

Clark University Master of Arts in Teaching Program Curriculum Unit Plan Guidelines

Opinion Writing CUP

I. Title and brief description: Give a title and short description. What, briefly, will students be doing in this unit of study? (2-3 sentences)

- For this unit, I will be teaching opinion writing. Students will learn how to write about their opinion using steps that I model through my writing each lesson (I think that..., One reason is..., another reason is..., also..., and this is why..) These steps will guide students to be able to write about their opinion, and give reasons for it that are relevant to the opinion. By the end of the unit, the students will be able to write about their opinion and think of multiple reasons by following our steps that we use throughout the unit.

II. Big Idea/Essential Question: Explain your “big idea” and/or essential question.

- What is an opinion and how do you convince your reader of your opinion?

III. Learning Goals: Explain what learning goals you have set for students’ investigation of the big idea/essential question. Consider the following areas:

- A. Development of content understanding (key concepts and ideas)
 - a. Key concepts:
 - i. What is an opinion
 - ii. Using reasons to back up your opinion
 - iii. Writing about your opinion with reasons to back it up
- B. Enabling students to experience the power of their minds and their capacities as learners and doers (powerful learning)
 - a. Students will be using their own reasons to back up their opinions, which is using their full capacity as learners.
- C. Development of intellectual and academic habits of mind, work, and discourse, including habits of independent or collaborative thinking and doing typical of readers, writers, speakers, creators, researchers and thinkers in the discipline (ways of knowing and academic literacy)
 - i. The steps of writing about your opinion chart, which we will be using for this unit, will help students to look back on during each lesson. This use of an anchor chart is a great tool for students to look at when they are lost and it is a strategy they can take with them into second grade and beyond.

- D. Literacy development, including capabilities of proficient readers, writers, and speakers in the particular discipline
- i. This unit will help students work on their writing and their ability to provide reasonings for their thoughts and opinions. Students will work on what their opinions are, and will learn through this unit how to write about their opinions with specific examples and reasons.
- E. Digital Literacy, including any ways to support collaborative work
- a. We will not be using technology in this unit, because it is a writing unit. In first grade, we focus on writing on paper and not on typing yet. We are focusing on getting students able to write in a straight line, using proper punctuation, etc. For this reason, students will not begin using technology within this writing unit.
- F. Development of trust and the classroom as an affirming, inclusive learning community
- Students will be sharing their opinions with each other, and I will be sharing some of my opinions (favorite animal, favorite season, etc) which validates students and lets the students know that I care about their interests and that we all care about each other. This is an inclusive writing unit because we are validating our first graders and their opinions.
 - *Students will be able to understand what an opinion is*
 - *Students will be able to share their opinion and back it up with reasoning and examples*
 - *Students will be able to convince the reader of their opinion*

IV. Personal, social, and cultural factors (yourself, your students, and learning)

- A. What assumptions are you making about why your plan will connect to your Main South students? How will you take advantage of your students' sociocultural strengths (funds of knowledge)? How are you taking into account any differences in your socioeconomic, cultural, language, or racial background, gender, personality, approach to learning, or view of the world?
- i. Students from different cultures come into my classroom, and this unit is validating the differences of my students because we are sharing our opinions. If one student likes pretzels, and another student likes hot cheetos, this might be because of their culture or what is allowed to be eaten at home. I am respecting my students and thier preferences because I am aware that we all come from different backgrounds. For example, we have many students form Ghana in our classroom, and two students from India. I know that their favorite foods are different because of what their families make at home, therefore they will get to write about different foods from different backgrounds. I will continue to remind my students

that we need to validate each other because not everyone likes the same things, and that is okay.

- B. In what sense is your plan culturally responsive/sustaining? In what sense does it represent an anti-racist stance in curriculum?
- i. Students will be able to write their own opinion, which does not disregard anyone's culture or race. They get to pick what is special to them and write about it.
- C. Please think about (and write about, if appropriate) whether and how in this plan you might position and empower students to "read the world" and act in it in support of equity and social justice.
- i. This will allow students to share their own opinion which they might not get to do in school very much or at home. This can uplift the student's voices.

