Grade Level	Content Area	Course Title *(9-12 Samples Only)*	Unit Title
1st Grade	**Writing**	**N/A**	**Physical Geography—*Mountains & Rivers***

Length of Unit	Time of Year Taught	Expected Prior Knowledge
6-8 weeks	August-October *These are the continued lessons of Physical Geography curriculum and some children move slower/faster through this work*	✓ To sit attentively for 20-30 minutes during lesson presentation ✓ K-1 reading & decoding skills preferred ✓ Some understanding and experience reading and writing various common textual structures (explanatory/informational/persuasive) ✓ Previous experience with *Writer's Process—6+1 Traits of Writing* ✓ Previous lessons & practice in *3 part cards* for various topics and areas of the curriculum (e.g., External Parts of a Fish; External Parts of a Flower; 1St Knowledge of Animals; 1st Knowledge of Plants; etc.) ✓ Presentation of and practice with *Who Am I?* animal and plant cards ✓ Completion of *Inverted Land & Water Forms*—demonstrations & lessons ✓ Effective & appropriate use of scissors and other simple art materials

Unit Description

This curricular sample illustrates a guided and structured method for teaching research and composition structures.

Methods specific to the Montessori approach, such as the 3-part card materials, are utilized to aid students in organizing and classifying information concerning animal and plant life--***observe, classify, then abstract***. We believe that the common core areas of math and language (reading & writing) are tools students must master in order to access deeper and more meaningful learning in what we refer to as our "Cultural Curriculum". Cultural subjects (history, biology, geography, etc.) are clustered around our five main themes ("Great Lessons"***—see A.3 Program of Instruction***) that comprise the full span of our elementary curriculum (K-6th grade).

Composition and writing skills are taught within the context of our cultural presentations and lessons, as are other areas of language. By presenting *curricular knowledge and structures of knowledge* through the use of specially designed stories and *3-part card materials* students are exposed to *concrete examples of informative and explanatory textual structures*. Presentations and student follow-up practice with the concrete booklets and cut card materials are *activities that lead to student mastery* for this sample's required standard of writing informative/explanatory texts. Once students are familiar with labeling, defining, and generating questions about a topic, they have the tools necessary *to compose original texts* of individually chosen, and/or assigned topics in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.

From General to Specific

Remembering that 6-9 year old children are particularly receptive to adventurous impressions and are beginning to ask questions that involve "self examination", as well as examination of the environments around them, we interrelate and unfold our cultural curriculum through the telling of "great

stories" (see A.3 Program of Instruction) which act as springboards for further learning and research. We continually move from the whole to the parts. In this way we give students the necessary context within which they can ***direct their questions, focus their research, and organize their learning.***

Throughout the Montessori curriculum students are practicing the essential skills of "how to learn" by honing their math and language abilities which enables them to access cultural subjects in more deep and meaningful ways. Students receive models and structures of reading and writing through specifically designed presentations and lessons that they then can practice and apply in the development and mastery of their own reading and writing skills. Using the cultural curriculum as a springboard, students *begin to construct their own time lines* (order & sequence); *begin to classify* plants (compare & contrast), animals, life; *begin to compose & publish* "mini researches" and compositions. At this level the student continues to be viewed as an "emergent" reader and/or writer—in other words, the focus remains more on students ***learning how to read and write*** **rather than** ***reading and writing to learn.*** Developmentally, students are the most receptive for concrete instruction of and "hands on" practice with various text structures. However, with the simplest structural model, *the 3-part card material*, students are able to construct their own explanatory texts with some details and a sense of closure. The writing objective for this sample can be assessed for progress and mastery by reviewing original texts produced by students during the course of this unit.

Cultural Area: Geography

The Montessori geography curriculum is composed of nine broad units or areas, which comprise a three year cycle of study and learning. For the 1st grade student, this area of study begins with the first unit in *physical geography*--the study of *Inverted Land and Water Forms*; then moves into studies of mountains, rivers, and other more advanced land and water forms of the world. This unit sample includes *Parts of a Mountain* and *Parts of a River* which come before studies in more advanced landforms. Related activities in this unit include students *researching and gathering facts about real examples of the landforms studied*. We also link human activity and migration to geographical regions and climates. While students learn about geography and its interrelationship with other cultural areas, they are exposed to *explicit reading and writing structures* through the *3-part card materials* and presentations.

Other curricular objectives are to provide an impressionistic demonstration of the relationship between land and water, then people to land and water; to offer the land and water contrast as the principle distinction in most maps, especially globes; and to provide a physical model that links the symbolic representation of maps and globes to actual land forms; to provide a physical model of simple human migration patterns. There are many related topics that students can write about to meet this standard's objective.

Standards:	**Strand:** Writing **Cluster:** Text Types and Purposes ***Standard #2:*** Write informative/explanatory texts in which they name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide some sense of closure.
Summative Assessment	✓ Assessment and observations regarding progress & practice (approaching mastery of the required standard): *Parts of (Landforms)* booklets (pictures—labels—definitions) with *1-3 assessed formally with writing rubric/conference process* ✓ Samples of written compositions generated from lesson activities are assessed for mastery using *a writing rubric*

	to identify progress and mastery for the required skills (see sample in Scoring for Summative Assessment). ✓ Progress data & observation notes entered into MRX system.
Scoring for Summative Assessment	The following *Writing Assessment Rubric* is an example of what is used for writing experiences leading up to mastery of the required standard. These assessments, as are all student writing samples assessed, are discussed with and reviewed with the student.

Writing Assessment Rubric Landforms Booklet	Date Completed: Conference Date:
Related Standard: *Write informative/explanatory texts in which they name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide some sense of closure.*	Author (Student):

Landform:	**3-4 Points ("mastery")**	**2 Points**	**0-1 Point**
Cover & landform components	Includes a creative cover illustration, title, and student's name. Illustration(s) may be original drawings, tracings, or real pictures. Picture-label-definition included. Provided correct and complete definitions as summaries—in student's own words. ☐	2 of the three elements are present. Picture with correct labels and definitions included. Definition copied from sample, or some attempt to summarize evident. ☐	Parts of the booklet may be missing, or incomplete. Pictures may be labeled correctly, but definition may be missing; or simply cut and pasted in; or student required considerable assistance with all or some of the parts. ☐
Spelling & Mechanics	Correct spelling, sentence structure, and/or use of capitalization and end punctuation. ☐	May have errors in spelling, sentence structure, and/or use of capitalization and end punctuation. ☐	May be incomplete. Has many errors which may impede reader's ability to comprehend. ☐
Neatness, Quality, & Effort	Overall balance of elements on the page; handwriting legible and consistent; accurate and clean cut and paste. Took the time to complete each element carefully and completely. Did not rush through construction. ☐	Meets requirements, however, may have had some difficulty and/or challenge with gluing and/or cutting accurately resulting in a less balanced and clean appearance. Some rushing. Appeared to 'just get the job done'. Better quality if more time had been taken. ☐	May be incomplete. Had difficulty with cutting, pasting, and construction. Very crude construction. Rushed through, or wanted to give up too easily. Required continued feedback and support to complete the booklet. ☐
TOTAL POINTS:	**Additional Comments:**		

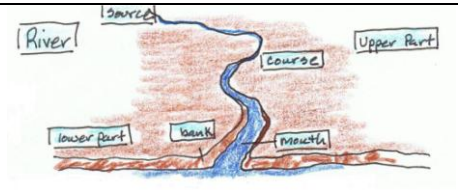
The writing assessment below is an example of what is used to assess mastery of the required standard for this writing sample:

1st Grade Writing Assessment Rubric **Text Structure:** Informative/Explanatory—*Geography Research*	Date Completed: Conference Date:		
Writing Standard: *Write informative/explanatory text and name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide some sense of closure.* **Criteria for Mastery** = 6+ points	Author (Student):		
Topic:	**0-1 Points**	**2 Points**	**3 Points**
Main Idea/Topic Identifies & names a topic related to geography studies	Did not include specific topic for researching or topic is unclear or includes details from several topics.	States a **specific topic *relating to area of geography study*** Alludes to or directly states purpose for text.	States a **specific topic *relating to area of geography study*** Opening statement clearly presents and support topic of research. May include a "hook" to grab the reader.
Facts, Details & Definitions	May list a fact but disjointed and incomplete details. May be incorrect or unclear or not provided at all. May have incomplete sentences or thoughts.	**Identifies and names** at least 3 complete facts with supporting details. Uses complete sentence(s). Expresses complete thought(s).	Identifies more than 3 facts, detailed definitions & details for each. Uses complete sentence(s). Expresses complete thought(s). May expand by including additional information about topic. May include effective use of descriptive vocabulary—going beyond what's expected for this level.
Conclusion	Ending unclear or does not exist. Made an attempt, such as, "and that's my animal report" or "the end".	**Provide closing statement or sense of closure**—for example, a positive or negative opinion or reflection about topic presented.	**Provide closing statement or sense of closure**—for example, a positive or negative opinion or reflection about topic presented. Goes beyond and provides thought provoking statement, question and/or opinion or humor in closing.
TOTAL POINTS	**Additional Comments:**		

Materials/Resources Needed *Include all items for the entire*	✓ ***Montessori materials (teacher made)*** *3 part card sets for Parts of a Mountain, Parts of a River, Water Ways—strait, channel, canal; and Land's End—cape, isthmus, peninsula, and promontory*

unit.	✓ Plasticene or modeling clay ✓ Tools for modeling ✓ Tray or small table ✓ Ruler to show altitude ✓ Paper or cardboard for labels ✓ Toothpicks to attach labels to ✓ Paper to make individual booklets ✓ Blackline copies of landforms ✓ Colored pencils, scissors, glue sticks

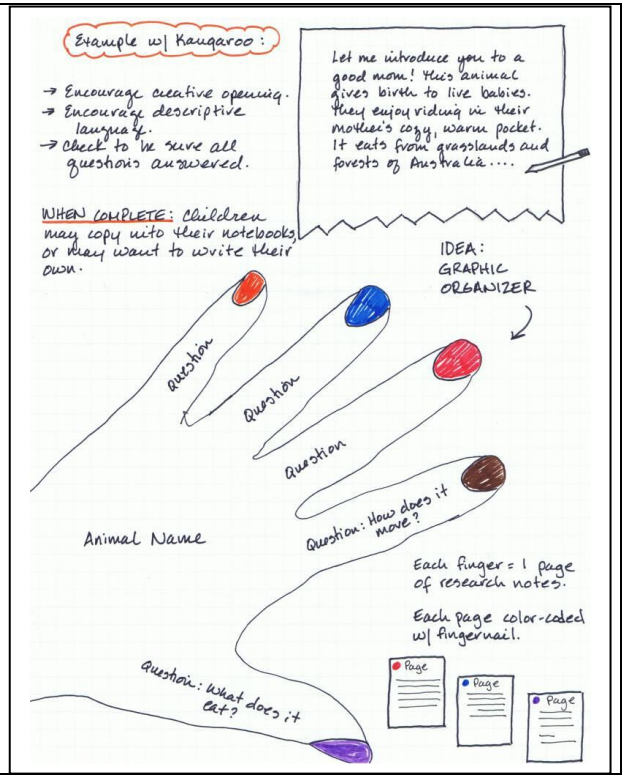
	Lesson 1 *Parts of a Mountain*—Concrete Model	**Lesson 2** *Parts of a Mountain*—Pictures with Definitions	**Lesson 3** *Parts of a River*—Concrete Model	**Lesson 4** *Parts of a River*—Pictures with Definitions
Instruction and Timeline	**Timeline:** 20-30 minute presentation **Aims of Instruction:** ✓ To provide a physical model that links the symbolic representation of maps ✓ Facilitate discussion and model thinking aloud strategies—formulating questions & ideas. ✓ Generate interest in a topic of study relating to cultural area of geography. NOTE: Important to have precut blank	**Timeline:** 20-30 minute session **Aims of Instruction:** ✓ To provide practice with informational text structure relating to Parts of a Mountain After a week, or so, bring students together again. Have the clay model and nomenclature booklets (3-part card material) and cards ready to review.	**Timeline:** 20-30 minute presentation **Aims of Instruction:** Same as Lesson 1 Repeat the presentation as described for the mountain. Once again, create the model in silence, and then allow children to guess what you have created. Introduce new nomenclature for the river: *source, upper part, course, lower part, bank, mouth.*	**Timeline:** 20-30 minute session **Aims of Instruction:** Same as Lesson 2 **[Same procedure as Lesson 2]**

	labels ready before constructing the mountain for students. Create a model of a mountain out of clay or plasticene. Try to do it in as much silence as possible, and instruct students to observe what you are doing, but that they should not call out the shape you are creating. Once basic and crude mound formed, ask the students what you have created. (They should guess mountain—at this point begin to share facts about the mountain) Using a ruler, *measure the mountain*, relating to the students the idea of scale, and introducing the idea of *altitude* above sea level. For example, explain that every inch = 1,000 feet of altitude (height) in real life. Write 'mountain' (main topic) on a prepared label and place it on the tray or table near the mountain. Starting with 'summit', the parts of the mountain are sculpted, identified, and labeled then woven into the story like presentation of facts demonstrated by the teacher. (Remaining terms: *base, slope, ridge, ridge crest, peak*, and related term *cairn*) Remove the labels and have students replace them (may use 3 period lesson to check for understanding of labels and definitions).	Begin to review the parts of the mountain by *sharing a story*. For example, an imaginary/remembered walk or hike. Place the labels as you go along. After review is complete, distribute cut pictures and labels to the students. Begin reading the definition cards and have student layout the correct picture and corresponding label. Have the student summarize information from definition card (hides it after 1st reading). Place the definition card with the picture and label as you go. Review follow up expectations.		

	Pictures from the nomenclature for parts of a mountain are laid out. Students match the labels to the pictures and verbally dictate the definitions recalled from the demonstration. The concrete and pictorial elements are vital. Without them, the nomenclature is of little use or interest to students. Close the lesson by reviewing the expectations for their follow up assignment and care of the mountain materials.			

	Lesson 1	**Lesson 2**	**Lesson 3**	**Lesson 4 (after)**
Student Activities and Timeline	(related to standard) ✓ (Choosing a topic) Begin to research and gather facts about a mountain or mountain region within the continent we are studying. (Connected to Writer's Process lessons & activities) ✓ Label the shelf mountain's parts—check master booklet for errors. ✓ Make their own model of a mountain and label parts	✓ Use the booklet materials on the shelf to make pictures, word labels, and paragraphs to create your own Parts of the Mountain chart or booklet. ✓ Continue research and gathering facts about a mountain or mountain region within the continent we are studying.	✓ Make own model of a river and label its parts. ✓ Use the booklet materials on the shelf to make pictures, word labels, and paragraphs to create your own Parts of the River chart or booklet. ✓ Add rivers to your research of mountains. Research other parts of rivers, i.e., parts of a delta.	✓ **Group:** Writing activity to demonstrate composing informative and explanatory text ***(see attached additional notes for this lesson's activities).*** ✓ **Individual:** Compose a mini research about one of the topics that interests you in your research activities thus far. **(To be used to assess for mastery of the writing standard)**

Lesson Activity—Additional Notes:

The illustration to the right gives an overview of the group story/composition process & structure. The hand is used as the graphic organizer: each finger represents one question strip from the 3-part card material (question strips in previous layouts) and each nail color corresponds to one section (few phrases, sentences, whole pages) of notes for the specific question or topic.

Writer's Process is explicitly taught and is used to support learning activities in the cultural areas. During this process students learn to draft, revise, share, edit, and publish their written work. At the end, students may share their writing with the group and/or whole class at the "Author's Chair".