Unit of Study: Informational Writing and Research for 3rd-5th Grades

Based on the format of
Lucy Calkins’ Units of Study for Teaching Writing Grade 3-5

Developed by
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Development Sponsored by

MAISD
Muskegon Area Intermediate School District
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Introduction

This unit of study for teaching writing is intended for 3rd through 5th graders and is written to align with the Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations for 3rd grade. Additional sessions may need to be written by the teacher to fulfill all GLCE requirements for 4th and 5th grade.

It is assumed that this unit will be taught after teaching Books 1, 2, and 3 of the Units of Study for Teaching Writing Grades 3-5 by Lucy Calkins (Launching the Writing Workshop, Raising the Quality of Narrative Writing, and Breathing Life Into Essays). It is also assumed that the students receiving the writing instruction in this unit have been immersed in the reading of nonfiction texts and are familiar and comfortable with their knowledge of headings, subheadings, table of contents, pictures and captions, and diagrams and labels, as well as other general elements of nonfiction.

The report piece in this unit is often referred to as informational writing, with the intent of nudging teachers away from the idea that a five-paragraph report is the expected informational writing product or research product of this unit. Teachers are encouraged to use their knowledge of their own students’ interests and abilities to create a published product that is age appropriate. A few ideas might include flip books, posters, all-about books, PowerPoint slide shows, etc… For simplification, a research poster is used as the published piece for the research portion of this unit. The approximations of reports and research projects at these grade levels will most likely include color and pictures.

Mentor texts are an important part of this unit. Mentor texts can be any published writing in your classroom library, from your school library, from your public library, or Weekly Reader or Time for Kids magazines or any published work that demonstrates the strategies taught in this unit. A limited list of possible mentor texts is included in this unit. The list categorizes books by the writing strategies that are taught in this unit and are found within that text.

The sessions in this unit are designed to be completed during one writing workshop period – generally 60 minutes. Approximately 45 minutes of that workshop time should be devoted to students writing independently. It is during that writing time that the most important instruction takes place: confering with individual students or small groups of students with the same need for instruction. The strategies offered during the mini-lessons are intended to be writing skills that students can use in many areas of their writing – not just a task to be completed in that day’s writing time. The Teaching Points are designed to be quick teacher-led, mini-lesson examples, with the only time for student interaction being offered in the Active Engagement portion of the session. For this reason it is helpful for teachers to prepare their more lengthy writing examples before Writers Workshop, not in front of the students during the mini-lesson. The teacher’s writing example included in the report portion of this unit is about Feeding Birds, and using a topic that the instructing teacher is an expert on will make this unit more genuine and easier to teach. In the research portion the example is about Box Jellyfish. Once again, the instructing teacher would be wise to use an example that fits within the category of research that he or she has selected for his or her class.

As shown in the Unit Map, this unit begins by teaching students the writing strategies that are important in nonfiction writing by leading them into an informational piece about a topic on which they are an expert. This first piece is not brought completely through the writing process to publishing, but rather serves as a “practice” piece to offer experience in nonfiction writing before moving on to research. Instead, after some revision, students are back to the beginning point of generating ideas for writing; however, this time the topic will be a content area category/topic chosen by the teacher. The teacher may choose something as broad as Michigan Products to something as narrow as Life Cycles of Insects. Within this guideline, students are expected to choose their own topic and questions for research. Then, the original process is repeated with new strategies added, and the research piece is the only piece that culminates in a published work for celebration.

It is our hope that the nonfiction writing strategies presented in this unit will help teachers instruct their students in ways that will help them to grow as writers, not help their students to make this particular piece of writing perfect.

“Teach the writer, not the writing.”

~Lucy Calkins
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**Informational / Nonfiction Mentor Text Possibilities**

Although the texts are separated by session, the use of each mentor text is not limited to that session. All of these texts are appropriate for sessions that are not specifically listed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Writing Craft or Strategy Modeled</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• DK EYE Wonder: Mammals (any in the series)</td>
<td>Sarah Walker</td>
<td><strong>Session 3:</strong> clearly presented sections of information with a heading describing each section</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Explore the Grasslands</td>
<td>Kay Jackson</td>
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<td>Gail Gibbons (any title)</td>
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<td>• Seashore Babies</td>
<td>Kathy Darling</td>
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<tr>
<td>• DK EYE Wonder: Mammals (any in the series)</td>
<td>Sarah Walker</td>
<td><strong>Session 4 &amp; 5:</strong> interesting and attractive nonfiction text page arrangements showing pictures with captions, diagrams with labels, vocabulary or fun fact boxes, … and significant amounts of text in sections with headings</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Explore the Grasslands</td>
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<tr>
<td>• DK EYE Wonder: Mammals (any in the series)</td>
<td>Sarah Walker</td>
<td><strong>Session 6:</strong> organizational writing patterns of problem/solution and compare/contrast</td>
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<td>• DK EYE Wonder: Mammals (any in the series)</td>
<td>Sarah Walker</td>
<td><strong>Session 7:</strong> Teaching a reader using exact, true details</td>
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<td>• Explore the Grasslands</td>
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<td>• DK EYE Wonder: Mammals (any in the series)</td>
<td>Sarah Walker</td>
<td><strong>Session 8:</strong> Revising to stay focused on the topic by turning headings into questions</td>
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<td>Kathy Darling</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Salamander Rain-a Lake and Pond Journal</td>
<td>Kristin Joy Pratt-Serafini</td>
<td><strong>Session 9:</strong> Generating questions for research, using a T-Chart to organize known information and questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Salamander Rain-a Lake and Pond Journal</td>
<td>Kristin Joy Pratt-Serafini</td>
<td><strong>Session 10:</strong> Revising questions to make them specific and researchable</td>
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<td><strong>Session 11:</strong> Organizing your notebook to begin research, how to record dash facts and source information</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Salamander Rain-a Lake and Pond Journal</td>
<td>Kristin Joy Pratt-Serafini</td>
<td><strong>Session 12:</strong> Drafting research information; making decisions on format and layout</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Salamander Rain-a Lake and Pond Journal</td>
<td>Kristin Joy Pratt-Serafini</td>
<td><strong>Session 13:</strong> Drafting using specific details and examples</td>
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<td>Title</td>
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<td>Session</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salamander Rain-a Lake and Pond Journal</td>
<td>Kristin Joy Pratt-Serafini</td>
<td>Session 14: Revising using question and answer boxes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Am the Mountain</td>
<td>Diane Siebert</td>
<td>Session 15: Revising using our personal voice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salamander Rain-a Lake and Pond Journal</td>
<td>Kristin Joy Pratt-Serafini</td>
<td>Session 16: Revising using content-specific vocabulary</td>
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<td>Salamander Rain-a Lake and Pond Journal</td>
<td>Kristin Joy Pratt-Serafini</td>
<td>Session 17: Creating a bibliography</td>
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<td>Session 18: Publish our research</td>
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<td>Session 19: Publishing Celebration</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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## Unit Outline

