



PERSUASIVE WRITING LESSON PLAN

WITH ANIMAL SHELTER COLLABORATION

TIME: 1-2 WEEKS

SUGGESTED AGE GROUP: GRADES 2 AND UP

VOCABULARY

- Persuasive
- Point of View
- Animal Shelter
- Ambassador
- Description
- Adoption



MATERIALS

- Examples of persuasive writing with one example being clearly more successful than another
- Photographs of shelter dogs printed from the shelter's website
- Drawing materials
- Picture-top writing paper



OBJECTIVE

Create a piece of persuasive writing from the point of view of a shelter animal encouraging the reader to adopt. Include a color drawing of the animal that will draw the eye of the audience.



PREPARATION

Before beginning this project, contact a local animal shelter or rescue in your community to see if they will partner with you. **The authenticity of this writing assignment is a large part of its success.**



QUESTIONING

- What does it mean to be persuasive?
- Who is your audience for this piece?
- What is the result you hope to get from your writing?



- **How is one example more persuasive than the other?**

(Possible answers to elicit include: use of adjectives, strong narrative voice, positive "spin" on possible trouble spots such as "I would be happiest in a home without cats" or "I am a little scared of small children and prefer to shower my love on grown-ups.")



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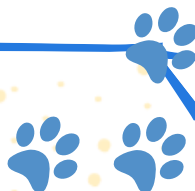
PRE-TEACHING

- Generate enthusiasm in the classroom.
- Talk to students about how even young children can make a big difference in their community! (*Share media materials from the St. Michael's project if appropriate.*)
- Take a virtual tour of the animal shelter through Zoom, Facebook or Instagram.
- If you can visit the site firsthand, take a field trip to visit the animals.
- Invite a staff member from the shelter to come to your school and bring an adoptable dog or ambassador puppy for the students to meet and pet.
- The staff member should speak with the children about what the shelter does in the community and why it is important to help shelter animals find their forever homes.



PROCESS

- Print pictures from the shelter's website of each animal that you want to use in the project. Include the animal's name on this paper for students to see.
- Use the shelter's website to brief the children about the temperament or any special needs that the dog/cat has.
- Randomly pass out the pictures of the dogs to the children. This is their assigned animal.
- Using picture top paper, children should first draw/color an illustration of their animal.
- Next, remind students about persuasive writing techniques and the importance of using descriptive words.
- Instruct students to write a paragraph through the eyes of their shelter animal in hopes that it will be adopted. Use a different piece of paper for the rough draft.





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WRITER'S WORKSHOP

Once students have created their drafts:

- Students take turns sharing their drafts with the class or in small groups.
- Suggestions may be made to strengthen the writing such as adding or exchanging adjectives, using rhetorical questions, and adding detail.
- Students revise their writing and review for capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.
- Once the writing has been given the go-ahead, students will copy their writing onto the picture top paper under their illustration.



FINAL STEPS ("PUBLISHING")

- Mount the page on colored paper and laminate each one. (*Make/keep color copies of each for possible press/media usage or for child.*)
- Bring the writings to the animal shelter to hang on the kennels.
- Photograph and video the student writings in place on the kennels to share with the class.
- Potential adopters will see the adoptable dog/cat and the persuasive writing papers together and hopefully feel persuaded to adopt!

ASSESSMENT

- After some time has passed, reflect upon how the writing may have persuaded someone to give some dogs a forever home.
- If the project has met with success, share the number of animals adopted and celebrate! (*We made a bulletin board display tracking adoptions.*)
- **Optional: Working with the shelter, alert the local news media about the student writings, along with the days and times the shelter is open for adoptions, to encourage visitors/potential pet adoptees.**





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TIPS

- **Tips for Struggling Writers**

- With the dog's photo in front of you, talk about the animal, jotting down ideas and adjectives as you talk. Help the student to put the information in order and encourage them to create the writing based on the notes.

- **Tips for Early Finishers**

- Using vetted sources, have early finishers research children who have made a difference in their communities. Have the students create posters celebrating that person and their achievement.



SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)

- This persuasive writing project/collaboration teaches compassion, respect, kindness and empathy.
- Students learn more about their capacity for serving others and discover that they can be change-makers, even at a young age.
- As a service-learning project, this project reinforces SEL as it broadens student perspectives, deepens social awareness, and connects actions to the needs of communities.



This successful persuasive writing lesson plan was developed by [St. Michael's Episcopal School](#) in Richmond, Virginia in partnership with Richmond Animal Care and Control. We encourage other schools and student organizations to implement this project in their own communities. In exchange for the lesson plan, we ask that you share with our school & students your organization name, location, and project outcomes via this form: tinyurl.com/StMPetAdoptionWriting.

ST MAGAZINE

ST. MICHAEL'S EPISCOPAL SCHOOL | SUMMER 2022

Read Our
Case Study



DRAGONS LEARNING TO **CHANGE THE WORLD**



St M second grade teacher Kensey Jones (second from right) and students, Hattie Custer and Parker Witthoeft, were invited to join Kelly Clarkson (far right), and (from left) reality star Jojo Siwa and actresses Jenna Fischer and Angela Kinsey this spring to talk about a class project that went viral.

