**Statement of Purpose**

**The Problem**

The current Common Core standards are packed full of good ideas. However, a teacher can become dismayed when they see how much nonfiction they are supposed to be teaching and how many different ways they are to be teaching it. As a high school English teacher, I would sometimes miss out on the fun of literature. It seems like we are always pushing them to read informational text they dislike and the Classics they unfortunately despise. I think one of the areas of greatest need is in reading and synthesizing informational text.

With the Common Core standards being new, there are a lot of teachers in the Elementary and Middle School who teach their students English mostly through Fiction stories. I don’t have a problem with this because this is when they are supposed to become interested in reading. However, because of this Fictional push, when the students arrive at my door as fresh-faced freshmen, they struggle to be able to slow down their reading and trudge through a nonfiction article. We work all year in 9th grade just getting them to read and annotate nonfiction. The major problem is that there is a lot of different work to be done: reading, synthesizing, and being able to write about what you are reading. To fix this problem, I needed to think of a way to have them practice more frequently and less hesitantly.

**Needs of the Learner**

As students transition into high school, they actually do start spending more of their time reading nonfiction than they realize. They are actively reading magazines whether it be print or online, as well as articles about teams or people that they are interested in learning about. When I saw this I knew that I could find a way to try to connect them to more valuable nonfiction. What I needed them to realize was how important it is to be able to not just read nonfiction but be able to talk about it as well.

Students need to be able to understand the importance of reading nonfiction text and being able to pick apart the most important information for possible regurgitation. As adults, this type of behavior comes second nature. We stand around in the morning before school and talk about information that we read including attempting to directly quote what we saw. This continues throughout the day including within the classroom as teachers try to bring the outside world into the minds of their students who think more about themselves than others around them. If a student is able to pick up on these conversations, it can help them in the world around them because they will be more cultured. Also, if a student is able to talk current events, it will naturally make them seem more cultured. For them to become the adult we want them to become, we need to encourage this type of conversation within the classroom first. This is a place where they feel comfortable. They will be more likely to talk about this information with their peers than a stranger. After they are comfortable enough sharing this information with a peer, then maybe they will be ready to share it with the rest of the world.

**Needs of Society**

Being able to read, synthesize and then discuss nonfiction is a very valuable trait when it comes to functioning in society. Most adult conversations, educated adult conversations, border around something that they read or heard about on the news or internet. The Common Core standards identified this importance by adding the Speaking and Listening standards. At first when I saw those standards, I thought they were just talking about being able to present well. Although presenting is an important skill for them to learn, it is not the only skill they will need in the future. If they are on a job interview and the Boss, or HR director asks them a question about where they see the company, the interviewee needs to have done their research, and be willing to talk about what they have read. This includes being able to possibly discuss what they have read about other companies with similar interests. I have been able to secure jobs I was not necessarily qualified for because I made sure to research what I was going to talk about and what they might ask me.

**Value of the Subject Matter**

The most difficult task, and problem as I stated earlier, is finding information that the student finds relevant enough to discuss. Not everything that they read is going to be relevant to them. Another difficulty is having them understand why they might have to read something they don’t enjoy but yet will have to talk about. Within the unit I am going to be teaching, I also like to sneak in text that makes them learn things I want them to learn. I know you are thinking, “Well that’s what most teachers do”. Well you are right. However, I try to notice things going on within the school. Say for instance the students are complaining about not being able to use their cellphones in school. I will then find an article about why cellphones are distracting within the classroom. I make them read it, answer questions with it, and be able to talk about it. This might bother them, but it gives them a better perspective when it comes to complaining about something. I also have had them find their own articles to support their argument. This helps the subject matter become much more important to them.

**The Educational Goal**

I intended to initially work through a Weekly Article with the students and eventually have the work through one on their own. I will model how they should read this article; what type of information they should pull from it. I will then slowly teach less and require more watching them slowly become students who are able to read a nonfiction article and then quickly talk about all of the important aspects of that article. I hope that they will be able to do what started with a week’s worth of work, in one or two days. This unit is designed to help strengthen their reading comprehension abilities as well as their speaking and listening abilities. I hope they will use this knowledge and information to spark conversation at home as well as in public with anyone who may ask.