Big Idea/ Topic

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 Four: Using Expert Words in Our Writing

The purpose of this lesson is to encourage students to incorporate vocabulary specific to their topic into their writing. Since they are “experts” in their subject, they are trying to teach others the correct terminology that goes with the topic.

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 Targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Targets</th>
<th>Lesson “Small Make(s)”</th>
<th>Unit “Big Make”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can <strong>use</strong> expert words in my writing.</td>
<td>As students continue writing in ongoing booklets or begin new ones, they will consider the vocabulary specific to their topic and work to include those words in their writing.</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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<tr>
<td>I can <strong>write</strong> facts, definitions, and details about my topic.</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.

**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) to design language expectations (p.28) specific to the GSE. Examples of the English language needed to support informational writing can be found on p. 91.
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, teacher’s ongoing model text, student sample writing “Sharks” [link to student writing sample text]
Students—blank paper, unplugged handout version
Engage

Opening:

Synchronous

- Compliment students on the work they have been doing so far – each student should have completed or be close to completing one booklet to the best of their current ability. [EBP: Create an engaged community of writers [Minimal evidence] (Graham et al., 2016)].
- Display the learning target and explain that “expert words” are the important words we use to teach others about our topic, words that show we are an expert on the subject. [EBP: Teach students academic language skills, including the use of inferential and narrative language, and vocabulary knowledge [Minimal evidence] (Foorman et al., 2016)].
- Share the student sample booklet “Sharks” and look specifically at page 3. Point out that the writer used the word “dorsal” as an expert word – that’s an important word to teach others about sharks, and it’s better than just saying “top fin”.
- Ask students what other expert words they see on that page. Possible answers: gills (instead of “holes”) and fin (instead of “arm”).

Asynchronous

Post on your learning management platform a brief video of yourself a) explaining what expert words are, b) pointing out expert words on page 3 of the student sample booklet, and c) modeling including expert words in your own modeled booklet.

Unplugged/Offline

Have students work through part 1 of Lesson 4 Handout – unplugged.
**Explore**

**Synchronous**

- Share the booklet you have been writing alongside the students, and model thinking aloud about where you might add expert words. Perhaps you have already used some that you can point out. However, during this section of the lesson, be sure to demonstrate thinking aloud about your next blank page and how you will include an expert word or two. Then write the sentence and include that word. Keep in mind, as you write in front of the students the emphasis is on intentionally using specific vocabulary – don’t get too caught up in thinking aloud about capitalization, punctuation, spelling, etc. [EBP: Teach students academic language skills, including the use of inferential and narrative language, and vocabulary knowledge [Minimal evidence] (Foorman et al., 2016)].

- Next, ask students to suggest other expert words you might use when writing about your topic. It should be sufficient for students to share these aloud without your needing to write them in your booklet. The goal is to clarify for students what is meant by “expert words” and allow them to hear multiple examples.

- Ask students to think about the topic they’re currently writing about. What are some possible expert words they might include in their booklet to teach others? Pair students up in breakout rooms to share their words.

**Asynchronous**

Have students record a brief Flipgrid or Seesaw video telling you 1-2 expert words they plan to add to their booklets.

**Unplugged/Offline**

Have students work through part 2 of [Lesson 4 Handout – unplugged](#).
**Apply**

*Synchronous/Asynchronous/Unplugged/Offline*

- Students will work independently on their booklet, either continuing a booklet they’ve already started or beginning a new one. As you confer with students, look for their use of expert words. Many students tend to use expert words in their labeled drawings, so that can be a good place to have students start: How can you write a sentence using one of the words from your labeled drawing?
  
  [EBP: Teach students academic language skills, including the use of inferential and narrative language, and vocabulary knowledge [Minimal evidence] (Foorman et al., 2016)]; [EBP: Teach students to use the writing process for a variety of purposes. [Strong evidence] (Graham et al., 2016)].

**Reflect**

*Synchronous*

Students can share their writing in groups of 2-3 via breakout rooms. [EBP: Create an engaged community of writers [Minimal evidence] (Graham et al., 2016)]. Ask students to begin by sharing expert words they included in their writing. Once the group has returned to a whole-group format, the teacher might ask 1-2 students to share their expert words with the group.

*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 identifying expert words and adding them to the teacher’s modeled writing. Students should also be able to orally share with a partner 1-2 expert words that go with their topic and begin to incorporate them into their writing in meaningful ways.

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: 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:

Students with lower language proficiency and ESOL students may struggle with producing expert words on their topics. In these cases, share with students a book on their topic that has labeled drawings or words in bold text. It is important to remember that the students should have chosen a topic they have background knowledge on (for example, horses) so that they have an understanding of the information while at the same time they may not know the English word for specific elements (e.g., hooves). Using a text as a resource can simultaneously support the student in learning new vocabulary and in teaching others through their writing.

Supports for English learners:

- Suggestions for this lesson include but are not limited to: providing students with a word-to-word dictionary and/or labeled pictures and/or bilingual books on the chosen topic to support with identifying expert words, teacher modeling of sentences with expert words, etc.
- Educators may find it valuable to review WIDA's Proficiency Level Descriptors (pp. 102-103) 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:

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:

Some students might also choose to do additional research to learn new vocabulary they don't already know about their topic. The students can then add these new “expert words” to their writing in meaningful ways.
Engaging Families

Aligning with your district’s family engagement plan to facilitate the most meaningful way to work with your families.

- Families might have discussions about the expert words that are relevant to the jobs of the adults in the household. For instance, auto mechanics will have different expert words in their field than a cashier or a nurse.

- Families might also discuss the expert words that align with the different places they go from day to day. Different words are important in a library, a laundromat, and the grocery store. What words would you use to show you are an expert of the car wash? The dentist’s office?

- Families of English learners can compare expert words in their home language to those in English. Teachers can provide a list of cognates to families, highlighting those relevant to the student’s topic (examples of cognate lists can be found here (English/Spanish) (Calderón, M., August, D., Durán, D., Madden, N., R. Slavin & M. Gil (2003) cited in Colorín Colorado, 2019) and here (English/Haitian Creole) (New York State Education Department, n.d.).
References

https://blog.heinemann.com/10-tips-for-conferring-with-student-writers-online


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