Unit 6: Independent Writing Projects

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s): **English Language Arts**
Time Period: **Generic Time Period**
Length: **Mid-May - June**
Status: **Published**

Unit Overview

At the end of the school year, students will have the opportunity to select and produce another piece in any of the categories of writing studied this year. For example, students may choose to write another narrative, whether it be personal or not or another fantasy. If someone is passionate about another informational topic, they may choose to write an explanatory piece or argue their perspective. Poets can produce an anthology of work. The possibilities are endless and the direction is left up to the student. During this unit, students can also take their ideas and express them in different ways by creating a story book, comic, or their own newspaper filled with a variety of writings. Along with guidance from their teacher and peers, students will use the writing skills and strategies learned throughout the course of the year to complete a product that can be assessed. The teacher's role will be to continue to guide the student through the writing process use various types of mentor texts, and remind students of strategies that will make for the best work. Students will draft both handwritten pieces as well as pieces using appropriate technology.

Standards

LA.W.5.5	With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
LA.W.5.10	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, metacognition/self-correction and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.
LA.SL.5.1	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.
LA.L.5.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
LA.L.5.2	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
LA.L.5.2.E	Spell grade-appropriate words correctly, consulting references as needed.

Essential Questions

- How can I best match my interests with a goal for my writing?
- Who is my intended audience as I write, and how must I suit my work to that audience?
- To which of this year's units of study will my work apply, and how will I use the skills I learned?
- Which subjects outside of ELA pertain to this topic?
- How can I gain inspiration from mentor texts?

Application of Knowledge: Students will know that...

- it is important to consider the audience when writing
- mentor texts can provide inspiration for writing regardless of genre
- other content areas can provide inspiration and information for writing
- the writing process includes planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing
- using strategies learned over the course of the year will make for the best work

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

- apply the basic skills of spelling, capitalization, and punctuation properly to their writing
- develop and strengthen writing with support and guidance from teacher and peers
- engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners, building on other's ideas and expressing their own clearly
- gain inspiration from published authors and exemplar texts to emulate in their writing
- produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience
- use technology to publish writing
- write with independence

Teaching Points and Suggested Activities

The teacher may choose to review strategies learned from the Grade 5 *Units of Study in Narrative, Information, and Opinion Writing* by Lucy Calkins.

Some teaching points/suggested activities include:

- generating ideas- writing notebooks, other subject areas, mentor texts
- planning your writing- maps, time lines, drawings, webs
- goal setting
- finding mentor texts for your genre
- grammar, spelling, punctuation review
- review of rubrics for each genre
- presentation of writing

Assessments

Since each student is working on their own individual project, the assessment rubrics will vary per genre selected.

Student self-assessment and peer assessment should take place whenever possible. Removing the traditional emphasis on teacher assessment enables students to take more initiative and become self-directed.

On-going teacher assessment will take place in the context of a conference. Conferences, both small group and one-to-one conferring, are used to reinforce expectations, provide advice and/or assistance, and ultimately, to support growth.

Diagnostic Assessments

Review of student's portfolio from this year- What strategies does the student still need assistance with in their selected genre of writing?

Students should map out a plan for their project. This will be used as a guide for the student and teacher to track progress and goal setting.

Formative Assessments (Informal)

Daily observation of students' participation and products during the active participation segment of each mini-lesson.

Students' questions, comments, suggestions to teacher

Comments, corrections, and records from peer conferences between students

Formative Assessments (Formal)

Teacher-student conferences

Summative Assessment

Summative writing will take the form of both handwritten pieces and pieces generated using appropriate technology.

The teacher can choose to use one of the rubrics from the *Units of Study* by Lucy Calkins to assess student work. However, the teacher may also choose to use the student's initial plan for the project as an assessment tool.

Activities to Differentiate Instruction

The design of Writer's Workshop allows for individualized instruction and independent growth for every child. At the heart of differentiation in Writer's Workshop is data and the analysis of data. Through the usage of monitoring student progress during independent writing, analysis of student writing using the learning progressions and writing checklists, teachers should be able to delineate which students are in need of additional supports, in what areas those supports should be targeted at, and which students are ready to be pushed further in their writing work.

Some methods to use to support struggling writers as well as advanced writers:

- Encourage student choice in topics to ensure that they are writing on topics that are meaningful for them
- Provide support as needed through conferencing
- Provide support as needed through strategy groups
- Provide modified and/or alternate grade level checklists and rubrics to scaffold or stretch learning
- Scaffold or stretch learning through the use of various strategies
- Provide appropriate writing partners
- Utilize charts to provide a visual reminder for students throughout the mini-lesson.
    - Add drawings and visuals to charts
    - Provide individualized copies of teaching charts
    - Depending on the concept, the chart may be most effective to visually break the concept into parts and touch each part during a demonstration
- For students needing more support at the end of the mini-lesson, keep them at the rug for an extra minute after dispersing the rest of the class and clarify the main topic of the mini-lesson or work one-on-one with them to start their writing
- Set writing goals for students and follow-up with the writing goals after an appropriate amount of time.
- Create group and one-on-one conferring calendars to ensure that students are being met with on a regular basis and working toward individualized goals
- As the unit progresses, the teacher, in coordination with the students, will develop a word wall that will highlight vocabulary specific to the topic chosen
- Assign roles to partners (Partner 1/Partner 2) to help scaffold which student should speak first and avoid one partner dominating the conversation and the other partner becoming a passive listener
    - For ELL students, creating a triad instead of partnership may be beneficial
- Demonstrate for students how to use writing checklists to set goals for their writing and also self-assess

Supports for ELL students:

- Provide consistent teaching structures
- Use consistent teaching language
- Offer plentiful opportunities for reading practice
- Provide access to a broad variety of texts
- Use assessment to provide extra support
- Support students in the preproduction and early production stages of learning English
- Use visual examples in your teaching
- Modify our mini-lessons to be as concise as possible
- Provide extra ?active engagement? time in mini-lessons for extra practice
- Provide readers with topic-based text sets
- Provide opportunities for listening and learning the social language of the reading workshop
- Provide opportunities to read in both their home language and in English
- Plan instruction with the ELL teacher
- Extend the language ELLs are producing through questioning
- Provide explicit instruction in tenses, pronoun references, and connectives
- Support students in building vocabulary using their own reading as the context
- As the unit progresses, the teacher, in coordination with the students, will develop a word wall that will highlight vocabulary specific to the topic chosen

In order to support this differentiation work, teachers may want to consult the following materials:

- Units of Study books at lower or higher levels for teaching strategies that are appropriate to the support needed.
- *The Writing Strategies* Book by Jennifer Serravallo
- If. . . Then. .. Curriculum book for alternate units or teaching points to support the individual reading levels.
- *A Guide to the Writing* Workshop (Primary Grades) chapter 14 for more in-depth information on differentiation

Integrated/Cross-Disciplinary Instruction

This project can cover various types of content areas depending on students' interests. The teacher must have a multitude of mentor text in various types of content areas to allow students to use them to assist them in their project.

Anything from:

picture books

chapter books

songs

nonfiction books (on any topic of interest)

comic strips

letters

poem books

Suggested Mentor Texts and Other Resources

To name a few suggestions

Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak

The Very Quiet Cricket by Eric Carle

"Let It Go" by Kristen Anderson Lopez and Robert Lopez

"Where the Sidewalk Ends" by Shel Silverstein

"TIME for Kids" Magazine

New York Time newspaper (also use for comic strips)

21st Century Skills

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.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.