

Inquiry Mini-Lessons

Reading/Researching with a Question in Mind

It is important for students to keep their inquiry question in mind as they investigate using a variety of supportive resources. They need to self-monitor to be sure that they are always focusing on their question, and not letting their attention wander off into other parts of the text. Students also need to realize that putting a resource back (with good reason) is a legitimate action.

Time: 20 minutes

Materials:

- a collection of different types of texts, including books, magazines, Websites, pictures, audio clips, DVDs
- sticky notes or index cards
- chart paper for an anchor chart

Grouping: whole class and partners

Procedure:

1. Remind students that they always need to keep their inquiry question in mind as they do their investigations.
2. Make a connection for students with the Self-monitoring strategy in which they always check in as they are reading to be sure the text makes sense and that they are reading for a purpose.
3. Create an anchor chart with the question, “Is this information answering my question” as a heading. Record, “Yes, this is a good resource to use” as option a) and “No, this is not a good resource to use” as option b). Post the chart in clear sight for students reference.
4. Model how you write a question on an index card or sticky note and place it in front of you as you research.
5. Begin to use a resource such as a DVD. Stop after two minutes of watching the DVD and show students how you go back to your question and ask, “Is the information I am finding out answering my question?”
6. Repeat step 5 with other texts or DVDs, and include one that is clearly not answering your question so students know what that process will look like. Tell students that sometimes the resources we choose are not very useful. Reassure them it is okay to move to a different section of the resource, or put the resource back if it is not helpful.

These books (magazines, Websites) are so filled with information that I have to work hard to keep my mind on the question I am thinking about.

Do you remember how we always have to stop and ask ourselves, “Is this making sense” when we are reading? We need to use this strategy here, too, and we need to be sure that what we are reading is helping us with our inquiry question.

If yes, this is a good resource for me. If no, I will put down the resource and select another one. What do you think?

It is fine to put a resource back, or to check out another part of the resource if you have a good reason for doing that.

Teaching Tip: Using a DVD or enlarged/projected text will make it easier for students to follow along with you and to identify whether you are meeting your goal of finding specific types of information.

7. Have students write their question(s) on a card or sticky note.
8. As they read/research, encourage them to consistently self-monitor, to use the anchor chart, and to ask themselves whether the resource they are using is helping them answer their inquiry questions.
9. Encourage students to share with a partner the information they have learned before recording it. Have them ask each other if the information is helping them answer their question(s). If not, then have them move to a different section/part of the resource, or a different resource all together.
10. During reflection time, have students, alone or in pairs, share how they have been able to keep their question in mind and what they did when they found a resource that was not helpful.