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 Nine: Getting Ready to Celebrate - Revision

In this lesson students will begin to prepare for the culminating celebration during which they will read their books to other students in order to “teach” them about their topics. Students will choose one of the booklets they have worked on over the course of this unit to publish. They will revise the content by rereading the booklet and clarifying ideas and adding or removing words or sentences. Students should not be made to copy over their entire book as part of the publication process, though some students may choose to do so. This revision lesson is about making the ideas in the booklets clearer and stronger; it is not about spelling, punctuation or capitalization, which will be addressed in the editing lesson, lesson ten.

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 | Lesson “Small Make(s)” | Unit “Big Make”
---|---|---
I can **revise** my writing to make sure it makes sense to others. | Students will choose one book to publish and will revise the content of the book by clarifying ideas and adding or removing words or sentences. | 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.

*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.

**ELAGSE2W6**: With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of tools to produce and publish writing, including digital tools and collaboration with peers.

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 p. 69.
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, student sample book about Sharks [link to student writing sample text], one of the teacher’s previously written booklets to be published. Also, it will be helpful if the teacher has already arranged the celebration with a partner class so you can tell students, “We’ll be reading our books to Mrs. Smith’s Kindergarten class” so your students have a specific audience in mind as they revise.

Students—blank paper, book student has chosen to publish, unplugged handout version
**Engage**

**Opening:**

**Synchronous**

- Explain to students that our publishing celebration is coming soon! We will celebrate our informational writing by partnering up with a Kindergarten or 1st grade class. Each 2nd grader will get to read their book to a partner student so their book can teach the younger student about the topic. [EBP: Establish an engaging and motivating context in which to teach reading comprehension. [Moderate evidence] (Shanahan et al., 2010)].

- Once we’ve chosen the book we will publish, we need to make sure it is ready for the younger students so we will **Revise** our books. That means we may need to make some changes so our writing is easy to understand, with lots of teaching facts and details. We need to reread our books with our younger audience in mind. [EBP: Teach students to use the writing process for a variety of purposes. [Strong evidence] (Graham et al., 2016)].

- Model rereading your booklet to the students, pausing when you come across a place where either a) a Kindergartener might be confused (i.e., a vocabulary word might need to be explained) or b) you could add another fact or detail that might be interesting to a Kindergartener. This includes adding details to the pictures as well.

- Keep in mind that one roadblock for students inserting information to their writing is knowing how to “squeeze it in” when it looks like there’s no room. One solution is to allow students to write the additional information on paper flaps they then tape onto their original story. You can see examples of that [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#).

**Asynchronous**

Post on your learning management platform a brief video of yourself, a) explaining the upcoming publishing celebration, b) explaining the purpose of revising our books and what that means, and c) modeling revising your own book for a Kindergarten audience.

**Unplugged/Offline**

Have students work through part 1 of **Lesson 9 Handout – unplugged**.
Explore

Synchronous

• Ask students to think about their Kindergarten audience as you reread the book about Sharks to the class. Are there any words or ideas that might be hard for a Kindergartener to understand? [EBP: Teach students academic language skills, including the use of inferential and narrative language, and vocabulary knowledge [Minimal evidence] (Foorman et al., 2016)].

• Ask for student input after reading the first page. For instance, would a Kindergartener know what a “seal” is in the caption? Perhaps we should add a sentence to the caption that says, “A seal is a mammal that can swim in the ocean.”

• Allow students to make another suggestion about where the writer might add or remove words to make information clearer, or where you might clarify illustrations.

Asynchronous

Share an image of the student sample book about Sharks. Have students record a brief Flipgrid or Seesaw video telling of one revision they suggest the writer should make.

Unplugged/Offline

Have students work through part 2 of Lesson 9 Handout – unplugged.

Apply

Synchronous

Students will work independently on first choosing the booklet they want to publish and then rereading it to see where they might add or remove information in the words and/or illustrations. You might make the work session of today’s workshop slightly shorter in order to pair up students to read their booklets to each other. As they listen, they should keep their Kindergarten audience in mind and make suggestions about possible revisions the writer might make. Allow students to make changes as they work with their partners. [EBPs: Provide daily time for students to write [Minimal evidence]; Teach students to use the writing process for a variety of purposes. [Strong evidence] (Graham et al., 2016)].
Asynchronous/Unplugged/Offline

Students will work independently on first choosing the booklet they want to publish and then rereading it to see where they might add or remove information in the words and/or illustrations.

Reflect
Synchronous

After students have had a chance to read their book to their partner and make suggested changes, meet as a whole class and have several students talk about the revisions they made. Discuss how these revisions make it easier for their audience to understand the book. [EBP: Create an engaged community of writers [Minimal evidence] (Graham et al., 2016)].

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 with this lesson if they can make meaningful revisions to their booklets based on their own thinking or the input of the teacher or their peers.

Formative Assessment

“More of What’s Meaningful”: Formative Assessments (Serravallo, 2013)

Formative assessment can occur in two ways:

- 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 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:

Some students may have difficulty stepping outside of their writing enough to be able to consider it from another person’s point of view. This is typical of young children and shouldn’t be overly concerning. In these cases, it would be helpful if the teacher mentions the confusing or unclear part and allows the writer to think about how to make the revisions, coaching as necessary. For instance, in the example from the shark book mentioned in the lesson above, the teacher may need to suggest, “What if a Kindergartener doesn’t know what a seal is? How could you make that easier for them to understand?”
Supports for English learners:

- Suggestions for this lesson include but are not limited to: recording students’ texts for students to review, strategically pairing students for partner review, providing students with a review checklist to target items for student review, 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.

Acceleration/Extension Activity:

As with earlier lessons, this lesson provides accelerated students an opportunity to conduct research about their topic if they choose to do so. In preparing their book for publication, they may want to learn more about the topic in order to add additional facts. Encourage this for students who are able to, but keep in mind that you may need to have a conversation about how to conduct research without plagiarizing.
Aligning with your district’s family engagement plan to facilitate the most meaningful way to work with your families.

- Families may want to establish routine ways for students to celebrate and publish their writing. For instance, they may want to set aside a particular day of the week for their children to “present” their writing to the immediate family or even via technology or social media to family at a distance.

- Explore the ways that published authors revise their writing. Check out author’s websites, where they often show earlier versions of their published works, or check out books that include revisions, such as Hooray for Diffendoofer Day, which includes Dr. Seuss’s earliest versions of the book.

- Engage families of English learners by encouraging reading of bilingual informational texts on students’ chosen topics to identify/support the English language needed for the unit (sample online resources for free bilingual books: Unite for Literacy, Global Storybooks). Families can also encourage writing at home (Spanish version) with students.
References


Tovani, C., & Moje, E.B. (2017). *No more telling as teaching: Less lecture, more engaged learning (not this but that).* Heinemann.
