Big Idea/ Topic

**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: Final Draft & Design Independent Workday**

This ninth lesson allows students the opportunity to have a final designated workday to complete the revisions based on peer feedback and to develop a final product in line with their personal aesthetic. Students will use the success criteria/rubric to self-evaluate and make final tweaks to their product.

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

*adapted from Cris Tovani’s *Why Do I Have to Read This? Literacy Strategies to Engage our Most Reluctant Readers* (2021)

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**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/resources/standards-framework) 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 Nine Handout (Unplugged)](#)

### Engage

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

**Synchronous and Asynchronous**

Allow students to share how they feel about their writing process at this point with their bodies (feel free to incorporate your own silly systems here). For instance, if they feel like they are in a good place for the last day of writing, have them make “touchdown” arms or “hop like a bunny.” If they are nervous, they can make waves with their arms. If they are in a state of total despair (which hopefully no one is), they can pantomime “crocodile tears.” Even though you are working with high school students, they still can enjoy silly actions that
jolt them out of their mundane school day.

If they are not feeling the silliness of a full body experience, you could use a free virtual tool to gauge general sentiment (such as the basic Survey Monkey or Slido) and display the results in real time. Tutorials are linked for each of those tools in the preceding sentence.

Remind students of the graphic design/technological tool “experts” identified in the last lesson and allow those “experts” time to share a few tips for everyone based on what they encountered in the last lesson with peers. Your students will be able to leverage their own expertise to improve their final product as well as the products of their peers! If you are in person, you could give each “Expert” a name tag to wear for the class with their name and their featured skill. It could even just be a piece of paper with tape on the back, but it will elevate them to rock star status.

Unplugged/Offline

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

Return to the exemplar shared with students earlier in the process and allow students an opportunity to compare to their final product thus far. Does it remind them of anything they meant to do?

Today, students will finalize 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.

Review the success criteria for their final product:

Criteria for Success:

- I have reviewed the feedback from my writing partner, and I made any changes I deemed necessary.
- 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 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.
My second genre is complete and seamlessly incorporated into the main article.
I have an engaging title.
I included my byline (and maybe an author’s photo and bio).
My final product is developed in 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.
- My second genre is complete and seamlessly incorporated into the main article.
- I have an engaging title.
- I included my byline (and maybe an author’s photo and bio).
- My final product is neatly developed using white paper, plastic sheet covers, and a 1-inch binder.

Unplugged/Offline

1. Have students complete Part II of the Informational Writing: Lesson Nine 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 completing their final products (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

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 reflect upon their process and use the final success criteria checklist and/or summative rubric for today if they have not already done so.

Depending upon time, student can analyze their treatment of social media based on their research in their Writer’s Notebook, focusing on how they considered its purpose. One acronym for the use of social media is SLIM (Sharing, Learning, Interacting, and Marketing). Do you take these purposes into account? Which of those purposes is the focus of YOUR use of social media (if you use social media)? Will your future use of social media change (decrease or expand)?

Unplugged/Offline

1. Have students complete Part IV of the Informational Writing: Lesson Nine 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).

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 Notebook Reflection (if time allows)
“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: 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.
• Compare exemplar to the student’s product and talk students through an analysis of what they are missing, could strengthen, or do even better than the original. **EBP: Explicitly teach appropriate writing strategies using a Model-Practice-Reflect instructional cycle. [Strong Evidence]** (Graham et al., 2016).

• Model using the success criteria 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.

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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.
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**Acceleration/Extension Activity:**

- High-achieving students can be required to include an author’s biography and headshot as part of their final product.

- If they have additional time, you could even set up a “photo booth” for students to take their own headshots, or to allow a student gifted in the arts to take the headshots for the others.
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 practice sharing their final product (demonstration style) to prepare them for sharing with their classmates during the next lesson.

References


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