

Mount Laurel Language Arts Curriculum  
Grade 6

**Writing Unit: Essay (Informational)**

**Stage 1: Determine the Desired Results**

**Enduring Understanding(s):**

When writers want to become experts on a certain topic they need to analyze and systematically investigate that topic in order to teach themselves and others about that topic/subject.

Effective writers develop and refine their ideas for crafting research-based topics by reading and analyzing a wide variety of sources to create a big-picture view of a topic.

**Essential Question(s):**

Why conduct research?

How do writers effectively gather information to develop research-based informational essays?

**New Jersey Student Learning Standards for English Language Arts**

NJSLSA.W2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

**Production and Distribution of Writing**

NJSLSA.W4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

NJSLSA.W5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

NJSLSA.W6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

**Research to Build and Present Knowledge**

NJSLSA.W7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects, utilizing an inquiry-based research process, based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

NJSLSA.W8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

NJSLSA.W9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

**Range of Writing**

NJSLSA.W10. 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 tasks, purposes, and audiences.

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**Progress Indicators for Writing**

**Text Types and Purposes**

W.6.2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

A. Introduce a topic and organize ideas, concepts, and information, using text structures (e.g., definition, classification, comparison/contrast, cause/effect, etc.) and text features (e.g., headings, graphics, and multimedia) when useful to aiding comprehension.

2. Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
3. Use appropriate transitions to clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
4. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
5. Establish and maintain a formal/academic style, approach, and form.
6. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the information or explanation presented.

**Production and Distribution of Writing**

W.6.4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, voice and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)

W.6.5. With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

W.6.6. 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 three pages in a single sitting.

**Research to Build and Present Knowledge**

W.6.7. Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.

W.6.8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources; assess the credibility of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and providing basic bibliographic information for sources.

W.6.9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research that are

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**Range of Writing**

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W.6.10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, metacognition/self correction, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

**Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening Comprehension and Collaboration**

NJSLSA.SL1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

NJSLSA.SL2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

NJSLSA.SL3. Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

**Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas**

NJSLSA.SL4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

NJSLSA.SL5. Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

NJSLSA.SL6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

**Note on range and content of student speaking and listening**

To build a foundation for college and career readiness, students must have ample opportunities to take part in a variety of rich, structured conversations—as part of a whole class, in small groups, and with a partner. Being productive members of these conversations requires that students contribute accurate, relevant information; respond to and develop what others have said; make comparisons and contrasts; and analyze and synthesize a multitude of ideas in various domains.

New technologies have broadened and expanded the role that speaking and listening play in acquiring and sharing knowledge and have tightened their link to other forms of communication. Digital texts confront students with the potential for continually updated content and dynamically changing combinations of words, graphics, images, hyperlinks, and embedded video and audio.

**New Jersey Student Learning Standards for English Language Arts Grade 6**

**Progress Indicators for Speaking and Listening**

**Comprehension and Collaboration**

SL.6.1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

1. Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under

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discussion.

2. Follow rules for collegial discussions, set specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.
3. Pose and respond to specific questions with elaboration and detail by making comments that contribute to the topic, text, or issue under discussion.
4. Review the key ideas expressed and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing.

SL.6.2. Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

SL.6.3. Deconstruct a speaker's argument and specific claims, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

### **Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas**

SL.6.4. Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate speaking behaviors (e.g., eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation).

SL.6.5. Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.

SL.6.6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

## **New Jersey Student Learning Standards for English Language Arts Anchor Standards for Language**

### **Conventions of Standard English**

NJSLSA.L1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

NJSLSA.L2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

### **Knowledge of Language**

NJSLSA.L3. Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

### **Vocabulary Acquisition and Use**

NJSLSA.L4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.

NJSLSA.L5. Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

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NJSLSA.L6. Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

**Note on range and content of student language use**

To build a foundation for college and career readiness in language, students must gain control over many conventions of standard English grammar, usage, and mechanics as well as learn other ways to use language to convey meaning effectively. They must also be able to determine or clarify the meaning of grade-appropriate words encountered through listening, reading, and media use; come to appreciate that words have nonliteral meanings, shades of meaning, and relationships to other words; and expand their vocabulary in the course of studying content. The inclusion of Language standards in their own strand should not be taken as an indication that skills related to conventions, effective language use, and vocabulary are unimportant to reading, writing, speaking, and listening; indeed, they are inseparable from such contexts.

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**Progress Indicators for Language**

**Conventions of Standard English**

L.6.1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

- A. Ensure that pronouns are in the proper case (subjective, objective, possessive).
- B. Use intensive pronouns (e.g., *myself*, *ourselves*).
- C. Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in pronoun number and person.
- D. Recognize and correct vague pronouns (i.e., ones with unclear or ambiguous antecedents).
- E. Recognize variations from standard English in their own and others' writing and speaking, and identify and use strategies to improve expression in conventional language.

L.6.2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

- A. Use punctuation (commas, parentheses, dashes) to set off nonrestrictive/parenthetical elements.
- B. Spell correctly.

**Knowledge of Language**

L.6.3. Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

- 1. Vary sentence patterns for meaning (syntax), reader/listener interest, and style/voice.
- 2. Maintain consistency in style and tone.

**Vocabulary Acquisition and Use**

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L.6.4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 6 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

1. Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
2. Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., *audience, auditory, audible*).
3. Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning or its part of speech.
4. Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).

L.6.5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

A. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., personification) in context.

B. Use the relationship between particular words (e.g. cause/effect, part/whole, item/category) to better understand each of the words.

C. Distinguish among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions)

(e.g., *stingy, scrimping, economical, unwasteful, thrifty*).

### **New Jersey Student Learning Standards for English Language Arts**

L.6.6. Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

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#### **Progress Indicators for Reading Informational Text**

#### **Key Ideas and Details**

RI.6.1. Cite textual evidence and make relevant connections to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI.6.2. Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

RI.6.3. Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes).

#### **Craft and Structure**

RI.6.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.

RI.6.5. Analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, chapter, or section fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the ideas.

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RI.6.6. Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

**Integration of Knowledge and Ideas**

RI.6.7. Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

RI.6.8. Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

RI.6.9. Compare, contrast and reflect on (e.g. practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) one author's presentation of events with that of another (e.g., a memoir written by and a biography on the same person).

**Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity**

RI.6.10. By the end of the year read and comprehend literary nonfiction at grade level text-complexity or above, with scaffolding as needed.

**8.1 Educational Technology: Interdisciplinary Connection**

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**

**Required Performance Task:**

Administer an open-ended prompt that includes the following language:

Think about a topic you have studied or know well. Write an informational or explanatory text that teaches others important and interesting information and ideas about this topic. If you want to find and use information from a book or outside source, you may bring that resource with you.

**Other Forms of Assessment:**

Informational/Explanatory writing essay

Multiple drafts of the informational/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

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: Student can spell high frequency words accurately;

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

**Active Engagement:** Students 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 students' growing repertoire. Students are reminded that today's lesson pertains not only to today, but to every day. The teacher often summarizes the conditions under which a student 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 students's intentions. Name what the student 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 student'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 student 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 student may not know.

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



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**UNIT 3**

**Research-Based Information Writing: Books, Websites, and Presentations**

**BEND I: Writing Research-Based Informational Essays**

**Session 1 — Becoming Engaged with a Topic**

[Teen activist links to video clips](#)

[Starter Packet Text Set](#)

[Anchor chart: Power-Learning and Note-Taking](#)

**Session 2 — Reading for a Wide View of a Topic: Teen Activism**

[Elephant graphic](#)

[Starter Packet Text Set](#)

[Anchor chart: Power-Learning and Note-Taking](#)

**Session 3 — Preparing to Write Informational Essays: Finding and Supporting Key Points**

[Anchor chart: Power-Learning and Note-Taking](#)

**Session 4 — Structure Sets You Free: Using Prior Knowledge to Flash-Draft Essays**

[Teacher writing exemplar: Teen activists](#)

[FIG 4-1 William's flash-draft essay](#)

[FIG 4-2 Nadell's flash-draft essay](#)

[Information Writing Checklist, Grade 6](#)

**BEND II: Drafting and Revising Information Books on More Focused Topics**

**Session 5 — The Trail of Research: Pursuing Information and Focusing in on Topics**

[Text set: Abandoned pets](#)

[Text set: Bullying](#)

[Text set: Child labor](#)

[Text set: Environment](#)

[Text set: Malala and Girls' Education](#)

[Anchor chart: Power-Learning and Note-Taking](#)

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**Session 6 — Envisioning Structures to Plan an Information Book**

[Chart: Table of Contents, Version 1](#)

[Chart: Table of Contents, Version 2](#)

[Chart: Writing Information Chapters](#)

[Chart: Common Structures for Information/Nonfiction Texts](#)

**Session 7 — Constructing Texts with Solid Bricks of Information**

[Link to Mentor Text: "Malala the Powerful"](#)

[Chart: Information Writers Combine a Variety of Information](#)

[Teacher writing exemplar: Malala](#)

[Anchor chart: Writing Information Texts Well](#)

[Chart: Example of Adding Transition Words](#)

[Chart: Some Recommended Transition Words](#)

[Chart: Common Structures for Information/Nonfiction Texts](#)

**Session 8 — Research: Gathering Specific Information and Creating Meaning**

[Anchor chart: Power-Learning and Note-Taking](#)

**Session 9 — Writing with Detail**

[Anchor chart: Writing Information Texts Well](#)

[Teacher writing exemplar: A Global Issue](#)

[Information Writing Checklist, Grade 6](#)

[Information Writing Checklist, Grade 7](#)

**Session 10 — Lifting the Level of Sentence Complexity**

[Chart: Excerpt from Cyberbullying](#)

[Chart: Ways Punctuation Helps Sentences be Clear](#)

[Information Writing Checklist, Grade 6](#)

**Session 11 — Using Text Features to Strengthen Writing**

[Teacher writing exemplar: Girls Denied Education](#)

[Link to Mentor Text: "Malala the Powerful"](#)

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[Anchor chart: Writing Information Texts Well](#)

**Session 12 — Planning Ready-to-Go Chapters**

[Chart: Ready to Go](#)

[Chart: Common Structures for Information/Nonfiction Texts](#)

[Chart: Big to Small](#)

[Chart: Details that Breathe Life into Our Writing](#)

[Chart: How to Bring Your Chapter Introductions to Life](#)

[Chart: One Way an Introduction Can Go](#)

[Anchor chart: Writing Information Texts Well](#)

**Session 13 — Quoting with a Purpose in Mind**

[Chart: Information Writers Use Quotations](#)

[Chart: Adding Quotes Example](#)

[Chart: Ready to Go](#)

[Anchor chart: Writing Information Texts Well](#)

[Chart: Transitional Phrases That Lead Readers into Quotations](#)

**Session 14 — Celebrating with a Book Exhibit Tour**

[Information Writing Checklist, Grade 6](#)

[FIG. 14-1 Nadell's informational book](#)

[FIG. 14-2 Estefany's informational book](#)

**BEND III: Digital Writing Projects: Sharing Expertise Online**

**Session 15 — Studying Digital Mentor Texts**

[Information Writing Checklist, Grades 6 and 7](#)

[Mentor text: Digital slideshow presentation](#)

[Digital Mentor Webpage and Presentation Text Sets](#)

Session 16 – Revising to Fit Digital Formats: Determining Importance

**Session 17 — Pouring into Digital Forms. . . and Publishing**

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[Links to resources](#)

**Session 18 — Celebration: Presentations, Feedback, Reflection**

[FIG. 18-1 Steven's presentation on saving the environment](#)

[FIG. 18-2 Siena's website on Malala](#)

**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
- Chunk mini-lessons over a number of days
- Develop target vocabulary
- Scaffold comprehension when reading is used to promote reader response
- Chunk reading material
- Use graphic organizers to develop key concepts/ideas
- Teach key aspects of a topic. Eliminate nonessential information
- Provide individual copies of the student's writing checklists
- Use sentence frames to promote student's thinking and writing (this is found in Lucy's Units)

**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

**Gifted Students:**

- Use Flexible grouping
- Give Independent projects
- Differentiate product assignments
- Offer student choice
- Use multiple intelligence options

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Create the Opportunity to Learn strategies</li><li>● Build lessons around student interests</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Provide opportunities to research (Individual/Group)</li><li>● Focus on Habits of Mind</li><li>● Focus on Webb's Depth of Knowledge - Emphasis on Level 4</li></ul>
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**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