



The Power of Persuasion

In this activity, students are provided with a fact sheet related to the Junior Energy CFL fundraiser. The students use the fact sheet to create a written product that persuades the reader to support the school's fundraiser by buying CFLs. Options for written products include: short essays, emails to parents, posters or other ads for use around the school, a web page for the school's web site, or others.

OBJECTIVES:

After completing this activity, students should be able to:

- Use facts to create a persuasive argument

TIME: One hour

Option One (for beginning persuasive writers)—About 15 to 30 minutes to introduce the assignment, time out of class writing

Option Two (for experienced persuasive writers)—About 30 to 60 minutes to introduce the assignment, then varies by approach.

MATERIALS:

One copy of the "CFL Fact Sheet" for each student and one copy of the "Power of Persuasion Outline" for each student (optional)

GETTING READY:

Review the activity and decide whether to pursue option one or option two. If you're pursuing option two, be sure to research any options for persuasive communications around your school. (For example, can you add information or a page to your school's web page? Would the school allow your class to email parents? Can you hang posters around the school? If so, how many?) Then, make one copy of the "CFL Fact Sheet" and the "Power of Persuasion Outline" (optional) for each student.



Once your students have learned about the differences between standard bulbs and compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs), it's up to them to decide if they want to participate in the Junior Energy fundraiser to encourage people to make the switch to more energy-efficient lighting. If they want to be successful at helping people make the switch to CFLs, they'll have to be effective communicators who can clearly explain why CFLs are the better choice.

In this activity, your students will be given a variety of information about why CFLs are a better choice than standard light bulbs, and they can use the information to craft a persuasive written communication. You (or the students) can decide what form it will take: a persuasive essay, a letter or email to parents, information for the school's webpage, a script for use on your school's announcements, posters for use around the school, an article for the school newspaper, or another format. Regardless of its form, the goal is the same: the students should use compelling reasons to support the argument that the reader should purchase CFLs as a part of the school's fundraiser.

THE ACTIVITY :

Review with students what they've learned from their participation in the Junior Energy program. Ask if they think CFLs are a good idea. What are the benefits of switching to this more efficient kind of lighting?

Next, if they don't already know about it, explain that the students have an opportunity to take action through the Junior Energy fundraiser. They can ask their parents to make the switch to CFLs in their own homes, and they can sell CFLs to their friends and family to help them make the switch too. The proceeds from the sale will benefit the school. It's an opportunity to help their school and help the planet.

To make this fundraiser successful, students must persuade people to change. They'll need to demonstrate that switching from the standard, familiar bulbs to the new CFL bulbs is a good idea. This activity will help students accomplish this by helping them develop a persuasive communication they can use in the fundraiser. (Students who will not be participating in the fundraiser can still use this activity to hone their persuasive skills.)

Remind students that good persuasive communications contain a main idea (the topic a writer is supporting, which in this case is that the reader should use CFLs). Supporting facts demonstrate why the main idea is true. Finally, a conclusion (often a restatement of the main idea) will sum up the persuasive argument. Explain that it's very important to use facts, not opinions, to support an argument. The main idea may be an opinion, but the supporting arguments must be facts that demonstrate why the main idea is true.

As an example, ask students to imagine that they're trying to persuade a reader that people should buy more bubble gum. If their main idea or goal is to get people to buy gum, which of the following are stronger supporting arguments?



Argument One:

Option One: "Chewing gum tastes awesome."

Option Two: "Chewing gum is available in many different flavors, so everyone can find a flavor they like."

Argument Two:

Option One: "Chewing gum is cheap."

Option Two: "Chewing gum is less expensive than most other kinds of candy."

Argument Three:

Option One: "Chewing gum is good for you."

Option Two: "Sugar-free chewing gum can help prevent cavities."

In each example, the second option is better because it's more factual than the first option, which is an opinion. Different people have different ideas about what makes something awesome, cheap, or good. But everyone can agree on facts. It's the persuasive writer's job to present the facts that support their opinion in order to convince the reader to agree with him or her.

Explain to the students that in this activity, they'll use facts to try to persuade others to buy CFL bulbs in their fundraiser. Depending on the option you've chosen, explain how students should craft their persuasive communication.

End the activity by asking students to review the different ways that we can waste energy you discussed. Then, ask if they can think of things we can do to help save energy. Guide the discussion so that the students understand that we can do things like being sure to turn things off when we're not using them, and that we can also use things that require less energy to operate. Explain that your school is participating in the Junior Energy campaign to help people switch from standard bulbs to CFLs so they can save energy.

Option One: Write a Persuasive Essay

Explain to the students that they'll be writing a persuasive essay designed to encourage the reader to support your school's fundraiser by buying CFLs. Give each student a copy of the "CFL Fact Sheet," and explain that they can use the information in this sheet to help them build the supporting arguments for their essay. If you like, you can also give each student a copy of the "Power of Persuasion Outline," which they can use to plan their essays. Be sure to specify the requirements for the essay, such as length, format, use of transitional words, etc. Your specific requirements will depend on your students' experience with persuasive writing.



When the assignments are complete, you can share some of the products with the students. If you like, you can select several samples from among all the essays and discuss as a group the pros and cons of each. (Consider choosing one or two weaker examples and one or two stronger ones, without revealing the authors during the discussion). When your discussion is complete, remind the students that they can put their work to use in persuading their friends and family to participate in the fundraiser.=

Option Two: Get Creative with Persuasion

If your students are already familiar with persuasive writing, you can add extra challenge by letting the students become more creative with their persuasive communication. The students can use the basic approach to writing a good persuasive essay (using strong supporting arguments to support their main idea), and apply them to other kinds of communications that might make sense in supporting your fundraiser.

