

**Understanding Nonfiction Genres:
Empowering the Mind behind the Pen-
Teaching Mind's to Empower their Readers**
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Overview

In the Pittsburgh Public Schools, every year students are required to complete specific requirements for a Standards-Based Portfolio, which teachers pass on to the next grade level. For second grade students, in the Writing Exhibit portion of the portfolio, there are four required entries focusing on three genres of writing: narrative writing, informational writing, and descriptive writing. This curriculum unit will provide teachers with a set of genre assignments that are suitable for teaching students how to successfully meet the requirements of this section of the portfolio.

Along with implementing the required language arts curriculum, this unit will use some familiar teaching methods along with a unique approach to help both teachers and students better understand the teaching and learning of nonfiction genres. Rubrics, graphic organizers, and the components of Writer's Workshop, will aid in this process. In addition, an exciting new tool, DocuScope visualization technology, will be introduced and implemented, to a degree, to assist teachers in guiding students toward the language variation they need to support their writing across genres. Components of this resource will provide a new outlook on language for both teachers and students of nonfiction genres. The goal is to change the direction of the teaching and learning of writing to focus on the experience of the reader and how the writer guides this experience.

Rationale

Second grade students' minds have an abundance of ideas and thoughts. They are eager to join groups of peers and tend to learn well in these groups. In my classroom, I group children in teams of four students each, which change with each quarter of the school year. This allows all students to experience working

with all of their peers throughout the school year. Second graders are very active, finding high interest in hands-on activities that assist them in learning by doing. The learning environment should be that of a consistent environment, with activities to hold their interest. This type of surrounding will also give them the desire to be comfortable at taking risks.

Second graders have wonderful imaginations and can be successful story tellers as well as good listeners. They respond well to imagery. Positive reinforcement is necessary to their well being. It is also important to begin to model accepted criticism techniques that will allow students to feel comfortable when sharing their work with their team members or to the entire class. I especially enjoy the combination of the opposing characteristics of this age. Second grade students are gradually growing more independent, yet they are still striving for some guidance from their teachers and their peers.

As a first year second grade teacher, I found that it was necessary for me to gain a deeper understanding of the writing process and then discover how I could relate my knowledge to the teaching of nonfiction genres. This was an essential step that would allow me to better serve the educational needs of my students. After learning more about the process, I felt more successful in creating student's interest in writing. Marc, who at the beginning of the year would comment, "I don't want to write," as he struggled to find the words to begin his assignment, was a challenge to me. Since then, he has eagerly inquired several times during the second half of the year, "Are we going to write today?" I was able to expand my intelligence of the writing process and genres so they could become more confident and natural at using theirs. This required generating my own ideas and thoughts about writing and forming them into strategies to be used to teach the writing process and genres simultaneously. With this change in the way I viewed language came along a whole new world of understanding which I passed along to my students.

I provided them with a layer of knowledge that tends to be hidden in a language arts curriculum. They began to see the significance of language to their world. Each small decision they made, the words they chose to put on the page, had an affect on a reader's experience. Genre is important, not to merely group texts, but to show how changing language changes experiences. Arthur Applebee, from the Center on English Language and Achievement agrees. He states, "Conversations about genre become more interesting to the students when the curriculum is planned around them rather than around individual texts." In one second grade classroom that he studied, the teacher established a continual conversation around genre and author studies. Throughout the year, students discussed genres comparing and contrasting books by the same authors, as well as by different authors writing in similar genres. As opposed to exploring the books in isolation, these second graders were "engaged in rich dialogue throughout the

year.” Simultaneously, they developed a more substantial understanding of the concept of genre and how authors rely upon and modify genre conventions “in order to achieve their particular effects.”

