Unit 4: Research-Based Inquiry and Informational Writing

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s): **English Language Arts**
Time Period: **Week 25**
Length: **8 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Unit Overview

Research-Based Information Inquiry and Informational Writing is a hybrid unit of study in which students will take the stance of critical consumers--taking in, categorizing, synthesizing, and checking the validity of information collected to explore multiple ways of learning from informational texts. Students will work to synthesize the array of information collected through research into a logical and clear structure for their writing that enables them to explain complex and important topics to others in their communities. In Bend I of the unit, students will immerse themselves within the research topic by reading and analyzing a wide variety of sources to develop a big-picture view of a topic, as well as discover key points and ideas within a larger topic. In Bend II, students will select a compelling issue to write about and commence a trail of research that strengthens their credibility on a topic by incorporating solid evidence (accurate quotes, supportable facts, and clear statistics) into their writing. Additionally, students will work to elaborate on their key points with emblematic, concrete details to create an accurate picture of the topic to convey to readers. Finally, in Bend III, students will work to share their expertise through a digital platform by studying mentor texts, determining the importance of the information collected, and re-framing their work to promote awareness and activism for the issues they've selected.

Standards

LA.RI.6.1	Cite textual evidence and make relevant connections to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
LA.RI.6.2	Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
LA.RI.6.3	Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes).
LA.RI.6.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.
LA.RI.6.5	Analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, chapter, or section fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the ideas.
LA.RI.6.6	Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.
LA.RI.6.7	Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.
LA.RI.6.8	Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.
LA.RI.6.9	Compare, contrast and reflect on (e.g., practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) one author's presentation of events with that of another (e.g., a memoir written by and a biography on the same person).

LA.RI.6.10	By the end of the year read and comprehend literary nonfiction at grade level text-complexity or above, with scaffolding as needed.
LA.SL.6.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
LA.SL.6.2	Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.
LA.L.6.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
LA.L.6.3	Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
LA.L.6.4	Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 6 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
LA.L.6.6	Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

Essential Questions

- How can I immerse myself in a topic by researching and note taking with power and purpose from different media of informational texts?
- How can I highlight my learning from research by drafting an essay?
- How can I choose a focused topic angle and shape it into an informational book by infusing targeted research while revising for effective text features, literary and informational writing moves?
- How can I transfer my focused topic expertise into an effective, engaging, and educational online format that both excites and educates others about my findings digitally?

Application of Knowledge: Students will know that...

- Collaboration in research grows new ideas and increases knowledge.
- Drawing evidence from multiple print and digital sources of informational texts supports analysis, reflection, and research.
- In order to develop a theory or position on a topic, readers weigh and evaluate evidence.
- Researchers construct their writing with solid bricks of information.
- Researchers read and analyze a variety of sources to develop a big picture of a topic.
- Researches are strategic in their inquiry; gathering information quickly and noticing gaps to guide their research trail.
- Writers are strategic in the choices they make to convey their big ideas.

Application of Skills: Students will be able to...

- Appraise evidence and details gathered for relevancy and credibility.

- Assemble relevant information (facts, anecdotes, statistics, quotations, etc.) from multiple print and digital sources.
- Categorize details and information collected in research into sub-categories of a topic or issue.
- Cite evidence from texts to support literal and inferential claims.
- Compose an informational/explanatory text with an awareness to the selection, organization, and analysis of content.
- Construct a claim with relevant evidence and logical reasoning.
- Construct research questions to guide inquiry.
- Devise a plan for the structure, features, and content of an informational/explanatory text.
- Distinguish key details and facts within informational texts.
- Employ academic and expert vocabulary to teach others about a topic or issue.
- Evaluate research texts (print and digital) for credibility, bias, and validity.
- Experiment with text structures and features to best convey information to the intended audience.
- Integrate information gathered from different media and forms to build an understanding of a topic or issue.
- Synthesize information and details from multiple research sources to construct central idea for informational text.

Teaching Points and Suggested Activities

Suggested Teaching Points

The following teaching points and activities are adapted from the TCRWP curricular calendars and texts and serve as a loose framework for teachers, who will add and or emphasize based on their students' needs.

Bend I: Research-Based Inquiry

- When you want to study a topic as a writer, you learn with pen in hand, not only taking in information, but also putting out responses to the information.
- Before writers write about any subject, they first take in a broad cross section of information about that topic, making sure to read different kinds of materials from different kinds of sources.
- When writers want to become an expert on a topic, they read, trying to build a mental model of the whole topic.
- Readers accumulate and sort information as they read across texts, working to figure out where new information belongs.
- Readers write long to think about their topic, using the structure of an essay to push their thinking to be logical and evidence-based.

