A Better Argument: Aristotelian Persuasive Rhetoric in Any Classroom

Marynn Dause and Beth Dibble
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Think, Pair, Share:
How do you currently teach persuasive writing, and what difficulties do you encounter?
Why Use the Methods of Aristotle?

- Make writing functional beyond the classroom.
- Help students express themselves authentically.
- Provides a flexible format for critical thinking.
The Lesson

- Introduce
- Background
- Argue/Make your point
  - Evidence
- Counter/Rebuttal
- Conclude/Bring it home

"Make the audience well-disposed and ill-disposed to our opponents."
"Make the audience well-disposed towards ourselves and ill-disposed to our opponent."

- What one part of Aristotle's rhetoric does Calvin leave out?
You know, I don't think math is a science. I think it's a religion.

Yeah. All these equations are like miracles. You take two numbers and when you add them, they magically become one new number! No one can say how it happens. You either believe it or you don't.

This whole book is full of things that have to be accepted on faith! It's a religion!

And in the public schools no less. Call a lawyer. As a math atheist, I should be excused from this.
"Make the audience well-disposed towards ourselves and ill-disposed to our opponent."

- What one part of Aristotle's rhetoric does Calvin leave out?

- Why is Calvin reasonably successful in his conclusion?
# The Thesis Statement

## Writing a Persuasive Thesis Statement

Mix and match options from the columns below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exactly who?</td>
<td>does / does not . . .</td>
<td>proving that . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What event?</td>
<td>should / should not . . .</td>
<td>resulting in . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which idea?</td>
<td>highlights . . .</td>
<td>reminding us . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many things?</td>
<td>ignores . . .</td>
<td>demonstrating . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are you telling about, exactly?</td>
<td>you want to believe!</td>
<td>this proves if you need to believe!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is in your audience?</td>
<td>you need to believe!</td>
<td>this proves if you need to believe!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this your argument?</td>
<td>you need to believe!</td>
<td>this proves if you need to believe!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Pre" Example: A longer school year does guarantee more learning opportunities, resulting in increased student success.

"Con" Example: A longer school year does not guarantee that students will be more productive in class, reminding us that young people need what they learn to be meaningful in order to succeed.

We need a silly topic. Any takers?
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What are you talking about, exactly? Choose any verb you like. This phrase is your point in a nutshell. Bring it home to your audience. Why should they care about what you say?

**“Pro” Example:** A longer school year does guarantee more learning opportunities, resulting in increased student success.

**“Con” Example:** A longer school year does not guarantee that students will be more productive in class, reminding us that young people need what they learn to be meaningful in order to succeed.

**We need a silly topic. Any takers?**
Ways to Implement This in Your Class

- In-class writings (< 5 sentences - Full page)
- Online class blog posts
- Formal papers (drafts and revisions)
- Fishbowl peer edits
- Group drafts for class debate
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Real World Examples

If students can't write, how can they learn?

By Shikha Pruthi

"I cannot understand students who are writing 50% and not doing a good job on it. If you are not comfortable with the curriculum, then that is your problem." Shikha Pruthi, a career counselor, was speaking about the importance of writing skills in the current education system.

Prezi

Try Try Try

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Prezi

Try Try Try
Lou Gehrig, “Farewell to Baseball Address”
July 4, 1939; Yankee Stadium

It seemed as if the luminous career of Lou Gehrig would go on forever. The Yankee’s first baseman and prodigious slugger was nicknamed the Iron Horse for his durability and commitment to the game. Sadly, his record for sitting up for 2,130 consecutive games came to an end when at age 36, Gehrig was struck with the crippling disease that now bears his name. On July 4, 1939, the Yankees held a ceremony to honor their teammate and friend. They retired Gehrig’s number, spoke of his greatness, and presented him with various gifts, plaques, and trophies. When Gehrig finally addressed the crowd, he did not use the opportunity to wallow in pity. Instead, he spoke of the things he was grateful for and what a lucky guy he was.

The Speech

“Fans, for the past two weeks you have been reading about a bad break I got. Yet today I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth. I have been in ballparks for seventeen years and have never received anything but kindness and encouragement from you fans.

Look at these grand men. Which of you wouldn’t consider it the highlight of his career to associate with them for even one day?

Sure, I’m lucky. Who wouldn’t consider it an honor to have known Jacob Ruppert – also the builder of baseball’s greatest empire. Ed Barrow – to have spent the next nine years with that wonderful little fellow Miller Huggins – then to have spent the next nine years with that outstanding leader, that smart student of psychology – the best manager in baseball today, Joe McCarthy!

Sure, I’m lucky. When the New York Giants, a team you would give your right arm to beat, and vice versa, sends you a gift, that’s something! When everybody down to the groundskeepers and those boys in white coats remember you with trophies, that’s something.

When you have a wonderful mother-in-law who takes sides with you in squabbles against her own daughter, that’s something. When you have a father and mother who work all their lives so that you can have an education and build your body, it’s a blessing! When you have a wife who has been a tower of strength and shown more courage than you dreamed existed, that’s the finest I know.

So I close in saying that I might have had a tough break – but I have an awful lot to live for!”

If students can’t write, how can they learn?

By Natalie Wexler, Published: November 1, 2013

When I started tutoring students in writing at a high-poverty D.C. public high school this year, I was prepared to run into some problems. I knew it was hard for an overworked teacher with a class of 25 or 30 students to engage in the kind of one-on-one work that teaching writing often requires. That’s why I volunteered to help.

