

# Unit 1: Introduction to Essential Writing Skills (Weeks 1-9)

Content Area: **English Language Arts**

Course(s):

Time Period: **Full Year**

Length: **9 Weeks**

Status: **Published**

## **Unit 1: Introduction to Essential Writing Skills**

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### **Unit Rationale**

Unit one will include a focus on literature mentor texts with infusions of nonfiction to make the connections between genres. Students will engage in reading, discussing and analyzing narrative text as well as writing literary analysis essays (expository essay). While reading literature, students will engage in collaborative discussion to analyze the development of theme and dialogue. The results of their analyses will be captured in an expository essay that examines and develops a topic or idea from an anchor text(s) in this unit. Norms will be set in this unit with students understanding the speaking and listening expectations as well as language expectations.

### **Essential Questions**

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- How can I write a solid RACE paragraph?
- How can I write a RACE paragraph to inform others of my opinion on a text?
- How will transitions help to make my RACE paragraphs clear?

### **Pre-Assessments**

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#### Pre-Assessment 1: Letter To Self

Teachers may use another pre assessment as long as it covers the marking period 1 standards.

The teacher will utilize the letter to self instructions on the provided Google Slides. The students will provide a 3 paragraph writing sample to the teacher that will serve as a letter to themselves that will be returned on the last day of school. The first paragraph is about their general goals for 8th grade, the second paragraph is about their goals for language arts and writing workshop, and the third paragraph is about their personal goals, which often includes goals about their extra curricular activities. The students will be asked to use proper grammar and sentence structure. They will be displaying their current knowledge of paragraph development.

#### Pre-Assessment 2: [Google Form Survey](#)

This survey will allow you to know the student's [current level of](https://forms.gle/2sm9qGgNB1XE4dtS6)

understanding of the skills that will be taught during MP 1.

## **Instructional Plan**

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### Part 1.) Introduction to unit 1

1.) The teacher will provide the students with clear rules and class procedures and the teacher will also communicate these with the parents as well. Teachers can utilize a solid [syllabus](#) , a [Google Slides introduction](#) to the course and policies, and the following [video](#) can be sent home to the parents showing them how to utilize Google Classroom.

Part 2.) Please use these [Google Slides](#) for the following writing workshop activities. Do First journals will be uploaded weekly.

1. The students will take notes on how to write a proper email from the provided Google Slides so they can write formal emails to their teachers throughout the year when they have questions about the provided content. They will practice writing formal emails through the provided [activity](#).
2. The students will write a letter to themselves that will be returned on the last day of school. The students should be using full sentences and formal language. This will serve as a basic writing sample for the students. The teacher can write back on to the student when the letter is returned on the last day of school. Slides are provided for this on the attached Google Slides above.
3. The students will study necessary grammar skills in order to be able to produce clear and coherent writing.

1. Part 3:

2. The students will learn RACE format. The information is provided on the slides. Padlet links are available as well in order to have the students to practice with.
3. The students will learn how to paraphrase and where paraphrasing would be appropriate in the RACE writing process. A paraphrasing worksheet is available [here](#).
4. The class will read the short story Seventh Grade by Gary Soto on Common Lit and will write the provided RACE response. The document for the RACE response is [here](#).
5. The students will [practice writing two RACE paragraphs](#) as if they are the body of an essay.
6. The students will complete their thematic essay.

ALL LESSONS CAN TAKE SEVERAL DAYS

Additional lessons and resources can be found [here](#)

## **Lesson 1: Email Etiquette**

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### **Student Learning Intentions or We are learning to ... (WALT)**

WALT address people through email with a formal style and tone.

WALT write emails with proper grammatical structure.

### **Student Success Criteria ... “I can statements”**

I can...write an email with formal style and tone.

I can...proofread an email for grammatical errors before sending.

### **Instructional Strategies and Activities**

- Direct instruction
- Gradual release
- Peer work
- Video instruction

### **Formative Assessments**

- Observation
- Written Work
- Grammar quizzes
- Exit tickets

### **Instructional Materials and Resources**

- Email [video](#)
- Email [analysis](#)
- Noredink.com

### **Reflections and Suggested Modifications**

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| ELA.L.SS.8.1   | Demonstrate command of the system and structure of the English language when writing or speaking.  |
| ELA.W.IW.8.2.E | Establish and maintain a formal style/academic style, approach, and form.  |
| ELA.W.WP.8.4   | With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, sustaining effort to complete complex writing tasks; seeking out assistance, models, sources or feedback to improve understanding or refine final products; focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed. |
| ELA.SL.AS.8.6  | Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.  |

## **Lesson 2: Grammar**

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### **Student Learning Intentions or We are learning to ... (WALT)**

WALT identify verbals and their purpose.

WALT properly use verbals in our every day writing.

WALT recognize spelling patterns.

WALT revise our word for spelling and grammar.

### **Student Success Criteria ... “I can statements”**

I can...identify verbals.

I can...properly use verbals in my every day writing.

I can...recognize the spelling patterns of commonly confused words.

I can...revise my writing for spelling and grammar.

### **Instructional Strategies and Activities**

- Direct instruction
- Gradual release
- Peer work
- Video Instruction

### **Formative Assessments**

- Observation
- Written Work
- Grammar quizzes
- Exit Tickets

### **Instructional Materials and Resources**

- Noredink.com
  - verbals
  - commonly confused words part 1
- Writer's notebook entries

### **Reflections and Suggested Modifications**

ELA.L.SS.8.1.A

Explain the function of verbals (gerunds, participles, infinitives) in general and their function in particular sentences.

### **Lesson 3: RACE Format**

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#### **Student Learning Intentions or We are learning to ... (WALT)**

WALT write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic by selecting, organizing, and analyzing relevant content

WALT in informative/explanatory text, the topic can be developed with relevant and well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples

WALT use precise language to inform about or explain the topic in informative/explanations

#### **Student Success Criteria ... “I can statements”**

I can...develop a proper body paragraph.

I can...use organizers to structure my writing in paragraphs.

I can...identify the components of a RACE response.

I can...develop paragraph structure into a RACE response.

#### **Instructional Strategies and Activities**

- Direct instruction
- Gradual release
- Video Instruction
  
- Editing/ Revising
  
- Chunking Information
  
- Peer Editing

#### **Formative Assessments**

- Observation
- Writer's notebook entries
- Flash drafts
- Exit Tickets
- Rubrics

#### **Instructional Materials and Resources**

- Body paragraph [practice](#)
- Paraphrasing [activity](#)
- [Race response](#) to Seventh Grade by Gary Soto

- Restate [practice](#)

## Reflections and Suggested Modifications

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| ELA.RL.CI.8.2  | Determine a theme of a literary text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.   |
| ELA.W.AW.8.1.A | Introduce claim(s) about a topic or issue, acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.   |
| ELA.W.IW.8.2.A | Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; 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) when useful to aid in comprehension. |
| ELA.W.IW.8.2.B | Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.   |
| ELA.W.SE.8.6   | 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.                 |

## Lesson 4: Intro to the Thematic Essay

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### Student Learning Intentions or We are learning to ... (WALT)

WALT identify the components of a thematic essay.

WALT write to inform.

WALT write to persuade.

### Student Success Criteria ... “I can statements”

I can...define the structure of a thematic essay.

I can...differentiate writing to inform and writing to persuade.

### Instructional Strategies and Activities

- Direct instruction
- Gradual release
- Peer work
- Video Instruction

### Formative Assessments

- Observation
- Flash drafts
- Writer's notebook entries

- Exit Tickets

## Instructional Materials and Resources

- sample [Rubric](#) to analyze components
- sample [digital notebook](#)
- Theme essay [graphic organizer](#)

## Reflections and Suggested Modifications

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| ELA.W.AW.8.1.A | Introduce claim(s) about a topic or issue, acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.   |
| ELA.W.AW.8.1.B | Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using relevant, accurate data and evidence that demonstrate an understanding of the topic or text, using credible sources.   |
| ELA.W.IW.8.2.A | Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; 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) when useful to aid in comprehension. |
| ELA.W.IW.8.2.B | Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.   |

## **Lesson 5: Essay Structure**

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### **Student Learning Intentions or We are learning to ... (WALT)**

WALT develop ideas into a full essay.

WALT compare the structure of persuasive and informational text.

WALT include transitions.

WALT add a concluding statement.

### **Student Success Criteria ... “I can statements”**

I can...write a fully developed essay.

I can...clearly structure my essay.

I can...embed appropriate transitions.

I can...include a concluding statement.

## **Instructional Strategies and Activities**

- Direct instruction
- Gradual release

- Peer work
- Video Instruction

## Formative Assessments

- Observation
- Flash drafts
- Writer's notebook entries
- Exit Tickets
- Rubrics

## Instructional Materials and Resources

- Corresponding novel in ELA class
- Theme activities for ELA novel
- Plan essay with [graphic organizer](#)
- Draft essay - [2nd option](#)
- [Exemplars](#)

## Reflections and Suggested Modifications

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| ELA.W.AW.8.1.C | Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.  |
| ELA.W.AW.8.1.D | Establish and maintain a formal or academic style, approach, and form.  |
| ELA.W.AW.8.1.E | Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.  |
| ELA.W.IW.8.2.C | Use appropriate transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.  |
| ELA.W.IW.8.2.D | Use precise language and domain/grade-level-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.   |
| ELA.W.IW.8.2.E | Establish and maintain a formal style/academic style, approach, and form.   |
| ELA.W.IW.8.2.F | Provide a concluding statement or section (e.g., sentence, part of a paragraph, paragraph, or multiple paragraphs) that synthesizes the information or explanation presented. |

## Lesson 6: Revisions

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### Student Learning Intentions or We are learning to ... (WALT)

WALT accept feedback from peers.

