

Unit 4: Opinion Essay (4 weeks)**Rationale**

Why is this unit important and appropriate for this grade level and at this time of the year?

This unit will focus on helping students move from narrative writing to expository writing. Specifically, students will write an opinion piece using the essay structure. This unit reflects the Common Core Standards which calls for students to engage in more opinion writing. Students will research their topic, develop a claim craft an essay with supporting evidence in a clear and concise manner.

Learning Outcomes

What do we expect students to know and be able to do at the end of the unit?

Students will:

- Write about a meaningful topic that they have an opinion about
- Compose an essay that follows standard structure
- Develop a thesis/claim statement
- Research topic to gather reasons and evidence to support claim
- Use a variety of craft strategies to enhance the essay and support the claim
- Cite sources (e.g., text, graphics, images) using EasyBib

Minilessons/Notes/Tips

What minilessons will lead to student learning outcomes?

Possible Minilessons:

- Using mentor essay texts (including student samples) to identify the components/structure/features of essay writing
- Generating ideas for essays (e.g., life experiences, current events, hot topics)
- Write many entries to try out possible ideas (these are not mini essays but rather entries about possible ideas)
- Gathering ideas for essays in a variety of ways
 - Using life experiences discovered by rereading notebook entries
 - Thinking about current events by reading Time for Kids, National Geographic Ladders, newspaper, etc.
 - Brainstorming list of "hot topics" discussed in media
 - Revisiting themes and social issues from class read alouds, just right texts\
 - Taking a familiar object, person or place and jotting down big ideas the writer has about the persona/object/place
- Try-out possible ideas/ topics for an essay by writing notebook entries from different perspectives/sides of the argument
- Using strategies to elaborate thinking on ideas captured in notebook entries
 - This is important because...
 - This makes me realize...
 - To add on...
 - The surprising thing about this...
- Choosing an idea and writing it as a thesis (also referred to as a claim)
- Taking a stance about a topic and having one's opinion reflected in the thesis statement
- Developing an essay by listing reasons for the claim/thesis with each reason serving as a topic

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- sentence for another portion (paragraph) of the essay
- Restating claim over and over, each time adding the transitional word “because” followed by a reason will help writer choose reasons that support the claim/thesis
- Research using a variety of sources
 - District library online databases
 - Primary sources
 - Secondary sources
- Gathering evidence to support reasons using a range of research techniques
 - Using angled stories
 - Using memories
 - Using interviews
 - Using quotes
 - Using observation
 - Using statistics from articles, a poll, a survey conducted
 - Using facts
 - Using details
- Providing multiple (3) reasons sentences to support the claim/opinion
- Crafting a cohesive draft by organizing and logically sequencing reasons and evidence
- Noticing what reasons need to be further supported (lay out index cards for each reason) and gather necessary research
- Crafting three supporting paragraphs with a topic sentence and supporting details using evidence/research gathered
- Writing an introductory paragraph which introduces the opinion and briefly states the arguments
- Trying out different leads for the piece
- Writing a concluding paragraph that summarizes the point of view of the piece
- Linking opinion and reasons using words and phrases
 - For instance
 - In addition
 - In order to
 - For example
 - Consequently
 - Specifically
 - However
 - Thus
 - Rather
 - On the other hand
 - Furthermore
- Exploring the art of persuasion through craft moves
 - Repetition of phrases/words
 - Powerful/precise/ domain specific word choice
 - Varied sentence structure and length
- Acknowledging the target audience through various craft moves (e.g., leads and strong conclusions)
- Editing writing to reflect grade level expectations for grammar, punctuation, capitalization (see Common Core Language Standards)

Notes/Tips:

- ***By the end of the unit, students should be writing during the workshop time independently for a minimum of 45 minutes. Students who finish their work related to the minilesson should continue writing should continue writing in their writer’s notebooks.***
- On Demand Writing #2: To assess students’ ability to compose an essay independently (over the course of two consecutive writing workshops) the teacher administers an on demand writing piece at the end of the unit (e.g., after students have published a process piece for the unit. The teacher analyzes student writing to identify areas of strength and need. Resources (e.g., Aussie rubric) to guide assessment can be found in the District Literacy Binder. The on demand piece will highlight those strategies each student has internalized and is able to transfer to other pieces. Data collected can be used to plan whole class, small group and individualized instruction in follow up units of study related to opinion and essay writing.
- Students edit their pieces daily. Refer to the District Conventions Continuum to determine appropriate convention objectives (punctuation, capitalization, syntax) to teach during the unit. Copies are

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available in the grade level literacy binders and on the district website
http://ww3.mamkschools.org/ela/Units_of_Study.html.

