Lesson/Unit Name: What's Trending: Research & Writing Development through Google Zeitgeist
Content Area: English language arts
Grade Level: 8

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.

The unit targets a set of grade-level CCSS ELA/Literacy standards as well as the Call to Action writing standard W.8.2 and reading standard RI.8.7. The Call to Action stipulation that the "unit should integrate the reading of multiple texts that build knowledge and lead to transference of that knowledge into a written product" has been sufficiently met.

The purpose of this unit was identified on page 2, to strengthen two areas identified as weaknesses from previous years of teaching. Students were not able to accurately conduct research and students had gaps in their writing. Page 5 of the Unit Plan, the Learning Sequence #2, states the teacher will explain the purposes of this unit/lesson.

The reading level selected text, "The ALS Foundation is tripling the money spent on research," is above the targeted grade band. However, it is appropriate for the advanced learners targeted in the unit since the teacher is guiding the initial discussions of the content and use of the GOOGLE search engine.

Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening are supported. Students go through the lessons independently which requires listening, they are reading their research findings and are speaking with the teacher through conferences, and they are presenting their projects at the end.

Rating: 3 – Meets most to all of the criteria in the dimension

Dimension II – Key Shifts the CCSS

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).

Students are using close viewing to determine the central focus of the Zeitgeist video. Students identify familiar and unfamiliar events, several of which will then be used for short research. What’s trending in 2014 worksheet provides questions that students must provide evidence from the linguistic and nonlinguistic text to answer the questions.

Students are utilizing the dictionary to develop an understanding of certain terms (credibility, trending, and zeitgeist). Academic vocabulary is highlighted through the ALS Foundation article with different colors representing the Tier II words and the Tier III words. Suggestions for teachers to display a word wall of the academic vocabulary words as well as Teacher suggestions for modeling the key technical vocabulary of the video, How Search Engines Work, is provided for three words.
✓ **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.

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As the unit progresses students are expected to utilize the information provided in the text in order to write their paper. The qualitative factor increases the complexity because students are progressing from being consumers of information to appliers. They must apply what they learn to compose their final written product.

The texts do seem to be strategically sequenced to best support students in the creation of their research project.

Because of the purpose of the unit, there is no need for a balance of texts.

Students are expected to do on-demand writing, as well as write a formal letter and an informational essay.

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**Rating**: 3 – Meets most to all of the criteria in the dimension

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### 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.

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Because the Zeitgeist video is engaging, students will want to find out more about their topics. Another benefit of this unit in keeping students engaged is the element of choice.

The expectations are defined in the objectives, and lesson chunks range from 2 -4 days of instruction. Options for teacher modeling the use of Google search engines, and modeling the annotation of key technical vocabulary are provided. Although this unit is written for a flipped classroom there are options available for students that might not have the accessibility of technology outside of school.

Because the unit is created for each student to progress through at their needed pace, the teacher is now free to work with students who need extra support. Opportunities for all students to read the texts, both the anchor text "The Ice Bucket Challenge" and the supporting text, "What is ALS" is not evidenced in the unit. It is recommended that the developer provide additional options for teachers that might have those students. Examples could be peer reading/discussing or small group reading with the teacher.

While there is evidence of questions to facilitate the students reading focusing on annotation and responding to the 5Ws+H (page 6), challenging
✓ 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.

Sections of the text were not identified nor focused on through the activities. Because students are choosing topics for research based on interest, they may skip over the complex portions. It is suggested that students have a protocol or process for choosing their topic for research.

There are some supports included: Frayer model for credibility, teacher/student conferences, viewing and re-viewing videos and worksheets that serve as notes. Recognizing their removal over time is difficult to determine due to the length of the unit. Videos and viewing worksheets provide support in grammar as well as writing strategies. Some of these included: citing a website, writing a hook sentence and thesis, using figurative language and writing a conclusion paragraph. The flipped model's expectation created an environment where students received their content lesson through the videos at home and the application during class time with feedback from their teacher. Utilizing technology and media is a centerpiece of this unit. Students are utilizing videos to develop an understanding of the writing expectations, they are using the Internet to research their chosen topic and they are expected to utilize media to turn their essay into a non-linguistic presentation to share with classmates.

Several extensions are provided throughout this unit. On page 6, extension prompts are provided about search engines, on page 7 a suggestion for an extension bulletin board is provided. One extension that could be misleading is the one found on page 5, #6. This video did explain the connection of vocabulary to comprehension and describe how Common Core defines academic vocabulary, but starting at 1:18 to the end of the 3:18 video an advertisement for the Learning A-Z program is provided. It is recommended that the developer state that students will only watching the first 1:18 of the video and in what ways students could use this information.

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

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**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).

The exit slips, teacher check-points, worksheets, persuasive letter, and research paper are all ways evidence is elicited.

The methods are unbiased and accessible to all; however, the prompt provided on page 8 of the teacher resource is a direction for an outline, not a prompt. A rubric for the research paper is included, as well as the partner critique checklist for the informational text essay. A possible improvement
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.

in this area would be to include a rubric or grading guideline for the non-linguistic presentation of research findings and the persuasive letter.

There are varied modes of assessments: teacher-student conferences, formal essay, informal writing, exit slip, and nonlinguistic presentation of research findings. Also, as self-reflection, the student could use the rubric and peer critique checklist.

Rating: 3 – Meets most to all of the criteria in the dimension

Summary Comments

The topical focus of developing the research process was very explicit and the topic is relevant and engaging to students. The unit successfully meet the criteria to be rated as an exemplar. The authenticity of the unit is a major strength.

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.