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# Section I

## Strategic Inventing

### *Contemplating Ideas*

**T**here are many steps we can take to help students fulfill their potential to create and compose high-quality, creative, and informative pieces of writing—whether they are composing in a writing workshop setting, for personal enjoyment, to respond to a prompt, to reflect, or to fulfill an assignment related to a content subject. In each case, students must begin with ideas and information that they need to process. They need to take these gemstones of knowledge and experience; hone them into substantial, meaningful thoughts; and piece them together into organized schemas that contain the rich vocabulary, organization, and insightful context we all want as writers.

This component of the writing process is what we refer to as *invention*. Typically, inventing is the way writers begin each writing experience or task. It then occurs throughout the process as writers tumble back and forth among thinking, composing, revising, organizing, and researching while they contemplate and toy with their craft. Writers invent each time they consider a new idea and determine how to include it among their other thoughts. They make the abstract more concrete as they begin to set ideas, knowledge, experiences, and eventually, words to paper.

Each of the strategies presented in this section is designed to help students

- generate and expand ideas,
- develop insight,
- organize their thinking,
- envision what their writing will entail, and
- produce as they prepare to write.

Some chapters provide reproducible charts and graphic organizers to prompt students to capture and record valuable thoughts and vocabulary as they prepare to draft. Some prompt students to think metacognitively about

writing to guide their planning. Other chapters support students' thinking by reviewing and analyzing mentor texts as genre models. Each chapter offers a mini-lesson to foster students' self-regulated use of inventing strategies as writing tools.

You may wish to begin to explore this section by reading the opening paragraph in each chapter. Note: Think of the individuals in your class who might benefit from each of the mini-lessons. Then, select a mini-lesson and try it out. We think you will be amazed at how readily students latch onto the use of well-grounded inventing strategies that support their writing—and how their writing improves as a consequence.

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# Color-Coding Sources 1

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**A**ccording to the English Language Arts Common Core Standards, students in Grades 4 through 8 are expected to start to learn how to locate and synthesize information from multiple sources to compose reports and research papers. The Color-Coding Sources strategy helps students organize ideas gathered from multiple primary and secondary sources by linking information with source citations. As students write notes, construct outlines or graphic organizers, and draft reports, they bring along the color-coding that matches the citation. This eliminates all guesswork about the material's origin.

## **WHY THIS STRATEGY IS IMPORTANT**

As a sixth-grade English language arts teacher, I routinely collaborated with our team social studies teacher on an inquiry project in which students researched and wrote reports about ancient civilizations. One of the most difficult writing tasks for students was to keep their notes organized as they collected information from multiple sources. By the time they wrote their first draft, many could no longer remember the exact sources of each piece of information. That's when I started showing students how to color-code sources and notes. To our delight, we found that adding this visual component helped them stay organized.

## **THE MINI-LESSON**

As I work with students on research reports, I note which writers have a system for organizing their information and which do not. To make this assessment, I simply look for citations attached to notes and ask students what they do to identify which information came from which source.

Once I've determined who would benefit from learning the Color-Coding Sources strategy, I meet with them in a small group, asking them to bring their notes and sources.

### Materials Needed

- Highlighters in several different colors
- Index cards
- Class computers, prepared for use
- Example inquiry question written on a piece of paper
- Examples of notes that have been color-coded using three methods:
  - highlighters
  - colored index cards
  - differently colored fonts

In preparation for the lesson, I use a different color in some way to code each source that I will bring to our group—highlighting it, writing it on a particular colored index card, or selecting a colored font on the computer. As noted, students also bring their own resources and notes when we meet in a small group.

To begin, students take turns sharing what they've done so far, and together we look at students' processes and progress. We also discuss how essential it is to cite others' ideas and not present them as our own. One of the most beneficial parts of this strategy happens when students move their notes into their report. All they need to do is transfer their highlighting from their notes to their report as they write the first draft. This way, they can identify what notes and sources they have used and the pages from which the information came. I tell students about this advantage up front so they know why they are color-coding their notes. For this stage, however, they should focus on getting the notes they will need to inform their writing in a way that is organized and makes sense to them.

### Model the Strategy

As I lead the group, I do the following:

1. I model how students might ask their question of inquiry, look for information in multiple sources, and keep a running log of citations or references for each source.
2. I ask students to take notes from one of my sources, using *the same color* that corresponds with the citation. I model this process as I explain it.
3. I demonstrate how I paraphrase. I remind students how to do this using the Use Your Own Words: Paraphrase strategy (see Chapter 10).

Here's an example of what this looks like.

**Teacher:** My report is about how the Ancient Egyptians used to mummify people when they died. In the part of my report that I'm working on now, I'm trying to answer my question about the process of mummification:

How were bodies prepared for mummification? I've found these three informative resources: *Mummies & Pyramids* [Taplin, 2010], *Mummies Made in Egypt* [Aliko, 2011], and an online BBC website entry about mummification [see [www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/Egyptians](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/Egyptians)]. They each explain the process and show pictures that help me understand the procedure.

I show them the first book and continue.

**Teacher:** I have my inquiry question written on top of the note card or paper so I know what question I'm trying to answer. That keeps my notes organized.

I point out the question on top of a piece of paper.

**Teacher:** Then, I paraphrase or put into my own words this information about the mummification process.

I show them the following notes in three formats: typed on a computer, written on a colored index card, and written on paper and highlighted.

