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.

This ten-lesson mini unit introduces students to critical analysis through informational writing. This unit emphasizes information literacy skills through the study of digital media and the analysis of information for accuracy and purpose. Students will actively engage with a variety of information media platforms, and they will write descriptions and analysis that demonstrate critical thinking skills. At the conclusion of the unit, students will use what they have learned to create an infographic, along with a detailed analysis of their own work.

**Lesson Five: Evaluating Information**

In this lesson, students will learn how to evaluate a website to determine if it is a credible source for information through learning about and engaging in the strategy of lateral reading. They will compare and contrast websites to determine which one is best for their purposes.

**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)&quot;</th>
<th>Unit “Big Make”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can <strong>determine</strong> the best source for information for a given circumstance.</td>
<td>• Research Tasks by Source</td>
<td><strong>Infographic</strong> with accompanying analysis (framed by <strong>Lesson Nine Research Guide</strong>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can <strong>fact-check</strong> resources for accuracy.</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Infographic Rubric</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Standard Alignment

**Standard(s):**

**ELAGSE6W2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.**

- a. Introduce a topic; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- b. Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
- c. Use appropriate transitions to clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
- d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
- e. Establish and maintain a formal style.
- f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the information or explanation presented.

**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 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.

Materials

**Teacher**—computer, projector, Internet access, a free Adobe Creative Cloud account or Canva for Education account could be created at this time for the students’ cumulative project (information guide), Check Yourself with Lateral Reading: Crash Course Navigating Digital Information #3 (Green, 2019, January 22)

**Students**—handout, computer/device, Internet access, Informational Writing: Lesson Five Handout (Unplugged), Website Evaluation Document (Synchronous/Asynchronous)

*Disclaimer:* The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) does not endorse any of the books, resources, websites, programs, products, and other materials that may be featured as part of the Remote Learning Plan units. Any use of books, resources, websites, programs, products and other materials are intended to serve as examples only. All curriculum decisions are made at the local level.
Engage

Opening:

Synchronous/Asynchronous

What is the most efficient way to verify source credibility? Have you ever heard of lateral reading? Let’s revisit the expertise of engaging author and online content creator John Green.

Show the following video about lateral reading as a strategy to vet source credibility to students or to boost your own understanding:

Check Yourself with Lateral Reading: Crash Course Navigating Digital Information #3 (Green, 2019, January 22)

- At 10:24, Green discusses the role of Wikipedia as a general reference resource for engaging in lateral reading. If you do not support the use of Wikipedia in this sense, you probably want to stop the video at this point.

Engage your class in a True/False exercise:

If I can find it online, it must be true. (F)
There is an email address listed in the website, so it must be a legitimate source! (F)
There is a logo of the White House at the top of the page, so I can definitely trust this website. (F)
The website looks really official. The information it offers must be true. (F)
There are a lot of graphs and charts on the site. With all this information it must be true. (F)
It is clear who wrote the content because there is contact information, and the information seems current and error–free. I can safely use this information for my homework assignment. (F)
I should always compare the information I find online with at least 2 other sources. (T)
I should always be a skeptic when it comes to information that I find online. (T)
I should always think about what’s missing from a website. (T)
I should always review the sources (or author) of the website. (T)

EBP: Increase student motivation and engagement in literacy learning. [Moderate Evidence] (Kamil et al., 2008); EBP: Connect and integrate abstract and concrete representations of concepts. [Moderate Evidence] (Pashler et al., 2007).

Unplugged/Offline

1. Have students complete Part I of the Informational Writing: Lesson Five Handout (Unplugged).
3. 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

Synchronous/Asynchronous

One method for determining whether a website can be trusted is lateral reading.

Demonstrate opening a tab and doing a Google search for a topic and open a website and scroll up and down on the page making note of details like graphics, pictures, text layout, etc. Then open another tab and do the same thing with the same topic. Show the students how it is easier to compare websites when they are both open and you can quickly go back and forth. It is similar to comparing the information on two pieces of paper in front of you, rather than just having to look at them one at a time. You can also research a site by opening new tabs.

EBP: Provide direct and explicit comprehension strategy instruction. [Strong Evidence] (Kamil et al., 2008); EBP: Explicitly teach appropriate writing strategies using a Model-Practice-Reflect instructional cycle. [Strong Evidence] (Graham et al., 2016).

