1. Focus

Explain Using Questions

Say: As I write an informational report, I imagine that I am explaining my topic to a reader. I want to make sure I discuss the topic as clearly as possible. And I want to keep my reader’s attention by writing interesting and engaging sentences. So, I write sentences that do not all sound the same. They are different lengths and they start with different words. They are different lengths and they start with different words. Some sentences are more complex than others. Another way to engage readers is to ask questions in the text. A question gets the reader’s attention and helps move the text forward. A question can help you explain a concept. Today I’m going to show you how to use questions in your informational reports.

Model Using Questions to Drive the Text

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Ask students to listen for questions as you read aloud the passage from “The Amazing Human Brain.”

Your Survival Brain is in charge of helping you react quickly at times when you are in danger. Think about it: What does any creature do when it is threatened? It either runs away from the threat or fights to defend itself.

Modeling Text

Say: I like the way the author uses the question in this passage. It makes me stop and think, and it forces me to engage with the text. It also makes me think about the topic personally—what would I do in that situation? Also, notice that the author uses the question to explain how the “Survival Brain” works. The question allows the author to give a concrete example of the “Survival Brain” in action. The question drives the text by establishing the topic of the rest of the paragraph, which describes the changes that happen in the brain when a person feels threatened. The question makes me want to keep reading so that I can find out the answer.
2. Rehearse

Practice Using Questions to Drive the Text

Display the practice text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

Imagine you want to go on a trip. Imagine the route you would take. Maybe you would go by plane, or by car, or by train. Imagine where you would go.

Practice Text

Ask students to work with partners to revise the sentences by using questions to drive the text. Ask: How can you engage the reader? How can you make this practice text more interesting? Pairs should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class and explain how they used questions to drive the text.

Share Practice Sentences

Bring students together and invite partners to read aloud their sentences and explain their revisions. Discuss how effectively students' questions engage the reader and how the questions might move the text forward. Record students' sentences and post these as models for students to use as they draft or revise their informational reports.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We learned that we can use questions in our reports to introduce topics, help explain concepts, and grab the reader's attention. As you draft and revise your informational reports, look for opportunities to use questions to engage readers and drive the text.

Encourage students to look for opportunities to use questions to drive their informational reports as they revise. 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 a few students who have incorporated questions into their reports to drive the text to share examples with the rest of the class.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning
While other students complete the partner practice activity, work with beginning ELs to practice using vocabulary related to transportation. Invite students to tell you what forms of transportation they have traveled on (car, bus, train, plane, boat). Draw pictures or use pantomime to build comprehension.

Intermediate and Advanced
Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity.

All Levels
If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share this English/Spanish cognate: informational/informativo(a).