Research Paper

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s): **English Language Arts, Generic District Course**
Time Period: **Generic Time Period**
Length: **Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Unit Overview

Concurrent with Cycle 2 of the Writing Workshop, this project will focus on developing research and writing skills for an informational report. Teachers may choose (or offer the students the choice) to apply the research model to either an argumentative writing topic or an informative writing topic from Cycle 2.

The writer will provide information or inform the reader of a specific topic. Students will implement steps of writing a research report, which include choosing a research question, consulting sources, discerning validity and pertinence of sources and information, developing a thesis, developing an outline, organizing information (via notecards or digital resources), drafting, revising, editing and proofreading, and publishing.

This project, more ambitious in its scale than the grade 7 project, requires citations from a minimum of eight sources--both print and digital--and a final printed product of at least six pages. Additionally, teachers will take special care that the sources merely inform the report, rather than compose it; that is, students must add their own synthesis and analysis to the material they draw from their sources.

Students must present their papers to their class as would university academics at a conference. Additionally, they must respond to questions from their peers and provide a verbal defense of their papers' findings.

Standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.7	Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (e.g., print or digital text, video, multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.a	Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.b	Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.c	Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.d	Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.e	Establish and maintain a formal style.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.f	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.5	With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.6	Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.7	Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.8	Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.10	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1.a	Come to discussions prepared, having read or researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1.b	Follow rules for collegial discussions and decision-making, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1.c	Pose questions that connect the ideas of several speakers and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant evidence, observations, and ideas.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1.d	Acknowledge new information expressed by others, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views in light of the evidence presented.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.4	Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.6	Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Essential Questions

How can research inform a writer, a reader, and a written product?

How can we determine whether research sources are reliable and useful?

What elements can a writer include to make a piece more authoritative and better develop his/her writing

voice?

How does the writing process contribute to effective pieces of writing and develop a well-written product?

How must one take special care to indicate which information and ideas come not from oneself but from outside sources?

Application of Knowledge and Skills...

Students will know that...

The student will know that:

-writing an effective research paper requires the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

-clear and coherent writing occurs when the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

-a sequence of components (introduction, body, and conclusion) along with relevant information and examples combine to ensure a clear product for readers.

-a formal style makes assertions and conclusions more authoritative.

-there are advantages and disadvantages of using different media to present a particular topic or idea.

-relevant information must come from multiple, credible print and digital sources.

-writers must follow a standard format for citation, attributing all information and concepts to their sources.

- -a formal style makes assertions and conclusions more authoritative.
- -a sequence of components (introduction, body, and conclusion) along with relevant information and examples combine to ensure a clear product for readers.
- -clear and coherent writing occurs when the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- -relevant information must come from multiple, credible print and digital sources.
- -there are advantages and disadvantages of using different media to present a particular topic or idea.
- -writers must follow a standard format for citation, attributing all information and concepts to their sources.

- -writing an effective research paper requires the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

Students will be skilled at...

The student will be able to:

-write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

-produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

-introduce a topic clearly, develop the topic with relevant information and examples, use appropriate and varied transitions, and provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.

-establish and maintain a formal style.

-evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different media to present a particular topic or idea.

-gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources.

-assess the credibility and accuracy of each source.

-quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

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Assessments

Research Question
Formative: Other written assessments

Students submit a research question and an explanation of what they plan to investigate and explain. The teacher will either accept the research question as appropriate for the project or work with the student to modify the question in order to make it suitable.

Source List
Formative: Other written assessments

After consulting a variety of sources and considering their validity, accuracy, and credibility, students compose a list of sources they plan to use for their projects. This list, which follows MLA format and style, will enable the teacher to assess students' skills in consulting a variety of media, gathering information, and discerning its usefulness.

Thesis Statement
Formative: Other written assessments

After consulting a variety of sources and producing a source list, students digest the concepts and information they have found and arrive at a thesis statement in preparation for the composition of their research papers.

Research Paper Outline
Formative: Other written assessments

Students formulate the sequence and flow of their ideas in an outline as further preparation for the composition of the research paper.

Note Cards
Formative: Other written assessments

Students record the specific data, ideas, quotes, and insights that they have found in their sources. Each item taken from a source will have the name of the source and page numbers, if applicable.

Students compile these fragments either on individual 3"x5" note cards or in digital format using a resource such as Evernote.

First Draft
Formative: Written Report

Students compose first full-scale drafts of their research papers following MLA format guidelines, complete with parenthetical citations and a list of works cited.

Final Draft
Summative: Written Report

After receiving their first drafts back from the teacher, students continue to revise and refine their work in consultation with their peers and the teacher.

Presentation and Defense
Summative: Oral Report

After submitting their research papers, students present and defend their ideas to their peers in a setting similar to a university academic conference. Students will have read each other's papers in advance, and will be

prepared with pertinent questions and comments.

Teachers may choose to divide the class into groups that will then conduct mini-conferences.

Students will be assessed on the degree of authority and knowledge they appear to have on their research topics based on their responses to questions and comments posed by their peers.

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- Summative: Written Report
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- Thesis Statement

Activities

Project orientation, including explanation of objectives, activities, sequence, and schedule

Consultation period with the Media Specialist in the GBMS Media Center

Class discussions, examples, and handouts related to each phase of assessment

Peer conferences and teacher consultation with individual students at all phases of the project

Submission and assessment of each task for assessment: research question, source list, thesis, outline, note cards, first draft, and final draft

Additional Concepts and Instruction:

Advanced instruction and examples illustrating the concept of voice

Advanced instruction and examples illustrating the concepts of mood and tone, targeting both to the topic and the audience

Advanced investigation of style standards (including concepts from Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style*) for further refinement of writing conventions

Profile of editorial and publication standards and formats other than MLA (e.g., APA and Chicago)

Activities to Differentiate Instruction

Students have the option of using formatting and documentation styles other than MLA (such as APA or Chicago).

Students may complete PowerPoint presentations as companions to the final paper.

Peer conferences and reviews at all stages of the project enable students of varying abilities to learn from and to assist each other.

Students who generate their own research questions and topics tailor their work to their interests and abilities.

Integrated/Cross-Disciplinary Instruction

The variety of topics that students take up will stretch across the entire curriculum.

Resources

Teacher website--for project guidelines and submission schedules

MLA.org--for style and format guidelines

www.evernote.com --a resource for managing and organizing information from various sources

GBMS Media Center website--for a wide variety of research ideas, advice, and online resources.

Pearson Prentice Hall *Writing and Grammar Workbook*

Pearson Prentice Hall *Writing Coach*

Pearson Prentice Hall *Writing Coach ExamView* CD-ROM

- http://www.ttms.org/writing_quality/voice.htm (for advanced instruction in the concept of voice in writing)

- http://ourenglishclass.net/class-notes/writing/the-writing-process/craft/tone-and-mood/ (for advanced lessons on mood and tone in writing)

Strunk, William, Jr. and E. B. White. *The Elements of Style*, Fourth Edition. New York: Longman, 1999.

- http://www.apastyle.org/ (manuscript guidelines for the American Psychological Association)

- http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html (manuscript guidelines for Chicago-style formatting)