Unit 4 Writing: Investigative Journalism: Writing Articles, Feature Stories, News Reporting

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Trimester 2**
Length: **6 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Brief Summary of Unit

Students will compare and contrast investigative journalism pieces with the more-familiar “news report” and discover the purpose and implications of investigative journalism. They will analyze the craft used in creating powerful pieces of investigative journalism and write their own investigative pieces based on their analyses and observations from the paired reading unit.

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. In this course, students are provided with opportunities to develop skills that pertain to a variety of careers.

Revision date: July 2023

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

New Jersey Diversity and Inclusion Law

In accordance with New Jersey’s Chapter 32 Diversity and Inclusion Law, this unit includes instructional materials that highlight and promote diversity, including belonging in connection with race and ethnicity, and religious tolerance.

Commission on Holocaust Education

This unit further reflects the goals of the Holocaust Education mandate where students are able to identify and analyze applicable theories concerning human nature and behavior; understand that genocide is a consequence of prejudice and discrimination; understand that issues of moral dilemma and conscience have a profound impact on life; and understand the personal responsibility that each citizen bears to fight racism and hatred

whenever and wherever it happens.

Information Literacy

This unit challenges students to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively. Information literacy includes, but is not limited to, digital, visual, media, textual, and technological literacy. Lessons may include the research process and how information is created and produced; critical thinking and using information resources; research methods; the difference between facts, points of view, and opinions, accessing peer-reviewed print and digital library resources; the economic, legal, social, and ethical issues surrounding the use of information.

LA.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.
LA.W.8.2.A	Introduce a topic and organize ideas, concepts, and information, using text structures (e.g., definition, classification, comparison/contrast, cause/effect, etc.) and text features (e.g., headings, graphics, and multimedia).
LA.W.8.2.B	Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
LA.W.8.2.C	Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
LA.W.8.2.D	Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
LA.W.8.2.E	Establish and maintain a formal style/academic style, approach, and form.
LA.W.8.2.F	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.
LA.W.8.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, voice and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)
LA.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.
LA.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.
LA.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.
LA.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.
LA.W.8.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
LA.W.8.10	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.8.1.D	Acknowledge new information expressed by others, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views in light of the evidence presented.

LA.SL.8.2	Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.
LA.L.8.1.A	Explain the function of verbals (gerunds, participles, infinitives) in general and their function in particular sentences.
LA.L.8.1.B	Form and use verbs in the active and passive voice.
LA.L.8.1.C	Form and use verbs in the indicative, imperative, interrogative, conditional, and subjunctive mood.
LA.L.8.1.D	Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb voice and mood.
LA.L.8.2.A	Use punctuation (comma, ellipsis, dash) to indicate a pause or break.
LA.L.8.2.C	Spell correctly.

Essential Questions

- How do journalists indicate their biases in writing?
- How do writers express their claims implicitly and explicitly?
- How does writing investigative journalism differ from hard news?
- What kinds of stylistic techniques are effective in captivating a reader when writing nonfiction?
- What makes an idea or event “newsworthy”?
- Where and how do writers collect ideas?
- Why is there a need for investigative journalism?

Students Will Know/Be Skilled At

- Analyzing an investigative piece for author bias
- Analyzing, comparing, and contrasting the structure of news articles and pieces of investigative journalism
- Applying the appropriate technical vocabulary when discussing journalistic pieces
- Building on their passion for an issue to craft well-organized and persuasive editorials
- Calling on previous learning of narrative writing to craft deliberate attention to issues and moments of social significance.
- Honing their nonfiction writing craft to convey meaning in the social issues of school
- Identifying and including various text features associated with news articles
- Identifying narrative elements used in a piece of investigative journalism
- Reporting real stories, writing about social issues, and conducting investigative reporting and research on issues
- Using passive and active voice appropriately in journalistic reporting

Evidence/Performance Tasks

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.

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:

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

Summative including Alternative Assessments:

- Students should have 1-2 final pieces.
- Published pieces
- Score grammar and spelling in final drafts only
- Student portfolios
- Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Learning Progressions
- Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Rubrics and Student Samples
- Rubrics: created for the standards-based report card as well as teacher-created.
- On-demand Writing Assessments
- Standards should be addressed
- Students craft their own piece of "investigative journalism" (or provide new examples)
- Students will create a presentation in some format (poster, Prezi, podcast, etc.) to showcase all of the above and will deliver presentation to their peers
- Student will publish stories for the school newspaper

Benchmark Assessments:

- Benchmark reading and writing assessments, scored using rubrics, district-created and standards-aligned; based on NJSLA, reported twice per year
- Grade-level Standards-based Rubrics
- Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System, grades 3-8, Levels L-Z, Heinemann (part 3, Writing about Reading section)
- New Jersey Student Learning Assessment (NJSLA)

Learning Plan

Middle School 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 writers share their work with others in the school community.

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

Throughout the year, students write in all modes of rhetoric including narration/description, argument/persuasion, and exposition. A variety of writing forms, including digital writing, are emphasized. Grammar lessons are embedded in writing instruction, holding students accountable for skills taught and practiced; modeling is done through published and student-crafted mentor texts. Teachers focus equally on process and product with an emphasis on synthesizing across texts for nuanced understandings; teacher-

created multi-modal text sets will be used as materials. High-and low-stakes writing and timed and untimed assignments will be used throughout the unit.

Sentence study teaches syntax, diction, 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 see this grade level folder for details.

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

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.

For additional materials, please see this folder in the Middle School ELA folder, grade 8.

Instructional Materials

- “Emergency Declaration Ends in Flint Water Crisis” (article by Associated Press)
- "Fossil CSI: Cracking the case of the ancient reptile graveyard" by Shortwave
- “High School Journalists Land a Scoop, and the Principal Resigns” (article from the New York Times, April 5, 2017)
- “Poison in the Water” (article by Bryan Brown from Upfront Magazine)
- Excerpts from NYT's article on Elizabeth Holmes
- Excerpts from The Cut's article on Elizabeth Holmes
- Excerpts from Vanity Fair's article on Elizabeth Holmes
- http://pix11.com/2016/05/16/lawmakers-pressure-port-authority-to-cut-back-on-pollution/ (link to online article “Lawmakers Pressure Port Authority to Cut Back on Pollution” from May 16, 2016)
- https://issuu.com/emilysmith41/docs/march_17 (link to online article “District Hires New Principal”)

- Mentor Texts: What the Dog Saw by Malcolm Gladwell and Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul
- Reveal Podcast's "School Haze" episode (https://www.revealnews.org/episodes Feb 18, 2017) *use search bar to find "School haze" episode

Teacher Resources

- High Five: The Integrated Language Arts and Journalism Curriculum for Middle School Students, Presented by the Newspaper Association of America.
- http://projects.propublica.org/muckreads/
- http://www.brandeis.edu/investigate/
- http://www.pulitzer.org/prize-winners-by-category/206 -- Pulitzer Prize Winning Investigative Reports
- https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/
- Investigative Journalism by Lucy Calkins, Mary Ehrenworth, and Cornelius Minor
- Newsela
- Reading Nonfiction by Beers and Probst
- Reveal Podcast: https://www.revealnews.org
- Scope Magazine
- ThinkCerca: http://www.thinkcerca.com
- Thinking Through Genre
- Write Like This by Kelly Gallagher
- Writing Pathways: Performance Assessments and Learning Progressions, Grades 6-8

Suggested Strategies for Accommodations and Modifications

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 writer:

- 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.
- Instruction provides focused small-group strategy lessons.
- Individual conferences with each student will address specific needs of the writer.

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

- Access speech-to-text function on computer
- Use visual presentations of all materials to include organizers, charts, word walls.

- Allow students to set individual goals for writing.
- Offer graphic organizaers, note-taking models, strategies for summarizing, and questioning techniques.
- Offer oral assessments
- 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
- Scaffold by chunking material and texts.
- 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
- Modify the length and quantity of assignments to fit individual
- Use digital technology, eBooks, audio version of printed text
- Create alternate assignments or homework
- Provide distinct steps in a process; elminate unnecessary steps, as needed.
- Manage executive function by scaffolding process and amending deadlines

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