PERSUASIVE COMMUNICATION

LESSON PACKAGE FOR GRADES 7 TO 8

THEME: YOUTH | SUBJECT: LANGUAGE
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GRADE LEVEL: Grades 7 to 8

LESSON PACKAGE OVERVIEW:
As critical consumers of information, students encounter different opinions, viewpoints, and perspectives every day. By analyzing persuasive language techniques, both within oral discourse as well as in writing, students begin to understand the ways in which an argument is structured and how a speaker’s choice of words plays a strong role in persuading others. As Canada’s next generation of thought leaders, students will practise ways to get important messages across to others. Students will engage in a culminating activity that will form a persuasive argument about a meaningful topic and will present it to their peers.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:
► How can we use persuasive language to help us gain support for a cause we care about?

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS:
• Understand how the use of both structure and language help create effective arguments with persuasive elements
• Synthesize information into small chunks of supporting evidence to increase audience awareness of subjects explored
• Create logical arguments tied to important causes that appeal to a wide audience and that showcase sound structure, purposeful language and an appeal to a target audience

WORD BANK
Anecdote—a story; a case study that supports a particular idea or perspective
Claim—a statement that a writer or speaker is arguing to be true

Counter-claim—a statement that contradicts the argument of an existing statement made by a writer or speaker
Emotion—a feeling; the system of thinking and understanding the world through feelings
Logic—the system of thinking and understanding the world in a clear, reasonable way
Persuasive language—speech or writing intended to convince someone of an opinion or course of action
Reasoning—the pattern of thinking that explains a decision or conclusion
Supporting argument—a statement or idea that reinforces the main point someone is trying to make
Target audience—the kind of people that a speech or piece of writing is intended to persuade

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES
• Computer with Internet connection
• Chart paper
• Markers
• Variety of magazines (e.g., Better Homes and Gardens, Hello!, TeenBeat)
• Blackline Master 1: Persuasive Building Blocks
• Blackline Master 2: Example Scenarios
• Blackline Master 3: 12 Persuasive Words
• Blackline Master 4: Important Issues

Recommended Assessment for Learning:
You know your students best—their learning styles and preferences, skill levels and knowledge. You are also best positioned to anticipate the habits of mind that will make this lesson package successful. In this lesson package, teaching strategies include collaborative group work, class debate, modeling, and suggestions for demonstration of learning include written reflection, exit tickets and student-generated discussion. Please take a moment to make any accommodations or modifications to best serve your students.
LESSON 1: STRUCTURE OF AN ARGUMENT

SUGGESTED TIME: 75 minutes

Investigate and Learn

1. Assess prior knowledge: Ask students to raise their hands if they feel that they usually win arguments and/or find it easy to convince people to take their side. Ask those who raised their hands, “Why do you think you’re good at winning arguments? What do you do, say or think as you enter into discussions with other people that you know have a different opinion than you?” Generate a brief discussion, noting student responses on the board. Then explain that we all have opinions and some of us are better at getting our opinions accepted than others.

2. Explain to students that they are going to work together in small groups to study argument structure and how it relates to our ability to persuade others to accept our viewpoints. Assign each group a topic to explore and generate a persuasive argument for each topic (e.g., should cell phones be allowed in school?).

3. Review guidelines for the activity with the class:
   - Each group will have a recorder and a presenter. The recorder’s job is to write down the team’s argument and the presenter will relay the argument to the class, trying to persuade others to accept their group’s opinion.
   - Each group will have 15 minutes to work together, with two minutes for the presenter to speak to the class.
   - A time keeper will note when the group time is up and when the presenter’s time is up.

EDUCATOR’S NOTE: Teachers may want to have student groups draw a number out of a hat that corresponds to one of the scenarios presented in class to support fairness.

4. Before beginning the activity, review the basics behind argument formation. Inform students that the task is to construct an argument that supports their viewpoint and offers evidence in support of it.

