Brainstorm by Thinking About Things You Want

**Objectives**

In this mini-lesson, students will:

- Learn a strategy for brainstorming ideas for a persuasive letter by thinking about something they want to happen or something they would like to have.
- Work with a partner and use guiding questions to identify and discuss topic ideas.
- Contribute to a class web of ideas for persuasive letters.

**Preparation**

**Materials Needed**
- Chart paper and markers
- Writer’s notebooks
- Interactive whiteboard resources

**Advanced Preparation**

If necessary, copy the sentence frames from “Strategies to Support ELs” on chart paper.

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**1. Focus**

**Explain the Brainstorming Process**

**Say:** When we write a persuasive letter, we’re trying to get something we want. We may want something at home, or we may want something at school. It could be something that’s just for us or something that’s for everyone. When I write a letter to persuade someone to give me something or to do something, I have to be able to explain why it’s important. I have to have good reasons for why it’s really needed. Let me show you how I brainstorm ideas for a persuasive letter.

**Model Brainstorming by Thinking About Things You Want**

Use the sample think-aloud to help you develop your own brainstorming models to share with students. Demonstrate how to record ideas with the ideas web as you model brainstorming.

**Sample think-aloud. Say:** I’d really like our class to go on a field trip to the park, but I need to get permission first. I could write a letter to our principal to persuade her that a field trip is a good idea. There are a lot of things we have learned about in science that we could study there. Going to the park would be a great way to learn, so taking a field trip to the park is something I really want. I’ll write that idea on my brainstorming web. I will also add getting more bookshelves for the classroom. Bookshelves cost money, but adding room for books will help us have more of them to read. Also, my daughter really wanted to get a kitten. She wrote me a letter telling me all the reasons why she should have one. Getting a new pet at home is also a great topic for a persuasive letter. Continue talking about other ideas and adding them to the web.
2. Rehearse

Practice Brainstorming by Thinking About Things You Want

Invite students to work in small groups to brainstorm things they want for the classroom or for themselves that could become ideas for writing a persuasive letter. Remind students to record ideas in their writer’s notebooks. Students should think about:
- What is something I really want?
- Why do I want it?
- Would other people agree with me?

If your class includes English learners or other students who need more support, use “Strategies to Support ELs.”

Share Ideas

Bring students together and ask them to share an idea they brainstormed based on their personal wants and needs. Record their ideas on the brainstorming web you started earlier. Ask students which ones they agree are important and why. Ask if anyone disagrees with an idea.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We’ve learned how to use things we want to help us discover ideas for a persuasive letter. As you brainstorm topics on your own, think about things at school or at home that you really want or need.

Encourage students to apply this strategy when they brainstorm during independent writing time. During conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to share some things they want and explain why. Discuss how thinking about things they want helped them brainstorm ideas for persuasive letters.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

Invite beginning ELs to draw a picture of something they want. Ask them to tell you about it using words and gestures. Write key vocabulary they need to talk about their drawings on self-stick notes and place them on the drawings.

Intermediate and Advanced

Provide sentence frames to help ELs talk to their partners about their topic for a persuasive letter. For example:
- I really need ______.
- It would be better if ______.
- I think we should ______.
- I want ______.

All Levels

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share this English/Spanish cognate: persuasive/persuasivo(a).