

Mount Laurel Language Arts Curriculum  
Grade 1

**Writing Unit: Essay (Informational)**

**Stage 1: Determine the Desired Results**

**Enduring Understanding(s):**

Good writers develop and refine their ideas for thinking, learning, communicating and aesthetic expression.

Informational text is organized by topic and supporting details.

When writing to explain or offer information, writers need to know the specific text patterns or forms of organization.

Researchers gather and critique information from different sources for specific purposes.

Rules and conventions of language help readers understand what is being communicated.

**Essential Question(s):**

How do writers express themselves? How does the process shape a writer's product?

How do writers organize informational text?

Where do writers go for valid facts to back up their ideas and how do they include this information in their writing?

Why conduct research?

How do rules of language affect communication?

**Students will be able to:**

**Text Types and Purposes**

- **W.1.2.** Write informative/explanatory texts in which they name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide some sense of closure.

**Production and Distribution of Writing**

- **W.1.4.** (Begins in grade 3)
- **W.1.5.** With guidance and support from adults, focus on a topic, respond to questions and suggestions from peers, and add details to strengthen writing as needed.
- **W.1.6.** With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.

**Research to Build and Present Knowledge**

- **W.1.7.** Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., explore a number of "how-to" books on a given topic and use them to write a sequence of instructions).
- **W.1.8.** With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather

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information from provided sources to answer a question.

- **W.1.9.** (Begins in grade 4)

**Range of Writing**

- **W.1.10.** (Begins in grade 3)

**Conventions of Standard English**

- **L.1.1.** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Print all upper- and lowercase letters.

Use common, proper, and possessive nouns.

Use singular and plural nouns with matching verbs in basic sentences (e.g., He hops; We hop).

Use personal, possessive, and indefinite pronouns (e.g., I, me, my; they, them, their, anyone, everything).

Use verbs to convey a sense of past, present, and future (e.g., Yesterday I walked home; Today I walk home; Tomorrow I will walk home).

Use frequently occurring adjectives.

Use frequently occurring conjunctions (e.g., *and, but, or, so, because*).

Use determiners (e.g., articles, demonstratives).

Use frequently occurring prepositions (e.g., *during, beyond, toward*).

Produce and expand complete simple and compound declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory sentences in response to prompts.

- **L.1.2.** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Capitalize dates and names of people.

Use end punctuation for sentences.

Use commas in dates and to separate single words in a series.

Use conventional spelling for words with common spelling patterns and for frequently occurring irregular words.

Spell untaught words phonetically, drawing on phonemic awareness and spelling conventions.

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**Knowledge of Language**

- L.1.3. (Begins in grade 2)

**Vocabulary Acquisition and Use**

L.1.6. Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts, including using frequently occurring conjunctions to signal simple relationships (e.g., *because*).

**8.1 Interdisciplinary Connection: Educational Technology**

All students will use digital tools to access, manage, evaluate, and synthesize information in order to solve problems individually and collaborate and to create and communicate knowledge.

**Integration of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Themes and Skills:**

- CRP6. Demonstrate creativity and innovation.
- CRP5. Consider the environmental, social and economic impacts of decisions.
- CRP7. Employ valid and reliable research strategies.
- CRP8. Utilize critical thinking to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.

**Stage 2: Assessment Evidence**

**Performance Task:**

Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., explore a number of “how-to” books on a given topic and use them to write a sequence of instructions).

With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

**Other Forms of Assessment:**

Informative/Explanatory Writing Essay

Multiple drafts of the informative/explanatory writing essay (pre-writing, rough draft, revising, etc.)

Mini-lesson application and accountability: Student is able to effectively apply the mini-lesson concept to his/her writing

Student Productivity: Child is able to work independently for the 15-20 minute period during independent writing time

Prewriting/planning check-in- Child is able to produce a simple drawing with accompanying appropriate words/print

Grapho-phonemics: Child is able to use spelling strategies for unfamiliar words; child is able to stretch out a word and list/write the sound s/he hears and record beginning or dominant sounds

**Stage 3: Learning Plan**

**Writing Informative/Explanatory Text**

**The Components of a Minilesson**

A writing minilesson is a short lesson focused on a specific principle or procedure (Calkins 1986, 1994). A minilesson's components are: Connection, Teaching, Active Engagement, and Link. Each minilesson follows the same architecture:

**Connection:** Children learn why today's instruction is important and how it relates to the prior work. They hear the teaching point that crystallizes the lesson.

**Teaching:** The teacher shows children how writers go about doing whatever is being taught. Usually this involves a demonstration, which the teacher sets up and explains.

**Active Engagement:** Children are given a chance to practice (for a minute) what has just been taught. The teacher scaffolds their work so they can be successful.

**Link:** The teacher crystallizes what has been taught, adding it to children's growing repertoire. Children are reminded that today's lesson pertains not only to today, but to every day. The teacher often summarizes the conditions under which a child is able to reach for this new knowledge.

**The Architecture of a Conference**

Each conference is unique; however, they nevertheless do have a predictable structure.

**Research:** Observe and interview to understand what the child is trying to do as a writer. Probe to glean more about the child's intentions. Name what the child has already accomplished as a writer and remind the child to do this in future writing.

**Decide:** Weigh whether you want to accept or alter the child's current plans and processes. Decide what you will teach and how you will teach it. Although there may be several teaching decisions, think about the one teaching point that is apt to make the biggest difference in the child's writing. Plan the way in which you will provide the student with guided practice.

