Key Developmental Stages for teaching Persuasive Writing

The objective of this document is to assist schools in developing a plan for a whole school focus on the teaching of persuasive writing. Although this document focuses explicitly on this genre, the ideas and strategies can be applied to the teaching of all genres. The strategies suggested here are by no means definitive but aim to provide examples to model and stimulate teachers’ thinking and planning.

The primary purpose of persuasive writing is to discuss, express a point of view, analyse and evaluate, and can also be used to entertain and inform. The style of persuasive writing can be formal or informal but does require the writer to adopt a sense of authority on the subject matter and to develop the topic in a rational way. A writer of the persuasive text may draw on their own personal knowledge and experience or on detailed evidence based on knowledge of a particular subject or issue. There are different types of persuasive writing: a one sided point of view through to a text that expresses both sides of a debate concluding with the author’s stance on the topic.

It is imperative that schools prepare students with the knowledge, skills and vocabulary to be successful writers in the persuasive form. Teachers working together to build up skill sets across the year levels is a critical element of this process. The planning of this is the responsibility of all teachers across all areas of the curriculum. Consequently a whole school plan is essential. Building in reflection and assessment time for teachers to discuss experiences in the classroom and develop a shared understanding of the processes across the year levels, will assist in creating a seamless system that enables teachers to support student learning.

Teachers must consider oral language as a basis for structuring their programs. Explicit instruction in oral language development provides students with the foundation for communicating effectively in all areas of the curriculum. The early years’ focus of this genre relies heavily on oral language activities which can be recorded in a variety of forms. These activities should be embedded into teaching programs across all areas of the curriculum as they provide authentic and relevant purposes for students to engage in the persuasive genre.

To establish an environment where students feel comfortable and confident to express their own opinions, teachers should provide regular practice, both explicitly and incidentally, to develop this skill. In many cultures it is not appropriate nor practiced within the culture to express opinions, therefore teachers need to be explicitly encouraged and taught. Students will need to understand the purpose and process involved when expressing their own personal viewpoints.

When encouraging students to express opinions, teachers should consider providing a safe classroom culture that allows everyone to share viewpoints on issues without criticism. Socio-cultural understandings must be taken into consideration and need to be addressed at the beginning of any program of this nature. It is advisable to begin to explore persuasive text types through school based contexts that are not confronting.

### Summary of persuasive writing teaching emphasis across year levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transition – Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2-3</th>
<th>Middle Primary</th>
<th>Middle Years</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oral to written emphasis</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>● Oral language is central to all learning.</td>
<td>● Ideas communicated in writing after class discussion and modelling.</td>
<td>● Independent planning, researching and writing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Ideas are expressed orally with minimal writing.</td>
<td>● Writing scaffolded with prompts.</td>
<td>● Debating techniques developed.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Personal to impersonal writing</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>● Personal writing</td>
<td>● Mix of personal and impersonal writing. Beginning to nominalise.</td>
<td>● Impersonal, formal writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>I like..., I think...</td>
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<td>Social workers examine...</td>
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Transition - End Year 1

Oral language development

Teachers can:
- Use everyday experiences and understandings to stimulate/develop students’ points of view/opinions and to give reasons for their opinions on:
  - favourite animal or food
  - preferred playground game or classroom activity
  - personal topics so students are familiar with contexts and can make connections with the known.
- Choose a school issue such as *Preschool children should be allowed to play all day.* Encourage students to not only express their opinion on the topic but also express why/what reasons they have for their opinions. Ask questions such as: *Why do you think/feel that way?*
- Provide opportunities for students to make choices and encourage them to justify the choices they make e.g. *which activity to do, where to play, what to order for lunch*....
- Provide opportunity for regular oral activities using visual stimulus, posters/pictures with which students are already familiar. This is the beginning of critical literacy understandings by encouraging students to share their opinions about what they view. Model modality and causal connectives for students e.g. *I like this book because..., I believe ...should...* Introduce modality vocabulary that helps to strengthen their opinions e.g. *should, could, must, must not, if...then, that is why I think...*
- Play oral language games that enable students to become very familiar with expressing opinions using the language above to help reinforce students’ reasons e.g. Games such as *What if..., Give me back my chair..., thumbs up, thumbs down* to express likes and dislikes.
- Incorporate kinaesthetic intelligence to assist students with expressing ideas and emotions. Create group oral activities to express an opinion. Ask students to stand on either side of the room in response. *Move to this side of the classroom if you like...., move to that side if you like...* Encourage groups to give reasons why.
- Create a picture matrix of student opinions (link to mathematics).
- Encourage and model morning news to be expressed in the form of opinions and have students explain why they are sharing this information.
- Vocabulary development – begin creating visual displays of vocabulary students can use when talking as well as in their writing.

