

Mount Laurel Language Arts Curriculum
Grade 4

Writing Unit: Essay (Opinion)

Stage 1: Determine the Desired Results

Enduring Understanding(s):

An effective opinion essay describes a topic, gives lots of reasons and explanations for a belief or way of thinking about something, and includes a concluding sentence.

Essential Question(s):

What does an effective opinion essay contain?

Common Core Standards:

Students will be able to:

Text Types and Purposes

- **W.4.1.** Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which related ideas are grouped to support the writer's purpose.

Provide reasons that are supported by facts and details.

Link opinion and reasons using words and phrases (e.g., *for instance, in order to, in addition*).

Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.

Production and Distribution of Writing

- **W.4.4.** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)
- **W.4.5.** With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.
- **W.4.6.** With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single sitting.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

- **W.4.7.** Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.
- **W.4.8.** Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information, and provide a list of sources.
- **W.4.9.** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Apply *grade 4 Reading standards* to literature (e.g., "Describe in depth a character, setting, or

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event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text [e.g., a character’s thoughts, words, or actions].”).

Apply *grade 4 Reading standards* to informational texts (e.g., “Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text”).

Range of Writing

W.4.10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Conventions of Standard English

- **L.4.1.** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Use relative pronouns (*who, whose, whom, which, that*) and relative adverbs (*where, when, why*).

Form and use the progressive (e.g., *I was walking; I am walking; I will be walking*) verb tenses.

Use modal auxiliaries (e.g., *can, may, must*) to convey various conditions.

Order adjectives within sentences according to conventional patterns (e.g., *a small red bag* rather than *a red small bag*).

Form and use prepositional phrases.

Produce complete sentences, recognizing and correcting inappropriate fragments and run-ons.*

Correctly use frequently confused words (e.g., *to, too, two; there, their*).*

- **L.4.2.** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

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.

Knowledge of Language

- **L.4.3.** Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

Choose words and phrases to convey ideas precisely.*

Choose punctuation for effect.*

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Differentiate between contexts that call for formal English (e.g., presenting ideas) and situations where informal discourse is appropriate (e.g., small-group discussion).

- **L.4.6.** Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal precise actions, emotions, or states of being (e.g., quizzed, whined, stammered) and that are basic to a particular topic (e.g., *wildlife, conservation, and endangered* when discussing animal preservation).

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 21st 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:

Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

- Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information, and provide a list of sources.

Other Forms of Assessment:

Opinion writing essay

Multiple drafts of the opinion 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

Prewriting/planning check-in: Student is able to narrow in on a particular topic, then brainstorm and develop that topic

Productivity: Student writes independently without needing teacher support, is able to revise and edit his/her work for clarity of thought and logical progression of ideas

Mechanics: Child can spell high frequency words accurately; can use his/her knowledge of our sound/symbol system (the alphabet) to spell unfamiliar words; is able to use punctuation successfully; and can look back over his/her final product to edit the final draft for clarity, cohesion, and logical expression of ideas

Teacher's anecdotal records

Stage 3: Learning Plan

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.

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Breathing Life into Essays: Grades 3-5. Lucy Calkins and Cory Gillette- Unit 3

- Session I. Collecting Ideas as Essayists (p. 1)
- Session II. Growing Essay Ideas in Notebooks (p. 13)
- Session IV. Using Conversational Prompts to Spur Elaboration (p. 45)
- Session VI. Finding and Crafting Thesis Statements (p. 71)
- Session VII. Boxes and Bullets: Framing Essays (p. 83)
- Session X. Seeking Outside Sources (p. 126)
- Session XIII. Gathering a Variety of Information (p. 162)
- Session XIV. Organizing for Drafting (p. 171)
- Session XV. Building a Cohesive Draft (p. 183)
- Session XVI. Writing Introductions and Conclusions

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Checklist of skills cited in Common Core for Writing – Opinion for Grade 4. This checklist will be used to inform instructional decisions for minilessons, assessing students’ writing, and as an aide when developing a rubric.

W. 4.1. Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

Opinion Writing Checklist

A. Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which related ideas are grouped to support the writer’s purpose.	
B. Provide reasons that are supported by facts and details.	
C. Link opinion and reasons using words and phrases (<i>e.g., for instance, in order to, in addition</i>).	
D. Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.	
Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)	
With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.	
With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single sitting.	
Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal precise actions, emotions, or states of being (<i>e.g., quizzed, whined, stammered</i>) and that are basic to a particular topic (<i>e.g., wildlife, conservation, and endangered</i> when discussing animal preservation).	

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Language Usage Checklist

Use relative pronouns (*who, whose, whom, which, that*) and relative adverbs (*where, when, why*).

Form and use the progressive (e.g., *I was walking; I am walking; I will be walking*) verb tenses.

Use modal auxiliaries (e.g., *can, may, must*) to convey various conditions.

Order adjectives within sentences according to conventional patterns (e.g., *a small red bag* rather than *a red small bag*).

Form and use prepositional phrases.

Produce complete sentences, recognizing and correcting inappropriate fragments and run-ons.*

Correctly use frequently confused words (e.g., *to, too, two; there, their*).*

Use correct capitalization.

Use commas and quotation marks to mark direct speech and quotations from a text.

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Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence.		
Spell grade-appropriate words correctly, consulting references as needed.		

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:

- 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

Gifted Students:

- 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

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- 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