**Teacher:** If I like to use the computer to take notes, I start with my first source. I type in my bibliographic information on the book first thing. That way, I have it done, and I won't have to look for all the information when it's time to get my bibliography together. I also note the page numbers where I find the information I'm paraphrasing so if I want to go back to check on something, I have that information right there. Also, if I want to quote something word for word directly from the book, I write it in quotes in my notes and put the page number. I'll need that page information to put into my report for direct quotes. I'm making things very easy for myself later by taking the time to put this information in my notes now. I know I won't remember all these details a week from now when I'm writing my final report!

As I explain all this, I point to this information in the sample notes I have displayed.

**Teacher:** Now comes the color-coding part. When I type in the bibliographic information for this first source, I choose one color that will stand for this source only. I've chosen blue for the *Mummies and Pyramids* book because the cover is blue. You don't have to use colors to match the book cover, but I find it's just another little strategy to help me remember

where my notes came from in case I need to go back to the book later. When I type in all my notes from this source, I will use blue. Then, I go to the second source, *Mummies Made in Egypt*. I change the color of my typing. This time, I'll use the color red to remind me of the cover. I type the bibliography for *Egyptians* in red, then type all the notes from this source in red also. Then, I go on to my third source, the BBC website entry on mummification. Again, I change to a third color; I've used green. I type my bibliography and notes from that source in that color.

After we've reviewed the three different methods, I continue modeling.

**Teacher:** Now that I have all my notes about the process of mummification in one place, I can read through them and quilt them together into a well-written report about how Egyptians mummified people when they died.

After students complete their notes, we meet again to practice quilting together their notes into a color-coded draft. At that point, I also refer students to the Quilting Together an Expository Paper in Four Steps strategy for how to synthesize notes from three sources into their report (see Chapter 8).

When the time comes for students to write their draft, I demonstrate how to transfer the color-coded notes into a first draft. I simply use a highlighter that matches the color of the source to highlight the section that came from a particular source. If I'm working on a computer, I change the color of the font to match the notes' colors. When I'm done with my draft, I show them how to insert the reference citations by matching the color-coded information to my bibliography. When I prepare my final report, I write—or edit my typed report—so no color coding shows. Magically, no one knows my color-coding secret!

### Students Practice the Strategy

As the example shows, I help students' practice the strategy by first walking them through one source. For students who need more help, I guide them with a second source and then gradually pull back my support so they can work toward independence.

### Independent Writing

Students continue using the strategy with several other sources, identifying a different color for each source. I support them by observing and guiding them through the process as needed.

## **Student Reflection**

Once students can use the strategy independently and confidently, I ask them to share how they might use this strategy in other ways. For example, how might color-coding help them organize other writing genres?

## **MODIFYING THE MINI-LESSON**

### **Adaptations for Writers Who Struggle**

I make it clear what style I want students to follow for their citations and report references or bibliography. For example, if I require APA (American Psychological Association, 2010), I provide examples of how to cite various types of sources, such as books, articles, and online sources. I teach students how to follow the models by replacing information from the model examples with information from their sources.

I also provide a graphic organizer for students to use to sort their sources (Figure 1.1). I adjust the number of sources I expect students to consult and refer to in their reports.

### **Adaptations for English Language Learners**

I have found that English language learners (ELLs) require assistance mostly with putting notes from a source into their own words and synthesizing data from multiple sources into coherent ideas. For ideas on how to assist ELLs with these skills, see *Use Your Own Words: Paraphrase strategy* (Chapter 10) and *Quilting Together an Expository Paper in Four Steps* (Chapter 8).

### **Adaptations for Advanced Writers**

I maintain high expectations for advanced writers to stretch their vocabulary as they write their reports and to explicitly follow the designated citation and bibliography style required. If writers are developmentally ready to think critically about the topic about which they are reporting, I have them add an addendum to the report that states their perspective or opinion and use the information from their notes to support their statement. Students use the Color-Coding Sources strategy to prepare this addendum.

## **EXTENDING THE STRATEGY ACROSS THE CONTENT AREAS**

The Color-Coding Sources strategy easily applies to writing exposition in any content area. The strategy may also be used when students are working collaboratively on a project. Each student's work and ideas can be identified on a final product through color coding and cited in a final bibliography or color-coding key.

**Figure 1.1** Note Chart for Sorting Sources

Inquiry Question:
Source # _____
Bibliography
Author _____ Copyright date _____
Title _____
Publisher City, State _____
Publisher _____ or website _____
Notes and Quotes
Page _____
Page _____

## RESOURCES FOR FURTHER READING

- Richards, J. C., & Lasonde, C. A. (2011). *Writing strategies for all primary students: Scaffolding independent writing with differentiated mini-lessons*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Teaching writing strategies is essential if we want students to envision how concrete mental operations occur during composing. Strategies such as Color-Coding Sources make mental actions transparent to students by demonstrating visually how to apply them. Teaching new strategies is critical to expand the knowledge base of writers in Grades 4 through 8.

- Richardson, J. S., Morgan, R. E., & Fleener, C. E. (2012). *Reading to learn in the content areas*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage.

Using computers as tools for writing is not just for advanced writers or older students. Students in Grades 4 through 8 can benefit from using technology to access, store, and draft information as they use the writing process to work through a report of research. Various technology tools and means of producing writing provide different kinds of opportunities for students to develop and enhance their writing skills and use of strategies.