



Module Area: LITERACY / Module 1 [SOUTH AFRICA] :

Reading and Writing for a Range of Purposes

Section 4:

Ways of presenting your point of view

Key Focus Question:

How can you help pupils become confident and thoughtful presenters of ideas?

Keywords:

own feelings; viewpoints; debate; letter; newspaper; inclusion

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, you will have:

- supported pupils in expressing their points of view in speech and in writing;
- developed your ability to help pupils understand other people' s situations, feelings and points of view;
- used discussion to explore inclusion issues.

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Introduction

This section focuses on ways we express feelings and present points of view. It is important that teachers and pupils are able to do this with confidence, both in speech and in writing, in order to participate in decision-making in the family, school and wider community. As a teacher, you have an important role to play. You need to be able to argue your case within the school for such things as resources and ways of working, and also you need to support your pupils as they develop these skills.

It is important that all pupils feel included in the classroom and community, regardless of their state of health, home circumstances or any disability.

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This part explores ways of working that will allow pupils to express their feelings and explore ideas about many things, including their personal lives. It looks at how to manage conflicts and frustrations more effectively.

Often, when starting topics that touch on sensitive issues, it is helpful to let pupils explore their ideas privately first. Writing thoughts down around an issue can help to stimulate thinking. This is a technique that can also be applied to other topics to find out what pupils already know.

Case Study 1: Writing to express feelings and point of view

Ms Vuyo Mbuyani in Durban, South Africa discussed with her junior secondary pupils the kinds of things that make children feel different and/or left out.

Next, she asked them to look at a picture of a child sitting alone while others played (**Resource 1: Child who is 'left out'**), and asked them to write about this child. She also asked them if they had ever felt left out or different from others in the past, or if they were feeling this way at present. She asked them to write about these feelings.

Then they played games that helped them to experience what it was like to have a physical disability (see **Resource 2: Games that promote understanding of physical disability**). Afterwards, they talked about how such disabilities may make children feel different and sometimes cause them to be rejected by their classmates. They also talked about children who suffered from HIV/AIDS, or whose parents had died from that disease. Vuyo asked them to write about their experiences during the games. What did it feel like to have a disability?

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After this, before starting a sensitive topic, Vuyo often asked her pupils to write or talk in pairs or small groups to explore their own ideas first.

Activity 1: Writing to express ideas and feelings

When starting a sensitive topic with pupils it is useful to explore their ideas and feelings first.

- Select a picture, poem or story to stimulate their thinking (see **Resource 1** for one example).
- Show the picture/read the poem or story and ask them to think about what it means to them.
- Ask them to write or talk with their partner about their thoughts and include their feelings as well.
- Remind them that no one will mark this or judge what they say to each other. It is for them to think about what they think and feel at that moment.
- Next, discuss with the class what they think the messages are in the picture.

Learning how to participate in a debate helps pupils (and adults) to express their points of view, listen to the views of others and think critically. When you choose topics for debate in your classroom, make sure you choose topics that are important to your pupils so they will really want to express their points of view.

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In **Activity 2** you will introduce your pupils to the rules and procedures for debating and support them as they prepare for a formal debate. In **Case Study 2**, the debate is on inclusion in the classroom. With younger children, you could hold very simple discussions or debates about issues such as not hitting each other.

Resource 3: Structure of debating speeches and **Resource 4: Rules and procedures for debating** will give you guidance. You may also find these rules and procedures useful if you belong to organisations that need to conduct debates.

Case Study 2: Preparing for and conducting a debate

After Vuyo Mbuyani and her pupils had written about being 'left out', they discussed specific children who were not in school for some reason. Some of these children were disabled, some had no parents and were heading households and some did not come to school because they were too poor to buy uniform.

Vuyo introduced the idea of debating to the class, and presented the motion: 'This class moves that all "out-of-school" youngsters, isolated because of barriers to learning, should be brought to school.'

She grouped the 36 pupils into groups of six, and asked half the groups to discuss points in favour of the motion and half to discuss points against.

Then she gave them a framework for preparing their speeches (see **Resource 3**). Each group drafted a speech, either in favour or against the motion, and chose a speaker from among their number. Vuyo looked at the speeches at lunchtime, and gave speakers advice on how to improve them. They did more work on their speeches at home.

