THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

Achievement & Assessment Institute

WRITING AN INFORMATIONAL BOOKLET
PART 1: PREPARING TO WRITE

W.3.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CONTENTS

UNIT OVERVIEW

This writing unit is divided into three subunits, or parts, to address each component of the W.3.2 standard. Each part includes a scaffolded lesson sequence that addresses steps of the writing process, including planning, researching, and drafting. Writing instruction is demanding for both teachers and students. Adjust the pacing and content of the lessons to accommodate any unique concerns, class schedules, and student ability levels.

Part 1 addresses five nodes from W.5.2:

- ELA-1461: Identify details relevant to the topic of a paragraph in an informational text
- ELA-1987: Identify the topic sentence in a paragraph
- ELA-2192: Identify the conclusion of an informational text
- ELA-2807: Identify the purpose for writing an informational text
- ELA-2809: Brainstorm for facts and details for a to-be-written informational text

The unit is centered on a provided model text to make implementation easier. However, the lessons are designed so that you may substitute a different model text and so that you may allow the context of your classroom to guide students' writing topics. This flexibility is based on the research that indicates writing for authentic purposes may improve students' writing outcomes (Duke, Purcell-Gates, Hall, & Tower, 2006; Graham, McKeown, Kiuhara, & Harris, 2012). Duke et al. (2006) defines authenticity as:

> literacy activities in the classroom . . . that replicate or reflect reading and writing activities that occur in the lives of people outside of a learning-to-read-and-write context and purpose. Each authentic literacy activity has a writer and a reader—a writer who is writing to a real reader and a reader who is reading what the writer wrote. (p. 346)

There are an infinite number of ways to make writing activities in your classroom more authentic, and we invite you to do so.

Lesson 1: In this lesson, students identify the purpose of writing informational text. Then, you guide students in deconstructing a model text to use as an example for creating their own texts in the rest of the unit. The model text helps students set goals for their own writing and provides them with an understanding of exactly how their end product should look.

Lesson 2: In this lesson, students identify the components of a paragraph and color-code the topic sentence, facts, details, and concluding sentence in the chosen model text. Then, students record the paragraph components into the lesson's sandwich-style graphic organizer.

Lesson 3: In this lesson, you explain the importance of prewriting and model the procedure using a brainstorming activity. Then, students complete the brainstorming process for their own writing topics.

Research Findings	Lesson Strategies, Approaches, or Activities
"Students benefit from setting writing goals, being taught the structure of informational text, and understanding what the end product should look like." (Graham, McKeown, Kiuhara, & Harris, 2012)	At each stage of the writing process, students deconstruct or analyze a model text. These exercises help students understand the parts of an informational text and how their own should be structured.
"Mentor texts provide something for writers to imitate. Mentor texts are especially helpful to inexperienced and young writers, helping them visualize how good writers organize their thoughts and ideas." (Gallagher, 2014)	Students use a mentor text throughout the unit to aid in their understanding of the structure of an informational text.
"Students benefit from the understanding that writing is a process rather than a product." (Graham, Harris, & Santangelo, 2015)	The lessons emphasize a process approach to writing and are designed to scaffold students through planning and drafting their texts. Students understand the end goal and have time to plan, research, and write.
"Students benefit from being explicitly taught about writing strategies and how to use them." (Graham, McKeown, Kiuhara, & Harris, 2012)	The lessons break down the process of writing into manageable chunks, allowing students access to the process of writing. Separating a big writing assignment into smaller manageable chunks is an important writing strategy for students to learn.
"Teachers tend to underestimate young students' ability to comprehend and write informational text and instead focus on personal narrative	These lessons are an opportunity for students to spend time examining and writing informational text.

writing. Teachers should provide opportunities for students to write and become familiar with informational text."

(Read, 2005)