**Teach:** Instruct the child on critical writing strategies, i.e., adding details, creating a more effective hook, removing information that does not support the topic, or selecting a topic that the child may not know.

**Link:** Name what the child has accomplished as a writer and remind the child to do this often in the future.

**Grade 1**

**Nonfiction Writing: Procedures and Reports: Lucy Calkins and Laurie Pessah**

**Part One: Writing How to Books**

Session I. Introducing How-To Books (p. 1)

Session II. Checking for Clarity (p. 11)

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- Session III. Revising Words and Pictures (p. 21)
- Session IV. Incorporating Features of How-To Writing (p. 29)
- Session V. Revising: Learning from a Variety of How-To Writing (p. 41)
- Session VI. Editing: Using Periods, Parentheses, and Colons (p. 47)

**Part Two: Writing All About Books**

- Session VII. Introducing All-About Books (p. 57)
- Session VIII. Structuring All-About Books: The Table of Contents (p. 63)
- Session IX. Planning Each Chapter: Choosing Papers and Structures (p. 71)
- Session X. Making Labeled Diagrams (p. 81)
- Session XI. Making Texts That Teach (p. 87)
- Session XII. Revising: Learning from Each Other’s Writing (p. 99)
- Session XIII. Revising: Fitting Information into Writing (p. 107)
- Session XIV. Editing: Becoming Resourceful Word Solvers (p. 113)
- Session XV. Celebrating Nonfiction Writing: Ceremonial Book Placement (p. 121)

**Checklist of skills cited in Common Core for Writing Informative/Explanatory Text for Grade 1. This checklist will be used to inform instructional decisions for minilessons, assessing students’ writing, and as an aide when developing a rubric.**

**W 1.2. Write informative/explanatory texts in which they name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide some sense of closure.**

**Writing Informative/Explanatory Checklist**

A. Name a topic	
B. Supply some facts about the topic	
C. Provide some sense of closure.	
With guidance and support from adults, focus on a topic, respond to questions and suggestions from peers, and add details to strengthen writing as needed.	
With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.	
Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts, including using frequently occurring conjunctions to signal simple relationships (e.g., <i>because</i> ).	

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**Language Usage Checklist**

Print all upper- and lowercase letters.	
Use common, proper, and possessive nouns.	
Use singular and plural nouns with matching verbs in basic sentences (e.g., He hops; We hop).	
Use personal, possessive, and indefinite pronouns (e.g., I, me, my; they, them, their, anyone, everything).	
Use verbs to convey a sense of past, present, and future (e.g., Yesterday I walked home; Today I walk home; Tomorrow I will walk home).	
Use frequently occurring adjectives.	
Use frequently occurring conjunctions (e.g., <i>and, but, or, so, because</i> ).	
Use determiners (e.g., articles, demonstratives).	
Use frequently occurring prepositions (e.g., <i>during, beyond, toward</i> ).	
Produce and expand complete simple and compound declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory sentences in response to prompts.	
Capitalize dates and names of people.	

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Use end punctuation for sentences.		
Use commas in dates and to separate single words in a series.		
Use conventional spelling for words with common spelling patterns and for frequently occurring irregular words.		
Spell untaught words phonetically, drawing on phonemic awareness and spelling conventions.		

**Modifications**

**Special Education:**

- Use Research, Decide, Teach, Link methodology during conferring with students
- Teacher models own writing
- Show additional number of samples/examples
- Provide additional opportunities to practice
- Use individual teacher/student conferences to address student's needs
- Use small group table conferences to address needs
- Develop target vocabulary
- Scaffold comprehension when reading is used to promote reader response
- Use graphic organizers to develop key concepts/ideas
- Teach key aspects of a topic. Eliminate nonessential information.

**English Language Learners (ELLs):**

- Model Thinking Aloud
- Encourage Partner Talk
- Repeat and Clarify
- Provide a Sequence
- Encourage self-selection of topics
- Target vocabulary
- Scaffold comprehension when reading is used to promote reader response
- Scaffold content-literacy reading
- Allow products to demonstrate student's learning
- Provide on-going feedback

**Students at Risk of School Failure:**

**Gifted Students:**

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- Utilize TIME Mentor Program
- Build a relationship
- Allow flexible due dates
- Employ strategies from Classroom Instruction that Works
- Create the Opportunity to Learn strategies
- Build lessons around student interests

- Utilize flexible groups-group gifted students with other gifted students or higher-level learners
- Encourage students to explore/research concepts in depth via independent studies or investigations (individual/group)
- Differentiate product assignments. Employ differentiated curriculum to keep interest/motivation high
- Encourage creative expression and thinking by allowing students to choose how to approach a problem or assignment (problem based learning)
- Invite students to explore different points of view on a topic of study and compare the two
- Provide multiple opportunities for students to “Own Their Learning”
- Ask students higher-level questions that require students to look into causes, experiences, and facts to draw a conclusion to other areas of learning. (Webb’s Depth of Knowledge- Level 4)
- Create a room environment that encourages creativity and discovery through the use of interesting literature and reference materials. Supply reading materials on a wide variety of subjects and levels
- Provide a learning-rich environment that includes a variety of resources, media, tasks, and methods of teaching
- Focus on Habits of Mind pedagogy

**Core Instructional Materials:**

- *Calkins Units of Study in Writing* Program 2014 edition
- Newsela.com for leveled texts
- Technology/Equipment: ACTIV Board, LCD projector, sound system , CDs, DVDs, videos, internet, iPod