Look at Informational Topics Through a Writer’s Eyes

1. Focus

Introduce Informational Report Writing

Display a social studies or science book you have used in class. Use the sample think-aloud below as a model of how to talk to students about a topic from the book. You may wish to share with students other resources that you’ve used to find information about the topic.

Sample think-aloud. Ask: Remember when we grew plants from seeds for our science project? I found that really interesting, and I decided I wanted to learn more about growing plants from seeds. So I did some research. That means I looked for information, or facts, about plants in books and online, and I studied the facts so that I could grow more plants.

Say: When we talk about topics that come from real life, such as growing plants from seeds, we call it a nonfiction topic. This means it is based on facts. Sometimes we are asked to write about a nonfiction topic. When we write about a nonfiction topic, it is called an informational report. In an informational report we share facts about a real-life topic. We start with an idea, we study to learn more, and then we write about it. For the next several weeks, we are going to read, write, and share informational reports with each other. We will learn about different ways to look for information, how to write interesting informational reports, and how to include maps and graphs and other illustrations.

Introduce the Purpose of and Audience for Informational Reports

Say: The main purpose of an informational report is to teach people about a topic. When I write an informational report, I ask myself who will read this report? I try to remember that my audience might not know anything about the topic, so I want to explain the facts clearly and in an orderly way. You may not realize it, but you probably see informational reports all the time. Our textbooks include informational reports. Magazine, newspaper, and Internet articles can be informational reports, too. We write informational reports to share facts about topics that interest us. Learning how to write a good informational report helps us share information both inside and outside of school.
2. Rehearse

**Practice Talking About Nonfiction Topics**

Invite students to work with a partner. Students should tell their partners facts they know about a topic they have studied this year in science or social studies. Encourage students to refer to the sources they have, including the textbook or other nonfiction materials you’ve used in class. The partner listening to the information should be prepared to retell some facts about the topic to the class. Students should explain to their partners what they learned from the sources.

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 facts about the topic their partners shared with them. Ask them to tell which sources they had for their information. Use one or more of the following questions to engage students in a discussion about the exercise.

**Student sharing facts**
- Why did you choose to tell about this topic?
- How did the textbook or other sources help you tell about the topic?

**Listener**
- What did you learn about the topic?

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

**Say:** We learned that informational reports help us share information. We discussed how there are many things in the world that we are interested in and can write about. We can start with a topic we already know something about, find out more, and then write about it to teach others. In the next several weeks, we will look at how to research and write interesting informational reports.

Encourage students to write a paragraph and/or draw an illustration about a nonfiction topic they have learned about in school.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to share their writing and drawings about nonfiction topics.

---

**Strategies to Support ELs**

**Beginning**

Meet with beginning ELs one on one. Encourage them to describe their topics of interest in any way they can—with words or gestures or by pointing to pictures. Use self-stick notes to label images in their books or other sources.

**Intermediate**

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the “Practice Talking About Nonfiction Topics” activity. Write simple sentence frames on chart paper and model how students can use them to talk about their topics. For example:

*We have learned about [science or social studies topic]. I have also learned ______.*

**Advanced**

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during partner practice.

**All Levels**

If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share this English/Spanish cognate to help them understand the lesson focus: *topic/el tópico.*

Display images using the interactive whiteboard resources as additional visual prompts for telling about nonfiction topics.