The Power of Persuasion

Fifth Grade  Writing  100 minutes  Standards: W.5.1

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Teach your students the power of persuasion by preparing them to write persuasive letters. This lesson, complete with brainstorming activities, allows young writers to unlock their inner rhetoricians.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to develop a plan for a persuasive letter that includes an opinion supported by evidence.

Materials and Preparation

- Paper
- Pencils

Key Terms:

- persuasion

Lesson

Introduction (15 minutes)

- Ask students to each take out a piece of paper and make a list of all the things that bother them at school.
- After students have completed this task, record some of their answers on the board.
- Ask students, "How can we help to change some of these problems?"
- Listen to some of their answers and discuss them as a class.
- Introduce the word "persuasion." Explain to students that persuasion is the act of making someone believe something. Today, the students are going to learn how to write a persuasive letter to ask for something to change.

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Explicit Instruction/Teacher Modeling (30 minutes)

- Explain to students that there are three main parts to a persuasive letter: statement of an opinion, support for the opinion, and closing.
- Draw a graphic organizer on the board with three horizontal rectangles; the one in the middle should be much larger than the top and bottom rectangles.
- Tell the students that you will be showing them how to tackle a persuasive letter using a common topic, e.g. "There should be no homework in elementary school."
- Explain to the students that once they have chosen a topic, it simply needs to be written as an opinion statement. Write "I think that homework should not be assigned to elementary school students" in the top box of the graphic organizer.
- Tell students that the next thing they must do is come up with three good supportive reasons for their argument. Write the following on the board in the second box of the graphic organizer: "Kids need to spend time with their families when they get home from school".
- Ask students to volunteer other ideas about what they think may be good support for this argument. Other ideas may be sports commitments, getting home late, needing downtime after school, etc.
- Add two more ideas of supportive statements to the second box.
- Explain to students that at the end of the letter, they will need to write a closing by wrapping up what they have been writing about by re-stating their opinion.
- Write the following sentence in the third box of the graphic organizer and read it to the students: "Elementary school students can lead happier lives if they can spend their time after school with their families and friends doing what they love instead of using their free time to do homework".
- Explain to students that they will eventually use the graphic organizer to write a whole letter.

Guided Practice/Interactive Modeling (15 minutes)

- Write the following sentence on the board: "Students in elementary school should be reading every night."
- Have students work in groups of 4 or 5 to come up with reasons for this opinion.
- Circulate the room to check to make sure everyone is thinking and participating in the activity.

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Independent Working Time (20 minutes)

- Ask students to each select one of their own topics discussed earlier in the lesson and create a graphic organizer for it that includes a statement of opinion, three pieces of evidence to support the opinion, and a closing statement.

Extend

Differentiation

- **Enrichment**: Have advanced students come up with four pieces of evidence.
- **Support**: For struggling learners, have them develop only two pieces of evidence.

Review

Assessment (10 minutes)

- Collect the graphic organizers and make sure students have a firm grasp of 1) a statement of opinion, 2) clear evidence, and 3) a closing sentence.

Review and Closing (10 minutes)

- Ask students: *Why do people write persuasive letters? Who else could you write a letter like this to?*
- Discuss these questions to make sure that students understand the purpose of a persuasive letter.