Bend II: Drafting and Revising Information Books on Focused Topics

- As writers pursue a research subject, they think, "What about this topic is important?"
- Readers revise their understanding of a topic by sorting information into familiar categories and making new categories when necessary.
- Writers of informational books construct an image of the text they will write by envisioning several possible ways to use or combine essential structures into a working plan.
- To write an informational text well, writers construct the text not with airy words, but with solid bricks of information: with quotations, facts, anecdotes, and numbers.
- When a reader wants to construct an information text that is built with a variety of precise bits of information, it helps to read with an eye towards collecting all those different kinds of information.
- Readers develop technical vocabulary as they learn more about a topic, and they incorporate it into their writing and conversation.
- Writing well often requires writing long (elaboration) with details that bring the text to life.
- Writers look to mentor sentences to develop powerful, complex sentences.
- Writers look to mentor texts to identify powerful text features to include in their own informational writing.
- Writers construct patters and matching in their writing to help make information more accessible to readers.
- To engage all readers, writers incorporate a variety of text features.
- Writers develop "ready to go" drafts by moving through the whole writing process in their minds.
- When writers get ready to write final drafts, they not only have a plan in their heads and some rehearsal under their belts, but they also have their quotations at their sides.
- Writers celebrate and share their published work within a community of writers.

Bend III: Digital Writing Projects--Sharing Expertise On-line

- When writers begin new writing projects, they often study mentor texts to get a vision of the whole kind of writing.
- When writers present their work digitally, they ask themselves, "What's the most important to share *right here, right now*?"
- When writers move to a digital format, they make key decisions by asking, "Which will help teach my readers most?"

- Writers celebrate and share their published work within a community of writers and digital learners.

Suggested Activities

- Mini-lesson to include connection, teaching point, modeling, active engagement, and link to independence.
- Develop and use reader's notebook for modeling, exemplar entries, and a time-line of teaching points
- Create authentic artifacts (logs, jots, etc.) for examination and inquiry
- Think aloud during process to model strategies, sentence stems, and problem-solving techniques
- Model creation of artifacts during read aloud
- Examine mentor and student exemplars
- Read aloud a mentor text or whole class text with strategic stopping points for teacher think aloud, turn and talk, and stop and jot opportunities
- Construct authentic anchor charts (specific teaching points + student observations + student friendly terms/examples)
- Create process checklists to guide reading work into independence
- Incorporate multimedia and visual texts as a means for active engagement and practice
- Small group strategy lessons
- Individual conference with students

Assessments

Assessment within this unit of study arrives in three forms: diagnostic, formative, and summative. The development and use of assessment will happen strategically throughout the unit as a means of maintaining a "pulse of learning" to ensure that students are grasping and mastering the skills and strategies intertwined within the teaching points prior to advancing on in the unit. Assessment will be formal and informal, as well as teacher-driven and student-driven. Students will be given the opportunity to self-assess their work to identify areas of weakness and development in order to develop ambitious, feasible goals. Students will also be asked to collaborate with peers in their assessment practices in order to support learning across zones of proximal development. On-going teacher assessment will take place in the context of the conference. Conferences, both small group and one-on-one conferring, are used to reinforce expectations, provide advice/or assistance, and to support growth.

Diagnostic Assessments:

- TC Running Record (http://readingandwritingproject.org/resources/assessments/running-records)

The running record forms provide a book introduction, the typed text, a sidebar of reading characteristics, a scoring guide, comprehension questions with sample responses, and space to take notes and to jot student responses. A Teacher Guidebook for Levels A-K and one for Levels L-Z+ is available in the Supporting Documents and explains in detail the assessments and includes suggestions for how to use the assessments to plan differentiated, explicit instruction for each student assessed.

Formative Assessments:

- *Writing Pathways: Performance Assessments and Learning Progressions, Grades 6-8* pre assessment (On-Demand performance task)
- Examination of student reading logs
- Examination of student developed jots and notebook entries (Reader's and Writer's notebook)
- Informal conferring and observation of independent reading habits and accountable talk
- Collection of anecdotes from teacher-student conferences: individual, small group, strategy, and guided
- Collection of observations from active engagement within mini-lesson
- Closure tasks: quick jot, exit tickets, etc.
- Student performance checklists
- Student self-reflection

Summative Assessments:

- End of unit post assessment (On-demand performance task)
- Research logs, notebook entries, and other evidence of students improving skills
- Published writing composition (essay, book, and digital publication)

Possible Informational Research Performance Assessment: Use either of the following sets of texts for this assessment.

For students reading slightly to two grades below grade level:
http://textproject.org/assets/products/tpfk/prototype/TP4KHeavy-Backpacks.pdf

*Note: if using this option, print only the cover and pages 1-7, as the last page offers different questions and activities which don't completely align with this assessment. Also, let the students know to treat each chapter in the book as a separate article for the purposes of answering the assessment questions.

For students reading at or above grade level:

http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9D06E1D71239F937A15757C0A9649D8B63&pagewanted=print

(**Only include the first two sections of this article: the introductory section plus "Pack Animals")

http://health.clevelandclinic.org/2013/08/7-tips-to-a-lighter-safer-school-backpack/

(print only the section that is clearly titled "7 Tips for a Safer Backpack" - the bulleted list of tips.

Assessment Questions:

Question 1: Which article provides the best information about why backpacks can cause problems for students? Quote the parts that you think give the strongest evidence about the problems backpacks can cause

and explain what makes that evidence strong.

Question 2:

If using “Heavy Backpacks,” by Holly Reed and Alice Lee Folkins: What is the main purpose of pages 6-7 in Heavy Backpacks? How is this different from the purpose of page 3?

If using “Personal Health,” by Jane Brody and “7 Tips,” from Cleveland Clinic: What is the main purpose of “7 Tips for a Safer Backpack?” How is this different from the purpose of “Heavy Backpacks Can Spell Chronic Pain for Children?”

Question 3: Using information from all of the articles you read, write a one-to-two page summary of what you now know about backpacks, including information from across more than one text.

Activities to Differentiate Instruction

Differentiated instruction is accomplished through preassessment and ongoing formative assessments that inform independent work, small group strategy lessons, and individual conferences. Differentiation in content, product and/or process addresses the needs of exceptionally able students, and scaffolding of varying degree is provided to support less ready students in meeting worthy and appropriately rigorous learning outcomes. Instructional objectives, strategies and materials emphasize relevance, authenticity, and student-centered learning.

In compliance with 504 plans and IEP's, teachers will review applicable documents, consult appropriate personnel connected with special-needs students' cases, work closely with inclusion teachers and classroom aides, and communicate with parents in an effort to see to the specific needs of all students. Due to varying dispositions and learning styles, teachers promote various strategies during all phases of the reading process. Students will have opportunities to work alone, in pairs, and in groups. The reading workshop incorporates a variety of instructional techniques to meet the continuum of learners’ interests, learning profiles, and readiness levels.

Differentiating through Independent Reading: After using the TCRWP benchmark assessments to determine corresponding Fountas and Pinnell text gradient levels A-Z+, students choose appropriate “just right” books that match them as readers based on interest/readiness. The strategy or skill being taught might be the same, but the book choice, or content, is differentiated.

Differentiating though Reading Response Methods: One option to differentiate product is to allow students to use different methods to track their thinking. For example, if students are working on inferring and using their notebooks, students can choose how to record their thought process (Venn Diagram, T-Chart, etc.) to use evidence and explanation to support their decision. The teacher can assign how students respond to literature

based on their reading goal or need, or the student can decide.

Differentiating through Conferences and Small Groups: Teachers should listen to students as they read and take notes during one-on-one conferences. Reading conferences can be used to encourage students' reading interests, help students find appropriate leveled books to read, and to monitor student progress. The teacher can also pull small groups for extra practice at this time. These small groups can be used to challenge higher-level students, give additional practice to all students in small groups, or to meet with lower readers to focus on areas of weakness. Small groups are meant to be flexible and change to fit the needs of students. During this time students can share their thinking with partners and with the small group, and then receive feedback from the teacher.

Individual conferencing and small group instruction allows for instruction at various levels, remediation or enrichment of specific skills, as well as the differentiation of the method of instruction and the presentation of information. In addition to these forms of differentiation other modifications can be made. They can include, but are not limited to those suggested below.

