**Claims, Evidence, Analysis Across the Elementary Curriculum**

**Rural Schools Professional Development Initiative**

**Kentucky Writing Project**

2015-16

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| **Preparing Students to Write** **Criteria-based and Text-based Opinions*****Adapted from materials developed by the National Writing Project*** ***for the i3 College Ready Writers Program funded by the U.S. Department of Education*** |
|  | **Notes** |
| **The thinking that supports argumentation is new and complex**; we can’t wait till we write “the opinion piece” to learn how to think like an opinion writer. It needs to be part of the knowledge we BRING to the piece, not new skills that we must orchestrate while we are researching and writing about a topic.**We therefore must layer the teaching of these skills in smaller ways**, through notebook entries and quick drafts, providing feedback to students, which helps them master a few skills at a time rather than expecting them to integrate multiple new skills simultaneously.**Through Mini-units, we are not trying to teach THE opinion paper, but rather teach and practice discrete opinion moves**. Students may later select from several of these short drafts to develop and revise a longer opinion piece. Standards tell us what students must be able to do, but not how to do that; standards are missing the techniques that get us to claim and evidence. These mini-units provide those techniques.**We also must teach and practice making claims and using evidence in every content area, all year long, if students are to become proficient in opinion writing.** |  |
| **Resiliency/Stamina** |  |
| In a school where writing scores have been persistently low or stagnant, resiliency research provides an effective lens through which to plan work with students and teachers. Students and teachers must believe to achieve. * Schoolwork is hard, but we can build our stamina as readers and writers through multiple short drafts.
* High standards + support is feasible in our classrooms. Formative assessment and focused feedback lifts the quality of student work.
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| **What Works** |  |
| School-wide Focus on Claims/Evidence/Analysis. * Informal opportunities: use the language of claim/evidence to
	+ discuss school issues;
	+ discuss current events;
	+ stop spontaneously as we read to make claims and identify specific pieces of evidence from the text.
* Planned lessons and mini-units featuring claims/evidence/ analysis.
* Formative assessment as well as on-demand assessment to measure progress and provide feedback.
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| **Why Mini-Units?**  |  |
| The US Department of Education’s program, Investing in Innovation, (i3) funded the NWP *College-Ready Writers Program*. The innovation that National Writing Project proposed was to provide professional development to rural secondary schools in the teaching of opinion/argument. Innovation requires trying something new, taking risks, and diving in. This approach is showing promise in many schools and districts that are participating in the project.This year the Kentucky Writing Project has been adapting these materials to expand the project to elementary classrooms and to use the frameworks to develop additional mini-units on other topics and for all contents. Trying a mini-unit approach (instead of a traditional, lengthy unit) *is* new for many teachers and may feel risky.  |  |
| **What are the Mini-Units?**  |  |
| The mini-units are short teaching units (3-8 class periods or less) that result in students writing short opinion pieces using sources as evidence. These mini-units are engaging for students. They are designed to be layered, with new mini-units being taught periodically over the course of the year.* They typically start with **readings** using **strategies** that support students in understanding an issue.
* They then move quickly to support students’ **opinion writing**.
* They don’t intend to teach students everything they need to know about writing opinions, but rather to focus **a few key skills**.
* The design requires we use a **succession** of mini-units, building on the students’ work each time.
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| **Why Non-Fiction?**  |  |
| During a mini-unit, students assemble evidence from non-fiction texts that offer a variety of perspectives and, often, a variety of genres, too. The thinking students have to do in these units is to understand multiple approaches to a single topic or issue and stake out a position for themselves.  They do this by citing the readings and then building a case for their own claim. Reading strategies are introduced to help students work with non-fiction, to assist in comprehension and to support selecting and using evidence. Why? * **Develop Critical Reading Skills**: These mini-units help students gain control over information, even, or especially, information that may communicate conflicting points of view.
* **Develop Abilities to Use Sources:** College teachers identify this as THE essential skill in college. Introducing text-based writing in elementary school raises the quality of student thinking and writing. It is much easier to support an opinion with text-based evidence than with ideas you have to dream up yourself. In the mini-units, students writing from the mini-units place themselves in a current conversation about an issue or idea and opinion for the consequence, the validity, or the “rightness” of their position by citing multiple texts. This conflict of purposes is why we haven’t mixed literary and non-literary texts in these units, running the risk of reducing the impact of literature and confusing the purpose of writing opinion/argument from sources.
* **Prepare Students for College and Career:** This kind of writing not only prepares students for success in middle and high school, it is what students will experience in college writing programs and in their majors. Academic work is nearly all about assessing existing information and finding one’s place in it.  College writing programs have changed. Set aside notions of grueling college writing. These materials have been reviewed by college writing teachers for authenticity of purpose.
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|  **What are the Common Components?**  |
| * A progression of work in text-based opinion writing around a common topic
	+ Close reading that includes writing about the readings.
	+ Focus on a particular skill or move that writers use in order to form opinions.
	+ Revisiting the readings to draft an opinion.
	+ Focused feedback provided on students’ use of the skill.
	+ Students are supported in making revisions based on that feedback.

Such a process layers over time the complex array of skills that students will eventually need to orchestrate in order to demonstrate competence in opinion/argument writing. |  |
| * A text set
	+ To connect students to issues that will invite them—even incite them—to write.
	+ Informational texts that will provide information for students as they seek to understand the topic and then later, will serve as evidence for students as they take positions on the topic.

OR* + Opinion pieces that introduce different perspectives on the topic, allowing students to consider their own stances and then select the most compelling pieces of evidence to support and extend their own thinking.

While we encourage you to first try the mini-units with these original texts—because we know these texts work with real students—re-teaching the mini-unit may be helpful in developing students’ expertise. A second or third text set could be substituted at this point. |  |
| * **Close reading and exploratory writing**
	+ Strategies slow students down enough to really think about the facts, the issues, and the perspectives involved.
	+ Guidance in identifying evidence that could be used to support a claim.
	+ Writing to learn and to discover so that students see the complexities in taking a stand on an issue as well as have opportunities to carefully consider their own stances.
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| * **Argumentation focus**
	+ Emphasis on at least one particular element of argumentation—a skill or writing move that helps students form effective opinions/arguments.
	+ The intent is to work more intensely on a particular aspect of opinion writing, master it, and then take up another mini-unit that will focus on a different, but equally important move that opinion writers make.
	+ A chart is provided that identifies some of these elements that students will be learning.
	+ Mini-units allow teachers to layer the instruction of opinion/argumentation so that students are learning one or two key moves in a single mini-unit that they will then be expected to take up more independently in subsequent writing opportunities.
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| * **Writing Processes**
	+ Students draft their own texts AND revise them after feedback from peers and/or teacher.
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| * **Sense-making and Transfer/ Processing**
	+ We need to name what we are learning in order to be able to access it later. Student self-assessment, peer assessment, and/or reflection are part of most mini-units.
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| **Mini-units feature tools to support students****in learning how to write opinions** |  |
| * **Harris Moves:** To help students learn to use sources effectively
* **Bernabei Kernel Essays**: To help students learn to consider purpose as they organize their opinions
* **Organizers and partner/small group activities** to scaffold student writers as they learn new skills
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| **What Might a Year Look Like?**

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| **August** | **September** | **October** | **November-December** |
| Baseline On-Demand & Analysis of work | Analysis of First mini-unit drafts | Analysis of Second mini-unit drafts | Analysis of 3rd mini-unit drafts |
| Writing into the Day activities to introduce Thinking Like an Opinion/Argument Writer-----------------Initial Mini-UnitFocus/feedback/re-vision on Claim | Selection & teaching of 2nd mini-unitFocus/feedback/re-vision on Evidence Selection and Harris Moves (especially illustrating) | Selection & teaching of 3rd mini-unitFocus/feedback/revision on Commentary | Review of drafts from first 3 mini-units. Selection of one to develop further (more research, with students searching for additional credible sources), feedback and revision (claim, evidence, commentary), edit, and publish |
| Example: Recess (on demand); Bluegrass Awards | Example: Exercise and the Brain | Examples: Fast Food; Should We Worry About What We Eat? |  |
| **January** | **February** | **March-April** | **April-May** |
| Mid-Year On-Demand and analysis of work | Analysis of Fourth mini-unit drafts | Analysis of Independent Opinion drafts | End-of-Year Assessments(class and/or state) |
| Selection & teaching of 4th mini-unitFocus/feedback/re-vision on logical development and structure | Planning, Researching, and Drafting an Independent Opinion pieceFocus on research skills (finding credible sources) and orchestrating all opinion skills learned to date | Revision study based on needs and completion of final draftsOn-demand practice and prep with bell-ringers and lessons around student work samples |   |
| Example: Sugary Drinks |  |  |  |

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