

EQuIP Review Feedback



Lesson/Unit Name: Researching to Deepen Understanding- Water

Content Area: English language arts

Grade Level: 7

Overall Rating:

E

Exemplar

Dimension I – Alignment to the Depth of the CCSS

<p><i>The lesson/unit aligns with the letter and spirit of the CCSS:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 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). <p><u><i>A unit or longer lesson should:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 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. 	<p>Standards: The unit identifies both a targeted set of standards as well as a supportive set of standards. A set of CCSS are identified and described as to when they are addressed in the sequenced lessons in the "How this Unit Aligns with the CCSS ELA/Literacy." These are reiterated during the lesson descriptions. The standards seem appropriate to the topic and instruction is aligned to the targeted set of standards throughout the unit.</p> <p>Purpose statements: The purpose for the unit is described in the opening paragraphs of the Unit Plan on pages 2, 6 in the rationale. Specifically, this unit develops research skills that middle school students will need in order to conduct independent research across a variety of curricular contexts. Page 9 gives a one-page unit Teacher Research overview as well as in the description before each lesson.</p> <p>Selected Text within Grade level Complexity: The unit provides a repository of texts that may be used for research. In the G7 Topic Repository document, the unit provides information about how to choose materials so that another teacher wanting to create his or her own repository on another topic can do so. In addition, the unit described the set's lexile range as well as a brief descriptor with words like "rich," "accessible," or "short" for each separate text along with some reader tasks and qualitative measures.</p> <p>Integrates reading, writing, speaking and listening: The lessons seem to be cyclical in nature and begin with a teacher led discussion about the process of research, moving then to reading and writing activities in all parts 1-4. Reading and writing are the heart of the unit but students develop their ideas through student discussion and teacher/student conferencing.</p>
<p>Rating: 3 – Meets most to all of the criteria in the dimension</p>	

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 	<p>Reading Text Closely: The activities in each part of the unit address examining evidence through reading, writing, and speaking and listening in an exemplary manner. Specifically, reading is a focus for gathering, analyzing and synthesizing information to prepare for writing a research paper with increasing independence by students. The unit includes several tools to aid in textual analysis; additionally, lessons are modeled, with opportunities to</p>
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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.

formatively assess student acquisition of skills before release to independence.

Text-Based Evidence:

The unit includes instruction for analyzing text for information, main ideas, bias, and questioning the text. In addition to the first read in which students must explore the topic of water and discuss areas of investigation, students must re-read the central text and answer "Guiding Questions for Inquiry and Research." Many other activities are provided in the unit which allow students to record evidence they want to use in the research process as well as discarded research--allowing students to discover the process of collecting evidence for research. The unit includes instruction as to analyzing text for information, main ideas, bias, and questioning the text. There is also the caveat that teachers should use these only as samples and that they may want to tailor questions for their students more specifically.

Writing from sources:

Short writing activities are the basis for learning the skills needed for the culminating research paper. These are described as a way for both students and teacher to see and monitor student thinking and learning of the lesson content/skills. The unit routinely demands that students take notes and use the various tools cited above to capture their learning based on sources provided. In addition students are also asked to create a final product which utilizes many different sources and texts.

Academic vocab:

The unit indicates how academic vocabulary is addressed (written as a position statement) in the Unit Planner under "Definition of terms used in this unit". Key academic words associated with research are identified and are visible to students in the tools section. However, the unit does not indicate opportune times to have students use the academic language in the instructional notes that may help students develop "deep conceptual understandings". The unit lessons could benefit from this sort of indication that would assist teachers in remembering to have students speak in academic registers using new vocabulary throughout.

Increasing Text Complexity:

There is increasing text complexity, both with the documents and with the tasks students are required to do. Texts contained in the repository range from 830L to 1180L. In Part 2 Gathering Information, the unit slowly takes away the scaffold and advances students toward independent reading of complex texts.

Builds Disciplinary Knowledge:

Disciplinary knowledge is developed throughout the unit both on the topic of research, and the topic being researched as well as how to present findings in an authentic way. In addition to the process of researching, students are also given opportunities to reflect on the research process and what is gained regularly allowing for transfer and retention.

Balance of Text:

The unit contains various informational texts and does not represent a true balance of texts, however as this is a unit focused on informational research, this is appropriate for the topic. Including a literary text in the unit may confuse students on the type of text that may be used in research.

Balance of Writing:

	Throughout the unit writing is an essential and integral part of instruction. The activities each contain good balance of writing with short writing pieces in the development of parts of the research paper; these are often part of a graphic organizer or notes which all lead toward a longer piece of writing. The unit also has process writing in the multi-paragraph research paper as the culminating project.
Rating: 3 – Meets most to all of the criteria in the dimension	

