Big Idea/Topic

These digital plans have been designed by Georgia educators as examples of what’s working well for their students. When making curriculum decisions for your students, consult the guidelines of your local school and district.

Overview of Lesson Sequence:

Teaching Others What We Know: Informational Writing

This 10-lesson mini unit introduces students to the concept of becoming writers of informational texts. 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 as the teacher models writing informational booklets and students will produce multiple booklets themselves over the course of the ten days.

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.

Introduction

At its most basic, informational writing is about sharing information with others. First graders are very capable of “reading to learn” from informational texts as well as “writing to teach” others about topics with which they are familiar. At this level, students will typically write “All About” books that cover one topic familiar to the student, for example: All About Hamsters, All About Going to the Laundromat, All About Weather, etc.

It is important to keep in mind the distinction between the W2 standard for writing informative texts and the W7 standard on conducting shared research. This unit will focus on the W2 standard, which requires that
students produce writing that is fact-based and includes a basic topic introduction and a sense of closure. Students may struggle with the shift from telling a personal story about a topic (e.g., *their* dog) to teaching others about the topic (e.g., *All About Dogs*). Thus, one of the big goals of this unit is to support students in their understanding of how to write informatively. It is *not* expected that students conduct research into topics on their own. In Kindergarten through second grades, the W7 standard expects that research is done collaboratively through shared projects. Nevertheless, if a student becomes curious about their writing topic and chooses to read more about it or searches for an answer to a particular question, teachers should encourage and support them by any means necessary. Authentic curiosity and a drive to discover are at the heart of why authors publish informational texts.

Finally, this unit is based on the premise that young writers are motivated by and better understand text creation when writing in booklet form. Simply folding one or two sheets of paper into a small booklet allows students to create texts that mimic those they encounter during reading workshop. Booklets allow them to begin to organize their information on separate pages, an important organizational skill that will lead to an understanding of paragraphing in older grades. The use of booklets also allows young writers to add detailed illustrations and possibly include text features such as headings, captions, and labeled drawings, though it is important to note that the use of text features is a *reading* standard and not a writing standard. Thus, the goal is for students to understand their purpose and be able to use these features to understand what they read; if they choose to include them in their own writing, that is a considerable bonus. Overall, having students write in booklets from the beginning of the unit – not just as a “publishing choice” at the end – makes sense to young writers and allows for genuine connections between the reading and writing curriculum. Students should spend 1-3 days on a booklet before moving on to create multiple informational booklets on a range of topics over the course of this 10-day unit.

**Standard Alignment**

The Elementary Georgia Standards of Excellence for English Language Arts encompass a dynamic skillset that steadily increases in sophistication, nuance, and complexity. All ELA standards target important and specific skills that are interconnected and that spiral throughout their entire K-12 education. The ELA GSE are designed to be revisited and reinforced throughout every school year. Primary grade students in Georgia regularly engage in the following holistic practices:

- Participate regularly in thinking, talking, and writing about rich stories and other read-aloud books.
- Learn to confer with peers about topics and texts by responding to others, asking questions, and following rules for discussions.
» Begin to experiment with writing using a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing letters to share information, ideas, and feelings.

Of course, for students to expand their knowledge, increase their skills, and build lifelong literacy practices, they need to engage in focused instruction and participate in diverse educational experiences. Even when lessons require students to use an array of literacy skills and knowledgebases (as they always do), instruction must zero in on specific skills at specific times.

The lessons in this sequence are unified by ELAGSE1W2. Additional standards are leveraged when students are required to read or write using specific skills and practices.

ELAGSE1W2 Write informative/explanatory texts in which they name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide some sense of closure.

### Instructional Design

**GaDOE’s Standards-based Classroom Instructional Framework**

This learning plan supports the whole child and aligns to the coherent instruction system of Georgia’s Systems of Continuous Improvement. Each lesson of the sequence is designed in accordance with the standards-based classroom instructional framework put forth by the Georgia Department of Education’s Division of School & District Effectiveness.

This standards-based framework follows a workshop model of instruction and includes an opening, a brief transition, a work session, and a closing. Figure 1 shows general percentages of class time devoted to each segment of the instructional framework; however, it is important to note that these percentages will vary with the instructional focus. For a more detailed description of the teaching practices contained within each segment, visit the instructional framework page on GaDOE’s website.

