Select Knowledgeable and Credible Sources

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

- Learn criteria for selecting credible and knowledgeable sources to interview for a persuasive letter.
- Practice evaluating sources based on their knowledge and credibility.
- Discuss the importance of knowing your sources before you interview them.

Preparation

Materials Needed

- Chart paper and markers
- Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation

If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, copy the practice text onto chart paper.

1. Focus

Explain What Knowledgeable and Credible Sources Are

Say: When you write a persuasive letter, you make a case to support your opinion. You back up your opinion with facts and evidence. You may look for facts in various sources, including magazine and Internet articles and in books. Also, you may go to a primary source for information. You may interview someone about your topic. But first you have to be sure this person is knowledgeable and credible. Being knowledgeable means they have first-hand knowledge about your topic. Being credible means they are believable and trustworthy. Today we’re going to learn how to evaluate expert sources.

Model Selecting Sources Based on Their Knowledge and Credibility

Sample think-aloud. Say: I am writing a letter to the mayor to convince her to turn a vacant lot in my neighborhood into a garden for the community. I want to gather information about what’s involved in creating a garden out of a vacant city lot and whether there will be any costs involved. To get this information, I want to find experts to interview. My grandfather knows a lot about gardening. Maybe I could interview him? But I guess, just because I think he’s a great gardener doesn’t mean he’s an expert. The mayor doesn’t know anything about my grandfather or his gardening. I need to find someone who is recognized by others as an expert in the field. For my letter to the editor, I might find an expert on gardening at a local nursery or garden store. Before I actually interview this person, I would want to know about his or her educational and work background. I would ask if he or she ever writes articles or teaches classes about gardening. This kind of information tells me if a possible source is credible and knowledgeable.
2. Rehearse

**Practice Evaluating Sources Based on Their Knowledge and Credibility**

Display the following persuasive letter topics on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The class should take a field trip to the aquarium.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cats should be allowed in the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students should be given more homework.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Practice Text**

Invite students to work with a partner. Ask partners to choose a topic and come up with a list of people they feel would be knowledgeable and credible as sources for their topics.

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

**Share Ideas**

Bring students together and invite partners to share their list of sources and explain why they think the people on their list would make good sources. As students share, write down ideas for sources next to the topic on the practice text. Encourage students to challenge any sources they think would not be good sources, but they must be able to provide reasons why. Ask students to discuss how they can apply this strategy to their independent research.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

**Say:** Today we learned how to find experts to interview as primary sources for a persuasive letter. We learned that it’s important to find someone credible who has first-hand knowledge about our topic. We need to find out about a possible source’s background, because knowing our sources before we interview them will help us get the best information possible for our persuasive letters.

Encourage students to list possible credible sources they may research for their persuasive letters during independent writing time. Reinforce students’ research strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring the class together. Invite volunteers to tell what sources they found that they feel are credible and knowledgeable.

**Strategies to Support ELs**

**Beginning**

Pair beginning ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity. Keep in mind that they will not be able to contribute many ideas orally. You will want to work with them individually to reinforce concepts while other students write independently.

**Intermediate and Advanced**

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity.