

VOICES OF EXPERIENCE

Practical Ideas to
Spark Up the Year

Grades K-3

CAREN CAMERON • KATHLEEN GREGORY
COLLEEN POLITANO • JOY PAQUIN



Introduction

Who is this series for?

Voices of Experience is a series of six books – three for grades K-3, three for grades 4-8. Each book is full of practical ideas designed for new teachers, teachers new to a grade level, and teachers who want new ideas to reenergize their practice.

What's in the books?

We have compiled our best ideas and organized them into two sets of three books:

- Book 1: for the start of the year when teachers are just getting to know their students
- Book 2: for during the year when teachers need to get themselves and their students “fired up”
- Book 3: for the end of the year when teachers need to wrap things up

Each book is organized into four sections around the acronym ROAR.

R = ideas for building relationships

O = ideas for classroom organization

A = ideas for classroom assessment that support student learning

R = ideas that are reliable and ready to use tomorrow

“Create a new model of teacher-teacher support so that every teacher knows every other teacher’s best ideas.”

— Eric Jensen,
Brain-Based Learning

For each idea we provide a brief discussion and easy-to-follow steps. Many also include student examples and unique adaptations. In addition, we have included current information about the brain and how students learn.

We have also included a variety of ways to use this series of books to support professional development activities in different settings; for example, educators' book clubs; team and department meetings and staff meetings; in-service and pre-service workshops; and seminars with student teachers (see appendix A).

Final Note:

The single, most important message we want to leave you with is to listen to your own voice and the voices of your students. Adapt our ideas to fit for you, your students, and your school community.

Research Routines: teaching an ongoing cycle

“Having choices in learning allows the student to begin with the positive emotional state associated with doing what he or she wants to do (McGeehan, 1999).”

— In Laura Erlauer,
The Brain-Compatible Classroom

DISCUSSION

When students have choice, motivation increases. One way we offer choice is by teaching a research routine where students select a question, search for information, summarize the answer, and share with another person. This routine is a cycle that encourages students to work on questions that are important to them, at their own pace.

STEPS

1. Tell students that they are going to learn a research routine so they can select the questions that interest them the most.
2. Draw the four steps of the research routine so that it clearly shows the cycle (see figure 49).
3. Demonstrate the routine for students by working through each step of the cycle and filling out a research sheet (see figure 50). Show how to record a question in Box #1, list sources in Box #2, write a summary in Box #3, and in Box #4, share with a partner and have the partner sign his/her name.

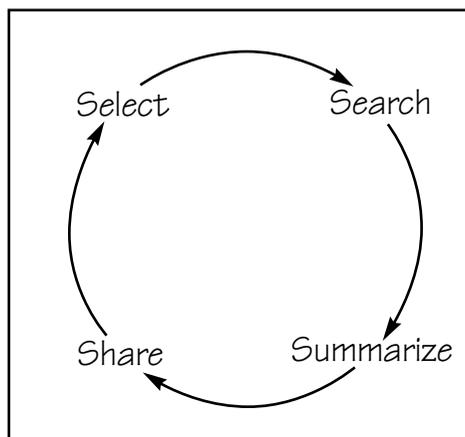


Figure 49. Four steps of a research cycle

4. Select a curriculum focus such as insects, and have the class work together to make a list of questions that they are interested in that relate to insects (see figure 51).
5. Give each student a file folder to hold their research, and make multiple copies of the research sheet for students (see black line master on p. 61).
6. Remind students that each time they finish the research cycle, they select a new question and start again.
7. Give students class time to work on their research. When they have searched and still cannot find an answer, they select a new question and start over. Remind students that the next time they work on their research, they begin where they previously left off. We reassure students that looking at the pictures in books, even if they can't read the words, is a good way to find information.
8. Meet as a group at the end of each research time and discuss: "What worked well today?" "What didn't work well today?" "What can we do next time to make it work better?"

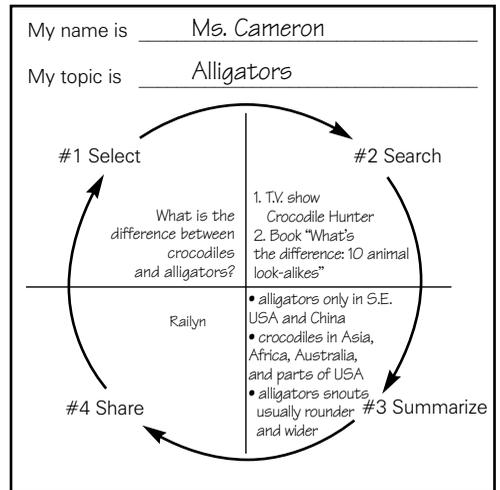


Figure 50. Four steps of a research cycle

Black line master on p. 61

○ What would we like to know about insects? ○

How many different kinds of insects are there?
 What do they eat?
 Do they bite you?
 Do they sleep?
 Do they get sick?
 Do they fight with each other?
 Where do they live?
 Is a spider an insect?
 What kinds are there?
 How do they have babies?
 Do people really eat insects?

Figure 51. Research questions

My name is _____

My topic is _____

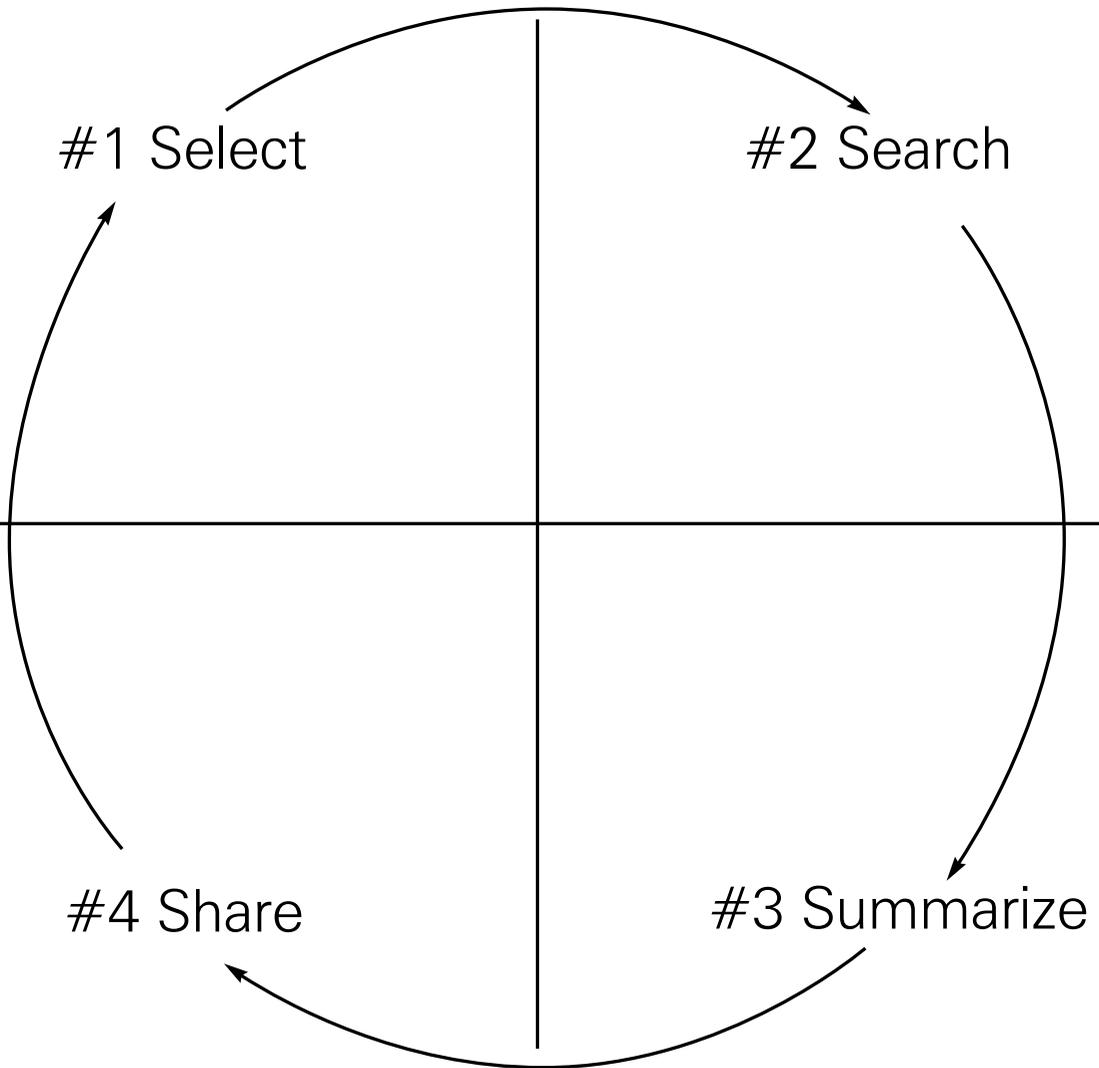


Figure 50. (page 47)