**English Instructional Plan: Opinion Writing: Grades 3-4**

**Primary Strand: Writing 3.8, 4.7**

**Integrated Strand/s: Communication and Multimodal Literacies**

**Essential Understanding:**

All students should:

* understand that writers use the writing process including planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing
* understand how to plan and compose writing for a variety of purposes.
* understand the domains of writing include composing, written expression, and usage/mechanics. (Grade 4)

**Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Processes:**

To be successful with this standard, students are expected to:

* use a variety of prewriting strategies to plan and organize writing
* use mentor texts as an example of writing
* develop writing by focusing on one topic
* write focusing on the composing domain features of central idea, organization, unity, and elaboration
* write focusing on the written expression domain features of word choice, specific vocabulary, and sentence variety
* produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to the purpose and audience
* recognize different forms of writing have different patterns of organization: opinion
  + state a clear opinion
  + provide multiple facts as reasons for support
  + provide a conclusion
* organize thoughts to convey a central idea before writing
* focus, organize, and elaborate to construct an effective, cohesive message for the reader
* select specific information to guide readers more purposefully through the piece

**Primary SOLs:**

3.8h Express an opinion about a topic and provide fact-based reasons for support.

4.7j Express an opinion about a topic and provide fact-based reasons for support.

**Reinforced (Related Standard) SOL:**

3.8 a) Engage in writing as a process.

b) Identify audience and purpose.

c) Use a variety of prewriting strategies.

d) Use organizational strategies to structure writing according to type.

4.7a) Engage in writing as a process.

b) Select audience and purpose

d) Use a variety of prewriting strategies.

e) Recognize different forms of writing have different patterns of organization.

**Academic Background/Language:**

Students naturally share their opinions; however, teachers will need to strategically build students’ vocabulary around the differences between opinions and facts. Furthermore, students need to understand their opinion may be different than the opinions of others. It is key for them to be able to share a specific opinion and provide reasons/support to persuade others to agree.

Sentence starters for opinion writing:

* I believe …
* I think…
* Everyone should…
* I prefer…
* In my opinion …
* I feel, … is better than…
* The best thing is…

Transition words for providing reasons:

* First…
* One reason is…
* Another reason is…
* Most importantly…
* One last reason…
* Next… Finally… Lastly…

Transition words for providing examples:

* For example…
* For instance…
* Specifically…
* Additionally…
* In fact…
* In other words…
* In particular…

**Materials**

* Editorials - (links provided below and documents attached)
* <https://newsela.com/articles/#/subject/opinion?content_maturities=Lower%20Elementary%20School>
* <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/30/learning/are-your-parents-addicted-to-their-phones.html>
* Chart paper
* Markers

**Student/Teacher Actions: What should students be doing? What should teachers be doing?**

(This lesson is intended to span over several days. The first steps are intended to introduce the concept of opinion writing, and the later steps are written to develop a writing project for writing an opinion piece).

1. Introduce opinion writing by asking students what it means to express an opinion. (a belief, judgment, or way of thinking about something.)
2. After discussing what an opinion is, divide the students into groups of four. Explain that they will be giving their opinions about topics. Explain that as a group they do not have to agree with each other, but they will be writing their opinions and giving reasons for them. Distribute a piece of chart paper to each group with one of these topics written on the chart paper: “What school subject is the most important for students to learn?” “What is the most important quality in a good friend?” “Do you believe that aliens exist?” “What is the best animal to have for a pet?” “What is the hardest job in the world?” “Is it better to have siblings or be an only child?”
3. Use a timer and encourage the students to talk about their questions first - 3 - 5 minutes. Then, after they have discussed as a group, have them write in their own section of the chart paper their feelings and opinions about the topics. Encourage them to write reasons for their opinions on the paper as well.
4. After groups have recorded their opinions on their charts, allow them to share their ideas with others by having them walk around and look at each group’s charts.
5. Explain to students that people express their opinions in various ways - newspapers, TV, websites, Twitter, Facebook, etc. Say that for them to get a better understanding of opinion writing, they will be reading and discussing editorials. Explain that an editorial is a newspaper article written by or on behalf of an editor that gives an opinion on a topical issue.

