[Research] Choose a Topic

Description

What makes for a good research paper topic?

Identify an issue, or a topic within a larger issue, that you either feel strongly about or wonder about.

Time To Complete: 1-2 Hours

Common Core Standards

- CCRA.W.7

I Can Statements

- I can choose a topic for my research paper that
    - promotes questioning and encourages my curiosity to learn more about the subject.
    - is clearly and accurately defined and related to my current area of study.
    - Is specific or narrow enough to support a manageable research process.
    - requires critical inquiry and higher-order thinking, such as analysis, questioning, and evaluation.

- I will know if my topic for my research paper is of high quality if it:
    - promotes questioning and curiosity to know more about the subject
    - is something I feel strongly about or want to learn more about
    - is clearly and accurately defined and related to the current area of study
    - is specific or narrow enough to support a manageable research process
    - requires critical inquiry and higher-order thinking, such as analysis, questioning, and evaluation

Suggestions for Assessing Student Readiness to Move Forward:

- Confer with students, asking probing questions about their topic to gauge how well the topic meets the quality criteria.

- Ask students to state their topic and explain (orally or in writing) how it meets the quality criteria for a high quality topic.
- Ask students to self-evaluate their work after completing one of the activities below.

Possible Activities

If students have complete freedom over the issue or topic they select, you might model your own writing process by showing how you gather information about the world. Model how you connect to news and issues based on your prior life experience, your interests, and what you read. You might also ask students to preview newspapers, watch news segments, and tune in to radio news and discuss their connections.

Have students brainstorm several topics for their research paper and ask them to write, draw, or discuss each one for a few minutes. They can use writing partners, re-read their own work, or ask the whole class for advice on which topic is the “thickest,” most relevant, or most interesting.

For practice have students argue a position on a selected issue in letters to two different audiences, addressing their own purpose and considering the needs of the audience in each letter. Students can work with peer groups

Give a mini-lesson on the various types of images and how they are used to persuade or influence an audience. Give examples of various images and discuss their emotional impact. Provide two images and have students choose which they would use for a specific audience. For example, show students a cartoon picture of a baby with a Band-Aid on its head and a real picture of a baby with an injury and ask which is more effective in persuading students to join a rally against child abuse.

Resources

Selecting a Topic for Research

- http://library.weber.edu/ref/guides/howto/topicselection.cfm

Topic Selection Guide for Senior Capstone Projects

- http://doe.sd.gov/octe/documents/SrE_Topic.pdf

Short Article on Choosing Research Topics

- http://www.welltrainedmind.com/writing-the-research-paper-step-ii-choosing-the-topic/