Differentiating for special education:

- *Learning Environment*: Allow space for students to choose; Use preferential seating; Provide opportunities for movement; Vary activities both in and out of desk/table
- *Curriculum:*Adapt amount of work required; Use different forms of assessments that demonstrate different learning styles; Allow different visual aids, concrete examples, hands-on activities, and cooperative groups to learn new concepts; Allow work to be completed in various formats
- *Teaching and Learning Styles:*Adapt the way instruction is delivered to the learner- use multiple teaching styles to teach a new concept; Use concrete examples and move towards the abstract; Provide an overview of lesson at beginning; Monitor the rate and manner in which the material is being presented
- *Time Demands*: Allow extra time to complete tests; Give different versions of tests; Follow a routine; Set specific time limits for test
- *Cooperative Learning:* Use flexible grouping; Use student choice in grouping; Assign peer helpers to check in on one another
- *Behavior Concerns:* Give clear expectations of goals for the class period; Be consistent in follow through with both positive and negative consequences; Use of cues; Give immediate positive reinforcement and feedback; Avoid power struggle
- *Attention/Focus Concerns:* Give notification of transitions; Use of cues to refocus; Seat near teacher or in area of less distraction; Introduce assignments in sequential steps; Make sure books/materials are on the correct pages
- *Organization:* Give copy of notes; Allow student to leave unnecessary materials in a nearby area; Color-coded materials; Use of binder system; Use a checklist for work in smaller units
- *Written Expression:* Allow use of manuscript, cursive, or typing for assignments; Leniency in spelling and neatness (to an agreed upon level); Provide a copy of notes; Avoid pressures for speed or accuracy
- *Visual Processing:* Give highlighted/color coded copy of notes; Avoid copying notes from the board; Check in with student to be sure that visuals are comprehended from the beginning of lesson; Avoided cluttered worksheets keeping them clear and well defined
- *Language Processing:* Give both written and verbal directions; Slow the rate of presentation and paraphrase information; Keep statements short and to the point Allow for extra wait time; Use student‘s name before asking a question; Use of visuals and hands-on materials; Familiarize students with new vocabulary before lesson

- *Audio Processing:* Provide a copy of notes; Use of a checklist; Keep statements short and to the point; Use of eye contact; Have student sit closer to instruction; Use of student buddy to check in with sitting nearby; Use of visuals; Stop and check in for understanding

- **Content specific modifications may include:**
    - Instruction aligned to student's performance level according to Teacher's College Reading Continuum
    - Personal student goals designed to move student along Teacher's College Reading Continuum

Differentiating to extend learning for gifted students:

Reading programs for the gifted should take into account the individual characteristics of the children, capitalize on the gifts they possess, and expand and challenge their abilities. Tasks should be commensurate with ability and achievement. Accommodations may include:

- Compacting the regular curriculum; acceleration of content and/or text at a pace and depth appropriate to the capacity of able learners
- Inquiry reading and independent study opportunities; use of more advanced books
- Focus on developing higher-level comprehension skills, along with higher level questioning
- Exploration of literary tropes and elements (i.e. craft, irony, symbolism, foils, unreliable narrators, and multiple perspectives) on a highly abstract level and with highly nuanced applications
- Special emphasis to the critical-thinking components of the standard scoring rubrics
- A wider and more in-depth array of related topics and cross-curricular connections
- Opportunities for students to engage in peer instruction
- Requiring more initiative and independence from students, emphasizing metacognitive skills that foster self-directed learning
- Encouraging students to apply insights revealed in group discussions to their own analysis of literature

Differentiating for ELL's:

General modifications may include:

- Strategy groups
- Teacher conferences
- Graphic organizers
- Modification plan
- Collaboration with ELL Teacher

Content specific vocabulary important for ELL students to understand include:

- Activism, Central Idea, Compare/Contrast, Relevant, Text Features, Point of View, Perspective, Analyze, Synthesize, Critique, Interpret, Theory, Text Structure, Evidence, Evaluate

Integrated/Cross-Disciplinary Instruction

Consistent with the concept of differentiated instruction, students should learn the knowledge and skills of this unit in conjunction with concepts from various content areas. While some teachers will provide instruction that includes specific concepts from various content areas, all should direct students to specific text and online resources pertinent to various content areas. Also, teachers will consult grade-level content area teachers on concepts covered in their classes, allowing subjects, lessons, and experiences to reinforce each other.

