Use Multiple Sources to Develop Original Ideas

1. Focus

Explain Using Multiple Sources

Say: Before you write an informational report, you have to become a “mini-expert” on the topic you’re going to write about. This means you need to know the topic well enough to write about it using your own ideas. To learn about the topic, you will need to consult multiple sources. Using multiple sources will help you gain a deeper understanding of your topic. And having this deeper understanding will help you come up with your own original ideas about the topic.

Model Using Multiple Sources to Develop Original Ideas

As you model using multiple sources, show students examples of books and Internet sites. If you have a whiteboard connected to the web, go online to show students different examples.

Sample think-aloud. Say: My topic is the Great Sphinx and my research question is, “What is the mystery surrounding the Great Sphinx?” To do my research, I’ll consult books, magazine articles, and conduct an Internet search to see what kinds of information I can find.

Show students an encyclopedia article and one or more books about the Sphinx.

Say: I started with an encyclopedia article, which gave me some basic information about the Great Sphinx: where it is located, its size, and so on. I'm looking for the mystery surrounding the Great Sphinx, so I found several books in the library that talk about the mystery. It seems that the argument is whether the Sphinx was actually built earlier than many believe. There are signs of water damage, which is unusual because it is in a desert. Some think it may have been constructed at a time when the Sahara was a grassland. This would make it very old. Because there are different points of view, I need to find resources that give details about the different ideas and also about the people who support the viewpoints.

If possible, show students websites about the Great Sphinx.

Say: I used the key words Great Sphinx to run a search on the Internet. Many sites came up, so I have to be careful that I get reliable, accurate information. One site tells me that the Sphinx was in existence during the time of Pharaoh Khufu but that no definite date can be given to its construction. Another site mentions that many believe it was built in the time of Pharaoh Khufu but also provides information on alternative theories. One website article gives me a name that I can search for: Robert Schoch, a professor of geology at Boston...
University. The important thing about using multiple sources is that they often give you leads to other important information. When I search for Robert Schoch, I find many sites about his theories and also about who he is. Searching multiple sources is important in order for me to come to my own conclusions. I will need to give both sides of the argument about when the Sphinx was built.

2. Rehearse

Practice Identifying Multiple Sources to Develop Original Ideas

Ask students to work with partners to brainstorm lists of sources they can consult to research their topics. Encourage students to think of the different angles from which they might study their topics; for example, the time period, events that may have happened before and after, and finding the most current information available.

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

Share Ideas

Bring students together and invite volunteers to share their lists of sources. Ask: How will these sources help you develop your own ideas about the topic? Ask students to discuss how they can continue to apply this strategy to their independent research.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: Today we learned about using multiple sources to develop original ideas about our research report topics. Using more than one source gives us a deeper understanding of our topics. They can also provide us with a variety of perspectives, which may help us think about our topic in new ways.

Encourage students to use multiple sources as they research 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 students to share sources they found that provided them with relevant information for their research reports. Ask: Did you find sources that provided conflicting information? How did you handle that?

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning
Pair beginning ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity. Keep in mind that they may not be able to contribute many ideas orally. You will want to work with them individually to help them choose a topic and find sources of information about it.

Intermediate and Advanced
Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity.