



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
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Persuasive Writing: Beyond the Three Reasons

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Introduction

Persuasive writing is a tool that students will use in and out of school. Arguments are the "predominant communication mode of our contentious times." ¹ If this is the case, then we must prepare students to be able to make an effective argument.

Everyday students are bombarded with visual stimuli. They watch TV, movies, music videos, use the internet and play video games. A good number of students integrate these activities with their school work on a daily basis, whether in school or while at home doing homework. ² Most of these activities are done outside of the classroom and are sometimes seen as a threat to learning. Instead of working against these activities these stimuli can be used as a tool in the classroom to help the students. Since students spend over a quarter of the day doing these activities ³ visual stimuli can be used as a tool to aid in student writing, specifically persuasive writing.

If teachers were to incorporate these activities into student writing maybe students would enjoy writing more. Hopefully by the end of the unit the students will move beyond the no-fail formula writing, a standard five paragraph essay which lacks creativity, which they have become accustomed to. In this unit students will work on creating a persuasive writing piece that goes beyond just giving reasons why people should agree with them, and make their writing more creative and enjoyable for them and their readers.

One of the main objectives of this unit is to have students write a persuasive essay using visualization and elaboration, while still meeting district and state standards. Some of the ways that this task will be completed are by getting students to think outside of their school box, and allowing them to incorporate some of the visual activities that they enjoy doing into their classroom and home activities. If students could take something that they do every day, and relate it to their writing, hopefully it will bring some enjoyment to student writing (and hopefully not make watching TV less enjoyable).

On a daily basis students watch and see what is going on around them; middle school students are at an age where they see literally and are starting to be perceptive to what is going on around them. We also ask them to start to show us this perceptiveness when we ask them to make connections beyond "the girl in the story had a dog and so do I." When it comes to persuasive writing we ask students to write an essay that has a clear

position with specific and elaborate support for their position. What we are asking is for them to show us their opinion on paper. Wouldn't students produce better show writing if we allowed them to bring their literal and perceptive vision into their writing?

Persuasive Writing -- Why We Need to Know How to Write Persuasively

A simple definition of persuasive writing is taking a position and trying to get an audience to agree. In middle school students are constantly asked to do this. Not only do we ask students to do this in speech, but also on paper. We ask them to write a convincing essay that shows they can persuade an audience and support their opinion on paper. In a perfect world middle-school students would love to write. The process from brain to pen to paper would flow like water through a stream. Unfortunately in my world writing is more like a still pond with very little movement. The grunts and groans received when the students are asked to pull out a paper and pen can be disheartening. To combat the dislike of writing that is necessary for life and for the Connecticut State Mastery Test, the students are given a no-fail technique for writing persuasive essays. Although the no-fail technique works, it does not leave much room for student enjoyment, creativity, and it adds to the students' dislike of writing.

A unit on persuasive writing is needed because everyday students are asked to persuade. Whether it is a written response to something they have read, or to tell why they liked or did not like a book or article, they are being asked to convince an audience of their point of view. Even when we ask students the simple question "Why?" we are asking them to convince us. Persuasive writing will also be used by these students in high school, college, and the work force. What students learn in middle school is the foundation for what they will use later in life. What students should understand is that writing persuasively and having someone agree is not just an accomplishment, it is a life skill, ⁴ and that once they leave middle school, the standard persuasive writing formula will no longer apply, and they will have to learn a new style of writing. Most teachers and people outside of middle school will not accept "my first reason is;" Now is the time to get students to exercise their writing skills, by coming up with a more creative and personal way for them to present their work.

As mentioned above the no-fail technique is also used to give students a guideline and sure-fire way to pass the state and district tests. These tests are another reason a persuasive writing unit is compulsory in this school district. In New Haven, middle school students are required to write a persuasive essay on their CMT's and are required to complete two writing prompts a year. The students are graded on elaboration, organization, fluency and audience awareness ⁵. As well as persuasive essays, students are required to answer open ended questions, and do a section on editing and revising. The work that is done in this unit will also help the students prepare for the other areas of writing that they are required to be proficient in on the state and district tests. When writing responses to open ended questions the students need to support their answers with information from the text or prior knowledge; and when they are working on creating persuasive pieces, they will also have to support ideas with information they have found and/or prior knowledge.

