

## **Debating to Find Main Ideas and Logical Elaboration --- The Theory**

In “**Writing to Think Critically: The Seed of Social Action**,” Randy Bomer states that “one of the goals many writing teachers share is that of enabling students, usually rendered voiceless in the world at large, to speak for social change in their writing” (2). Bomer declares “we want students to view their writing as more than exercises for learning to write, as more than obedience to teacher instruction, but rather as a unique form of social action” (2). Students begin to see writing as more than a teacher-directed exercise when they can see how their writing relates to their lives and the world around them.

---Bomer, Randy. “Writing to Think Critically: The Seeds of Social Action.”  
*Voices from the Middle* 6.4 (May 1999): 2-8.

### **Support and Elaboration...**

Support and Elaboration is the extension and development of the topic/subject. The writer provides sufficient elaboration to present the ideas and/or events clearly. Two important concepts in determining whether details are supportive are the concepts of relatedness and sufficiency. To be supportive of the subject matter, details must be related to the focus of the response. Relatedness has to do with the directness of the relationship that the writer establishes between the information and the subject matter. Supporting details should be relevant and clear. The writer must present his/her ideas with enough power and clarity to cause the support to be sufficient. Effective use of concrete, specific details strengthens the power of the response. Insufficiency is often characterized by undeveloped details, redundancy, and the repetitious paraphrasing of the same point. Sufficiency has less to do with amount than with the weight or power of the information that is provided.

--Further Reading Writing Study Group of the NCTE Executive Committee. 2004.  
NCTE Beliefs about the Teaching of Writing. October 2009. Web.  
<http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/writingbeliefs?source=gs>

### **Writing has a complex relationship to talk...**

From its beginnings in early childhood through the most complex setting imaginable, writing exists in a nest of talk. Conversely, speakers usually write notes and, regularly, scripts, and they often prepare visual materials that include texts and images. Writers often talk in order to rehearse the language and content that will go into what they write, and conversation often provides an impetus or occasion for writing. They sometimes confer with teachers and other writers about what to do next, how to improve their drafts, or in order to clarify their ideas and purposes. Their usual ways of speaking sometimes do and sometimes do not feed into the sentences they write, depending on an intricate set of decisions writers make continually.

As they grow, writers still need opportunities to talk about what they are writing about, to rehearse the language of their upcoming texts and run ideas by trusted colleagues before taking the risk of committing words to paper. After making a draft, it is often helpful for writers to discuss with peers what they have done, partly in order to get ideas from their peers, partly to see what they, the writers, say when they try to explain their thinking. Writing conferences, wherein student writers talk about their work with a teacher, who can make suggestions or re-orient what the writer is doing, are also very helpful uses of talk in the writing process.

---NCTE Guidelines, <http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/writingbeliefs?source=gs>

### **Internet sources for debate in the classroom...**

[http://www.kyrene.org/schools/brisas/sunda/debate/teaching\\_debate.htm](http://www.kyrene.org/schools/brisas/sunda/debate/teaching_debate.htm)

## Unit Packet

[http://www.kyrene.org/schools/brisas/sunda/debate/sunda\\_debate\\_unit.pdf](http://www.kyrene.org/schools/brisas/sunda/debate/sunda_debate_unit.pdf)

## Resources for Debate in Classrooms

[http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_lesson/lesson/lesson304b.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson/lesson304b.shtml)

## How to Hold a Class Debate

<http://712educators.about.com/cs/lessonsss/ht/htdebate.htm>

## Interactive Persuasive Exercise on ReadWriteThink.org

[http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/persuasion\\_map/](http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/persuasion_map/)

## Discussion Webs

[http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_lesson/lesson/lesson032.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson/lesson032.shtml)

Persuasive Speaking Tips... [http://www.kyrene.org/schools/brisas/sunda/debate/debate\\_tips.htm](http://www.kyrene.org/schools/brisas/sunda/debate/debate_tips.htm)

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## Debating to Discover the Supporting Details – The Lesson Plan

### WARM UP REFLECTION

Make a list in your daybook of the things that bug you or the problems for which you might have a solution in your daybook. Choose one. Quickwrite about your topic and include any facts, stories, or quotes you recall about the subject.

### CONNECT

When you're upset over something, what do you do about it?  
Has any one ever accused you of not being clear?  
What does it mean to be clear and concise?

### TEACHING POINT

When people are angry about something, many do something about it. They write to the newspaper or to their government representative. But there's a problem. They often do not make the topic clear. In addition, they don't support their solutions with evidence and clear, logical thinking. Today, we're going to take a look at what makes the evidence work to support the main ideas.

### TEACHING

1. **Use facts:** confirmed data and quotes from confirmed authorities – The world is round.  
Explain how the reader will benefit from the facts – like saving time or money or getting healthier.
  - Try to predict the reader's concerns and address them.
  - Use reliable evidence to support your claim. Avoid argument fallacies.
  - Use an appropriate voice. Don't talk down to the audience or use foul language.
2. **Avoid opinion** unless, as a writer, you can make a convincing case with facts. i.e., "Charlotte is the best city to live in."
3. **Explain and support facts** that people may think are opinions with statistics. - Global warming is causing disastrous storms throughout the world. *Ninety-five per cent of scientists worldwide say so.*
4. **Avoid the pitfall of believing opinions that people think are facts.** For example...
  - If I wear my red shirt to the game, my baseball team will win. (*Because of this fallacy: Because of this, then that.*)

### MATERIALS

- Timer or clock
- Students in groups of 3.
- DocCam or overhead
- 2 volunteers who will debate as models

- When you shoot an arrow into the sky, it never comes down in the same spot as where it was shot. (*For or against a person fallacy* – the big kid said it.)
- The hoboes did it. (*Bandwagon effect*. When you believe something just because everyone says it: our parents told us, all the kids in the neighborhood believed it: common mythology.)
- If we don't win in Viet Nam, all the other countries will become communist. (*Domino effect* - zero tolerance for anything that you think might create a precedent that will lead to further problems.)
- Since you look like me and talk like me, I will believe you. (*Halo effect*.)

