Lesson Skill: Synthesizing to support a thesis — “big picture” emphasis

Strand   Writing, Research
SOL      9.6, 9.8
          10.6, 10.8
          11.6, 11.8
          12.6, 12.8

Materials
• Narrowing the Topic Graphic Organizer
• Web Source Evaluation Organizer
• Thesis Flow Chart
• Computer/Internet access for all students

Lesson
1. Review definition of thesis and authentic purpose.
   o Thesis -- states the objective of a paper in a single statement identifying
     the topic, support, and position.
   o Authentic purpose - the reason the topic is important to you, the writer.
2. Students choose a topic to investigate further. Discuss the two types of knowledge:
   self and world. Using this information, students choose a topic that they believe
   would be narrow enough to research.
3. Using the Narrowing the Topic graphic organizer, students take the chosen topic and
   narrow it even further, until it is a topic that is workable.
4. Using computer resources (databases, Internet, keyword searches), students begin
   gathering information. They analyze and evaluate each source using the Web Source
   Evaluation Organizer. Students need to synthesize the information in order to
   organize it for further use.
5. Discuss the differences between primary and secondary sources. Have students
   identify and organize their sources into these two categories.
6. Using the Thesis Flow Chart, students synthesize the information they have collected
   and organize.
7. Remind students that this is a working or preliminary thesis and is subject to change
   as they compose their research document.
8. Have students move into pairs. In their pairs, students evaluate the synthesis of
   information with their partner. Students assist one another in identifying possible
   research questions which will need to be answered during the process of writing the
   final research product. Students collaborate with one another, through discussion,
   the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed topic and support.
9. Students share their observations with the class or in a larger cooperative group, recording additional evaluative information for further use.

10. When all groups have presented their preliminary findings, discuss the overall process of writing a working thesis. Review the importance of defining and utilizing: thesis, authentic purpose, self-knowledge, and world knowledge, supporting details, primary sources, secondary sources, reliability of sources, and evaluation.

**Strategies for Differentiation**
- Modeling of Narrowing the Topic
- Vocabulary — word wall
- Text to Speech for Web sites
- Editing guide — checklist
- Dictation tool
Narrowing the Topic

Directions: Choose your topic for research. Using a computer and Internet search engine, narrow your topic. Each level should be more specific resulting in fewer “hits” and thus bringing your topic to a manageable level.
Research Main Topic

Supporting Details

Position

English Enhanced Scope and Sequence
Web Source Evaluation Organizer

Web Source: ____________________________________________

Date Accessed: _________________________________________

Location of Access: _____________________________________

Authority
Who is the author/editor? ________________________________

What qualifications do they have to be an expert? ______________

Can I verify the credibility of the author? Where? How? ______________

Accuracy
Are the facts accurate? ___________________________________

Is there an editor, blog, discussion board, or peer review process? ______________

Are there links to known authorities? What are they? ______________

Is the information primary or secondary? _______________________

Objectivity
Does the author show bias? If so, how? ________________

Is there an affiliation with an educational institution? ______________

Who sponsors the site? _________________________________

Is it a government site (.gov)? _______________________________

Timeliness
When was the site last updated? ______________________________

Was its inaugural post in the last year? ________________________