Ask the students to brainstorm different audiences they'd like to reach as a part of their fundraiser. You could prompt them by asking, "Who might buy light bulbs as a part of this fundraiser? Who should we be trying to persuade?" Create a T-chart and place the audiences on the left side of the chart with plenty of space between each.

Then, for each audience, ask the students to brainstorm different tactics they could use to communicate with that audience (besides talking to them, since the goal of this activity is to produce a written persuasive communication). For example, they might produce a chart such as the following:

Audience	Tactic
Parents	Letter Email Website
Students	Website Posters Announcements Article in school newspaper
Friends	Facebook Twitter Email Letter
Family members	Email Letter
Other people in the community	Letter to the editor in newspaper



Then, help students narrow down the list. For example, you might need to find out if it's an option to add information about your fundraiser to your school's webpage, or if your school newspaper (if you have one) would accept a submission of an article or letter to the editor. You can also make judgments about what kinds of products might be appropriate based on the level of your group, the time you can devote to the project, etc.

Once you've identified several options for the students to pursue, you can either let each student work alone on the communication that most interests him or her, or let the students work in groups. Set some ground rules of what's expected for each product, creating a rubric if needed. Remind students that although these aren't typical persuasive essays, the same basic rules apply for this project: They're still using facts to support their main idea, to convince their audience to purchase bulbs for their fundraiser.

If you like, you can give each student or group of students the "Power of Persuasion Outline" to use in organizing their written product. But let students know that they can change the format somewhat to fit their audience and tactic. For example, if students are working together on creating posters for use around the school, they might decide to create three separate posters, with each poster dedicated to a different supporting argument. One poster with all the information might be too much for people to read. Likewise, if your school allows it, your students might want to create a script for use on the daily announcements. Rather than creating one long announcement, the students might make one short announcement every day for a week. The first might explain the main idea, the next three might each deliver one supporting argument, and the final one might provide the conclusion.

When the assignments are complete, you can allow the students to share some of their products, asking them to explain how they've used supporting arguments to persuade their audience. When your discussion is complete, the students can put their work to use in persuading their friends and family to participate in the fundraiser.



The Power of Persuasion Outline

Main Idea:

Argument 1:

Supporting Facts:

Argument 2:

Supporting Facts:

Argument 3:

Supporting Facts:



CFL Fact Sheet

Count the Costs

Since one CFL bulb costs over a dollar more than one standard bulb, many people think it's more expensive to use CFLs. But, in reality, CFLs are cheaper. CFLs last much longer than standard bulbs. In fact, most CFLs last 10 times longer than the average standard bulb. That means that for every one CFL you buy, you'll have to buy 10 standard bulbs. If you spent \$1.66 on a CFL through the Junior Energy fundraiser, you'd spend about \$6.00 on standard bulbs over the same amount of time.

Electric Bill Savings

Not only do CFLs last longer than standard bulbs, but they also cost less to operate. When you use a light bulb, you not only have to pay to buy the bulb, but you also have to pay for the electricity to use it. Standard bulbs use about four times more electricity than CFLs. Energy costs for an average CFL might be about \$4.20 per year, while the cost for a standard bulb might be about \$18.25 per year. That means that you save over \$14 every year over the life of the CFL bulb.

Savings Add Up

According to the calculator on the Junior Energy website, one CFL bulb will save you over \$70 over the life of the bulb when you add up the savings from buying the bulb and using the electricity.

Wasted Energy

Most of the energy that standard bulbs use is converted to heat, not light. That means that standard bulbs waste a lot of electricity getting hot. CFLs are much more efficient. Most of the electricity they use is converted to light. Standard bulbs use about four times more electricity to produce the same amount of light as a CFL. If everyone in America replaced just one standard bulb with a CFL, we'd save enough electricity to light more than 3 million homes for a year.

Save Resources for the Future

Most of the electricity we use is generated from burning coal. Coal is a limited resource, which means that someday we will run out. When we use CFLs to save energy, we don't have to burn as much coal for electricity, which means this important resource will last longer.



Clear the Air

When we burn coal (and some other energy sources) to make electricity, pollution escapes into the air. Burning coal causes several different types of air pollution. When we save electricity by using CFLs, we burn less coal to create electricity. And that means we create less pollution.

Cool the Planet

Scientists agree that our planet is heating up. It's a problem called global warming, and it's causing the planet's climate to change in ways that are dangerous for people, plants, and animals. One of the main causes for this problem is the gas carbon dioxide. It's a normal part of our atmosphere, but today we're producing so much that it has become a pollutant. In large quantities, carbon dioxide and certain other gases cause our atmosphere to heat up.

When we burn coal and some other energy sources to create electricity, a lot of carbon dioxide and other climate-changing gases escape into the atmosphere. The more electricity we produce, the more carbon dioxide we add to the air.

But when we use CFLs, we use a lot less electricity, which means we put a lot less carbon dioxide and other dangerous gases in the air. If everyone in America replaced just one standard light bulb with a CFL, we would keep about 9 billion pounds of carbon dioxide and other climate-changing gases out of the air every year.

Support Your School

The light bulbs for sale through the Junior Energy fundraiser are high-quality bulbs that are available at a lower price than you can buy them in a store. Junior Energy is a non-profit organization, not a light bulb company. Junior Energy does not make money from the sale of the light bulbs. The money raised through the Junior Energy light bulb fundraiser goes back to your school. Your school can decide how to use the funds.