# Teaching Nonfiction, Grades 4–12

1. **What do you primarily teach?**
   - [ ] I teach all content subjects
   - [ ] Language Arts/English
   - [ ] Reading
   - [ ] Science
   - [ ] Social Studies/History
   - [ ] Technical subjects
   - [ ] Fine Arts
   - [ ] Resource
   - [ ] Special Education
   - [ ] Mathematics
   - [ ] I am not a classroom teacher. I am an administrator, coach, supervisor, or university professor.

2. **What grade do you primarily teach? Check all that apply.**
   - [ ] Grade 4
   - [ ] Grade 5
   - [ ] Grade 6
   - [ ] Grade 7
   - [ ] Grade 8
   - [ ] Grade 9
   - [ ] Grade 10
   - [ ] Grade 11
   - [ ] Grade 12

3. **How long have you taught?**
   - [ ] 1–5 Years
   - [ ] 6–10 Years
   - [ ] 11–15 Years
   - [ ] 16–20 Years
   - [ ] 21–25 Years
   - [ ] 26–30 Years
   - [ ] More than 30 years

4. **How many students are in your school?**
   - [ ] Fewer than 200
   - [ ] 200–500
   - [ ] 500–750
   - [ ] 750–1000
   - [ ] 1000–1500
   - [ ] 1500–2000
   - [ ] More than 2000

5. **How many students do you teach each day? (Round to the closest number.)**
   - [ ] About 15 students
   - [ ] About 30 students
   - [ ] About 50 students
   - [ ] About 75 students
   - [ ] About 100 students
   - [ ] About 125 students
   - [ ] About 150 students
   - [ ] More than 175 students

6. **The majority of my students speak. . . .**
   - [ ] English as their home language
   - [ ] English as a second language

7. **The majority of my students are. . . .**
   - [ ] Hispanic or Latino
   - [ ] White
   - [ ] Black or African American
   - [ ] Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
   - [ ] Asian
   - [ ] American Indian or Alaskan Native
   - [ ] My school is roughly equally divided between 2 or more ethnicities

   If split between or among groups, list them here using the terms we used above

8. **The majority of my students. . . .**
   - [ ] Appear to come from homes where finances are tight.
   - [ ] Appear to come from homes where financial issues do not negatively affect a student’s work and concentration.
   - [ ] Appear to come from homes where students have many advantages.
9. How often do you spend time specifically teaching students TO READ your subject matter, as opposed to teaching them the content itself?

☐ Never  ☐ Once every couple of weeks  ☐ Several time a week
☐ Not very often (once a month)  ☐ Once a week  ☐ Every day

10. On average, about how many minutes per week do students read assigned nonfiction material during class time? This is silent reading that they do with no support of buddy reading, you reading aloud to them, or the CD playing the text they are reading.

☐ None  ☐ About 1 hour  ☐ About 2 hours
☐ About .5 hour  ☐ About 1.5 hours  ☐ More than 2 hours

11. About how much at-home reading of nonfiction do you assign each week?

☐ None  ☐ 11–20 pages  ☐ 41–60 pages
☐ Fewer than 10 pages  ☐ 21–40 pages  ☐ More than 60

12. What is most of the nonfiction reading your students do for your class? Choose one.

☐ Primary source documents  ☐ Textbooks
☐ Trade books on a particular topic (such as Earthquakes by Seymour Simon or We've Got a Job: The 1963 Birmingham Children's March by Cynthia Levinson)  ☐ Newspapers
☐ Materials from the web  ☐ Articles from magazines
☐ Workbooks and/or worksheets

13. I believe that I should be expected to teach students not only the content itself, but also how to read the content.

☐ Yes  ☐ No

14. When it comes to teaching students who struggle with reading the texts for my content, I . . .

☐ Know a lot about teaching reading to struggling readers.  ☐ Know some things about teaching reading to struggling readers.  ☐ Know little about teaching reading to struggling readers.

15. In choosing texts for your teaching of nonfiction, which of these is most problematic?

☐ Planning instruction that accommodates diverse and unrelated interests of students.
☐ I have no choice. The school system specifies what is to be taught.
☐ Not knowing enough about the students’ reading levels.
☐ Finding and organizing several texts on a particular topic in order to teach students to look at multiple sources of information.
☐ Identifying or funding (purchasing) texts at the students’ levels.
☐ Finding the time to select appropriate texts.

Other (please specify)
16. Where do you spend the majority of your instructional time when working with struggling readers? Choose up to 3.

“I spend my time helping struggling readers to…”
- Recognize the importance of text features—bold-faced words, maps, figures, diagrams, charts, headings, etc.
- Use context clues to understand unknown vocabulary.
- Identify the main idea, details, and summarize or paraphrase what was read.
- Think about the author’s purpose, arguments, and bias.
- Make logical inferences from the text and cite evidence for interpretations and inferences they offer about the text.
- Offer questions about the author, the text, and their responses to the text.
- Simply comprehend and retain the material.

17. The preceding question asked you to identify the area where you must spend the majority of your instructional time when working with struggling readers. Consider these same options in this question and tell us where you must spend the majority of your instructional time when working with skilled and highly skilled readers. Choose up to 3.

“I spend the majority of my instructional time helping skilled and highly skilled readers…”
- Recognize the importance of text features—bold-faced words, maps, figures, diagrams, charts, headings, etc.
- Use context clues to understand unknown vocabulary.
- Identify the main idea, details, and summarize or paraphrase what was read.
- Think about the author’s purpose, arguments, and bias.
- Make logical inferences from the text and cite evidence for interpretations and inferences they offer about the text.
- Offer questions about the author, the text, and their responses to the text.
- Simply comprehend and retain the material.

18. What do you perceive as your students’ biggest stumbling blocks when it comes to understanding the nonfiction you assign? Select up to 3.

- Lack of ability to identify main idea and key details
- Lack of vocabulary needed to access the text
- Lack of knowledge about transition words and phrases (“before this,” “so as to,” “as a result”) and how they indicate text structure
- Lack of background knowledge on the topic
- Poor decoding abilities
- Lack of strategies for getting through difficult texts
- Lack of interest in, or reason for, reading about the topic

19. How do students in your class primarily get the information about the topic you are teaching?

- Through reading
- Through my class lectures, explanations, presentations
- Through class discussions
20. Do you think your students, as a group, mostly like to read about your content or mostly do not like to read about your content?

☐ I think most of them do not enjoy reading about the content we are studying.
☐ I think most of them enjoy reading about the content we are studying.
☐ I do not know what most of my students think about the reading they must do.

21. Do you think readers use different strategies for reading various types of nonfiction texts? In other words, do you think we need different strategies for reading, for instance, a science text and a social studies text?

☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ I’m really not sure

If you answered yes, please offer examples of strategies that you think are more appropriate for one content or another.

22. If there is one work of nonfiction that you have students read every year, what is it? (This could be a magazine that you rely on; if so, please tell us its title.)