Read Aloud a Mentor Persuasive Letter 2

1. Focus

Introduce the Mentor Persuasive Letter

Say: Today I’m going to read you a persuasive letter to the editor. Letters to the editor are published in the newspaper where the editor works. Community members write letters to the editor to express their opinions on stories in the newspaper and issues in the community. The title of this letter is “The Tree Can Go.” What does the title tell you? What can you predict about the content of this letter to the editor? Allow students to share their predictions.

If your class includes English learners or other students who would benefit from vocabulary or oral language development to comprehend the persuasive letter, use “Make the Mentor Text Comprehensible for ELs.”

Read Aloud the Mentor Persuasive Letter

If you have not already read aloud the newspaper article on page 4 that provides the background for the letter to the editor, you may wish to do so now. Read aloud the letter, stopping at some or all of the places indicated (or at other points you choose) to highlight two key features of a persuasive letter:
1. Persuasive letters use facts and evidence to make a case.
2. Persuasive letters suggest solutions or actions to a problem.

Facts and Evidence to Make a Case
Page 9, after first paragraph. Say: The author states that the town should build a new middle school and gives facts and evidence to support her view. First, the writer points out that the school is seventy years old. I know that old buildings can be difficult to maintain. Then the author describes problems that the middle school has: walls are crumbling and plaster falls from the ceiling. I wonder if this person is exaggerating the problem. But the author includes evidence: a photo of a wall in which the plaster has fallen away and I can see the bricks. That does look pretty bad. Good persuasive letters support a position by providing facts and evidence.

Facts and Evidence to Make a Case
Page 9, after third paragraph. Say: Here the author uses more facts and evidence to make her case. She says that “According to the Board of Education,” there is no money to make repairs. Citing a source shows me that this writer has researched the problem and knows what she is talking about. Then the author tells a story about something that happened to her daughter, who is a student at this school. The daughter found a mouse in her locker and was “traumatized by this experience.” This evidence helps prove to me that the school is a problem. If the poor physical environment is affecting the students, that really convinces me that something needs to be done!
Suggests Solutions or Actions
After reading page 9. Say: In the last paragraph of the letter, the author presents a very specific solution to the problem. She states exactly what she thinks the town should do: sell Old Oak Park and use the money to build a new middle school. She ends the letter by reminding me why a new school is important: it will help the students feel safe and concentrate on their studies. I have no doubt how strongly this writer feels about her position!

2. Rehearse

Respond Orally to the Mentor Persuasive Letter
After reading, invite students to share their own ideas and reactions to the text by asking such questions as:
• Do you think the author made her case effectively? Why or why not?
• How would you describe the person who wrote this letter?
• Did you like this persuasive letter? Why or why not?

If necessary, model the following sentence frames to support ELs and struggling students:
• The author made her case effectively because______.
• The author is ______.
• I liked the letter because ______.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: As you write your own persuasive letter, remember to use facts and evidence to support your position and make it appear stronger to the reader. This will help convince the reader that your opinion is important and that the solution or action you recommend is a good one.

Ask students to write a paragraph in which they identify a problem in their community that they feel strongly about and suggest a solution to the problem.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to read aloud the problems and solutions they identified in their paragraphs.

Make the Mentor Text Comprehensible for ELs

Beginning
Review words for the parts of a room or building used in the mentor text, such as walls, ceiling, windows, bathrooms, and locker. Say the words and have students point to the feature in your room or in a drawing.

Beginning and Intermediate
Use the picture in the text as you give students an overview of the letter. Say: This letter was written by a parent. Her daughter goes to a school that is old. The walls are crumbling. This mother wants a new school. She wants the town to sell land to get money to build a new school.

Intermediate and Advanced
Explain that in the letter, the author gives reasons that the town needs a new middle school. Make sure that students understand the reasons. Ask: Why would the town need a new school? What things could be wrong with the old school?

All Levels
If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share the following English/Spanish cognates: infested/infestado(a); traumatized/traumatizado(a).