

# Contents

Preface .....	3
Introduction .....	10
<b>Chapter 1 Getting Started .....</b>	<b>13</b>
Students as Researchers .....	13
Finding a Research Topic .....	14
Interest Assessment .....	14
Interest Development .....	16
Debriefing .....	16
<b>Chapter 2 Focusing Your Problem .....</b>	<b>23</b>
Research Questions .....	23
Generating Subtopics .....	23
Finding a Question .....	24
Making Hypotheses .....	25
<b>Chapter 3 Types of Research .....</b>	<b>31</b>
Descriptive Research .....	31
Historical Research .....	38
Experimental Research .....	46
Correlational Research .....	54
Developmental Research .....	60
<b>Chapter 4 Gathering Data .....</b>	<b>67</b>
Observation .....	67
Surveys .....	72
Interviews .....	79
Document Analysis .....	87
<b>Chapter 5 Sample Selection .....</b>	<b>93</b>
How Big Is Big Enough? .....	93
Teaching Students about Sampling .....	93
Choosing a Sample .....	94
<b>Chapter 6 Analysing and Interpreting Data .....</b>	<b>99</b>
Data Analysis .....	99
Quantitative Analysis .....	99
Descriptive Analysis .....	100
Inferential Statistics .....	104
Drawing Conclusions .....	105

<b>Chapter 7 Sharing Results .....</b>	<b>111</b>
Identifying Authentic Audiences .....	111
Creating Product Outlets .....	112
Choosing a Product: Impact on Audience .....	116
Writing a Research Report .....	117
Saying Goodbye .....	118
<b>References .....</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>Appendix A (Table of Random Numbers) .....</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>Appendix B (Upper %age Points of X<sup>2</sup> Distribution) .....</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>Appendix C (Activity pages suitable for Primary Year Levels) .....</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>Resource List .....</b>	<b>140</b>

# Getting Started

## Students as Researchers

How do your students react when you mention doing research? For some young children, the word *research* is totally unfamiliar. For others, it conjures up images of white lab coats, bubbling test tubes and possible explosions! Still others may associate it solely with past experiences in library research: notecards, bibliographies and writing reports. Each of these concepts limits students. If they perceive research as too sophisticated, difficult or tedious, it will be difficult for them to envision themselves as real researchers. This self-limitation can be particularly severe among students who are not adept at written work and have only experienced research in books.

One of the most valuable assets we can give young students is a broadened view of the research process. In the real world, someone has a question or hunch about something and tries to come up with some proof by gathering and analysing data. Children, too, have hunches and questions about their world, but they often do not have the tools to follow them up.

There are several ways you can introduce students to this new perception of research. One way is to gather several real world examples for them to see, preferably about issues of interest to them. Older students may be interested in research on schools, health or the environment as reported in *Time* or *Newsweek*. Younger children may be interested in the consumer research in *Choice* magazine or in data collected by last year's class. Once you (and your students) begin to look for examples of research, you may find them in sources as diverse as a community newsletter or a fundraising report from a non-profit organisation.

Another way to help students broaden their

thinking about research is to have them think about various people in the community and the research they might do as part of their job. For example, what questions might the community health centre nurse want to answer? A local fire fighter? A car salesperson? The nurse who investigates the most frequent causes of children's health problems, the fire fighter who notices the times of day when most fires occur, and the salesperson who charts the colours most frequently requested not only do their jobs more effectively (wouldn't you like to have more fire fighters on duty during critical hours?), but become true researchers. You may want to invite a visitor or two from the community to discuss the things they research on the job. You may also want to discuss with children the kinds of research you do: finding out what books children like to read, the best ways to teach maths, the least expensive source of stickers, and so on.

Another approach is to help students identify some of their questions and hunches so they see that they, too, have researchable questions. For example, if Kate claims that everyone else gets to stay up to watch the late movie except her, you might suggest she gather data to find out if it is true. If David wonders when the school building was constructed, you could encourage him to find out. Students may not always elect to investigate the questions they raise, but they should recognise the identification of questions as a valuable skill and one essential to budding researchers. One teacher encouraged student questions by creating a bulletin board entitled "I Wonder...". Any time questions were raised or ideas suggested in class that could not be investigated immediately, the questions were recorded and pinned on the board. Students could later investigate (or simply admire) questions raised by their classmates. Once students begin to envision the variety and

## Getting Started — Activity 1

### I Wonder...

Good researchers are always asking questions about the world around them. They notice things that are interesting and wonder about the things they do not know. This exercise will help you practice being a good questioner. For each topic, think of as many interesting questions as you can. Try to think of some unusual questions—questions no one else will think of.

For example, if the topic were cricket you might wonder:

How did the greatest batter learn to bat?

Which team won the most shields? Why?

You could also wonder:

How much money is made at the cricket ground?

How has cricket changed since the introduction of one-day games?

Does the colour or style of the uniform affect playing?

Now, you wonder about these topics:

Your school building

Biscuits

Birds

Cars

What other topics (things) do you wonder about?

