

9.3

Introduction to Research Module for ELA/Literacy

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Research is a near-perfect means of leveraging the integrative nature of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for ELA/Literacy. The process of research as demanded by the CCSS requires all six of the [pedagogical shifts](#) to be in play, while also demanding a volume of independent reading and engagement in an iterative writing process in order to create a product that demonstrates effective use of the standards and the shifts. As stated in the [CCSS Key Design Considerations](#), regular engagement in the research process builds invaluable skills for college, career and citizenship:

“To be ready for college, workforce training, and life in a technological society, students need the ability to gather, comprehend, evaluate, synthesize, and report on information and ideas, to conduct original research in order to answer questions or solve problems, and to analyze and create a high volume and extensive range of print and non-print texts in media forms old and new. The need to conduct research and to produce and consume media is embedded into every aspect of today’s curriculum. In like fashion, research and media skills and understandings are embedded throughout the standards rather than treated in a separate section.”

How does the CCSS Envision Research and Writing to Present Knowledge?

The CCSS for ELA/Literacy emphasize an iterative process of productive inquiry with the Research to Build and Present Knowledge strand of the Writing standards. Rather than topic or thesis-driven research in which the sources are chosen and assessed on their capacity to support a claim, the CCSS envision research as an inquiry-driven process in which the sources shape the question or problem, narrowing or broadening the inquiry as needed, often necessitating additional sources which may shape the question or problem more, until such a point in which the sources, claims, and understandings are organized in support of a central claim that represents an evidence-based perspective on the topic or problem. Throughout this process, the researcher collaborates with peers, sharing constructive feedback and building an inquiry community.

Once the researcher has established a central claim, the researcher engages in an iterative writing process to capture this perspective. They plan, they write, they edit and revise; they try a new approach when needed. They attend to conventions and adhere to the style that is appropriate to the type of writing.

Please see the Research and Writing Process graphic on page 7 for a visual depiction of these processes and how specific CCSS for ELA/Literacy overlap and interact.

Module 9.3 Structure

Because engaging in research and writing with an end goal of presenting knowledge requires engagement in a process and contains variables inherent to inquiry, this module is different from the preceding modules in several significant ways.

Unit 1 models how to initiate a process of inquiry-based research using a text that is rich enough to provide multiple areas of investigation. Students read a seed text that will enable them to identify topics that spark inquiry and provide entry points into the research process they will engage in throughout the module. Educators could and should swap out the seed texts for others that can support a process of inquiry. Students begin the research process in this unit by surfacing topics and crafting inquiry questions to pre-search information. Through the latter half of the unit, students refine topics into several areas of investigation that can be reasonably supported through research, while also generating and refining more inquiry questions. This initiation of inquiry builds the foundation for the research work in Unit 2.

Unit 2 continues guiding students through the research process, following the same trajectory and using many of the tools, handouts, and checklists from Odell Education’s Research to Deepen Understanding units. Students will vet their areas of investigation from Unit 1 and craft a specific research question/problem that will anchor the research for all of Unit 2. Students continue to pose and refine specific inquiry questions, exploring areas they wish to investigate related to the research question/problem. They find and assess sources and use close reading skills developed in previous modules by annotating and taking notes on key sources. Students will organize researched material in ways that will support their analysis and integration of information. As their inquiry progresses, they evaluate and extend their research, synthesize their information, and eventually express their evolving evidence-based perspective in a final End-of-Unit Writing Assessment. While this unit provides model sources to demonstrate a path of inquiry and research skills, these model sources do not need to be reproduced, and other sources may be used in place of them. The process itself can be adapted for use with any topic or related source.

Unit 3 guides students through a writing process of presenting their evidence-based perspective from Unit 2 in a refined writing product. Students receive direct instruction and guidance through an iterative process of writing in which they plan, edit, revise and try new approaches to communicate their evidence-based perspective. Students will learn how to craft works cited pages that adhere to MLA style guidelines while avoiding plagiarism. At the end of this unit, students complete a research paper that represents the culmination of their work throughout the three units.

The module performance task requires students to publish and enhance their research paper using and leveraging the advantages of technology to communicate information dynamically and flexibly (W.9-10.6). Students incorporate graphics, tables, audio, and video into their published research product and are evaluated on the basis on their ability to enhance their evidence-based perspective using diverse media.

It is crucial to remember, as noted in the [9–12 ELA Prefatory Material](#), that the lessons in 9–12 ELA modules are detailed but not intended to be scripts. The lessons in this module provide an organized and granular structure for instruction that addresses the targeted standards. Teachers should exercise professional judgment and make real-time decisions to meet the needs of their students while staying true to the demands of the standards and the shifts. For example, if students needed more class or library time to locate and assess sources in Unit 2 and/or revise their writing in Unit 3, teachers should create the time and space to have students engage in the necessary practice of these skills, while holding them accountable for efficiency and growth.

Finally, it is important to note that librarians and media specialists will be invaluable resources in guiding students through the research and inquiry processes, and collaboration with this school staff is encouraged throughout this unit and module.

