Using the Lessons

For ease of use and to help you establish a consistent routine in your writer’s workshop, every day follows a consistent 4-step gradual-release structure.

**Step 1: Mini-Lesson—Focus**

Teachers explain and model the lesson focus section to the whole class. Each focus section includes think-alouds and step-by-step instruction for effective modeling.

**Objectives**

In this mini-lesson, teachers will:

- Launch the informational report unit of study.
- Establish themselves as informational report writing mentors by sharing papers they researched as a student and facts they know about nonfiction topics that interest them.
- Model how to talk about nonfiction topics.

**Students will:**

- Choose a topic and discuss what they know about it and how they might go about researching or learning more.
- Share what they know about a topic and discuss their ideas about the process of researching a topic with the whole class.

**Preparation**

**Materials Needed**

- If possible, a research report you wrote as a student (such as an excerpt from a thesis, dissertation, or shorter research paper) or a nonfiction text you wrote more recently that required research
- Chart paper and markers
- Self-stick notes
- Interactive whiteboard resources

**Introduce Informational Report Writing**

Display a research paper you wrote as a student. Use the sample think-aloud below as a model of how to talk to students about a topic you learned about while writing an informational report. You may wish to share with students a variety of resources that you used to find information on your topic.

**Sample think-aloud.** Say: When I was a student, I wrote many papers. Some were informational reports, such as this one. I only knew a little bit about the planet Mars before I studied it and wrote a report. I read other reports to learn more about it. I looked at many different sources, including books, magazine articles, and articles from space organizations that I found on the Internet. I was also lucky and had the chance to talk with a scientist who was an expert on Mars. Through this research, I learned many facts that I could share. For example, Mars is much smaller than Earth. It has seasons and polar areas as on Earth. It also has giant mountains and canyons. I became so interested in Mars that I kept reading and talking about it with others long after writing my report. All of us read informational reports to learn about topics, and we all share information by writing informational reports.

**Say:** In informational reports, writers write about nonfiction topics they have researched. For the next several weeks, we are going to read, write, and share information about topics as we learn to write informational reports. We will learn about the importance of researching our facts and using different types of sources, the value of organizing concepts, and the usefulness of including charts and other graphic features to support the text in an informational report.

**Introduce the Purpose and Audience for Informational Reports**

**Say:** The main purpose of informational reports is to inform readers about nonfiction topics. When I write an informational report, I think, “Who will read this?” I think of my audience as people who don’t know anything about my topic. I try to write in a way that grabs my readers’ attention from the start. I want to support the information I present with accurate facts, data, graphics such as diagrams and charts, and expert evidence. Learning to write a strong informational report will help you not only when you need to write a report for school but also whenever you want to share information with others clearly.
In this mini-lesson, teachers will:

**Objectives**

- Look at Topics Through a Writer's Eyes
- Introduce Informational Report Writing
- Practice Talking About Nonfiction Topics

**Materials Needed**

- Interactive whiteboard resources
- Self-stick notes
- Chart paper and markers

**Preparation**

- Establish themselves as mentors by sharing papers they recently that required research
- Nonfiction text you wrote more about nonfiction topics
- Sample think-aloud. Say:

  **Strategy to Support ELs**

- **Beginning**
  - Meet with beginning ELs one on one while other students work with partners in “Practice Talking About Nonfiction Topics.” Encourage them to describe their topics in any way they can—with words or pictures or by drawing or painting on pictures. Expand on their ideas with simple sentences. Use self-stick notes to label images of key content vocabulary in pictures.

- **Intermediate**
  - Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during partner practice. Write simple sentence frames on chart paper and model how students can use them to talk about topics. For example:

  - My topic is ______ and ______.
  - I know ______.
  - 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 to help them understand the lesson focus:
      - inform/informar, informational/informativo(a), topic/tópico.

**Strategy to Support ELs**

The main purpose of informational reports is to inform readers about nonfiction topics they have researched. For the next several weeks, we are going to read, write, and share information about topics as we learn to write informational reports. We will also look at how to write informational paragraphs providing a topic sentence and facts and details about any nonfiction topic they know about. They might want to use the topic they discussed with their partner during the mini-lesson.

**Step 2: Mini-Lesson—Rehearse**

 Students work with a partner to practice and discuss the lesson focus prior to independent writing.

**Step 3: Independent Writing and Conferring**

 Students write independently at whatever stage of the writing process they are in. If appropriate, students apply the mini-lesson focus. Teachers use Strategies to Support ELs and the Responsive Prompts to Support and Scaffold Writers (on the flip chart) to meet individual students’ needs.

**Step 4: Share**

 Each day’s workshop ends with 2 or 3 students sharing how they applied the mini-lesson focus to their own writing.