Reading and writing development

Teachers can:
- Use oral activities as springboards for recording and writing activities.
- Further extend kinaesthetic activities by recording results onto graphs, T-charts and other graphic organisers. Develop pictures/posters of class choices.
- Following modelled and shared writing create opportunities for independent writing (use sentence stems for early writers).
- Expose students to texts about expressing opinions – picture books (John Birmingham *Oi! Get Off Our Train*), posters to stimulate oral activities/discussion/model writing that expresses reasons why (I like this book because..., I believe ...should...).
- Introduce vocabulary that helps to strengthen their opinions (should, could, must, must not, if...then, that is why I think...).
Oral language development

Teachers can:

- Continue building on all of the learning experiences presented in Transition to Year 1.
- Broaden student experience around opinions - widen their scope or context to the outside world - move away from the egocentric view to look at issues from other perspectives, giving reasons and justifications.
- Incorporate assessment for and as learning strategies that focus on student self-reflection about their learning – give opinions about what students have learned, reflect on incidental every day activities.
- Share and listen to a variety of texts.
- Examine texts that express opinions on a variety of issues. Class groups deconstruct the text and discuss aspects presented by the writer e.g. introduction of opinion, reasoning, conclusion and vocabulary used to connect ideas and strengthen opinion. Encourage students to structure their thoughts with a statement of position (opinion) and reasons to support opinion (arguments).
- Include cross curricula activities that encourage interviewing of student opinions, create surveys of choices/opinions/favourites to obtain evidence and then graph results.
- Provide greater structure and purpose to morning news by setting broad topics, tuning into issues happening at school or around the world. Move to a reflective use of language (I believe..., What happens when...) can assist in broadening vocabulary. Record new words on charts to assist all students to strengthen vocabulary.
- Extend oral language games by adding in rebuttals of other students' reasoning (ensure students maintain respect for all opinions and viewpoints). Students can begin to use vocabulary that considers other positions.
- Build in group and pair discussion time where students exchange opinions about class topics. Students then present their partner’s point of view to the class e.g. Sally thinks...because...
- Using a context that is familiar to students by having them solve a school or social problem/issue. As a class group discuss strategies to solve the problem which can lead to modelled/shared/independent writing, possibly letters to the principal.
- Consider critical literacy and that there are questions to be asked about the social and cultural practices associated with all texts.
- Examine stereotypes - give alternative endings to stories and reasons why.

Reading and writing development

Teachers can:

- Begin to focus on text structure - statement of position, reasons and examples to elaborate, conclusion. Model writing and provide maps/templates for students to record opinions and reasons about a topic. Use texts as springboards for words and ideas.
- Program large group, small group and independent writing. Use T charts/graphic organisers to assist students to organise their ideas: to rearrange ideas in order of priority; and to compare/contrast ideas. This can be used as a stepping stone to develop students in thinking about how to convince another person to see a different point of view.
- Use surveys of choices/opinions/favourites to obtain evidence and then graph results.
Middle Primary

Oral language development

Teachers can:
- Continue building on all of the learning experiences presented in Early Years.
- Discuss the purpose of persuasive writing and where we would see this format in our everyday world. Discuss reasons for using persuasive language.
- Widen student experience around opinions - broaden their scope or context to the outside world, moving away from the egocentric view to look at issues from other perspectives, giving reasons and justifications.
- Incorporate assessment for and as learning strategies that focus on student self reflection about their learning – give opinions about what students have learned, reflect on incidental every day activities. What have we learned about using language in arguments? Through arguments what have we learned about the views of others? What value is this learning in our lives?
- Provide plenty of opportunity for the students to share opinions and ideas before and during the writing process.
- Discuss topics and have students prioritise ideas from the strongest, most important reason to weakest, least important reason. Use T charts/graphic organisers to assist students.
- Examine texts that express opinions on a variety of issues. As class groups, deconstruct the text and discuss aspects presented by the writer e.g. introduction of opinion, reasoning, conclusion and vocabulary used to connect ideas and strengthen opinion.
- Develop vocabulary banks that assist students with how to persuade another. Students begin to consider other points of view to establish rebuttal strategies. Use rebuttals to strength own points of view.
- Organise informal debates – for and against. Have students move to a side of the classroom they agree on for a topic and as a group formulate reasons and ideas to sway other members of the class. Students move from one side to the other as points of reason are given and agreed upon.
- Discuss techniques that are used in persuasive writing to convince the reader. Talk about techniques that are unacceptable (distortion of truth, abusive language).
- Look at language used in advertisements and list all the persuasive words and devices that are used to sway the reader’s/ listener’s judgement.

