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The Benefits of a Shorter School Day

Grades 4–5

Standards

- Introduce a topic clearly, provide a general observation and focus, and group related information logically; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work, and provide a list of sources.
- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Materials

- *The Benefits of a Shorter School Day* (page 117)
- *Recall Notes* (page 118)
- *Text Summary* (page 119)
- *Using Headings* (page 120)
- *Writing Conclusions* (page 121)
- *Interview Notes* (page 122)
- *Opinion Text Planner* (page 123)
- projector or document camera
- markers
- clipboards

Overview

Students take notes from the text to capture the main points of the argument. Then they learn how they can use their notes to produce written summaries of the text. Students use the text as a model to learn about the use of text features and concluding statements in opinion texts. In the culminating project, students use their note-taking and summarizing skills to research a topic and write a persuasive piece that uses text features and concluding statements to enhance their writing.

Areas of Focus

- taking notes
- summarizing
- developing text structure
- writing conclusions

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The Benefits of a Shorter School Day

Grades 4–5

Writing Activities

Taking Notes

1. Distribute a copy of *The Benefits of a Shorter School Day* (page 117) and a *Recall Notes* activity sheet (page 118) to each student. Tell students that they will take notes while they read through the text for the first time.

2. Read the first paragraph of the text aloud while students follow along on their copies. Then have students turn over their papers so the text is not visible.

3. Use a projector or document camera to display a copy of the *Recall Notes* activity sheet (page 118). Without looking at the text, ask students to share what they remember from the first paragraph. Demonstrate how to record their ideas using words and short phrases in the *Quick Notes* section of the activity sheet.

4. Repeat step 3 for the remaining paragraphs in the text.

5. Assign each student a partner. Tell students, "Now I want you to read through the text again and record specific information from the text in the *Additional Information* column on your activity sheet. These details should correspond to the main ideas you recorded in the *Quick Notes* section. For example, after reading the first paragraph I wrote *more free time*. In the *Additional Information* column I might write *long school day + homework = no free time*. This time you can look at the text while you write your notes, but try not to copy the exact words from the text."

6. Provide time for partners to work together to go through the text and record additional notes in the *Additional Information* column of the activity sheet.

7. When students have finished, review the notes they recorded in the *Additional Information* column. Have students share their notes and record them on the projected copy of the activity sheet.

8. Summarize how this type of note-taking activity helps them identify the main points of the text through recall (*Quick Notes* column) and then allows them to record additional information that supports these main ideas.

Summarizing

Note: This activity builds on the "Taking Notes" lesson activity.

1. Have students reread the text *The Benefits of a Shorter School Day* (page 117).

2. Instruct students to take out their *Recall Notes* that they completed during the "Taking Notes" lesson activity. Have them read over their notes and review the main points and supporting details they recorded.

3. Ask students, "What makes a good summary? How can you use your notes from the *Recall Notes* to write a summary?" Discuss with the class that a good summary of a text includes all the main points or arguments, but does not include examples or details. Point out how students have already identified the main points on the *Recall Notes* activity sheets.

The Benefits of a Shorter School Day

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4. Distribute a *Text Summary* activity sheet (page 119) to each student. Explain that each student needs to use his or her notes to write a summary of the text on the activity sheet. Remind students that it is also important to provide the name of the source at the bottom of the page. Review how you want students to cite the source.

5. Provide time for students to write their summaries independently.

6. When they have completed their summaries, have them share their writing with partners. Write the following questions on the board:

   - Does the summary include all of the main points?
   - Does the summary leave out the examples and details?
   - Does the summary make sense?

7. Have students take turns reading their summaries to each other. After listening to the summary, one student evaluates it based on the three questions on the board. If the answer to all three questions is *yes*, then the listener gives the reader a high five. If the answer is *no* to any of the questions, the listener provides the reader with suggestions for revision.

8. Select several students to read their summaries to the class. Note any similarities or differences between the summaries.

9. Discuss the connection between taking notes and writing summaries. Review how both processes help the reader identify, recall, and utilize the salient points from a text.

Developing Text Structure

1. Have students reread the text *The Benefits of a Shorter School Day* (page 117). Ask, "What is the purpose of this text? How do you know?" Allow students to share their ideas. Remind them to cite evidence from the text to support their answers and ideas.

2. Use a projector or document camera to display the text *The Benefits of a Shorter School Day* (page 117). Review the purpose of the text (to express the author's opinion about the benefits of a shorter school day), and underline the text in the opening paragraph that conveys this purpose.

3. Ask the class, "What do you notice about the structure of this text?" Point out the headings at the beginning of each paragraph. Discuss how the headings help readers visually separate the text into small chunks.

4. Divide students into groups of 3–4 students. Ask, "How does the formatting of this text support its purpose?" Give groups three minutes to discuss the question.

5. Have students return to their seats. Distribute copies of the *Using Headings* activity sheet (page 120). Read the instructions to the class. Provide time for students to complete the activity sheet independently.

6. Ask several students to share their headings with the class. Review how text features, such as headings, help the reader understand the organization of the information in the text and clarify the text's main points or arguments.

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Writing Conclusions

1. Use a projector or document camera to display the text *The Benefits of a Shorter School Day* (page 117). Have students follow along as you reread the last paragraph.
2. Select three different colored markers. Underline each of the headings (except *Conclusion*) with a different color. For example, underline *Free Time* in red, *Extracurricular Activities* in blue, and *Ability to Focus* in green.
3. Read the first sentence from the concluding paragraph aloud. Think aloud as you demonstrate how to annotate the text by writing *author's opinion* next to the sentence.
4. Have a volunteer read the second sentence of the last paragraph. Ask, "Which paragraph in the text does this sentence correspond to?" Underline the sentence in the corresponding colored marker (red) to show the connection between the sentence and the paragraph.
5. Repeat step 4 for the remaining sentences in the concluding paragraph. Discuss how the purpose of the concluding paragraph is to summarize the main points covered in the body of the text. Talk about how the color-coding illustrates that each sentence in the conclusion relates to one of the main points in each paragraph in the text.
6. Distribute copies of the *Writing Conclusions* activity sheet (page 121). Have each student write a concluding paragraph to go with the ideas presented in the outline.
7. Have students divide themselves into small groups of 3–4 students. Provide time for students to read their concluding paragraphs in their groups.

Extended Writing Project

1. Ask students, "If you were the principal of our school, what is one change you would make?" Have students brainstorm ideas and record them on the board (e.g., different food selections at lunch time, different extracurricular activities provided, smaller/larger classes).
2. Explain that they will write a persuasive text about what they would like to change about the school. To gather information about their topic, students will interview several classmates and take notes on their responses. They will then use their interview notes as a source of information for their writing.
3. Provide each student with the *Interview Notes* activity sheet (page 122) and a clipboard. Instruct students to write their topic at the top of the activity sheet. Then give them time to develop an interview question about their topic. Model how to create open-ended questions instead of questions that can be answered *yes* or *no*.
4. After students have developed interview questions, explain that they will interview three people. Tell them that you will assign their first interview partner and they will choose the next two.
5. Use a projector or document camera to display the *Interview Notes* activity sheet. Demonstrate where to record the name of each person. With a student volunteer, model how to conduct an interview. Explain the importance of making eye contact, speaking clearly, and taking good notes. Think aloud as you model how to take notes after asking your interview question.

6. Divide students into pairs. Give them several minutes to ask each other their interview questions and record the responses.

7. Explain that students will have one minute to find new partners when you tell them to do so. Once students have interviewed their new partners, have students find their third and final partners. After they have interviewed three people, have students return to their seats.

8. Distribute one copy of the *Opinion Text Planner* (page 123) to each student, and display a copy of the activity sheet using a projector or document camera. Think aloud as you model how to use the *Interview Notes* to outline a persuasive text on the *Opinion Text Planner*. Remind students about the importance of writing headings and concluding paragraphs. Then have students complete their own planners using the notes from their interviews.

9. When students have completed their planners, provide time for students to share with partners. Have them discuss how to support their opinions and the ways they can use the information from their interviews to write their texts.

10. Have students use their completed planners to write a cohesive text describing their opinions and providing reasons to persuade readers to adopt the same opinion. Explain that they need to reference the information they learned through their interviews in their written text in addition to including headings and a concluding paragraph.

11. When students have completed their writing samples, have them read their projects aloud to partners. Encourage them to edit and revise their work as needed after reading it aloud. Display the texts on a classroom or hallway bulletin board.

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The Benefits of a Shorter School Day

Our current school days are too long. A shorter school day would be better for children's learning and development. In our district, the school day starts at 8:00 a.m. It goes until 3:00 p.m. I think the school days should start at 8:30 a.m. and end at 2:00 p.m. Kids need more free time to play and explore. They need less time sitting at a desk. As it is now, they have very little free time. They do not get out of school until 3:00 p.m. Then they have to do their homework. I think a shorter school day would help them learn better.

Free Time

Kids learn a great deal when they have free time. If the school day was shorter, more kids would have time to go to the park or play with friends. These activities encourage physical activity and enable kids to spend time exploring nature. Playing with friends also builds social skills. Kids would have more time to read for pleasure. They could also pursue their own learning interests in their free time.

Extracurricular Activities

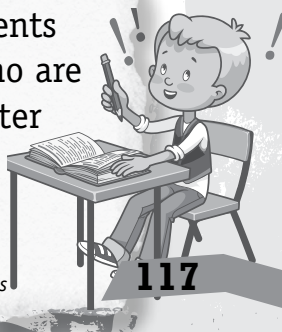
In addition to having more free time, shorter school days would also allow kids to participate in more extracurricular activities. There are many interesting opportunities for learning outside of school. However, it is hard for students to take advantage of these opportunities because they are in school for so long. For example, kids could explore a range of options such as chess club or gymnastics. They could also try things like martial arts, science classes, or art lessons. Students could experience many other sports and activities if they had more time after school.

Ability to Focus

A shorter school day would also help them focus better when they are in school. It is hard to sit still and learn for many hours in a row. Furthermore, kids are often tired when they are in school. If kids want to participate in any after-school activities, they cannot start their homework until after dinner. Sometimes schools give several hours of homework. As a result, kids have to stay up late to complete it. Then they are tired the next day.

Conclusion

Overall, I believe a shorter school day would be beneficial to students. The students would have more opportunities to learn through free play and exploration. If they choose to, they could also participate in more after-school activities. This would allow them to develop a greater range of skills and knowledge than what they learn in the classroom. A shorter school day would also allow students to get to bed earlier. Students who are rested would be able to focus better and learn more when they are in school.



Name _____ Date _____

Recall Notes

Directions: Read the text one paragraph at a time. After each paragraph, cover the text and record notes about what you remember in the *Quick Notes* column. Read the text again. While looking at the text, take notes about the supporting information in the *Additional Information* column.

Paragraph Number	Quick Notes	Additional Information
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

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Name _____ Date _____

Text Summary

Directions: Use your notes from the *Recall Notes* activity page to write a summary of the text. List the source at the bottom of the page.

Source: _____

Name _____ Date _____

Using Headings

Directions: Think about how you would respond to the opinion below. Write three headings that represent your ideas.

Every Day Should Be Pajama Day!

Heading 1:

_____

_____

_____

Heading 2:

_____

_____

_____

Heading 3:

_____

_____

_____




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Name _____ Date _____

Writing Conclusions

Directions: Write a concluding paragraph using the ideas outlined below.

The Benefits of a Longer School Day

- Students would have more time for learning.
- Students would have more opportunities to do art, music, and P.E. in school.
- Teachers would not have to give as much homework.
- Students would improve their patience and be able to concentrate for longer time periods.

Concluding Paragraph: _____

Healthy Food Choices

Grades 2–3

Standards

- Introduce a topic and group related information together; include illustrations when useful to aiding comprehension.
- Develop the topic with facts, definitions, and details.
- Use dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events or show the response of characters to situations.
- Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.
- Recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take brief notes on sources and sort evidence into provided categories.

Materials

- *Healthy Food Choices* (page 237)
- *It's Good Enough to Eat!* (page 238)
- *Creating Visuals* (page 239)
- *Funny Food Face* (page 240)
- *Friendly Letter* (page 241)
- *Healthy Choices Notes* (page 242)
- projector or document camera
- construction paper
- writing paper
- glue
- digital technology for publishing
- chart paper (*optional*)

Overview

Students identify the main idea and supporting details and use a similar structure to write informational texts. Students examine how information is conveyed through both visual graphics and printed text. They then use a text as a model to write their own text and create visuals. Students read a narrative text and explore the way the author uses rhyming to create rhythm in a poem. Students then combine their learning to write a narrative. Ultimately, students select a related topic and go through the writing process to create a final piece using the skills and techniques developed through the prior activities.

Areas of Focus

- using text features
- creating rhythm
- using multiple texts

Healthy Food Choices

Grades 2–3

Writing Activities

Using Text Features

1. Use a projector or document camera to display a copy of the *Healthy Food Choices* text (page 237). Ask, "Before we even read this text, what do you notice about it?" Point out that the text contains two large graphics. Discuss the pictures with students.
2. Say, "Based on the pictures and the title of the text, what do you think this text is going to be about?" Talk about how text features, such as titles, headings, and graphics, provide information to the reader about the type of information contained in the text.
3. Provide each student with a copy of the text. Have student volunteers read it aloud.
4. Direct students' attention back to the picture of the MyPlate diagram. Ask, "What did you learn from the written text that helps you understand the information in this graphic?" Discuss how the text suggests that people should use the plate diagram to determine how to create a healthy, well-balanced meal.
5. Have a student reread the fourth paragraph aloud. Talk about how this paragraph explains how to use the nutrition labels on foods to make healthy choices about the foods you buy and eat. Also note how the visual provides an example of a nutrition label to help readers understand the text.
6. Say, "Imagine you are a nutritionist and it is your job to help students understand how to make healthy choices about food."
7. Distribute copies of the *Creating Visuals* activity sheet (page 239). Explain that students need to make a flyer that conveys the information from the fourth paragraph of the text. Provide time for students to create their flyers on the activity sheet.
8. Display students' graphics around the room. Give students several minutes to walk around the classroom and examine their classmates' work. Then have them return to their seats and discuss how students were able to convey some of the same information from the text in a visual format. Talk about the benefits of using visuals to convey information.

Creating Rhythm

Preparation Note: Prior to the lesson, cut out fruit and vegetable shapes from different colored construction paper. For example, yellow circles for banana slices, orange rectangles for carrot sticks, and green bunches for broccoli. Or, have students draw their own fruits and vegetables.

1. Read aloud the *It's Good Enough to Eat!* text (page 238).
2. Ask students to talk about what they noticed while they were listening to the poem. Record notes about the poem on the board. Point out that the poem contains rhyming words, and the rhyming pattern creates a rhythm for the poem.
3. Read the poem aloud again, this time stressing the rhyming words and rhythm while you read.
4. Provide each student with a copy of the poem. Have them read the poem and circle the words that rhyme.

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Healthy Food Choices

Grades 2–3

5. Project the poem using a document camera or projector. Ask students to tell you the rhyming words they circled on their texts. Circle the words that rhyme. Point out that some words, such as *plate* and *shapes* do not exactly rhyme, but they still keep the rhythm of the poem.

6. Explain that students will create their own pretend faces out of food, like in the poem. Distribute copies of the *Funny Food Face* activity sheet (page 240). Have students use the construction paper fruits and vegetables to create their own funny face.

7. Provide each student with a sheet of writing paper. Have students write rhyming poems to go with their artwork.

8. Allow students time to share their work with a partner. Encourage students to read their poems aloud. Then display the faces and poems on a classroom bulletin board.

Using Multiple Texts

1. Review both texts with the class. Summarize each text. Discuss how both texts provide information about healthy food choices.

2. Say, "For this activity, you will use the information from these texts to create your own piece of writing. You will write a letter to a friend and describe the healthy food choices you make throughout the day."

3. Divide the class into pairs or let students choose their own partners. Provide time for them to review the sources and take notes about healthy food choices from the two texts.

4. Distribute a copy of the *Friendly Letter* activity sheet (page 241) to each student. Review the instructions at the top of the page. Give students time to write letters describing the healthy choices they make.

5. Have students trade letters with partners. On the board, write the following question: *Does the letter include information about healthy food choices?* Tell students to read each other's letters and then give feedback based on the question.

6. Provide time for students to make changes to their letters based on their partner's feedback. Have students publish a final draft of their letters using digital technology.

Healthy Food Choices

Grades 2–3

Extended Writing Project

1. Review how students used two different sources, *Healthy Food Choices* (page 237) and *It's Good Enough to Eat!* (page 238), to learn information and writing techniques.

2. Explain that students will write their own informational texts about how to live a healthy life.

3. Ask students to brainstorm other lifestyle choices that affect our health (e.g., staying active, getting enough sleep, wearing a helmet when riding a bike). Record their ideas on the board or chart paper.

4. Distribute copies of the *Healthy Choices Notes* activity sheet (page 242). Explain that students will have time to gather sources and take notes about choices for a healthy lifestyle. Remind the class that they already have sources about the importance of healthy food choices (i.e., sample texts from the lesson).

5. Have students locate sources in the school or classroom library that contain information about healthy lifestyles. You may also choose to provide sources from the Internet for them to use.

6. Divide the class into small groups and have students work together to review the sources and take notes on their *Healthy Choices Notes* activity sheets. Remind them to research *how* and *why* each choice is considered healthy.

7. After they have completed their research, discuss their findings as a class. Use a projector or document camera to display a copy of the *Healthy Choices Notes* activity sheet, and take notes as students share their research. Encourage students to add to their notes as necessary throughout the discussion.

8. Explain that students will use their notes to create an informational pamphlet about how to have a healthy lifestyle. In addition to the written text, they will also include graphics, either hand-drawn or digital, to accompany their written text.

9. Demonstrate how to fold a sheet of drawing paper into thirds to create a pamphlet. Have students fold their papers. Give students time to independently write their informational texts and include graphics to accompany their texts.

10. Have students take their pamphlets home and discuss them with their families. As a reflection activity, have students write a paragraph explaining one way that they would like to improve their eating habits or lifestyle to make it more healthy.

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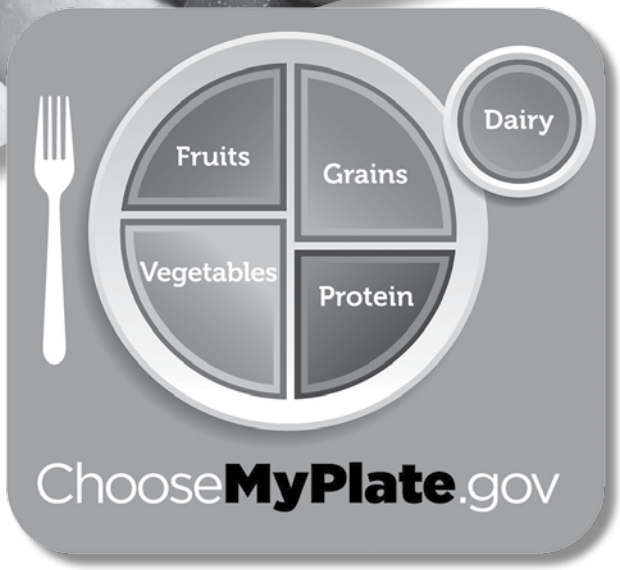
Healthy Food Choices



How do you know which foods to eat? You probably know that too much candy is bad for you. But which foods does your body need? And how much of them should you eat? One easy way to start choosing healthy meals is to use the MyPlate guide.

Every kind of healthy food can fit into five groups. You should choose food from each group at every meal. These groups are fruits, vegetables, protein, grains, and dairy. The plate is divided into four sections. The sections show the proportion of each kind of food you should put on your plate. There is also a small circle for dairy. If you have a glass of milk or a cup of yogurt, it would go there. Use these sections as a guide as you prepare your meals.

Sample label for Macaroni & Cheese

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 cup (228g)
Servings Per Container 2

Amount Per Serving

Calories 250	Calories from Fat 110
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 12g	18%
Saturated Fat 3g	15%
Trans Fat 3g	
Cholesterol 30mg	10%
Sodium 470mg	20%
Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 5g	
Protein 5g	
Vitamin A	4%
Vitamin C	2%
Calcium	20%
Iron	4%

* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

The nutrition facts label is a guide. It can help you make healthy choices. It tells you how much of each type of nutrient is in one serving of the food. Look at the amount of fat and cholesterol. Look at the amount of sodium and sugar. Avoid foods that have large amounts of these. They are not healthy. Look at the vitamins and minerals. Eating foods high in these nutrients is a healthy choice. Use the information on the nutrition facts label to help you choose healthier foods.

It's Good Enough to Eat!

By Amelia Edwards

My friends have come to play. Now it's time for lunch.

My mom has made a plate of fruit and veggies for us to munch.

"Enjoy your lunch," she says, "Why don't you make it fun?

Take a plate and make a face. I'm sure it can be done."

Marco makes an alien with kiwi fruit for eyes.

He makes a nose of berries that are each a different size.

Lily makes a clown face with red pepper for the hair.

She adds a watermelon mouth and eyebrows made of pear.

Benji makes a tiger face with carrots and some beans.

He makes sharp teeth from cucumbers—they make the face look mean!

Sammy makes a robot in the middle of his plate.

The ears are really funny because they're very different shapes.

Anna makes a cat face with bright blueberry eyes.

Then, she adds some parsley fur and that's a big surprise!

Carly makes a princess face whose taste is super sweet.

Her crown is made of pineapple and topped with one green pea.

We created lots of different things from a clown to a pretty cat.

Food can be creative—what do you think of that?

We loved making faces, oh, what a tasty treat.

Now, we want to eat our lunch—it looks good enough to eat!

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Name _____ Date _____

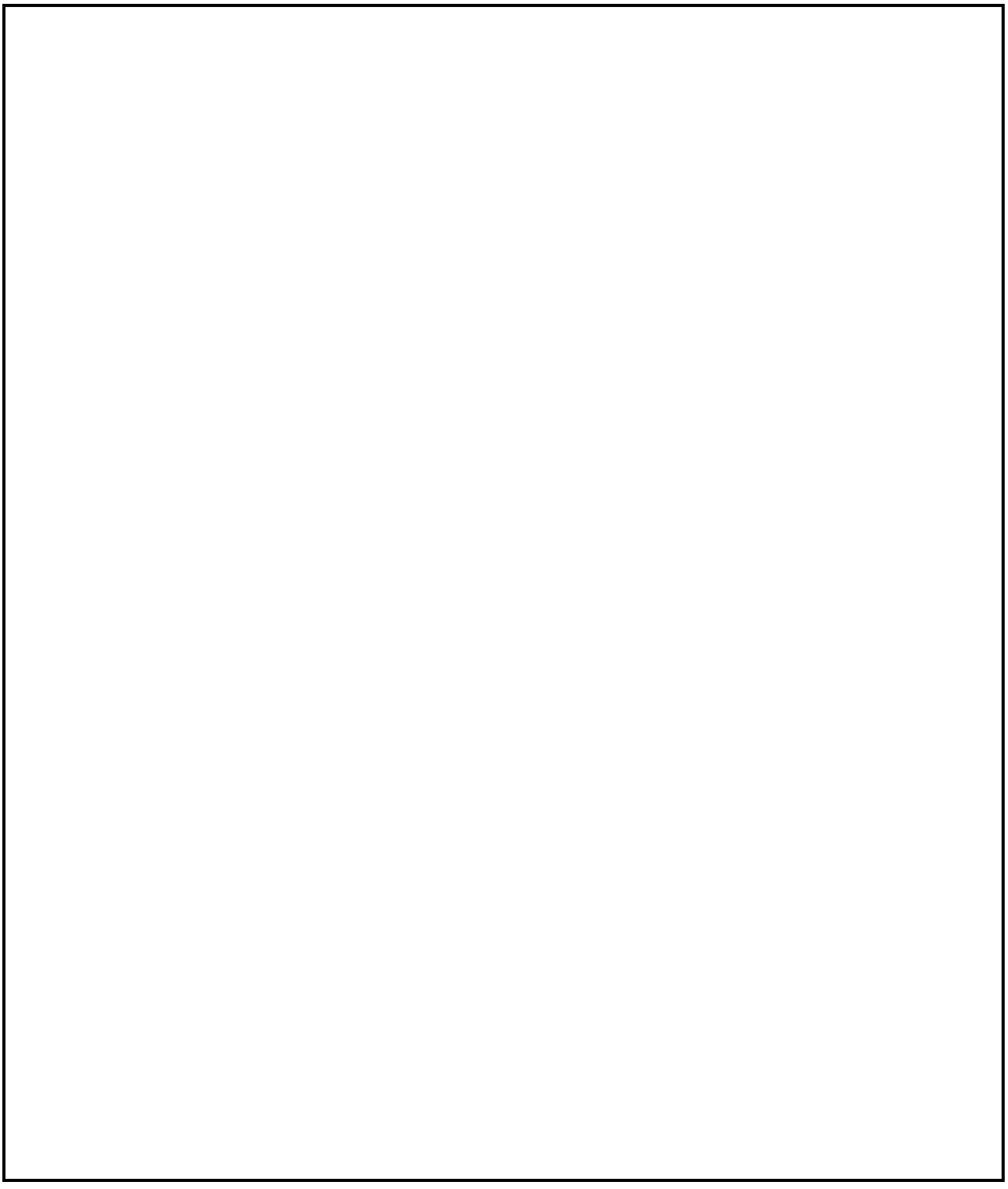
Creating Visuals

Directions: Make a flyer that shows the information from the text. Use visuals.

Name _____ Date _____

Funny Food Face

Directions: Use paper fruits and vegetables to create your own funny face. Glue the shapes to the paper.



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Name _____ Date _____

Friendly Letter

Directions: Write a letter to a friend about healthy food choices.

Dear _____ ,

I hope you are well. I'm writing to tell you about healthy food choices I make. First, I _____ _____.

I also _____ and _____.

My favorite healthy food is _____ because _____.

What healthy food choices do you make? Do you like _____ ?

Your friend,

_____