Self-Initiated Research Cheat Sheet

PARSE THE QUESTION

Are you wondering why there is a set of scissors above? It's because the first step to research is parsing the question you have. You'll be dissecting your thoughts to get at the heart of your question. For instance, if you have questions about reading differentiation, what part do you need the most help with? Let's say it's small group instruction. Then, decide what you need to know about small group instruction? Let's say you want to know what the other students supposed to be doing while you are instructing the small group. You want to ensure they are growing as learners and now just occupied with busy-work. See the process?

IDENTIFY KEYWORDS

The next step of the process is to find keywords that allow you to search databases, search engines, and such. For our example above, independent reading activities, individual reading lessons, or individual reading work could all be key phrases to search. What about adding your main focus to the keyword search (like: individual reading work differentiated instruction)? That can help you narrow down the possibilities, too. Lastly, with regards to keyword searches, know that search tools vary in how they associate words. Algorithms are used, and there are sets of established guidelines to follow called Boolean Searches. Check out the possibilities by clicking on Boolean Searches.

IDENTIFYING SYNONYMS FOR KEYWORDS

Another key step in locating information is to find synonyms for your key search words. In our example, you will find that educators use the jargon "anchor activities" to describe independent differentiated reading work. Another synonym is "sponge activities." How can you find synonyms? You'll notice them in the web-site description on your search page, the abstract, or the "related topics" area of your resource. In addition to that, remember to utilize a traditional or online thesaurus resource.