Reading and writing development

Teachers can:
- Select and read a variety of persuasive texts to introduce structure and uses of language. At this stage it is best to work with familiar content when introducing an unfamiliar structure.
- Teacher and students together deconstruct the language and format that various writers have employed. Construct own text as a group/ independently imitating language from viewed text.
- Introduce the terminology of thesis (statement of position) and reinforce the text structure using persuasive maps. Develop or source persuasion maps to help students develop plans to elaborate ideas with examples.
- Use language presented in debates/ oral discussion to build word banks. Focus on formal connectives to assist student to use more formal language (however, firstly, finally). Use these words to sequence a text and cut into strips for students to sequence.
- Develop an understand of how persuasive writing can be adapted for different audiences and purposes e.g. by using formal language where appropriate, and how it can be incorporated into or combined with other text types.
Middle Primary Reading and writing development (cont)

- Broaden experience and knowledge of language devices and techniques. Collect and investigate the use of persuasive devices such as words and phrases 'surely', 'it wouldn't be difficult…'; persuasive definitions 'the real truth is…'; rhetorical questions 'are we expected to…?', 'where will future audiences come from…?'
- During shared reading, read the position statement of an argument that deals with familiar subject matter without showing the students the arguments used by the author. Encourage students to predict and list possible arguments that could be included to justify this point. Read the text and compare their predictions. Note: teachers may need to write a persuasive text for shared reading.
- Use knowledge after completing a unit of work to jointly construct a persuasive text on a related issue to include relevant technical terms. Build up information for arguments in point form before jointly constructing the text.
- Use cards with connector words printed on them to act as visual prompts to encourage students. For example, when retelling a story the students are shown how to connect two simple sentences using a connective to create a more complex sentence.
Middle Years

**Oral language development**

Teachers can:
- Incorporate strategies that have been identified at previous year levels to stimulate discussion.
- Compare and contrast different types of persuasive writing on the same issues. Use cartoons, advertisements and writing to discuss the meaning conveyed through each format. Discuss which groups within the community would use each of the forms of persuasion.
- Employ a cross curricula focus for topics of discussion. Incorporate current affairs, science, maths topics to extend students.
- Have students participate in role plays of moral dilemmas to highlight how emotional and personal biases play a part in shaping opinions. Determine the levels of modality (low: *may* can; medium: *would, should*; high: *must, certainly*) required in a variety of situations, when appropriate and the level of success when inappropriate level of modality is applied.
- Encourage students to take different positions on the same issue. Devising assessments that enable the listeners to evaluate the speaker’s position of statement, evidence and supported arguments.

**Reading and writing development**

Teachers can:
- Develop formal language writing using an impersonal style for audience awareness. Focus on highlighting the degrees of distancing opinions and views e.g. *in my view..., my belief is that...to the impersonal ...it could be said..., it is commonly accepted..., to an external source most students agree..., politicians claim....*
- Explore the meaning of the word *persuade* through a variety of writing forms including advertising, letters to the editor, cartoons. Discuss text purpose and how successful they are at changing people’s view point or opinion.
- Write about the same issue but targeted to different groups to develop an understanding of audience and purpose for writing.
- Develop a wider bank of cohesive devices and conjunctions that show cause and effect relationships e.g. *however, unless, results in...*
- Broaden experience of technical language through deconstruction of texts both as a group and independently. Use a variety of persuasive devices such as words and phrases (*surely, it wouldn’t be very difficult…*) persuasive definitions (*the real truth is…*), rhetorical questions (*are we expected to…?*, *where will future audiences come from…?*)
- Highlight for students and have them experiment with punctuation as a form of persuasion e.g. one sentence paragraphs, exclamation marks and ellipses for emphasis.
- Differentiate between fact and opinion and how this determines the strength of the persuasion.
- Have students write advertisements that highlight a variety of persuasive devices.
- Explore emotive language by listing alternatives for words and ranking them from highly emotive to least emotive e.g. *slaughter – destroy – kill.*
- Develop continuums to demonstrate modality. Locate words in sample texts that indicate viewpoint, e.g. *definitely, might, should*. Order these to indicate degree of certainty and display as a reference for student writing.
- Develop sequencing tasks where the persuasive text is cut into chunks and re-assembled. These can be used during modelled, guided and independent reading and writing. A scrambled text can be sequenced by groups of students as a collaborative activity and then compared with the original text. It can also be used by the teacher for demonstrating the typical features of a text.