Informational Writing: What is social media, and how does it affect young people?

This ten lesson mini unit challenges students to think critically about social media through reading and composing informational text. Students will demonstrate what they have learned by creating a magazine or ‘zine’ about social media, a topic that they are familiar with. Students with access to technology may use Canva to create their zine and students who are unplugged may use images from magazines, white paper, plastic sheet covers, and a 1 inch. binder to create their zine.

For more information about teaching informational writing, The New York Times offers a video on Teaching Informational Writing as part of their writing webinar series.

NOTE: This learning plan uses specific texts (e.g., written, performed, illustrated) however, these texts are not endorsements. The selection of classroom texts is completely a local decision and subject to local approval processes.

Informational Writing: Genre Integration

This eighth lesson engages students in an exploration of various graphic design elements as they consider their final product and composition of their second text genre. Following a review of potential resources, students will be allowed time to work on finalizing their main magazine article drafts and working on their second informational genre. Students will continue to refer to the drafting success criteria checklist to remain on track with their work.

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>
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<tr>
<th>Learning Target</th>
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<tr>
<td>• I can <strong>examine</strong> complex ideas about social media.</td>
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<td>• I can <strong>organize</strong> complex ideas about social media by using headings, graphics and multimedia.</td>
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<td>• I can <strong>make</strong> meaningful connections between the facts on my topic.</td>
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<td>• I can <strong>use</strong> precise language to manage the complexity of the topic.</td>
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<td>• I can <strong>demonstrate</strong> my understanding of various perspectives while still clearly articulating my own.</td>
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<td>• I can <strong>revise</strong> my writing to make sure it makes sense to others.</td>
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<th>Lesson “Small Make(s)”</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Final Product Draft-in-Progress</td>
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<td>• Writer’s Journal Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<th>Unit “Big Make”</th>
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<td>• Students will independently create their own <strong>multi-genre magazine article or ‘zine’</strong> to distribute information about a topic of their choice.</td>
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<td>• <strong>Rubric</strong></td>
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<td>• <strong>Exemplar</strong></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

**ELAGSE9-10W2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

**ELAGSE9-10W5:** Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

**ELAGSE9-10W6:** Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology’s capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

**WIDA English Language Development Standards for English learners (ELs):**

Teachers of ELs are encouraged to use the resources in the [WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 Edition](https://www.wida.us), to design language expectations (p.28) specific to the GSE. Examples of the English language needed to support informational writing can be found on pp. 186-187.

### Instructional Design
For more information regarding daily routine practices and/or additional information on the unit framework (including materials), please see the Informational Writing Unit 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),
Students—reader & writer’s notebooks, digital or physical annotation tools, Informational Writing: Lesson Eight Handout (Unplugged)

Engage
Opening: Whole-group discussion. [Increase student motivation and engagement in literacy learning [Moderate evidence] (Kamil, et al., 2008)].

Synchronous and Asynchronous
Ask students to provide a brief showcase of their second genre (podcast, chart, infographic, video, etc.). Then, facilitate an open discussion about the graphic design principles discussed in Lesson Six and ask them what technological (or physical) barriers they might encounter. As a group, brainstorm how they might overcome some of those barriers.

Also, ask if anyone has explored the tools and feels like an “expert.” Allow “experts” the opportunity to let you know their areas of strength, and with their consent, post a list of “If you have a question about making a chart in Canva, reach out to __________________.” Post this list to the Google Classroom or Canvas space
so that it remains a constant resource for students to go back to. Your students will be able to leverage their own expertise to improve their final product as well as the products of their peers!

**Unplugged/Offline**

1. Have students complete Part I of the *Informational Writing: Lesson Eight Handout (Unplugged).*
2. If possible, try to find a way to communicate with students about their thoughts and to provide feedback (even if it is via phone call or Google Voice).

**Explore**

*EBP: Integrate writing and reading to emphasize key writing features.* [Moderate Evidence] (Graham et al., 2016); *EBP: Provide direct and explicit comprehension strategy instruction.* [Strong Evidence] (Kamil et al., 2008).

**Asynchronous & Synchronous**

Now that students have received feedback for the first draft of their magazine article and second genre, they will work on finalizing their drafts (including finalizing body paragraph headings and making final edits based on peer feedback). They will use a digital or physical tool to work toward creating a final, integrated product.

Have students review their copy of the success criteria and annotate it. Have them write any questions/thoughts in the margins and/or highlight anything of interest. Then, open the floor to discussion about anything they do not understand.

Ask students if they think this is a complete criteria list for success. What would you add? By shifting some of the ownership to students, their self-efficacy will rise, and their engagement in the process will follow suit, based on the research. If they propose something worthwhile, add it to the list. If they think something is unreasonable and can argue why, then consider removing it. Ultimately, the professional discretion is yours to implement this approach.

**Criteria for Success:**

- I have reviewed the feedback from my writing partner, and I have ideas for changes I will make.
- I wrote a lead that draws readers into my article.
- I finalized my headings for paragraphs 2-4.
- I have double-checked spellings and correct/precise use of words.
- I have double-checked for active voice.
- I have double-checked for correct punctuation usage.
- I clearly identify my main topic and support it with well-organized details.
- I have incorporated at least four text features to enhance my final product.
- I have formatted my information to align with genre expectations.
- I have a solid draft of my second genre.
- I have an engaging title.
- I included my byline.
- I am prepared to type my information from my learning journal into a magazine article format.
on Canva or another digital tool like it.

