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.

**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.

**Informational Writing: Brainstorm/Conduct Preliminary Research on Topics**

*(Facts Only)*

This third lesson affirms students’ conceptions of fact and opinion and offers insight into the complex way that media can weave them. Students engage in preliminary research/brainstorming on self-selected topics to determine a minimum number of facts they can use in their final 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.
### Learning Target

- I can examine complex ideas about social media.
- I can differentiate between fact and opinion in a complex text.
- I can identify facts about social media and its effects on young people.

### Lesson “Small Make(s)”

- Fact/opinion Analysis
- Brainstorm/Topic Questions & Facts

### Unit “Big Make”

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)*

---

### 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.

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.

**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/standards), 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 Three Handout (Unplugged), Fact v. Opinion Guide (HMH), Editorial Copy (will need to be printed to accompany unplugged students’ handouts), Research/Brainstorming Guide
Engage

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

Synchronous and Asynchronous

Pull up the students' work from the previous lesson and focus on the features of a magazine article. Allow the students an opportunity to become grounded in the genre and to share their thoughts from the previous lesson, as well as to ask any unresolved questions.

Notify students that they will be creating a magazine article about a topic with at least one other informational genre incorporated into their final product (infographic, product comparison, how-to, etc., recipe, etc.).

Unplugged/Offline

1. Have students complete Part I of the Informational Writing: Lesson Three 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

Fact & Opinion Mini Lesson

To help remind students of the difference between fact and opinion, spend some time grounding them in how to tell the difference. What once was a more simplistic skill has been complicated through social media and media bias. Here is a quick guide from HMH on differentiating between the two.

One possible resource to assist students with uncovering media bias could be Damon Brown’s TED Ed: “How to Choose Your News”

Working alone or in pairs, have students read the editorial provided below OR find their own editorial to analyze (preferred option); they can use online annotation tools to highlight the facts in blue and the opinion in orange (or whatever color combination you choose). Alternatively, they could complete a quick fact/opinion chart.


When students are finished, discuss their findings as a group, then ask if they noticed how seamlessly the
facts and opinions were blended? Why do many texts can create a complex blend of fact and opinion? Then explain for the purposes of their ‘Zine article about social media, they need to have a solid foundation of fact. Today, they will be researching and brainstorming for their final product.

**Unplugged/Offline**

1. Have students complete Part II of the [Informational Writing: Lesson Three 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:** Ask deep explanatory questions. [Strong Evidence] (Pashler et al., 2007).

**Synchronous & Asynchronous**

Now conduct preliminary research using the resources available to you. Select two (2) of the topics below, determine what questions you have, and research them and record facts about each of the topics you decide to research:

- Social media trends
- Social media and mental health
- Social media as a weapon
- Social media as a money-making enterprise (role of advertising, algorithms, etc.)
- Social media and privacy
- Social media and politics
- Social media challenges (i.e., TikTok Challenges, etc.)
- Social media as a tool for change/awareness
- Beauty/appearance standards of social media
- Effect of social media on different generations
- The intersection of poverty and social media
- Independently proposed topic for research:

Students can use [this document](#) to record their facts and document where they found them.

**Unplugged/Offline**

1. Have students complete Part III of the [Informational Writing: Lesson Three 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*

Ask students to reflect on what they found and determine which topic they developed the best. What questions do they have about that topic? They should also use this time to jot down their lingering questions (there will be a handout accompanied with this assignment for unplugged students.)

**Unplugged/Offline**

1. Have students complete Part IV of the *Informational Writing: Lesson Three 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:**

Research Topic Questions and Facts

**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:

- 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)*.
- The number of facts can be easily modified.
- Meet with students to be sure they understand the topics. Model asking questions and researching the first few facts for each topic as appropriate for the student's level of need. EBP: Explicitly teach appropriate writing strategies using a Model-Practice-Reflect instructional cycle. [Strong Evidence] (Graham et al., 2016).
- Partner work could also be utilized.
Supports for English learners:

- Suggestions for this lesson include but are not limited to: pre-teaching vocabulary words related to mini lesson on identifying bias, allowing students to practice analyzing editorials in first language, providing students with common signal words/phrases to identify facts and opinions in texts, 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:

ELAGSE9-10W8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

Acceleration/Extension Activity:

- Students can be asked to cite their sources for each research fact in MLA format. They can use an engine such as Citation Machine to assist.

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 ask their family members to engage in a scavenger hunt for informational text in their homes.
- Have students/families scroll through social media to see how many genres of informational text they can identify.
- Families of English learners can also compare and contrast fact and opinion signal words/phrases in English and their home language by listening to or reading articles in their home language.
References