Distribute copies of the editorial from the *Richmond Times Dispatch* to the students. Tell the students that this editorial was written by a college student who is an environmental studies major. Explain that it’s important to know the author of editorials to understand why they are expressing their opinions. Read the article to them as they follow along. There is some advanced vocabulary in this article that you can explain as you read it. After reading, facilitate a discussion about the author’s opinion. Have the students highlight opinion statements and underline the reasons or evidence that the author used to express her opinion.

1. Share other editorials with students and give them time to read them and find the opinion statements and the evidence the author uses.
2. Explain that students will now write their own editorials. Generate a chart of topics that they have strong opinions about - topics they feel strongly enough to be inspired to write an editorial.
3. Make an anchor chart of the format of an editorial. Have students look at all of the editorials that they have read to help you create the anchor chart by noting the steps the authors followed. Items to include in the anchor chart:

* Introduction - state opinion
* Reason one followed by evidence, feelings and supporting details
* Reason two followed by evidence, feelings and supporting details
* Reason three followed by evidence, feelings and supporting details
* Closing - restate opinion

1. Decide if students need a support lesson on fact and opinion. It is a 4th grade nonfiction reading SOL, but in order to do opinion writing at the 3rd and 4th grade levels, students must support their opinions with facts. See the Extensions and Connections section of this plan for suggestions on introducing fact and opinion.
2. Explain that facts that support an opinion make an editorial stronger. Allow the students to research the topic they choose to gather facts to support their opinions. Refer back to the articles they have read and guide them to find facts that are in them articles to make the opinion stronger. (graphic organizer included)
3. Guide students through the writing process - prewriting (graphic organizer included), drafting, editing and revising and publishing. Explain that they must consider their audience in all stages of the writing process.
4. Explore options for having students’ editorials published. Many local newspapers will publish students’ work. Newsela will also publish students’ work. Another option is to publish all of the editorials together as a school or classroom newspaper.

**Assessment (Diagnostic, Formative, Summative)**

* **Formative -** teacher observation of the discussions and students’ opinions in the introductory activity.
* **Formative -** analyze the statements that students highlighted in the articles they read.
* **Summative -** Consider using the VDOE writing rubric draft for 5th grade as a guide for assessing the students’ final products - their editorials. Link to page with 5th grade writing rubric: <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/local_assessments/index.shtml>

**Reading Connections:**

* Editorials written for and by students <https://www.thecurriculumcorner.com/thecurriculumcorner123/newspapers-part-5-editorials/>
* <https://newsela.com/articles/#/category/kids>

**Extensions and Connections (for all students)**

* Briefly discuss the difference between a fact and an opinion. Use a piece of chart paper, and divide it into a T chart with Fact and Opinion as headers. Use one of the topics from the introductory activity to show the difference between fact and opinion. For example, “What school subject is the most important for a student to learn?” On the chart, write these facts: Math is a subject taught in school that focuses on numbers. Science is a subject taught in school that includes the study of plants. On the chart, write these opinions: Math is the most important subject in school. Reading is my favorite subject. Have the students share what they notice as the differences between the sentences. Have students give more examples of facts and opinions and add them to the correct section of the chart.

**Strategies for Differentiation**

* Scribe for students who have difficulty getting their thoughts on paper.
* Differentiate the number of reasons that students are required to write.
* Use visuals to correlate with the topics for opinions.

*Note: The following pages are intended for classroom use for students as a visual aid to learning.*

**Editorial to be used for reading as a class.**

Header from Richmond Times- Dispatch

***Virginia's News Leader***

**Is another power plant one too many?**

Editor, Times-Dispatch:

The addition of another gas power plant to Charles City County is irresponsible and morally reprehensible. Charles City County already is home to a landfill, gas electricity plant and is the site for a permitted natural gas plant by NOVI Energy. This natural gas power plant proposed by Balico’s Chickahominy Power LLC threatens an already at-risk region.

Carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuel power plants contribute to pollution and various respiratory health issues. Pushing the narrative that “Charles City Council is on the verge of becoming a natural gas-powered energy capital of Virginia,” as columnist Michael Paul Williams wrote recently, is dangerous to the natural environment of Virginia and to its residents. Fracking is not the key to a successful economy and it negatively affects already marginalized populations. Minority residents in the region would be exposed to additional pollution and toxins in the case of another natural gas plant.

We have a moral responsibility to prevent the disastrous impact this plant would have on the health of the natural ecosystem and human populations of Virginia. Decisions made at the State Air Pollution Control Board meeting will indicate whether the state takes a huge step backward.

As the fight for a shift toward renewable energy continues in Virginia, the need for our state to have a funded and codified Environmental Justice Council working on fossil fuel infrastructure becomes increasingly clear and urgent.

Sarah Conley

**Sample Editorials by students:**

**Kids Need Their Recess**

By: Sam Hanson, 4th Grader, Anderson Elementary

It is a proven fact that most healthy kids have a lot of energy. Our growing bodies take in the necessary food we need to stay in good physical shape, but that food also has a side effect – we are FILLED with energy most of the time! (And we don’t need to necessarily mention the sugar that we sometimes crave and need as well.)

Now energy is not a bad thing in most cases. We know many adults who would give anything to have more of it. But at school this energy can *sometimes* get us into trouble if we aren’t able to direct it in the right ways. And hey…we’re kids. The ability to channel that energy into only positive ways at school can be difficult. Our brains are still young and developing, right? You can’t disagree with that.

So, we have an idea that seems like a win – win for everyone. Give us more recess time! Think about it. We expend energy playing. We have less to get us in trouble in class. We will still have more than enough to pay attention and learn. (Remember – we are FILLED!) You, therefore, get to spend less energy trying to figure out ways to keep us out of trouble and have more energy yourself to teach us new and exciting things!

The way we see it, our plan is one that works for all of us. Give us more recess and most problems with student attention in class will be solved. The world of education is a much better place with more recess time. You can’t really argue with that.

**Give Me a Break**

By: April Rodriguez, 3rd Grader, Stowbridge Elementary

For kids, evenings are meant for relaxation and recreation. They are for playing in the backyard with friends, for dance lessons and soccer practice. They are meant for sharing a meal with people we care about and then cuddling up on the couch for some TV before bedtime.

So, I ask all of you teachers out there…what do YOU like to do in the evenings? Do you like it when you have to bring papers home to grade after a long day of teaching? More work after working all day? No? Well, guess what. Neither do kids. And there are so many reasons that we deserve a break from our normal homework – at least for a while.

We work hard. It takes a lot of effort to pay attention all day at school and learn all of the new things you are teaching us. Our brains are TIRED by the end of the school day. Reading, math, spelling, language, writing and so much more. We love to learn, but you can’t expect us to keep up that level of thinking all day and into the evening and night.

And how can quality family time happen if we are doing homework every night? We only have a few short hours between the end of the school day and bedtime. Once our homework is done, there seems to be no real time left to hang out with our parents and siblings. Everyone says that family is the most important, so our time with them should be protected as much as possible.

Now think about the physical exercise that we AREN’T getting by sitting at a table for an hour or more each night doing homework. We should be active so that we can stay healthy. We don’t get much movement at school each day, so the evenings are our only chance to get out and get the much needed exercise that doctors say kids need these days.

You can teach us all that we need during the school day, can’t you? We have faith in you. Give us a break. We deserve it! Don’t you think?

**Organizer - Note Taking for Opinion Writing**

Topic:

Reason 1:

Notes to support reason 1:

Source of notes:

Reason 2:

Notes to support reason 2:

Source of notes:

Reason 3:

Notes to support reason 3:

Source of notes:

**Prewriting Organizer for Opinion Writing**

**Brainstorm:**

What do you feel strongly about?

Why do you feel strongly about this topic? Why is it important to you?

What do you need to do to convince others to believe you?

**Drafting Hints:**

Sentence starters for opinion writing:

I believe, I think, Everyone should, I prefer, In my opinion, I feel, … is better than …, The best thing is, Transition words for providing reasons:

First, One reason is, Another reason is, Most importantly, One last reason, Next, Finally, Lastly

Transition words for providing examples:

For example, For instance, Specifically, Additionally, In fact, In other words, In particular

**Introduction:**

**Reason 1:**

**Evidence:**

**Reason 2:**

**Evidence:**

**Reason 3:**

**Evidence:**

**Conclusion:**