

EQuIP Review Feedback



Lesson/Unit Name: Making Evidence-Based Claims

Content Area: English language arts

Grade Level: 8

Overall Rating:

E

Exemplar

Dimension I – Alignment to the Depth of the CCSS

The lesson/unit aligns with the letter and spirit of the CCSS:

- ✓ Targets a set of grade-level CCSS ELA/Literacy standards.
- ✓ Includes a clear and explicit purpose for instruction.
- ✓ Selects text(s) that measure within the grade-level text complexity band and are of sufficient quality and scope for the stated purpose (e.g., presents vocabulary, syntax, text structures, levels of meaning/purpose, and other qualitative characteristics similar to CCSS grade-level exemplars in Appendices A & B).

A unit or longer lesson should:

- ✓ Integrate reading, writing, speaking and listening so that students apply and synthesize advancing literacy skills.
- ☐ (Grades 3-5) Build students' content knowledge and their understanding of reading and writing in social studies, the arts, science or technical subjects through the coherent selection of texts.

Targets a set of Grade-Level Standards

The grade 8 "Making Evidence-Based Claims" unit explicitly targets a grade-level set of CCSS ELA/Literacy standards enumerated on page three of the EBC Unit Plan (contained within the Unit Plan & Texts folder of the zip drive). RI.8.1 and W.8.9b: drawing evidence from informational texts to support analysis and reflection of explicit and inferred text meanings. This section of the unit's description further builds on inclusion of a grade-level set of standards by also targeting RI.8.2 and RI.8.3 for instruction and practice through structured class discussions, SL.8.1 as well as the development of writing assignments (W.8.4) to further reflection and learning in the process of building evidence-based claims.

As the unit continues, each of the five Unit Parts (p. 8, 13, 19, 23) distinguish between targeted standards and supporting standards in a section titled "Alignment to CCSS." This continued emphasis on the relationship of standards supports teaching and learning to a grade-level set of standards.

Suggestion: Designer may want to review the accuracy of standards listed. Although RI.8.6 is referenced as a supporting standard within each the unit's five Parts (p. 8, 13, 19, 23, 27), RI.8.6 is not referenced in the discussion of standards alignment on page 3. On the other hand, on page 3 of the Unit Plan RI.8.3 is listed as among the standards aligned within this unit; however, RI.8.3 is not referenced as among the standards in any of the five Parts detailed within this unit (p. 8, 13, 19, 23, 27).

Clear & Explicit Purpose for Instruction

The EBC Unit Plan, page 2 makes clear the purposes of this unit are two-fold: students need skill in extracting detailed evidence nuanced by "authorial craft" and make valid claims about the information gleaned. The goals of this unit are deeper and richer than developing skills at textual summary; the goals of this unit are aimed at students' interactions with provocative texts that invite readers to make their own analytic claims.

Text Complexity

This unit is comprised of three texts: "Equal Rights" by Shirley Chisholm (Lexile Measure 1180), "Ain't I a Woman" by Sojourner Truth (Lexile Measure 750), and "Wimbledon has Sent Me a Message" by Venus Williams (Lexile 1130). The Common Core State Standards suggest students within the 6-8 grade band read texts within the 860-1010 Lexile range and occasionally stretch to read texts falling within the 925-1185 Lexile range. Clearly, two of the three texts measure within the suggested quantitative complexity bands. However, equally important in establishing complexity are qualitative considerations. The Sojourner Truth text measures at a relatively low Lexile; however, her use of highly figurative language imbues the text with complexity related to text structure, language

	<p>conventionality, levels of meaning, and general knowledge demands. Additionally, not only are the Chisholm & Williams texts complex by quantitative standards, the text structures, analogies, and nuanced language make high cognitive demands on a reader.</p> <p>Integration of Literacy Skills The unit offers students practice in all areas of literacy skills: they are asked to read independently; they listen to the texts being read aloud by teachers; they participate in discussion involving text dependent questions; they work with partners in identifying evidence in support of claims; they work in pairs to develop their own claims and supporting evidence; they write evidence-based claims and work as peer reviewers of evidence-based claims. Suggestion: On page 5, "How This Unit is Structured," unit designers indicate "reasoning" to be among a series of words related to the context of the unit design: making evidence based-claims. However, the lessons develop fewer opportunities of a rich interaction in reasoning (explicitly referenced only four times within the unit) than with the concepts of claim, evidence and inference.</p> <p>Additionally, the unit appears to develop students' content knowledge within the area of social studies; however, the unit is written for the 8th grade, therefore that box remains unchecked.</p>
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Rating: **3 – Meets most to all of the criteria in the dimension**

Dimension II – Key Shifts the CCSS

<p><i>The lesson/unit addresses key shifts in the CCSS:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reading Text Closely: Makes reading text(s) closely, examining textual evidence, and discerning deep meaning a central focus of instruction. ✓ Text-Based Evidence: Facilitates rich and rigorous evidence-based discussions and writing about common texts through a sequence of specific, thought-provoking, and text-dependent questions (including, when applicable, questions about illustrations, charts, diagrams, audio/video, and media). ✓ Writing from Sources: Routinely expects that students draw evidence from texts to produce clear and coherent writing that informs, explains, or makes an argument in various written forms (e.g., notes, summaries, short responses, or formal essays). <input type="checkbox"/> Academic Vocabulary: Focuses on building students' academic vocabulary in context throughout instruction. <p><u><i>A unit or longer lesson should:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increasing Text Complexity: Focus students on reading a progression of complex texts drawn from the grade-level band. Provide text-centered learning that is sequenced, scaffolded and supported to advance students toward independent reading of complex texts at the CCR level. 	<p>Reading Closely</p> <p>The series of activities replicated in each of the three reading parts of the unit support close reading of the text and scrutiny of individual thinking in relation to the text. The unit is centered in text, from the initial practice with using text details to form claims through the process of citing text evidence to support teacher-made claims, into the gradual release of responsibility of student pairs to make claims which shifts to independent claim-making. The student handouts act as organizing materials to focus readers not only on the literal text but also the deeper, unstated message that lies within the text.</p> <p>As the unit progresses from reading to writing in the development and expression of text-based claims, the attention to intertextuality among the three unit texts focuses the student readers/writers to compare and contrast not only the messages of the three texts but also the structures and tones of those texts. This shift could be made more explicit to the teacher. As the materials are laid out, the intertextuality among all three texts and the assertion of "global" claims appears to be reliant on an implicit teacher understanding of the term as used combined with two model documents: "Organizing EBC Model-Chisholm" and "Written EBC Model-Chisholm" which both models not of the Chisholm speech alone but of global analysis including all three texts.</p> <p>Suggestion: Unit Designers may want to clarify the accuracy of titles for the documents included in the materials set and align those titles more specifically to the unit plan. Additionally, designers may consider including a definition and clear example of a global claim within the unit plan.</p> <p>Text Evidence</p>
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- ✓ **Building Disciplinary Knowledge:** Provide opportunities for students to build knowledge about a topic or subject through analysis of a coherent selection of strategically sequenced, discipline-specific texts.
- ✓ **Balance of Texts:** Within a collection of grade-level units a balance of informational and literary texts is included according to guidelines in the CCSS (p. 5).
- **Balance of Writing:** Include a balance of on-demand and process writing (e.g., multiple drafts and revisions over time) and short, focused research projects, incorporating digital texts where appropriate.

The unit title "Making Evidence-Based Claims" demands close attention not only to the text but the teasing out of text evidence to support the discussion of the writer's claims, explicit and implicit as well as any claims the reader advances upon close analysis of the text. Again, the student handouts as organizing tools make this attention to text-based evidence apparent. Moreover, the unit engages students in whole class discussion and small group or paired discussion in both identifying supporting evidence and moves through a progression of text tasks from easier to more complex, culminating in the making of a global claim integrating some aspect of all three texts developed and supported through text-based evidence.

Writing from Sources

The organization and supporting materials ask students to routinely write about the texts under study, in Parts 1-3 through the completion of handouts: Forming Evidence-Based Claims and Making Evidence-Based Claims. In Parts 4 & 5, students develop quasi-outlines in the process of completing the Organizing Evidence-Based Claims handout as a precursor to formal writing. Additionally, Parts 4 and 5 of the unit shift the lessons from making claims to supporting claims and organizing that support through writing conventions.

Academic Vocabulary

Page 5 of the unit plan delineates four words as the focus of vocabulary instruction: claim, evidence, reasoning, and inference. In the context of the unit's goals and activities, deep understanding and practical application of these four words should be attained. However, vocabulary as an instructional focus is not listed among the standards in any of the unit's five Parts. The reviewers of this long unit discussed whether the unit "focuses explicitly on building...academic vocabulary concepts throughout instruction" (EQuIP Review). The texts of this unit are replete in rich Tier 2 vocabulary as noted within the editable glossaries and glossed words; however, the appearance of the vocabulary words and their definitions at the bottom of each page are not supportive of RI.8.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone.

Suggestion: The unit developer could consider adding some vocabulary work to the unit design that would reinforce students' opportunities to grapple with more challenging language in context. Such an activity could also have the potential to interact with RI.8.6 which this reviewer identified earlier as an important standard in the process of analyzing and developing claims.

Increasing Text Complexity

The unit clearly moves from texts of easier complexity to texts of higher complexity and longer lengths.

Building Disciplinary Knowledge

The progression of texts is not only related to complexity, but also across time from the more distant to the more recent. This progression has the potential to build student knowledge about the growth of civil rights and equal rights in the United States.

Balance of Texts

The selected texts offer an engaging and interesting breadth of literary nonfiction: two speeches and a newspaper essay/editorial on topics that have presented controversy over the course of our country's history.

	<p>Balance of Writing</p> <p>Parts 1-3 ask students to complete charts with claims and evidence to be used in discussions. Parts 4 and 5 offer opportunities for drafting or composing written pieces; however, the goal of the unit does not appear to be one that includes multiple drafts and revisions over time.</p> <p>Suggestion: Students could compose answers to the text-dependent questions prior to discussions as a means to enable all students the opportunity to develop a thought about the text before sharing their thoughts with the class. Writing to learn could be a supportive strategy for exploration of individual thinking and as a formative (even a pre-assessment) of student understandings and misunderstandings. The unit presents multiple opportunities for read alouds and class discussions; perhaps between these read alouds and discussions could be an opportunity for students to sort their thoughts in writing. Additionally, multiple drafts of the writing of Part 5 would strengthen the unit's writing balance.</p>
<p>Rating: 3 – Meets most to all of the criteria in the dimension</p>	

Dimension III – Instructional Supports

<p><i>The lesson/unit is responsive to varied student learning needs:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Cultivates student interest and engagement in reading, writing and speaking about texts. ✓ Addresses instructional expectations and is easy to understand and use. ✓ Provides <i>all</i> students with multiple opportunities to engage with text of appropriate complexity for the grade level; includes appropriate scaffolding so that students directly experience the complexity of the text. ✓ Focuses on challenging sections of text(s) and engages students in a productive struggle through discussion questions and other supports that build toward independence. ✓ Integrates appropriate supports in reading, writing, listening and speaking for students who are ELL, have disabilities, or read well below the grade level text band. <input type="checkbox"/> Provides extensions and/or more advanced text for students who read well above the grade level text band. <p><u><i>A unit or longer lesson should:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Include a progression of learning where concepts and skills advance and deepen over time (<i>may be more applicable across the year or several units</i>). ✓ Gradually remove supports, requiring students to demonstrate their independent capacities (<i>may be more applicable across the year or several units</i>). ✓ Provide for authentic learning, application of literacy skills, student-directed inquiry, analysis, evaluation and/or reflection. 	<p>Cultivates Student Interest</p> <p>The age old "battle of the sexes" as the fundamental topic of the unit's text selection foster interest in the content of this unit and support the overarching unit purpose: making evidence based-claims. Additionally, the opportunities for students to work with others fosters collaboration which in itself acts to interest most students.</p> <p>Addresses Instructional Expectations/Easy to Understand</p> <p>The unit overview explicitly identifies the standards to be addressed and the unit design integrates those expectations into a five-part instructional frame. As noted on page 3 of the Unit Plan, the framework for instruction moves sequentially from early steps of understanding and making simple claims to the mid-level process of organizing supporting evidence to justify a claim, and the final, more complex process of using an organizational structure to write about a more global claim. Additionally, the materials provide explicit examples for teachers; specifically, the unit plan guides users to ask text dependent questions that build towards the suggested claims provided within the unit plan. For instance, on page 11, the unit plan suggests a series of text-based questions for the close reading of Sojourner Truth's speech that will later support the teacher claims found on the model tools for Making Evidence-Based Claims. Likewise, on page 15, the unit plan suggests a series of text-based questions for the close reading of Shirley Chisholm's speech that will later support the teacher claims found on the corresponding model tools.</p> <p>Suggestion: The Unit Outline on page 7 indicates that Part 4 and Part 5 begin with students independently reviewing "the text" to "develop" or "make" a new EBC. However, within the directions of each Part--four and five--the directions reference all three texts--by Part 5, students are making "global" claims--reviewing all three texts and making a claim that can be supported through the final writing piece of Part 5. Clarifying that texts and not a single text are the focus of Part 5 and possibly Part 4 could help the user understand the concept and purpose of global claims and the grouping of thematic texts.</p>
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- ❑ Integrate targeted instruction in such areas as grammar and conventions, writing strategies, discussion rules and all aspects of foundational reading for grades 3-5.
- ❑ Indicate how students are accountable for independent reading based on student choice and interest to build stamina, confidence and motivation (*may be more applicable across the year or several units*).
- ❑ Use technology and media to deepen learning and draw attention to evidence and texts as appropriate.

Provides All Students Opportunities to Engage

The unit scaffolds progressive lessons, moving between independent reading, paired reading, listening to reading as parts of the process to increase understanding about claims within a text as well as the ability of the reader to make independent claims about a text. The varied organizers and careful step-by-step sequencing supports through gradual release to ensure all students can appropriately grapple with the challenging texts that comprise this unit. Students are provided with guided reading instruction, asked to read the text independently, and have an opportunity to listen to it aloud. Teacher modeling throughout builds student capacity for independently acquiring the skills intended. Additionally, the alternate progression of activities Lesson 5 (p. 30) offers variation based on student/class readiness.

Suggestion: Although this unit has numerous supports for scaffolding learning through the use of discussion and thinking organizers, the nature of the texts and the cognitive demand of making evidence-based claims may need more scaffolding for students with reading disabilities and other learning challenges. On another related but separate note, there is little in the unit to support visual learners either in content or engagement. The developers could consider offering alternate texts and/or activities to better support the diversity of learners in today's classroom.

Focuses on Challenging Sections of the Text

Guided reading activities through text based questions directly focus students on complex passages important to understanding the overall intent of the authors. Furthermore, the suggested claims provided in the Model Tools also act to bring attention to challenging text passages. For instance, the suggested claim (see Model Tool for Organizing Evidence-Based Claims) for the Venus Williams' editorial contends that Wimbledon's outward show of impartiality is a subterfuge for a female prejudice. Using the organizer complete with the suggested teacher claim focuses the reader's attention on both points as students uncover evidence to support the standing claim. Similar materials are in place for each of the three unit texts.

Integrates Appropriate Supports

Support for younger or less experienced learners are provided as evidenced in the extensions of Part 3/Activity 3. Graphic organizers are also suggested as a way to support struggling learners. The unit developers recognize some students may struggle to read these texts independently. In the case of each text, the Instructional Notes for each Unit Part are the same: "Depending on scheduling and student ability, students can be assigned to read and complete the tool for homework. Teachers should decide what works best for their students" (p. 14, 20, 24, 28). Developers could consider the addition of practical means by which teachers could appropriately support the engagement of all students.

Provides Extensions for Advanced Students

There appears no extension opportunities specifically provided by the unit design. Page 5 of the unit plan notes this unit is "framed as skills-based instruction" and suggests teachers sequence the unit within their curriculum and instructional plans, and to establish content connections that will be meaningful for students."

Unit developers could consider including a bibliography or list of additional, more challenging texts as suggestions for more advanced readers/students as appropriate to use alongside those selected for this unit.

Progression of Learning
 Concepts and skills progress logically through the lesson from understanding evidence-based claims to making evidence-based claim, organizing evidence-based claims and writing to support evidence-based claims. This progression is outlines on page 7, The Unit Outline, within the Unit Plan. All materials within the unit follow this outline.

Gradually Removes Supports
 The unit tools for students, each accompanied with teacher model tools, follow the unit's five-part progression.

Authentic Learning
 Each lesson or part within the unit opens with direct instruction. Although the students are asked to read independently, the guiding questions are coming from the teacher as are the claims used to model thinking. However, as each lesson progresses, students are asked to work with partners or small groups in identifying their own supports or evidence to teacher asserted claims. Eventually, students are making their own claims. The section of the Unit Plan entitled "Making Evidence-Based Claims" suggests that "students view claims as their own. They should see their interaction with text as a personal investment in their learning" (p. 2). As such, the unit theoretically supports opportunities for authentic learning.

Targeted Instruction
 Described as "skills-based instruction," ("How This Unit Might be Embedded... p. 5), this unit design does not explicitly address targeted instruction for grammar, writing strategies, or discussion rules. However, aspects of instruction that users may choose to target are included among the criteria of the writing rubric and discussion checklist. For example, the writing rubric lists five criteria, among those language and grammar. Similarly, the discussion checklist enumerates five criteria, among those descriptors including targeted speaking factors of eye contact, audibility, relevance of responses & questions, etc. Users of this lesson could target specific aspects of the rubric for teaching and learning.

Students Accountable for Independent Reading
 The unit plan repeatedly references independent reading of the texts provided within the scope of the skills unit, both in the Unit Outline (Unit Plan, p. 7) and throughout the detailed instructions for each of the five lessons or Parts. However, the unit plan does not reference independent reading beyond that of the unit. The plan does suggest that these lessons could be part of a larger unit (Unit Plan, p. 5).

Perhaps this aspect of the unit evaluation would be met if a bibliography or reading list were to accompany the unit design.

Technology & Media Deepen to Learning
 The editable PDF form of the unit design allows the user to customize the unit for deeper learning; this customization could be extended to students by introducing targeted lessons on how to use the various commenting tools available with PDF forms. This is currently not an explicit aspect of the unit's directions or designs.

Rating: 2 – Meets many of the criteria in the dimension

<p><i>The lesson/unit regularly assesses whether students are mastering standards-based content and skills:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Elicits direct, observable evidence of the degree to which a student can independently demonstrate the major targeted grade-level CCSS standards with appropriately complex text(s). ✓ Assesses student proficiency using methods that are unbiased and accessible to all students. ✓ Includes aligned rubrics or assessment guidelines that provide sufficient guidance for interpreting student performance. <p><i>A unit or longer lesson should:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Use varied modes of assessment, including a range of pre-, formative, summative and self-assessment measures. 	<p>Direct, Observable Proficiency Evidence of Targeted Standards w/Complex Text</p> <p>The Five-Part outline of the unit's structure lends itself to a series of formative assessments leading up to a culminating independent writing piece. Part 1 though without pre-assessment lends itself to the crafting of such an assessment while Parts 2-4 provide practice with the skills of claim making, evidence gathering, and organizing structures. Each of these parts or steps along the learning continuum can be documented for formative assessment using the varied handouts previously referenced and provided in the unit's materials. As such, the measurement of proficiencies are accessible to all students.</p> <p>Unbiased Accessible Methodology</p> <p>The methods utilized are unbiased and accessible to students. The developer incorporates supports that make the expectations of the unit accessible to all students.</p> <p>Rubrics and Guidelines are included, and is mostly reflective of assessing the content the students are taught in this unit.</p> <p>Suggestion: The developer may want to re-evaluate the control of the language and grammar section. Although this section is crucial for writing and is a valuable portion of the rubric, there was no instruction that hit on those components, and it seems inappropriate to assess students on components without providing instruction.</p> <p>Varied Modes of Assessment</p> <p>The majority of assessments are conducted in writing; however, one strength in the assessment portion is the EBC tool. Having students complete this tool along with progressing to transferring their information on the tool to a written piece allows for varied modes of assessment. The developer points out that by doing this the teacher is able to assess the students' abilities to write the EBC independently of the students' ability to write.</p>
<p>Rating: 3 – Meets most to all of the criteria in the dimension</p>	

