Kenosha Literacy Council
Tutor Tips

February 2008

Personal Experience Writing Activity

One of the best places to find ideas for writing is in personal experiences. Things that happen to us, or things that we have learned of, can often spark an idea. Explain to your student(s) that it is likely that they have already had many experiences that could provide fine material for writing, but that they just have not uncovered them. The following list of questions can help students identify possible topics for writing.

1. What things do I especially like? What things do I dislike?
2. What makes me different from other people?
3. What advice or insight could I share with others?
4. What would I like to change about the world?
5. What do I care about most?
6. What would I most like to know?
7. What would I like to do?
8. Where would I like to go?
9. What exciting things have I done?
10. Do I know any interesting people? Why are they interesting?

Adapted from *Writing Workshop Survival Kit*.

Finding Differences

This activity will help build speaking skills and practice vocabulary. Begin by collecting pairs of objects that are similar but not identical, such as two shoes, books, coffee cups, writing utensils, beverages or shirts.

1. Model the activity. Begin by taking your two objects and asking the students what they are. Write the two labels at the top of your paper (ex. Running shoe and sandal) as the heading of two columns.
2. Ask the students to identify the differences between the two shoes. If they don't know how to explain something, supply those words in simple language, such as big or small.
3. Once your list is sufficient, go back over the list. Ask student to read what is written on the paper and show the differences on the objects.

Newspapers as a Cultural Key

This is a wonderful way from your student to learn more about life in America and to incorporate conversation into your lesson.

You will need a copy of the classified ads from the newspaper. Highlight the section headings so they are easy to find. Choose a section of the ads to begin with. Read some of the ads under that heading. You might read them to your student, they might read them to you or you can take turns. Now use the questions below to stimulate discussion about cultural issues related to that section.

Examples:

Merchandise: In your country…
Do people advertise things for sale in the paper?
If so, is there a fixed price or do people bargain?
Do Americans bargain?

Roommates: In your country…
Do strangers share apartments?
Do young men and women live on their own before they get married?
What do you think about some Americans who live away from their families before they are married?

Employment: In your country…
Do employers advertise their jobs in the paper?
Do people usually get jobs by knowing someone important?
How do you think Americans find jobs?

Pets: In your country…
Do people buy and sell pets?
What are some common pets in you country?
What do you think about American and their pets?

Extension: Have your student choose a section from the classified ads and develop their own discussion questions.

??Questions from KLC Tutors??

Do you have a question that you'd like to see featured?
Please email it to cheryl@kenoshalit.org

Q: I want to add more conversation practice to the lessons with my student. What suggestions do you have?

A: Pictures from a newspaper or magazine are an easy way to spark conversation. Use your student's interests as the foundation for the discussion. For example, if they enjoy cooking use a recipe magazine and if they enjoy being active use a sports magazine. Also, try to use open ended questions. These types of questions often begin with explain, describe, or tell me. Remember that a conversation is two sided so your students wants to hear your opinions as well. Finally, a big smile and a little encouragement go a long way!