Big Idea/ Topic

**Teaching Others What We Know: Informational Writing**

This 10-lesson mini unit supports students in writing longer, more in-depth informational texts as second-graders. While this unit focuses primarily on writing instruction, the assumption is that students are also engaging in reading workshop lessons centered around nonfiction texts. This overlap in reading and writing instruction allows students to begin producing the same types of texts they are reading independently and invites natural observations of text characteristics used by readers and writers of informational texts. In this unit students will observe the teacher model writing informational booklets while producing multiple booklets themselves over the course of the ten days.

**Lesson Six: Using Comparisons to Describe New Information**

Students will learn that when stating facts and details in their writing it is often easier for the reader to understand if the writer compares the new, unknown, fact to a more familiar idea.

**NOTE:** This learning plan uses specific texts (e.g., written, performed, illustrated) as concrete examples of standards-based learning activities. These texts are not endorsements. The selection of classroom texts is completely a local decision and subject to local approval processes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Targets</th>
<th>Lesson “Small Make(s)”</th>
<th>Unit “Big Make”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can use comparisons in my writing.</td>
<td>Students will add at least one comparison fact to their informational texts by either continuing the book they are currently working on, beginning a new book, or revising a previously written book.</td>
<td>Students will individually publish an informational booklet that teaches others by choosing one of the booklets they created during the unit, revising and editing to the best extent possible, then sharing with an authentic audience, such as a Buddy Kindergarten/1st grade class or another second-grade class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can write facts, definitions, and details about my topic.</td>
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*adapted from Cris Tovani’s *Why Do I Have to Read This? Literacy Strategies to Engage our Most Reluctant Readers* (2021)
Standard Alignment

ELAGSE2W2: Write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.

Instructional Design

For more information regarding daily routine practices and/or additional information on the unit framework (including materials), please see the Unit Plan Overview.

Various evidence-based practices (EBPs) are identified throughout the lesson below; however, we believe good teaching can be eclectic, “...thoughtfully, intentionally taking some of the best of different teaching methodologies, while always holding onto some research-based, core beliefs, we can help our students flourish in ways that teaching only one way will not” (Roberts, 2018, p. 6). Always feel free to adapt the lesson to meet your professional needs with your specific student population. Ideas for student supports and enrichments can be found in the “Student Learning Supports” section.

This mini unit is written for synchronous distance learning or face-to-face learning that utilizes various technology resources. Everything listed as synchronous can be utilized with little to no change in a face-to-face (f2f) environment. However, guidance is provided for modifications, including ideas for supporting students who are learning asynchronously and those with little or no access to technology (unplugged / offline).

Materials

Teacher—virtual whiteboard (shared document), document camera, sample student mentor text “Sharks” [link to student writing sample text], booklet you have been modeling for students (be prepared to write a fact that lends itself to a comparison on the next page of your booklet)

Students—blank paper, unplugged handout version
Engage

Opening: Whole group discussion

Synchronous

- Explain to students that today we will be learning about a special way to make interesting information even easier for our readers to understand. When informational writers want to make sure their audience truly understands an idea, they oftentimes use a comparison. A comparison is when the writer says one thing is similar to another. Many times, they use the word LIKE or AS when writing the comparison. [EBP: Teach students academic language skills, including the use of inferential and narrative language, and vocabulary knowledge [Minimal evidence] (Foorman et al., 2016)].

- Examples of comparisons:
  - A plant sucks up water through its stem like we suck up water through a straw.
  - A whale spouts water through its blowhole like a water fountain.
  - A hummingbird’s nest is as small as a quarter.
  - A doctor’s stethoscope is like a magnifying glass for the ears.

- Read students page 2 of the sample student text Sharks. Point out to students that the author compares the Hammerhead shark’s head to a hammer. Ask students what other comparison they see on this page (e.g., Whale sharks are as long as a school bus.) Read page 3 and ask students to find the comparison (e.g., Their skin is rough like sandpaper).

Asynchronous

Post on your learning management platform a brief video of yourself a) explaining what comparisons are, b) pointing out both comparisons on page 2 of the Sharks book, and c) modeling thinking aloud about a few possible comparisons for your new booklet. End by showing them these practice comparisons:

- A cheetah can run as fast as __________.
- An elephant is as big as __________.
- A dog’s tail is like a __________.

Unplugged/Offline

Have students work through part 1 of Lesson 6 Handout – unplugged.
Explore

Synchronous

• Ask students to practice making a few comparisons:
  o A cheetah can run as fast as __________ [a car, a motorcycle, a train].
  o An elephant is as big as __________ [a house, a car].
  o A dog’s tail is like a __________ [flag, windshield wiper, Swiffer].

• Show students your current booklet underneath the document camera. Talk about the next fact you want to write about your topic and how you’d like to use a comparison to make it easier to understand. Think aloud about how you might use a comparison (to help with this, think about how big/small your topic is, another object it might look or sound or feel like, or another situation that is similar). [EBP: Teach students academic language skills, including the use of inferential and narrative language, and vocabulary knowledge [Minimal evidence] (Foorman et al., 2016)].

• Ask students to help you with your comparison after you think of one example. Or perhaps provide them with a different fact about your topic and let them help you come up with a comparison.

• Have students think about a comparison they could use in their current booklet. Ask 1-2 students to share their ideas with the group as examples for those students who might have difficulty creating a comparison on their own. [EBP: Create an engaged community of writers [Minimal evidence] (Graham et al., 2016)].

Asynchronous

Have students record a brief Flipgrid or Seesaw video in which they begin by orally completing the practice comparisons you showed them and then tell you at least one comparison they could add to their booklets.

