Discussion questions for groups of teachers: How do you currently teach your students to write with big topics (or themes) and sub-topics in mind? How might the following lesson ideas and lesson plans be adapted for the grade level you teach?

**Big Topics and Sub-Topics**

Fresh ideas from Northern Nevada Writing Project teachers on the following topics:

- Writing with a clear, central big idea or theme in mind
- The big idea or theme is supported by sub-ideas or sub-topics
- Highly interesting sub-topics are purposefully chosen by the writer

Graphic organizers are a powerful way to teach the concept of pre-thinking subtopics before writing. They also set up students to be successful with organization.

**Organization connection:** How do these graphic organizers set up students for success with **sequencing**?

**Organization connection:** How do these graphic organizers set up students for success with **paragraphing**?

**Sharks**

- How long do they live?
- What do they eat?
- Biggest threats to them?

- Size at birth? Full grown by when?
- Oldest shark?
- How much daily? Favorite foods?
- Man-eaters?
- Natural enemies? What country eats most shark? Endangered?

**A forest is my favorite place to be**

- What do I like best about it?
- Where are best forests?
- Forests you want to visit?

- It smells good. You can watch animals. It's never too hot there.
- Rain Forest, Yellowstone, New England in the Fall.

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Two basic graphic organizers for idea development that lead to organization:

Discussion questions for groups of teachers: How might you use the following graphic organizers to pre-write for a piece of writing that would require both a big topic & supportive sub-topics? What variations of these organizers have you used?

A time-sequence graphic organizer:

Possible Prompts: “A person’s rise to power” (historical or fictional person)
“How [sub-topic] became my favorite [topic]” (narrative)
“How I came to strongly believe [topic]” (persuasive)
What other prompts might work with this organizer?

Event:  
Event:  
Event:  
Event:  
Event:  
Event:  

Process/cause-effect graphic organizer:

Possible Prompts: “What really started the Civil War?” (informational)
“What always makes me feel [insert emotion]?” (narrative)
“How to change someone’s attitude about [topic]” (persuasive)
What other prompts would fit this organizer?

A great on-line location for creative (and free) graphic organizers:

http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/
Two sophisticated graphic organizers for better idea development:

Discussion questions for groups of teachers: Assuming a teacher would provide excellent modeling beforehand, what age of student could go deeper with topics and sub-topics, using either of these graphic organizers? What would "excellent modeling" look like with students you might be working with?
Five creative graphic organizers for idea development with younger students:

Discussion questions for groups of teachers: How might you use the following graphics to inspire students to pre-write for a piece of writing that would require both topic and sub-topics? What topics might be appropriate with these creative shapes?

My story about: