Brainstorm Ideas Using Your Expertise

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

• Use what they know to brainstorm things they know how to do well.

• Tell partners about things they know how to do, using sentence frames if necessary.

• Develop a class list of topics for procedural writing.

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 the prompts for practicing brainstorming and the sample sentence frames provided in “Strategies to Support ELs“ on chart paper to help students talk about their topics.

1. Focus

Explain Brainstorming

Say: Brainstorming is a strategy that writers use to think of ideas to write about. When we brainstorm, we open our minds and let our ideas flow quickly. We write down all our ideas, without judging whether they are good or bad. We look at our ideas later and decide which ones we think are the best. Before writing a procedural text, writers ask themselves, “What things can I do really well? Can I explain how to do these things to someone else?” We all know how to do a lot of things. Brainstorming often shows us that we know more than we think we do! Let me show you how I use what I already know to brainstorm ideas for a procedural text.

Model Using Your Expertise to Brainstorm

If possible, display objects that reflect things you know how to do (for example, a scarf you knitted, a picture you drew, a cell phone you know how to use). Use the sample think-aloud to help you develop your own brainstorming model to share with students. Demonstrate how you write down your ideas on chart paper.

Sample think-aloud. Say: When I think about writing a procedural text, I know I’m going to need to give detailed instructions to somebody else, so I want to brainstorm procedures I really know how to explain. Look at this scarf. I knit this scarf myself, and I have also knitted many other things. Knitting is something I know how to do very well. I know what materials someone needs, and I know exactly what the steps are. Oh, here’s something else I know well. I have a cell phone. I know how to download e-mail on my cell phone. I could definitely help someone else learn how to do that. I am going to write both of these ideas down on my brainstorming list so that I don’t forget about them.

Ideas for Writing a Procedural Text

- Knitting
- Downloading e-mail

Sample Brainstorming List
2. Rehearse

Practice Brainstorming Topics for a Procedural Text

Invite students to work with partners to brainstorm ideas for writing a procedural text. Ask students to record their ideas in their writer’s notebooks. Write the following prompts on chart paper to prompt their discussion:

- Think about things you know how to do, for example, sports and games.
- Think about foods you know how to make.
- What do you do every day that you could explain to someone?

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 encourage volunteers to share the ideas they brainstormed. As students contribute their procedural text ideas, record them on a class brainstorming list. Reread the list together and point out the variety of ideas and the number of “experts” in the classroom. Encourage students to use the list as a resource when they brainstorm independently.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We’ve just learned how to use the things we do well to brainstorm topics for a procedural text. As you brainstorm your own topics, remember to focus on what you know how to do well.

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 list of ideas they generated during independent writing time.

Strategies to Support ELs

- **Beginning**
  Invite beginning ELs to show you how to do something they know how to do. Encourage them to use any words they can to describe what they are showing you. Use simple sentences to put words to the steps they demonstrate. As an alternative, ask students to draw words to the steps they demonstrate. Talk with students about their drawings.

- **Intermediate and Advanced**
  Provide sentence frames to help ELs talk to their partners about their topics. For example:
  
  I can make ______.
  I know how to ______.