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The debate was held the next day. Vuyo was very pleased with the high level of participation from all class members. The motion was carried, and pupils started making contact with out-of-school children, and working with their teacher and head teacher to bring them back to school. Vuyo realised that the debate had provided an excellent opportunity for pupils to develop and express their points of view and for addressing an important community issue.

Activity 2: Debating a motion; expressing points of view

Explain to pupils about participating in a debate.

- Brainstorm debating topics that interest them and help them to express these in the form of a motion. Decide on the motion for debate (see **Resource 3**).
- Explain the rules and procedures for debating, using the information in **Resource 4**.
- Write the key rules and procedures on your chalkboard so that pupils can make a copy to refer to in future.
- Ask pupils to prepare the debate speech in groups and choose one speaker to present their arguments.
- You may have to help by providing background information for them to use in their speeches.
- Check if the groups are ready to start the debate (perhaps later in the week) and then follow the rules and procedures.

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Ask pupils to tell you what they have learned from the experience and use this information to plan future lessons and opportunities to discuss ideas.

With younger pupils, you could debate topics that relate to school, such as whether they should have class rules. You may have to help them learn to take turns to speak and listen to others' ideas.

It is important to learn how to express a point of view clearly, with supporting arguments. This is a useful skill when writing student essays, but also, when older, if debating a community or national issue in a letter, particularly a letter to a newspaper.

A letter to a newspaper can be compared to the first half of a debate. Often another person will respond to a published letter and will present alternative arguments. In **Resource 5: Example letter** there is a letter to a newspaper in which pupils write about the important issue of including all pupils in schools.

Case Study 3 and the **Key Activity** offer you guidance for working with pupils to present arguments in the form of a letter.

Case Study 3: Learning to write a letter to the head teacher or a newspaper

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A few months after Vuyo first introduced the idea of inclusion to her pupils, there were two new pupils in her class. One was deaf, and the other had only one arm. She and her pupils were gradually learning to include them in their class, to communicate with them, and to support them without making them feel too 'different' .

She now suggested the pupils write a letter to the head teacher or a newspaper on the topic of the importance of including all pupils in school. They could send their letter to the head teacher or to the *Daily Dispatch* in East London, to *The Teacher* or to the local paper. They would have to write in English.

Pupils liked this idea and brainstormed what they could say. They produced an outline for the letter.

1. Theme: Schools should make efforts to bring in 'out-of-school' youngsters.
2. Reasons.
3. 'Ways to counter the possible arguments against.
4. Our experience.
5. Successes and challenges.
6. Repeat theme.

Vuyo gave pupils guidance on the kinds of phrases to use, especially for 2 and 3, where they were presenting the argument. They asked a teacher

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who had access to a computer to type it, and sent copies to the newspapers (see the letter in **Resource 5**).

Key Activity: A letter to the head teacher or a newspaper to express a point of view

Take a topic your pupils have debated and introduce the idea of presenting their arguments in a letter to the head teacher or, if you have one locally, to a newspaper.

- Ask them to brainstorm, in groups, what they wish to write.
- Next, write the structure for the letter on the chalkboard using the outline in **Case Study 3** (although your theme may be different).
- Pupils may need to write this letter in an additional language (e.g. English) so give them some guidance on phrases to use for introducing and presenting arguments (see **Resource 6: 'Argument' phrases**).
- Ask the groups to assess their own and each other' s letters, and decide which is the best one to send to the head teacher or newspaper (see **Resource 6** for guidance).
- You may need to do some editing before sending the letter, but try to keep the pupils' words.

Think what your pupils have learned from turning debate arguments into a letter.

With younger pupils or those less confident and competent at writing, you could do this as a class exercise where you write

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down their ideas. Use the activity to develop their vocabulary in the additional language.