Tovani (Tovani & Moje, 2017) puts forth a similar framework, which she calls the student engagement model (Figure 2). This model includes a catch segment during which the teacher refocuses the class by clarifying misunderstandings or introducing a new strategy. For more information, please see the professional learning study guide and framework template to design your own lesson: “TIME: Planning for Students to do the Work” (Tovani, 2020). Both frameworks are flexible, and
any segment may serve as an entry point. While most class periods will incorporate all segments, this, too, will vary with the instructional focus.

Tovani also writes about the “Curriculum You Anticipate (CYA)” structures, comprised of the six Ts: topic, text, time, targets, task, and tending, to help facilitate deeper dives into the content (2021).

**TOPIC: How can we teach others through our writing?**

We read informational texts to learn new ideas and we write informational texts to share the facts and information we know with others. Informational texts have important characteristics that make them easier for the reader to understand.

**TIME:** This unit incorporates 10 Lessons, which depending on the environment, pacing, and your professional discretion could take more than 10 days.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Unit Learning TARGETS</th>
<th>TASK Unit “Big Make”</th>
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<tr>
<td>• I can <strong>describe</strong> the purpose of informational texts.</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 class or another first-grade class.</td>
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<td>• I can <strong>use</strong> mentor texts to inspire my writing.</td>
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<td>• I can <strong>brainstorm</strong> possible informational writing topics.</td>
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<td>• I can <strong>write</strong> facts about my topic.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• I can <strong>write</strong> about my topic part by part.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• I can <strong>add</strong> more to my writing when the reader has questions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• I can <strong>interest</strong> my reader at the beginning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• I can do my best to <strong>spell</strong> harder words.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• I can <strong>create</strong> illustrations that teach the reader.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• I can <strong>write</strong> an ending to my booklet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• I can <strong>revise</strong> my writing to make sure it makes sense to others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• I can <strong>check</strong> my writing for correct grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling of word wall words.</td>
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**TEXT:** The main text used in this unit will be the teacher’s modeled booklets that he/she writes alongside the students. The teacher will also show students simple published informational books that demonstrate the learning target for the lesson.

**Disclaimer:** The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) does not endorse any of the books, resources, websites, programs, products, and other materials that may be featured as part of the Remote Learning Plan units. Any use of books, resources, websites, programs, products and other materials are intended to serve as examples only. All curriculum decisions are made at the local level.

**TENDING:** First grade students will demonstrate a range of writing abilities as they begin this unit, with some perhaps still needing the teacher to take dictation while others are able to write multiple sentences per page. It is important to separate the evaluation of students’ writing conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, spacing) from their composition of informational texts. For instance, some students may create booklets that are
difficult to decipher and yet meet the standard of naming the topic, supplying facts, and including a sense of closure. At this age, students may become discouraged at the gap between the sophistication of texts they can read versus the texts they are able to create on their own. During writing conferences, use student-friendly rubrics and checklists that allow writers to see progress and set goals. Proficient student writers may be accelerated by encouraging them to go into more depth on their topic of choice. They may choose to research their topic independently by reading books, viewing webpages, and watching videos, then adding newly learned information to their writing. These accelerated students may need support with how best to include this information without plagiarizing their sources. When tending to students’ individual needs, utilizing “catch and release” times in addition to the other scaffolds, supports, and accelerations in the Student Learning Support portions can increase your awareness of your students’ needs. For more information on engagement strategies for a variety of disinclined learners, check out Tovani’s Why Do I Have to Read This? Literacy Strategies to Engage Our Most Reluctant Students (2021).

Evidence-based Practices:
In addition, evidence-based practices have been identified throughout the Remote Learning Plan Reading Power lessons, by color-coding the evidence-based practices (EBP) and accompanying citation; these are practices that have been found to be effective at producing positive outcomes with student populations. For more specific information, please review the IES Practice Guide cited for each practice.