Second grade project makes

After 17 years in education, second grade teacher Kensey Jones was looking for a new way to teach persuasive writing. Instead of having students convince others about their favorite cookies or sports, Mrs. Jones said, “An idea popped into my head and spiraled from there.”

As a volunteer with Richmond Animal Care and Control (RACC), Mrs. Jones wanted to combine her love of animals with her love of teaching by having her students use their writing skills to encourage animal adoptions. She shared her idea with Christie Peters, RACC director and mom of second grader Max, and Christie jumped at the partnership.

At the end of January after getting approvals from the School and all second grade parents, Mrs. Peters brought 10-week-old Snow, a white Pit Bull puppy ambassador, to Campus. While students visited with Snow, Mrs. Peters explained how the shelter works and shared some animal facts. She also talked about how the students’ projects could help 24 animals, many of which were harder to adopt because of their age, temperament, or health conditions, find new homes.

After each second grader was matched with a dog or cat, they took virtual tours of RACC to see their assigned animals and learn more about the animals’ personalities and needs. Students then began writing from the perspective of their animals, eventually drawing pictures to display with the finished projects.

“I’m a Pit Bull. I won’t hurt you. I’ll give you lots of kisses. SLURP!” wrote one student. “My name is Sleight Ride. Do you want to adopt me? I’m getting bored of this place. Would you love me forever?” shared another.

FINDING FOREVER HOMES

Four days after Mrs. Peters’ visit, student projects were posted on each animal’s kennel and shared on RACC’s social media channels. Within the first two weeks, nearly half of the animals were adopted, with many families commenting that they’d been persuaded by the student writings. Within three months, every animal found a forever home.

“The students rose beyond my expectations with this project,” said Mrs. Jones, who shared adoption updates with her students each day. “They wrote with enthusiasm because they truly



Students wrote notes from the perspective of animals and added illustrations to help the animals get adopted.

cared about the animals, and they got to see what an impact persuasive writing can have.”

By combining the academic goal of teaching persuasive writing with a community project to support RACC, Mrs. Jones provided a service learning opportunity for her students. The project also reinforced the School’s DRAGONS, Values of compassion, respect, and kindness.

According to Cathryn Berger Kaye, author of “The Complete Guide to Service Learning,” “When students are engaged intellectually and emotionally with a topic, they can light up with a revelation or make a connection between two previously separate ideas.” In addition, research from the University of Alabama shows that around 80% of students who took part in a service learning project saw improvements in communication skills, self-awareness, and knowledge of community needs.

For Mrs. Peters, the idea was simple — “Who doesn’t love dogs and kids? It was a different approach to adoption. The public and social media loved it, but neither Mrs. Jones nor I anticipated the media coverage.”

GOING VIRAL

After the story appeared in the *Washington Post* in late March, an avalanche of press ensued as the story was picked up by news outlets nationwide and globally. The project was featured in radio, television, print, and digital media including *NBC Nightly News*, *The Today Show*, *Good Morning America*, *New York Times*, and *Southern Living*. It was translated by German and Italian media, appeared in several British publications, and was featured in GeoBeats Animals, a digital media outlet that feeds content to larger news sources,

racking up more than 85,000 views in its first four days.

In April, *The Kelly Clarkson Show* flew Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Peters, and two second grade students, Hattie Custer and Parker Witthoefft (with parent chaperones), to Los Angeles to tape a show, which aired nationally in May. As part of the episode, the group got to meet actresses, Jenna Fischer and Angela Kinsey from the TV show, "The Office," and reality star, JoJo Siwa, to learn about their pets. They also met, via video conference, one of the families who was persuaded by the students' writings to adopt a dog. Another exciting surprise was learning that one of the show's sponsors was donating \$5,000 to RACC.

Since late March, Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Peters have been contacted by teachers and animal shelters from across the country looking to repeat the project in their areas. Mrs. Jones has received thank you gifts and cards from strangers,

including two authors who sent copies of their books about dogs to be used in her classroom. She also received a note from a dog owner, who included a note for the students, written from the perspective of the woman's dog.

In culmination of their outstanding community service, second graders and their teachers were invited to the Virginia House of Delegates in June where they received a commendation and standing ovation for their project. Delegate Kaye Kory, chair of the Animal Welfare Caucus, sponsored the commending resolution.

"I get emotional thinking about the animals that went home because of something these children did," said Mrs. Jones, who has already heard from first grade parents hoping she'll repeat the memorable lesson next year. "I'm very passionate about animals and about teaching. The fact that I could put these two loves of mine together to see this amazing thing happen has been very, very exciting."



One of the families who was persuaded by the students' writings smiled with their new furry friend.

global impact

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St M students enjoyed meeting Snow, a white Pit Bull puppy ambassador.



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Christie Peters, RACC director, posted student notes to encourage adoptions.