Still, I was shocked by what I found. Even though I’ve generally worked with the school’s higher-performing students, I’ve encountered some who aren’t familiar with terms such as “subject” and “verb.” A number don’t know why “Although I read the book” isn’t a complete sentence.

But the problems go deeper than ignorance of the rules of grammar, spelling and punctuation. Many students have no idea how to write a paragraph that hangs together, let alone a coherent five-paragraph essay. They don’t understand how to draw a connection between a claim and a piece of evidence, a basic necessity in constructing a logical argument.

These aren’t just writing skills. These are thinking skills of the type the students will need to succeed in college, on the job or even just to dispute a charge on a credit card bill — and to knowledgeably exercise their right to vote.

I have no reason to believe that the level of writing at the school where I’ve been tutoring is worse than at any other high-poverty D.C. high school — or any other high-poverty school in the country, for that matter. Expository writing skills simply haven’t been taught in many elementary schools for the past 30 years or so. Instead, what has been taught, at some schools, is self-expression: stories, poems, personal essays. That approach may get kids to embrace the idea of writing, but it doesn’t teach them how to write. One of my students showed me a poem she composed that was so powerful it took my breath away, but she couldn’t write a logical paragraph to save her life.

These widespread problems are about to become painfully apparent. The District and 45 states have adopted the Common Core standards, which put much more emphasis on explanatory and analytical writing skills. Beginning next year, D.C. students will be taking new standardized tests that require them to demonstrate those skills. Scores will probably plummet.

Shortly before I started tutoring in January, I came across an article in the Atlantic magazine about a writing program that had produced dramatic effects at a low-performing high school on Staten Island. The program, devised by an educator named Judith Hochman, had students writing in history and science as well as English, using a format that was both

structured and

grew more sophisticated as the year went on. Soon after, I called the teacher

I tried some of Hochman’s strategies with my students and was amazed by how much improvement there was. It was as if a light had been switched on in my students’ brains.

I’ve also seen an upswing in the school’s scores on the new exams.

Last spring I jumped at the chance to help. The program is being scaled up with

Hochman Proctor.

There’s no guarantee that improved test scores will lead to improved learning how to use writing skills.

But it’s worth a try. And if we keep scoring poorly in writing, we’re going to have to go back to school and learn how to teach it.

Natalie Wexler

5 Comments

Eric Goldstein
11/14/2013 11:14 AM
This timely article
sentence structure
year to ensure
argumentative
I know this first hand. Charter Schools have already started to
Great work still challenges our
"Try"
Colbie Caillat

Put your make up on
Get your nails done
Curl your hair
Run the extra mile
Keep it slim
So they like you. Do they like you?

Get your sexy on
Don't be shy, girl
Take it off
This is what you want, to belong
So they like you. Do they like you?

You don't have to try so hard
You don't have to give it all away
You just have to get up, get up, get up, get up,
You don't have to change a single thing

You don't have to try so hard
You don't have to bend until you break
You just have to get up, get up, get up, get up,
You don't have to change a single thing

You don't have to try, try, try
You don't have to try, try, try
You don't have to try, try, try
You don't have to try
You don't have to try

Oh

Get your shopping on,
At the mall,
Max your credit cards
You don't have to choose,
Buy it all
So they like you. Do they like you?

Wait a second,
Why should you care, what they think of you
When you're all alone, by yourself
Do you like you? Do you like you?

You don't have to try, try, try
You don't have to try, try, try
You don't have to try, try, try
You don't have to try
You don't have to try

Oh

You don't have to change a single thing
You don't have to try, try, try
You don't have to try, try, try
You don't have to try, try, try
You don't have to try, try, try
You don't have to try
You don't have to try

Take your make up off
Let your hair down
Take a breath
Look into the mirror, at yourself
Don't you like you?
Cause I like you
Success!

My Name: Mrs. Blank
Class Name: English

If you are interested in continuing to see if you are successful in your endeavors, here are some tips:

1. Set clear goals: Define what success means to you and break it down into smaller, achievable steps. This helps you stay focused and motivated.

2. Stay organized: Keep track of your progress and manage your time effectively. This ensures you can tackle tasks one at a time without feeling overwhelmed.

3. Seek feedback: Regularly ask for feedback from others to get a different perspective on your work and progress.

4. Reflect on your achievements: Take time to reflect on what you have accomplished and what you have learned along the way. This helps you understand your strengths and areas for improvement.

5. Stay persistent: Success often requires persistence and resilience. Keep working towards your goals even when faced with obstacles or setbacks.

Remember, success is a journey, not a destination. Enjoy the process and the lessons you learn along the way!
What’s your topic? Domino’s pizza at school

Who’s your audience? Mr. Conway (principal)

What do you want to persuade him/her to do? Let us have good pizza again

Okay, make your case!

Domino’s Pizza should be allowed to deliver large pizzas to the school for lunch again, resulting in happier students with less hunger. A lot of times, the food at school is bad. We the students don’t like it. A lot of times, we just don’t eat it, but that makes us really hungry and then we get mad in class later because we’re hungry and tired. If we had better food that tasted good, we would eat more. Like Domino’s makes pizza that tastes good, and it’s got good ingredients in it, so it’s pretty healthy for us too. I know some people might say Domino’s is too expensive or might make us fat. I think that’s not true, though. If we split up the cost of each pizza and only paid for a few slices at a time, we could probably afford it. And if we have more energy from eating a good lunch, we can play more in P.E. Wouldn’t that help us not get fat? I know you care about us and want us to grow up and learn stuff. Thanks for listening to what I have to say. Please let us get good pizza back soon!
SUCCESS
Because you too can own this face of pure accomplishment
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