Resource 1:

Child who is 'left out'



Teacher resource for planning or adapting to use with pupils



Original source: Umthamo 6, University of Fort Hare Distance Education Project

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Resource 2:

Games that promote understanding of physical disability



Teacher resource for planning or adapting to use with pupils

You can help pupils to understand some of the difficulties that children with physical disabilities face by playing games like those below:

1. Bring to school some old stockings or pieces of rope or wool. Give these to pupils and ask them to tie behind their back the arm and hand they usually use to write with. Give each pupil a piece of paper. Explain that the game is to find out who can write the sentence that you are about to read to them in the fastest time, with the neatest handwriting. Read the sentence and then watch what happens! After you have chosen the winner, discuss with pupils how they felt while playing this game and what it must be like for pupils who have a disabled or missing arm/hand. If they are not able to write, ask them to draw a tree.
2. Bring to school some pieces of cloth or scarves (or ask pupils to do so) so that half the pupils are able to tie cloth over their eyes. Take the class outside. Tell pupils to work in pairs. The one who has been blindfolded has to walk around a number of obstacles that you have set up – you could use desks and chairs for this – being guided by their partner. Time each pair. If your class is not too large, ask the pairs to swap roles and then time each pair again. The winner is the pair that completes the task in the shortest time, without knocking over any of the obstacles. Afterwards, ask pupils how it felt to be blindfolded and to have to rely on a partner.
3. Bring to school enough cotton wool for each pupil to be able to put cotton wool into their ears to prevent them from hearing clearly. Then ask pupils to listen while you give the class a message to write down. The winner is the first pupil to complete writing the message without mistakes. Afterwards ask pupils how they felt when they could not hear clearly and what they could do to help someone with hearing problems.

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4. If your school can afford to do this, buy a large number of marshmallow sweets. Give enough to each pupil so that his or her mouth is full. Tell them not to chew or swallow any of the marshmallows but to tell a partner the message you have written on the chalkboard. This is very difficult to do and they will realise what it is like to have a speech defect that prevents a person from speaking clearly. At the end, they eat the marshmallows!

Resource 3:

Structure of debating speeches



Background information / subject knowledge for teacher

Explanation of a motion

In parliament, or on important committees, when the members are making decisions, someone may introduce a motion to debate. A motion is a statement about something that needs to be done or discussed. A debate explores all sides of the argument. For example, if a member of parliament stands up and says: 'I move that capital punishment be abolished,' this idea is discussed formally and a decision is reached, which results in the desired action being carried out or not.

The following motions are examples of issues you could use in schools. You may have to adapt these depending on the size of your class and the age of your pupils.

- Parents should not use corporal punishment to discipline children.
- What we learn at home and in the community is more important than what we learn at school.

a) Supporting the motion

- State the motion: *I move OR I support the motion that all 'out-of-school' youngsters, isolated because of barriers to learning, should be brought to school.*
- Define your terms. In this case, you will need to say what you mean by 'out-of-school' youngsters, and barriers to learning. (This need only be done by the first speaker.)
- Give your reasons in support of the motion: e.g. *My first reason for supporting this motion is ...*
- *Secondly, ...*
- *Thirdly, ...*
- Sum up your reasons for supporting the motion: *In summary, OR To sum up, ...*
- Restate the motion: *I therefore repeat OR I therefore urge you all to support the motion that*

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b) Opposing the motion

- State your opposition to the motion: *I oppose the motion that ...*
OR I support those who oppose the motion that ...
- Define your terms. In this case, you will need to say what you mean by 'out-of-school' youngsters, and barriers to learning. (This need only be done by the first speaker.) All those involved need to agree on their definition of terms.
- Give your reasons for opposing the motion: e.g. *My first reason for opposing this motion is ...*
- *Secondly, ...*
- *Thirdly, ...*
- Sum up your reasons for opposing the motion: *In summary, OR To sum up, ...*

Restate your opposition to the motion: *I therefore repeat OR I therefore urge you all NOT to support the motion that ...*

Resource 4:

Rules and procedures for debating



Background information / subject knowledge for teacher

A debate is a contest, or, perhaps, like a game, where two or more speakers present their arguments intent on persuading one another ...

Why debate?

By preparing for and participating in debates, pupils learn to find and use information to support their arguments. They also learn how to present their ideas clearly and persuasively.

Through debating, they learn to understand views that are different from their own because, when debating, they may have to argue a case that they don't fully agree with, and they have to become very familiar with the view of the opposing team.

Preparation

Good debaters are very well prepared. The debate you conduct in your class may be an informal one, but could build towards a situation where your pupils debate seriously in competitions.

Before constructing a speech, debaters collect as much information on the topic as possible, from libraries, newspapers, magazines and discussion with people.

They think of all the points in support of the motion, and against the motion. In other words, they become familiar with the opposition's case as well as their own. They prepare themselves for all possible questions that might be asked by the opposition, and all possible challenges they might offer.

