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Curriculum Proect

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**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

Students use persuasion and are exposed to examples of persuasion very frequently. Therefore, it is important that students learn to understand what they hear, read, and see. They need to be able to recognize and use persuasive techniques in order to be effective speakers and writers. This will empower students to share their opinions and encourage change in a positive way.

It is also important that they are comfortable with persuasive techniques so that they can effectively interpret media messages. In addition, this will help them make smart choices in their lives. Media is a very important for people, and therefore, it is important that students are literate of media techniques, so that they can make informed choices. Kipping (1989) summed up the importance of students being aware of the media, by saying:

Media literate people understand that television is constructed to convey ideas, information and news from someone else's perspective. They understand that specific techniques are used to create emotional effects. They can identify those techniques and their intended and actual effects…Media literate people seek alternative sources of information and entertainment. Media literate people use television for their own advantage and enjoyment. Media literate people know how to act. They are not acted upon. In that way, media literate people are better citizens. (p. 23).

They will be more effective citizens, able to express their viewpoints, and back them up with evidence as well. One of the primary purposes of education is to prepare for students to be active citizens, and teaching them to understand persuasive techniques is definitely going to help them be better citizens. According to The National Communication Association (2009),“In an increasingly technological world, students need to be able to process information critically, and to create messages that are appropriate for both the medium of transmission and for the audiences of those messages.” It is vital that students understand the persuasion involved in media messages.

The persuasive unit addresses many of the Ohio English Language Arts Content Standards for Seventh Grade, including those that deal with writing persuasively, delivering persuasive presentations, and understanding persuasive techniques (see complete list below). It also addresses many of the standards proposed by the National Communication Association.

A persuasive unit needs be implemented so that students can become knowledgeable consumers and active citizens. As a result of this unit, students will learn the skills and concepts necessary to establish clear positions on issues, back them up with evidence, address counter-arguments, and call for action. They will also learn how to be aware of persuasive techniques used in media and presentations, so that they can be knowledgeable consumers.

**Ohio Academic Content Standards-English Language Arts-Grade 7**

WRITING PROCESSES

* Establish a thesis statement for informational writing or a plan for narrative writing
* Group related ideas into paragraphs, including topic sentences following paragraph form, and maintain a consistent focus across paragraphs

WRITING APPLICATIONS

* Write business letters that are formatted to convey ideas, state problems, make requests, or give compliments.
* Write persuasive essays that establish a clear position and include relevant information to support ideas.

COMMUNICATION: ORAL AND VISUAL

* Identify and explain the persuasive techniques (e.g., bandwagon, testimonial, glittering generalities, emotional word repetition, and bait and switch) used in presentations and media messages
* Interpret the speaker’s purpose in presentations and visual media (e.g., to inform, to entertain, to persuade)
* Deliver persuasive presentations that:
  + Establish a clear position
  + Include relevant evidence to support positions and to address counter-arguments
  + Consistently use common organizational structures as appropriate (E.g., cause-effect, compare-contrast).
* Vary language choice as appropriate during the presentations.
* Adjust volume, phrasing, enunciations, voice modulation, and inflections to stress important ideas and impact audience response.
* Demonstrate active listening strategies (e.g., asking focused questions, responding to cues, making visual contact)
* Draw logical inferences from presentations and visual media.

**SUBUNIT INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**Subunit One: Persuasive Techniques**

* Students will define persuasion, including what it is and why it is used.
* Students will identify and explain the five types of persuasive techniques, including testimonial, glittering generalities, emotional word repetition, bait and switch, and bandwagon.
* Students will state one example of each of the five persuasive techniques.
* Students will identify which persuasive technique(s) is being used in given examples of advertisements.
* Students will recognize the importance of being knowledgeable about persuasive techniques as consumers.

**Subunit Two: Writing an Editorial Letter**

* Students will choose an issue of importance to them from a given list.
* Students will establish a clear position on the issue, and write a thesis statement.
* Students will write an editorial letter using business letter format, including a heading, greeting, body, closing, and salutation.
* Students will use an attention-getting hook, such as a question, statistic, unusual detail, quotation, or strong statement in the introduction of the letter.
* Students will provide evidence to support their positions, and address counter-arguments, in the body of the letter.
* Students will restate the thesis, summarize evidence, and call for action in the conclusion paragraph of the letter.

**Subunit Three: Creating a Persuasive Essay and Presentation**

* Students will choose an issue of importance to them from a given list.
* Students will establish a clear position on the issue, and write a thesis statement.
* Students will write a persuasive essay on the issue selected.
* Students will use an attention-getting hook, such as a question, statistic, unusual detail, quotation, or strong statement in the introduction of the essay.
* Students will provide evidence to support their positions, and address counter-arguments, in the body of the essay.
* Students will restate the thesis, summarize evidence, and call for action in the conclusion section of the essay.
* Students will select key points from the essays to use in verbal presentations.
* Students will vary language choice as appropriate during the presentations.
* Students will adjust volume, phrasing, enunciations, voice modulation, and inflections to stress important ideas and impact audience response.
* Students will demonstrate active listening strategies while listening to peers’ presentations.
* Students draw logical inferences from peers’ presentations.

**SEQUENCING RATIONALE**

The Persuasion Unit is organized based on the concept-related sequencing patterns of sophistication and logical prerequisite. It orders the concepts based on what appears to be the most logical order for the learners (logical prerequisite), and on a building level of complexity (sophistication). Other patterns of organization could be used, but this arrangement seems to be the most logical for students.

The first subunit, “Persuasive Techniques,” is a logical starting point. Students need to understand what persuasion is and why it is used before they can use it in their writing. This subunit will provide the knowledge base for students to create effective persuasive writings in for the remainder of the unit.

The second subunit, “Writing an Editorial Letter,” is appropriate because it will help students establish their positions on issues, and back their opinions up using research. It needs to come after students clearly understand the definition of persuasion and examples. Because students should have prior knowledge of letter formats, sentence and paragraph structure, parts of speech, and grammar, this should be a concept that is developmentally appropriate.

The final subunit, “Creating a Persuasive Essay and Presentation,” is appropriately sequenced last because by this time, they will already understand what persuasion is, why and how it is used, and they will have already written a persuasive letter. They can now take their knowledge and expand on their ideas to create a longer piece of persuasive writing. In addition, they should be confident with persuasive strategies at this point, which make it an appropriate time for them to give persuasive presentations.

**EVALUATION STRATEGY**

Understanding and using persuasion is an important concept that students will use throughout their lives. Therefore, it is important that the unit is evaluated thoroughly to identify the effectiveness. The teacher of the unit will be the primary assessor using formative assessment. Summative assessment will also be used.

Students will be evaluated using formative assessment. The teacher of the unit will administer pre- and post assessment surveys to determine student knowledge of persuasion and persuasive techniques. The teacher could also ask the student to write a persuasive paragraph or letter at the beginning of the unit, as a post assessment of how students’ prior knowledge of writing persuasively.

In addition to pre- and post assessments, the students’ writings will serve as performance assessments. They will be evaluated using rubrics. This will show that the students are using all of the elements required to effectively write persuasively. Other students will be asked to make conclusions as they listen to their peers’ presentations. Interviews and discussions with the students could also be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the unit.

All of the above formative evaluation strategies should be followed up by summative evaluations. What students are learning about persuasion may need to be altered in the future, as the media is always changing. Therefore, this curriculum should be evaluated frequently. Summative evaluation strategies need to be used. These should be developed by teachers who have the students in the years after the unit has been taught. Then, they can identify weaknesses in the students in using persuasion, which can be added in to the curriculum. Teachers who use debating in their classes would be good ones to provide input. They could evaluate the strengths of the students in using persuasion after they have had the persuasive unit with those that were not taught the unit.

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