Unit 1: Writing for Media, Digital news, and Reporting

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 learn to research and write in various journalistic styles, understand the responsibilities of different journalism roles, develop skills for accuracy and timeliness, and explore the impact of digital media on news dissemination. Students will evaluate other newspapers to understand diverse reporting styles, editorial standards, and the presentation of news. This analysis will help them identify effective storytelling techniques, recognize biases, and assess the credibility of sources.

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: July 2024

Standards

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, including the difference between primary and secondary sources; 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.

The identified standards reflect a developmental progression across grade 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.RI.11-12.9	Analyze and reflect on (e.g., practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) documents of historical and literary significance for their themes, purposes and rhetorical features, including primary source documents relevant to U.S.

	and/or global history.
LA.W.11-12.1.A	Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
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.11-12.3.C	Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g., a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution).
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.11-12.9.B	Apply grades 11–12 Reading standards to literary nonfiction (e.g., "Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning [e.g., in U.S. Supreme Court Case majority opinions and dissents] and the premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy [e.g., The Federalist, presidential addresses]").
LA.SL.11-12.5	Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.
LA.L.11-12.3.A	Vary syntax for effect, apply an understanding of syntax to the study of complex texts.
LA.11-12.CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.RL.7	Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
LA.11-12.CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.RL.9	Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.
CRP.K-12.CRP2	Apply appropriate academic and technical skills.
CRP.K-12.CRP4	Communicate clearly and effectively and with reason.
CRP.K-12.CRP6	Demonstrate creativity and innovation.
TECH.8.1.2.B.1	Illustrate and communicate original ideas and stories using multiple digital tools and resources.
TECH.8.1.12.A.1	Create a personal digital portfolio which reflects personal and academic interests, achievements, and career aspirations by using a variety of digital tools and resources.

Essential Questions

- ● How does media influence public opinion, and how can journalists navigate this power responsibly?
- ● What are the ethical responsibilities of a journalist in the digital age?
- ● How do the different roles within the field of journalism work together to create and deliver accurate, engaging, and ethical news in both traditional and digital formats?
- ● What impact has journalism had on shaping historical events and public perceptions throughout different periods of history?
- ● What skills are essential for journalists to thrive in today's fast-paced, digital news environment?
- ● What techniques do journalists use to write clear, concise, and compelling news stories?

Students Will Know

- ● How digital media has transformed news dissemination and audience engagement.
- ● The responsibilities and functions of different journalism roles, such as reporters, editors, photojournalists, broadcasters, and digital media specialists.

Students Will Be Skilled At

- ● Analyzing mentor texts to determine techniques used to achieve stated or implied purpose
- ● Evaluating and revising personal work based on feedback
- ● Using web-based platforms to write and enhance communication of ideas.
- ● Analyzing and evaluating the content, style, and credibility of diverse newspapers and news sources.
- ● Researching and writing in different journalistic styles, adapting their tone and structure for various media platforms.
- ● Utilizing digital tools and platforms to effectively communicate news and engage with audiences.

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, newspapers, and digital texts
- 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
- Common Lit Reading Benchmark Assessments, three times per year (grades 9-11)
- Advanced Placement tests (grades 11-12)
- NJGPA (grade 11)
- PSAT (grades 10-11)
- SAT (grades 11-12)
- Final Exam
- IXL

- Develop a portfolio of mentor articles that match students' intended purpose (e.g. Student who plans to write a sports blog might collect example of model sports article and annotate according to strengths and weaknesses)
- Score websites according to a set of criteria developed as a class, including, but not limited to, readability, visual appeal, organization, responsible attribution of sources.
- Write articles for the school paper that incorporates qualities of models. Weekly posts should include links to outside sources and images, for example.

Learning Plan

Instructional time will be dedicated to whole class text instruction, collaborative learning, and independent and personalized learning. The intent is for student-readers to have clear modelling through whole-class instruction. These strategies are practiced in a group setting of peers and through independent practice monitored through teacher conferencing with students. An emphasis will be based on the transfer of skills instruction, teaching the reader, not merely the content of the text. The text complexity and rigor of reading will be appropriate for grade 9-12.

The reading of text during this class targets not only comprehension, but also analysis. Students may read both long-and short-form, exceprted and full-length, print and electronic, fiction and nonfiction texts. Study will include the analysis of visual texts including film clips, art, infographic, maps, charts, graphs, cartoons, graphic novel. Technique and terminology specific to a genre of reading is examined. Research tasks are embedded throughout the year and a minimum of one task is completed during each unit. Vocabulary instruction will be chosen from the reading material.

Students write in all modes of rhetoric including narration/description, argument/persuasion, and exposition. 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 will be used as materials. High-and low-stakes, timed and untimed pieces are all important.

Students will be taught how to speak and listen in addition to being assessed on these skills.

1. History of journalism; what the future of journalism might look like.

- Printed journalism predates the American Revolution, while popular media rose during the early 1900s with newspapers and radio before TV became dominant in the 1950s–this allowed for average citizens to have the news right in the comfort of their homes. The turn of the century saw the rise of new journalism with the internet. The internet changed how journalists and media outlets operated – and offered an opportunity for all the consume media 24/7.

- The traditional ideal of journalism was for reporters to serve as independent sources, attempting to deliver

the news in a fact-based, objective manner. While this tradition remains intact in some news avenues, increased access to technologies has led to the proliferation of citizen and activist journalists who openly have a bias or point of view, but still attempt to promote that perspective through a lens that includes fair framing, editing, and reporting. Some also take advantage of these technologies to advance propaganda under the guise of news. In addition, the internet has allowed for all of us to become authors: Anyone can create a blog and put an opinion out into the world, where it can go viral without any fact-checking or editing. Journalists in the digital age must operate in a world where the news cycle moves faster. As a result, striking a balance between timely and in-depth reporting is often more difficult.

a. Students will write in many journalistic and media-based styles, including but not limited to local history, school-based news, fashion, op-eds, sports, and more.

    i. For local history, students might research and write about significant events or notable figures in Cranford's past, honing their investigative and narrative skills.

    ii. In school-based news, they will report on current events and issues relevant to peers, learning the importance of accuracy and timeliness.

    iii. Fashion journalism will allow them to explore trends, interview designers, and critique styles, developing a keen eye for detail and cultural relevance.

    iv. Op-eds will challenge students to express and support their opinions on various topics, teaching them how to construct persuasive arguments and engage readers thoughtfully.

    v. Sports journalism will involve covering games, profiling athletes, and analyzing performance, requiring quick, accurate reporting and a deep understanding of the subject matter.

    vi. By writing across these varied styles, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of the different facets of journalism, developing versatility and adaptability as writers. This exposure will not only enhance their writing skills but also provide insight into the broader media landscape, preparing them for potential careers in journalism and related fields.

b. Students will examine the various roles that make up the field of journalism, gaining a comprehensive understanding of each function's responsibilities and contributions. They will explore positions such as reporters, editors, photojournalists, and broadcasters, as well as emerging roles in digital and social media journalism.

    i. Reporters: Students will learn about the responsibilities of reporters, including gathering information, conducting interviews, and writing articles. They will practice developing story ideas, researching facts, and adhering to ethical standards to ensure accurate and fair reporting.

    ii. Editors: The role of editors will be examined, focusing on tasks such as reviewing and refining reporters' work, ensuring factual accuracy, and maintaining the publication's style and tone. Students will gain experience in editing for clarity, coherence, and impact, learning the importance of editorial judgment.

    iii. Photojournalists: Students will explore the visual storytelling aspect of journalism, understanding how photojournalists capture images that complement and enhance written stories. They will study techniques for taking compelling photographs and the ethical considerations of photojournalism.

iv. Broadcasters: The course will cover the role of broadcasters, including the preparation and delivery of news on television and radio. Students will practice skills such as scripting, voice modulation, and on-camera presence, learning to present information clearly and engagingly.

v. Digital and Social Media Journalists: With the rise of digital media, students will examine how journalists utilize online platforms and social media to disseminate news and engage with audiences. They will explore strategies for creating multimedia content, understanding analytics, and maintaining journalistic integrity in the digital age.

c. Students will examine other newspapers including local, school, and world. They will evaluate other newspapers to understand diverse reporting styles, editorial standards, and the presentation of news. This analysis will help them identify effective storytelling techniques, recognize biases, and assess the credibility of sources.

i. Lehigh University - The Brown and White

ii. Union College

iii. Scotch Plains High School

iv. Westfield High School

- Analyze articles to determine purpose, and critically analyze how intended purpose is achieved
- Critique and comment consistently on peer blogs
- Curate a portfolio of model blogs to use as mentor texts in a Google Doc
- Design and maintain an ongoing blog about a topic of student interest and choice using platforms such as Wordpress, Weebly, or Google Sites. Include audio, image, and video features in personal blog
- Evaluate the elements of an author's craft in a website (including, but not limited to, design, presentation, audio, video, typography, layout, user experience, tone,)
- Research and develop list of guidelines for responsible internet writing, including how to avoid plagiarism, how to link sources, cite images.
- Use MAPS strategy to analyze blogs: Mode, Media, Audience, Purpose, Situation (See teacher resources, Troy Hick's Digital Writing)

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.

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:

- Accessing speech-to-text function on computer.
- Using visual presentations of all materials to include organizers, charts.
- Allowing students to set individual goals for writing/reading.
- Offering graphic organizaers, note-taking models, strategies for summarizing, and questioning techniques.
- Offering oral assessments.
- Supplying study guide questions and access to class notes.
- Working in partnerships.
- Giving responses in a form (verbal or written) that is easier for the student.
- Using additional time to compete a task or project.
- Scaffolding by chunking material and texts.
- Individualizingreading choices based on ability and level .
- Providing frequent breaks.
- Using an alarm to help with time management.
- Assessing individually or in small groups.
- Marking text with a highlighter or other manipulative such as a post-it.
- Receiving help coordinating assignments.
- Modifying the length and quantity of assignments to fit individual.
- Differentiating roles in discussion groups.
- Using digital technology, eBooks, audio version of printed text.
- Creating alternate assignments or homework.
- Providing distinct steps in a process; elminate unnecessary steps, as needed.
- Using art, music, and film to convey alternate interpretation of literature and assessment.
- Managing executive function by scaffolding process and amending deadlines.
- Clarifying key terms and definitions at the beginning of the unit to create a shared vocabulary for analysis and evaluation.

Particular to this unit:

- Optimizing individual choice in terms of the selection of mentor texts, as well as the topics for ongoing blogging.
- Guiding students in goal-setting and executive function by setting timelines for completion of various stages, including design, writing, commenting, and reflecting.
- Encouraging the use of asynchronous learning to promote student autonomy and flexibility throughout the writing process.
- Fostering collaborative learning through the use of commenting as a method of providing peer feedback and positive communication.
- Providing opportunities for self-regulation by including reflective self-evaluation periodically.

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