

Inquiry Mini-Lessons

Evaluating Information Sources

Being able to tell if the information you are using is reliable or not is critical when doing research. In this lesson, students will learn what they need to consider when looking at sources for inquiry.

Time: 25 minutes

Materials:

- a variety of non-fiction texts to support the inquiry question (Be sure to include some texts that are examples of resources from credible Websites, organizations, and government sources, and a few resources that are from less-credible sources.)
- chart paper and marker, or interactive whiteboard

Grouping: whole class and partners

Procedure:

1. Set up a chart with the heading, “Reliable Sources of Information.” Brainstorm with students what sources they think would make a resource useful for research and record their ideas. Ensure that credible sources are covered in the brainstorming, e.g., government sources, experts, organizations.

When we look at how reliable a resource is, we need to think about where the information comes from. Is it written by an expert in that area? Is it written by a government source, or perhaps a credible or well-known organization or company?

2. Explain to students that it’s also a good idea to ask themselves some questions about each resource. Chart the questions, such as:

- Is the information up to date? (Look for the year the information was published or posted.)
- Is the information accurate or true?
- Can I find this information in more than one source?

3. Remind students of your inquiry question, e.g., “How we can help everyone to have clean water?” and the resources that you have chosen that you think might help you with the inquiry. Explain that you want to be sure that these resources are reliable, or credible.

Even though I have a lot of resources, I’m not sure what will be of help to me. I need to evaluate how reliable these resources are. I can figure this out by looking at the source of the information. I can also figure out how reliable the resource is by asking myself our list of questions.

4. Model by choosing a resource and thinking aloud, using the questions you have charted.

5. Provide partners with one of the non-fiction resources that you have gathered and ask them to skim through the resource and decide if they think it is a reliable source.

I want you to look at a few of our resources with a partner and, using the questions on our chart, discuss how reliable the information is.

6. Have students share their findings with the class. What criteria did they find most useful for evaluating the resources? Add any new evaluation suggestions to the class chart.

Teaching Tip: If students are researching in small groups, pairs, or individually, ask them to go back to their own gathered resources and evaluate them using the Reliable Sources of Information chart.