**MODEL**

1. Select 2 students to model how to debate.
2. Choose one person to be in favor, one person to be against. The teacher serves as recorder. A student may be arguing a position opposite of what she believes.
3. Arrange the debaters at the front of the class. Ask students (depending on their ability) to take notes on the debate.
4. Discuss the subject. One person offers support or elaboration in favor of the position. The recorder takes notes on a T-chart similar to the one the teacher modeled. The recorder should write down (1) generalizations, (2) support in the form of statistics, (3) support in the form of quotations or paraphrases (4) support in the form of personal stories. In addition, the recorder should bring attention to opinions not backed up with facts.
5. The other person offers support and elaboration against the position. Recorder makes notes in the same way.

**ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT**

1. Cluster students into groups of three for role-playing purposes.
2. Ask the students to use their warm-up reflection to choose ONE debate topic. Choose one person to be in favor, one person to be against, and one person to be the recorder. A student may be arguing a position opposite of what she believes.
3. Discuss the subject. One person offers support or elaboration in favor of the position. The recorder makes notes. Recorders look for and record (1) generalizations, (2) support in the form of statistics, (3) support in the form of quotations or paraphrases (4) support in the form of personal stories, and (5) explanations.
4. The other person offers support and elaboration against the position. The recorder takes notes on a T-chart similar to the one the teacher modeled.
5. The teams debate for 15-20 minutes.
6. Ask the recorder to share what strong reasons and elaboration they heard in the discussions and record them on the board.

The driving age should be raised to 18 years of age.

Recorders' notes

For	Against
Insurance rates are highest for 16 year olds. (Generalization)	Age is not the primary factor. Experience is. (Generalization)
Insurance companies attribute the cost to statistics that show the high number of accidents among this age group. (Statistics)	"First-year drivers are the problem, no matter their age." (Quotation)
	Insurance companies show that first year drivers have the same number of accidents as 16-year olds. (Statistics)

(When teacher analyzes the notes, she can show students the kind of statements the debaters used. Later, the teacher will show that the writer is very important to the process because she will add the transitions and explanations that will tie the generalizations and evidence together.)

### **LINK:**

Again, summarize what makes a strong reason and elaboration and what does not. Re-emphasize that finding the generalizations, the statistics, and the quotes are part of what makes the debate strong. The writer must tie all that information together with clear, concise, logical explanations. The writer will decide on a voice that will carry the paper.

### **REFLECTION** in daybook or on exit card (index card)

What did you learn today that you could apply to writing persuasively?

### **Student reflections I loved from the middle school class where I taught this lesson:**

1. You need to back up your data. You can't say something without proof. You need to have facts. You should use quotes and other data when you are in an argument.
2. I learned that when you're debating about a topic and you have no data, it is a struggle to back up your answer.
3. What I've learned today is that for debating, you need to know your facts, sources, and data. If they don't understand you, then they won't believe you. You also need to know your quotes. To know your quotes, you need to find a quote that refers to the problem. Quotes may give your audience more things to think about.
4. Today I learned that you will not always be right. You may think you are right but you may not be.
5. Figure out data about something I was against normally, but then go for it. It was also very hard to think fast no other things to say against your opponent. If you get one thing wrong, you will be closer to losing your case.
6. The argument can be hard if you're both right in different ways. Unless you both agree, no one really ever wins. You can get other people to help you in the argument even though it's your argument. If your competitor is a good arguer, you can still show your points if you have good facts.

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### **Follow Up**

1. Debate other issues.
2. Talk in Socratic Seminars.
3. Highlight the reflections that pinpoint the main ideas of the lesson. Clear up any misconceptions you noticed by reading the reflections.
4. Explore mentor texts to analyze how writers use generalizations, quotations, statistics, stories and other evidence to support their ideas. In addition, look at the voice, the style, and the explanations the authors used that made the writing convincing.
5. Ask students to keep reflections in their daybooks – even if they have to glue in the exit cards – to use for reflective letters they will write later. Pass cards around to help students understand what is “good” reflection and what kind needs work. Let students reach consensus on guidelines for reflection that works. Make a list for daybooks. Add to it as the year moves along.
6. Students will be able to use quotes or paraphrases of information they've heard when debating. Lead them to understand that through the debate (or any kind of prewriting activity) the writer will realize that they're missing sources or facts they knew but couldn't remember. Once they discover those gaps, students need to be able to find the information or they have to drop the supporting evidence. Research while writing a persuasive paper is okay!

## WORK DIRECTIONS

1. Choose a group of three for role-playing purposes.
2. Choose ONE debate topic from your warm-ups or of your choice.
3. Choose one person to be in favor, one person to be against, and one person to be the recorder. (A student may be arguing a position opposite of what she believes.)
4. Discuss the subject. One person offers support or elaboration in favor of the position.
5. The recorder takes notes on a T-chart similar to the one the teacher modeled. Recorders look for and record (1) generalizations, (2) support in the form of statistics, (3) support in the form of quotations or paraphrases (4) support in the form of personal stories, (5) explanations.
6. Recorders can ask questions and offer help to push debaters to think through their generalizations and evidence.
7. The other person offers support and elaboration against the position. Recorder takes notes. Be ready to share with the class.