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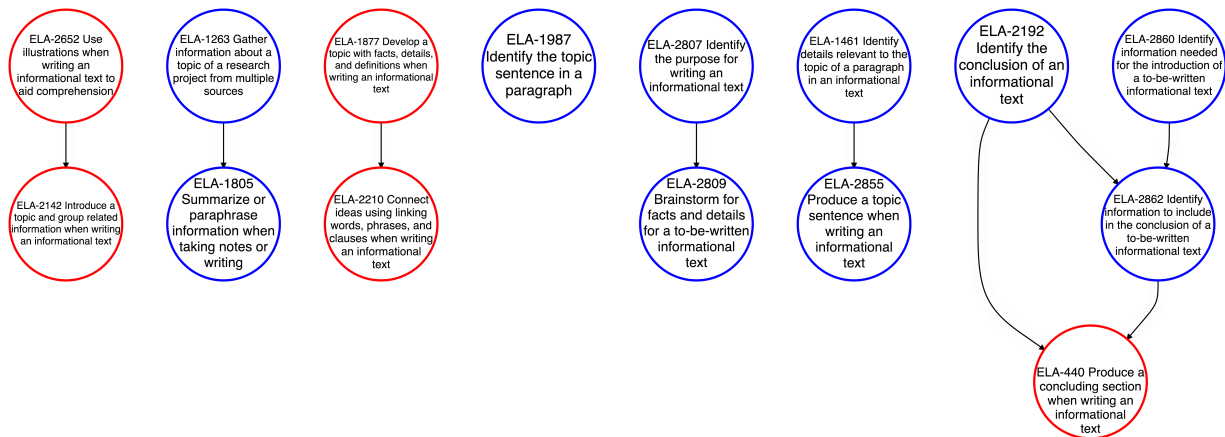
STANDARD

W.3.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

a. Introduce a topic and group related information together; include illustrations when useful to aiding comprehension.

b. Develop the topic with facts, definitions, and details.

c. Use linking words and phrases (e.g., also, another, and, more, but) to connect ideas within categories of information.

d. Provide a concluding statement or section.

Learning map model for W.3.2 (Parts 1–3)

Node ID	Node Name	Node Description
ELA-440	PRODUCE A CONCLUDING SECTION WHEN WRITING AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT	Produce a concluding section or paragraph that relates to and supports the information or explanation presented when writing an informational text.
ELA-1263	GATHER INFORMATION ABOUT A TOPIC OF A RESEARCH PROJECT FROM MULTIPLE SOURCES	Gather facts, details, and other information related to the topic of a research project from multiple information sources.
ELA-1461	IDENTIFY DETAILS RELEVANT TO THE TOPIC OF A PARAGRAPH IN AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT	Identify the details that are related in some way to the topic of a paragraph in an informational text based on their similarities.
ELA-2142	INTRODUCE A TOPIC AND GROUP RELATED INFORMATION WHEN WRITING AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT	Produce a written informational text by introducing the topic and grouping related facts, details, ideas, and concepts together based on content.
ELA-1805	SUMMARIZE OR PARAPHRASE INFORMATION WHEN TAKING NOTES OR WRITING	Summarize or paraphrase information when taking notes or when composing a written piece.
ELA-1877	DEVELOP A TOPIC WITH FACTS, DETAILS, AND DEFINITIONS WHEN WRITING AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT	Develop a topic by including relevant facts, details, and definitions when writing an informational text.
ELA-1987	IDENTIFY THE TOPIC SENTENCE IN A PARAGRAPH	Identify the topic sentence in a paragraph when it is not explicitly stated.
ELA-2192	IDENTIFY THE CONCLUSION OF AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT	Identify the conclusion of an informational text based on its characteristics.
ELA-2210	CONNECT IDEAS USING LINKING WORDS, PHRASES, AND CLAUSES WHEN WRITING AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT	Connect ideas within and across categories of information using linking words, phrases, or clauses (e.g., *for example*, *another reason*, *and*, *more*, *but*, *also*, *because*, *in contrast*, and *especially*) when writing an informational text.
ELA-2652	USE ILLUSTRATIONS WHEN WRITING AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT TO AID COMPREHENSION	Include illustrations when writing an informational text that will enhance reader understanding of the topic.
ELA-2807	IDENTIFY THE PURPOSE FOR WRITING AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT	Identify the purpose or reason (e.g., answering a question, explaining a process, or describing a topic) for writing about a topic.
ELA-2809	BRAINSTORM FOR FACTS AND DETAILS FOR A TO-BE-WRITTEN INFORMATIONAL TEXT	Conduct brainstorming independently or with peers to develop potential facts and details that can be used to support the topic and purpose for a to-be-written informational text.
ELA-2855	PRODUCE A TOPIC SENTENCE WHEN WRITING AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT	Produce a topic sentence that introduces the topic and main idea for an informational text.
ELA-2860	IDENTIFY INFORMATION NEEDED FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF A TO-BE-WRITTEN INFORMATIONAL TEXT	Identify what information (e.g., the topic, the main idea, the most important key details, and the purpose for writing the text) should be included in the introduction of an informational text.
ELA-2862	IDENTIFY INFORMATION TO INCLUDE IN THE CONCLUSION OF A TO-BE-WRITTEN INFORMATIONAL TEXT	Identify what information, such as the main idea and the most important key details, should be included in the conclusion of an informational text.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY

LEARNING GOAL

In this lesson, students review the purpose and structure of informational text and organize a text into a model booklet.

