

Comparing Information Sources

Info Task

Students gather information from a variety of sources and make comparisons.

Clarifying the Task

By gathering data from a variety of sources, students can gain a more balanced view of a topic. In this task students select and record key points from three different information sources in order to look for similarities and differences and conflicting information.

Building Understanding

Ask your students to work in groups to brainstorm as many places as they can think of where they can get information (e.g., books, Internet, encyclopedias, people, museums, telephone books, etc.). Give them adhesive notes or small strips of paper to record their ideas on so they are able to move them around. Ask the students to look for similarities and to cluster their information sources into different categories. Have them give each cluster or category a name.

Afterward, invite them to share and discuss their ideas. The following are some possible discussion questions:

- Which information sources could you find here in your classroom, school or library?
- Which information sources do you have at home?
- What community resources are available to you?
- Which sources do you like best for research? Why?
- Why should we use more than one source for research?
- How can we be sure that information is reliable?

Once they have finished the above activity, instruct your students to find three different types of resources for a project they are working on. Ask them to record key points using the organizer *Comparing Sources* on page 88. Explain that they should use the outside boxes to record key ideas they discover. Once students have exhausted all three resources, have them reread their key points and look for common information. If they find any points common to all three sources, ask the students to record them in the center box. Remind them that the wording does not have to be exactly the same. If they find conflicting information, have them rewrite it outside of the boxes. Ask students to think of ways to test out their conflicting information.

Demonstrating Understanding

Ask students to meet back in their groups and discuss what they have learned about research and different types of resources through this process. Have the students share and chart their findings. Individually, have each student create a chart on the computer of information sources they can use for research. Encourage them to put telephone numbers, Web addresses and other information on their chart where applicable. Have them print the charts and fasten them to their research folders for future reference.

Check It Out

Prepare a list of Web sites that would be of use to your students with homework and other information tasks. Send it home in a newsletter with students, along with a copy of their personal information sources chart.

Selecting Information

Info Task

Students locate and select information from a variety of resources in order to investigate the significance of an historical event, such as the building of the Canadian Pacific Railroad on the development of Western Canada.

Clarifying the Task

Locating and selecting key data and ideas is fundamental to successful information processing. In this task students learn how to search through large amounts of information, how to select relevant data and ideas, and how to sort the data to solve an information problem.

Building Understanding

Discuss the term *significance* with the class. To determine the significance of an event, students must first examine the impact the event has on the community. Use a local event, like the opening of a new supermarket, to demonstrate impact on the community. Make sure that students recognize that there is an impact on a number of individuals and groups with a range of effects.

Following this, ask the students to think about the individuals and groups that a particular historical event, such as the building of the CPR, would impact on. Chart their ideas.

When they have completed this, have them fold a paper into four columns and head each column with a person or group that they think might have been affected by the event they are examining. Schedule several sessions for your students to work in the school library to search for information on the event. You may need to have the teacher librarian review search strategies with your class. Remind students to keep their defined need in mind and to stay focused on the significance of the event (e.g., how the building of the CPR affected the development of Western Canada). Also, remind students to select a variety of resources on the topic (e.g., encyclopedias, reference materials and multimedia resources) so they see different perspectives.

Coach students to skim resources and scan for relevant passages, chapter headings, sub-topics, captions, etc., and then select a few to read more closely. Give students a quantity of adhesive notes so they can make reference notes about key points or questions they have about their discoveries. Instruct students to refer back to their adhesive notes, to read passages more closely and to select relevant data that is effective evidence for each heading on their organizer. As students record their data in point form, instruct them to keep it organized under the headings. Have students repeat this procedure with each resource. Encourage students to seek other sources if they are not satisfied with what they have found.

Afterward, group students so they can discuss and consult as they work with their information. Instruct groups to look for patterns and trends in their collective data. Have them select the three big ideas that they have discovered about the significance of the event, record supporting evidence and build a chart with their data using the organizer *Ranking Information* on page 89. Encourage students to dig for ripple effects as they identify those impacted.

Demonstrating Understanding

Have students individually demonstrate their understanding by writing a letter from the point of view of one of the individuals affected by the event they have examined to someone who is unfamiliar with the event. Giving students the opportunity to empathize helps them build real understanding of historical issues.

Check It Out

Make connections to literature through the powerfully illustrated fiction of Paul Yee.