V. Rationale: Your rationale should show clearly your careful consideration of a full range of factors in planning your unit to ensure equitable support and meaningful, authentic, and substantial learning for all students, taking into account:

A. Learning goals: Explain why your big idea/essential question and your learning goals are important for your discipline and meaningful for your students.

- Through this unit, we will be going through the steps to begin opinion writing. This will provide students with the ability to set up their opinion writing (state opinion, provide multiple relevant reasons, and re-state opinion).

B. Curriculum standards: Explain how the big idea/essential question connects to the Guiding Principles in the MA curriculum frameworks. Identify which learning standards are addressed and how. Fall 2020

- 1.W.1: Write opinion pieces that introduce the topic or name the book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply a reason for the opinion, and provide some sense of closure.
- 1.W.3 Construct viable arguments and respond to the reasoning of others
- 1.W.4 Produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience

C. Students' backgrounds and readiness: What strengths, capacities, and interests, in terms of their content understanding (prior knowledge), academic and literacy development, personal and cultural abilities, and development as a learning community, are you taking into account in planning this unit?

- I am thinking about what my students are interested in when I am picking the topics that they have to write their opinion about. For example, I know that my students love animals and we always talk about them. That is why I am having them write about what they think the best animal is. I want my students to be excited by our writing, and I want them to have strong opinions on the subjects we are writing about.

D. Student needs: What particular needs of your students have you taken into account in planning the unit, such as academic, social, personal (including moderately and severely disabling conditions), and language development level?

- This unit is only being taught to 8 out of my 13 students because my ELL students get pulled during our writing block. One of my students who is in the room gets easily distracted by others and he does like to do writing. He is an amazing reader, but strongly dislikes writing. I will keep this in mind and continue to try to check up on him and make sure he is not chatting with his seat neighbor. I will also move his seat for writing time (if needed) so he can have a good view of the board and he can be isolated in order to focus.

E. What will they need to be able to do in order to meet the learning goals?

- This student who struggles to start writing needs to be able to use the sentence starters and fill in the rest of the writing. He can use the sentence starters to help him and to get less frustrated by the amount of reasons we have to give for our opinion. As long as this student gives me two reasons for his opinion on his writing, this will count as meeting my learning goals.

F. Research- and evidence-based powerful learning practices: Explain how research and ideas about powerful learning have informed your plan. What are some supportive practices that you will use to meet different student needs?

- Modeling : I know that modeling will help students to know exactly what I expect from them, this is why I will model every time we are doing a new opinion writing lesson.
- Sentence starters : Sentence starters will help students to not get overwhelmed and it gives them something to look back on if they get stuck.
- Being flexible : I will be open to change my lessons if something does not go as planned because I know this is how effective teaching works. You cannot stick to one plan if the students are not meeting your learning goals.

- Incorporating student interest into lessons : I am putting topics into my opinion writing lessons (favorite animals, indoor recess vs. outdoor recess, and picking the better candy) to help my students to feel connected to the work we are doing in class.

VI. Assessments: It is essential for both you and your students that your formative and culminating assessments clearly show the extent to which students have achieved learning goals.

Explain your main assessments and why they are appropriate for your learning goals.

How will students know what to expect and the criteria for good work?

Attach a draft of your culminating assignment and corresponding assessment criteria/rubric.

How will students and parents learn about students' overall academic progress from these assessments?

Lesson 1 Main Assessment	Lesson 2 Main Assessment	Lesson 3 Main Assessment	Lesson 4 Main Assessment	Culminating Assessment 5
<i>Oreo Worksheet</i> "Yummiest snack is..."	Sentence starter worksheet (not oreo) "I think the best animal is..."	"I think the best season is..."	"I think indoor recess is better than outdoor recess because..."	Students choose their favorite candy out of the two choices (Starburst and hershey kiss) and then they write why one is better
How will students know what is expected? - Modelin g opinion writing on big sheet	How will students know what is expected? - Modelin g opinion writing on big sheet - I think that.. - One reason is... - Another reason	How will students know what is expected? - Modelin g opinion writing on big sheet - I think that.. - One reason is...	How will students know what is expected? - Modelin g opinion writing on a big sheet in front of class - I think that.. - One	How will students know what is expected? Modeling using our steps for opinion writing - I think that.. - One reason is... - Another reason is...

