Prepare a Formal Letter to the Editor

1. Focus

Explain Preparing a Formal Letter to the Editor

Ask: What are some instances when you have written a letter, either by hand or on the computer? What is the difference between writing a letter to a friend and writing a letter to someone you don’t know? Allow students to generate their own ideas about the differences between formal and informal writing.

Say: When you write a formal letter, you have to include certain pieces of information. These can include a greeting, a salutation or closing, and an address. When a letter is sent by mail, you must put the letter in an envelope to be mailed. The address of the person to whom the letter is being sent must be included on the outside of the envelope in a certain way in order for the letter to reach its destination.

Model Preparing a Formal Letter to the Editor

Display the mentor text Old Oak Park: Build On or Save It? in book form or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Read aloud the letter on page 9.

Say: This is the letter to the editor of a local newspaper from a citizen and parent expressing her opinions about the need to build a new middle school. This is a formal letter so we need to include the address of whom we are writing to on the left-hand side of the letter.

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:
• Learn strategies for preparing a formal letter to the editor.
• Brainstorm ideas for writing a formal letter with a partner.
• Discuss how to apply the strategies to their own persuasive letters.

Preparation

Materials Needed
• Mentor text: Old Oak Park: Build On or Save It?
• Chart paper and markers
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation
If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, copy the modeling texts on chart paper prior to the mini-lesson.

Modeling Text

Say: Notice that the first line tells who the letter is written to. This is followed by the name of the newspaper this person works for, and that is followed by the address of the newspaper office. Under the address, we write the salutation, which in this example is “To the Editor.”

Display the modeling text of the addressed envelope on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.
Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning
Display a simple letter. Point to a part of the letter, say its name and describe its purpose. Say: This is the salutation (greeting). It tells us the person we want to read the letter. Have students point and repeat after you. Repeat for different parts of the letter.

Intermediate and Advanced
Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity.

All Levels
If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: editor/el editor/la editora; formal/formal.

The Chatham News-Tribune
Attn: Editor
4411 Oakdale Drive
Oakdale, TX 58985

Modeling Text

Say: When you address an envelope, you need to include certain information on the front. This way, your letter will arrive at its correct destination. On the first line of the address, you include the place of business where you want your letter to go. The name of this business is The Chatham News-Tribune. The next line tells the newspaper who the letter is for. This letter is written to the editor of the newspaper. The abbreviation Attn: means “Attention” and tells the people who work at the newspaper that the letter was written to the editor. The last two lines are the actual address. You should also put your return address in the upper left-hand corner of the envelope.

2. Rehearse

Practice Preparing a Formal Letter to the Editor

Invite students to work with a partner and select a persuasive letter to use for the practice activity. Ask them to write the addresses they would include on the letter and on the envelope.

Share and Discuss

Bring students together and invite them to talk about the process of preparing a formal letter to the editor.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We learned how to address a formal letter and its envelope. Keep this in mind as you write your persuasive letters and prepare them for mailing.

Encourage students to apply this strategy when they prepare their own persuasive letters for mailing. 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 share their persuasive letters with the class. Discuss any challenges students have with addressing their letters.