson time, as well, and averaged over four days for both narrative and non-narrative texts to give us an average off-task behavior rate. The average unweighted off-task behavior rate was computed as well. The unweighted and weighted off-task behavior rates for narrative and non-narrative texts are displayed in Figure 3. For a two-tailed t-test at the 0.05 level of significance with three degrees of freedom, $t = \pm 3.182$. The value computed for this data was $t = 2.2255$, therefore, at this level of significance, there was no statistical difference. This means that we cannot reject the null hypothesis, which states that the number of off-task behaviors during narrative lessons and the number of off-task behaviors during non-narrative lessons will be the same. Therefore, we cannot support the alternative hypothesis that states that more off-task behaviors will be exhibited during non-narrative lessons than during narrative lessons. Because the t-value computed on these data is quite a bit smaller than the significant t-value, I can say confidently that no difference exists between the number of off-task behaviors during narrative versus non-narrative whole lessons. This flows logically from the analyses drawn from the reading and discussion data where there were no significant statistical differences found between narrative and non-narrative texts. A t-test was run on the unweighted data from the whole lesson and $t = 1.4317$. Again, this is far from being statistically significant at an alpha level of 0.05, meaning that no difference exists between narrative and non-narrative lessons.

Discussion

There are four points of interest that this study raises. The reading data, although it is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level, cannot be discounted as a finding. At a less

stringent alpha level, the reading data is statistically significant. Secondly, the findings and observations from the discussion data also raises some interesting questions as to the effects narrative text has on activities conducted after read alouds, and the difficulty young learners have in deciphering facts from narrative text. These two sets of data have important implications for the use of narrative text in the classroom as well, which will be discussed. Finally, this study has also come to similar conclusions that other studies have drawn. There needs to be future studies to investigate the role of narrative texts in social studies. Ideas for future studies will be suggested.

The t-value derived from the data on reading fell between the 0.05 and 0.10 significance levels. After further investigation, I found that the exact level of significance for the reading data was at 0.075. This means that there is only a 7.5 percent chance that the distribution curves of the narrative reading data and the non-narrative reading data are the same. There is a 92.5 percent chance that the curves are different for narrative and non-narrative read alouds. I determined this to be a significant finding in terms of narrative text's effect on off-task behavior. Coupled with my observations during data recording, I conclude that narrative text does, indeed, have a negative effect on the number of off-task behaviors exhibited during read alouds in kindergarten social studies instruction. There will be less off-task behaviors exhibited during narrative read alouds than non-narrative read alouds. I attribute this effect to the fact that kindergarten students find narrative texts more interesting than non-narrative texts, therefore, they are more likely to be engaged in the read aloud part of the lesson. This increased attention in the lesson also increases the likelihood that meaningful learning will be taking place in the kindergarten classroom that utilizes narrative texts for social studies content instruction.

Perhaps the most interesting finding in this study is the data obtained from the subsequent discussion during the lesson. Originally, I had assumed that because students would be more engaged and interested in the reading part of the lesson, they would be more interested in the lesson as a whole; therefore, they would be more interested in any

subsequent activity, such as a discussion. I found that narrative text has no effect on the interest level of students during subsequent discussions, even though it does increase interest level during the read alouds. The interest in the lesson is only evident during the reading part of the lesson and does not carry over into subsequent discussions or the whole lesson, in general.

Although my findings did not support any statistically significant difference between the two types of text on off-task behaviors during discussion, the raw data obtained is interesting in its own right. Table three and table four show the raw data from the discussion part of the lesson. What is of particular interest is the fact that the time of discussions following narrative read alouds is approximately twice as long as the time of non-narrative discussions. This seemed quite puzzling to me since the students were asked the same three questions after every read aloud. After reflecting on my observations of students' behavior during the discussions, I remembered the ease that the students had in answering the questions after the non-narrative read aloud. They appeared to have no problem with the recall and comparative questions. This relative ease is exemplified in the time of the narrative and non-narrative discussions. It took the students a shorter amount of time to answer the same questions after non-narrative read alouds than after narrative read alouds. I believe that students found the questions easier to answer after the non-narrative text had been read as demonstrated through their responses. During the narrative discussions, students volunteered information about the story and about the characters in the story, rather that answering the posed questions. I believe that the reason for this fascinating observation is because the facts in non-narrative text are not embedded in the text. In a story narrative, the facts are often times presented as sidelights to the story, therefore, the facts are often deeply embedded in the text, itself. Students at this primary age have difficulty in sifting through the information presented in story narratives to arrive at the more salient facts in the text. The structure of non-narrative text lends itself to search tasks for recall and comparison questions because the information is presented in a

straightforward manner. These findings from the discussion data, as well as the reading data, suggest serious implications for narrative use in the classroom.

Narrative texts have proven to be successful during instruction because they increase the interest students have in the lesson. They are a valuable tool for engaging young learners in text, which is important at preliterate and emergent reading stages (Allington, 1977). They should be included in content instruction whenever possible. However, it is not the recommendation of this study to replace traditional non-narrative texts and textbooks in instruction, but rather to use narrative to enhance traditional non-narrative social studies curriculum. A combination of narrative and non-narrative texts in instruction will prove to be invaluable as an instructional technique. It will increase the interest level of students, possibly encourage the development of reading by engaging students in text, and increase the likelihood that meaningful learning will be taking place.

Because the use of narrative text may not control off-task behavior during subsequent discussions, the teacher may need to investigate alternative activities to traditional discussions that children find more interesting and engaging, or implement a successful behavior management plan to decrease inappropriate and undesired off-task behaviors. The second implication involves the actual use of narrative texts as a basis for subsequent discussion. Because facts are more embedded in narrative texts and young children have a difficult time deciphering or decoding facts embedded in text, it will become the responsibility of the teacher, especially teachers in the primary grades, to point out the salient facts during reading. The teacher needs to do this in a manner that does not distract from the reading or meaning of the story, but that will ensure that all students are exposed to the relevant facts and information. In order to be able to do this, the teacher will need to read the text prior to instruction and determine what points or facts he/she wishes his/her students to remember. This may require more preparation for the teacher, but ultimately this will decrease the likelihood that the teacher will have to reteach material because the teacher

will be able to make sure that students are attending to the factual elements embedded in the plot.

The findings from this study seem to replicate the synthesis of other studies examining the efficacy of narrative texts in social studies instruction. The effects of narrative text during instruction is somewhat ambiguous. Narrative texts are useful for keeping students interested in read alouds, but they can create some difficulty for young learners in extrapolating facts from story narratives. The conclusions of this study also replicate the conclusions drawn from other studies. There needs to be more research done in this area to determine the place of narrative texts in social studies instruction.

There are many different angles and approaches future studies could take in order to further investigate the place of narrative texts in social studies instruction. I contend that a replication of the current study with a larger sample size and more observers might produce the effects hypothesized for read alouds at the strict and widely used alpha level of 0.05. A replication of this study at a different grade level would be interesting as well. One could examine the differences and/or similarities found across grade levels. A study comparing across grade levels may lead to the conclusion that narratives are more useful at a certain age level than at other age levels.

For this study, off-task behavior was meant to indicate the level of interest of the students in the text. Studies have demonstrated that preferential attention is indicative of interest, and to that which we pay more attention and find more interesting, we tend to recall longer and more accurately (Anderson, at al., 1984; Poissant, et al. 1991; Renninger and Wozniak, 1995; Wade, 1990). A future direction would be to actually measure recall ability of students, the effects of interest on recall, and the effects of narrative text on level of interest. The current study operationally defined off-task behaviors and then counted the number of off-task behaviors that occurred during instruction. I was unable to determine what was going on in students' minds during the lessons. For example, just because a student's eyes were not on text or speaker, does not necessarily mean that that student was

not aware of, or did not understand what was being said. For a study investigating the effects of narrative text on interest and subsequent recall ability of students, a 2 x 2 x 2 experimental design would need to be devised, as well as a valid method of measuring recall ability. This latter task becomes more challenging as the age of the students with whom one is working gets younger. Studies that measure content acquisition/mastery would also be a future direction to take with this study. The results from these last two proposed studies could be used and compared to the previous studies that also examined recall ability and content acquisition, but did so with older students. This could also provide invaluable information as to what age group, if any specific one, narrative texts are more likely to have the greatest impact and success in classroom instruction.

In conclusion, this study found that reading data was statistically significant at the 0.075 level. The study, therefore, advocates the use of narrative texts in social studies instruction because the data supports the hypothesis that there will be more off-task behavior during non-narrative read alouds than during narrative read alouds. Although there was no significance to the discussion data, the discussion data was possibly the most interesting finding. The use of narrative texts can also be successfully incorporated into whole lesson instruction, rather than just as the topic for read alouds. To use narrative texts as a basis for subsequent discussion, though, the teacher will need to prepare the lesson carefully so that the teacher can ensure that the salient information from the story narratives is transferred to the students listening or reading the narrative text. Perhaps the best argument for using narratives in social studies instruction is that they increase the likelihood that meaningful learning will occur, which should be the goal of all educators.

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Table 1

Off-Task Behavior Rate During Narrative Reading

Lesson number	Reading time (in minutes)	Number of off-task behaviors	Weighting factor	Number of weighted off-task behaviors	Weighted off-task behavior rate	Unweighted off-task behavior rate
1	7:00	8	0.88	7.04	1.01	1.14
2	9:15	16	0.78	12.48	1.35	1.73
3	12:00	32	0.68	21.76	1.81	2.67
4	12:45	29	0.66	19.14	1.50	2.27
Total	41:00	85		60.42		

Weighted average off-task behavior rate = 1.42

Unweighted average off-task behavior rate = 1.95

Table 2

Off-Task Behavior Rate During Non-Narrative Reading

Lesson number	Reading time (in minutes)	Number of off-task behaviors	Weighting factor	Number of weighted off-task behaviors	Weighted off-task behavior rate	Unweighted off-task behavior rate
1	6:00	12	0.94	11.28	1.88	2.00
2	12:00	47	0.68	31.96	2.66	3.92
3	10:15	42	0.74	31.08	3.03	4.10
4	8:15	52	0.82	42.64	5.17	6.30
Total	36:30	153		116.96		

Weighted average off-task behavior rate = 3.19

Unweighted average off-task behavior rate = 4.08

Table 3

Off-Task Behavior Rate During Narrative Discussion

Lesson number	Disc. time (in minutes)	Total time (in minutes)	Number of off-task behaviors	Weighting factor	Number of weighted off-task behaviors	Weighted off-task behavior rate	Unweighted off-task behavior rate
1	6:15	13:15	18	0.65	11.70	1.87	2.88
2	6:15	15:30	59	0.59	34.81	5.57	9.44
3	5:30	17:30	51	0.55	28.05	5.10	9.27
4	4:00	16:45	52	0.56	29.12	7.28	13.00
Total	23:00	63:00	180		103.68		

Weighted average off-task behavior rate = 4.96

Unweighted average off-task behavior rate = 8.65

Table 4

Off-Task Behavior Rate During Non-Narrative Discussion

Lesson number	Disc. time (in minutes)	Total time (in minutes)	Number of off-task behaviors	Weighting factor	Number of weighted off-task behaviors	Weighted off-task behavior rate	Unweighted off-task behavior rate
1	3:30	9:30	16	0.77	12.32	3.52	4.57
2	3:00	15:00	29	0.60	17.40	5.80	9.67
3	3:00	13:15	16	0.65	10.40	3.47	5.33
4	3:15	11:30	19	0.70	13.30	4.09	5.85
Total	12:45	49:15	80		53.42		

Weighted average off-task behavior rate = 4.22

Unweighted average off-task behavior rate = 6.36

Table 5

Off-Task Behavior Rate During Whole Narrative Lesson

Lesson number	Total time (in minutes)	Number of off-task behaviors	Weighting factor	Number of weighted off-task behaviors	Weighted off-task behavior rate	Unweighted off-task behavior rate
1	13:15	26	0.65	16.90	1.28	1.96
2	15:30	75	0.59	44.25	2.85	4.84
3	17:30	83	0.55	45.65	2.61	4.74
4	16:45	81	0.56	45.36	2.71	4.84
Total	63:00	265		152.16		

Weighted average off-task behavior rate = 2.36

Unweighted average off-task behavior rate = 4.10

Table 6

Off-Task Behavior Rate During Whole Non-Narrative Lesson

Lesson number	Total time (in minutes)	Number of off-task behaviors	Weighting factor	Number of weighted off-task behaviors	Weighted off-task behavior rate	Unweighted off-task behavior rate
1	9:30	28	0.77	21.56	2.27	2.95
2	15:00	76	0.60	45.60	3.04	5.06
3	13:15	58	0.65	37.70	2.84	4.38
4	11:30	71	0.70	49.70	4,32	6.17
Total	49:15	233		154.56		

Weighted average off-task behavior rate = 3.12

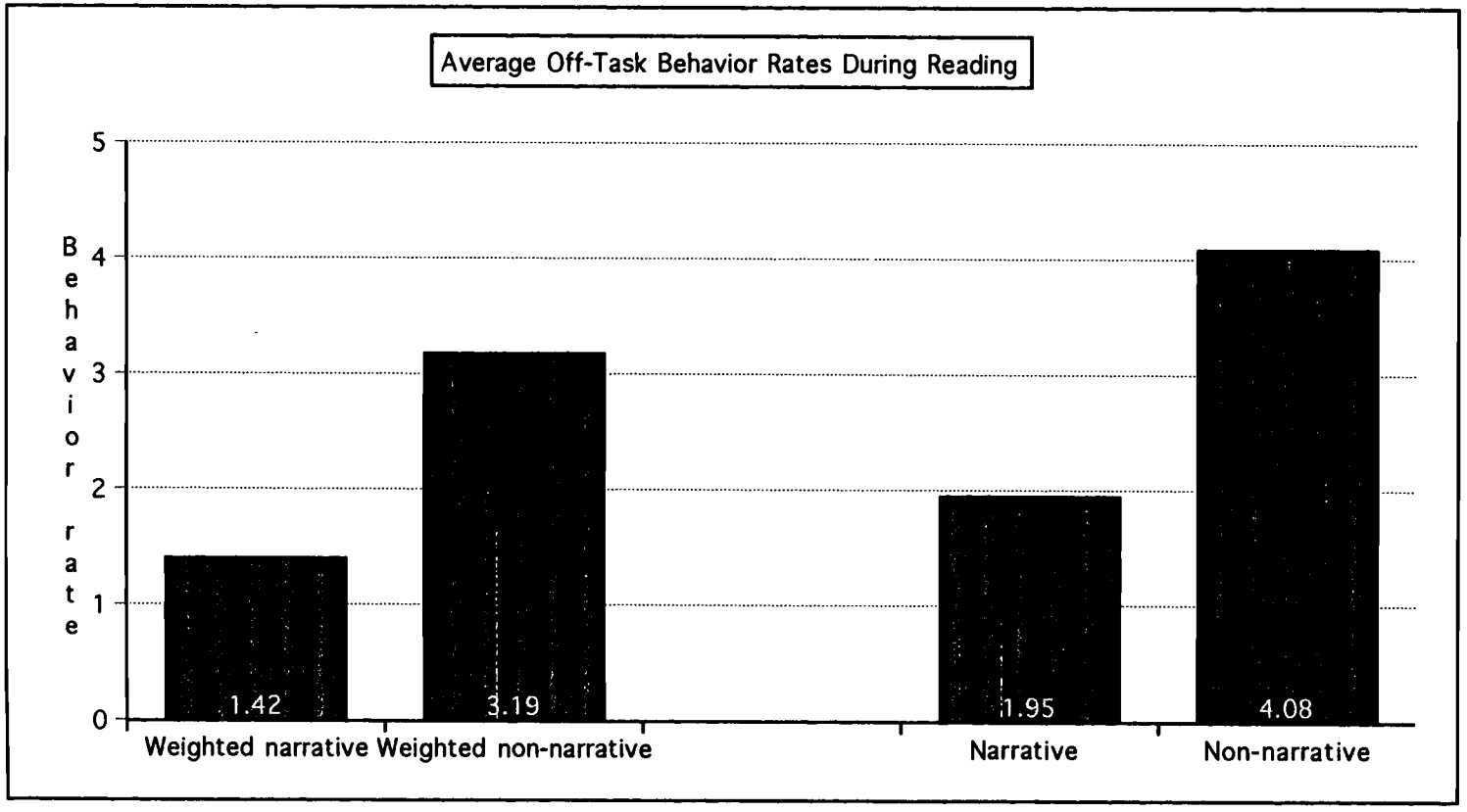
Unweighted average off-task behavior rate = 4.64