	is... - Also.. - This is why...	- Another reason is.. - Also.. - This is why...	reason is... - Another reason is.. - Also.. - This is why...	- Also.. - This is why...
Relate to learning goals? - Learning about what an opinion is	Relate to learning goals? - Learning about what an opinion is - Using reasons to back up their opinion	Relate to learning goals? - Convincing reader of opinion - Using reasons to back up their opinion	Relate to learning goals? - Convincing reader of opinion - Using reasons to back up their opinion	Relate to learning goals? - Being able to try a candy, pick the reasons on why it is better than the other,

VII. Unit Calendar

Provide a calendar of key learning activities, learning strategies, and assessments for your anticipated timeframe for the unit.

Explain your sequence of activities—why does this particular order make sense in light of your learning goals and rationale for the unit?

Lesson 1 (Wednesday 8th 9:30-10:00)	Lesson 2 (Thursday 9th 9:30-10:00)	Lesson 3 (Friday 10th 9:30-10:00)	Lesson 4 (Monday 13th 9:30 -10:00)	Lesson 5 (Tuesday 14th 9:30- 10:00)
THE YUMMIEST SNACK IS...	THE BEST ANIMAL IS...	THE BEST SEASON IS...	INDOOR VS OUTDOOR	<u>*Bring in hershey kisses and starburst for the class*</u>
- Introduce OREO chart - The yummiest snack worksheet with sentence starters	- Go over example - Introduce word bank for opinion writing words - “I think the best animal is..” - Turn and talk and tell them what they think the best animal is	- The best season is... - Come up with word bank for each season - Students write their own with no sheet before hand (first time that students are going straight to the lined paper)	- Make sure students are coming up with more evidence in this lesson, must have more reasons - Indoor recess vs. Outdoor recess	- <u>Final lesson</u> - Bring in two types of candy - Starburst vs. Hershey kisses - Make sure the students work <u>independently</u> during the writing time so I can measure how <u>their skills have changed</u> since the first lesson
Modeling: I think the yummiest snack is Cheez-its. One reason is because they are so flavorful. For example, they taste so salty and crunchy. This is why Cheez-its are the yummiest snack. - Class fills out worksheet after the modeled write	Modeling: I think the best animal is a panda. One reason is because they have adorable eyes. Another reason is because they have unique black and white fur. Also, pandas are so fluffy. This is why I think pandas are the best animal.	Modeling: I think the best season is summer. One reason is because the weather is sunny and warm. Another reason is you can go to the beach. Also, you can swim in the ocean. This is why summer is the best season!	Modeling: I think indoor recess is better than outdoor recess. One reason is because indoor recess has more activities to do. For example, you can color during indoor recess. This is why indoor recess is better.	Modeling: I think Twizzlers are better than skittles. One reason is because twizzlers have a fun shape. For example, you can use twizzlers as a straw. This is why twizzlers are better than skittles.

Why does this sequence of lessons make sense?

- Students will start out writing about what they think the best snack is, then move forward with the best animal. I picked these because I know the students are going to be overwhelmed with a new writing style and format, so I picked something I know they would look forward to writing about. I chose indoor vs. outdoor recess because I wanted to give two choices, and then build a strong opinion on why one is better than the other. The last lesson, on valentines day, will let the students **form** their own opinion after tasting two candies. This lesson

gives the students more independence and they get to use new vocabulary and have to convince the reader. With this last lesson, I will be giving the student limited help when they are working at their desks. This way, I can see what they have taken away from the unit.

VIII. Family and Community Involvement:

Are there possible ways for you to actively involve parents in their child's academic activities and performance, and communicate clearly with them?

Are there possible resources—such as guest presenters, A/V, field trips, and material artifacts—from colleagues, families, and the community for you to draw on to enhance learning?

- For this lesson, I am asking opinions directly from my first graders, so I do not need help from the families. I think that my families will enjoy reading what their children will have to say about their opinions on certain subjects! I am sending all of the writing home at the end of the unit so that the parents and guardians can see the work that we have been doing and they can see what their children are capable of!

