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.

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Target</th>
<th>Lesson “Small Make(s)”</th>
<th>Unit “Big Make”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• I can recognize the features of informational writing.</td>
<td>• Informational Writing Paragraph on Topic of Choosing</td>
<td>• Students will independently create their own multi-genre magazine article or ‘zine’ to distribute information about a topic of their choice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I can write about a topic I know about.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Rubric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I can compose a coherent paragraph.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Exemplar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I can ask questions about what I don’t know, but I would like to know.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*adapted from Cris Tovani’s Why Do I Have to Read This? Literacy Strategies to Engage our Most Reluctant Readers (2021)
Introduction: What is the Purpose of Informational Writing?

This first lesson is intended to establish the foundation for the unit. For students to compose their own informational text, they must understand what informational writing is, including purpose and audience. Reviewing relevant examples will also help to develop students’ thoughts about informational writing.

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.

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.

a. Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
b. Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience’s knowledge of the topic.
c. Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.
d. Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic.
e. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

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, 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), Informational Writing Mentor Text List and Questions, Informational Writing Questions Presentation

Students—reader & writer’s notebooks, digital or physical annotation tools, unplugged handout version, mentor text.

**Engage**

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

Synchronous

Use the Informational Writing Presentation to help guide your discussions and consideration.
Ask questions to check their prior knowledge about composing informational text. Ask students of they can provide examples of where you may find information text. [EBP: Help students build explanations by asking and answering deep questions [Strong evidence] (Pashler et al., 2007). To respond, students may unmute themselves, virtually raise their hands, or type their answers in the chat box or back channel. Record students’ ideas on a virtual whiteboard or shared document. The virtual whiteboard materials listed below can be utilized in asynchronous and synchronous sessions. Affirm their ideas and record them on the shared document. Keep your own commentary to a minimum.

**Asynchronous**

Have students record their ideas on a shared virtual whiteboard ([Jamboard](https://jamboard.google.com) or Whiteboard.).

**Unplugged/Offline**

1. Have students complete Part I of the [Informational Writing: Lesson One 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).

**Explore**

**Asynchronous & Synchronous**

EBP: Integrate writing and reading to emphasize key writing features. [Moderate Evidence] (Graham et al., 2016).

1. Share a [PowerPoint presentation](https://example.com) describing informational text.

If in the classroom, you can also create an anchor chart that your students can reference similar to the one below. Here’s a link to an [Info Writing Pinterest Anchor Chart](https://pinterest.com); however, feel free to create your own!
2. Have students read two short mentor texts to familiarize themselves with informational text style writing. Ask questions to check their understanding by asking:
   - What is the topic discussed in the introduction?
   - Have I named the facts and supporting details?
   - What is the conclusion?

**Unplugged/Offline**

1. Have students complete Part I of the *Informational Writing: Lesson One 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:** Integrate writing and reading to emphasize key writing features. [Moderate Evidence] (Graham et al., 2016).

**Synchronous & Asynchronous**

1. Ask students to think about topics they're interested in. If students struggle, you could provide them these generic categories to stimulate their thoughts:
   - Sports
   - Animals
   - Natural phenomena
   - Holidays
• Careers
• Trends
• Superheroes
• Movies
• Books

2. Ask students to chat for 2 minutes with one partner about their topics of interest. The partner should help their narrow down their topic.

3. Using the anchor chart ask students to write an introduction describing the topic.

4. Remind students that this is practice and when they work on the magazine, they will have an opportunity to research the topic that the teacher selects.

5. Students should exchange their writing pieces to conduct checks for understanding and give feedback to their peers.

Unplugged/Offline

1. Have students complete Part III of the Informational Writing: Lesson One 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

Synchronous & Asynchronous

Ask students to reflect on the writing they produced. They should also use this time to jot down their lingering questions or to share those in a collaborative document.

Unplugged/Offline

1. Have students complete Part IV of the Informational Writing: Lesson One 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 for Lesson One:
Informational paragraph: does it have an introduction, facts, and a conclusion?

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, though not exhaustive, are designed to support students struggling to meet this lesson’s learning target, and/or learning English as an additional language, 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:**

- The mini-informational text writing is intended to allow students time to process and practice writing informational text. This lesson will also introduce students to the language associated with informational text such as mentor text.

- As students read aloud, pause and do a think aloud to demonstrate how students should answer the following questions: what is the topic? What is the information being shared about the topic? What are the supporting details? What is the conclusion?

- 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)*.

**Supports for English learners:**

- Suggestions for this lesson include but are not limited to: providing students with informational texts in first language to help identify characteristics of informational texts, teacher modeling of paragraph writing using the anchor chart, using visuals along with a graphic organizer to accompany presentation, etc.

- Educators may find it valuable to review *WIDA’s Proficiency Level Descriptors* (pp. 210-213) 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: Informational Writing 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.

Acceleration/Extension Activity:

- Students can use this Politifact quiz (series of questions that students can go through related to a given article about the web address, attributions, grammar, etc.) to help determine if a source article is credible.

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.

- Interview one family member to determine what they know about social media.
- Push students to challenge the family member to state only facts about the topic.
- Students could voice record the interview (with permission).
- Engage families of English learners by encouraging students to read bilingual or first language informational texts at home. Students and families can identify the characteristics of informational texts together and then create a shared writing piece using the anchor chart and notes from class.
References


