Big Idea/ Topic

**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 the teacher model writing informational booklets while producing multiple booklets themselves over the course of the ten days.

**Lesson Four: Getting Help from Writing Partners**

Students will become more aware of the audience for their writing by reading their booklet to a partner and receiving feedback. The lesson will focus on having partners ask the writer questions about their topic in order to prompt them to add details and facts.

**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>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can <strong>add</strong> more to my writing when the reader has questions.</td>
<td>Students will continue working on a booklet they’ve previously started. After reading their booklet to a partner and hearing that partner’s questions, the student will add more facts and details to their booklet.</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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*adapted from Cris Tovani’s *Why Do I Have to Read This? Literacy Strategies to Engage our Most Reluctant Readers* (2021)
Standard Alignment

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

**ELAGSE1W5**: With guidance and support from adults, focus on a topic, respond to questions and suggestions from peers, and add details to strengthen writing as needed. a. May include oral or written prewriting (graphic organizers)

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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*, student writing sample All About Eagles [*link to student sample booklet*], teacher’s ongoing booklet started yesterday (if you did not write much in front of students yesterday, be sure to add a few sentences to your writing before this lesson while still leaving out information that might invite students to ask questions for this lesson)

**Students**—blank paper, previously written booklets, unplugged handout version [*link to lesson 4 handout unplugged*]

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*Engage*
Opening:

Synchronous

- Tell students that when informational writers are working on their books, they often ask others to read their books to see what questions they have. Those questions give us ideas about what else we can add to our books. [EBP: Create an engaged community of writers [Minimal evidence] (Graham et al., 2016).
- Show students All About Eagles and think aloud about what questions you still have. You might say, “After I read page 1, I realize I’m wondering something – if the eagle’s head is white, what color is the rest of its body? This writer could add another sentence here that says It has a brown body.” (Hint: you might also model thinking aloud about p. 3 and how the eagles eat the fish – do they eat them in the water? Do they carry the fish away? The author could add more to tell about that.)

Asynchronous

Post on your learning management platform a brief video of yourself thinking aloud about questions you have about the student sample All About Eagles as well as how the writer could answer them.

Unplugged/Offline

Have students work through part 1 of Lesson 4 Handout – unplugged.

Explore

Synchronous

- Show your booklet from yesterday under the document camera. Read a few pages, pausing after each page to allow students to share their questions and what else they’re wondering.
- Have students suggest what you might add to your writing to answer these questions.
- As students come up with suggestions add them to your model booklet. [EBP: Create an engaged community of writers [Minimal evidence] (Graham et al., 2016).

Asynchronous

Ask students to help you with your modeled piece of writing – what questions do they have? What could you add to answer that question? Have students record a brief Flipgrid or Seesaw video telling you 1-2 questions they have and the information you could add to your booklet.

Unplugged/Offline

Have students work through part 2 of Lesson 4 Handout – unplugged.

Apply
Synchronous

- Explain to students that you will pair them up in breakout rooms with a partner. Designate which partner will read first (e.g., “the partner with the shortest name reads first”). The reader will read a page and pause to see if the listener has any questions or wonderings. [EBP: Create an engaged community of writers [Minimal evidence]; EBP: Teach students to use the writing process for a variety of purposes. [Strong evidence] (Graham et al., 2016)].
- It may be easiest for the writer to add to their booklet at the moment the listener asks their question. However, the writer has final say over whether they want to add a detail/fact to their writing. In other words, the writer should add some details to the writing based on this partner work, but they do not need to answer every question the listener asks. This helps writers feel in control of their writing and allows for the possibility of off-topic or random questions by the listener.
- Once partner one has finished reading their booklet, their roles will switch.
- When both partners have finished their booklets, they may stay in their breakout room and keep working on their booklets. This will allow you the time to make the rounds to each partnership to ask how it went, and allow those who are finished to be productive while they wait for your arrival.

Asynchronous/Unplugged/Offline

Ask students to pair up with someone at their home – a parent, grandparent, sibling or babysitter – and read their booklet to the partner. Their partner should ask questions they still wonder about and allow the student to add additional information to their booklet.

Reflect

Synchronous

Pair students up with a different partner for this reflection and have them share at least one question their earlier partner asked and what additional information they added to their booklet. Once the group has returned to a whole-group format, the teacher might ask 1-2 students to share with the whole group.

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.

Evidence of Student Success
Students will be considered successful if they are able to effectively participate in the discussion about asking questions and adding information to the model texts. They should be able to add at least one additional piece of information to their own writing based on their partner’s questions.

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)

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:
Some students may have difficulty formulating questions and instead simply tell the writer what they should do (e.g., “You should tell what color the body is” instead of “What color is the eagle’s body?”) Support these students in formulating their suggestions as questions or a wondering statement by providing a list of question words such as: Who? What? When? Why? Where? How? Do? Is? Can? I wonder...

Practice using this chart to formulate questions by modeling with either the student writing sample or your own booklet (e.g., *Who takes care of elephants? When do they take a bath? Why do elephants have such big ears? Etc.*)

**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*):
  - Actively listen and comprehend text read aloud with support from visuals and/or realia.
  - Orally ask and answer “wh-” questions about a text read aloud using sentence starters and modeled teach.

**Acceleration/Extension**

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

ELAGSE1W5: With guidance and support from adults, focus on a topic, respond to questions and suggestions from peers, and add details to strengthen writing as needed. a. May include oral or written prewriting (graphic organizers)

**Acceleration/Extension Activity:**
Some students will realize they don’t have the answers to some of their partner’s questions and will want to research to find out. This is perfectly natural and should be encouraged, though you will likely need to offer research support to most students, especially since individual research is not expected at this age. Some students, however, will be very capable of reading texts and watching videos in pursuit of the answer to a question. Encourage the use of safe search engines, such as [www.Kiddle.co](http://www.Kiddle.co) (Powered by Google).

### Engaging Families

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

- Families can stimulate curiosity about the world around them by encouraging students to constantly ask questions about what they see. Have students begin with question words (Can? Do? How?) or “I wonder…” as they drive to appointments, view a movie, or discuss the day’s events each evening.
- Create a routine of having students read their writing to a family member partner and encourage the partner to tell 1) something they enjoyed about the writing and 2) a question they still have. This routine can apply regardless of writing genre.

### References


Guide/WWC_Elem_Writing_PG_Dec182018.pdf


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