How this Module Differs from the Other Modules

By the nature of this module, students attend to and engage in iterative processes both in terms of research and writing, based on a research question/problem derived from a seed text. In this sense, this module is different from the modules that precede it in several significant ways:

- 1. Increased Independence with Appropriate Accountability.** As students enter the stage in which they are exploring and tracking topics and initiating inquiry, students should be able to independently put into practice some of the strategies and practices taught in previous modules. This module is embedded with a high degree of accountability, with students expected to meet deliverables to track their progress in the research and writing process including independent searching, reading and researching homework and class work deliverables. These deliverables are often composed of Odell Education’s handouts and tools from [Research to Deepen Understanding Core Proficiency units](#). In addition to providing accountability, the use of the handouts and tools helps to provide the necessary organization for students and teachers during the complex and iterative inquiry process.
- 2. Specific Texts Are Not Defined in Units 2 and 3.** While the module places an emphasis on textual sources as the basis of claims, besides the seed text in Unit 1, the texts are not defined. This is because: 1) students need to pursue their own paths of inquiry based on research questions/problems (areas of investigation), credible and relevant sources, etc., and 2) the units focus on research and writing respectively, devoting instructional time to direct instruction on

research and writing rather than reading. Thus, this module's instructional units that focus on research and writing processes are designed to be applicable to a wide variety of texts and topics, as long as the rigor of the standards is present. It should also be noted that while the texts are not defined, there is a modeled research thread, using a model research question/problem (area of investigation) and derived from the seed text, modeled throughout the module. The teacher can use the model sources associated with this model research question/problem to demonstrate specific research processes to students. The model sources can also be swapped for other rigorous, grade-appropriate sources and are not intended to teach specific content.

3. **Academic Vocabulary.** As a result of the foci of Units 2 and 3, specific academic vocabulary that students are acquiring is not specifically called out in the lessons. However, students are encountering a wide range of academic and domain-specific vocabulary, as they search for, read, evaluate, and synthesize sources related to their inquiry. In addition, students are exposed throughout this module to academic vocabulary that is process-oriented—words articulating the act of reading closely and the research and writing processes—for example “objectivity,” “credible” and “plagiarism.” To hold students accountable to the acquisition of all vocabulary throughout the process, students track words they encounter throughout the stages of the research and writing process in a vocabulary journal. Students will use a variety of strategies to determine the meaning of unknown words and keep track of these words, their meanings, and the strategies used to determine the meaning in the vocabulary journal.
4. **Accountable Independent Reading (AIR)/Volume of Independent Reading.** In order to make time for students to read texts that support the research question/problem of their choosing, students will not be required to complete AIR in this module. Instead, students are independently reading a volume of texts that they can comprehend—predominantly informational in nature, but related to the research question/problem that interests the students and that they are evaluating for credibility and relevance. Students are held accountable to this volume as they proceed throughout the module via the specific deliverables and assessments.
5. **Instruction of Research Process and Writing Process.** Because this is instruction of a process incorporating many skills, there is a greater need to include direct instruction in this module, particularly in Units 2 and 3. As students practice and gain fluency with these processes through repeated instruction in later grades, this level of specific instruction in these processes may be less necessary. Additionally, students will be noting their research progress and next steps by reflecting in a Research Journal throughout Unit 2. Because the research process is iterative and cyclical, students will consistently be reflecting on the process and their next steps.
6. **Assessment of Research Process and Writing Process.** Whereas other modules' lesson-level assessments may have measured a reading or writing standard, the key standards requiring assessment in Units 2 and 3 are [W4](#), [W5](#), [W7](#), and [W8](#). It is not possible to measure these standards in a single Quick Write, as these are standards explicitly related to engagement with

and in processes rather than demonstration of knowledge or skills. To this end, some of the lesson-level assessments will measure a student's ability to engage in an aspect of the writing or research process in an authentic and rigorous way, with the student providing evidence of having completed the necessary steps in the process. For example, a student may be required to describe in writing how and why sources they have found are credible and relevant to their area of investigation. ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.8](#)).

How this Module Uses Odell Education's Research to Deepen Understanding Units

Unit 2 guides students through a research process that is based on Odell Education's Research to Deepen Understanding units. It follows the same trajectory and uses many of the tools, handouts, and checklists from Odell Education's approaches and materials. However, this module is different in that it operates at the lesson level and follows through to research writing products that are informative and/or explanatory in nature.

How this Module Leverages Collaboration

While this module scaffolds towards independence and demands students do a large amount of their research and writing work on their own, this module also leverages the advantages of collaborative work. During various aspects of the inquiry process (e.g., generating inquiry questions and areas of investigation, evaluating and analyzing sources), students are working with their peers, forming small groups that support each other and are accountable to each other. Similarly, during the writing work in Unit 3, students work in heterogeneous groups to help with revising, editing, and trying new approaches to communicating their knowledge. The [Common Core standards for Speaking and Listening](#) that are addressed by many of the collaborative activities in this module have a particular application for students' career readiness.¹

¹ See Conley, David T. *Getting Ready for College, Careers, and the Common Core: What Every Educator Needs to Know* for more information on the application of these standards to the career pathway.

How this Module Leverages Technology

Technology and “media forms old and new” are built into the CCSS key design considerations quoted above. This module recognizes that in the 21st century, vast amounts of information are at most students’ fingertips and that this volume of information brings with it its own challenges. Students receive direct instruction regarding assessing the credibility of sources with this challenge in mind. Students are also incorporating non-print media as an integral part of the module performance assessment, and are required as part of the research process to track credible, effective, and diverse media that can support their communication about the research question/problem.

This module also recognizes that technology can assist students in organizing their research and writing, and encourages teachers to use free online resources such as Google Docs as a means of achieving this end. In terms of the writing process, using review features such as track changes and comments in Microsoft Word are also useful for students sharing their revisions with their teachers and peers. Finally, teachers are encouraged to use cloud-based tools such as Google Drive to leverage collaboration among peers and research communities.

How this Module can Accommodate More Independent/Advanced Students Reading and Exploring Topics Independently

As mentioned before, this module comes with a high degree of accountability and detailed structure to guide students through the processes of research and writing in a rigorous manner. Some students may benefit more from a lighter touch and more independence as they proceed with these processes. As long as the standards are being met and students are engaging in inquiry as envisioned by the CCSS, educators should feel free to modify this curriculum to best suit the needs of their students.

Research and Writing Process Graphic

