Unit 2 Writing: Personal Essay

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Marking Period 1**
Length: **3-4 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Brief Summary of Unit

Students will write a personal essay that is focused on a purpose, communicates with an audience, has evidence of choice and/or suitable tone, shows depth of idea development supported by elaborated, relevant details, has logical, coherent organization, has controlled and varied sentence structure, employs acceptable, effective language, and has few errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization relative to length and complexity.

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.

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Pacing Guide

Please refer to this Language Arts Reading and Writing Workshop Pacing Guide for grade 8 Advanced.

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.

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.8.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.
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.8.10	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.

Essential Questions

- How can I engage an audience to read a chapter of my life or too see life through my perspective?
- How do rules of language affect communication?
- How do writers develop a well-written product?
- What experiences have shaped you into the person you are today?

Enduring Understandings

- Even the smallest moment in time can be captured to tell a story.
- Storytelling is an effective strategy over summarizing for writing personal essays
- Writers deliberately choose text structures to craft their personal narrative.
- Writers establish a writer’s notebook
- Writers use a variety of strategies to elaborate and enhance their work.
- Writers write with volume and stamina

Students Will Know

- How to add, delete, or change writing to improve organization and support, sharpen focus, achieve clarity, and refine language and sentences.
- How to choose language appropriate to audience and purpose.
- How to discuss the writing with teacher and others and use their questions, comments, and suggestions to aid revision and editing.
- How to focus on relating the significance of the central topic on the writer’s life.
- How to identify audience and purpose.
- How to use an individual voice appropriate to the topic.
- How to use dialogue and sensory details effectively when appropriate.
- How to use prewriting strategies e.g. brainstorm, visualize, draw, free-write, web, cluster, and other

graphic aids.

- How to use transitions between ideas

Students Will Be Skilled At

- Crafting leads and conclusions
- Elaboration
- Finding ways to collect and develop ideas
- Incorporating narrative elements
- Noticing the qualities of a personal essay
- Synthesizing events and moments
- Transitioning
- Writing with Reflection and Purpose

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:

- 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 will include personal essay or essays in an anthology or a class anthology
- **Authentic Audience:** Students may enter their personal essay in various writing competitions (Ex. VFW-sponsored Patriot's Pen)
- Students will orally present their personal essays to teacher/classmates. recite personal presentation in some format (poster, Prezi, etc.) to showcase all of the above and will deliver presentation to their peers

- **Select pieces can be showcased at the annual Union County Teen Arts Festival.

Benchmark:

- 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

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. 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.