

Need to Have / Nice to Have Activity: Criteria for a Good Persuasive Essay

Over the next week, you will be writing a persuasive essay in class. To prepare for that essay, follow these steps to identify the essential criteria found in high-quality persuasive pieces.

Step 1: Read and Reflect on Your Own

Working by yourself, read the following persuasive essay. While reading, record things that make it a strong piece of persuasive writing.

Text	What Makes This a Strong Piece of Writing?
<p>It's officially that time of year again, when students are going back to school, and the school lunch debates are taking the news by storm.</p> <p>According to a U.S. News report, over thirty-two million students take advantage of the school lunch program, and twelve million use the breakfast program. But since 2010, government officials have been remodeling the school lunch program by adding more fresh fruits and veggies, providing low-fat or fat-free milk, reducing the amount of sodium in the products and ingredients they use, and slowly converting all the grains to whole grains (Taub-Dix, 2014).</p> <p>But how are the students taking this change?</p> <p>One student says, "I hate it." Another added, "I never want to buy it." So maybe the new lunch program is not as great as the government originally planned.</p> <p>But on the other hand, the <i>American Journal of Preventive Medicine</i> released a study showing that students were eating more fruits and veggies since the remodeling of the lunch program. The article states that fruit selection has raised 23 percent since the new implement. An additional 15.6 percent of entrées are being consumed while 16.2 percent more vegetables have been devoured since the new program was implemented (Cohen, Richardson, Parker, Catalano, & Rimm, 2014).</p> <p>As a student who consistently buys school lunch, these statistics make me curious. Are students consuming some types of entrées more than others? Do these statistics include only the most popular foods? Does they only include certain schools?</p> <p>The new school lunch program sounds like a great idea for U.S public schools, but just because an idea sounds good, doesn't mean it will work. The statistics from the <i>American Journal</i> and what students are actually saying about the lunches do not add up. So how should the success of remodeling the school lunch program be measured—by what the students are saying, or by what they are buying?</p> <p>In my opinion, you can't go wrong by following the numbers, so I think the school lunch remodeling is a success. It is working, but only because students are forced to buy healthy food. That may create healthy habits later in life, which in an odd way shows that the government is achieving its goal. Students are eating healthier lunches and creating good eating habits, which will prevent diabetes and other sugar-related diseases later in life.</p> <p>#IsYourLunchAFriendOrFoe</p> <p>By Daniel and Ried</p>	

Step 2: List Three Criteria of a Strong Piece of Persuasive Writing

Working by yourself, decide on the top-three criteria that you think we should use to judge persuasive essays. What characteristics will we find in the best persuasive essays? Why are those characteristics so important?

Criteria That Matter	Reasons I Believe These Criteria Matter

Step 3: Identify Need to Have / Nice to Have Criteria

Working with partners, review the criteria that you thought were essential for judging persuasive essays. Together, sort your shared criteria into four categories: Need to Haves, Nice to Haves, Not Necessary, and Not Sure. Remember that we will be using your lists to build our class rubric for persuasive essays.

Persuasive Essays Need to Have:	It Would Be Nice if Persuasive Essays Had:
It Is Not Necessary for Persuasive Essays To:	We Are Not Sure if Persuasive Essays Should:

Step 4: Share Your Criteria With Our Class

Now we will work as a class to share our essential criteria for a good persuasive essay. We will:

- Record each group’s criteria
- Look for criteria that appear on multiple lists
- Allow people to argue for criteria that don’t appear on multiple lists
- Decide on three criteria to include on our persuasive essay rubric

Remember to speak up if you think that important criteria are being left off of our rubric!

Source: Cohen, J. F. W., Richardson, S., Parker, E., Catalano, P. J., & Rimm, E. B. (2014). Impact of the new U.S. Department of Agriculture School Meal Standards on food selection, consumption, and waste. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 46(4), 388–394.

Taub-Dix, B. (2014). Coming to a school lunch tray near you. Accessed at <http://health.usnews.com/health-news/blogs/eat-run/2014/08/21/coming-to-a-school-lunch-tray-near-you> on May 20, 2016.