WALT make changes that improve the quality of our writing.

WALT provide meaningful feedback to peers.

### Student Success Criteria ... “I can statements”

I can...review my work with a peer.

I can...accept their feedback.

I can...make changes based on feedback.

I can...provide meaningful feedback to my peers.

### **Instructional Strategies and Activities**

- Direct instruction
- Gradual release
- Peer work
- Revising/Editing

### **Formative Assessments**

- Observation
- Written Work

### **Instructional Materials and Resources**

- Essay Draft
- Rubric review

### **Reflections and Suggested Modifications**

ELA.W.WP.8.4

With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, sustaining effort to complete complex writing tasks; seeking out assistance, models, sources or feedback to improve understanding or refine final products; focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

## **Modifications and/or Accommodations**

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### **Suggested Modifications (ELL, Sp. Ed, Gifted, At-risk of Failure)**

#### **English Language Learners**

**Native language support:** The teacher provides auditory or written content to students in their native language.

**Adjusted Speech:** The teacher changes speech patterns to increase student comprehension. This could include facing the students, paraphrasing, clearly indicating the most important ideas, and speaking more slowly.

**Visuals:** The teacher uses graphics, pictures, visuals, and manipulatives. This helps ELL students better understand and comprehend the subjects at hand.

**Front-Loading Vocabulary:** The teacher front loads vocabulary. This means providing students with a list of important vocabulary words they will need to know for a book, lesson, etc. prior to the lesson

being taught. Including pictures to go with the vocabulary words is also very beneficial for the students.

## **Special Education Students**

**Chunking:** The teacher presents information in a way that makes it easy for students to understand and remember. Chunking is based on the presumption that our working memory is easily overloaded by excessive detail. The best way to deliver information is to organize it into meaningful units. Because students with special needs get overloaded easily, chunking is an effective strategy to use with them.

**Checking for Understanding:** It is important to constantly check for understanding, especially for students who have accommodations. Teachers want to make sure students understand the concepts being covered in a way that makes sense to them.

**Extra time:** The teacher provides students with special needs extra time to complete work or answer questions. It is important to give students enough time to process their thoughts.

**Oral Reading:** The teacher will read work orally to students. Class work such as tests and literature circles may need to be read aloud to the student.

**Timers:** The teacher will use timers as an instructional tool. The use of timers is beneficial for students who have trouble completing tasks. Timers can be helpful so the student is aware of how much time they have to complete an assignment.

## **Students with 504 Plans**

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**Checking for Understanding:** It is important to constantly check for understanding, especially for students who have accommodations. Teachers want to make sure students understand the concepts being covered in a way that makes sense to them.

**Extra time:** The teacher provides students with special needs extra time to complete work or answer questions. It is important to give students enough time to process their thoughts.

## **Gifted & Talented Strategies**

**Extensions/Enrichments:** Teachers will provide gifted and talented students with extension/enrichment projects. Students will be challenged to further their understanding, to apply acquired knowledge, and/or to produce something in reference to acquired knowledge.

**Modify/Change Activities:** Teachers will monitor and modify activities to accommodate those students who need to be challenged further. Additional reading, problem-solving, writing, or project work is necessary for those students who are ready to move on at a rate more accelerated than their peers. In this way, G & T students are provided the same opportunity for support as special needs students.

## **Students at Risk of School Failure**

**Directions or Instructions:** Make sure directions and/or instructions are given in limited numbers. Give directions/instructions verbally and in simple written format. Ask students to repeat the instructions or directions to ensure understanding occurs. Check back with the student to ensure he/she hasn't forgotten.

**Peer Support:** Peers can help build confidence in other students by assisting in peer learning. Many teachers use the 'ask 3 before me' approach. This is fine, however, a student at risk may have to have a specific student or two to ask. Set this up for the student so he/she knows who to ask for clarification before going to you.

**Alternate or Modified Assignments:** Always ask yourself, "How can I modify this assignment to ensure the students at risk are able to complete it?" Sometimes you'll simplify the task, reduce the length of the assignment or allow for a different mode of delivery. For instance, many students may hand something in, the at-risk student may jot notes and give you the information verbally. Or, it just may be that you will need to assign an alternate assignment.

**Increase One to One Time:** When other students are working, always touch base with your students at risk and find out if they're on track or needing some additional support. A few minutes here and there will go a long way to intervene as the need presents itself.

**Contracts:** It helps to have a working contract between you and your students at risk. This helps prioritize the tasks that need to be done and ensure completion happens. Each day write down what needs to be completed, as the tasks are done, provide a checkmark or happy face. The goal of using contracts is to eventually have the student come to you for completion sign-offs.

**Hands On:** As much as possible, think in concrete terms and provide hands-on tasks. This means a child doing math may require a calculator or counters. The child may need to tape record comprehension activities instead of writing them. A child may have to listen to a story being read instead of reading it him/herself.

**Tests/Assessments:** Tests can be done orally if need be. Break tests down in smaller increments by having a portion of the test in the morning, another portion after lunch and the final part the next day.

**Seating:** Seat students near a helping peer or with quick access to the teacher. Those with hearing or sight issues need to be close to the instruction which often means near the front.

See Crosswalks

This unit allows for great discussion on a variety of informational texts. This can include DEI, climate change, and informational and media literacy.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1uf0fWDvpqWFOAb51rOq7mN5xq-xu-M5Yp2FbEVZ9Kt8/edit?gid=0#gid=0>

## **New Jersey Student Learning Standards: Content Area**

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|----------------|--|
| ELA.L.SS.8.1.A | Explain the function of verbals (gerunds, participles, infinitives) in general and their function in particular sentences.   |
| ELA.L.SS.8.1.G | Recognize spelling conventions.  |
| ELA.RL.CI.8.2  | Determine a theme of a literary text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.  |
| ELA.W.AW.8.1.A | Introduce claim(s) about a topic or issue, acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.  |
| ELA.W.AW.8.1.B | Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using relevant, accurate data and evidence that demonstrate an understanding of the topic or text, using credible sources.  |
| ELA.W.AW.8.1.C | Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.   |
| ELA.W.AW.8.1.D | Establish and maintain a formal or academic style, approach, and form.   |
| ELA.W.AW.8.1.E | Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.   |
| ELA.W.IW.8.2.A | Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; 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) when useful to aid in comprehension.                            |
| ELA.W.IW.8.2.B | Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.  |
| ELA.W.IW.8.2.C | Use appropriate transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.   |
| ELA.W.IW.8.2.D | Use precise language and domain/grade-level-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.  |
| ELA.W.IW.8.2.E | Establish and maintain a formal style/academic style, approach, and form.  |
| ELA.W.IW.8.2.F | Provide a concluding statement or section (e.g., sentence, part of a paragraph, paragraph, or multiple paragraphs) that synthesizes the information or explanation presented.  |
| ELA.W.WP.8.4   | With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, sustaining effort to complete complex writing tasks; seeking out assistance, models, sources or feedback to improve understanding or refine final products; focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed. |
| ELA.W.SE.8.6   | 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.

ELA.W.RW.8.7

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.

ELA.SL.PE.8.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

ELA.SL.AS.8.6

Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

## **Integration of Career Readiness, Life Literacies and Key Skills**

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TECH.8.1.8.A.2

Create a document (e.g., newsletter, reports, personalized learning plan, business letters or flyers) using one or more digital applications to be critiqued by professionals for usability.

TECH.8.1.8.A.4

Graph and calculate data within a spreadsheet and present a summary of the results.  
Multiple solutions often exist to solve a problem.

## **Integration of Computer Science and Design Thinking**

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CS.6-8.8.2.8.ITH.2

Compare how technologies have influenced society over time.

## **Interdisciplinary Connections: NJSLs for ELA, Social Studies, Science and/or Math**

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The reading and writing skills taught throughout this unit will provide knowledge, practice, and support in all content areas where reading and writing are required.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1bNUBwwW9BLgTLqjfVVAJiet6rbmQ3THg-sXDz2rEnXk/edit?gid=0#gid=0>

ELA.RL.CR.8.1

Cite a range of textual evidence and make clear and relevant connections to strongly support an analysis of multiple aspects of what a literary text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

ELA.RL.CI.8.2

Determine a theme of a literary text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

## **21st Century Life and Career**

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CRP.K-12.CRP4.1

Career-ready individuals communicate thoughts, ideas, and action plans with clarity, whether using written, verbal, and/or visual methods. They communicate in the workplace with clarity and purpose to make maximum use of their own and others' time. They are excellent writers; they master conventions, word choice, and organization, and use effective tone and presentation skills to articulate ideas. They are skilled at interacting with others; they are active listeners and speak clearly and with purpose. Career-ready

individuals think about the audience for their communication and prepare accordingly to ensure the desired outcome.

## **SEL Competencies and Standards**

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SEL.PK-12.3.1

Recognize and identify the thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of others

SEL.PK-12.3.3

Demonstrate an understanding of the need for mutual respect when viewpoints differ