

Lesson Skill: Writing business and postsecondary correspondence

Strand Writing

SOL 11.6

12.6

Materials

- Access to an online search engine or a word processor program with a business letter template.
- Copies of the attached handout, “Peer Critique Sheet for Workplace or College Inquiry Letter.”
- Access to computer workstation for online research.

Lesson

1. This lesson requires a great deal of personal reflection on the part of the student before coming into the classroom. Students have been given a chance to brainstorm one of the following letter-writing possibilities:
 - What college(s) or other institute(s) of higher learning they would like to attend AND/OR
 - What career paths are of most interest to them. Encourage the students to “dream big.” This is a chance for them to see how difficult or attainable some career paths may be.
2. Review with students the information needed to contact a particular company in their chosen career path or a learning institution. Information would include:
 - Address of company or admissions office for institute of higher learning.
 - Specific reasons for contacting this particular school or company. This should be a journal entry or a set of bullet points. Examples would include: “The school is the number one ranked engineering school in the state” or “This is the company whose skateboards I ride every day.”
 - Specific name of person to be contacted with questions (if available). If students do not have this information, use an online search engine to help them find it.
3. Review types of questions students may be asking of their particular correspondent. Some possible questions include:
 - What GPA or standardized test scores do I need to get into your school?
 - If my GPA or standardized test scores are not as high as your school’s mean test scores, are there alternative means of assessment, such as portfolios or interviews?
 - What does the school offer that makes it unique? Why would I choose said school over others?
 - If to a company, what entry level positions does the company offer that have options for advancement? What are the qualifications for these entry level positions?

- What does a typical work day look like at the correspondent company?
 - What benefits does the company offer for entry level positions?
 - What training opportunities does the company supply to aid workers in their career advancement?
4. Review as a class the key information that they, the students, will be including in the letter, including:
 - Student name and address
 - Information for brief introduction of who the student is (for instance, a junior at _____ High School)
 - Any additional information that may be of interest to correspondent (for instance, projects student has been involved in, personal and academic, that may fit with the vision of the particular school or company).
 5. Have students access the templates on their particular computers, looking for business letter format. If the particular word processor being used does not offer such a template, use an online search engine to find business letter templates. If possible, use a projector to model the search for a template or the online search.
 6. Students should work independently to construct the drafts of their letters. Circulate through the room helping students with their individual issues as they come up.
 7. After the drafts are completed, students share their drafts with writing review groups. Such groups will have been teacher selected and will be diverse so that students can draw on each others' strengths and help each other through their weaknesses. Give students the attached handout to guide them through the review process. Each group should consist of three students and each paper should get at least two reads, each with a completed review sheet.
 8. Students are given an opportunity for revision based on the feedback from the handout. The second draft is given to the teacher, along with the review sheets. This is a formative assessment, both of the writer and the reviewer.
 9. Perform one final review of each student's letter and one final opportunity for revision. This would be another opportunity for formative assessment.
 10. At this point, students mail their letters to their respective recipients.

Strategies for Differentiation

- Business letter samples and templates — critique sheet
- Vocabulary — terms word wall
- Initial Questioning Organizer — prior to writing the letter
- Interview/Conversation with a peer — to focus goal — with starter questions
- Text to Speech — Web site access
- Chart Paper — brainstorming

Peer Critique Sheet for Workplace or College Inquiry Letter

Your name: _____

Name of student whose paper is being reviewed:

1. Does the letter follow the proper business letter format? Is there a(n):
 - Date of correspondence?
 - Return address?
 - Address of the recipient, properly formatted?
 - Greeting?
 - Properly punctuated paragraphs?
 - Complimentary close?
 - A signature block?
2. Has the letter been signed?
3. The writer's name and title after the signature block?
4. In the introduction, what information does the writer give about himself or herself?
5. Imagine you were the recipient of this letter, what else would you like to know about the sender?
6. In the body of the letter, what specifically does the writer ask for?
7. What additional information might the writer ask for?
8. Is the letter short and to the point? If not, what details might be cut while still keeping the central idea of the letter?