Finding Resources: Organizing and Taking Notes — Grade Seven

Ohio Standards Connections

Research

Benchmark B
Locate and summarize important information from multiple sources.
(Grades 5 - 7)

Indicator 2
Identify appropriate sources and gather relevant information from multiple sources (e.g., school library catalogs, online databases, electronic resources and Internet-based resources).
(Grade 7)

Benchmark C
Organize information in a systemic way.
(Grades 5 - 7)

Indicator 4
Select an appropriate structure for organizing information in a systematic way (e.g., notes, outlines, charts, tables and graphic organizers).
(Grade 7)

Indicator 5
Analyze and organize important information, and select appropriate sources to support central ideas, concepts and themes.
(Grade 7)

Lesson Summary:
Students will learn how to find resources and take notes by participating in group work before they begin working individually on their own research questions. Students will then identify appropriate resources and gather relevant information for their investigations. They also will practice summarizing and paraphrasing information from the sources and begin to take notes on note cards. Students will spend some time creating a cluster to develop subtopics for their research so they can organize their information more effectively.

Estimated Duration: *Three-four hours broken into instructional sessions.*

Commentary:
Once students select an investigative question, they should begin to look for resources. Sometimes, students find resources are limited or too difficult to understand. This could lead them to select a different topic and question, or they may simply need additional help in locating the appropriate resources.

As students begin to read through the resources they have selected, they will need to think about the information they really need. Practice in clustering topic and sub-topic clustering is provided in the lesson. The clusters students develop can help them decide what data is useful and guide them when they organize their note cards for their oral presentations.

Taking notes and quoting sources when writing down a direct quote on note cards is one of the best ways to ensure that students avoid plagiarism. When students are ready to begin taking notes, you might choose to talk to them about stealing another person's words or ideas and the importance of giving credit to the "owners" of the words and ideas. This concept is difficult for many students and will need to be reviewed throughout the project. Periodic conferencing and ongoing assessment to monitor note taking by students is advisable during this process.

Pre-Assessment:
A teacher may show students a list of research topics alongside a companion list of resources. This would be followed by a series of questions for students to respond orally about which resources may be the most useful or offer the most support for any of the listed topics. The teacher monitors the accuracy of and insightfulness displayed by the students' responses to the questions and, based on their responses, determines at which level they should begin their investigation.

Post-Assessment:
Ongoing assessment is especially important during this lesson. Teachers will need to monitor students' work closely to be sure students are not simply copying word-for-word from their resources, and when they do copy, use quotation marks. It's important, too, that students identify their sources on their note cards.

Instructional Procedures:

1. Divide students into small groups. Provide each group with a variety of resources on a single topic along with a question to be researched. (**Note:** Each group can have the same question and the same resources, or each group could have a different question with appropriate resources.)

   Sample questions:
   - What does science fiction tell us about our future?
   - What do we know about life on a space station?
   - What dangers exist for people who want to travel to a space station?
   - Why is space travel so expensive?
   - What kind of training do people need for space travel?
   - What kinds of problems might people face if they were to live in a confined space station?

2. Ask the groups to create a chart or cluster to show what subtopics or questions they need to research. Show them Blackline Master 1 as an example of how a cluster might look.

3. Give each group a set of 5-10 note cards. Before they begin to read the information provided, they should record the information for citation – one citation per card. Put the following information on an overhead transparency to show students what goes on each card:
   - Author(s)
   - Title
   - Publisher
   - Place of publication
   - Date of publication

   Students should then give each note card a number. Explain to them that they can use this number when they fill out other note cards from that source.

4. Have each group read all of the information provided and look for information that addresses the research question and the subtopics from their clusters or charts. As groups examine different resources, ask them to think about the following questions:
   - What information was the same in all of the resources?
   - What conflicts in information did you find?
   - How can you know which information is correct?
   - What type of information can you get from each of the different types of resources?
   - Why is it important to look in more than one resource to answer investigative questions?
   - What other resources would have been helpful in investigating your question?

5. Have each group decide what information they should put on additional note cards that will be used for taking notes from their resources. They should also decide whether the information should be paraphrased, summarized or quoted. Students should include the following information on each note card:
   - the number assigned to the resource,
   - the page number(s) where the information or quotation is located,
   - the subtopic the note goes with, and

- the note itself, enclosed in quotation marks when needed.

6. Have groups share their findings and their note cards with the rest of the class. Discuss the importance of gathering information from more than one source. Talk about the advantages and disadvantages of each of the types of resources. Generate a list of additional resources that could have been used for further research.

7. Discuss the different types of resources available and how relevant they are. Use the following terms: online database, electronic resource, Internet-based resource, primary source, secondary source.

8. Tell students they will continue their research on their own questions (the questions they have decided to use from their individual and/or class lists of questions) by visiting the school library. Allow groups to plan how they will use their time in the library wisely. Provide time for students to do their research in the school library. (Note: If the library has Internet access, some students can explore online resources during the trip to the library. If not, time will need to be provided for students to explore these resources in class.)

9. Have groups meet together to share information gathered from the visit to the library. Ask each group to share answers to their research questions orally and tell about what resources were helpful and which seemed to contain inaccurate information.

10. When students have all or most of their resources, they should read through enough of them to determine what subtopics they might need for their investigative questions. They should develop a cluster or chart to organize their sub-topics. Provide them with a cluster template to chart their sub-topics. (See Blackline Master 2.)

11. Once students have their clusters developed, they should begin reading and taking notes, being careful to find information and to take notes for each sub-topic.

Differentiated Instructional Support:
Instruction is differentiated according to learner needs, to help all learners either meet the intent of the specified indicator(s) or, if the indicator is already met, to advance beyond the specified indicator(s).
- Vary the research topic according to the interests and abilities of the students in a group.
- Consider grouping struggling readers with more capable readers for research purposes or create a group of struggling students that you will work with to guide through the process.
- Collect resources written on a variety of levels to allow all students the opportunity to do research.

Homework Options and Home Connections:
Encourage students to bring in relevant information for the research questions that they might have available at home. If they have Internet access at home, encourage them to continue their search for resources at home.

Materials/Resources Needed:

For the teacher: A variety of resources, both primary and secondary, that address the same topic (e.g., newspapers, encyclopedias, magazines, almanacs and online resources); research questions for each group based on the resources provided; note cards to give each group 10; copies of Blackline Masters for all students; overhead projector and blank transparencies and transparencies of the Blackline Masters.

For the students: Access to the Internet and a pack of 3x5 note cards, preferably lined.

Key Vocabulary:

- relevant
- online databases
- electronic resources
- Internet-based resources
- primary sources
- secondary sources

General Tips:

- Try to include both primary and secondary sources in the materials students examine.
- Teach the differences among online databases, electronic resources and Internet-based resources.
- The media specialist is a wonderful resource person for this unit. Arrange with the media specialist to help students learn how to find different kinds of information in the school media center. You might want to plan this ahead as a lesson to be taught in the media center by the media specialist. This lesson and the resulting search for resources will probably require at least two class periods in the media center.
- Invite parents to contribute materials and resources related to the topics being researched.
- When possible, invite parents or other experts in a field to be interviewed by the class.

Attachments:

- Sample Cluster for Science Fiction Topics (Blackline Master 1)
- Cluster Template (Blackline Master 2)