IX. Post-Teaching Reflection

A. Based on your culminating and other assessments of learning goals, analyze the extent to which students achieved your learning goals.

a. To what extent did different students achieve the learning goals?

- The first lesson of my unit helped me to change up how I was teaching opinion writing, and I think this allowed for my students to be successful in lessons 2,3,4,and 5. For each of those lessons (2-5) all of my 8 students were able to produce work that met my learning goals. They were able to state their opinion, give one reason, give another reason, another reason, and then re-state. My anchor chart (OREO method) for the first lesson ended up confusing my students (and me) so the first lesson did not go the way I planned. It started the unit on a confusing note and I was worried that the unit was going to be a failure and the students were going to hate it. Once I sat down and did more research, I found a method of teaching opinion writing that I knew would work better for my class. This enabled my students to reach the unit goals for the rest of the unit. All 8 of my students were able to have their own opinion and back it up with relevant reasons for lessons 2-5.

What do you learn from differences in performance, or puzzling student performances (hard for you to explain), about the particular challenges of learning in this unit?

- I think one thing that was puzzling for me is that sometimes we have an opinion like, “starburst are the best candy” but maybe you do not have so many reasons for thinking it is the best. Sometimes people just like things for no real reasons, they just like it. But, for the sake of this unit, I needed my students to think of specific reasons because we were teaching about coming up with reasons.
- I also found it hard to work with students who struggled to write anything on their own, and I also had a student who could do all of the writing in 5 minutes. I learned to give myself time and space to work with these students, and it is okay if some of my students have to wait a few minutes for me to come over to them. My students tend to be very needy during writing time (help with spelling, saying they do not know what to write, distracted, etc). I found myself getting overwhelmed with trying to help them all at the same time. It is more effective if I take it one student at a time and give quality help to this specific student.

What do you learn from differences in performance about the effectiveness of your planning for the needs of different students?

- I think all 8 of my students were able to effectively write because of my scaffolding tools. I worked **so hard to make sure** my students knew exactly what they were supposed to be doing. That is why I modeled every time and then I put the sentence starters in different colors very large on the board. This way, my students could not say that they did not know what to write. We also had a word bank, which helped them spell. I noticed that some of my students tried spelling words on their own, and they did not look at the word bank. I know this because of the spelling mistakes. I am fine with my students doing this, but I think they could of used our tools on the board more. Sometimes the students ignore the help that we have on the board, if they are not

used to the modeling, word bank, and sentence starters.

- If I was to do this unit again, I would also incorporate a day where I did not put up sentence starters because I want to see what my students could do if they were writing creatively. I think it would be interesting to see how it went if my students had more freedom. But, I also think this is why all 8 of my students were able to succeed. I used so many tools to assist, that there was limited room for failure and being lost within my lessons.

What would you change to improve this plan and why?.

- I really liked the writing prompts that I picked, and I would not change them. I felt that there were many different topics, and each student loved at least one of the lessons. I would add to the lessons, I would love to have made this unit longer and to be able to add more into it like adding a “hook” sentence.
- Something that I would change is the timing and I would do the first day as just a model and discussion day. I felt like each of my lessons was rushed because I wanted to have the finished writing product by the end of the lesson. If I was able to make this unit longer, I would give two class periods for each lesson, also so the students did not feel rushed. I hate feeling rushed but I was doing this to my students throughout the unit.
- I would also add a lesson that was not written, but I would have two sides of the room debate something and come up with reasons in front of the class. I think this would be a good activity to help with coming up with reasons and to see what helps to win an argument and it would transfer over to their writing. It would also take the pressure off, so I could see more if my students were understanding on how to convince someone of your opinion and how to build their argument with relevant reasons.

Writing an OPINION Piece

- ① State your opinion clearly.
↳ "I think that..."
↳ "In my opinion..."
- ② Tell your reason for your opinion.
↳ "one reason is..."
- ③ Tell another reason for your opinion.
↳ "another reason is...."
- ★ ④ Tell another reason for your opinion.
↳ "also..."
- ⑤ Re-state your opinion.
↳ "This is why..."