When students are asked to write, they are expected to choose a particular topic and to organize the contents, adding details, all the while paying attention to conventions. Many students fail to realize, or fail to be told, that they are writing for an audience. I began to add to the creativity of the writing process by presenting writing as more of an art form to the students. I believe writing, the words on the page, can be compared to a performance or a piece of art. Dr. David S. Kaufer similarly views, “language as the material and words are a material surface.” Students can benefit from looking at their writing as a design on the page. I feel a connection of writing to art is necessary. This will allow students to begin to understand that they are creating an experience for the reader, they are in control. This idea should be empowering to students. When the minds of the students are empowered, they will be able to then empower their readers.

Howard Gardner explains that in Chinese primary schools, “children produce-ink-and brush paintings of striking beauty and delicacy.” When a student is learning the art of making these Chinese characters, the teacher must clearly define each stroke continually, in the exact way they need it to be articulated. He goes on to explain that, “after being exposed to “live” and “text” models, the child practices each stroke over and over again. Teachers observe these practice sessions and often aid their charges by “holding the hand.”” Skeptics might think that this method would only produce copies, however many students are able to produce interpretations of objects that they haven’t been taught to paint. They could not have painted these objects before their instruction began. I agree with Gardner when he says, “this careful attention to models and practicing of brush strokes develop some skills that transfer surprisingly well.” Just as with teaching the various brushstrokes, each genre represents a different experience for the reader. Students begin to see for themselves that the changes in writing are in the “small strokes”. The picture is getting clearer to them. A change of language changes the experience for the reader.

Joyce Maynard, in sharing her beliefs about writing a story with an authentic character, reminisces about the art in writing. “The process that comes to mind here, that most resembles the one I undergo when I embark on bringing a character to life on the page, is that old art class exercise I still love, the contour drawing. You set your pencil on the paper and keep your eye firmly locked on the face of your subject, and then you let the pencil begin to move.” This is yet another example of an author merging art concepts with writing techniques. This union allows the writer’s experience to guide the readers experience more smoothly.

In order to do this successfully with writing, students need to develop language awareness and increase the vocabulary of what they can do. The reader lives through the events on the page. The writer is transporting the inside words of the mind to the outside page. They are communicators that have a message for the reader. They think about the reader's feelings. It makes sense to teach writing as a studio art. Gardner believes, "it is not the mechanics of writing that is absent..., but the knowledge about when to invoke these skills and the inclination to do so productively in one's own daily life". Students need to be motivated and internalize these skills. These skills will in turn provide building blocks for higher level middle school skills. Ralph Fletcher talks about, "creating a unique environment where students get to walk in the shoes of writers nearly everyday." This thought needs to be complemented with keeping in mind that the reader of their writing is not too far behind these steps.

Once we get students to the point of understanding the significance of changing words, we need to give them a tool to do this with. This is where DocuScope fits in. It is a software that allows students to view their writing in a new medium. It is an ingenious way to give teachers and students a new vision to the writing process. It gives students a muscle memory of writing a particular form. It does not, however, deal with grammar, sentence style, or conventions. DocuScope cannot alone produce proficient pieces of work. With this technology, the student assignments can be color coded, by placing strings of words into six color groups. This process will be discussed later in the Classroom Activities section of the unit. Even though I did not have access to the DocuScope software in my classroom, I was able to teach its concepts and ideas, focusing on developing the language required for each genre of writing.

Students need to gain a means of looking more closely, more colorfully at their own work. A more hands-on medium for students to examine their writing was necessary. I often became frustrated when trying to guide my students to improve their writing through revision. It's a challenge for them to visualize what their writing is lacking. I feel the hands-on experience with this visualization technique will provide a stained glass window of opportunity for them. When a student is ready for revision of their draft, their writing then is presented to them in color. This can initially be done by the teacher, who underlines words in color, corresponding to the color system. Eventually, students should have a enough experience with the color system and can use the color-coded word banks to do this on their own. With the DocuScope software, words are typed into the computer and are matched with corresponding color groups. This is an effort to automate the color system by applying color to text automatically. The color system can be successful on its own, yet it is even more beneficial in conjunction with the software.