| Mini-Lesson | Teaching Point-  
Today I will teach you that… | Mid-Workshop Teaching Point-  
I will also teach you that… | Teaching Share-  
You can learn from your classmates… | Resources Needed |
|-------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|
| **Session 1:** Generating Ideas for Reports | You can use a T-Chart to create a list of topics you know a lot about. On this T-Chart you will also make a list of the facts that you can teach your reader about each of those topics. | We can use mentor texts to learn more about writing informational reports. | Thanks for a great job in staying focused on generating ideas for your reports today. Highlight a few of your experts and their topics. | - Mentor texts showing a wide range of possible expert topics  
- Writers Notebooks  
- Chart paper and markers |
| **Session 2:** Selecting a Topic | Nonfiction writers use specific questions, or criteria, to choose the one topic that is the best topic for their report. | When you are writing long about your top topics, be sure to write true facts about your topic that you can teach to your reader. | Do a quick whip around our circle and name the topic you think will be your topic for your report because you know the most about it and you were able to write a lot about it today. | - Mentor texts showing the types of information taught for certain topics  
- Writers Notebooks  
- Session 1 T-Chart and markers  
- The “We’re Experts!” chart from Session 1 |
| **Session 3:** Planning to Draft by Grouping Information and Writing Headings | Nonfiction writers plan for writing their draft by organizing similar facts under a heading that describes those facts and helps their reader find information. | Writers make decisions and you need to decide which section is best for each piece of information. | Choose 1 or 2 students who successfully grouped their writing into appropriate sections with effective headings. Have these 1 or 2 students share how they made their decisions in planning for writing their report draft. | - Mentor texts showing headings and sections  
- Writers Notebooks  
- Teacher model of writing long from Session 2 on overhead or chart paper |
| Session 4: Using Booklets to Begin Drafting | Writers use the writing collected in their Writers Notebooks to begin drafting. | Use interesting and colorful words as you draft and teach! | Highlight a student who has successfully created a well-laid-out page with interesting and factual writing that teaches. | • Mentor texts showing informational text page arrangements  
• Writers’ Notebooks (for rereading – not for drafting)  
• Lined paper stapled into packets (1 page+ for each section of the student’s report)  
• Teacher model of Table of Contents and first section of report using a picture and caption on overhead or chart paper |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Session 5: Adding Interest as We Continue Drafting | Nonfiction writers sometimes add interesting text boxes to their sections that can teach a reader even more! | When you make a text box it doesn’t have to be a vocabulary box. It could be a Fun Fact box! | Ask volunteers to share their favorite section, sentence, or “box” of writing. | • Mentor texts showing vocabulary boxes, or fun fact boxes  
• Writers Notebooks (for rereading – not for drafting)  
• Lined paper  
• Teacher model of second section that uses a Text Box on overhead or chart paper |
| Session 6: Revising Using Organizational Patterns | Nonfiction authors revise their work to make it better and more interesting and understandable to their reader by using organizational patterns in their writing like the problem/solution pattern. | You can compare and contrast the information in your section. Write about how facts are alike and different. | Ask volunteers to share a challenge they were having in their writing and how they overcame it. | • Mentor texts showing problem/solution and compare/contrast organizational patterns  
• Writers Notebooks and Drafts  
• Lined paper  
• Problem/Solution Clue Word Chart  
• Compare/Contrast Clue Word Chart  
• Teacher model of a third section that has been revised using the problem/solution organizational pattern on overhead or chart paper |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Session 7: Revising By Keeping The Promise to Teach</th>
<th>Writers reread their information to make sure they have kept their promise to teach the reader something new.</th>
<th>Writers use numbers of things when teaching the reader.</th>
<th>Share a place where you used a specific number related to your topic.</th>
<th>• Writers Notebooks (for rereading – not for drafting) and Drafts • Lined paper stapled into packets (1 page+ for each section of the student’s report)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Session 8: Revising to Stay Focused: Turning Headings into Questions</td>
<td>Writers revise by turning their headings into questions and rereading their information for the answers.</td>
<td>Writers pay attention to paragraphing while drafting and revising.</td>
<td>Do a whip share to name a question each student might be using as a heading.</td>
<td>• Writers Drafts • Lined paper stapled into packets (1 page+ for each section of the student’s report)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 9: Generating Questions for Research: A Teacher-Chosen Content Area Topic</td>
<td>Non-Fiction writers use T-Charts to create lists of what they already know about their topic and what they wonder.</td>
<td>Writers ask complex questions to guide their research.</td>
<td>Do a whip share to name the subtopic the student has chosen to research; post chosen subtopics to create a community of researchers.</td>
<td>• Writers Notebooks • Chart paper and markers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 10: Revising our Questions to Guide our Research</td>
<td>Nonfiction writers use THICK questions as a road map to guide them through their research.</td>
<td>Writers consider the questions their readers may have about their topic.</td>
<td>Let’s do a quick whip around our circle and share a research question that you revised.</td>
<td>• Writers Notebooks • Session 9 T-Chart and markers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 11: Let the Research Begin: Seeking and Recording Research</td>
<td>Writers organize themselves for recording their research as dash facts.</td>
<td>Writers give credit by creating a resource page or bibliography.</td>
<td>Writers often record fun facts about their topic on a special page called Fun Facts.</td>
<td>• Writers Notebooks • Resources for student’s research subtopics (books, magazines, web sites and internet access, text books, brochures...) • Teacher Session 9 T-Chart questions written onto separate pages (as well as Fun Fact page and Resource page) on overhead or chart paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 12: Drafting our Research with Our Final Published Piece in Mind</td>
<td>Writers make decisions about layout and format when writing informational texts.</td>
<td>When doing research, writers need to collect enough information to answer all of their questions.</td>
<td>Share your draft poster and thinking with your writing partner. Explain the decisions you made about your displayed information.</td>
<td>• Lined and/or blank paper (1+ pages for each question/section each student’s writers notebook.) • A model of a published piece • Unit rubric – one for each student and one overhead</td>
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<td>Session 13: Drafting Using Specific Details and Examples</td>
<td>Non-fiction writers include specific details and examples.</td>
<td>Non-fiction writers use their own words, not the words of the author of a source. They use the same kind of voice they might use if they were talking to a friend.</td>
<td>Ask volunteers to share their favorite section, sentence, or “box” of writing.</td>
<td>• Lined and/or blank paper (1+ pages for each question/section for each student’s writers notebook.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 14: Revising Using Question and Answer Boxes</td>
<td>Writers revise by rereading their work, deciding if they’ve included enough information and work to make it more understandable to their reader by using organizational patterns.</td>
<td>Writers grab the reader’s attention by using powerful words to describe the sections of their information.</td>
<td>Ask volunteers to share their favorite headings.</td>
<td>• Lined and/or blank paper (1+ pages for each question/section for each student’s writers notebook.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 15: Adding Personal Voice</td>
<td>Non-fiction authors revise by adding personal voice to their writing.</td>
<td>Writing strong leads “hooks” the reader.</td>
<td>Ask volunteers to share a lead they revised.</td>
<td>• Lined and/or blank paper (1+ pages for each question/section for each student’s writers notebook.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 16: Writing with Content Specific Vocabulary</td>
<td>Writers also revise by using content-specific vocabulary.</td>
<td>Writers edit as they revise instead of waiting until the very end of their work</td>
<td>Ask volunteers to share content-specific vocabulary or transition words they used.</td>
<td>• Lined and/or blank paper (1+ pages for each question/section for each student’s writers notebook.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 17: Creating a Bibliography</td>
<td>Writers give credit to the authors and sources of their information.</td>
<td>Writers use strong verbs to describe their subject in action.</td>
<td>Take a moment to reflect on your work so far. Wow! We will be publishing our research presentations tomorrow!</td>
<td>• Lined and/or blank paper (1+ pages for each question/section for each student’s writers notebook.) • Final draft paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 18: Finishing Final Product</td>
<td>Writers add color, artwork and their own personal style to their finished products.</td>
<td>• Lined and/or blank paper (1+ pages for each question/section for each student’s writers notebook.) • Final draft paper • Final product materials</td>
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<td>Session 19: Publishing Celebration</td>
<td>Writers celebrate hard work!</td>
<td>• Finished products</td>
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# Unit of Study: Informational Writing and Research for 3rd-5th Grades

## Unit Map

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<th>Generating</th>
<th>Focusing</th>
<th>Planning</th>
<th>Drafting</th>
<th>Revising</th>
<th>Editing</th>
<th>Publishing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Piece #1:</strong> Informational Writing on Personal Knowledge</td>
<td>Session 1: Generating Ideas for Reports</td>
<td>Session 2: Selecting a Topic</td>
<td>Session 3: Grouping Information and Writing Headings</td>
<td>Session 4: Using Booklets to Begin Drafting</td>
<td>Session 6: Revising Using Organizational Patterns</td>
<td>Session 7: Revising By Keeping The Promise to Teach</td>
<td>Session 8: Revising by Turning Headings into Questions</td>
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<td><strong>Piece #2:</strong> Research Writing</td>
<td>Session 9: Generating Questions from Teacher-Chosen Content Area Topic</td>
<td>Session 10: Writing Compelling and Researchable Questions</td>
<td>Session 11: Seeking and Recording Research</td>
<td>Session 12: Begin Drafting: Making Decisions on Format &amp; Layout</td>
<td>Session 14: Revising Using Question and Answer Boxes</td>
<td>Session 15: Adding Personal Voice</td>
<td>Session 17: Creating a Bibliography</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Session 18: Finishing the Final Product</td>
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## INFORMATIONAL WRITING AND RESEARCH RUBRIC

| Name: ____________________________________________ Date: ____________________ |
|---|---|
| **4 – WOW!** | **3 – I’m There!** | **2 - Almost** | **1 – Not Yet** |
| **Topic and Productivity** | I have written about a specific topic. I have produced at least 1½ pages of writing each day consisting of several separate pieces which were later combined to create a report with at least 6 headings. | I have written about a clear topic. I have usually produced 1½ pages of writing each day consisting of several separate pieces which were later combined to create a report with at least 5-6 headings. | I have written about a topic that might be too broad or too narrow. I have usually produced less than 1½ pages of writing each day consisting of 3-4 pieces which were later combined to create a report with at least 3-4 headings. | I have written about an unclear topic. I have consistently produced less than 1½ pages of writing each day consisting of only 1 or 2 pieces which were later combined to create a report with less than 3 headings. |
| **Headings / Subheadings** | I have effectively and accurately used headings and subheadings to organize my information and lead my reader smoothly through the text. | I have accurately used headings and subheadings to organize my information and lead my reader smoothly through the text. | My information may not be categorized correctly or my headings may not clearly identify my information. | My headings and subheadings do not help to organize my information or lead my reader smoothly through the text. |
| **Productivity** | I have produced at least 1½ pages of writing each day consisting of several separate pieces which were later combined to create a report with at least 5-6 headings. | I have produced at least 1½ pages of writing each day consisting of several separate pieces which were later combined to create a report with at least 5-6 headings. | I have produced less than 1½ pages of writing each day consisting of 3-4 pieces which were later combined to create a report with at least 3-4 headings. | I have produced less than 1½ pages of writing each day consisting of only 1 or 2 pieces which were later combined to create a report with less than 3 headings. |
| **Craft** | I have used a variety of text features (organizational text patterns, text boxes, diagrams with labels, pictures with captions…) throughout my report to teach my reader about my topic and add interest to my writing. | I have used a variety of text features (organizational text patterns, text boxes, diagrams with labels, pictures with captions…) throughout my report to teach my reader about my topic and add interest to my writing. | I have used 3-4 text features (organizational text patterns, text boxes, diagrams with labels, pictures with captions…) throughout my report to teach my reader about my topic and add interest to my writing. | I have used 1 or 2 of text features (organizational text patterns, text boxes, diagrams with labels, pictures with captions…) throughout my report to teach my reader about my topic and add interest to my writing. |
| **Details** | I have used a wide variety of honest and precise support within each subheading, as well as extensive content specific vocabulary, to teach my reader everything I know about that subheading. | I have used honest and precise support within each subheading, as well as content specific vocabulary, to teach my reader everything I know about that subheading. | I have used general support within each subheading, and some content specific vocabulary, to teach my reader what I know about that subheading. | I have used minimal support within each subheading, and limited content specific vocabulary, to teach my reader a little about that subheading. |
| **Revision** | I substantially revised my headings, subheadings, facts, and transitions to make sure they were organized and paragraphed to help my reader find information easily. I chose specific suggestions from conferencing with my partner or teacher to improve my writing. All of my sentences are capitalized and have ending punctuation. I use commas correctly in a series, in letters and in dates. I have spelled all of my high-frequency words correctly. I am using quotation marks and capitalization correctly in dialogue. All of my subjects and verbs are in agreement. All of my verbs are written in the correct tense. I have written and used all of my possessive nouns correctly. | I revised my headings, subheadings, facts, and transitions to make sure they were organized and paragraphed to help my reader find information easily. I used suggestions from conferencing with my partner or teacher to improve my writing. Most of my sentences are capitalized and have ending punctuation. I usually use commas correctly in a series, in letters and in dates. I have spelled almost all of my high frequency words correctly. I usually use quotation marks and capitalization correctly in dialogue. Most of my subjects and verbs are in agreement. Most of my verbs are written in the correct tense. I have written and used most of my possessive nouns correctly. | I revised some of my headings, subheadings, facts, and transitions to make sure they were organized and paragraphed to help my reader find information. I may not have used suggestions from conferencing with my partner or teacher to improve my writing. Some of my sentences are capitalized and have ending punctuation. I sometimes use commas correctly in a series, in letters and in dates. I have spelled most of my high-frequency words correctly. I sometimes use quotation marks and capitalization correctly in dialogue. Some of my subjects and verbs are in agreement. Some of my verbs are written in the correct tense. I have written and used some of my possessive nouns correctly. | I did little revision on my headings, subheadings, facts, and transitions to make sure they were organized and paragraphed to help my reader find information. I may not have used suggestions from conferencing with my partner or teacher to improve my writing. Few of my sentences are capitalized and have ending punctuation. I seldom use commas correctly in a series, in letters and in dates. I have spelled some all of my high-frequency words correctly. I do not use quotation marks and capitalization correctly in dialogue yet. Few of my subjects and verbs are in agreement. Few of my verbs are written in the correct tense. I have written and used few of my possessive nouns correctly. |
| **Editing for Conventions** | I have corrected any grammar feature errors that I may have missed earlier in the writing process. I have used commas correctly in a series, in letters and in dates. I have spelled almost all of my high frequency words correctly. I am using quotation marks and capitalization correctly in dialogue. All of my subjects and verbs are in agreement. All of my verbs are written in the correct tense. I have written and used all of my possessive nouns correctly. | I have corrected most of the grammar feature errors that I may have missed earlier in the writing process. I have used commas correctly in a series, in letters and in dates. I have spelled almost all of my high frequency words correctly. I am using quotation marks and capitalization correctly in dialogue. Most of my subjects and verbs are in agreement. Most of my verbs are written in the correct tense. I have written and used most of my possessive nouns correctly. | I have corrected some of the grammar feature errors that I may have missed earlier in the writing process. I have used commas correctly in a series, in letters and in dates. I have spelled most of my high frequency words correctly. I am using quotation marks and capitalization correctly in dialogue. Some of my subjects and verbs are in agreement. Some of my verbs are written in the correct tense. I have written and used some of my possessive nouns correctly. | I have missed many of the grammar feature errors that I may have made earlier in the writing process. I sometimes use commas correctly in a series, in letters and in dates. I have spelled some of my high-frequency words correctly. I use quotation marks and capitalization correctly in dialogue. Some of my subjects and verbs are in agreement. Some of my verbs are written in the correct tense. I have written and used few of my possessive nouns correctly. |
| **Publishing / Presentation** | I always speak clearly when I share and my piece was published on time. I listen attentively with an intention to learn when others are presenting their work. | I usually speak clearly when I share, and my piece was published on time. I listen attentively when others are presenting their work. | I sometimes speak clearly when I share, and my piece was published on time. I sometimes listen attentively when others are presenting their work. | I might not speak clearly when I share, and my piece might not have been published on time. I seldom listen attentively when others are presenting their work. |

**TOTAL SCORE:** 25-28 points = 4 18-24 points = 3 11-17 points = 2 7-10 points = 1

4 – student work exceeds objectives - EXCELLENT!! 3 – student work achieves objectives – GREAT WORK!! 2 – student is making progress – GOOD EFFORT!! 1 – student is experiencing difficulty – KEEP WORKING!!

3/25/2009 DRAFT

Development Sponsored by
Unit of Study: Informational Writing and Research for 3rd-5th Grades

Session 1: Generating Ideas for Reports

**Connection:**
We have learned and practiced many genres of writing this year. We’ve written personal narratives, essays, and even poetry! We have learned different ways to come up with ideas for each of those genres of writing. All of you have impressed me with the very different thoughts and ideas that each one of you have shared. We will now begin a new genre of nonfiction writing. We will be writing an informational piece to teach your reader about something you are an expert on.

Today I will teach you that you can use a T-Chart to create a list of topics you know alot about. On this T-Chart you will also make a list of the facts that you can teach your reader about each of those topics.

**Teaching Point: – “I do”**
Here is a book written by Gail Gibbons. Watch me as I show you how I make a T-Chart to create a list of topics I know alot about. First I draw my chart. Then I write, “Topics I Know ALot About” at the top of the left column and “Facts I Can Teach About My Topic” at the top of the right column. Then listen to me as I think about which topics I know alot about and watch as I write them down. See how I list the facts that I can teach my reader about my topic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics I Know Alot About</th>
<th>Facts I Can Teach About My Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Feeding Birds</td>
<td>• Different birds eat different kinds of food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Different kinds of food go in different kinds of feeders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Birds need water all year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Certain birds eat from certain kinds of feeders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Some birds only eat on the ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The more kinds of food I put out, the bigger the variety of birds that come</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gardening</td>
<td>• Some flowers come up every year (perennials), but other flowers have to be planted every summer (annuals)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Certain flowers only come in certain colors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• My favorite flower is the Black-Eyed Susan (an opinion, not a fact)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• There are flowers that grow best in shade and flowers that grow best in sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I like pink flowers best (an opinion, not a fact)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Did you see how I thought for a while, and then I wrote down a topic I know alot about? …then I wrote down facts, not opinions, which I can teach my reader about my topic? Thumbs up if you can do that!
Active Engagement: – “You do”
Now it’s your turn. You are going to think about a topic you know a lot about and think about some facts you can teach your reader about that topic. Hold the topic in your head and name the facts on your fingers. Give me a thumbs up when you have your topic and some facts.

Okay, Partner 1 turn to your partner and tell your partner what topic you know a lot about and tell your partner a few of the facts you know about your topic.

I noticed that __________ is an expert on __________ and told his/her partner that________________. (Give a few specific examples of the conversations you listened in on.)

Link to Other Writing:
Today and every day, when you are getting ready to write a report about something that you are an expert on, I want you to remember that using a T-Chart can help you to generate ideas of topics that you know a lot about and facts to teach your reader about a topic.

Off you go! I can’t wait to see the many wonderful things that each of you are experts on and will teach your readers about!

Mid-Workshop Teaching Point:
We have used mentor texts all year to help us create writing that looks like published authors’ writing. We can use mentor texts to learn more about writing informational reports. These authors are experts on many different topics. I will put these books __________ so you can see the kinds of things that some of these writers are experts on. Things like __________ (Examples of appropriate mentor texts for this unit are listed on the first page of the introduction to this unit. List some topics that the informational mentor texts focus on such as dogs, snakes, magnets….)

