Brainstorm Ideas Using Photographs

1. Focus

Explain the Brainstorming Process

Say: Brainstorming is a way of thinking. When we brainstorm, we open our minds to all the possibilities. We let ideas come into our heads and we jot them down. When we brainstorm a personal narrative, we need to think back on events in our life, and one way to do that is to use photographs. Looking at photographs can bring back whole scenes in our minds. We can watch events from our past in our minds as if we’re watching a video. Let me show you how I do this.

Model Brainstorming with Photographs

Display a photograph from a time in your life. Think aloud to show how your photograph helps you remember the details of an event in your life. Use the sample think-aloud to help you construct your own ideas to share with students. Demonstrate how you write your idea on a brainstorming list on chart paper.

Sample think-aloud. This photograph shows me on my first day of kindergarten. You can see that I was all dressed up and smiling. When I look at this photo, I suddenly remember that whole first day of school. When I got there, I realized I was going to have leave my parents, and I got very frightened and started to cry. Then my new teacher came over and introduced herself to me. She was really nice to me and I realized I was going to have fun in her class. None of these memories were in the photograph, but seeing the photograph brought them all back to me. I could write a personal narrative about that first day of school. I will write this idea on my brainstorming list.

2. Rehearse

Practice Brainstorming with Photographs

Invite students to work with a partner to look at photographs from their past to brainstorm personal narrative ideas. Explain that students should record any ideas they have in their writer’s notebooks. Students should share the following information about their photograph(s):
When and where was your photo taken?  
What is happening in your photo?  
Who else appears in the photograph?  
What ideas or images come into your mind as you look at this photograph?  
What feelings does this photograph make you remember?

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

### Ideas from Our Photographs
- My first day of school
- My best birthday party
- The first time I rode on an airplane
- When my family moved to this country

**Sample Brainstorming List**

### Share Ideas

Bring students together and invite individuals to share an idea they brainstormed based on their photograph(s). As students contribute personal narrative ideas, record them on your class brainstorming list. Reread them together, and point out the rich diversity of ideas students contributed. You may also want to point out that sometimes a classmate’s idea may spark a new idea for them as well.

### Strategies to Support ELs

**Beginning**

Invite beginning ELs to tell you about their photograph using any words they can. Use self-stick notes to label people and objects in their photographs. Expand on their ideas to form simple sentences about their photographs.

**Intermediate and Advanced**

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

*In this photo I am ______.*  
*This photo makes me think about ______.*  
*This photo makes me feel ______.*

**All Levels**

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: *photograph/la fotografía, scene/la escena, past/el pasado, narrative/el narrativo.*