Use Your Own Interests to Brainstorm Ideas

Objectives

In this mini-lesson students will:

• Use personal knowledge and interests to brainstorm topics for writing an informational report.
• Work with a small group to brainstorm and discuss topic ideas.
• Contribute to a class list of ideas for informational reports.

Preparation

Materials Needed

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

Advanced Preparation

If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, you may wish to copy on chart paper the sample sentence frames in “Strategies to Support ELs” to help students talk about their informational report ideas.

1. Focus

Explain Using Your Own Interests to Brainstorm Ideas

Say: When we write an informational report, we need to know a lot of facts about our topic. It’s a good idea to choose a topic we find interesting and know a lot about. We can ask ourselves, “Is this a topic I’m really interested in? What do I know about it?” Brainstorming is a good way to help us decide on topics to write about. Let me show you how I use my special interests and knowledge to brainstorm ideas for an informational report.

Model Using Your Own Interests to Brainstorm Ideas

Think aloud to show how you use your own interests to brainstorm informational report ideas. Use the sample think-aloud or develop your own think-aloud to share with students. Demonstrate how you record ideas on chart paper as you brainstorm.

Sample think-aloud. Say: I have always been very interested in roller coasters. When I was younger, I read many books about roller coasters. I know a lot of facts about them. For example, I know there are lots of different kinds of roller coasters and that they can be found all around the world. I even know that the very first roller coaster was built in New York in 1885! This would be a good idea for me to write about. I know a lot, and I could find out even more. I’ll write down this idea so I don’t forget it. I am very interested in another topic, too. I’m interested in cats. My family had cats when I was growing up, so I know how to take care of them. I have also gone to a cat show and learned about different cat breeds. I’ll write down that idea, too. Continue talking about your interests and recording them in a list. Include at least five items in your list.

Ideas for an Informational Report

- roller coasters
- cats
- Australia
- Native American pottery
- totem poles
- gardening
- whales

Sample Brainstorming List
2. Rehearse

Practice Using Your Own Interests to Brainstorm Ideas

Ask small groups of students to work together to brainstorm ideas for an informational report. Remind students to use their own interests to help guide their brainstorming. Students should record the group’s ideas in their writer’s notebooks.

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

Share Ideas

Bring students back together and invite individuals to share ideas they brainstormed based on their personal interests. As students contribute informational report ideas, record them on your class brainstorming list. Reread them together, and point out the wide range of interests students in the class have. Post the class brainstorming list as an anchor chart students can refer to as they brainstorm additional topics for their own informational reports.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: Today we learned a strategy for brainstorming ideas for informational reports. We learned that we can use our own interests to come up with ideas. As you brainstorm your own ideas, try to use this strategy. If you let your interests guide you, you will find a topic that you can get excited about.

Encourage students to apply the brainstorming strategy during independent writing time, as appropriate. 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 share the ideas they generated by brainstorming.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

Invite beginning ELs to draw pictures about a topic they are interested in. Ask them to label their drawings and to tell you about them. Model using simple sentence frames to talk about the topic. For example: I know that ______.

Intermediate and Advanced

Provide sentence frames to help ELs talk to their group members about their topic for an informational report. For example:

I know a lot about ______.
I am interested in ______.
A fact I know is ______.

All Levels

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: information/la información; interested/interesado(a).