New Paltz Central School District
Writing
Fourth Grade

Unit 5: Informational Writing
(January - February)
(6 weeks)

Essential Questions

- What motivates writers to write nonfiction?
- How do you present information in a way that engages your reader?
- How does research drive your writing?

Content

Informational writing is designed to "examine a topic and convey information and ideas clearly." (Lucy Calkins, 2011) The student's purpose as an informational writer is to teach his/her reader about a topic that is important to the writer.

Standards/Skills
Skills:
- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- Research to build and present knowledge.
- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Standards:
- Introduce a topic clearly and group related information in paragraphs and sections; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.
- Link ideas within categories of information using words and phrases (e.g., *another, for example, also, because*).
- Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
- Provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented.
- Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.
- Use correct capitalization.
- Use commas and quotation marks to mark direct speech and quotations from a text.
- Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence.

- Spell grade-appropriate words correctly, consulting references as needed.

Assessments (formative and summative)

- Formative Assessment- On Demand at beginning of unit- Students will be asked to write about a topic of individual expertise. Teacher could say: Think about a topic that makes you feel like an expert – something you know all about. Write to teach me all about that topic.
- Summative Assessment - Nonfiction picture book – final product can be hand-crafted or digital – Options for digital picture books could include Photo Story, PowerPoint, etc. See attached rubric.
- Teacher observation/ writing conferences

Key vocabulary/Teacher language

- heading
- subheading
- topic
- subtopic
- caption
- table of contents
- glossary
- introduction
- conclusion
- annotated diagram
- chart
- side-bar definition
- transition words
- narrative non-fiction
- non-narrative

Resources

- Mentor Text – *"Deadliest Animals" National Geographic*
- Rigby non-fiction
- Time For Kids or Scholastic News
- Non-fiction picture books
- *A Curricular Plan for the Writing Workshop,* Unit 4, pages 76-93
- *Nonfiction Craft Lessons,* Ralph Fletcher and JoAnn Portalupi
- *Crafting Nonfiction*, Tony Stead and Linda Hoyt
- www.readingandwritingproject.com

Possible Mini-Lessons

Part 1

Lesson 1: Study mentor texts to analyze how the author presents information.

Lesson 2: Have students gather potential topic ideas and list background information on the topic.

Lesson 3: Study back of the book blurbs, imagine how their book would go, write their blurb.
Lesson 4: Students try on a topic - writing everything they know about that topic.

Lesson 5: Students plan how their books would go, possible creating a table of contents.

Part 2

Lesson 6: Students create a list of questions that they want to know more about. Begin to use books/internet to "fill in the gaps" in their knowledge and answer their questions.
Students begin to collect information through note-taking.

Lesson 7: Model how writers share thoughts about their information. Make a t-chart of facts and thoughts or responses to the information.

Part 3

Lesson 8: Students teach their topic to a partner verbally and note parts where we need to collect more information.

Lesson 9: Students begin draft by writing the pages they are most fired-up to write.

Lesson 10: Organize information into subsections in a way that best teaches the reader. Teachers model big ideas (topic sentence) followed by smaller details.

Lesson 11: Students make a plan for the text features that will be on each page (illustrations, diagrams, charts, side-bars...)

Part 4

Lesson 12: Students return to their notebooks, revisit their writing, compare what they wrote to mentors texts on their topics, and make revisions.

Lesson 13: Students make sure they extend their ideas with such prompts as "This is important because…" or "This is connected to..."

Lesson 14: Students can create a glossary or side-bar to define important vocabulary.

Lesson 15: Students will focus their subsections, making sure the information in each paragraph fits together.

Lesson 16: Students will revise the lead.

Lesson 17: Students will revise their conclusion.

Lesson 18: Students use transitions words to move from sub-topic to sub-topic.

Part 5
Lesson 19: Students edit for spelling and punctuation.

Lesson 20: (may be several lessons in guided format) Depending on chosen medium, students will learn medium for digital presentation in conjunction with the school librarian. Digital media include: Powerpoint, Pdworks.com, Schoolwires, Photostory, ZooBurst

Lesson 21: Students publish their picture books over several days using a multi-media or hand-crafted format.

Rubric:

Fourth Grade Informational

	Exceeds Expectations 4	Meets Expectations 3	Approaching Expectations 2	Expectations Not Met 1
Ideas	• The main idea or thesis statement is clearly defined • Includes extensive facts and details to elaborate on the topic • Excludes extraneous details and inappropriate information • Draws from multiple sources of information	• The main idea or thesis statement is evident • Includes appropriate facts and details about the topic • Excludes extraneous details and inappropriate information • Draws from more than one source of information	• The main idea can be identified • Includes some appropriate facts and details about the topic, but information may be limited • Excludes most extraneous details and inappropriate information, but may have minor digressions • Draws from only one source of information	• The main idea is not identifiable • Does not include enough relevant information about the topic • Includes extraneous details and inappropriate information • Source of information is not evident
Organization	• The structure is organized within each paragraph in a logical and effective sequence • The writing is a cohesive piece that includes an engaging introduction, a body of relevant information, and a conclusion that reinforces the main idea • Transitions are consistently used to effectively connect the ideas within and between paragraphs	• The structure is organized in a logical sequence • The writing is developed with a functional introduction, body, and conclusion • Transitions are appropriate and connect the ideas within and between paragraphs	• The structure is loosely organized and may not flow in a logical sequence • The writing is beginning to develop with a functional introduction, body, and conclusion • Transitions are sometimes used to connect the ideas within and between paragraphs	• The structure is not evident • The writing does not include a clear introduction, body, and conclusion • Transitions are not used effectively
Style	• Engages the reader by using an expressive tone appropriate to the topic, purpose, and audience • Uses a range of appropriate strategies such as rich vocabulary and descriptive language which convey the writer's personality	• Engages the reader by using a tone appropriate to the topic, purpose, and audience • Uses some rich vocabulary and descriptive language which convey the writer's personality	• Begins to engage the reader by using tone appropriate to the topic, purpose, and audience, but voice may not be developed • Inconsistently uses vocabulary and descriptive language	• Does not use appropriate tone for the topic, purpose, or audience • Does not use varied vocabulary or descriptive language
Conventions	• Contains correct sentences, usage, grammar, and spelling that make the writer's ideas understandable	• Some errors are present, but they do not interfere with meaning	• Errors interrupt the flow of communication and may interfere with meaning	• Errors prevent the reader from understanding the writer's message