

Activity 4

Create a Research Report

Objectives

- ◆ Guide students through the stages of the writing process.
- ◆ Strengthen students' research, critical thinking, organizational, editorial, and computer skills.
- ◆ Reinforce student understanding of plagiarism and the obligation to credit sources in all school work.
- ◆ Raise awareness of the meaning and importance of copyright.
- ◆ Celebrate student achievement.

Materials Required

- ◆ Student copies of reproducible worksheets for research planning, research record-keeping, and organizing the report.
- ◆ Student computers with Internet access and word processing software, located in the classroom or the school computer center.
- ◆ **You're Part of the © Team!** copyright stickers.

Time Required

- ◆ Five to seven class periods, for planning, research, organizing the report, and creating the final report.

Instructional Guidelines

- ◆ Tell students they are going to find out firsthand why intellectual property is so valuable by producing some intellectual property of their own – an original report based on Internet research. Explain that they can think of themselves as investigative journalists digging out the facts, or as academic authorities putting facts together. Either way, they'll find out how much creative energy and intellectual effort it takes to produce an original work, and why it is important to protect that work with copyright.
- ◆ Assign a topic for your students' reports or allow individual students to propose their own. Refer to the curriculum connections chart for topic suggestions.

Research Planning

- ◆ Provide students with copies of the reproducible **©Team Research Planning Diagram** worksheet. Explain that this form is designed to help students come up with a plan or direction for their



research. As they have seen, the Internet is an almost endless source of information on seemingly all aspects of every topic. That's why it is important to have some goal in mind before going online. This goal might change as you learn more about your topic – you might narrow your focus, or change direction, or see the topic from a different point of view. But to reach these moments of discovery, a researcher needs a plan to getting started.

- ◆ Show students how to use the wheel-and-spokes diagram on the worksheet to generate questions about their topic. These can be the familiar journalistic questions – Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? – or broader questions about context, causation, or consequence. Reassure students that any question they might pose is a good one, since it will help them begin the process of inquiry and open the way for other questions to pop into their minds. Point out that as they write their questions on the spokes of the diagram, they are looking at their topic from different angles and trying out different approaches. By the time they have filled in all the spokes, they may not have exhausted the possibilities for investigating their topic, but they should have a better sense of what they would like to find out.
- ◆ When students have completed their planning diagrams, have them share ideas in small discussion groups. This can be another step toward finding a direction for research and can also lead to research partnerships as students discover they share a common interest or point of view.

Internet Research

- ◆ As they begin their research, provide students with copies of the reproducible **©Team Internet Research Log**. This form includes spaces where they can take notes on the content they find online, indicate how each piece might fit into their report, and record the information they will need to credit their sources.

- ◆ As your students' research proceeds, meet with them individually to review their log sheets and discuss the content they have gathered. Encourage students to refine and reevaluate their plans in light of new information they may have discovered or new ideas that have occurred to them. Confirm that they are keeping adequate records so that they can credit their sources, and help them resolve any questions concerning rights and permissions that may arise.

Organizing the Report

- ◆ To help students begin organizing their research, explain the concept of a thesis – a statement that the researcher illustrates or explains with his or her findings. One way to formulate a thesis is to ask, What did I learn through my research that I didn't know before? Reassure students that a thesis need not be profound, but it should be interesting, and should help a writer sort out his or her evidence and put it in a logical order.
- ◆ A more visual approach to organizing a research report is suggested by the reproducible **©Team Report Organizer** included with this program. This form divides the report into five "pages" that students use to sort out their research, placing similar pieces of information together in order to discover the different areas or aspects of the topic they can cover and the most effective order for presenting them. One advantage of this approach is that students can often see more easily how visual and multimedia content they have retrieved from the Internet fits together with other pieces of information.

First Draft and Peer Feedback

- ◆ For homework, have students write first drafts of their reports, noting where and how they will use content they have copied from the Internet. Explain that they will have time later to polish their writing and format each page of the report effectively. For now they should focus on putting their ideas and discoveries together in a way that is informative and easy to follow.
- ◆ When students have completed their first drafts, divide them into pairs or small groups to review one another's work. Explain that, as editors for one another, it is their job to help correct writing and spelling mistakes and to point out places where the report may be confusing or hard to follow. This is an opportunity, too, for students to check that their partners have the information needed to credit all their sources and have not

inadvertently committed plagiarism anywhere in the report.

The Finished Product

- ◆ If time and resources permit, have students produce their final reports using word processing software. This will enable them to insert images and diagrams they have copied from the Internet directly into the body of the report, and will allow them to enhance the report's overall appearance through font selection, type size, and other formatting refinements. If necessary, show students the basic techniques for using word processing software, including (if appropriate) automatic insertion of footnotes and spell check.
- ◆ As a finishing touch, have students create illustrated covers for their reports. These can be original drawings or can feature images copied from the Internet. Remind students that, although people say you can't judge a book by its cover, it is still important to make the cover appealing. Explain that this is an opportunity for them to focus on their visual communication skills and exercise all their artistic creativity. Remind them, too, that students who use borrowed images for the cover should credit their sources.

Publication: You're Part of the ©Team!

- ◆ Conclude the project with a publication party at which you award students **You're Part of the ©Team** copyright stickers to affix on their reports. The sticker has space for students to fill in the date of publication and their name as the copyright owner.
- ◆ Call students' attention to the statement printed below the copyright symbol on the sticker:

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

This is a standard notice used by real publishers to protect copyrighted works. Talk with students about the meaning of this notice and how it protects all the hard work they put into creating their reports. Remind them that the copyright notice identifies the report as their intellectual property, even though it may contain elements that are the intellectual property of others. Invite students to reflect on the time, effort, and creative energy they invested in this project and ask how this experience has affected their attitude toward copyrighted content they see on the Internet and in print.