

Inquiry Question: Does giving students an authentic audience improve their writing?

W.5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting or trying a new approach.

W.1 Write arguments to support claims with reason and evidence.

W.1b Support claim with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.

Assignment Description:

Students will write a problem/solution argumentative essay supported by evidence about a problem at Waldo. The best essays will be shown to the principal who will give them feedback on their ideas. Even though most essays were not shown to the principal, the authentic audience was a tool to inspire my students to write persuasively and to do their best work. I chose four solutions that aligned to problems that students had identified.

Key Vocabulary:

- controlling idea=main idea=central idea
- summary-a short version of the main things that happened
- text structure-how the text is organized
- inference-an informed judgment
- paraphrase-rewrite in your own words
- plagiarism-stealing someone else's words
- relevant=important

Problems:

- stress
- fights, skipping
- distractions
- junk food/diabetes

Solutions:

- meditation in schools
- restorative justice
- ban/allow cell phones
- ban/allow junk food

Timeline:

Day 1-2: Introduction of topics/assignment

1. Meditation--Waldo should/not include meditation in our day to relieve students' stress.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCqmFpKiLD0>

2. Restorative Justice--Waldo should/not adopt restorative justice as an alternative to suspensions.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZtdoWo1D3sY>

3. Junk Food--Waldo should/not allow students to eat junk food at school.
4. Cell Phones--Waldo should/not allow students to use their cell phones at school

Day 3-4: Decide on topic, begin investigation

1. Mark the text
2. Find evidence for your claim, identify the counterclaim
3. Write two paragraphs with evidence supporting, and one paragraph with evidence as a counterclaim.

Day 5-6: Begin Drafting Paper

Day 7-8: Edit/Revise/Final Draft

Day 9: Gallery Walk with silent voting with stickers

Resources:

Lesson plan for Letter to Principal

<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/persuading-principal-writing-persuasive-1137.html?tab=4>

Model Intro:

A problem at this school is that there are kids, like me, who keep on getting suspended. Whenever I get suspended, I get mad, but I don't really change. A solution to this problem is to move away from suspending kids and use the Restorative Justice to get kids to reflect on their behavior. The first reason why I think Waldo should use Restorative Justice is that in other districts when the program is in use, suspensions go down 87%. When suspensions go down, more students get to learn. Another reason why we should switch to Restorative Justice is that when students get suspended a lot, they are more likely to be incarcerated or sent to jail later on in life.

Body:

Some people claim that cell phones will cause kids to have bad posture and for that reason they should be banned in schools. The author of OMG You're Texting Your Way to Bad Posture links cell phone usage to bad posture. He states, "...bending your head at a 60 degree angle to get a better look at your selfie is putting 60 pounds of pressure on your cervical spine..." (paragraph 4). While it is true that cell phone users often have bad posture, it is not the cell phone's fault. If students just texted sitting upright, they wouldn't have such bad posture.