5. Explain to students that an argument is a line of reasoning designed to prove a point. Arguments can be simple, expressed in a few lines, or can be complex texts including essays and whole books. State that regardless of sophistication and length, all arguments follow the same basic framework:

   1. The author states a claim/opinion. (We often refer to this as a thesis.)
   2. A counter-claim is presented.
   3. Supporting evidence is added to their central idea/opinion.
   4. A conclusion sums up the argument in a central idea.

EDUCATOR’S NOTE: Some students may find the concept of a counter-claim difficult to understand and wonder why they should include it in their argument. Review the definition with the class while exploring the benefits of developing a counter-argument in preparation for debates.

6. Note that when all of these elements are present and the information is arranged in a way that is appealing to the reader, an argument becomes more effective than if no structure was followed.

7. Have the students watch the following video, which sums up the structure of an effective argument in three minutes: “Parts of an Argument”: youtube.com/watch?v=04UA2YwDpc4.

8. Ask students to think critically about what holds more weight in an argument—factual evidence or opinions based on personal experience. Discuss student responses and emphasize the importance of a balanced approach, noting that their initial arguments are for an audience of their peers and will not be formally evaluated. It is also wise to let students know that they will be involved in exercises in which they will be writing for alternate audiences and might therefore have to adopt a different approach.

9. Distribute Blackline Master 1: Persuasive Building Blocks to each group of students. Inform the students that their task today is to adopt a practice of basic argument formation in which they will take a collective stand as a group on a particular issue, develop a line of supporting evidence (both factual and opinion based) and arrange their work in a single paragraph for presentation. If necessary, scaffold the activity working through the following example with your students: “Uniforms should be mandatory for all schools.”

10. Distribute the scenarios from Blackline Master 2: Example Scenarios to each group. At the teacher’s discretion, either assign a scenario for each group, or allow the students to select their own scenario. Tell each group that they are to work together as a team and fill out Blackline Master 1: Persuasive Building Blocks worksheet.

11. Once the worksheet is complete, they are to arrange the claim, counter-claim, reasoning and evidence together in a persuasive paragraph format. As students create their responses, explain the benefits of organizing arguments. Help the students to understand that the way an argument is organized influences the way it is received. Invite students to create a plan of action before they start writing their arguments. Finally, have the group select a representative to present their argument and persuasive paragraph to the class.

12. Discussion: Once all of the groups have finished presenting, ask students what they noticed while listening to each group (whether or not they sided with some of the presenter’s
It is wise to highlight that some students could be natural public speakers and that this additional comfort level in front of an audience might lend itself to the credibility of the argument.

13. RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING: Have students reflect on the presentations and write a short response to the following questions: What group made the best argument for their scenario? What made this argument strong? Encourage students to address the following elements of argument presentation:

- Word choice
- Speaking
- Voice
- Tone
- Approach

EXTENSION: Invite students to create an argument representing the opposite viewpoint. Encourage students to use the same argumentative approach and experiment with word choice and sentence structure.
LESSON 2: LANGUAGE THAT PERSUADES

SUGGESTED TIME:
75 minutes

EDUCATOR’S NOTE: There are many words that we consider persuasive in the English language. For the purpose of this lesson, we will focus on what some experts believe are the 12 most influential words individuals can use to get their point across. Students are invited to select their favourite word selection and presentation tactics in an effort to create arguments that sound and feel natural.

1. Inform students that they will be adding to their learning from the previous lesson by studying how the use of language, especially certain words, can make their arguments more persuasive.

2. Ask students if there are some words or phrases they feel are more convincing than others. Invite students to write their suggestions on the board. Aim for at least seven words on the board, urging students to think of words they often see in advertisements or on the news (e.g., increase, opportunity, grow).

3. Inform the students that for this activity, they will be studying 12 powerful words (found in Blackline Master 3: 12 Persuasive Words), their meanings and how they can use these words to revise their arguments from the previous class.