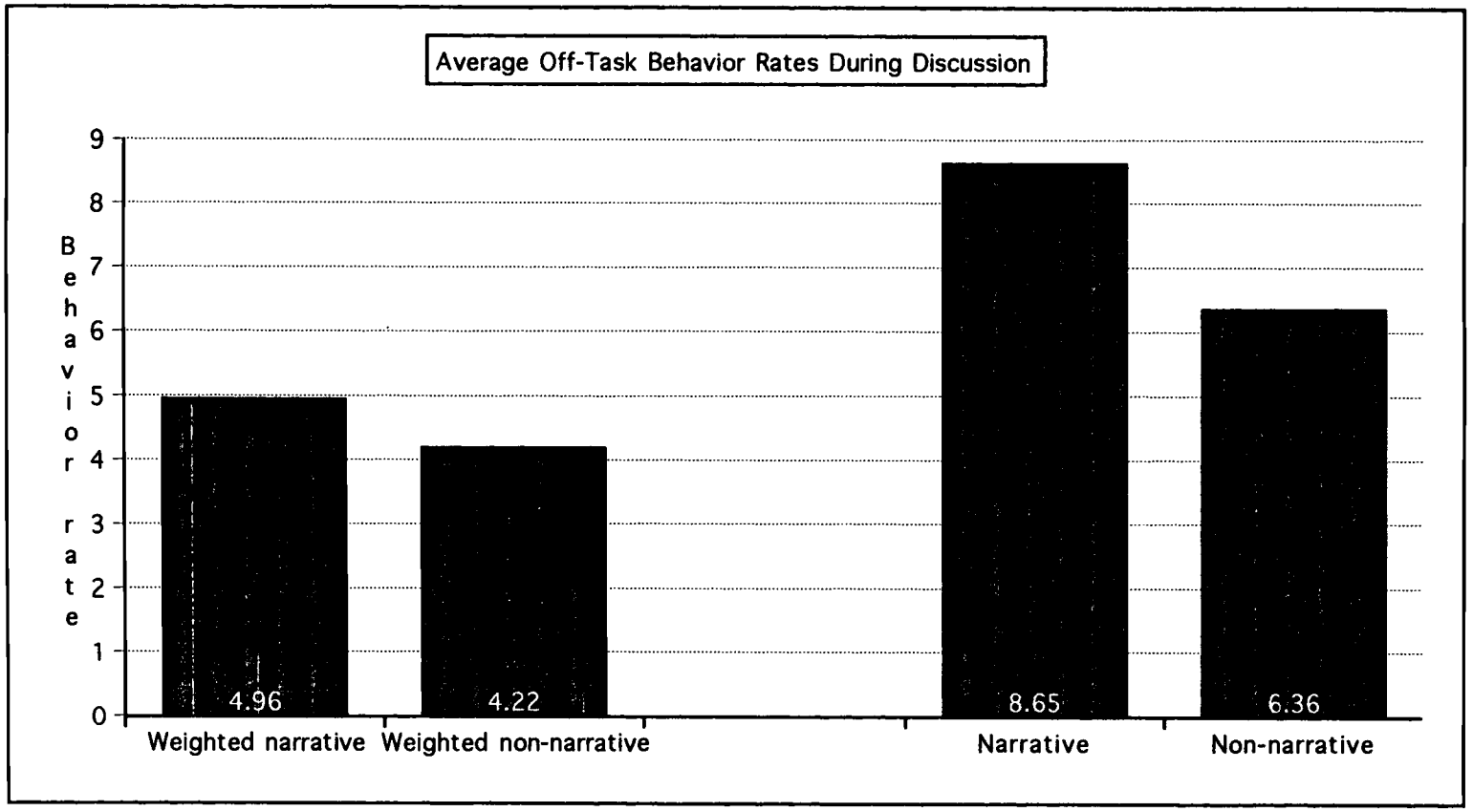
Figure Caption

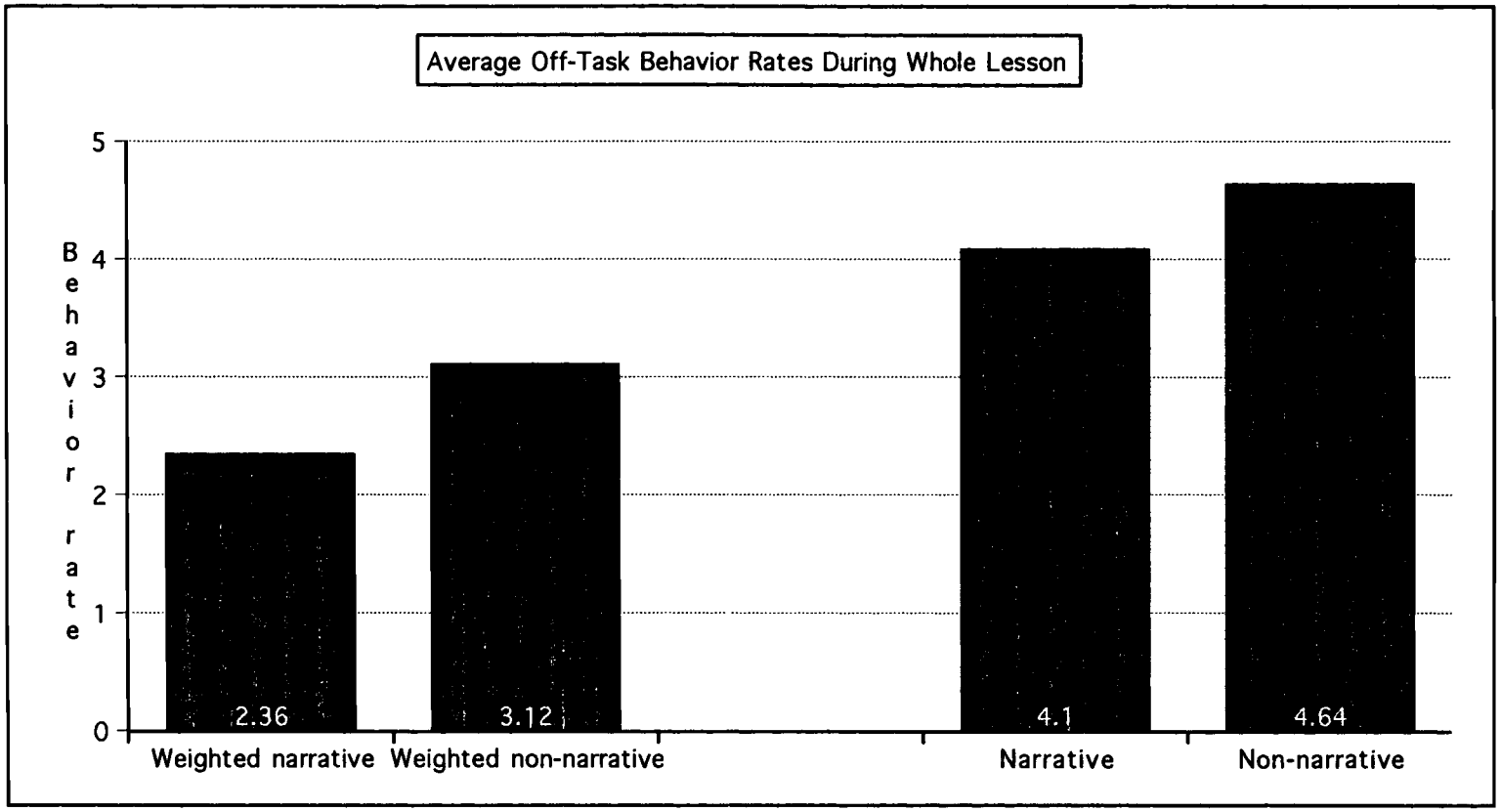
Figure 1. Weighted and unweighted average off-task behavior rates exhibited by kindergarten students during the reading of texts as a function of text type.

Figure 2. Weighted and unweighted average off-task behavior rates exhibited by kindergarten students during discussions as a function of text type.

Figure 3. Weighted and unweighted average off-task behavior rates exhibited by kindergarten students during whole lessons as a function of text type.


Average Off-Task Behavior Rates During Reading
Behavior rate
5
4
3
2
1
0
1.42
3.19
1.95
4.08
Weighted narrative
Weighted non-narrative
Narrative
Non-narrative


Average Off-Task Behavior Rates During Discussion
Behavior rate
0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
4.96
4.22
8.65
6.36
Weighted narrative
Weighted non-narrative
Narrative
Non-narrative


Average Off-Task Behavior Rates During Whole Lesson
Behavior rate
5
4
3
2
1
0
2.36
3.12
4.1
4.64
Weighted narrative
Weighted non-narrative
Narrative
Non-narrative

Appendix A

Annotated Bibliography of Books Used in Career Unit

1. Ardizzone, Edward. Little Tim and the Brave Sea Captain. (1955). New York: The Trumpet Club.

   Little Tim wants to be a sailor and live on the sea. He stows away on a ship and soon finds out that working on a ship is hard work. He meets other crew members and learns about their jobs on the ship. When trouble arises Tim learns to be brave just like the sea captain he admires. Eventually he makes it back to his home where he finds his parents waiting for him.

2. dePaola, Tomie. The Art Lesson. (1989). New York: The Trumpet Club.

   Tommy cannot wait to go to school so he can take art lessons from the art teacher. He loves to draw and paint and wants to be an artist when he grows up. When he gets to school, he finds he will have to wait another year until first grade before the art teacher comes to his class. After waiting patiently for first grade, Tommy discovers that he can only use school crayons, the art teacher only gives one piece of paper and he is expected to copy. Disappointed, Tommy and the art teacher work out a deal that is pleasing to them both.

3. Fitz-Gerald, Christine Maloney. I Can Be A Reporter. (1986). Chicago: Children's Press.

   This book in the "I Can Be . . ." series describes the job of a reporter. It addresses both television and newspaper reporters and discusses the differences between these two types of reporters. This book illustrates the responsibilities and often times hectic schedule that reporters have.

4. Greene, Carol. I Can Be A Forest Ranger. (1989). Chicago: Children's Press.

   This book explains and illustrates the different and important responsibilities of a forest ranger. It discusses the tasks forest rangers do while working

including prevention of forest fires, teaching people about nature, protecting the wildlife and reforesting the forest. This book also addresses the differences between a forest ranger and a park ranger.

5. Henderson, Kathy. I Can Be A Farmer. (1989). Chicago: Children's Press.

This book discusses the different tasks farmers perform while working their long days. The book describes and differentiates between the types of farmers--dairy farmers, crop farmers, fruit farmers, and animal farmers. It also depicts the different tools and machines that are used on a farm.

6. Henkes, Kevin. Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse. (1996). New York: The Trumpet Club.

Lilly loves school. She wants to be a teacher when she grows up. That is until her teacher takes away her most prized possessions--her new purple plastic purse, shiny quarters and movie star sunglasses. Lilly learns that a teacher's job is not always fun because sometimes they have to discipline their students. Lilly realizes this and works things out with her teacher.

7. Moncure, Jane Belk. Jobs People Do. (1976). Chicago: Children's Press.

This book introduces children to a number of occupations. It does it in a way that contrasts characteristics of differing jobs. Standing jobs are compared to sitting jobs. Inside jobs are compared to outside jobs. There are other contrasts made in the book that expose young audiences to many different types of jobs.

8. Rathman, Peggy. Officer Buckle and Gloria. (1995). New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Officer Buckle knows all the safety tips there are to know, but still no one listens to him. That is until he gets a new partner--Gloria. In this Caldecott Medal Award winner, Gloria introduces a twist to the demonstration of safety tips that causes everyone to sit up and take notice. Officer Buckle

realizes that he has been upstaged and quits. He soon learns the most important safety tip of all--never leave your buddy.

Appendix B

Discussion Questions

For Jobs People Do (Day 1):

1. What were some of the jobs people did in this book? (Recall)
2. Which job would you like to have from this book? Why? (internalization)
3. How was a __(chose a profession)__'s job different from a __(another profession)__'s job? (compare)

For all other books (Days 2-8):

1. What are some of the things that a __(profession book addresses)__ does in his/her job? (recall)

   policeman
   farmer
   artist
   forest ranger
   sea captain
   reporter
   teacher

2. Would you want to be a __(profession of book)__? Why? (internalization)
3. How is a __(one profession that has been discussed)__'s job different from or the same as a __(profession in discussion)__'s job? (compare)

Appendix C

Data Record Sheet

Day	Book	Time		Off-Task Behaviors	
		Reading	Discussion	Reading	Discussion
1	"Jobs People Do" by Jane Belk Moncure non-narrative				
2	"Officer Buckle and Gloria" by Peggy Rathman narrative				
3	"I Can Be a Farmer" by Kathy Henderson non-narrative				
4	"The Art Lesson" by Tomie dePaola narrative				
5	"I Can Be a Forest Ranger" by Carol Greene non-narrative				
6	"Little Tim and the Brave Sea Captain" by Edward Ardizzone narrative				
7	"I Can Be a Reporter" by Christine Maloney Fitz-Gerald non-narrative				
8	"Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse" by Kevin Henkes narrative				

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