

Informational Writing Minilesson:

Planning a "How to" Piece

Shannon, First Grade

Teacher speaking to whole class:

"Alright, writers, you know how we have been talking about our how-tos and going through the steps of how we first..."

Whole class speaking:

"...think..."

Teacher speaking to whole class:

"...then we..."

Whole class speaking:

"...plan..."

Teacher speaking to whole class:

"...by telling and touching each page and then we..."

Whole class speaking:

"...sketch..."

Teacher speaking to whole class:

"...and then we..."

Whole class speaking:

"...write..."

Teacher speaking to whole class:

"...out our steps when we are trying to do a how-to to teach someone about something. Well, today I want to teach you something very important though because as a writer and especially as a writer who is teaching something I have to get my reader ready. I have to make sure that they know exactly what they are going to be doing and in order for them to be prepared I have to tell them what they are going to need in order to do this. Ok? So we are going to think as writers today: what will my reader need so they can be ready to do what I am trying to teach them? Ok? So let me show you how I am going to do that. First thing, I always have to do what?"

Whole class speaking:

“Think.”

Teacher speaking to whole class:

“I have to think. So, let me think. Oh, this is something I know how to do...I know how to paint my finger nails. So, I am going to first think of something that I might need in order to paint fingernails. I’ve got my piece here and this is something that you will notice in your booklet today too: ‘You will need’. I try to think to myself when I am painting my nails...Oh, I need cotton balls. So, I just draw a quick little sketch and write cotton balls. Oh, I also need nail polish. Ok? Oh, something else! I need nail polish remover because sometimes I don’t like the color and have to change it or I might make a mistake. So did you see, writers, how I first thought of what I am going to need before I start to teach so that my reader will be ready? Now that I have all of my materials I’m going to plan out my how-to and make sure that I include those materials in my steps. So let me plan. First take a cotton ball and put some polish remover on the cotton ball. Next, rub your nail to take off the old polish. Next, choose a nail color that you want to use. Then...I am trying to think of a precise word...then brush the nail polish over your finger nail to cover it with the color. Last, put the top on your polish bottle and let your finger nails dry. So do you see how I first thought, number one of my idea? Ok? Then I thought of the materials that I’m going to need in order to teach someone how to do this, and then I went through my booklet and I planned each step trying to remember to put these materials in my steps. Ok? Do you think you can try this? Ok. So let’s first, thumbs up when you have an idea of something that you think...”

[Students hold up their thumbs]

Teacher speaking to whole class:

“Wait ...think first...thumbs up when you have thought of an idea of something you think you might want to teach someone today. I’ve got some thumbs up, I see some writers who are thinking carefully, thinking “what is something that I know how to do, that I have done many times and I know how to do it, I am so good at it I can teach someone how to do it?” Oh, I see lots of thumbs now. So writers, this is what I want you to give a go. You have a piece in your folder. When I say go you are going to set up, you are going to pull out your piece, and you are going to talk with your partner very quickly about what it is that you are going to be teaching, what materials you are going to need to do that, and then quickly plan through your steps. And partners, it is very important. Remember - be a good listener, be a good partner because if you hear your partner saying something that they might have left out or that they might need a reminder of, give them that helpful reminder. Ok? Alright? That’s why we partner up. They are a tool to help us. Ok, writers are you ready? Ok, go. No, No. Here at the carpet, like we do, hip to hip, hip to hip. Pull out your piece. Pull out your blank piece. “

Teacher speaking with pair of students:

Do you have an idea of what you are going to do today?

[Student speaking inaudible]

Teacher speaking with pair of students:

“Already Forgot? Think again and I will go talk to Kenny while you are thinking. Have you done that before?”

Student speaking:

“Yes.”

Teacher speaking with pair of students:

“Ok. So, what are some of the things that you think you may need to do that? Turn to that first page. Go to the first page. What are some of the things you think you’ll need to do that? “

[Student speaking inaudible, describing steps to paint nails]

“Well, those are the steps but what will I even need to do that? If you said you know how to paint your nails what are the things that you use to paint your nails? We need finger nail polish, what’s something else you might need?”

[Student speaking inaudible]

Teacher speaking with pair of students:

“You know what I like that you’re doing? I like how you’re already thinking of your steps of how you would do that but I also want you to be sure that you have all the things that you need. So you need finger nail polish and I also want you to be thinking of some other things? Olivia maybe ya’ll can discuss that? What is it that you will be writing about?”

Student speaking:

“Getting dressed”

Teacher speaking with pair of students:

“What would you need to do that? What would you need? And Kenny listen to Olivia and how she is going to tell me what she is going to need.”

[Student speaking inaudible, describing what is needed for getting dressed]

Teacher speaking with pair of students:

“Did you see what she did there Kenny? Did you see how she thought of the things that she’ll need to tell me how to get dressed? Ok, alright. Now maybe plan through your steps.”

Teacher speaking with next pair of students:

“Alright boys, what is it that you’re planning on doing today?”

Student speaking:

“How to ride a bike”

Teacher speaking with pair of students:

“How to ride a bike. Ok, so what is something you would need to do that?”

Student speaking:

“Bike, helmet, kneepads, and shoes”

Teacher speaking with pair of students:

“Bike, helmet, kneepads, and shoes. Definitely. Ok, Alright. On purpose? So what would you need?”

[Student speaking inaudible]

Teacher to whole class:

“Alright, writers can I have your attention this way real quick please? As I was talking to some of you, I noticed that when you thought of your topic you immediately knew what you were going to need. [Student 3] is doing one on how to ride a bike and he immediately said “I’m going to need a bike, helmet, kneepads, and shoes”. Then he started planning out his piece of how he is going to use those things in his teaching. Great minds think alike – you are doing the same thing. So writers did you see how important it is to go ahead and think of things you are going to need before you try to teach someone how to do it? Because your reader has to be prepared, they have to be ready. So, as we go to our seats I want you to keep in mind you’ve already got your idea, you’ve already talked with your partner about the things that you’ll need, so when you go back to your seats you are going to sketch out your materials that you’ll need and plan again, I would plan again, what your steps are and how to do that, because planning is one of the most important parts. Ok, writers off you go!”