Unit 4 Writing: Journalism: Researching and Writing Articles

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Trimester 3**
Length: **6 weeks**
Status: **Published**

Brief Summary of the Unit

This comprehensive journalism unit is divided into three distinct bends to help students master nonfiction writing. In the initial stage, students learn to function as reporters, practicing the "inverted pyramid" structure to prioritize essential facts and adopting a formal journalistic tone. The second phase introduces beat reporting, where teams collaborate on specialized topics by conducting interviews and utilizing strategic paraphrasing to represent diverse perspectives. Finally, the curriculum culminates in the creation of a special-edition magazine, requiring students to integrate primary research, data, and purposeful visuals into their feature articles. Throughout the program, students utilize a writing toolkit and mentor texts to refine their skills in fact-checking, revision, and structural organization. By the end of the unit, learners transition from basic information writing to producing polished articles for an authentic community audience.

This unit is designed to be part of a developmental progression across grade levels and make interdisciplinary connections across content areas including physical and social sciences, technology, career readiness, cultural awareness, and global citizenship. During this course, students are provided with opportunities to develop skills that pertain to a variety of careers.

Revision Date: June 2026

Pacing Guide

Please refer to the Language Arts Writing Workshop pacing guide for grade 3 in the curriculum folder. Sentence Study is paced and aligned within the Syntax, Style, Grammar and Conventions section. Please refer to this folder for the scope and sequence for Sentence Study.

A sample K-5 Literacy Schedule Across a Week is accessible in instructional materials section of the Grades K-5 folder.

Standards

The identified standards reflect a developmental progression across grades/ levels and make interdisciplinary connections across content areas including social sciences, technology, career readiness, cultural awareness and global citizenship.

These mandates may be hit through the selection of choice literature:

Amistad Commission

This unit also reflects the goals of the Department of Education and the Amistad Commission including the infusion of the history of Africans and African-Americans into the curriculum in order to provide an accurate, complete, and inclusive history regarding the importance of African-Americans to the growth and development of American society in a global context.

Asian American and Pacific Islander History Law

This unit includes instructional materials that highlight the history and contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in accordance with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in Social Studies.

Commission on Holocaust Education

This unit further reflects the goals of the Holocaust Education mandate where students are able to identify and a consequence of prejudice and discrimination; understand that issues of moral dilemma and conscience have a pı and hatred whenever and wherever it happens.

Information Literacy

This unit challenges students to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively. Information literacy includes the research process and how information is created and produced; critical thinking and using information resou difference between facts, points of view, and opinions, accessing peer-reviewed print and digital library resourc

The standards that follow are relevant to this course in addition to the associated content-based standards listed below:

Reading Informational Text (RI)

- RI.CR.5.1: Quote accurately from an informational text when explaining what the text says explicitly and make relevant connections when drawing inferences from the text.
- RI.CI.5.2: Determine the central idea of an informational text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.
- RI.PP.5.5: Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent and how that may influence the reader's interpretation.

Writing (W)

- W.IW.5.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- W.WP.5.4: With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
- W.WR.5.5: Establish a central idea about a topic, investigation, issue or event and use several sources to support the

proposed central idea.
- W.SE.5.6: Gather relevant information from multiple valid and reliable print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work, making note of any similarities and differences among ideas presented; and provide a list of sources.

Speaking and Listening (SL)

- SL.PE.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.
- SL.II.5.2: Summarize a written text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, and orally).
- SL.PI.5.4: Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

Language (L)

- L.KL.5.1: Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
- L.VL.5.2: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning academic and domain-specific words and phrases based on grade 5 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
- L.VI.5.3: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

	Collaboration with individuals with diverse perspectives can result in new ways of thinking and/or innovative solutions.
9.4.5.CI.3	Participate in a brainstorming session with individuals with diverse perspectives to expand one's thinking about a topic of curiosity (e.g., 8.2.5.ED.2, 1.5.5.CR1a).
9.4.5.CT.1	Identify and gather relevant data that will aid in the problem-solving process (e.g., 2.1.5.EH.4, 4-ESS3-1, 6.3.5.CivicsPD.2).
	Intellectual property rights exist to protect the original works of individuals. It is allowable to use other people's ideas in one's own work provided that proper credit is given to the original source.
9.4.5.DC.1	Explain the need for and use of copyrights.
9.4.5.IML.7	Evaluate the degree to which information meets a need including social emotional learning, academic, and social (e.g., 2.2.5. PF.5).
	Collaborating digitally as a team can often develop a better artifact than an individual working alone.
9.4.5.TL.4	Compare and contrast artifacts produced individually to those developed collaboratively (e.g., 1.5.5.CR3a).
9.4.5.TL.5	Collaborate digitally to produce an artifact (e.g., 1.2.5CR1d).

Performing Arts Standards

1.4.5.Cr2: (a). Devise original ideas for a drama/theatre work that reflect collective inquiry about characters, plots, and their given circumstances. (b). Participate and identify defined responsibilities required to present a drama/theatre work informally to peers/audience and participate in the process.

1.4.5.Cr3: (a). Collaborate with peers to revise, refine, adapt, and improve ideas to fit the given parameters of

an improvised or scripted drama/theatre work through self and collaborative review. (b). Use and adapt sounds and

movements in a guided drama experience. (c). Refine technical choices by creating innovative solutions to design and technical problems that arise in rehearsal for a drama/theatre work.

1.4.5.Pr6: (a). Practice drama/theatre work and share reflections individually and in small groups, and informally with an audience.

1.4.5.Cn10: (a). Explain how drama/theatre connects oneself to a community or culture and identify the ways drama/theatre work reflects the perspectives of a community or culture.

Essential Questions

Bend One: How do journalists discover newsworthy stories in their community, and how do they use firsthand observations and the inverted pyramid structure to report them with accuracy and a clear journalistic voice?

Bend Two: How do beat reporters collaborate in teams to gather diverse perspectives through interviews, and how do they choose when to quote or paraphrase to build clear, purposefully structured paragraphs?

Bend Three: How do journalists research and weave facts, statistics, and quotes into their writing to report on a shared community issue, and how do they use mentor texts, visual choices, and focused editing to publish a cohesive special-edition magazine?

Students Will Know/Students Will Be Skilled At

By the end of this unit, students will:

- Generate article ideas based on events, surprises, or topics that matter to their community.
- Write multiple articles, ranging from brief news reports to longer feature pieces.
- Observe carefully and include specific, precise details to engage readers.
- Apply journalistic tone and differentiate it from personal narrative tone.
- Structure writing using inverted pyramid, chronological, cause-and-effect, or problem-and-solution formats.
- Conduct interviews, gather research, and integrate quotes, paraphrases, and data accurately.

- Revise writing for clarity, focus, readability, grammar, and conventions.
- Collaborate with peers as copy editors and work in beat teams to produce sections of a newspaper.
- Incorporate visuals strategically to clarify, emphasize, or engage readers.
- Fact-check and publish articles in a class newspaper or magazine for an authentic audience.

Evidence/Performance Tasks

Students demonstrate differentiated proficiency through both formative and summative assessments in the classroom. Based on individual student readiness and performance, assessments can be implemented as formative and/or summative.

Developmental progression across years in both reading and writing is evidenced by multiple benchmark assessment screeners, administered three times per year. Follow up diagnostic assessments are used to target skill remediation. Student proficiency allows for additional or alternative assessment based on demonstration or absence of skill.

The performance tasks listed below are examples of the types of assessments teachers may use in the classroom and the data collected by the district to track student progress.

Formative:

- Answer essential questions
- Teacher observations/conferring notes
- Turn and talks
- Partnerships rehearsing their writing
- Peer Conferences/Partnership Discussion and Rehearsing
- Writer's Notebook (quick writes/drafts/prewrites)
- Teacher checklists using mini-lessons for measurable skills
- Writing Conferences: Individual and small group
- Writing Partnership work and discussions
- Writing folders with student work
- Writing pieces to note the growth need of the writer
- Observations
- Listening in on partnership discussion of writing piece
- Drafts online (Google Docs)
- Writing Club work and discussions

Summative:

- Students should have 2-3 final pieces to score not including the post assessment.
- Published pieces
- Score grammar and spelling in final drafts only
- Student portfolios
- During publishing students read their piece to assess oral speaking and reading skills
- Rubrics: created for the standards-based report card as well as teacher-created.

- Standards should be addressed as reported on the Standards-Based Report Card and should reflect this work

Benchmark:

- Benchmark writing assessments: opinion, narrative, and informational, scored using rubrics, district-created and provided.
- Located in the shared Grades K-5 Language Arts folder on the Google Drive, reported three times per year

Learning Plan

Our upper elementary writing instruction follows a balanced literacy approach including a number of strategies and techniques in Writing Workshop. These include mini-lessons, shared writing, independent writing, small group strategy instruction, one-to-one conferencing, partnerships and/or writing clubs. Writing Workshop emphasizes immersion, independence, and choice. Individual conferences with each student will address specific needs of the writer. Each unit ends with a celebration of learning where children share their writing with others in the school community.