STANDARD

W.3.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
   a.   Introduce a topic and group related information together; include illustrations when useful to aiding comprehension.

PREPARATION

Before the lesson, select a short, interesting informational text with a clear text structure, including headings, topic sentences, facts, and details to use as a model. This unit includes a passage, SOME POINTS ABOUT PENCILS, which you are free to copy. Follow all copyright restrictions and guidelines as they pertain to material you select for classroom use from any other source.

Prepare a completed STUDENT HANDOUT: MY INFORMATIONAL BOOKLET MODEL to show students as they create their own model.

Additionally, collect a variety of other informational texts such as brochures, booklets, magazines, websites articles, directions, or newspapers to use during the opening activity.

Create an organizing system for students to keep all writing materials and handouts from the unit.

MATERIALS & HANDOUTS

   ▶   stapler
   ▶   scissors
   ▶   glue

- colored pencils (optional)
- PASSAGE: SOME POINTS ABOUT PENCILS or other model informational text
- STUDENT HANDOUT: MY INFORMATIONAL BOOKLET MODEL

IMPLEMENTATION

As a class, turn the learning goal into an I Can statement: "I can identify the parts of an informational text."

Explain the purpose of writing an informational text. **Display** the term informational text and tell students to find the base word *inform* at the beginning of the term. **Explain** that *informational text* informs the reader by answering a question, explaining a topic, or describing a topic. Write the purposes on the board. **Review** additional characteristics of nonfiction.

Distribute an informational text to partners and give students two minutes to preview the text. After students preview, **tell** partners to discuss why their text is informational. **Prompt** struggling students by referring to the term and purposes on the board: "What does your book explain? What is being described?" Allow volunteers to share. Have students trade books and repeat the procedure.

Provide students with copies of the chosen model text (e.g., SOME POINTS ABOUT PENCILS). Draw attention to the title, and tell students to predict what the text will be about or what they might learn.

Read the text. **Ask** students if their predictions were correct. **Discuss** with students how they will write an informational text like this one and design it as a booklet.

First, **distribute** unstapled copies of the STUDENT HANDOUT: MY INFORMATIONAL BOOKLET MODEL. **Tell** students to organize the pages of the MY INFORMATIONAL BOOKLET MODEL in the correct order: Title Page, Introduction, Body Paragraph, and Conclusion. **Staple** the model booklets.

Using your prepared booklet model as a reference, **discuss** which parts of the text go into which sections of the booklet and why. On the title page, **instruct** students to put their name on the top-right corner for identification purposes. The author's name will be pasted into the accompanying section. Then, **ask** students to cut apart the sections of the model text, and **guide** students toward pasting them into the appropriate sections in the booklet. **Encourage** students to draw an illustration in the appropriate sections when they are done cutting and pasting.

While students work, **circulate** and **follow-up** by checking for student understanding:

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING		
Determine if the student can IDENTIFY THE PURPOSE FOR WRITING AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT (ELA-2807):		
▶ What is this text about?	▶ Why did the author write this text?	▶ What makes this text informational? How do you know?

To close the lesson, **tell** students to share their favorite illustration with a partner and to explain why they drew the picture in the section that they did. **Introduce** students to the organization system you prepared for the unit, then **collect** all materials.

For a discussion of the research that supports this instructional model, see the TEACHER NOTES for this lesson set.

MY INFORMATIONAL BOOKLET MODEL BY

Paste author's name.

Introduction

Paste text title.

Paste heading.

Paste paragraph.

Find or draw an illustration to go with the introduction.

Body Paragraph

Paste heading.

Paste paragraph.

Find or draw an illustration to go with the body paragraph.

Conclusion

Paste heading.

Paste paragraph.

Find or draw an illustration to go with the conclusion.

Some Points About Pencils

by Harmony Hanson

Introduction

Yellow pencils with pink erasers are all around in American classrooms. These ordinary pencils may be a simple school supply, but they have an interesting history. People have used pencils for hundreds of years. Pencils did not always look the way they do now, though. Today's common pencils have some unexpected facts in their past.

Pencil History

Early pencils were different from the pencils we use today. The wooden pencil was first described in 1565, and it was not yellow. Painting pencils yellow began over 300 years later, in 1889. Also, the first pencils came without erasers. Before erasers were invented, people removed pencil marks with squished-up old bread! Later, yellow pencils with connected erasers became the standard writing tool.

Conclusion

Today, yellow pencils topped by pink erasers appear in schools, desks, and fingers. But pencils did not begin this way. At first, pencils were not yellow. Also, early pencils did not have erasers. These handy tools have changed as people have used them to write and draw—and erase!

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INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY

LEARNING GOAL

In this lesson, students identify the components of a paragraph, including topic sentence, facts, and details in a model informational text.

STANDARD

W.3.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
  a. Introduce a topic and group related information together; include illustrations when useful to aiding comprehension.

PREPARATION

Plan to display information on a white board for students to reference throughout the unit.

MATERIALS & HANDOUTS

  ▶ colored pencils or highlighters
  ▶ completed STUDENT HANDOUT: MY INFORMATIONAL BOOKLET MODEL from Lesson 1 or other model text
  ▶ STUDENT HANDOUT: A TASTY PARAGRAPH

IMPLEMENTATION

As a class, turn the learning goal into an I Can statement: "I can identify the parts of a paragraph."

Referring students to the body paragraph of your STUDENT HANDOUT: MY INFORMATIONAL BOOKLET MODEL, **discuss** how writers use body paragraphs to inform readers about the informational topic. Explain that a body paragraph provides facts and details about the topic.

A review of fact and opinion may be needed before proceeding. For your reference, see nodes EXPLAIN THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FACTS AND OPINIONS (ELA-2563), IDENTIFY A FACT RELATED TO A TOPIC (ELA-2564), and IDENTIFY A FACT IN AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT (ELA-2566).

Create and **display** an anchor chart that defines the parts of a paragraph. As you discuss the components, **provide** students with examples of each element.

- ► Topic vs. topic sentence – The *topic* is the general subject of the paragraph described using one word or phrase ("dogs"). The *topic sentence* is a complete sentence that tells what the rest of the paragraph is about ("Dogs make great pets for many reasons.").
- ► Facts vs. details – *Facts* are true pieces of information about the topic that can be proven ("Owning a dog can help people live longer."). *Details* make the facts clear or add more information to the fact ("Dogs help increase their owners' exercise.").
- ► Concluding sentence – A *concluding sentence* restates what the paragraph was about in a new way ("There are so many reasons to get a four-legged friend.").

Create a code for the class to use to identify and color-code the pieces of the body paragraph. For example, red equals topic sentence, green equals facts and details, and blue equals concluding sentence. **Hand out** colored pencils or highlighters and the completed STUDENT HANDOUT: MY INFORMATIONAL BOOKLET MODEL. Each student should color-code their own model. **Remind** students to give their partner time to independently locate the proper sentence. Then, **allow** partners to compare their thinking. When pairs arrive at a consensus about what to color, **instruct** the students to color the correct part.

Circulate and **collect** evidence about student thinking.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING		
Determine if the student can IDENTIFY THE TOPIC SENTENCE IN A PARAGRAPH (ELA-1987): ► What color did you code the topic sentence? ► How did you know that it is a topic sentence?	Determine if the student can IDENTIFY DETAILS RELEVANT TO THE TOPIC OF A PARAGRAPH IN AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT (ELA-1461): ► Why did you color-code this sentence in [green]? ► What makes the sentence you coded in [red] different from the sentence you coded in [green]?	Determine if the student can IDENTIFY THE CONCLUSION OF AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT (ELA-2192): ► What color did you code the concluding sentence? ► What makes this sentence the concluding sentence?

Distribute the STUDENT HANDOUT: A TASTY PARAGRAPH. Get students interested by asking them what their favorite sandwich is and why. **Explain** the analogy of how a satisfying paragraph is like a tasty sandwich in which all of the pieces work together. Draw student attention to the sandwich-shaped outline in the

handout. **Ask** students what would happen if a sandwich had no bun as well as what would happen if a paragraph did not have a beginning or end.

Model how to complete the handout using the color-coded items from the model booklet. **Ask** students to complete the handout on their own and refer to their own color-coded model booklet. Check for understanding using the Checking for Understanding questions.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING		
Determine if the student can IDENTIFY THE TOPIC SENTENCE IN A PARAGRAPH (ELA-1987): ▶ Is this the best place for the topic sentence? Why? ▶ Do you think it is a good topic sentence? Why or why not?	Determine if the student can IDENTIFY DETAILS RELEVANT TO THE TOPIC OF A PARAGRAPH IN AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT (ELA-1461): ▶ Why did you decide to color-code this detail in [blue] instead of [green]? ▶ Do you think all the details tell us something about the topic? How do you know?	Determine if the student can IDENTIFY THE CONCLUSION OF AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT (ELA-2192): ▶ How do you know this is the concluding sentence? ▶ Is the concluding sentence in the best place? Why?

