Think About Something We Feel Strongly About

**Objectives**

In this mini-lesson, teachers will:
- Launch the persuasive writing unit of study.
- Establish themselves as persuasive writing mentors by identifying topics they feel strongly about.
- Model how writers think about how to persuade the reader to think or do something.

Students will:
- Talk about something they feel strongly about.
- Discuss things they would like to do something about.

**Preparation**

Materials Needed
- Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation
If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, copy the sentence frames from “Strategies to Support ELs” onto chart paper prior to presenting the mini-lesson.

**1. Focus**

**Introduce Persuasive Writing**

Talk with students about something you feel strongly about to demonstrate how writers choose the topics of their persuasive essays. Explain that all people have something they feel strongly about. You may wish to share more than one idea so that students have a greater chance of personally identifying with one of the issues you discuss.

Sample think-aloud. Say: When I was at the park this weekend with my son, I noticed that there were many things on the playground that needed to be fixed. There were rocks and roots sticking out of the ground by the swing set. The ladder going up to the slide was broken, and the merry go round was tilted so much that children could fall off. I think the playground should be a safe place for children to play. I think the town has to take more care in repairing the playground so that no one gets hurt. I am thinking of writing a letter to the mayor to let her know about these problems. I will tell her what I think of the problem and what I think should be done.

Say: The safety of the playground is something I feel strongly about. I feel so strongly about it that I am willing to do something about it. I am sure there is something you feel strongly about also. When we feel strongly enough about a topic, we can write about it and try to persuade, or convince, people to think the way we do or to do something we think is important. Persuasive writing is the kind of writing that tries to get someone to think or act in a certain way. We use facts in persuasive writing to support our position.

**Introduce the Purpose and Audience for Persuasive Writing**

Say: Every day someone uses persuasive writing to try to persuade you to think about something in a certain way or to do something. Billboards, ads on TV, ads in magazines, and signs in stores are all trying to persuade you. Knowing that someone is trying to persuade you can make you stop and think about whether you agree or not. People also write persuasive letters to try to convince someone about something, for example, letters to a mayor or politician, a principal, and even to parents. Persuasive letters often try to point out a problem and then suggest ways that the problem can be fixed. It is important to use facts in a persuasive letter to support a position. Knowing how to write persuasively is an important skill you will use in school and in the real world.
2. Rehearse

Practice Speaking Persuasively

Write the following topic on chart paper or use the interactive whiteboard resources: Should we get one extra week of summer vacation? Read the topic aloud to students. Invite students to work with a partner. One partner should take on the role of a student, trying to persuade the principal that students should get an extra week. The other partner takes on the role of the principal, trying to persuade the student that there should not be an extra week of vacation. Remind students to give reasons to support their positions.

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

Share Procedures with the Class

Invite pairs to reenact their conversations with the class. Ask students who are listening to identify the reasons students used to support their positions. Record their ideas on a chart like the one below. Discuss the importance of using facts to persuade. Begin a discussion with questions such as:

- Which position has more facts to support it?
- Which position was more difficult to support? Why do you think that is?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students SHOULD get an extra week of vacation</th>
<th>Students SHOULD NOT get an extra week of vacation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They will be more rested when school starts in the fall.</td>
<td>They will be more likely to forget things they learned.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample Reasons Chart

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: Today we learned that when you persuade people, you try to get them to think the way you do about something, or get them to do something. In your persuasive letter, you give reasons why you feel the reader should think a certain way or do something. In the next several weeks, we will be looking at persuasive letters and then writing letters of our own.

Encourage students to take turns trying to persuade a partner to read a certain book or see a certain movie. During student 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 how they tried to convince their partners to read a book or see a movie. Ask if they felt they were successful or not.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

Meet with beginning ELs one on one to build the concept of what it means to persuade. Display a healthy fruit such as an apple. Say: We should eat apples. Write the words on chart paper. Use the sentence frame We should eat apples because _______ to model giving reasons (they taste good, they are healthy, they are good for our teeth, etc.). Say: I give reasons. I give reasons to persuade.

Intermediate

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the “Practice Speaking Persuasively” partner activity. Encourage them to use the following simple sentence frame to communicate their reasons for why students should/should not have an extra week of vacation.

Students should/should not have an extra week of vacation because _______.

Advanced

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the “Practice Speaking Persuasively” partner activity.

All Levels

If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates to help them understand the lesson focus: opinion/la opinión; persuade/persuadir; reason/la razón.