Organize Ideas for a Persuasive Letter

1. Focus

Explain Organizing Ideas for a Persuasive Letter

Say: When we chose our topic for our persuasive letter, we chose a topic that we felt strongly about. The persuasive letter we write will try to get our readers to agree with our position. We did research to find facts that support our position. We also found out more about the opposing position on the issue, so that we are better able to argue against it. Today, I’m going to show you how to use a planning chart to help you organize your ideas before you begin writing.

Model Organizing Your Ideas

Display a Persuasive Letter Planning chart like the one below on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Add information to the chart as you think aloud about organizing your research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem:</th>
<th>water bottles on desks during class time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Position:</td>
<td>We should not allow water bottles on desks during class time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience:</td>
<td>Our school community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arguments/Reasons</th>
<th>Facts/Evidence to Support Arguments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Distracting during class time</td>
<td>• All teachers interviewed reported it as problem on occasion; two-thirds of students reported it as problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Not all kids have them and may feel left out</td>
<td>• Half of the kids interviewed felt left out if they didn’t have water bottles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Some bottles have offensive logos on them</td>
<td>• A quarter of bottles had offensive logos</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Solution: | Students keep water bottles in backpacks. Teachers remind students to have a drink when they break for next class. |

Sample Persuasive Letter Planning Chart (BLM 4)

About “Problem” and “Position.” Say: The problem my persuasive letter will be concerned with is having water bottles on desks during class time. My position is that water bottles on desks shouldn’t be allowed. Model writing the problem and position on the chart.

About “Audience.” Say: It’s important to decide who my audience is before I begin writing a persuasive letter. This helps me choose the language that is most appropriate. This issue concerns our whole school, so my audience is our school community. Model writing the audience on the chart.

About first argument. Say: In a persuasive letter, I need to make sure to give arguments that support my position. I also need to back up my arguments with good reasons. If I’m telling the school community that we shouldn’t allow water bottles on desks, I need to give arguments that tell why. One of the most important arguments is that water bottles are a distraction in the classroom.
All the teachers and two-thirds of students I spoke to said the water bottles are distracting.

About second argument. Say: Another argument is that some kids have water bottles, while others don’t. In four classes I asked students who didn’t have water bottles what they thought. Over half said they often felt left out.

About third argument. Say: I examined the water bottles in four classes. I found that about a quarter of the bottles had offensive logos. Model writing the third argument on the chart.

About “Solution.” Say: If students don’t have water bottles on their desks, but they still need to be sure to drink water, what could the solution be? One idea is that kids could keep water bottles in their backpacks. The teacher could remind students as they break for their next class to be sure to get a drink, either from their own water bottle or from water fountains in the school.

2. Rehearse

Practice Organizing Your Ideas

Invite students to use the Persuasive Letter Planning chart to organize the letter topic they chose during the narrowing-the-focus lesson.

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

Share Ideas

Bring students together and invite volunteers to share the ideas they organized on the chart. Discuss how organizing their ideas before writing will help them write a more effective persuasive letter.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We just learned that we can use a planning chart to organize our ideas for a persuasive letter. It’s important that we state our position clearly and that we have logical arguments to support our position. We need to make sure we can support our arguments with evidence. The planning chart can help us make sure we include the information we need in order to write a strong letter.

Make BLM 4 available to students who are ready to organize the research for their persuasive letters. During conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring the class together. Invite volunteers to report their progress organizing ideas for their persuasive letters. Ask students to share one or more facts and details they plan to use to support their positions.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning
Invite beginning ELs to draw a picture of something they feel strongly about. Ask them to tell you their reasons why, using words and/or gestures.

Intermediate and Advanced
Encourage ELs to use the following sentence frames to help them talk about their persuasive letters:

The problem is _______.
My position is _______.
One argument for my position is _______.
A solution is _______.

All Levels
If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: problem/el problema; reason/la razón; solution/la solución.