We all know that children have diverse learning styles and use of these concepts (and tool if available) will benefit all styles greatly. This makes it easier to communicate to students what there is to see in language and encourages them to look for themselves. The language variation becomes visible and tangible to them. I feel that teachers and students will simultaneously benefit from this visual medium. It also gives teachers an exciting path to opening their student's eyes to the many possibilities of expanding the colorful horizons of their capabilities.

I find Writers Workshop to be a valuable in the teaching of writing. It is an environmental centerpiece in my writing instruction. Therefore, it will also be necessary to introduce these views about language variation and genre within all components of Writers Workshop. Whether through sharing their work in the Author's chair or assisting the teacher in modeled writing, students will gain exposure to writing for an audience. Mini lessons are valuable in honing in on a particular area, maybe a convention, that students are having trouble with. Additionally, mini lessons can be beneficial in developing banks of color words with the class. The components of Writer's Workshop lend a hand to supplement the techniques of the color system. They offer a way for teachers and students to be more successful in producing great work. The use of rubrics and graphic organizers also prove to be valuable. The implementation of these will be discussed later in the curriculum unit.

Objectives

In this curriculum unit, students will be able to successfully complete a personal narrative, and pieces of narrative, informational, and descriptive writing. The color system, components of Writers Workshop, the use of rubrics, graphic organizers and a connection to the state standards will collectively be used to assist students in completing these goals. While doing this, we will accommodate the student's identity as a designer of several organized pieces of writing. Students are given clear expectations of the genre assignments before they begin, and these objectives are continually reinforced, while they work on them. We need to meet the developmental needs and interests of our students to make them successful learners. Students will be able to discriminate language for the purpose of writing in different genres. A main objective of this process is to both educate and entertain themselves and their readers.

Narrative Writing

Narrative writing requires students to tell a story. They recall personal experiences and events and engage the reader by creating an enjoyable text. In this text, the writer develops an organizing structure that uses language to develop a setting, plot and characters. There is conflict and closure. The writer can explore, observe and reflect upon a wide range of experiences. In this unit, students will be required to produce a personal narrative; a self portrait, and a non-fictional narrative piece of writing. Tales are also a type of writing that would fit into the narrative genre.

Informational Writing

Informational writing requires students to share knowledge. They will convey messages, instructions and ideas by making connections between the familiar and unfamiliar. In this genre of writing, the writer creates a text that develops a main idea that communicates a perspective on a particular topic. This writing also has an organizing structure that is appropriate to a specific purpose, audience, and content. In this unit, students will be required to produce a how-to-paragraph. Other options for this type of writing can include a letter, news story, or a report.

Descriptive Writing

Descriptive writing requires students to represent the features of a particular topic utilizing sensory words. This is a form of writing that creates vivid impressions of a person, place, object, or event for the reader. This type of writing shows the reader, rather than telling them. Imagery is necessary to this type of writing. In this unit, students will be required to produce a paragraph that describes, focusing on either an animal or an object.

Strategies

Since there are several meaningful strategies that are used in this curriculum unit, I will talk about each separately and then combined to show how their uniqueness will aid in the effectiveness of their combined efforts. There are many aspects of teaching writing, from the steps of the writing process to recognizing different genres of writing and on to utilizing writing conventions. For teachers and students to be successful they must have an understanding of all of these aspects. This unit focus is on the actual process of writing and how understanding genres can coincide with this process. Even though attention to writing conventions is necessary, it is only a small part of this unit.

The district language arts curriculum has a set of guidelines to follow. First, the student's writing is connected to their reading. Then, a student model is analyzed, focusing on organization and elaboration. Next, the students organize their thoughts during the pre-writing and drafting stages. This is where a graphic organizer is introduced. Then, students take turns reading each other's work aloud and give constructive suggestions for improvement in the editing and revision stages. Finally, students proofread their work and publish clean copies to be displayed. Publishing helps to authenticate their purpose for writing. Ralph Fletcher feels, "they develop a genuine feel for writing- its power and purpose." They feel the presence of a strong sense of audience and discover real readers are interested in their words and ideas. This step will also provide literature for the community of the classroom.

Before the student starts writing on their own, they should be introduced to the genre with a writing model. I had often used a student model provided in the curriculum to accomplish this task. I am now using writing from my childhood, as well as building an archive of student work that is appropriate to each genre. In this step, teachers and students collectively discuss and develop criteria and see how well the model meets it. They establish specific goals to aim for in their writing. This is in the form of a rubric

During the pre-writing and drafting stages, students should refer to these criteria to review the important aspects of organization and elaboration that should be included in their writing. In the revision stage, they can check with the rubric to see how their writing can be improved. While proofreading, they can add to grammar, usage, punctuation and sentence variety. After writing, they are encouraged to score their own writing in pairs or small groups. It is valuable to have two competent students demonstrate this activity to the class. Over time, all students will be able to practice this technique. Through this peer assessment they can highlight parts which will be used to view progress over the year. These steps will also allow for students to assume more responsibility for their writing.

Even though it is not a required part of the PPS language arts curriculum, I feel it is necessary to implement Writer's Workshop and its components in the teaching of writing genres. Direct instruction, through modeled writing, can emphasize major writing forms, purposes and processes. Helpful suggestions to improve organization and elaboration can be accomplished through mini lessons. Writer's Workshop guides students in the writing process by taking time out to have group discussions around particular conventions or concepts that need to be worked on. Students can orally share their work in the Author's chair and gain valuable insights from peer reflections. Mini lessons come in handy because the

material presented is one idea, quick, and to the point rather than a long drawn out lesson that will not hold their interest. The components of Writer's Workshop allow you to successfully teach various levels of students.

Rubrics are a tool used to score a student's work. It lists criteria for evaluating the work and describes different levels of success in meeting those criteria. It can be a useful assessment tool for teachers and students. I've found that creating the rubrics with the students leads to the most successful use of this tool. Using a rubric, which will be student and teacher generated, they will develop a piece of writing that meets specific criteria. Graphic organizers help students to organize their thoughts during the pre-writing and drafting stages. It is a beneficial tool to assist in getting them started on their writing without being overwhelmed.

Through the use of visualization techniques, the color system, students will be able to view their writing through a colorful means. This process allows students to be more involved in the editing (revision and proofreading) stage of their writing. Along with teacher conferences and peer response, using components of the DocuScope software, proves to be a communication system that is efficient, a kind of interactive tutor. To ensure student involvement in this process, it is necessary to include them in its implementation. Rather than merely introducing them to words that fit into each category, lists of words should be developed together. They are guided through discussions and develop dictionaries of words that would coincide with each genre. In a sense it will mirror a type of word wall, characterized by colors.

I feel this process will make the students more confident and eager to take risks in their writing. Along with the discussions and examples of work, students will be encouraged to keep journals and banks of words to be used over the course of the year. The students will develop sensitivity to the writing process and truly understand that they are writing to an audience. Coupled with readings that are good models of each genre, I plan to develop a student archive of work that will give students a basis of knowledge to prepare them for their expectations in writing. Representational composition, the color system, discriminates the written language.

Classroom Activities

The following are classroom activities that can be used to support the ideas of the curriculum unit. Since every classroom differs, you will have to adapt the environment and activities to meet your needs. These lessons are developed in relation to the national, state, and local standards that all Pittsburgh Public School curricula must meet. The state has developed 62 content standards within 10 Core Curriculum Frameworks to meet the national standards. In this unit, the focus is

on the Communication Standards. In the following activities, I will refer to these standards by number.

To start this curriculum unit successfully, a lesson which clearly shows students that they are writing for an audience is necessary. This lesson addresses the communication standards C3, C5, C6,C7 and C9. *On the Day You Were Born*, by Debra Frasier, will be read to the class. This writer clearly exhibits that she is writing for an audience, you the reader. By using language that speaks directly to the reader, each child will feel that this book has been written solely for them. After the book has been read, a discussion can begin about the language the reader chose to make her audience clear to the reader. A list can be developed of the specific vocabulary that was used; such as **your** birth and **you** were born.

