Write with a Tone of Authority

1. Focus

Explain Writing with a Tone of Authority

Say: When I write a personal narrative, I want to establish a strong personality in my voice. One way to do this is to use an authoritative tone. This means that I want to sound like an authority, or expert. I try to write with certainty and show my knowledge of the topics. I try to use details that show I remember the events that I describe. Today I’m going to show you how to include this type of voice in your personal narrative.

Model How Writers Voice a Tone of Authority to Connect with Their Audience

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

Modeling Text

1. Horses trekked up a winding, steep path. Their riders bounced around as the horses jogged. The walking trail was beside the horse trail. I pointed to a steep shortcut on the trail while I raced toward it yelling, “Let’s go!”

2. It was so hot out that we had to rest frequently in the shade. People would jog by us and we marveled at their energy. We often had to grab rocks on the steepest inclines just to keep from slipping back.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

• Identify writing with a tone of authority as one aspect of voice.
• Practice improving voice by adding a tone of authority through knowledgeable explanations of their topics.
• Discuss how to apply this strategy to their independent writing.

Preparation

Materials Needed

• Chart paper and markers
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation

If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, copy the modeling text and practice text onto chart paper prior to the mini-lesson. If necessary, copy the sentence frames from “Strategies to Support ELs” on chart paper.

Write with a Tone of Authority

After example 1. Say: In this passage, the author sets herself up as an expert on the trip she is describing. She guides me through the sequence of events on her hike, like a horse guiding me along a steep mountain path. One way I know she has masterful knowledge of the trip is that she includes many specific details, such as the horses whose “riders bounced around as the horses jogged.” She also includes details about dialogue, which give me a sense of being there with her. By guiding me confidently through the experience, inserting details along the way, she establishes a tone of authority in her narrative voice.

After example 2. Say: In this second example, the writer continues to describe the sequence of events in a logical order and in precise detail. This shows her authoritative voice. She says, “It was so hot out that we had to rest frequently in the shade.” While she and her family rest, she tells us, people jog by. Then she adds detail to describe how her family climbed the mountain: “We often had to grab rocks on the steepest inclines just to keep from slipping back.” Again, the author’s use of specific detail tells me she really knows what she’s talking about. This is useful in a personal narrative because readers will want to sense that you’ve mastered your story and remember it well.
2. Rehearse

Practice Writing with a Tone of Authority

Display the practice text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

Mom stopped the car. We wanted to admire the view.

Practice Text

Ask students to work with a partner to establish a greater tone of authority in these sentences. Remind students to add words, phrases, or sentences that explain events with a sequential flow and include lots of detail and even perhaps some dialogue to show they are experts on this event. Invite them to imagine details as necessary for this practice activity. Pairs should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class. They should be able to explain how their sentences make a stronger voice for readers because they are written with an authoritative tone.

Share Practice Sentences

Bring students together and invite pairs to read their sentences aloud and explain how they made the voice of the practice text more authoritative. Record students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they write their own personal narratives.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We learned that establishing a tone of authority in a personal narrative is one way to connect with readers. Remember that you can tell events in order using detail and dialogue to establish a tone of authority in your personal narratives.

Ask students to identify sections of their personal narratives in which they can strengthen the writer’s voice by writing with an authoritative tone. During conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring the class together. Invite volunteers to read aloud sections of their personal narratives in which they improved the writer’s voice by adding details or dialogue that created a tone of authority.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning
Model how you explain simple events with detail. Use simple sentences and picture support. For example, draw yourself arriving at school. Say: This morning, I drove to school. I parked my car. It was a hot day. I was late. I ran! Invite students to draw themselves getting to school. Encourage them to add details first in their drawing and then in oral sentences. Provide the following sentence frames to help them add detail.

Today, I ______. I saw ______. I heard ______.

Intermediate
Model how you explain simple events with a sequential flow, details, and dialogue. Invite students to draw pictures of themselves getting up in the morning and coming to school. Ask students to tell you what they are doing in the drawings, using sequential sentence frames such as:

I got up when ______. Then I walked ______. After that, it was time to ______.

Advanced
Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during partner practice.

All Levels
If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: authority/la autoridad; detail/el detalle; dialogue/el diálogo.