4. Distribute Blackline Master 3: 12 Persuasive Words to students and point to any words or phrases that students generated on the board. Ask students if they can recognize any of these words from their previous arguments.

5. Have students move back into their groups and revisit their arguments from the previous lesson. Challenge them to incorporate at least three of the new persuasive words from Blackline Master 3: 12 Persuasive Words into their arguments. Allow 10 minutes to complete the task.

6. Invite student groups to read their first drafts from yesterday followed by revised drafts. Suggest that two students volunteer from each group to present the updated version and ask the rest of the class to notice the subtle, yet effective changes in each argument. Invite students to share their feedback. Did the persuasive words affect their opinions?

7. Inform students that the next step in the process of effective argument formation is to develop an approach that appeals to a wide audience using specific techniques. Have the students rearrange themselves in pairs or new small groups and distribute magazine samples to each. Ask the students to look for examples of advertisements that appeal to a person’s sense of logic, morals or emotions. Have them brainstorm with their partner(s) what aspects of the advertisement and language used were effective in the appeal. Invite students to share their observations with the class, and how they might include such elements in their written arguments and future visual presentations.

EXTENSION AND ENRICHMENT: Have students watch the following video for a deeper conceptual understanding of these concepts. “An Introduction to Ethos, Logos, and Pathos”: youtube.com/watch?v=9L_G82HH9Tg.

8. Have students move back into their small groups from Lesson 1 and ask them to revise their arguments from the first class using appeals to emotions, morals and reasoning. Individually, ask them to reflect on the development of their paragraph and argument. How did persuasive language and appeal change the effectiveness of their argument?
LESSON 3:  
A CASE FOR YOUR CAUSE

SUGGESTED TIME:  
75 minutes

Action Plan

1. **RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT AS LEARNING:** Ask students if they can remember a commercial, advertisement, or speech that made them want to do something or buy something and ask them if they can recall what aspect of the argument was most effective (even if they did not buy a product or take part in the event).

2. Tell students that they will be applying skills that they’ve learned during the previous two lessons to help support a cause that they care about.

3. Have students start to think about causes they care about, either local or global, and why they care about those causes. Provide some local examples to prompt if necessary. Then ask them to share their cause with a partner, choosing to use persuasive language in an effort to convince their partner of the importance of the cause.

4. At the end of the class, students will present their ideas using the new format presented in the lessons and will engage in a classroom vote to determine what student-driven cause they wish to pledge their efforts to using the WE Volunteer Now campaign as a way to get started.

5. Explain to students that volunteering is a mutually beneficial activity that helps society reach its goals for all individuals. Tell students that while you know they’ve expressed interest in helping others, it is now time to put that energy into action by raising awareness about causes that they care about. Distribute Blackline Master 4: Important Issues, a list of social justice causes that students have expressed interest in and advise students to make their selections from this list, noting that if they want to take action on another subject that they must get approval from the teacher.

6. Allow students five to ten minutes to choose a few causes that mean something to them.

7. Ask students why they are drawn to some causes over others.

8. Students may work individually or in pairs in an effort to formulate an argument of why that particular cause is important.

9. Instruct students to utilize their worksheets from the previous classes to structure their argument.

10. The remainder of the class period can be used to construct their arguments to support their selected cause. Tell students that they should continue to self-check their arguments for the following elements:

    • Organization
    • Word choice
    • Appeals to the audience using logic, emotions and morals
    • A call to action

11. At the end of class or during a follow-up lesson, students may share their persuasive arguments with the class.

    At the end of the class, a vote may be taken to see which cause students have selected as the one they would like to support in their first involvement with the WE Volunteer Now campaign. Students are invited to write on their voting sheets the reason behind their choices, especially if it has to do with the way in which the cause was presented by their fellow peers.

12. Ask students if they would like to further commit to being a part of moving toward youth empowerment by taking the WE Are Canada Pledge. If students are interested, visit WE.ca for more information and to take the pledge.