Good debaters structure their arguments very persuasively. They listen to other people debating, so that they learn the art and the skill of debating. They join debating societies, and debate as often as possible.

The process

There are two teams, each consisting of two or three speakers. One team (the affirmative) supports the motion, and the other (the negative) opposes the motion.

There is a chairperson, who controls the proceedings.

The speeches and speaking time are divided equally between the two teams.

Each speaker makes a speech they have prepared to argue their case. The sides speak in turn, starting with the proposer of the motion (affirmative, negative, affirmative, negative). Each speaker has a specified amount of time to speak (e.g. three minutes or five minutes).

Then the debate can be opened to the floor, with speakers standing up to offer points supporting or opposing the motion. Each speaker from the floor is allowed a specified amount of time (e.g. one minute or three minutes).

Each team may then speak in 'rebuttal', after a short period has been allowed for the teams to consult. This means that they have a chance to argue against points raised by the opposition. Each team may have one rebuttal speech each, or more. The first rebuttal speech is made by the negative side and the final rebuttal speech is made by the affirmative.

Important rules

- The team supporting the motion must not shift its point of view. The same goes for the opposition, who must oppose the motion completely (whatever their private opinions may be).
- If a speaker makes a statement, they must be able to provide evidence or reasons to support the statement.
- Facts presented in a debate must be accurate.
- Speakers may not bring up new points in a rebuttal speech.

Points of order and points of information

Members of the house (anyone involved in the debate) may interrupt a speaker by raising their hands and indicating that they have a 'point of order'. This means that they wish to point out that

one of the rules of debate is being broken (e.g. the speaker is speaking overtime, or does not have evidence to support his or her point).

Members may also raise their hands with a 'point of information' (a question or some information they have to offer). The speaker may choose to allow the member to speak, but does not have to.

Judging

The winning team in a debate is usually decided on the basis of the quality of the debating, by a judge, or judges.

However, it may also be decided by a vote.

Adapted from: http://www.triviumpursuit.com/speech_debate/what_is_debate.htm

Resource 5:

Example letter – written by Vuyo’s class



Example of pupils’ work

This letter is to a newspaper, but you could write your letter to the head teacher about another issue if you prefer.

The Editor

Daily Dispatch

East London

Sir

Schools must bring in children who are sitting at home

In our new South Africa, education is free. It is for all children. But there are still children sitting at home, without education. Some have disabilities, some have HIV positive parents, some are too poor to buy uniform.

Schools must bring these children in, to share education with other children. Why do we say this?

Firstly, it is their democratic right to be educated. The Minister of Education says all children must be included in classes.

Secondly and most importantly, they need to have friends and be part of life.

Some say that teachers do not know how to teach children with disabilities. Some say that parents don’t want their children to be friends with ‘cripples’. But we don’t want our society to be one that chooses. Everyone must be treated the same. Children can help those with disabilities, and make it easier for the teacher.

Our Grade 5 class at Mfunalwazi Primary found two children sitting alone at home. We persuaded them to come to school. Chumisa has only one arm. We are helping her to learn writing and to play games. She is very clever and learns fast. Luthando is deaf, but if he looks at your lips, he can hear. He is getting better at it. He is also becoming good at reading. We can write messages to him. We

are learning many things from these children, and they are our friends.

It is still difficult for them, and the teacher is giving them extra help after school. The School Governing Body is also helping them to get school uniforms. They don't have uniforms yet.

We are pleased that they have come into our class, and we want to tell other schools to do the same.

Sincerely

Grade 5 Class, Mfunalwazi Primary School

Resource 6:

'Argument' phrases



Background information / subject knowledge for teacher

Argument phrases

We maintain that ...

Our reasons for saying this are as follows: Firstly, ... Secondly, ...
Finally and most importantly, ...

In the (newspaper name), of (date), (name of person) writes ... OR
(name of author), in his book (name of book), says ... This shows
that ... OR This proves that ...

Some say that ... But we believe ...

Our experience has shown ...

Assessment questions

- Does the letter start by stating the case, or argument, clearly?
- Does it present arguments supporting this statement?
- Does it include some information that relates it to local circumstances or events and gives it a human touch?
- Does it present the case once more, conclusively, in the last paragraph?
- Is it well structured, divided into paragraphs, each with a main idea?
- Is it accurate, with no grammar, spelling or punctuation errors?