

Grade Level |

K-2

California Writing Project

Informative Writing in Kindergarten

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From Teacher to Teacher

Young students are curious and interested in the world around them. This interest is a natural starting point for teaching children how to write about what they learn. What do they bring to the lesson? Themselves! What do you as a teacher need? Stamina and a clear vision of how to guide your young writers to write informative text.

This series of lessons will scaffold beginning writers in informational text. Lessons move from whole group instruction and modeled writing activities to shared, collaborative, and guided experiences. Students are gradually released to independent writing. The goal of these lessons is for students to write an informative text (5–6 page booklet) independently. While this lesson uses students' learning of science, the lesson sequence and written genre could be used with any content area.

Text Resources

Cowley, Joy. *Red Tree Frog*. New York: Scholastic, Turtleback, 2006.

Enchanted Learning. Directed Drawing instructions, 1996.

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/Home.html> (accessed July 12, 2012).

Teaching Context

This lesson was developed for Kindergarten students.

The lessons, described in this sequence, are designed to be taught in the order listed so as to provide scaffolded instruction. Lessons were conducted daily in 10–15 minute intervals, 2–3 times per day, in a half-day kindergarten class. We used the Writer's Workshop model as a structure for our independent writing time.

Text Type, Genre, Writing Prompt

- Informative/Explanatory booklet based on science learning
- **Writing Prompt**
Using the information we have gathered, write an informative book about frogs. Be sure to have an introductory statement and a concluding statement.

Instructional Strategies

- Engagement strategies
 - Think/Pair/Share
 - Thumbs up
 - Choral response
- Read-Aloud/Shared Reading/Guided Reading
- Modeled Writing/Interactive Writing/Independent Writing (structure in place, such as Writer's Workshop)

Common Core State Standards

Reading

Literature

1. With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
5. Recognize common types of texts (e.g., storybooks, poems, fantasy, realistic text).
10. Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

Informational

1. With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
4. With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text. (See grade K Language standards 4-6 on page 13 for additional expectations.)
5. Identify the front cover, back cover, and title page of a book.
6. Name the author and illustrator of a text and define the role of each in presenting the ideas or information in a text.
9. With prompting and support, identify basic similarities in and differences between two texts on the same topic (e.g., in illustrations, descriptions, or procedures).
10. Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

Writing

2. **Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.**
5. **With guidance and support from adults, respond to questions and suggestions from peers and add details to strengthen writing as needed.**
7. **Participate in shared research and writing projects.**

Speaking and Listening

1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on kindergarten reading and content.
5. With guidance and support from adults, explore word relationships and nuances in word meanings.
6. Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts.

California Content Standards: Science

2. Different types of plants and animals inhabit the earth. As a basis for understanding this concept:
 - a. Students know how to observe and describe similarities and differences in the appearance and behavior of plants and animals (e.g., seed-bearing plants, birds, fish, insects).
 - b. Students know stories sometimes give plants and animals attributes they do not really have
 - c. Students know how to identify major structures of common plants and animals (e.g., stems, leaves, roots, arms, wings, legs).

English Language Development Standards—Kindergarten

A. Collaborative

1. Exchanging information and ideas with others through oral collaborative conversations on a range of social and academic topics
2. Interacting with others in written English in various communicative forms (print, communicative technology, and multimedia)
3. Offering and supporting opinions and negotiating with others in communicative exchanges

B. Interpretive

5. Listening actively to spoken English in a range of social and academic contexts
6. Reading closely literary and informational texts and viewing multimedia to determine how meaning is conveyed explicitly and implicitly through language
7. Evaluating how well writers and speakers use language to support ideas and opinions with details or reasons depending on modality, text type, purpose, audience, topic, and content area
8. Analyzing how writers and speakers use vocabulary and other language resources for specific purposes (to explain, persuade, entertain, etc.) depending on modality, text type, purpose, audience, topic, and content area

C. Productive

10. Composing/Writing literary and informational texts to present, describe, and explain ideas and information, using appropriate technology
11. Supporting own opinions and evaluating others' opinions in speaking and writing
12. Selecting and applying varied and precise vocabulary and language structures to effectively convey ideas

Lesson Objectives

The goal of these lessons is for students to write an informative text (5–6 page booklet) independently. Students will:

