Look at Topics Through a Writer’s Eyes

1. Focus

Introduce Informational Report Writing

Display a book, magazine, or Internet article (preferably with photos or illustrations) about a topic that interests you. Use the sample think-aloud below as a model of how to talk to students about the topic and the facts you learned from reading about it. You may wish to share with students other resources that you’ve used to find information about the topic.

Sample think-aloud. Say: I happen to know a lot about our state and its history. But not too long ago, I traveled through the eastern part of our state and saw some interesting land formations that I had never seen before. I didn’t know anything about these formations—how they were made or when. So I did some reading to find out about them. I read to learn new information all the time. I read informational texts in books, magazines, newspapers, and online, too. All of us read informational texts to learn new information, and we can also write informational texts to share information with others.

Say: In informational reports, authors write about real-life topics that they have researched. For the next several weeks, we are going to read, write, and share informational reports with each other. We will learn about why we research, or look for information, what kind of writing makes informational reports interesting, and how to use maps, graphs, and other illustrations to support the information in our reports.

Introduce the Purpose and Audience for Informational Reports

Say: The main purpose of informational texts is to share information. When I write a report I ask myself, who will read my writing? I try to write in a way that keeps my readers’ attention. I want to pull readers in while explaining the facts clearly, accurately, and in an organized way. You may not realize it, but you read informational reports all the time. A magazine article about a favorite athlete and an account on the web about crazy cat tricks are both informational reports. In our small reading groups, we often read nonfiction informational texts. Learning how to write a strong informational report will help you not only in school but also whenever you have to share information with others.
2. Rehearse

**Practice Talking About Nonfiction Topics**

Invite students to tell a partner facts about one topic they have learned about recently. Encourage students to refer to the sources they brought with them, such as magazine articles or books. Students should explain to their partners what sources they used to learn about the topic. The partner listening to the information should be prepared to retell some facts about the topic to the class. If your class includes English learners or other students who need support, use “Strategies to Support ELs.”

**Share Nonfiction Topics with the Class**

Invite volunteers to retell information about the topic their partners shared with them. Ask them to tell which source or sources their partners used to learn about the topic. Use one or more of the following questions to engage students in a discussion about the exercise.

**Student sharing facts**

- Did you feel confident about what you were telling your partner, or did you feel like you did not have enough information?
- Why did you choose the topic you chose?
- How did your sources help you tell about the topic?

**Listener**

- How did you feel as you listened to your partner talk about the topic? Were you bored, interested, or surprised?
- What fact that your partner shared was most interesting to you, and why?

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

**Say:** We learned that informational reports give facts about nonfiction topics. We read informational reports to learn new information, and we write them to share the knowledge we have. In the next several weeks, we will look at how to research a topic and how to write informational reports that engage readers.

During independent writing time, encourage students to write short paragraphs about real-life topics that interest them. During student conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to read aloud the paragraphs they wrote during independent writing time.

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## Strategies to Support ELs

### Beginning

Meet with beginning ELs one on one while other students work with partners. Encourage them to describe their topics of interest in any way they can—with words or gestures or by pointing to pictures. Use the following sentence frames to help them talk about their topics:

I know ______.  
I want to know ______.

Use self-stick notes to label the images in their sources.

### Intermediate

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner practice. Write simple sentence frames on chart paper and model how students can use them to talk about their topics. For example:

I want to learn more about ______.  
I want to learn more because ______.  
Here are three things I know: ______, ______, and ______.

### Advanced

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during partner practice.

### All Levels

If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates to help them understand the lesson focus: topic/el tópico; study/estudiar; photographs/las fotografías; informational/informacional.