Before, during, and after video clip 3, Brenna carefully scaffolded her students’ thinking in ways that helped them take up text features, structures, and craft moves from published nonfiction authors to try them out in their own compositions.

As Brenna taught responsively, she clearly uncovered her vision of what she wanted her students to learn through this project. She reflected back and projected forward as she gave students feedback. The following excerpts from the reflective conversation reveal the ways children were learning content about weather and climate while also exploring text features and structures they might use in their own books.

Brenna opened the conversation, “So we’ve been talking about our research projects about weather. We just want to share what you have been finding in your research and what the process has been like for you.”

After reviewing the process, timeline, and the class-generated list of expectations, Annie Laurie shared her current thinking. “We’ve been looking at covers and inside of books of what we would want to use for our books. I had an idea from *100 Ideas from Explorers* and I was going to make mine into twenty things or ten things you should know about hurricanes. And we are doing books so I think this idea would work.”

Brenna responded, “Yeah we’ve talked about how we want our project to become a nonfiction book and we’ve studied nonfiction text features and then we got into some nonfiction and we said, ‘Where do these authors do things to inspire us to do things in our nonfiction?’ So some of you have gotten great ideas from nonfiction sources.”
Alexis chimed in, “I said something about a glossary, it tells you words that are in the back that you probably don’t know of and it tells you a fact about it, what it is and it just highlights it so you know which topic it is.” (As you might predict, this inspired a number of kids to use glossaries in their books.)

Chris added to the group’s thinking, “Well in this book it showed me like facts that would draw your reader in. Like on the back it says, ‘It’s a weird world out there, dazzle your friends with wacky facts and more from this series,’ because it has weird facts that are really interesting. And the one that I found that was kind of really weird—it says in Oklahoma an entire herd of cattle was lifted from by a tornado and returned unharmed.”

Brenna and a number of kids in the class respond in concert, “Wow!”

Chris continued, “And I thought that was kind of interesting because I thought a tornado would just rip through anything in its path.”

Brenna noticed and named, “So, you are being inspired too by how the author draws the reader in by giving facts that are really interesting that will make the reader really want to read it.”

Austin was wild about wild weather so we were not surprised by his contribution. “Well I have this book called Wild Weather and there’s this page in here about tornados and water spouts. This is an actual picture of what a waterspout looks like and it can go up to hundreds of feet into the air.”

Brenna reflects that he is learning content, “So you are finding some cool facts.”

Danielle demonstrated the value of models by showing one from her book and her own sketch. “Well I was looking through this book about the life and times of a drop of
water and here’s a little thing I copied off the book.” (Shows model she sketched from the book about one way humans have harnessed the water cycle.) “One of the things I found most interesting that you can actually die from not having water in your body.” The conversation continued focusing on the role of water in life and safety in diverse weather conditions.

Ryan chimed in enthusiastically, “Here’s a book called Tornadoes. ‘The 1956 tornado turned a Michigan field into a junkyard. Homes smashed to pieces and vehicles turned on their sides were only part of the damage done by the violent storm.’”

Brenna responded by nudging him to think about the relationship between the book and his guiding question, “And so why was that important to you?”

“Because I am doing my weather project on tornadoes.”

Brenna asked, “And what is your guiding question, Ryan?”

“What is stronger, a tornado or a hurricane?” was his response.

Brenna taught the class while coaching Ryan by adding on, “Okay so you are doing a comparison or contrast kind of thing and we’ve been talking about the text structures we find in nonfiction and the ways that authors might structure or organize information. We said you can’t just throw it on the pages. You have to organize it somehow. So we said some questions lend themselves to a certain organization or structure. We said that might be one where you are thinking about your question that compares and contrasts. That’s like mine. I’m comparing seasons in the northern and southern hemisphere.” (Brenna refers to a list on the wall chart to remind them to access it as a resource: Descriptions with Main Ideas with Details; Sequence: Information Given in Order; Questions and Answers; Compare and Contrast.)
Kaitlyn returned to safety issues, “In my book it has lots of information about drought. It’s captioned.” She reads from text, “It has a way to stay safe and it says emergency action.”

Brenna reacted, “So you found lots of safety information and the ‘so what’.”

Austin shared his question, “What happens inside a tornado?” Then he continued by citing quotes and sources. Brenna simply thanked him for sharing the ways he was crediting his references.

Crystal added to the safety information being accumulated, “I found out where to be safe when the lightning strikes.”

Brenna made a connection about reading like a writer, “I noticed you have a magazine there? Have you thought about how you want to structure your writing? Were you inspired by the magazine? What’s one of your ideas?”

“I was thinking about doing something like this.” Crystal pointed to print embedded in a photo. “I was thinking of doing something like that with a picture of lightning.”

“So, you are going to put information inside a picture,” Brenna validated.

The conversation concluded with a brief discussion about checking dates of sources because as the kids said, “If it is dated, the information may have changed, it may be outdated.”

Throughout this reflective conversation Brenna demonstrated how authors construct nonfiction texts; she gave students a chance to inquire into craft, text structures, and features in their own books on topics of their choice while deepening their
understanding of weather; and she built in daily reflection sessions so all students could share their observations and plans for writing with their fellow writers.

**Students Need to Learn How to Select the Best Structure for Their Purpose**

Brenna taught students how to select a text structure that would best support their answers to their guiding questions. She believed it is important for students to learn how to use guiding questions when reading to learn. She also believed it was critical to help her students come to understand that authors make deliberate decisions so that the form of the text best supports the content or message they want to convey.

Brenna gently yet explicitly reminded her nonfiction authors to be mindful of the relationship between their guiding questions and the text structure that might work best for them. Authors make decisions about whether to choose question–answer, compare–and–contrast, a number of interesting facts about a topic, and so on, by envisioning a text structure that makes the most sense for the kind of book they are trying to write.

Throughout this reflective conversation, Brenna made comments like, “Okay, so you are organizing your text to compare and contrast. That’s very much like mine. I’m comparing and contrasting weather in the northern and southern hemispheres.” She helped them become careful observers of nonfiction text features (pictures, charts, graphs, and dates, etc.) for the purpose of composing their own books. She made constant connections between the books they were reading and the books they were envisioning.
Teachers Teach and Inspire by Writing Alongside Students

Because Brenna believed teachers should work in front of, alongside, and behind her students much like an apprenticeship model in the world, she composed and published a nonfiction book on weather alongside her students.

Together, Brenna and her students posed questions and read to investigate their particular wonderings while concurrently inquiring into the range of nonfiction text features found in their weather and climate books.

As you contemplate video clip 3 of Brenna’s reflective conversation to wrap up science workshop, just imagine how much the children in Brenna Osborne’s room learned about weather, climate, and nonfiction during this embedded inquiry. Brenna created the conditions for children to learn about nonfiction, how to read and write nonfiction, while learning through nonfiction to explore their burning questions about weather. They celebrated their growth and change by publishing their nonfiction books. They departed from the embedded inquiry as stronger writers with greater expertise and interest in viewing the world as meteorologists and climatologists.