Establish the Writer’s Voice

1. Focus

Explain Establishing the Writer’s Voice in an Informational Report

**Say:** When I write a report, I’m trying to be factual and objective. That means I don’t share my opinions or personal feelings about my subject. I don’t talk in the first person. I don’t share stories about my personal life. I explain. But I still want to give my writing a voice, a personality. I want my readers to feel as if I’m talking to them and that I’m in the writing, acting as their guide, their expert. That’s not so easy to do when I’m busy giving the facts, but there are some techniques I can use. Today we’ll look at some ways to put your voice into an informational report.

Model Establishing the Writer’s Voice in an Informational Report

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

Ask students to listen as you read the passage aloud and to listen for the presence of a strong narrative voice.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

- Learn techniques for establishing their own voice in an informational report.
- Practice recognizing these techniques in informational texts.
- 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.

Modeling Text

**Say:** When I read the first sentence, I know immediately what the topic is going to be about—soccer. But I don’t really sense the writer’s presence in the text until I get to the second sentence: “But don’t be fooled.” When I read that, I really start to pay attention. I think, “This writer is talking to me. She’s telling me not to jump to conclusions.” That makes me want to read on. When she says, “There’s a lot to understand,” it occurs to me that this writer must know a lot about soccer. And when she says, “Let’s start with the field,” I feel as if she is there with me, taking my hand, and that she is going to give me a personal introduction to this game. I really like that. She gives me confidence that although the game is complicated, she will explain it to me in an organized way so that I will understand it, too.

Soccer has been called a simple sport because the game is simply about kicking a ball, scoring goals, and making sure the other team doesn’t. But don’t be fooled. There’s a lot to understand.

Let’s start with the field: It’s a rectangle 100 yards wide and 130 yards long divided by a halfway line.
2. Rehearse

Practice Identifying the Writer’s Voice

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

You should realize that offside is a complicated rule that takes some getting used to. Of course, a great way to learn soccer is to watch the game in action. Look for games in your neighborhood. Even better, put on a pair of cleats and play a bit.

Practice Text

Read aloud the practice text while students follow along. Ask students to work with a partner to identify the ways the writer establishes her voice of authority in the text and connects with the reader. Students should be prepared to share their ideas with the class.

Share Ideas

Bring students together and invite them to share their ideas. If necessary, use some or all of the following questions to guide students’ analysis:

- Where does the writer speak directly to you? How do you know?
- What words does the writer use to make you feel she is the expert telling you about the game of soccer?

Students should recognize these phrases as ways that the writer establishes her voice and authority:

- Sentence 1: “You should realize . . .” is a phrase that indicates the writer knows a lot about her subject.
- Sentence 2: This sentence establishes a friendly but authoritative voice.
- Sentence 3: The writer offers a suggestion directly to the reader using the word your.
- Sentence 4: The writer follows up her first suggestion by issuing a soft challenge to the reader to actually go out and play a little soccer.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We just learned that writers can establish a voice of authority and camaraderie in their report. Some ways to do this are by speaking directly to readers in a voice of authority, referring to readers as you, and by giving direct suggestions or commands that grab their attention.

Encourage students to think about ways to establish their own voice as they write their reports during independent writing time. During 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 read aloud sections of their informational reports that show that they’ve established their own voice.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

While other students complete the partner practice activity or during independent writing time, work with beginning ELs one on one to support their ability to generate oral sentences about an informational topic of interest to them. Help them write their sentences and reread them together.

Intermediate and Advanced

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity. Ensure that students understand the practice text before they begin the activity.