

Unit 2: Writing to Inform and Explain

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Marking Period 1**
Length: **4-5 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Brief Summary of Unit

Summary: Students will understand the value of writing to inform and explain in clear, accurate language that highlights real-world insights. Informing and explaining reinforces how something works, develops, or occurs. Clarity of word choice as well as the use of transitional words and phrases will be paramount in this unit. As such, students will engage in reading about writing techniques in addition to reading sample, mentor text essays from a variety of sources in order to gain a thorough understanding of audience, purpose, and tone. Students will closely analyze the use and structure of language to determine what constitutes effective writing while demonstrating command of standard English grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation in composing a variety of responses to both creative and practical, real-world writing prompts. In order to share critical interpretations of strong writing and to offer feedback to their peers, students will actively engage in whole class discussions, small group conversations, as well as teacher-student conferences as they allow for an enhanced understanding of different perspectives on writing.

Interdisciplinary Connections and Career Readiness: 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. When completing this course, students can make informed choices and pursue electives that further their study and contribute toward the formation of career interest.

Revision: June 2023

Standards

LA.L.11-12.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
LA.L.11-12.2.A	Observe hyphenation conventions.
LA.L.11-12.2.B	Spell correctly.
LA.L.11-12.3	Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.
LA.W.11-12.2.A	Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new

element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

- LA.W.11-12.2.B Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.
- LA.W.11-12.2.C Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.
- LA.W.11-12.2.D Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic.
- LA.W.11-12.2.E Establish and maintain a style and tone appropriate to the audience and purpose (e.g., formal and objective for academic writing) while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
- LA.W.11-12.2.F Provide a concluding paragraph or section that supports the argument presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).
- LA.W.11-12.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)
- LA.W.11-12.5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, trying a new approach, or consulting a style manual (such as MLA or APA Style), focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.
- LA.W.11-12.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, share, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.
- LA.W.11-12.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- LA.W.11-12.8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation. (MLA or APA Style Manuals).
- LA.W.11-12.10 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 tasks, purposes.
- LA.RI.11-12.1 Accurately cite strong and thorough textual evidence, (e.g., via discussion, written response, etc.), to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferentially, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- LA.RI.11-12.2 Determine two or more central ideas of a text, and analyze their development and how they interact to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.
- LA.RI.11-12.3 Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.
- LA.RI.11-12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).
- LA.RI.11-12.5 Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.
- LA.RI.11-12.6 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is

particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.

LA.RI.11-12.10b

By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at grade level text-complexity or above.

LA.SL.11-12.1.B

Collaborate with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and assessments (e.g., student developed rubrics), and establish individual roles as needed.

LA.SL.11-12.1.C

Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

LA.SL.11-12.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

Essential Questions

- How do transitional statements and details enhance an essay of explanation?
- How does explanatory writing serve different purposes?
- How does mentor text study enhance understanding of informative and explanatory writing?
- How does mentor text study enhance understanding of this type of writing?
- How does one properly convey connections and cause-effect relationships in writing?
- How does one properly structure a step-by-step, how-to or process explanation?
- What is the value of revising and editing in enhancing informative and explanatory writing?
- What real world purposes does informative and explanatory writing serve?

Essential Understandings

- Mentor texts serve as models for effective writing
- Students need to understand the importance of exactness and attention to detail via clear diction and syntax
- There are extensive uses for informative and explanatory writing in real world scenarios.
- Utilizing the stages of the writing process will allow for development of clear observations, connections, and relationships through writing
- Write informative/explanatory text to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Students Will Know

- How to develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.
- How to draw evidence from other informational texts to support one's explanations.
- How to produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are

appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

- How to select a topic of interest, develop details to explain a concept or observation, and enhance one's writing with research, as needed.
- How to use different types of transitional expressions to create coherent flow in an essay of explanation.
- The value of free-writing and idea invention as it aids in the stages of the writing process.

Students Will Be Skilled At

- Developing a process essay that explains a topic of the student's choice.
- Participating in discussion groups and editing sessions with their peers.
- Progressing through all of the stages of the writing process to ensure proper development and explanation of ideas.
- Scrutinizing mentor texts for strategies that enhance clarity of writing.
- Using technology to develop, share, and publish real-world writing samples.

Evidence/Performance Tasks

Developmental progression across years in both reading and writing is evidenced by multiple benchmark assessment screeners, administered two 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.

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.

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:

- Teacher Observations
- Accountable Talk, Socratic Seminars/Fish Bowls
- Analysis of multimodal text sets
- Analysis of critical commentary, literary criticism
- Writers Notebook (quick writes/drafts/prewrites), emphasizing author's craft
- Close reading analysis of text using evidence as substantiation
- Conferences: Individual and small group, accompanying conference notes
- Reflective exercises and assessments
- Oral Reading and Interpretation
- Peer and self-evaluations of learning

- Entrance and Exit Tickets
- Open-Ended Responses in Journal
- Textual Analysis Reading Responses
- Dialectical Journal
- Rhetorical Precis
- SOAPSTone Analysis

Summative, including Alternative Assessments:

- On-demand Writing Assessments, timed and untimed
- Researched Presentations
- Performance Assessments
- Project-based Learning
- Problem-based Learning
- Personalized Learning
- Visual Literacy Prompts
- Digital Portfolios
- Online Discussion Forums
- Analytical and Expository Essay

Benchmark:

- Benchmark reading and writing assessments, scored using rubrics, district-created and standards-aligned; based on NJSLA, reported twice per year
 - Engage in text set analysis using visual literacy and close reading analysis strategies to compose a claim and use evidence as support
 - Grade-level Standards-based Rubrics
 - SAT (grades 11-12)
 - Final Exam
 - IXL
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- Answer the essential questions through collaborative discussion and teacher-student conferences.
 - Brainstorm, outline, compose, edit, and revise essays.
 - Examine strategies used by writers to frame arguments.
 - Formulate a thesis statement.
 - Peer edit and offer feedback on essays of explanation.
 - Write an essay developing a process explanation that utilizes steps and/or patterns and relationships.

