



Paraphrasing a Research Source

1 Say what you will model and why:

Ms. Evans: “When authors write books, their words are protected by copyright laws. Those laws say that we can use facts we learn from these authors, but we can’t just take what they’ve written word for word. We have to write in our own words. I’m going to show you what it looks like to record some facts you learn from a research source in your own words, not the author’s words. I want you to follow my thoughts as I work, so I’ll be thinking aloud some of the time.”

2 Model the behavior:

On the electronic whiteboard, Ms. Evans displays and reads aloud a paragraph about the artist Frida Kahlo and then switches to a “notecard” screen with the word *Childhood* at the top. Showing her Think-Aloud sign, she records the key things she remembers from the paragraph.

Ms. Evans: “Let’s see, she was born in Mexico in—I’d better check the year.” [*She goes back to the first screen briefly and finds the date.*] “1907. OK, her parents had an unhappy marriage. She had two sisters. She was sick as a girl.”

3 Ask students what they noticed:

Ms. Evans: “What did you notice about how I recorded what I read?”

Omar: “You wrote it your own way.”

Ms. Evans: [*following up*] “What do you mean?”

Omar: “Your sentences don’t sound like the ones you read out loud. You didn’t copy them.”

Ms. Evans: [*prompting for deeper thinking*] “What did I do to make sure that I didn’t copy exactly what the book said?” [*seeing students’ perplexed looks, she gives them think time*]

Gianna: [*tentatively*] “You didn’t look at the paragraph?”

Ms. Evans: “That’s right. Why might that matter?”

Edgar: “Well, unless you have a photographic memory, if you don’t look, you can’t copy.”

Ms. Evans: “That’s true. What else did I do to make sure I didn’t copy?”

London: “Your sentences were much shorter. They just had the facts.”

Ms. Evans: “Yes, I tried to write down just the key ideas—not everything. And what did I do when I couldn’t remember something specific—like that birth date?”

Axel: “You went back to the paragraph, but you just looked quickly.”

Ms. Evans: “Yes, I wanted to make sure I was accurate, but I tried to be fast so I wouldn’t copy.”

4 Invite one or more students to model:

Ms. Evans chooses Julian to model. She then displays the next paragraph and has the children read it silently. When Julian is ready, she switches to the “notecard” screen.

Ms. Evans: “Now watch while Julian records key ideas from the paragraph in his own words.”

5 Again, ask students what they noticed:

After Julian writes a few notes, Ms. Evans invites student comments.

Ms. Evans: “What did you notice about how Julian recorded what he discovered?”

Ani: “He looked away from the paragraph while he was writing.”

Jerome: “He wrote short sentences with just facts in them.”

6 Have all students practice:

Ms. Evans wants all students to practice on the same text so that she can provide on-the-spot coaching.

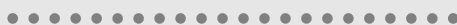
Ms. Evans: “Now we’re all going to practice. Read the next paragraph to yourself. Then, in your own words, tell your partner some of the facts you learned.”

7 Provide feedback:

Ms. Evans circulates, listening carefully. She then calls the class together, records key facts from a few pairs, and displays the original text.

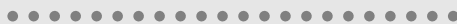
Ms. Evans: [*reinforcing successes*] “I noticed that lots of you chose only important facts, not all the details in the original text. I also noticed that you put those facts into your own words.”

After another round of practice, she sends the students off to practice independently with their own source text. She has one small group of students who were struggling work closer to her so that she can continue to support their growth.



To adapt this lesson for younger children:

Use a similar structure to teach a lesson on deciding between what is important and what is just interesting in a text.



To adapt this lesson for older children:

Teach a similar lesson focused on more complex strategies for paraphrasing.