

Lesson Skill: Informative/Expository writing

Strand Writing

SOL 3.9

4.7

5.7

Materials

- Children’s magazines with nonfiction articles
- Available technology
- Blank paper, index cards, paper clips

Lesson

1. Choose a few well-written and interesting nonfiction magazine articles to read to students as models of informative/expository writing. Display the articles, or provide a copy for each student.
2. Explain how these articles convey ideas and information, pointing out clear, interesting topic sentences; well-developed paragraphs; specific vocabulary; and use of facts, definitions, opinions, details, and information. Explain how to identify the intended audience by noticing how the techniques employed in the article cater to the intended audience.
3. Explain to students that they will be writing an article for their peers and will create an “expert list”—a list of topics about which they consider themselves to be an expert. First, use think-aloud strategies to model how to write an expert list for students, then have them begin their own expert lists and share topic ideas. Model how to choose a topic of interest to students that will be used to demonstrate the process, then have them choose their own topic for independent development, using the same criteria.
4. As part of the class model, write facts about the chosen topic—one fact per piece of blank paper. Give each student a few index cards, and ask them to write only one fact they know about their own chosen topic on each card.
5. Begin to organize the facts for the class topic by sorting similar facts together. Students may begin to notice similarities among the facts as you help sort them. Tell students this is how they will organize their nonfiction piece, either into sentences or paragraphs. Have students now organize their own index cards and clip them together by similarities. Ask students to share how they organized their facts.
6. Use think-aloud strategies about the facts, and use them to create an interesting lead/topic sentence. Refer back to the nonfiction articles for examples of topic sentences. Have students brainstorm at least two different lead/topic sentences for their article and share them with the class. Have them choose the lead/topic sentence that best explains the central idea of their piece.
7. Model how to turn facts into cohesive sentences and paragraphs using transition words (e.g., ‘for example,’ ‘finally,’ etc.), descriptive vocabulary, and voice. Note that well-

developed writing takes a lot of thought. Now, let students write their own paragraphs, using the facts they organized. Follow up by having them write their conclusion, regardless of whether it is a sentence or a paragraph. Explain that the conclusion should refer back to the topic and restate the central idea not using the same words. Refer back to the nonfiction articles to examine how those authors concluded their articles. Create a conclusion for the class article, and have students write their own conclusion.

8. Summarize by asking the following questions about students' writing: Is the article clear and easy for the reader to understand? Is there a specific topic identified? Are supporting details, facts, and definitions used? Is specific vocabulary used? Does the conclusion refer back to the topic's central idea?

Strategies for Differentiation

- Have students highlight/color code/underline organization techniques, i.e., topic sentences.
- Give students a list of choices for their writings.
- As an extension activity have students share how they organized their facts using a student-generated online poster.
- Use other models of informative/explanatory writing that includes examples of anonymous student writings.
- Post transition words and descriptive vocabulary within the room for reference.
- Preteach elements of the lesson, such as voice.