Teaching Share:
I am so excited about all of the topics that you are experts on! I am eager to learn about __________ (topic) from __________ (student). And I see that __________ (student) is going to teach his/her readers __________ (fact) about __________ (topic). You are wonderful experts who know so much about many different things! I’ll create a class “We’re Experts!” chart that shows everything that we are experts on. Thanks for a great job in staying focused on generating ideas for your reports today.
Unit of Study: Informational Writing and Research for 3rd-5th Grades

Session 2: Selecting a Topic

Connection:
Yesterday we were working on generating ideas for reports by using T-Charts to list topics that we know a lot about and then listing facts that we can teach our readers about those topics. You stayed focused on your work and created T-Charts with great ideas for expert topics and facts to teach.

Today I will teach you that nonfiction writers use specific questions, or criteria, to choose the one topic that is the best topic for their report.

Teaching Point: – I do
Watch me as I show you how I use specific criteria, or questions, to decide which of my topics is the best topic to write about in my report.

These are the questions I will ask myself about each topic I have listed in my T-Chart:
- Do I really know a lot of facts about this topic?
- Can I teach someone else about this topic?
- Can I spend my writing time for the next week writing facts about this topic?

If my answer is yes for a question, I will make a check mark next to that topic. After I have finished, ask these three questions about every topic in my T-Chart; I will see which topic has the most checks. That topic is probably the best topic for me to write about. (Refer to your Session 1 T-Chart)

1. Do I really know a lot of facts about Feeding Birds? Yes I do, so I make a check next to Feeding Birds. It looks like I might not know a lot of facts about Gardening because I already had to scratch out some opinions, so I won’t put a check next to Gardening.
2. Can I teach someone else about Feeding Birds? Yes I can – I taught my dad about Feeding Birds already! So I make a check mark next to Feeding Birds. Can I teach someone else about Gardening? Well, some things I can, but some things I can’t, so I won’t put a check mark there.
3. Can I spend my writing time for the next week writing facts about Feeding Birds? Yes, so I make a check mark. Can I spend my writing time for the next week writing facts about Gardening? Yes, so I make a check mark there, too.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics I Know A Lot About</th>
<th>Facts I Can Teach About My Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feeding Birds ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>• Different birds eat different kinds of food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Different kinds of food go in different kinds of feeders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Birds need water all year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Certain birds eat from certain kinds of feeders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Some birds only eat on the ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The more kinds of food I put out, the bigger the variety of birds that come</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I see that I have the most check marks next to Feeding Birds, so now I will write long about the topic of Feeding Birds. I will write and keep writing as I ask myself questions to push my thinking. Remember how we did that in writing essays? (Refer to the “Pushing Our Thinking” Chart from Calkins’ Breathing Life Into Essays Unit)

Many people have bird feeders in their yards to feed the birds. Different birds like different kinds of food. Woodpeckers eat suet, Baltimore Orioles eat grape jelly and oranges, American Goldfinches eat thistle and sunflower chips, and Northern Cardinals eat peanuts and sunflowers.

It’s important to put the right kind of bird food in a feeder that the birds can get the food out of. If you put peanuts in a thistle feeder, the Cardinals won’t be able to eat it because the holes are too small for the peanuts to go through. Suet goes in a …

Let me stop here, writers. Did you see how I used specific criteria questions and checkmarks to decide how to choose a topic? Did you watch while I wrote long about my topic to quickly put everything I know down on paper?

Active Engagement: – You do
Now it’s your turn. Please open your Writer’s Notebooks to your T-Chart from yesterday. You are going to ask yourself the first question, “Do I really know a lot of facts about this topic?” for the topics in your T-Chart. Make a checkmark by the topics that you really do know a lot of facts about.

I noticed that __________ realized that some of his/her facts were not really facts, they were opinions. I noticed that __________ discovered that he/she didn’t really write down all the facts he/she knows about one of his/her topics. I’m glad you were careful not to just put a checkmark next to everything!

Link to Other Writing:
Today and every day, when you are choosing a topic to write about, I want you to remember to ask yourself specific criteria questions to decide if that one topic is the best topic for you.

Let’s get to our writing spots! We have decisions to make and lots of thoughts to put on paper!

Mid-Workshop Teaching Point:
Writers, let me interrupt you a moment to remind you that when you are writing long about your top topic, be sure to write true facts about your topic that you can teach to your reader. The purpose for your writing is not to tell your reader about your favorite things or what you like – the purpose of nonfiction writing, like this report, is to teach your reader about the topic. When you think you’ve written down everything you know, use the “Pushing Our Thinking” chart to write more about your topic and stick to the facts!

Teaching Share:
Let’s do a quick whip around our circle and name the topic you think will be your topic for your report because you know the most about it and you were able to write a lot about it today.
Unit of Study: Informational Writing and Research for 3rd-5th Grades

Session 3: Planning to Draft by Grouping Information and Writing Headings

Connection:
Yesterday we were working on choosing a topic for our report and writing long about that topic. Several of you pushed your thinking using the questions on our chart. By doing that, you were able to remember even more facts that you knew about your topic and you were able to add to your writing!

Last night as I was rereading my writing about Feeding Birds and pushing my thinking to write more, I realized that some of the things I was writing belong together! Today I will teach you that nonfiction writers plan for writing their drafts by organizing similar facts under a heading that describes those facts and helps their reader find information. In doing this organizing, I was also able to see which sections had too little information and that I needed to write more to teach my reader more information.

Teaching Point: – I do
Watch me as I show you how I look for facts that are similar and mark them so that I can see which information belongs together in a section under a specific heading. I will use special colors in my Writers Notebook to do this. When I reread the writing I did about Feeding Birds, I notice that a good chunk of my writing is about Different Kinds of Food. I am going to use my blue highlighter (or crayon or colored pencil) to mark those facts about Different Kinds of Food. Different Kinds of Food will be a section in my report and it will have a heading that describes this section.

Birds eat different things depending on what kind of bird they are. Dark-eyed juncos and robins eat on the ground. Unlike these ground-feeding birds, Baltimore orioles and ruby-throated hummingbirds like to eat sweet nectar from flowers or sugar water from my nectar feeder. Tufted titmice, wrens, sparrows, finches are like the orioles and hummingbirds because they come to feeders, but they are unlike orioles and hummingbirds because they do not eat nectar. These small birds eat thistle seed and sunflower chips from thistle feeders or tube feeders. Just as they like sunflower chips, some bigger birds like cardinals, red-winged blackbirds, blue jays, and rose-breasted grosbeaks eat sunflower seeds, safflower seed, and peanuts.

Some birds eat big seeds. Some birds eat very small seeds. Some birds eat nuts. There are even birds that eat grape jelly, oranges, sugar water, or meal worms. The problem is how do you know whether to put your bird food in a suet box or a hopper feeder?

I also notice that I write a lot about Bird Feeders so I’m going to use yellow to mark the parts that are about Bird Feeders that I want to put in my Bird Feeders section. I will use other colors for the other kinds of things that I wrote a lot about that will be put together in their own section. As I look at the writing here that I haven’t color coded yet, I see that I might need a section about Which Birds Eat Which Kinds of Food? I think I’ll use pink for that.

Did you see how I reread my writing many times to decide how my information might be grouped together? I decided that I wrote a lot about one kind of thing and decided that I would group those facts together in a section. Then I highlighted everything I want to put in that section. I continued doing this until almost everything I have written has been put into a section that has a specific heading. Writers – remember that this is not a coloring project. This is a sorting project where each color writing belongs in its own section.

Thumbs up if you can do that.
Active Engagement: – You do
Now it’s your turn. You are going to reread what you wrote yesterday when you wrote long about your top topic. When you reread, think about what groups of things you wrote a lot about and name those sections on your fingers. Put your eyes on me when you have reread your writing and have thought about a couple sections you could use in your report. Partner 2, tell Partner 1 which sections and headings you might use in your report and what color you plan on using to highlight the sentences that are about those subtopics.

I noticed that ________ started naming facts for her partner, but then realized that some of those facts could be put together under a heading in a section of her report, so she changed the name of her section so show that those facts went together.

Link to Other Writing:
Today and everyday when you are writing informational pieces, I want you to remember that nonfiction writers group similar facts together in sections with headings that describe what is in the section. This helps the reader find the information they are looking for!

Let’s start planning our sections and headings by color coding the facts that belong together and naming those sections.

Mid-Workshop Teaching Point:
Some of you are noticing that you have some pieces of information that could go into two different sections. That’s okay! Writers make decisions and you need to decide which section is best for that piece of information. Some of you have already finished color coding all of your writing. Remember, “If you think you’re done, you’ve just begun!” Maybe some of your sections are short and you have more to teach your reader in that section. You can choose to add more facts that you missed when you wrote long yesterday. Or, you might make a list of your different sections and headings and see if anything is missing that you want to teach your reader. Or, you might be ready to decide what order your sections will go in. Or, maybe you need to go to our mentor texts to get ideas from our published authors about how they created their sections and headings. Keep planning so you’re ready to draft tomorrow!

Teaching Share:
Choose 1 or 2 students who successfully grouped their writing into appropriate sections with effective headings. Have these 1 or 2 students share how they made their decisions in planning for writing their report draft. They might share a subheading and a fact that they have included under that subheading.

Time for Assessment:
After this session and before drafting begins, take the time to review student writer’s notebooks. You might choose to create some small groups for reteaching based on: 1) the appropriateness of the topic – not too narrow, not too broad; 2) writing based on facts not opinions; 3) organization of similar facts into categories – is there enough information for each category?
Unit of Study: Informational Writing and Research for 3rd-5th Grades

Session 4: Using Booklets to Begin Drafting

Connection:
Yesterday we were working on organizing our information by grouping similar facts together. We decided on sections for groups of similar facts and we chose headings for those sections. You’ve really worked hard to plan your draft in a way that will help your reader find the information they are looking for!

Today I will teach you that, just like other nonfiction writers, we have:
1. Generated ideas,
2. Chosen our best topic,
3. Written down everything we know about that topic,
4. And organized that information into sections with specific headings----

We are ready to begin drafting!

As I looked at mentor texts last night, I noticed that the authors didn’t just organize the information, the information on each page in their informational books was arranged to interest the reader! We know this from all the nonfiction reading we’ve done this year! Nonfiction writers use pictures with captions and diagrams with labels, so we will too! Today I will teach you that writers use the writing collected in their Writers’ Notebooks to begin drafting.

Teaching Point: – I do
Watch me as I show you how I use my draft booklet to begin drafting my report. First, I look at my work from yesterday and write a Table of Contents on the first page of my booklet. I try to put my sections in an order that makes sense for my reader. Next, in order, I write one heading at the top of each page in my draft booklet. Each page will be one section. Next, I reread the information in my notebook that I planned to put in that section. Finally, I close my Writer’s Notebook and write that information from my memory onto the page in my booklet that has that heading. I do the same thing for every section – reread the information in my notebook that I planned to put in that section and close my Writer’s Notebook and write that information from my memory onto the page in my booklet that has that heading.

I’ll write my Table of Contents first. On the first page, I write my headings in an order that makes sense for my reader. I can add page numbers later when my booklet is done.

(Each box is one page in my booklet.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bird Foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of Bird Feeders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Different Birds Eat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Next I reread the information for my first section, Bird Food. That information is blue.

Birds eat different things depending on what kind of bird they are. Dark-eyed juncos and robins eat on the ground. Unlike these ground-feeding birds, Baltimore orioles and ruby-throated hummingbirds like to eat sweet nectar from flowers or sugar water from my nectar feeders. Tufted titmice, wrens, sparrows, and goldfinches are like the orioles and hummingbirds because they come to feeders, but they are unlike orioles and hummingbirds because they do not eat nectar. These small birds eat thistle seed and sunflower chips from thistle feeders or tube feeders. Just as they like sunflower chips, some bigger birds, like cardinals, red-winged blackbirds, blue jays, and rose-breasted grosbeaks, eat sunflower seeds, safflower seed, and peanuts.

Some birds eat big seeds. Some birds eat very small seeds. Some birds eat nuts. There are even birds that eat grape jelly, oranges, sugar water, or meal worms! The problem is how do you know whether to put your bird food in a suet box or a hopper feeder?

Then I plan and write this information on my first page. As I plan this page, I’m thinking about how nonfiction writers use pictures and captions to help teach their reader. I’m going to use a picture and a caption, too. I will indent as I start my paragraph, and I will be careful to write in complete sentences using appropriate spelling and punctuation. I’m writing to teach my reader about my topic. Look at me as I plan my page and write:

![Bird Foods]

Birds eat seeds, fruits, and nuts.

Birds eat many different kinds of foods. Some foods are wet like the nectar that birds find in flowers or the sugar water that people make to attract birds. I always buy my bird food at our local bird feeding store. Birds eat fruits like oranges and berries. Birds even gobble up grape jelly! Other bird foods are seeds like sunflower seeds, safflower seeds, and thistle seeds. Some birds enjoy peanuts and mealworms, too.

I continue doing this until I have a page for every section.

Did you see how I reread the information for one section at a time? ...as I decided where I wanted to place the information, picture and/or diagram on my page? ...and wrote from my memory to create the draft in my booklet? I didn’t copy from my Writer,s Notebook, did I?
**Active Engagement: – You do**

Now it’s your turn. You are going to reread the information in your notebook that you planned to put in one of your sections – everything that is one color. Then you are going to close your Writer’s Notebook and write that information from your memory in the air as you whisper the words that you will write in your booklet later.

I noticed that _______ practiced writing his/her section about _____________. She/he did a nice job of using descriptive words to keep the reader interested!

**Link to Other Writing:**

Today and everyday when you begin drafting, I want you to remember that drafting is not copying. Writers’ Notebooks are for collecting ideas and thoughts and for planning our drafting. Drafting is when we leave our Writer’s Notebook and actually begin our writing for our reader!

Go and begin by writing your Table of Contents. Then begin drafting your first section in your booklet! Each of you is such an expert and has so much to teach your reader!

**Mid-Workshop Teaching Point:**

Remember that you are teaching your reader about your topic and you want your reader to be interested! Use interesting and colorful words as you draft and teach! Instead of writing, “Birds eat different kinds of food,” I would write, “Every beautiful bird has a favorite type of nutritious and delicious food.” After you draft one of your sections, move on to draft the next, and the next… Don’t forget to include nonfiction elements like diagrams/labels and pictures/captions.

**Teaching Share:**

*Highlight a student who has successfully created a well-laid-out page with interesting and factual writing that teaches.*
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Session 5: Adding Interest as We Continue Drafting

Connection:
Yesterday we began working on our informational report drafts. We wrote a Table of Contents that put our different sections in an order that made sense to our reader. We reread our writing from our Writers’ Notebooks, closed our Notebooks and planned and drafted a section of our report on each page of our booklet. We included pictures with captions, or diagrams with labels to interest our reader and teach our reader. I’ve seen some really spectacular work that will teach your readers all about your topic!

Nonfiction writers add interest to their writing with text boxes. You might use this strategy to teach your reader information that really doesn’t seem to fit well in any of your current sections. Today I will teach you that nonfiction writers sometimes add interesting text boxes to their sections that can teach a reader even more!

Teaching Point: – I do
Watch me as I show you how I add a vocabulary box to my section about Bird Feeders. First, I reread the information about one of my sections, What Different Birds Eat. Nonfiction writers use specific vocabulary that readers of their writing need to know. As I reread this section, I notice that I use the names of birds with which my reader probably isn’t familiar. I can make a text box in the corner of my page where I teach my reader these new words.

What Different Birds Eat

Birds eat different things depending on what kind of bird they are. Dark-eyed juncos and robins eat on the ground. Unlike these ground-feeding birds, Baltimore orioles and ruby-throated hummingbirds like to eat sweet nectar from flowers or sugar water from my nectar feeders. Tufted titmice, wrens, sparrows, finches are like the orioles and hummingbirds because they come to feeders, but they are unlike orioles and hummingbirds because they do not eat nectar. These small birds eat thistle seed and sunflower chips from thistle feeders or tube feeders. Just as they like sunflower chips, some bigger birds like cardinals, red-winged blackbirds, blue jays, and rose-breasted grosbeaks eat sunflower seeds, safflower seed, and peanuts.

Some birds eat big seeds. Some birds eat very small seeds. Some birds eat nuts. There are even birds that eat grape jelly, oranges, sugar water, or meal worms!

New Bird Words

Northern Cardinal – bright red medium sized birds with head crests, black bills and masks and cone-shaped reddish bills. Females are light brown with reddish wings.

Tufted Titmouse – small songbirds that search acrobatically for insects among foliage and branches.

Did you see how I chose words that I thought would be new to my reader and wrote definitions for them in the box?
Active Engagement: – You do
Now it’s your turn. You (and your partner) are going to find words in your report that you might need to teach your reader. Give me thumbs up when you have found a word or can think of a new word that you can teach your reader about your topic. Super. Partner 1, please teach partner 2 a vocabulary word that your reader needs to know to learn about your topic. Partner 2, please teach partner 1 a vocabulary word that your reader needs to know to learn about your topic.

I noticed that some of you really know some great words that only an expert on your topic would know!

Link to Other Writing:
Today and every day, when you are teaching by writing an informational report, I want you to remember that nonfiction authors add interest to their writing by using vocabulary boxes to teach specific vocabulary words.

We have more drafting to do today! Teach your readers some new words about your topic!

Mid-Workshop Teaching Point:
Writers you are really focused on adding interest to your drafts today! Here’s another idea for adding interest to your writing. When you make a box it doesn’t have to be a vocabulary box. It could be a Fun Fact box! For example, in one of my fun fact boxes, I could write, “Many birds eat so much food every day that it weighs more than the bird does!” Remember, if you write a Fun Fact box, the information has to be true!

Teaching Share:
Ask volunteers to share their favorite section, sentence, or “box” of writing.
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Session 6: Revising Using Organizational Patterns

Connection:
Yesterday we were working on adding interest to our writing by including vocabulary boxes or fun fact boxes. I noticed that several of you used our mentor texts to get ideas for some interesting boxes!

Nonfiction authors write drafts as a first copy of their work. Once they have a draft, then writers are able to turn the draft into the best writing that they can. Nonfiction writers do this by revising. Today I will teach you that nonfiction authors can revise their work to make it better and more interesting and understandable to their reader by using organizational patterns in their writing.

Teaching Point: – I do
I can use a problem/solution organizational pattern to revise my draft and make it better. I know that when I want to teach my reader about feeding birds, I want them to know that they might have a problem if they try to put the wrong kind of food into a bird feeder. The problem is that the birds won’t be able to get to the food. The solution is to use the right kind of feeder for that kind of food. Watch me as I show you how I have changed my section about bird feeders. That’s what revising is – looking at my draft again with fresh eyes and making changes. Here is my draft:

Writers don’t write one draft and stop there! Writers look for ways to improve their writing!
Here is my revision using the problem/solution organizational writing pattern:

### Bird Feeders

Some birds eat big seeds. Some birds eat very small seeds. Some birds eat nuts. How do you choose the right kind of feeder to put your bird food in? **The problem is**, if you use the wrong kind of feeder the birds can't get to their food!

Well, **one solution is** if the seeds are big you can use a hopper feeder where you open the top and pour the seeds into the feeder. The seeds come out into a tray at the bottom of the feeder where birds can land and eat.

If the seeds are small, **the solution you can use** is a tube feeder. It is a tall cylinder that has holes with perches in the sides where birds can eat the small seeds.

Another answer is to use a different feeder if the seeds are very tiny. The holes in the sides of these feeders are just little slits so that all of the tiny seeds don't pour out of the holes onto the ground. Therefore, birds have to poke their beaks into these little holes to get the seeds.

Other feeders are great for sugar water because they are little bowls with covers that the birds can stick their long beaks into to drink.

Meal worms and peanuts are easy for birds to get to and grab them up quickly when you put them in trays.

My reader learned more when I explained how each kind of feeder solves the problem of birds not being able to get to their food. Here is a chart *(This chart is also included in this session)* that gives some clue words that nonfiction authors use when they write using a compare and contrast organizational pattern. Did you see how I added interest by writing about the problem and the solutions?

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**Active Engagement: – You do**

Now it's your turn. You are going to turn and talk to your partner about a section in your writing where you can find a place to write about a problem and a solution.

I noticed that __________ is going to use the problem of __________ and explain to his/her reader how to solve it by __________. 
**Link to Other Writing:**
Today and everyday when you are writing a nonfiction informational piece, I want you to remember that an organizational writing pattern like problem/solution can help you add interest and expand your writing. You can improve your writing - and in nonfiction writing improve our teaching - by using an organizational writing pattern like problem/solution.

We have job choices to make today. If you have completed drafting each of your sections, I expect you to try revising - changing - one of those sections (or a part of that section) by using the problem/solution organizational pattern. If you are not finished drafting, please continue working on getting all of your sections down on paper in your draft booklet. Remember to add interest by planning your page arrangement, using pictures and captions or diagrams and labels, and adding vocabulary boxes or fun fact boxes.

**Mid-Workshop Teaching Point:**
I have another organizational pattern to teach you that you are already familiar with: compare and contrast. Instead of finding a section in your writing where you can change and improve your work by writing about a problem and a solution, you can find a section where you can compare and contrast the information in your section. Write about how facts are alike and different. For example, I could write about how sunflower seeds and safflower seeds are alike and different. I could write about how all of the different bird feeders are alike and how they are different. Here is a chart (This chart is also included in this session) that gives some clue words that nonfiction authors use when they write using a compare and contrast organizational pattern. This is something else you can try when you revise your different sections.

**Teaching Share:**
*Ask volunteers to share a challenge they were having in their writing and how they overcame it.*

**Time for Assessment:**
At this point, students have been offered many options for varying their writing. Review student drafts to see 1) if any strategy need to be retaught because the strategy is not being used well, 2) which strategies are not being used – perhaps clarification is needed or students may need help in knowing where the strategy would fit in their own writing, and 3) if students are sticking with their original plan in their Table of Contents, if they are making good choices in adjusting and revising their Table of Contents as they go, or if they need help in focusing on distinctly different sections.
CLUE WORDS FOR
PROBLEM AND SOLUTION WRITING

• the problem is...
• the question is...
• a solution...
• one answer is...
• so...
• for this reason...
• when/if ____, then ___...
• because...
• therefore...
• then ____, so____...
CLUE WORDS FOR

COMPARE AND CONTRAST WRITING

• like...
• just as...
• similar to...
• unlike...
• different...
• on the other hand...
Unit of Study: Informational Writing and Research for 3rd-5th Grades

Session 7: Revising By Keeping the Promise to Teach

Connection:
Yesterday we were using an organizational writing pattern such as problem/solution or compare/contrast to add interest and expand our writing. Many of you have excellent examples of possible problems and solutions related to your topics. This really makes your writing more valuable to your reader.

Last night I was thinking about the purpose of our reports….to teach the reader about a topic. We made a promise to fully explain. Today I will teach you how to keep your promise.

Teaching Point: – I do
Watch me as I re-read a section in my report about feeding birds and think, “Have I taught my reader something they wouldn’t already know?” Each time I read a fact I will hold up one finger.

Active Engagement: – You do
Now it’s your turn. You are going to reread a section of your report that you worked on yesterday and count on your fingers how many new things you taught your readers during yesterday’s writing.

Now turn to your partner. Partner 1, you are the teacher. Partner 2 is taking a class with you on your topic. Say to your partner—“I am going to teach you about _______.“ Teach your partner some things – some facts - you know and have written about in your report. Encourage the teaching partner to give examples, provide details, and encourage the listening partner to ask questions.

Remind students of what they are doing well, and ask partners to switch roles.

Link to Other Writing:
Remember when you are writing a report, you are making a promise that you will teach us. As you continue to draft and revise your writing today, remember to teach your reader about your topic.

Mid-Workshop Teaching Point:
Writers, some of you are having trouble thinking of all the things you know and can teach someone else about your topic. One of the things you can teach people is the numbers that go with a topic. I’m thinking about the numbers that would go with bird feeders. I might revise and expand a section by writing:

Tube feeders have six to eight perches where birds can land and rest while they are eating.
Hummingbird feeders have four fake flowers where hummingbirds can land to eat. About three birds can sit on each edge of a tray feeder. There is only room for one Baltimore oriole to land and eat from the small bowl of grape jelly.

Teaching Share:
With your writing partner, share a place where you used a specific number related to your topic.
Unit of Study: Informational Writing and Research for 3rd-5th Grades

Session 8: Revising to Stay Focused

Connection:
Yesterday we were working on revising our reports by using specific names and numbers of things related to our topics.

Today I will teach you that there is another way to make sure that the information in our reports teaches our readers.

Teaching Point: – I do
Watch me as I read the headings that I will be using in my table of contents. These headings name what I want to teach. I want to make sure I actually taught the reader about each heading, so I am going to pretend my first heading is a question.

Bird Foods (original heading) → What kinds of food should I feed to the birds? (new question)

Next, I want to make sure that I answered this question in my writing. If I didn’t, then I can add that information. I can also take out information that doesn’t relate or answer this question.

Birds eat many different kinds of foods. Some foods are wet like the nectar that birds find in flowers or the sugar water that people make to attract birds. I always buy my bird food and the bird feeding store. (Oh my – I should take that out – that’s not about what to feed to birds! That’s about where I shop!) Birds eat fruits like oranges and berries. Birds even gobble up grape jelly! Other bird foods are seeds like sunflower seeds, safflower seeds, and thistle seeds. Some birds enjoy peanuts and mealworms, too.

Did you see how I reread my information with my question in mind?

Active Engagement: – You do
Now it’s your turn. You are going to turn each of your headings into a question, making sure that you included information to answer that question. Partner 1 – tell partner 2 one of your headings and then tell partner 2 the question you will use instead.

Link to Other Writing:
Today and every day, when you are writing, I want you to remember one way you can keep your promise to teach the reader, is to ask a question and then reread to make sure you answered the question. As we read we take out information that doesn’t answer the question, and we add the necessary information to be sure to answer our question completely.

Mid-Workshop Teaching Point:
Writers, let me interrupt you. I want to remind you that as writer drafts and revises, they pay attention to paragraphing. Remember to start a new paragraph whenever you begin writing about a new idea.

Teaching Share:
Today, let’s do a whip share around the circle to say one question you might be using as a heading.
Session 9: Generating Questions for Research

At this point, students will be dropping their work on their first report piece. If you have time and choose to, you may have your students carry the first piece through to publishing before you begin this session. In this session, students will begin work on their second piece – a piece that will require research and will expect students to use and build upon the strategies they have learned up to this point in the unit. Students should be made fully aware that they will now be using the strategies they have already learned as they begin their new research writing piece.

Connection:
For about the last two weeks, we have been writing reports on topics with which we are familiar, topics we know a lot about. Now we are going to begin a new piece. I will teach you how to write about a topic that interests you, but one that you aren’t familiar with or need more information. Each student in our class will be writing about a topic within the category of _________________. Teacher selects a topic from science or social studies. Students brainstorm possible subtopics for research. For example: Salt Water Invertebrates: jellyfish, shrimp, octopus, plankton.

Today I will teach you that you can use a T-Chart to create a list of what you already know about this topic and what you wonder. You will be using the list of subtopics that you brainstormed for this category during science or social studies.

Teaching Point: – “I do”
Watch me as I show you how I make a T-Chart to create a list of what I already know. First I draw my chart. Then I write, “What I Know” at the top of the left column and “Questions I Wonder” at the top of the right column. Then listen to me as I think aloud to make my lists.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box Jellyfish</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What I Already Know</strong></td>
<td><strong>Questions I Wonder</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They are the most poisonous</td>
<td>• How long does it take to die from a sting?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>creature on earth.</td>
<td>• How do they sting?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They sting.</td>
<td>• How long are the tentacles?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Their tentacles are very long,</td>
<td>• Are they the biggest jellyfish?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>because the ranger told us to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stay over 15 feet from shore.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They are a type of jellyfish.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Did you see how I thought for a while, then I wrote down what I know and questions I wonder about? Thumbs up if you can do that!

Active Engagement: – You do
Now it’s your turn. Reread the list of subtopics you already brainstormed. Which of these interests you? Which subtopic do you want to know more about? Okay, Partner 2, turn to Partner 1 and tell Partner 1 which subtopic you are interested in and what questions you have. I noticed that ________________ chose ________________ and told his/her partner that________________. (Give a few specific examples of the conversations you listened in on.)

Link to Other Writing:
Today and every day, when you are getting ready to write a about an unfamiliar topic, I want you to remember that using a T-Chart can help you list what you already know and ask questions that can help guide your research. Off you go! I can’t wait to see the many things each of you already know and what questions you have in your minds!
**Mid-Workshop Teaching Point:**
When researchers ask questions about something, they ask THICK questions that have more complex answers than "yes" or "no." Reread your wondering questions and reword them to be sure that they cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or "no."

**Teaching Share:**
I am so excited about all of the subtopics you have chosen. I am anxious for you to start answering your questions! Let’s do a whip share (share quickly around the circle without discussion) and name the subtopic each of us will be researching. I will post these subtopics so that as we find information about someone else’s topic we can let them know where they should look. We’ll develop our own community of researchers.
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Session 10: Revising Our Questions to Guide Research

Connection:
Yesterday we were using T-Charts to list what we already know and questions we have about a subtopic of ____________________ (teacher chosen topic / category).

Today I will teach you that nonfiction writers use specific questions as a road map to guide them through their research.

Teaching Point: — I do
Although all questions are important, some make better research questions than others. Some readers may be able to answer questions from background knowledge, while others require more research. Easily answered questions do not lend themselves to further research. For example, questions that can be answered with yes or no do not make good research questions. Bigger, more puzzling questions usually make for easier and better research. Watch me as I show you how I think about the kinds of questions I want to answer.

These are some questions I want to research, the ones from my T-Chart:
• How long does it take to die from a sting?
• How do they sting?
• How long are the tentacles?
• Are they the biggest jellyfish?
• Are they good for anything?

I see that two of my questions can be answered yes or no. Those are thin questions. (underlined questions) I can rephrase these two questions, to make them more researchable — THICK questions.
• How big are Box jellyfish?
• What role does the jellyfish play in an ocean ecosystem?

Active Engagement: — You do
Now it’s your turn. Please open your Writers Notebooks to your T-Chart from yesterday. You are going to ask yourself, “Are these thick or thin questions? Can I research them?” Turn to your partner, discuss each other’s questions, and put a ✓ next to the thin questions that need to be reworded into THICK questions.

Link to Other Writing:
Today and every day, when you are preparing to do research, I want you to remember to use specific thick questions as a road map to guide you through your research. Let’s get to our writing spots! Look for your checkmarks and reword the thin questions into THICK questions. Continue to write down everything you know and can teach about your subtopic, and continue to add questions to your list. You may choose to refer to our mentor texts to see what types of questions our mentor authors may have asked themselves when they wrote their nonfiction books.

Mid-Workshop Teaching Point:
Writers, let me interrupt you a moment to remind you that when you are teaching about a topic, you need to consider your reader’s questions too. What questions would other kids have? It may even help you to get together with your partner to brainstorm questions readers might have about your topic.

Teaching Share:
Let’s do a quick whip around our circle and read a thin question you have revised to create a THICK question.

Time for Assessment:
Review students T-Charts to be sure that they are writing questions that will help guide them in their research.
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Session 11: Let the Research Begin

- Be sure you have collected a large quantity of appropriate resources for your students to use for research in this and future sessions. This session will likely stretch over a few days in order for students to complete their research and find complete and satisfactory answers for all of their questions. Your librarian can help you to gather a significant amount of appropriate resources. The subtopic list you created in session 9 will help you pull these resources together.

- At some point during the research, it is likely that your students will begin to feel some concern about not finding complete answers, or any answer at all, for their questions. Be sure to address these concerns with individuals or as a whole group. Nonfiction writing is new and challenging, especially for younger writers in 3rd grade. Your students need to know that you are confident in their abilities and that you are there to support them as they dive into this new genre of writing. As teachers of writing, we are offering students new strategies to grow as nonfiction writers – we are not expecting perfect nonfiction writing. Celebrate with students as they try new strategies and add them to their writing toolbox.

Connection:
Yesterday we were working on using specific questions as a road map to guide us through our research, using THICK questions, instead of thin ones to make our research easier and more informative. Remember that these questions are a road map to help you find information to teach to your reader. They are different than test questions, because you might not be able to find an answer to every question! These questions just help you in your search to learn about your topic.

Today I will teach you how to organize yourself to actually do the research and find the answers to your questions.

Teaching Point: – I do
Watch me as I show you how I organize my questions about the jellyfish in my writer’s notebook. Do you see how I wrote one question at the top of each page? I also wrote “Fun Facts” at the top of one page. This information I will put here doesn’t necessarily answer one of my questions, but is very interesting and will make my report more interesting. I also record WHERE I find my information. I need to give credit to the author that wrote the book in which I find my information. I will call this my “Resource” page. It will be the page after all the questions. These pages give me a special place to record my facts, or answers, to my questions. Thumbs up if you can do that.

Next, as I read through a resource book to look for the answers to my questions, I record the information in my notebook as dash facts. Watch as I demonstrate how to write just the needed information, not necessarily in complete sentences. As I find a fact that answers one of my questions, I put a dash (hyphen) before the information. (Each box is a separate page in the Writer’s Notebook.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How long are the tentacles?</th>
<th>Fun Facts</th>
<th>Resource Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- 4 clusters of 15 tentacles</td>
<td>- Sea turtles are the only animal not bothered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- when swimming, tentacles contract, they are about 15cm long and about 5mm in diameter</td>
<td>- Sea turtles are predators, will eat them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- when hunting, the tentacles are thinner and about 3m long</td>
<td>- Jellyfish called “Sea Wasp”</td>
<td>Box Jellyfish – Wonders of the Sea by Mary Renee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Active Engagement:**
Now it’s your turn. Use your T-Chart and record each of your questions on a separate page of your notebook. Be sure to make a Fun Facts page and a Resources page.

**Link to Other Writing:**
Today and every day when you are researching, I want you to remember to organize your questions and use dash facts to quickly record the information and answers you find. If you discover that you wonder some new questions, you need to decide if that question goes along with one you already have and can be written on that same page or if it so different that it needs its own new page. Let the research begin!

**Mid-Workshop Teaching Point:**
As you are using different resources, be sure to write the title and author on the resource page.

**Teaching Share:**
Writers, ____________ found a WOW fact while doing research. With your writing partner, share an interesting piece of information, or fun fact, you found that surprised you.
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Session 12: Drafting With Our Research Publication in Mind

Connection:
Yesterday we began researching answers to our questions, finding fun facts, and recording our resources.

Today I will teach you how to use the information you have collected to make a Teaching Poster, similar to our mentor text, Salamander Rain-a Lake and Pond Journal by Kristin Joy Pratt-Serafini.

Teaching Point: – I do
Let’s look at how the author of Salamander Rain organized the pages of her book. (Explore and explain the attributes of the book.)

I think the author looked at her work to decide which information to include. Then she thought about how she wanted that information to look on the page. I want to display my information in a way that makes sense for my reader. I will decide if my information is best displayed as a diagram, flow chart, paragraph, or Fun Fact box. I will create a different section on my poster for each of my question pages. I will group similar questions together if the information for those questions goes well together. I think I’ll put my diagram in this corner and some special vocabulary words in a box here… (You might choose to display a model of a finished poster at this point. It would also be an appropriate time to share your grading rubric, so students are familiar with the expectations for their finished product. A rubric is included with this unit.)

Active Engagement: – You do
Now it’s your turn. In your writer’s notebook, create a draft or sketch of your teaching poster. Where will you put the different information you have been collecting? Just think about the arrangement - where will the title go? What about the different sections you are writing?

Link to Other Writing:
Today you will continue working on your research. Remember to consider the format of the teaching poster you will be publishing about your topic so that your information is presented in a way that makes sense to the reader. Then begin writing your information. Remember to use a different piece of paper for each section of your poster.

Mid-Workshop Teaching Point:
Writers, we are all excited to begin our Teaching Posters, but remember to collect enough information to answer all your questions.

Teaching Share:
Share your draft poster and thinking with your writing partner. Explain the decisions you made about your displayed information.

Time for Assessment
Students should have collected several dash facts for each of their questions. Review writers’ notebooks to see if writers have had difficulty in finding answers to their questions or if their dash facts do not apply to the question on the page. Students may find that some new questions have come up as they have done their research. Help students who find themselves in this situation to create new questions or to find new resources. Be on the watch for students who struggle to paraphrase and tend towards plagiarism.
Connection:
Yesterday we began organizing how we will display the information on our teaching posters.

Today I will teach you that as we draft the different sections for our posters, we want to include specific details and examples.

Teaching Point: – I do
Let’s look at Salamander Rain and find the specific details and examples the author used. (Explore and explain the attributes of the book.)

Notice on the salamander page that the author included a paragraph about the salamander’s life cycle. In this paragraph she told us exactly where the salamander lives on the forest floor. She didn’t just say that it lives on the forest floor.

Active Engagement: – You do
Now it’s your turn. First, go back to your notebook. Circle the small sections of information you have written that you know you can teach more details about. Remember to include exact, true facts that are related to each other.

Link to Other Writing:
Today as you continue drafting, use a separate piece of draft paper for each section/question in your writer’s notebook. You might choose to write a paragraph, draw a diagram with labels, or create a fun fact box. You might choose to revise the small parts of your writing that you’ve circled because you know you can teach using more specific details. Be sure to include specific details, such as number of things or and content-specific vocabulary to teach your reader about your topic. It may be necessary for you to continue doing research. Let’s get busy!

Mid-Workshop Teaching Point:
Writers, when we are writing our information, we need to use our own words, not the words of the author of the source. When you write today, try writing about your facts in the same kind of voice you might use if you were talking to a friend.

Teaching Share:
Ask volunteers to share their favorite section, sentence, or “box” of writing.
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Session 14: Revising Using Question and Answer Boxes

Connection:
Yesterday we wrote about our topics using specific details and examples. Over the past few weeks, we have learned many strategies to use as we write nonfiction.

Today I will teach you that writers revise by rereading their work, deciding if they’ve included enough information, and working to make it more understandable to their reader. One way writers do this is by using question and answer boxes.

Teaching Point: – I do
In the book Salamander Rain, the author used a question and answer format in a text box. This is an interesting way to share a fun fact. (See the dragonfly page.)

Active Engagement: – You do
Now it’s your turn. First, go back to your drafts and reread your information. Look for a section where you might be able to use a question and answer box to make your writing more understandable.

Link to Other Writing:
Today as you work on the information for your poster, pay attention to the variety of writing you have created to present your research. Consider using a question and answer box or some of the other types of strategies nonfiction authors use, like diagrams and labels, compare and contrast writing, problem and solution writing, or vocabulary word boxes.

Mid-Workshop Teaching Point:
I was reading through our mentor text and noticed another way the author taught us her information. She grabbed our attention by using powerful words to describe the sections of her information. For example: Landlocked Lobsters, Living Frog-sicles, and Crazy as a Loon are headings. The words catch our attention, let us know what to expect, and teach us. As you continue working, try to create interesting headings for your different sections of information.

Teaching Share:
Ask volunteers to share their favorite headings.
Unit of Study: Informational Writing and Research for 3rd-5th Grades

Session 15: Revising Using Our Personal Voice

Connection:
Yesterday we learned that nonfiction writers use question and answer boxes to add interest to their writing.

Today I will teach you another way non-fiction authors revise by adding personal voice to their writing.

Teaching Point: – I do
When we talk about voice in writing, we mean writing that sounds like a real person wrote it. I don’t have to sound like an encyclopedia when I write non-fiction. My reader wants to find out what I think, what I noticed, and what amazing things I know about my subject. When I discovered that sea turtles can eat box jellyfish without getting hurt, I was amazed and I can write this in my nonfiction piece to let my reader hear my voice. I might write, “I could hardly believe it when I learned that sea turtles like to eat jellyfish. They don’t even feel the painful sting of a jellyfish!”

Active Engagement: – You do
Now it’s your turn. First, go back to your drafts and reread your information. Where does your writing really sound like you? Where does it sound like somebody else? Tell your partner one place where you could add your thoughts and feelings about the information that you are teaching your reader about.

Link to Other Writing:
Today as you work on the information for your poster, use conversational words and phrases to add personal voice. Examples might include: well, as you can imagine, sort of, and although.

Mid-Workshop Teaching Point:
Writers, as we revise, we need to remember to grab our reader’s attention. We do this by writing strong leads that “hook” the reader. Please create strong leads in your paragraph writing and powerful words in your headings that grab your reader as you continue your work.

Teaching Share:
Ask volunteers to share a place where they added their own reactions to the information they were teaching or a lead they revised.
Connection:
Yesterday we revised our writing by adding personal voice and strong leads.

Today I will teach you that writers also revise by using content-specific vocabulary.

Teaching Point: – I do
Writing is best when it is simple, clear, concise, and accurate. In the book Salamander Rain, the author used vocabulary specific to her topic. When she talked about frogs, she used the words cold-blooded, dark facial mask, and amphibian. (See Living Frog-sicles on frog page) People who know a lot about frogs use this vocabulary to make the writing clear, concise, and accurate. We want to be sure to use words that are special to our topic as we teach our reader about the topic.

Active Engagement: – You do
Choose one of your teaching poster sections and circle any content-specific vocabulary that you used. Put a ✓ where you think you could use words that the experts use to teach your reader more about your topic.

Link to Other Writing:
Today as you work on the information for your poster, look for places to be more clear, concise, and accurate by using the vocabulary words that are important for your topic and new to your reader. Be sure to refer to your rubric so that you know exactly what jobs you still need to complete.

Mid-Workshop Teaching Point:
Writers, please remember that writers edit and fix up their writing as they draft and revise. They do not wait until their piece is almost finished to do all of the editing work. Fix the basics like spelling, capital letters, and punctuation as you are working.

Teaching Share:
Boys and girls, I noticed that ____________ used content-specific words in his/her writing! Way to go _____! (Have student share his/her work)
Unit of Study: Informational Writing and Research for 3rd-5th Grades

Session 17: Creating a Bibliography

Connection:
Yesterday we revised our writing with content-specific vocabulary.

Today I will teach you that writers give credit to the authors and sources of their information.

Teaching Point: – I do
When we do research and read the writing of other authors, we need to give them credit for their work. We do this by writing a resource page or bibliography. There is a specific way to write your source information. Watch how I write my resource information, the title and author, for each of my sources.

First I write the author’s last name followed by a comma, and then the first name followed by a period. Next I write the copyright year followed by a period. Then I write the whole title of the book (or magazine, website, etc…) followed by a period.

(This is a very simplified version of a bibliography. It is the teacher’s decision as to how specific the student’s resource information will be written.)

Active Engagement: – You do
As you write the final drafts of the sections that will be glued on to your teaching poster, remember that one of your sections will be a list of your resources.

Link to Other Writing:
Whenever you are researching and writing informational text, remember to give credit to the authors and sources of your information. Be sure to refer to your rubric so that you know exactly what jobs you still need to complete.

Mid-Workshop Teaching Point:
As you do your final editing, making your poster polished and accurate, try using strong verbs to describe your subject in action. Let me give you an example from Salamander Rain. (See the water lily page)

This afternoon, Kori and I adventured around the lake…and we steered through some green soup called duckweed.

The words adventured and steered give the writing action. Find places in your writing to add strong verbs.

Teaching Share:
Take a moment to reflect on your work so far. Wow! We will be publishing our teaching posters tomorrow!

Resource Page
Session 18: Finishing Our Final Products

Connection:
Today we take our drafts and turn them into published teaching posters. We make final drafts of each section, being sure to group similar sections together if necessary. Each section will have its own subheading and similar types of information should not be in separate places on our poster. We add our artwork, color, and personal style to our displays!

(Requirements for finishing the final product are the decision of the individual teacher. This session may be stretched over a few days to complete the work. At this level, color and pictures are appropriate ways to present research.)
Connection:
Boys and girls you have made it! You have completed your research and become successful writers of informational text! Your teaching posters look amazing!

(How the finished product is shared or displayed is the decision of the individual teacher. Remember that a celebratory event with an authentic audience is an important way for any writer to present a final published piece.)