Learning Plan

Taught using a Writing Workshop approach, this unit of study will move through the development and publication of a work or multiple works of writing (while study mentor texts relevant to a specific genre of study or rhetorical mode). Strategies and techniques in Writing Workshop 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. Various forms of writing including digital writing are emphasized as well. Grammar instruction is embedded in writing instruction through mini-lessons, holding students accountable for skills taught and practiced; modelling is done through mentor texts, both

published and student-crafted. Teachers focus on process in addition to product with an emphasis on synthesizing texts with nuanced understanding; teacher-created multi-modal text sets may be used as materials. High-and low-stakes, timed and untimed pieces are all important. Each unit ends with a celebration of learning where writers share their work with others in the school community.

Lessons may 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 teacher will confer and offer feedback throughout the writing process. The architecture of a writing conference includes:

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

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

Suggested Lessons:

- Introduce real world inform and explain writing through a discussion of purpose (focus on organization and clarity of expression), methods (vehicle to convey information), and audience (degree of knowledge about topic being explained)
- Identify various methods used to inform and explain including (but not limited to): definition, classification, process (directive process/explanatory process), comparison and contrast, and cause and effect
- Explore personal, free choice, concise, and specific expository writing following the reading and discussion of a literary excerpt from S. Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*: write and then orally present "The Unofficial and Unwritten Rules..." that define/explain one's experience as a part of a group in a particular setting
- Read and discuss a variety of additional expository mentor texts, noting rhetorical strategies and

techniques that the authors employ to enhance the information they impart. Selections may include (but are not limited to): J. Brady ("I Want a Wife"), W. Mosley ("Show Me the Money"), L. Eighner ("Dumpster Diving"), N. Mairs ("Disability"), and S. Pinker ("Mind Over Mass Media")

- Analyze organizational formats in expository writing; delineate the difference between the subject-by-subject and point-by-point comparison formats as well as the importance of sequencing and chronology in cause and effect writing
- Utilize expository writing techniques and strategies to develop an essay of definition/classification (Define what self-confidence means to you, define the importance or value of something you own in relation to other valuables), process (Select an area of expertise and explain how to do something in depth-comment on how knowing this skill may teach you an important lesson or serve an important purpose in life), comparison and contrast (Compare the impact two forms of music, two artists/bands, or songs have on you emotionally, psychologically, or spiritually), or cause and effect (What has caused a certain concern to evolve in your community? Explain the causes as well as the effects)
- Students select rhetorical strategies highlighted in the mentor texts to incorporate in their original writing
- Engage in personal brainstorming/invention activities that include free writes, drawing, written notes, online research
- Select a topic and target audience. Then, develop a focused thesis that highlights the essay's purpose and method
- Using Chromebooks, laptops, or personal devices, draft an essay of 500-800 words
- Review the value/purpose and use of transitional expressions in writing to encourage logical development of ideas
- Conference with peers and instructor for the purpose of editing and revision
- Engage in individual editing and revision
- Optional sharing and submission of final draft

Materials

The materials used in this course integrate a variety of leveled 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.

Teachers must refer to the district-approved [Core Book List](#) while selecting whole-class or small-group leveled resources.

- 642 Tiny Things to Write About by San Francisco Writer's Grotto
- Bowman's It's Complicated: The American Teenager
- Easy Writer by Lunsford
- Gallagher's Write Like This
- Grammar Girl quickanddirtytips.com
- Library media databases including Facts on File, EBSCO, and Points of View.

- Library print resources.
- Marchetti and O'Dell's Writing with Mentors
- MLA Handbook.
- Models for Writers by Rosa and Eschholz
- The St. Martin's Guide to Writing.
- The Writer's Resource Ed. by Day and McMahan
- Time Magazine
- Writers Inc.
- www.npr.org
- www.nytimes.com
- www.theatlantic.com
- www.thedailybeast.com
- www.youtube.com

Suggested Strategies for Accommodation and Modification

[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.

Possible accommodations include:

- Access speech-to-text function on computer
- Use visual presentations of all materials to include organizers, charts
- Allow students to set individual goals for writing/reading
- Offer graphic organizers, note-taking models, strategies for summarizing, and questioning techniques
- Offer oral assessments
- Supply study guide questions and access to class notes
- Work in partnerships
- Give responses in a form (verbal or written) that is more accessible for the student
- Take additional time to complete a task or project
- Scaffold by chunking material and texts
- Individualize reading choices based on ability and level
- Take frequent breaks
- Use an alarm to help with time management
- Small group and one on one assessment
- Mark text with a highlighter or other manipulative such as a post-it
- Receive help coordinating assignments
- Answering fewer questions or completing shorter tasks
- Modify the length and quantity of assignments to fit individual
- Differentiate roles in discussion groups
- Use digital technology, eBooks,, audio version of printed text
- Create alternate assignments or homework

- Provide distinct steps in a process; eliminate unnecessary steps, as needed
- Use art, music, and film to convey alternate interpretation of literature and assessment
- Manage executive function by scaffolding process and amending deadlines
- Encourage students to self-advocate and use alternate methods of presenting information
- Encourage the use of asynchronous learning to promote student autonomy and flexibility throughout the analysis and writing process.

Adhere to all modifications and accommodations as prescribed in IEP and 504 plan