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. ✓ 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. ☐ 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 (<i>may be more applicable across the year or several units</i>). ✓ Use technology and media to deepen learning and draw attention to evidence and texts as appropriate. 	<p>Cultivates interest: The unit focuses research on the need/uses of water as a model positioning it as a controversial and important topic. It then extends to student interest in researching. Modeling of the research begins by having students determine what it is they want to learn about a topic. This inquiry style allows students to engage authentically in their work.</p> <p>Ease of Use: The unit introduction and lesson format is easy to use and includes: How to Use These Materials; separate Text Repository and Tools folders; and overview pages. Each section begins with an introductory page laying out the focus standards, activities and goals of that section. Within each lesson, materials lists are present for teacher preparation. Because of the overviews and tools for both teachers and students, the unit remains clear as to the purpose for learning and the desired outcomes.</p> <p>Provides ALL Students with Access: There are scaffolding opportunities throughout the lesson sequence, paying careful attention to supporting every student's success with the complex texts. Graphic organizers and checklists serve as supports to help students organize and synthesize their thinking and monitor their progression in the skills being taught. The unit includes several additional activities as needed by the students. The gradual release of instruction is also a scaffold, as are the formative assessments with reminders of the learning students should have in place in order to build skills.</p> <p>Focus on Challenging Sections of Complex text: Students are required to read the central text and additional texts several times in order to gather enough information and evidence to write their research notes, make inferences, and develop and support their opinions. Texts used are short and use complex vocabulary. Graphic organizers assist with analyzing the text and developing and organizing information for research, and engage students in a productive struggle building independence.</p> <p>Integrates Appropriate Supports for ELLs, SPED and Students with Low Reading Ability: Tools such as graphic organizers as well as small group work are good supports for students requiring extra scaffolding. The developer may choose to integrate suggestions or tips about how and when to target specific groups within the instructional notes.</p> <p>Extensions: The Text Repository includes a variety of text levels. While there is no specific indication of extension, these could be used for advanced students. In addition, students are to select their own topics and articles which is key for advanced students.</p>
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	<p>Progression of Learning This unit is clearly planned around a coherent progression of learning where students engage in activities that strengthen their reading, writing, and speaking & listening skills.</p> <p>Gradually Removes Supports: The unit activities include teacher modeling, extensive use of graphic organizers and small group work before moving students to work independently. Supports in the unit are removed as students independently engage in their own topic of research.</p> <p>Authentic Learning: Because students are allowed to pursue their own angle on water based on their own inquiry path, the unit provides an authentic experience for students.</p> <p>Integrated Instruction: Sections on grammar and conventions are explored as they relate to the writing expected of students.</p> <p>Students Are Accountable for Independent Reading: The unit indicates that students are responsible for examining several of the articles and readings on their own and which tools to use with their reading and evidence collection.</p> <p>Uses Technology and Media to Deepen Learning: Technology is integrated in a natural manner, as a resource for research. The unit allows for students to create a digital portfolio of their research which are accessible Online. Tools for evidence collection are designed to help students vet sources and give students confidence to find additional valid sources. The unit's resource repository does not demand that students have to use technology (a nicety for a school where technology resources are scarce). Additionally, students may choose to present their research to the class by creating a PPT to be delivered to the class.</p>
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Rating: **3 – Meets most to all of the criteria in the dimension**

Dimension IV – Assessment

<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><u><i>A unit or longer lesson should:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Use varied modes of assessment, including a range of pre-, formative, summative and self-assessment measures. 	<p>Elicits Direct Observable Evidence: The many different writing and speaking assignments throughout the unit allow a teacher to tell how well a student can independently research and present his or her research. The example documents for the tools also provide insight on how these should be completed and are a good resource to understand what the targeted skills should be. The texts used throughout the unit for the research and the assessments are grade-level texts.</p> <p>Unbiased and Accessible to All Students: Assessment methods appear to be unbiased and accessible by all as they are based on teacher-modeled processes.</p> <p>Aligned Rubrics or Assessment Guidelines: Formative assessments are indicated for both the reading and the writing, as well as a summative experience that asks students to reflect on their learning. Additionally, checklists and sample student responses for</p>
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	<p>appropriate components for each sub skill and the overall research paper are included.</p> <p>Varied Modes of Assessment: The unit includes a variety of modes of assessment including a range of pre-, formative, summative and self-assessment measures. Checklists provided include: Research Evaluation Criteria Checklist, Area Evaluation Checklist, Evidence-Based Claims Criteria Checklist, and Text-Centered Discussion Checklist. The unit allows for much self-assessment throughout the unit as well as through in-class conferencing and the student's choice of products to create for the summative assessment.</p>
<p>Rating: 3 – Meets most to all of the criteria in the dimension</p>	

Summary Comments

This exemplar unit is a well-thought-out, well-scaffolded plan for advancing students' skills. At multiple stages throughout the unit, students prepare to present their research, check for changes to their topic and inquiry path, express their opinions based on evidence, and capture their learning in writing. The unit includes instructional notes for both the teacher and the student making clear what targets should be met at regular intervals. The unit's scaffolds include a variety of graphic organizers, handouts, and rubrics as well as samples of what student work should look like.

Writing instructional tips and suggestions into the unit about how a teacher might provide additional supports for ELLs of students with special needs may improve the unit's quality and usability while ensuring that the targets can be reached by all students. Though academic vocabulary words about the research process and content vocabulary are touched on through the unit by the teacher's instructions and in the tools, more explicit vocabulary instruction may increase the likelihood that new vocabulary will be learned and acquired through connection, deep-processing activities, and deliberate exercise of the new academic vocabulary.

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.