13. Have students reflect on what they learned about the subjects presented by other class members. What new information surprised them? What might they do to take their learning to the next level?
LESSON 4:
LET’S PLAN AND TAKE ACTION

SUGGESTED TIME:
150 minutes

Action Plan and Take Action

EDUCATOR’S NOTE: This project is an opportunity for students to exercise a broader set of communication skills that can be applied to real world scenarios. Embedded within this lesson are opportunities for teachers to explore the concepts of argument formation and thesis development, organization of text, and word choice. Note: Depending on time constraints, one or several projects can be implemented consecutively or simultaneously within these lessons. Students can also take these skills and apply them to future projects that require similar skills.

1. Now that the cause to support is selected, students have the opportunity to apply their research efforts and persuasion skills into efforts that help generate additional support through this cause. Students will showcase their support in a variety of forms with the primary awareness strategy being a student-produced bulletin board outside of their classroom that showcases student interests and their driving message linked to an action.
   - Teacher will provide a list of great websites for students to find information on the selected cause
   - Students should look for recent statistics that highlight the impact of the issue within their community and the world (if applicable)

2. Lead classroom discussion around the different topics and persuasive tactics covered during the previous lessons. Ask students, “How can we create awareness within our local and national communities to bring awareness to social justice causes that we are passionate about and would benefit the most from our advocacy efforts?”

3. Ask students to create groups and brainstorm ideas about how, as a school community, they can start the process of bringing awareness to causes that they care about both individually and collectively.
   Suggested actions:
   - Create visual displays/posters to post within the school to raise awareness about different issues and their presence in the students’ home community and in Canada.
   - Invite a guest speaker in from a local volunteer organization to share information about best practices and advice on how to get started.
   - Share research and collected data with your community via social media (e.g., school Twitter, school website, local media, YouTube etc.)

4. Ask students to choose their favourite cause and write a short summary about how they might help generate awareness about it. Encourage students to describe the event, the overall purpose and what the event would look like using persuasive language and argument appeals. The groups will present these ideas to the class. For example, does the group want to host a food drive, plan a bake sale, or create awareness posters for distribution in the school’s community?

5. As a class, vote on an action that students can implement with little assistance that is linked to the students’ top voted cause. Once the action has been selected by the class, ask students to think about the overall goal for the event. Set goals for the event. Ensure that the goals are measurable and results based.

6. Create a realistic timeline with roles and responsibilities allocated for each student.

7. Students should ensure that they collect evidence and data throughout the Take Action section. Collecting evidence and data allows students to reflect on their learning throughout the section as they are actively participating in creating measurable outcomes for their goals.

8. Prior to taking action, review the set goals and think about types of evidence that will demonstrate that the action has effectively taken place.

9. RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT AS LEARNING: Set up daily/weekly check-in meetings to monitor students’ engagement with the project and progress towards the initial event set up. Students may also like to discuss any accomplishments or challenges they are facing during the planning process.

Take Action

10. Students will make announcements about their planned event through posters, school announcements and word of mouth.

11. Students will engage in their selected activity (bake sale, awareness campaign, social media campaign, local volunteer effort).

EDUCATOR’S NOTE: Before interacting on social media, review classroom and school guidelines on using social media.

12. Ensure students are actively participating and collecting data throughout the Take Action section.
LESSON 5:  
SHARE AND REFLECT ON OTHER’S WORK

SUGGESTED TIME:  
60 minutes

Report and Celebrate

1. As a class, reflect on the learnings and experiences from the Action Plan and Take Action sections. Think about the measurable goals that were set for the Take Action section, and use the evidence collected to reflect upon how well these goals were achieved through the action.

2. Write down the goals on the front board and ask students to reflect through a written, verbal or visual response. While reflecting, students should link the evidence collected during the Take Action section and directly align this to the measurable goal. Does the evidence demonstrate a successful effort? Reflect upon ways you might not have reached your intended audience. How might you revise your plan or actions in the future to refocus your efforts more on your intended audience?

