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 Five: Introducing Our Topic in Interesting Ways

In this lesson, students will work on the leads of their booklets with a focus on creating a lead that lets the reader know the topic in an attention-grabbing way. Young writers often work best with concrete options for leads such as: opening with a question, saying how you/others feel about the topic, posing a riddle, or simply addressing the reader.

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 interest my reader at the beginning.</td>
<td>Students will either begin a new booklet and work on creating a lead that names the topic and grabs the reader’s attention, or students can go back to a previously written booklet to revise their lead. If students don’t have room in their old booklet to squeeze in a lead, they can write the lead on a sticky note or a taped paper flap on the first page.</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
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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

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, a new blank booklet, student sample book Sharks [link to student writing sample text], anchor chart 2 [link to anchor chart 2 -leads]

Students—blank paper, unplugged handout version
Engage

Opening:

Synchronous

- Explain to students that now that they’ve started to get comfortable teaching others by writing booklets, we are going to begin to think about how to make our writing even stronger and more interesting for the reader. [EBP: Create an engaged community of writers [Minimal evidence] (Graham et al., 2016)].
- Tell students, Writers make sure to name their topic in the first sentence, so the reader knows exactly what the book will be about. Writers also work hard to make the beginning of their book interesting, so readers will want to continue reading.
- Share anchor chart 2 about leads and talk through the different options. (You might also note that both Earthworms and Surprising Sharks begin with leads that talk to the reader.)

Asynchronous

Post on your learning management platform a brief video of yourself a) explaining what leads are and sharing the anchor chart, b) pointing out the lead in the Sharks book, and c) modeling thinking aloud about a few possible leads for your new booklet.

Unplugged/Offline

Have students work through part 1 of Lesson 5 Handout – unplugged.

Explore

Synchronous

- Model beginning a new booklet about a new topic. Think aloud about how you might begin with one of the types of leads on the anchor chart, such as “sharing a riddle.”
- Have students make suggestions about other ways you might begin your booklet in an interesting way. Students might suggest other riddles, or they might use other suggestions from the anchor chart. [EBP: Teach students to use the writing process for a variety of purposes. [Strong evidence] (Graham et al., 2016)].
- To support students further with constructing leads, ask a particular student to share their topic and as a class brainstorm possible leads they could use.
**Asynchronous**

Have students record a brief Flipgrid or Seesaw video telling you 1-2 different leads they could add to their booklets, just like you thought about several possible leads for your modeled piece.

**Unplugged/Offline**

Have students work through part 2 of Lesson 5 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. Tell students they need to work on their leads during the first part of this independent writing time. They can either begin a new booklet, or they can go back to the beginning of the booklet they’re in the middle of and squeeze in a lead. They may need to use a sticky note for adding their lead if there’s not enough room on the first page. Alternatively, they can tape a small flap of paper over the first sentence to add a lead. [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)].

As you confer with students, look for students’ ability to name the topic and get the reader’s attention.

**Reflect**

**Synchronous**

Students can share their writing in groups of 2-3 via breakout rooms. Ask students to begin by sharing the lead for their booklet. Once the group has returned to a whole-group format, the teacher might ask 1-2 students to share their leads with the group. [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 if they are able to participate in the discussion about potential leads for your modeled text as well as other students’ texts. Students should be able to produce an interesting lead to their informational text but it is not expected that they create a sample of each type of lead on the anchor chart.

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 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:

Using a question lead is generally the easiest type of lead for students. But some students have difficulty formulating questions and would benefit from a chart listing question words, such as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Do bats eat meat? Read this book to find out.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have</td>
<td>Have you ever seen a bat at night?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did</td>
<td>Did you know that bats do not have feathers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What</td>
<td>What do bats eat?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Creating a riddle is also a very concrete type of lead but one that may require support for students to write successfully. One option is to create an organizer for students to complete before making their riddle:

_____________ are ________ and _________.
_____________ have ____________.
_____________ can _____________.

Example:
Bats are black and blind.
Bats have fur on their wings.
Bats can fly at night.

Sample riddle:
What is blind and can fly at night?

English learners in need of additional language support may benefit from the above resources coupled with visuals.
Additional 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):*
  - Orally share writing using short, simple sentences with teacher support, as needed.
  - Write potential leads for a topic with support from annotated exemplars and sentence stems with visuals.

**Acceleration/Extension**

**Standard: 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.

**Acceleration/Extension Activity:**

Students who would benefit from acceleration might be willing to try a more sophisticated lead, such as beginning with a narrative section that paints a picture of the topic for the reader. These narratives are often written in present-tense and offer a “slice of life” window into the topic. An example:

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**Global Warning**

*Deep in the Arctic a mother polar is returning from a long, hard day of hunting. But looking ahead she sees the ice floes she uses to get home are much farther apart. It will be a lot harder to make it home. She jumps in and swims for it but pretty soon becomes exhausted. Just when she can’t make it any further another ice floe appears. She barely made it.*

Sadly, not all polar bears are this lucky. The North Polar ice caps are melting rapidly causing all sorts of problems needing grave attention.

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**Engaging Families**

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

- Families might enjoy looking through the informational books in their home and online to explore the different ways writers begin their books. Together they can decide whether the lead was effective enough to grab their attention.
- Families might play the “lead game” by having one person name a topic while the other orally creates an interesting lead.

**References**

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

[https://ctl.wustl.edu/online-annotation-tools/](https://ctl.wustl.edu/online-annotation-tools/)


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