Lesson/Unit Name: Opinion Writing  
Content Area: English language arts  
Grade Level: 3

Dimension I – Alignment to the Depth of the CCSS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The lesson/unit aligns with the letter and spirit of the CCSS:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Targets a set of grade-level CCSS ELA/Literacy standards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Includes a clear and explicit purpose for instruction.</td>
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<td>✓ 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 &amp; B).</td>
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| Targeted Standards: The developer provides a list of third grade standards for each part of the Opinion Writing extended lesson. The standards are appropriate for the lesson. It is unclear whether the developer intends to provide instruction on W.1 a - d. Only W.1 is indicated in the lesson plan, but the writing rubric indicates W.1 a - c. The rubric on the last page uses 6 Traits of Writing as an organizer. Two writing standards are listed as 3.5 and 3.6 in the rubric but not on the standard documentation in parts I, II, and III. The developer might want to clear up the difference in the next version of the lesson. |

| Purpose for Instruction: The unit title and selection of standards note opinion writing as the topic of the lesson: analyzing two pieces of writing and preparing an opinion piece in response to the text. The focus on that purpose is maintained throughout the unit. Final product is a direct application of the purpose of instruction. It would be helpful to provide a summary of the lesson to allow the teacher implementing the lesson to discern whether the lesson fits into his or her instructional sequence. |

| Complex Text: The Lexile of the informational bulletin is 670 (from reviewer determination) which is within parameters of the "core" expectations. The extended lesson uses two texts about food choices to build prior knowledge and interest for the independent writing of a persuasive letter. The texts are provided as part of the unit itself, so all students have access to the material. To tighten the alignment to RI 9, it is suggested that the developer include a second informational text to support the comparison within the informational genre as called for in the standard. |

| Integrated Literacy: The standards in this lesson are focused on reading and writing. Students read a poem and a bulletin. They write a persuasive letter. Students have several opportunities, in each of the three lessons, to talk and listen to each other as well as the teacher. |

| Disciplinary Knowledge: In this three-part extended lesson students read about food choice and write an opinion piece about nutritional changes in the school lunch program. The developer may want to consider additional selections and activities to help third graders see how nutritional scientists use literacy to create and share knowledge. In addition, more substantive content on nutrition would make the interdisciplinary connection stronger. |

Rating: 2 – Meets many of the criteria in the dimension
The lesson/unit addresses key shifts in the CCSS:

- **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).
- **Academic Vocabulary**: Focuses on building students’ academic vocabulary in context throughout instruction.

**A unit or longer lesson should:**

- **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.
- **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.

Reading Closely: The lesson uses general "talking to books" questions as well as some additional text-based questions. There are several approaches which offer students opportunities to make meaning, such as the TBTB, journal notes, class discussion, etc. The developer may wish to consider making the link of reading for writing purpose more explicit in the next update of the lesson. The connection for students that we purposefully read for facts that we may or may not wish to use in writing needs to be clearer for students.

Text-Based Evidence: The two texts are read and students answer both "talking about books" standard questions as well as a few specific text-dependent questions in part 1. Text-based evidence is limited to the two texts, but the unit mines the texts deeply. There are several approaches which offer students opportunities to make meaning, such as the TBTB, journal notes, class discussion, etc. In the next update of the lesson it might be useful to consider how the conversation around the text could be focused around the upcoming writing task. How do readers learn and gather insight that they will use for writing.

Writing from Sources: The students write their own persuasive essays, using the two text sources, which do provide a balance of informational and literary texts. Students plan for the use of evidence by highlighting potential sources of fact/evidence. The use of Elliott’s essay, and the specific study of its construction and features, will really help students to see what is wanted in their own essays. However, it is noted in Dimension 4 that the rubric does not address this expectation (utilizing information from texts).

Academic Vocabulary: An opportunity is missed here for structured academic vocabulary development. When students are doing the first scans of the two texts, they could get vocabulary questions answered easily. As the writing rubric asks for vocabulary questions answered, the unit would benefit from the pre-selection of certain vocabulary terms from the two texts that should be expected to be used in the student essays, and a recurring emphasis on those terms throughout the unit.

Increasing Text Complexity: The two text selections align with the grade band text complexity. As a single lesson there is no indication of the progression of text that has been or will be used in the classroom, no sense of increasing complexity.

Building Disciplinary Knowledge: Writing an opinion is the English content focus in this lesson. The comparison of texts on the same topic provides students the opportunity to learn about the benefits of eating nutritional foods. A third text, a 30 second video clip, is utilized to gain examples of persuasive techniques. To build disciplinary knowledge the lesson would need to focus more deeply on learning about nutrition.

Balance of Texts: This lesson uses a pair of informational and literary texts as a source of evidence for writing an opinion. It also offers the use of a video clip.
Dimension III – Instructional Supports

**The lesson/unit is responsive to varied student learning needs:**
- Cultivates student interest and engagement in reading, writing and speaking about texts.
- Addresses instructional expectations and is easy to understand and use.
- Provides all 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.
- Provides extensions and/or more advanced text for students who read well above the grade level text band.

**A unit or longer lesson should:**
- Include a progression of learning where concepts and skills advance and deepen over time *(may be more applicable across the year or several units)*.
- Gradually remove supports, requiring students to demonstrate their independent capacities *(may be more applicable across the year or several units)*.
- Provide for authentic learning, application of literacy skills, student-directed inquiry, analysis, evaluation and/or reflection.
- 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.

**Student Engagement:** The unit is very appealing and engaging. What is more important to third-graders than lunch? Even the first post-it note activity engages students in assessing their own food preferences, and then the interest builds from there. The unit is formatted very well, so that it appears easy to follow and proceeds logically from one part to the next.

**Instructional Expectations:** All three parts of the lesson use the same organizing pattern: set, input, guided practice, and reading practice. This consistency would be appreciated by the user. Each part of the lesson targets standards. The lesson provides clear steps for an easy to follow sequence of instruction.

**All Students:** The lesson activates student prior knowledge (food choices) in the anticipatory set in part 1 by playing "Pop Up" and using student generated favorite foods. The developer has chosen to chunk the three parts of the lesson around the same paired texts. The reading of the texts is independent, although it is unclear how the students would answer the text-dependent questions on pages 3 and 4 of the lesson without having read the texts prior to the "independent" reading on page 4.

**Productive Struggle:** The developer provides a set of additional engaging questions about the text that are very aligned to the content that students will be evidencing in later writing. Yet, there is no section identified in either text as challenging, nor is any section treated as challenging.

**Below Grade-Level Supports:** There are numerous instructional supports built in for all students, and certain modifications are also suggested for differentiation, such as partnering some students or splitting up the reading. A successful example of scaffolding instruction in this unit is the analysis of Elliott’s letter. The suggestion of highlighting evidence students might want to put in their letters was a great step. The lesson does presume English-language fluency. ELLs will need much more targeted scaffolding if they are to make sense of the content, of the informational prose, and of the implied understanding of the vocabulary. It would not be difficult to build in more partner talk, sentence frames, vocabulary emphasis, etc.

**Above Grade-Level Supports:** The developer does not provide additional text suggestions for students who read well above grade level and who might want to read more about persuasion, or nutrition. More complex texts or independent research would be a way to address students who read well above grade level.

**Progression of Learning and Independence:** The lesson builds towards a writing task. The progression is logical and sequential as students gain knowledge. However, the lesson does not indicate the scope and sequence of how often opinion writing is to be done in Write Steps.
Removal of Supports: The gradual removal of supports to get students to independently write opinions across topics is the intent of these two criteria but this lesson does not provide that across lesson perspective. There are supports in the lesson; however, the supports are consistently applied throughout the lesson.

Authentic/Application: The purpose of the unit is authentic and practical -- a subject third graders will respond to well and see their own voices in addressing. The emphasis on writing strategies, as evidenced by deconstructing Elliot’s essay, is excellent.