The diverse subjects of informational reading make this highly feasible, and mini-lessons can apply to concepts from multiple content areas including science, social studies, and the arts. The topics and research questions for informative writing span far beyond the middle school curriculum. Here are some possible research questions and the content areas to which they apply:

- How did teen activists like Malala and Iqbal change the world? (social studies)
- What contributions did young scientists or inventors make to improve the world? (science)
- How do young people use the arts to make a difference? (the arts)

Writing Workshop

- apply language and ideas from read alouds and independent reading
- utilize read alouds and independent reading as mentor texts
- expand written vocabulary from read alouds and independent reading
- apply sentence, paragraph, and text structure from mentor texts
- utilize other elements of author's craft seen in mentor texts and independent reading books

Content Areas: Science, Social Studies, Health

- use mentor texts to deliver Social Studies, Science, and Health content
- apply reading skills and strategies to the reading done in the content areas

Study Skills

- use graphic organizers to support reading
- use checklists and rubrics to monitor progress
- use Venn diagrams and t-charts to gather, compare, and contrast events
- use highlighters, note cards, post-its, and other tools to keep track of events, details, and ideas
- keep a log and notebook

The Arts

- analyze illustrations, diagrams, maps, photographs in books

- illustrate a text to show details and ideas
- create multimedia presentations based on reading
- act out a sequence from a text to better visualize a process

Suggested Mentor Texts and Other Resources

Suggested Teaching Resources

- Beers, Kylene, and Robert Probst. *Reading Nonfiction: Notice & Note Stances, Signposts, and Strategies*. New Hampshire: Heinemann, 2016. Print.
- Calkins, Lucy, Maggie Beattie Roberts, and Emily Strang-Campell. *Research-Based Informational Writing: Books, Websites, and Presentations* (Grade 6: Unit 3--Information). New Hampshire: Heinemann, 2014. Print.
- Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. Reading Curricular Calendar, Sixth Grade 2015-2016: "Unit Three--Reading to Learn: Synthesizing Nonfiction"

Suggested Text Sets:

- Starter Packet Text Set available on CD-ROM provided with *Research-Based Informational Writing: Books, Websites, and Presentations.*

21st Century Skills

CRP.K-12.CRP1.1	Career-ready individuals understand the obligations and responsibilities of being a member of a community, and they demonstrate this understanding every day through their interactions with others. They are conscientious of the impacts of their decisions on others and the environment around them. They think about the near-term and long-term consequences of their actions and seek to act in ways that contribute to the betterment of their teams, families, community and workplace. They are reliable and consistent in going beyond the minimum expectation and in participating in activities that serve the greater good.
CRP.K-12.CRP2.1	Career-ready individuals readily access and use the knowledge and skills acquired through experience and education to be more productive. They make connections between abstract concepts with real-world applications, and they make correct insights about when it is appropriate to apply the use of an academic skill in a workplace situation.
CRP.K-12.CRP4.1	Career-ready individuals communicate thoughts, ideas, and action plans with clarity, whether using written, verbal, and/or visual methods. They communicate in the workplace with clarity and purpose to make maximum use of their own and others' time. They are excellent writers; they master conventions, word choice, and organization, and use

	effective tone and presentation skills to articulate ideas. They are skilled at interacting with others; they are active listeners and speak clearly and with purpose. Career-ready individuals think about the audience for their communication and prepare accordingly to ensure the desired outcome.
CRP.K-12.CRP5.1	Career-ready individuals understand the interrelated nature of their actions and regularly make decisions that positively impact and/or mitigate negative impact on other people, organization, and the environment. They are aware of and utilize new technologies, understandings, procedures, materials, and regulations affecting the nature of their work as it relates to the impact on the social condition, the environment and the profitability of the organization.
CRP.K-12.CRP6.1	Career-ready individuals regularly think of ideas that solve problems in new and different ways, and they contribute those ideas in a useful and productive manner to improve their organization. They can consider unconventional ideas and suggestions as solutions to issues, tasks or problems, and they discern which ideas and suggestions will add greatest value. They seek new methods, practices, and ideas from a variety of sources and seek to apply those ideas to their own workplace. They take action on their ideas and understand how to bring innovation to an organization.
CRP.K-12.CRP7.1	Career-ready individuals are discerning in accepting and using new information to make decisions, change practices or inform strategies. They use reliable research process to search for new information. They evaluate the validity of sources when considering the use and adoption of external information or practices in their workplace situation.
CRP.K-12.CRP8.1	Career-ready individuals readily recognize problems in the workplace, understand the nature of the problem, and devise effective plans to solve the problem. They are aware of problems when they occur and take action quickly to address the problem; they thoughtfully investigate the root cause of the problem prior to introducing solutions. They carefully consider the options to solve the problem. Once a solution is agreed upon, they follow through to ensure the problem is solved, whether through their own actions or the actions of others.
CRP.K-12.CRP11.1	Career-ready individuals find and maximize the productive value of existing and new technology to accomplish workplace tasks and solve workplace problems. They are flexible and adaptive in acquiring new technology. They are proficient with ubiquitous technology applications. They understand the inherent risks-personal and organizational-of technology applications, and they take actions to prevent or mitigate these risks.