

Third Grade Informational Text Writing

Background Information: The unit of study is designed to engage 3rd grade students in informational text writing that results in a descriptive, illustrated report based on personal topic selection and mini-research.

The study is more effective when the following assumptions are true.

Assumptions:

- Students can read the material (appropriate level text).
- Students have experience in Memoir writing.
- Students have experience in Narrative writing.
- Students have written personal connections to text.
- Students have had opportunities to reflect on their writing.
- Students have been exposed to Informational text.
- Students have published and celebrated in other genres.

Teaching Objectives:

Students will demonstrate that they can write well about a topic they have recently learned, or a topic they already know. They will provide evidence of the following:

- Have an interesting beginning that sets the context for a topic.
- Have organizational structure that has a clear focus throughout the piece of writing.
- Will include details and explanations that will help the reader understand the ideas clearly.
- Communicate big ideas, insights, theories that have been elaborated on or illustrated through facts, details, quotations, statistics and information.
- Uses diagrams, charts or illustrations which are appropriate and that support the text.
- Employ a straight forward tone of voice.
- Have a conclusion or ending section that is logical.
- Have a glossary of related terms.



Third Grade Informational Text Writing

Week one: Introduction

1. Immersion in the genre
2. Choosing a topic
3. Organizing Structure
4. Resources
5. Note taking

Week two: Research

1. Engaging the Reader
2. Logical flow of ideas
3. Paragraphing

Week three: Structure

1. Closure
2. Detailed Drawings
3. Captions
4. Rubric (2 days)

Week four: Publishing

1. Extraneous information (revision)
2. Editing
3. Glossary
4. Publishing
5. Celebration



Informational Text Writing
Choosing a Topic
Week 1, Lesson 3
Grade 3

Mini-Lesson Goal:

Students will self-direct their learning by choosing a topic for report writing.

TEKS 3.18A; 3.7 B,C; 3.14A,B;3.20B

Material Needed:

- Selection of informational text, which supports the topics
- Classroom Topics of interest chart
- "Real Reasons" to write reports chart generated by students in Lesson 1
- Copies of "Topic" strategy sheet for every student

Before the Lesson:

Review orally topics students could write about based on the topics of interest chart

Mini-Lesson

Connection:

Guide students to narrow their topic by asking themselves: "What do I want to know more about?" or "I am interested in learning more about..."

Teach:

Model for the students your own selected topic on a chart using the strategy sheet. It is critical that you use think aloud to support students in making independent writing connections.

Active Involvement:

Students commit to a topic as they complete the "Topic" strategy sheet.

Link:

Students share their work from the "Topic" strategy sheet in pairs or triads.

Note to the Teacher:

Conference with students who are having difficulty making a self-directed decision on choosing topic.

Select 3 or 4 students to share with the whole group.



Name _____ Date Started _____

Topic Sheet

My possible topics:

1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____ 4. _____

Circle your selected choice.

What I already know

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

What I want to know



Informational Text Writing
Immersion
Week 1-Lesson 1
Grade 3

Mini-Lesson Goal:

Students will understand “real reasons” to write a report by using literary models, and will identify narrative informational text.

TEKS 3.14 D

Materials needed:

- Selection of non-fiction touchstone text
- Professional Readings on Non- Fiction Writing
Suggested resources: *Nonfiction Matters: Reading, Writing and Research in Grades 3-8*
by Stephanie Harvey

Prior to teaching the Lesson:

Review the features of non-fiction text. Revisit fiction touchstone texts or chapter books in order to compare fiction and non-fiction. Use fiction books that support these characteristics: beginning, characters, setting, problem/situation (plot), and ending.

Connection:

Remind students that non-fiction models are used to assist students with their own report writing.

Mini-Lesson

Teach:

Chart: “Reasons to write informational text”

Possible things to include in the chart:

- To give information about a subject
- To communicate information in different ways/styles
- To gain knowledge about a personal interest
- To find answers to questions about a topic

Active Involvement:

Student groups look at and read a variety of informational texts from the classroom library. Using post-it notes, write noticings(features of text) which should be about author’s style, kind of information, variety of topics, illustrations, pictures, table of contents, glossary etc.

