Practicing Persuasion

Author
Diane Barone, Professor of Literacy Studies, University of Nevada, Reno

Purpose
The purpose of this article is to showcase three ways to support students’ persuasive writing that go past usual persuasive prompts.

The Article
When learning to write persuasive papers, students write letters or short essays to persuade someone to change their opinion and to influence him or her to rethink a behavior. Persuasive writing can be challenging for young writers because they have to not only determine and understand their position but they must also provide evidence to support their position. Additionally, they need to understand the opposite position and counter through thoughtful arguing and supportive evidence. And lastly, they need to be able to step outside their personal orientation and think about the arguments that will sway the differing ideas and experiences of another. This article provides three activities that teachers may use to help scaffold students’ persuasive writing. The first activity concentrates on children’s books as models of persuasion. The second activity is the discussion web that supports students in crafting the details for an argument. The third activity uses fairy tale characters and plots as a scaffold for persuasive writing.

What this Means for the Field
Persuasive writing is challenging for most students. While prompts present students with suggestions for writing, they often leave little room for students to consider alternative views. This article provides supporting activities that teachers may use to help cultivate students’ art of persuasion beyond the typical use of prompts. The hope is that these activities will increase students’ skill in writing engaging, persuasive pieces.

Citation

Contact
Dr. Diane Barone: 775-682-7870; barone@unr.edu or visit www.unr.edu/education