Summary Comments

The unit design creates a supportive instructional environment for teachers and students as they meet the challenges of the Common Core. Not only are the texts introduced in a scaffolded manner by difficulty and length, the materials supporting the teaching and learning of evidence-based claims are equally scaffolded. The unit seamlessly integrates reading, writing, speaking, and listening moving back and forth between individual, whole class, and small group work. Within that ebb and flow are opportunities for teachers to differentiate instruction that will meet the needs of a growingly diverse classroom.

Suggestions: The unit designers may want to look through the specifics of the unit's materials to verify accuracy of standards delineated as well as clarity of material titles. Additionally, to provide opportunities to actually grapple with the challenge of the high Lexiles presented by two of the three texts, designers may want to consider embedding some vocabulary activities that meet the letter and spirit of the vocabulary standards through in-context meaning making. The reviewers also reflected on positive value of the student organizing tools and offer this suggestion regarding the "Forming Evidence-Based Claims" tool. The box titled "How I Connect the Details" provides the reasoning/explanation for the evidence that students select to support the claims. However, once the students progress to the "Making Evidence Based Claims" tool, the "How" box disappears. A valuable addition to the tool could be the claim at the top, followed by supporting evidence boxes, and a "How I Connect the Details" box at the bottom. The reviewers' reasoning: the reasoning on the evidence-based claims criteria checklist identifies reasoning as "all parts of the claim are supported by specific evidence you can point to in the text," but there is no expectation for the students to continue to communicate that reasoning. By including the bottom box, students would be encouraged/reminded of the importance of providing/explaining their reasoning.

Rating Scales

Rating Scale for Dimensions I, II, III, IV:

- 3:** Meets most to all of the criteria in the dimension
- 2:** Meets many of the criteria in the dimension

- 1:** Meets some of the criteria in the dimension
- 0:** Does not meet the criteria in the dimension

Overall Rating for the Lesson/Unit:

- E:** Exemplar – Aligned and meets most to all of the criteria in dimensions II, III, IV **(total 11 – 12)**
- E/I:** Exemplar *if* Improved – Aligned and needs some improvement in one or more dimensions **(total 8 – 10)**

- R:** Revision Needed – Aligned partially and needs significant revision in one or more dimensions **(total 3 – 7)**
- N:** Not Ready to Review – Not aligned and does not meet criteria **(total 0 – 2)**

Rating Descriptors

Descriptors for Dimensions I, II, III, IV:

- 3:** **Exemplifies CCSS Quality** - meets the standard described by criteria in the dimension, as explained in criterion-based observations.
- 2:** **Approaching CCSS Quality** - meets many criteria but will benefit from revision in others, as suggested in criterion-based observations.

- 1:** **Developing toward CCSS Quality** - needs significant revision, as suggested in criterion-based observations.
- 0:** **Not representing CCSS Quality** - does not address the criteria in the dimension.

Descriptor for Overall Ratings:

- E:** **Exemplifies CCSS Quality** – Aligned and exemplifies the quality standard and exemplifies most of the criteria across Dimensions II, III, IV of the rubric.
- E/I:** **Approaching CCSS Quality** – Aligned and exemplifies the quality standard in some dimensions but will benefit from some revision in others.

- R:** **Developing toward CCSS Quality** – Aligned partially and approaches the quality standard in some dimensions and needs significant revision in others.
- N:** **Not representing CCSS Quality** – Not aligned and does not address criteria.