3. Ask students to reflect further to understand the deeper impact of the Take Action section. Consider how they can continue the process of informing others about their chosen cause, as well as other causes that individual students care about.
   - How does knowing more information about a cause help promote support?
   - Why might knowing how to persuade others help generate more interest for your cause?

4. Ask students to consider if the cause they studied is just a local issue, or if it extends to communities around the world. Have a discussion with the class and brainstorm how the cause is reflected on a global scale.

EXTENSION: Encourage students to think about how they are able to raise awareness about various causes within different communities. As a young member of society, what issues are they passionate about and how can they become involved in raising awareness about these changes in personal actions within their local communities to start the process of change globally?

EDUCATOR’S NOTE: As a Canadian and a global citizen, what are students learning about how individual actions can impact the greater community? Link the conversation to WE Villages and encourage students to learn more.
### Blackline Master 1: Persuasive Building Blocks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td><strong>Evidence</strong>: factual or material support for an argument</td>
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Scenarios:

A. Your school district leaders want to replace your art classes with additional science and math classes. Students who want to develop and refine their artistic talents will be encouraged to take art classes outside of school and pay for these separately. Compose a logical argument convincing your school administration either for or against the change in course offerings.

B. Your community plans to build a major highrise building where a community park is situated. This means that two full basketball courts, a skating rink and a soccer field will be removed to clear room for development projects scheduled in the next year. Supporters argue that it will bring more residents to the city. Develop a logical argument to present to your city’s elected officials, either persuading them to reconsider the project or to continue with the building plans.

C. Many school districts in your neighbouring province have changed the school calendar so that they are now year-round schools. While there is still a break in the summer, there is not the usual two-month break. Your province is also thinking about adopting an extended school year. Compose an argument either in support of the year-round school calendar or in support of continuing with the standard school year.

D. Your city is considering a 25 percent price increase on all junk food found in convenience and grocery stores. This means that a single pop can will cost $1.25 instead of the traditional $1.00. Government officials claim that this price increase will cut down on unhealthy eating habits and, in the long run, health expenditures. Compose an argument for or against the price increase.
Expert speakers have identified these 12 words as the most persuasive in the English language. Try using one or two in your next presentation, and watch for changes in how people react to your message.

1. **You**: Personalize your speech so that your listeners feel you are talking directly to them. (Example: Ask, “What does this mean to you?”)

2. **Discovery**: What an exciting and enthusiastic feeling from childhood this conjures!

3. **Easy**: Your audience wants more ease in their busy lives. What can you offer?

4. **Guarantee**: Remove the feeling of risk. Make people feel safe.

5. **Safety**: This word conjures comfort and eases people’s fears.

6. **Save**: Everyone loves to save money and time. Make the most of this word!

7. **Health**: Your listeners gravitate toward self-preservation. See if you can make this connection to your topic.

8. **Love**: Don’t overuse it. It’s one of the most powerful words when you know what your audience loves the most (Family? Security? Safety? Income?)

9. **New**: Freshness, innovation, change...people like new “stuff.”

10. **Proven**: The opposite of “new,” this word ensures us that we are not taking risks. Be sure to back this one with data.

11. **Results**: What people will get and how they will benefit. Very powerful!

12. **Free**: Don’t forget the different definitions of this word. It means not only free of charge, but also freedom of movement and choice. This word gives the hope of liberation and expansion.

All of these words involve emotion. Don’t be afraid to use them, as emotion is the key to persuasiveness.

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<th>Important Issues</th>
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<td>Racism and prejudice around the world</td>
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<td>Debt and financial problems</td>
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<td>Pollution</td>
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<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>Global climate change</td>
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<td>Indigenous rights</td>
<td>Human rights</td>
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<td>Access to education (minority groups, the poor, refugees, migrant workers, and others)</td>
<td>Sweatshops</td>
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<td>Impact of illiteracy on society</td>
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<td>Victims of disasters: earthquakes, floods, fires</td>
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