Unplugged/Offline

Have students work through part 2 of Lesson 6 Handout – unplugged.

Apply

Synchronous/Asynchronous/Unplugged/Offline

Students will work independently on their booklets, either beginning a new one or continuing an ongoing text. Tell students to spend the first part of their writing time working on adding a comparison or two to their writing. Some students may wish to go back to previously-written books or pages to add a comparison. [EBP: Teach students to use the writing process for a variety of purposes. [Strong evidence] (Graham et al., 2016)].
**Reflect**

**Synchronous**

Students can share their writing in groups of 2-3 via breakout rooms. Ask students to begin by sharing the comparison they created today. Once the group has returned to a whole-group format, the teacher might ask 1-2 students to share their comparisons with the group. [EBP: Create an engaged community of writers [Minimal evidence] (Graham et al., 2016)].

**Asynchronous/ Unplugged/Offline**

Students will continue working on their booklets. These can be shared with teachers via a scheduled online conference, regular phone conference during which the student reads aloud their writing, or photos can be emailed to the teacher of the student’s work.

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**Evidence of Student Success**

Students will be considered successful if they are able to participate in the discussion about potential comparisons for the practice comparisons, your modeled text, as well as other students’ texts. Students should be able to produce a comparison in their informational text.

**Formative Assessment**

“More of What’s Meaningful”: Formative Assessments (Serravallo, 2013)

Formative assessment can occur in two ways:

- Conferring [Guidance: Tips for Conferring to Maximize Student Engage]
  “Supercharge your Conferring: Focus on Goals, Strategies, and Feedback” (Serravallo, 2018)

- Sharing ["How to Create an Inclusive Virtual Classroom” (Kern, 2020)]
  “8 Strategies to Improve Participation in Your Virtual Classroom” (Minero, 2020)

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**Student Learning Supports**

At all levels, the English Language Arts standards encourage students to become critical thinkers and communicators. The following strategies are designed to support students who are either struggling to meet this lesson’s learning target and/or are exceeding and would benefit from enrichment.
Supports/Scaffolding

- **Conceptual Processing:** Allow additional processing time. Review this content prior to the lesson occurring so that the student will have additional time to formulate responses. Summarize each lesson segment and keep summary accessible for students. Implement scaffolds identified below for various circumstances.

- **Language:** Prior to beginning of the lesson, explicitly teach vocabulary required to engage with the content. [EBP: Teach students academic language skills, including the use of inferential and narrative language, and vocabulary knowledge [Minimal evidence] (Foorman et al., 2016)].

- **Visual-spatial Processing:** Provide opportunities for students to engage with visual representations and/or manipulatives (virtual or concrete) as they explore informational writing and communicate ideas.

- **Organization:** Maintain logical progression of big ideas/lesson segments in the course’s shared virtual space so that students can revisit lesson segments as necessary. Help students bookmark frequently utilized sites (such as Flipgrid) or how to group tabs in Chrome to assist with organization.

- **Memory:** Maintain logical progression of big ideas/lesson segments in the course’s shared virtual space so that students can revisit lesson segments, as necessary.

**Lesson-specific scaffolds:**

Comparisons might be a difficult concept for some students. When this is the case, fall back on more concrete examples, such as comparisons of size. Other students will be able to write comparisons but won’t realize they are best used when the reader encounters new or unfamiliar information – these students will need to be coached to think from their audience’s perspective. For example, you might say, “The Kindergarteners you will read your book to might already know that seagulls are white like the clouds. So, let’s think about something that makes seagulls different from other animals, like how they dive to eat fish. What could that be compared to?”

**Supports/scaffolds for English learners:**

- Educators are encouraged to refer to resources such as WIDA’s Essential Actions Handbook or the downloadable GO TO Strategies from CAL to find a variety of scaffolds appropriate for ELs across ELP levels.

- Sample language objectives/targets for this lesson (Please note the following language objectives are examples and should not be used across all ELP levels. Teachers should take students’ ELP levels into account when creating language objectives for their lessons):
  - Compare and contrast aspects of two different topics in L1 using pictures and a Venn Diagram.
  - Write a simile to compare topic to another related topic with support from sentence frames and visuals.
**Acceleration/Extension**

**Standard:**

- **ELAGSE2W2:** Write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.
- **ELAGSE2RI7:** Explain how specific images (e.g., a diagram showing how a machine works) contribute to and clarify a text.

**Acceleration/Extension Activity:**

Some students will really enjoy the idea of creating comparisons in their informational texts. These writers can be encouraged to create “Did You Know?” call-outs within their text that highlight interesting facts and comparisons and might also include illustrations. Show these students examples of these in texts such as National Geographic Kids’ *First Big Book of Weather* and others.

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**Engaging Families**

Aligning with your district’s family engagement plan to facilitate the most meaningful way to work with your families.

- Encourage families to play the Comparison Game in which one person names a topic or object and the other has to make a comparison (for example, a kite is like a _____).
- As you read informational texts, look for examples of comparisons and collect them on a chart (this collection will also help you play the Comparison Game).

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**References**

[https://blog.heinemann.com/10-tips-for-conferring-with-student-writers-online](https://blog.heinemann.com/10-tips-for-conferring-with-student-writers-online)

[https://ctl.wustl.edu/online-annotation-tools/](https://ctl.wustl.edu/online-annotation-tools/)


Tovani, C., & Moje, E.B. (2017). *No more telling as teaching: Less lecture, more engaged learning (not this but that)*. Heinemann.