Link:

Students share noticings they wrote on post-it notes. Notes can be posted on a chart for future reference



Notes to the Teacher:

Touchstone texts should be on a variety of topics. Eg. Animals, people, inventions, places, machines, events, etc. Informational text is referred to as report writing in the national standards.



Informational Text Writing
Organizing Structure
Week 1 – Lesson 2
Grade 3

Mini Lesson Goal:

Students will understand the standard features of *Print*, *Graphic Aids*, *Organizational Aids* and *Illustrations* used as tools for organizing informational text.

TEKS 3.12 C,E

Materials Needed:

- Chart tablet and markers
- Informational books that support the following features: *Print* such as bold print, size of font, italics etc; *Graphic Aids* such as diagrams, timelines, labels, graphs, maps, etc.; *Organizational Aids* such as titles, subtitles, glossary, index; *Illustrations* such as pictures, drawings and photographs.

Mini Lesson

Connection:

As readers of informational text, we choose literature that interests us by its catchy title, search for specific information listed in the table of contents, define unfamiliar words in the glossary or jump to a page as referred by the index.

Teach and Active Involvement:

- Discuss elements of the non-fiction book chosen for the lesson. List the standard elements of non-fiction text on chart paper.

Features of Informational Text

Print Features

Title
Headings
Labels

Graphic Aids

Sketches
Maps
Graphs

Organizational Aids

Table of contents
Glossary
Index

Illustrations

Colored photos
Labeled drawings

- View the table of contents. Discuss its function. Continue with the rest of the features. When students have a clear understanding of the features in informational text, begin to consider topics of interest.
- Have students offer ideas with the whole group on interested topics. These may be charted. You may consider having each child select a different topic in order to maximize the use of available resources.



Link:

Students will begin to collect resources on topic of interest.

Encourage students to share any resources or information they may come upon related to their peers' topics.

Follow Up

Remind students that living a writerly life involves “living and breathing your topic” inside and outside of the classroom. Encourage them to visit their public library and consider gathering information from experts i.e., family members, friends, neighbors, etc.



**Informational Text Writing
Resources
Week 1-Lesson 4**

Mini-Lesson Goal:

Students will identify possible sources they can use to research their identified topic.

TEKS 3.11B,C; 3.12C-E, G; 3.20C
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Materials Needed:

- Variety of research sources: reference books, encyclopedias, magazines, people, Internet, video documentaries, atlas etc.

Before the Lesson:

- Review World Wide Web search-engine login procedures
- Review Informational Text Features chart
- Review school library search procedures. (Title, author, topic)

Mini-Lesson:

Connections:

Discuss sources they are familiar with already.

Teach:

Chart types of resources they are familiar with and those that are new resources

Include in chart:

- School library
- Public Library
- Class Library
- Video Documentaries
- World Wide Web
- Interviews

Share with students how these resources support your teacher selected topic discussed in lesson 3.

For example: “ In my research of China, I found 2 books in our school library. The public library had this additional book. On the internet, I found ...”

Active Involvement:

Students begin search in classroom library, school library, Internet, etc.

Link:

Students share the different sources they have collected so far and interesting information that they have learned about their topic.



As students share, remind the class that if they come across a source that someone else can use to let them know.

Notes to teacher:

A class visit to the school library would be appropriate at this time to review or teach search procedures. Ask librarian to assist you with this lesson. Students can be sent in groups to conduct their search in the school library during Active Involvement. This activity can be extended to the public library to include a parent/student involvement activity.



Informational Text Writing
Note Taking
Week 1 – Lesson 5
Grade 3

Mini Lesson Goal:

Students will learn note-taking strategies.

TEKS 3.11B,C; 3.12C-E,G; 3.20 C,D
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Materials needed:

- A selection of non-fiction books
- Activity page copied for each student

Connections:

Share with students that authors who write informational text organize their information by sub topics before beginning their research. Show examples from specific texts. Tell students that is very important to take good notes when collecting information as they are reading their sources. Good notes can help you remember facts and sources of information, and help them enrich their informational writing.

