Look at Topics Through a Writer’s Eyes

1. Focus

Introduce Research Report Writing

Display and/or describe a research report you wrote as a student. Use the sample think-aloud below as a model of how to talk to students about your experience as a research report writer.

Sample think-aloud. Say: When I was in college, I was studying to be a teacher. And I had to write many papers. My teachers, or professors, assigned many research reports to me and my classmates. Sometimes I got to choose the topic myself, but other times the professor assigned the topic to us. One of the research reports I had to write was about how children learn to read. When I got this assignment, I had no idea what I would say. This was my first education course, and I had no idea there were so many scientific studies about how we learn to recognize print and read and understand it. But I went to the library, and I found books, magazines, and journal articles and I read and took a lot of notes. I learned how children make the connection between sounds and alphabet symbols. I learned that young children don’t even necessarily know how to read from left to right until they are taught that. I learned how important it is to think as you read so that you understand what the words are telling you. When I finally finished that research paper, I felt like an expert. And that felt really good!

Say: People write research reports to present solid information. All of us have been or can be writers of research reports. For the next several weeks, we are going to read, write, and share research reports with one another. We will learn about the importance of researching and about different types of sources, the value of organizing concepts, and how to use graphic features such as diagrams and charts to support the information in a report.

Introduce the Purpose and Audience for Research Reports

Say: The main purpose of a research report is to inform readers. Scientists write research reports to share with other scientists the results of their research. Students write research reports as part of their assignments for the courses they are studying. The audience can be the writer’s peers or teachers.
2. Rehearse

Practice Talking About Nonfiction Research Topics

Invite students to work with partners. Students should tell their partners about a topic they might like to research. The partners sharing should tell why the topic interests them and what sources they might use to gather information about the topic. The partners listening should be prepared to tell what they learned from their partners.

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

Share Nonfiction Research Discussions with the Class

Invite volunteers to share their discussions with the rest of the class. Use one or more of the following questions to engage students in a group conversation.

Listener
- What research topic did your partner tell you about?
- What does your partner already know about this topic? What sources would he or she use to find out more?

Student sharing facts
- Why did you choose this topic?
- How easy or hard was it to think of informational sources to use for research? Why do you think it was easy or hard?

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We learned that a research report informs readers. When I wrote research reports, I ended up feeling like an expert on my topic because I did so much reading and note taking. In the next several weeks, you will explore many topics and research and write your own research report. You will get to feel like an expert on your topic, too!

Ask students to write one or more paragraphs providing 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.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to read aloud their informational paragraphs.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning
Meet with beginning ELs one on one while other students work with partners. Encourage them to describe their idea for a research topic in any way they can—with words or gestures or by drawing or pointing to pictures. 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 research topics. For example:

I am interested in ______.
I would like to research ______.

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; investigate/investigar; study/estudiar; topic/el tópico.