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.

Informative Writing

This ten-lesson mini unit introduces students to informative writing. Students will learn to brainstorm effectively, research a chosen a topic of interest, organize research, learn to write an introduction with a “hook” that grabs the reader’s attention, learn to effectively conclude their writing, and review their work for editing purposes.

Lesson Two Topic: How do I brainstorm an idea or topic to write about?

Lesson Two Description: Students will be introduced to three brainstorming strategies that they may choose from to find students’ intended research topic. Teacher will support students along the way to ensure students have a topic ready for research the following day.

Note: The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) does not endorse the books, resources, websites, programs, products, and other materials identified in 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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Targets</th>
<th>Lesson “Small Make(s)”</th>
<th>Unit “Big Make”</th>
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<tr>
<td>I can use background knowledge of informative writing to discuss what I already know.</td>
<td>• Completed Brainstorming Graphic Organizers</td>
<td>Culminating task is a fully researched informative essay written by the student (about a topic of the student’s choice) that will be shared with other 5th grade students in a coffee house event.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can use one of three brainstorming strategies to find a topic of research.</td>
<td>• Reflection response</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I can reflect on what I learned about informative writing.</td>
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**Standard Alignment**

**Standard(s):**

**ELAGSE5W2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

- a. Introduce a topic clearly, provide a general observation and focus, and group related information logically; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

- b. Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.

- c. Link ideas within and across categories of information using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., in contrast, especially).

- d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
e. Provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented.

ELAGSE5W7: Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a 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, 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. 114-115.

### 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**— Google Jamboard, Informative Writing PowerPoint, or alternative will be created for the three brainstorming strategies.

**Students**— Access to Google Classroom (or alternative), computer with Wi-Fi, pen, paper, journal; Informational Writing: Lesson Two Handout (Unplugged)
**Engage**

**Opening:**

**Synchronous**

Today we will learn three different strategies to brainstorm to help us find a topic that you will be excited to inform others about. You will use your Google Jamboard, Miro, Microsoft Whiteboard, or other alternative app for students to write digitally.

**Asynchronous**

Today we will learn three different strategies to brainstorm to help us find a topic that you will be excited to inform others about. You will use your Google Jamboard, Miro, Microsoft Whiteboard, or other alternative app for students to write digitally. If using Google or Microsoft document, please label student work as: Last Name – Brainstorming Strategies. Have students share the document with you.

**Unplugged/Offline**

1. Have students begin Part I of the Informational Writing: Lesson Two 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**

**Synchronous**

Teacher will present three strategies to synchronous students in a Google presentation or the Informative Writing PowerPoint. [EBP: Teach students to use the writing process for a variety of purposes. [Strong evidence] (Graham et al., 2016)].

- The first strategy is called Word Bubble Wonderings. Teacher will share a word bubble in google drawing (or similar platform) that students can fill in with wonderings. Be sure to make a copy for each student so students do not write on top of each other in the bubble. Students will be asked to fill in their word bubble with things or ideas that they wonder about. They should be given 5-10 minutes for this process to ensure that they have a few wonderings to ponder.

- The second strategy is a bulleted list. Students will be asked to create a Google or Microsoft document labeled with Last Name: Brainstorming Ideas, then list 5 topics that interest them or that they would like to know more about. This will be shared with the teacher.

- The third strategy is called a brain dump. For those students struggling to find an interest or topic at this point, this strategy allows them to just write what is on their mind. This strategy is provided for those
students who may not want to participate at the moment, or those who struggle with creating lists. Teachers may directly ask what the student’s favorite activity, sport, etc. to help the student get something solid to research the following day.

Asynchronous

The teacher will present three strategies to synchronous students in a Google presentation or the Informative Writing PowerPoint that they will peruse independently. The teacher will make a copy of the presentation for each student so that they can do work directly on the slides. Students will complete the lesson by the end of the day and share the document with the teacher. Some platforms share automatically, so this may not be necessary. Students will be introduced to the following strategies with explicit directions given on each slide.

- The first strategy is called Word Bubble Wonderings. Teacher will share a word bubble in google drawing (or similar platform) that students can fill in with wonderings. Be sure to make a copy for each student so students do not write on top of each other in the bubble. Students will be asked to fill in their word bubble with things or ideas that they wonder about. They should be given 5-10 minutes for this process to ensure that they have a few wonderings to ponder.

- The second strategy is a bulleted list. Students will be asked to list 5 topics that interest them or that they would like to know more about. Students can complete work on the slides.

- The third strategy is called a brain dump. For those students struggling to find an interest or topic at this point, this strategy allows them to just write what is on their mind. Teachers may directly ask what the student’s favorite activity, sport, etc. to help trigger ideas for the student.

Unplugged/Offline

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

Give students an opportunity to look over their wonderings, list of ideas, and brain dump writing for 5 minutes. Ask students what ideas, topics, or subjects their three lists have in common and have them circle these. Ask students what they circled might tell them about their interests. Ask if they think they would like to research more about this topic or idea. If the answer is yes, then have students type in that topic in the chat box with a sentence or two describing what they would like to know most about the topic. The teacher can take notes
and save the idea for the student for the following day. [EBP: Create an engaged community of writers [Minimal evidence] (Graham et al., 2016)].

Asynchronous
After you have completed your brainstorming work, look over the three slides and see what they might have in common. Have students highlight ideas on the slides. This can be a separate slide. Students can write down the commonalities. Ask students if they would be interested in learning more about this topic, and if so, please write what they would like to begin researching the following day. Teacher will check student responses to see if research groups can be formed.

Unplugged/Offline
  1. Have students complete Part II of the Informational Writing: Lesson Two 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
How was brainstorming helpful to you today? Drop your answer into the chat when I say, “Waterfall.” [EBP: Create an engaged community of writers [Minimal evidence] (Graham et al., 2016)].

Asynchronous
On the last slide of the presentation, ask students to rate their brainstorming experience with a 1, 2, 3, or 4 with 4 being a very helpful experience. Why?

Unplugged/Offline
  1. Have students complete Part III of the Informational Writing: Lesson Two 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).
Note to the Teacher: Before the lesson begins tomorrow, you as the teacher need to form research groups among students (if students share the same interest). Also, create a table with the students’ names and selected research topics (or have students enter their final topic into a shared table at the end of class). After that table is created, keep it in a slide students cannot edit but that can be posted/shared throughout the process. This will help keep students accountable for their topic so that they do not change topics mid write.

Evidence of Student Success

Formative Assessment “Small Make” Description

- Check student brainstorming documents for results/formative checks on the process.
- Students’ reflections will also serve as a check for understanding.

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)
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 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.

Lesson-specific Scaffolds:

- Teacher will provide support in breakout rooms or Google Meets for those students who need extra support.
- For students who struggle with putting their ideas on paper, they could record themselves speaking via a voice memo or even through a quick video creation (such as Flipgrid) so that they can talk through their ideas without committing to paper, and then play the audio/video back to process their thoughts and to feel more confident writing them down.
- If your students would perform better with a digital organizer, “Best Graphic Organizers for Education” (Restifo & Kapuler, 2021) shares several resources (many of which feature a free basic account), but your district’s technology guidelines and local policies should also be taken into consideration.
• Provide explicit instruction on how to use the technology and the digital graphic organizer for students who may not have been exposed to the tools before.

**Scaffolds for English Learners:**

• Suggestions for this lesson include but are not limited to: teacher modeling of each brainstorming strategy, providing students with sentence stems to complete brainstorming activities, providing students with word-to-word dictionary, etc.
• Educators may find it valuable to review [WIDA’s Proficiency Level Descriptors](#) (pp. 136-138) 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):**

**ELAGSE5SL1**: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly

**Acceleration/Extension Activity:**

• Students can pair off to listen to one another’s brainstorming ideas and ask questions to help each other build on the original ideas. This activity can help the students explore their own ideas through avenues they had not previously considered, and it may help deepen their research experience on the following day.

**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. If you have a parent liaison associated with your school/district, you may want to reach out to that individual for further guidance.

• Families can discuss topics of interest with their child and then discuss what they already know from their background knowledge.
• As an extension, parents can ask their child to research the topic at home and take notes in their writing journals. This topic may end up being the topic their child chooses to write about for their informative writing.

• Encourage families of English learners to read or listen to informational texts in their home language together. Families can access content for free through websites such as Wonderopolis and CommonLit.

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**References**