- This unit includes information, fluency and technology learning outcomes that lend themselves naturally to a collaboration between classroom and library.
- Students should use district online databases (e.g., World Book Online, Scholastic Grolier). The district has purchased many high quality, engaging, multi-leveled online databases for student research. Students should not be using Wikipedia and like online sources to research.
- Students should be encouraged to continue writing in their notebooks after meeting the goal of the day's lesson.
- Students should take the notebook home every night in order to continue practicing the strategies taught and accumulate entries.
- Analyze student writing to assess whole class, small group and individualized needs.
- Meet with guided writing groups consistently as a way to differentiate writing instruction.
- The genre of essay will be new for many students. Therefore, it is critical that teachers collect a variety of examples and immerse students in analyzing, annotating and discussing the genre.
- Use shared reading to expose students to sample essays. Color coding and labeling each section of the shared piece will help students see the different components of the essay.
- It is important to implement shared writing into the instructional schedule for the intermediate grades. By having shared writing 2-3 days a week, teachers are able to model for students the type of writing that will be discussed during workshop minilessons. . During a series of shared writing sessions the teacher can model and scribe a class essay - growing compelling ideas of essays, strategies for elaborating thinking, choosing an idea and writing it as a thesis, building the structure of the essay, gathering material (evidence) for an essay, drafting and revising an essay. The teacher can use the class essay as a mentor text in workshop minilessons to model the various teaching points.
- Graphic organizers are a great support for students in planning and organizing their thinking prior to and during the process of writing
- Explicit directions for the structure of an essay are essential to the writing process. Shared writing can be a powerful tool that enhances learning of structure and craft. (see Calkins Units of Study, *Breathing Life into Essays Grades 3 - 5*)
- Teachers can make the process tactile for students by using envelopes and index cards as an organizational tool. Students write the topic sentence for each of their three arguments on the front of an envelope. They use index cards to record the different research/examples they gather to support their supporting statements. Once evidence (e.g., quotes from an interview, statistics from a survey) is jotted on an index card, the card is placed in the appropriate folder. As students continue to research and collect evidence for the various supporting statements they are able to easily see which arguments need additional support by laying out the index cards for each statement. This method is also helpful to students because they can construct their essay by laying out the envelopes and index cards as a prewriting exercise before beginning to draft their essay.
- When introducing the genre of essay, start with picture books to help students understand “sometimes writers write about an *idea* they want their readers to think about.” (*Study Driven* by Katie Wood Ray). Here is a starter list of picture books that seem to fulfill the intentions of essays and will help students generate ideas for their thesis:
 - *I Want to Be* by Thylias Moss
 - *Let's Talk About Race* by Julius Lester
 - *A Quiet Place* by Douglas Wood
 - *What You Know First* by Patricia MacLachlan
 - *Who Was the Woman Who Wore the Hat?* by Nancy Patz
- Possible mentor texts include:
 - *Small Wonder: Essay* by Barbara Kingsolver
 - *Never in a Hurry: Essays on People and Places* by Naomi Shihab Nye
 - *Thinking Out Loud: On the Personal, the Political, the Public, and the Private* by Anna Quindlen
- Students are encouraged to publish writing using word processing tools such as Word or other online publishing tools.
- **To view Grade 4 archived artifacts for the unit please visit the Grade 4 reading/writing page. Select “Resources” from the top nav bar. To access the units of study website use the link http://ww3.mamkschools.org/units_of_study/.**
- To view sample unit specific anchor charts for various units of study in reading and writing use the following link: <http://readingandwritingproject.com/resources/classroom-charts/third-eighth-grade.html>
- To view samples of student writing across genres and grade levels use the link <http://tc.readingandwritingproject.com/resources/student-writing>. For additional samples of student

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writing view the Units of Study for Teaching Writing Grades 3-5 by Lucy Calkins and Kathy Collins (Resources for Teaching Writing CD-ROM).

Professional Resources

What professional resources will be helpful in planning the unit?

- *The Common Core Writing Book* by Gretchen Owocki
- *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing, Grade 4* by Lucy Calkins et al
- *The No Nonsense Guide to Teaching Writing* Davis and Hill
- *Study Driven* Katie Wood Ray (pp. 209 - 214)
- *Units of Study for Teaching Writing: Grade 3-5* by Lucy Calkins and Cory Gillette (Breathing Life into Essays, Volume 3)
- *Units of Study for Teaching Writing Grades 3-5* by Lucy Calkins and Medea McEvoy (Literary Essays: Writing About Reading, Volume 5)
- *Crafting a Life in Essay, Story, Poetry* by Donald Graves
- *100 Ideas for Writing* by Linda Rief
- *My Quick Writes for Inside Writing* by Donald Graves and Penny Kittle
- *Guided Writing: Practical Lessons, Powerful Results* by Lori D. Oczkus
- http://ww3.mamkschools.org/ela/Units_of_Study.html (See the District Conventions Continuum)