Lateral reading demonstration video using the topic “building schools in Afghanistan,” then exploring some of the more questionable pieces of information out there about one of the primary associations with that research topic: the Central Asia Institute and its founder Greg Mortensen.

Introduce evaluation task.

Unplugged/Offline

1. Have students complete Part II of the Informational Writing: Lesson Five 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

Synchronous/Asynchronous

Students will work independently to explore two websites, practicing lateral reading and evaluating sources.

Assignment page for synchronous/asynchronous learners.

Website #1

Who created the site and is the author an expert or is it by a trusted organization?

What is the purpose of this site?
What is the contact information? Can it be verified?

Are there links or footnotes to other relevant and reliable sources?

Does the website use correct grammar, spelling and sentence structure?

**Website #2**

Who created the site and is the author an expert or is it by a trusted organization?

What is the purpose of this site?

What is the contact information? Can it be verified?

Are there links or footnotes to other relevant and reliable sources?

Does the website use correct grammar, spelling and sentence structure?

While students work, model/conference with individuals or small groups as planned (scheduled times) or spontaneously. **EBP: Explicitly teach appropriate writing strategies using a Model-Practice-Reflect instructional cycle. [Strong Evidence] (Graham et al., 2016); EBP: Ask deep explanatory questions. [Strong Evidence] (Pashler et al., 2007); EBP: Provide direct and explicit comprehension strategy instruction. [Strong Evidence] (Kamil et al., 2008).**

**Unplugged/Offline**

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

Allow students to share their findings. You can even encourage a student vote on which site is better but ask them to support their positions.

**Which website would you choose for information and why?**
## Unplugged/Offline

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

### Formative Assessment

- Did the students correctly engage in the lateral reading strategy? Did they determine the most credible website? Is additional scaffolding or practicing necessary?
- Alternatively, was this something relatively intuitive for students? Do they need more challenging topics?

**“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 concepts of power 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.

Scaffolds for Specific Lesson:

Students may need to conference individually or in small groups when they begin exploring websites and looking for relevant information. You may need to model the process in a small group or individually.

Students with similar struggles can be grouped for additional supports and/or modeling.

Students could work together on the main search task (in small groups or partners).

Additional lateral reading resources can be found at Civic Online Reasoning (Stanford University, n.d.); these resources can be used to further tier instruction. Teachers can sign up for free accounts to access all the available resources.

Supports for English learners:

- Suggestions for this lesson include but are not limited to:
  - Spanish and Portuguese Subtitles/Transcripts available for Check Yourself with Lateral Reading: Crash Course Navigating Digital Information #3 (Green, 2019, January 22)
  - 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 (if different):**
ELAGSE6SL2: Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

**Acceleration/Extension Activity:**
- Additional lateral reading resources can be found at Civic Online Reasoning (Standford University, n.d.); these resources can be used to further tier instruction.
- Students can also experiment with self-chosen topics to research, incorporating lateral reading strategies into their quests for truth. If successful in mapping out potential bias or credibility, they can share their findings with the class.

**EBP:** Increase student motivation and engagement in literacy learning. [Moderate Evidence] (Kamil et al., 2008); EBP: Connect and integrate abstract and concrete representations of concepts. [Moderate Evidence] (Pashler et al., 2007).

---

**Engaging Families**

Aligning with your district’s family engagement plan to facilitate the most meaningful way to work with your families should remain the focus. At the secondary level, much of the communication occurs with the student serving as a liaison.

**FAMILY ENGAGEMENT:**
- Students can demonstrate their new lateral reading skills for friends and family.
- Engage families of English learners by encouraging reading of bilingual informational texts (sample online resources for free bilingual books: Unite for Literacy, Global Storybooks) (Knight, 2018). Families can also encourage writing at home (English version / Spanish version) with students (¡Colorín Colorado!, 2019).
References


https://www.britannica.com/animal/octopus-mollusk


https://www.colorincolorado.org/es/articulo/consejos-para-padres-de-adolescentes-con-dificultades-para-escribir


https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/tips-parents-struggling-adolescent-writers

Common Sense Education. (n.d.). *Teen voices: Presenting yourself online.*

https://www.commonsense.org/education/videos/teen-voices-presenting-yourself-online


https://app.socialmediatestdrive.org/intro/presentation


News Literacy Project. (n.d.). Two facts and a feeling. NewsLit.org. https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/14W5qyDUIItzhCK1dKIGDRkt7UN_UmMoLRRWi5oPmSZo/edit#slide=id.ga6442950e1_0_1072


