



Transactional Writing: Argument

LEVEL 1i 1ii 1iii **2** 3 4 5

Should We Have Gum at School?

THE LEARNING CONTEXT

The class brainstormed the concept and purpose of an argument, and then held a mock debate about whether roller blades should be allowed at school. They divided up into “for” and “against” factions, and came up with legitimate reasons to persuade the other side that they were right.

The teacher then shared a model of a written argument: “Why We Should Plant Trees”. The students analysed and discussed its structure – thesis, supporting reasons, and conclusion restating the thesis. The teacher also asked them which words could be described as persuasive.

The students were then given a choice of topics relating to school regulations to argue. They were expected to choose one that they felt particularly strongly about. They were then to brainstorm ideas and write a draft that fitted the framework they had discussed.

Teacher-student conversations

After the first draft, the teacher and Courtney discussed the persuasive language, and ways to make the argument stronger. The teacher acknowledged the structure, which had been followed effectively.

- Teacher: Which of your reasons do you think will most appeal to your readers?
- Courtney: I think the other kids will like the blue-tack idea.
- Teacher: I think you’ve managed to use humour very effectively. It sounds like a serious argument because you’ve given reasons, but you are joking aren’t you?
- Courtney: Yes, I was trying to be funny ’cause I know I could get all the other kids agreeing with me.
- Teacher: Do you think it will persuade the principal to change the rules?
- Courtney: I doubt it!
- Teacher: You’ve found the right words to strengthen your argument – “definitely” and “critical”. Well done!

Courtney later edited and published the piece independently.

INTEGRATING READING AND WRITING

There should be opportunities in guided and shared reading programmes for students to read and analyse a range of texts with appropriate models of persuasive writing. This could include:

- emotive language
- rhetorical questions
- pronouns that denote inclusion or exclusion
- appealing to authority
- imperatives.

Such texts can be found in newspapers, magazines, and some *School Journal* articles.

Students should also be encouraged to read visual texts, especially advertisements, where verbal and visual features are often used persuasively.

WHERE TO NEXT?

To move Courtney towards the next learning step, the teacher might help her to focus on:

Ideas

- elaborating on ideas with more detail.

Vocabulary

- developing a wider range of vocabulary for a specific purpose.

Language features

- exploring persuasive language, such as rhetorical questions and imperatives.

The teacher could nurture these skills in a rich language environment, where reading and writing are supported by discussion. Specific skills can be taught in the reading and writing programmes, especially in feedback sessions. Persuasive language features can be explored in guided and shared reading programmes.

CURRICULUM LINKS

English in the New Zealand Curriculum

Level 2: Writing Functions

Transactional Writing: Students should write instructions and explanations, state facts and opinions, and recount events in a range of authentic contexts.

Levels 1 and 2: Reading and Writing Processes

Exploring Language: Students should explore choices made by writers, and identify and use the common conventions of writing and organisation of text, which affect understanding.

Thinking Critically: Students should identify and express meanings in written texts, drawing on personal background, knowledge, and experience.

English in the New Zealand Curriculum, pages 35-36

REFERENCE

Ministry of Education. (1994). *English in the New Zealand Curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media.



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WHAT THE WORK SHOWS: Courtney clearly states her opinion, using humour and logic to win her audience over. She has used a clear and simple writing framework to convince the reader.

Student's second draft

Deeper features

Ideas

States main idea clearly with some supporting evidence.

Structure

Sequences ideas logically.

Uses simple framework for argument.

Sentences

Uses mainly compound sentences; attempts complex sentence.

Vocabulary

Chooses appropriate words.

Strengthens opinion by choosing strong words.

Language features

Appeals to reader's emotions.

Should we have gum at school?

Gum should deffintly be allowed at school.

Firstly, you wouldn't need blue tack because gum is just as sticky.

Secondly, you won't talk because your too busy chewing.

Thirdly, It tastes good and you won't need any other food.

Lastly, if you have bad breath or forget to brush your teeth, it would do the trick.

Therefore I think it is deffintly critical to have gum at school.

Surface features

Spelling

Spells most high-frequency and content words correctly.

Punctuation

Understands capitals, full stops, commas.

Grammar

Uses most grammatical conventions correctly.



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Should We Have Gum at School?

Student's second draft

Should we have gum at school?
Gum should ^{definitely} ~~deffintly~~ be allowed at school.

Firstly, you wouldn't need blue tack because gum is just as sticky.

Secondly, you won't talk because you're too busy chewing.

Thirdly, it tastes good and you won't need any other food ~~because you could just eat gum.~~

Lastly, if you have bad breath or forget to brush your teeth, it would do the trick.

Therefore I think ~~it~~ ^{is definitely critical to} ~~should~~ ^{is} definitely ~~have~~ gum at school. ✓