All About Writing Standard #2:
Standard Progression and Research Base

6th – 12th Informational/Explanatory Writing
(Underlined portions indicate what is new to the grade level)

6th- 8th Grade	9th- 10th Grade	11th- 12th Grade
Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes. - Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concept, and information into broader categories as appropriate to achieving purpose; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension. - Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and concepts. - Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts. - Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic. - Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone. - Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.	Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes. - Introduce a topic and organize ideas, concepts, and information *to make important connections and distinctions*; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension. - Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, *and sufficient* facts, *extended* definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information *and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.* - Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts. - Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic. - Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone. - Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.	Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes. - Introduce a topic and organize ideas, concepts, and information *so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole;* include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension. - Develop the topic *thoroughly by selecting the most significant and* relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic. - Use varied transitions and *sentence structures to link the major sections of the text,* to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among *complex* ideas and concepts. - Use *precise* language, domain-specific vocabulary *and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic; convey a knowledgeable stance in a style that responds to the discipline and context as well as to the expertise of the likely readers.* - Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information *provided (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).*

About Standard #2

About Standard #2

"Informational/explanatory writing conveys information accurately. This kind of writing serves one or more closely related purposes:

- to increase reader's knowledge of a subject,
- to help readers better understand a procedure or process, or
- to provide readers with an enhanced comprehension of a concept.

Informational/explanatory writing addresses matters such as types (*What are the different types of poetry?*) and components (*What are the parts of a motor?*); size, function, or behavior (*How big is the United States? What is an X-ray used for? How do penguins find food?*); how things work (*How does the legislative branch of government function?*); and why things happen (*Why do some authors blend genres?*). To produce this kind of writing, students draw from what they already know and from primary and secondary sources. With practice, students become better able to develop a controlling idea and a coherent focus on a topic and more skilled at selecting and incorporating relevant examples, facts, and details into their writing. They are also able to use a variety of techniques to convey information, such as naming, defining, describing, or differentiating different types or parts; comparing or contrasting ideas or concepts; and citing an anecdote or a scenario to illustrate a point.

Informational/explanatory writing includes a wide array of genres, including academic genres such as literary analyses, scientific and historical reports, summaries, and précis writing as well as forms of workplace and functional writing such as instructions, manuals, memos, reports, applications, and resumes. As students advance through the grades, they expand their repertoire of informational/explanatory genres and use them effectively in a variety of disciplines and domains.

Classroom instruction for this standard may emphasize how to express an understanding, establish an organization, and convey complex information in a well-written composition. To do this work, students need to first acquire a deep and thorough understanding of the material they select and decide on the most effective strategies that will help them to clearly and accurately present information in writing. Instructional activities may include: seeking to define any or all unknown terms in a text, creating charts and graphs to determine cause/effect relationships, comparing and contrasting data, gathering note-worthy quotations about the material from experts in the field, or watching informational videos to observe visual representations of the topic or data." (Common Core State Standards, pg. 23)

This research base gives teachers, curriculum directors and content area personnel information regarding the reasoning and research supporting informational/explanatory writing that will be required of students. Appendices have been attached to assist with definitions of the terms that will help guide the construct of informational and explanatory writing. It is important to also state what this research does not address. It is not intended to prescribe what teachers should instruct in the classroom, especially with regards to rhetoric, vocabulary, or conventions. The research here is only to provide a definition for teachers who may need background information about explanatory and informational writing.

The standards explain that "this kind of writing serves one or more closely related purposes:

- to increase readers' knowledge of a subject, (social studies, literature, science),

- to help readers better understand a procedure or process, (science experiments, recipes), or

- to provide readers with an enhanced comprehension of a concept (Big Bang Theory, Civil Rights Movement). "   (adapted from CCSS, 2010, pg. 23, Appendix A)

 Informational/explanatory writing addresses the following kinds of writing:

Informational and Explanatory Writing Types and Examples

Types of items	What are the different types of poetry?
Components	What are the parts of a motor?
Size, function, or behavior	How big is the United States? What is an X-ray used for? How do penguins find food?
How things work	How does the legislative branch of government function?
Why things happen	Why do some authors blend genres?

                                                 (Adapted CCSS, 2010)

"To produce this kind of writing, students draw from what they already know and from primary and secondary sources. With practice, students become better able to develop a controlling idea and a coherent focus on a topic and more skilled at selecting and incorporating relevant examples, facts, and details into their writing. They are also able to use a variety of techniques to convey information, such as naming, defining, describing, or differentiating different types or parts; comparing or contrasting ideas or concepts; and citing an anecdote or a scenario to illustrate a point. " (CCSS, 2010, pg. 23, Appendix A).   Appendix A of this document provides example genre and purposes for writing informational/explanatory documents along with providing direct links to specific example directions and tasks.

At times, explanatory writing may cross over into narrative and argumentative writing. Explanatory writing is meant to provide clarification for the reader and not a point of view, which is the purpose of an argumentative piece. With regards to narrative writing, it creates a story dependent upon time as a structure. Nonfiction news story writers have habitually used argument writing when reporting on something like an oil spill and drawing the viewer or reader into their viewpoint of where the fault lies. The narrative nonfiction news story can be played out when a story is crafted around a character that has a problem to solve. For example, around a well-received sporting event, such as the NCAA Basketball Tournament, personal stories of players in the tournaments are often highlighted. The story begins with a character, then leads with an against all odds theme as the story builds into its climax, and results in the winning or losing game shot. The resolution usually leaves the viewer or reader with a thought provoking lesson. These types of writings do have a place and purpose however; both are more fully explained in the argumentative and narrative research base.

The structure of an expository and informational text will be analytical in so much that it covers a sweeping subject, large development or broad trend. An expository narrative may do the same but it follows a person

or thing within that development. For example, if a writer considers a storm in Asia, such as the recent tsunami that devastated the region, an informational or expository piece might cover impact on the economic trends that have occurred post tsunami. How is the region recovering economically? How has the tsunami affected businesses in the US? What is the status of rebuilding? What long term environmental damage was sustained? If a writer were to take on an expository narrative piece, he or she might focus on one person in the region and how they specifically are recovering from the economic strains of the tsunami and follow the story with time as a deep structure, build the plot into a climax and then end with a resolution. Both are nonfiction, however, one if very broad and informational in nature versus the other that is a story and time structured.

Although nonfiction argumentative and nonfiction narrative writing examples shown above contain well-crafted ideas, they do not serve the explanatory writer who is responsible for clarifying and providing information. Because there are so many forms or types of nonfiction explanatory and informational writing, it is imperative that the teacher and student understand the structure for which they will write and consider the tone, the style and the audience. For example, a travel brochure will have a certain structure versus a senior chemistry essay regarding a new discovery and how the discovery may alter what was previously known. Another example is an administrative report in a business class versus a literary analysis in a literature class. Allowing teachers and students to view several different structures of the type of writing that is to be expected will essentially narrow the characteristics of the structure of the piece.   A well-defined purpose for students and outlined expectations regarding the structure will be the first hurdle and most significant information to adhere to from the beginning of the paper to the end. According to Zinsser, "as for what point you want to make, every successful piece of nonfiction should leave the reader with one provocative thought that he or she didn't have before. It will only give you a better idea of what route you should follow and what destination you hope to reach; it will affect your decision about tone and attitude." Once structure and audience are determined, many simple questions can be answered to arrive at a nonfiction piece that provides clarification and information.   Most nonfiction writing has an attitude or tone and style: is the writer humorous, playful, or cynical? Is the writer disconnected, critical, or involved with their material? How does the writer address their audience; formally or informally and personally or a mixture? When writing explanatory/informational pieces, writers should adhere to a consistency from start to finish with attitude or tone and style. Consider a travel brochure that is written about visiting the beautiful volcanic terrain of Hawaii and describes the destination's surroundings in first person. Then, what if the writer switches to telling about a time he or she visited the serene waters and black beaches? Not only will the writer begin to write in the narrative nonfiction structure, but also will have changed the style from a more formal approach to informal. Consistency will matter to the reader and the end goal of explanatory/informational writing, which is clarification.

Writers need time to research the subject they will be working with, guidance in what will clarify their topic, assistance with the structure of the type of writing that is expected, and abbreviated editing sessions to build confidence. In short, according to the Vermont Writing Collaborative, "in order to write effectively about anything, students need depth of knowledge in the topic about which they will be writing. They also need a clear understanding of what they want to say about that knowledge, as well as a sense of how to build the particular piece of writing they will build."

Informational/explanatory writing includes a wide array of genres, including academic genres such as literary analyses, scientific and historical reports, summaries, and précis writing as well as forms of workplace and functional writing such as instructions, manuals, memos, reports, applications, and resumes.   As students advance through the grades, they expand their repertoire of informational or explanatory genres and use them effectively in a variety of disciplines and domains. (CCSS, 2010, Appendix A, pg. 23). Just a few of the genre, purpose and links that share more information are provided in the following table.

Genre	Purpose	Link
Literary Analysis	Examine and evaluate a piece of literature such as Romeo and Juliet or a poem. The intent is to better appreciate or understand the work as a whole or one particular piece such as the images the piece portrays.	http://www.bucks.edu/media/bcccmedialibrary/pdf/HOWTOWRITEALITERARYANALYSISESSAY_10.15.07_001.pdf
Scientific Report	Unlike an essay, a scientific report has a very formalized structure. Depending on the grade level, the report may or may not include all structural parts of the scientific report.	(6-12) http://unilearning.uow.edu.au/report/2b.html
Historical Report	Historical reports communicate information which has been compiled as a result of research and analysis of data and of issues.	(5-12) http://unilearning.uow.edu.au/report/ Click on Field to gain the most accurate information regarding Historical Report writing.
Descriptive Essay	The descriptive essay is a genre of essay that asks the student to describe something—object, person, place, experience, emotion, situation, etc. This genre encourages the student's ability to create a written account of a particular experience.	(3-12) https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/685/03/
Summary/Book Review	A summary is a condensed version of a piece of writing. Elementary students learn to write summaries of books, articles and reading passages to highlight the most important ideas, briefly describe story elements and review information for studying. Students may also write a summary of research they have gathered to help them organize information for a report.	(K-8) http://www.readwritethink.org/parent-afterschool-resources/tips-howtos/help-child-write-book-30292.html and http://www.readingquest.org/strat/summarize.html (6-12) http://clas.uiowa.edu/history/teaching-and-writing-center/guides/book-review

Genre	Purpose	Link
Memos	The memorandum, usually called a memo, is a common form of internal communication in business and academia. Memos have many purposes, including informing employees, giving directions, outlining procedures, requesting data, supplying responses, and confirming decisions.	https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/590/1/
Administrative Report	Report writing differs from essay writing because it has a different purpose. The report usually outlines a problem, provides the relevant facts and ideas to the situation, and then recommends a course of action.	https://academicskills.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/handout_pdfs/Report%20writing%20generic%20[new].pdf and http://www.csu.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/82736/reportwrtg.pdf
Historic Structure Report	Historic Structure Reports provide a valuable foundation for the rehabilitation, restoration, stabilization or reconstruction of an historic building.	http://ohp.parks.ca.gov/pages/1069/files/historic%20structure%20report%20format.pdf
Résumé	A résumé is a brief document that summarizes your education, employment history, and experiences that are relevant to your qualifications for a particular job for which you are applying. The purpose of a résumé (along with your cover letter) is to obtain an interview.	(6-12) https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/719/1/
Applications for hire and Application essays	An application for hire is required by anyone expecting employment. An application essay is the personal statement required by many undergraduate or graduate programs, internships, and special academic programs. It should reflect how you arrived at your professional goals, why the program is ideal for you, and what you bring to the program.	Jobs http://www.worksmart.ca.gov/tips_application.html and Application Essays http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/application-essays/
Manual (Example: user manual for a dishwasher or instructional manual on brushing teeth)	User manuals are typically written for a variety of reasons: to instruct the user on how to use a product, to decrease support costs, to market or improve a company's image. The purpose for the manual will affect how the manual is written. Instructional manuals are one of the most common forms of writing in business and industry. These manuals have many purposes: they are often used to train new employees; they can function as operational policies and procedures; they help to ensure that workers follow safe procedures; and they can be used to document the expertise of a group of workers.	Both user manuals and instructional manuals follow the same format: http://www.as.wvu.edu/~lbrady/208instruct.html

Bibliography

Hart, J. (2011). *Storycraft: The complete guide to writing narrative nonfiction.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers. (2010). *Common core state standards*. Washington D.C.: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers.

Hawkins, J., Ginty, E., LeClaire-Kurzman, K., Leddy, D., Miller, J. (2008). *Writing for understanding: Using backward design to help all students write effectively.* South Strafford, VT: The Vermont Writing Collaborative.

Zinsser, W. (2006). *On writing well: The classic guide to writing nonfiction,* (30th anniversary ed.). New York, NY: Collins.