Current Persuasive Writing at the Middle School Level

The current essays the students are creating are uninspiring, repetitive, and lack creativity; however these essays do answer what the state asks students to complete in the objectives. When students reach seventh grade, the state asks them to write a persuasive essay that shows that they are capable of writing a clear and convincing argument. They are scored based on their ability to write a "well-developed response that takes a clear and thoughtful position and provides persuasive support." ⁶ In order for students to get a top score, they must show that they have "fully elaborated reasons with specific details; exhibited strong organization; are fluent and used sophisticated transitional language; and that they may show a heightened awareness of audience." ⁷ I believe students can still write a convincing essay, which meets the above requirements, without writing a dry and uncreative one.

Currently the middle-school students I teach are taught to write in a fool proof way in order to gain a passing score on the CMTs. The no-fail formula consists of five paragraphs, and an outline of what to include in each paragraph. In the first paragraph the students are asked to state the issue of the essay, along with their position on the issue, and then to give three reasons why they chose their position. The next three paragraphs ask the students to elaborate on each reason; they must state the reason and explain why they feel the way they do. In their concluding paragraphs the students are told to restate the topic, remind the audience of their positions and reasons, and encourage them to agree. If I were to ask my students to write an essay convincing me that they should have no homework, their response would look something like this:

I think we should not get homework because it is not fair. We have other things We could be doing. The reasons I believe we should not have homework are because we have a lot of other work to do when we get home. The next reason is because we learn everything already in school. The last reason is because we should be able to relax when we get home from the long day at school. These are the reasons I think we should not get homework.

The first reason why we should not get homework is because we have a lot of other things to do when we get home like;

The second reason I think we should not get homework is because we learn everything we need to in school like;..

The third reason I think we should not get homework is because we are supposed to relax when we get home from a long day at school. We do things like; These are the reasons that I think we should not get homework and now that you have seen why we should get no homework, we should pass a new rule;

This way of writing allows students to receive a passing score, but it does not work with anything else, and they end up using this formula for any kind of writing. When these students go to high school and college they will not be able to write using the no-fail formula, so one of the goals of this unit is to allow students to get their points across and express all of their ideas without writing in a way that is uninspiring to them or their readers.

Unlike Math or Science, writing is not black and white, or right and wrong. There are no formulas (or at least there should not be any formulas) to memorize in order to make sure that students get the answer right. Due to this, students who may be straight A students in other subjects sometimes do not do well in writing, and often do not like to write. I often hear that writing is stupid and that there is no point to it. A majority of these statements come from the fear of doing it. The no-fail formula that they are given for persuasive writing eases the minds of those students, and gives them a way to write and get it right. Hopefully with the introduction of visual stimuli to their writing, the students will see enjoyment and a point to writing.

Changing the Current Persuasive Writing Predicament

If teachers find the current persuasive writing boring and uninspiring, think of how the students must feel writing it. Students have no ownership of their writing; they are only writing to pass; they are only writing for other people, and not for themselves. How can we get students to change their feelings on writing? How can we get students to write for themselves and actually enjoy writing? Imagine if the student who loved to doodle and draw could turn in a persuasive "essay" that is all images and tells a story. The goal of this unit is to have the students still enjoy writing their images as much as they would enjoy drawing them. The goal is to get them to write what they draw.

One of the ways that the goal of getting students to write what they see is going to be accomplished is by incorporating what students do daily, see, with visualization and elaboration techniques. Elaboration or descriptive writing is needed to help show the students how to take what they have visualized and write it down on paper. Some of the tools used to get the students to work on visualizing and elaborating and enjoying are what the students do every day when they are not in school, watch TV and play on the computer. Movies are often used in the classroom to assist teachers and students, since watching movies asks students to use the same strategies that they use when reading⁸. By reversing visualization to go from using it to visualize what you just read to what you are about to write, we can ask students to use movies and apply some of the same reading and watching strategies to writing. They will be asked to write down what they are seeing, to describe the scenes, to explain why they liked them or did not like them, using details from what they have viewed.

Visualization and Elaboration

Visualization is a strategy that we teach students to use to help decode and comprehend what they are reading. We ask our students to create images or see in their heads what they are reading. Visualization is "the ability to create mental images and associations using background knowledge."⁹ But why should it only be used as a reading strategy when it could work as a writing strategy as well? Visualization as a writing tool has made writing come to life for students who struggle with writing¹⁰. We want students to show us, so if we can get them to visualize and then write they will be doing what we requested.

In this unit I will ask the students to use visualization in the reverse: I would like them to write what they are seeing. Students should be taught that the mental images they create should be done before, during and after writing, not just for reading ¹¹. The students will be asked to write what they see from things they view every day or images that I provide for them. The students will conclude the unit with a persuasive piece that shows their ability to write visually. Using visualization as a tool for writing can be just as effective a tool as using it for reading comprehension. Seeing what they want to write first can help students to formulate and organize their ideas. On a daily basis students see first, then organize their thoughts. If this is what they already do, it would only benefit them if it was integrated with their writing.

One way for students to make their writing more creative and turn their visions into words is by using elaboration, or descriptive or detailed writing. There is a big difference between the sentence, "teaching is great," and the sentence "teaching is an experience that makes you want to shout from the mountain tops!" Although the second sentence is a bit extreme, it gives a clear picture of someone who is excited about teaching. The second sentence helps a reader visualize, and makes the point the writer is trying to prove stronger. You have a stronger chance of believing that someone loves teaching if he or she wants to "shout from the mountain tops" versus "it's great." If students can see the difference between these two sentences and learn how to write with elaboration, they can make their own writing more convincing and creative.

Modern Visual Stimuli as Tool for Writing

As a teacher I find it difficult to not check my email or go online all day long. When I get home, I like to watch television as I grade papers or play computer games when I have some free time. Do I love to read, yes, but a majority of time I would rather be watching TV. If I would rather do this as an adult, then I am sure my students would rather do it as well. How can I expect them to want to come home and write, when that is not something that even I want to do? If my desire to chat on Facebook and watch television comes from my "increased appetite for visual stimuli, ¹²" how can I expect that my students do not have an even bigger appetite for it? How can I as a teacher compete against the visual stimuli that the students have access to everyday? I should not compete with the stimuli; I should use them, allow them into the classroom and in at-home activities. I have some students who get home by 4 p.m., drop their bags, grab a snack, and are playing video games and watching TV by 4:15 pm. They possibly stop for dinner, and then are back on the video games and/or TV until 11 p.m., and that is being generous. If these students took five minutes to write down why a certain move in a game worked and described it play by play, they would be showing me and at the same time trying to persuade me why this move is the best. Doing those kind of activities would be a great way for students to incorporate what they do with visualization and writing. Having students watch television and write down the different persuasive words that they hear or describe persuasive scenes that they see in commercials is another way to get them visually thinking about persuasive writing while using visual stimuli.

Grammar

People may not believe that grammar is an important part of persuasive writing or that is a given that grammar would be taught throughout a unit. Although it may seem like teaching grammar would be second nature, it is not. The middle-school students I teach have problems with grammar and mechanics, and there are certain grammar mistakes that I consistently come across when correcting their papers. Sentence fragments, run-on sentences, and the improper use of punctuation are a few grammar issues I see daily.

Although it would seem that this should not be included in preparing for persuasive writing, I disagree. I believe that the students need to be reminded how to write correctly. These constant errors take away from their essays. Repeated run-on sentences, sentence fragments, and incorrect punctuation take away from the points the students are trying to make. I want students to enjoy writing and write creatively; and if their audience is also able to understand what they are reading, the students will enjoy it more. Students should also realize that writing correctly will help to make their audience see their point more clearly and that constant errors take away from their argument. If the long-term goal is to prepare students for defending themselves past middle school, then grammar must be a part of this unit. Even if only three things are focused on, they are three things that bring the students closer to being better writers.

Students' common grammar mistakes make their positions less effective. Proper grammar helps the audience that the students are writing to respond as the students would want them to. ¹³ Students are not officially graded on spelling and grammar on the district and state tests, but if a scorer cannot understand the students' positions or takes one of their points out of context, the students will be marked down on their essays. The lost points help to reinforce their negative thinking about writing.

Grammar is being included in this unit to help students remember that it is important and does have an effect on their writing. One way to work on grammar is by having mini lessons on grammar every day during this unit. We will do mini lessons on punctuation (commas, semicolons, and ending punctuation), run-on sentences, and sentence fragments. These are the majority of grammar mistakes that I see among the students. If we work on these grammar issues repeatedly during the unit (and most likely before and after), this should help to combat the problems seen in their writing.

Classroom Activities

The classroom activities and lessons are designed to incorporate vision and seeing with persuasive writing. The unit will include visual stimuli, descriptive writing, and visualization as tools to expand the students' current formulaic writing. If students use the tools and complete the activities and lessons they should be able to write a persuasive piece that does not include and expands beyond "my first reason is;"

The lessons for this unit consist of 10 lessons. Although there are 10 lessons, some lessons will take more than one class period to complete. The lessons in this unit will be completed consecutively, but not necessarily done everyday. The lessons will meet the district and state standards, as well as the CMT persuasive writing standards. By the end of this unit the students will have all of the tools that they need to write a persuasive piece that would get them a passing score on the CMT.

All lessons in this unit start with grammar mini lessons (please see the section on grammar for reasons why). The first lesson will discuss persuasive writing, the main point of the unit, and introduce it to the students. Although students will have a vague idea of what it is, I have found that with this age group, more times than most you have to start fresh as if they have never heard of a subject. The lessons to follow will include visualization and elaboration mixed with visual stimuli to help students expand their ideas, think creatively, and make connections between writing and their own worlds. Students will also be making connections between images and writing during these activities.

Putting It All Together

By the end of this unit, students should be able to write a persuasive piece that incorporates persuasive writing techniques with visualization and elaboration. Students should be able to use the tools and ideas that they have gained from their classroom activities that allow them to write a complete essay. They should be able to visualize their ideas and what they want to write first, and be able to show their audience what is in their heads. The students will also hopefully leave this unit with a new view on writing. They should feel prouder of their work and take more ownership of their writing. They will be able to reflect on the visual stimuli that they used in their classroom and at-home activities when they are writing their persuasive pieces in class, and beyond.

Lesson Plans

Teacher: Alice Smee

Class: Read 180

Grade: 6, 7, 8

Objective(s):

The learner will:

Be introduced to persuasive writing.

Read and compare examples of professional persuasive writing to their own persuasive writing.

Use visual stimuli to connect writing to images.

Broaden their descriptive and persuasive vocabulary.

Be introduced to descriptive writing and elaboration of their own writing.

Be able to write descriptive and elaborate sentences.

Be able to find persuasive ideas in media

Be able to describe how images can be persuasive

Be able to write a descriptive, visual, and elaborative persuasive piece.

Be able to find and correct sentence fragments, run-on sentences and punctuation errors.

Lesson 1

Materials: Notebooks, pens and pencils. Grammar tip sheet on run-on sentence, run-on sentence worksheet, examples of persuasive pieces (the teacher will provide).

Procedures:

(include Initiation, New Material if applicable, GP, IP, and closure)

Initiation: When the students come into the class there will be a sentence on the overhead that reads "The images in your head are important how you transfer those images to words is important also." The class will discuss how we can fix the run-on sentence in order to make it a proper sentence. After we discuss the different ways I will give the students a packet about run-on sentences. Note: The packet will be for students to keep and use in class during the times when we are working on run on sentences.

New Material: The teacher will ask the students "What does it mean to persuade someone? Write your own definition." After a discussion of the answers, the teacher will then ask, "What is persuasive writing?" Again the class will discuss the answers and the students will write down the answers in their notebooks, so that they can always go back to refer to them. Finally the teacher will ask, "What are the main parts of a good persuasive argument?"

Guided Practice: The teacher will give an example of two persuasive writings: one writing will be a student example, and the other will be a more descriptive and creative writing, a review of a movie or music. We will read both together and discuss them.

Individual Practice: The students will be given a Venn diagram graphic organizer; the left side of the diagram will say, "Characteristics of Writing One;" the middle will say, "Similarities of Both Writings;" and the right will say, "Characteristics of Writing Two." The students will have to complete the sheet about the two different writings.

Closure: After reviewing the sheet they will also be given a sheet with the following questions:

1. What did you notice was different about the two writings?
2. Which writing was more descriptive?
3. Which writing did you prefer and why?
4. Draw a picture that represents one thing that stood out to you in one essay of the writings.

After giving them time to answer the questions, the students will discuss them with a partner. Time with their partners will be followed by a brief whole class discussion about the differences between the two essays, and how the objective of our persuasive unit is to write an essay that follows the standards, but is also creative

and descriptive like the second essay.

Lesson 2

Materials: Notebooks, pens and pencils. Sentence fragments tip sheet, sentence fragment worksheet, popular children's television show.

Procedures:

(include Initiation, New Material if applicable, GP, IP, and closure)

Initiation: The students will enter the class and fix a sentence fragment that will be on the overhead. After the class reviews the answers for the ways to fix the sentence fragments, the teacher will pass out the tip sheet for the sentence fragments.