Mini Lesson

- Create a chart with students about what good note taking is.
- Teacher models notetaking using her own topic from lesson 3.
- Write the facts that pertain either to your subtopic (notetaking activity sheet) or questions you may have generated.

Active involvement:

- Have each student fill out one of the note taking activity pages.
- After gathering a number of facts that answer their questions, they can put the facts into complete sentences for their report paper.



Notetaking Activity

Subtopic

My Connections

Facts

-
-
-
-
-

Source

Subtopic

My Connections

Facts

-
-
-
-

Source



Informational Text Writing
Engaging the Reader
Week 2 - Lesson 1
Grade 3

Mini Lesson Goal:

Students will write an introduction to their informational text piece in a simple, concise, interesting and creative way.

TEKS 3.18B;3.19A,D

Materials Needed:

Excerpts with strong leads from resources such as:

- *Ranger Rick* Magazine excerpt
- *National Geographic World* Magazine
- *Zoobooks* Magazine

Prior to teaching the lesson:

Review the features of a good introduction/lead as previously discussed in narrative writing. A good lead or powerful introduction impacts the reader and invites him/her to continue reading.

Mini Lesson:

Connections:

Revisit the good introductions chart used for narrative writing. Ask students if the attributes would differ for informational writing. If so, how? Point out that this lesson's focus will be on introductions for informational writing.

Teach:

Begin by reading an introduction from one of the selected resources. Ask students to share if the author has instilled interest for them to continue reading the rest of the article. Discuss why. We are going to talk about introductions and the impact they have on the reader.

Active Involvement:

Distribute informational books, magazines etc. with different types of introductions for students to peruse. Does it grab their attention? Is it creative and interesting? Discuss with partners and as a whole group; share what makes the introduction creative and interesting. Chart these attributes of effective introductions.

Link:

Students will create or revise the introductions to their informational writing pieces. Remind students to refer to the good introductions chart.

Note to the teacher:

At the end of the lesson have students share successful introductions.



Informational Text Writing
Logical Flow of ideas
Week 2 - Lesson 2
Grade 3

Mini Lesson Goal:

Students will understand how to connect their thoughts from one sentence to the next so that their writing shows a smooth and logical flow of ideas.

TEKS 3.18B;3.19A

Materials Needed:

- Excerpts from informational texts that demonstrate a logical, sequential flow of ideas

Prior to teaching the lesson:

Review the attributes of good organizational techniques previously discussed in narrative writing. Discuss the importance of connecting one idea with the next, both in sentences as well as in paragraphs. Review also the use of transitional words that support the ideas being connected.

Mini Lesson:

Connections:

The flow of clear ideas is important in informational text as well as in any form of writing. Connecting a thought from the previous sentence is one way to do this.

Teach:

Show students an excerpt from selected texts that illustrate how authors connect their ideas through their sentences creating a flow of ideas

Active Involvement:

In partner groups have students discuss the flow of ideas that exist in each sentence and/or paragraph in sample texts. When they return to their desks they should reread their piece and revise as appropriate to ensure a logical flow of ideas. Conference with students to achieve a coherent, logical written piece.

Link:

As the students continue their informational writing they should be vigilant that a flow of ideas exists between each sentence and paragraphs.



Informational Text Writing
Paragraphing
Week 2 -Lesson 3
Grade 3

Mini Lesson Goal:

Students will be introduced to the purpose and the process of using paragraphs in their writing. Students will organize their ideas into paragraphs and use a topic sentence to initiate their main idea at the beginning of each paragraph.

TEKS 3.18B;3.19A.D

Materials Needed:

- Informational text excerpts on transparencies that show a piece of text written as continuous text and then written with paragraphs.

Prior to teaching the lesson:

Review with the students the importance of organizing their information. Paragraphs make their writing easier to read because the information is organized around separate ideas.

Mini Lesson:

Connections:

Remind students of the importance of thinking in paragraphs in order to organize their information. It is easier and more inviting for the reader to understand the information being read.

Teach:

Show on the overhead or give a copy of the prepared excerpts to the students.

Allow students to read both versions.

Let them discuss the difference in clarity between the readings.

Discuss their reflections about both pieces of writing.

Remind students of the purpose for paragraphing.

Paragraphs give the reader clarity and order to what is being read.

Active Involvement:

Show on the overhead the excerpt written as continuous text. Allow students to Partner-Talk by discussing their impressions as they read the information. After giving feedback on the format and on the understanding of the piece, have students work with a partner to separate the text into paragraphs and underline or point out the topic sentence. Now show the second text written in paragraph form. Discuss and compare their work to that of the author's.



Link:

Students will reread their writing and organize their informational writing around specific ideas/subtopics as paragraphs. They will add a topic sentence if one is not available for each of their paragraphs.

Note to the teacher:

You may need to pre-teach the concept of topic sentences prior to this lesson.



Sample Rubric Informational Report Writing

Performance Element	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Chosen Topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Writer knows firsthand a lot about the chosen topic * Topic is focused on a specific subject 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Writer knows something about the topic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Writer knows a little about the topic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Writer knows very little about the topic.
Organized Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Writer presents information in an organized, useful and interesting way. * Reader can easily follow and understand. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Writer doesn't present information in an organized, useful or interesting way.
Expert Tone of Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Writer clearly blends own knowledge and experiences with topic. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Report consists of a list of actual information on the topic.
Details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Writing contains plenty of specific details and facts supporting the topic. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Writing has few specific facts and lacks details that explain topic.
Graphics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Graphics support meaning of text. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Graphics don't relate to/ or support text.

Performance Task: This particular rubric is written as a tool guide to help teachers get started. Rubrics must be created with the active participation of students and should utilize their language.



Informational Text Writing
Closure
Week 3 -Lesson 1
Grade 3

Mini Lesson Goal:

Students will demonstrate an understanding of closure or endings in informational text. They will realize its relevance and discover that the ending is the part that stays with the reader when he or she is finished.

TEKS 3.18B; 3.19A,D

Materials Needed:

- *A New true Book: Farm Animals* by Karen Jacobsen
- *A Cold is Nothing to Sneeze* at by Susan Perry
- *Farming* by Gail Gibbons
- *Make me a Peanut Butter Sandwich and a Glass of Milk* by Ken Robbins
- Any book may be used that summarizes or wraps up the gist of the story within the closure.

Prior to teaching the lesson:

Read aloud all or some of the above books.

Mini Lesson:

Connections:

As writer's, ending a piece is the most difficult, partly because we run out of things to say or write. As students read their pieces, some will seem like they have run out of gas and come to a halt without a true closing in mind.

Teach:

Read the ending pages of the books listed in the materials needed.

Ask students what the authors did to bring closure to their piece.

Discuss and chart findings. We are going to discuss closures and the impact they have on the reader. Demonstrate how an author can close a piece of writing by summarizing, creating an image, a reflection, a quote or an interesting fact not yet mentioned in the story.

Active Involvement:

Distribute informational books, magazines, etc. with different types of closure for students to peruse. Students will work with a partner to discuss the types of endings and how they connect to the topic. Have students write a "try it" closing in their Writer's Notebook.



Link:

Students are to examine their piece and consider ending their writing with a summarization of the topic, a quote, a story, an image, or an interesting fact.



Informational Text Writing
Detailed Drawings
Week 3-Lesson 2
Grade 3

Mini-Lesson Goal:

Students will learn how to include detailed drawings in their informational reports.

TEKS: 3.12E

Materials needed:

- *The Great Kapok Tree* by Lynn Cherry or similar informational texts of your choice that support content with detailed drawings
- chart tablet/markers
- drawing paper /art supplies

Prior to the Lesson:

Connections:

Review with the students how authors use visuals (maps, drawings, pictures, photos etc.) to enrich and support the information they are providing the reader. Share with students that drawings are important in informational reports. They should think about how drawings in books or reports help you the reader. Ask students why it is easier or more effective to get information across through a drawing.

Teach:

Read *The Great Kapok Tree* or similar text of your choice to illustrate how drawings support informational text. Ask students to pay close attention to the drawings. Let students share specific noticings related to each drawing and the context it supports. Chart noticings.

What did you notice about the drawings? Where are the illustrations/photos most helpful?

Active Involvement:

Ask students to think how they will teach or inform the reader of the facts and details they have learned through their own research. Let them share with a partner.

Link:

Students will now have the opportunity to revisit their content and insert (drawings, photos, illustrations etc) into their writing. Conference with students to become aware of where the drawings best support their writing.



Informational Text Writing
Writing a Caption
Week 3-Lesson 3
Grade 3

Mini-Lesson Goal:

Students will learn how to include captions that support graphics (detailed drawings, illustrations, photos, maps etc) in their informational reports

TEKS 3.12E 3.20B

Materials Needed:

- chart tablet/markers
- drawing paper/art supplies
- notebook/notes
- photos with captions/clipboards
- informational texts/newspaper clippings/magazines (*Zoo books, Ranger Rick, Scienceland, National Geographic* etc.)

Prior to teaching the Lesson:

Connections:

Remind students that as they have been looking at different informational texts, a specific feature such as captions, is almost always evident and has great importance in informational writing. Captions specifically support the text by giving additional information.

Teach:

Show several samples of informational text captions from the collection of materials. Point out how the captions describe or provide additional informational support to each graphic.

Active Involvement:

Allow students to work in pairs or triads. Let them peruse available informational texts in your classroom. Let them discuss their findings on the role the captions play in the texts they are reading. Discuss as a whole group students' observations. Share a few examples.

Link:

Ask students to begin writing captions that will support their selected graphics chosen for their report from the previous lesson.

Follow Up:

Students may continue researching at home by viewing additional captions and how they are used to support graphics.



Informative Text Writing
Developing a Rubric
Week 3-Lesson 4
Grade 3

Mini Lesson Goal:

TEKS 3.1D 3.19A

Students will develop an informational report rubric using the attribute chart.

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper and markers
- Previously made charts
- Chart on Choosing a Topic
- Chart on informational report writing attribute chart

Prior to teaching the Lesson:

- Set up the rubric chart with the appropriate number of headings and boxes
- Remember that all rubrics are based on charts that come out of the mini lessons

Connections:

Review with students how rubrics have guided and supported their writing so far. Go over some specific supportive features the Narrative rubric contained.

Teach:

- Teacher and students will create a Informational Report writing Rubric. The informational attribute chart will be a mayor component in the development of this rubric.
- Ask students to look at all the charts that are related to informational report writing and observe the categories that the rubric has been divided into.
- Ask them to list what constitutes a “4” and then a “3” etc. Being specific with the middle two levels is difficult for students, and a consensus should be reached with a majority of students agreeing.

Active Involvement:

- For this lesson, all students will be active participants in the development of the rubric.

Note to the teacher:

Rubric lessons do not follow the usual writer’s workshop time frame. It will often take the entire writer’s workshop time to develop each rubric. This lesson may be extended into two days if necessary.

Also, be sure the rubric includes all of the genre attributes and text features/structures that you’ve taught. Include: graphic aids, illustrations, captions, organizational structure, introductions, endings, and glossaries.



Informational Text Writing
Extraneous Information
Week 4 – Lesson 1
Grade 3

Mini Lesson Goal:

Students will learn how to identify and remove extraneous information from their piece by deleting unnecessary parts that the reader already knows.

TEKS 3.18C 3.19A,C

Materials Needed:

Any piece of nonfiction writing that includes information that the reader already knows. Make a transparency of the piece and copies for each student to use.

Mini Lesson:

Connection:

Explain to students that nonfiction writing has to make a connection between three essential elements: the writer, the topic and the reader. The reader agrees to continue reading so long as the writer keeps the reader interested and teaches them something new about the topic. Share with students that the informational books that most draw our attention are those with new information. This is what students should strive for!

Teach:

Make a transparency an informational text excerpt of your choice. Discuss how new facts build interest for **you** the reader. Highlight or underline the facts new to you.

Sometimes young writers include in their informational writing, information that they previously knew or they repeat some information. Use a transparency of an informational text excerpt to model how extraneous information affects the reader's interest. Model by using brackets around information that makes the reader say "Yeah, yeah, I already knew that!"

Active Involvement:

Have students work in pairs and read the piece to each other again. Students will now work on the rest of the excerpt. Instruct students to bracket information that the reader already knows.

Link:

Students reread their own writing and think about parts that the reader might already know. They should delete those parts. Explain to students that this does not make their piece shorter, instead it gives them a chance to provide more interesting facts.



Informational Text Writing
Partner Editing
Week 4-Lesson 2
Grade 3

Mini Lesson Goal:

Students will work with a partner to help edit their writing piece.

TEKS 3.18 C,D 3.19 B 3.16 A-H 3.15 B

Materials Needed:

- Editing Checklist Chart
- Post-its

Prior to teaching the Lesson:

Make copies of editing checklist that students have previously used

Connection:

Remind students that all published books go through a process of adding and changing information (revision and editing) in order to make it better and get it closer to publication. Students should be familiar with this process from their narrative writing or other writing genres. Writers go to other writers to get help editing their writing pieces. Explain to students that they too will have an opportunity to talk with a peer author to help them edit their piece.

Mini Lesson:

Teach:

Brainstorm and create an editing checklist with students. Record their suggestions on chart paper.

Possible responses:

<p style="margin: 0;">Editing Checklist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">___ spelling errors___ periods___ exclamation points___ question marks___ commas___ capital letters



Active Involvement:

Have students work in pairs and look at their piece together. Remind students to refer to the editing checklist. Have them look for one thing from the chart at a time. Partners are to write editing suggestions on a post-it.

Link:

Students will return to their own writing and edit their drafts using partner's suggestions. Choose some students to share the editing changes that they made to their drafts.



Informational Text Writing
Creating a Glossary
Week 4 – Lesson 3
Grade 3

Mini Lesson Goal:

Students will identify terminology in their topic that may require definition. Therefore, students will create a glossary in their finished writing.

TEKS 3.8C 3.12G

Materials Needed:

- Chart tablet and markers
- *Predator!* By Bruce Brook
- Selection of books that use glossaries in the back or within the text
- Copies of sample pages from *Predator's!* glossary
- Reference books: dictionaries, thesauri, etc.
- Science and Social Studies texts currently in use.

Connection:

There have been many times we come across new words in nonfiction that we are not familiar with. There is a place in the text, book or report that helps us understand the meaning of those words. Remind students that glossaries were one of the features we noted in nonfiction text writing.

Mini Lesson

Teach:

Discuss how nonfiction authors help readers understand unfamiliar words by providing the meaning of the words in a **glossary**. Show students specific examples with informational texts with glossaries. Share that the words found in a glossary help readers understand their meaning. Point out that the definitions in glossaries are simple and short and based on the contextual meaning in the text.

Using your own piece (if you have been writing along with your class) or a student's draft, model determining which words should be put into a glossary.

Active Involvement:

Students will revisit their piece with a partner to determine which words will be part of their glossary.

Link:

Students will create a glossary for their informational text.



Informational Text Writing
Creating a Glossary
Week 4 – Lesson 4 and 5
Grade 3

Mini Lesson Goal:

Students will publish and celebrate their nonfiction writing.

TEKS 3.1D 3.14C 3.18F 3.20D

Materials Needed:

- Computers (if students will be typing their final copy)
- Any other material you wish to use to publish

Connection:

Remind students that they have previously published in other writing genres. Emphasize that as writers, our goal is to produce a polished piece.

Mini Lesson

Teach and Active Involvement:

Remind students of the importance of being careful not to make mistakes as they transfer their information from their final draft to their published copy.

Link:

Students will publish their piece.

Teachers Note:

It may take students more than one day to publish. Celebrate as previously done in other genre studies.

