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 Three: Telling Different parts on Different Pages

Students will learn to plan a new piece of writing by thinking first about how they might tell about their topic part by part, with different parts, or subtopics, on different pages. Planning their booklets in this way encourages students to think in organized ways and will also allow room for future revisions/additions to booklet pages.

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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<tr>
<td>I can write about my topic part by part.</td>
<td>Students will start a booklet on a new topic and begin by creating headings for several pages before they begin writing. (While students are expected to begin a new booklet during today’s lesson, they may also spend some of their work time continuing to finish earlier booklets)</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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*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

**ELAGSE2W5**: With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing.
   - a. May include prewriting.

### 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, anchor chart 1 [link to anchor chart 1 – part by part], blank booklet for teacher modeling, simple online book with headings OR hard copy book with headings to show underneath document camera (such as Claire Llewellyn’s *Earthworms*)

**Students**—blank paper, unplugged handout version
**Engage**

**Opening:**

*Synchronous*

- Show students a second-grade level text with headings at the top of some or all pages such as *Earthworms*. Alternatively, you might share a simple online book from a site such as [www.epic.com](http://www.epic.com). [EBP: Teach students to identify and use the text’s organizational structure to comprehend, learn, and remember content [Moderate evidence] (Shanahan et al., 2010)].
- Read 1-3 pages of the text and guide students toward noticing that the heading tells the reader the type of information they will find on the page. The writer intentionally put facts that go together on the same page, and added a heading to help us know that.
- Tell students: *When writers create informational writing, they make sure to tell about their topic part by part. Each part tells different information about the topic.*
- Show anchor chart 1 and explain how the illustration demonstrates a piece of writing about soccer told part by part.
- Underneath the document camera, show students a blank booklet. Tell them: *My new book is going to be about trees. I know from what I’ve read that there are different kinds of trees, so one part of my book can be about that.* Write “Kinds of Trees” as a header at top of one page. Explain that later you’ll go back and add facts on this page, this is just the header for now.
- *I also know that I should probably tell about the parts of a tree, like their trunks and leaves and branches, so I’ll make another page about “Parts of a Tree.”* Add the heading at the top of the page.

*Asynchronous*

Post on your learning management platform a brief video of yourself a) describing the headings of an online or hard copy informational text and then b) thinking aloud about adding headings to your new blank booklet, as described above.

*Unplugged/Offline*

Have students work through part 1 of [Lesson 3 Handout – unplugged](#).
Explore

Synchronous

- Allow students to actively participate in helping you think of additional headings you might add. Possible ideas include: How People Use Trees, Where Trees Live, What Trees Need, etc.
- As students come up with headings, add them to your model booklet.
- Have students choose a topic from their expert list to begin a new book. Then ask them to think about at least two headings they could put in their booklet. Use the wording from the anchor chart by asking them, “How would you tell about this topic part by part? What are the parts?” [EBP: Teach students to use the writing process for a variety of purposes. [Strong evidence] (Graham et al., 2016)].
- Ask a student to share with the group and, if needed, have the class help them think of parts they could write about.
- Pair students up in a breakout room to share the parts of their topics.

Asynchronous

Ask students to help you with your modeled piece of writing – what additional parts could you add? Have students record a brief Flipgrid or Seesaw video telling you 1-2 headings you could add to your booklet.

Unplugged/Offline

Have students work through part 2 of Lesson 3 Handout – unplugged.

Apply

Synchronous/Asynchronous/Unplugged/Offline

- Students will work independently to begin a new booklet by writing headings for the parts at the top of several pages, just like you demonstrated with your model text. They should then go back and begin writing their facts. Remember, they are not researching the topic, merely writing from their own background knowledge of the topic. However, it’s fine if students want to refer to published books on their topic for ideas. In this way, second graders may participate in the beginning steps of research by simply satisfying their curiosity as they write. [EBP: Teach students to use the writing process for a variety of purposes. [Strong evidence] (Graham et al., 2016)].
• Some students will not have finished the booklets they’ve been working on during the previous two lessons. Ask students to begin this new booklet first, then allow them to go back to work on the earlier book if they would like.

**Reflect**

**Synchronous**

Students can share their writing in groups of 2-3 via breakout rooms. Ask students to begin by sharing their headings and how they will tell about their topic part by part. Once the group has returned to a whole-group format, the teacher might ask 1-2 students to share how they will tell about their topic part by part. [*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.

### Evidence of Student Success

Students will be considered successful if they are able to effectively participate in the discussion about adding headings or “parts” to informational text. They should be able to add at least one heading to a page in their new booklet and begin to write related facts on that page.

**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 need tactile support in planning how their booklet will be organized. They may benefit from using their hand as a planner, with the palm being the overall topic and each finger a different heading or “part” to write about. The teacher can model with one topic and then assist the student in thinking of parts for their topic using their hand as an organizer. Additionally, it helps to remind students that a heading should be something you could write several sentences about. For instance, “Trees need sunlight” would not make a good heading, because there’s not much more to say about that. But “What Trees Need” could be a good heading because we can write several sentences about the water, soil, and nutrients trees need.

Supports/scaffolds for English learners:

- Educators are encouraged to refer to resources such as [WIDA’s Essential Actions Handbook](https://www.wida.us) or the downloadable [GO TO Strategies from CAL](https://www.cal.org) 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*):
  - Identify potential headings for topic by using a graphic organizer and word-to-word dictionary in partner groups.
  - Orally share writing draft with the support of visuals and sentence frames in peer groups.
**Acceleration/Extension**

**Standard:**

ELAGSE2W5: With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing. a. May include prewriting.

**Acceleration/Extension Activity:**

For most young writers, using a graphic organizer to plan a piece of writing can feel redundant. Typically, students attempt to include too much information on the organizer and write complete sentences rather than simple words and phrases. However, those students who are ready for acceleration can be taught to organize their information on an organizer before beginning the act of writing. A bubble map can help writers think of possible heading categories, or an open chart could allow for the organization of headings with related facts underneath.

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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.

- Families can support their young writers by exploring the ways the informational texts they read are organized. Point out how similar facts are grouped together and in booklets without headings, think about potential headings the author could have used.

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**References**

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