



**Literacy Design
Collaborative**

The "Failure" of American Public Education - Proposing Updates to an Outdated System

★ TASK

by Kelly Ratliff

This module was implemented at the end of a unit on the Industrial Revolution. It achieves the unit objective of evaluating the impact of Industrial Revolution institutions on modern society.

Purposes include:

1. Identifying problems within a system and suggesting relevant solutions
2. Recognizing continuity and influence within social institutions
3. Evaluating the credibility of sources and media
4. Intentionally writing with purpose to a specific audience

During this module, students will become knowledgeable about the history, foundations, problems and reform efforts in regard to the American public education system and propose potential solutions to update and modernize the outdated and (according to many) failing system.

Prior to this module, students examined institutions created during the Industrial Revolution, and the purpose for their creation during that time period. Among these institutions was the public school system that in many ways, is the same today as it was at the end of the 19th century. The module is an application of this historical content, focused on the current education system we have in this country, and considering the context of today.

GRADES

10

DISCIPLINE

 **Social
Studies**

COURSE

 **US
History**

PACING

 **10hr**

Section 1: What Task?

Teaching Task

Task Template A10 - Argumentation

After reading credible articles on the "failure" of America's public schools, write a letter to the Colorado or United States Department of Education in which you identify a problem in our current education system and propose a solution. Support your position with evidence from the text/s. Give at least one example/s from past or current events to illustrate and clarify your position.

Standards

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

RH.9-10.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social studies.

RH.9-10.6

Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

WHST.9-10.4

Focus

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

WHST.9-10.8

Focus

Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

WHST.9-10.9

Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Colorado Academic Standards for Social Studies

1.2.e.

Analyze continuity and change in eras over the course of United States history

1.3.b.

Focus

Investigate the historical development of and impact of major scientific and technological innovations. Topics to include but not limited to the Industrial Revolution

1.3.e.

Analyze ideas critical to the understanding of American history. Topics to include but not limited to populism, progressivism, isolationism, imperialism, anti-communism, environmentalism, liberalism, fundamentalism, and conservatism

Texts

🔗 **"The Failure of American Schools"**

📄 **The Failure of Public Education - John Hood.docx**

🔗 **"Half of US Schools Fail Federal Standards"**

🔗 **"Colorado a Leader in Education Reform"**

📺 **"Waiting for Superman" (2010)**

<p>Documentary about the American public school system by Davis Guggenheim.</p>

🔗 **"Report Warns: US Educational Failures Pose National Security Threat"**

📄 **Boyer, Ashley Problems Facing American Education.pdf**

🔗 **"How to Fix Our Schools"**

🔗 **"Teacher: The Day I Knew for Sure I was Burned Out"**

Student Work Rubric - Argumentation Task - Grades 9-12

	Emerging	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Advanced
	1	2	3	4
Controlling Idea	Makes a general claim with an unclear focus.	Establishes a clear claim that addresses the prompt , with an uneven focus .	Establishes and maintains a clear, specific, and credible claim that addresses all aspects of the prompt.	Establishes and maintains a precise, substantive claim that addresses all aspects of the prompt. Acknowledges limitations and/or the complexity of the issue or topic .
Selection & Citation of Evidence	Includes minimal details from sources. Sources are used without citation.	Includes details, examples, and/or quotations from sources that are relevant to the claim . Inconsistently cites sources.	Includes details, examples, and/or quotations from sources that support the claim and supporting ideas . Consistently cites sources with minor formatting errors .	Includes well-chosen details, examples, and/or quotations from sources that fully support the claim and supporting ideas. Consistently cites sources using appropriate format .
Development / Explanation of Sources	Explanation of ideas and source material is irrelevant, incomplete, or inaccurate.	Explains ideas and source material to support the argument , with some incomplete reasoning or explanations .	Accurately explains ideas and source material and how they support the argument.	Thoroughly and accurately explains ideas and source material, using logical reasoning to support and develop the argument.
Organization	Lacks an evident structure. Makes unclear connections among claims, reasons, and/or evidence.	Groups ideas and uses transitions to develop the argument, with some lapses in coherence or organization .	Groups and sequences ideas to develop a cohesive argument . Uses transitions to clarify the relationships among claim(s), reasons, and evidence .	Groups and sequences ideas in a logical progression in which ideas build to create a unified whole . Uses varied transitions to clarify the precise relationships among claim(s), reasons, and evidence.
Conventions	Major errors in standard English conventions interfere with the clarity of the writing. Language or tone is inappropriate.	Errors in standard English conventions sometimes interfere with the clarity of the writing. Uses language and tone that are sometimes inappropriate for the audience and purpose.	Consistently applies standard English conventions; minor errors , while noticeable, do not interfere with the clarity of the writing. Uses language and tone appropriate to the audience and purpose .	Consistently applies standard English conventions, with few errors . Demonstrates varied syntax and precise word choice . Consistently uses language and tone appropriate to the audience and purpose.
Content Understanding (Generic)	Attempts to include disciplinary content in explanation or argument but understanding of content is weak; content is irrelevant, inappropriate, or inaccurate.	Briefly notes disciplinary content relevant to the prompt; shows basic or uneven understanding of content; minor errors in explanation.	Accurately presents disciplinary content relevant to the prompt with sufficient explanations that demonstrate understanding.	Integrates relevant and accurate disciplinary content with thorough explanations that demonstrate in-depth understanding.

Background for Students

As you have come to see, the Industrial Revolution was a time of great innovation and change. Out of this era came many institutions we still know today, including our public education system. During the Industrial Revolution, the purpose of education was to prepare students to enter the workforce, particularly for skilled and unskilled labor. Over the course of history the world has changed, as has the purpose of public education, but has the system changed with it?

Extension

Not provided

Section 2: What Skills?

Preparing for the Task

TASK ENGAGEMENT: Ability to connect the task and new content to existing knowledge, skills, experiences, interests, and concerns.

TASK ANALYSIS: Ability to understand and explain the task's prompt and rubric.

Reading Process

ACTIVE READING/NOTE-TAKING: Ability to identify the central point and main supporting elements of a text. Students will read and evaluate credible articles that discuss problems in the American public school system.

CONTENT COMPREHENSION: Ability to apply understanding from reading to addressing the prompt.

APPLICATION OF ACTIVE READING: Ability to apply understanding from active reading/note-taking to the larger issue.

Transition to Writing

PREPARING FOR WRITING: Ability to begin linking reading results to writing task.

Writing Process



PLANNING THE WRITING: Ability to develop a line of thought and text structure appropriate to an argumentation task.

DEVELOPMENT: Ability to construct an initial draft with an emerging line of thought and structure.

EDITING/REVISION: Ability to identify mistakes, refine text, including line of thought, language usage, and tone as appropriate to audience and purpose.

COMPLETION: Ability to submit final piece that meets expectations.

Section 3: What Instruction?

PACING	SKILL AND DEFINITION	PRODUCT AND PROMPT	SCORING GUIDE	INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES
Preparing for the Task				
20 mins	TASK ENGAGEMENT: Ability to connect the task and new content to existing knowledge, skills, experiences, interests, and concerns.	SHORT CONSTRUCTED RESPONSE/DISCUSSION What is the purpose of public education?	Respond to the prompt in a 5-7 sentence paragraph.	To introduce the task and topic to students, link to earlier class content - Industrial Revolution/Industrial Model <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brainstorm together: What is our public education system like? Discuss student responses as a class Consider - How has public education changed since its creation? Has the purpose of public education changed?
Additional Attachments:  Module Slides.pdf				
30 mins	TASK ANALYSIS: Ability to understand and explain the task's prompt and rubric.	DECONSTRUCTING THE PROMPT As a class, we will analyze the prompt for this module and break it down so we know what we're going to be learning about throughout the module and what you will have to do for this final assignment.	Meets Expectations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students participate in reading of the prompt and class discussion. Students identify and resolve unknown words in the prompt. Students identify important tasks in the prompt. Students discuss what they will learn and do based on analysis of the prompt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss why it is important to carefully read and understand a task's prompt. Read the prompt together as a class. As a class, practice close-reading strategies by underlining unknown words in the prompt. In addition, underline important tasks in the prompt by identifying action verbs. Have students work in groups to identify the meaning of unknown words in the prompt. Students will share these whole class. Discuss the verbs that explain exactly what students will be expected to DO throughout this learning task. (Examples: Read, write, describe, support your response.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Option: Can discuss this whole class, model completing the attached handout on the board, or have students complete the attached handout on their own. When appropriate, ask students to rewrite the prompt in student-friendly language. <p><i>After this routine is established, students can be expected to complete this handout on their own for future modules.</i></p>
Standards: CCR.R.1 : Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.				
Additional Attachments:  Prompt Reflection TEMPLATE				

The "Failure" of American Public Education - Proposing Updates to an Outdated System

Reading Process				
2 hrs	<p>ACTIVE READING/NOTE-TAKING: Ability to identify the central point and main supporting elements of a text. Students will read and evaluate credible articles that discuss problems in the American public school system.</p>	<p>PROBLEMS IN PUBLIC EDUCATION - NOTES</p> <p>Identify problems in the American public school system as well as possible solutions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What problems in our system stem from the Industrial Revolution? • What solutions could change or modernize the system? 	<p>Scoring Guide (Work Meets Expectations If):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles are annotated to demonstrate comprehension - see text annotation key (attached) • Notes demonstrate comprehension of articles, critical thinking in regards to task and identify relevant information in article. 	<p>Prior to assigning the notes, we discussed the history of public education in America and looked at some facts about the current system as a whole.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students complete a jigsaw "A Brief History of Education in America". <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ As a class, read and discuss the introduction paragraph (Module Slides - Slide 4) ◦ Each student reads one section of the timeline ("Permissive Era," "Encouraging Era," "Compulsory Era" and "Freedom or School Choice Era"). ◦ Students who read the same text meet and discuss the nature of their assigned era. ◦ Students go back to original tables and share out the chronology of American public education. ◦ This background information could also be included in their Cornell Notes (following). • Discuss the history of public education as a class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ What defined the system in various time periods? ◦ What was the purpose of education during the Industrial Revolution? ◦ How has that purpose changed today? ◦ Why do many consider our public school system to be "failing"? <p>Introduce notes as a way to collect information to complete the task.</p> <p>Cornell Notes as an common note-taking strategy (see attached template).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big ideas on the left side, details and citation information on the right. • Summary to synthesize thinking. <p>Instruct students to elect TWO of the FOUR attached articles on the failure of public education in America.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and annotate each of the two articles (text annotation key attached) • Take notes on ways in which our schools are failing, or reasons we consider our schools to be failing <p>Additional Strategies/Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles selected and previewed for content • Read some aloud and discuss/give background to various aspects of education system • Jigsaw articles to cover more content
<p>Standards:</p> <p>RH.9-10.4 : Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social,</p>				

The "Failure" of American Public Education - Proposing Updates to an Outdated System

or economic aspects of history/social studies.

RH.9-10.6 : Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

Additional Attachments:

 **Boyer, Ashley Problems Facing American Education.pdf**

 **Module Slides.pdf**

 **Report Warns US Educational Failures Pose National Security Threat**

 **Half of US Schools Fail Federal Standard**

 **The Failure of Public Education - John Hood.docx**

 **The Failure of American Schools**

 **Public Education_Cornell Notes Template.doc**

 **Text Annotation Key.pdf**

 **History of Education in America.pdf**

30 mins

CONTENT COMPREHENSION:

Ability to apply understanding from reading to addressing the prompt.

PROBLEMS IN PUBLIC EDUCATION - PARAGRAPH

What is wrong with our public school system? Is a public education system created during the Industrial Revolution outdated by 21st century standards?

Meets Expectations If:

- Paragraph response identifies problems with the public education system, based on readings.
- Identifies indicators for failing schools - why we consider our schools to be failing.
- Answers the prompt with evidence from articles.
- Paragraph is organized and well-constructed.

Once students have finished reading and taking notes on 2 of the 4 provided articles, use this mini-task as a check in to reconnect with the task and formatively assess their comprehension of the reading.

Prior to writing the paragraph, come back together as a class and scaffold by:

- Creating a class list of problems and indicators
- Discussing vocabulary students may not be familiar with
- Identifying the purpose of an education system in the past vs. present

This might also be a good opportunity to revisit the rubric and expectations. Students should have a good idea of how they might go about completing the task at this point, but they might not have all the information they need.

Each student should independently write a paragraph that responds to the prompt and cites evidence from the articles. Proper citation is worth introducing here, even if its just a parenthetical citation with the author's name.

2 hrs

APPLICATION OF ACTIVE READING:

Ability to apply understanding from active reading/note-taking to the larger issue.

EDUCATION REFORM MINI-ASSIGNMENT

Research and evaluate education reform initiatives in various states.

- Identify statewide vs. nationwide problems
- What reform initiatives are unique to your state?
- How do national reform initiatives/standards impact your state?

Meets Expectations if:

- Identifies relevant elements of research/articles
- Differentiates between state and nation-wide initiatives
- Pulls relevant information from sources

I introduced students to this step by giving a mini-lecture on the state of public education in Colorado. We discussed implications of Colorado's Senate Bill 191 that eliminates teacher tenure and the new teacher evaluation rubric that holds teachers accountable for student growth. We also discussed the shift to the Common Core and what that means for both teachers and students.

This context gave students a better understanding of the type of information I was asking them to look for when it came to state vs. nationwide problems and the concept of education reform.

For the assignment -

- Explain that students will research reform

initiatives in various states in groups. Assign the groups and states and give them a class period to find credible news articles in regard to this topic.

- Students often need some instruction on what a credible article is and how to do a search like this. It might also be necessary to discuss bias in news sources.
- Once groups find their article, remind them to print and annotate it. Groups should take notes (adding onto previous notes) and work together to analyze the article. They should look for information on:
 - Statewide problems
 - Reform Initiatives
 - Standards/Reform unique to their state
 - Centralized/Standardized reform/standards
- Once these articles have been printed and analyzed, have a class discussion in which you compare and contrast problems/reform initiatives in various states. This can be done in a Socratic Seminar format, or more informally.
 - This discussion should bring to light the larger issues our nation faces in terms of public education and align with some of the notes they took on the common articles they read.
- It is also worth considering different perspectives on problems/solutions. Many of the articles published regarding the "failure" of America's education system are written by people outside of the system itself. To add a different, but worthwhile element to this discussion, incorporate the two articles attached here - "The Day I Knew for Sure I was Burned Out" and "How to Fix Our Schools." These two articles represent the issue from the perspective of a teacher, and leaders in education. Read these articles as a class (or do a jigsaw) and add this perspective to the class list of problems and reform initiatives - students should also add this perspective to their notes.

I extended this activity by showing Davis Guggenheim's "Waiting for Superman" documentary in class. As students watched, they took notes on specific problems and specific solutions proposed by the film. This gave students a concrete understanding of the issues they've read about and a fresh perspective on certain solution ideas. It also brings in the "solution" of charter schools, which is another interesting perspective on the issue.

Standards:

4.1.E. : Critique various media sources for accuracy and perspective

RH.9-10.6 : Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.





Additional Attachments:

🔗 **"How to Fix Our Schools"**



🔗 **"Teacher: The Day I Knew for Sure I Was Burned Out"**

Transition to Writing

1 hr	<p>PREPARING FOR WRITING: Ability to begin linking reading results to writing task.</p>	<p>SOCRATIC SEMINAR - APPLICATION OF CLOSE READING</p> <p>Is a public education system created during the Industrial Revolution outdated by 21st century standards?</p> <p>The Socratic Method, or Socratic Debate, is named after the classical Greek philosopher, Socrates. It is a form of inquiry and discussion between individuals, based on asking and answering questions to stimulate critical thinking and to illuminate ideas.</p> <p>Purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no right or wrong answers, as long as you can prove your arguments with evidence from the text. • We will always begin with an essential question to invite thoughts, ideas and questions regarding the topic. 	<p>Meets Expectations if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students come to class prepared for the Socratic Seminar <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Text read/annotated • Students actively participate in the Socratic Seminar <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Earn a total of 5 Discussion Points 	<p>A Socratic Seminar is a discussion based on the close reading of a text, with the goal of answering an essential question. In the seminar itself, students use evidence from the text to discuss and answer a series of questions related to the essential question. This deep engagement with a text, applied to a group discussion, allows students to analyze various aspects of the text, as well as collectively gain a deeper understanding than they would be able to achieve by simply reading the text.</p> <p>Students have read about the history of education in America, read and annotated 2 of 4 articles on the problems with the American public school system, and completed the Education Reform Assignment. The Socratic Seminar will allow them to discuss and synthesize all the information they have collected in preparation for writing their letters and completing the task.</p> <p>Instruction -</p> <p>To set up for a Socratic Seminar, I arrange the classroom into large circles of approximately 10 desks each. In smaller classes, one circle is fine. In larger classes, there are sometimes 3-4 discussions taking place at once.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To hold students accountable for the discussion, I select a group leader to keep track of participation using a form called Discussion Points (see attached in teacher resources). • Students can only get a discussion point if they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Reference a specific passage in the text ◦ Ask a question that references a specific passage in the text ◦ Give specific evidence when agreeing/disagreeing with another student <p>The Socratic Seminar itself:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will only be successful if norms are understood and followed (see Socratic Seminar Expectations) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Only one student may speak at a time ◦ Students may defend their argument but may not attack others • Always begins and ends with an essential question <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Is a public education system created
------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

				<p>during the Industrial Revolution outdated by 21st century standards?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progresses through the text(s) based on discussion topics pre-selected by the teacher <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ I use animations in powerpoint to move through these topics as students are ready for them ◦ In this case, the topics were fairly broad (Module Slides: Slides 18-20): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify problems in the current system. ■ Argue for a solution to updating and modernizing the current system. ■ How do we take action? • Must be rooted in the TEXT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Students may make connections and identify real-life examples, but should be redirected to the text if the conversation moves off topic • Should end back where it started - with the essential question <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Based on learning and insight gained during the discussion, students should be able to clearly answer the essential question and support with evidence from the text <p>**Teacher Note: When I taught this module, I used the Socratic Seminar as an extension of the task. However, I think this strategy would also be an excellent way for students to synthesize the information in their notes in preparation for writing. This is why this mini-task is included here.**</p>
<p>Standards:</p> <p>CCR.R.1 : Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.</p> <p>CCR.SL.1 : Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</p> <p>CCR.SL.4 : Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</p>				
<p>Additional Attachments:</p> <p> Module Slides.pdf</p> <p> Socratic Seminar Expectations.pdf</p> <p> Discussion Points.docx</p> <p> Text Annotation Key.pdf</p>				
Writing Process				
50 mins	<p>PLANNING THE WRITING: Ability to develop a line of thought and text structure appropriate to an argumentation</p>	<p>FORMAL LETTER OUTLINE</p> <p>Outline the main points of your letter, making sure to follow proper formal letter format.</p>	<p>Meets Expectations If:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follows formal letter format. • Includes main idea of each paragraph 	<p>In preparation for writing the actual letter, we reviewed information from the readings and video as a class. On the board, I asked students to identify problems in the public schools themselves, and indicators of those problems. We then identified some larger systemic problems and</p>

The "Failure" of American Public Education - Proposing Updates to an Outdated System

	task.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporates evidence from texts 	<p>proposed solutions to update and modernize the system (Module Slides: Slides 11-15).</p> <p>Once we discussed these topics as a class, we reviewed the task for a final time. Once again, we annotated for understanding of what students would have to do in order to complete the task.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer the question: Is a public school system created during the Industrial Revolution outdated by 21st century standards? Write a letter to US Dept. of Education or CDE Identify problems in current system Argue for a solution to updating/modernizing <p>I then provided students with a template for writing a formal letter and we discussed it as a class (see attached).</p> <p>Template includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addresses and formatting Greeting Information for paragraph #1 - introduce purpose for writing Information for paragraph #2 - identify problems in current system Information for paragraph #3 - argue for solutions to updating/modernizing the system Closing Signature <p>Once students understood the formatting, they independently constructed their initial outlines.</p>
	<p>Standards:</p> <p>WHST.9-10.9 : Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.</p> <p>WHST.9-10.4 : Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</p>			
	<p>Additional Attachments:</p> <p> Module Slides.pdf</p> <p> Formal Letter Format.pdf</p>			
30 mins	<p>DEVELOPMENT:</p> <p>Ability to construct an initial draft with an emerging line of thought and structure.</p>	<p>ROUGH DRAFT</p> <p>Write an initial draft of your letter, complete with headings, greeting, three complete paragraphs, and closing; insert and cite textual evidence.</p>	<p>Meets Expectations If:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides complete draft with all parts. Supports the opening in the later sections with evidence and citations. Includes evidence from reading process. 	<p>Prior to drafting the letter, I reviewed students' outlines for formatting and basic information. We then had a class discussion on audience and purpose for formal letter writing. It is important for students to know their audience for this assignment, as we actually mailed these letters to Secretary Arne Duncan and the Colorado Department of Education. We discussed formal writing voice, and the importance of being direct and to the point. We also discussed the importance of the greeting to establish the purpose of the letter, and topic sentences to establish the purpose of each body paragraph.</p> <p>Otherwise, it was fairly simple for students to translate their original outlines into drafts of the</p>

The "Failure" of American Public Education - Proposing Updates to an Outdated System

				letter. These drafts were hand-written initially, then edited and typed.
	<p>Standards:</p> <p>WHST.9-10.10 : Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.</p>			
50 mins	<p>EDITING/REVISION:</p> <p>Ability to identify mistakes, refine text, including line of thought, language usage, and tone as appropriate to audience and purpose.</p>	<p>GROUP PEER REVIEW</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assign the following roles to each group member for peer review: Clarity Crusader, Proofreader, Structure Czar, and Example Exemplar. 2. Read each others' letters in your assigned role; giving feedback to help improve each others' writing. 3. Respond to the closing question: How did this process help to improve your paper? Be sure to include specific details in your response. 	<p>Meets Expectations If:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides specific examples that will improve their peers' writing. • Offers feedback to their peers that is respectful. • Reflects on the feedback received to their own paper and plans revisions. 	<p>Note to Teacher: This is a peer editing mini-task I edited for my purposes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each student needs the hand-written copy of their letter for this activity. Each student has a different color of a highlighter and a pen to make comments on the single copy of the essay, based on their assigned role. <p>Direct Instruction: Review each of the roles for students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity Crusader - Responsible for clarity and coherence of letter. Should read letter aloud. • Proofreader - Responsible for grammatical errors. Ex. spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc. • Structure Czar - Responsible for formal letter formatting. Should compare to template. • Example Exemplar - Responsible for content of letter. Check that evidence supports argument, is valid, and properly cited. <p>Practice:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students move to groups of four. 2. Roles are assigned by the teacher. 3. Students will pass their letters to each of their group members until each student has reviewed all four papers. While reviewing, students should write directly on the paper to identify errors and suggest improvements (in color). 4. Upon completion, students will review their own letters and identify changes that need to be made. 5. Ticket out the door: Students will write on a 3 x 5 card or small slip of paper about how this process helped to improve their paper. Remind the students that it is important to include specific details during this closing writing activity. 6. Homework: Students will make necessary changes to their work based on their peers' feedback.
	<p>Standards:</p> <p>WHST.9-10.5 : Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.</p>			
50 mins	<p>COMPLETION: Ability to submit final piece</p>	<p>FINAL DRAFT</p> <p>Construct a complete,</p>	<p>Meets Expectations If:</p>	<p>Students should apply feedback from peer editing to type a final copy of their letter. As students</p>

that meets expectations.	error-free, signed copy of your letter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fits the “Meets Expectations” category in the rubric for the teaching task. • Includes a fully addressed envelope to be mailed 	<p>move forward into this final step, a few things must be addressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explain the importance of incorporating the feedback they were provided by the editing process. ● Stress the importance of editing with a fine-toothed comb when mailing a letter to a public official. Errors in this type of writing and for this purpose are unacceptable. I told my students that these letters would only be mailed if they were absolutely perfect. This took some extra time, and I reviewed and returned letters to students several times, but the outcome was worth it. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I did assist below grade level students in the editing process to identify spelling, grammar, punctuation mistakes, etc. They were often able to make corrections on their own after having help identifying mistakes. ● I had students label their own envelopes in preparation for mailing these letters. The school paid for postage, although several students put their personal addresses on the return label. In hindsight, I should have asked students to list the school's address on the return label. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This is because some students received replies from the US Dept. of Education and the CDE. Students who received replies did bring them to school to show the class, but it might have worked better to have these replies send directly to the school. <p>Once the letters were ready to mail, I graded another printed copy of the letter using the LDC rubric.</p>
<p>Standards:</p> <p>WHST.9-10.5 : Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.</p>			

Instructional Resources

Teacher Resource

 DOE Response (1).pdf

 DOE Response (2).pdf

Section 4: What Results?

Student Work Samples

Advanced

 [Advanced.pdf](#)

Meets Expectations

 [Meets Expectations \(1\).pdf](#)

 [Meets Expectations \(2\).pdf](#)

Approaches Expectations

 [Approaching Expectations.pdf](#)

Teacher Reflection

This module was an absolute success. My students were incredibly engaged throughout the module and produced quality letters which were sent to the Colorado and United States Department of Education. In addition, several of my students received replies from the US Department of Education, which I have uploaded to the resources section. I am also very pleased with the extension activity of Socratic Seminar, which I captured on video. The most exciting part of this module, however, was when my principal sat in on our Socratic Seminar. In addition to discussing public education as a whole, students also addressed concerns they have about our school in particular, and brought them to the attention of our principal. The principal considered the students' point of view and implemented some of the changes they requested. He was impressed with the students' level of engagement and passion for taking a stand for their own education.

All Attachments

- 🔗 "The Failure of American Schools" : <https://s ldc.org/u/7rhj2xbtafmpj4015xqcz9sxq>
- 📄 The Failure of Public Education - John Hood.docx : <https://s ldc.org/u/elogm8jk43ktsekq18qax4ivt>
- 🔗 "Half of US Schools Fail Federal Standards" : <https://s ldc.org/u/bi8fv6nrbhqut6pfzww240mf7>
- 🔗 "Colorado a Leader in Education Reform" : <https://s ldc.org/u/26qhu7c3girdxh745vygxy5l>
- 🔗 "Report Warns: US Educational Failures Pose National Security Threat" :
<https://s ldc.org/u/5zm7gr62fn5tham35580282u9>
- 📄 Boyer, Ashley Problems Facing American Education.pdf :
<https://s ldc.org/u/bosmuv197xufi4zpwnhz4zqx2>
- 🔗 "How to Fix Our Schools" : <https://s ldc.org/u/92fb7byo81qbn7q5264z09fcl>
- 🔗 "Teacher: The Day I Knew for Sure I was Burned Out" :
<https://s ldc.org/u/9uen8aaqvjx4vnx87hpzpd4sn>
- 📄 Advanced.pdf : <https://s ldc.org/u/62x53lw9sw1z3avu9fg2tvc5m>
- 📄 Meets Expectations (1).pdf : <https://s ldc.org/u/1qn46sru3ct9ms2rkipbw3062>
- 📄 Meets Expectations (2).pdf : <https://s ldc.org/u/7uzmhnhnm7czx4as6u6903z1o>
- 📄 Approaching Expectations.pdf : <https://s ldc.org/u/91hx23pjhyurcokhzktwndfsk>
- 📄 DOE Response (1).pdf : <https://s ldc.org/u/8mqhe5s1plqj8uiuee95cip7i>
- 📄 DOE Response (2).pdf : <https://s ldc.org/u/36os5yxqcei6v65qjak2tmbxc>