NO TECHNOLOGY:

- I used physical magazines to find pictures that align with the topic of the article.
- I wrote a lead that draws readers into my article.
- I have finalized my headings for paragraphs 2-4.
- I have double checked for spellings and correct/precise use of words.
- I have double checked for active voice.
- I clearly identified my main topic and supported it with well-organized details.
- I have incorporated at least four text features to enhance my final product.
- I have formatted my information to align with genre expectations.
- I am prepared to neatly re-write my magazine article with no scratch outs or blemishes on my white paper.
- I have an engaging title.
- I included my byline.
- I am prepared to create/incorporate a final copy of my second genre.
- I have all of the following physical materials to start creating my magazine article.
  - white paper, plastic sheet covers, and a 1 inch. binder

Unplugged/Offline

1. Have students complete Part II of the Informational Writing: Lesson Eight Handout (Unplugged).
2. If possible, try to find a way to communicate with students about their thoughts and to provide feedback (even if it is via phone call or Google Voice).

Apply

EBP: Increase student motivation and engagement in literacy learning. [Moderate Evidence] (Kamil et al., 2008); EBP: Integrate writing and reading to emphasize key writing features. [Moderate Evidence] (Graham et al., 2016)

Synchronous & Asynchronous

Allow students independent time to work on their finalized drafts (both the design and the content).

While students read and work independently, conference with individual students or small groups as planned or by spontaneously checking in with them and their writing process. Based on the feedback from the last lesson, small group and individual discussions may be catered based on expressed needs. Review tips about effective small group and conferencing practices (Roberts, 2018); also, Anderson’s tips for virtual writing conferences (2020) is a good resource.

Unplugged/Offline

1. Have students complete Part III of the Informational Writing: Lesson Eight Handout (Unplugged).
2. If possible, try to find a way to communicate with students about their thoughts and to provide
feedback (even if it is via phone call or Google Voice).

**Reflect**

**EBP: Provide opportunities for extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation. [Moderate Evidence] (Kamil et al., 2008).**

**Synchronous and Asynchronous**

Have students take a few moments to analyze what they have done so far in their Writer's Journal.

- What have they learned about their topic?
- What have they learned about graphic design, and about communicating their ideas?
- What can they do to make their final product have a more profound impact?
- How has learning about their topic affected the way they relate to social media?

**Unplugged/Offline**

1. Have students complete Part IV of the [Informational Writing: Lesson Eight Handout (Unplugged)](https://example.com).
2. If possible, try to find a way to communicate with students about their thoughts and to provide feedback (even if it is via phone call or Google Voice).

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**Evidence of Student Success**

Students will independently create their own magazine or ‘zine’ to distribute information about social media and its effects on young people. This will serve as the evidence-based deliverable.

**Formative Assessment:**

- Final product draft
- Writer’s Journal Reflection

**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](https://example.com)
“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: Explicit vocabulary instruction [strong] (Kamil, et al., 2008)].

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

- **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 Canva) 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:**

- If students struggle (especially in the virtual world), you could do a guided small group or one-on-one session in a break-out room to use your expertise and provide intensive supports (High-leverage practice).

- Incorporate positive feedback to recognize what students have done well with their writing (High-leverage practice).

- Utilize “Peer Experts” to assist students struggling with an element of the technology, as identified during the Engagement step.

- Meet with students who might need more assistance with integrating their two genres into one final product. EBP: Explicitly teach appropriate writing strategies using a Model-Practice-Reflect
instructional cycle. [Strong Evidence] (Graham et al., 2016).

- Model using the writing partner checklist, and help students review their peer feedback. Help them understand the comments, and also guide them through ways they can improve their final products.

**EBP:** Explicitly teach appropriate writing strategies using a Model-Practice-Reflect instructional cycle. [Strong Evidence] (Graham et al., 2016).

**Supports for English learners:**
- Suggestions for this lesson include but are not limited to:
  - providing students with resources (including audiovisual) to develop students’ conceptual understanding of informational genre characteristics (such as the Spanish infographic resources contained [here](#))
  - allowing students to work with a partner on assignment, working with students in a small group setting to review draft progress, etc.
- Educators may find it valuable to review [WIDA’s Proficiency Level Descriptors](#) (pp. 210-211) when planning for differentiation based on students’ levels of English proficiency.
- Teachers of ELs are encouraged to incorporate [high leverage practices](#) for teaching EL students and to utilize relevant evidence-based strategies such as those found in Project EXCELL’s downloadable [GO TO Strategies](#) (Levine et al., 2013).

**Acceleration/Extension**

**Standard:**

**ELAGSE9-10W2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
- c. Use appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.
- d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic.
- e. Establish and maintain an appropriate style and objective tone.

**Acceleration/Extension Activity:**

- High-achieving students can also create a glossary of terms as part of their final product, identifying specific words in their writing and providing accessible definitions.
- Students can identify “pull quotes” from their articles to highlight in the final product layout (Bear, 2021).
Engaging Families

Aligning with your district’s family engagement plan to facilitate the most meaningful way to work with your families. At the secondary level, much of the communication occurs with the student serving as a liaison.

- Have students share the review checklist with a family member and gain their feedback, too.
  - Can family members offer more precise language for some parts of their article?
  - Did they write anything that was unclear?
- Have students engage their families in discussion about the role of social media (within the confines of their research).
  - Is anything surprising?
  - Has your relationship with social media changed as a result of your research?

References


The lessons in this unit were created in collaboration with the Georgia Writing Project and Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPB).