Brainstorm Using Home or School Events

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

• Learn a strategy for brainstorming ideas for fiction by thinking about home and school events.
• Tell a partner about home and school events that could become ideas for writing a story.
• Contribute to a class list of story ideas.

Preparation

Materials Needed

• Chart paper and markers
• Writer’s notebooks
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation

If necessary, copy the sentence frames from “Strategies to Support ELs” on chart paper.

1. Focus

Explain the Brainstorming Process

Say: Writers brainstorm when they need ideas for writing. One way we can brainstorm story ideas is to think about things that have really happened at home or at school. We can think of problems we’ve had or that other people have had and how those problems were solved. As we think of things that could make good stories, we need to jot them down so we don’t forget them. Then we can go back and decide which of those events we want to write a story about. Let me show you how I brainstorm ideas for stories by thinking of things that have happened at home or here at school.

Model Brainstorming

Use the sample think-aloud to help you develop your own brainstorming model. Demonstrate how to record ideas on chart paper as you model brainstorming.

Sample think-aloud. Say: I remember playing baseball at home one day with my son. He wanted to practice his pitching, so I told him that I’d help by batting as he pitched to me. The problem was that I’m not very good at baseball. I accidentally hit the ball into our neighbor’s driveway and made a dent in the side of his new car. I was so embarrassed! My son and I went next door and told our neighbor what had happened. I apologized to him profusely! The next day, my neighbor brought a bill over to show me how much it would cost to have his car fixed. I paid for the repairs and he forgave me for what happened, but now I never offer to help my son with his baseball practice anymore. I let someone else do it and preferably at a park! I think this would make a great story idea so I’ll write it on the list. Another good story idea is forgetting to set my alarm clock one night and waking up late on a very important date. This idea has a good story problem that I could develop through interesting story events. Continue talking about other ideas and adding them to your list.

Story Ideas

denting my neighbor’s car
forgetting to set my alarm clock
getting lost at the outdoor concert
losing my car keys at the mall
going to my grandma’s birthday party

Sample Brainstorming List
2. Rehearse

Practice Brainstorming Story Ideas Using Events That Have Happened at Home or at School

Ask students to work with a partner to brainstorm ideas for writing a story based on events that have happened to them at home or at school.

If your class includes English learners or other students who need more support, use “Strategies to Support ELs.”

Share Ideas

Bring students together and invite them to share their story ideas. As students contribute ideas, record them on the brainstorming list you started earlier. Reread the list and comment on the variety of ideas students have suggested. Ask if any of the ideas remind students of similar experiences they have had. Discuss how listening to other writers’ ideas often helps us think of our own ideas.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We just learned a strategy for brainstorming ideas for a story. We can think about things that happened at home or at school. We can use a problem that we had or that someone else had and write a story about what happened and how the problem was solved. This is a very good strategy to use when you’re brainstorming story ideas.

Encourage students to apply this strategy when they brainstorm during independent writing time. During 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 share some of the events they brainstormed. Discuss how the events could provide a good story problem and solution.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

Invite beginning ELs to draw pictures of events they remember from home or from school. Help students use simple sentences to tell you about their pictures.

Intermediate and Advanced

Provide sentence frames to help ELs talk to their partners about their story ideas. For example:

One day at school, _______.
I had a problem at home when _______.

All Levels

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share this English/Spanish cognate: problem/el problema.