To deepen the knowledge your students have about writing and “what good writers do”, an extension or a follow-up to this lesson is essential. A second reading of the story, without showing the pictures, can be used as an introduction to the color system, the coded characteristics of different genres of writing. Explain to the students that they are going to begin to learn how to color their words to help them become better writers.

This is a reference of the color system categories for the teacher. A child friendly version is also necessary that you may want to develop on your own. For example, the red category can be paired with the word head for a quick and rhyming reminder that these words are in our minds.

Red-the student has succeeded in making their mind visible to the reader-inner thought (narrative)

Orange- taking the reader forward or backward in time-thinking ahead and back-past and future (narrative)

Gold-information in the world of text-establishing social ties to the reader-reasoning and thinking

Green-information and direction signals to the reader-giving the reader left to right guidance-pronouns -(informational)

Blue- scenic and spatial description-creating visual images and scenes-(descriptive)

Purple-temporal description-moving the reader across time and place- verbs(ed) (descriptive)

In the extension or follow-up, students can be made aware of other types of language that were used in this story. A discussion can begin about what other elements the reader’s enjoyed in the story. This writer uses a lot of words that describe elements in the story, such as the **glittering** North Star and the Earth’s **green** lands. Explain to students that this would be an example of blue language.

This type of language creates clear pictures for the reader. When a writer wants to peak reader interest by developing a good setting, plot and characters, they can use these kinds of descriptive words. A list of blue words can be established, using words from the book in addition to words generated by the students. To ensure that students understand this concept they can each be given a word and be asked to make it more interesting by adding a blue word.

On the Day You Were Born is also a good example of purple words. These types of words moving the reader across time and place by using verbs(ed). The writer uses a lot of words that relate to the concept of time, such as the Moon **glowed** and sea clouds **swelled**. Another word bank can be established with words from the story as well as student generated words. This should be a continual process.

The remainder of the lessons relate to the specific requirements for the Writing Exhibit portion of the Standards-Based Portfolio,

Entry 1: Personal Narrative; self portrait (inner thinking and description)
-red, blue and purple words

For this entry, I decided to use a piece of my own writing from second grade to give the students a piece of text to analyze. In this entry the students are required to write a self portrait. Their audience is someone whom has never met them, however after reading their self-portrait they will feel as though they have. This will require a balance of disclosure with convergence (enactment). The inside meets the outside with a product of writing which tells their audience about themselves.

All About Me

I have brown hair. My eyes are blue. I have five people in my family. My hobbies are reading and biking. I ride my bike a lot. I read a lot too. My favorite sport is Bat and Birdie. Every time I go to my Pap's I play. Up my Pap's I ride my bike. Sometimes I take my friend Kim. I am 7 years old.

This type of writing should have a good mixture of red, blue and purple words. Since the students have not yet classified the red category, it will be done at this point. Red words are used to let the reader know what the writer is thinking. The writer should use words like I, me and my. I will go back to my piece of writing and underline these words in red. In my writing I made good use of these types of words.

There should also be the presence of blue words. These words have been discussed and can be expanded upon. I use words like brown and blue which fit into this category. Many students use words like really and very a lot to describe. The color system will prevent them from doing that and will guide them to make better word choices. I will remind students that I need a good mixture of the colors. Adding to the blue color bank, family words, like Pap (grandfather), will fit into this category. When making themed words lists or word walls, they can be color coded to use for other assignments.

Lastly, I need to discuss purple words. These are words that move the reader across time and place. Students have previously learned that verbs will fit into this category. Inform them that verb phrases, such as **came to the** and **was coming** fit into this group. I did not have any of these types of words in my writing. Another type of purple word talks about the duration of this time. I wrote that I ride my bike a lot. In order to show the students that revision is always necessary, even for teachers, I will choose a better word to express this idea. So that I can add some color, specifically purple, to my writing, I change the sentence to say: I ride my bike **everyday**. This makes the idea clearer to the reader.

Students will then begin working on their own piece of writing. Since this is their first experience with the color system, I like them to just write what comes to them. Initially this is done without a graphic organizer. Later on, one will be used to allow students to list words in the red, blue and purple color groups to be used in their writing. This will cause them to be more careful when selecting words. These words will then be made into sentences, which will be given color by the teacher. Eventually the students will be able to use the color system on their own. Using a checklist and a rubric to students will be reminded of the elements that they need to address. Examples of these can be found in the Appendices.

Entry 2: Narrative Writing: personal story (inner thinking and description)

For this entry students will begin to discover the stories that they have to tell. Tomie DePaola is an author who does a great job of storytelling, using personal accounts from his own childhood. In *Things Will NEVER Be the Same*, A 26 Fairmont Avenue Book, he tells an account of his first day of second grade (54-63). This will assist students in understanding that they have the opportunity to tell stories from their own lives. They can choose their own topics and this will give them a sense of ownership for their writing. In this book, Tomie writes in his diary and uses the ideas in his entries to tell his stories. If a student is having a hard time getting started on their writing, you may want them to look back in their journal entries and search for possible topics there. Students are beginning to

develop an understanding that stories are a part of their lives. The classroom community can be built upon these stories, once again making their audience evident.

Students will be told that like the self-portrait, this writing has a mixture of red, blue and purple words. The difference is that they will be telling a personal story, not just details about themselves. When reading parts of the DePaola story, you can point out characteristics of the writing that they should already be familiar with, such as: beginning, middle and ending sequences, detail, dialogue, setting and characters. After first reading quality literature and discussing it, they will apply narrative elements into own writing. Students should also note the writer's use of color words adding to their word banks for further use in their writing.

For this piece of writing I have three student examples of narrative writing. These are part of the archive I am using to critique student work. These writings are from the first semester of the year:

High level-

One day I went to school. My teacher's name was Ms. Wilson. First, my teacher said, "Shaina, can you stay after school and help me clean?" "Yes," I said. Next, I went to help her clean her room. Then, we cleaned the room. Last, it was time for me to go. She gave me some candy. I said, "thank-you". She said, "you're welcome". I felt big alongside my teacher.

Middle-

My First Day In First Grade

I was in first grade. I was shy. I didn't know anyone. I wondered if it was fun. I knew my teacher. Her name was Miss White. I met Sasha and we had fun. I felt good. I made a friend.

Low-

I had fun at school. I was happy. I love Diamond. Me and Diamond play together.

Entry 3: Informational Writing: how-to-paragraph

For this entry I will have the students follow a recipe to make something, such as a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. This will provide the background knowledge they need to do understand informational writing. Use of time order words is necessary in this genre. They will also be introduced to green words,

words that give left to right guidance to the reader. The writer will then use these textual clues to guide their reader's movement through the text. **You need to** (use of pronouns) and **please be sure to** are words that would fit into the green word bank. The Dorling/Kindersly series of Eye Witness books can be used as examples of quality literature that match this genre.

Entry 4: Descriptive Writing: paragraph that describes

For this entry I will bring a pizza into the classroom. While I describe it, using my senses, I will tell students that they will be picking an object or animal to describe. In this lesson I will have students assist me with my modeled writing. I will also use my student archive of work to show examples of proficient writing and writing that needs work. When describing the pizza I will pay attention to words that may be used to describe more than one thing, causing the writer to add more details. For example, I can say it is red and round. This could also be a description for an apple. I make the following revision and say it is hot and round with red sauce.

Patricia Polacco is an excellent author that uses great descriptions in her writing. All of the color word banks necessary for this writing, green, blue and purple have been discussed previously and begun to be established. My modeled writing, the archive of student work, and readings from Polacco can add to these banks of words. The color system should be a continual process that is maintained throughout the entire school year. It is one of the most basic building blocks of the writing process, yet the one that is most frequently overlooked: language discrimination.