To close the lesson, **collect** all materials and handouts.

For a discussion of the research that supports this instructional model, see the TEACHER NOTES for this lesson set.

Topic Sentence:

Detail/Fact #1:

Detail/Fact #2:

Detail/Fact #3:

Concluding Sentence:

LEARNING GOAL

In this lesson, students brainstorm to explore a topic and plan ideas to write an informational text.

STANDARD

W.3.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
   a.   Introduce a topic and group related information together; include illustrations when useful to aiding comprehension.

PREPARATION

Before the lesson, select appropriate informational writing topics for students to research. This lesson does not provide a writing topic because the topic you choose depends on the timing of the unit and the class needs. Suggestions for topics include an expert topic (something the students already know about), people, places, or endangered animals. Allow students to choose their own topics if possible. Be aware that students will conduct multiple writing exercises with the topic. Pair students so they can collaborate and research the same topic.

Select an appropriate graphic organizer for students to use for brainstorming, and prepare to display the graphic organizer for modeling purposes. STUDENT HANDOUT: BRAINSTORM! is provided for your use.

MATERIALS & HANDOUTS

  ▶   STUDENT HANDOUT: BRAINSTORM! or other prewriting graphic organizer

IMPLEMENTATION

As a class, turn the learning goal into an I Can statement: "I can brainstorm to explore a topic and plan ideas to write an informational text."

Pair students to review the purpose of informational text. **Ask**, "What is the purpose of informational text?" Listen for answers such as to inform, answer a question, explain, or describe a topic. **List** correct responses on the board. **Clarify** that the booklet they will create does not involve making up a story or creating a narrative.

Introduce the concept of brainstorming. **Ask**, "What does a basketball player or dancer have to do before they play or dance?" followed by "Why do they have to warm up or stretch?" **Lead** students to an understanding that writers need to brainstorm or *prewrite* as a way to get their minds ready before writing.

Assign pairs of students to different topics or allow pairs to draw approved topics from a box randomly. **Explain** that it is time to do the first step of the writing process, which is to brainstorm. **Display** the STUDENT HANDOUT: BRAINSTORM! or another prewriting activity. Use an example topic to **model** the procedure for the brainstorming activity. List the example topic in the *My topic* section. Record prior knowledge about the topic in the *I know* section. Record questions students have about the topic in the *I wonder* section. Additional time may be needed to teach students how to ask appropriate questions about a topic. **Explain** your thinking aloud, and **encourage** student participation to practice generating questions.

Provide time for partners to complete the brainstorming organizer for their topic. While students work, **circulate** and **ask** the Checking for Understanding questions.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" align="center">CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING</td></tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine if the student can IDENTIFY THE PURPOSE FOR WRITING AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT (ELA-2807):

▸ What topic are you writing about?

▸ What is the purpose of writing your informational booklet? (inform, explain, describe)</td>
<td>Determine if the student can BRAINSTORM FOR FACTS AND DETAILS FOR A TO-BE-WRITTEN INFORMATIONAL TEXT (ELA-2809):

▸ What do you already know about your topic?

▸ What would you like to know about your topic?

▸ Can you ask a question about your topic?

▸ What makes your topic interesting?

▸ What do you think others might want to know about your topic?</td>
</tr>
</table>

Make plans to **follow-up** with students that do not understand the purpose of informational text or the brainstorming process. If necessary, allow students to express their thinking using illustrations to aid in understanding and help generate appropriate questions for the *I wonder* section of the graphic organizer.

Instruct students to add the STUDENT HANDOUT: BRAINSTORM! to their collection of materials for the unit for use in the next lesson.

For a discussion of the research that supports this instructional model, see the TEACHER NOTES for this lesson set.

My topic:

I know...

I wonder...

Directions: For each learning goal, circle the sentence that best matches what you can do.

Learning Goal	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Identify the purpose of an informational text	I can identify an informational text.	I can organize the parts of a model booklet in order.	I can explain the purpose of an informational text.
Identify a topic sentence and details	I know that a good paragraph is made of many parts.	I can locate the topic sentence or details in a paragraph.	I can identify the topic sentence and details in a paragraph.
Brainstorm for facts or details	I can identify what I know about my topic.	I can ask a question about my topic.	I can brainstorm for facts, details, and questions about my topic.