THE POWER OF PERSUASION!
A lesson in persuasive writing for Grades 3-5

Nine-year-old Milo Cress is concerned about the millions of straws that pollute waterways, waste fossil fuel, and harm ocean creatures. He convinces restaurants in his community to “go straw-free.” In another part of the US, on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, three 11-year-olds learned about the Skip the Straw campaign online. They visited Falmouth restaurants asking them to “skip the straw!” In this three-part lesson, educators have the opportunity to bring the power of persuasion to life examining persuasive strategies through a hands-on writing lesson to local businesses.

"When I first started this project, I thought that adults wouldn’t listen to what a kid has to say."

Milo’s power of persuasion can be explored through Young Voices for the Planet’s persuasive writing assignment. This lesson introduces students in grades 3-5 to persuasive letter writing while reflecting on our responsibility to be environmental stewards. First, we introduce Milo’s story and prompt students to identify common methods of persuasion through our film, The Last Straw. While working with classmates, students will use methods they identify during a brainstorm activity. Finally, students will draft letters to local businesses encouraging them to eliminate plastic straws. Through getting restaurants to change plastic straw policies, students can become empowered to change minds and regulations—even though they’re just kids. This lesson will help young people encourage local restaurants to reduce plastic straw use.

Link to film: https://www.youngvoicesfortheplanet.com/youth-climate-videos/the-last-straw/
THE POWER OF PERSUASION
Lesson Plan Instructions

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:
How can we persuade others to create positive changes?

OBJECTIVES:
Students will identify persuasion strategies and provide examples.
Students will express their opinions through organized writing.
Students will support their opinions through concrete details, facts, and statistics.

DIRECTIONS (suggested lesson time of three 40-min periods.)

1. Introduction: Think-Pair-Share. Randomly pair students in the class at your own
discretion. We suggest distributing two different colors of construction paper squares,
evenly split, to do a “Fruit and Veggie” think-pair-share strategy. Students will find a
partner with the opposite food type (have them pick a fruit or vegetable that
corresponds to their color) to answer the question you pose. Have students hold on to
their color card throughout the lesson. Tell students, “In the next few minutes, try to
convince your partner why plastic straws are bad for the planet.” Give partners a few
minutes to talk to their partner before sharing. Allow pairs to share out their
responses, writing on board as they speak.

2. Show film: Introduce the Last Straw film. Share with students that these were
young people, just like them, who were able to convince adults in their community to
help them accomplish something that helps our planet. Challenge them to look for the
persuasive strategies that they shared (written on the board) while watching the film.
Pause intermittently to prompt students with their observations, comments, questions,
etc.

3. Handout part 1 - persuasive strategies: Distribute handout to students, read
directions aloud. Have student volunteers read out each type of persuasive strategy.
Tell students to be on the lookout for the persuasive strategies listed while they watch
again. Show the film again. Prompt students to work independently on the first page
while you walk around to assist.

4. Brainstorm strategies: Ask students to meet up with a new partner w/ an opposite
color and share their answers from part 1. Review as a class.

5. Handout part 2 - writing practice: (Depending on the timing of your lesson, it may
be a good idea to show the film again as a refresher before beginning this part.) Read
directions together as a class. Before allowing them to start, practice letter
introductions on the board (using sentence frames or other prompting strategies).
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Ask students why they think they should ask the restaurants in their community to eliminate/reduce plastic straws, identify which restaurants would have the biggest impact, and WHO they should address the letters to (the owners, managers, etc.)? Give students time to work on part 2 individually while you call students over to your writing station. Assess and assist students with steps 1, 2, and 3 in small groups. *At your discretion, you may want to go over part 2 as a class either on overhead projector, whiteboard, etc.*

6. Write out letter: Once students have completed the handout (both sides) allow them to practice writing out the full letter in their student journals. This will be their first draft. When students have finished writing out the draft, have them share their letters with a partner. Once you have reviewed the letters for spelling/grammar, allow them to create final letter on stationary of your choice.

7. Conclusion: Show students how to address letters on envelope. Challenge students to take picture with their letters at restaurant of choice. Create a class bulletin board with copies of letters, pictures of restaurants written to, and any responses they may have received, Track progress and responses from restaurant owners.


MATERIALS:
- Two colors of construction paper, cut into squares
- Student handout (below)
- Student journals
- Stationary of your choice
- Writing utensils
- Whiteboard/chalkboard
- Computer, internet connection, projector

SUGGESTED MODIFICATIONS:
- For ELD students: Complete part 1 with a partner, part 2 with teacher 1:1 (or in ELD writing team), provide transcript of film, provide sentence stems for persuasive letter or option to illustrate ideas visually.
- For Differentiated Instruction (DI): Provide sample letters for students to work off of, sentence stems with transition words and phrases, allow students to re-watch film on personal tablets/devices.