Verbalize Ideas Before Writing a Persuasive Letter

1. Focus

**Explain Verbalizing Ideas**

**Say:** In some countries, people can get in trouble for saying what they think about an issue. In those places, writing a protest letter to a newspaper or a public official could be dangerous! In this country, we have the right to speak out and express our opinions. If I feel strongly about an issue, I might write a letter to my congressperson or to a local newspaper. I want to make the best case I can. So before drafting my letter, I try to figure out what the arguments on the other side will be. That way I can answer them in my letter. One technique I use before drafting is verbalizing both sides of an issue! I say my own argument out loud—and then what people arguing against it might say!

Today I’ll show you how to verbalize the pro and con sides of an issue for a persuasive letter.

**Model Verbalizing Ideas**

**Say:** I’m going to draft a persuasive letter that shares my position that water bottles shouldn’t be allowed in the classroom. Before I begin drafting, I need to consider questions people might ask me concerning my position. This will give me a chance to practice my argument before I draft it. One thing I might be asked is, “What makes you think anyone cares about water bottles on desks?” (Write the question on chart paper.) How do I respond? Well, I know that this issue is a source of conversation for both students and teachers. So, I can say that I know the school community is interested. Another question I need to consider is, “Why do you support this position?” (Write the question on chart paper.) I can answer this by saying that I am a teacher and my primary goal is to make sure students get a good education. If water bottles disrupt class lessons, this concerns me as a teacher. I could be asked, “What do you say to the person who feels the opposite of you?” (Write the question on chart paper.) Certainly one of the opposing arguments is that it’s important to drink water and stay hydrated. I can agree with this but explain that we don’t need to have water bottles in the classroom to achieve this. I can provide other ways to help students stay hydrated. Thinking about challenges to my position helps me write a better draft.
2. Rehearse

Practice Verbalizing an Argument

Ask students to work with a partner. Using one of the partner’s ideas for a persuasive letter, ask students to role-play a discussion about it. One partner should challenge the other using the questions you used during the modeling portion of the lesson. The other student practices his or her arguments for his or her position.

Share and Discuss Verbalizing an Argument

Invite students to talk about their experiences verbalizing an argument. Use question prompts such as:
• Was it easier to say the arguments aloud than it would be to write them?
• Did you get ideas you could use to draft the argument?

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We just learned how to verbalize, or talk about, our arguments before we begin writing. When getting ready to draft a persuasive letter, thinking about questions others may have about your position and answering these questions out loud helps you make your strongest case. As you draft your persuasive letter, remember to verbalize your arguments.

Encourage students to verbalize their arguments before beginning their drafts. Reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies during conferences, using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring the class together. Invite volunteers to discuss how verbalizing arguments before they begin drafting helps them be better prepared for writing.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

Work with ELs one on one. Ask students to tell you about an issue they are concerned about, using words or gestures, or ask them to draw it. Ask them simple questions about their position and encourage them to answer in any way they can; for example:

*Why is this issue important?*
*Who cares about this issue?*

Intermediate and Advanced

Give students some simple sentence frames to help them verbalize the arguments for the activity.

*People care about this issue because ______.*
*I support this position because ______.*
*I can argue ______.*

All Levels

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: argument/el argumento; persuade/persuadir.