

# Writing Project—Persuasive Letter

## Common Core Standards

**Writing**—Text Types and Purposes, W.3.1–W.5.1; Production and Distribution of Writing, W.3.4–W.6.4; W.3.5–W.6.5; W.3.6–W.6.6; Research to Build and Present Knowledge, W.4.9–W.12.9

**Speaking & Listening**—Comprehension and Collaboration, SL.3.1–12.1; Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, SL.3.4–12.4

**NOTE:** This is a general social studies project on community, volunteer work, and civic engagement.

One of the most important kinds of writing your students will learn is persuasive writing. Tell your class that writers often try to persuade readers to agree with their opinions. This can happen even when it isn't obvious that the writer is trying to do that. After all, we all have opinions, and writing is one way of sharing those ideas.

Persuasion usually takes one of three forms. Write these three statements as column headers on the board:

- The writer (or speaker) wants you to believe something.
- The writer (or speaker) wants you to do something.
- The writer (or speaker) wants you not to believe something.
- The writer (or speaker) wants you not to do something.

Ask students to think of examples of each type. If they seem stuck, ask them when they last tried to persuade their parents or siblings to do something they wanted. This should suggest numerous examples. In addition, it should make your students aware that they are already pretty experienced at persuasion.

After listing examples from students' lives, point out that in our world, a lot of the persuasion we encounter comes from television. Ask your students what types of persuasion they have seen on TV. They should recognize that the most common type of persuasion on television is advertising. What do advertisers want people watching TV to do? The answer, of course, is to buy something.

Another kind of persuasion students may have seen on TV has to do with government. That is, when someone runs for office, they often pay for television ads to persuade people to vote for them. Have your students seen campaign ads on TV in favor of a candidate for mayor, governor, congressman or congresswoman, or president? Of course, some political ads mostly try to persuade viewers *not* to vote for someone.

Remind students that their writing needs specific details in order to be appealing to readers. When working to be persuasive, writers also need to give specific *reasons*. Discuss the models on the second "Persuasive Letter" activity page. The first example shows what a persuasive letter without specific details and reasons looks like. The second letter includes specific details and reasons. Ask your students to compare and contrast the two letters. What do students notice about each letter? Which one is more convincing, and why? How could the second letter have been even more convincing?

Students should recognize that the specific details and reasons in the second letter make it more persuasive. They should also note that the second letter is more polite. Though some people yell and scream when they want to be persuasive, it is almost always more effective to be pleasant and polite. Point out that if you make your readers feel like you think they aren't very smart or that they are big fat jerks, they'll be a lot less likely to want to listen to what you have to say. It's important to think about what writers call *audience* when writing persuasively. Who is meant to read what students write? Who will be affected by the change or ideas students are proposing? What will they want to hear? What will be most convincing to them in particular? Let students know that their letters will be longer than the models because their topics are larger and will need additional details.

Help your students practice writing reasons by putting the following persuasive topic on the board: "Please take me to the amusement park." Have your class brainstorm about the topic. List their ideas on the board and then discuss which reasons are the best. Which ones are most likely to convince parents? Why? Which ones are least likely to convince parents? Why?

In this lesson, students will be working on a persuasive project about changing certain things at school. Let students choose their topics from the following list. Be sure to delete any topics that don't apply at your school because of existing circumstances or policies, e.g., you already have a mural. You can also ask students to propose topics. Approve new topics if you think they will work for this persuasive project.

# Writing Project—Persuasive Letter

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- Change the school cafeteria food in specific ways.
- Make recess 10 minutes longer.
- Add a special program such as art, music, or dance.
- Take a class trip to a specific location.
- Add a school sports team of some kind.
- Plant trees or flowers somewhere on the school grounds.
- Paint a mural on a specific topic on an outside school wall.
- Be able to be tardy a certain number of times without penalty.
- Start a school recycling program.
- Adopt a certain type of class pet.

Assign students to fill out the prewriting organizer on the first “Persuasive Letter” activity page. Then they will write a persuasive letter based on their notes. It should be at least two paragraphs long and should include specific details, reasons, and examples.

When students are finished, have them share their work with a partner to get ideas for revising their writing. The reader should respond as a person being persuaded, thinking about whether the letter feels convincing and what would make it more persuasive. Make sure students focus on

content development, adding details and clarification rather than simply proofreading (correcting a few spelling and grammatical errors). After students have revised and you have checked their work, they should type up their writing on the computer.

Discuss students’ work as a class after they have revised. What makes a letter persuasive? What strategies did students try that seemed to be effective? What details helped strengthen their persuasive writing?

You can also have students create short oral presentations in which they try to persuade an audience to support their proposals. They can use different methods and media for making their case. You may want to hold a class vote to see which presentations and reasoning are the most persuasive. What made the winning presentations effective and memorable?

Research is another option that will add to this project’s effectiveness. Students can look for facts, quotes, and other material about their topics to make their writing more persuasive.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Writing Project – Persuasive Letter (1 OF 2)



## Persuasive Writing Expressing Your Opinion – Persuasive Letter

After choosing a topic, write notes below to prepare for writing your persuasive letter. Then write a letter of 1–2 paragraphs using your notes.

Topic \_\_\_\_\_

Who are your readers? Who do you need to persuade? \_\_\_\_\_

How will this change or project help different groups?

Students \_\_\_\_\_

Teachers \_\_\_\_\_

Principal, Leaders \_\_\_\_\_

Parents \_\_\_\_\_

List 3–4 more reasons you think this change or project should take place.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Writing Project – Persuasive Letter (2 OF 2)

## MODELS

### PERSUASIVE LETTER WITHOUT DETAILS

Dear Mom and Dad,

I'm so mad! I should be able to stay up later. It is so unfair that you make me go to bed at 8:30. Why can't I stay up till 10:00 like my friends?

You are really mean to make me go to bed early. Please change the rules and let me stay up till 9:30 or 10:00 instead.

Love,

Ronny

### PERSUASIVE LETTER WITH DETAILS

Dear Mom and Dad,

I have been going to bed at 8:30 since I was little. Now that I'm older I want to ask you to let me stay up later. Staying up later would give me more time for doing my chores and my homework. If I had more time, I could get better grades!

My friends at school get to stay up till 10:00 or sometimes 11:00, but all I'm asking is to stay up till 9:30. What do you think?

I know I need to get enough sleep, but I did the math and I would still get at least 8 hours of sleep. I learned at school that kids need about 8 hours of sleep. I would actually get even more.

Can we try this new bedtime out for a week? If it turns out good, we can keep going. I know you're my parents and you get to decide. I'm just asking you to give me a chance to show that this is a great idea.

Love,

Ronny