New Material: The class will discuss ways that they are persuaded daily. In school, at home, on the internet, on the television, etc. The class will discuss what they see and how they are being persuaded and if it works. The teacher will then explain to the class how visuals can help them when they are writing and coming up with their own ideas for writing.

Guided Practice: The teacher will then show the class a popular, age appropriate, television show. The class will watch the show together for no longer than 20 minutes.

Individual Practice: The students will be required to complete two tasks after they watch the show. The first task is to describe the most important scene in the show. The students will need to write who and what they saw in the scene. They will be asked to describe everything they saw. The second task is for the students to write why they like this show, and how what they saw supports their view.

Closure: For the remainder of the class, the students will break into partners or small groups and discuss their two tasks. The students will create a list of at least two things that they noticed. They will also have to choose which classmate's reason for liking the show and details to support. Each partnership or group will have five minutes to create this list, and then we will go around and discuss as a class.

At home activity: The teacher will give the students an image of a current event and ask the students to write down what they see. They will be asked to write every detail in the image that they can actually see. The students will have to make a decision about the picture; they can decide anything. Then they will have to support their decision with what they saw in the picture. They cannot use anything that they have not already written down on the sheet. In partners the students will discuss their decisions and support.

Lesson 3

Materials: Notebook, pens and pencils. Punctuation tip sheet, "Say this not that" worksheet (the teacher will provide).

Procedures:

(include Initiation, New Material if applicable, GP, IP, and closure)

Initiation: The students will enter the class and correct a sentence with incorrect punctuation that will be on the overhead. After the class reviews the answers for the ways to fix the sentence, the teacher will pass out

the tip sheet for punctuation.

New Material: The teacher will explain to the students that since they have been describing pictures and television shows, and since they will encounter more description and elaboration, they will figure out words that can be descriptive and convincing. The class will complete an exercise called "Say ___ not ___"

Guided Practice: The teacher will explain to the class that they will be given common words that they use daily like: talk, go (going), agree, walk, etc... They will be asked to come up with more descriptive phrases or synonyms of those words.

Individual Practice: The students will be broken into small groups of no more than four and will have small competitions. Each group will be given a sheet, and a word. They will all be given five minutes to come up with alternate words and phrases. The activity will be done in two rounds, round one for descriptive words and round two for persuasive words.

Closure: The class will create a master list of descriptive words they can use when they are writing.

At home activity: The teacher will ask the students to take notice while they are watching television or on the internet of all the commercials or ads that they see. While watching they need to make a list of all the words, images and ideas that were used to try and convince or persuade them into doing or buying what the ad is for.

Lesson 4

Materials: Notebook, pens and pencils. Run-on worksheet, assignment directions, Sentence Expanders homework (the teacher will provide).

Procedures:

(include Initiation, New Material if applicable, GP, IP, and closure)

Initiation: When students enter the classroom a picture will be on the overhead with the caption "This man is running from really bad run-on sentences help him fix it what should he do." The students will have time to fix the issue themselves first and we will briefly discuss it as a class. Note: Students can refer to their run-on tip sheet if they need to.

New Material: The teacher will explain to the students that this lesson will focus on elaboration in writing. First the class will discuss what it means to "show and not tell" when writing. The teacher will give the students examples, and then will ask each of the students in the class to come up with his or her own example. The class will then be asked to complete a short writing activity that asks them to be descriptive and creative.

Guided Practice: The class will review the directions of the assignment together (see individual practice). After the directions are reviewed the teacher will read the students an example of the assignment:

If I could bring objects into the class I would bring two things. One is reddish brown and white. It has two dark brown eyes that look at me with unconditional love. It also has a black nose that is so smashed I worry if it can breathe; because of the nose you often hear it coming before you see it and that sends people running! When I am feeling down or sick it cuddles up next to me and gives wet kisses until laugh and feel much better. The teacher will stop there and see if any of the students could guess what he or she is describing and why it was

special.

Individual Practice: The students will complete the following assignment:

Think about an object that is special to you and that you would want to bring to school for show and tell. In the space below you must write a short story or a poem that does two things. The short story or poem has to describe the object you would bring, without saying what the object is, and also show why the object is special. Make sure you use descriptive words when describing the objects. You will be sharing this story or poem with a partner and will answer questions about your partner's story or poem.

Closure: After the students are finished, they will have to exchange assignments with a partner. They will each be given a sheet with the following questions:

- 1a. Was your partner's story or poem descriptive enough? Were you able to figure out the object he or she was describing? What was it?
- 1b. What are some descriptive words that your partner used to describe his or her special object? If your partner did not use any descriptive words, list some that he or she could have used.
- 2a. Are you convinced that your partner's object is special? Why or why not? If you are not convinced, what could your partner have said to convince you?
- 2b. What descriptive words that your partner used were also words that helped to persuade you? List them.

For homework will give the students a worksheet called "sentence expanders." The students will have to take telling sentences like "John's shoes were old" and turn them into showing sentences like "John's shoes had so many rips, creases and dirt on them that I thought he borrowed them from my great grandmother."

Lesson 5

Materials: Notebook, pens and pencils. Sentence fragment tip sheet, completed sentence expanders assignment, assignment directions (the teacher will provide).

Procedures:

(include Initiation, New Material if applicable, GP, IP, and closure)

Initiation: When students enter the classroom there will be a picture on the overhead of an arrow pointing downhill. I will ask the students "how is this picture a sentence fragment?" We will discuss what the picture is missing and what we can add to make it a complete sentence. The students will have a chance to draw a complete picture, and then we will make the sentences together on the overhead.

New Material: The teacher will ask the students to take out their sentence expanders' homework and explain that we are going to use them to work on visualization as well as descriptive writing. The teacher will then ask the class to come up with a definition of visualization. The class will then discuss how visualization is defined, how visualization is used in reading, and how it can be used in writing.

Guided Practice:

The class will review the sentence expanders' homework and go over a few different sentences that the students turned from telling into the showing sentences.

Individual Practice: The teacher will ask them to choose the sentence from their homework that they think is the most elaborate or descriptive, and to write it on a piece of paper. The students will then be broken into partners. One partner will read their sentence, and the other will have to say what they are visualizing, and then they switch. This exercise gives the students a chance to practice visualization with their peers and understand how descriptive words can help to create images in their heads.

Closure: The class will discuss some of the visualizations they had when working with their partners.

Lessons 6-9

The next lessons continue to expand the idea of visualization, elaboration and persuasive writing. The grammar mini-lessons will also continue to incorporate visuals with the grammar. For example, in the next punctuation mini-lesson the students will watch one line from a television show. I will ask the students to close their eyes and visualize where the punctuation belongs. I will also put the sentence on the board, and ask the students to come up and put the punctuation where it belongs.

In lesson six, students will have to use a picture to describe a healthy lifestyle. They will use one that I give them to describe and support their opinion and they will also have to research one on the internet to support their ideas.

In lesson seven the class will discuss creating arguments and counter arguments for their use of text and internet use in schools, actually sending their argument to the teacher on one of these visual media. We will also work on finding supporting evidence to defend their arguments.

In lesson eight we will discuss writing from the readers' point of view versus the writers' point of view and, using all the tools that they have worked on, how to write descriptively enough for it to be written to the readers' point of view.

The final lesson will ask the students to write a persuasive piece. It does not have to be a formal essay, but it does have to include what we have learned: it must be descriptive, visual, make a defending statement and support itself. Students will have time in class to complete the assignment and will also work together in partners and small groups to edit, and revise.

Appendix on Standards

Standards and Objectives

National Standard(s) (NCTE): #4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes. 5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes. 6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.

State Framework(s) :

1 Reading and Responding - Students read, comprehend and respond in individual, literal, critical, and evaluative ways to literary, informational, and persuasive texts in multimedia formats.

3 Communicating with others - Students produce written, oral, and visual texts to express, develop and substantiate ideas and experiences.

4 Applying English Language Conventions - Students will apply the conventions of Standard English in oral and written communications.

- proofread and edit for grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization
- speak and write using conventional patterns of syntax and dictation
- use variation of language appropriate to audience, language and task.

The unit will be aligned with state and national standards, as well as the CMT standards. The state says that all students when communicating with others should be able to "use descriptive, narrative, expository, persuasive and poetic modes,"¹⁴ but in seventh grade students should "use oral language with clarity, voice and fluency to communicate a message; and listen to or read a variety of genres to use as models for writing in different modes; as well as write to delight in the imagination."¹⁵ These standards will be met in the unit, by allowing the students to read persuasive writing that does not follow their formula; by working on expanding the students' descriptive vocabulary; by having the students collaborate on their work; and by introducing them to strategies that get them to write in a colorful and vivid way.

Reading List for Teachers

Camp, Lindsay, and Inc. ebrary. 2007. Can I change your mind? London: A. & C. Black. - book on persuasive writing, where the author writes using the same ideas, tricks and tips about persuasive writing he is trying to get you to follow.

Hayles, N. Katherine. "Hyper and Deep Attention: The Generational Divide in Cognitive Modes." Profession (2007): 187-199- Article on visual stimuli and how it affects the attention span of students.

Mcquade, Christine, and Donald Mcquade. Seeing and Writing 3. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006.

Muschla, Gary. Teach Terrific Grammar, Grades 6-8: A Complete Grammar Program for Use in Any Classroom (McGraw-Hill Teacher Resources). New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006. - Grammar lessons, tips and exercise to use in a classroom.

Onofrey, Karen A., and Joan Leikam Theurer. 2007. What's a teacher to do: Suggestions for comprehension strategy instruction. Reading Teacher 60, (7) (04): 681-4. - Provides tools and strategies on how to use visualization and prior knowledge to aid in reading comprehension and writing.

Seitz, Ingrid. 2008. Classroom materials: Enhancing writing through Visualization/Middle school matters: Innovative classroom activities. Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy 51, (8) (05): 699-700. - Article on using visualization in middle school as a way to improve writing.

Shaw, Fran. 50 Ways to Help You Write: Tips, Techniques, and Shortcuts to Help You Write Like a Pro. New York: Authors Choice Press, 2000- Writing exercise book, with examples and steps on how to do all kinds of writing, formal and creative.

Stead, Tony. 2003. The art of persuasion. Teaching Pre K-8 34 - Article with tips on ways to get students to enjoy persuasive writing. Stead gives tips on how to engage students in persuasive writing and assess their writing.

Reading List for Students

Mcquade, Christine, and Donald Mcquade. Seeing and Writing 3. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006.

-- Girl by Jamaica Kincaid - short story about girl who has lots of chores but the author uses great descriptive detail, to help with visualization.

-- Writers Corp (624-629) - Pairs poems with images. Will give the students a chance to visualize and work together

Shaw, Fran. 50 Ways to Help You Write: Tips, Techniques, and Shortcuts to Help You Write Like a Pro. - Writing exercise book, with examples and steps on how to do all kinds of writing, formal and creative. The whole book is great for students to have, but for this unit:

-- Chapter One- Describing People, Places and Things -Basic writing exercise that uses descriptive writing and visualization tools.

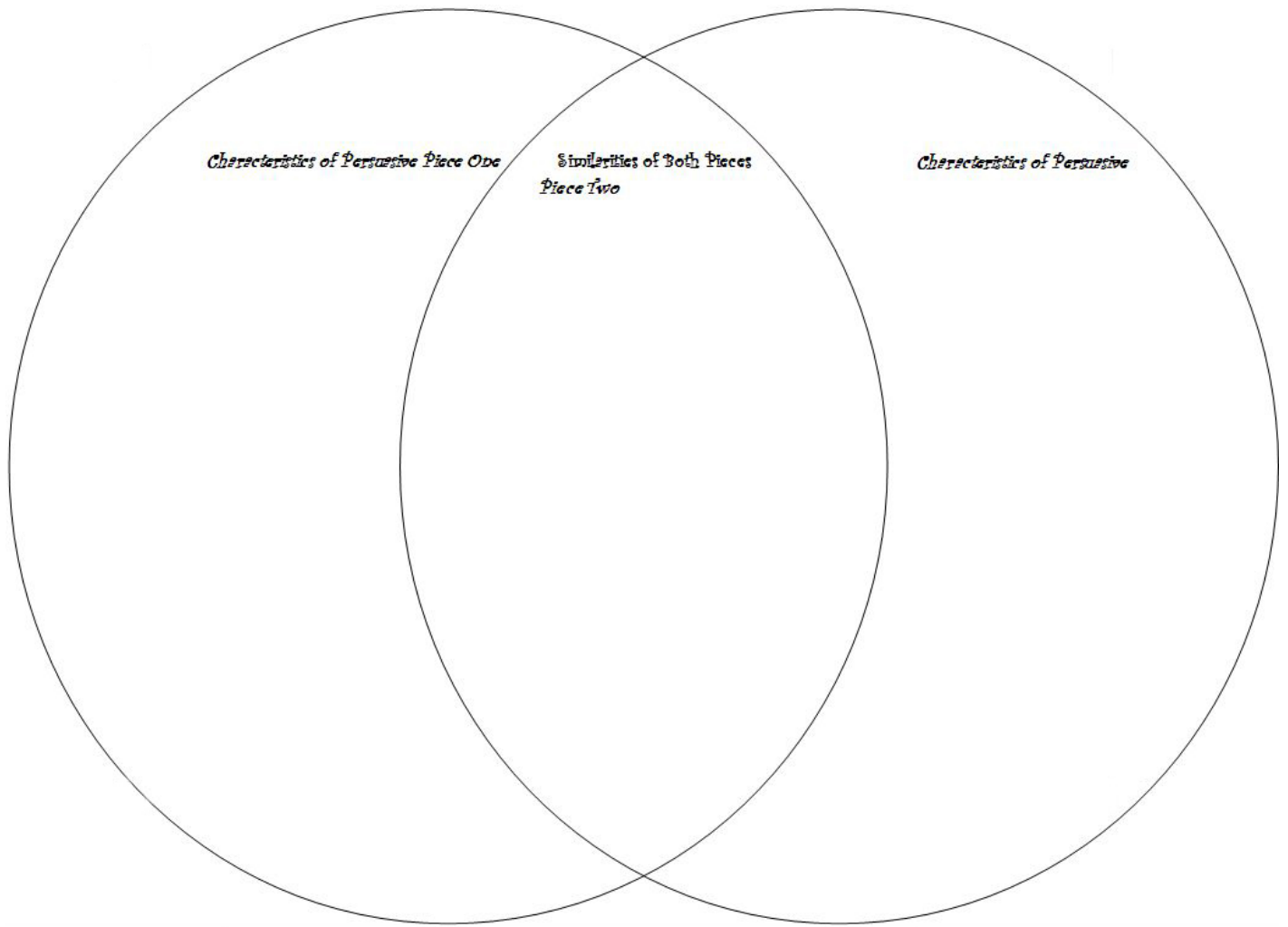
-- Chapter four convincing someone exercises on how to write in all different kinds of persuasive situations.

Truss, Lynne. Eats, Shoots & Leaves: Why, Commas Really Do Make a Difference!. New York: Putnam Juvenile, 2006. - Picture book that combines punctuation and images.

Web sites

Newhavenindependent.com - Site full of visuals and text, for students to keep up with current issues in their communities.

Rollingstone.com - site with contemporary articles on music, but specifically the reviews for this unit.



Notes

¹ Fleming, Bruce E. 2003. *Art and argument: What words can't do and what they can*. Dallas: University Press of America.

² Hayles, N. Katherine. "Hyper and Deep Attention: The Generational Divide in Cognitive Modes." *Profession* (2007): 187-199

³ Hayles, N. Katherine. "Hyper and Deep Attention: The Generational Divide in Cognitive Modes." *Profession* (2007): 187-199

⁴ Camp, Lindsay, and Inc ebrary. 2007. *Can I change your mind?*. London: A. & C. Black.

⁵ CT English Language Arts Curriculum Framework,
<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&q=320866>

⁶ CMT Persuasive Writing Rubric

⁷ CMT Persuasive Writing Rubric

⁸ Onofrey, Karen A., and Joan Leikam Theurer. 2007. *What's a teacher to do: Suggestions for comprehension strategy instruction*. *Reading Teacher* 60, (7) (04): 681-4.

- ⁹ Onofrey, Karen A., and Joan Leikam Theurer. 2007. What's a teacher to do: Suggestions for comprehension strategy instruction. *Reading Teacher* 60, (7) (04): 681-4.
- ¹⁰ Seitz, Ingrid. 2008. Classroom materials: Enhancing writing through Visualization/Middle school matters: Innovative classroom activities. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 51, (8) (05): 699-700.
- ¹¹ Seitz, Ingrid. 2008. Classroom materials: Enhancing writing through Visualization/Middle school matters: Innovative classroom activities. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 51, (8) (05): 699-700.
- ¹² Hayles, N. Katherine. "Hyper and Deep Attention: The Generational Divide in Cognitive Modes." *Profession* (2007): 187-199
- ¹³ Camp, Lindsay, and Inc ebrary. 2007. *Can I change your mind?*. London: A. & C. Black.
- ¹⁴ CT English Language Arts Curriculum Framework,
<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&q=320866>.
- ¹⁵ CT English Language Arts Curriculum Framework,
<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&q=320866>

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