Targeted Instruction: Foundational reading skills and writing skills are the focus of this criteria. The following examples from the lesson do not get at the heart of the direct teaching of foundational skills: a) mentioning fluency and comprehension on page 4 as skill support that the teacher can do while roving, b) scoring skills outside of the selected standards such as grammar and conventions, and c) suggesting that teachers remind students of general listening skills (p. 19).

Independent Reading: The lesson does not provide any additional reading suggestions due to the developer focus on culminating writing activity.

Uses Technology: The lesson suggests using a classic YouTube video to provide a reference of how persuasion is used in daily life. This one movie would not be enough to deepen understanding of persuasive commercials in today's media rich environment.

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

Dimension IV – Assessment

| The lesson/unit regularly assesses whether students are mastering standards-based content and skills: |
|  ✔️ 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. |
| **A unit or longer lesson should:** |
|  ✔️ Use varied modes of assessment, including a range of pre-, formative, summative and self-assessment measures. |

| Evidence: The student assessment (persuasive letter) provides direct evidence of meeting the CCSS standards addressed in the unit. Writing 3.1 has four points that are evidenced in part of the page 23 assessment. The lesson does include instruction on the targeted standards; however, the heavily scaffolded lesson does not elicit evidence of students' independent proficiency. |
| Unbiased Methods: The page 23 rubric assesses writing criteria that are not within the stated standards on page 17. Certainly the ones listed are good targets, but a rubric totally focused on the writing standards on page 17 would help students focus on what is the targeted learning. The suggestion to allow struggling writers to use the planning sheet as their finished product does not allow those students to meet the learning target. Including supports that allow struggling writers to meet the learning target would strengthen the lesson. |
| Guideline Guidance: There is a rubric for the persuasive essay, and students become familiar with it through processing Elliot’s essay. The rubric on page 23 provides a six point "sort and select" scale with room for teacher comments. The included rubric addresses standards that are not taught in the lesson. Also, inclusion of proving understanding of texts through writing would tighten the alignment between the targeted standards and the rubric. The unit would be enhanced by building in "guidance for interpretation" exemplars for teachers that provide... |
examples of what is outstanding, good, or below average at the third grade level.

Varied Assessment: The lesson offers opportunities for formative assessment throughout instruction. The summative assessment is a repetition of what was taught during the instructional sequence. The extended lesson is focused on the page 23 summative assessment rather than including a range of assessments that includes formative and self-assessment processes. The focus of the opinion writing standard is within the bullet points for ideas/content, and organization. The other trait bullet points are beyond the scope of the targeted standards on page 17. The developer may want to tighten the summative to assess only the standards targeted for part 3.

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

Summary Comments

EI Summary: This extended lesson scores at the lower end of the Exemplary if Revised (8) range. It is obvious that the developer loves teaching writing and the value of writing to post-secondary success. The embrace of opinion writing is also supportive of the spirit of the writing strand.

The lesson incorporates a variety of text types and leads students to an authentic writing task of a persuasive letter. The topic of cafeteria food would be a familiar starting point for third grade students as they receive instruction in the area of letter writing.

Suggestions are meant to establish a more balanced playing field for students who would need support to understand some complicated motivations, and be able to produce a quality essay on the topic at the end. These are the suggestions: 1) tight alignment of the assessment system for this lesson to the targeted standards, 2) including a means of determining students’ independent proficiency with the CCSS, 3) addition of instruction in language & foundational standards, 4) more substantive study of nutrition, 5) incorporation of academic vocabulary study and scaffolds for ELLs, and 6) deeper development of reading purpose alignment to the writing task.

The progression of literacy skills used to write argumentatively are outlined well at the Literacy Design Collaborative website. The developer might consider looking at that website for ideas on linking reading for evidence to writing from sources. EI Summary: Although this lesson does need more attention to vocabulary development and the needs of ELLs, I want to credit its excellent structure and content. The designer has created a unit of study that demonstrates quality and rigor in nearly all aspects of its dimensions.

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.