To assist students in reaching the goals for this unit, teachers will guide them through the following steps:

- Immersing students to study the purpose, structure, and characteristics of writing while generating possible writing ideas
- Choosing topics by considering focused areas of expertise
- Organizing information and writing pieces
- Elaborating to increase writing volume and to add a variety of detail
- Revising and editing to prepare for publishing

Through mentor text, students will be immersed in text type in order to recognize text features and structures of the particular type of writing. It is suggested that students form writing partnerships with the goal of collaborating and supporting each other throughout the writing process. Grammar and conventions mini lessons will be taught throughout this unit during Sentence Study.

Lessons should follow the mini-lesson format:

- Teaching point(s) for each lesson
- Connection: Connects new learning to previous learning/lessons
- Teach/Modeling: Uses ‘think alouds’ when modeling what you expect students to do
- Guided Practice/Active Engagement: Guides students through practice of the teaching point
- Link to Independent Practice: Helps writers understand the purpose for the writing they are about to do and the skills/craft they will be practicing/applying independently as good writers
- Independent Writing/Student Conferences: Provides time for students to do independent writing while teacher confers with individual students, works with small groups, or writing clubs.
- Closure/Sharing: Pull students back together and recognize the work they have done relating to the teaching point.

The architecture of a writing conference includes:

- Research
- Decide
- Teach and Coach with guided practice
- Link

Mentor sentence study will be taught across the week to teach syntax, dictation, grammar, and punctuation.

Students will learn how to write like an author by mimicking specific sentence patterns and applying it to their own writing. Please refer to this link in the K-5 folder for specific lessons and materials.

Teachers may personalize instruction during this unit and address the distinct learning needs, interests, aspirations, or cultural backgrounds of individual students.

Before Beginning This Unit . . .

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Bend I – Living as Journalists

- Match students with writing partners.
- Ensure each student has a writer's notebook and/or access to a digital device.
- Prepare reporter badges with names and pictures (template available in online resources).
- Provide small reporter notebooks for students to use during observations and interviews.

Bend II – Becoming Beat Reporters

- Form beat teams (recommended 4 students per team) based on applications submitted in Bend I, Session 8.
- Use stickers or labels on reporter badges to indicate beat team assignments.
- Prepare center materials for idea generation, interviewing, and grammar/language practice; decide whether to provide paper, digital, or audio formats.
- Provide mentor news articles for students to study.

Bend III – Crafting a Class Magazine

- Provide starter research texts for each magazine subtopic, either print or digital.
- Ensure students have access to tools to collect and organize research, quotes, and visuals.

Ongoing Materials & Practices

- Students maintain a writing toolkit with copies of class charts, mentor texts, and pages they've created.
- Encourage students to use their toolkit regularly for drafting, revising, and self-assessment.
- Teachers maintain their own toolkit as a model for students.

Detailed Curriculum Map

Teaching Points and lessons are located in the K-5 folder under Grade 5 Curriculum for Language Arts. These curriculum unit guides include not only aligned teaching points to standards, but also specific lessons and appropriate resources. Guidelines for preparing to teach the unit as well as goals for the end of the unit are outlined. Academic vocabulary and prerequisite skills are identified. Essential questions and possible assessments are detailed as well.

Materials

The materials used in this course allow for integration of a variety of instructional, enrichment, and intervention materials that support student learners at all levels in the school and home environments. Associated web content and media sources are infused into the unit as applicable and available.

Instructional Materials

The core materials for this unit include the Units of Study in Writing for grade 5, The Reading and Writing Project at Mossflower, 2026.

The instructional materials which correspond with this unit are linked in the detailed curriculum map under resources and housed in the Grades K-5 folder under grade 5.

Please refer to this folder for specific materials for Sentence Study.

Teacher Resources

- Fountas and Pinnell Classroom Materials: Minilesson book, Guided Reading, Interactive Reading
- Online Anchor charts and resources available through Heinemann
- Use resource CD for rubrics, student samples, and charts.
- *The Writing Strategies Book*, Jennifer Serravallo
- *Feedback that Moves Writers Forward,* Patty McGee
- Mentor Sentences Grades 3-5 Volume 2: Unit 1.