Annotated Bibliography/Resources:

Teacher Resources:

Calkins, Lucy. *The Art of Teaching Writing, New Edition*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1994

Fletcher, Ralph. *Live Writing: Breathing Life Into Your Words*. New York: Avon, 1999.

Fletcher, Ralph and Joann Portulapi. *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2001.

Gardner, Howard. *The Disciplined Mind: What All Students Should Understand*. Simon & Schuster New York 1999 (105-6) (186-7)

Gardner, Howard. *The Unschooled Mind: How Children Think and How Schools Should Teach*. Basic Books, 1991.

Web Sources:

Applebee, Arthur. *Engaging Students in Meaningful Conversation Leads to Higher Achievement*. Center on English Learning and Achievement Newsletter, Winter 2000. 2 June 2003

<http://cela.albany.edu/newslet/winter00/engaging.htm>

Maynard, Joyce. NYTimes.com Article: *Let Your Characters Tell You the Story*. Feb. 25 2003. Feb. 25 2003.

<http://nytimes.com>

Student Resources:

DePaola, Tomie. *Things Will NEVER Be the Same*. G.P. Putnam's Sons New York, 2003.

Frasier, Debra. *On the Day You Were Born*. Harcourt, Inc. New York, 1991

The following books may be used independently or for an author study within the curriculum unit.

Polacco, Patricia. *Pink and Say*. Philomel Books: New York, 1994.

Polacco, Patricia. *When Lightning Comes in a Jar*. Philomel Books: New York, 2002.

Polacco, Patricia. *The BeeTree*. The Putnam & Grosset Group: New York, 1993

Appendix A-Content Standards:

PPS content standards for Communication.

1. All students use effective research and information management skills, including locating primary and secondary resources of information with traditional and emerging library technologies.
2. All students read and use a variety of methods to make sense of various kinds of complex texts.
3. All students respond orally and in writing to information and ideas gained by reading narrative and informational texts and use the information and ideas to make decisions and solve problems.
4. All students write for a variety of purposes, including to narrate, inform and persuade, in all subject areas.
5. All students analyze and make critical judgments about all forms of communications, separating fact from opinion, recognizing propaganda, stereotypes and statements of bias, recognizing inconsistencies and judging the validity of evidence.
6. All students exchange information orally, including understanding and giving spoken instructions, asking and answering questions appropriately, and promoting effective group communications.
7. All students listen to and understand complex oral messages and identify their purpose, structure, and use.
8. All students compose and make oral presentations for each academic area of study that are designed to persuade, inform, or describe.
9. All students communicate appropriately in business, work, and other applied situations.

Appendix B- Self Portrait Rubric and Checklist

The rubrics in this unit are reader sensitive, using child friendly language. There are also writer sensitive checklists, also in child friendly language. This continues the notion of writing for an audience. Testable questions of the reader or reader based criteria are used.

Entry 1: Personal Narrative: Self Portrait

Self Portrait Rubric

- 4 The reader successfully develops a very clear picture of the writer.
Using the words I, me, and my, show the reader that they are the topic.
Many describing words and interesting details are used to interest the reader.
There is a title for the reader.
The reader feels as if they have met the writer.
- 3 The reader develops a picture of the writer.
Using the words I, me, and my, show the reader that they are the topic.
Describing words and details are used to interest the reader.
There is a title for the reader.
The reader feels as if they have met the writer.
- 2 The reader tries to develop a picture of the writer.
The reader has trouble deciding what the topic is.
Few describing words and details are used to interest the reader.
There is a title for the reader.
The reader does not feel as if they know the writer very well.
- 1 The reader cannot create a picture of the writer.
It is not clear to the reader what the topic is.
Describing words and details are not used.
There is no title for the reader.
The reader does not know the writer at all.

Self Portrait Checklist

- My writing has a title.
- My writing tells about myself.
- My writing uses words like I, me, and my. (red)

- My writing uses describing words. (blue)
- My writing uses details. (purple)

Appendix C: Narrative Writing Rubric and Checklist

Narrative Rubric

4

- the reader finds clear sentences including a topic sentence with a good lead
- the reader moves smoothly through a logical sequence of events
- the reader can easily focus on one topic
- the reader finds descriptive language that tells about characters, events and objects in detail
- the reader finds above grade level vocabulary
- the reader feels that the audience and purpose were successfully addressed

3

- the reader finds clear sentences including a topic sentence
- the reader moves through a logical sequence of events
- the reader can focus on one topic
- the reader finds descriptive language
- the reader finds appropriate vocabulary
- the reader feels that audience and purpose were considered

2

- the reader finds simple sentences, without a topic sentence
- the reader feels that the sequence of events does not flow
- the reader finds few details and descriptive words
- the reader finds basic vocabulary
- the reader feels there was only minimal consideration to audience and purpose

1

- the reader finds incomplete sentences
- the reader feels there is no logical sequence
- the reader finds no detail or descriptions
- the reader feels there is no consideration of audience or purpose

Narrative Checklist

- My story tells when and where the story happens.
- My story gives the details about the characters.
- My story includes what kind of problem the main character has.
- My story tells how the main character solves the problem.
- My story has a beginning, middle, and an end.
- My story has a title.

Appendix D: Informational Writing Rubric and Checklist

Informational Rubric

- 4** The reader has an accurate understanding of the topic.
The reader is able to maintain a focus on this topic.
The reader finds relevant details.
The reader finds the information in a logical order.
The reader finds a large selection of interesting words.
- 3** The reader has an understanding of the topic.
The reader is able to focus on this topic.
The reader finds details.
The reader finds the information in an order.
The reader finds interesting words.
- 2** The reader has minimal understanding of the topic.
The reader is unable to maintain a focus on this topic.
The reader does not find enough relevant details.
The reader does not find the information to be in a logical order.
The reader finds few interesting words.
- 1** The reader has not found an evident topic.
The reader is unable to maintain a focus.
The reader does not find any relevant details.
The reader finds disorder among the information.
The reader finds no interesting words.

Informational Checklist

- My writing gives a main idea.
- My writing gives details to support my main idea.
- My writing is well organized and complete.
- My writing uses words that make my meaning clear.

Appendix E: Descriptive Writing Rubric and Checklist

Descriptive Writing Rubric

- 4** The reader is able to focus on one topic throughout the writing and has a sense of interest. The reader is provided with many descriptions that utilize sensory words. The reader follows a coherent and logical sequence of events. The reader is provided with many interesting words.
- 3** The reader is able to focus on one topic throughout the writing. The reader is provided with descriptions that utilize sensory words. The reader follows a sequence of events. The reader is provided with interesting words.
- 2** The reader has difficulty focusing on one topic. The reader does not find description that utilizes sensory words. The reader has trouble following a sequence of events. The reader is not provided with many interesting words.
- 1** The reader cannot find a clear topic. The reader does not find any description. The reader cannot follow a sequence. The reader cannot find any interesting words.

Descriptive Checklist

- My description tells about an animal or an object
- My description tells what something looks, sounds, smells, feels, or tastes like.
- My description had details.
- My description has colorful words.

Appendix F: Conventions Rubric and Checklist

Conventions Rubric

4

- uses a variety of sentences
- spells high frequency words correctly
- writes legibly

3

- uses complete sentences
- uses correct punctuation
- uses correct capitalization
- spells most words correctly
- writes legibly

2

- most sentences are complete
- errors in punctuation and capitalization
- spelling errors
- not consistently legible

1

- errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization
- writes illegibly

Conventions Checklist

- I checked over my writing and corrected any mistakes
- I checked to make sure my sentences made sense
- I used capital letters and ending marks correctly
- I used word spelling strategies