Lesson Sequence
Lesson 1 . . . Getting Started Writing Informational Booklets
Lesson 2 . . . Telling Facts and Adding More
Lesson 3 . . . Telling Different Parts on Different Pages
Lesson 4 . . . Getting Help from Writing Partners
Lesson 5 . . . Getting Our Reader’s Attention
Lesson 6 . . . Being Brave with Our Words
Lesson 7 . . . Illustrating with Intention
Lesson 8 . . . Ending Our Booklets
Lesson 9 . . . Getting Ready to Celebrate: Revision
Lesson 10 . . . Getting Ready to Celebrate: Editing
Learning Environments
Synchronous, Asynchronous, & Unplugged/Offline Distance Learning

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. Throughout the lessons, the various learning environment modifications can be identified through the color-coded label of Synchronous, Asynchronous, or Unplugged/Offline. If you are in a face-to-face setting, you will likely be able to follow this plan with minimal adjustments; however, utilizing chart paper to create Anchor charts as you move through the lessons could be an excellent addition to keep track of the thinking.

Materials
This learning plan requires minimal supplies, allowing you to adapt it to your teaching environment and to your students. Most days, students will need independent writing materials, blank paper to create booklets or a printed writing booklet [Booklet Paper Template], and illustration supplies such as crayons, markers or colored pencils. It often helps for each student to have a pocket folder to keep up with finished and ongoing booklets. This has the added bonus of serving as a work portfolio.

For your mini lessons, you will need demonstration texts and something that can function as a whiteboard for notes (Jamboard, Whiteboard.fi, or Miro), and an anchor chart for keeping track of new strategies and techniques. You will also be modeling during mini lessons by writing booklets alongside the students, so prepare a selection of blank booklets that mimic those the students are using.

Give yourself and your students grace when it comes to new technology—often, simple and familiar is the most effective. For more tips, please check out our new GaDOE ELA Guidance Document: “Digital Tips for Student Engagement” (2021); you can utilize the virtual introduction document here.

For more information about a workshop model of instruction, teacher as writer, and reader’s and writer’s notebooks, view this guidance from the Georgia Writing Project (GaWP) (2019).

Evidence of Student Success
Diagnostic or Pre-assessment
You may choose to pre-assess your students at the beginning of this unit with an unassisted, open-ended assessment in which you ask them to teach you about a topic of their choosing. Your first graders will have written informational texts in kindergarten, and conducting a pre-assessment allows you to see what skills have transferred from the previous year. Simply remind them what informational writing is, provide them with a single piece of paper, and ask that they do their best without help from you or a parent. Compare the student pre-assessment writing to the rubric [1st grade information writing rubric] to give yourself an idea of where your students’ strengths and needs lie.

**Formative Assessment**

In this mini unit, formative assessment occurs in two ways:

- Conferring [“Supercharge Your Conferring” (Serravallo, 2018)]
- Sharing [“How to Create an Inclusive Virtual Classroom” (Kern, 2020)]

**Possible Summative/Post-assessment**

The final assessment for this unit will be presented as a Publishing Celebration for students. Students will choose one of the many booklets they created over the course of the unit to “publish” during the last days of the unit as they go through a revision and editing process led by the teacher. The Celebration will consist of first graders meeting with a Kindergarten class, with each first grader pairing up with a Kindergarten student, to read them their books and “teach” them about the topic. Having an authentic, younger audience for their writing encourages first graders to revise and edit their booklets for clarity and precision and helps emphasize their understanding of informational books as “teaching texts.”

**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.

- In this section of each plan, supports are identified for students who might struggle with conceptual processing, language, visual-spatial processing, organization, and/or memory.

- In addition, scaffolding (including that for English language learners) and acceleration/extension are provided for use.
  - For more information about evidence-based teaching practices and scaffolding, see this [infographic (REL Southeast, 2017)].
Engaging Families

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

Drawing upon the research of Day (2013), Ferguson (2005), and LaRocque (2013), Jacques and Villegas (2018) argue that family engagement best occurs for parents when the following conditions are met:

A relationship with a trusted staff person or teacher who is approachable, friendly, receptive to concerns, and a champion for the student and family. Perceptions that families are welcome and valued at the school. Receptivity, transparency, empathy, and flexibility from school staff regarding communication and collaborative efforts to support learning and success. (p. 1)

References


New York State Education Department. (n.d.). *Glossary of cognates: English/Haitian Creole*. [https://research.steinhardt.nyu.edu/scmsAdmin/media/users/tn293/cognates/english_haitian_cognates.pdf](https://research.steinhardt.nyu.edu/scmsAdmin/media/users/tn293/cognates/english_haitian_cognates.pdf)


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

