

# Looking Ahead

## February Writing in Fourth Grade

Before Looking Ahead, let's **LOOK BACK** at January. In January...

- You used Fletcher's *Launch Unit* to refocus and re-energize your students for writing.
- You probably revisited routines and procedures for Writer's Workshop expectations and behaviors.
- Hopefully your students came together as a community of writers, and were able to verbally share writing ideas with one another. This also would give them an opportunity to be a productive and effective partner in regards to feedback.

In February...(Looking Ahead):

- The Pacing Guide leaves February open for Nonfiction Writing. Check out [www.writingfix.com](http://www.writingfix.com) and then go to [Writing Across the Curriculum](#). There are tons of lessons for History and Science writing using picture books/texts that students will engage with! If you want to integrate your curriculum this is a great place to start!
- Another resource for quick and to the point Nonfiction lesson plans is: **Nonfiction Craft Lessons**, by Joann Portalupi and Ralph Fletcher. It is sectioned by grade bands and very teacher- friendly.
- You can continue to work on an Elaboration Module that fits with the Nonfiction unit so that it is taught in the context of their writing. The Prewriting Module called Alphabetic Taxonomy is a beginner prewriting strategy that works well with nonfiction writing.
- Modeling is still *so* important, even for 4<sup>th</sup> graders! Giving them time to practice the strategies and try them out in different pieces of writing is one of the keys to success.
- Make sure students know their audience and purpose for what they are writing before they start writing.
- Remember, in the classroom where writing happens regularly and instruction in writing happens regularly, students need not fear a writing assessment. (Fletcher)
- Have students work with the end in mind...what type of publishing will be done with the writing? (ideas listed at the end of the lessons) This will help with the organization piece. It will also help students revise as they go.
- Listed below are the Nonfiction lesson plans from Ralph Fletcher's TQW. You may be finishing up with these, or just beginning, depending on how you paced your class the last 2 months.

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Nonfiction Unit of Study, (TOW) Ralph Fletcher  
**February Lessons and Teaching Points**  
 (Nonfiction spans December, January, and February)

Lesson Card Number and Title	Teaching Points, Tips
L-18 Use a Natural Voice	Students are taught that nonfiction writing needs to have the element of voice. Students look at different phrases that authors of nonfiction use to insert voice into their writing.
D-10 Find the Right Distance by Pulling in Close	Students explore how using voice and details helps the writer come closer to their topic.
D-11 Find the Right Distance by Pulling Back	Students look at pulling back from writing to give the reader a larger perspective. What important information is the writer forgetting to include?
D-1 Anticipate What the Audience Expects	Students are given an explicit strategy to think about their reader. By asking questions about the topic, the writer can organize their writing.
D-9 Capture the Power of One	By featuring “one” instead of a group in writing, the reader is able to connect more easily with the plight of an individual.
I-14 Use Authentic Details	Students choose details to help sharpen the focus and write in an authoritative voice.
D-6 Use Subtitles to Organize Your Writing	Using subtitles help to bring order to research.
D-20 Open with a Scene	Students try writing a scene to lead their reader into their writing.
D-18 Lead with a Question	Another strategy for writing a lead is to ask a question that intrigues the reader.
L-24 Use Vocabulary Specific to a Subject	When using specialized vocabulary the writer needs to understand the words first, and then explain them to the reader. The back of the card has to very clear examples of how to incorporate specialized vocabulary in a clear way.
D-5 Use a Transition Between Ideas	Using transitions is introduced to help with the chopiness of student writing. This is a sophisticated concept.
I-19 Make a Comparison	Writers help us see the world in new ways when they make a comparison that is unusual and interesting.

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P-4 Use Commas to List Ideas GLE 3.2.3 (sentences)	By using commas to list things students can shift to writing more complex sentences.
P-7 Use the Ellipsis	Students look at how ellipses can be used in a practical way and also in a way to create mood.
L-16 Avoid Passive Verbs	Overusing passive verbs weakens writing. Students look at how to change sentences from passive to active.

**Publishing Possibilities:**

brochure, feature article, report, bulletin board display, event or object description, oral report

**Key notes about teaching Nonfiction Writing (from Regie Routman, Writing Essentials)**

- Expository writing develops more slowly than narrative writing.
- Don't overload students with nonfiction writing that requires a lot of research. Teaching students to do the research is more challenging and requires a separate, intensive teaching focus.
- Summarizing is a prerequisite for writing a successful report.
- Provide more time for browsing nonfiction (after you've modeled how to browse) and immersing children in the genre before expecting them to write.

**A Framework for Teaching Writing Genres**  
**(Writing Essentials, Regie Routman)**

- Find out what kids know about the genre, and chart responses.
- Gather lots of examples of the genre at a level appropriate for most of your students.
- Let students, in pairs or small groups, browse through these materials. Model first.
- Discuss and chart, "What makes a good (blank)?"
- With students, choose one text to study together.
- Write in the genre together as a class. Use the language of the genre. Refer to chart you created.
- Identify additional criteria for what to include when writing in the genre.
- Prepare to write- students gather resources, brainstorm ideas...
- Write for a sustained period in the form of the genre for an authentic audience and purpose.
- Confer with students and teach what is needed. (Celebrate, assess, teach, revise, edit)
- Publish and share with intended audience.
- Encourage students to write more pieces in the genre.