- Patterns of Power: Inviting Young Writers Conventions of Language Grades 1-5 by Jeff Anderson
- The Continuum of Literacy Learning by Guy Su Pinnell & Irene C. Fountas
- The Common Core Writing Book by Gretchen Owocki
- Projecting Possibilities for Writers: The How, What & Why of Designing Units of Study by Matt Glover & Mary Alice Berry
- Ruth Culham's The Writing Thief
- Georgia Heard's Finding the Heart of Nonfiction: Teaching 7 Essential Craft Tools with Mentor Texts
- Everyday Editing by Jeff Anderson
- For All Parts of the Writing Process, including tools for intervention and ways to publish, see The Good Writer's Guide by Gretchen Bernabei
- Cranford Public School Grades K-5 Google Folder for instructional materials

Suggested Strategies for Modification/Accommodations

Content specific accommodations and modifications as well as Career Ready Practices are listed here for all students, including: Special Education, English Language Learners, At Risk of School Failure, Gifted and Talented, Students with 504.

The structure of writing workshop is designed to differentiate and address specific goals and learning for each reader:

- The unit includes presentation of material through multiple modalities such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic to address the unique learning styles of all students.
- The teacher will assign, assess and modify if necessary to address the specific needs of the learner.
- Students have individualized choice of topics within each unit.
- Individual conferences with each student will address specific needs of the writer.

Possible accommodations during writing workshop include, but are not limited to:

- Use visual presentations of all materials to include organizers, charts, word walls.
- Allow students to set individual goals for writing.
- Work in partnerships
- Give responses in a form (verbal or written) that is easier for the student
- Take additional time to compete a task or project
- Take frequent breaks
- Use an alarm to help with time management
- Mark text with a highlighter or other manipulative such as a post-it
- Receive help coordinating assignments
- Answering fewer questions or completing shorter tasks
- Create alternate assignments or homework
- Provide distinct steps in a process; eliminate unnecessary steps, as needed.
- Manage executive function by scaffolding process and amending deadlines
- Access speech-to-text function on computer

Possible modifications to content during writing workshop include, but are not limited to:

- Refer to the Strategies for Striving Students in the K-8 folder for specific appropriate interventions.
- Adhere to all modifications and accommodations as prescribed in IEP and 504 plan
- Refer to Pathways to Intervention documents in the K-5 folder for specific appropriate interventions.
- Consult with Cranford Problem Solving Team (CPST), as needed.

Framework for Alternative Setting (LEAP Program at Lincoln School)

In our K–5 alternative school setting, each class consists of students who require a highly personalized approach to reading instruction. The district's core Writing Units of Study will continue to serve as the primary writing curriculum framework; however, lessons will be further adapted to ensure accessibility and engagement for all learners. Teachers will use a combination of pacing adjustments, flexible timing, and individualized goal setting to meet students at their current skill levels. Instruction will be delivered through a blend of whole-group, small-group, and one-on-one settings, with intentional scaffolds in place to build confidence and reduce frustration.

To adapt any writing unit for an alternative school serving students with school avoidance, anxiety, behavior challenges, and social constraints, teachers should employ flexible, supportive modifications while aligning with grade-level writing standards (focusing on organization, elaboration, and mechanics) and speaking/listening standards (focusing on collaborative discussions).

- Timing Adjustments: Extend the pacing of instructional blocks or bends (e.g., extending a typical 2-week drafting phase to 3 weeks) with shorter daily writing sessions (20–30 minutes). Incorporate calming transitions or choice-based entry activities to ease transition anxiety.
- Activity Modifications: During the initial brainstorming and topic-generation phase, use sensory-friendly methods like drawing, sketching, or voice recording instead of demanding whole-group sharing. During structural planning, provide pre-made graphic organizers tailored to the specific genre's layout (e.g., chronological, narrative plot maps, or thesis-and-reason structures) and allow low-stakes, paired verbal rehearsals to build confidence. For the revision phase, incorporate supportive one-on-one teacher conferring for feedback, replacing peer review sessions with optional self-reflection journals. Simplify checklists and rubrics with visual icons, and offer flexible writing alternatives like dictated drafts or digital speech-to-text tools for students with severe writing aversion.
- Intervention Programs: Integrate comprehension-focused frameworks (such as Visualizing and Verbalizing) to unpack exemplar texts, structured foundations programs (like UFLI) for keyword jotting and sentence-level drafting, and systematic phonics/morphology programs (like Sonday System) during conventions exploration (e.g., mechanics, grammar, and parts of speech).
- NJTSS Framework: Implement Tier 1 universal supports, such as explicit modeling of introductions, transitions, and conclusions with visual aids; Tier 2 targeted small-group interventions for elaboration and planning, tracked via regular anecdotal notes; and Tier 3 intensive individualized sessions for goal-setting and revision, prioritizing emotional safety and student agency.
- Data Analysis: Leverage formative assessments (e.g., conferring notes, on-demand writing samples) and summative pre/post benchmarks to personalize pacing, ensuring students produce structured, cohesive compositions in a nurturing environment that celebrates writing progress through low-pressure, voluntary sharing.