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 as the teacher models writing informational booklets and students will produce multiple booklets themselves over the course of the ten days.

Lesson Two: Adding Facts, Definitions, and Details to Our Writing

Students will continue to add to the booklets they started in lesson one, with an emphasis on adding facts, definitions of potentially confusing terms, and details to their text. The teacher will continue to clarify for students that informational books tell facts about a topic rather than telling a story about a time something happened. The teacher will model continuing his/her booklet rather than starting a new one.

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)”</th>
<th>Unit “Big Make”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can describe the purpose of informational texts.</td>
<td>Continue to create a booklet of informational writing about a single topic. Students will add facts, definitions and details to the pictures and words in the book started in lesson one.</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 write 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.

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 booklet begun in previous lesson, sample student mentor text about sharks [link to student sample writing text](#)
- **Students**—blank paper, [Lesson 2 Handout – unplugged](#)
**Engage**

**Opening:**

**Synchronous**

- Place **student writing sample from yesterday (“Sharks”)** underneath the document camera and ask students if they think this writer was able to complete the entire book in one day. Guide them towards concluding that a great deal of work went into writing and drawing the text, and the author likely worked on it for more than one day, taking their time to add details and as much information as they could.  
  
  [EBP: Teach students to use the writing process for a variety of purposes. [Strong evidence](Graham et al., 2016)].

- Place the booklet you began yesterday underneath the document camera and think aloud about the fact that what you wrote yesterday is not enough – you have more to say. Write 1-2 additional facts on the next page, being sure to add details to your drawing to align with your text (e.g., if you wrote “Hawks eat rabbits” don’t just draw a hawk, but also draw the rabbit, the sharp talons, the bush the rabbit was trying to hide under).

- Specifically point out that the author of “Sharks” helped the reader by explaining what harder words mean. Think aloud about how the writer explained what a dorsal fin is by adding, “It is on top of their body” to their sentence (they could have just written, “Sharks have a dorsal fin.”)

- Ask students to find another place on page 3 where this writer explained a word (e.g., gills).

**Asynchronous**

Post on your learning management platform a brief video of yourself a) discussing how the author of “Sharks” likely spent more than one day writing their book, and b) modeling adding 1-2 additional facts and definitions to your booklet from yesterday.

**Unplugged/Offline**

Have students work through part 1 of **Lesson 2 Handout – unplugged**.

**Explore**

**Synchronous**

- Allow students to actively participate in helping you write additional facts. The emphasis here is on taking our time with our booklets, adding details, and not just quickly writing one sentence per page and thinking we’re done.  
  
  [EBP: Teach students to use the writing process for a variety of purposes. [Strong evidence](Graham et al., 2016)].
Be sure to prompt for the use of definitions. Ask students which words the reader might need help understanding that you therefore need to explain/define.

During this segment, emphasize the inclusion of facts rather than stories in our writing. You might ask, "Can I tell about the time I saw a hawk when I went to the lake? No! This is informational writing, not story writing, so we are teaching our reader facts about our topic."

To apply the reading, ask students to help you with your modeled piece of writing—what additional facts and definitions could you add? Have students record a brief Flipgrid or Seesaw video telling you 1-2 sentences you could add to your booklet.

Unplugged/Offline

Have students work through part 2 of Lesson 2 Handout—unplugged.

Asynchronous

Ask students to help you with your modeled piece of writing—what additional facts and definitions could you add? Have students record a brief Flipgrid or Seesaw video telling you 1-2 sentences you could add to your booklet.

Reflect

Students can share their writing in groups of 2-3 via breakout rooms. Ask students to listen for the facts and definitions the writer is teaching about the topic. Once the group has returned to a whole-group format, the teacher might ask 1-2 students to share how they added facts, definitions, and details to their writing from yesterday. What information did they add and how well do details match the pictures? 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.

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**Evidence of Student Success**

Students will be considered successful if they are able to effectively participate in the discussion about adding facts, definitions, and details to informational text. They should be able to add additional sentences to the booklet they started yesterday. Their booklets should contain factual information and not narratives or opinions. They may not yet include definitions of difficult words, but the goal is for them to include definitions by the end of the unit.

**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)

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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: 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:**

Some students may have difficulty distilling the thoughts in their head down to a manageable sentence to put on paper. In these instances, encourage students to begin with a detailed picture with labels, similar to page three of the sample text “Sharks.” Then confer with the student and help them compose a sentence about one of the labels. It may help to have the student “say the sentence across their fingers” by touching one finger for each word they say. Have them repeat the sentence 2-3 times while touching their fingers, then return to the first finger to determine the first word to write. Using this tactile approach can help young writers organize their thoughts in concrete ways.

**Supports/scaffolds for English learners:**
• Educators are encouraged to refer to resources such as WIDA’s Essential Actions Handbook or the downloadable GO TO Strategies from CAL to find a variety of scaffolds appropriate for ELs across ELP levels.

• Sample language objectives/targets for this lesson (Please note the following language objectives are examples and should not be used across all ELP levels. Teachers should take students’ ELP levels into account when creating language objectives for their lessons):
  o Add factual details to text using a report frame/outline and word-to-word dictionary.
  o Create illustrations to clarify vocabulary and refine information in text with support from leveled texts to reference.

**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:**

Students who need acceleration can be encouraged to write many sentences per page and add additional pages to their booklets. You might have them read an online informational text from a source such as www.epic.com to serve as a mentor text beyond the sample student text included in this lesson. Students might observe the ways the writer addresses the reader to create a sense of “voice” in the writing, as well as the depth of facts included.

**Engaging Families**

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

• Families can support students as they begin to create informational booklets by serving as genuinely interested readers/listeners as well as by asking questions to stimulate further writing (e.g., What kinds of activities can you do at Myrtle Beach?).

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


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