- actively listen
- orally respond to questions
- orally cite evidence from text or source
- pair/share as a means of collaboration
- speak in complete sentences
- participate in shared reading and writing instruction
- participate in guided instruction (reading and writing) that support the goal of writing informative text independently
- write an informative text (5-6 pages) independently
- edit writing for skills taught

Session One: Pre-Activity: Determining Students' Current Knowledge about Frogs

(10–15 minute session):

1. This activity will help focus students on the topic and will give the teacher information about what students know and any misconceptions they may have.
2. Working together to make a class chart about frogs, I elicit responses and note their responses on the chart below.

Session 1: Pre Activity – Determining Students' Current Knowledge about Frogs

(10–15 minute session):

What do we know about frogs?	What do we want to know about frogs?

Session Two: Introducing Frog Study

(5-minute session):

Teacher explains to students that they will be studying frogs for the next few weeks:

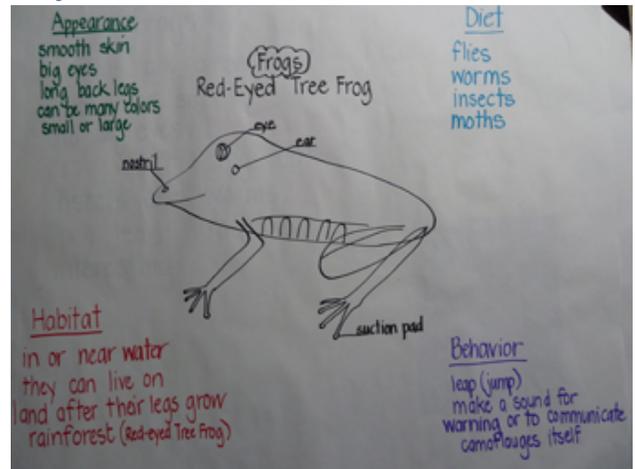
1. We will add new information learned to our process chart.
2. We will use the information to write sentences and then a paragraph about frogs collaboratively.
3. I explain that I will help and support them through this process.
4. Students will be writing their own book with facts about frogs at the end of the study.

Session Three: Creating a Pictorial to Deliver Key Content

(15-minute session):

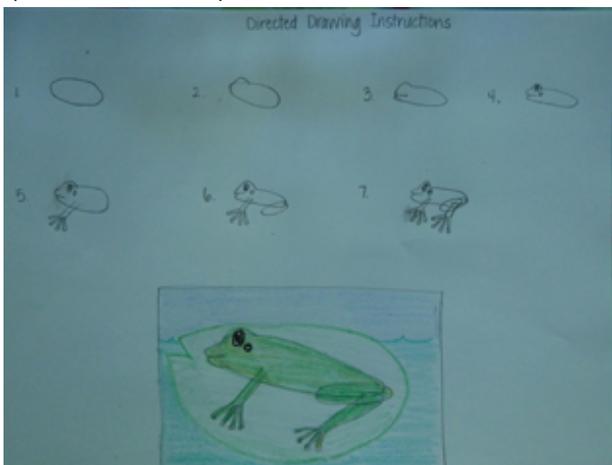
A pictorial is an informational chart, which is first sketched in pencil (by the teacher prior to the lesson) and is then filled in with markers as you give students information about frogs. Drawing and sharing information are done in one session.

A drawing of a frog, labeled, is in the middle of the chart and shared information will be placed in boxes around the pictorial. Important information is discussed and vocabulary is highlighted. It is a kindergarten-style "lecture" with visuals.



Session Four: Directed Drawing

(15-minute session):



1. Teacher draws a step-by-step picture of a frog, and students copy it. Teacher identifies this as a feature of nonfiction text.
 - Appropriate background is added to drawing.
 - Students begin to understand that as a nonfiction text feature, the drawing must be accurate.

Resource:

Enchanted Learning. 1996. Directed Drawing instructions. <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/Home.html> (accessed July 12, 2012).

Session Five: Gathering Information from Sources

Note: The following activities will take place in short sessions (5–15 minute sessions, as noted) over a period of 10 or so days. The teacher will utilize Engagement Strategies (such as Think/Pair/Share and Thumbs up/Thumbs Down) during these lessons as part of the teaching/learning.

(This is completed over several days of 10–15 minute sessions, and may be broken down by reading the selection in one session and adding to the chart in another session):

A process chart is a way of organizing and processing content into a visual format. I prepare the chart with headings to denote topics students will be focusing on in the

Group	Appearance	Diet	Habitat	Behavior
Amphibian	smooth skin, wet, long back legs, big eyes	flies, dragonflies, insects	water (fresh water, salt water)	leap, they can leap, they can leap, they can leap

study. After read-alouds or shared reading, I elicit responses from students to fill in the grid. The chart is used over time as information is gathered. The information listed on the chart is color-coded. For example, all information listed under animal would be written in red, all information listed under appearance would be purple. Color-coding in this way helps students with linking the information to the writing later.

Session 5: Gathering Information from Sources Chart

Animal	Appearance	Diet	Habitat	Behavior

Session Six: Continuing to Gather Information from Sources

Group	Appearance	Diet
Amphibian	smooth skin, wet, tongue that goes from front of his mouth, 4 legs, big eyes suction cup toes, small or large	flies, dragonflies, mosquitos, moths



Teacher reads aloud *Red-Eyed Tree Frog* and/or other sources

(completed over several sessions or several days):

1. I elicit information from students to add to the process chart.
2. I ask for students to cite evidence before adding information to chart.
3. I add information to chart in phrases and add an illustration (if necessary) for learners.
4. I continue to read nonfiction texts (see Resources section for other text ideas) and add information to the chart until I have enough information to model writing sentences.

Note: In example below, information from *Red-Eyed Tree Frog* is added to column under *Appearance*.

**Frogs!* National Geographic Kids

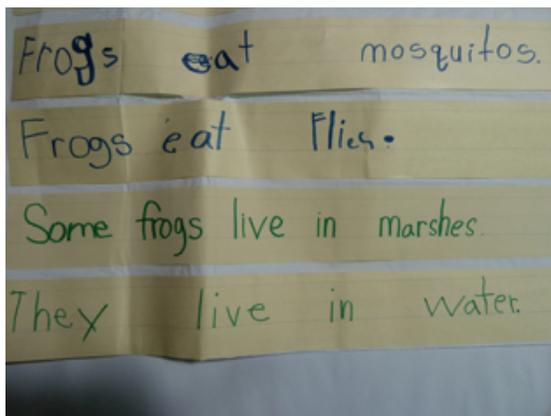
Session Seven: Modeling the Writing of Informational Text

Completed over several sessions:

1. I develop a topic sentence.
2. I model how to find supporting details from process chart.
3. I write a sentence, citing from chart, and model conventions and sentence structure.
4. I continue to model writing, with input from students, until there is one sentence from each topic area.
(**Note:** Sentences are color-coded to match information on the Process Chart.)
5. Students read piece together, with my guidance, talking about what makes the writing interesting.
6. Students read piece to make sure it makes sense, looks right, and sounds right. I ask if there are any suggestions (such as the order, combining sentences, deleting, looking at how sentences begin... so every sentence is not Frogs... Frogs... Frogs...) I am modeling and eliciting responses from my students.
7. We edit for skills taught (period at the end of a sentence, capital letter at beginning, etc.).



Session Eight: Modeling the Writing of Informational Text



Completed over several sessions:

1. To move some of this writing into shared writing, follow the model above, but have students begin to share the pen where appropriate.

Note: "Sharing the pen" may include having students add high frequency words, beginning sounds, etc., to the text with the aid of the teacher. The text should be correct in all forms, as it will be used for Shared Reading. For more information on Interactive Writing see: *Interactive Writing: How Language & Literacy Come Together, K-2* by Andrea McCarrier, Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell.

Session Nine: Using Collaborative Text for Shared Reading

Completed over several sessions:

I write student-dictated paragraphs on sentence strips for Shared Reading.

Note: As a Shared Reading activity, the teacher may direct the students to do some of the following activities with the sentences in the pocket chart:

Sentence to word to letter: Pocket chart activities

Matching lines of text

Switching lines of text

Matching pictures

Search for high frequency words

Match high frequency words to text

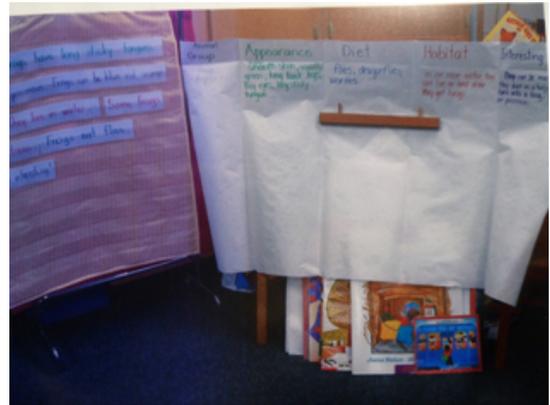
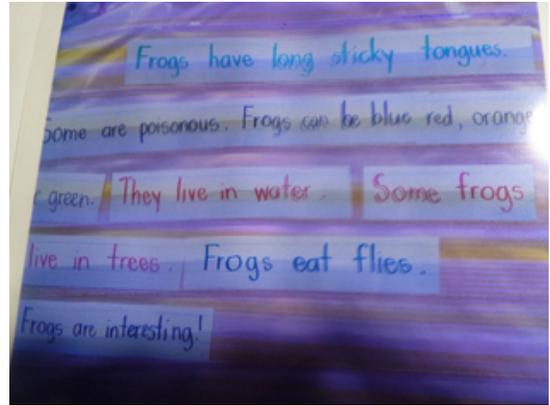
Reorder words within text

Replace missing words

Correct word substitutions

Correct letter substitutions

(adapted from Judy Lynch)



Session Ten: Reading Collaborative Texts in Small Groups

I type the group text on a computer. Each student gets a copy. They practice independently, with a partner, and/or in small group reading (where I can teach appropriate reading skills in context).

Session Eleven: Writing Independently

Mini-Lesson

Teacher models writing (as above) in a 5–6 page booklet that has been prepared ahead of time.

1. One fact and an illustration appear on each page.
2. Introductory sentence names what they are writing about—Frogs are interesting. I know about frogs.
3. Concluding sentence—I've learned a lot about frogs. Do you want to know more about frogs? Frogs are interesting.

Independent Writing

Students write independently, using the charts that they have been working with the past weeks.

Editing

When work is completed, students use editing sheet to check their work before completion. See student examples in the *Learning From Student Work* section.

What Worked

- Developing the charts together created common language and experience, and provided an opportunity to participate in shared research and writing.
- Teaching the students how to access information from the charts and providing opportunities to practice this skill helped ensure that students were better prepared to write their own informational text.
- Providing opportunities for students to talk to one another and encouraging them to speak in complete sentences transferred to the writing process.
- Keeping lessons short helped keep interest high and management issues to a minimum.

Modifications

- English Learners need additional practice in taking information from the charts and composing complete sentences (both orally and in writing).
- Additional focus and practice on introductory and concluding sentences.

Extensions / What's Next?

- More explicit teaching on writing an introduction and a concluding sentence and including it in written piece.
- Model writing in a pre-made book with 6 pages, one for introduction, 4 for facts taken from chart, one for concluding sentence.
- With guidance and support from the teacher, students begin to gather information from provided sources to answer a question, and proceed to write an informational text on a topic of their own choosing.

Extension Resources

Instructional Resources

See text resources earlier in this lesson.

Professional Resources

Anderson, Jeff. *10 Things Every Writer Needs to Know*. New York: Stenhouse Publishers, 2011

Jackson, Norma R. and Paula L. Pillow. *The Reading-Writing Workshop: Getting Started*. New York: Scholastic, 1992.

Ray, Katie Wood. *In Pictures and In Words: Teaching the Qualities of Good Writing Through Illustration Study*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2010.

Ray, Katie Wood and Lisa B. Cleaveland. *About the Authors: Writing Workshop with Our Youngest Writers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2004.

Stead, Tony. *Is That a Fact? Teaching Nonfiction Writing K-3*. New York: Stenhouse Publishers, 2001.

Spandel, Vicki. *Creating Young Writers—Using the Six Traits to Enrich Writing Process in Primary Classrooms*. 3rd ed. Boston, MA: Pearson and Allyn & Bacon, 2012.

Digital Resources

Wonderopolis: wonderopolis.org

http://www.teachingbooks.net/book_reading.cgi?id=3822&a=1

Nic Bishop introduces and shares some of the backstory for creating Red Eyed Tree Frog.

Frogs: <http://www.kidzone.ws/lw/frogs/>

All About Frogs: <http://allaboutfrogs.org/weird/weird.html>

There are many apps that allow children to create ebooks. Here are a few suggestions:

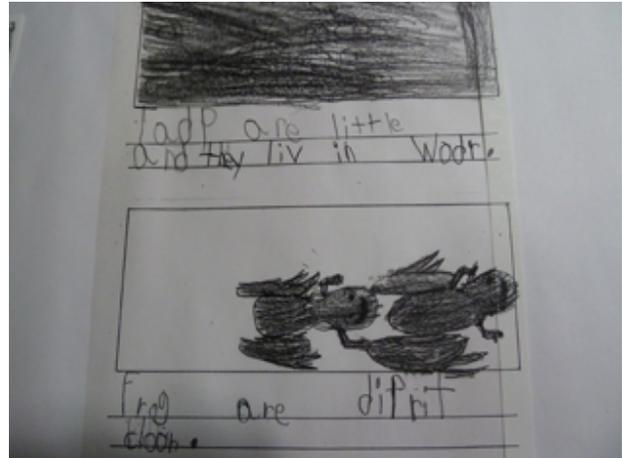
- *StoryBuddy* by Tapfuze
- *StoryKit* by storykit@childrenslibrary.org
- *Explain Everything* by MorrisCooke
- *Little Story Maker* by GrasshopperApps.com
- *Scribble Press* by Scribble Press

Waggoner Elementary – 6 Traits Rubric

Student work was annotated using our district's Kindergarten 6 Traits Rubric.

Informative Writing in Kindergarten			
Waggoner Elementary 6 Traits Rubric – Grade K			
	(1)	(3)	(5)
Ideas	<input type="checkbox"/> No attempt at writing. <input type="checkbox"/> Picture unrelated to the prompt.	<input type="checkbox"/> A single topic is clear. <input type="checkbox"/> Details present to support topic. <input type="checkbox"/> Writes to the prompt most of the time.	<input type="checkbox"/> The writing stays focused on a clear topic. <input type="checkbox"/> Includes numerous details to support the topic. <input type="checkbox"/> Precisely writes to the prompt.
Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> Sequencing is random.	<input type="checkbox"/> Sequencing is appropriate.	<input type="checkbox"/> Sequencing is natural. <input type="checkbox"/> Attempts a beginning, and middle.
Voice	<input type="checkbox"/> Unclear response to task. (i.e. letter strings)	<input type="checkbox"/> Paper expresses some predictable feelings. <input type="checkbox"/> Moments of individual sparkle, but then hides.	<input type="checkbox"/> Writing is individual and expressive <input type="checkbox"/> Writer takes some risk to say more than what is expected.
Word Choice	<input type="checkbox"/> Words or phrases are not constructing meaning. <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental print and/or letter strings. <input type="checkbox"/> Random marks, numbers and indiscernible symbols or no attempt at writing.	<input type="checkbox"/> Uses many simple, familiar words and phrases appropriately.	<input type="checkbox"/> Writes with vocabulary that may extend well beyond spelling ability.
Sentence Fluency	<input type="checkbox"/> Sentences not yet present.	<input type="checkbox"/> Write in complete, coherent sentences. <input type="checkbox"/> Patterned sentences may be present. <input type="checkbox"/> Most sentences can be read and understood easily by the teacher.	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 or more complete sentences. <input type="checkbox"/> Some varying sentence beginnings.
Conventions	<input type="checkbox"/> Random or no spacing. <input type="checkbox"/> Sight words spelled incorrectly. <input type="checkbox"/> Almost no evidence of the use of correct letters to spell phonetically.	<input type="checkbox"/> Usually uses appropriate spaces. <input type="checkbox"/> Most sight words spelled correctly. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses phonetic sounds to spell.	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate spaces. <input type="checkbox"/> All sight words spelled correctly. <input type="checkbox"/> Consistently utilizes beginning, medial and ending sounds in non-cvc words. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses end punctuation correctly.
Trimester 1 Goals <hr/> <hr/>			
Trimester 2 Goals <hr/> <hr/>			
Trimester 3 Goals <hr/> <hr/>			

Student Sample A



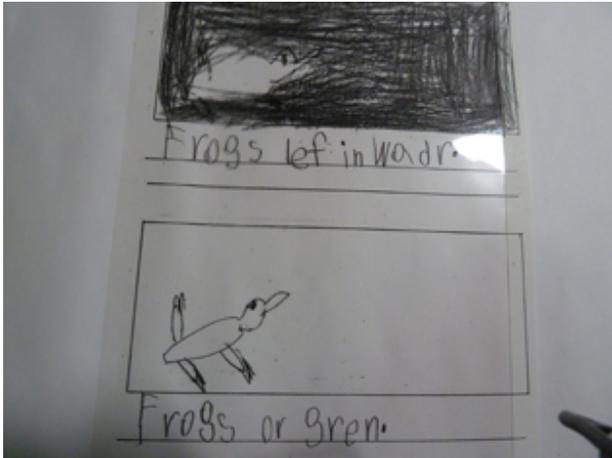
- Pg 1 Frogs eat fish.
- Pg 2 They have sticky toes.
- Pg 3 Tadpoles are little and they live in the water.
- Pg 4 Frogs are different colors.

Annotation – Student Sample A

Student Work	What do you see in the student work?	How does it connect to your assessment tools?	What will you work on next with this student?
<p>Student #1</p> <p>Pg 1 Frogs eat flies.</p> <p>Pg 2 They have sticky tongues.</p> <p>Pg 3 Tadpoles are little and they live in water.</p> <p>Pg 4 Frogs are different colors.</p>	<p>Student #1</p> <p>The student stays focused on the topic (frogs) and includes various details (diet, habitat, special features). Her pictures support the text. She uses varied sentence beginnings and displays an understanding of conventions. As a second language learner, her sentence fluency and word choice are impressive.</p>	<p>Student #1</p> <p>District Rubric (Kinder)</p> <p><u>Ideas:</u> The writing stays focused on a topic. It includes numerous details to support the topic (frogs).</p> <p><u>Organization:</u> Sequencing is appropriate.</p> <p><u>Voice:</u> Writer takes some risk to say more than what is expected.</p> <p><u>Word Choice:</u> Uses many simple, familiar words and phrases appropriately. Writes with vocabulary that may extend well beyond spelling ability.</p> <p><u>Sentence Fluency:</u> Writes in complete, coherent sentences. Most sentences can be read and understood easily by the teacher. 4 or more complete sentences. Some varying sentence beginnings.</p> <p><u>Conventions:</u> Most sight words spelled correctly. Appropriate spaces. Consistently utilizes beginning, medial, and ending sounds in non-cvc words. Use end punctuation correctly.</p> <p>CCSS Writing Standards <u>Text Type and Purposes</u> 2. Use a combination of drawing, dictating and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about a topic.</p>	<p>Student #1</p> <p>An introductory sentence that names what she is writing about.</p> <p>A concluding sentence</p>

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Student Sample B



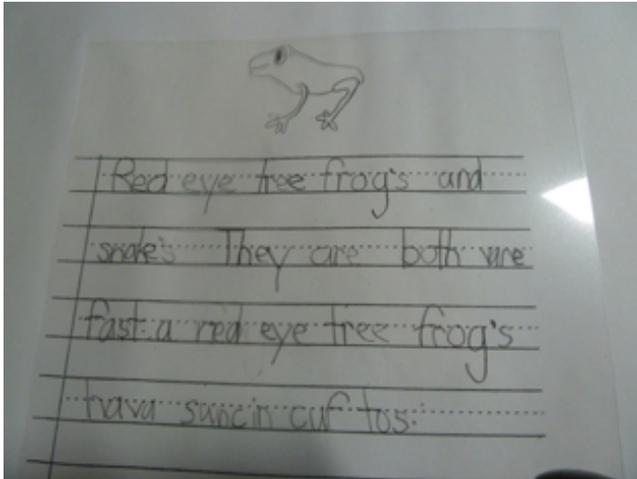
- Pg 1 Frogs live in water.
- Pg 2 Frogs are green.
- Pg 3 Frogs eat flies.
- Pg 4 Frogs eggs are in piles.

Annotation – Student Sample B

Student Work	What do you see in the student work?	How does it connect to your assessment tools?	What will you work on next with this student?
<p>Student #2</p> <p>Pg 1 Frogs live in water.</p> <p>Pg 2 Frogs are green.</p> <p>Pg 3 Frogs eat flies.</p> <p>Pg 4 Frogs eggs are in piles.</p>	<p>Student #2</p> <p>The student stays focused on a clear topic and adds details (diet, interesting facts). He writes in complete, coherent sentences, which can be read and understood. All sentences begin with "Frogs...". Conventions are acceptable. His drawings support his writing and are detailed and accurate.</p>	<p>Student #2</p> <p>District Rubric (Kinder)</p> <p><u>Ideas:</u> The writing stays focused on a clear topic. Includes numerous details to support the topic.</p> <p><u>Organization:</u> Sequencing is appropriate.</p> <p><u>Voice:</u> (Rubric does not address voice for Informational Text)</p> <p><u>Word Choice:</u> Uses many simple, familiar words and phrases appropriately.</p> <p><u>Sentence Fluency:</u> Writes in complete, coherent sentences. Patterned sentences may be present. Most sentences can be read and understood easily by the teacher.</p> <p><u>Conventions:</u> Most sight words are spelled correctly. Appropriate spaces. Consistently utilizes beginning, medial, and ending sounds in non-cvc words. Uses end punctuation correctly.</p> <p>CCSS Writing Standards K</p> <p><u>Text Type and Purposes</u> 2. Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.</p>	<p>Student #2</p> <p>An introductory sentence that names what he is talking about.</p> <p>A concluding sentence.</p> <p>Varying sentence beginnings.</p> <p>Adding details.</p>

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Student Sample C



- Red eye tree frogs and snakes, they are both very fast. A red eye tree frog's have a suction cup toes.

Annotation – Student Sample C

Student Work	What do you see in the student work?	How does it connect to your assessment tools?	What will you work on next with this student?
<p>Student #3</p> <p><i>Red eye tree frogs and snakes they are both very fast. A red eye tree frog's have suction cup toes.</i></p>	<p>Student #3</p> <p>A single topic is clear and there are some details present to support the topic. He ventures into some comparison with another animal the class studied previously. He attempts (sometimes correctly) to use possessives. Sentence fluency is confusing.</p>	<p>Student #3</p> <p>District Rubric (Kinder)</p> <p><u>Ideas:</u> A single topic is clear. Details are present to support topic.</p> <p><u>Organization:</u> Sequencing is appropriate.</p> <p><u>Voice:</u> (Rubric does not address voice for Informative writing.)</p> <p><u>Word Choice:</u> Writes with vocabulary that may extend well beyond spelling ability.</p> <p><u>Sentence Fluency:</u> Most sentences can be read and understood by the teacher.</p> <p><u>Conventions:</u> Most sight words spelled correctly. Appropriate spaces. Consistently utilizes beginning, medial, and ending sounds in non-cvc words.</p> <p>CCSS Writing Standards K</p> <p><u>Text Type and Purposes</u></p> <p>2. Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.</p>	<p>Student #3</p> <p>Revising and Editing (for fluency and sentence structure)</p> <p>Including numerous details to support the topic.</p> <p>He took some risk in comparing the frog to the snake. I might encourage him to continue to compare the two (frog and snake) in the areas of Appearance, Habitat, and Diet, pointing out that he did just that in the area of Behavior (<i>They are both very fast.</i>)</p> <p>Continued work on Introductory Sentence and Concluding Sentence.</p>

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Session 1: Pre-Activity

Informative Writing in Kindergarten

Determining Students' Current Knowledge about Frogs

(10–15 minute session):

What do we know about frogs?	What do we want to know about frogs?

Session 5: Gathering Information

Informative Writing in Kindergarten
Gathering Information from Sources Chart

Animal	Appearance	Diet	Habitat	Behavior